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Honors Thesis
on
The Nature of Love:
A Phenomenological Approach

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ABSTRACT

Since the time of Socrates, the idea of love and the conception of the human heart have been devalued by thinkers who, by definition, are known as “lovers of wisdom.” Considered pejoratively as “the passions,” the subject of emotion was deemed inferior to thought centered upon the human faculty of reason. Many studies in the sciences, from biology to psychology, claim to have pointed us to the source of the human experience of love—but do they help us to understand love properly? In order to provide a full consideration of love in my philosophical research, I will focus my analysis on love under the philosophical lens of phenomenology. Known as the study of firsthand human experience, phenomenology became the influential school of thought for many German philosophers in the early twentieth century. My research will closely examine the writings of Max Scheler, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Jean-Luc Marion within the context of this tradition. Moving from a justification of love in philosophy to the topic of self-love, I hope to define effectively what it means to love another. I shall also attempt to disambiguate the common assumptions regarding the nature of love. Is there a fundamental difference between the phenomenon of “falling in love” and of love itself? I question whether love, in its essence, is defined by the element of choice—of a willful emotional giving of oneself to another—and whether it can be distinguished from a passive feeling and an active loving will. I aim to bring the human affective sphere into the full light of philosophical inquiry, considering whether love is a moral act of the will that involves a total participation of the self—in mind, body, and spirit. Love is arguably the most powerful of the human emotions, one that elevates the human sphere of emotions and the ethical existence beyond simple desire. As I hope to show, a philosophical study of love is highly relevant today, since the sciences have not adequately answered the perennial question: What is love?

DEDICATION

In loving memory of Jake Gibbs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To

My family for allowing me to become who I am,

My mother for handing me so many books in my youth, and for believing in me,

Tyler for nourishing my philosophical *eros* and awakening my understanding of personalism,

Dr. Nguyen for leading me to the path of philosophy, and Dr. Strawser for helping me continue on my journey.

INTRODUCTION

What is the nature of love, and how should it properly be spoken of in philosophical discourse? The meaning of the word *philosophy* is derived from two Greek words, *philo* meaning love, and *sophia* meaning wisdom, and yet the particular nature of the phenomenon of love has been a question neglected, ironically, by philosophers—those considered by definition to be lovers of wisdom. For many, love is a private topic of discussion, a notion that is so personal it is often passed over in silence. It is often left for the artists—the poets, painters, and musicians—but do they help us to properly understand love? Some consider the topic as belonging to the realm of the ineffable, an emotion that is in essence so subjective that it is left unquestioned, cast aside to make room for other philosophical matters. Many disagree as to the nature of love, whether there is a fundamental reality, and even argue that love itself is a human construct. Can there be one fruitful definition of love great enough to satisfy the human appetite for knowledge of the heart's deepest emotion? In order to address these questions in the deepest sense, I shall consider the love primarily under the philosophical lens of phenomenology, a way of knowing that will be particularly helpful in grasping love's essence. This work will attempt to bring the concept of love into the full light of philosophical inquiry through exploring the possibility of a unified philosophy of love.

Multiple studies in the sciences, from biology to psychology, claim to have pointed us to the source of the human experience of love. Yet the biological explanation of what truly constitutes the human experience of love may have fallen short of a thorough answer. Although a basic empirical understanding of human love is valuable in our pursuit of knowledge, philosophy essentially picks up where empirical study—in both neurology and psychology—leave off. I shall nonetheless consider reductionistic or naturalistic explanations as to what constitutes love—from biological

theories of attraction and attachment, to the psychoanalytic conception posed by Freud—in order to discover what limitations there are with this view from a philosophical perspective. As I hope to show, a philosophical study of love is relevant even today, since science has yet to properly satisfy our appetite for answers to the essential, perennial question: *What is love?*

Since the time of Socrates, the status of love and the conception of the human heart have been devalued, deemed supremely inferior to the human faculty of reason. Plato's conception of the soul devalues the human affective sphere, otherwise known as "the heart." Although love has often been overshadowed by other intellectual pursuits in the history of ideas, many profound visions of love can be found in philosophical works, which may provide answers to these myriad questions of love.

One way of achieving this goal is to consider the argument that love is, to some degree, an "ethical art" a notion that should be explored, in theory and practice, to properly address the central question of philosophy established by the ancients, which is, "How should we live the good life?" Socrates, a proclaimed expert in the 'art of erotics,' spoke about love in the sense of both *erôs* and *erôtan*—love is both an expression of passion and of conversational inquiry. Is love thus best understood as an emotion, an ethic, a way of life? Does loving require—or at least seek—an understanding of the beloved, and does love grow inextricably with knowledge? Beyond merely abstract reasoning, viewing love as a moral task elevates it from emotion to action in the life and social sphere of an individual. I shall argue that love is necessarily a moral act, as it occurs between two human persons and is an act that involves a total participation of the self.

The nature of love has been explored by many thinkers since the time of Socrates, but it is with the advent of the phenomenological tradition that an exciting new way to explore the nature of love was opened. Conceived by German philosopher Edmund Husserl, the tradition of

phenomenology took root in the early twentieth century thought of the Munich and Gottingen circles. Phenomenology, the study of firsthand human experience, became the influential school of thought for Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand in the twentieth century. Scheler's *Nature of Sympathy*, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, and *Ordo Amoris* provide a phenomenology of the emotions and a profound ethical analysis of the human affective sphere that influenced thought a century late, and von Hildebrand provides a thorough account of the human affective sphere, the heart, and its most powerful and misunderstood spiritual emotion—love—in his works *The Nature of Love* and *The Heart*. A contemporary of Scheler, von Hildebrand's philosophy complements Scheler's theory of emotions and offers an account that takes the philosophical inquiry even further. Looking at the most recent work in the phenomenology of love, Jean-Luc Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon* continues the thread of thought drawn from Husserl in examining the erotic intentionality of human love. These works will be examined in detail below.

Both Scheler's phenomenological "order of love" outlined in the essay *Ordo Amoris* and Kierkegaard's espousal of love's duty in his *Works of Love* serve as two perspectives central to this study that represent the dichotomy between theory and practice. This view of love as both conceptual theory and ethical practice arguably best helps in understanding the nature of love, and its normative value that can transcend the self in the social sphere to cultivate a more loving attitude in the world. Throughout my thesis, I shall attempt to disambiguate the common assumptions regarding the notion of love, and through extensive research from I shall seek an answer as to whether or not a unified conception of love exists. By closely studying the works of Scheler and von Hildebrand within the context of the phenomenological tradition, I will be able to thoroughly examine my philosophical question in all its complexity and richness.

I shall begin my thesis with an exploration of the heart in Chapter One, for the sphere of affectivity forms the basis of Scheler and von Hildebrand's conceptions of love. I discuss the role of the heart in the history of Western philosophy in the first chapter, examining the role of subjectivity and will in our affective response to others. In Chapter Two I will begin a discussion of love's ontology, that is, to explore the *being* of love, to establish the claim that love is objectively real—beyond the realm of merely subjective feeling that many scientific studies suggest—and is worth a consideration as an intrinsically moral act. In Chapter Three I will examine Scheler's phenomenology of emotions, outlining the stratification of the emotional life and the formation of the human person. One of the assumptions I shall analyze in Chapter Four is that in order to love, one must first love oneself. I shall focus on an exploration of the love of self, seeking to uncover whether or not self-love exists, and to question whether a phenomenology of emotions provides insight into the love of self.

In Chapter Five I shall attempt to determine the nature of love for the other, and consider how it may also manifest itself in authentic and inauthentic forms in Chapter Seven. Providing the reader with an account of love's phenomenology within Scheler's *Ordo Amoris*, I question whether a working concept of "proper," "ideal," or "authentic" love in the normative sense can be uncovered in his work. I anticipate juxtaposing views of love that differ in terms of a *passive* and *active* sense. The idea of love in the *passive sense* embodies the character of love in its primal nature. That which is ruled by passive feeling we have no control over; the passive sense encompasses the notion of falling in love, the Kierkegaardian idea of the "first love" and the rule of passion that befalls us. The initial instance of love, with regard to the notions of temporality, caprice, feeling, and other conditional senses of love's experience, falls within the sphere of passivity. This passive aspect of love stands in contrast to love in an *active sense*, one which is inscribed by will and, ultimately, stems from a sense of

duty to love one's neighbor as oneself. I differentiate between these phenomena of love as "falling in love" (passive) and "choosing to love" (active). As I expect to demonstrate, the essence of love goes beyond the merely subjectively *passive* experience, and into the transcendent and *active* ethic of choice. I shall argue that the human experience of actual "love" is an active emotion with an element of choice. The role of choice in love is a distinctive phenomenon of the human experience of love. The element of choice is a prominent feature of our human capacity for love, one that takes us beyond the sphere purely sensual feeling toward a higher ethic of loving. That love in essence is defined by this distinctive element of choice, of a willful emotional giving of oneself to another serves ultimately to distinguish the passive loving *feeling* from the active loving *will*.

I shall finally question whether or not, within the nature of love, a normative ideal, proper order, or authentic phenomenon of love leads one toward communion with the other, a love which goes beyond the self toward edification and unification with others. I shall further explore in Chapter Four the relation between love and knowledge to examine the correlation between understanding and loving, which one, if either, precedes the other, to discover how the interplay of love and knowledge can transform one's love for another. Love is arguably the most powerful of the human emotions, one that elevates the human sphere of emotions and the ethical existence beyond the self. It is a force that compels individuals toward a greater existence, not only for oneself or one's neighbor, but for many, love drives one toward a compassionate attitude in life. With a basic understanding of the fundamentals of love, it will be the task of the reader, or the lover, to put into practice his or her understanding of love as it relates to the human striving of "the good life."

Beyond these readings involving my research I wish to acknowledge some of the teachers who have been indispensable in my philosophical journey. I wish to acknowledge Dr. Nam Nguyen,

the first teacher to introduce me to philosophy. My mentor, my teacher, and my friend, Dr. Nguyen placed my very first readings on love in my hands when I was a freshman, a chapter on love from M. Scott Peck's work, *The Road Less Traveled*. It was at this moment I realized that in matters of love, I had a great deal to learn. Our conversations inside and outside of class initially sparked my inquiry on the meaning of love, and continue to challenge me today, both academically and personally.

I wish to recognize the debt of gratitude I owe to my research mentor, Dr. Michael Strawser. He has guided, enhanced, and challenged my research questions on the nature of love since my first class with him on the philosophy of love in the Spring of 2010. Without his support and guidance, my projects, travels, grants, and presentations would not have been possible. Without his dedication, I would not be where I am today in my understanding of key philosophical concepts in our field.

Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge my personal communication with scholars in philosophy that I have encountered outside of my university. During my stay at the Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College in the Summer of 2011, the many office hour conversations with Kierkegaard scholar and library curator Gordon Marino helped guide and focus my research. Dr. Marino provided much-needed advice for advancing the development of my ideas and furthering my understanding of Kierkegaard's thoughts on love. For the past year, Franciscan University professor, von Hildebrand scholar and translator of *The Nature of Love*, Dr. John F. Crosby has enriched my philosophical understanding of love. In continuing my correspondence with Dr. Crosby, I have exchanged ideas on the philosophy of love and von Hildebrand's work, and he has given me guidance and suggestions on improving my research. He provided me with an unpublished chapter of the English translation of von Hildebrand's work *Aesthetics*, which brings a deeper comprehension and appreciation of his thoughts on value-response and the essential

connection between love and beauty. Dr. Crosby also provided me with resources—from articles to his own philosophical lectures—which aren't readily available to students at my university.

Another scholar integral to my discovery of von Hildebrand is the founder of the Dietrich von Hildebrand Legacy Project and co-translator of *The Nature of Love*, John Henry Crosby. During my stay at the Legacy Project's headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, I was allowed access to a myriad of invaluable resources, sharing Mr. Crosby's wealth of personal and academic knowledge of both Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand through our conversations during my stay. To these men and many others I owe my gratitude for keeping the love of wisdom alive in philosophical discourse today—a task I seek to enhance in this thesis.

*To feel for none is the true social art
of the world's stoics — men without a heart.*
Lord Byron

Chapter One: The Role of the Affective Sphere

For centuries, many philosophers have defined the human person as *ens cogitans*—a thinking being. Two contemporaries within the German phenomenological tradition, Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand began, instead, from the conception of humans as *ens amans*—loving beings. Deeply imbedded within their works is the primacy of the heart. Why did each thinker begin from this philosophical standpoint? Why the heart? This chapter will explore the role of the heart in the philosophy of love in the works of Scheler and Hildebrand.

While teaching in Germany, both philosophers were colleagues and close friends, writing in many areas with coinciding interests. How closely are their ideas on love interrelated? An eminently important aspect in their philosophies can be seen in “the pride of place” given to the affective sphere.¹ Elevating the role of human emotion in philosophy, both Scheler and von Hildebrand have formulated a phenomenology that places love at the center of man and the philosophical task. Through examining von Hildebrand’s key philosophical works, including *The Nature of Love* and *The Heart*, and Scheler’s *The Nature of Sympathy*, I will uncover how Scheler and von Hildebrand’s work in the phenomenology of emotions may help us understand the phenomenon of love.

¹ John Henry Crosby, "Introduction to Dietrich von Hildebrand's Mozart: Dietrich von Hildebrand in His Unknown Role as Master Phenomenologist of Art," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 7, no. 2 (2004): 176.

The Heart in Western Philosophy

Since the ancient era, philosophers have generally privileged the human faculty of reason, *logos*, over that of emotion, *pathos*. Many of these philosophers maintain that “our passions and our feelings are unnecessary to the search for truth about any matter whatever. What is more, feelings can easily impede that search, either by distracting the searching intellect, or, still worse, by distorting its view of the world.”² Such an attitude has been prevalent for centuries. An idea held by many philosophers is that to involve the affective sphere is to “move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment.”³ It should be no surprise that philosophy has remained historically silent on the topic of love, as:

The secondary place assigned to the sphere of affectivity and to the heart has remained, strangely enough, a more or less noncontroversial part of our philosophical heritage. The entire affective sphere was for the most part subsumed under the heading of passions, and as long as one dealt with it expressly under this title, its irrational and nonspiritual character was emphasized.⁴

This betrayal of matters of the heart is reinforced by Western thought since the time of ancient philosophers. The heart—and its associated affective activities—has been discussed and dismissed in ways that diminish general attitudes toward a relevant aspect of what it means to be human. I wish to argue however that the human affective sphere is not only a subject for philosophical exploration; it is a vital topic of inquiry that leads us to a greater understanding of love, and ultimately, unlocks the nature of the human person.

The neglect of the heart harkens back to ancient Athens, as “the Aristotelian position

² Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 262-263.

³ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁴ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Heart* (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), 3.

towards this sphere unequivocally testifies to a disparagement of the heart.”⁵ Von Hildebrand explains that, according to Aristotle’s concept of the soul, “the intellect and the will belong to the rational part of man; the affective realm, and with it the heart, belong to the irrational part in man, that is, to the area of experience which man allegedly shares with animals.”⁶ This sentiment has only evolved to damage the merit of the heart throughout the history of philosophy. Returning to the ancient conception of love in philosophy, “it is true that we find in Plato’s *Phaedrus* the words, ‘the madness of love is the greatest of heaven’s blessings,’” von Hildebrand writes, “but when it comes to a systematic classification of man’s capacities (as in the *Republic*), Plato did not grant to the heart a rank comparable to that of the intellect.”⁷ This places our discussion at a point of contention, which both Scheler and von Hildebrand address in asking us: what can be more essential to man than love?

The bias toward the cognitive faculty in experience throughout the history of philosophy is on the decline, as many phenomenological thinkers have brought intellectual attention to the experiential and moral value of emotions. As this work develops, it will become clear how both Scheler and von Hildebrand were committed to “rehabilitating the dignity of the affections”⁸ in their works of phenomenology. According to John Drummond, “Our ordinary experience *from the beginning* encompasses cognitive and affective—and, I might add, practical—dimensions.”⁹ It is natural, even necessary to consider *both* the cognitive and affective elements of human experience, as it is clear that both “things and situations affect us; they evoke feelings in us.”¹⁰ To divorce the

⁵ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Heart*, 3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John Henry Crosby, “Mozart,” 176.

⁹ John J. Drummond, “*Feelings, Emotions, and Wertnehmungen*” (invited plenary address at the meeting of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für phänomenologische Forschung, September 30–October 3, 2009), 1-2.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2.

affective from philosophical inquiry would be to provide an incomplete picture of reality: “The phenomenologist...must describe how a world filled with physical, affective, practical, and cultural significance is disclosed by any experiencing subject.”¹¹ We cannot reduce the meaning of what is human to one aspect of our soul or personality. Our world is filled with many elements, from the affective to the rational. To deny the importance of one aspect of our approach to reality is to deny the fullness of our experience of reality.¹² Von Hildebrand retained this attitude throughout his life, and “considered the implied standard of emotional detachment and affective neutrality to be tantamount to an inauthentic form of objectivity.”¹³

Men without Chests

The Vienna Circle—a distinct group of intellectuals in the 20th century—began a dialogue that sought to expunge philosophy’s contemplative endeavors of all metaphysical notions, including any talk of *love* or *the heart*. In an attempt to achieve a scientific world-conception as close to the “truth” as language would allow, branches from the philosophical tree were broken off with the intellectual force of positivism. The movement was an effort to achieve the utmost clarity and concision in the work of philosophy, comparative to the scientific achievements at the time. Even philosophers could not ignore the intellectual successes of the scientific community, which included thinkers from Helmholtz to Einstein. Many wished to achieve a standard of philosophy that reached

¹¹ Drummond, “*Feelings, Emotions, and Wertnehmungen*,” 3.

¹² This is a hallmark move of von Hildebrand away from his teacher Husserl (who desired an atheist phenomenology): The phenomenological approach is not... restricted to the philosophical analysis of genuine essences, that is, to philosophical a priori knowledge. It is also indispensable for the deeper understanding of man data which play a predominant role in the humanities, such as a great individual personality, or the cultural epoch baroque, or an individual work of art (*What Is Philosophy?* Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

Furthermore, the discrepancy between Husserl’s philosophical idealism seriously conflicted with von Hildebrand’s phenomenological realist leanings such that, upon von Hildebrand’s completion of his graduate work, Husserl denied his student a post-graduate recommendation due to the Catholic influence on his philosophy.

¹³ John Henry Crosby, “Mozart,” 176.

a level of accuracy on par with the hard sciences. Such philosophical disciplines expelled by the positivists included the pursuit of metaphysics, aesthetics, and ethics.

Many philosophers of his thread of thought attack the emotive and impassioned aspects of the written word, and presuppose that these features are irrelevant to the “grasp of truth,” rendering them unspeakable in the whole of philosophy. For some, philosophers who approach ideas, objects, or others with an “intuitive” way of knowing are disregarded by the many philosophers who “have in fact forsaken love, dismissed it without a concept and finally thrown it to the dark and worried margins of their sufficient reason—along with the repressed, the unsaid, the unmentionable.”¹⁴ Yet for these purely cerebral men, as C.S. Lewis warns us, “their heads are no bigger than the ordinary: it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so.”¹⁵ As we shall see, the human heart can fall into *affective atrophy*—a loss of one’s connection with emotional affectivity—and this trend of thought may be a result of philosophical “affective atrophy” that befell those philosophers overruled by the faculty of reason. Perhaps positivism is what C. S. Lewis was referring to in his essay *The Abolition of Man*; the contemporary positivists are the “men without chests.”

The reverberations of the positivist movement can still be felt in the tradition of philosophy today. It is echoed in the response of those of the school of Wittgenstein who hold steadfastly to the seventh proposition in the *Tractatus*: “Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.”¹⁶ The mention of the emotions—from the sphere of affectivity to love—often falls on deaf ears in philosophical discourse. Perhaps Marion is correct in saying that “this silence is for the better,

¹⁴ Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man, or, Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 25.

¹⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1922), 27.

because when philosophy does venture to speak of love it mistreats or betrays it.”¹⁷ The aim of this work, beyond seeking clarity on the hazy notion of love in philosophy, is to serve as a clarion call to philosophers that emotion is not only a valid, but necessary topic of exploration.

C.S. Lewis reminds us that, “without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism.”¹⁸ We are not speaking of “emotion” in the strictly Platonic sense, as unrestrained passion, but of emotion as a sanctioned center of affectivity. I speak of “emotion” as not a fleeting physiological response to an object, but of emotion as representative of an entire spectrum of human feeling, ascending from simple sensual response (pleasure/pain) to complex spiritual response (love/hatred). The sensual or vital level of feeling is simple in the sense of its non-intentionality: there is no object of such feeling-states, no specific response to a specific external object at this level of feeling. This lies in contrast to emotions of intentionality; in reference to ‘intentional,’ “we refer to a conscious, rational relation between the person and an object.”¹⁹ For both von Hildebrand and Scheler “intentionality is a mark of the higher, spiritual part of man, distinguishing it from the lower irrational part.”²⁰

What it means to be human cannot be reduced to the material, through studies in science or psychology. Missing from these studies is the ontological level—a consideration of the heart. The scientific type of knowledge is acquired by a “seeing from without,” an empirical way of gathering facts of the world. Throughout his work, von Hildebrand sought to clarify the difference between scientific seeing “from without” to philosophic seeing “from within.” The nature of love deals with not just the physical—the measurable view from without that psychosomatic studies seek to explain,

¹⁷ Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 1.

¹⁸ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 24.

¹⁹ Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Ethics* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), 191.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

but the metaphysical—the realm beyond purely physical appearance—which is accessed by a sight from within, from the spiritual center of man, from the heart.

The Tenor of the Heart

Throughout this work I have explained that the heart is the center of affectivity, the spiritual center of the self. What is the overall significance of the heart in the experience of the human person? The primary goal of this section is to delineate the significance of love, which is “the voice of the heart, an affective response, indeed the most affective of all responses.”²¹ The heart is responsible for the human range of emotions, hence why the term *sphere of affectivity* is the philosophical equivalent of the more poetic, metaphoric *heart*. This center of affectivity is given a place of importance in the phenomenology of von Hildebrand and his value-realist counterpart, teacher, and friend Scheler. Both philosophers recognize the limitations of the Platonic conception of emotions. Although Scheler vehemently elevates affectivity above the other faculties, emotion, volition, and cognition hold an equal rank in the formation of man for von Hildebrand.

The sphere of affectivity is responsible for emotions simple and complex, the highest and most powerful of which being love and hatred. With the human response to emotions, are hearts are actualized, and we are moved, affected by the object, person, event, and so on. According to von Hildebrand “this actualization of the center of the value response, “the charitable, reverent, humble center,” excludes the simultaneous actualization of the center from which hate, envy, and revenge derive.”²² If love and hatred are the highest powers of the heart, it follows that there is only “space” for one eminently powerful value response in the heart at one time. We cannot simultaneously love and hate an individual. How can humans gain control of their affectivity? How

²¹ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love* (Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2009), 54.

²² Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 409.

can it be possible to allow love to descend into hatred; how can we allow love to transfigure hate? A full consideration of the relation between love and hatred is beyond the scope of this work. Let us now consider the role of the will in the value responses in the heart.

If emotions are indeed, according to von Hildebrand, on par with, and not subservient to reason or the will, how does he reconcile the power of human affectivity? On this point, let us look at von Hildebrand's view on the relation between love—the voice of the heart—and will:

One cannot deny that love is not free in the same sense as the will is free. We cannot give ourselves love even if we want to. It is not in our power freely to posit such a response of the heart like we can posit a response of the will, nor is it in our power to command love like an action. Between the mere will to love someone and real love for that person there is an abyss. ²³

The spontaneity of love, the freedom of the value-response is retained in von Hildebrand's interpretation of volition. We are free to love, but we are not free to *force* our heart to respond to another in love. He preserves the voice of the heart as a personal recognition of the other, the “tenor of the heart” in the sense of love as being a response to value. Von Hildebrand indeed acknowledges the difference between the heart's free response to the other—love as value response—and the command to love others as a neighbor—love as willed ethic. The theme of this work is the former. This response does not arise from will or intellect, but from the heart:

Even if one were blind to the role of love in human life, it is still true that whether one considers the main source of earthly happiness to be beauty, knowledge, or creative work, the experience of happiness is something affective, for it is the heart that experiences happiness, and not the intellect or the will.²⁴

The will does not respond to value, nor does it serve as the voice of the heart. The value response of love lies in the recognition of the heart. In his emphasis on spontaneity and freedom in the response of the heart, von Hildebrand does not intend to relegate his personalist concept of love to a purely

²³ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 54.

²⁴ Von Hildebrand, *The Heart*, 17.

free, unsanctioned response of the heart. He means to point to the approach to the other in love as motivated not through a willing, but by a giving, for “the commitment of the heart is that is proper to love is not a result of the will but a gift.”²⁵ The dignity of love as an affective response lies not in its willing extension to the other, but in spontaneous givenness. For von Hildebrand, value and gift are thematic elements proper to love, not duty. What value, what insight can we glean from the heart’s response when it is strictly a willed ethic?

On this point—the role of the will in love—we can immediately separate von Hildebrand’s value phenomenology from Kantian deontology, and even the Thomist approach to love. For love *qua* love cannot merely be willed into action to retain the dignity of the value response to the other *qua* person:

Whoever loves realizes that this love is not really returned as long as the other person only has the will to love him but without any involvement of the heart. If the other does not yearn for our presence and is not delighted by it and made happy by it, if his heart does not speak, then he does not love us, even if he makes the greatest effort of will to love.”²⁶

Love is not will; collapsing the two in an attempt to properly identify love is equivocation. Although human affectivity is a valid motivation for love, this is not to be confused with sentimentality, sort of aesthetic stirring of the emotions for the sake of feeling itself. Sentimentality is a form of emotional aestheticism, “a merry-go-round of the heart which spins only to spin again.”²⁷

Von Hildebrand cautions of the danger of “men without chests,” individuals who forsake the tenor of the heart out of a fear or disdain for emotion. This leads to a closing-off, a hardening of the heart that severely limits not only our understanding of the other, but our experience of the world. Such a person “avoid[s] the unique surrender of his heart and of the entire rhythm of his life.

²⁵ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 54.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Fulton Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, 6.

His is an attitude which...also resists any total love in which one gives one's heart."²⁸ The hardening of one's heart points to "the lack of freedom that comes from remaining stuck in one's subjectivity and being too preoccupied with one's interests. By being preoccupied like this, one cuts oneself off in a sense from the objective *logos*, from the rhythm of the world of values, and from one's neighbor."²⁹ The heart is key to opening up our subjectivity—our *Eigenleben*—in order to enter communion with others.

In opening up our hearts, how can our affectivity change our response to others? Under what conditions of the heart are we led to respond to others with love or hatred? Perhaps we can say that an individual with a strong *Eigenleben* is more receptive to the value of others, more engaged in the intersubjective, I-Thou communion that will open our hearts to recognize "the charitable, reverent, humble center"³⁰ of others. Perhaps a "withered" *Eigenleben* can inhibit our ability to respond to others with love. Considering the role of the will in love, can we say that our love overpowers our hatred with the sanction of the will? Perhaps hatred, if we allow it to, can also overpower love. The next section will touch on a historical example of hardened affectivity and its effects on the individual and society, exemplified in the affective atrophy of Germans under National Socialism. I will consider the consequences of von Hildebrand's rehabilitation of the heart, the effect of opening up our affectivity to others.

Rehabilitation of the Heart

In his time, von Hildebrand took upon himself the task of reminding us of the importance of the heart in a time when "many were oppressed by the mechanical and artificial rationality that

²⁸ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 54.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

³⁰ Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 409.

dominate[d] modern life.”³¹ Living in European society during the rise of National Socialism, von Hildebrand knew that his people “were longing to get beyond this sterile rationality and to participate in forms of life that were more abundant and organic.”³² Von Hildebrand’s philosophy has an undoubtedly personalist element in his emphasis on the meaning of subjectivity in the philosophical task. The unique status of the human person is eminently important to the task of the philosopher, whether it is discovering the nature of reality or the nature of love. Throughout his life as an academic, von Hildebrand vehemently pronounced the necessity of valuing the human person.³³ Von Hildebrand saw the inherent dangers of Nazism, and “was quick to detect an opening for the anti-personalism of the age.”³⁴ John F. Crosby shares his view on von Hildebrand’s emphasis on value and the importance of our subjective response to value. He claims that, for von Hildebrand, “what is authentically personal cannot be reduced to artificial rationality.”³⁵

For von Hildebrand, affective responses are proper to objects like fine art and music, as well as persons as intrinsically valuable subjects; these responses to value are “not just instinctual and vital but are properly and eminently personal.”³⁶ His delight in the abundance of value found in

³¹ John F. Crosby, “The Witness of Dietrich von Hildebrand,” *First Things* (December, 2006), 8.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ On the history of von Hildebrand’s personal experience with extreme opposition to his ideas at his university, John F. Crosby writes:

So Hildebrand opposed his Christian personalism to the anti-personalism of the time. And it was on the basis of this personalism that he resisted anti-Semitism; he was in fact one of the most resolute voices in all of Europe on the evil of anti-Semitism. . . . He apparently lost the support of many Austrian Catholics over this issue; many of them agreed with him until he spoke about the Jews (“Witness,” 9).

The consequences of his ideas led to an intellectual unrest at his university during the World War II. Students, professors, friends turned against him in his authentic pursuit of truth and value in the face of moral and value relativism, and a national exchange of truth for propaganda. Von Hildebrand’s philosophical convictions, his inability to compromise his authenticity, forced him to evade the wrath of National Socialism, escaping European cities—Munich, Austria, Florence, and Toulouse—for Sao Paulo, and finally, to safety in New York City.

³⁴ John F. Crosby, “Witness,” 8.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

everyday life was not merely aesthetic. In fact, as John Henry Crosby points out, von Hildebrand recognized the power of beauty as a symbol pointing to the realm of value, which grounds the entirety of his philosophical outlook. Rather than viewing beauty as a merely subjective category of personal appeal, he recognized the objectivity of it, and how beauty relates intrinsically to both love and morality.³⁷ Von Hildebrand had a “preternatural sense for the sacred,” which led to an “aesthetic sensibility [that] was bound up with a strong moral sense.”³⁸ This sensibility, often devalued in philosophy today, is essential to the phenomenological account of love espoused in this work. Far from the shallow aestheticism that von Hildebrand considers with caution, “these feelings are not just filling up our hearts, making us feel good or bad; they help us see things for what they are and understand the world for what it really is.”³⁹ I will explore further below the connection between philosophy and affectivity, and how the sphere of emotions plays a vital role in the phenomenology of von Hildebrand and Scheler. For these philosophers, “getting in touch with reality is one of the most important things our emotions are for. That’s why reason and emotion—thinking and feeling—belong together: they both help us get at the truth about reality.”⁴⁰ These themes will be explored fully throughout this work. For both Scheler and von Hildebrand, there can be no more fruitful an account of what it means to be a human being than an investigation into the affective sphere, into the phenomenon of love.

³⁷ In his first presentation as a student of philosophy, von Hildebrand “attempted to distinguish between the intrinsic aspects of a work of art and those that are extrinsically related to it.” (John Henry) This sensitivity to beauty, and a proclivity toward pointing out the objective in a seeming field of subjectivity was a foretaste of one of his lifelong tasks and commitments to both philosophical and aesthetic truth.

³⁸ John Henry Crosby, “Mozart,” 168.

³⁹ Phillip Cary, *Good News for Anxious Christians: Ten Practical Things You Don't Have to Do* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 102.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

*We must close the eyes of the body,
to open another vision.*
-Plotinus

Chapter Two: The Ontology of Love

Building upon my *apologia* of the heart in Western philosophy, can we now speak of love—the fundamental act of the affective sphere—in a meaningful way? Perhaps I should now establish love as an ontologically real phenomenon. Whether love is intangible, illusory, meaningless, or mundane will be questioned; these common objections to the reality of love will serve to answer the fundamental question: on love, should philosophers remain silent? I will further explore the possibility of a unified definition of love as a complex and spontaneous phenomenological act that involves emotion sanctioned by the will that recognizes and responds to the intrinsic value of the other. In defense of love as having a unified essence, I claim that if one is to consider love as having an ontological existence, its nature must be of something more than a passion reflected in the Romantic ideal, more than a relative, subjective experience in the pejorative sense of the term. In spite of the varying characteristics and categories of love, it remains a unique and personal phenomenon, the essence of which I will attempt to adequately describe in the subsequent pages.

The idea of an “ontology” of love is perhaps best expressed in the words of Paul Tillich, from his essay *Love, Power, and Justice*. He expresses how these three concepts “are metaphysically speaking as old as being itself. They precede everything that is. They have ontological dignity. And before having received ontological dignity they had mythological meaning. They were gods before they became rational qualities of being.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 21.

Although many disciplines describe love in term of the poets, attributing to it such words as *ephemeral*, *attraction*, *attachment*, and even *addiction*, love is ontologically real. This attests to an accepted pluralism of accepted ideas on the topic. A definition that transcends the cultural, historical, or psychological interpretation of love is missing from many emergent understandings of the concept. Philosophical work within traditions as old as that of Aristotle, and the medieval school of Aquinas—and as young as the phenomenological tradition of Scheler— have attested to the truth of love having an essence that is real, ordered, and even transcendent. The approach of this paper emerges from the phenomenological tradition, a method that Scheler and von Hildebrand consider to transcend the scientific, biological, psychological, historical, and cultural interpretation of love: phenomenology attempts to “see,” to “get at” what love is at the personal level.

The first objection commonly raised is that love is an imaginary concept, that it is mere poetic fancy, and bears no “tangible” effect on reality. Throughout much of his work, most notably in his text *What is Philosophy?* Von Hildebrand seeks to establish that love is objectively real. Here he clearly defines the difference between the subjective and objective existence of things:

To be subjective may mean, first of all, to pertain to the personal world, as opposed to the impersonal world; it would mean something belonging to the personal subject of knowing, willing, loving, and so forth. In this sense everything which is a real “part” of a person may be called “subjective.” An act of knowledge, an act of will, an act of love or joy are all subjective in this sense; a rock or a tree would not be subjective in the same sense.⁴²

A part of the human experience is the subjective, personal experience of love. While loving may be an inherently subjectively felt or experienced phenomenon, this in no way renders the act of love a *purely subjective* phenomenon that does not exist outside of one’s subjective reality. On the contrary:

But let it be clearly marked and known: the acts of knowing, love, and so forth are fully objective *realities*. They are at least as “real” as a stone or a tree. Thus the term “subjective”

⁴² Von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 153-154.

refers to the ontological feature of being a “subject,” a person, and not to the epistemological feature of being an appearance for a subject.⁴³

Love is an ontologically real *essence*, but exists in varying degrees of expression; each has his or her own interpretation or experience of love’s *existence*. However, ontologically speaking, love can be considered a unified concept. The love for a romantic other, a brother, or a friend differs in some form, yet we call each a variant of a fundamental love of the other. Love exists as both an affective response to the intrinsic value in the other and as a choice in the sense that our response is sanctioned by the will. What it means to love is to both respond to the value of the other experience, and into the transcendent and *active* ethic of choice. Human experience of actual “love” is an active emotion; it is the love that Aquinas speaks of when he talks of its “power” beyond mere “passion.”⁴⁴

Nussbaum attests to the knowledge of such love, and the reality, for “knowledge of our heart’s condition is given to us in and through certain powerful impressions, impressions that come from the reality itself of our condition and could not possibly come from anything else but that reality.”⁴⁵ In this small insight, Nussbaum touches upon a fundamental idea that serves as a thread throughout the work of Scheler, that “impressions” or insight are the intuitions of reality that phenomenologists seek in the pursuit of philosophical knowledge of reality, especially in our response to the personal value of the other.

To continue the discussion of love’s ontologically unified essence, we will consider an idea that is recurring in the writings of von Hildebrand. On the irreducibility of love’s essence, he writes:

⁴³ Von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 154.

⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

⁴⁵ Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 266.

Many necessary essences stand in their fullness before our minds and are grasped as things which cannot be broken down or reduced in any way. Such, for example, are the color red, the essences of love, space, time, and so forth. Here intelligibility means a unique “meaning-fullness” which renders it possible for our minds to grasp the object “From within.”⁴⁶

There are two fundamental ways in which we can perceive objects, by way of a “seeing from without,” part and parcel of an incomplete perception, and a “seeing from within,” which is the essence of philosophical perception. Regarding such differences in perception is to realize the difference in position between the philosopher and the scientist:

Philosophical distance, on the contrary, entails freedom from all arbitrariness. It renders possible our allowing ourselves to be borne along in knowledge by the main theme of the object in question. Above all, in this remoteness of the spiritual position from which philosophy considers the object, there is no “seeing things from without.” We saw, in our analysis of *a priori* knowledge, that the mind is able to know “from within” only those objects having an essence that can be grasped intuitively. We saw, furthermore, that this knowledge from within is one of the deepest characteristics of philosophical knowledge.⁴⁷

These two stances on seeing are intricately tied to love and perception of the other. He explains this way of seeing as one which “leads us to consider the beloved person under a false external aspect.”⁴⁸ This aspect is devoid of the profound seeing or apprehension of another in full light of their uniqueness and individuality, their subjectivity. He explains the danger when one sees strictly “from without” as a “source of a typical misunderstanding of the other person and is radically antithetical to love.”⁴⁹ Here von Hildebrand makes clear the moral accountability of one whose vision is restricted to the first intent of seeing. One’s vision is flawed, and von Hildebrand even considers this an attitude “antithetical to love.”

⁴⁶ Von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 133-134

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁴⁸ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 334.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 334.

When we behold our lover from this phenomenological stance, we are in fact “seeing the other ‘from within,’ which holds a special significance for philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand. He goes so far to say that “love is by nature a ‘seeing from within.’”⁵⁰ This involves an active perceiving where one lives “in his or her depth.”⁵¹ This depth-seeing means that this sight, beyond the passive or receptively-seeing in the first sense (with the sensual eye), involves a deeper commitment to seeing beyond the physical sense of self, much like our love of neighbor commands humans to love with a willing that is beyond our primitive human faculty of love.

In considering the ontology of love, it is important to account for the relational aspect, the intersubjectivity of two persons in love. While love is a non-physical existence—you cannot point to it in any physical sense—there are aspects of the relationship between man and woman that point to love’s mediating presence. Yet, although one cannot effectively “point to” love, it can be known by its fruits. I will speak of this notion in terms of two aspects of this interpenetration of selves, that is, in terms of “mine” and “we.” Firstly, love is often considered in the sense of a shared “we,”⁵² a love that transcends each lover’s unique experience and brings each person into a unique communion bound by love. It is an experience that is reflected in a play of shared moments, in a reciprocated relation of two subjects joined by this new shared experience in love. In this new relation we find a communal orientation marked by an *intentio unionis* and an *intentio benevolente*—the desire for union and a willing of the good for the other—that brings two persons in love together in this shared “we.”

⁵⁰ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 334.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² For a more in-depth discussion of the new “we” that arises out of merging solitudes in love, see Nozick’s *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

Let us consider the relation between the qualities of personality and our motivation for love. Poets and plebeians alike seek to convey the particular characteristics of another in an attempt to explain their motivation for love. We may be drawn to the other by an attraction via the characteristics of personality; however, to love a person for a set of characteristics is inaccurate. Many romantics tend to glorify particular traits of the beloved—a sanguine pallor or a waterfall of auburn curls—in order to express their love. This impassioned “fall” into love, although aesthetically appealing when framed poetically, is a different category of experience, and not constituent of love itself. In an example cited by Fulton Sheen,

If one is asked why he is in love with a particular person, he may, if he is a logician, put his argument into some such form as this:

It is our nature to love goodness:
But X is good:
Therefore, I love X.⁵³

What is missing from this argument is the personal element. We are “attracted” to individuals for characteristics X Y or Z. We love individuals, however, not *for* X, Y, or Z, but for the sake of the individual him or herself, for his or her intrinsic value. We are missing that which is eminently personal, as Scheler and von Hildebrand would say, if we love the other because they bear goodness. For “goodness” to be a premise for our love, the argument would have to be amended to personalize the X in terms of the individual, overall value-response. Love aims at the irreducible subject, the unique and wholly other person. There is a fundamental distinction between “loving for X,” where X is a characteristic, and “loving X,” where X is an individual. This marks the ultimate difference between mere attraction, affection, or lust and genuine love for another person. This irreducibility of love is precisely why phenomenology is the methodology used in this work: it

⁵³ Fulton J. Sheen, *Three to Get Married* (Princeton, N.J.: Scepter Publishers, 2004), 16.

encompasses the attitude of “letting things be,” which is—quite apart from qualitative measurements—precisely what it takes to account properly for our value-response, our love of another human person.

Attraction, affection, and lust are examples of what von Hildebrand terms “pseudo-loves,” or “passive” feelings—or the vital or psychological for Scheler—which, in the case of attraction and affection, may in fact ultimately *lead* to love. These three examples are ontologically lower emotions, and, in Schelerian terms, they are closer to the vital level than the spiritual level. The task of this work is to outline the emotion of love, which is the ontologically highest emotion for both Scheler and von Hildebrand. Before I begin to outline the nature of love in phenomenological terms, let me begin with a brief analysis of the realist phenomenological approach underlying this thesis.

Love on the Mind

Can the sciences allow us to come to a deeper understanding of love? When arguing in favor of the objective reality of love, a scientific consideration should be considered given recent progress in the field of neurology. In contemporary research, neurological studies have claimed to pinpoint areas in the brain that correlate with human receptivity to love. Such empirical evidence can, at least in part, provide insight into the phenomenon of love. Multiple studies in neuroscience claim to have pointed us to the source of the human experience of love. Is it accurate to say that we “love” with our mind? Although studies in neurology have focused on pinpointing “love on the brain,” this is only a one-dimensional picture of the human experience of love. This does not mean, however, that this evidence is irrelevant to the pursuit of truth.

The work of Helen Fisher points toward a scientific correlation between brain activity and the limbic response of a lover: “Regions of the prefrontal cortex monitor the pursuit—one's

progress toward the goal: emotional, physical, even spiritual union with the beloved.”⁵⁴ That is to say, both the joy and suffering of a person “in love” has been charted as a neurological phenomenon. A basic empirical understanding of human emotion—evidenced by the growing research on the correlation between the brain and emotional response— is valuable in our pursuit of knowledge:

The prefrontal [lobe] is the brain of involvement... It gives us the taste, the enthusiasm for what we choose. It does not give us merely a barren notional knowledge, but makes us assent with our whole hearts to what we know. And this is what would appear to be the full significance of the prefrontal. Its real name is the brain of the heart, the organ of love.⁵⁵

Many philosophers and theologians refer to the heart as the origin of emotion, an allusion that serves to ground affective discussion in a non-physical, metaphorical realm of the body. Many scientists, however, would consider this reference to the heart more metaphor than anatomical truth. Further, knowledge of cognitive correlation between reason and emotion “made for the wedding of emotion and intellect, a ceremony that perhaps took place in Paul Chauchard’s ‘brain of the heart’ – the late-arriving prefrontal brain—to produce that exhilarating experience we call love.”⁵⁶ This “wedding” of emotion and intellect is an idea that only recently received scientific illumination. Neurology, it seems, relegates “love” to merely an “exhilarating experience.” This discussion will reconsider the recurring confusion between ephemeral feeling and willing emotion. The neurologist reduces the complex range of human emotions to one specific response, and appears to have empirically measured the human phenomenological act of love.

⁵⁴ Helen Fisher, *Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love* (New York: H. Holt, 2004), 267.

⁵⁵ Anthony Walsh, *The Science of Love: Understanding Love & Its Effects on Mind & Body* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1996), 90-91.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

This scientific conception confuses the fundamental difference between the limbic responses of pleasure—associated with lust, attraction, and the romantic conception of “falling in love”—with the profound *value response* of love for another person.⁵⁷ One aim of this work is to exemplify the difference between the feeling of falling in love with being in love, as “what some people love is not a person, but the experience of being in love. The first is irreplaceable; the second is not.”⁵⁸ While the manifest presence of love might appear in synaptic relations in the brain, love remains essentially intangible. This work will argue the higher relevance of love as a response to value, and the reality of love as an ontological category that is not reducible to impulses in the brain. Although neurological studies have mapped the cognitive response of the human phenomena of falling in love, they have not fully accounted for the human experience of love. There is a need in both the sciences and philosophy for a “rehabilitation” of the heart for our understanding of love; “can the role of the most affective of all affective responses be ignored?”⁵⁹ The goal of this work is to serve, at base, as an *apologia* for the heart and emotions as vital pursuits in philosophy. I further seek to outline what, at base, value-realist phenomenology is in order to ground a phenomenological exploration of love.

Perhaps both the scientific and philosophic thinker will begin to recognize the value of the affective response, as perhaps “the remedy for all the sufferings of the modern brain lies in the enlargement of the heart through love, which forgets itself as the subject and begins to love the neighbor as the object.”⁶⁰ As it stands, science can only explain the response of falling in love, it cannot, however, explain the *why* of our love. Biology can and will only explain the physiological

⁵⁷ Von Hildebrand writes: “The fact that love is a value response, essentially implying an *intentio unionis* and an *intentio benevolentiae*, and the fact that there is a difference between the *imago Dei* and the *similitudo Dei* are all apriori facts and typical topics of philosophy. They have not, however, the obvious character of “Two plus two equals four” or “Moral values presuppose a person” (*What is Philosophy?* 137).

⁵⁸ Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, 1.

⁵⁹ Von Hildebrand, *The Heart*, 17.

⁶⁰ Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, 5.

reactions of human love. It cannot chart the *raison du couer*, the inner workings of the human affective sphere. Only when the effects of love become manifest in human thought and behavior, visible enough through sight “from without” for scientific inquiry to begin its measurements, is love subject to any sort of empirical analysis. Everything prior to and beyond this outward appraisal of love falls under the lens of philosophical inquiry. In listing the different aspects of the mysterious, von Hildebrand numbered love as among life’s mysterious phenomena. Love can be considered one of life’s mysteries,⁶¹ in that:

because of its depth and richness, is inaccessible to a purely rational penetration *meo geometrico*, in a geometrical fashion. In this sense the human person is a mystery; love is a mystery; beauty is a mystery. Though they are not supra-rational, although they in no way contain antimonies, these mysteries escape the kind of rational explanation which is to be found in logic or mathematics.⁶²

Precisely because of its profundity, love cannot be assessed solely *meo geometrico*. While there is undoubtedly a cognitive element—as this work will attempt to illustrate in the section titled love and knowledge—love is beyond reduction to reason.⁶³ Of course, there are “reasons for love,” but they do not read like a checklist of items. This is precisely the mistake of reductionism, as I have outlined earlier. In the words of Fulton Sheen, “love needs no reasons... love never asks "Why?" It says, "I

⁶¹ For another phenomenological perspective on the person and love as essentially mysterious, see the work of Gabriel Marcel. He discusses the difference in philosophy between “problems” that do not essentially involve the knower, and “mysteries” which involve the knower in a personal, existential way: Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I: Reflection and Mystery*, Trans. G.S. Fraser. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2001).

⁶² Dietrich von Hildebrand and Alice M. Jourdain Von Hildebrand, *The Art of Living* (Chicago: Regnery, 1967), 55.

⁶³ We find this idea of our love for the other as mysterious clearly articulated by John F. Crosby:

The more you come to know and love some person, the less you find yourself able to express what it is that you know and love. You find something in the other that is unutterable, ineffable, unspeakable. You can describe well enough the various qualities of the other, the types and kinds that he falls under, but there is something else, something deeper in the other that escapes your expressive and descriptive powers. You see and experience this something else as you come to know and love the other as person, but you cannot render it in clear concepts, and you just stammer when you try. What you are encountering is precisely the other as unrepeatable person. The problem is that our language is only suited to expressing properties that are common to many; it fails us when we try to give expression to that which is unrepeatably some person’s own (John F. Crosby, “Persons are Unrepeatable,” *Lay Witness*, May 2000).

love you." Love is its own reason."⁶⁴ The reasons for love indeed "are so deep that we can never exhaust them with our knowledge."⁶⁵ Perhaps Gautier is correct in intertwining the heart and mind in the task of loving. This work will attempt to point toward the underlying aspects of love's nature, and address the essential structure of love according to the phenomenological value-realists, Dietrich von Hildebrand and Max Scheler. Let me begin by clearly establishing love as a subject of ontological inquiry.

The Phenomenological Approach

As I already explained, I wish to focus on the phenomenological tradition, as it is the best lens to approach the nature of love and it is through this lens that both Scheler and von Hildebrand view the meaning and task of philosophy. The meaning of the word "phenomenology" is the science of appearances or of appearings.⁶⁶ It is an essential approach of the discovering of, the seeking of truth of things-in-the-world. Phenomenology is a philosophy centered in the descriptions of the revealing or unconcealment of phenomena, and each philosopher within the tradition presents an array of different phenomenological "themes" within his or her work. Ricoeur describes such themes as the "melodic lines of existential phenomenology."⁶⁷ The main "themes" of existential phenomenology which Ricoeur explicitly describes include:

- (1) The "owned body" found in the work of Marcel, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty.
- (2) The "freedom" found in Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre.
- (3) The theme of "the Other" found within the work of Sartre.

The primary philosophical voices I will reference in this essay—Scheler, von Hildebrand, and Marion—are phenomenologists whose work indeed contains existential themes, and do not fall

⁶⁴ Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, 5.

⁶⁵ Von Hildebrand, *The Art of Living*, 55.

⁶⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: an Analysis of His Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967).

⁶⁷ Ricoeur, *Husserl*, 208.

quite easily into any one of these three categories.⁶⁸ Perhaps the theme of “the Other” is the best categorization for Marion. Although von Hildebrand was a student of Husserl, his work departs explicitly from Husserl’s strict phenomenological methodology. I would consider the main “theme” of von Hildebrand and Scheler, two “value realists,”⁶⁹ to be that of the value-response, an affective intentional act in which we find a “deep, meaningful, and intelligible relationship between the act and its object.”⁷⁰ Value-realists respond to the value of different categories of objects, from “the beauty of noble music or the nobility of a moral act,”⁷¹ to the beauty of a virtuous person or the beauty of our beloved. Perhaps, then, a new class of existential phenomenologists needs to be added to include the thinkers I reference in this work, namely, von Hildebrand, Scheler, as well as Karol Wojtyla. Having briefly outlined the phenomenological approach, I will move to a brief overview of two predominant areas of philosophy that are related to the philosophers referenced in this essay: existentialism and personalism.

While scientific inquiries and answers deal predominantly with the empirical human object, philosophical inquiries of the existential thread deal with the particular human subject. The themes of existentialism and personalism both deal primarily with the concretely unique individual.

Although this claim is backed by the science of biology—there has never been and will never be again another genetic “you”—this explanation does not adequately explain the philosophical theme

⁶⁸ In recent scholarship, the idea of Kierkegaard as a phenomenologist has gained popularity (see Jeffrey Hanson’s *Kierkegaard as Phenomenologist: An Experiment* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010]). One scholar focused on the theme of Kierkegaard as a phenomenologist of love is my thesis chair, Dr. Michael Strawser.

⁶⁹ This term I borrowed from John J. Drummond’s description of Scheler in his introduction to *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy: A Handbook*, page 9:

For Scheler, values rather than objects are the primordial phenomenon; values precede their objects, and our apprehension of the object as valuable depends on a prior apprehension of the value, an apprehension that in no way depends upon any inductive or causal inferences from sensory experience.

⁷⁰ Judith Stewart Shank, “Von Hildebrand’s Theory of the Affective Value Response and Our Knowledge of God,” *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* 5, (January 1, 1992): 155.

⁷¹ Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 208.

of personalism. This example serves to further von Hildebrand's claim that philosophy "stands in an incomparably deeper relation to the spiritual life of the person."⁷² This is, of course, to presuppose a spiritual element of man. The existential/personalist phenomenological accounts of Kierkegaard, Scheler and von Hildebrand move from the claim that humans are more than physical beings; we are fundamentally spiritual beings. Philosophy "requires a much more essential awakening, a much sharper eruption from the ordinary attitudes of life than do all the other sciences."⁷³ This existential notion, that philosophy deals with an "essential awakening" of the self is central theme of phenomenology. Many philosophers of his tradition consider the "ordinary attitudes of life" as the "natural attitude," one which philosophy leads us away from, toward a more "awakened" sensitivity to the world around us. The next chapter will serve to develop further the phenomenological attitude as it pertains to love. I will begin with a discussion of Scheler's phenomenology of the emotions, which greatly influenced the von Hildebrand's work. My examination of the value-realism of Scheler and von Hildebrand will take root in a phenomenological analysis of the sphere of affectivity in an attempt to shine light on the philosophical complexities of the human heart.

⁷² Von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 231.

⁷³ Ibid.

*Love is always what awakens both knowledge and volition;
indeed, it is the mother of spirit and reason itself.*
Max Scheler

Chapter Three: Max Scheler's Stratification of the Emotional Life

In his work *The Nature of Sympathy*, Max Scheler provides a phenomenological account of the emotions, from love to hatred. This section will focus on Scheler's phenomenology of love, for his "insistence on the primacy of emotions over cognition, love over control, or recognition over cognition...provides a welcome antidote to the reifying tendencies that mark the contemporary human sciences."⁷⁴ It is important to note that toward the beginning of his study, Scheler begins with a declaration: "the ultimate essences of love and hatred, as inherent in acts, can only be *exhibited*; they cannot be defined."⁷⁵ Although he claims it is impossible to define the essence of love, Scheler indeed provides a full account of what love *is* and *is not*. How he attempts to account for the existence of love is to be examined at length in this chapter, as I will draw primarily upon three of his main texts, *The Nature of Sympathy*, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, and *On the Eternal in Man*.

Scheler begins by disambiguating the common assumption that *love* is derived from a sense of fellow-feeling, that its reality can be reduced to a feeling of benevolence for another.⁷⁶ He explains that while we can love intrinsically valuable things, like knowledge, beauty, and God, we do not necessarily feel "benevolent" towards them. This opening discussion served as a response to

⁷⁴ Frédéric Vandenberghe, "Sociology of the Heart: Max Scheler's Epistemology of Love," *Theory, Culture and Society* 25, no. 3 (May 1, 2008): 18.

⁷⁵ Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), 152.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

what Scheler perceives as “one of the gravest errors... of British moralists,”⁷⁷ and what he considers to be a return to Greek and Christian ethics in placing an ontologically independent value on the reality of love, without attaching to it, or placing before it a lesser term of feeling to dampen the power of the emotion.

The philosophical anthropology of Scheler is founded upon the understanding of human emotion. Once we unlock the phenomenon of love, we come closer to an understanding of Scheler’s concept of individuality, for “[a]cts in which [a] person reveals himself most deeply are emotional acts.”⁷⁸ He presents an existential-personalist worldview, in which human persons are subjects oriented toward participation in the world of value, an absolute value-laden reality that we have access to by our human faculties, of which emotion is primary. Scheler’s concept of value-realism is indivisible from his concept of person-in-the-world, for “who the person *is* is revealed in and through the life that he is creatively living out...the person unfolds in reciprocal relation to the unfolding of the concrete existential situation in which he finds himself.”⁷⁹ The overarching “theme” of Scheler’s “existential situation” is, according to A. J. Luther, the theme of *value*.⁸⁰

Our intentionality in the world unfolds under this ultimate aspect of value. Hence Scheler’s zealous approach to the emotional in man’s experience in the world; how often in philosophical circles is this integral aspect of human experience overlooked and disparaged in the pursuit of

⁷⁷ Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 140.

⁷⁸ A.J. Luther, “Scheler’s Interpretation of Being as Loving,” *Philosophy Today* 14, (September 1, 1970), 217.

⁷⁹ Luther, *Persons in Love: A Study of Max Scheler’s Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (Netherlands: The Hague, 1972), 217.

⁸⁰ Scheler’s particular brand of value-realism is rooted in a Catholic pre-phenomenological tradition since Augustine: Following Augustine and Pascal, he argued that the primordial relation to the self, the other, the world and God emotional, and that emotions constitute and disclose the world as a world of values. Correcting the cognitivist bias of Husserl’s phenomenology of perception (*Wahrnehmung*), Scheler went on to develop a phenomenology of ‘value-ception’ (*Wertnehmung*)” (Frédéric Vandenberghe, “Sociology of the Heart: Max Scheler’s Epistemology of Love,” 21).

reason? In his phenomenology, the emotional sphere of man is the core of his being, for “love grounds the meaning of all other acts, whether emotional, rational, volitional, etc.”⁸¹ Love is the central act of the affective sphere, the most powerful and defining feeling. Love reveals the human person at his inmost depths, “thus [love] reveals [the] person concretely.”⁸² Love is feeling at the highest level of Scheler’s stratification of emotional life: the spiritual. What is love’s essential relation to value? For Scheler, love is an intentional act “fundamentally directed towards value.”⁸³ A value-realist *par excellence*, for Scheler “the perception of value, in this case, love, is a unique irreducible emotional act.”⁸⁴ Love, a response to the value of another human person, is not reducible to any single factor; aspects like rationality, volition, or sexuality cannot alone or together point to the truth of love.

Scheler does not attempt to merely justify a reconsideration of the relevance of emotion in the life of a human person; he elevates the role of the human affective sphere above all other human faculties. His justification, according to Luther, is that feeling is “the dynamic presence of a person in the world, is value perception, the unique unveiling of the world in its dynamic actuality.”⁸⁵ What constitutes the individual person? I will now examine Scheler’s concept of the human person, and how the idea of the person grounds the phenomenological relationship between love and value.

⁸¹ Luther, *Persons in Love*, 218.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 219.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 218.

Radically Individual Personhood

For a richer consideration of what Scheler means by the “dynamic presence” of an individual person, it is important to note the fundamental philosophical strands of personalism that are revealed throughout his works. The agents of love are persons—unique, unrepeatably individual.⁸⁶ To be a person is to be unique; “[t]o be unique is to be irreducible, which is to be in such a way that confusion of one person with another is radically impossible. Strictly speaking, for Scheler, being *is* personal, absolute, unique, irreducible.”⁸⁷ Every human person, for Scheler, “has an essence all his own, that is, an essence that could not possibly be repeated in a second person.”⁸⁸ What is at the core of this uniquely individual person? The person is irreducible because of individual value, thus each person is constituted individually by a unique value-essence. This essence “stands at the center of the individuality of a person, [and] has nothing to do with logical constructions,”⁸⁹ meaning that a person is not constituted by external characteristics either unique to the self or in relation to others. For example, Sophia’s individual personal essence can be no more understood in terms of her humility or height than by her identity as daughter or dancer. This is the premise of the value-realist phenomenology of both Scheler and von Hildebrand: to be a person is to be an essentially irreducible subject of intrinsic value. The complexity of the human person is realized in the

⁸⁶ Noting the difference between “person” and “individual” that is found in the tradition of personalism, John F. Crosby makes it clear that:

Scheler does not posit the antithesis of ‘person’ and ‘individual’ that is found in many personalist authors, such as Maritain, Mounier, and (even if he is not usually reckoned to the personalists) Hans Urs von Balthasar... in each case ‘individual’ forms some kind of antithesis to ‘person’ and it expresses something lower in human beings something in contrast to what is highest and best in them, which receives the designation ‘person’ (*Personalist Papers*, 148).

⁸⁷ Luther, *Persons in Love*, 42.

⁸⁸ John F. Crosby, *Personalist Papers* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 149.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

complexity of personal individuality. The individual is so radically other that it is unutterable

(*individuum est ineffabile*).⁹⁰

That the person is irreducible points to the fact that “[t]he mystery of personal being is rich in content.”⁹¹ Thus, the mystery of person *qua* person is profound. However, because this mystery of the person is irreducible, Scheler does not mean to allude to a center so ambiguous that it has no foundation in reality, no real content. The element of the person, the unique “theme” if you will, is *value*. To understand the personal value that Scheler speaks of, we must understand that the basic constitution of the person is that of subject, and not object, for “[p]erson as person is never an object.”⁹² He describes objects as things “finished, complete, static...susceptible to empirical observation of some kind.”⁹³ Hence, the role that phenomenology plays in adequately accounting for acts of the person that are irreducible and mysterious as persons themselves.⁹⁴ The subject, persons, are not “susceptible to empirical observation,” but subject to a phenomenological investigation in which one “must cultivate an openness in which what is actual in the real may reveal itself to him as it is in itself.”⁹⁵ This phenomenological openness is related to Scheler and von Hildebrand’s “fundamental moral attitudes” that at once informs the philosophical approach to the *object*—in humility, reverence, and love—as it informs the personal approach to the *subject* of our love.

⁹⁰ John F. Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, 150-151.

⁹¹ Luther, *Persons in Love*, 49.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 50.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁴ For another phenomenological perspective on the person and love as essentially mysterious, see the work of Gabriel Marcel. He discusses the difference in philosophy between “problems” that do not essentially involve the knower, and “mysteries” which involve the knower in a personal, existential way: Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I: Reflection and Mystery*, Trans. G.S. Fraser. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2001).

⁹⁵ Luther, *Persons in Love*, 47.

Returning to the ineffable character of love, this idea attests to speak of our love in terms of qualities or characteristics attributed to the other. In attributing our love to a set of characteristics or even a central one, we are tending toward a reduction of the other in the sense of an object. Yes, one can adequately capture the “essence” of a tree by describing its characteristics—the greenness of the leaves, the woodenness of the trunk—but we cannot account for the essence of person *qua* person by listing qualities available to our sense-perception. In our attempt to speak of the other in this way, we reduce the person to an object constituted by an array of qualities that are seen, felt, and heard. This difference is pronounced in our love of the other, for

the love which has moral value is not that which pays loving regard to a person for having such and such qualities, pursuing such and such activities, or for possessing talents, beauty, or virtue; it is that love which incorporates these qualities, activities and gifts into its object, because they belong to that *individual person*.⁹⁶

It can be said that we are drawn to certain qualities of others; we are attracted by intelligence, kindness, and beauty. However, we do not *love* a person for their qualities or possessions. That we are motivated to love another by desiring or recognizing wealth in the property or personality of the other is a frequent category mistake. These features may *draw* us in to an initial interaction or relationship with another. Desire or attraction is motivated by qualities, which perhaps involves the sensible or vital sphere of affectivity. One may derive simple pleasure in the other by virtue of their possessions or personality. In this instance, individuals would pursue the maximally valuable other, consistently seeking a person of desirable traits until a need or desire is satisfied. If love was determined by, say, intelligence, we would naturally seek out the maximally intelligent person to love. Yet, this would only increase our immediate pleasure by way of intellectual enjoyment; this is not an example of love. One would be forever seeking to intimately engage the mind of others, thus

⁹⁶ Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 166-167.

reducing the other to a mere instantiation of a particular trait. The relationship would be cheapened, for who would desire to be loved in virtue of a need or interest that is satisfied by another?

Love, however, is motivated by the person *qua* person, in a personal response to value. The lover desires the response to be eminently personal- I love *your* intelligence, *your* beauty, *your* kindness. As Scheler said, “it is that love which incorporates these qualities, activities and gifts into its object, because they belong to that *individual person*.”⁹⁷ Without a personalization of the other, a movement beyond the sensible recognition of the other, our relationship cannot move to a spiritual act of love. Our response to value is not a general inclination toward merely agreeable qualities, but a personal affective response to the other by virtue of it belonging to our beloved.

The way in which we must understand person and love is from a supremely *relational* standpoint. How we understand persons is through relations, and how we understand love is through personal relations:

The difficulty of approaching being from this perspective lies in the paradox that, although personal being is absolute being, absolute being as personal is relational. Personal being is not personal, absolute, or unique, ‘outside’ the relational unity which constitutes the concrete existential situation. The deepest describable structure of this relational unity is love, more concretely persons in love.⁹⁸

It is the personal act of love that gives us the most adequate insight of others. This “insight” of which Scheler speaks is of “the essence of another’s individuality, which cannot be described or expressed in conceptual terms (*individuum ineffabile*), [and] is *only* revealed in its full purity by love or by virtue of the insight it provides.”⁹⁹ What does Scheler mean by love? The subsequent sections will attempt to uncover how love as a relational act reveals the person. Let us now begin to analyze

⁹⁷ Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 166-167.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 160.

this structure of feeling more clearly, to uncover just where love fits into the spectrum of emotional life.

The Structure of Feeling

The order of the emotions in the sphere of affectivity moves from levels of ontologically lower feelings to higher emotions—the highest of which Scheler considers love. This order ascends from the more primitive “vital” emotions of pleasure and displeasure, toward the highest “spiritual” emotions of beauty, truth and a sense of the sacred, or what Scheler describes as “feelings of the personality.”¹⁰⁰ Moving beyond the strict method of Husserlian phenomenology, Scheler takes into account the particularly spiritual nature of man, and emphasizes the intuitive knowledge of man—an epistemology rooted in love—that is key to approaching his form of phenomenology.¹⁰¹ Scheler defends these claims of an “investigation” into the realm of love, as “love relates, in the first instance, to *what has value*, and to man only to the extent that he is endowed with value and capable of advancement in this respect. These acts and their laws can be investigated *by means of a phenomenological reduction*.”¹⁰² According to Scheler there are four levels of values, which he calls a “stratification of the emotional life,” which move from simple sensible feelings to the vital, and from psychological to spiritual emotions. The first two levels are labeled “feelings” in particular because of the passivity of their nature; they “do not have a lasting duration, are not divisible in space...are devoid of deeper levels of satisfaction, and are localized in a particular part of the body.”¹⁰³

Through these faculties we arrive at a “sensuous” understanding of reality, which is essentially the

¹⁰⁰ Eugene Kelly, *Material Ethics of Value: Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann*, 32.

¹⁰¹ For a further elaboration, see his essay *The Nature of Philosophy*, in which Scheler moves from the modern western philosophical consideration of love as mere passion, and integrates it into his philosophical attitude, within the text *On the Eternal in Man*, 92.

¹⁰² Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 155.

¹⁰³ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 90.

“natural attitude” through which we approach life as mere spectators or inductive scientists.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, this distinction between “feeling” and “emotion” is important because, for Scheler, “sensible and vital feelings are properly called feelings rather than emotions because they are experienced through the body, while psychological and spiritual emotions are called emotions because they transcend the felt experiences of the body.”¹⁰⁵ Hence, there are two essential “modes of intentionality,” falling under the category of the sensual and the spiritual. Love is an emotion, therefore it is best understood as a spiritually intentional act. This is an important point to consider when comparing the work of phenomenology with scientific research: biology and neurology can only reveal “love” or feeling at the sensual or vital level, for they are inductive sciences that measure “facts” on the common-sense or scientific level of the Schelerian spectrum. Therefore, to deny or ignore a philosophical intuition is to essentially miss an important aspect of the experience of love that cannot be mechanically or statistically quantified: the spiritual.

The Realm of Value

It is immediately evident from this preliminary glimpse into the mind of Scheler that he is presupposing a realist worldview, that there is an independent reality of values that lay just outside the subjective human experience of them, and that our love is a relation to these values. An element of his personalism is also revealed here, for man is “endowed with value,” and is ethically accountable for his love of value, for his apprehension of values in the world makes man “capable

¹⁰⁴ These basic levels of feeling correspond with Scheler’s epistemology. He distinguishes between three kinds of “facts” in our world-experience: common-sense experiential, positive scientific, and phenomenological. The first two correspond to a “natural fact” that we arrive at through our basic faculty of sense-perception. See: “Max Scheler’s Epistemology and Ethics,” by Alfred Schutz. Schutz also draws a comparison between Scheler’s phenomenology of feeling and his ordering of values, which ascend from ontologically lower (vital) to higher (spiritual) in the same way as his order of emotions.

¹⁰⁵ Rainier R. A. Ibana, “The Stratification of Emotional Life and the Problem of Other Minds According to Max Scheler,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* (December 1, 1991): 462.

of advancement.”¹⁰⁶ As sensible feelings form the primitive origin of man’s spectrum of emotions, the communion shared in love is something “which a sensible feeling cannot bring about and to which it is blind.”¹⁰⁷ Hence, a full understanding of the order of emotions is the key to understanding Scheler’s concept of the value-drive movement of the emotional life, and his ontology of love.

Let us look for a moment at what Scheler considers the “five value realms for the human person.”¹⁰⁸ In his philosophy, the five realms of value consist of the spiritual or divine value, the value of the person (moral, intellectual, artistic), the vital value (the appetites, including the sexual drive), the useful or practical value, and lastly, the sensual value: the only one differentiated from all other values.¹⁰⁹ All value culminates in love, the highest response to value for both Scheler and von Hildebrand. In addition, “love, and the intuitions of the heart, form the core of the person,”¹¹⁰ which leads naturally to Scheler’s conclusion that it is the heart that forms the center of phenomenological intuition. Love, then, is a form of knowledge, following the line of thought since Pascal of the heart’s “own reasons of which the mind knows nothing, and can know nothing.”¹¹¹ This, however, is a false dichotomy of terms, as I have shown in the previous sections. The mind and heart, in fact, are deeply intertwined faculties. A character flaw of Scheler lays in his overzealous defense of the heart. He reverses the hierarchy privileging reason to emotion, and instead replaces this binary with a privilege of emotion to reason.

¹⁰⁶ Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 155.

¹⁰⁷ Ibana, “The Stratification of Emotional Life,” 462.

¹⁰⁸ Rebecca S. Biefeld, “Max Scheler: An Essay Commemorating the One-Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 5 (October 1, 1974): 212.

¹⁰⁹ Biefeld, “Max Scheler,” 212.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 213.

Beyond the establishment of love as a willing of the subject, in act or movement, Scheler proposes that the phenomenon of love is, rather than simply an ephemeral or passive emotion, a *cause* of emotional states, and not simply the effect of them.¹¹² Regarding the emotional eternity that love holds, Scheler writes:

In love...between human beings these acts remain wholly independent of changes in the state of feeling, as is shown by the fact that throughout such changes they *remain fixed* upon their objects, as with a steady, unwavering light. Our love for someone does not alter, for all the pain and grief the loved one may cause us....¹¹³

The concept of love is twofold: it is both a spiritual emotion that arouses knowledge and a spiritual act of the will. Love's reality is similar, in a way, to the nature of light itself. Light acts as both a particle and a wave, depending upon the context. Love is indeed a spiritual emotion, the ontologically highest response of feeling found in the sphere of human affectivity. But love is also sanctioned by the will, and is manifest in an act that can be discerned, as I have mentioned before, by its fruits. While it is clear that Scheler means to emphasize the willing element in love, the specific relation between love and the "activities of the soul"—the cognitive, the volitional, and the affective—is a topic I will explore in-depth below. While he considers love to be "entirely concerned with the positive values of *personality*, and with welfare only so far as it promotes such personal value,"¹¹⁴ Scheler does not discount the initial instance of love that is derived beyond a mere sense of extended goodwill and a positive feeling paired with an idea of the Other, what I termed earlier as a feeling of "benevolence."¹¹⁵ Is love merely a positive emotion tied to the thought of another

¹¹² Scheler, *On the Eternal on Man*, 148.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹¹⁵ Here I draw a parallel in opposition to a commonly considered presupposition of love as simply a willing of the good extended from the self to another, and the modern western definition proposed by Spinoza in his *Ethics*. On the first page of his chapter on love's phenomenon, Scheler writes of "the complete futility of Spinoza's definition: '*amor est laetitia concomitante idea causae externae*'" (140).

human? Along the lines of Spinoza's reasoning, love becomes merely "a positive feeling accompanied by the idea of an external cause."¹¹⁶ It appears here that Spinoza is relegating love to the sphere of sensible feeling, in Scheler's terms, to that which is merely pleasure or displeasure. Here he confuses love proper with attraction. Although it is beyond the scope of this work to fully investigate Spinoza's philosophy of love, I simply wish to draw a connection between Spinoza and one of his most ardent critics, Scheler. If this is the case—that love is a positive feeling evoked by an external cause—it would follow that any proper ethic tied to the phenomenon of love becomes merely an application of moral emotivism. Speaking of "love" in this sensible or vital (passive) sense is to confuse the spiritual (active) nature of genuine love. For Scheler posits a definition of love that has "an intrinsic reference to *value*, and for that reason alone it cannot be a fellow-feeling."¹¹⁷ Henceforth, love in relation to the human affective sphere will be strictly mentioned with reference to emotion, rather than feeling. This assertion of love's relevance beyond mere feeling is explored further, as Scheler directly claims that "love is not a 'feeling' (i.e. a function), but an *act* and a *movement*."¹¹⁸ Accordingly, he elucidates that it is appropriate to consider love an emotion; the claim that love is a 'feeling' or 'affect' is disregarded necessarily by Scheler's elaboration:

All feeling is passive or receptive, whether it be feeling for values or for circumstances (e.g. suffering, enduring, tolerating, etc.), and we describe it therefore as a 'function'. But love is an emotional gesture and a spiritual act. It does not matter here whether, phenomenologically speaking, the gesture is mainly called forth by its object or is felt to proceed from the self.¹¹⁹

The phenomenological nature of love is not primarily concerned with the inspiration of love. Love could arise as a value-response to the object, or as a spontaneous act proceeding from oneself,

¹¹⁶ Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics: Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1992), 27.

¹¹⁷ Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 141.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

unprompted by an attribute of the object of love. This emphasis on the *gesture*, as opposed to mere function establishes love as a conscientious act in the intellect and heart of the willing individual. A gesture is clearly an example of an *active* emotion, that is, an emotion that is not a mere happening-to, but a bringing-forth. A gesture involves the element of human will; it is a decision and act of the spirit. Scheler places an importance on the idea of love as an ‘act,’ in that “the person... can never be treated as an object.”¹²⁰ This notion of love between two *subjects*, as opposed to one or more *objects* of love is an essential point in understanding Scheler’s ethical personalism. The mutual recognition as subjects is a necessary relation of love between two persons. This intersubjectivity—the recognition between two individuals as dignified human subjects—implies a sense of mutual respect, and a presupposition of valuing others.

With regard to his idea of a concept of love that is ontologically higher than “passive or receptive” feeling, Scheler calls into question the significance of the contrary notions of “active” and “passive” emotions. The former is a higher order of feeling, the latter, lower. Ontologically superior is the “active” emotion—love and hate—while the ontologically inferior is the “passive” feeling—pleasure and displeasure. A fundamental aspect of love involves the will. Although willing is not a sufficient cause or constituent of love on its own, the will is undoubtedly a necessary aspect of love. Our experience of love for the other is not purely a passive happening-to, but a creative activity that draws upon our whole self.

How, then, is love related to the self? Can love be directed toward oneself? This next chapter will begin with a focus on Scheler’s philosophy of self-love, serving as a foundation for a critique of common conceptions of the love of self.

¹²⁰ Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 142.

*Himself the worshipped and the worshipper,
he sought himself and was pursued, woe, fired by his own heat of love.*
Ovid

Chapter Four: A Radical Reappraisal of Self-Love

In the tale of Narcissus, a word of prophecy was uttered, that “he [would] love himself alone, and yet fail in that great love.”¹²¹ Ovid’s mythological tale reveals the dark side of self-love, a love that is all-consuming to the point of death. The history of philosophical discourse on the topic is vast. However, the question remains insufficiently answered: is self-love a *real* phenomenon? Or when we speak of it, are we propagating a philosophical stance that is unfounded, one resting on a mere truism? Does current philosophical discourse adequately assesses the possibility or impossibility of a love of self? It appears that there are three schools of thought on self-love: that self-love exists and is subject to normative restraint, that self-love exists as merely analogous to love of the other, and that self-love does not exist, and is replaced by self-hatred. I shall analyze these views, as well as Marion’s claim that it is ontologically impossible to love one’s self. I will begin with a discussion of self-love in Scheler, followed by an analysis of the views two critics of self-love—Paul Tillich and Jean-Luc Marion—and bring this views into dialogue with the more prevalent views of self-love in Christian theology, to examine which theory, if any, properly account for a love of self. This inquiry on self-love will serve to call into question the common assumption that love ought to begin with the self. I shall determine whether the advent of a proper or ethical self-love serves as a valuable beginning point for our love of others.

¹²¹ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses* (New York: Viking Press, 1958), 75.

Self-love in Scheler

In the essay “Ordo Amoris,” Scheler outlines a brief philosophy of self-love that poses a normative distinction between “genuine” spiritual self-love and selfish love of self. He considers the former a “certain type of *love* which must precede the knowledge of individual destiny.”¹²² Scheler explains the former instance as:

Genuine *self-love* [*Selbstliebe*], or love for one’s own salvation, which is fundamentally different from all so-called love of self [*Eigenliebe*]. In love of self we purposely see everything, even ourselves, through our “own” eyes only. We refer every datum, even ourselves, to our sensuous states of feeling, without having a distinct and clear awareness that this is what we are doing.¹²³

According to Scheler, “love of self” is a morally improper love of oneself, a view of subjectivity in a selfish sense. In this case, one is “trapped” within one’s own perspective. The sight of this self-lover [*Eigenliebe*] is limited to his own selfish vision. Unawares, he interprets everything from this self-absorbed worldview. In this way of being, “[c]overed with a web of many-colored illusions and phantoms, woven out of stupor, vanity, ambition, and pride, we see everything, including ourselves, in the light of love of self. It is quite different in genuine self-love.”¹²⁴ This *Eigenliebe* would transfigure our perception in a radically negative way. We would be hindered by our self-love, affected not only in our intersubjective relations, but in our approach to the world. Even our philosophical approach, Scheler would say, would be affected by this fundamentally immoral attitude. Given what we understand to be the essential moral attitudes of man—humility, self-mastery, and love—it would seem inevitable that not only would our personality be hindered by such a negative self-love, but our task as a philosopher.

¹²² Scheler, *Ordo Amoris*, 106-107.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 107.

As regards “genuine” self-love [*Selbstliebe*], what Scheler deems “love for one’s own salvation, our “sight” is transformed in a positive way. This self-love profoundly transfigures our interpersonal and philosophical intentionality:

Here our spiritual eye and the ray of its intention is focused on a transworldly spiritual center. We see ourselves *as if* through the eyes of God himself, and this means, first, that we see ourselves objectively [as if with genuine self-knowledge] and second, that we see ourselves as a part of the whole universe.¹²⁵

Rather than viewing self-love as a simple ethic to live by, Scheler views the proper love of self as a philosophically informative orientation. We achieve a kind of self-knowledge through this spiritual love of self. In essence, this is the self-love that many theologians describe as loving oneself in the way that God loves each one of us. This “agapic” self-love can be seen in imagining the love of God when He considers the goodness of his creation, in a sort of divine value-response, so to speak. I will address this idea of “agapic” self-love and the implications further later in this chapter.

The theme of sight, found throughout value-realist phenomenology of Scheler and von Hildebrand, plays an important role in Scheler’s conception of genuine self-love. Only in God can we cultivate for ourselves a proper attitude of self-love:

Indeed, we love ourselves, but always only as what we would be before an all-seeing eye and only so far as we could stand before this eye...the self-shaping, creative hammers of self-correction, of self-education, of remorse and mortification strike away all the parts of us which project beyond that form which is conveyed to us by this image of ourselves before and in God.¹²⁶

It is sight that rests in God that saves us from the vanity and pride of *Eigenliebe*. Put another way, this selfish love of self is a form of egocentrism. Luther explains the relation between egocentrism and inauthentic self-love in his study on Scheler’s *The Nature of Sympathy*. He writes:

¹²⁵ Scheler, *Ordo Amoris*, 107.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Where feeling, that is, who the person is, is directed towards himself in terms of what is pleasant or sensuously satisfying solely, this value perception becomes the root of egocentrism which is devoid of authentic self-love. Authentic self-love is disclosed where one's spiritual or personal presence and radiance is focused in a transcendent personal center.¹²⁷

It seems that *Eigenliebe* as egocentrism is problematic because it limits our knowledge of the self and others. We cannot see purely or truly; we are blinded by our selfishness if locked in this world of self-love. If, for Scheler, “self-knowledge is a legitimate form of loving one's self,”¹²⁸ this egocentric self-love is a catalyst for ignorance. Thus, *Eigenliebe* is rendered an improper love of self because it inhibits our pursuit of knowledge—the goal of self-mastery— which Scheler does consider a moral attitude required for the philosophical task. What shall we make of this contribution to the scholarship on the philosophy of self-love? Scheler's work on the love of self is highly ambiguous, as he fails to leave the reader with a clear understanding of what exactly the love of self is.¹²⁹ Perhaps placing his work in dialogue with past and present voices on self-love will help clarify what Scheler might have meant in his normative distinction between proper and improper self-love. I will now open a dialogue among contemporary philosophers on the (im)possibility of a love of self, proposing a radical critique that will hopefully clarify philosophical discussion on the matter, and bring scholars to a clearer understanding of what we mean when we talk about the love of self.

¹²⁷ Luther, *Persons in Love*, 125.

¹²⁸ Scheler, *Ordo Amoris*, 107.

¹²⁹ This tendency of Scheler to discuss ideas at once with vigor and ambiguity, without a detailed or extended elaboration on his philosophy is prevalent throughout his work, especially the topic of self-love. On putting his thoughts into perspective, Vandenberghe writes:

Although Scheler's scattered reflections may not add up to a system, they nevertheless find their unity in a single meta-anthropological question: Was ist der Mensch? What is Man? A thinking reed? A bundle of drives? A toolmaker? A symbolic animal? No, according to Scheler, the human is, first and foremost, a spiritual being, a *zoon noetikon* or animal spiritual (Frédéric Vandenberghe, “Sociology of the Heart: Max Scheler's Epistemology of Love,” 20).

In his work *Love, Power, and Justice*, theologian Paul Tillich makes the bold claim that “Self-love is a metaphor, and it should not be treated as a concept.”¹³⁰ If he is accurate, his view is in the minority of scholarly opinions on the idea. Whether or not Tillich is correct, it is my thesis that we should carefully consider our view on self-love. The intent of this inquiry is a reevaluation of popular opinion, the common idea that many hold as almost an a priori truth: *before I love others, I ought to love myself*.

While von Hildebrand defends the claim that self-love cannot serve as the origin, the starting point of our love of others, Tillich takes the argument even further, and argues against the ontological reality of self-love. Whereas Marion rejects self-love as a sufficient bridge between separate selves, the *I* and the *me*, Tillich argues against a separation within the self at all, rendering any element of unity unspeakable in terms of self-love:

If love is the drive towards the reunion of the separated, it is hard to speak meaningfully of self-love. For within the unity of self-consciousness there is no real separation, comparable to the separation of a self-centered being from all other beings. Certainly the completely self-centered being, man, is self-centered only because his self is split into a self which is subject and a self which is object. But there is neither separation in this structure, nor the desire for reunion.¹³¹

Tillich differentiates between the “original solitude” of man, the ontological separation between humans, and the “assumed” separation within the self that is amended by love. Neither Marion nor Tillich identifies the self as a bridge between two to be crossed in love; there is no separation within our self that is comparable to our separation from others. Tillich points out a fundamental problem with belief in a love of self:

The lack of conceptual clarity in the concept of self-love is manifest in the fact that the term is used in three different and partly contradictory senses. It is used in the sense of natural self-affirmation (e.g. loving one’s neighbor as oneself). It is used in the sense of selfishness

¹³⁰ Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 34.

¹³¹ Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 33-34

(e.g. the desire to draw all things into oneself). It is used in the sense of self-acceptance (e.g. the affirmation of oneself in the way in which one is affirmed by God).¹³²

Many Christian theologians often make a normative distinction between the first sense (natural self-affirmation) as a “proper” form of self-love, and the second sense (selfish self-love) as an “improper” form of self-love. This is seen in the distinctions posed by Rousseau, Kierkegaard, and Scheler. Tillich proposes that, rather than attempting to continuously justify self-love in an ambiguous and often mystical way, philosophers and theologians should begin to speak of self-love by eradicating the term “self-love” entirely. He suggests that “it would be an important step towards semantic clarification if the term ‘self-love’ were completely removed and replaced by *self-affirmation*, *selfishness*, and *self-acceptance* according to the context.”¹³³ Proposing a radical rejection of self-love, Tillich leaves us with pragmatic advice on how to handle our talk of self-love. The nature of *love* is within an ontologically separate category from self-affirmation (as most Christian theologians conceptualize self-love), selfishness (as Kierkegaard, Scheler, and Rousseau call “negative,” “improper,” or “selfish” self-love), and self-acceptance (as many psychologists or counselors advise us all to achieve, perhaps via Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs”). Let us consider a phenomenology of self-love, bringing the concept into dialogue with recent phenomenological thinkers in order to uncover whether love directed toward the self is compatible with the nature of love.

A Radical Love of Self?

To further my rejection of a phenomenology of self-love, I draw upon a contemporary source of phenomenology in Jules Toner’s *Love and Friendship*. How can we experience “love” of ourselves in any real sense if we are both lover and beloved? How can we transcend ourselves in the

¹³² Ibid., 34.

¹³³ Ibid., 34, emphasis my own.

way necessary for self-love to be possible? Imagine the impossibility of actualizing the essential aspects of love, as directed toward oneself. Is it a tenable position that self-love is, in any way, comparable to love itself? I will revisit the key phenomenological aspects of love in order to defend my thesis that self-love is indeed a phenomenological impossibility.

My next point of inquiry is whether or not the element of unity can in the phenomenon of self-love. Can one phenomenologically unite with oneself? Can one make a gift *of* the self *to* the self? These two elements are integral to the accounts of love provided by the aforementioned thinkers. According to Toner, “the giving which is an act of radical love is a giving into, so that by it the gift is in the loved... for it is myself who am in the loved one by my love, not merely my possessions, or even my thoughts, my wit, my joy... It is I myself.¹³⁴ This brings the discussion back to the phenomenology of the gift in love. Here we find striking commonalities between both von Hildebrand and Marion’s account of love. Again, we see how love is not directed toward our possessions. Love recognizes the radically other self that is the beloved. Toner’s work furthers the personalist theme of loving the person qua person, rather than the accidents of the person. In addition, if love is a gift, it follows that it is a gift of the self, flowing from the loving core of the self: the heart. How is this giving aspect of love related to self-love? We are of course, self-reflective beings. But can this self-reflection begin to constitute a real sense of love for our own self? How can we move from a recognition of our self to a *love* of this self? We reach an impasse when we attempt to connect the unity of self-love with the unity of love between man and woman: “The lover wants to be in the beloved, to have the beloved in him, to interpenetrate with the other without loss of

¹³⁴ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 127.

either self.”¹³⁵ Can we actualize this intimate interpenetration with our self? Even if we can, would it be comparable to the interpenetration of lovers?

Furthermore, when we speak of Toner’s concept of “radical love,” we invoke the language of ontology, which presents a phenomenological account that is necessarily different than any phenomenon of love. For Toner, “radical love is not a tendency affection but a being affection by which I am in union with, am present with the loved one.”¹³⁶ Can we direct this “being affection” toward our own being? Can we form a unity with the self in the way that Toner describes as a presence with the loved one? I will bring into dialogue several voices of critique into the discussion to ground the theological and philosophical claims made by scholars both past and present in an attempt to better understand what is meant by a love of self.

Voices of Critique

What is the position of “the self” in our love of others? For Toner, “the self...is only actualized in loving others with a genuinely radical love, an affirmation of the other for the other’s own sake.”¹³⁷ While I disagree that the self is a necessarily other-oriented being—I hold that the self is both subject and object, the subject as immaterial *I* and the object as narrative *me*, regardless of its affirmation of others—the emphasis on the actualized self in love is a key point of discussion. Toner is correct in holding that “genuine” love is an affirmation of the beloved’s radical otherness for the other’s own sake. To bring into dialogue the language of many Christian theologians, it is common to establish a dichotomy between *eros* as loving the other for my own sake, and *agape* as

¹³⁵ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 123.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

loving the other for his or her own sake.¹³⁸ I will avoid speaking in these strict terms, as I feel it is a convoluted and problematic dichotomy. Of course, we can use *eros* in a purely descriptive sense, as an analogy; *agape* as a comparative term for our apprehension of the other's intrinsic value. Vacek explains this dichotomy as it relates to self-love with the following: "The first [agapic] is a direct love of self, the second [eros] is indirect. In the immediate object is something other than ourselves, which we love as a way of loving ourselves. With the first, we love ourselves for our own sake: agapic self-love. With the second, we love another for our own sake: eros."¹³⁹ This is an accessible way of considering the normative implications of self-love, prescribed by theologians of Nygren's tradition of thought. Although this is a beneficial attitude to hold—we ought to love ourselves for our own sake, and we ought to love others for their own sake—I do not think that this normative distinction accounts for a phenomenology of self-love. Vacek is merely espousing what Tillich words as an attitude of self-acceptance or self-affirmation. Of course: we ought to *value* ourselves in the way we would imagine God would. We ought to *affirm* the value of others in the way we would wish others to *affirm* our own value. This is an invocation of the classic "golden rule," the Kantian imperative that affirms the other's intrinsic value, and bars the treating of the other as a means to an end.

I am in line with von Hildebrand's thinking, as he moves away from the radical sort of distinction between the terms that many theologians (Anders Nygren, Christopher West) tend to pose, and also "wants to avoid a dichotomy of eros and agape."¹⁴⁰ In the conclusion of his chapter on *Caritas*, he reminds us that "an essential core of love qua love remains common to eros and

¹³⁸ Edward Collins Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 240.

¹³⁹ Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine*, 240.

¹⁴⁰ John F. Crosby, personal communication.

agape, in spite of their difference."¹⁴¹ The Christian critique of *eros*, most notably by Anders Nygren, is derived from the self-seeking nature of *eros*. Thus, all pseudo-loves would seem to originate in *eros*, and all (selfish, improper, prideful) self-love would also be *eros*. If *eros* indeed loves another for its own sake, it is not love at all. It would seem extraneous, then, to even need to attach any form of "agape" to love, for *eros* would cast out the meaning of genuine love entirely, and we would be left with love itself, without need for "agape" as a descriptor. It would seem obvious for self-love to be positive at all, it would need to rid itself of *eros* and only bother with expressions of agape. If self-love is a tenable position to hold at all, it would most naturally need to mirror the selfless love from God. In this way, "agape corrects for selfishness, which is ever ready to mask itself as healthy self-love.... When the problem is overweening pride, agape enables us to appreciate the value of others in and for themselves."¹⁴² This is, however, a problematic dichotomy to draw, as evidenced by the decades of books and articles dedicated to the Christian self-love debate. To begin his analysis of self-love in Christian ethics, Vacek suggests that "[s]ome scholars, as we have seen, reject self-love because, they say, love needs some separation to overcome. Indeed, it is not easy to see how we can act in a self-transcending way toward our own self. But we do perform this self-referential act."¹⁴³ Vacek draws upon the ideas of Karl Rahner in a defense of self-love's possibility. Rahner explains that "self-affirmation is not simply surrender to the instinctive drives of the 'struggle for existence,' but is based on an objective recognition of the value and dignity of the subject within reality as a whole and in relation to God. This God-given excellence is not loved

¹⁴¹ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 273.

¹⁴² Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine*, 241.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

simply because it is one's own, but because it *is* and is of value.”¹⁴⁴ This view of self-love as an affirmation of our own intrinsic value parallels von Hildebrand's idea of love as a value-response. Again, as discussed by Tillich, “self-affirmation” is *not* comparable to love itself. The argument that there is an ontological chasm between self-love and other-love still stands. While an *aspect* of the nature of love is present in what many theologians defend as self-love, the complexity of love is not comparable when we speak of the love of self. A higher-ordered self-love might be considered a response to the “God-given excellence” and an “objective recognition of value and dignity,” yet the element of *unity* present in the love between man and woman is radically different from unity we have with ourselves. We cannot *love* ourselves, but we can *affirm* ourselves in a way analogous and even identical to the way in which lovers affirm the value of the beloved.

We have the propensity to recognize the metaphysical beauty of ourselves, to cultivate the spiritual dimension of our being; we cannot, however, love ourselves in the way that lovers do, the way in which spouses love when affirmed in the marital vow. Self-love is, as Tillich explains, merely analogous. In his discussion on self-love, von Hildebrand speaks of it primarily in the sense of the impossibility for self-love to precede other-love. It is impossible, according to von Hildebrand, “to derive the love of other persons from the love of oneself.”¹⁴⁵ The idea that other-love can originate in one's love of self would be to reduce love to “the natural solidarity of a person with himself.”¹⁴⁶ The love that one has for another is of an ontologically different category than the self-love that philosophers tend to speak of. In his illustration of self-love and its normative categories, Scheler merely echoes the ambiguous claims of philosophers before him, without adequately justifying self-

¹⁴⁴ Karl Rahner, in Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine*, 241.

¹⁴⁵ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 365.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

love as a phenomenon subject to the same philosophical inquiry that both he and von Hildebrand subject other-love to. The next section will examine a criticism of self-love from a contemporary phenomenologist, Jean-Luc Marion. Beginning with a unique approach to his critique of self-love, Marion outlines “three absurdities” of self-love, arriving at its phenomenological impossibility.

The Impossibility of Self-love in Marion

In his book *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Jean-Luc Marion begins an inquiry into the nature of erotic love with a fundamental question “Does anyone out there love me?” From a query derived from the point of vanity, the one caught amid love’s contemplation moves from this egocentric question to an external impasse. Marion asserts that while a “love of self can indeed be proclaimed...[i]t cannot be performed.”¹⁴⁷ The contemporary French thinker replaces the Cartesian rationalism of the *ego cogito* with a new ontological outlook. He begins with a new ontology of the ego, the *ego amans*, concluding that *I love, therefore I am*.

In effect, no one is closer to one’s self than the reduced ‘me,’ absolutely immanent to the self, with an immanence rendered more tangible by the awful solitude that is provoked by the erotic reduction. In this solitude, I discover my self reduced to my purest self, melted into a new metal, a kernel of egoity so dense that no nuclear reaction could ever fissure it, or separate me from myself.¹⁴⁸

It is immediately clear that Marion takes a different approach to the self in its “awful” solitude. Here, Marion is presenting the *I* of the ego, the self that is inaccessible to others. It is not the “narrative” self, the self extended in time, with an external identity and social presence. Marion reduces the self to its simple ontological category of being, before he asks us: could this “strictly reduced

¹⁴⁷ Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 44.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

me...suffice to love me and thereby assure me of myself?"¹⁴⁹ Marion presents us with "at least three reasons for this absurdity"¹⁵⁰ that is a self-assurance derived from the love of self:

First, because if I had to love myself like an other than myself, it would be necessary for me to precede myself. Those who have loved me originally (in principle, my parents) could only do so because they preceded me and they loved me before I was even in a state to receive their love; loved without yet being.¹⁵¹

It is ontologically impossible to love oneself because we simply cannot precede our self, we cannot separate from our self in the way in which it is required of loving. Marion is not satisfied with man's ability to derive self-love from our own self. We must be loved first by another, a wholly other person outside of our own being. He continues to write, "thus, to love myself, I would have to go beyond myself, in order to respect the measure of love, which has none. I would demand of myself *an excess of myself over myself*. But who can add one cubit to his stature?"¹⁵² This "original" love, it would seem, can come from either our parents or God. For God indeed "loved without yet being," because he loves all beings before creation. Not only can we not love our self, but it would seem equally "absurd" to place any value of self-assurance on any other being except for God. For in God, the Being who came before all being, our self-assurance, self-love, and even our very sense of self would be most safe.

In an attempt to address the common explanation of self-love as possible out of the human capacity to self-reflect, Marion writes:

The concern is not that I (as transcendental *I*) think of myself (as empirical *me*); the concern is loving myself. Loving requires an exteriority that is not provisional but effective, an exteriority that remains for long enough that one may cross it seriously. Loving requires distance and the crossing of distance. Loving requires more than a feigned distance, or one

¹⁴⁹ Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 42.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 46.

that is not truly dug out or truly crossed. In the drama of love, actions must be accomplished effectively over distance—distributing, going, coming, returning.¹⁵³

Loving oneself is not reducible to self-reflection. I cannot as *I* think of *Me* and be considered “loving myself.” Marion defends the radical alterity of the lover that “requires an exteriority,” and a “crossing of distance.” Love is, then, an essentially interpersonal act. For, if we can “love” ourself, does that imply that we are two selves, that we can “divide” our self into both lover and beloved, object and subject? Marion further explains the importance of alterity in the loving act:

Without the distance of this elsewhere, no one would ever love me. Thus I cannot love myself—except by leading myself astray into the insane illusion of imagining myself as my own elsewhere. Thus, unable to precede myself, to exceed myself, or to cross the distance, I can neither think nor perform the formula ‘I love myself.’¹⁵⁴

This “distance” is another way of looking at love’s interpersonal nature as inherently mutual participation, as reciprocity. How can I reciprocate my own love for myself? Self-love, then, seems an ontological impossibility. Going further with his argument against the possibility of self-love, Marion tells us that we actually *hate* ourselves:

Thus all love that begins as a love of every man for himself (impossible) ends up, by self-hatred (actual), in the hatred of the other (necessary). If I claim to love myself or to make myself loved, in the end I hate, and make myself hated. Thus the assurance from out there remains inaccessible. Vanity in the end bears it away.¹⁵⁵

We become frustrated by our need of assurance “from elsewhere;” our lack of assurance in love leads to self-hatred. Marion asserts that all claims of self-love are false, and can only become a vain self-hatred. What is primary, for Marion, is the advance one makes towards the other. We cannot assure ourselves of our own love but we can know when we have initiated the love of another. At

¹⁵³ Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 46-47.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

best, we can be open to the gift of love in return, but our advance is not conditioned on a response, otherwise it would not be a free act of love.

Marion concludes—in alignment with both Scheler and von Hildebrand—that rather than viewing human beings as essentially thinking beings, they are more—humanity is composed of a totality of *loving* beings. He argues in opposition to the human ability to be self-loving. One begins in self-hatred, incapable of achieving a sense of self-love independent of the affirmation of the other. For Marion, in the phenomenon of the erotic “*the other loves me more than I hate myself.*” Loving oneself in his philosophy is a movement beyond initial self-hatred. One is not ontologically able to love oneself in a way comparable to the love we receive from another. Marion holds that our only hope for a love of self is derived from the love of another:

In the end, I love even myself, because the other lover, through her own advance, has made me a lover, and thus lovable in her eyes and, because I believed her, loveable in my own eyes... I wind up by loving even myself because I have believed, seen, and experienced that I too, even I, could play the lover... I believe what she tells me more than what I have ever told myself.¹⁵⁶

Even at this point, Marion merely proposes the possibility of “loving even oneself” in the sense that one recognizes the lovability in oneself. This love of self is the recognition of the self as lover, an attitude of belief that the advance is achievable, that we are worthy of an advance: we are lovable. Self-love, in this sense, appears as an attitude, a kind of self-assuredness that we receive from the beloved. It remains, however, entirely dissimilar from love in the general sense that I have been discussing throughout this thesis. There is room for this concept idea of self-love in von Hildebrand, for as long as self-love is not attributed as the grounds or motivation for other-love, a love of self remains a subtle possibility. Only through the love of another can we begin to love ourselves. The relevance of man as an *ego amans*—a loving being—which Marion espouses is the underlying

¹⁵⁶ Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 214.

significance of this essay. The distinction made in the prior discussion of loving oneself serves to ground the argument for apt theory and practice: proper grounds for self-love. There is a delicate normative distinction between “self-love” and “love of self” that is drawn by philosophers from Kierkegaard to Scheler. However, I argue that to remain phenomenologically accurate, in accordance with our account of love in the preceding sections, that “self-love” is an *impossible* phenomenon. If we replace, as Tillich suggests, this concept of “self-love” with affirmation or esteem where appropriate, we can escape the phenomenological absurdity of loving oneself.

Drawing the previous account of Marion into this discussion, it would seem absurd that the self can love itself in any conceivable way. Again, to echo the philosophy of Tillich, we can only speak of self-love as a metaphor. It is inconceivable to account for a phenomenology of self-love without invoking a metaphor. Self-love has no basis in reality. It is an attitude, an affirmation of value. But it is not a phenomenal act.

Love responds to the overall beauty of the person who is loved.

Dietrich von Hildebrand

Chapter Five: Dietrich von Hildebrand's Phenomenology of Love

In the first chapter of his work *The Nature of Love*, Dietrich von Hildebrand roots his theory of love on the claim that love “in the most proper and most immediate sense is love for *another* person.”¹⁵⁷ Von Hildebrand specifically isolates love as particular to human relations. This distinction also implies *intentionality*, that love is essentially *for another*, that is, it is directed toward another human person. A core aspect of von Hildebrand's philosophy is the *value-response*; these responses are “related to their object in a highly spiritual, rational, and meaningful way.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore, we can say that the act of *loving* presupposes a person; our involvement with this person affects us in a profoundly personal way.

Value Phenomenology

Let us now consider the concept of value phenomenology, as “love relates, in the first instance, to *what has value*, and to man only to the extent that he is endowed with value and capable of advancement in this respect. These acts and their laws can be investigated by means of a phenomenological reduction.”¹⁵⁹ Both von Hildebrand and Scheler presuppose that love is just one of the many acts comprising the value-laden world around us, to which we react in a value-responding way. This response is an emotion, for example, of “joy in response to the beauty of a piece of great music or sadness over significant personal loss.”¹⁶⁰ These two examples of values

¹⁵⁷ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 15.

¹⁵⁸ Judith Stewart Shank, “Von Hildebrand's Theory of the Affective Value Response,” 155.

¹⁵⁹ Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 155.

¹⁶⁰ John Henry Crosby, “Mozart,” 176.

both material and immaterial will be explored later in this chapter, in connection with the morality of beauty as I will examine how affective responses to moral value and disvalue can elicit both reverence and disgust, respectively. Von Hildebrand's theory of "value phenomenology also lies at the base of his untiring defense of beauty as a genuine and objective value."¹⁶¹ Such events, from beholding the beauty of a great work of art, to witnessing the moral disgust of a crime against an innocent person elicit a profound response in persons because of their capacity to move us affectively. These responses "are either appropriate or inappropriate, and it is part of our moral vocation that we form our affections in the light of truth."¹⁶² Because the value-response is an affective intentional act, we find a "deep, meaningful, and intelligible relationship between the act and its object."¹⁶³ We respond to the value of different categories of objects, from "the beauty of noble music or the nobility of a moral act,"¹⁶⁴ to the beauty of a virtuous person or the beauty of our beloved. It is within the nature of human persons to be receptive to value to a certain degree:

Some people have a greater capacity than others to be affected by values, a greater capacity for ardor and awakedness in their responses to values. Their overall relation to the world of values, to the important in itself, to all that contains a message from above, is deeper, more alert, more intensive, more ardent.¹⁶⁵

It will become clear in this work that von Hildebrand and Scheler are value-realists *par excellence* in their phenomenological revelation of the world of values. It is through love that we gain the most intimate access to this value affectivity. Love—the most profound response to value in which humans can partake—discloses the world to us in the most personal way. Where does this revelation of value begin? Let us begin with attraction, the nascent stage of the phenomenology of love.

¹⁶¹ John Henry Crosby, "Mozart," 175.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁶³ Shank, "Von Hildebrand's Theory of the Affective Value Response," 155.

¹⁶⁴ Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 208.

¹⁶⁵ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 63.

Attraction and Attachment

Von Hildebrand further differentiates love from the common analogy of “being attached,” a comparison prevalent in the sciences. A common model for “love” in disciplines such as psychology is describing it in terms of an “attraction-attachment” model. Humans are initially attracted to another, whether incited by a physical, emotional, or intellectual interest. This attraction, however, is more often reduced to a sexual desire in some way. A refinement of our conception of what “attraction” is can be gleaned from philosophers of the personalist tradition. Karol Wojtyła devotes a section to his text *Love and Responsibility* to the role of attraction in love. His thesis is captured in this phrase: “*attraction is of the essence of love and in some sense is indeed love, although love is not merely attraction.*”¹⁶⁶ Rather than placing sex at the basis of attraction between man and woman, Wojtyła suggests that this sexual urge “insists on being raised to the personal level.”¹⁶⁷ For our attraction as human persons is not *purely* carnal, but emotional, psychological, and spiritual as well. Ergo, our attraction for others rests on our apprehension of the beloved as a *person*. This founds his position on a view of attraction that “does not possess a *purely* cognitive structure.”¹⁶⁸ Our attraction for another need not be considered one-dimensionally, as most traditions tend to speak of human attraction. We are not directed solely by our sexual drive, and we rarely operate with a purely rational decision regarding the object of our attraction.

This anti-reductionist theme that we have explored earlier in the philosophy of von Hildebrand is also present in the work of Wojtyła. Reductionist thinkers tend to place a singular focus on one element of attraction. For Wojtyła, “we must recognize that not only extra-intellectual

¹⁶⁶ Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 76.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

but extra-cognitive factors, namely the emotions and the will, are involved in that cognitive commitment which has the character of attraction.”¹⁶⁹ This point exemplifies our theme that love involves more than a passive feeling of the lower affective sphere; it involves elements of both heart and will. It is a higher, spiritual emotion sanctioned by the will.

The element of attraction in our love of others possesses no shallow commitment for personalist philosophers. Wojtyla holds that the attraction of human persons is oriented toward the good. That attraction retains a theme of importance points to the value Wojtyla and others attribute to individuals: “For every human person is an indescribably complex and, so to speak, uneven good.”¹⁷⁰ Therefore, it would be most accurate to consider attraction on the basis of more than just fleeting feeling or carnal fulfillment. Attraction, the prelude to the overture of love, possesses both an intellectual and affective component. Our ordinary human experience is comprised of both intellectual and emotional experiences. Wojtyla is careful to point out the affective importance of this prelude:

The emotions are present at the birth of love because they favour the development of a mutual attraction between man and woman. Man’s emotions are in general not oriented towards intellectual knowledge but towards experience in a broader sense. This natural tendency expresses itself in an emotional-affective reaction to the good.¹⁷¹

Our knowledge of the beloved does not simply increase in a general sense, but in a way specific to a couple in love. The self that is disclosed in love is radically different from the self that is disclosed in the public eye. For most, in the sphere of love, a rare glimpse into the inner self is reserved for those in the special loving relationship. This epistemology of the heart, our knowledge of love presents us:

¹⁶⁹ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 65.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

A certain way of disclosing a person's intimate being and the beauty that the person takes on by loving—goes far beyond all of this. It is a knowledge of the loving person that is only granted to the one to whom his or her love is addressed. It is a deeper and more intimate level that arises in the one who loves when he discloses himself to the beloved person.¹⁷²

Many can attest to the experience of a new “love world” that emerges from two persons in love; not only does the experience of the world around them change, but the experience of each other, and of themselves is profoundly altered by this love.¹⁷³ This idea is explicitly conceptualized in von Hildebrand's work, and how we “dwell” in the world of our love:

However conscientiously we may be attending to an outward task, we remain *in the world of* the beloved one. Our love of that person, not the activity of the moment, colors the atmosphere in which our soul is moving. At every moment it is present to our mind (however discreetly) that what we are just *doing* is not the real thing that fills and guides us; that we are not centered in this petty, peripheral section of our life but continue dwelling in the depth.¹⁷⁴

Here we find the profundity of love's affect. Love is not a mere happening-to, as I have said, it is much more. Love is a happening-with, a mutual indwelling, a shared being-in-the-world. Our love “colors our atmosphere,” our relations with others, even our relation to philosophy. This is what von Hildebrand refers to as a superactual response, a concept which we will explore further on. Perhaps we are led to a new “awakened” view, a new insight into reality that we were not open to before. It has been said that some of the most paradigm-altering scientific discoveries have been arrived at through creative imagination. Love plays a definite part in our creativity—we may write, paint, think under its influence. Not only can love inhabit our participation in the world of values, in our philosophical achievements, but it can affect our ethical life. I will discuss later the correlation

¹⁷² Von Hildebrand, *Nature of Love*, 234.

¹⁷³ This concept of the “love world” is referenced in Robert Solomon's *About Love*, as well as the memoir *A Severe Mercy*, by Sheldon Vanauken. These philosophical and testimonial pieces provide a broader insight on this concept.

¹⁷⁴ Von Hildebrand, *Nature of Love*, 234.

between love and virtue, for “[t]he higher the realm of value, the more sublime the response of love.”¹⁷⁵

Furthermore, the effect of love resonates in our every human activity, whether *prima facie* visible or hidden to the cursory glance. Love is a great example of a “superior motif resounding in the background, while the foreground is filled by peripheral interests.” He explains how

A great love, for instance, which inspires our heart and lends wings to our whole existence, is likely to resound with its melody throughout our external occupations; it never allows our soul to be dulled by the wear and tear of our daily routine, nor silences the voice of our deeper personality.¹⁷⁶

Perhaps we are not fully cognizant of the permeating effect of love in our everyday lives. It may take the loss, however transitory, for us to truly recognize its fruits.

When von Hildebrand writes of this great liberation of love, he writes in the specific context of love’s requital as the source of happiness in love. Our attraction can lead us to

union, the interchange of looks that expresses love. On the one hand, there is the full duality of I and Thou, the clear difference between them, the full consciousness of the Thou of the beloved person and his unique individuality; on the other hand, there is the ultimate unity that can only be granted by the interchange of looks that expresses love and by the mutual sharing in the being of each other.¹⁷⁷

Our love for another is far deeper than the “attraction/attachment” account given by psychologists.

Love cannot adequately be explained as a mere “attachment” to another person. For von

Hildebrand, this idea of attachment can be attributed to material or inhuman things: we can be

“attached” to money or clothing, but not to other humans. He cites the examples of humans who

are unhealthily attached to objects, and how this excessive attachment can be mistaken for love:

“The heavy drinker does not love alcohol; the greedy man does not love money. They are no doubt

¹⁷⁵ Von Hildebrand, *Nature of Love*, 62

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Von Hildebrand, *Nature of Love*, 234.

attached to these things and are under the power of them; these things have an indescribable attractive power for such people.”¹⁷⁸ Although von Hildebrand does not deny the element of attachment that is often found in love, he separates human attachment in the love of the other distinctly from the excessive material attachment of objects.

An example of this clear distinction between attachment between human subject and material object is given by von Hildebrand with reference to a warm bath. The pleasure that arises from something considered “merely agreeable” is of a different kind than the response to value. While beautiful music and human beings are considered “objective goods which are delightful on the basis of their value,”¹⁷⁹ objects that satisfy vital needs like comfort and fulfill us with mere pleasure do not warrant a value-response.

When we fall in love, many of us find an unusual degree of attachment to the beloved. We find our thoughts and our actions changing to encompass both the thought and action of the beloved. We begin to incorporate the other into our sort of life-world: the way in which we approach the world, objects, and other people begins to change. And while we may place an unusually higher stake in the opinion, thought, and feeling of the beloved, our consideration of them that is sparked by a newfound love *is not merely* due to a so-called “attachment” to the other. Although our actions toward the beginning of a romantic relationship may signify a higher-than-average sense of attachment to the other person, love cannot be reduced to this attitude. Although it can be said that when one “falls in love,” as it is inferred from many psychological or neurological studies, that one becomes “intoxicated” with his love of the other, the *real phenomenon of love* is of a higher emotional order than mere pleasure or appetitive response to the beloved.

¹⁷⁸ Von Hildebrand, *Nature of Love*, 15.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

Irreducibility of the Other

When we limit our understanding of love to its purely biological aspect that cannot be denied, as it is evidenced throughout the sciences—we limit the appreciation of the “awakened” reality of love. To further a point I made in an earlier section, phenomenology allows for a proper account of love due in part to its non-reductionistic approach to the nature of reality. We are indeed “indescribably complex” beings, irreducible to any particularity. An account of love that emphasizes—as von Hildebrand aptly does—the thematicity of the beloved as the intent of the value-response does justice to not only the complexity of the human person, but to the complexity of love itself.

This is why, as von Hildebrand and Crosby plainly state throughout their work, we are unable to provide “reasons” for our love. We cannot reduce our “attraction” to the “accidents” of persons. In other words, there is an “ineffability of the value-essence of the beloved person.”¹⁸⁰ One cannot possibly put into words precisely that which we love about the other. Love is “*essentially* inexhaustible... [and] *essentially* indescribable,”¹⁸¹ as Kierkegaard writes. This inability to reduce love to its component parts is a personalist idea underpinning the entirety of this work. We do not love any singular characteristic of the beloved, whether the characteristic is material (wealth or success) or immaterial (intelligence or amiability). As John Henry Crosby explains:

The principle of the thematicity...is also revelatory of the deeply phenomenological spirit of von Hildebrand’s thought, for in phenomenology there is a deep and conscious resistance to anything that smacks of reductionism. Indeed one might say that the opposition to the reductive spirit is a phenomenological leitmotif. Phenomenology wants things to be what they are, whatever they may be, however desirable or undesirable this may be.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ John F. Crosby, “A Question About Marion’s ‘Principle of Insufficient Reason,’” 249.

¹⁸¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 5.

¹⁸² John Henry Crosby, “Mozart,” 182.

The complexity of human experience, radically antithetical to the “reductive spirit” is indeed a phenomenological leitmotif. Rather than impressing our ideas upon reality—in this case, love—the phenomenologist allows the object to impress its reality upon us. To “explain” love in terms of our particular world-view is to impress our subjective interpretation upon it.

In this way, phenomenologists allow for an “exegetical reading” of reality. It is an approach to love with a full awareness of our subjectivity, allowing it to be what it is. The phenomenologist appropriately recognizes when he is being subjective in the *negative* sense—in the case of a jaundiced value-judgment in accordance with a non-philosophical, unfounded presupposition—and when he is being *appropriately* subjective, in the positive sense, when personal insight into the nature of the reality of the object of perception is actually a glimpse of truth into the nature of the other. Von Hildebrand’s “genius for ‘letting things be’ is especially appropriate when the realities in question are the ‘great things’—the all-encompassing laws of metaphysics, the great expanse of moral good and evil, the reality of the sacred.”¹⁸³ An example of an inappropriate response to objects is aestheticism, what von Hildebrand often refers to as a shallow sense of value and beauty that stands in the way of an accurate apprehension of realities. He holds a deep aversion to “an aestheticism that, for one reason or another, refuses to recognize the intrinsic and interior bond that binds together the realm of beauty with that of all other objective values (and, conversely, ugliness with all forms of disvalue), and in particular with the reality of the sacred.”¹⁸⁴ In both Scheler and von Hildebrand’s life and philosophy, one can find a deep sense of the sacred, a reverence for the objectivity of value, and an assertion of the objective value-laden reality.

¹⁸³ John Henry Crosby, “Mozart,” 182.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

Both thinkers take it as a given that the phenomenological approach to reality is a moral one. Man's place in nature is at once both animal and spiritual, both carnal and moral. In love, the two meet. Modern science takes the former for truth and the latter for mystical untruth. It reduces the complexity of human nature (denying, of course, that we are in fact human persons) to a conglomeration of body parts, of cells with a particular function in the material world. We are no more than the sum of our parts. The phenomenology that we encounter here accounts for both aspects of man. It does not pretend that man is not animal, nor does it pretend that we live without spiritual presence. How do we love when we love another, if the human person is irreducible? Considering our prior claim, that the self is both subject and object existing simultaneously, we love the other profoundly, "from the lover's most personal self, with sincerity, intensity, endurance."¹⁸⁵ It is from our mysterious center, from a place of love that Kierkegaard, Marion, von Hildebrand and Scheler would consider the origin of our affectivity: the heart. Here a parallel may be immediately drawn between Scheler's "primary source" and Kierkegaard's source of love that is the secret nourishment of everything. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard alludes to the source of love within man:

Where does love come from, where does it have its origin and its source, where is the place it has its abode from which I flows? Yes, this place is hidden or is secret. There is a place in a person's innermost being; from this place flows the life of love... But you cannot see this place; however deeply you penetrate, the origin eludes you in remoteness and hiddenness.¹⁸⁶

Perhaps in describing this "hidden...secret" source, he alludes to the "innermost being" of the heart. Although, for Kierkegaard, its origins may seem mysterious, this study will illuminate the nature of love, and how it affects our lives, from our apprehension of objects in the world to our understanding of other. It is from our hearts that we can "affectively affirm this unique person in a

¹⁸⁵ Jules J. Toner, *Love and Friendship*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003), 160.

¹⁸⁶ Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 8-9.

response informed by full, detailed, knowledge which catches the delicate shadings of his profoundest attitudes, moods, likes and dislikes, ideals, fears, hopes....”¹⁸⁷ This notion of an “informed” response foreshadows a later discussion of the interplay between love and knowledge in Chapter Six. Although a specified amount of knowledge is not required in order to love another, our response inevitably becomes an informed one, for it is our love, our desire to love and be loved that leads us to come to know the other. As Scheler might add, *eros* inspires us to step outside of ourselves in order to apprehend the other as a unique, radical other worthy of our love.

Subjectivity and Objectivity in Love

Another way of considering the content of “value” in our response to it lies in von Hildebrand’s proposed difference between that which is *subjectively* satisfying and that which is *objectively* satisfying. This is directly correlative of our previous discussion regarding the difference between appropriate and inappropriate subjectivity in philosophy. The former arises out of our subjective interpretation of value, or that which is valuable to me in a purely subjective way—*the other is valuable because I deem them to be*. The latter arises out of a genuine response to an encounter with an object that possesses an objective value or that which is valuable apart from my subjective like or dislike of it—*the other is valuable because he/she possesses value intrinsically*. While the former value is subject to one’s unique taste, the latter value retains its status regardless of subjective interpretation.¹⁸⁸ We may not all agree on the value of chocolate; for some it provides the benefit of health, for others the benefit of pleasure, and for a small minority, no benefit at all. In alignment

¹⁸⁷ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 160.

¹⁸⁸ In placing the term “subjective” human experience here in contrast with “objective” moral value, I do not intend to imply that human subjectivity demeans the reality of objective value. On the contrary: von Hildebrand argues that it is precisely our human subjectivity that enables us to uniquely perceive and respond to the moral values that we encounter in the world. Our subjectivity is wholly necessary for participation in the realm of objective values. Each of us is uniquely attuned to the stratum of values in the world through our personal experience of it. Thus, a “value-blind” person is either unaware of this value-laden reality, or unwilling to acknowledge or participate in it.

with Aristotle's third category of friendship, von Hildebrand argues that love, like friendship, "is only possible when it is embedded in the good, because only then are we interested in the other person as person; this throws clearly into relief the fact that love is a value-response."¹⁸⁹ Neither love nor "true" friendship arises out of utility. A person can care about another so long as they provide a service of use, or some aspect of their personality is deemed of use to the other—this is not a friendship of love.

Now that we have considered love's many aspects, what more can we draw from a phenomenology of love? I shall discuss the knowledge of the affective sphere—a sort of epistemology of the heart—in order to account more fully for the multi-faceted nature of love.

¹⁸⁹ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 17.

It is possible to love more than we know.

Fulton Sheen

Chapter Six: Love's Knowledge

One of the most difficult debates within the philosophy of love arises when we ask: *Does love precede knowledge, or does knowledge precede love?* Many are left without a satisfactory answer. I will address the handling of the topic by our phenomenologists of love. How can we properly found or direct our love if we have no adequate content, no knowledge of the object at which our love is directed? An “epistemology of the heart” will reveal that “at the beginning, knowledge is the condition of love, in its latter stages love can increase knowledge.”¹⁹⁰ This section will serve to illustrate how our knowledge can inspire and intensify our love. While our perceptual knowledge of the other by way of a cognitive intention may initially serve us in grasping the object of our love, the heart leads us knowledge “deeper than any spoken word, or any scientific investigation; it is knowledge that comes from love, a kind of intuitional perception of what is in the mind and the heart of the other.”¹⁹¹

In his book *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Jean-Luc Marion provides an explicit answer to the question of love's knowledge:

Knowledge does not make love possible, because knowledge flows from love. The lover makes visible what she loves and, without this love, nothing would appear to her. Thus, strictly speaking, the lover does not know what she loves—except insofar as she loves it.¹⁹²

For Marion, love is the guiding light of knowledge. In the pure sense of *eros*, the lover is wrought to desire knowledge of the other *through* her love of the other. We do not know to love; on the contrary, our loving precedes all knowledge. This is problematic, as how can we know if we are properly loving, or whom we are loving, without a base level of knowledge of the other?

¹⁹⁰ Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, 16.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 87.

Two serious problems may arise if we begin to love the other without any knowledge of the heart. We may displace genuine love with forms of pseudo-love, namely, idealization and lust. Examples of characters who illustrate the “love” of idealization include Masoch’s Severin of *Venus in Furs*,¹⁹³ Kierkegaard’s Johannes the Seducer in *Either/Or*¹⁹⁴ and Stendhal’s discussion of “crystallization” in his work *On Love*.¹⁹⁵ These men prefer to remain in a “cloud of unknowing,” prefer to keep the objects of their affection in the same haze as the lustful seducer, Don Juan and Johannes the Seducer. Genuine lovers approach the beloved with a love of truth, in the same way the phenomenologist approaches Reality.¹⁹⁶

John F. Crosby critiques this view in his article, “A Question about Marion’s ‘Principle of Insufficient Reason.’” In his essay, Crosby initially points out the problematic concept of insufficient reason, as it ignores a fundamental reality of the experience of beauty in the phenomenology of love. For Crosby, “Marion seems to exclude from his account of love this engendering power of the beauty glimpsed by the lover in the beloved person, for he wants love to precede all that one apprehends in the beloved person, and to bring it to light for the first time.”¹⁹⁷ Even Plato writes in his *Symposium* on the transformative power of beauty when we behold the other. On this point, we might recall Diotima’s speech on the ascent of love that moves from the physical or temporal desire

¹⁹³ Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

¹⁹⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).

¹⁹⁵ Stendhal, *On Love* (Mount Vernon, N.Y.: Peter Pauper Press, 1950).

¹⁹⁶ All forms of pseudo-love represent a fundamentally anti-phenomenological attitude. This approach to love embodied in the characters of the idealizing and lustful lover is counterintuitive to the task of philosophy. They represent an anti-personalist attitude, preferring to love objects rather than subjects. The object of their love, untainted by genuine or even adequate knowledge, remains a figment of imagination, an object of desire. Therefore, one cannot claim to be a philosopher—a lover of truth—and yet in love prefer to remain in the dark, in the shadow of wisdom. This is essential blindness to the reality of the beloved. Such people do not “love” reality, and have not yet been awakened to reality in love in the sense that von Hildebrand speaks of throughout this work. Instead, they choose to propagate the created world (unreality) of idealization. They live, scripturally, in the darkness, rather than in the light of truth.

¹⁹⁷ John F. Crosby, “A Question about Marion’s ‘Principle of Insufficient Reason,’” in *Quaestiones Disputate: Selected Papers on the Thought of Jean-Luc Marion*, vol. 1, No. 1., ed. John R. White (Fall 2010): 245.

for the beauty of another person to the metaphysical or eternal desire for Beauty in its transcendent form. We are at first moved by the visible aesthetic beauty of the beloved as we view the other “from without.” However, our love moves us beyond this shallow dimension toward the invisible depth-dimension of beauty, to apprehend the other “from within.” Only when our desire moves us to seek the inner source of beauty do we discover the metaphysical beauty of the beloved which, as Diotima teaches us, is superior to beauty that is purely physical. Both Crosby and Marion embrace this interrelation between love and beauty. Marion speaks of an “objective” way of viewing the other in an “act of me ‘sizing up’ a person’s qualities,”¹⁹⁸ which misleads the lover in the same way that a strict sight of the other “from without” lacks a full apprehension of the beloved’s beauty. According to Crosby:

This “objective” way of looking cannot lead me to love this person. For this kind of looking at another that yields only an object, a composite of qualities, and not a beloved person. It is not difficult to understand that it takes a loving way of looking at another in order to catch sight of the beauty of the person. This means that love does indeed in some sense precede and make possible the appearance of the other as beautiful and loveable.¹⁹⁹

So what does Crosby propose is the proper relation between love and knowledge? He proposes that Marion’s Principle of Insufficient Reason “captures only part of the truth about knowledge and love as they exist in the one who initiates love.”²⁰⁰ The natural answer from the phenomenological perspective is that both love and knowledge are in an interplay in the response to the other. We equally love to know as we know to love. Can not the mind and the heart be one? Is there not some intimate relation between the two, an inevitable “bridge,” so to speak, between the faculties? In fact,

¹⁹⁸ Crosby, “A Question about Marion,” 246.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Scheler points to the influence of love over knowledge, claiming that “love is what awakens both knowledge and willing; it is the mother of both spirit and reason.”²⁰¹

In the phenomenon of love, there is no clear-cut progression either from love to knowledge or from knowledge to love. The most accurate answer is provided by Crosby, in that “one would think that the relation between love and knowledge would be a mutual relation, with the power of love to disclose the beauty of the beloved person being only the beginning of the relation.”²⁰² In attempting to pinpoint the phenomenological priority—whether it is love or knowledge—the lover would be, it seems, unable to definitively prove whether love arose before knowledge, as they are deeply interwoven in the experience of love. It almost seems absurd that one would love before one would have any knowledge of *what* one loves. In loving with adequate knowledge, we approach the other with emotional maturity. Since our discussion of love is driven by the presupposition that love is intentional, would it make sense to say that we naturally do not know the content of our love? If love involves an element of the will, can our will have no comprehension of its direction? Certainly not, for the act of love “is rather entirely opposed to the arbitrary.”²⁰³ These problems are addressed by Crosby in the simple conclusion that “the priority of love over knowledge would seem quickly to yield to a certain priority of knowledge over love.”²⁰⁴ Love is an irreducible dialectic between knowledge and spontaneous loving; we cannot clearly distinguish the root of our love as springing from primarily our cognitive or affective experience.

²⁰¹ Biefeld, “Max Scheler,” 213.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 65.

²⁰⁴ Crosby, 246.

The Morality of Love

As I have outlined before in the section on love as a value-response, the powerful effect of love is undeniable, as it brings the other to full thematicity, and alters the lover's perception of both the beloved and the world itself. Von Hildebrand refers to a response to the fullness of the other's person. In love, the person becomes "fully thematic," which means that "the value responded to is the primary theme and not the relation to other goods."²⁰⁵ The lover's apprehension of reality is profoundly altered for the better, and a new vision is revealed. Von Hildebrand writes:

In every intense and complete love a person undergoes a certain awakening. I begin to live more authentically; a new dimension in my personal existence discloses itself and I am liberated from the captivity of habits, from the bonds of convention, from dependence on the opinions of others, from the social image I have of myself.²⁰⁶

Often considered negative for its "blinding" effect on the person, love can effectively *open* the eyes of the lover to a new way of seeing and a new way of being through the experience of loving another. This awakening, far from hindering the lover in his or her ability to act, or inhibiting the lover to become, serves as a fertile ground for fully recognizing the idea of the human person, and acting in accordance with this ethic, "for it is only when the other loves me that I discover entirely new aspects and treasures of his being. With some persons the difference between loving and not loving is so great that we are tempted to say that we do not really know them at all until they disclose themselves in love."²⁰⁷ We cannot know a person to the fullest extent of our ability without love's knowledge. This leads us to the question of the relation between knowing and loving. Do we know to love, or do we love to know? Which comes first?

²⁰⁵ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 349.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 312.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

The Metaphysical Beauty of Love

Beauty is a major theme in von Hildebrand's philosophy of love. While he by no means posits beauty as *the* theme of love—value is, in fact, what von Hildebrand considers the theme of love—the apprehension of beauty is an essential element of our human experience of love.²⁰⁸ Von Hildebrand explains the intrinsic connection between our apprehension of the lover's beauty, and “why beauty plays such a fundamental role in love.”²⁰⁹ This piece elaborates upon themes found in *The Nature of Love*; von Hildebrand dedicated the second chapter of *Aesthetics* to outlining “the quasi-sacramental function of the visible and audible,”²¹⁰ an idea that John F. and John Henry Crosby translates as “metaphysical beauty” [*Sinnesbonenheit*]. He introduces his study with a word on the importance of spiritual beauty in Plato:

This beauty is also expressed in the very important Greek word *kalo-kagathon* (the beautiful, the good, the perfect). In Plato and Plotinus, the superiority of the beauty of spiritual things to the beauty of the visible and the audible is emphasized, although both philosophers explicitly acknowledge the latter in its value (especially Plotinus in the ninth *Ennead*).²¹¹

As regards the connection between love and beauty, von Hildebrand proposes that “Love responds to the overall beauty of the person who is loved.”²¹² He continues to explain:

It is characteristic even of a purely natural love for a person, which is always love for the person as a whole, that it is a value-response to the beloved person's overall beauty,²¹³ which also contains the reflection of all moral and spiritual values. How profound and

²⁰⁸ On the topic of the “thematicity,” von Hildebrand tells us in a footnote to the section *The family of the artistic-creative personal values* that “In the gift of the philosopher, the theme is not beauty, but truth.” It would perhaps seem fair to equate “theme” with the philosophical term *telos*—that which we consider thematic in a vocation we also consider its goal. In three examples of the philosopher, the artist, and the lover, we may consider the theme to be truth, beauty, and value, respectively.

²⁰⁹ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics* (forthcoming), trans. John F. Crosby.

²¹⁰ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The New Tower of Babel* (Manchester, N.H.: Sophia Institute Press), 157-175.

²¹¹ Von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Cf. von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, ch. 1.

significant it is when Tristan, in his vision in the third act of *Tristan und Isolde*, cries out the ultimate word that sums up everything, the deepest word of love: “Isolde, how beautiful you are!”

The theme of personalism is abundantly clear in this excerpt. What can a lover say when another asks: “Why do you love him?” Many lovers are left cold, speechless at the request to adequately put into words such a profound emotion. In love, we do not respond to merely “aesthetic particulars.” We are not moved by *his face*, we do not respond to *her eyes*. The apprehension of beauty in love is a response to the whole person. While it is clear that the particulars of the beloved may in fact be aesthetically pleasing, when we speak of “metaphysical beauty” [*Sinnesbonenheit*], we are speaking of a certain form of beauty that is beyond the visible and audible, in von Hildebrand’s words. This is the type of beauty that one cannot perceive with the eyes or ears: we can be blind to the world, and still “see” the metaphysical beauty of another.

Let us return for a moment to the theme of the irreducibility of the intentional act, in this case, the value-response that is love. When asked to capture the essence of one’s love for another person in the form of “reasons for love,” lovers are often rendered speechless. The irreducibility of beauty found in personalist thought is seen in “[t]he inability to indicate the reasons for loving someone.”²¹⁴ The ineffable experience of love “only serves to point out the deeper and more individual value datum that we call the ‘overall beauty’ [*Gestamtschonheit*] of a person.”²¹⁵ The ineffability of our love is not a sign of a *lack* of love, or an unfounded, irrational love of another. Quite the contrary: our love is as complex as the human person; to attempt to reduce it to a quality or a set of qualities is a disservice to the “essentially indescribable, inexhaustible” topic of love. If we attempt to attribute our love for another to, say, the beloved’s agility with words, once we find another person with a more developed poetic art, are we then justified in “leveling up” in our love?

²¹⁴ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 22.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Is it inevitable for us to fall in love with the better wordsmith, seeing as our love is founded upon our penchant for writers? Of course, the answer is no. This would betray the value-response to the beloved as a unique *person*. In the face of silence, “[w]e should not doubt that love is a value-response simply because when asked why we love someone we cannot indicate the value qualities that motivate our love.”²¹⁶ We do not love an amalgamation of a person’s characteristics; we love the person as a primary subject, irreducible to the particulars.

There is an intimate relation between metaphysical beauty of the beloved and the theme of the value-response. To recognize the metaphysical beauty of the beloved is to address the subject’s being, to respond to the value of the beloved’s overall being. In *The Art of Living*, a work co-written by his wife Alice, von Hildebrand specifically addresses this lack of reverence for the metaphysical aspect of man. In a critique of the lack of reverence many exhibit—another example of seeing “from without”—von Hildebrand asks, “how little attention is paid to the person’s *being*, his kindness, generosity, humility, patience?”²¹⁷ This theme of personal love—love for another person *qua* person—is exemplified in this excerpt from the aforementioned work:

We are led to believe that success in life lies primarily in our being able to bring *credentials*, and yet, who would dream of saying to another person: “I love you because you are the most efficient secretary I have met in my life,” or because “you are the teacher who best organizes the material.” Love is not concerned with a person’s accomplishments, it is a response to a person’s *being*: this is why a typical word of love is to say: I love you, because you are as you are.²¹⁸

This is an example of personal love *par excellence*. Love is recognizing the beloved for himself, his intrinsic worth, his radical otherness. Perhaps von Hildebrand’s phenomenological “genius for

²¹⁶ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 22.

²¹⁷ Von Hildebrand, *The Art of Living*, 59.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

letting things be” ought to be applied to our approach of loving others. Perhaps the phenomenological attitude itself can lead to a more profound love, a deeper understanding of the other. Phenomenology uncovers things as they are; personal love loves “because you are as you are.”

Beauty and Morality

There is a profound interconnection between the morality of love and beauty. Von Hildebrand often equates love with the recognition of the intrinsic, the “metaphysical” beauty of another. The influence of virtue on beauty is a topic of much discussion in the works of von Hildebrand. The beauty of another person’s moral value “demands a value-response; and this is equally true of the ugliness of the moral disvalue.”²¹⁹ His work outlines the theory behind a “spiritual beauty” that can be found in particular in the splendor of religious works of art. It is not something purely or simply aesthetic; it is a beauty that resonates beyond the merely visible or audible. Love engenders this metaphysical beauty in the beloved:

Suppose we know someone who has never really loved and suddenly is seized by a great and deep love. Even in this case we can clearly see how much more beautiful he becomes, how liberated from the chains of comfort and routine, how much greater he becomes, how much less mediocre, how much more humble, more heroic.²²⁰

Not only does love augment knowledge of the beloved, it augments the beloved himself. This leads to the uncovering, or the growth of our response to the metaphysical beauty of the beloved.

Often the source of heightened creative imagination, love has the power to draw a person beyond that which he would normally be capable of achieving. It is the power in life that inspires transcendence, leading man to experience the sacred, and seek a reality that is beyond “the bonds of convention,” beyond the limits of what he formerly thought possible. In escaping the limitations of

²¹⁹ Von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*.

²²⁰ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 234.

the self, or at least seeking to move beyond them, love leads man to seek his “true self,” to seek a self that reaches a depth or magnitude that aspires to the heights of his love; this “true self breaks through in love; by loving and giving myself in love I am able to receive as a gift my better and more authentic self.”²²¹ Von Hildebrand then ties in *beauty* with *morality*, such that love is an act that creates a sense of the beautiful:

By loving I become more beautiful, and this precisely through the special commitment and self-gift which is proper to love, and also through a certain humility. In loving, I grow in humility because love is a gift and because I experience myself being “seized” by something that is greater than myself. Before I had relied on my own strength... but now all of this collapses when I love.²²²

The idea that there is a fundamental connection between morality and beauty is a common theme in the work of von Hildebrand. This point made by von Hildebrand also points to the “economy” of love. In giving our self in love to another, we do not “lose” a part of ourselves in the exchange; rather, we become augmented by our love, by our very giving of self. This is why, when giving up our autonomy in love, we do not “lose” strength; we begin to find our strength in another. This points to the ultimate theme among the personalists in love, the theme of the “gift of self.” This gift, when bestowed properly, does not detract from our “supply” of love. When we allow our self—and what we may consider our ego-boundary,²²³ we begin to grow in love. Only through humility—one of both Scheler and von Hildebrand’s fundamental moral attitudes—can we begin to *truly* love another.

As regards the recurring notion of the fundamental attitude requisite of the lover, there are two basic elements that are requisite:

²²¹ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 313.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ See M. Scott Peck’s chapter on love in *The Road Less Traveled*. Thomas Merton writes extensively on the ego and its barriers to pure love in much of his work, namely in *Disputed Questions* and *Love and Living*.

The attitude of love implies, as we know, two basic elements: *the intention of union (intentio unionis)* and *the intention of well-wishing (intentio benevolentiae)*. In addition to these, there are many other elements to be found in love: the tone of inner suavility, the elements of fervor and audacity, and the act of a heroic self-abandonment.²²⁴

Quite common in Christian conceptions of love is the idea that union and benevolence (willing the good for the other) are the primary or foundational elements of love. While these are necessary of our loving attitude, they are not sufficient for our love. Since Aquinas, a common explanation of love has been a wishing the good for another person. This thesis, however, does not provide the complete picture of our phenomenological experience of love; hence, the Thomist approach to the love between man and woman is lacking in its explanation of the nature of love. Of course, the intent of unity and the intent of benevolence are valuable preconditions for a viable and happy love for another. It is my thesis that, however, the fundamental attitudes posited by both Scheler and von Hildebrand—namely, humility and reverence—are more phenomenologically relevant for an explanation of love's nature.

The transfiguring effect of love that arises from a proper foundation in the human person is evident in the happiness of our love. The more reverent, humble, and self-aware we are as lovers, the more joyful and happy the interpenetration of selves. We become more open and receptive to the value of the other person *qua* person, and we are more able to enter into a personal communion with our beloved. Von Hildebrand speaks of love's tangible effect on our being in relation to our loving attitude:

The aspect of which meekness embodies a specific expression is that of a serene *mellowness* inherent in the perfect attitude of love: the softening quality of love by virtue of which it becomes, as it were, a tangible substance, which might be described as *fluid goodness*. Meekness is comparable to a seal which this element of love impresses on our whole

²²⁴ Von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ*, 406.

essence, thus conferring a specific stamp upon all forms of our communication and intercourse with other persons.²²⁵

This “specific stamp” relates to the profound transfiguration of the self, the other, and the world around us through our loving experience. This mark of love points to the idea that persons can truly be known by their love.

A final note on beauty that I wish to make is regarding the “theme” of beauty in the love of another person. Although von Hildebrand stresses the importance of our apprehension of the beauty, and our response to it in a normatively appropriate way, “this role that beauty plays in love, however, must not in any way be understood to mean that the beauty is the theme in love.”²²⁶ Von Hildebrand seeks to clarify the difference of “thematicity” between our response to persons in love, and our response to an object in recognition of its value:

There is a radical difference between the value-response of love to a person and the value-response to a work of art, for in this latter case the beauty is indeed thematic. The beauty of the beloved person is as it were an irradiation of all his or her other values. It is these (the moral, “intellectual,” and vital values of this person) that are the theme. The metaphysical beauty which is their irradiation does not interfere with the thematicity of these values; on the contrary, it gives them particular prominence.²²⁷

Here, the language of Scheler is used to further the differentiation between the “moral,” “intellectual,” and “vital” categories of value. In reiterating this point, von Hildebrand seeks to clarify the appropriate order with which we should approach the value of metaphysical beauty in our meditation on love. As he explicitly states, beauty is an “irradiation of all his or her other values,” meaning that the *root* of love is the value of the beloved person, and the *fruit* of love is the beauty

²²⁵ Von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ*, 406.

²²⁶ Von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

that “irradiates” from the source of value. Metaphysical beauty is an accident of true value. The “theme” of love is the *value* to which we respond, not the beauty:

Love would be undermined if one were to make the “glory” of the other values, the beauty that emanates from them, the theme. In addition, the love refers to this real individual person and embraces this person in his or her totality. This is why one cannot take the same attitude to a beloved person that one takes to a work of art; such an attitude would be utterly incompatible with the essence of love.²²⁸

While von Hildebrand greatly appreciates the value-responding power of a beautiful work of art, he in no way confuses the categories of beauty. The objects of our value-response—love of persons and appreciation of objects—are qualitatively different. Both “objects” may be objectively worthy of a value-response, however they are to be approached with a different level of sensitivity. So far in our analysis of love’s primary characteristics, the themes of beauty and value have been explored. I will conclude this chapter by examining the character of love as a gift.

The Gift of Love

It was Shakespeare who wrote that “love sought is good, but given unsought is better.” This aphorism is rooted in truth; the phenomenology I have explored in this work affirms that essential to love is the element of the gift. However, many discussions on love involve distinctions in the characterization of love that involve a binary of “gift-love” and “need-love.”²²⁹

²²⁸ Von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*.

²²⁹ See, for example, C.S. Lewis’s *The Four Loves*, in which he poses this distinction in a useful way, as in his delineation between *agape* as essentially giving and child-parent love as essentially needy. The discourse I am referencing, however, is of the tendency to discuss not categories of love (i.e., *eros*, *philia*, or *agape*) as having the character of gift or need. Rather, I am referencing the tendency of thinkers in both academic and popular literature as describing literally two different forms of love that are essentially “need-love” or “gift-love,” as if there exists “Love”—and I am referring to the general idea of love with a capital L—that is essentially needy and a variant of love that is essentially giving. The nature of love in this work deals with love in a singular sense, a love in which “gift” is a constituent factor—even “thematic,” to use von Hildebrand’s language—and “need” is no more thematic or essential than is the desire for one to seek solidarity with oneself. On this point in particular, I will draw a comparison between the absurd notion that need is the natural origin of our love for another in the same way that one cannot view self-love as the natural origin or starting point for a love of the other. Just as love of the other is qualitatively radically different than the solidarity one has with oneself, so is the

In speaking of love in the proper sense, that is, in the unified sense that I have attempted to describe in this work, there is no such thing as a “need love” that lies in opposition to a “gift love.” To pair “need” with genuine love, the nature of which I have outlined, is an inadequate, incorrect way of accounting for its nature. Love is radically opposed to “need.” For, if we grant that a characteristic of our love is need, one might then ask what “need” this love satisfies. Say, for example, one is wrought to love another out of a “need” for a partner in parenthood. It is common knowledge—backed also by biological and psychological studies on the matter—that it is natural for individuals, especially women, to experience at some point the “urge” for parenthood. Is the urge for motherhood a sufficient “reason” for loving another? When this need is satisfied, what becomes of our love?

To characterize the nature of love as needful undermines the basic tenet of the recognition of personal value that founds and nourishes our love for others. When the need is satisfied, needs from parenthood to financial gain, the love loses its foundation. Other needs, both seen and unforeseen, may arise within the loving relationship that may become satisfied as a result of a requited love. However, to say that love is a satisfaction of one’s need or particular desire is not love proper—it is simply desire in the guise of “love.”²³⁰ Let us look for a moment at the possibility of love being founded upon a more basic and perhaps justified need. Perhaps our love is founded upon

need for loving and being loved qualitatively different than the act of loving another, the value response that arises out of a spontaneous encounter with another, and the will to gratify the response for the good of the other.

²³⁰ On this note, perhaps we can consider insights from Scheler in his discussion of the various forms of self-deception which “fall within the empirical-psychological framework which have been confused with sympathy” (Luther, *Persons in Love*, 28). In his analysis of Scheler’s ideas in *The Nature of Sympathy*, Luther writes that this self-deception in the guise of love is in fact an “I” centeredness, and “reveals a purely egoistic attitude, which in no sense reaches the other as other” (Luther, *Persons in Love*, 29). He proceeds to characterize various “character types” of self-deceivers, from the “vain” [*Eitlen*] who is overly concerned with the perception of others to the “parasite” [*Schmarotzertypus*] who forms an identity and character from a particular other. These characterizations are forms of self-deception that confuse forms of sympathy, or *love*, with their fundamental *need* for others to constitute a self-identity. These forms of self-deception “have nothing to do with sympathy because self-preoccupation isolates and disconnects one from another rather than reaches towards another...[and] a relational unity has been lost” (Luther, *Persons in Love*, 30). Thus, love is displaced by need.

a need for being loved and loving. If this is true, can need be a constituent factor, and the love sustain?

Need love in this sense is, if anything, a psychological dependency on another person. Of course, this is not to say that humans don't need love, and that to need love is a fundamental psychological flaw. This concept of "need-love" that some consider an actual category of love is at best a pseudo-love, and should instead be considered an improper attitude that leads one from true understanding of love and appreciation of the other *qua* person.

I will conclude with the idea that persons are constituted by love—*amo, ergo sum*—and it follows from my premises that love is constituent for a fuller human experience, in a myriad of ways. That love is derived from a fundamental lack, from a need is not within the scope of a phenomenological account of love. Although we may be aware of the benefits of love, although we may think that we in fact *need* love for honest reasons, like the sharing of one's self, be it in the form of shared resources or life-experience, we do not *approach* love from the standpoint of one in need. We seek the other's love from the standpoint of the gift. In the next section, we will look at the effect of love's gift, how it colors our perception of the other, and our experience of the world around us.

The Overall Response to Value

Love's actuality brings one to a greater personal understanding of others, of themselves, of life. This discussion serves to illustrate von Hildebrand's conception of love as a value-response. Our love for another human person is the highest response to value, the highest participation in the realm of values, for "love goes beyond all other value-responses in its response, that the 'gift' of love is greater than in any other value-response, and above all that it objectively surpasses the value of the

good that merits a response.”²³¹ The essential aspect of love as a “gift of self” is represented in its (1) affirmation and “enthronement” of the beloved person, (2) the “credit” of love, and (3) the referent of love as an individual, unique person.²³² These three aspects, when understood in light of von Hildebrand’s philosophy of the human person and the reality of the value-response, form an adequate defense of the claim of love as gift. In love we are inclined to “enthronement” the other, that is, to raise them above all others in our response to value. In this phenomenon of enthronement, “the other emerges from the sphere of indifference not only into the sphere of the precious, the valuable, the estimable, but also into the sphere of the enchanting and of the delightful [*Beglückenden*].”²³³ The other becomes a prominent one among many, is “*declared* to be precious in love.”²³⁴ A significant face, recognizably distinguished from a sea of indiscernible others, we imagine the other to be valuable above all other persons. In the enthronement, the beloved “is crowned” the “king” or “queen” of our heart,²³⁵ and directs our passions as we surrender to them our affectivity. How does this enthronement differ from respect, veneration, admiration, or any other response to value? Essentially, in love “the overall beauty of the other has to present itself to me if the response of love is to be awakened in me.”²³⁶ We find in love a qualitatively different response to value in that our heart is “conquered by another.”²³⁷ Our response to the other, in respect or reverence, is not in the same category of response as love.

²³¹ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 365.

²³² *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 67.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

The “credit of love” that we extend is the emphasis on the positive qualities of the other. It is a vision of the potentiality of the other, a discovering of the positive. Kierkegaard might consider this credit resulting from our presupposing love in the other, presupposing that the other is lovable, worthy of our love, and will be open to respond to our love. The credit of love implies that “love believes the best about the beloved person,” that love is slow to judge, a form of faith in the goodness of the other. This credit is exemplified in the instance of character judgment; “when I hear something negative told about him, I will not at first believe that it is true or at least not believe that it has been adequately interpreted.”²³⁸ This credit of love is, in essence, a statement of faith in the other.

Furthermore, the profound effect that love has on the life of an individual is illustrated by von Hildebrand’s idea of love as a *superactual response*. By superactual, von Hildebrand intends to distinguish the effects of love from other temporary responses, such as the response to pain in one’s body as a result of physical injury.²³⁹ Such responses are responses that are “actualized from time to time,”²⁴⁰ as opposed to an enduring response that lasts over time. Love’s superactuality is experienced in the fact that

The veneration which I have for someone does not cease to exist when I am taken up with other things; when I encounter this person it is identically the same veneration that is actualized again. It endures as a personal reality even if I am not actualizing it at the moment. It lives on superactually.²⁴¹

The difference between “actual” and “superactual” responses is a valuable contribution to the phenomenological account of love. The effects of love may not be felt as imminently superactual.

²³⁸ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 67.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The fact that a commitment to love is made in a promise, the fact that you have shared, spoken a ‘yes’ in love to another person colors your ultimate experience, regardless of the immediate “actual” feeling or effect of love’s gift. The response is felt in an overarching way, in a *superactual* way. Here we find an interrelation between the superactual response and the value response:

Love for another person subsists as a full factor in my soul, coloring every other situation, deeply forming my life. It subsists not as any vague subconscious element, but as a meaningful response to the beloved person. It tends indeed to be actualized, but in its character of a meaningful response to the beloved it does not live only on its full actualizations.²⁴²

Ever-present in our lives—whether hidden in potentiality or fully actualized—is our love for the other. This amorous intentionality indeed “colors” every situation, the other appearing under an aspect of our advance as lovers, our orientation as persons colored by our loving attitude.

A unique point made by von Hildebrand is that prior to the marital vows, which are essential for the “gift” of love to become solidified, affirmed, and transcendent, a “spousal love” is already present between lovers.²⁴³ What this means is that marriage is a consecration of a love that is presupposed: two people can love like a married couple before the promise is made. This is a fascinating claim made by von Hildebrand, for he makes the bold declaration that spousal love can—and does necessarily—exist outside of marriage. The promise or gift of love espoused in the marital vow is an affirmation of a love that is already present. Therefore, two people can have shared the marital “gift of love” before the promise has been made. The commitment in its fullness should predate any “requirement” of commitment. The spousal love is a foretaste of marital love; the latter is an “eternal security” of the preexistent former.

²⁴² Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 242.

²⁴³ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 365.

Considering von Hildebrand's work in light of personalist phenomenology, the act of love is inseparable from morality. To love is a moral act, hence Scheler's tri-fold criterion of the lover of wisdom: the same can be said for the lover of another human person. The gift of self is "proper" to love, because love is to hold oneself accountable to moral preconditions. A relationship can be held to this criterion of *love* to be considered a relation that is conducive to love proper, or exhibits a kind of "pseudo-love" that von Hildebrand discusses throughout his work. Hence this is why von Hildebrand, Scheler, and many others consider love to be the fundamental act of persons. To become a human person in the truest sense, one *transcends* the self in the act of loving another. The goal of human existence is to—in humility, and with a sense of self-mastery (which is the normative criterion of a "gift of self)—overcome one's self-centered and singular existence in order to reach out to his or her fellow persons. It is not enough for us to reach perfection *in vacuo* we must share our love, our happiness with others. Love is essentially a mutual activity. The goal of human creatures is not singular, but collective. It is not self-perfection in isolation; however, it is self-perfection in a community, within a shared communal experience.

When a relationship is founded with this tri-fold criterion—humility, self-mastery, and a fullness of love—the inclination toward moral betterment is inevitable in the communion of two persons in love. For Saint Augustine tells us, "Let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good."²⁴⁴ A love in full light of recognition of the other is not an object in any sense of the word, but as a personal subject with a purity of heart—to will the good—is bound to prosper. This purity of heart is a fundamental aspect of love; it is our "reverent, humble, loving center"²⁴⁵ of human affectivity. This purity of heart leads to "a noble, great, and deep love

²⁴⁴ Augustine, quoted in *Ethics* by Dietrich von Hildebrand (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), 462.

²⁴⁵ Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 463.

which is not bound up with any dark passion... the effect of this love is liberating and it challenges us to heroism, and does so without any threat of enslavement or any moral danger.”²⁴⁶ While passion in itself is not a detriment to human flourishing, there is a form of passion of both good and bad nature. The morality of passion is derived from the root of “noble, great, and deep love” that brings man outside of himself and leads him to strive toward a greater existence. A personalist philosopher *par excellence*, von Hildebrand writes in a way that fully integrates the value of the individual human person into his notion of love. I wish to extend this analysis of personalism in love with a discussion of the *ordo amoris* and its history, to see how the ordering of love is exemplified by Scheler and von Hildebrand.

²⁴⁶ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 313.

What we love we shall grow to resemble.
Bernard of Clairvaux

Chapter Seven: The *Ordo Amoris*

A Brief History

The theme of the *ordo amoris* dates back to the philosophy of Plato. In the *Symposium*, Diotima speaks of the nature of *eros*, and how it “recognizes a scale of beauty and of good.”²⁴⁷ As she narrates the movement of love, Socrates learns of the ascending order of love, a hierarchy naturally beginning with apprehending the beauty of the beloved, ending with the Beauty of form. The movement is an “ascent toward the things that are always, as opposed to those that come into being and pass away.”²⁴⁸ This idea of the “ladder of love” influenced the philosophy of Augustine and became manifest in his philosophy of the *ordo amoris*. Augustine contributes to this theme of love’s ascent a moral order. Rather than a descriptive ascent into the abstract world of forms proposed by Plato, Augustine outlines a normative ascent from earthly, temporal goods to heavenly, eternal ones. According to Augustine, the man living in accordance with the *ordo amoris*:

Is a man of just and holy life who forms an unprejudiced estimate of things, and keeps his affections also under strict control, so that he neither loves what he ought not to love, nor fails to love what he ought to love, nor loves that more which ought to be loved less, nor loves that equally which ought to be loved less or more, nor loves that less or more which ought to be loved equally.²⁴⁹

Essentially, Augustine instructs us to order our desire in accordance with the natural moral order. It seems that this normative order ought to be intuitive: while there is not a strict “list of loves,”

²⁴⁷ Brady, *Christian Love*, 79.

²⁴⁸ Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, in Brady, *Christian Love*, 79.

²⁴⁹ Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love: A Study in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 119.

Augustine calls us to weigh our loves seriously, not only in accordance with that which is objectively good and desirable in the eyes of God, but to weigh our loves in reference to each other. Put simply, we *ought* to love finite goods less than infinite goods. We are to love every finite good less than God, even man. Our love for other persons is to be for the purpose of loving God; if we love others for themselves, we are essentially loving them too much. We are to love everything in God, especially other persons. Ultimately, we are to love God more than other persons, even more than ourselves. If we love inordinately, we do not love in accordance with the *ordo amoris*. Our lives become improperly ordered, and we are no longer on the pathway in alignment with the good.

In the Medieval Era, the Christian conception of an “ordering of love” is found within the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Continuing with the Augustinian tradition of thought, “Thomas held that virtue is rightly ordered love: rightly ordered passions are good, and wrongly ordered passions are vicious.”²⁵⁰ Ultimately, the *ordo amoris* founds the relation between the self and the other in that “love is directed to someone else for the sake of the other's perfection.”²⁵¹ Let us see how this Medieval conception of love's order influenced the value-realist phenomenology of Scheler and von Hildebrand.

The Ordo Amoris and Value Realism

In the final chapter of his book, von Hildebrand discusses the *ordo amoris*—the order of love—in both a general and precise sense. We order our loves in terms of that which is more and less valuable. It is the substructure of morality that consists of the “hierarchy of morally relevant

²⁵⁰ Stephen J. Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 57.

²⁵¹ Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, 6.

goods,”²⁵² or put simply, and order of lovable values. In what he considers a “general sense,” the

ordo amoris:

encompasses the entire order of preferring one thing to another, and it encompasses the obligation to do justice to the hierarchy of values in our response. In this general sense, it then implies the very general obligation to choose the higher good over the lower good in our actions, in our affective responses—in every kind of relating to things.²⁵³

It is a consideration of love “analogously,” by which he means in a sense that is not in terms of the “precise,” “narrow” and “proper” way in which von Hildebrand considered it in the first thirteen chapters. In a footnote to this passage, von Hildebrand makes a distinction between his conception of the *ordo amoris* and that of Max Scheler. While Scheler thought that morality could be essentially reduced to the *ordo amoris*, von Hildebrand disagreed with a reduction of the sphere of morality to the *ordo amoris*. Von Hildebrand did not deny the merit of the *ordo amoris* and its role in the formation of man’s morality; however, he made it clear that his stance in no way mirrors that of Scheler’s. The primary focus of moral structure as centering upon the *ordo amoris*—the ordering of relevant goods—does a disservice to the independent value-response due of a particular moral good. The privilege of the merit of value is primary to but not necessarily independent of the *ordo amoris*:

Of course, the morally relevant value must be apprehended in the rank that it occupies in the hierarchy of values and the value-response as an adequate response and does not necessarily involve consciously placing the morally relevant good above or below any other good. The call to give an adequate value-response issues primarily from the value of the good and not from the relation of the good to other goods.²⁵⁴

The good is to be considered objectively and not solely or primarily in light of the other goods that take order around it. Von Hildebrand disagrees explicitly with Scheler in that “it is wrong to reduce

²⁵² Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 350.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 349.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

moral badness to choosing the lower over the higher good.”²⁵⁵ The choice to commit a morally bad act, or to align oneself with morally lesser good is not reducible to a simple “lesser than” mentality. Even a morally poor choice is to be considered in full light, and not in terms of that which *could have* been chosen as a lesser good, or as greater. To commit to this line of thinking would lessen the status of an intrinsically or irreducibly bad act, and miss the fullness of badness or goodness of a moral choice.

In his discussion of *ordo amoris* in the “more precise sense,” von Hildebrand specifies that in this sense, this order is the hierarchy of persons in our sphere of love. Here, he is not concerned with the *ordo amoris* as pointing to an abstract “good” that we are responding to, but rather, “with the question of which persons we should love *more* than others.”²⁵⁶ He applies this consideration to many loves, including the parental love of child, love of another friend, and the love of spouse. As regards each particular love, von Hildebrand provides an explanation for the theme of proper value-response to each situation. What he does tell us is that love is a gift, a promise, a value-response. He imputes his concept of value-response to the “theme” of the ordering of love. When we consider the value of another, say, our beloved, “to the higher values ‘more’ of a value-response should be given. The higher good deserves more of a response than the lower good.”²⁵⁷

The Movement of Love

Much like Plato, Augustine, and Aquinas before him, Scheler alludes to the striving of man toward love, toward perfection through our loving of that which is good and noble for the spirit. A properly ordered love leads one beyond the self toward a higher expression of love, and a more

²⁵⁵ Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 349.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 350.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

profound ethical understanding of others through loving. From the *ordo amoris* "emerge[s] the basic moral tenor of a person, the ethos of his community, and the norms to which he submits."²⁵⁸ This character of a "movement" is clear in Scheler's work; "love is certainly a movement towards positive value, but so far as the *nature* of love is concerned it makes no difference whether this value exists or not."²⁵⁹ Is Scheler, then, indifferent to the realm of values? As regards the *nature* of love, it seems that the advent of loving will continue whether or not the element of value is presupposed. If value is present, love seeks to enhance it; if value is absent, love seeks to discover it.

Just as in the model of the human affective sphere as having an order of emotions, from lower to higher order, so does love contain a similar element of movement. For Scheler, "love is a movement, passing from a lower value to a higher one, in which the higher value of the object or person suddenly flashes upon us."²⁶⁰ It seems, then, that one cannot "be in love" if one is not caught in a value-driven movement. This emphasis on value, prevalent in both Scheler and von Hildebrand, aids in distinguishing *love* in its pure sense from other forms of "pseudo-love," including mere lust, desire, or attraction. According to Peter Spader, "it is because the movement of love is occurring that we can now see more clearly the higher values and their objective hierarchy."²⁶¹ So, for Scheler, the theme of love is a value-conscious movement that can occur in response to the value of another, or out of a spontaneous gesture from the self. This movement is akin to the philosophical task set by Scheler in his essay "The Nature of Philosophy," in that he establishes two distinct facets of philosophy hearkening back to the Platonic tradition of philosophy:

²⁵⁸ Kelly, *Material Ethics of Value: Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann*, 44.

²⁵⁹ Scheler, *Nature of Sympathy*, 141.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁶¹ Peter H. Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism: Its Logic, Development, and Promise* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 236.

1. An *integral movement* of the inmost personal Self, such as is *not* within the capacity of the common-sense outlook or of any cognitive desire which is founded therein.
This is necessary even to bring the object of philosophy before the mind's eye.²⁶²
Further, this movement is founded in—
2. An Act, which in essence is a *love* with a special character.²⁶³

In the first point, Scheler points out that philosophy is separate from any “common-sense outlook,” incapable of a reductionist outlook on human nature. The pursuit of the philosopher is ontologically separate from the psychologist, biologist, or anthropologist. While other traditions deal with empirical ways of seeing, philosophy *presupposes* love in the character of the thinker. The primacy of love in human life arose “at the beginning of the Christian era,” and thus, since the coming of the Son of Man, “the primal Reality was, rightly or wrongly, thought and felt to consist in an endless activity of creative and merciful *love*.”²⁶⁴ To explore the *nature* of philosophy fully is beyond the scope of this work; however, a brief look into what Scheler and von Hildebrand consider the fundamental moral attitudes of philosophy can offer an insight into the moral attitudes of love. There is an integral connection between love and knowledge. Scheler adds that “love, which may be thought of as the heart and soul of the entire complex of acts, leads us in the direction of the absolute. It thus takes us *beyond* objects existing only *relatively* to *our* being.”²⁶⁵ Love leads us toward a sort of “ethical ascent,” in that we are drawn out of our subjectivity—our “*Eigenleben*” in von Hildebrand’s view—toward the other and ultimately to God. While in Plato’s ascent the absolute was a form (Love), in the ethico-religious Christian ascent of love—to use a term from

²⁶² Our physical body responds to others erotically with the faculty of human desire, while our immaterial soul responds to others metaphysically in the form of spiritual recognition. It is in this sense that our physical body perceives the world with a “physical eye,” provided our sense of sight is operable, while our spiritual self perceives the world with a “metaphysical eye,” or the “mind’s eye” as philosophers attempt to apprehend reality, and as lovers (with what is considered the “heart’s eye,” another facet of this metaphysical faculty of sight) apprehend the beloved, be it one’s spouse, one’s family, one’s neighbor.

²⁶³ Max Scheler, *On the Eternal on Man* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972), 74.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Kierkegaard—leads us beyond the self to communion with others and with God, the absolute love (*agape*). This so-called “Christian” ethico-religious ascent of love will be explored in the next section.

As evidenced the prior discussion of his essay on the nature of philosophy, Scheler provides an outline of moral philosophy that grounds an intricate connection of the activity of love in man to the task of philosophy. It is from love that desire for knowledge arises; a desire that Scheler and von Hildebrand call the “philosophical *eros*.” This interconnection between love and philosophy, and the idea of love as an act central to man will contribute to Scheler’s foundational thesis that, above all other faculties—to reason, to choose, to doubt—man is a loving being. Through love, we are led to a full awareness of the objectivity of others and the world around us. In the next section, I will discuss the philosophical ascent of love since Plato to discover the intersection between the concepts of the Platonic and Christian ideas of love’s ascent.

The Ascent of Love

In Plato’s *Symposium*, the goddess Diotima instructs Socrates on the art of love. She speaks of an ascent of love that moves from the physical or temporal desire for the beauty of another person to the metaphysical or eternal desire for Beauty in its transcendent form. Of this Platonic ascent there are “serious objections which are often raised against this concept: it is a love of ideals and not of *persons* and in the end it is a form of ‘spiritualized egocentrism.’”²⁶⁶ Furthermore, this critique points out that, “on Plato’s view we cannot love persons for their own sakes but only to the extent that they instantiate or realize ideals or contribute to the realization of ideals.”²⁶⁷ This platonic approach to love is radically antithetical to the personalist view of the lover seeking the other in love as ends in themselves. Rather than recognizing the irreducibility of the other, the platonic lover is

²⁶⁶ Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love: A Study in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 113.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

moved by a characteristic of the other—say, beauty in the physical (or metaphysical) sense—to further recognize and love the form of Beauty.

This movement differs from the Platonic ascent, as Scheler's account of love's movement can be more accurately considered an "ethical ascent," as his concern for the other is not superseded by greater values, like the form of Beauty or love itself. Perhaps the underpinnings of this view can be found in each thinker's ultimate *telos* of the community. For Plato, the highest of human strivings is a life of philosophical activity, the life of the intellect. The ideal community is ruled by philosophers—our leaders shall be rational thinkers, not affective lovers, he tells us. In fact, Plato privileges *objects* of love to *subjects* of love: "As objects of Platonic love (beautiful bodies or political programmes) all these are not only as good as persons, but distinctly better. Plato signifies their superiority by placing them in the higher reaches of that escalated figure that marks the lover's progress, relegating love of persons to its lower levels."²⁶⁸ The idea of a community comprised of "persons in love" is the ideal republic of Scheler. This idea will be imbedded throughout this work, and it will culminate in my thesis that, if Scheler considers the nature of love a *movement*, it differs radically from Plato's ascent in which love aims *beyond* the other, upward from the particular to the universal realm of the abstract—toward beauty, goodness, and truth. The ascent of love in Scheler and von Hildebrand, however, is a personalist movement in *full light* of the other, moving upward not to the universal abstract, but ascending within our value-imbued world, and our shared world with the beloved, to the other in God.²⁶⁹ Ultimately, the *ordo amoris* is the order of love that, for both Scheler and von Hildebrand, points to objective value-laden reality outside our subjectivity. Through loving in light of the *ordo amoris*, which is ordered from the simple vital realm to the

²⁶⁸ Gregory Vlastos, "Love in Plato," in Brümmer, *The Model of Love*, 114.

²⁶⁹ On this point, we detect hints of Augustine's neo-platonism, and how his *ordo amoris* and idea of love rests in God. We are to not love others as intrinsically valuable themselves, but as a utility to extend our love to God.

complex spiritual realm of emotion, one comes to a full recognition of the beloved in light of their unique, radical otherness.

Love as the Task of Philosophy

When confronted with the question of the philosopher's purpose, many respond with an etymological answer: the philosopher is a lover of wisdom. This statement derives from a blend of the Greek terms *philo* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom)—*Philosophia*. Traditionally, this is as far as philosophers have been willing to take the discussion of love's connection to philosophy. Such an explanation, however, falls short of an adequate explanation to the philosopher. If philosophy historically began with "love" (*philo*), how does it relate to the nature of philosophy, if philosophy has since neglected its meaning? How is love and the pursuit of truth related? German poet Heinrich Heine waxed poetically: "The deepest truth blooms only from the deepest love."²⁷⁰ Let us look at the intricate relation between love and philosophy to see how the personal motivation and preconditions for love may reflect the philosophical *eros* of lovers of wisdom.

The role of love for the philosopher has often been cast as *eros*, the ancient Greek word for desire, what is now considered to resonate more as an erotic love than a desiring faculty of the human person. Like love, the idea of the soul can be traced back to ancient times, the Platonic *daimon*, responsible for the "animating" feature of man—the soul—which is also considered the seat of *eros*, human desire. Max Scheler outlines the relation of love to the Platonic conception of the soul in his essay "The Nature of Philosophy." Plato regards philosophy as an activity of the soul. The soul, according to Plato, is

the *dynamis* at the centre of the Person, the mainspring, the Something which produces the soaring to the Real world, as the highest and purest form of what he calls *eros*—that is, as

²⁷⁰ Heinrich Heine, *Pictures of Travel*, (New York: Leypoldt & Bolt, 1866), 465.

what he was later to call...the indwelling tendency of all imperfect being towards perfect being.²⁷¹

Both Scheler and von Hildebrand, like Plato, presuppose a realist conception of reality, hence the emphasis on the desire to strive toward an absolute “perfect being.” Thus, the journey of the philosopher begins with a stirring at the innermost center of the self, the desire toward something higher, toward perfection. Tillich explains the relevance of Platonic *eros* in the discussion establishing love as an ontological category:

Love, power, and justice are ever repeated subjects of ontology. There is hardly a leading philosopher who does not put them into the very foundations of his thought. In Plato we find the doctrine of *eros* as the power which drives to the union with the true and the good itself... In Aristotle we find the doctrine of the universal *eros* which drives everything towards the highest form, the pure actuality which would not as a cause (*kinoumenon*) but as the object of love (*eromenon*). And the movement he describes is a movement from the potential to the actual, from *dynamis* to *energeia*.²⁷²

This philosophical *eros*, as von Hildebrand states, “is at its very heart a basic form of man’s natural longing for God, the absolute truth and the source of all truth.”²⁷³ Catholicism is the underlying influence beneath both Scheler’s and von Hildebrand’s philosophies; the neo-platonic influence of Augustine clearly informing their thoughts on philosophy. Therefore, rather than point to an abstract perfection, what they had in mind was the God of Christianity. The philosophical *eros* strives to unravel the truth of God, as all reality lays in Him. To understand this strikingly mystical description of the person in relation to wisdom, we must consider that phenomenology is, for Scheler, “an attitude of spiritual seeing...something which otherwise remains hidden.”²⁷⁴ This animating feature of man (the soul) is what forms the basic connection among men, and leads one

²⁷¹ Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, 73.

²⁷² Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 21-22.

²⁷³ Von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 228.

²⁷⁴ Scheler, “Ordo Amoris” *Selected Philosophical Essays* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 137.

to seek ascending goals for the self, to move from a state of lesser perfection to higher. Scheler also draws upon the etymology of the tradition, as “the very name ‘Philosophy’, love of essential Reality, still bears the clear and ineffaceable stamp of Plato’s basic meaning.”²⁷⁵

Philosophy, then, is a love that leads one to discover, or at least, to seek that which is essential to Reality. Such love is a distinct mark of what it means to be human; the human soul is equipped to discuss natures, to comprehend essences, to “love” reality in a way that animals (as far as we know) cannot. Von Hildebrand also differentiates philosophy from this so-called “common-sense outlook,” which he considers as perceiving the object “from without.” He proposes that, rather than this viewpoint, philosophy deals with a seeing of objects “from within,” which Scheler references in his discussion of perceiving objects “before the mind’s eye.” The sciences cannot attain the insight that philosophy can through its intuitive insights. The pursuit of the philosopher is ontologically separate from the psychologist, biologist, or anthropologist.

While other traditions deal with empirical ways of seeing, philosophy presupposes love in the character of the thinker. Therefore, akin to the Aristotelian conception of *eudaimonea* as an activity of the soul, love is also a central act of man that founds philosophical activity. Scheler defines the nature of the philosophical attitude central to all thought in the tradition: “A love-determined movement of the innermost personal Self of a finite being toward participation in the essential reality of all possibles.”²⁷⁶ This is a short but profoundly rich statement. By love-determined movement, Scheler is referencing the philosophical *eros*, the desire for knowledge that moves our self toward a “higher” realm of truth. This “higher” realm is what Scheler means by

²⁷⁵ Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, 73.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

“essential reality.” He is admitting to philosophical realism in that there is a set truth, an “essential reality” that is beyond our merely subjective interpretation of it.

If philosophy is a movement, when is the task as a philosopher finished? As soon as one has completed the task of loving, one may argue—philosophy, like love, is an act that never reaches completion. Perhaps, then, like the philosopher’s pursuit of wisdom, “Love can never be fulfilled... for love is always to come; love is always a task, something each individual must unremittingly strive to realize.”²⁷⁷ Finally, the activity of the philosopher is to be approached with triune orientation, or what I referred to earlier as the “moral attitude” of philosophy:

1. The whole spiritual person must love absolute value and being;
2. The natural self and ego must be humbled;
3. Self-mastery must be achieved.²⁷⁸

Scheler considers these three “moral acts” to lead, “in systematic interaction,” toward a full participation in the nature of reality. These acts of love, humility, and self-mastery are Scheler’s criterion of appropriate attempts to form an accurate mode of phenomenological seeing. This trifold criterion mirrors the thinking of von Hildebrand in much of his work when he writes of the moral attitudes. For von Hildebrand held the “conviction that certain realities, notably philosophical truths but also the beauty in great music and art [and persons], will only reveal themselves on the basis of what he called ‘fundamental moral attitudes’—reverence, humility, and love.”²⁷⁹ Although von Hildebrand does not write explicitly on this topic of “proper” phenomenological attitudes, he does warn us that, without a proper orientation toward knowledge, we will succumb to the “unfortunate

²⁷⁷ Mark Dooley, *The Politics of Exodus: Søren Kierkegaard's Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 238.

²⁷⁸ Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, 95.

²⁷⁹ John Henry Crosby, “Mozart,” 176.

role that erroneous philosophical attitudes play in false common sense and inorganic reasoning about the world.”²⁸⁰

It is on this point that I find an overlap between the seeking of metaphysical knowledge and the ethical formation of the philosopher. For (in phenomenology, at least) it takes fundamental moral attitudes to properly orient oneself toward the seeking of philosophical truth. It is only through humility, reverence, and love (the philosophical *eros*) that we are led toward higher knowledge, to the attainment of truth. Ultimately, both Scheler and von Hildebrand have formulated a phenomenology that places love at the center of man and at the “heart” of the philosophical task. What I aimed to outline is the intricate connection of the activity of love in man to the task of philosophy. This interconnection between love and philosophy illustrates the relevance of “love” as the philosophical *eros* to the task of philosophy.

Loving and Being

Thus far in this work, I have illustrated the concept of the human person and the phenomenological act of loving. As love is a spiritual act of the person, the interrelation between persons in love leads to a profound knowledge of the other *qua* person. We are constituted by a radically unique, irreducible personal center; “we live out of our personal center, we never lose ourselves in the beings with which we have to do; we remain intact as persons, standing in ourselves in relation to all other things.”²⁸¹ We enter in communion with others and yet retain ourselves in the process; there can be no loss of self in the communion of love when our self is radically other from the beginning:

²⁸⁰ Von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 232.

²⁸¹ Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, 153.

I and the other remain irreducibly two persons throughout the most heartfelt act of sympathizing with the other...it implies the irreducible two-ness of myself and the other. The same holds for love; it too is a properly personal act and so there can be no question of any amalgamation of two persons loving each other. Their irreducibility to each other, their inalienable two-ness is presupposed and in fact powerfully lived from within in all authentic love.²⁸²

In love there is an interpenetration of selves that retains an “inalienable two-ness.” The individual person is irreducible *qua* person and *qua* lover. There can never be a collapse of the self in authentic love. “As the perceiver’s insight into the being of a person deepens,” our knowledge and our love “becomes more individual, more ineffable and at the same time more certain.”²⁸³ There is an interplay of knowledge and love in the spiritual act of love extended to another person. In the interpenetration of selves in love, the “person is present as loving, and where value is revealed as person...the structure of the correlation or dialogue is inexhaustible in its richness of meaning.”²⁸⁴

Love leads one to discover new meaning in the other person. Love will, as Luther points out,

reveal itself as a spontaneous, creative act in whose execution a person is most fully present and in whose movement other persons are discovered as persons, that is, in the full richness of their unique presence. The creative relational unity of persons in love will reveal a dynamic structure of Being.²⁸⁵

Love is a creative drawing of the self, an awakening to the self and the other. To know, apprehend, experience another in a way that nears an adequate or meaningful relation is only achieved through love. The complexity of the human person demands a relation that is spiritual, hence the profoundly personal element of love. Returning to our epistemology of the heart:

Scheler conceives of knowledge as an ontological relation of ‘participation’ in which a Being transcends itself to participate in the selfevident ‘whatness’ or ‘quiddity’ of another Being.

²⁸² Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, 153-154.

²⁸³ Luther, *Persons in Love*, 50.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

This self-transcendence in which a Being opens itself towards another Being in order to partake in its Being is what is called Love.²⁸⁶

This transcendence of the self, this interpenetration of being is what Scheler and von Hildebrand consider precisely what love to be, on an ontological level. Retaining the concept of the person as a “mystery” is necessary in order to understand the essentially deep interpenetration of selves that is requisite of a phenomenological understanding of persons:

One can say then, that the deeper one penetrates into human being, and Scheler will admit that such penetration is possible only in love, the more a human being appears, unique, irreplaceable, which is to say individuated. Scheler means that a human being *is* more individual, the more he is intimately personal.²⁸⁷

There is no possible “objective” way of understanding love or persons, for love and human subjects are “mysteries” to be intuited, and not “problems” to be probed. To take a cold, distant, or eminently rational approach to a notion such as love or personhood is to overlook the existential import of such concerns. For Scheler, “[t]o reach another as a thinking being is not yet to reach him as a person. A person is not only one who thinks, but also one who wills, believes, feels, loves and so on.”²⁸⁸ Descartes was incorrect to reduce the human person to the *ego cogito*. To begin with the aforementioned approach is to begin with only a single facet of what it means to be human. The task of philosophy, much like the task of the lover, is to understand the object of our philosophical *eros* in the fullness of its mystery. And while person and love are mysteries that perhaps will never and can never be fully intuited, we will come closer by participating in such profound mysteries as

²⁸⁶ Vandenberghe, “Sociology of the Heart,” 29.

²⁸⁷ Luther, *Persons in Love*, 48.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

phenomenologically constituted persons, for “loving is incisively precise in its direct penetration to the core of being, where being opens itself in its full inexhaustible dynamic richness.”²⁸⁹

What, then, does a community of “persons in love” look like? In a communion of love are “all persons, human and divine, involved in a world, in the psycho-physical, in the personal.”²⁹⁰ And this loving communion recognizes not just what is, but that which “is fundamentally unfinished,” for the task of person is a continual becoming. The invitation to a loving community “becomes an invitation or a task for man to become who he is, as he *is* and *can be*, in this world with these persons.”²⁹¹ That is the essence of love, an invitation to become what they are, to fully actualize their potentiality in the direction of the good, in a community of “persons in love.”

²⁸⁹ Luther, *Persons in Love*, 166.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

Let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good.
Augustine

Conclusion: The Meaning of Love

Love's presence seems to imbue all of human life with meaning. Love has the power to awaken us, to pull us beyond our mundane existence, to usher us on the path toward profound communion with others. For Marion, "if what I love is lacking, for me who loves, if therefore reciprocal polarization is suspended, even for an instant, even if for an innocuous motive, nothing less than the entire world is immediately and completely struck with vanity."²⁹² A love broken or unreciprocated can starve life of all meaning to the point of desperation, even death.

With or without love, our world becomes transfigured. With the advent of love, we discover new value in others and in ourselves, and our life is imbued with new meaning. With the demise of love, we can be torn from this newfound reality, and even faced with the prospect of existential vanity. Whether we find or lose our love, the fact remains: we, the beloved, and our world are transfigured by our connection with value.

I wish to return to the words of von Hildebrand, which I feel capture, in essence, the nature of the person's love for another:

Falling in love is essentially to be granted a vision of the beauty of another person's individuality. This vision fills us with reverence, and simultaneously with a powerful attraction for the object whose beauty has been perceived. Literally, to love another person means to see his beauty, to discover the secret of his personality. This vision as we have called it, is so convincing that we say, "Never shall I forget it."²⁹³

The core of von Hildebrand's philosophy of love, which encompasses his philosophy of the human person, is how we perceive the other. Love leads us toward humility in our openness and sensitivity

²⁹² Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 136.

²⁹³ Von Hildebrand, *The Art of Living*, 63-64.

toward others. This vision of love reveals the beloved person in a new light. With this vision, we see this person's "true face, his unique beauty: with the eyes of love, [we are] granted a "Tabor vision."²⁹⁴ This apprehension of beauty is not of any sort of material or empirically measurable observation. This vision is beyond the vital sphere of perception. The Tabor vision "from within" surpasses the scientific observation of the impersonal human body, which is, ultimately a seeing "from without." The foundation of Scheler and von Hildebrand's philosophy is a *profound philosophical perception* of the other—a view of the neighbor, or the romantic other with a spiritual sight grounded in love, an essential seeing "from within." This love is for the other in full light of their intrinsic value, a value-response to their unique and unrepeatable self.

Love is a reverent appreciation of the other's being as such, a response to the transcendent value of another person in terms of themselves as a *thou*, in full light of the other's personhood. Love is "directed to the *totality* of the person loved."²⁹⁵ This response to the other in "love is a self-transcending value-response; I de-center myself towards the other when I seek out the beauty of the other and love her in virtue of her beauty."²⁹⁶ This attitude of reverence is the cornerstone of one's love for the other. This love involves the full self—the cognitive, affective, and volitional aspects of man—as knowledge, emotion, and will in coordination comprise the intentional act of loving.

²⁹⁴ In her book *By Love Refined*, Alice von Hildebrand refers to this "Tabor vision," which she calls a "great gift" and a seeing into the beloved's true self:

Those who love have been granted the special privilege of seeing with incredible intensity the beauty of the one they love - while others see primarily his exterior acts, and particularly his failings. At this moment, you see Michael more clearly than does any other living human being ... Do you recall the Gospel story of the Transfiguration? The apostles went with Jesus to the top of Mount Tabor, and suddenly Jesus became radiant and his garments a dazzling white. For the first time, the apostles were allowed to see Jesus directly, clothed in His glory as God. He was transfigured before them (Alice von Hildebrand, *By Love Refined*, 12).

²⁹⁵ Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, 5.

²⁹⁶ John F. Crosby, "Personal Individuality," 2.

Emotion belongs—passion, fear, hatred, and love—to the study of philosophy just as much as reason. A person feels as much as he thinks; it is argued that the basis of language itself came from the passions, from the drive toward human expression that became manifest long before the logical infrastructure of the spoken word.²⁹⁷ We may know causally the effect of this power constituent of love by its effects on our body and our psyche. Studies in neuroscience have shown us the human physiological response to others, the chemical response to “love” in the brain. However, the corporeal affect *is not* the sufficient cause of love. Even a full and complete identification of the physical reaction of attraction is not the final answer in our quest to know what the nature of love is. Love cannot be reduced to sensible or vital human feeling. Love’s effect is experienced cognitively, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We must also consider love’s power teleologically, as love can imbue our lives with new meaning as a result of the theme of love: value. The relevance of love’s *telos* is correlative of the central theme of this work in placing the heart at the level of the mind and will.

Love is a dialectic between loving and knowing. We approach the other with a certain amount of knowledge, and an attitude oriented toward love, we seek to know and to love simultaneously. One cannot prioritize love over knowledge, nor can one prioritize knowledge over love. Our love of the other is an irreducible experience that, *from the beginning*, as Drummond tells us, involves concurrent cognitive and affective human faculties.

The element of willing, of commitment is the final point of difference between *love* and all other pseudo-forms of love, including attraction, lust, affection, and other feelings often mistaken for love in its true form. Through an understanding of the account of love posed in this work, the

²⁹⁷ This idea is found in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1998).

various forms of pseudo-loves—what love *is not*—can be recognized. Furthermore, this analysis of love grounded a discussion of the difficulty in affirming the ontological reality of self-love. What is often confused as a “love” of self is perhaps best considered self-esteem, affirmation, or faith in oneself to *become what we are*.

One of the main themes of this work is the role of fundamental moral attitudes in both our life as moral agents and in our life as lovers. Repeatedly throughout this work and throughout each of their works respectively, Scheler and von Hildebrand discuss the importance of moral attitude as the foundation of everything from our approach to others to our approach to philosophy. Through cultivating such attitudes as reverence, humility, and love, we properly orient ourselves toward others, toward the task of philosophy, and toward the task of loving. It is my hope that philosophy moves away from biases inherited by our forefathers—from the Greeks to the Positivists—in order to reach a new level of understanding of the human person in light of our true self, comprised of emotion, will, and reason. Though a thorough understanding of love we come to realize how important it is to begin to understand ourselves and others, for it is “only through love [that] we can attain to the mystery of individuality in a person, that is, get a glimpse of the unrepeatable personal essence of a person.”²⁹⁸

Without love we can only grasp a person at the level of the essential; through love the other becomes fully revealed. Love heightens our receptivity to others and the world around us. We are, as with the philosophical *eros*, drawn out of our subjective existence (*Eigenleben*) and into an intersubjective dialectic of love with others and the world around us. Hence, the profound affect that the fundamental moral attitudes—especially love—has on us as both neighbors and philosophers. Through our love of the other, we are profoundly brought to recognize the individual

²⁹⁸ Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, 161.

as worthy of being loved as a human person. This gift is the key that unlocks our innermost self and our fundamental task as human persons: to love others.

Let us recall the task of love for both Scheler and von Hildebrand, of which “the essence of love as an edifying and uplifting [*erbauende und aufbauende*] action in and over the world.”²⁹⁹ Here we find a fundamental parallel between Scheler and Kierkegaard: love as an essentially edifying. Love is both an emotional response to another on the basis of value and an ethico-religious act of the will. We give ourselves to other, resulting in an edifying and uplifting mutual spiritual growth. In love, we are called to this uplifting task: “If I had loved as I should have loved, then I would have been co-responsible for the growth in the power of another to love, and thus co-responsible for the greater love that he would have shown throughout his life in all of his relations with innumerable others.”³⁰⁰ The phenomenon of love, as I have shown, cannot be reserved for oneself. For love to be edifying, it must be a mutual, for-the-other, intentional *act*.

It can be spoken of both metaphysically—an ontologically real phenomenon—and in the sense of an edifying task. Love is an enduring task, “always a dynamic becoming, a growing, a welling up of things in the direction of their archetype, which resides in God.”³⁰¹ Through climbing the “ladder of love,” we ascend to new heights, recognizing the value of others as fundamentally lovable human persons. We become members of a loving community, of “persons in love,” as we participate in the world of values. We make ourselves a “gift” to others with full awareness of the fundamental moral attitudes—love, humility, reverence—and through our participation in this value-laden reality, we begin to truly understand ourselves and others as loving beings: *amo, ergo sum*.

²⁹⁹ Scheler, “Ordo Amoris,” 109.

³⁰⁰ John F. Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, 177-178.

³⁰¹ Scheler, “Ordo Amoris,” 109.

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