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**On Truth and Totalitarianism: Assessing Contemporary
Relevance of Dietrich von Hildebrand's Political Philosophy**

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Abstract:

Dietrich von Hildebrand was arguably one of the key philosophical personalities of the 20th century within Christian-personalist and realist-phenomenological circles. During 1930s in Vienna, he published a series of political essays with the primary aim to fight against National Socialism, but also to philosophically critique communism and liberalism. Due to the philosophical nature of the essays, the dissertation examines the roots of Hildebrand's thinking and attempts to put them in contemporary context. Although a part of Hildebrand's writings are contextual and depend on the historical and cultural context in which he worked, many of his ideas are transtemporal and can be used to critically evaluate today's political context. For this reason, the main purpose of the dissertation is to thoroughly examine Hildebrand's philosophical arguments against National Socialism, communism, and liberalism, and then assess whether and to what extent they are still useful for understanding the modern political phenomena.

Keywords: totalitarianism, dethronement of truth, Dietrich von Hildebrand

Podsumowanie:

Dietrich von Hildebrand był prawdopodobnie jedną z kluczowych postaci filozoficznych XX wieku z kręgów chrześcijańskich personalistów i realistów fenomenologicznych. W latach 30. opublikował w Wiedniu serię esejów politycznych, których głównym celem była walka z narodowym socjalizmem, ale także filozoficzna krytyka komunizmu i liberalizmu. Ze względu na filozoficzny charakter esejów, dysertacja analizuje korzenie myślenia Hildebranda i próbuje umieścić je we współczesnym kontekście. Chociaż część dzieła Hildebranda jest kontekstualna i zależy od kontekstu historycznego i kulturowego, w którym pracował, wiele jego idei ma charakter transtemporalny i można je wykorzystać do krytycznej oceny dzisiejszego kontekstu politycznego. Z tego powodu głównym celem dysertacji jest dogłębne zbadanie argumentów filozoficznych Hildebranda przeciwko narodowemu socjalizmowi, komunizmowi i liberalizmowi, a następnie ocena, czy i w jakim stopniu są one nadal korzystne dla zrozumienia współczesnych zjawisk politycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: totalitaryzm, detronizacja prawdy, Dietrich von Hildebrand

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Introduction

Dietrich von Hildebrand was arguably one of the key philosophical personalities of the 20th century within Christian-personalist and realist-phenomenological circles. Pope Pius XII even called him "the twentieth-century Doctor of the Church"¹. Likewise, then cardinal Joseph Ratzinger expressed his admiration of Hildebrand's work by stating: "When the intellectual history of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century is written, the name of Dietrich von Hildebrand will be most prominent among the figures of our time."²

Growing up in Munich, Hildebrand was surrounded by the great artistic sensibility of his parents. Although formally Protestant, his parents were not religious. From an early age, he was characterized by the traits which will prove decisive for his philosophical and political work, namely reverence for truth, deep contact with reality and the realization of the importance of religion. All these characteristics will be accentuated after his conversion to Catholicism in 1914. To the end of his life, the Catholic faith will remain one of the most important determinants which influenced Hildebrand's life and work.

Hildebrand always considered philosophy to be his calling. During his formative years, he had the opportunity to be privately tutored by philosophers such as Alois Fischer and Alexander Pfänder. The decisive moment in his philosophical development happened during his early University years when he met with Adolf Reinach who made a lasting impression on him. In the University of Munich, he will also meet Max Scheler, who will for several years become his best friend and a philosopher who will influence his religious conversion. Finally, transferring to Göttingen to study under Husserl, Hildebrand will fully immerse himself in the study of the phenomenological method.

Phenomenology done in a realist fashion was probably the most important philosophical root of Hildebrand's philosophy. What attracted Hildebrand to phenomenology was its refutation of psychologism, positivism, naturalism and similar relativistic and reductionist philosophies, and its realist and objectivist approach to philosophy. Hildebrand will write his doctoral dissertation under Husserl and continue to offer original contributions in phenomenology.

¹ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Trojan Horse in the City of God: The Catholic Crisis Explained* (Manchester, N.H: Sophia Institute Press, 1993), 269.

² Joseph Card. Ratzinger, 'Foreword', in *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 12.

In the 1920s, he will start working at the University of Munich. These are also the days when his first encounters with Nazism will happen. Already in 1921, the Nazis took note of Hildebrand for publicly condemning German invasion of neutral Belgium at the beginning of the World War 1 at a conference in Paris. Not long after that, Hildebrand will also learn that he is on a Nazi blacklist which meant that he will be killed in case if the National Socialist party comes to power. This was also among the chief reasons why Hildebrand needed to flee Germany in 1933 after the Nazis seized power.

He will move to Vienna where he will start a journal *Der Christliche Ständestaat* with a group of collaborators and with the financial support of the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. The journal will be published from 1933 until the annexation of Austria in 1938. In it, Hildebrand published most of his political philosophy in the form of essays. The primary aim of the journal was the fight against National Socialism, although it also attacked communism and liberalism with equal fierceness. Due to his work in *Der Christliche Ständestaat*, Hitler considered him one of the most important enemies of National Socialism in Austria.

The primary aim of Hildebrand's political essays was not to comment on daily politics, but to analyze political phenomena from first principles. This insight into the essential nature of National Socialism will enable Hildebrand to recognize its evil nature very early on, already in the early 1920s. In his works, Hildebrand provides philosophical arguments against the three mentioned political ideologies. He recognizes that National Socialism and Bolshevism are essentially the same in their philosophical precepts, although they might differ in accidental features. He also shows that there exist fundamental philosophical similarities between these two totalitarian ideologies and liberalism.

Precisely because he analyses things from first principles, Hildebrand's investigations show promising potential to be used for understanding the political situation of today. His analyses are not just relevant to understand the past, but they offer a quality method for interpreting the political phenomena in the present. More than seventy years of peace in Europe achieved that many have become accustomed to it and have started to take peace for granted. One could think that the times in which Hildebrand was writing are so radically different from today that no analogy can be drawn between them. However, recent war in Ukraine shocked the world and showed that things are not so different after all. The similarity is even more striking if we

consider Vladimir Putin's justification for entering Ukraine – the wish to “protect people who have been subjected to bullying and genocide” and to “denazify” Ukraine.³

The analogy goes beyond such obvious cases. The use of ideology to dethrone the truth and objective morality is – as we will try to show in this work – widespread in today's Western society. Even though its consequences are still not fully developed as in National Socialism and Communism, it is important to recognize these philosophical ideas early on – before they are able to wreak havoc in practice. Coupled with attempts to clothe the state will powers which overstep its legitimate boundaries, they are able to enable totalitarian inroads in today's society. Although there is no one overarching ideology which could be considered as the main danger, there are different ideological precepts on both political Left and Right which are strikingly similar to those which Hildebrand was criticizing.

For this reason, the main purpose of this dissertation will be to thoroughly examine Hildebrand's philosophical arguments against National Socialism, communism, and liberalism, and then assess whether and to what extent they are still useful for understanding the modern political phenomena.

We will start this work by analysing both the historical context in which von Hildebrand fought his political battle, as well as his personal background. Several historical contexts need to be observed to understand the situation in which Hildebrand wrote his political essays. Firstly, there is the general situation in Europe between two World Wars in which the majority of the continent was involved. It is also important to observe how several important ideas which Hildebrand opposes, like nationalism, racism and antisemitism were spreading not just in Germany but worldwide. Then there is the specific situation in Germany where the National Socialism came to being and where Hildebrand lived and worked until emigrating to Austria. Finally, there is the political situation in Austria where the most important part of Hildebrand's political work happened. Since Hildebrand's work is strongly related to this political situation, it is necessary to examine the context in which he writes.

All this will provide the background for understanding the situation in which Hildebrand lived and worked before and during the years in which his political activism was happening. We will

³ Cf. Andrew Osborn and Polina Nikolskaya, 'Russia's Putin Authorises "special Military Operation" against Ukraine', *Reuters*, 24 February 2022, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-putin-authorises-military-operations-donbass-domestic-media-2022-02-24/>.

also elucidate important events in Hildebrand's life and work which will help us understand the background in which his philosophical ideas emerged.

In the second chapter, we will provide a longer exposition of Hildebrand's phenomenological approach to philosophy and the main ideas and authors who influenced him in this regard. A special analysis will be reserved for his three biggest influences: Husserl, Scheler, and Reinach. Although Hildebrand shares many commonalities with the early realist phenomenologists, he is an original thinker who furthers the research in phenomenology, so his main philosophical ideas need to be examined in their own respect.

This we will do in the third chapter where we will examine the central concepts of Hildebrand's personalism, namely, person, value, love, and community. Since Hildebrand never developed a full political philosophy of his own, the understanding of these concepts stands as a prerequisite for understanding his political writings. These ideas can be considered as anthropological, ethical and socio-ontological foundations of the political philosophy he never fully developed.

In the fourth chapter, we will go deeper into Hildebrand's political thought, first by providing the general context of his work, and then analysing in detail his arguments against National Socialism, communism, and liberalism. A special part of this chapter will be dedicated to the clarification of Hildebrand's positions towards authoritarianism and fascism, which remain controversial to this day, and which are sometimes used to blur the truly original and quality contributions of Hildebrand's philosophy.

Finally, the most important contribution of this dissertation will be to assess the contemporary relevance of Hildebrand's philosophy, which we will attempt to do in the last chapter. In this part, we will use the insights gained from analysing Hildebrand's philosophy in the earlier chapters and apply them to the analysis of the political situation of today. Our special focus will be to investigate whether there are the same erroneous political ideas that Hildebrand recognized in his day still present in today's society. More concretely, we will investigate whether and in which form today exists the dethronement of truth, negation of objective morality, anti-personalism, instrumentalization of religion, omnipotence of the state and deification of the collective – the traits which Hildebrand recognizes as cores ideas behind the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century. We will also examine how the potential totalitarian tendencies relate to the modern liberal-democratic society in which we live in.

In conclusion, we will offer judgement on whether Hildebrand's political philosophy sheds light on the complex political situation we live in today. If the answer proves positive, this will also give the impetus for further applications of realist phenomenology in general and Hildebrandian philosophy in particular to the field of political philosophy.

1. Context of Dietrich von Hildebrand's Political Struggle

1.1. Historical Background

1.1.1. Political and Economic Situation in Europe After World War I

When World War I was declared, there was a widespread enthusiasm among people in Berlin, Paris, St. Petersburg and elsewhere. People were signing patriotic hymns and there were celebratory demonstrations urging for war.⁴ Hitler was among those who shared the enthusiasm of the coming war.⁵ The enthusiasm would not last for long. The tiresome and long war brought all optimism to an end.

In June 1918, the German army was militarily defeated. Both the Spring and Summer offensives failed, only in the last four months of the war 385.000 German soldiers surrendered – more than in the previous four years altogether and it was estimated that 750.000 million soldiers deserted the Army only from August 1918.⁶ Still, the German citizens were not aware of this since propaganda at home concealed the truth and persisted in the campaign which accepted peace only in the case of victory. German generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff were jointly fighting against Russians in World War I in which they achieved important victories. Both were fully aware of the coming defeat and knew that the negotiations need to be lead before the full collapse of the German army happens and becomes fully visible. They started to manoeuvre to shift the blame from the military to the political forces in favour of parliamentary democracy, especially the Socialist Left.⁷ This was the root of the later widespread legend that Germany was not defeated on the battlefield and that it was stabbed in the back by the socialist traitors at home who were fuelling the worker's unrest.

Majority of Germans in fact did not believe that Germany was militarily defeated. During the War there was mostly no destruction happening in Germany itself. When peace was agreed upon there were no foreign soldiers on German territory and the German forces still occupied Luxembourg and the bigger part of Belgium. When the German soldiers returned from the front, they were welcomed with flags and flowers and the Prussian war ministry announced that the heroes are returning home undefeated.⁸

⁴ Kershaw, 42-43.

⁵ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 51.

⁶ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 89.

⁷ Cf. Kershaw, 65.

⁸ Kershaw, 125.

The Socialist Left used the problems on the front not just to demand the stop of the war and signing of peace treaties, but also changing the political system in order to establish democratic parliamentary government.⁹ This happened after Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated in November 1918 and the Republic was declared from the Reichstag's balcony in Berlin. The new chancellor became the Socialist Friedrich Ebert. At the same time, a significant number of people on the political right and in military leadership viewed democracy as the biggest calamity for Germany and blamed the Socialists for bringing about the shameful peace treaty.¹⁰ Nazis were equally outraged by the situation and later used every opportunity to attack the "November criminals" who were used as scapegoats for the defeat in 1919, for the Versailles treaty, for inflation.¹¹ Hatred for those "miserable and degenerated criminals" was one of the chief reasons which motivated Hitler to enter politics.

After World War 1, Germany deeply resented the way in which it was treated by the Allies. Both Italy and Germany were enraged due to the loss of territory after the war (Italy, even though on the side of the victors, was denied the territories of Yugoslavia to which she had pretensions).¹² The conditions of the Versailles Treaty of 1919 were extremely hard for Germany, and they shocked the German population even more considering that the military defeat was not obvious to them. The terms were laid down by the Allies without negotiations with Germany who was not invited to Paris peace talks.¹³ Germany lost 13 percent of its territory in Europe and around 10 percent of its pre-war population of 65 million people. The area of Saarland near the French border was demilitarized and put under the governing rule of the League of Nations, and in a similar manner the Allies occupied the Rhineland for a period of fifteen years. German army was reduced from 4,5 million reserves in 1918 to only 100.000 people, and the general military conscription was prohibited. The German navy was reduced to 15.000 people and Germany was prohibited from possessing submarines and air force.¹⁴

The biggest rage among Germans was caused by the article 231 of the Treaty which stated that Germany and its allies bear the guilt for war.¹⁵ This was a basis for demanding reparations by

⁹ Kershaw, 89.

¹⁰ Kershaw, 91.

¹¹ Cf. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, Based on an Abridgement Prepared by Reader's Digest (London: Bison Group, 1995), 21; Franz Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009), 30.

¹² Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 4.

¹³ Cf. Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands, Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Penguin Random House, 2005), 7; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 31.

¹⁴ Cf. Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 126.

¹⁵ Kershaw, 127.

the Allies, which were established on the level of 132 billion Golden Marks. Economic sanctions were severe but were not irreparable since in the long run they could be paid off without crippling the German economy. The damage was primarily political. The anger and the calls to revise the Treaty of Versailles will later give fuel to the rise of National Socialism in Germany.

At the same time in Italy, the situation was ripe for fascism to emerge. In 1919 Mussolini declared the program of the Fascist movement and in 1921 he formally founded the National fascist party. It was revolutionary in its precepts, and it advocated for overthrowing the existing regime. It wanted to dispense with the Senate and the Monarchy, and to establish a new Italian republic. In 1922 Mussolini was ready to abolish the demand for dispensing with the Monarchy and establishing the Republic. The famous March on Rome which would lead to Mussolini being appointed as prime minister happened on October 28, 1922.

The March on Rome was in fact not a “march”. The King was misinformed that after the resignation of the government, the Fascist militia of 100.000 men was marching towards Rome. In fact, there were only 20.000 weakly armed people which the Army could have dispelled if it wanted. When the final attempt to form a liberal government failed, the King invited Mussolini to become the prime minister.¹⁶ Mussolini did not owe his success only to Blackshirts, because the ruling liberal politicians had offered Mussolini the premiership even before the militia arrived in Rome.¹⁷ The first government was a broad coalition of liberal, nationalist, democrat and people’s parties, besides Mussolini and three Fascist ministers. Only later in 1925 did Mussolini manage to establish the dictatorship through a combination of political violence and tactics. Mussolini’s triumph provided inspiration and a role-model for Hitler. He was reported saying: “So will it be with us. We only have to have the courage to act. Without struggle, no victory!”¹⁸

The triumph of Bolshevism after 1917 was another important historical fact which shaped the life of Europe between world wars.¹⁹ Bolshevist party in its beginnings did not enjoy the

¹⁶ Kershaw, 147.

¹⁷ Cf. Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

¹⁸ Kershaw, *Hitler*, 111.

¹⁹ Socialism and communism were growing already from the late 19th century, and especially from 1889 when the “Second International” was founded as an umbrella organization for the coordination of the Socialist programs and demands. Most of these parties remained loyal to the revolutionary ideas of Marx and Engels, especially in the demand to expropriate the capitalist class and the to establish a new classless society, which had a strong appeal among the industrial working class which suffered from poverty and want. In most of the European countries, Socialist parties and movements were loud and were amassing bigger and bigger support. Cf. Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 14–15.

support of the majority of the working class in Russia but it had a strong, unified and fanatical leadership and the program which was not content with merely throwing down the old regime but also building a completely new society.²⁰ Bolshevism showed its nature already early in 1918, by invoking the popular terror, killing the “kulaks”, shedding of bourgeois blood and radically stifling any opposition. In 1922, the system felt strong enough to attack religion and destroy the influence of the Orthodox Church. Lenin demanded the merciless war against clerics, and already in that time the State Security Police, the Cheka, developed the unlimited power.²¹ Bolshevik aggressive anti-bourgeois policies directed against the capitalists, the middle class, peasants, and other class enemies, created the strong social polarization by dividing the society, including the political Left, to the Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik camps.²² Nazism and Fascism also used the anti-Bolshevik tendencies to mobilize mass support.

Another important factor which determined the historical currents after World War 1 was a severe economic crisis which struck most of the European countries. Inflation was growing after the War. Food in Germany was almost eight times more expensive in 1921 than immediately after the War, and in 1922 it became 130 times more expensive.²³ In April 1921, the Allies announced the demand for reparations from Germany amounting to 33 billion dollars, which Germans claimed they could not pay and which in turn led to depreciation of the mark.²⁴ After a short period of growth of industrial production and fall of unemployment rates between 1920 and 1922, in 1923 things again worsened. The hyperinflation was combined with the political crisis due to the French occupation of Ruhr; American dollar which was valued at 4,20 German marks, in 1923 was worth 44,2 billion marks.²⁵

Between the inflationary crisis in the early 1920's and the deflationary crisis of the 1930's there was a short-term economic boom. However, the boom was not founded on solid grounds. The two crises of 1920's and 1930's, separated only by a short span of time, were characterized by an economic and social decline in which poverty and fear from want were widespread and were fuelling the political extremism.²⁶ Economic crisis was combined with the crisis of political legitimacy which was further strengthened by ideological clashes and deep cultural divides

²⁰ Cf. Kershaw, 86.

²¹ Cf. Kershaw, 118.

²² The coalition between Social Democrats and Communist became possible only after Stalin and the Komintern in 1934 abandoned the position that Social Democrats are 'Social-Fascists' and started actively supporting the collaboration with Social Democrats to jointly oppose the Fascist threat. Cf. Kershaw, 317.

²³ Kershaw, *Hitler*, 108.

²⁴ Cf. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 30.

²⁵ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 103–4.

²⁶ Cf. Kershaw, 5.

which unveiled the weakness of political elites with regards to mass political mobilization.²⁷ Parties were more concerned by their special interests than the national ones. Governmental authority in general was weak and it represented a relatively easy target for the attacks of mass political movements.

On October 24, 1929, the stock market crashed. Global economic conditions again worsened and in Germany it was especially felt. Registered unemployment in January 1932 counted six million people, with around two million more of the so-called invisible unemployed.²⁸ Production fell by almost half from 1929 to 1932 and number of banks collapsed.²⁹ Both the National Socialist and the Communist Party increased their support in these conditions.

Cumulative attribution of these different factors was able to produce an acute crisis which will bring Europe and the World at the brink of destruction. In Germany, those factors were most strongly at play and Adolf Hitler proposed to counter them with force. After NSDAP came to power in 1933, the economic recovery started and lasted until the World War II. Part of the reason was that the Great Depression reached its bottom in 1932 and economic cycle could only go up from that point. Still, Germany recovered faster than the world average.³⁰ Nazi government also made sure that the recovery is visible to the people. Investing in military and automotive industry, opening jobs, building roads and buildings, were among the policies that the government initiated. Government spending doubled from 1933 to 1936 and the economic growth was steadily directed to rearmament and building the military power of Germany.³¹

Parliamentary system after World War 1 in most countries of South, Central and Eastern Europe was characterized by instability where a big number of parties gathered support from different parts of the society and entered the parliaments. With such big number of parties and the fragmented political body, it was hard to establish a functioning government. By the early 1930s, democracy in Europe remained stable only in North and West Europe and in most of other European countries, it was replaced by authoritarianism of one kind or another.³² By 1939 more Europeans lived in authoritarian regimes than in democracy.³³ Rejection of parliamentary democracy in the 1920s and 1930s was widespread in Europe both among the military,

²⁷ Cf. Kershaw, 6.

²⁸ Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, 30.

²⁹ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 48.

³⁰ Cf. Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 239.

³¹ Cf. Kershaw, 241.

³² Cf. Kershaw, 196.

³³ Cf. Kershaw, 277.

bureaucracy, the churches, as well as among many intellectuals.³⁴ National Socialism, fascism and communism were on the rise.

1.1.2. The Rise of National Socialism

After World War 1, numerous small parties emerged in Germany. One of them was German Worker's Party. In 1919, on one occasion Adolf Hitler was sent as an informant of the Army to report on a meeting of the German Worker's Party in Munich. Hitler considered the party to be a "boring organization", no different from many other smaller parties emerging in Munich at that time.³⁵ During the meeting, Hitler entered a debate with an invited guest, from which he emerged as a victor. This impressed the party's chairman who invited Hitler to return and join the new movement. Hitler did return mostly out of curiosity, even though he was appalled by the small-mindedness of the organization. In September 1919, Hitler joined the Party and became its 555th member (and not the 7th as he later claimed in *Mein Kampf*).³⁶

Hitler's rhetorical talent made him more and more visible in the political meetings in Munich and gave him prominence among the crowds. There, he was promoting the *völkisch* ideas which were in circulation at that time, mostly focused on the notion of specifically *German* or *national* socialism coupled with an attack on "Jewish capitalism".³⁷ In 1920, together with the leader of the party Anton Drexler, Hitler devised the twenty-five points of the party's programme³⁸ and later that year the party was renamed to National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP). Hitler became the leader of the NSDAP in 1921. He was able to attract the masses like no one else and the Party steadily grew, mostly in Bavaria. From 2000 members in the early 1921, it grew to 20000 in the Fall of 1922.³⁹ The economic crisis of 1923 and the French occupation of Ruhr area further strengthened Hitler's capacities to mobilize the mass based on nationalist and anti-government sentiments.

³⁴ Cf. Gerhard Senft, 'Economic Development and Economic Policies in the Ständestaat Era', in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria, A Reassessment*, Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, Alexander Lassner (eds.), vol. XI, Contemporary Austrian Studies (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 16.

³⁵ Kershaw, *Hitler*, 75.

³⁶ Kershaw, 76.

³⁷ Kershaw, 81.

³⁸ Some of the points in the programme were union of all Germans in a Greater Germany, exclusion of Jews from the citizenship, press and the public office, abolition of incomes unearned by work, nationalization of trusts, the sharing with the state of profits from large industry, abolishing the land rents, death penalty for usurers, traitors and profiteers, abolition of the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain and the creation of the strong central power of the State. Cf. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 23.

³⁹ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 151.

The post-war years were filled with attempts to initiate uprisings and overthrow the government. The socialist left in favour of democracy became increasingly fearful of the new Bolshevist revolution and it reached the agreement with the Army leadership to jointly fight off the Bolshevist threat.⁴⁰ Both the communist left and the nationalist right were against the democracy, and they wanted to overthrow the government. The nationalist right initiated the Kapp putsch in 1920, while the communists initiated the Spartacist Uprising in 1919 and the uprising in Saxony and Thuringia in 1921, among others.⁴¹ All of them were defeated by the government but the democracy became increasingly unstable.

Hitler initiated his own putsch in a beer hall in Munich on November 8, 1923.⁴² There Hitler, Ludendorff and their men kidnapped the Bavarian state commissioner Kahr, head of the state police Seisser, and commander of the Bavarian Reichswehr Lossow. The triumvirate did not succumb under pressure to abdicate and support the putsch, but Hitler managed to convince the crowds in the beer hall that they did. However, the putsch finally failed the next morning when the police opened fire on the Nazi column of around 3000 storm troopers. Hitler escaped the scene but two days later he was arrested. He used the trial to promote his ideas. Finally, he was sentenced to five years in prison but was released less than nine months later.⁴³ He also used the time in prison to write the first volume of his book *Mein Kampf*.

Even though the putsch failed, Hitler was a hero in the eyes of many. The failure of the putsch also marked the transition of NSDAP to more legal means of political struggle. Although National Socialist were against parliamentary democracy, they used it to gain political power. From then on, National Socialism has “utilized liberal democratic forms where they could be useful in attaining certain objectives”⁴⁴.

The political crisis was mostly over in 1924 but the underlying reasons for discontent remained. In 1925, the Locarno pact was signed through which Germany, France and Belgium provided mutual non-aggression assurances, and Italy and Great Britain were guarantors of the agreement. The pact made Germany to accept its Western borders (including the loss of Alsace-

⁴⁰ Kershaw, 151.

⁴¹ Kershaw, 153.

⁴² Cf. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 36–42; The direct inspiration for the putsch was Mussolini’s ‘March on Rome’. Cf. Snyder, *Bloodlands, Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, 15.

⁴³ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 42.

⁴⁴ Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, 150.

Lorraine) and the demilitarized Rhineland zone, in exchange for being able to join the League of Nations in 1926.⁴⁵

After 1923, the NSDAP was mostly a fringe party. By the end of 1925, the party had only 27000 members.⁴⁶ In 1927, one observer noted that the Nazis are nothing else than “the fraction incapable of any kind of influence on the majority population or on the stream of political events.”⁴⁷ In the parliamentary elections of 1928, NSDAP got only 2,6 percent of votes and the Social Democrats formed the government in coalition with two Catholic and two liberal parties. This unstable coalition ended in 1930. In the elections of 1930, NSDAP rose to 18,3 percent support and it became the second strongest party in Reichstag.

Crisis of political legitimacy came to a peak during the years 1928-1932. No single party or a coalition could form the government for a longer period. In 1932, three elections were held within five months. On the elections of July 31, 1932, NSDAP rose to 37% support and became the largest individual party in Germany.⁴⁸ It also had 850.000 members and the S.A. had 400.000 members who were not all members of the Party.⁴⁹

On January 30, 1933, President Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor, after series of unsuccessful attempts to form the stable government. Soon after Hitler started banning the press and meetings of the opposing parties and restricting freedoms in general. The Reichstag fire which happened on February 27 was used by the Nazis to construct the story that the Communists initiated it. The idea of the fire was likely initiated by Goebbels and Goering, although all the details of how it happened are not known to this day.⁵⁰ Hitler used the fire to urge the President to suspend several individual and civil liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. Since the government was formed together with conservatives and nationalists, Hitler was eager to call new elections and atmosphere of insecurity caused by the fire gave a perfect opportunity. In March 1933 new elections took place and NSDAP made a sweeping victory with 43.9% of votes.⁵¹ This opened the doors for Hitler to assume dictatorial power. In the weeks that followed, he maneuvered the Parliament to turn over their constitutional powers to him, which ended parliamentary democracy and enabled Hitler to rule by decree. By July 1933, only party one could be a member of was NSDAP and in November new elections were

⁴⁵ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 192.

⁴⁶ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 45.

⁴⁷ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 205.

⁴⁸ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 56.

⁴⁹ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 226.

⁵⁰ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, 65.

⁵¹ Cf. Snyder, *Bloodlands, Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, 17.

staged in which only Nazi candidates could run and win.⁵² Now Hitler and NSDAP could rule unhindered. In 1934, Hitler ordered the purge of Röhm, the leader of SA and his circle of associates. This will later be known as “The Night of the Long Knives”. In it, Hitler used one branch of Nazi paramilitary, the SS, to master the other, the SA.⁵³ The SS were later going to become the true “ideological soldiers” carrying the purges in the occupied lands.

Already in 1933, Germany left the League of Nations and soon after initiated rearmament. In 1935, Hitler felt strong enough to declare – despite the Treaty of Versailles – the establishment of new Wehrmacht around 550.000 men strong, as well as the establishment of the new and stronger air force.⁵⁴ Military expansion was still not needed in 1938 when the Third Reich “peacefully” annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia. The main justification was that of uniting the ethnic German community. On July 11, 1936, a so-called gentlemen’s agreement was concluded between Germany and Austria, which was used by the German government as a means of exercising pressure on Kurt von Schuschnigg’s government in Vienna. Hitler sought to preserve the facade of legality while applying political pressure under the threat, but without the overt use of force. On February 12, 1938, Schuschnigg, the Austrian chancellor, was bullied into accepting far-reaching demands during an interview with Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Upon returning to Austria, Schuschnigg decided to hold a referendum about whether Austria should join the Third Reich, which forced Hitler to act quickly. On March 12, 1938, German troops occupied Austria 24 hours before the referendum was due to be held. After entering Vienna, Hitler declared “the return of my homeland into the German Reich”.⁵⁵ On the occasion of the annexation, the Western powers mildly protested but were incapable of making significant action.

Hitler also used the argument of ethnic unity to claim that the three million Germans of Czechoslovakia and the regions they inhabited should be allowed to unite with Germany.⁵⁶ At a conference in Munich, Britain, France and Italy agreed to let Germany annex the Western part of the country where most of those Germans lived. Believing that Hitler only wanted the annexation of Sudetenland and not the occupation of the whole Czechoslovakia, after the first

⁵² Snyder, 63.

⁵³ Cf. Snyder, 76.

⁵⁴ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 269.

⁵⁵ Kershaw, 345.

⁵⁶ Snyder, *Bloodlands, Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, 109.

round of talks with Hitler in Munich, the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain privately said that Hitler is “a man whose word can be trusted”.⁵⁷ This later proved catastrophically false.

The relation of the Christian churches towards Nazism was mixed. Part of the Protestant clergy believed that Germany needs a “true statesman” different from mere politicians of the Weimar Republic and saw Hitler’s ascension to power as a start of the national revival and the renewal of faith.⁵⁸ There was also a Nazi wing of the Protestant church called “German Christians” which rejected the Old Testament as Jewish and understood themselves as assailants of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, this position was not able to take a stronger foothold in the Protestant Church in Germany. In 1934, a group of priests in Barmen rejected the heresy of the “German Christians” and declared the doctrine of subordination of Church to the state as false. Still, behind the Barmen declaration stood only a minority of Protestant clergy, while the majority supported Hitler and some theologians even tried to provide a doctrinary justification of antisemitism, racism, and the National Socialist regime.

Shortly after Hitler came to power and promised to respect the Catholic Church’s rights and institutions, the concordat between Vatican and the Third Reich was signed even though from the beginning it was clear that Hitler’s regime will be hostile to the Church. Attacks on the Church’s institutions started already before the concordat, the Catholic Centre Party was dissolved, the big Catholic youth movement was prohibited, Church press and Church processions were banned, the priests were terrorized and arrested, and the Church was exposed to constant violence – between 1933 and 1937, the Vatican protested over seventy times for violating the concordat.⁵⁹ This unfortunately could not stop the coming disaster.

The Church eventually condemned many aspects of the National Socialist ideology and practice in the 1938 encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge (With burning concern)* of Pius XI.⁶⁰ The encyclical reiterated the principles of the Catholic faith and criticized the National Socialist instrumentalization of religion and fabrication of morality. It also established that morality and natural law are superior to temporal decrees. Finally, the encyclical addressed different sections of the German faithful.

⁵⁷ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 347.

⁵⁸ Cf. Kershaw, 457.

⁵⁹ Cf. Kershaw, 459.

⁶⁰ Pope Pius XI, ‘Mit Brennender Sorge, Encyclical on the Church and the German Reich to the Venerable Brethren the Archbishops and Bishops of Germany and Other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See’, 14 March 1937, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge.html.

The German government's reaction to the encyclical was immediate. Two days after its release, minister for church affairs Hanns Kerrl wrote a letter in which he charged the German bishops with violating their oaths of loyalty signed under a concordat. He also closed two publishing houses that printed the encyclical and further prohibited the printing, reproduction, and distribution of the encyclical.⁶¹ On the ideological level, the Reich responded with accusations that the Church engaged in political Catholicism.⁶²

Despite this, the priests were able to read the encyclical to the faithful on Palm Sunday, March 21. In a letter to Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli, Cardinal Faulhaber expressed that “the letter was listened to by the people with tense concentration and visible emotion. In spite of bad weather, the parishioners came to the parish church from the mountains and the remote farms. In some parishes, the pastor read the whole letter on Palm Sunday morning and even in this case, the faithful stayed in the church—without exception—until the end.”⁶³ On the other hand, some priests expressed the difficulty of interpreting the letter to the faithful.⁶⁴

Although the encyclical initially created waves of reactions among the people and the opposition by the Reich government, the relations between the Church and the state in Germany were not changed in significant ways.⁶⁵ The National Socialists continued to antagonize the Church in Germany, with fabricated morality trials against the clergy, prohibiting Catholic associations, schools and press, launching vicious attacks in the media, etc.⁶⁶ However, the National Socialists did not completely disable the Church. Sacraments were still available, and parishes remained open, while services and pilgrimages were well attended. In the same year, around 108,000 people left the Church (almost double than the year before) although it is difficult to assess to what extent this was due to the influence of the encyclical.

1.1.3. Origins of Nationalism and Racism

Nationalism of the Third Reich was of the racial sort. Establishment of a racial community was a cornerstone of National Socialist policies. Already in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler justified the reasons why Austria “must return to the great German mother country” in racial terms. His main reason

⁶¹ Cf Alexandra Valdez, ‘Mit Brennender Sorge. An Exegesis on the Encyclical to the Third Reich’, *Elements* 10, Spring (n.d.): 15.

⁶² Cf. William M. Harrigan, ‘Pius XII’s Efforts to Effect a Détente in German-Vatican Relations, 1939-1940’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 49, Nr. 2 (1963): 175.

⁶³ Cited in: Valdez, ‘Mit Brennender Sorge. An Exegesis on the Encyclical to the Third Reich’, 15.

⁶⁴ Cf. Valdez, 16.

⁶⁵ Cf. Valdez, 16.

⁶⁶ Cf. Harrigan, ‘Pius XII’s Efforts to Effect a Détente in German-Vatican Relations, 1939-1940’, 176.

was that “one blood demands one Reich”.⁶⁷ However, nationalism was not a unique feature of the National Socialist ideology. Increase of ethnic and racist nationalism was a common thing in the decades between two world wars. Loss of belief in religion was arguably one of the reasons for the rise of nationalism. As one author said in 1932: “Nationalism is a new religion. People do not go to church. They are going to nationalist rallies.”⁶⁸ Nationalism as a political movement was in most countries torn by its internal divides, but at the same time it was strong enough to demand the loud and aggressive external policy.

What contributed to the rise of nationalism was the disintegration of the Austrian-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the huge violence of the Russian civil war which came after the Revolution.⁶⁹ From the ruins of the Austrian-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian empires new nation-states came into being with collage-like territories and in very inhospitable circumstances. Creators of the Versailles Treaty of 1919 were faced with the almost impossible challenge to reconcile the territorial demands of new states which emerged from the old empires. Ethnic minorities usually constituted a large percentage of the population in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe which was potentially a destabilizing factor in the region. They were often discriminated by the majority population and their demands were often unmet.

Nationalist hatred was often directed towards Jews as scapegoats for the general misery which shaped the European continent between the wars.⁷⁰ More Jews lived in Central and Eastern Europe, they were less socially integrated and belonged to lower strata of society than in the Western Europe so the areas of Central and Eastern Europe – much more than Germany itself – were influenced by traditional antisemitism. However, antisemitism did not originate with nationalism. Throughout the 19th century there was widespread a certain kind of popular antisemitism which was influenced by the socio-economic grievances towards Jews as they were expanding their influence in business and cultural life. These grievances later became articulated in the form of accusation of Jews for any kind of economic problem.⁷¹ Economic crisis which emerged after the War directed the hatred of lower classes towards capitalists and the financial class, and it was easily diverted towards Jews who were proverbially depicted as

⁶⁷ Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)* (Fairborne Publishing, The Colchester Collection, n.d.), 9, <https://www.colchestercollection.com/>.

⁶⁸ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 452.

⁶⁹ Cf. Kershaw, 2.

⁷⁰ Cf. Kershaw, 2–3.

⁷¹ Cf. Kershaw, 20.

exploiters of the masses and the embodiment of financial capital.⁷² Economic dissatisfaction merged with anti-Jewish stereotypes were already present in the minds of the many.

Within the Church throughout history there were also occurrences of antisemitism based on theological errors. Pope John Paul II describes it vividly: “Sentiments of anti-Judaism in some Christian quarters, and the gap which existed between the Church and the Jewish people, led to a generalized discrimination, which ended at times in expulsions or attempts at forced conversions. In a large part of the "Christian" world, at the end of the 18th century, those who were not Christian did not always enjoy a fully guaranteed juridical status. Despite that fact, Jews throughout Christendom held on to their religious traditions and communal customs. They were therefore looked upon with a certain suspicion and mistrust. In times of crisis such as famine, war, pestilence or social tensions, the Jewish minority was sometimes taken as a scapegoat and became the victim of violence, looting, even massacres.”⁷³

Although the Church later explicitly condemned the theological errors that underpinned antisemitism within the Church⁷⁴, still many Catholics did not protest against Hitler’s antisemitism due to the antisemitic sentiments present also within some Church circles. This also shows why Hildebrand’s position is important for paving a new way for correct understanding of Christian-Jewish relationships in difficult times.⁷⁵

With regards to the popular antisemitism, three major themes can be found in antisemitic writings which later were also adopted by the National Socialists. The first identifies Jews with capitalism and economic exploitation, the second considers them to be leaders of Marxist Socialism, and the third (drawing inspiration from the forged book called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) puts them at the centre of the world conspiracy for the destruction of Aryanism.⁷⁶ Later, the list of accusations against Jews was expanded by the National Socialists.

⁷² Cf. Kershaw, 82.

⁷³ Pope John Paul II, ‘We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah’, 12 March 1998, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19980312_shoah.html.

⁷⁴ See documents: Pope John Paul II; Pope Paul VI, ‘Nostra Aetate. Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions’, 28 October 1965, para. 4, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

⁷⁵ For further reference, see: Franz König and Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich, *Juden und Christen haben eine Zukunft* (Zürich: Pendo, 1988).

⁷⁶ Cf. Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, 111.

One was the claim of inherent criminality of Jews which was used to justify many anti-Jewish policies.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the popular antisemitism became much more dangerous when in the later part of the 19th century it became coupled with biologist racism which wanted to “scientifically prove” that Jews are different “by their blood” and so this could not be changed. Antisemitic rhetoric was gruesome; Jews were regularly described with bacteriological metaphors and were compared to beasts in human form.⁷⁸ Terms like “bacilli”, “leeches”, “parasites” were often used in the process of dehumanization and consequently legitimizing the exterminations.⁷⁹

Hitler himself adopted antisemitic views during his Vienna years just before the World War I, and later explained it in significant detail in his book *Mein Kampf*. In his first written statement on this issue published in 1919, he advocates for the rational approach to the Jewish question which would aim at the systematic removal of Jews altogether.⁸⁰ In 1939, just before the outbreak of World War II, Hitler explicated his infamous prophecy: “If the Jews plunge Europe into war, the result will be their annihilation in Europe”.⁸¹

A systematic approach to the destruction of Jews is visible in the Nationalist Socialist treatment of this question when they were at the peak of their rule. For example, the Night of the Broken Glass happened in 1938 in which more than 7000 stores have been ransacked and the SA sent its formations to burn all synagogues in the country. Propaganda Minister Goebbels wanted the NSDAP to organize and execute violence, but not to appear outwardly as the architect of it. However, many voices inside party, such as those of Himmler, Göring and Funk strictly opposed such approach. They considered it irresponsible, messy, and harmful to the economy. They favoured the planned and systematic approach to the Jewish question. Hitler agreed that such acts were not to be repeated and that from now on the elimination of Jews is to be executed in a planned and systematic manner by the state.⁸²

National Socialism was the first movement to advocate for the complete destruction of the Jews. Still, the complete destruction was only part of a wider plan which aimed at “the

⁷⁷ Here, again, a forged book was used to create the story. It was the book *The Jewish Ritual Murders* which collected all the legends of the Jewish ritual murders. Cf. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2019), 656–57.

⁷⁸ Cf. Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 20.

⁷⁹ Cf. Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*, 111.

⁸⁰ Cf. Kershaw, *Hitler*, 74–75.

⁸¹ Cf. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 257.

⁸² Cf. Hilberg, 23–30.

purification of the German blood”,⁸³ and which employed eugenics against wider groups of “unfit” people. In Weimar Germany, the laws were drafted to allow the voluntary sterilization of people with hereditary diseases in 1932, before the Nazis came to power. Hitler’s government made further steps in 1933 by making obligatory the sterilization of people with hereditary diseases, with physical deformation and chronic alcoholism. Later, 400.000 people were affected by this law.⁸⁴ These practices were not limited to Germany; most Scandinavian countries brought similar laws under which tens of thousands of people were sterilized, and in the US before World War II around 42.000 citizens which were deemed mentally unfit were sterilized.⁸⁵

In 1935, the Third Reich promulgated the so-called Nuremberg laws to “maintain the purity of the German blood”. The laws prohibited marriages between Jews and German citizens “of German or racially similar blood”; non-Aryans who had one or more Jewish grandparents could marry among each other only with consent of the ministry; Jews were not permitted to display official flags or to exhibit their colours in any way, etc.⁸⁶ The nationality act of the same year went a step further and excluded the Jews from the possibility of being citizens of the Third Reich and enjoying political rights.⁸⁷ To remove Jews from the economic life, the primary policy was the aryanization of the Jewish property.⁸⁸

In 1938, Italy brought the anti-Jewish laws, even though they were not officially requested by Germany. The laws rested on the premise that “Jews do not belong to Italian race”.⁸⁹ Even though antisemitism was not an essential part of the fascist ideology, Italy wanted to appease Germany and so it brought these laws. These policies excluded the Jews from membership in the civil service, the army and the party, and from ownership of armament firms or any enterprise employing more than hundred Italians; marriages between Jews and Italians were forbidden, Jews were forbidden to own real estate in excess of a certain amount, etc.⁹⁰ In 1939, a new law was passed which said that all foreign and denaturalized Jews, except those older than 65 or living in a mixed marriage, should leave Italy.⁹¹

⁸³ Cf. Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, 111.

⁸⁴ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 221.

⁸⁵ Kershaw.

⁸⁶ Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, 113.

⁸⁷ Neumann, 115–16.

⁸⁸ Neumann, 116–20.

⁸⁹ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 299.

⁹⁰ Cf. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 423.

⁹¹ Cf. Hilberg, 424.

In 1939, the Third Reich started the “action euthanasia” which was directed to the destruction of “racial degenerates”. By 1941, around 70.000 inmates of mental asylums were killed. After the condemnation by the Bishop of Munich, “action euthanasia” in mental hospitals was halted, only to be transferred to the secrecy of concentration camps where ultimately the number of “euthanasia” victims rose to estimated 200.000 people.⁹²

Eugenics was not just German fact at that time, but the hopes of creating new elites and stimulating the national revival were present worldwide. The influential scientists promoted eugenics both because of concerns of the reduced natality and because of wanting to improve the “quality” of the population.⁹³ Eugenics society of Britain was established in 1926 and quickly grew to 800 members, mostly intellectual and political elite. Similar societies were established in Scandinavia, Spain, USSR and elsewhere. For example, in 1922 in Uppsala, the Swedish Institute for racial biology was established. Already in 1920, legal expert Karl Binding and psychiatrist Alfred Hoche argued that “the destruction of the life unworthy of living” should be permitted by law. In Great Britain, the botanist Marie Stopes promoted birth control to improve the quality of population; but the eugenic movement was supported also by other leading intellectuals, such as John Maynard Keynes, George Bernard Shaw and Aldous Huxley.⁹⁴ So, racism and eugenics should not be viewed as “isolated incidents” limited to Nazi and fascist ideology. As Hildebrand will clearly show, they were rooted in anti-personalism present in different ideologies, including communism and liberalism.

1.1.4. From The First Austrian Republic to the Annexation

Hildebrand did most of his political activism in Vienna within the political regime of Engelbert Dollfuss. To understand how Dollfuss’ corporate state was established, we will try to briefly sketch the constellation of political forces in The First Austrian Republic from 1920 to 1934. During these years, four major political forces were the Social Democrats, the Christian Social Party (CSP), Greater German People’s Party (*Großdeutsche Volkspartei*, GDVP), and the right-wing paramilitary force, *Heimwehr*.⁹⁵

⁹² Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 377.

⁹³ Cf. Kershaw, 188.

⁹⁴ Kershaw, 220.

⁹⁵ Cf. Helmut Wohnout, ‘A Chancellorial Dictatorship with a “Corporative” Pretext: The Austrian Constitution Between 1934 and 1938’, in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria, A Reassessment*, Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, Alexander Lassner (eds.), vol. XI, Contemporary Austrian Studies (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 74.

There were two main parties on the political Right: CSP (Dollfuss' party) which espoused a form of Christian conservatism, and GDVP which encompassed a network of secular liberal and national groups.⁹⁶ As for the relation to Nazism, CSP never aligned itself to Nazism, while the GDVP in rural areas was closer to the *völkisch* tradition close to National Socialist ideology. CSP was the majority party in the government during most of the 1920s and GDVP was its junior partner. Ignaz Seipel, a priest and a politician whom Hildebrand greatly admired,⁹⁷ was the CSP's chairman from 1921 to 1930 and the Austrian chancellor from 1922 to 1924, and from 1926 to 1929. On the political left were the Social Democrats who after losing the elections in 1920, remained in opposition until 1934. Still, they were dominant as the regional party of government in Vienna.

There was also the *Heimwehr*, the home guard, which originated in the early 1920s as a loosely formed paramilitary organization. It understood itself as a defence against the Socialist Republican Defense League (*Schutzbund*). Later *Heimwehr* developed its own ambitions for political power.⁹⁸ Its relation to the CSP was often complicated. While the CSP promoted corporatism based on the Catholic social teaching and the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, *Heimwehr* propagated the fascist corporatism modelled on the Italian version and based on the theories of Othmar Spann.⁹⁹ In fact, there were two strands inside the *Heimwehr*. The corporatist strand rejected parliamentarism, Marxism and liberal capitalism; it built on the social teachings of the Church, wanted the restitution of authority, and proposed the Christian corporatism as the model for society, while the Nazi strand strived to achieve unification with the Reich, it was more secular and strived to build the *Volksgemeinschaft*. What both strands shared was the rejection of parliamentary democracy, because of what some authors considered them to be two strands of fascism.¹⁰⁰ However, as we will see in the later chapters, labelling both groups as fascist would blur the necessary distinctions too early, that is, before understanding the nuances of Hildebrand's political allegiances in those days. Later, the

⁹⁶ To understand these developments, see: Senft, 'Economic Development and Economic Policies in the Ständestaat Era', 15–19.

⁹⁷ Among chief reasons were Seipel's anti-nationalism and anti-bolshevism. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Engelbert Dollfuß: ein katholischer Staatsmann* (Salzburg: Pustet, 1934), 13–19.

⁹⁸ Tim Kirk, 'Ideology and Politics in the State That Nobody Wanted: Austro-Marxism, Austrofascism, and the First Austrian Republic', in *Global Austria*, ed. Günter Bischof et al., vol. 20, Austria's Place in Europe and the World (University of New Orleans Press, 2011), 90, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1n2txkw.7>.

⁹⁹ Wohnout, 'A Chancellorial Dictatorship with a "Corporative" Pretext: The Austrian Constitution Between 1934 and 1938', 153.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Senft, 'Economic Development and Economic Policies in the Ständestaat Era', 16.

Heimwehr was dissolved by Kurt Schuschnigg in 1936 and incorporated in the *Fatherland Front*.¹⁰¹

Marxists and the National Socialists also formed smaller parties of their own. In distinction to the Austrian Marxists,¹⁰² the National Socialists in Austria did not represent any program of their own, but they mostly just promoted the policies of its German counterpart. So, its main aim was the unification with Germany and subjugation to the rule of the Third Reich.¹⁰³ Their ideology and policies were those of the NSDAP.

Economic conditions in Austria in the 1920s were similar as elsewhere. The post-war inflation reached its climax in 1922, then there was the stability crisis in 1923, series of bank collapses which started in 1924, until finally in the second part of 1920s the economy stabilized.¹⁰⁴ After an upturn which lasted from 1923 to 1929, another major crash came which caused the unemployment to jump from 8.8% to 26% and GDP to fall below the level of 1913.¹⁰⁵ A severely problematic economic situation in the early 1930s was coupled with equally problematic political situation. Similar as in Germany, no government could last for a longer period in the early 1930s. Coalitional governments were formed but they would quickly dissolve.

This led to a series of events which ended with the formation of a new government under Dollfuss in 1932. On March 6, the parties started the dissolution of the Parliament and requested a General Election, which would leave the country for weeks without an effective government. The cabinet needed to resign and the deliberations to form a new Government were torn by fractionism. Dollfuss considered the dissolution of the Parliament to be an irresponsible proceeding, considering that parties wanted an election merely for the sake of the party advantages which they anticipated from it. He wanted a coalition of parties to form a Unity Front, which would be a permanent arrangement to ensure an effective Government.¹⁰⁶

Finally, a new administration was formed on May 20, 1932, with Dollfuss as the Chancellor, which would last until the annexation by the Third Reich in 1938. Dollfuss' coalition partners

¹⁰¹ Cf. Wohnout, 'A Chancellorial Dictatorship with a "Corporative" Pretext: The Austrian Constitution Between 1934 and 1938', 157.

¹⁰² To learn more about the specificities of the Austro-Marxism, see: Kirk, 'Ideology and Politics in the State That Nobody Wanted'.

¹⁰³ Johannes Messner, *Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot* (Norfolk, VA: IHS press, 2004), 81.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Senft, 'Economic Development and Economic Policies in the Ständestaat Era', 33.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Senft, 34.

¹⁰⁶ Messner, *Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot*, 46.

were the Pangermanic *Landbund* and the earlier mentioned *Heimwehr*.¹⁰⁷ Both the National Socialists and the Social Democrats were strong opponents of the regime from the very beginning, even though they were sworn enemies between themselves.

Several events led to the dissolution of the Parliament and the Government by decree. Dollfuss was experiencing the mounting pressure both by the *Heimwehr* leaders, and from the increase in popularity by the National Socialists who recently won sweeping victories at communal elections in Vienna and Innsbruck.¹⁰⁸ As a result, the Social Democrats demanded general elections in 1932 with the hope that the Nazis will win enough bourgeois votes to severely weaken the CSP and force it to form a left-centre coalition or that they themselves will play a major role in the government. As Peter Berger puts it: “The spectre of an ‘unholy’ alliance of Austro-Marxists and followers of Hitler led many Christian Social politicians, otherwise sceptical of methods of ‘government’ by decree, to believe in the merits of at least temporary suspension of parliamentarism”¹⁰⁹. Similarly, the League of Nations representative in Vienna believed that temporary suspension of democracy “would greatly facilitate the containment of the Nazi peril.”¹¹⁰

The crisis was most ardently felt by Dollfuss in February 1934 when the socialists and their military arm, the Republican *Schutzbund*, initiated a revolt and call for a general worker’s strike. Dollfuss employed the army where several hundred troops and agitators lost their lives. The event divided the international Christian thinkers – for example, Jacques Maritain organized the collection of signatures against Dollfuss, while some others, like G. K. Chesterton and Gabriel Marcel, refrained from criticizing Dollfuss’ action.¹¹¹

Even though in the early days of his Government, Dollfuss was not certain whether the parties would remain or not, the February Revolt brought him the answer. He felt that he could not allow either the Nazis or the Socialists to prevail under the party system. Finally, the National Parliament dissolved itself on March 4, 1934. Dollfuss started ruling by decree. On May 1, 1934, the new Constitution was proclaimed which transferred the plenitude of the Parliament’s

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Wahnout, ‘A Chancellorial Dictatorship with a “Corporative” Pretext: The Austrian Constitution Between 1934 and 1938’, 86.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Peter Berger, ‘The League of Nations and Interwar Austria: Critical Assessment of a Partnership in Economic Reconstruction’, in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria, A Reassessment*, Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, Alexander Lassner (eds.), vol. XI, Contemporary Austrian Studies (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 87.

¹⁰⁹ Berger, 87.

¹¹⁰ Berger, 87.

¹¹¹ Cf. Messner, *Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot*, 10.

authority and legislative powers to the Government. Several authoritarian measures were soon passed: prohibition of public meetings and marches, imposing restrictions on the freedom of the press, prohibition for State employees to take part in party politics and wear party badges during working hours, and prohibition of political strikes.¹¹² After the first wave of Nazis terror swept Austria in mid-1933, Austrian Nazi party and its military organization were disbanded, and similar fate soon faced the Communist Party and the Freethinkers Union.¹¹³

The Constitution of 1 May 1934 replaced the wording of the “Republic of Austria” to the “Federal State of Austria” and defined it as “Christian”, “German” and on a “Corporative basis”.¹¹⁴ In drafting the constitution, Dollfuss was inspired by the writings of Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI and aimed to construct the state on the basis of the Catholic social teaching.¹¹⁵ It was based on the corporative principle, or the construction of the social order around estates, or vocational groups endowed with autonomous rights.¹¹⁶ Corporatism aimed at overcoming the class struggle and political factionism by joining employers and employees into different estates in which they would work together to advance the common good.¹¹⁷ The workers and employers would need to cooperate since they would both form the same corporation. Corporations aimed to unite people politically according to their trades and thus do away with political factionism. So, workers and employers from different trades would be represented in corporations, whose variety was meant to displace the partisan multiplicity of political parties.¹¹⁸ Even though the system was corporatist in its pretext, some critics argue that corporatist institutions were hollow, and that the majority of legislation passed between 1934 and 1938 was implemented by means of the “old” War Economy Enabling Act.¹¹⁹

Even though Dollfuss abolished the democratic parliamentary system, he still believed in the democratic principle understood as participation of people in management of public affairs.¹²⁰ To some degree this was preserved by the 1934 Constitution. The Constitution gave the Government four corporations to advise it regarding laws which it shall propose to Federal

¹¹² Cf. Messner, 52–55.

¹¹³ Cf. Messner, 57.

¹¹⁴ Wohnout, ‘A Chancellorial Dictatorship with a “Corporative” Pretext: The Austrian Constitution Between 1934 and 1938’, 145.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Messner, *Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot*, 14–15.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Messner, 106.

¹¹⁷ Even though corporatism aimed at reducing social tensions between the estates, some argue that workers and employers were forced to join corporations. This obviously directs the corporatist social arrangement more towards authoritarianism. Cf. Senft, ‘Economic Development and Economic Policies in the Ständestaat Era’, 34.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Messner, *Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot*, 14.

¹¹⁹ Kirk, ‘Ideology and Politics in the State That Nobody Wanted’, 92.

¹²⁰ Messner, *Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot*, 120–21.

Parliaments. However, their role was only advisory. The Federal Parliaments were the legislative organs which could approve or reject measure without amending them, as well as the power to call the Federal Government to account before the Federal Court of Justice, the power to certify the constitutionality of the Government's emergency decrees and the right to nullify them in case they are not constitutional.¹²¹ Provisions were also made for the referendum, by the results of which the Government is bound, regional burgomasters were elected on the local level, etc. These and other measures preserved a certain degree of general participation in the public life.

Dollfuss understood authority not as unlimited power but as limited by the moral law. In Dollfuss' words, the Constitution wanted to achieve "the just relation between unity and liberty".¹²² Even though the regime was Catholic, the principle of religious freedom was still applied, and different religions and churches were recognized under public law.¹²³ The May Constitution contained also a catalogue of fundamental rights and liberties of an individual: the quality of all citizens without distinction of birth, condition or class; the freedom of the individual, the secrecy of correspondence and telephonic intercourse, the right to form associations within the limits of the law, independence of judges and their exercise of office, the freedom of the Press, freedom of science and research, and freedom of conscience and of liberty of private and public religious practices, if they do not conflict the public order.¹²⁴

Dollfuss was murdered after a failed Nazi putsch on 25 July 1934, which was led by the Austrian Nazis and approved by Hitler. The intrusion happened in the Chancery by the group of Nazi insurgents one of whom shot the Chancellor. Their aim was to get Dollfuss to resign, but he refused before passing away. Four days later Kurt Schuschnigg became the Federal Chancellor. He was also Dollfuss' preferred successor.¹²⁵ Schuschnigg's approach to relations with the Third Reich were generally considered to be more conciliatory and lenient. However, it is also likely that Schuschnigg was aware of the deceitful nature of National Socialism and so he and his cabinet often used deception themselves in their relations with the Nazi Germany. Some authors interpret the "gentlemen's agreement" with Hitler of 11 July 1936 in this light by saying that it was an act of feigned friendship on Schuschnigg's side to win the international

¹²¹ Messner, 121.

¹²² Messner, 105.

¹²³ Wohnout, 'A Chancellorial Dictatorship with a "Corporative" Pretext: The Austrian Constitution Between 1934 and 1938', 145.

¹²⁴ Messner, *Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot*, 122–23.

¹²⁵ Cf. Messner, 154.

support and possibly avoid the German armed expansion.¹²⁶ Visiting Hitler in February 1938, Schuschnigg apparently capitulated to Hitler's long list of demands, but upon the return to Vienna, declared the referendum on March 13, for the people to vote on the possible German-Austrian unification. The annexation soon followed before the referendum could take place.

The historical assessment of Dollfuss' and Schuschnigg's regime remains polarized to this day. The interpretations also tended to reflect the political affiliations of the commentator.¹²⁷ The scholarly inquiry into this issue still suffers from politicization and divisiveness which is also visible in the use of terms to describe the regime – while some call it “Austrofascism”, others call it “the corporate state” (*Ständestaat*).¹²⁸ Similarly, the accounts of Engelbert Dollfuss range from considering him to be a political martyr to portraying him as a fascist dictator.¹²⁹ In this work, we will refrain from going into an in-depth analysis of the regime, but we will enter into a dialogue with Hildebrand's assessment of it.

1.2. Dietrich von Hildebrand's Life and Work

1.2.1. Early Days and Philosophical Formation

Dietrich von Hildebrand was born on October 12, 1889, in his family's villa in Florence. His father Adolf was a renowned sculptor and architect. His mother Irene received little formal education but was nevertheless very cultivated. Dietrich was the youngest of six children Adolf and Irene had, as well as the only male child. Hildebrand family cherished art and learning in a high degree and Dietrich grew up surrounded with great artistic sensibility and by the age of nine, he was fluent in Italian and German. He was schooled by private tutors, among which were some notable intellectuals such as the archaeologist Ludwig Curtius and the philosopher Alois Fischer.

¹²⁶ Alexander Lassner, 'The Foreign Policy of the Schuschnigg Government 1934-1938: The Quest for Security', in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria, A Reassessment*, Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, Alexander Lassner (eds.), vol. XI, Contemporary Austrian Studies (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 178.

¹²⁷ Tim Kirk, 'Fascism and Austrofascism', in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria, A Reassessment*, Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, Alexander Lassner (eds.), vol. XI, Contemporary Austrian Studies (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 10-11.

¹²⁸ Cf. Alexander Lassner and Günter Bischof, 'Introduction', in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria, A Reassessment*, Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, Alexander Lassner (eds.), vol. XI, Contemporary Austrian Studies (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 1; Senft, 'Economic Development and Economic Policies in the Ständestaat Era', 32.

¹²⁹ Hildebrand is obviously counted among the former. Cf. Wohnout, 'A Chancellorial Dictatorship with a "Corporative" Pretext: The Austrian Constitution Between 1934 and 1938', 12.

Hildebrand's family was not religious. Even though they were formally Protestant and have baptized Dietrich in a Protestant church, they never attended religious services or discussed religious matters at home. However, Dietrich showed strong admiration for religion already from an early age. At the age of five, he tried to persuade his sister Bertele that Christ is God, after she repeated her mother's statement that Christ is the Son of God only in the sense that all people can be considered children of God.¹³⁰ At the age of fifteen he answered negatively his mother's question if he wants to be confirmed, on the grounds that he took religion much too seriously to perform a religious act as a mere formality.¹³¹

Similar event testifies to another characteristic trait of Hildebrand: a strong reverence for truth. At the age of fourteen, his sister Nini tried to convince him that moral values are purely relative, which he strongly objected with a whole series of arguments. Nini then appealed to their father explaining that Dietrich refuses to accept that all moral values are relative to which the father responded that he is only fourteen. To this Dietrich responded that one's age is not an argument against his positions, and if that's his father's main argument, then his positions probably rest on very shaky grounds.¹³² Hildebrand later relayed this event on different occasions and considered it indicative of two of his philosophical traits: the conviction about the existence and knowability of the objective truth and his independence from his surroundings and ideas hovering in the air.¹³³

Hildebrand always considered philosophy to be his calling. He commenced his university studies under Theodor Lipps, whose lectures he found impressive. While his earlier teachers, such as Alois Fischer and Alexander Pfänder he considered dry in their lectures, Lipps was quite the opposite. The main point which attracted him to Lipps, apart from his personality, was his defense of objective values and rejection of ethical relativism.

In his early University years, Hildebrand met Adolf Reinach who made a deep impression on him. In Reinach, Hildebrand met a philosopher who impressed him "deeply by his unconditional love of truth, his intellectual power, his thoroughness, and his exceptional

¹³⁰ Alice von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 57.

¹³¹ von Hildebrand, 59.

¹³² Cf. Ernst Wenisch, 'Einleitung', in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1938* (*Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte*), ed. Ernst Wenisch, vol. 43, A (Mainz: Grünewald, 1994), 14.

¹³³ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Survey of My Philosophy', trans. John F. Crosby, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (25 October 2017): 519, <https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq2017914125>.

clarity.”¹³⁴ As Alice von Hildebrand describes this impression: “He sensed Reinach’s unconditional thirst for truth, his intellectual discipline and thoroughness, his moral stamp. Reinach stuck him as a person totally free of prejudice and receptive to the ‘voice’ of being. He had an outstanding precision and clarity of mind... He radiated an atmosphere of moral strength, of absolute purity, and of an outspoken moral greatness.”¹³⁵ Reinach also made Hildebrand aware of the limitations of Lipps’s ethics and even more, of his epistemology, still strongly entangled in the web of psychologism. To the end of Hildebrand’s life, Reinach remained his single strongest philosophical influence and Hildebrand considered him to be his “true teacher”.¹³⁶ On the other hand, Reinach also shared his admiration of Hildebrand.¹³⁷ Among the original phenomenologists, Reinach was the only one who took notice of Hildebrand’s important discovery of the categorial difference between value and merely subjectively satisfying and sensed to some extent the importance of this discovery.¹³⁸

Another important influence was certainly Max Scheler, whom Hildebrand first met in 1907. With his extraordinary giftedness and philosophical talent, Scheler played a decisive role in Hildebrand’s early life. Hildebrand was captivated by Scheler from the first moment of their acquaintance and regarded him as a real genius. He chose to take Scheler’s lectures in the University of Munich, in addition to those of Lipps and Pfänder. Hildebrand’s friendship with Scheler lasted for fourteen years and underwent important transformations. Despite their friendship and admiration Hildebrand had for Scheler, he never considered himself to be a disciple of Scheler, “whether with regards to the style and method of philosophizing, or with regards to the content of his philosophy”.¹³⁹ Hildebrand truly loved Scheler and highly admired his gifts, but after some time recognized also the “gap between Scheler’s amazing gifts and his total lack of self-control”.¹⁴⁰ Hildebrand was aware of and did not approve Scheler’s promiscuity and life filled with vices. Despite Scheler’s failings, he nevertheless paved the path for Hildebrand to enter the Catholic Church by convincing him that the Church received and

¹³⁴ Hildebrand, 520.

¹³⁵ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 68.

¹³⁶ von Hildebrand, 71.

¹³⁷ Karl Schumann, ‘Husserl und Hildebrand’, *Aletheia: An International Yearbook of Philosophy* V (1992): 7.

¹³⁸ Cf. John F. Crosby, ‘The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of Bonum’, *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* I, no. 2 (1977): 278.

¹³⁹ Hildebrand, ‘Survey of My Philosophy’, 521.

¹⁴⁰ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 73.

retained the fulness of revealed Truth. Hildebrand would become baptized in the Catholic Church in 1914.¹⁴¹

Apart from that, Scheler introduced Hildebrand to the works of Shakespeare, and several philosophical ideas, such as the distinction between the Christian love of neighbor and humanitarian love.¹⁴² At one point in life, Hildebrand and Scheler also shared the same love. Before marrying his first wife, Gretchen, Hildebrand was engaged to a lady named Märit. He soon realized that Märit was not the right person for him, which made Scheler happy since he was in love with Märit. The two later married. However, Scheler's personality did not allow marriage to last. He was unfaithful from the beginning, and a few years later he fell in love with another woman, his assistant Maria Scheu. Scheler's wish to have the marriage with Märit annulled and his request to Hildebrand for help in this regard, marked the end of their friendship. Hildebrand refused to testify in his favor and expressed his sadness with Scheler's wish to end his marriage. After marrying Maria Scheu and leaving the Church in 1924, Scheler's writings also changed. In Hildebrand's opinion they became much shallower, even though they still possessed intellectual brilliance.¹⁴³ After Scheler's death in 1928, Hildebrand wrote several articles in which he both appreciated his friend and criticized his later philosophy.¹⁴⁴

After two and a half years of studying in Munich, Hildebrand transferred to the University of Göttingen to study with Edmund Husserl (Hildebrand's third important philosophical influence) for a semester. Hildebrand must have played a very active role in Husserl's seminars, according to the oral account of a fellow student of this time, Sigfried Johannes Hamburger. According to him, Hildebrand was very regular in intervening in those seminars. He would explain to the students what Husserl had said and to Husserl he explained what the students had meant; and sometimes he explained to Husserl what he himself had really intended to say.¹⁴⁵

Hildebrand was inspired by the "objectivist, anti-psychologistic and anti-relativistic philosophy" of early Husserl.¹⁴⁶ Husserl's *Logical Investigations* opened a new philosophical

¹⁴¹ Interestingly, Scheler took this news rather casually which obviously disappointed Hildebrand who expected the joyous response. Cf. von Hildebrand, 146.

¹⁴² Cf. von Hildebrand, 94–95.

¹⁴³ Cf. von Hildebrand, 217.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Max Schelers Philosophie und Persönlichkeit', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 587–639.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Josef Seifert, 'Introductory Essay', in *What is Philosophy?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 8.

¹⁴⁶ Wenisch, 'Einleitung', 15.

world to Hildebrand. Unlike Scheler, Husserl did not possess a captivating personality which would impress others. Husserl's focus was on research and his lectures were often prepared only superficially. He would often speak incomprehensibly and would allow himself to be carried away by personal thoughts. Soon after, Reinach became Husserl's assistant and Hildebrand decided to study ethics under him. Reinach distinctions between the "right" and the "good" which he presented in the mentioned course left an important influence on Hildebrand's later thought.¹⁴⁷ Both Hildebrand and Reinach considered that Husserl diverged from his initial position after the publication of his *Ideas* in 1913.

During his time in Göttingen, together with Theodor Conrad, Hildebrand founded a Philosophical Association, which gathered philosophers like Hedwig Martius, Sigfrid Hamburger, Alexander Koyré and Roman Ingarden. All of them were still students who honored both Husserl and Reinach. Hildebrand was also present together with Husserl, Scheler and Reinach at the founding meeting of the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* (Journal of philosophy and phenomenological research) which took place in Husserl's home.¹⁴⁸ Finally, in Göttingen Hildebrand wrote his dissertation under Husserl on the topic of "The Nature of Moral Action".¹⁴⁹ Husserl granted a *summa cum laude* to the dissertation and called it a "superb work".¹⁵⁰

After finishing his doctorate, Hildebrand's then partner Gretchen gave birth to their son Franz. Hildebrand's parents were initially reluctant to give Dietrich and Gretchen permission to marry (this was obligatory by law in Germany at the time), but the birth of a baby changed their mind and so the couple soon married. Another important event soon followed, and this was the conversion of Dietrich and Gretchen to Catholicism. This event was probably the most important in Hildebrand's life. It also left a mark on his philosophy. As we will see in the larger part of this work, conversion to Catholicism provided foundations of Hildebrand's opposition to National Socialism and Communism. Conversion opened for him a new view on the nature of authority. Before, he was his own sole authority; now, he came to realize that every true authority comes from God.¹⁵¹ By accepting some teachings of the Church that initially baffled

¹⁴⁷ Cf. von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 85.

¹⁴⁸ von Hildebrand, 110.

¹⁴⁹ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung', *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 3 (1916): 126–251.

¹⁵⁰ Final grade was eventually only *cum laude* since the zoology and botany professors granted lower grades to Hildebrand, who decided to take these courses following advice of Scheler but turned out to be bored and disinterested in them. Cf. von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 119.

¹⁵¹ Cf. von Hildebrand, 132.

him (such as the prohibition of contraception),¹⁵² he also learned the importance of humility in intellectual life. From then on, his philosophizing would become open to the supernatural light of faith¹⁵³. Some others, like Husserl and Hildebrand's parents, were not so happy with the conversion. Husserl, who was once impressed by Hildebrand's dissertation, now stated that "a great talent has been lost for philosophy",¹⁵⁴ simply because Hildebrand's conversion. Later barely any contact remained between them.

After Göttingen, Hildebrand family returned to Munich for Dietrich to write his habilitation thesis. Approximately at that time, the killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand triggered a chain of events which would turn into the World War I. The wave of enthusiasm swept through Munich and it was shared by Hitler, but not by Hildebrand. Many volunteered to join the army, including Adolf Reinach who fought and died in the front in 1917. Hildebrand also worked in the Red Cross transport operation until 1915, and later, due to illness, was transferred to work as a medical assistant in Munich until 1918. Simultaneously, Hildebrand was writing his habilitation thesis on the topic of "Morality and the Knowledge of Moral Values".¹⁵⁵ In spring 1918, he was not permitted to work at the hospital anymore and he was invited to join the military training in new Ulm. He rushed to finish his habilitation thesis before going to the front. He achieved this aim and delivered his thesis to the professor for final approval before departure. On the front, Hildebrand did not feel himself at home. He was relieved when he was granted a short leave to defend his thesis. His public lecture needed for habilitation went flawlessly, but Hildebrand's health was in bad shape. He received a medical certificate proving that he was not fit for duty and so he remained working in the hospital until the end of war.¹⁵⁶

After the war came to an end, the situation in Germany was desperate. The situation did not pass by Hildebrand. In a coup staged by the Communist in Munich on May 1, 1919,

¹⁵² Hildebrand later became the champion of the Church's teaching on family planning. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Encyclical Humanae Vitae, A Sign of Contradiction* (Steubenville: Hildebrand Project, 2018).

¹⁵³ It is interesting to note, however, that after his conversion Hildebrand remained silent on religious matters for full five years, before publishing his first philosophical article in this domain. Cf. Alice Jourdain, 'Von Hildebrand and Marcel: A Parallel', in *Balduin V. Schwarz (Ed.) The Human Person and the World of Values: A Tribute to Dietrich von Hildebrand by His Friends in Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1960), 15.

¹⁵⁴ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 179.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis: eine Untersuchung über Ethische Strukturprobleme', *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* V (1922): 462–602.

Hildebrand first supervisor was Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster who also influenced his political views, especially in terms of understanding the dangers of Prussian militarism and the cult of brutal force that accompanied it. Later, Foerster took a leave of absence from the University and Hildebrand switched supervisors. His new mentor was professor Baeumker. Cf. von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 161.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 178.

Hildebrand's friend Hermann Solbrig was caught in a crossfire and died from severe wounds.¹⁵⁷ His wife Marguerite later became Hildebrand's secretary in Munich and then in Vienna, where she worked with him in publishing the anti-Nazi journal *Der Christliche Ständestaat* from 1934 to 1938. In 1920, Hildebrand first time witnessed the rise of anti-Semitism, when during a concert directed by his brother-in-law Walter Braunfels, the man stood up and shouted: "I protest against this Jewish music".¹⁵⁸ Braunfels' father was Jewish which made him qualified for the remark in the eyes of the Nazi protester. Needless to say, the event intensely shocked an upset Hildebrand.

When Hildebrand started teaching at the University of Munich, the topics that interested him were in between philosophy and religion. In 1920, he published an article called "The New World of Christianity", after which several articles on St. Francis of Assisi followed. The first books he published after the habilitation were *Purity and Virginitiy* and *Marriage* in 1927 and 1929, for which he faced disapproval by some of his university colleagues. After these books, in 1930 Hildebrand wrote the masterpiece of political and social philosophy titled *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft* (Metaphysics of Community) which provided philosophical foundations for his anti-Nazi writing in the 1930s.¹⁵⁹

1.2.2. First Encounters with National Socialism and Communism

The 1920s for Hildebrand were the years of constant activity and his professional ascendancy. Nevertheless, he had already sensed that the rising political forces could threaten peace and security not just of Germany, but of the whole European continent.¹⁶⁰ In the first part of 1920s, several German politicians were assassinated, including an opponent of German military policy Matthias Erzberger, a foreign minister Walther Rathenau and the Social Democratic leader Friedrich Ebert. These were among the signs that not all is well.

Still, this situation did not stop Hildebrand from furthering the intellectual and cultural life in Munich. In 1924, Hildebrand and his wife started holding "afternoons" in their home with the purpose of discussing religious and philosophical questions. Numerous notable guests attended the afternoons, including Church dignitaries, intellectuals, aristocrats, friends, and others. These afternoons continued in the 1930's when Hildebrand family moved to Vienna. Apart

¹⁵⁷ von Hildebrand, 183-185.

¹⁵⁸ von Hildebrand, 193.

¹⁵⁹ For a full bibliography of Dietrich von Hildebrand, see: Adolf Preis, 'Hildebrand-Bibliography', *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1992): 363-431.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 197.

from that, Hildebrand also travelled extensively and met several notable thinkers, diplomats, politicians, among whom were Martin Buber, Edith Stein, Etienne Gilson, Jacques and Raissa Maritain, Nikolay Berdyaev, pope Benedict XV, Princess Zita, and numerous others.

The Nazis already took note of Hildebrand in 1921 when he publicly condemned German invasion of neutral Belgium at the beginning of the World War 1 at a peace conference organized by Marc Sagnier.¹⁶¹ The German journalist Alfred Nobel who was present at the conference wrote an article for a German newspaper and seriously distorted Hildebrand's words, so that the situation caused scandal in Germany. Hildebrand was threatened that he would lose the position at the University, if he did not successfully justify himself, which he luckily managed to do. Soon after Hildebrand also learned that he was on a Nazi blacklist which would have him killed in case the Nazis seized power.¹⁶²

This threat became actual in 1923, when the Nazis organized a putsch in a Munich beer hall.¹⁶³ The morning after the putsch, on November 9, Hildebrand met an acquaintance who told him that the night before the Bavarian government was overthrown, that general Ludendorff was named president and Hitler a chancellor of Germany. The immediate impression was that the whole Munich is in Nazi hands, and the questions was whether Reichswehr would intervene. Knowing that he is on the Nazi killing list, Hildebrand rushed home and called his spiritual director, Father Alois Mager. He advised him to go to the University since only the right side of Isar is occupied by the Nazis and Dr. Kahr, the head of Bavarian government, retracted the resignation given last night. After the class, Father Mager and Hildebrand met to evaluate the situation. Since the Nazis put posters everywhere saying that they have set up the people's tribunal, Mager reasoned that Hildebrand is not safe in Munich and that he should immediately leave. Hildebrand and his family soon fled to Ulm, where they heard that the putsch collapsed. The day after they were able to return to Munich. Later, Hildebrand was outraged to hear that Ludendorff was acquitted and Hitler released after less than a year in prison.

Even though Nazism suffered a blow, a few years after Hildebrand saw that it was not completely dead. Its ideas sprouted among the people. Antisemitism and nationalism became more common in the public opinion. The spirit of the time was such that the power of the Nazi

¹⁶¹ John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby, 'A Fateful Decision', in *My Battle Against Hitler* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 2.

¹⁶² Cf. von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 223.

¹⁶³ See Hildebrand's recollection of these events in: Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Memoiren', in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1938 (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte)*, Ed. Ernst Wenich, vol. 43 (Mainz: Grünewald, 1994), 6-9.

ideas infused it. Many people became infected by the totalitarian spirit, without necessarily being aware of it. For this reason, Hildebrand later decided to write his *Metaphysics of Community* to shed light on the relationship between individual and the community.

Few years after publishing the book, Hildebrand was asked to present at a conference in Rhineland. There, a Franciscan priest and biblical scholar Thaddäus Soiron delivered a speech which betrayed the same infatuation by collectivist ideas of National Socialism.¹⁶⁴ Hildebrand was appalled. In his speech titled “Individual and Community” he fervently criticized collectivism and giving priority to the community before the individual, as well as liberal individualism which denied the value of a true community.¹⁶⁵ Hildebrand’s speech triggered both enthusiastic support and a strong opposition. Father Soiron and others even accused him of contradicting the Catholic dogma. Among other opponents were also the famous industrialist Fritz Thyssen who supported the NSDAP from 1923 to 1939, and Franz von Papen who argued that National Socialism and Catholicism were compatible. Von Papen later shortly served as the Reich’s chancellor in 1932 and in 1934 became Hitler’s Ambassador in Vienna.

On January 10, 1933, Hildebrand was invited to speak at a pacifist congress in Munich.¹⁶⁶ In the speech, he criticized nationalism and idolization of the state, and spoke at length about the Catholic conception of peace. He was disappointed to learn that several speakers that came after him were Communist in their outlook. Soon after, he rose from his chair and declared that he could stand no longer the attacks on the Catholic Church. He did not want to be a part of the Communist propaganda and so he left. When Hildebrand came home, he learned that the Nazis telephoned his wife Gretchen and threatened Hildebrand because he dared to speak at the pacifist conference.

When Hitler became chancellor, Hildebrand knew that he had to leave Germany. He knew that staying and keeping a low profile was not an option. But staying and speaking decisively against the regime would get him killed in the matter of days. So, the best option was to leave without hesitation. He hoped that by leaving he could lead a relentless fight against National Socialism from abroad. Finally, Hildebrand and his wife left for Florence with only a couple of suitcases in hands (their son Franzi studied for a year in the US at that time).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 10.

¹⁶⁵ These ideas were later published in Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Individuum und Gemeinschaft’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 50 (18 November 1934): 3–7.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Memoiren’, 14–15.

Soon after leaving, Hildebrand was invited by Etienne Gilson to deliver a lecture in Paris in a congress honouring Albert the Great. While he was in Paris, the boycott imposed against the Jews started in Germany. Hildebrand was also very unhappy with the fact that the German bishops lifted excommunication for participating in the Nazi party after Hitler came to power. He believed that the shepherds should be clearer in condemning the evil. The last night in Paris, Hildebrand was invited to a dinner where two German Dominican priests clearly in favour of Hitler were present. The priests praised Hitler's understanding of authority and the nation and considered it worthy that Hitler often mentions God's name. To this, Hildebrand bitterly responded: "Hitler is so stupid that when he speaks of God, he does not know what he is talking about."¹⁶⁷ One of the Dominicans further insisted that Catholics should play a leading role in Nazism and give it a Catholic stamp, to which Hildebrand insisted that there is no possible reconciliation between Nazism and Catholicism and that it is illusory to expect a positive influence on something so evil in its core. What troubled Hildebrand is that the opinions expressed by these two monks were widespread among Catholics in Germany. It was *Zeitgeist* influencing even the Catholic intellectuals.

Another thing that contributed to the confusion in Hildebrand's opinion was the concordat that Vatican signed with the Third Reich. Obviously, the concordat did not mean that the Church approves the regime, it was a legal agreement to protect the rights of the Church, such as offering the sacraments. Hildebrand understood the position of the Church and even quoted pope Pius XI who on the occasion of signing the treaty with Mussolini said that he would sign a concordat with the devil if that would help him to save one soul.¹⁶⁸ However, the perception of the concordat among the faithful was another thing. For many, the concordat meant that the Church had blessed the regime.

Another indication of the situation in Germany was the request from the University of Munich for him to declare whether he is Aryan or Jewish. As a protest, he declared himself Jewish since paternal grandmother was Jewish, even though this would not qualify him as Jewish under Nazi laws. Later this fact would also grant him the nickname "The Jew Hildebrand" among some circles in Austria.

Hildebrand was also deeply shaken by the statement that the German bishops made at Fulda in June 1933. In it, they started by taking a positive stance towards Nazi government, praising its

¹⁶⁷ Hildebrand, 34.

¹⁶⁸ Hildebrand, 41.

spirit of authority, affirmation of the German nation, etc. Hildebrand insisted that the notions of authority, nation and others, were used equivocally in the letter, since the bishops could never subscribe to the real content in which the Nazis used these terms. Only in appendix, the statement condemned certain forms of racism, but no word has been made of totalitarianism, of crimes, and the evil of Nazi ideology.¹⁶⁹ The letter left a conciliatory impression, which deeply upset Hildebrand.

During his time in Florence, Hildebrand wrote *Der Sinn philosophischen Fragens und Erkennens* (The Nature of Philosophical Question and Knowledge), the book which was not published in Germany until the end of World War II.¹⁷⁰ He was also visited by Klaus Dohrn, a young journalist who shared his hatred of Nazism, to discuss political situation. Both were adamant to fight the evil of Nazism and were at the same time impressed by Engelbert Dollfuss, possibly the only European politician at that time who clearly conceived the evil of Nazism. During Dorn's stay in Florence, they devised a plan to start in Austria the journal dedicated to combatting National Socialism.¹⁷¹

1.2.3. Vienna Years

This idea of starting anti-Nazi journal motivated Hildebrand to travel to Vienna to obtain an audience with Chancellor Dollfuss. He borrowed money and in August 1933 took the trip but was left disappointed after several unsuccessful attempts to meet Dollfuss while he was there. He only managed to obtain the audience later through the intervention of a friend. The meeting happened in Dollfuss' home and Hildebrand fervently explained the purpose of his visit. Dollfuss agreed and explained that the fight against National Socialism is not merely a political question, but the question of *Weltanschauung*.¹⁷² He promised the government's support for the journal, as well as a professorship in the University of Vienna as soon as the vacancy would occur.

This conversation marked a turning point and in October 1933, Hildebrand and his family moved to Vienna. Vienna years were characterized by Hildebrand's vigorous opposition primarily to National Socialism, but also Communism and liberalism, through his journal *Der Christliche Ständestaat* (The Christian Corporative State). The name of the journal was not

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 45–46.

¹⁷⁰ In English it was translated and published in 1960 as: Dietrich von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁷¹ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 252.

¹⁷² Hildebrand, 'Memoiren', 59.

exactly Hildebrand's wish, since he wanted a name that would more clearly express the anti-Nazi stance, but he yielded to the pressure of Friedrich Funder, the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Reichspost*.¹⁷³ Hildebrand also demanded that Klaus Dohrn be hired as a journalist, and Marguerite Solbrig as his assistant, which was finally granted to him.

The first issue of the journal was published in December 1933, and it immediately attacked both Nazism and Communism.¹⁷⁴ The journal systematically criticized anti-personalism, totalitarianism, military morals, nationalism, atheism, denying the dignity of the human person and other errors of National Socialism, Communism and liberalism. The response to the journal turned out to be more hostile than Hildebrand had initially anticipated.¹⁷⁵ Some had become explicit supporters of Nazism, some considered Nazism to be the expression of *Zeitgeist* and wanted to achieve reconciliation between Catholicism and Nazism. Moreover, antisemitism was widespread in several circles, including the Catholic ones. To all these groups the straightforward tone of *Der Christliche Ständestaat* was unwelcome.

The year of 1934 was marked by the Socialist revolution organized in Vienna. It started as a worker's protest, but soon turned out violent. The protestors were armed, and the government used force to suppress the protest. In the end, there were casualties on both sides. Dollfuss later offered a general amnesty and preached reconciliation, but much to no avail. The press declared him a murderer. From Hildebrand's perspective, a big problem was also that many Catholic intellectuals spoke against Dollfuss. Jacques Maritain even collected signatures and organized a protest against Dollfuss in Paris (Gabriel Marcel did not sign and participate arguing that he does not have enough information on the matter).¹⁷⁶

Another unfortunate event followed. The government decided to reinstate the capital punishment, which had already been abolished, to deter a series of criminal assaults. The government also believed that the first person to be sentenced to death should be a Communist and not a Nazi so as not to provoke the Third Reich, which upset Hildebrand who did not believe that the government should take so much consideration of what the treacherous regime of the Third Reich thinks.¹⁷⁷ Finally, neither a Communist nor a Nazi was sentenced, but an

¹⁷³ Cf. Rudolf Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1976), 14.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Österreichs Sendung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 1 (December 1933): 3-5; On the identification of Nazism and Bolshevism, see explanation in Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 83.

¹⁷⁵ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 262.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Memoiren', 86.

¹⁷⁷ Hildebrand, 96.

arsonist who had put a barn on fire. This was definitely too harsh a punishment for such a deed, but the courts were happy to find a victim whose sentence would not provoke a national unrest. Dollfuss was not happy with the sentence, but believed he had a duty to allow it to be carried out. Hildebrand, on the other hand, was appalled by the sentence and could find no reason to justify it.

Finally, on July 25, 1934, the Nazis assassinated Dollfuss. That morning Hildebrand paid his regular monthly visit to Edmund Weber, the director of communications in the government's press office, with whom Hildebrand was regularly solving practical matters of the journal. Weber told him how Dollfuss appreciates his work with *Der Christliche Ständestaat* and that he approved an extra sum of money for Hildebrand and his wife as a token of appreciation.¹⁷⁸ After rushing home to inform his wife of good news, he received a phone call from a friend who told him that Dollfuss has resigned and the new chancellor is Anton Rintelen, a politician who had publicly supported Nazism. The radio soon announced that Dollfuss was being held prisoner in his office. Hildebrand was devastated that his beloved Dollfuss had „fallen into the hands of criminals“.¹⁷⁹ Dollfuss soon died after being shot.

Briefly after the assassination, Hildebrand was asked by a publisher to write a book about Dollfuss, which he gladly did. Only in twelve days, he completed the biography *Engelbert Dollfuß: ein katholischer Staatsmann*.¹⁸⁰ Apart from the biography, he published numerous articles about Dollfuss in *Der Christliche Ständestaat* and each year commemorated in the journal the day of his death.

The question of Dollfuss's successor emerged. There were two main competitors for the position, Prince von Starhemberg, a leader of the *Heimwehr* and later of the Fatherland Front, and Kurt von Schuschnigg, then a Minister of Justice. Hildebrand's good friend Father Österriecher strongly believed that Schuschnigg is a better option and urged Hildebrand to visit President Miklas and urge him to appoint Schuschnigg. Hildebrand felt uneasy with this task, since he did not want to interfere in Austrian internal political decisions, but he nevertheless yielded to his friend's wishes. Miklas gave him a friendly welcome and said that he too thinks Schuschnigg would be a better choice.

¹⁷⁸ Hildebrand, 103.

¹⁷⁹ Crosby and Crosby, 'A Fateful Decision', 1.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Engelbert Dollfuß: ein katholischer Staatsmann*. (Salzburg: Pustet, 1934).

Eventually, Schuschnigg did become a new chancellor. From the beginning, Hildebrand was not happy with the course taken by Schuschnigg.¹⁸¹ It seemed to him that as a personality, Schuschnigg lacks vision and clear-sightedness of Dollfuss. Also, he had *Grossdeutsch* outlooks, which made him follow politics of peaceful coexistence with the Third Reich, instead a direct opposition.¹⁸²

Soon after Dollfuss died, Hildebrand was informed that his journal will not anymore be supported by the Austrian government. The attitude of Edmund Weber, Hildebrand's main person of contact in the Government, also turned from friendly to distanced. Hildebrand managed to keep the journal alive until the German annexation of Austria for 44 months by soliciting contributions to cover the regular expenses. Hildebrand was not a skilled fundraiser and businessman and the whole time during this period the journal was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Financial concerns made it more pressing for Hildebrand to get the professorship at the University of Vienna promised to him by Dollfuss. When the spot opened, Schuschnigg decided to appoint another person for the full professorship. Hildebrand got only a position of the extraordinary professor, which carried a lower rank and remuneration. At the day Hildebrand should have given his inaugural lecture, the fierce demonstrations had broken out. There were around 600 protesters.¹⁸³ Despite the danger, Hildebrand decided to hold the lecture under police protection. Since his topic was purely philosophical and he discussed no politics, several students soon left. Later Hildebrand learned that the protest was planned by some professors who encouraged their students from various faculties to demonstrate.¹⁸⁴

The remaining time in the University was rather unpleasant for Hildebrand since the pro-Nazi professors used every opportunity to show their distaste of him. However, a notable exception among the faculty was Moritz Schlick. Even though, as a logical positivist, his philosophy was the opposite of Hildebrand's, he was also opposed to Nazism. That is why the tragedy of Schlick's murder disturbed Hildebrand. Schlick was killed by a mentally disturbed student and the motive was not political. Shortly after, Schlick's son came to ask Hildebrand to publish a defense of his father in *Der Christliche Ständestaat*, since the magazine *Schönere Zukunft*

¹⁸¹ Cf. Wenisch, 'Einleitung', 28.

¹⁸² After World War II, Schuschnigg acknowledged to Hildebrand that his assessment of the situation was flawed. Cf. von Hildebrand, 276–77.

¹⁸³ Ebner, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 29.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Memoiren', 117.

attacked him for adopting a “typically Jewish anti-metaphysical position”. Hildebrand gladly accepted and wrote a paper showing, among other things, how ridiculous it is to call the Jewish spirit anti-metaphysical.¹⁸⁵

By 1935, Hildebrand’s activities with the journal started drawing more and more hostile attention to him. This was confirmed when he received the invitation by the Austrian chief of secret police Weiser to pay him a visit. When he did, Weiser informed Hildebrand that the secret police have information about the Nazi underground plans to assassinate him.¹⁸⁶ He then informed Hildebrand how he should behave to protect himself. These helpful instructions Hildebrand rarely implemented.

Meanwhile, the political pressure was slowly mounting and by early 1938, it was clear that the situation between Austria and Germany needs to be resolved in one way or another. On February 12, 1938, Hitler invited Schuschnigg to Berchtesgarden where he pressured him to accept a series of conditions for not invading Austria, among which was to curb the activities of the emigrant press, including that of *Der Christliche Ständestaat*.¹⁸⁷

By that time, it was already clear that the Nazis consider Hildebrand to be among their principal enemies in Austria. In 1937, German ambassador in Vienna wrote to Hitler that Hildebrand was a “leading enemy of National Socialism” and on another occasion called Hildebrand “the most dangerous enemy of National Socialism”.¹⁸⁸

Schuschnigg finally succumbed to Hitler’s pressure and signed the agreement. Upon returning to Austria, he decided to call a referendum to give people the chance to decide whether they wanted to join the Third Reich. This greatly upset Hitler since he very well knew that the outcome of the referendum might not be favorable for the Nazis. Therefore, he decided to invade Austria before it occurred. Already from before, Hildebrand had an agreement with a friend in Salzburg that he should warn him if there would be an unusual military activity at the frontier. On March 1, 1938, a Nazi sympathizer told the friend’s wife that “von Hildebrand is doomed”. Although he did not know what to make of it, Hildebrand decided that its best to flee and a friend drove him and his wife to the border with Czechoslovakia. Since for a few days everything seemed to be in order, they decided that it was a false alarm and returned to Austria.

¹⁸⁵ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 284-285.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Memoiren’, 122.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 252.

¹⁸⁸ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 291.

However, on March 1, Germany finally invaded Austria and Hildebrand knew that he and his family need to leave for good. He and Gretchen managed to take the last train to Czechoslovakia before the Nazis took over Vienna. When they arrived at the border, the Austrian citizens were already prohibited to leave the country. Nevertheless, Hildebrand had a Swiss passport inherited from his grandparents which enabled him and his wife to pass the border. Tomorrow, he called home to learn that two Gestapo officers already came looking for him. All Hildebrand's possessions were seized and sold at an auction. The last number of *Der Christliche Ständestaat* was published in Vienna on March 6, and the next number, ready before the annexation, was published in Prague shortly after the *Anschluss* had happened.

Hildebrand family went to Switzerland, where their son Bruno also joined them. After eleven months in Switzerland, Hildebrand got a teaching position in Toulouse in France. In the rapid development of events, Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was signed, and Hitler soon conquered Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Holland, preparing to imminently invade France. This was another sign for Hildebrand family that they need to leave. Then, after a series of interesting and dangerous events, Hildebrand family went to Spain, Portugal, Brazil and finally arrived in New York in December 1940.

This marked the end of the danger for Hildebrand and his family. He was appointed to a professorship at the Fordham University, and largely moved away from his political activity to a purely philosophical life. In the years ahead, he would publish some of his most notable philosophical works.

Hildebrand's wife Gretchen died in 1957 and in 1959 he married a colleague and philosophical collaborator Dr. Alice M. Jourdain, who was teaching philosophy at the Hunter College. Dietrich von Hildebrand died in 1977.

2. Philosophical Roots of Hildebrand's Thought

2.1. Hildebrand's Phenomenological Approach to Philosophy

To understand Hildebrand's philosophical opposition to Nazism and Communism, we will first attempt to analyze the background of his philosophical thought. Hildebrand was a Platonist at heart.¹⁸⁹ He was committed to discovering the truth about the being, especially in its essential and necessary aspect. Although being a Catholic convert, Hildebrand never underwent a Thomistic training, typical for most Catholic philosophers.¹⁹⁰ His decisive philosophical formation was done inside the circle of early phenomenologists.

The term "phenomenology" appears already in the 18th century in the authors such as Lambert, Herder, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel.¹⁹¹ However, Franz Brentano employed the term in 1889 and provided the direct inspiration to his pupil Edmund Husserl who would become the founder of phenomenology. Brentano discovered and elaborated the notion of intentionality, which Husserl and other phenomenologists appropriated (although not without modifications).¹⁹² Intentionality means that each conscious experience is directed towards an object. It is always a "consciousness of" or "experience of" something. So, in phenomenology, "intending" means the conscious relationship we have to an object.¹⁹³

Edmund Husserl was the founder of phenomenology, and his *Logical Investigations (LI)* provided the starting point for the movement. From the very outset, Husserl understood the *LI* as a "break-through" work which should mark the beginning of a new line of philosophical research.¹⁹⁴ From Brentano, Husserl adopts the idea of philosophy as a rigorous science. The main purpose of *LI* was to provide grounding for philosophy conceived in such a way. To establish philosophy as a rigorous science Husserl first aims to refute "psychologicistic prejudices", and with them, all forms of positivism, empiricism, relativism, nominalism,

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Jourdain, 'Von Hildebrand and Marcel: A Parallel', 15.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Jourdain, 15.

¹⁹¹ Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 6.

¹⁹² For a longer exposition of Brentano's influence on phenomenology, see: Moran, 23–59; Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, Third revised and enlarged edition (Dordrecht, London, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 27–49.

¹⁹³ Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8.

¹⁹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 3.

subjectivism, positivism, etc.¹⁹⁵ Husserl primarily objected to psychologistic explanation of the laws of logic which, according to him, were unable to explain the necessity of such laws.¹⁹⁶

While criticizing empiricism and subjectivism, Husserl insisted that the starting point of philosophy is experience. For Husserl, all knowledge “begins with experience”.¹⁹⁷ Experience here is not understood in a narrow, empiricists sense. One of the tasks of phenomenology is precisely to overcome and replace the narrow empiricists concept of experience with an enlarged one.¹⁹⁸ To be able to ground “pure logic” in experience and not end up in psychologism, next to sense-experiences and sensuous intuitions Husserl also distinguishes “categorical intuitions” which are directed to objective universal essences and essential laws.¹⁹⁹ The task of phenomenology is to “bring to pure expression” and “describe in terms of their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences”.²⁰⁰ The essences Husserl speaks about are timeless, objective, universal and strictly necessary. Their existence is not dependent on human mind, but the mind is subject to them and their intrinsic necessary each time it aims to think correctly.

Husserl insists on building phenomenology as a “presuppositionless” science. This implies “the strict exclusion of all statements not permitting of a comprehensive phenomenological realization”²⁰¹. To achieve “phenomenological realization” philosophical investigation should turn its attention toward the givenness of reality, that is, it should focus on the way in which reality is given to us in experience.²⁰² Givenness for Husserl means that all experience is experience *to someone*, according to a particular manner.²⁰³ Each experience has a “dative” element, a certain “to whom”. However, for early Husserl this “dative” element of experience does not imply subjectivism. In experience, the object itself discloses itself to us. Therefore, phenomenology can be conceived as the systematic study of the essential correlation of subjectivity with objectivity.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁵ Husserl, 1: Prolegomena.

¹⁹⁶ Likewise, Hildebrand in the introduction of his book *What is Philosophy?* states his intention to refute positivism, empiricism, relativism, skepticism, idealism, psychologism, nominalism and related philosophies. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 57–63.

¹⁹⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2 (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 54.

¹⁹⁸ Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 37.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Seifert, ‘Introductory Essay’, 14.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2001, 1:166.

²⁰¹ Husserl, 1:177.

²⁰² Cf. Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 45.

²⁰³ Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 11.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 7.

This brief sketch of the approach to philosophy in early Husserl was widely shared by early phenomenologists, including Hildebrand. Hildebrand explains that the proper starting of philosophy is the given, in whose “rich qualitative plenitude” “we must immerse ourselves” and bring ourselves to “a full state of ‘wondering’ about it.”²⁰⁵ This datum we must “seek to analyze, delve into its nature” and “explore its relations to other fundamental data of experience.” This is, among other things, one of essential characteristics of phenomenology. Phenomenology has the “methodical concern to do justice to the qualitative nature of the object.”²⁰⁶ A phenomenologist is not a mere collector of the data connected with the object, but he concentrates on the very nature of the object itself, tries to grasp its specific character by intuitive delving into it.

Hildebrand warns that philosophers need to be on guard against all constructions and explanations which are incompatible with the data as presented in experience. Thus, every result of our philosophical explorations must be confronted again and again with explicit and unrestricted experience of the data.²⁰⁷ The reality is the measure of theory and of philosophy, not vice versa. Faithfulness to experience likewise demands that we suspend all theories and interpretations known to us from the past so that we can give priority to that which is immediately given. The same goes for different premature classifications which aim to discard a certain explanation based on its resemblance to a particular author or a school of thought.²⁰⁸ This way, one can call a certain theory Thomist, Hegelian, Kantian etc. and imply that he knows everything about it. Then, if he considers that school of thought erroneous, he will likewise apriori discard a new explanation without analyzing it in its own respect.

Often, these “philosophical prejudices” do not leave space for the data in question, and so they might not allow the being to present itself in its fulness. However, this act of suspending or bracketing is only temporary. The aim is only to “take reality seriously in the way in which it discloses itself” and to abstain from all presuppositions which are not evident or proved. When the full *prise de conscience* of the datum is achieved, we can confront our results with different theories and interpretations we hold in mind. The goal is not to become a total “tabula rasa” with regards to theories and explanations, but to give the methodical priority to the datum.

²⁰⁵ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Ethics* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), 1.

²⁰⁶ Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 275.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 2.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 3.

The totality of reality must naturally always stand in the background of each philosophy and philosophers need to make way for the truth about reality to present itself. Still, this does not mean that any one philosophy can encapsulate the totality of truth in one system, regardless of how sophisticated it might be. Hildebrand does not pretend that he has explained all there is with his philosophy and warns against the prejudice that a work can be considered philosophical only if it constructs a system.²⁰⁹ This does not mean that philosophy should not be done systematically, or that different facts should not be connected with the more general ones.²¹⁰ Between the systematic approach and system-building there is a great difference. It is an error to believe that from certain general principles – even true ones - we can deduce the rest of the facts about the universe. Such mathematical procedures can only blind us to the plenitude of being and cause us to overlook completely novel and original data. Reality is always broader and deeper than any system or theory, and such novel data will necessary always exist. There exist many intelligible essences which are so fundamentally new that they cannot be deduced from other facts, only reached in original intuition.²¹¹ Each philosophical clarification needs to be based on this original intuition.

Another danger with premature systematizations is a tendency “to be caught by the immanent logic of a system”, which makes one more concerned in preserving the coherence of a system than to do justice to the nature of the being.²¹² The new datum is then interpreted according to the frames of the system and not necessarily in accordance with the nature of the being. Preoccupation with fitting the being in a system should not have the priority over study of the being itself. If facts do not fit the theory, theory should be revised instead of twisting or ignoring the facts to fit the theory. The given needs to have an absolute priority over hypothesis, interpretation, explanation.

Hildebrand insists that starting from experience should not imply any kind of subjectivism. The fact that some datum is available to our immediate experience is not enough to establish that the datum has only a subjective validity. Being of objects like dreams, fictions and mere semblances consists only in being perceived. But the formula *esse est percipi* holds only thus far. There are many other objects, like justice, love or truth, which possess the character of

²⁰⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 12.

²¹⁰ Likewise, Husserl agrees that the realm of truth is “dominated and unified by law” and that “the investigation and setting forth of truths must reflect the systematic connections of those truths”. Cf. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2001, 1:18.

²¹¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 13.

²¹² Cf. Hildebrand, 15.

intrinsic necessity and intelligibility and which for this reason cannot be considered as mere appearances. The entities of ultimate, objective meaningfulness and ontological truths can never be mere fictions – claiming that would be non-sensical.²¹³ Intrinsic necessity and consistency of such entities is essentially different from the contingent character of mere appearances.

Starting from experience also does not mean that philosophy is a mere description of a naïve experience, nor does philosophy aim to explain everything we experience. There is a variety of data in our pre-philosophical knowledge. There is an awareness of an object (e.g. seeing a car approaching) in an unreflecting lived contact with being, but there is also a variety of unphilosophical and unscientific opinions that man holds and which are not necessarily in the real contact with the first naïve experience. We can see this from people who hold diverse opinions contrary to their experience (e.g. they say that all values are relative, but also hold that no one should discriminate people of different color or nationality). People can experience one thing and provide explanations of completely different sort. These explanations can also in turn influence how one experiences things by darkening and confusing the naïve experience. So, reaching the given in Hildebrand's sense implies purifying the content of naïve experience to clear it from all unconscious influences of the *doxa*.²¹⁴ This task is genuinely philosophical – to become aware of all these influences which blur the connection between our mind and the voice of being in the lived experiential contact. Otherwise, we can only fall prey to illusions.

The second step for reaching the datum consists in “eliminating those narrowing and accidental reductions which the pragmatic outlook imposes on our approach to being”.²¹⁵ Despite having certain positive functions for motivating the achievement of scientific knowledge, pragmatic approach corrodes the object-thematicity of knowledge and it excludes the contemplative approach to the object in question.²¹⁶ It causes that we only grasp the parts of reality which have a practical use. On the other hand, a genuine philosophical approach must free the voice of being from one-sidedness and let it speak for itself. It also ultimately intends a contemplative possessing of the object, a spiritual wedding with it, and not mere “abandonment” of the object once the knowledge about it is reached. That is why, an already known truth never becomes old or outdated for philosophy²¹⁷.

²¹³ Cf. Hildebrand, 6.

²¹⁴ Hildebrand, 8–9.

²¹⁵ Hildebrand, 9.

²¹⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 239.

²¹⁷ Hildebrand, 242.

Finally, the goal of philosophical exploration is “to bring to articulate awareness” or, as Hildebrand says in numerous places, to achieve *prise de conscience* of the original data given in experience. In differ this way, philosophical discoveries radically from those of science: “They consist, not in making us acquainted with beings, nor in showing us beings which were completely unknown in prescientific experience, but in a *prise de conscience* of facts which are in some way familiar to us and which in great part are constantly presupposed by us in our life.”²¹⁸ The fact that these facts are already present in our pre-philosophical, lived experience, in no way diminishes their rank.

To achieve *prise de conscience* a philosopher needs to listen to the “voice of being”. The truth of the being speaks for itself, but it needs to be heard and brought to light by the philosopher. Indispensable prerequisite for this is faithfulness to the data given in experience. The “given” at which the philosopher should aim is not a mere conglomerate of accidental features as some empiricists would have it, it is not a mere sensation. On the contrary, it is “a necessary, intelligible entity, the only true object of philosophy”, such as being, truth, knowledge, space, time, person, justice, love, will, etc. This object imposes itself on our intellect and revels and validates itself fully when we focus on it in an intellectual intuition.²¹⁹ This given is not easy to apprehend nor it can be identified with that which is seen or admitted by everyone. Here also comes the problem for phenomenological epistemology: when a phenomenologist ground his assertions in an intellectual insight into intelligible and necessary essences, it is not evident that all who read his assertions will gain this insight. This is especially so for those who, because of their prior philosophical and other commitments, are not ready to bracket their preconceptions decisively enough to reach the given. The given is not that which is known by everybody, even though it is certainly knowable if appropriate methodological procedures are employed. Furthermore, the given can embrace that which is apprehended in an implicit – and not just explicit – awareness and it can also include those things which require special education or talent to be grasped, such as the beauty of art.

So, the primary concern of the philosopher is the knowledge of the immediately given datum. This is almost never achieved at once but requires a step-by-step penetration into the nature of the being at stake. Then, it should be followed by a second concern – to harmonize this knowledge with other formerly conquered data.²²⁰ Only after doing justice to a new datum the

²¹⁸ Hildebrand, 136.

²¹⁹ Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 10.

²²⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 16.

question of co-ordination comes to the fore. In fact, the question of a relation of a datum to other beings, necessary as it is, can only impose itself after we have done the full justice to the nature of being under consideration. Also, the knowledge of the datum cannot be made dependent on resolving a host of other problems which concern its relation to other beings. The datum needs to be affirmed even if it raises new questions and difficulties. We are not allowed to give it up simply because we are unable to answer other problems which arise from allowing it.

2.2. Phenomenology of Munich and Göttingen Circles

In the early days of phenomenology, no official founding of the movement or the school took place. However, two important phenomenological circles in Munich and Göttingen were formed. Already in 1902 Husserl started having international students coming to study with him in Göttingen, but the decisive point happened in 1905 when a whole group of advanced students (most of whom studied under Theodor Lipps) from Munich joined him in Göttingen. First came Adolf Reinach and Johannes Daubert, to be followed by Moritz Geiger a year later, Theodor Conrad in 1907, Dietrich von Hildebrand in 1909, and Conrad Martius, Alexandre Koyre, Hans Lipps, Edith Stein, and Roman Ingarden (among others) after 1910.²²¹ Among them, Husserl particularly regarded Reinach, who wrote his Habilitation under him and was his teaching assistant in Göttingen.²²²

All the students were fascinated by Husserl's *LI* and in 1907 they started forming a special circle in Göttingen which met outside the lecture halls and largely without Husserl. Already by that time, the discrepancy between the circle's philosophical approach and the Husserl's change of method was visible. The members of the circle were committed to objectivism, while Husserl was turning more and more to subjectivism.²²³ After initial formal gatherings, in 1910 a Göttingen Philosophical Society was formed and from Winter 1910 to Summer 1911, Hildebrand was its president.²²⁴ The Society was brought to a halt in 1916 by World War 1.

Another circle was formed in Munich. Already in 1895, older students of Theodor Lipps formed the *Akademischer Verein für Psychologie*. Alexander Pfänder and Johannes Daubert were among the leading members of this group in the early days. In 1902, Daubert visited Husserl in Göttingen and then in 1904 Husserl came to Munich to hold lectures for the members

²²¹ Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 167.

²²² Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, 25.

²²³ Cf. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 168.

²²⁴ Cf. Schumann, 'Husserl und Hildebrand', 8.

of the circle. The decisive year for the Munich circle was 1906 when Scheler joined and gave a form to it. Among the early members there were Adolf Reinach (before leaving to Göttingen), Theodor Conrad, Moritz Geiger, and of course, Dietrich von Hildebrand. Hildebrand first caught the attention of Munich phenomenologists in the Winter semester 1906/07, when he gave the talk on aesthetics to the circle, which Moritz Geiger praised as “an excellent work”.²²⁵

Usually, it is considered that the members of the phenomenological movement were only loosely connected, and that they were not a homogenous group. Phenomenology is widely called “a movement” to signify its dynamic character, as well as the fact that its members did not share any definite conclusions but only the starting point of research.²²⁶ Early phenomenologists such as Adolf Reinach argued that phenomenology is not “a system of philosophical propositions and truths” which all phenomenologists would have to believe, but rather it is “a method of philosophizing”²²⁷. So, it is not so much about common conclusions, as much it is about common approach to investigating reality.

Under the umbrella term “phenomenological movement” often very divergent authors are counted, including Heidegger, Sartre, Marcel, Levinas, and others. Understood in this way, phenomenology is indeed such a diverse movement that it is hard to recognize any commonalities between its members. However, if we speak about the early Munich and Göttingen circles, then the “phenomenological movement” indeed shared some clearly defined philosophical tenets, as well as some methodological commonalities.²²⁸

The early followers of Husserl were all attracted by his objectivistic approach to philosophy and the motto “back to things in themselves”²²⁹. In *LI*, Husserl revived the classical objectivism and established the method for doing philosophy in objectivist sense. These tenets were also shared by the early phenomenologists, who gave a new methodological and “modern” foundation to this “classical” realist philosophy of necessary truths.²³⁰ Reinach even went so far as to claim that necessary and essential laws are not just one of the most important things

²²⁵ Schumann, 6.

²²⁶ Cf. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 1–2.

²²⁷ Adolf Reinach, ‘Concerning Phenomenology’, in *Sämtliche Werke: Textkritische Ausgabe in 2 Bänden*, ed. Karl Schumann and Barry Smith, trans. Douglas Willard (München: Philosophia Verlag, 1989), 531–50, <https://dwillard.org/articles/concerning-phenomenology-trans-of-adolf-reinachs-ueber-phaenomenologie>.

²²⁸ Cf. Seifert, ‘Introductory Essay’, 12.

²²⁹ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2001, 1:168.

²³⁰ Seifert, ‘Introductory Essay’, 15.

for philosophy, but for the world at large.²³¹ Without the existence of such necessary essences, the most important things in life such as love, truth or value, are neither knowable nor possible.

However, in his Vienna lectures from 1905 Husserl moved away from the objectivist approach and started moving in the direction of transcendental phenomenology;²³² the turn which culminated in 1913 with the publication of his book *Ideas*.²³³ There his position becomes much more subjectivistic, and he starts holding that man cannot reach “things in themselves” independent of human subjectivity.²³⁴ Majority of early phenomenologists from Munich and Göttingen did not follow Husserl in his subjectivistic turn, and branch into a separate school of realist phenomenology. As the time went by, Husserl became more and more a “leader without followers” and in 1931 declared himself the greatest enemy of the “phenomenological movement”.²³⁵

Considering these reasons, it would be much more appropriate to speak of Hildebrand as belonging to the school of “phenomenological realism” (a much less equivocal term), the school which is typified by Husserl of the first edition of *LI*, as well as Reinach, Pfänder, Scheler, Ingarden, Conrad-Martius and Stein.²³⁶ The main contribution of this school was to show that there are eternal and immutable truths which can be discovered by human reason with certainty. This school also differs from later Husserl in his use of *epoche* (bracketing). While Husserl wants to bracket real existence altogether, realist phenomenologists do not look at the world merely phenomenally but as the world of real being.²³⁷ Even though they admit that the knowledge of necessary essences is obtained without necessary reference to existence,²³⁸ they consider that the world around them is the world of real being and thus do not refrain from attributing real being to different phenomena.

²³¹ Adolf Reinach, ‘Concerning Phenomenology’, in *Sämtliche Werke: Textkritische Ausgabe in 2 Bänden*, ed. Karl Schumann and Barry Smith, trans. Douglas Willard (München: Philosophia Verlag, 1989), 531–50, cited from: <https://dwillard.org/articles/concerning-phenomenology-trans-of-adolf-reinachs-ueber-phaenomenologie>.

²³² Those were later published as a book titled *The Idea of Phenomenology*. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. L. Hardy, Softcover reprint of hardcover 1st ed. 1999 edition (Dordrecht; Boston; London: Springer, 2010).

²³³ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2014).

²³⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 17.

²³⁵ Cf. Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 2.

²³⁶ Cf. Josef Seifert, ‘Foreword’, *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* I, no. 1 (1977): iv–v.

²³⁷ Cf. Seifert, vi.

²³⁸ Hildebrand explicitly states that in case of an insight into an essentially necessary and absolutely certain state of facts, the actual here-and-now existence of the states of facts in question is strictly irrelevant. To achieve certainty about these truths, their actual existence does not need to be given to me, but only the essence. The

For Hildebrand, the phenomenological approach in the realist sense primarily signifies the intuitive analysis of genuine, highly intelligible essences.²³⁹ Understood this way, phenomenology does not have anything to do with reducing the world to mere phenomena, or the mere description of subjective appearances. This approach represents a contrast to mere observation and induction, as well as any abstractionism or dealing with mere concepts.²⁴⁰ It is also opposed to genetic approach which claims to know the object if it understands its causes and the approach which sees the definition as the climax of knowledge.²⁴¹ Thus understood, phenomenology is perhaps nothing new since it was employed by past philosophers whenever they attained the genuine *prise de conscience* of the given. However, since it was employed only occasionally and unsystematically, and it was not consciously elaborated as a method, it is permitted to say that phenomenology is new and even revolutionary. So, the most original contribution of phenomenology is that it has epistemologically founded and legitimated the fore mentioned method, and not only *de facto* used it.

Anti-reductionism is another shared objective of early phenomenologists.²⁴² This non-reductionist stance implies giving the priority to the given and allowing it to manifest itself in its fullness. It also implies giving priority to experience over pre-conceived theories, traditions, explanations etc. All these things need to be bracketed before experience gives its judgement on their validity. The principle of simplicity, or economy of thought, is one of such principles pre-accepted by the positivists. For this reason, Husserl and the phenomenologists sharply opposed positivism.²⁴³ This is not to say that Ockham's razor should be abolished, but it should be complemented by a phenomenological principle that phenomena are not to be diminished below what is intuitively given.²⁴⁴

facts of this kind require only the "givenness" of a such-being to be grasped. Already a single example of such truth provides the guarantee that it is true in all cases. Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 128–30.

²³⁹ Hildebrand, 273.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 274.

²⁴¹ As Reinach says, the definition cannot bring the thing itself "a hair closer to us", and therefore a serious philosophical exploration cannot contend itself with merely arriving at the definition. Hildebrand agrees that the definition is never a climax of philosophical knowledge, since it "can never exhaust the plenitude of a necessary, intelligible essence; it can only circumscribe it by mentioning some essential features which suffice to distinguish this essence from another" and give a certain concept the univocal precision. Only essence of artificial beings and technical objects can be exhausted by a definition. All other beings show the plenitude beings which cannot be exhausted by a definition. Cf. Reinach, 'Concerning Phenomenology'; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 14.

²⁴² Cf. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 679.

²⁴³ Cf. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2001, 1:126–32.

²⁴⁴ Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 681.

Hildebrand too opposes any kind of reductivism, or “nothing but” theories in philosophy.²⁴⁵ Even though he admits the legitimacy of the method of reduction in natural sciences, he explains that it is not appropriate for philosophy since “philosophy will never discover anything which is absolutely alien to our pre-philosophical knowledge”.²⁴⁶ For example, philosophy will never be able to discover that justice is nothing but *ressentiment* of the weak, or that reason and will are one and the same thing, in the way in which natural science says, for example, that light is a form of electromagnetic radiation. Even though it is always tempting to reduce the datum to something already familiar to us, we should always strive anew to wonder at the being in all its richness.

Anti-reductionism does not mean that the motto “back to things in themselves” is primarily negativistic, but it has a positive meaning. This positive effort consists of several layers, starting from the investigation of phenomena, focusing on their general essences, apprehending essential relationships among essences, etc. Phenomenological intuition is nothing mystical, although it is a demanding operation, “which requires utter concentration on the object intuited without becoming absorbed in it to the point of no longer thinking critically”.²⁴⁷ This intuition is also closely tied to phenomenological (or, as later Husserl calls it, “intentional”) analysis, which signifies “the general examination of the structure of the phenomena according to their components and their configuration”²⁴⁸. Only after intuiting and analyzing the phenomenon can the phenomenologists proceed with describing and classifying it.

2.3. Key Influences on Hildebrand’s Philosophy

The influences on Hildebrand’s thought are not always easily discerned since he rarely refers to other authors. He is more oriented to examine the truth about things themselves, than to analyze what other philosophers have said about a certain topic. This trait is among many realist-phenomenological characteristics of his writing.²⁴⁹ This obviously does not mean that one should ignore all the positive contributions of the thinkers of the past. Hildebrand admits that we are “standing on the shoulders of giants” who have enlarged our knowledge of the

²⁴⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 61–62.

²⁴⁶ Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 5; Here Hildebrand echoes Husserl who insisted that philosophy begins with what has been “taken for granted” as “obvious”, in order to make it truly understood. Cf. Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, 49.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 682.

²⁴⁸ Spiegelberg, 692.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Martin Cajthaml and Vlastimil Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 6.

given.²⁵⁰ He only wants to stress that entering a dialogue with thinkers of the past does not have to reduce the philosopher to a commentator of past thoughts, but that he can and should always strive to enlarge the *prise de conscience* of the “given”.

However, Hildebrand professes that Husserl, Scheler and Reinach influenced his work in important ways.²⁵¹ Still, he was not a mere follower of his predecessors. Even though his thought builds on important contributions of those three philosophers, he made genuine discoveries of his own. This does not just concern the discoveries which we will study in the next chapter, such as those of value and spiritual affectivity, but also Hildebrand’s furthering of the phenomenological approach to philosophy. In a similar way, our aim here is not just to show the parallel places in Hildebrand and other authors, but to additionally show how Hildebrand develops thoughts of his own on the relevant matters.

2.3.1. Husserl

Hildebrand was attracted by objectivist, anti-psychologistic and anti-relativistic philosophy of early Husserl. For this reason, he also went to Göttingen to do his dissertation under him. Husserl, in turn, shared his fascination with Hildebrand. He graded Hildebrand’s dissertation with “opus eximium” and praised Hildebrand’s genius.²⁵² Hildebrand’s dissertation also made Husserl realize that Hildebrand is not just a student, but an independent researcher in the field of phenomenology.²⁵³ Hildebrand impressed him both by his scholarly and methodical rigor, as well as by original discoveries when analyzing the human act, taking cognizance, stances and knowledge.²⁵⁴ Finally, Hildebrand’s dissertation was published in Husserl’s *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*.²⁵⁵

After 1912, the two philosophers lost all contact. By 1916, Husserl started expressing disagreements with Hildebrand’s work and by 1922, when Hildebrand published his habilitation thesis, Husserl lost all interest in Hildebrand’s work.²⁵⁶ Husserl, himself a follower of “free Christianity”, considered Hildebrand’s conversion to Catholicism and adherence to

²⁵⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 12.

²⁵¹ Wenisch, ‘Einleitung’, 16.

²⁵² Cf. Edmund Husserl, ‘Urteil über Hildebrands Doktorarbeit’, *Aletheia: An International Yearbook of Philosophy* V (1992): 4–5.

²⁵³ Cf. Schumann, ‘Husserl und Hildebrand’, 12.

²⁵⁴ While praising his original discoveries with regards to these individual analyses, Husserl had some reservations with Hildebrand’s outline of general phenomenology of consciousness which he presented in one of the drafts, which also might have to do with Husserl’s turn to idealism which was happening at that time. Cf. Schumann, 13.

²⁵⁵ Hildebrand, ‘Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung’.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Schumann, 19–24, 30–31.

Catholic dogma and authority of the Church detrimental to his philosophical thinking. In his letter to Paul Natorp from 1922, he expresses his regret with Hildebrand's conversion and his new focus on religious-ethical considerations.²⁵⁷ It seems that the view in which Hildebrand's religiosity somehow overshadows and lessens his philosophical contributions was also present in later assessments of the early phenomenological movement.²⁵⁸ This, however, is an erroneous view, as we hope to show in the coming pages. Hildebrand clearly distinguishes his purely philosophical considerations from those obtained by faith.²⁵⁹

It would be hard to pinpoint individual ideas in which Husserl inspired Hildebrand. It was more the general approach to philosophy of the early Husserl which Hildebrand acquired as his own and built on it. Primarily it concerns the rigorous and objectivist approach to philosophy with the means of phenomenological method. The task of phenomenology, according to Husserl, is to "bring to pure expression" and "describe in terms of their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences"²⁶⁰.

Hildebrand shares this view. He states that the object of philosophy is primarily to discover apriori and not empirical states of facts.²⁶¹ Apriori truths which philosophy aims at are not mere tautologies. Philosophical truths belong to the synthetic, and not analytic apriori since the predicate is not contained in the subject. These apriori truths should not be limited only to the sphere of mathematics or logic but they are also possible in metaphysics, the ontology of the person, in ethics, aesthetics, and many other areas of human knowledge.²⁶²

To discover what this means we first need to attach a clear meaning to both the "apriori" and the "empirical". Husserl first distinguished between empirical necessity and necessity of essence.²⁶³ Hildebrand accepts this basic distinction but expands on it. He explains that the necessity of the apriori is a structural inner necessity and not a mere formal necessity, which arises when an individual case is found to be an instance of a generally valid truth. Here, the necessity is found already in the inner structure of the truth in question, prior to any

²⁵⁷ Cf. Schumann, 32.

²⁵⁸ See, for example, Herber Spiegelberg's treatment of Hildebrand in: Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 235–37.

²⁵⁹ See, for example, Hildebrand's introduction to his book *Metaphysics of Community: Hildebrand, Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*.

²⁶⁰ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2001, 1:166.

²⁶¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 117.

²⁶² This is also his point of contention with positivism. Cf. Hildebrand, 181.

²⁶³ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2001, 2:12.

consideration of how it relates to more general truths.²⁶⁴ The apriori necessity should be distinguished from those which is found in the facts studied by the natural science (e.g. that heat causes the body to expand), even though the latter also possesses a kind of necessity. These “laws of nature” are not based on mere factual bonds, but they are general and necessary laws. However, they are different from apriori necessity, since their necessity is not absolute, and they are not intelligibly grounded in the essence of the objects in question.²⁶⁵ Here we can contrast the necessity of essence and necessity of nature. The first is absolute and has a strict foundation in the essence of the thing as such. The second is relative to the contingency of the world, or in modern language: it is not necessarily true in all possible worlds. One can imagine a world in which heated body does not expand or the water does not boil at 100 degrees Celsius at standard atmospheric pressure. On the other hand, imagining that one and the same thing exists and does not exist simultaneously is intrinsically impossible.

Intrinsic necessity is closely linked to incomparable intelligibility which is not present in the general laws of nature. This intelligibility is rooted in the essential necessity. Here, we grasp that something is such but also why it is. Only with regards to these facts we can speak of having an “insight” in the full sense. Only those facts can be brought to self-evidence in the fullest meaning of the term; only with them we can reach a real *intelligere*, a real understanding from within.²⁶⁶ The high intelligibility of apriori facts does not mean that they need to be self-evident at first sight, especially in the field of philosophy, nor they need to be knowable by every man. In some cases, person does not know the apriori truth since he lacks an experience of such being in question”.²⁶⁷ In other cases, apriori facts need to be brought from naïve awareness to the full philosophical *prise de conscience*. This requires both a certain distance from objects, as well as delving more and more deeply into the being in question, accompanied by a long and difficult philosophical analysis.

The third characteristic apriori facts is their absolute certainty. This certainty is not a mark of the fact as such, but of the relation of the fact and knowledge about it.²⁶⁸ The empirical necessities are only very highly probable, but apriori facts absolutely certain. It would be nonsensical to assume that there is a possible world in which apriori truths are not true. There

²⁶⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 120–21.

²⁶⁵ Hildebrand, 122.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 123.

²⁶⁷ Hildebrand, 149.

²⁶⁸ Hildebrand, 124.

is not even a possibility “in principle” that those facts could be refuted, since “the state of facts in its necessity is laid completely and absolutely bare before our mind”.

The difference between apriori and empirical facts is also visible from how they become known to us. Husserl contends against Mill that apriori laws cannot be mere generalizations from experience.²⁶⁹ They are not reached through observation and induction, but by intuition. The term “intuition” should not be confused with anything irrational or mysterious²⁷⁰, nor it should be understood as a sudden infusion and inspiration.²⁷¹ The intuitive element of perception consists in the full unfolding of a such-being before our mind. This is the broader meaning of the term “intuition”. Intuitive knowledge signifies the “perception” in the broadest sense of this term and so, intuition (considered in this way) plays a fundamental role in all our knowledge: naïve, scientific and philosophical.²⁷² A narrower meaning of intuition can be called “intellectual intuition” and it is possible only in the case of highly intelligible, genuine essences. This type of intuition includes not only “the self-presence and deployment of the essence of the object, but also a unique intelligibility which is present only in the case of these necessary essences.”²⁷³ In an intuition the object becomes luminous to us in its essence. This intuitive grasping refers to the knowledge “from within” which makes possible the fulfilment of contemplative “wedding” with the object. For this intuitive contact to be achieved, the perception of a concrete being is not always required. We can also imagine a being in our minds and then focus on its essence to achieve an intuitive contact. It is essentially unimportant whether we start from a concrete perception or a mere spiritual representation.

On the other hand, the “causal nexus” between water and boiling at 100 degrees Celsius is not in itself given, only the individual facts of water and boiling at 100 degrees, which follow each other in time, are given. The causality is only inferred from the observation that the B follows the A under numerous different conditions. This inference does not possess absoluteness of certainty, but there is – at least in principle – a possibility of refutation. Although the refutation is highly improbable, the possibility exists. In Husserl’s words: “Induction does not establish the holding of the law, only the greater or lesser probability of its holding; the probability, and not the law, is justified by insight.”²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ Cf. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2001, 1:1.

²⁷⁰ Hildebrand charges Bergson with having such non-phenomenological, irrational conception of intuition. Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Max Schelers Philosophie und Persönlichkeit’, 595.

²⁷¹ Reinach, ‘Concerning Phenomenology’.

²⁷² Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 266.

²⁷³ Hildebrand, 266.

²⁷⁴ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2001, 1:47.

Even the knowledge of simple individual facts, such as “This chair is green”, is not absolutely certain, even though it is not inferred by induction. As long as we grasp the fact for the first time and as it occurs here and now there is a possibility of hallucination and deception. However, this possibility of deception ceases to be when the fact is confirmed over and over in the continuous stream of experience. When an individual fact “is inserted into the totality of our experience of reality, and confirmed time after time, it no longer makes any sense to say that we may be deceived about it”.²⁷⁵ If the knowledge is confirmed over and over by experience, then it is not endowed with high probability, but a full certainty.

However, to confirm the essentially necessary facts, we do not need the recourse to confirmation by the stream of experience. These facts possess absolute certainty even when we reach an insight into just one of them. This certainty is grounded in the such-being of those facts, not in their actual existence. These facts also have a general character so the certainty we have with regards to the differs from the certainty we can have with individual concrete facts. Only in one unique case – namely, of the Augustinian "*Si fallor, sum*" and the Cartesian "*Cogito ergo sum*" – the knowledge of the concrete fact possesses the same absolute certainty as the apriori knowledge.²⁷⁶

As we have noted, the knowledge of essential necessities is achieved through intuition of general essences which Husserl calls “eidetic intuition” or *Wesenschau*.²⁷⁷ This method is widely shared by phenomenologists, even though some prefer to use terms such as “experience of essences”, “insight into essences”, or as Hildebrand calls it: “experience of such-being”. This type of experience is not a mere empirical observation, but it refers to every concrete disclosure of a such-being.²⁷⁸ If we understand this, we can also understand what it means that “the apriori is independent of experience.” Apriori is indeed independent from experience in the sense of observation and induction, but it is not necessarily independent of the experience of such-being. The latter experience in no way excludes absolute certainty, intelligibility, and essential necessity.²⁷⁹

Hildebrand claims that “to gain an absolutely certain and essentially necessary insight, it is not enough that we have an experience of such-being and that we prescind from the question of

²⁷⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 127.

²⁷⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 128.

²⁷⁷ For Husserl, obtaining an essential insight is not achieved through some kind of a passive gaze through which we are able to obtain infallible insights into the essence of each and every object, but it is a demanding conceptual analysis that is in many cases defeasible. Cf. Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 39.

²⁷⁸ Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 141–42.

²⁷⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 145.

actual existence and induction”, but “we must have also a very special kind of such-being and a givenness which is possible only with this type of such-being.”²⁸⁰ Here Hildebrand also criticizes Husserl for erroneously believing that it is enough to bracket real existence to guarantee apriori knowledge. Contrary to this, Hildebrand insists that apart from bracketing, a specific kind of such-being needs also to be given to us.²⁸¹

This kind of such-being is given when we deal with objects like a square, a person, love, justice, etc. It possesses a necessary unity and the highest level of inner consistence. This unity is directly and intuitively accessible and not hidden. The constitutive such-being is here intuitively given and not hidden from our immediate experience. The lines of the species are clearly given – what is accidental and what is constitutive of the genus is unambiguously given.²⁸² The “authentic generic such-being” offers itself to our mind completely by itself and we can only glance at one concrete example without the need for observation of further instances. The genus or species is not reached by abstraction, but it is given in the perception of the concrete being.²⁸³

Furthermore, Hildebrand insists that it should not be assumed that the appearance of intrinsically necessary and highly intelligible data is something completely different from its ontological being. In natural science we can discover that this which appears in our naïve experience is something different from the nature of the object as such. This way we can say that even though the Earth appears to be flat, it is indeed spherical. Nevertheless, this distinction between appearance and real nature of an object applies only to material substances in their unintelligible and contingent character.²⁸⁴ We need to reject any form of Kantian interpretation which would hold that in all cases appearance somehow veils the being. Phenomenology does not consider the object as hidden behind the appearance.²⁸⁵ What we encounter in experience

²⁸⁰ Hildebrand, 152–53.

²⁸¹ Hildebrand distinguishes different such-being which are hierarchically ordered according to levels of unity and meaningfulness. The lowest on the spectrum of unity are the chaotic and accidental unities, which fail to be “something” in a true sense (e.g. a heap of stones). They do not possess a genuine form or such-being, but only external elements keep it from falling apart. On a higher level are the morphic unities, such as a stone or an animal. They have a strong enough unity to form the basis of universality. Their such-being has an inner consistency which makes it something objectively meaningful, in contrast to merely accidental and factual. However, such-being here is still not absolutely necessary, but “essential here means what is de facto constitutive for a species, and not what is intrinsically necessary and what is absolutely to be included in the essence in question.” Cf. Hildebrand, 154-161.

²⁸² For example, when we think of the constitutive nature of a chair or a dog, the line which defines one specific kind from all the others is not unambiguous. It is unambiguous, however, in the case of the triangle or the color red. Cf. Hildebrand, 164.

²⁸³ Cf. Hildebrand, 165.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 7.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 15.

is the being itself which discloses itself to us, not a mere “screen” which could display something other than the being itself.

A final thing needs to be clarified. Earlier we have said that the phenomenological approach to philosophy aims at discovering apriori truths which are atemporal and ahistorical.²⁸⁶ At the same time, Hildebrand is doing political philosophy (which we will analyze in this work) on the phenomenological foundation. But political facts are both temporal and historical. How it is then possible to do a genuine philosophy in the realist-phenomenological way by analyzing the political datum given in specific time and place in which he found himself?²⁸⁷ Answering this question will not just provide the foundations for Hildebrand’s political philosophy, but also show that Hildebrand is not just repeating or systematizing the philosophy of early phenomenologists, but also brings major breakthroughs of his own.

Hildebrand solves this problem by discovering the notion of empirical essences. Political philosophy on phenomenological foundations then needs to investigate empirical essences. Rocco Buttiglione vividly portrays how the analysis of the empirical essence of Nazism looks like in von Hildebrand: “It is correct to say that Nazism is a result of the Treaty of Versailles and of the humiliation of German national spirit. This state of affairs interacts with the consequences of the Russian revolution... Nevertheless, in order to have Nazism we must have something more than these material elements... National Socialism is a specific answer given to this situation and through this answer a whole conception of the nature of man and of the meaning of history comes to the fore. This ideal moment enters in history and becomes an active factor in its further development, linking according to a certain intentionality different empirical elements and creates new matters of facts... von Hildebrand explains again and again the precedence of the intellectual moment over the empirical, bringing to the fore a truly phenomenological anti-reductionistic spirit.”²⁸⁸

Hildebrand stresses that the phenomenological approach is not restricted to the philosophical analysis of genuine essences.²⁸⁹ It is also indispensable for the deeper understanding of the data which play an important role in the humanities, such as a great individual personalities, cultural

²⁸⁶ However, not all apriori states of facts fall inside the object-domain of philosophy (e.g. objects of mathematics, such as the Pythagorean theorem). Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 192.

²⁸⁷ It is not surprising then that Robert Sokolowski remarked that “phenomenology has not developed a political philosophy”. Cf. Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 203–4.

²⁸⁸ Rocco Buttiglione, ‘The Philosophy of History of Dietrich von Hildebrand’, *Aletheia: An International Yearbook of Philosophy* V (1992): 176.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 275.

epochs, or individual works of art. There also legitimate objects of philosophy which lie outside the territory of the apriori, such as the questions of the existence of God, the teleological order in the outer world, etc. Also, the focus on the apriori does not mean that philosophy does not have any interest in real, concrete existence. Both the Augustinian *si fallor, sum* and the Cartesian doubt are expressions of a concrete fact and are still eminently philosophical truths. The same is true regarding the question whether we can reach the adequate knowledge of the things-in-themselves of whether God exists. Even though both truths concern the concrete existence, philosophy is answering them by means of apriori facts, not of empirical and inductive method. Although in some cases absolute certainty will not be reached but only high probability, this again would be an admission stemming from an insight into the epistemological character of an object.²⁹⁰

Another characteristic which determines if something is an object of philosophy is “a certain essential significance and central importance to be found in the contents of some objects”²⁹¹. Philosophy is concerned only with those objects which stand in deep relation to the focus of reality. This relation can be found in the generality of the object in question (e.g. the nature of number four is not an object of philosophy, but of an object as such is), it can also be found in the depth of content and qualitative meaningfulness of the object (as in the field of ethics or aesthetics). Philosophy is not only concerned with centrally important objects but also to know them in a centrally significant manner, i.e. through apriori knowledge.²⁹²

In the field of social and political philosophy the analyses both of apriori and empirical facts. For example, that each person possesses inviolable dignity is an apriori fact which can be arrived at through the insight in the such-being of a person. This fact then plays an important role in judging a certain political system. This analysis is then necessarily coupled with different historical and empirical facts which are present in a concrete political system. These empirical facts a philosopher also needs to intuit, even though their intelligibility is lower, and they do not possess the strict necessity like the apriori facts. This is precisely what Hildebrand is doing when analyzing National Socialism, Communism and liberalism. He is analyzing both the ideal content of the ideas contained in those systems, as well as empirical fact with which those ideas are coupled.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 200.

²⁹¹ Hildebrand, 196.

²⁹² Cf. Hildebrand, 197.

2.3.2. Scheler

Another important philosophical influence on Hildebrand was made by Max Scheler. Both Scheler and Hildebrand had an enormously rich original experiential contact with things. However, Scheler often drifted in the analysis of many secondary aspects of a problem and side aspects of a datum, while Hildebrand stayed focused on the issues of central importance for a philosopher.²⁹³ Despite admiring Scheler, Hildebrand never considered himself to be Scheler's disciple.²⁹⁴ He both admired Scheler's living contact with reality and the ability to discover different phenomena, but also criticized his lack of rigor and philosophical discipline.²⁹⁵ Scheler was always pressured by impressions and inspirations that came to him, but never spent enough time to rework and rethink his intuitions. As Josef Seifert explains, Scheler's analyses "exceed those of Reinach in ingeniousness and wealth of interesting aspects but lack the precision and clarity of Reinach's investigations and which are mixed with some gratuitous and unfounded assertions"²⁹⁶.

Hildebrand considered the years 1921-1922 to be decisive turning point both for their friendship and for Scheler's philosophizing. From then on, Scheler's philosophy would be filled with illusions and unobjective elements, it would move away from phenomenology and become more and more separated from the Christian thought.²⁹⁷ All these reasons obviously increased the differences between Hildebrand and Scheler to irreconcilable levels.

Despite this, there are obvious parallels in the works of two philosophers, especially in the earlier phase before Scheler's philosophical turn in 1922. Even though Hildebrand rarely explicitly recognizes Scheler's influence on philosophy, it can be argued that the most explicit point of contact is their moral philosophy and the theory of values.²⁹⁸ In his habilitation thesis, Hildebrand credits Scheler for discovering a specific intuitive grasp of values, first in his lectures on ethics at the University of Munich (1907-09) and then in his foundational ethical

²⁹³ Cf. John F. Crosby and Josef Seifert, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977)', *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* I, no. 1 (1977): 225.

²⁹⁴ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 106.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'The Personality of Max Scheler', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (2005): 45–55, <https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq20057912>.

²⁹⁶ Seifert, 'Introductory Essay', 26.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Max Schelers Philosophie und Persönlichkeit', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 605, 610, 625, and elsewhere.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 21.

work: *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*.²⁹⁹ Hildebrand also remarks that the connection of his work with Scheler's world of thought will be evident in many passages.

Both Scheler and Hildebrand share the critique of Kant, especially his position that any non-formal (i.e. material) value must be changeable and historically relative.³⁰⁰ Their main attempt is to establish an objective, non-relative value ethics that is not merely formal. One of the ways they are achieving this is by showing that there are objective values which are ontologically and epistemologically different and independent from the sphere of empirical goods.³⁰¹ Precisely this non-identity of the material and empirical is the basis of their critique of Kant.

Scheler establishes that value qualities are ideal objectivities independent of values as properties of real things. Husserlian distinction between ideal and the real is here applied to the values themselves. Just as one can grasp the essential necessities (e.g. redness as such) in themselves, the same is true for value qualities. Value qualities can be grasped in their qualitative unity independent and irreducible to their concrete instantiations. Immediate intuition serves here for grasping the essential connections between values. This way, Scheler escapes the danger of relativism and historicism, without ending up with a purely formal ethics.³⁰²

In a typically phenomenological fashion, Scheler aims to ground his material value ethics in "phenomenological experience" and by researching the apriori in its essential connections.³⁰³ "Phenomenological experience" or "phenomenological intuition" are Scheler's terms to describe what Hildebrand calls "such-being experience".³⁰⁴ It is primarily directed towards the intuition the apriori and not merely empirical structures.³⁰⁵ Through this phenomenological experience we also access values as special types of apriori essences. For both Scheler and

²⁹⁹ Hildebrand, 'Sittlichkeit und Ethische Werterkenntnis: eine Untersuchung über Ethische Strukturprobleme', 468.

³⁰⁰ There is also an important point of divergence in their critique of Kant and it concerns the concept of duty. While Scheler reject the notion of duty almost all together, Hildebrand wants to revive it in its true meaning. Cf. Hildebrand, 'The Personality of Max Scheler', 601–3.

³⁰¹ Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 26.

³⁰² Sometimes Scheler's material value ethics is interpreted as if values are completely separated from the world, which Hildebrand believes to be an erroneous interpretation. However, he did make an error of separating the world of values from the world of purposes. Cf. Hildebrand, 'Max Schelers Philosophie und Persönlichkeit', 593.

³⁰³ Cf. Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 5.

³⁰⁴ However, although there is an obvious similarity in terminology and method, Hildebrand believed that Scheler never actually achieved this phenomenological intuition of essences. Cf. Hildebrand, 'Max Schelers Philosophie und Persönlichkeit', 616.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value*, 48–52.

Hildebrand, values are the original phenomena (*Urphänomenen*) which cannot be reduced to other spheres of being but need to be directly grasped in original phenomenological intuition.³⁰⁶

Both Hildebrand and Scheler recognize that there is an objective hierarchical order among values. However, there is one important difference between the two philosophers. Scheler puts all his value categories under the same hierarchy. For him, the hierarchy includes four types of values (from lowest to highest): agreeable, vital, spiritual and values of holiness.³⁰⁷ In this hierarchy, the agreeable is merely the lowest type of value. For this reason, Hildebrand charged him with committing a categorial mistake because of not recognizing the essential difference between merely subjectively satisfying and intrinsically important.³⁰⁸ Scheler did not recognize different types of importance, but he puts them all under the same heading of value. On the other hand, Hildebrand insists that between merely subjectively satisfying and value there is not just a difference of rank, but that of quality. They are two different categories of importance. These two categories form different hierarchies, not the same one.

To illustrate Hildebrand's point, we can offer the following example.³⁰⁹ Let us imagine that someone is divided between two choices. On the one hand, he can go to a party and experience a lot of amusement. On the other hand, a close friend needs help so he could go and help the friend in need. Now, these two options are not of the same kind, they are not a part of the same hierarchy of values. There is an obvious moral obligation to help a friend, a real call directed towards the person. The party does not present such a call. If one would be deciding among two parties and would choose the more amusing one, this would mean giving preference to one thing over another within the same hierarchy. But the call to help a friend cannot even be measured by the same "yardstick" as the party (they are "incommensurable").

A connected point can be made. In one of his later works, Hildebrand credits Scheler for laying out the distinction between four types of great men in a hierarchical order (the saint, the genius, the hero and the inventor) and explaining that the difference in rank between them is such that the lowest among saints is higher than the highest among geniuses. Still, Hildebrand notes that he is quoting Scheler simply to show that there exists a rank among the values, and not to

³⁰⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Max Schelers Philosophie und Persönlichkeit', 596.

³⁰⁷ Cf. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value*, 105–10.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 47.

³⁰⁹ This example and a longer discussion on Hildebrand's critique of Scheler's categorial mistake can be found in: Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 64–71.

identify himself with the details of Scheler's work.³¹⁰ The likely reason is that for Hildebrand the saint and the inventor would differ essentially, not just in terms of the rank.

There is another important difference between Scheler's and Hildebrand's account of values. It concerns the realization of moral values. For Scheler, moral values are realized "on the back" (*auf dem Rücken*) of the acts of *willing* to realize a higher positive value over a lower one.³¹¹ Practically, this means that whenever someone realizes a non-moral positive good or even wills to do it, the moral good is at the same time realized as a kind of by-product.³¹² On the other hand, Hildebrand recognizes moral values as distinct type of values which can be intended and realized directly. Scheler also identifies direct intending of the good with Pharisaism, which Hildebrand strongly objects.³¹³ Direct intending of moral values can serve to glorify God, and not necessarily to elevate one's ego. Therefore, one can intend moral values without falling into Pharisaism.

A point of agreement with Scheler can be found in the fact that Hildebrand recognizes that there are certain non-moral values which are at the same time morally relevant. Realizing them would imply a certain moral relevance. But, apart from that, there is a whole order of specifically moral values which are realized not merely "on the back" of other acts but directly.

A specific value domain on which both Hildebrand and Scheler put a high emphasis is the domain of love. While both acknowledge the importance of love, Hildebrand stresses that love presupposes the apprehension of values and then responding to them, while Scheler highlights that love discloses previously unnoticed values.³¹⁴ For him, love is a movement in which the human person starts to see more clearly the values which it did not recognize before.

However, Hildebrand's biggest objection to Scheler is not with regards to value, but with regards to the human person. Hildebrand claims that Scheler negated the substantiality of the person.³¹⁵ The specific character of man as a spiritual person and a conscious subject, his self-possession of a completely new kind was only incompletely grasped by Scheler. This fact also made him overlook that the person is an authentic substance. For Hildebrand, the person the most perfect substance in the created world and understanding this fact is also necessary to

³¹⁰ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1976), 23.

³¹¹ Cf. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value*, 27.

³¹² Cf. Philip Blosser, 'What Makes Experience "Moral"?' Dietrich von Hildebrand vs. Max Scheler', *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 72.

³¹³ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Max Schelers Philosophie und Persönlichkeit', 590.

³¹⁴ Cf. Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 21.

³¹⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Max Schelers Philosophie und Persönlichkeit', 604.

correctly comprehend how a community can and should be built. Without the correct understanding of the person, there is no correct understanding of community and body politic.

Finally, Scheler's and Hildebrand's views also diverged on the issues of war and politics. In 1916, Scheler published the work *Der Genius des Krieges* (The Genius of War)³¹⁶ in which he praised German militarism as "a work of art, the highest cultural expression of the German soul" and claimed that through war Germany pursues its mission to ensure the very survival of the human civilization.³¹⁷ Similar sentiments were also expressed by Husserl, who spoke about the "sacred War" and admired the spirit of the nation at the beginning of WW1.³¹⁸ Although Hildebrand initially sympathized with the ideas expressed in Scheler's book, later his views changed, and he considered the book to be both too nationalistic and opportunistic. Hildebrand did not share Scheler's enthusiasm for the "German war", but he believed that the war was from the beginning a betrayal of the Christian mission of Europe.³¹⁹

Scheler and Hildebrand also differ in their view of fascism. After visiting Italy in 1922, Scheler conveyed to Hildebrand how impressed he is by this new political movement which he characterized as "dynamic", "interesting" and "new".³²⁰ Dynamism of historical events which so impressed Scheler, left no influence on Hildebrand. He had reservations towards fascism. The categories which primarily interested Hildebrand were those of just and unjust, good and evil, right and wrong, and here fascism could not pass the test.

2.3.3. Reinach

Reinach earned his doctorate under Lipps in 1904 and in 1909 habilitated in Göttingen under Husserl.³²¹ He re-read Husserl's *Logical Investigations* several times and "was convinced that philosophy had been put on a new basis by Husserl's breakthrough to objective being and by the exactness and stringency which he cultivated in his work"³²². Husserl, on the other hand, very much respected Reinach and considered him to be among "the very first philosophers who

³¹⁶ Max Scheler, *Der Genius des Krieges und der Deutsche Krieg* (Leipzig: Verlag der Weissen Bucher, 1915).

³¹⁷ Cited from: von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 163.

³¹⁸ Husserl changed his positions after the war. Cf. Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 31-32.

³¹⁹ Cf. Buttiglione, 'The Philosophy of History of Dietrich von Hildebrand', 179.

³²⁰ von Hildebrand, *The Soul of a Lion: Dietrich von Hildebrand: A Biography*, 215.

³²¹ For a short biography of Reinach, see: Karl Schuhmann and Barry Smith, 'Adolf Reinach: An Intellectual Biography', in *Speech Act and Sachverhalt: Reinach and the Foundations of Realist Phenomenology*, ed. Kevin Mulligan, Primary Sources in Phenomenology (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1987), 3-27, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-3521-1_1.

³²² John F. Crosby, 'A Brief Biography of Reinach', *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* III (1983): ix.

fully understood the distinct character of the new phenomenological method and who was able to see its philosophical significance”³²³. Reinach was also the first to mention phenomenology as a *movement*. Many of the movement’s members, including Hildebrand, Stein and Alexandre Koyré referred to him, and not Husserl, as a teacher, while Hedwig Conrad-Martius went so far as to call him “the phenomenologist *par excellence*”³²⁴.

After Husserl’s transcendental turn, Reinach became one of the forerunners of phenomenology, especially with his 1913 work *The Apriori Foundations of the Civil Law*³²⁵ and 1914 lecture *Concerning Phenomenology*.³²⁶ In these works, Reinach uses the phenomenological method to rigorously investigate the necessary essences and essentially necessary states of affairs connected to them. He shares Husserl’s critique of psychologism and subjectivism and seeks to establish absolute necessity of certain essences and laws not just in the field of logic, but also in other fields where such essences and laws can be found (e.g. in the domain of social acts and the law). For Reinach, these facts are objectively such and cannot be otherwise. They are also intelligible and can become evident to our intuition. Unlike Husserl, he insists that not only ideal beings such as those of logic, but also real beings possess necessary essences.

Hildebrand wrote again and again that his only true teacher was Reinach. The depth and rigor of philosophical analysis that Hildebrand was missing in Scheler, he discovered in Reinach.³²⁷ Reinach systematically employed the phenomenological method and wanted to do philosophy in the form of a strict science.³²⁸ What Hildebrand cherishes the most in Reinach is that he “achieves and formulates, often for the first time, general foundational insights”, and that these insights “are at the same time in most instances so precisely formulated that nothing more is needed for us to build on them”³²⁹. In his posthumously published work *Moralia*, Hildebrand credits Reinach for pointing that the objective justice has an immediate moral relevance, which also signifies that Hildebrand revered Reinach until the end of his life.³³⁰

³²³ Edmund Husserl, ‘Reinach as a Philosophical Personality’, *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* III (1983): xii.

³²⁴ Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 191–92.

³²⁵ Cf. Adolf Reinach, ‘The Apriori Foundations of the Civil Law’, trans. John F. Crosby, *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* III (1983): 1–142.

³²⁶ Reinach, ‘Concerning Phenomenology’.

³²⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘The Personality of Max Scheler’, 48.

³²⁸ Cf. Husserl, ‘Reinach as a Philosophical Personality’, xii.

³²⁹ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Reinach as a Philosophical Personality’, *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* III (1983): xx.

³³⁰ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, Gesammelte Werke, IX. (Regensburg: Verlag Josef Habbel, 1980), 473.

Hildebrand also praises Reinach for making “the foundational distinction” between acts; namely, between acts “in which a position or stance is taken”, versus acts “in which something is grasped or apprehended”³³¹. The first are usually called stances (*Stellungnahme*), while the latter are referred to as cognition or taking cognizance (*Kenntnisnahme*). This distinction first appears in Reinach essay *Towards the Theory of the Negative Judgment* from 1911³³², and Hildebrand adopts it in his doctoral dissertation which was generally closely connected with the thoughts of Reinach.³³³ However, Hildebrand gives stances a considerably more detailed treatment and delineates them in a different way.³³⁴ He goes much further in developing his ideas about stances and responses. As we will see later, the notion of a response plays a pivotal role in Hildebrand’s conception of ethics and of love.

Among Reinach’s analyses which were influential on Hildebrand, the analysis of social acts comes to the fore. Reinach’s insights which he laid out in the *The Apriori Foundations of the Civil Law* undoubtedly influenced Hildebrand’s social philosophy and theory of community. This theory Hildebrand considers “fundamental for the whole ontology of the of personal acts”³³⁵ and explicitly builds on it in his social-ontological analysis in *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*.

Reinach introduces the notion of other-directed (*fremdpesonal*) experiences to designate experiences for which it is essential to be directed towards another person.³³⁶ While acts such as forgiving or making a resolution can happen entirely from within, acts like commanding, warning or promising direct themselves towards the other and are in need of being heard by the other. The acts which are in need of being heard Reinach calls social acts. The turning to another subject and the need of being heard is absolutely essential for every social act. Also, all social acts presuppose as their foundation “some materially complete experience whose intentional object coincides with the intentional object of the social act or is at least somehow related to it”³³⁷. Finally, after they successfully reach the addressee, social acts create new

³³¹ Hildebrand, ‘Reinach as a Philosophical Personality’, xxii.

³³² Cf. Adolf Reinach, ‘On the Theory of the Negative Judgment’, in *Parts and Moments. Studies in Logic and Formal Ontology*, ed. and trans. Barry Smith (Philosophia Verlag, 1882), 315–77.

³³³ Cf. Schumann, ‘Husserl und Hildebrand’, 9.

³³⁴ Cf. Dr. Jean Moritz Müller, ‘Dietrich von Hildebrand’, in *Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, ed. Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer (New York/London: Routledge, 2020), 115.

³³⁵ Hildebrand, ‘Reinach as a Philosophical Personality’, xxi.

³³⁶ Cf. Reinach, ‘The Apriori Foundations of the Civil Law’, 19.

³³⁷ Reinach, 22.

entities with a *sui generis* metaphysical status, which are different from the addressor, the addressee, and the social act itself.

To understand some essential relations of social acts, we can look at the act of promising and the apriori relations which arise from it. To exist, the act of promising needs to be heard by the addressee. However, the promise is characterized by another essential fact: when it is heard, it necessarily creates the obligation of fulfillment for the one who makes the promise. By creating an obligation, the “promise changes the structure of objective world”³³⁸. Therefore, it is not a mere social construct. Only when the promise becomes fulfilled, this obligation ceases to exist. Furthermore, a promise necessarily requires an object different from itself and it needs to be directed towards another person, not myself and not purely material objects, plants, and animals. The recipient of the promise can also cancel the obligation of the promisor, but the same is not true for the promisor himself. Important contribution of Reinach was to show that all the above-mentioned relations possess a strict essential necessity.

Hildebrand approvingly speaks about Reinach’s theory of social acts but also criticizes what in his view was “an unmotivated limitation of the sociality’s sphere to linguistic experiences”³³⁹. More specifically, Hildebrand stresses that several emotional stances (*Stellungnahmen*), like social acts themselves, share this essential trait of needing to be heard. Furthermore, Hildebrand highlights another important thing. In Reinach’s theory social acts presuppose complete inner experiences, but the expression and inner experience form two different acts (e.g. questioning presupposes inner experience of doubt, but questioning and doubt are two distinct acts). On the other hand, Hildebrand shows that certain emotional acts can form much closer unity with the inner experience they presuppose.³⁴⁰ In the act of love, the act of declaring one's love to another person is not a new act building on an inner experience of love, but it rather just gives love a “voice” and lets it become expressed. Therefore, Hildebrand both uses Reinach’s theory of social acts and expands it in his theory of interpersonal relations by bringing to light different aspects that Reinach did not consider.

Reinach made another important discovery with regards to receptivity of cognition.³⁴¹ By phenomenologically analyzing the essence of knowledge and its intentional directedness, he

³³⁸ Reinach, 37.

³³⁹ Alessandro Salice, ‘Communities and Values. Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Social Ontology’, in *A. Salice, H.B. Schmid (Eds.), The Phenomenological Approach to Social Reality, Studies in the Philosophy of Sociality 6* (Springer International Publishing Switzerland, 2016), 242.

³⁴⁰ Cf. John F. Crosby, ‘Reinach’s Discovery of the Social Acts’, *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* III (1983): 155.

³⁴¹ Cf. Seifert, ‘Introductory Essay’, 24.

discovered that intentional direction in cognition goes from the object towards the subject. In other words, the object is disclosing itself to the subject's mind. So, knowledge is essentially receptive, and not creative. As soon as cognition is interpreted as constitution or production of an object, the nature of knowledge is misconstrued. Building on Reinach, Hildebrand understands cognition as essentially intentional and receptive, but he also makes a step further by explicitly refuting Husserl's theory of radical constitution.³⁴²

For him, knowledge is a primary datum which cannot be deduced from anything else or defined in the strict sense.³⁴³ Therefore, the true nature of knowledge must be grasped in itself in a living, intuitive contact. Such contact can only be established by a personal and conscious being. Knowledge is explicitly a one-sided relation where the subject grasps the object and whereby the change can happen only in the subject, and not in the object. The participation in the object is purely intentional, not real or physical.

Hildebrand explains that the first step in attaining philosophical knowledge is taking cognizance (*Kenntnisnehmen*). This act is essentially receptive and not "productive". Here, the object discloses itself and unfolds before our "spiritual eyes".³⁴⁴ An active form of intentionality finds itself only in the end point of knowledge - the affirmation or judgement. However, taking cognizance is different from judgement insofar as in taking cognizance the intention goes from the object to me, while in judgement no object is given to me, but I proclaim that a certain state of affairs exists and so the intention goes from me to the object.³⁴⁵ Two acts also differ in content. The objects of taking cognizance can be contents of all kinds (things, qualities, events, etc.), while for judgements those can only be states of facts.

Taking cognizance should also be distinguished from theoretical response of conviction (which is presupposed in judgement). Response is something in between mere receptivity of taking cognizance and activity of affirmation. In conviction, as in enthusiasm, veneration, esteem or love, the person gives an answer and directs himself with a specific content to an object. In principle, this is an answer to the value of an object.³⁴⁶ Conviction is a theoretical response (like doubt or conjecture), while joy, sorrow, love, etc. are affective responses. In the case of a theoretical response the answer refers to the existence of an object and the subject is saying the inner "yes" to the existence of a state of facts.

³⁴² Reinach shared this view, but never presented any written elaboration of it. Cf. Seifert, 28.

³⁴³ Cf. Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 69.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 71.

³⁴⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 74.

³⁴⁶ This is elaborated in more details in: Hildebrand, *Ethics*, chap. 17.

Conviction and taking cognizance differ in several aspects.³⁴⁷ Conviction arises spontaneously, while taking cognizance is receptive. In conviction, the object is not disclosing itself to me like in taking cognizance, but I take a stand towards the object. The object of conviction can only be states of facts, not qualities, things, persons, etc. Unlike affirmation, conviction reaches states of facts immediately, not through propositions. Finally, although taking cognizance and conviction are different, the latter is necessarily the fruit of the former.

In any of the three analyzed data, there can be no question of producing of the object. The act of knowing is basically receptive. However, receptivity of taking cognizance is not mere passivity, but it possesses two “active” elements as well. First, activity can be found in the preparatory turning of attention toward the object and the focusing upon it of a gaze corresponding to the depth and meaningfulness of the object; and second, in the spiritual "going with" the object.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?*, 76-77.

³⁴⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 80.

3. Personalistic grounding of Hildebrand's Political Philosophy

As we have noted earlier, Hildebrand never developed a full political philosophy of his own. His writings were contextual and they have addressed the grave problems he was facing. Even though he did not write any systematic work on political philosophy, he did develop significant contributions in other fields which influence his political writings. On the basis of these contributions, we can map out the foundations of Hildebrand's political philosophy and better understand his political writings which address actual occurrences of the day, but also criticize political ideas from the perspective of first principles.

Each political theory necessarily rests on certain philosophical foundations. These foundations are primarily ethical and anthropological, but also metaphysical. In other words, the political system one wants to develop, and a critique of other political systems are conditioned upon one's view of the human person and the moral sphere. The same is true of Hildebrand's political theory. His conceptions of value, person, love, and community deeply permeate and influence his political critique of National Socialism, communism and liberalism.

Hildebrand's Christian personalism gave him tools to oppose anti-personalistic anthropological errors of the systems he criticized.³⁴⁹ Philosophical foundations for Hildebrand's opposition to Nazism were grounded in the concepts of value and disvalue which he developed in his doctoral dissertation and later expanded in his ethical works.³⁵⁰ What he developed theoretically in his philosophical works, became practical in his political writings and activism. He always aimed to judge political systems based on first principles, and from them he clearly saw that Nazism presents something evil. Precisely because Nazism is evil in its roots, Hildebrand insisted that there can be no negotiations with it.³⁵¹ One would not be able to understand Hildebrand's radical condemnation of Nazism so early on (even before the murderous atrocities have happened) if one does not analyze the philosophical roots of his critique.

For this reason, in this chapter we will go in more depth analyzing central concepts of Hildebrand's philosophy which bear relevance for his political writings. The concepts are value, person, love, and community. Only by gaining an adequate insight into these

³⁴⁹ Cf. John F. Crosby, 'The Witness of Dietrich von Hildebrand', *First Things*, December 2006, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2006/12/the-witness-of-dietrich-von-hildebrand>.

³⁵⁰ Cf. John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby, 'Who Was This Man Who Fought Hitler?' (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 14.

³⁵¹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Eritis sicut Deus', in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1938 (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte)*, Ed. Ernst Wenisch, vol. 43, A (Mainz: Grünewald, 1994), 244.

philosophical foundations, we will be able to analyze the essential elements of Hildebrand's political opposition to National Socialism, communism, and liberalism.

3.1. Value

Value represents one of the central discoveries in Hildebrand's philosophy. It is an original contribution not just to ethics but to philosophy as such. Similarly, discovery of the value-response "sheds a completely new light on the relationship between the human person and the world of values" and it signifies one of the decisive philosophical discoveries of the 20th century.³⁵² This discovery stems from Hildebrand's recognition that values are distinct from their bearers, which makes him speak about the notion of "importance" and its three-fold distinction.³⁵³ Hildebrand's philosophy of value cannot just be viewed as a mere continuation of Scheler's and Hartmann's (as Hildebrand is often portrayed as a "mere" disciple of Scheler). On the contrary, it can be rightly argued that Hildebrand is the first who achieved the full philosophical *prise de conscience* of value.³⁵⁴ In his later works, Hildebrand acknowledges not just Scheler as someone who contributed to the understanding of value, but also Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Kirkegaard and William David Ross. Nevertheless, he explicitly lays forth the claim that in none of these philosophers the full philosophical *prise de conscience* of value is achieved.³⁵⁵ This is also true of his contemporaries in the early phenomenological circles (except Reinach), who failed to grasp the essential difference between value and other types of importance.³⁵⁶

Value is for Hildebrand an original datum (*Urdatum*) or the original phenomenon (*Urphänomen*). This means that value cannot be reduced to anything else, but its essence needs to be intellectually intuited and analyzed in its own respect. His distinction between three categories of importance, which lift the being out of neutrality and give it the ability to motivate us, serve as a philosophical basis not just for Hildebrand's ethics, but also provide many

³⁵² Balduin V. Schwarz, 'Introduction', in Balduin V. Schwarz (Ed.) *The Human Person and the World of Values: A Tribute to Dietrich von Hildebrand by His Friends in Philosophy* (New York: Fordam University Press, 1960), x.

³⁵³ Even though Hildebrand distinguished the value from its bearer, it would be misguided to identify his theory as a mere "value platonism". Indeed, he is indebted to Plato, but his theory of value is in some important respects distinct from that of Plato. Cf. Iris Tićac, *Uvod u etičku misao Dietricha von Hildebranda* (Rijeka: Teologija u Rijeci, 2001), 104.

³⁵⁴ Cf. John F. Crosby and Josef Seifert, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977)', *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* I (1977): 222.

³⁵⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 47–48.

³⁵⁶ Cf. John F. Crosby, 'The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of Bonum', *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* I, 2 (1977): 279.

valuable insights for his philosophy of love, philosophy of the person and socio-political theory, as will be seen later. His insights into the nature of value and the ethical theory developed from it, allow Hildebrand not just to construct an abstract ethical system, but also to address many practical moral problems, which remain actual to this day.³⁵⁷ For this reason, we will now delve deeper into Hildebrand's understanding of value.

3.1.1. *Categories of Importance*

As a phenomenologist, Hildebrand starts his ethical analyses from experience. In this case, his starting point is the experience that an object of our knowledge will not in all cases motivate our will or our affections.³⁵⁸ Hildebrand portrays this by examples: understanding that “two plus two equals four” or understanding the Pythagorean theorem can hardly make us joyful, enthusiastic, or sorrowful. Statements such as those seem to have a character of neutrality which makes them incapable of motivating negatively or positively our will or affective responses.³⁵⁹ On the other hand, we also have the experience of beings which have the capability of motivating our will or engendering an affective response in us. This property of being was traditionally marked by the notions of good (*bonum*) and evil (*malum*). It has to be stressed that Hildebrand here is not talking about the metaphysical notion of good and evil as transcendental property of being, which would imply that every being is endowed with this transcendental property and that no being is fully neutral.³⁶⁰ Hildebrand's analysis is primarily phenomenological, not metaphysical. As a phenomenologist, his is primarily interested in the data as they are given to us in experience. He is simply speaking of the property of being as it is disclosed to us in experience. This distinction is experiential, and Hildebrand allows that there might be a deeper stratum in a being which would reveal that even experientially neutral beings might have a hidden metaphysical importance. Even if some being would disclose itself to us as neutral, there still might be in it some deeper metaphysical *bonum*.

The character of a being to be able to attract our will or affective responses, Hildebrand calls “importance”. Importance lifts the being out of neutrality and gives it a character of being good or evil. While neutral objects can attract our intellect, only objects endowed with positive or

³⁵⁷ See, for example, how his theory of value allows him to address the issue of euthanasia. Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 167.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 23.

³⁵⁹ This seems to be too rash a statement from Hildebrand. For example, when a researcher discovers a new mathematical theorem, or when Einstein discovered the theory of relativity, it seems like they certainly could experience joy from it.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 24-26.

negative importance can motivate our willing, wishing or affectivity. On the level of experience, negative importance (evil) is not a mere absence of the positive importance (good). The antithesis between good and evil is a contrary one, not a contradiction.³⁶¹

Hildebrand distinguishes two basic meanings of motivation: the importance which motivates our interest, and the stance which lives in the person and manifests itself in persons' decisions, acts etc.³⁶² He is primarily focused on the first. When analyzing the power of a being to motivate our response, Hildebrand speaks primarily of motivation in the sense of a personal act given to us in experience, thus going away from the traditional notion of *bonum* as that which all things desire. This does not mean that he rejects the traditional definition of *bonum*, but stresses that this definition still does not tell us how our happiness or unique sense of the good should be the object of our acting or loving.³⁶³ His approach focuses on the essentially personal character of motivation and avoids using impersonal relationships as a pattern for understanding the phenomenon. Understanding of motivation should not limit itself only to objects of possible desire, but also to those which are capable of motivating joy, enthusiasm, veneration, etc.³⁶⁴

This brings us to the analysis of different categories of importance. To describe these categories, we can compare two situations.³⁶⁵ In the first, someone gives us a compliment and in the second, we witness a generous action of someone forgiving a grave injury. The two situations clearly motivate us in different ways. The compliment motivates us as something merely *subjectively* important since it has the character of importance only if it pleases us. However, the act of forgiveness strikes us as something *important in itself* since its importance is not drawn from any relation to our satisfaction. In other words, *subjectively satisfying* acts are always agreeable *for* someone, while forgiveness is not primarily noble or good *for* someone, but it is intrinsically such.³⁶⁶ This intrinsic importance Hildebrand calls "value".

It is true that a value can delight a person, but its essential characteristics are not found in this relation to us. The object of delight or admiration stands autonomously in relation to us, which

³⁶¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 26.

³⁶² Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 217.

³⁶³ Cf. Josef Seifert, 'Dietrich von Hildebrands philosophische Entdeckung der "Wertantwort" und die Grundlegung der Ethik', *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* V (1992): 35.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 30.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 34. It is interesting to note that Hildebrand made this ethical discovery when he was standing hungry in front of the sausage shop in Vienna and the thought came to his mind that he could break in and grab the sausage. Cf. Seifert, 'Dietrich von Hildebrands philosophische Entdeckung der "Wertantwort" und die Grundlegung der Ethik', 36.

³⁶⁶ The fundamental distinction between important-in-itself and merely subjectively satisfying, which was extensively elaborated in his *Ethics* Hildebrand recognized already in his doctoral dissertation. Cf. Hildebrand, 'Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung', 174–75.

is not the case with merely subjectively satisfying. Admiration of something intrinsically important does not just differ in degree from the pleasure aroused by something agreeable - it is a difference in kind. This essential difference is visible from several distinguishing marks.³⁶⁷ The happiness aroused by value is a kind of a superabundant effect which flows from its intrinsic importance. The value here is the determining factor (*principium*) and the happiness is the determined (*principiatum*), while in the case of subjectively satisfying the opposite is true. Value and subjectively satisfying address different spheres in the human person - the first addresses free spiritual center of a person and the latter the center of pride and concupiscence which is “tempting me to yield and let myself go.”³⁶⁸ Value calls for an adequate response, while subjectively satisfying does not. It only “invites” us to enjoy it but leaves us free to respond or not. When we encounter a beautiful work of art, we *ought* to admire it, but there is no *ought* to enjoy a cake. Finally, indulging in pleasurable goods has the tendency to further close us in our self-centeredness, while value elevates and liberates us from it. When responding to value, we submit ourselves to it, while subjectively satisfying objects we conform to ourselves.³⁶⁹

There is also a third kind of importance. It can be discovered in the experience of gratitude. The object of gratitude, like some benefit that another person bestowed on us, shows itself to be different from both value and subjectively satisfying. It presents itself “as an objective good for me, as something which is objectively in my true interest, which has a beneficent character with respect to my person and which is in the direction of my good.”³⁷⁰ The value is here presupposed, but it is not the formal object of my gratitude. The examples of *objective goods for the person*, as Hildebrand calls this third category, can be good health, relations with other people, freedom from imprisonment, good education, or when someone is saved from a danger

³⁶⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 34-39. It must be noted that different Hildebrand scholars summarize Hildebrand’s distinctions between important in itself and subjectively satisfying in different ways. For example, Seifert recognizes five essential differences while Cajthaml and Vohánka find only four of them. To avoid misunderstandings, we will proceed by avoiding classifying the differences in categories, but only to summarize them all together. Cf. Josef Seifert, ‘Dietrich von Hildebrand on Benevolence in Love and Friendship: A Masterful Contribution to Perennial Philosophy’, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 88–90; Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 43–51.

³⁶⁸ Damian Fedoryka, ‘Authenticity: The Dialectic of Self-Possession, Reflections on a Theme in St. Augustine, Heidegger and von Hildebrand’, *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* V (1992): 221. There can of course be legitimate and illegitimate ways of enjoying the subjectively satisfying goods. Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 135-144.

³⁶⁹ Cajthaml and Vohánka rightly note that this contrasting feature between the subjectively satisfying and important-in-itself is “not another essential distinction of the two kinds of importance. Rather, it concerns the different types of responses that are given to these kinds of importance.” Cf. Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 50.

³⁷⁰ Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 50.

which threatens his life.³⁷¹ There are also counterparts, *objective evils for the person*, such as when someone offends me or when a friend betrays me. I can forgive this *objective evil* done to myself, but I cannot cancel the disvalue which it created. The saying “I forgive you; may God pardon you” sheds a light on this difference between objective good or evil for the person and the value or disvalue.³⁷² While both are interrelated (the same object can possess a value and be objectively good for me), their essential difference lies in the fact that objective good for me has always this character of being *for me*, while the value is important *in itself*. Value addresses itself to everyone equally, while the objective good for the person always addresses a particular person. Also, value or disvalue is always the determining factor (*principium*) and the good or evil bestowed on us is the determined (*pricipiatum*).³⁷³ For example, we should abstain from injustice because it is a disvalue, and not because it bestows evil on someone.

In being always *for* someone, objective good for the person resembles subjectively satisfying. Still, the two categories must be distinguished. Objective good for the person has an element of objectivity which does not exist in merely subjectively satisfying. Something can be subjectively unpleasant and at the same time objectively good for us (e.g. when someone reproaches us for a bad behavior). Subjective unpleasantness of the act does not invite us to forgive it, since no objective evil exist.

Hildebrand also speaks of the specific importance of the objective good for the person when the good of another person is at stake.³⁷⁴ This is most visible in love where we want to make the other happy and bestow them with different objective goods. Some authors have argued that Hildebrand in his earlier works, when speaking of the objective good for *the person*, always implies the objective good for *the agent*, or the person responding.³⁷⁵ In his later works Hildebrand mentions responses to objective good for another as a source of morality,³⁷⁶ but he presents the interest in another’s good as an outgrowth of love and not as a motivation which

³⁷¹ For other examples, see: Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Die Rolle des “Objektiven Gutes für die Person” innerhalb des Sittlichen’, in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 65-67.

³⁷² Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 51.

³⁷³ Hildebrand brings an insightful explanation of the difference of two concepts, the good and the value: “Value is that which makes these goods to be goods. A good by contrast is the whole real being in its value. An act of love of neighbour is a good on the basis of the fact that it is beautiful. The beauty itself is a value. In a good, a value finds its realization.” Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2009), 79.

³⁷⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 58.

³⁷⁵ Cf. Fritz Wenisch, ‘Self-Regarding and Non-Self-Regarding Actions, and Comments on a Non-Self-Regarding Interest in Another’s Good’, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 120.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 99–103.

can exist prior to and independently of love. Nevertheless, as Fritz Wenisch shows, the interest in another person's good can exist even if we do not love that person, and thus it is a category of importance *sui generis*.³⁷⁷

Finally, value is not to be identified with Aristotle's notion of direct importance which describes an object sought for its own sake (or, as an end) in contrast to indirect importance where the object is sought for something else (or as means).³⁷⁸ To be a value is not the same as to be an object of direct importance. We enjoy good wine for the sake of enjoying it, but this enjoyment is clearly not a value. Value refers to nature of importance as such, while direct importance refers to the way in which the importance inheres in a being.

Hildebrand does not just limit himself to speaking of importance in terms of motivation, but he also recognizes the importance of being as such. For him, this importance is as fundamental as being.³⁷⁹ The being has importance not just in relation to ourselves, i.e. in being able to motivate us, but also it has inner meaning and necessity in its deep metaphysical stratum. Now, this metaphysical importance can only be synonymous with importance-in-itself since any other importance can never give the ultimate answer to the question of meaning and importance. Only value can give this answer.³⁸⁰ It penetrates the stratum in which the full content of the being, its reality and fullness, opens itself in a completely new way.³⁸¹

When we praise a certain act as noble, or a painting as beautiful, we undoubtedly refer to excellences which are properties of a being, not just points of view of motivation. We grasp that there is an essential, necessary, and intelligible link between the value and the object.³⁸² Value is a real property of being, it reveals itself as belonging to a being independently of any

³⁷⁷ In this understanding, there would also be a fifth category of motivation: aiming to conform one's conduct to what one considers to be right. Cf. Wenisch, 'Self-Regarding and Non-Self-Regarding Actions, and Comments on a Non-Self-Regarding Interest in Another's Good'.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 62.

³⁷⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 72.

³⁸⁰ Seeing the importance Hildebrand assigns to value, it is worthy to mention his strong criticism of the traditional Thomistic-Aristotelian philosophy claiming that it equivocated the notion of *bonum*, reducing all positive importance to Hildebrand's category of objective good for the person and it thus overlooking the most important category of importance - value. Several Hildebrand disciples tried to further this criticism, most notable being John Crosby. Cf. John F. Crosby, 'The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of Bonum', *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* I, 2 (1977): 231-238. There were also convincing attempts in "rescuing" the traditional notion of the good from Thomistic perspective, see: Michael Waldstein, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand and St. Thomas Aquinas on Goodness and Happiness', *Nova et Vetera, English Edition* 1, no. 2 (2003): 403-464. Other authors have also attempted at a more conciliatory solution: Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 72-89. We will not try to resolve this issue here since it lies outside the scope of our work, but we consider important to mention it.

³⁸¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 52.

³⁸² Cf. von Hildebrand, 87-88.

desire or will. It also serves as a foundation of the objective good for the person, since every objective good implies the datum of value.³⁸³ But this “implied” reality does not just exist *de facto*, but also it *should* exist. There is an important metaphysical difference between the sheer *de facto* existence of a being and the *oughtness* of the reality of value.³⁸⁴ Value is as fundamental and metaphysically potent as *being*.³⁸⁵ It is not something superimposed on being, like an *ought* artificially added to the *is*. Value *is* a fundamental stratum of reality which exists in manifold manifestations which we will now analyze.³⁸⁶

3.1.2. Different Types and Hierarchy of Values

Although value and subjectively satisfying differ essentially, there can be differences in degree between different values and different subjectively satisfying objects. However, among subjectively satisfying there can be only a scale of more and less pleasurable goods, but there is no genuine hierarchy. This hierarchy exists only among values and permits us to speak about lower and higher values or higher and lower goods, according to their respective values.³⁸⁷ Values do not just differ in their rank, but also in their themes: there can be moral values, intellectual, aesthetic values, and others. Some values also resemble each other more than they resemble some others. In this way they belong to the family of values. For example, humility, purity, justice or charity belong to the sphere of moral values; wit, intellectual depth and brilliance are intellectual values, while loveliness, gloriousness or grandeur all center around the value of beauty and thus belong to the sphere of aesthetic values.³⁸⁸ The values inside the same sphere also differ qualitatively among themselves and have hierarchy of their own (e.g. humility ranks higher than reliability).³⁸⁹

³⁸³ Cf. Hildebrand, 92.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 64.

³⁸⁵ John F. Crosby, ‘Introductory Study’, in *Nature of Love* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2009), xv.

³⁸⁶ For a further elaboration on the different ways a thing can be opposed to nothingness and possess “being”, see the insightful elaboration of Hildebrand’s disciple Josef Seifert in: Josef Seifert, ‘Die verschiedenen Bedeutungen von “Sein” - Deiterich von Hildebrand als Metaphysiker und Martin Heideggers Vorwurf der Seinsvergessenheit’, in *Wahrheit, Wert und Sein, Festgabe für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag* (Regensburg: Verlag Josef Habel, 1972), 301–32.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 129.

³⁸⁸ For a further elaboration of examples and differences between intellectual and aesthetic values, see: Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*, vol. I (Steubenville: Hildebrand Project, 2016), 75–101.

³⁸⁹ Nevertheless, this qualitative difference inside the same type is incomparable to the difference between different value types since the latter differs also in theme and ratio, in the genus of values in question. Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 130.

Qualitatively, moral values are of the highest rank among all natural values.³⁹⁰ Important mark of moral values is that they necessarily presuppose a person, while this is not the case with some other qualitative values, i.e. aesthetic ones. A mountain or a tree can rightly be said to be beautiful, a waterfall can be adequately described as sublime.³⁹¹ Other values, like intellectual ones, also presuppose a person. We can admire the genius of a certain philosopher, but we cannot do the same with plants or animals.

A distinguishing mark of moral values is that they come with responsibility.³⁹² We blame a person when he behaves unjustly or cowardly, but we do not blame him for lacking intelligence or musical gifts. For this reason, moral guilt invokes punishment and the disharmony caused by it demands atonement, while moral merits deserve a reward. This is obviously not so with other qualitative values, like intellectual or aesthetic ones. Responsibility built in the moral values necessarily presupposes freedom. Thus, animals cannot be held responsible for anything insofar they are not free in the true sense, and persons cannot be held responsible for something which lies outside of the scope of their free influence (even if it is caused by them). To prove that someone is responsible for something it is enough to prove that he acted freely. While man can become morally good or bad through his free decisions, other qualitative values, like intelligence or artistic genius, display more the character of a gift bestowed on a person, which does not stem from his free decisions. This connection with freedom gives moral values a degree of seriousness which is not present in intellectual or aesthetic values. For example, if a talented artist commits a grave moral injustice, this injustice overshadows all his talent.

Second distinguishing mark of moral values is reflected in the fact that moral failure affects our conscience, which is not the case when we fail to solve an intellectually demanding task. This may make us feel intellectually inferior or invoke bad feelings, but these feelings are not the same as disharmony brought on by a bad conscience.³⁹³ Moreover, moral values are characterized by their indispensability. If someone lacks intelligence or talent, we can say that that is a pity, but if someone is morally bad, that is much more than a pity. Possessing moral values is a vocation for everyone - it is indispensable that every person *should* possess *all* moral values. On the other hand, it might be quite reasonable to say that someone is talented for

³⁹⁰ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Art of Living* (Steubenville: Hildebrand Press, 2017), 1.

³⁹¹ This is wonderfully explained by C.S. Lewis in his famous essay *The Abolition of Man*. Cf. Clive Staples Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: The Augustine Club at Columbia University, 2002), https://archive.org/stream/TheAbolitionOfMan_229/C.s.Lewis-TheAbolitionOfMan_djvu.txt.

³⁹² Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 171.

³⁹³ Cf. Hildebrand, 172–73.

music, but not for philosophy. To be endowed with moral values is a greater good for the person than to be endowed with any other value. Moral goodness is more important for man than anything else, since moral values manifest the character of transcendence decisive for man's eternal fate.³⁹⁴

A further distinction should be made between moral and morally relevant values. For example, human life is a morally relevant value, and the forgiveness is a moral value. Morally relevant values have broader scope than moral values. There can be many values which are not strictly moral, but are morally relevant, such as human life or human rights. All moral values are morally relevant, but vice versa is not the case. Morally relevant values are contrasted to the morally irrelevant ones, which do not have a power to bind us morally (e.g. a tree has a value, but I am not in all cases morally prevented to cut it down).³⁹⁵

Morally relevant are all goods and facts to which the right response is either morally obligatory or at least morally good.³⁹⁶ Morally relevant values are "those values of which we can predicate that to be interested in them, to conform to them, to let ourselves be motivated by them, is something morally good in the full positive sense of the term. Morally relevant values are also characterized by the fact that the morally conscious man in grasping their call also grasps the moral significance of an adequate response to them."³⁹⁷ Thus, the term "morally relevant" indicates that the positive response to this value is necessarily morally good. Morally relevant values do not form a specific value domain, nor they are centred around the ontological value of one being, but the element of moral relevance cuts through different value domains. They are also not tied to the personal sphere like in the case of moral values (for example, torturing of an animal can be morally relevant, but it is not connected with a person).³⁹⁸

Moral values hold a central role in human life to the degree that Hildebrand contrast them to all the other values which he jointly classifies as extra-moral. He also warns that some extra-moral personal values are often confused with moral values, such as self-control, vigour, and courage.³⁹⁹ Even though these values are indispensable for a virtuous man, they are not the guarantee of moral goodness. All of them can also be possessed by morally evil men. The

³⁹⁴ Cf. von Hildebrand, 176.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Crosby, 'Introductory Study', xvii.

³⁹⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 445.

³⁹⁷ Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 279–80.

³⁹⁸ For a more detailed discussion of moral relevance, see: Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 445–67.

³⁹⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, 66.

nature of these values is purely formal, or instrumental, while the moral values possess qualitative character which demands from us a certain response.

Another distinction Hildebrand introduces is between ontological and qualitative values.⁴⁰⁰ In the first group is the dignity of the human person (i.e. the value person possesses in and by itself), while in the latter group belong the moral, intellectual, and aesthetic values. These two types of values exhibit some important differences. Each qualitative value has a counterpart (e.g. justice-injustice, humility-pride, etc.), while ontological values do not (there is no negative counterpart of human dignity, only absence of it which is not a disvalue). Secondly, qualitative values appear to be much more something of their own independently of the bearer embodying them, while the ontological values are in a way inseparable from the bearer. It can be said that ontological values are not *in* a being, but they are values *of* a being.⁴⁰¹ We can conceptualize and name different moral values (they have their own *eidōs*), while we cannot name the ontological value of the human person without referring to the person itself. Thirdly, both types of value reflect God differently. Moral values speak of God in a specific way (e.g. God is *the* Goodness, Charity etc.), and every moral goodness of a person carries a resemblance to God. Moral values have a more direct reflection of God, while the ontological values resemble God only indirectly through the being which embodies them.⁴⁰²

Moreover, ontological value of a person is proper to the being as such - while the being exists, the ontological value is also there. This is not the case with moral values. The existence of a person does not guarantee their existence, but it depends on the person's attitude. There is a real possibility that a person loses the moral values. Also, there is no difference in degree between ontological values (different persons cannot have more or less dignity), while there is such difference between qualitative values (someone can be more generous than someone else). Still, there is a hierarchy of ontological values, so we can say that value of living organisms ranks higher than dead matter, or that persons rank higher than animals. This is the hierarchy between different types of ontological values, similar to the rank between different types of qualitative values (e.g. moral values rank higher than intellectual ones). The analogical rank to

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 130–35.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Rogelio Rovira, 'On the Manifold Meaning of Value According to Dietrich von Hildebrand and the Need for a Logic of the Concept of Value', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 89, no. 1 (2015): 122–23.

⁴⁰² Here it can be said that the human person in its ontological value is *imago Dei*, while in the moral goodness it acquires *similitudo Dei*. Also, other impersonal beings in their ontological value cannot be said to resemble God as *imago Dei*, but it would be more appropriate to speak about *vestigium Dei* or the trace of God. All impersonal beings are traces of God and man alone is his image. Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 162.

the one inside a particular qualitative value type (e.g. humility is higher than reliability) does not exist between ontological values.⁴⁰³

Further important difference between two types exists in the manner of their realization. Ontological value of a person is realized through the existence of that person, while qualitative values must be realized through her free attitude.⁴⁰⁴ Finally, the ontological value is immanent to the being, while moral values transcend the being embodying it.⁴⁰⁵ The mentioned immanence is not the same as the formal value of the being as such, or the value which “to be something” embodies, the value of having essence and existence as such, without any reference to the specific character of its nature.⁴⁰⁶ The latter is a purely formal and general value, which can only be grasped in a third degree of abstraction in Aristotelian-Thomistic terminology.⁴⁰⁷

A separate type of values are the technical values or the values of perfection.⁴⁰⁸ Those are, for example, the strength of will and clarity of mind. To understand these values, we need to understand the ontological value of the being embodying them. If we analyse the example of the strength of will, we understand that ontological value of the will⁴⁰⁹ is different from the formal perfection of the will which is manifested in persons’ capability to control his instincts and desires. The power is not embodied in all people (thus it is not an ontological value) and it can be present in degrees. Technical values also have a contrary opposite (e.g. weakness vs strength of will). In contrast to the qualitative values, technical values are immanent to the being. Finally, if we compare the strength of the will to the moral goodness of the will, we see that it has a merely functional, instrumental nature.

⁴⁰³ There is also the hierarchy between different objective goods for the person, analysis of which would be outside of the scope of our work. Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 117–28.

⁴⁰⁴ Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 137.

⁴⁰⁵ John F. Crosby adds that this implies that ontological value of a person is incommunicably his own, while this is not the case with moral values in which other persons can participate due to their transcendence. This incommunicability of the human person would in a way imply that each person has his or her own ontological value and preciousness. Some may object that this would be in contradiction with universality of the ontological value of each human person, but this is not the case. It may still be that the whole species of human persons possess the type of ontological value of a certain rank and that this type of value is universal to the species, but at the same time each member of a species has a unique and incommunicable realization of this value in a concrete person. This insight is amplified by the fact that no human person is just a member of the species, but even more a uniquely incommunicable individual. Cf. John F. Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 240.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 147–49.

⁴⁰⁷ This formal value of a being as such was classified by some authors as a separate category of value, even though Hildebrand does not analyse this type as a separate category. Cf. Rovira, ‘On the Manifold Meaning of Value According to Dietrich von Hildebrand and the Need for a Logic of the Concept of Value’, 125–26.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1976), 60–63.

⁴⁰⁹ For Hildebrand, not only substances possess ontological value, but also different capacities, such as intelligence and free will.

3.1.3. Value Response

One of the main differences between value and merely subjectively satisfying lies in the fact that values demand a certain response from us, while subjectively satisfying does not include such a demand. The understanding of this difference relies on the notion of intentionality. Not all experiences are intentional, since some of them do not have a conscious relation to an object, such as being tired or being in bad mood. These states can be caused by something, but this is not the same as the intentional relation which necessarily presupposes the knowledge of the motivating object.⁴¹⁰ For example, the joy is always about something, it is a response to an object like meeting an old friend after a long time – if I am not aware of it, I cannot experience joy. Thus, the conscious acts transcend themselves and partake in the being of the object before us, they symbolize a certain “yes” to the existence of the object.

Intentional experiences should be distinguished not just from non-intentional experiences, but also from teleological trends in man’s nature, like thirst or craving for food. These trends are characterized by an “inner movement towards and object, a seeking of fulfillment or appeasement.”⁴¹¹ Even though this trend has an element of intelligibility and meaningfulness proper to a final cause, this meaningful direction unfolds itself *in* us, independent from our conscious and free response to an object. This is more of a “push”, than a “response”.

Intentionality involves two types of spiritual experiences: cognitive acts or acts of taking cognizance (*Kenntnisnahme*) and stances or responses (*Stellungnahme*).⁴¹² Whenever the nature of an object reveals itself to our mind, a cognitive act happens. Perception, imagination, memory all belong to this sphere. Cognitive acts are characterized by the fact that they are *conscious* of the object, the whole content is on the side of the object, and the subject is, in a sense, empty. Different from this are the experiences like belief, hope, fear, joy, sorrow, enthusiasm etc. which Hildebrand calls responses. All responses presuppose cognitive acts, but in them, the content is on the subject side. Here, the intention goes from subject to the object, and in cognitive acts the opposite is the case. Thus, cognitive acts show the character of receptivity while responses are not receptive, but spontaneous.

Hildebrand distinguishes between three types of responses: theoretical (e.g. conviction, doubt, expectation), volitional (willing) and affective (e.g. joy, love or hatred).⁴¹³ In a theoretical

⁴¹⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 191.

⁴¹¹ Hildebrand, 194.

⁴¹² Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung’, 134-142.

⁴¹³ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 197-208.

response we say “yes” to the such-being (*sosein*) and existence of an object which reveals itself to our mind. These responses go further from cognitive acts since they involve affirmation or negation on the subject side. Even though meaningful, they are not free since it is not in our power to be or not to be convinced when facing a datum of knowledge. Volitional responses are always directed towards something not yet real, which has the possibility of being realized. They involve a *fiat* coming from our spiritual center. While theoretical responses aim at the truth, volitional ones aim at the *importance* of the object of our will and its coming into existence. Thus, volition responds to something not yet real (but realizable through me), while theoretical responses presuppose the existence of a real or ideal fact. Thus, the will also has a practical note which theoretical responses lack. Finally, affective responses presuppose both the knowledge and the importance of an object, and they are motivated by this importance. In turn, the response imparts a new “word” on the object, which is not just noetic, but affective. Many affective responses (like love or joy), although not all, do not aim at something not yet real like volitional ones, but they are also characterized by an affective plenitude which is not present in the will. They are voices of our heart, and they involve our whole person.⁴¹⁴ Affective responses are not in the power of our *fiat* like volitional ones, they are not free in the strict sense and are not in our capacity of command, but they are granted to us as a gift.⁴¹⁵ Nonetheless, this lack of freedom does not diminish their spirituality, they are still meaningful, intentional, and spiritual.⁴¹⁶

The motivating object determines which kind of response is engendered in us.⁴¹⁷ Values can motivate both affective and volitional responses and this value response always has a specific

⁴¹⁴ Hildebrand expands on his notion of the heart and affective responses in his book *The Heart*. We will also touch upon this in more details later. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Heart, An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977).

⁴¹⁵ Josef Seifert and Stephen D. Schwarz offered a convincing critique of Hildebrand’s limiting of the free will only to realizing the unrealized states of affairs, showing that also affective responses and inner volitional responses can be in a wider sense free. Cf. Josef Seifert, ‘Human Action and the Human Heart, A Critique of an Error in Hildebrand’s Ethics, Philosophical Anthropology, and Philosophy of Love’, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* Online First: October 12, 2017 (2017); Stephen D. Schwarz, ‘Von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love’, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013). It must be noted that Hildebrand admitted that there exists a free will in this expanded sense, but in his earlier works he worked with the notion of free will as only aiming to unrealized states of facts: von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, chap. 25. In some footnotes of his posthumously published work, Hildebrand seems to have retracted his initial position even though he did not live long enough to develop full consequences of his retractions: Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*.

⁴¹⁶ Hildebrand admits that there exists non-spiritual affectivity, such as bodily and psychic feelings. Nevertheless, he insists that there are also affective responses which are properly intentional and spiritual. Hildebrand, *The Heart, An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, chap. 2.

⁴¹⁷ Sometimes the object “causes” in us the experience of being affected, which should be distinguished both from a mere state (since it has a conscious, meaningful relation to the object) and from affective response. In being affected the object bestows something on me (it touches me, so to speak), while in affective response I

nature.⁴¹⁸ It is characterized by self-abandonment, since our interest is completely motivated by the intrinsic importance of the object. It involves conforming and submitting ourselves to the logos of the value, thus countering egoism and self-centeredness (opposite of what happens when we respond to merely subjectively satisfying). Thus, a value response has a transcendence consisting not only in motivation and intentionality, but a meaningful “concerting” with the value and its intrinsic objectivity. Even more, such a response is objectively *due* to the object, the object deserves a certain response (e.g. in admiration we are aware that the object is objectively admirable). This implies that the value response presupposes the perception of the positive or negative importance of the object (value or disvalue).⁴¹⁹ In value perception I am, so to speak, void and the whole content is on the object side. Sometimes we perceive value without being affected by it, but when we are affected by value, the content appears in our soul. This being affected allows us to experience of the delectability of values. Yet, in value response our union with the good possessing a value can be further increased. Our imparting of the “word” on the object, our inner movement toward it and spiritual embracing of it results in a higher degree of union with value. The inner word of the value response “closely corresponds in quality to the values of its object and forms a meaningful complement to it.”⁴²⁰ Thus, the value response is the highest relation of the subject and the object, much more than perception, knowledge or being affected.⁴²¹

This correspondence results in several effects. First, positive value will always motivate a positive response, and a disvalue negative one. It is impossible to respond positively to the act clearly grasped as morally evil.⁴²² Secondly, the qualitative content of the response corresponds to the type of value responded to, so responses to moral or aesthetic values will differ in qualitative content. Thirdly, the content of the response corresponds not just to the value domain, but also to specific quality and rank of the value responded to. This needs to result in the adequacy of the response; thus, we need to esteem more the higher values than the lower

impart something to the object. We can be humiliated by another person’s attitude, but our response can be both anger and resentment or loving forgiveness. Cf. Hildebrand, 209-210.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 214–17.

⁴¹⁹ Perception of the value has three general marks of perception: the real presence of the object; the fecundating contact with the object in which the object discloses itself to my mind, informs me and imposes itself on my mind in its autonomous being; the intuitive character of the contact, but it also has some specific traits. It relies much more on the right disposition of our will than any other knowledge. It can also be hindered by our interests, pride and concupiscence. Cf. Hildebrand, 229-233.

⁴²⁰ Hildebrand, 236.

⁴²¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 68.

⁴²² Obviously, someone can respond to a morally evil act from the point of view of other types of importance, e.g., the act can satisfy his pride or concupiscence.

ones. For example, when confronted with the justice of Socrates our response should be positive (the negative one would be unfitting), it should possess the quality of a response to the *moral* value (and not, for example, the intellectual one) and it should also be of a high rank which corresponds to the high rank of Socrates' embodiment of justice.⁴²³

The adequate response is also due to the objective goods for a person.⁴²⁴ Possessing them demands my response of gratitude. Here also the qualitative content of a response is determined by the quality of the rank of the good involved. In this respect, the most important and the highest gratitude should be given to the highest objective goods, such as being given the eternal unity with God, compared to the goods necessary to sustain our life, such as food and shelter. This response is different from the response to values, since when responding to values "it does not matter whether these values are in ourselves or in another person because, insofar as we are aware of their intrinsic worth, we should have for them the same interest regardless of whether they have their being in us or in another person."⁴²⁵

All the mentioned elaborations bring us to the following remark: an adequate response needs to be given to every value and the value is realized in the fact that an adequate response is given.⁴²⁶ On the other hand, indifference towards a value, an inadequate response or a contrary one, constitute an objective disharmony which is a disvalue *sui generis*. We become aware of this when someone unjustly judges a great work of art made by a genius, or when someone praises a great injustice. This objective disharmony remains the same regardless of whether there is a moral or intellectual disvalue of the wrong response; even if there is no moral objection to the wrong responses, the objective "oughtness" still calls for fulfilment. Neither the moral nor the intellectual value of the adequate response is the basis for the principle which declares that an adequate response is due to every object endowed with a value.⁴²⁷ The adequate response should be given not for the sake of responding person, but for the sake of the value itself. This relation of oughtness between value and the adequate response is an ultimate principle at the basis of the universe and excluding any further "why". This oughtness relation increases according to the rank of being. The disharmony created by wrongly responding to a

⁴²³ Cf. Crosby, 'The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of Bonum', 1977, 285.

⁴²⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 111–12.

⁴²⁵ Seifert, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand on Benevolence in Love and Friendship: A Masterful Contribution to Perennial Philosophy', 91.

⁴²⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 244.

⁴²⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 248.

higher value is higher than the one created by wrongly responding to the lower values. Also, the rank of value involved increases or decreases awareness of the response obligation.

The oughtness relation is found in the sphere of theoretical, volitional, and affective responses.⁴²⁸ Our judgements should correspond to reality; the positive theoretical response is *due* to the being. Thus, the error creates a disharmony which can be considered as an evil. Here too the gradation is present. The objective disharmony is incomparably higher when wrongly judging an eternal truth, than an irrelevant contingent fact. In understanding the object endowed with a value, we necessarily surpass the mere knowledge of a being and enter the realm of value. When a saint is misunderstood, the disharmony is created which results from inadequate knowledge, but even bigger disharmony stems from the denial of the saint's value. In the sphere of affectivity, it means that we should not remain indifferent or untouched by the value of an object, and this is more so as the value ranks higher. The climax of this principle is found in the value response. Every value response implies the awareness that the adequate response does not derive from our arbitrary mood, but from the relation of oughtness of the object itself. This gives the note of humility and objectivity to every value response.

3.1.4. Value Knowledge and Value Blindness

Even though Hildebrand stresses the centrality of values for human life, he is also aware that there are numerous people who do not see the nature of value properly. As Hildebrand would say, "They stand clueless before it like completely unmusical people before the beauty of a melody."⁴²⁹ This cluelessness is not a result of an error in judgement, but it is based on a kind of blindness to the value in question.

Hildebrand's account of the value blindness rests on his conceptions of basic stances and different centers in man. He distinguishes between different and mutually excluding centers in the person, which imply either positive or negative general attitude toward the morally relevant values and in the last analysis, toward God.⁴³⁰ When speaking of centers, Hildebrand does not think of them as ontological elements of the person, but only the qualitative unities of a basic attitude from which many other attitudes derive. The term "center" only means "to express a

⁴²⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 249–53.

⁴²⁹ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis: eine Untersuchung über ethische Strukturprobleme', *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* V (1922): 481. Direct quotes from *Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis* in this chapter are taken from the unpublished translation of the book by D. Rollinger.

⁴³⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, *Ethics*, chap. 31.

kind of fundamental approach to the universe and to God, a qualitatively unified 'ego' which is always more or less actualized when the person accomplishes a morally good act."⁴³¹

The different centers are a source of moral good and evil and cannot be actualized simultaneously. The center of moral goodness is "the reverent, humble, loving center" or "loving, reverent, value-responding center"⁴³². It becomes actualized in every authentic response to morally relevant values. At the root of morally negative acts there are two qualitatively similar centers - those of pride and concupiscence. They are connected, but still different. Attitudes such as revengefulness and hardheartedness have their root in pride, while covetousness, impurity, and laziness are rooted in concupiscence. The opposing positive and negative centers are not on the same ontological footing - the positive belongs to the very meaning of man, while the negative is a mere perversion which characterizes its fallen nature.

Connected to this is the "basic moral stance"⁴³³. This stance precedes any explicit consciousness of morally relevant value. It is a factual stance which a person takes towards the moral sphere without yet being sanctioned by a person as a moral agent. This stance can be both unconscious in the sense that it does not feature moral consciousness, and subconscious in the sense that the person is not aware of its basic stance. Here both a loving, value-responding attitude and pride and concupiscence can be present. A person's stance toward particular values and his moral conduct as a whole both depend on this basic stance towards the moral domain as such.

Moral intention is added to this basic stance, and it makes the person consciously turn towards the good. When a person develops a "special intention directed at the good" besides his de facto basic stance, "he is directed in a new manner towards the basic value as he understands it."⁴³⁴ The addition of the basic intention moves the person from unconscious to conscious position and awakens "something completely new in the person which justifies us in speaking of him as a moral person in a completely different sense." While the basic stance as such is not essentially connected with sanction, the basic intention cannot be conceived without the sanction. The basic intention is itself a sanction which has become a complete act.

⁴³¹ Hildebrand, 413.

⁴³² Hildebrand, 412.

⁴³³ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis: eine Untersuchung über ethische Strukturprobleme', 547-49.

⁴³⁴ Hildebrand, 555.

Finally, when the person enters into the intention with his whole being and is objectively standing where his intention is, he has identified himself with the moral intention with his whole being and all stances arise from the center of sanction, we speak not just of the basic stance but of the basic moral attitude of a person.⁴³⁵ The person has full consciousness of the intention towards the morally good and sanctions this intention at the same time retaining its full content. It should also be noted that the basic moral attitude can only be value-responding and positive, and it has no negative counterpart.

We can now turn to the notion of value blindness. To understand this notion, we must first distinguish knowledge of values from intuitive seeing and feeling of values. In Hildebrand's words: "Values are intuitively given to us in both the seeing and the feeling of values. The seeing of values is just as distinct as the feeling thereof is from a mere knowledge that something is valuable. In seeing we can become acquainted with a value. It can itself be given to us in the seeing of a value. Really 'experiencing' it, however, is something I do only in feeling. Here the value enters into a completely new and direct relation to me."⁴³⁶ Feeling of values involves a closer acquaintance and closeness with the value than seeing of values.

Now, we can obviously recognize that someone can have a theoretical knowledge of values which he reached by inference, without grasping the value or disvalue intuitively and without "feeling" it. Knowing gives the seeing and feeling of values a superactual stance not limited to a concrete situation. Value blindness is for Hildebrand a cognitive dysfunction with respect to a value and it relates primarily to inadequate intuitive contact with a value, not an inadequate theoretical understanding.⁴³⁷ Inadequate theoretical understanding can cause value blindness, but it is not the value blindness as such. Value blindness often stems from various defects in the basic moral stance and the basic moral attitude of the person. There can be general value blindness which refers to the whole world of values, and moral value blindness which refers to moral and morally relevant values.⁴³⁸ The peculiarity of the moral sphere and the fact that the real challenge to pride and concupiscence lies not in values as such but in moral values, shows the importance of focusing on the moral value blindness. Moral value blindness is founded on the free basic attitude of a person and thus it is morally blameworthy, while the value blindness to extra-moral values (e.g. artistic ones) need not be.

⁴³⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 560.

⁴³⁶ Hildebrand, 470.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 125.

⁴³⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, 11–14.

In his habilitation thesis, Hildebrand distinguishes between three types of moral value blindness: total (constitutive), partial and subsumption blindness. Total value blindness refers to the complete absence of intuitive apprehension of “good” and “evil”, of moral and morally relevant values. It involves full blindness to the entire moral aspect of the world, including every particular value type. It is a real blindness in the intuitive seeing and feeling of values. Total value blindness exists in two basic modalities: value-indifferent and value-hostile blindness.⁴³⁹ In the first case, we have an indifference or disinterestedness to the world of values, which is not just a matter of the actual will of the person, but it reaches deep into the person to his basic moral stance. This basic moral stance is characterized not just by the absence of a stance towards the world of values, but it involves a negative or rejecting stance. In the second case, there is in the basic stance of a person a hate-filled revulsion towards the world of values. This mode of total value blindness is founded in prideful basic moral attitude, while the first one is founded in concupiscent basic moral attitude.⁴⁴⁰

The basic attitude of pride causes blindness to values since the person understands the power which the values have, even though he does not see their qualitative content. Precisely the experience of this power makes the person resent values, since he finds this power as a kind of theft of his own being and power. The concupiscent basic attitude makes the person see everything from the perspective of the pleasure it brings, while values demand a response stemming from the value-seeking attitude incompatible with the concupiscent one. Therefore, the person dominated by the concupiscent basic attitude becomes incapable of seeing and feeling moral values, even though this can change if the person changes his basic attitude.

There is also a partial moral value blindness which involves an intuitive apprehension of the world of values as a whole, and of particular value types (for example, justice or veracity), while at the same time it completely lacks an intuitive grasping of other value types (for example, humility or purity). This blindness to particular values is constant and it usually refers to those values which are more difficult to grasp like purity or meekness, while the person still grasps more easily discernible values like justice or loyalty.

Partial moral value blindness is again divided in two subtypes: constitutive partial blindness and the blindness of obscuring. Constitutive partial blindness⁴⁴¹ finds its roots in a hesitant basic

⁴³⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, „Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis: eine Untersuchung über ethische Strukturprobleme“, 516–18.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 518–20.

⁴⁴¹ Hildebrand also calls it existential blindness. Cf. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, 16, 19.

attitude, whereby the person is not ready to fully submit herself to the demand of a value response placed by values. The hesitation found in the basic attitude limits the ability of the person to see and feel certain values. Usually, the person sees only the lower types of moral values which do not require a more perfect basic moral attitude to be apprehended nor a full submission of the person.⁴⁴² An irresolute basic attitude is also present in the blindness of obscuring. This subtype of partial value blindness differs from the constitutive partial blindness insofar it presupposes the attachment to some desire, like the desire for pleasure or wealth, and it also involves the surrender to concupiscence in the person which in turn obscures the value.⁴⁴³

In his later book *Graven Images*, Hildebrand offers a different division of the partial value blindness whereby he divides it on blindness caused by pride and concupiscence and traditional moral value blindness caused by tradition and education.⁴⁴⁴ His analysis of blindness due to pride and concupiscence follows mostly the same line as the one he expressed in his habilitation thesis, but now he also recognizes some new examples of partial moral value blindness. For example, Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and punishment* does not see the value of the human life because he succeeded to convince himself intellectually in the moral legitimacy of murder. The reason for his partial value blindness is the impact of erroneous theory and it clearly differs from the real and immediate value blindness since it is a perversion in the realm of conviction and not in the capacity of perceiving moral values. Another cause of Raskolnikov's blindness is his love for extra-moral values, like the ones embodied in a strong personality who can achieve important aims regardless of dominant customs, the public opinion and convention. The overemphasis on the extra-moral values is the root of the partial moral value blindness in some cases. For example, if someone would worship efficiency and strength as extra-moral values, this might lead him to become blind to certain properly moral values, like compassion or meekness.

Traditional partial value blindness has its root in errors of tradition, education, and habit. While some moral values, such as justice, can be grasped intuitively at the very early age, some others are grasped through the parents' commands and prohibitions which play a big role in the formation of child's conscience. When such commands and prohibitions influence the child in a wrong direction for a longer time, a new type of value blindness can occur.⁴⁴⁵ This situation

⁴⁴² Cf. Hildebrand, 'Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis: eine Untersuchung über ethische Strukturprobleme', 511.

⁴⁴³ Hildebrand, 513.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, 15-18.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 20.

is heightened when a whole society supports immoral behavior, like is the case of Muslim women who do not grasp polygamy as morally illegitimate. Their attitude is not determined by pride and concupiscence, which it probably is in the case of some Muslim men who live in polygamous unions. Here it is clear that education and tradition are blurring the clear intuition of moral value of monogamous marriage and the disvalue of polygamy. This is the only type of value blindness for which the person cannot be fully responsible. While for all other types the person is responsible, for this one it is not the case, even though it sometimes does happen that the person breaks with the tradition and grasps clearly the value to which he was blind before.⁴⁴⁶ However, Hildebrand also maintains that some moral and morally relevant disvalues, such as murder or theft, are so evident that no education or tradition can completely blur them. In principle, the person who is blind to them is always to a significant extent caught in the pangs of pride and concupiscence and thus carries the responsibility for being blinded.

Finally, moral subsumption blindness happens where there is an intuitive apprehension of a particular value type, but the person fails to recognize the bearer of this value type in a concrete situation. In other words, the person fails to subsume the concrete conduct as a case of a value type in question. This way the person can recognize the value of justice in general and not recognize the just action in a concrete case. For example, a happily married man who gets attracted to another woman can in principle clearly see the value of marital fidelity, yet the strong interest in another woman makes him blind to see that his behavior in certain cases might be inappropriate for a married man.⁴⁴⁷ One of the most important factors which make him value-blind is the strong sensual temptation. Passions have a strong power to deceive us and lull our conscience. For the passions to take hold of a person, there also must be an unconscious unwillingness to see in the person or a tendency to avoid the conflict between moral imperatives and inclinations. This requires a basic moral attitude that makes one shrink from what is immoral and there must be an internal attachment to the pleasant which causes a constant *internal readiness* of a person for it. Only with such attitude – which necessarily needs to be unconscious - can passions take hold of the person.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ In his posthumous work *Moralia*, Hildebrand mentions in passing that in his habilitation thesis he showed how all value blindness carries moral culpability. In the same place he fails to mention that in his later work *Graven Images* he described traditional value blindness as a type of moral value blindness for which the person is not always fully responsible. Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 35. Of course, when saying that the person is culpable for the value blindness, this does not mean that her culpability for the immoral act is not diminished by the value blindness.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis: eine Untersuchung über ethische Strukturprobleme', 487.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 493–98.

The final type of moral value blindness is blindness through desensitization (*Abstumpfung*). Several factors influence the person to become desensitized to moral values. First, this type of blindness often occurs through repeating certain morally bad actions, like the so-called “white lies”. The person who often tells white lies has probably felt pangs of conscience initially, but after some time will find nothing problematic in misusing his word.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore, this blindness is a direct result of sinning. It concerns primarily the feeling of values and extends to seeing of values only secondarily. However, repeated morally bad actions do not suffice to fully explain blindness through desensitization. Something else is required: an irresolute or lax basic moral attitude which seeks to restrict the domain of struggle as much as possible. And finally, “it is still given over to pride to the extent that it does not easily own up to one’s moral guilt.”⁴⁵⁰

With these elaborations, we conclude our survey on Hildebrand’s understanding of value and value blindness. The notion of value blindness is indispensable for his political and social philosophy. The actuality and relevance of it can be seen in his anti-Nazi writings where he warns about the danger of becoming morally blunted or desensitized to the dangers of totalitarian regimes.⁴⁵¹ Value blindness led numerous Catholics and intellectuals of his day to tolerate or even accept National Socialism. These and similar positions Hildebrand will sharply criticize in his political writings.

3.2. Person

To understand ethics, society, and politics, one needs to have a correct understanding of the human person. For Hildebrand, it is essential to defend the human person from the narrow and abstractive systems of thought, which drain the reality of all mystery and of all transcendent values.⁴⁵² He also understood anti-personalism as the major threat to the Western culture and traced its roots back to the age of the Enlightenment, which denied the concept of the spirit and of the spiritual person. Consequently, one of his main aims was to rehabilitate the spiritual person. This is especially visible in his battle against Nazism and Bolshevism, where he defends the dignity of the human person from these ideologies based on anthropological and

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 501.

⁴⁵⁰ Hildebrand, 504.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘The Danger of Becoming Morally Blunted’, in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 258–63.

⁴⁵² Cf. Vincent Micelli, ‘Von Hildebrand and Marcel: Philosophers of Communion’, *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* V (1992): 253.

philosophical truths. It may convincingly be argued that the whole of Hildebrand's philosophy has this personalistic aim. As Mark Spencer notes: "A chief benefit of reading phenomenologist and personalist Dietrich von Hildebrand is that he helps us grasp more fully what it is to be a human person."⁴⁵³

Hildebrand's account of the human person is drawn from the riches of the Catholic philosophical tradition, phenomenology and personalism, as well as Aristotelian and scholastic tradition. To understand the human person, we must understand the whole world personalistically, that is, as oriented to the lives of persons and having personal or person-like characteristics.⁴⁵⁴ Even though Hildebrand develops his thought inside the Catholic tradition, he notes that mysteries of faith cannot be the object of philosophical analysis and derives his concept of the human person primarily from philosophical insight, not Revelation.⁴⁵⁵

For Hildebrand, the human person is primarily a "conscious being". Still, the consideration of the person's consciousness cannot be done merely with methods of psychology, but we need the real philosophical intuition in to the essence of this being and its acts in order to grasp their essence.⁴⁵⁶ For this reason, the *person* is equally the psychological and ontological category.⁴⁵⁷ Hildebrand approaches the person through his experience and his acts and through it he develops his metaphysics of the person.⁴⁵⁸ His approach is in this way modern, but also accepting the eternal truths: he starts from subjectivity and ends up in metaphysics.

One of decisive contributions of Hildebrand's philosophy is his recognition that there exist three basic forms of personal life: intellect, will and the heart, which puts him at odds with most of the philosophical tradition which laid more emphasis only on the intellect and the will. Another important Hildebrand's contribution is the insight that human sexuality is closely connected to our most intimate selves, and this is so from the fact of human nature, not derived from any acts of ours. Even though analyzing this fact would go outside of the scope of our work, we consider it worthy of being mentioned on this place. The insight into the personal

⁴⁵³ Mark K. Spencer, 'Sense Perception and the Flourishing of the Human Person in von Hildebrand and the Aristotelian Traditions', *Tópicos, Revista de Filosofía* 56, no. enero-junio (2017): 97.

⁴⁵⁴ Spencer.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 251.

⁴⁵⁶ Hildebrand, 1.

⁴⁵⁷ John Zizioulas, 'An Ontology of Love: A Patristic Reading of Dietrich von Hildebrand's The Nature of Love', *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 15–16.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. John F. Crosby, 'The Philosophical Achievement of Dietrich von Hildebrand. Concluding Reflections on the Symposium', *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* V (1992): 322.

nature of human sexuality has important implications for Hildebrand's anthropology and thoughts on marriage,⁴⁵⁹ purity,⁴⁶⁰ sexual ethics⁴⁶¹ etc.

Hildebrand never developed a systematic anthropology or philosophy of the human person, as he did with ethics, aesthetics, or philosophy of community. For this reason, we will be explicating here only the selected contributions of Hildebrand to the philosophy of human person, namely his analysis of subjectivity and transcendence and the role of the heart.

3.2.1. *Ontology of the Human Person*

To attain the whole grasp of the metaphysical situation of man and especially our creatureliness and dependence on God, we need to possess the virtue of humility. In Hildebrand's word: "It is in humility that we attain to and exact consideration of the metaphysical situation of man."⁴⁶² Man's metaphysical situation is characterized by two different aspects.⁴⁶³ On the one hand, man possesses great capabilities, such as knowing, memory, free will, capacity for loving, building I-Thou community, embodying moral values, creating artistic works, making scientific discoveries, and having philosophical knowledge. Man can also understand his metaphysical situation. He is before all *capax Dei* (capable of God). On the other hand, he is also dependent on God. On account of his creatureliness, man has absolute obligations towards God who is also a Person.⁴⁶⁴ Everything what he aims for depends on God's willingness to give it. Man understands that he owes reverence to God, who is the Lord to whom man should serve.⁴⁶⁵

Man as a spiritual being should also recognize his responsibility with regards to truth and understanding the value that inheres in truth.⁴⁶⁶ Following truth and avoiding self-deception is needed for a man to recognize his metaphysical situation, but also that man could place the demands of values above the wishes for subjectively satisfying. If man is ordered towards the world of values, he still needs truth to recognize intrinsic importance of these values and transcend himself by submitting himself to them. As a spiritual being, man is endowed with "intentionality" or the capacity to understand reality. One of the grave errors of individualism

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Die Ehe* (St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag Erzabtei St.Ottilien, 1983).

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *In Defense of Purity* (Steubenville: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2017).

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Encyclical Humanae Vitae, A Sign of Contradiction*.

⁴⁶² Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Humility, Wellspring of Virtue* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1997), 25.

⁴⁶³ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 166.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand and Alice von Hildebrand, *Morality and Situation Ethics* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966).

⁴⁶⁵ This has also an important consequence that the man is not the Lord over life and death of another person.

Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 166–69.

⁴⁶⁶ Hildebrand, *Art of Living*, chap. 4.

is the failure to acknowledge this intentional and spiritual nature of man, which isolates the human person from the world of objective meaning, values, and ultimately from God.⁴⁶⁷ Since man finds his fulfillment in giving himself to the world of values and ultimately to God, separating him from this world disfigures his personhood and violates his dignity.

The core of Hildebrand's whole philosophy can be expressed by the words "man is a person".⁴⁶⁸ As a person, a man is both concretely real (as opposite to abstract) and a spiritual being. Having a spiritual nature implies that the spiritual sphere in man should have the primacy over the vital sphere.⁴⁶⁹ Relying on the Catholic teaching that each soul (unlike the body) proceeds immediately from the hand of God and is not a product of physical generation, Hildebrand strongly opposes reducing the human spirituality to the mere function of the vital sphere. Soul was traditionally considered to be ontologically higher than the body, which found its classical expression in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas: *anima forma corporis* (the soul is the form of the body). Man's vital sphere is not decisive for his spirit, but his spirituality, free will and openness to the workings of grace play a key role for his development.⁴⁷⁰

By being the spiritual person, a conscious and meaningful being, the person is radically different than anything else in the realm of being. In Hildebrand's words: "Personal being stands incomparably higher than all impersonal being, and in doing justice to the distinctive character of personal being, one penetrates much deeper into the realm of being and of metaphysics."⁴⁷¹ The metaphysical dignity of the human person makes it incommensurable to all impersonal beings and gives it a central place in the whole of reality. This essential and not just quantitative difference between man and animal is also a fundamental insight on which the democratic society and human rights should rest.⁴⁷²

The human person is among all created beings in the highest degree the "world for itself" (*Welt für sich*). To be a "being for itself" (*für sich Seiende*) is given to the human person already from its substance; and even more from its character of being the *whole* substance which does not

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Individual and Community', in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 327.

⁴⁶⁸ Jourdain, 'Von Hildebrand and Marcel: A Parallel', 28.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Ceterum Censeo...!', in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 287.

⁴⁷⁰ Hildebrand would add that those who reduce spirit to the function of the vital sphere or the race, also show a "shocking ignorance of the true meaning, value, and mystery of life." Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'The Chaos of Our Times and the Hierarchy of Values', in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 317.

⁴⁷¹ Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 1.

⁴⁷² Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Against Anti-Semitism', in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 264.

show the need for being complemented. Human person is also in a higher degree a “being for itself” than any other created substance, whether it would be a purely material thing or a living being.⁴⁷³ Its substance-character includes that the human person is a unified whole, which possesses an inner harmony and connection of its different “parts”. This unity is incomparably higher than one possessed by a rock or living organisms. Even though every living organism has inner unity which connects all its different elements, and which gives it a much greater substance-character than a pure matter would ever possess, the substance-character of the human person is even higher and more unified.

As Hildebrand would say: “The man is a person. He is a conscious being, which has an “I”, unified in itself, free being which possesses itself.”⁴⁷⁴ By being conscious, i.e. being a subject, man possesses “a new dimension” of being, which Hildebrand also calls “awakened” being, in comparison to which all other beings are asleep.⁴⁷⁵ This is a new and incomparably deeper sphere of being than we find among other substances. Man participates in the general dignity of personal substances because of which they represent the highest form of the substantiality as such. In them, the individuality and being “world for itself” are of the highest form.

This helps us to understand the error of pantheism which conceives the individual human person as a mere “excerpt” taken out of the continuum of “spirit”. Every such theory comes from the misunderstanding of the spiritual as spiritual, from understanding of the personhood by the model of the matter. In its substantiality, the person can never function as a real part of the bigger whole or as an element of a bigger continuum. The person is always a unified whole, which possesses a substance-character so full, that its “borders” cannot ever dissipate in such a degree that a person would become fused with another substance. Nevertheless, besides being the fullest substance among natural beings, only in the spiritual contact with other persons does the human person find its fulfillment. Only in community man becomes fully himself. The essence of the human person on the one hand shows the character of being a “world for itself” incapable of merging with other substances, and on the other hand it possesses the ability to transcend him or herself and, in this transcendence, to reach the other person. This is a deeper connection than any other non-personal being can possess.⁴⁷⁶ Man reaches his fulfillment both in the loving I-Thou relationship, as well as in the we-relationship of a community.

⁴⁷³ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 17.

⁴⁷⁴ Hildebrand, 20.

⁴⁷⁵ Hildebrand, 17–21.

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 21.

Therefore, Hildebrand's anthropology is essentially a metaphysical and relational philosophy of the person, who is a spiritual substance and at the same time who is called to realize himself through his relationships to the world, to other humans, and to God.⁴⁷⁷ As a relational being, the man is naturally ordered towards an I-Thou relationships and the "we" communion. This way Hildebrand's anthropology serves as the basis for his philosophy of community.

Finally, one of the most important characteristics of the man as a personal substance is his immortal soul.⁴⁷⁸ This immortal soul gives him the most special and the highest value among the created beings. Possessing the spiritual soul also gives the human soul-body composite the incredibly high inner unity. Thus, the value of the human person stands incomparably higher in the hierarchy of values than the value of communities, such as nation, state, and others. Man's soul is created by God and for God, and therefore the person cannot be used as mere means to be exploited for the goals of the nations, of other persons, or even of the Church. We can say: whenever someone uses another person as mere means, he disrespects that person's dignity. This is what happened in Bolshevism and Nazism where the person was used as means for the ends of the state. Therefore, Hildebrand's opposition to Nazism was founded on his personalistic grounding of the dignity of the human person.

Alongside the general remarks about the human person just laid out, Hildebrand also made specific contributions to philosophical anthropology which we will now explore.

3.2.2. *Subjectivity (Eigenleben) and Transcendence*

One of Hildebrand's main philosophical contributions was his affirmation of transcendence of the human person in a value response. Man's capacity to transcend himself is one of his deep characteristics which elevate him above all non-personal beings. In Hildebrand's words: "The specifically personal character of man as a subject manifests itself in his capacity to transcend himself. This transcendence displays itself above all in participation in the objective logos of being which takes place in knowledge insofar as our intellect conforms itself to the nature of the object, and which again takes place in every value response wherein we conform either with our will or with our heart to the important-in-itself. This kind of participation is absolutely impossible for any impersonal being."⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Paola Premoli de Marchi, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand and the Birth Of Love as an I-Thou Relation', *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 145.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Austria and Nationalism', in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 250.

⁴⁷⁹ Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 218.

Man's transcendence is most visible in the response to values. Thus, the proper understanding of the human person requires understanding of his relationship to the world of values: "What makes us particularly human is our capacity to understand, to be affected by values, and to be able, and therefore obliged in various ways and to various degrees, to *respond* to them."⁴⁸⁰ As it was said earlier, every value-response elevates and liberates a person from his self-centeredness. Value response is characterized by self-abandonment since our interest is completely motivated by the intrinsic importance of the object. It involves conforming and submitting ourselves to the logos of the value, thus countering egoism and self-centeredness. The objective ordering towards values calls man to "incorporation" to the world of values.⁴⁸¹ Still, even though all men are ordered to values, they are still not *inevitably desiring values*, but must freely choose them.⁴⁸² This allows some men to focus exclusively on the subjectively satisfying and become imprisoned in their egocentricity. Thus, man's self-transcendence happening in giving himself to the world of values is given to man as a task to be achieved.

Now, the self-abandonment in the value response does not require abandoning all interest in anything which would be subjectively beneficial for myself. This subjective beneficence Hildebrand captures by the term *Eigenleben*.⁴⁸³ Subjectivity here does not relate to all things that I consciously experience as in common usage of the term, but only to those things that specifically "have to do with me and my concerns and that refer in particular to my happiness."⁴⁸⁴ These are the things that concern me as this unrepeatable individual, stand in relation to my happiness and address me specifically, not another person. *Eigenleben* in this sense should not be equated with egocentricity. To have *Eigenleben* is something entirely positive; it is characteristic of a man as a spiritual person, and it is deeply connected with his metaphysical condition and his dignity.

In the deepest part of *Eigenleben* is the dialogue between man and God. The term also applies to everything that grows out from natural and instinctive solidarity we have with ourselves. This way, it is ordered to the sphere of happiness. It comes from the fact that I do not need a

⁴⁸⁰ Schwarz, 'Introduction', x.

⁴⁸¹ Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 67.

⁴⁸² Cf. Crosby, 'The Philosophical Achievement of Dietrich von Hildebrand. Concluding Reflections on the Symposium', 325.

⁴⁸³ Appropriate translation for this term is hard to find in the English language, even though direct translation of this term would be "one's own life" or "the life proper to oneself". John F. Crosby in his translation of Hildebrand's book *The Nature of Love* translated *Eigenleben* as *subjectivity*, even though he himself was not completely satisfied with this translation. Since no better translation was offered by other authors, we will mostly use the German term *Eigenleben* without translation and in some places we will speak about subjectivity, in the same meaning as *Eigenleben*. Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 200.

⁴⁸⁴ Hildebrand, 201.

specific kind of self-love to take an interest in my well-being, whereas the interest of another person will not affect me if I lack a loving attitude towards that person.⁴⁸⁵ *Eigenleben* also encompasses my being, life, health, welfare, economic conditions, and all that which was traditionally called *appetitus*, such as bodily drives and spiritual strivings rooted in man's nature. Nevertheless, *Eigenleben* can never be completely reduced to *appetitus* or the natural solidarity we have with ourselves. These spheres are characterized by immanence, while *Eigenleben* transcends immanence since higher kinds of happiness can only be acquired through transcendence. To become truly happy, one needs to transcend the immanence.

Hildebrand develops his notion of *Eigenleben* to clarify the importance of subjectivity with regards to love.⁴⁸⁶ This subjectivity is so essential to the human person that it should not be disregarded or suppressed in the name of the false virtue or false love. Hildebrand warns about the examples contrary to the healthy *Eigenleben*.⁴⁸⁷ The first is the example of someone taking an office (like a judge or a public representative), who is so taken by this role that he ceases to have any real *Eigenleben*. He is completely identified with his role. Second example is of the so called "background person" who has "modest" aspirations in relation to happiness and the goods the life has to offer. He is so closely connected to others and lives for them to such an extent, so that his *Eigenleben* withers. Even though the second example is not so dehumanizing as the first, still it is often falsely presented as an ideal of a love of neighbor. *Eigenleben* can also be withered in the loyal citizen of a totalitarian state, who does not acknowledge any duty except that to the state. He does not consider interest in his happiness as something legitimate and completely abandons his subjectivity to become the instrument of the collective. Self-transcendence of love has nothing to do with the loss of *Eigenleben* found in these distortions.

Misunderstanding of *Eigenleben* can also go in the direction of eudaimonism and altruism.⁴⁸⁸ Eudaimonism negates person's transcendence by making him incapable of taking interest in value and limiting his motivation only to subjectively beneficial things. Radical altruism, on the other hand, thinks that man can achieve self-fulfillment only if he abandons everything beneficial for him and lives from a pure value-response. Both are errors. Failing to acknowledge man's transcendence means failing to recognize what distinguishes man from all other impersonal beings. Altruism equally fails to understand the specificity of man as a

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 202.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Zizioulas, 'An Ontology of Love: A Patristic Reading of Dietrich von Hildebrand's The Nature of Love', 22.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 204–5.

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 206.

subject, who possesses a center ordered to beneficial goods and intrinsically tied to his dignity as a man. Altruistic misconception is most clearly seen in love. If someone says to the beloved person: “I love you for what you are, for your own sake, but whether you love me in return I don’t care, and I don’t care if our love is mutual and is a source of happiness for me; I want nothing for myself, I just want your good and your happiness”,⁴⁸⁹ it is clear that such statement would not make the addressee happy, it could even insult him. Involving my subjectivity and expecting to be loved in return is an essential trait of true love between a man and a woman. Altruistic selflessness which would negate this interest in my happiness in love, would not elevate love to a higher and more noble plane, but it would make a mockery out of it.

Understanding these errors helps us to see that *Eigenleben* and transcendence are complementary, and both represent something essential for a man. They are nowhere so interpenetrated as in the moral sphere. In Hildebrand’s words: “A moral call is addressed to a person to intervene in a certain situation; perhaps another is in danger... He grasps the morally relevant value, he understands its call, he is aware of the moral obligation, which appeals to his conscience. On the one hand, we have here a high point of transcendence in the pure commitment to the morally relevant value. But on the other hand... this call is my most intimate and personal concern, in which I experience the uniqueness of my self. Supreme objectivity and supreme subjectivity interpenetrate here.”⁴⁹⁰

It would be wrong to assert here that morally relevant value which motivates our will, or the action to which we are called, is only *means* for our salvation. The call of morality is categorical, and any instrumental relation would misconstrue its nature. Nevertheless, even if it is not the main motive for my action, issue of my salvation is still present in my consciousness and elucidates the personal character of the call of moral obligation. There are two movements which are happening in the moral obligation, where supreme transcendence goes hand in hand with the actualization of our subjectivity.

This interpenetration of *Eigenleben* and transcendence in a similar way happens in a true love of neighbor. Love of neighbor does have an element of stepping out of my subjectivity, but this no way means abandoning.⁴⁹¹ It is more a change of theme, than dying to my *Eigenleben*. Love of the neighbor and the good of the other become a central theme, but my *Eigenleben* also becomes actualized. Similarly, in the value-response I transcend my subjectivity, but I in no

⁴⁸⁹ Crosby, ‘Introductory Study’, xxvi.

⁴⁹⁰ Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 206–7.

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 210.

way abandon it. Negating or abandoning the *Eigenleben* in the radical altruism would in fact undercut the very possibility for a genuine value-response, since there should be a “substance” of personality that constitutes a healthy *Eigenleben* and which is essential to the subject making a value-response.⁴⁹² In every true value response, volitional or affective, the submission of myself to value results in a greater degree of self-possession.⁴⁹³

This interpenetration reaches a unique form in the case of love. Every great love, whether love for a child, friend, or a spouse, involves a self-donation as a gift to the other person. In this self-donation I do not step out of my subjectivity, but I grant the beloved person the dominant place inside it. The other person in a way becomes the “lord” of my subjectivity, and my happiness becomes dependent on his or hers. This element is characterized by giving my heart to the other, my mysterious individual self, which is a dimension of self-giving that precisely presupposes and includes the full actualization of my subjectivity.⁴⁹⁴

It must be stressed that in these forms of love the happiness and salvation of the beloved person rank higher than the happiness of my union with him or her. Even though they can be in deep harmony, the transcendence takes priority over my *Eigenleben*. There also exists a danger where this is not taken into account and where the person remains “stuck” in his or her *Eigenleben*. This happens when the priority of the pure value response over subjectivity is not preserved. Transcendence stops being a priority and I become cramped in my subjectivity.⁴⁹⁵

Finally, the most radical transcending of my subjectivity happens in handing myself unconditionally to God. Here I indeed give away my subjectivity, but this does not result in the final death of my subjectivity. In the free self-emptying of my subjectivity, I receive it back from God “purified and transfigured and at the same time tremendously enhanced and enriched.”⁴⁹⁶ Here we find the highest expression of the self-transcendence (which is here more

⁴⁹² Cf. Matthew Lu, ‘Universalism, Particularism, and Subjectivity—Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Concept of *Eigenleben* and Modern Moral Philosophy’, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 187.

⁴⁹³ Cf. Fedoryka, ‘Authenticity: The Dialectic of Self-Possession, Reflections on a Theme in St. Augustine, Heidegger and von Hildebrand’, 225.

⁴⁹⁴ This element is not found in the love of neighbour. Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 212.

⁴⁹⁵ The example of this are not people dominated by pride and concupiscence, but those who live in the constant fear of something happening to their legitimate interests and their well-being. Protecting these legitimate goods is a view that dominates their life. If they are confronted by the moral call, they evaluate it from this point of view. These people end up “locked” in their subjectivity, which leads them to the deep lack of freedom, to an oppressive being-cramped. They also cut themselves off from the objective logos, from the world of values and their neighbours, and ultimately from God. Cf. Hildebrand, 217.

⁴⁹⁶ Hildebrand, 220.

self-abandonment) and reconstituting our *Eigenleben* in a fully new sense, which also actualizes it in a qualitatively different and higher way.

3.2.3. *Discovery of the Affective Sphere: The Heart*

Hildebrand's reaffirmation of man's subjective sphere correlates to his discovery of the special kind of man's affectivity. We have already seen that Hildebrand discovered a type of responses which he terms affective. This leads him to recognize that there must be a third "center" in the human person besides intellect and will, which he calls "the heart".

Hildebrand sharply criticizes the history of philosophy for disregarding the affective sphere and the heart itself.⁴⁹⁷ Even though affectivity had a role in poetry, literature, personal prayer, Liturgy and the Bible, philosophers treated it as a "proverbial son" – both by not sufficiently exploring it and by wrongly interpreting it. Plato ranked the heart lower than the intellect; Aristotle situated it in the irrational part which man shares with animals, in contrast to the intellect and the will which he deemed rational. Most of the philosophical tradition subsumed the affective sphere under the heading of passions and attributed to it an irrational and nonspiritual character.⁴⁹⁸ This was primarily because the whole affective sphere was identified with the lowest type of affective experiences, even though this sphere includes experiences of very different levels.

Hildebrand admits that there were examples of philosophers who regarded the affective sphere much higher, like St. Augustine whose *Confessions* are "pervaded by deep and admirable insights concerning the heart and the affective attitudes of man"⁴⁹⁹. Augustinian tradition had fundamentally different attitudes towards affectivity than the Greek one, and Augustine never locates the heart in the irrational and biological sphere of man, but he still lacks a clear-cut refutation of the Greek heritage. Augustine's biggest error lies in the separation of the affective responses from the object which motivates them, which in turn deprives the response from its full meaning and justification and puts it into a servient position to the intellect and the will.

The affective sphere was discredited not only because of wrong theories, but also because of the danger of inauthenticity.⁵⁰⁰ There are several examples of this inauthentic affectivity, such

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Heart, An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, 25–46.

⁴⁹⁸ It would exceed the scope of our work to resolve this question here, but it is worthy to mention that there were attempts to partially redeem the philosophical tradition from Hildebrand's criticism. Cf. Robert E. Wood, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Heart', *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 115–16.

⁴⁹⁹ Hildebrand, *The Heart, An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, 28.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 32–39.

as “rhetorical inauthenticity” of a man who exhibits a false pathos and inflates rhetorically his enthusiasm, the “sentimental inauthenticity” of someone who focuses exclusively on his own feelings instead on the object which motivates an affective response, or “hysterical inauthenticity” of people who are imprisoned in an excitable egocentricity. However, it would be an error to equate all instances of “being moved” with these ungenune responses. There can be noble affective experiences of being moved, e.g. when someone is deeply moved by the beauty of Beethoven’s IX Symphony or when someone deeply weeps because of the loss of a dear person. Nothing should be interpreted by its possible deformation. Even though there can be deformations of the affective sphere, this should not discredit this sphere as such.⁵⁰¹

Among the affective data, there exist experiences which can greatly differ in their structure, quality, and rank.⁵⁰² The first difference is between bodily and psychic feelings. Feelings like headache or physical fatigue show a clear relation to our body. This relation is not restricted to their being causally linked to physiological processes, since they involve a conscious, experienced relation to the body.⁵⁰³ These feelings are the “voice of our body”. Irreducibility of the human person to the rest of the world is also present in the bodily feelings, which cannot be equated with the bodily feelings of animals. In humans they are personal experiences, although they are not spiritual and share some physiological traits with those of animals.

Different are the psychic feelings, which have a much greater rang and variety. Ontologically lowest among them are the feelings such as tipsiness. They already show psychic, and not just bodily nature. Psychic feelings do not have to be caused by bodily processes (e.g. depression can be caused by some persistent tension), and even if they are, they are not located in the body, nor they are states of the body; they are much more “in the subject”.⁵⁰⁴ Obviously, bodily feelings can accompany psychic states and often interpenetrate each other (such as, when bodily feelings of health and vitality coexists with psychic feeling of high spirits or good humor), but this does not diminish their difference.

Finally, incomparably different are the experiences such as joy, love, sorrow, or compassion. Unlike bodily and psychic feelings, they are true responses. They are characterized by

⁵⁰¹ Apart from discrediting the affective sphere, there is also a widespread equivocation of the term “feeling” which Hildebrand warns about. First, the term “heart” is often used synonymously with the term “soul” and in this sense it designates man’s interior life as such. Here the heart is contrasted with the body, and not with the will and the intellect. Cf. Hildebrand, 47.

⁵⁰² Scheler already went down this path before Hildebrand, in: Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value*, 253–64.

⁵⁰³ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Heart, An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, 50.

⁵⁰⁴ Hildebrand, 53.

intentionality. Even though intentionality does not yet guarantee spirituality, it does imply the presence of rationality. This rationality is not imposed from without on affectivity, but it has a rationality of their own.⁵⁰⁵ Responses are “motivated”, while bodily and psychic feelings are caused. Affective responses imply the consciousness of the object which motivates them and the awareness that this object is the motive for a response, which displays a meaningful and intelligible relation to the object.⁵⁰⁶ In experiences such as tipsiness, we can be aware that it is caused by an alcoholic drink, but the drink clearly is not a motive for a “tipsy response”. Response to a motivating object is conscious and intelligible. This clearly does not imply that affective responses do not have repercussions on the body or the psyche, since this is one of the traits of affective responses. Still, bodily feelings cannot by themselves engender affective responses, since they need a motivating object which engenders them. The rational nature of affective responses can also be seen from the fact that they too, like the reason and will, sometimes need to be “freed” from irrational psychic feelings. By overcoming the enslavement by the illegitimate psychic feelings, we become free for true affective responses, and can love what deserves to be loved and admire what deserves to be admired.

As it was said, the intentionality still does not guarantee spirituality, for it requires transcendence characteristic of values responses.⁵⁰⁷ Value response is transcendent in the sense that it is free from merely subjective needs, appetites and entelechial movements. In the affective value response, our heart conforms to the value and forms a certain union with the object analogous to the adequation of the intellect to the thing in knowledge.⁵⁰⁸ The union of the value response is even stronger than in the case of knowledge. Spiritual affective responses always include the cooperation of the intellect with the heart since they are based on cognitively grasping the object. The free spiritual center of a person collaborates here with the intellect and shows that affective responses are radically antithetic to mere immanent unfoldings of our nature, such as in desires and appetites. This response is characterized by transcendence and intelligibility. The inner, meaningful relation between aesthetic or moral values and the appropriate response can be immediately intuited as we focus on the value and this response. “The remarkable fact that we are able to respond with our heart to an object, not only when it is an objective good for us, but also because of its intrinsic importance, that is, the moral value,

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Crosby, ‘The Philosophical Achievement of Dietrich von Hildebrand. Concluding Reflections on the Symposium’, 325.

⁵⁰⁶ This knowledge of the object is not a mere sense perception, but it implies the full actualization of our intellect. Cf. Hildebrand, *Art of Living*, 96.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Heart, An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, 69.

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Art of Living*, 97.

the beauty and sublimity of the act of forgiveness, is one of the most outstanding manifestations of man's transcendence."⁵⁰⁹ A further mark of the spiritual character of affective value responses is found in the fact that we need not have formerly experienced the event that engenders affective value response in order to grasp that this event can engender it.⁵¹⁰ To understand that the act of forgiveness can engender joy, I need not have experienced it, I need only to understand the value of this fact and the nature of joy in general.

Thus, the higher sphere of affective responses is truly spiritual, and it cannot be reduced to the mere bodily or psychological level.⁵¹¹ This also implies that we need the elevated understanding of the heart as the locus of these affective experiences. Hildebrand speaks about the heart in two senses. In the wider sense, Heart would refer to the center of the affective life. Here the heart could represent the "organ" of all affective acts, such as wishing, desiring, happiness or sorrow. The narrow sense would represent the heart as the very core of the affective sphere, such as when we say that some event struck someone's heart. In its broader meaning the heart can be contrasted to the intellect and the will, and the narrower meaning contrasts it with less central strata of affectivity (e.g. things that just superficially affect us).

Hildebrand argues that the heart in the wider sense is in many instances more the real self than the intellect and the will.⁵¹² The will is the last word in the moral sphere, since here the voice of our free spiritual center is the most important. But in the sphere of human love, the heart has the foremost relevance since it forms our core and our real self. This is so because love is essentially the voice of our heart, and it also aims the heart of the beloved in a specific way. We also want the love to be returned and to call the heart of the other "ours". We are not satisfied if the other would only *will* to love us and merely "conformed his will to our wishes". The heart also represents the true self if we want to answer the question "Is man truly happy?". If a man only wills to be happy or considers with his intellect that he should objectively be happy, this is not yet enough for him to be truly happy. The happiness needs to be experienced with the heart to be true happiness: "Whatever the source of happiness may be, happiness itself must be felt, and belongs to the realm of affectivity."⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁹ Hildebrand, 97.

⁵¹⁰ Hildebrand, 98.

⁵¹¹ Spirituality of the response increases with the rank of value someone is responding to. The highest form of holy joy can be an example here, since in it qualitative spirituality is added to the formal spirituality characteristic of all value responses. Nevertheless, even though there is a great variation of the degree of spirituality in value responses, all value responses must be considered as spiritual. Cf. Hildebrand, *The Heart, An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, 70.

⁵¹² Cf. Hildebrand, 109-110.

⁵¹³ Hildebrand, *Art of Living*, 101.

Hildebrand argues that higher affective responses in certain respects rank higher than volitional acts, even though they are often superabundant gifts bestowed on us, and not states realized through the will. These responses which have the character of a “gift from above” are the “voice” of our heart in the narrower sense since they come from the depth of our soul. Man is deeper and greater than the acts he can control through the will and thus in the realm of these higher (and deeper) affective responses, the heart is man’s true self. Nevertheless, even if these affective responses are not free in the strong sense, they are free in the sense that they can be sanctioned by our free “yes” or “no”.⁵¹⁴ These affective responses become most truly ours only if we say “yes” to them and sanction them with our free spiritual center. I can fully love another person only if I freely accept the gift given to me. If I say “no” to this experience, I somehow disavow it and do not allow it to become truly mine.

Therefore, there exist in the human person certain affective responses which are truly spiritual and intentional, and the heart is a third center in the person, next to intellect and will, which is the source of these affective responses.

3.3. Love

Love is another “fundamental reality” which Hildebrand analyses to reveal the “inexhaustible depth and the incomparable glory of this most central of all personal acts.”⁵¹⁵ He takes as his guiding motto the invitation of his friend Siegfried Hamburger: “Let us seek to look into the face and heart of love, this most primordial of all primordial realities, and let us try really to open ourselves for the sublime freedom and greatness that belongs to love in the midst of all its tenderness – and then this essential audacity, this fundamental audacity will shine forth in the face of love.”⁵¹⁶

Following his phenomenological approach, Hildebrand analyses the experiential data revealed in the personal act of love to understand the essence of love. Fundamental personal datum of love is taken as the point of departure of the analysis, since it is given immediately to us.⁵¹⁷ The starting point he takes is not the act of self-love, but the act of love for another person, since this kind of love reveals all the essential characteristics of love. As with other original data,

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk*, 303.

⁵¹⁵ Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 374.

⁵¹⁶ Siegfried Johannes Hamburger, ‘Die Kühnheit der Liebe’, in *Wahrheit, Wert und Sein, Festgabe für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag* (Regensburg: Verlag Josef Habbel, 1970), 100.

⁵¹⁷ Hildebrand discards the skepticism towards the examination of personal acts and experience, claiming that precisely in these spheres the nature of love is most fully revealed. Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 1–6.

Hildebrand warns us to avoid any attempt to unjustly reduce the datum of love to something other than itself. This also includes deriving the love for another from self-love or instinctive solidarity with oneself.

Hildebrand invites us to investigate three types of experience in which the fundamental datum of love is given. Those are: my own loving, being loved, and understanding the love of others.⁵¹⁸ In loving someone we have a unique kind of “lateral experience” different from frontal experiencing, which involves the consciousness-of.⁵¹⁹ In performing certain acts, we become acquainted with their nature, and this is certainly so with affective responses like love. In another case the nature of love discloses itself to me when I am loved by another and when his love encompasses me, which is neither lateral nor purely frontal experience, but it is a way of being affected by the love of the other. The experience of being loved presupposes love as a given datum. Finally, in finding love in other persons (e.g. the charity of a saint or love of two friends for each other), we can also get to know the nature of love and its peculiar quality through a frontal experience, in which a consciousness of someone’s love reveals the nature of love as object. Love in other persons can also be discovered in the works of art where the essence of love is given too.⁵²⁰ The indication that we can intuit personal acts not just in ourselves, but also in others must have wide anthropological and epistemological consequences, since it implies that a man and his knowledge is not closed in itself, and especially, that inner lives of others are not completely inaccessible to us.⁵²¹

Hildebrand wants to analyze all the mentioned types of experiences, since some of them will reveal certain traits of love and the others will reveal the rest. This also requires carefully examining different distinctions that come up and confront them with reality and with the nature of love given to us in philosophical intuition.

3.3.1. *Essential Traits of Love*

Hildebrand’s understanding of love is based on his philosophy of value. To understand the nature of love, we must recall the difference between the delightfulness that is rooted in value and having pleasure in something merely subjectively satisfying. Attachment to the goods

⁵¹⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 11–13, 221–222.

⁵¹⁹ See a bigger discussion on this in: Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Wesen und Wert menschlicher Erkenntnis’, *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* VI (1994): 2–27.

⁵²⁰ In this experience, some feel for love is presupposed. Unemotional person will hardly be able to grasp it.

⁵²¹ Cf. Ann-Therese Gardner, ‘The Phenomenology of Body and Self in Dietrich von Hildebrand and Edmund Husserl’, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 33.

endowed with a value is radically different from attachment to the goods which are merely agreeable. It is essential for every kind of love that the beloved stands before us as precious and lovable. This preciousness of the person discloses him or her as someone objectively worthy of being loved. Thus, love represents the response to this preciousness. It is a true value response, and it cannot be founded on the mere usefulness or amusement. In fact, love is the most perfect among value responses.

The value we are responding to in the act of love must form a close unity with the person as person, and the person must be fully thematic in them. If a person attracts us with his “poetical charm”, this value makes the person beautiful and precious as such. When we are delighting in this value, person remains fully thematic. This is even more the case with moral and spiritual values, such as generosity, purity, or goodness. These values are so closely linked to the person that focusing on them focuses me on the person as such. Love, therefore, is a value-response of a certain kind: a response to a value so connected to the person that the person as such stands before me as precious, valuable, beautiful.⁵²² This value basis of love also excludes any possibility of looking upon the beloved person as mere means for my happiness and delight.⁵²³ Now, seeing the other as precious does not mean that the lover does not see his faults. He sees them but interprets them in a different light: as unfaithfulness towards his true self.⁵²⁴

Value response present in love is the affective one. As such, it has the fullness and warmth which the will does not possess.⁵²⁵ Love is the voice of the heart, and it must be experienced or felt. “To truly love a person means to feel the love for that person.”⁵²⁶

Insight into the nature of love brings us to discover certain essential traits of love.⁵²⁷ Firstly, love is the most affective value-response. It is a response in which the subject is involved in a quite new way, and it requires a deeper personal involvement from the lover. The contribution of the subject here goes much more beyond the mere “participation” in the object, which

⁵²² This is one of the points in which Hildebrand’s account of love is aligned with that of Karol Wojtyła. For a longer comparison of both accounts, see: Jarosław Merecki, ‘Some Remarks on the Philosophy of Love in Dietrich von Hildebrand and Karol Wojtyła’, *Roczniki Filozoficzne* LX, no. 3 (2012): 5–13.

⁵²³ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 19.

⁵²⁴ Cf. Alice von Hildebrand, ‘Communion’, in *The Art of Living* (Steubenville: Hildebrand Press, 2017), 57.

⁵²⁵ Of course, love as affective value response is not independent from will or reason. Cf. Merecki, ‘Some Remarks on the Philosophy of Love in Dietrich von Hildebrand and Karol Wojtyła’, 9; Nevertheless, cognition of values without the involvement of the heart, must remain not just inadequate and peripheral, but also necessarily sterile. Karla Mertens, ‘Dietrich von Hildebrands Persönlichkeit’, in *Wahrheit, Wert und Sein, Festgabe für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag* (Regensburg: Verlag Josef Habel, 1970), 334.

⁵²⁶ Schwarz, ‘Von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love’, 137.

⁵²⁷ Hildebrand recognizes nine such traits. Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 43–57.

happens in other value-responses.⁵²⁸ Second, love is essentially superactual.⁵²⁹ Actual experiences exist only as long they are experienced, e.g., headache exists only as long I feel it; when I stop feeling it, it ceases to exist. If I start to feel headache again tomorrow, it is a new individual experience, even if it shares the physiological causes or the quality with the one I experienced yesterday. Superactual experiences continue to exist when my actual consciousness is focused on other things. Veneration, for example, endures as a personal reality even though it is not actualized right now.

There are two ways the superactual responses can act in us.⁵³⁰ The first way is represented by inherently superactual stances which take the position towards the object which remains valid beyond the present moment. The example of this is respect I can have for someone who does not play a particular role in my life, since it possesses validity and meaning even when it is not consciously performed by me. Another type of superactuality is found in the stances in which not only validity endure, but also the act itself continues to exist with full reality at a deeper level of our being. Hildebrand situates love in this latter type. In love, not only the word spoken by love endures in its validity, but the attitude itself endures in my soul, continuing to color and modify all the real situations I encounter. It modifies the whole structure of my experiencing. This kind of superactuality also has the tendency to actualize itself again and again, which is not the case with the first type. It should not be confused with the unconscious, since it belongs to the conscious sphere which stands “in the background”. It does not disrupt our conscious lives as the unconscious does, but it is the animating background.

Fourth essential mark of love is being delighted by the beloved person. This delight involves a deep givenness of value unfolding itself before us. The value experienced as beautiful engenders delight in us, it is not a mere desire for something pleasing. The values that engender delight elevate the other person and show themselves as the expression of a general preciousness of the person. So, the value here is both the representation of the overall beauty of the person and it must be given as delightful and touch our heart.

Moreover, in every love, “one spiritually hastens toward the other person in order to dwell with him, to partake in him, and on the other hand, to cover him with a mantle of goodness, to

⁵²⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 59–61.

⁵²⁹ For a more detailed discussion on the distinction between actual and superactual experiences and stances, see: ‘Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis: eine Untersuchung über ethische Strukturprobleme’, *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* V (1922): 462–602; and *Ethics*, chap. 17.

⁵³⁰ Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 44-47.

spiritually cherish and protect him.”⁵³¹ These two intentions Hildebrand calls *intentio unionis* and *intentio benevolentiae*. *Intentio unionis* is a yearning for spiritual union with the beloved. The lover is not fully satisfied with the presence of the other or the knowledge of his life, but he also desires the union of hearts. This is not just the case of the spousal love, but of every form of love. This *intentio* is always accomplished by the one who loves, even though the full *unio* comes into being only in returned love. Love does not just desire the union, but also has the power to create it, it has the *virtus unitiva* (unitive power). *Intentio benevolentiae* is the desire to make the other happy, but also a deep solidarity with the other, making his or her well-being my own concern.

Another essential trait of love is self-donation, which exists in every kind of love, but most fully in the spousal love.⁵³² In the spousal love, I give my heart to the other and I want to belong to him, it is deeply tied to *intentio unionis*. In love I can give nothing more to the beloved than saying: “I am yours.”⁵³³ In this act of self-donation, the lover in turn becomes himself more fully and actualizes his subjectivity. In comparison to other value responses, here not only the subject speaks the “word” towards the object and takes a positive stance towards it, but he also contributes his own person to the beloved in the form of a “gift”. The value response of love objectively surpasses the value of the good which merits the response.

Because of this going beyond the required response to value, Hildebrand calls love a “super value-response”.⁵³⁴ Love is a super value-response not just because of its “gift” character, but also because of its different dimensions, such as *intentio unionis*, the fact the valuable good bestows deep happiness on me and the degree of commitment and transcendence which surpasses even the one present in moral value responses. This extraordinary commitment to the other exists in all forms of love even though it is most characteristic of the spousal love. Here, the whole person of the lover is committed, binding himself to the beloved. This is the commitment of the heart and involvement of the heart brings a new dimension of commitment. It is not merely a result of the will, but of a gift. If the other only wills to love me, this is not enough for me. This shows us that every love has a character of going beyond of what is in my

⁵³¹ Hildebrand, *Art of Living*, 37.

⁵³² Hildebrand distinguishes three forms of self-donation: first is present in the natural love of neighbour, where the neighbour becomes a real concern for me; second is *caritas* as a form of Christian love of neighbour, and third is the real and spontaneous interest in the beloved person which is associated with *intentio unionis*. Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 373–74.

⁵³³ Ivan Kešina, ‘Ljubav kao nadvrijednosni odgovor kod D. von Hildebranda’, *Obnovljeni život* 57, no. 1 (2002): 14.

⁵³⁴ For a more detailed discussion on this, see: Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, chap. 4.

power. This character of a gift is accompanied with “cooperative freedom”, i.e. the power of sanctioning the value-response by our free spiritual center. So, the gift of love which arises in our heart needs to be freely sanctioned by saying “yes” to it with our free spiritual center. The heart needs to speak first, so that the freedom can say “yes” to it. There can also be cases where someone disavows the affective response, which then acts against the self-donation. In his unpublished writings, Hildebrand refers to love as both the gift and a task: “Being able to love, both in general and in the specific love for a human being, is a gift of God. But it also contains a task, an appeal to our free will. And not only faithfulness, not only the preserving and protecting [of] one’s love, but also the fact that we have to learn how to love truthfully.”⁵³⁵

Love is also a kind of value-response which brings happiness like no other value response. Other value responses do not have the power to bestow such a happiness on us.⁵³⁶ Here, the personality of the other enchants me and confers happiness on me. Obviously, different kinds of love confer different types of happiness, so the happiness of the spousal love differs in quality from the one given by filial love. The happiness flowing from being affected by the beauty of the beloved is not only greater than other kinds of happiness, but it also differs in type: it is much more intimate, it affects me much more personally, it is much more deeply rooted in me, engaging me in quite another way and becoming a lasting element in my life.

Finally, love always desires for a requital like no other value-response. As said earlier, *intentio unionis* is essential for every kind of love, most fully for the spousal love. By being returned, love brings us an additional dimension of happiness and it makes us unhappy if it is not returned. On the other hand, this is not the case with other value responses. Veneration does not call for a return and it does not cause unhappiness if it is not returned. The returned love in which the beloved person blesses us with the gift of him or herself, bestows on us the happiness which is even greater than the one which comes from delighting in the beauty of the beloved. Of course, happiness is neither the motive nor the goal of love, not even its primary theme; it is the superabundant gift flowing from love.⁵³⁷ This happiness which arises from love should not be conflated with the self-centered happiness which comes from seeking merely pleasurable goods. We have already noted that the authentic happiness of love comes from the objective value and preciousness of the beloved person as such. As Hildebrand puts it: “Affirmation of the other person as such is what takes place in love. My own desire for

⁵³⁵ Cited from: Premoli de Marchi, ‘Dietrich von Hildebrand and the Birth of Love as an I-Thou Relation’, 160.

⁵³⁶ For a longer discussion on the relationship between love and happiness, see: Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, chap. 10. See also: Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, chap. 5.

⁵³⁷ See, for example: Hildebrand, 234.

happiness can never give rise to love for him. But happiness does come from union with another – because of the love I bear for him. Happiness is love’s outcome, never its motive.”⁵³⁸

3.3.2 *Intentio Unions and Intentio Benevolentiae*

One of the essential elements of love is the desire for union with the beloved person, or the *intentio unionis*. *Intentio unionis* should not be understood as simply a decisive mark of eros but it is an organic component of love as a value-response.⁵³⁹ To describe its nature, we should distinguish two types of contacts with value-bearing goods: non-personal and personal. The contact among persons formally surpasses any kind of contact among non-personal goods and all contact of persons with non-personal goods. Only the contact between persons can be called “union” in a true sense.

It is important to distinguish here between intentional and real contact with the being.⁵⁴⁰ In cognition and stances we are intentionally directed to the world of beings, but we are not participating really in the being of the object. This is different from a real contact with the object, like touching a material object or when two chemical elements merge. However, even this real contact which emerges as a certain mid-level between two beings is still different from the real participation in the being of the other, which can only emerge if the object is the spiritual person. When a person says something to the other, this is a connection of a different kind than the one which happens when the person touches the stone.

The first step of real participation happens when the other notices our spiritual contact; higher level emerges when the other not merely notices our stance (such as, love or hate), but consciously accepts it. When I profess love to someone, the contact of different level emerges then when he merely notices my profession and consciously accepts it.⁵⁴¹ Only by being accepted can this conscious stance fulfill its inner meaning. Decisive moment happens if the other not only accepts, but also returns our love. If both persons at the same time reveal their love to the other, the interpenetration of loving looks happens as the formal high-point of the I-Thou spiritual contact.⁵⁴² This interpenetration of loving looks is a prerequisite, but it still does not represent unification as such. It must be supplemented with a specific entering into

⁵³⁸ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), 39.

⁵³⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 124.

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 22–25.

⁵⁴¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 26.

⁵⁴² Cf. Hildebrand, 32.

another person. This participation in the being of the other which brings about the *unification* can also go further and create the situation of *becoming one* (*Einswerdung*) with the other.⁵⁴³

As we have noted earlier, every love contains two basic elements: the moment of flowing goodness and tendency for the unification with the beloved. The first moment uniquely affirms the being of the other and his happiness and manifest itself in all the good deeds, sacrifices and caring bestowed upon the beloved person. There exists a close connection between love and goodness. “Love is, as it were, flowing goodness, and goodness is the breath of love.”⁵⁴⁴ The second moment is manifested in the desire to be together with the other, to participate in his life, thoughts, and interests, but primarily in the desire to participate in the being of the other called “*intentio unitiva*”. The fulfillment of *intentio unitiva* can only happen in a returned love, in which both lover and the beloved freely give themselves to the other. Only then the full interpenetration of the spiritual persons happens. In “becoming one” as a high point of participation in the being of the other their spiritual nature is fully revealed.

The becoming one of two persons should not be conflated with the pantheistic understanding where the individuality of each person disappears. In becoming one both the lover and the beloved remain distinct individualities; this unification is conscious and results in a bigger depth than the one found in an unconscious fusion of non-personal things. The I-Thou union of persons is also higher than the one-sided conscious relation of a person to a non-personal object, including very sublime experiences, like the contemplation of a beautiful landscape or an artwork. What the personal I-Thou union essentially presupposes is “that I encounter the other as person and treat the other as person, never approaching him or her as an object.”⁵⁴⁵

Now, claiming that *intentio unionis* is an essential part of love and that the unification bestows incomparable happiness on us does not mean that the other is being used for my happiness. Firstly, the *intentio unionis* is an essential element of the self-donation of love and an irreplaceable gift for the other person. It springs from the fact that the lover recognizes the preciousness of the beloved as a person and is being deeply impressed by him and drawn to him by this preciousness. Love as a value-response necessarily yearns for union but giving myself to the other is also an incomparable gift to him or her. “A person can give me no greater

⁵⁴³ From this it can once more be seen that proper object of unifying love can only be persons. This put Hildebrand’s account of love at odds with the platonic account in which the Form of a Good is the highest object of love. For a longer comparison of Hildebrand’s and Plato’s understanding of love, see: Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, chap. 5.

⁵⁴⁴ Hildebrand, *Art of Living*, 36.

⁵⁴⁵ Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 125.

gift than desiring union with me and longing for the return of my love.”⁵⁴⁶ Obviously, the happiness is inseparable from the union, but this goes in both ways: I am the source of happiness for the other in the same way he is for me. The union is not the mere means for achieving happiness, but happiness is a superabundant gift which flows from the union. The interest in the happiness and wellbeing of the beloved takes priority over union with him and happiness which flows to me from this union. The union presupposes that both persons are made happy by it and thus in every *intentio unionis* the union is sought both as a source of happiness for the other, as well as for myself. Egoism can emerge only if the union is desired uniquely as a source of my own happiness, but this would negate the true nature of the loving union and become the mere “will to possess”.⁵⁴⁷

Another important element of love is *intentio benevolentiae*. It can be found only in love and it distinguishes love from other stances, such as esteem or admiration. *Intentio benevolentiae* symbolizes the desire to do good to the other. In Hildebrand’s words: “*Intentio benevolentiae* consists in the desire to make the other happy; it is above all else a real interest in the happiness, the well-being, and the salvation of the other.”⁵⁴⁸ Still, *intentio benevolentiae* is far more than the wish to make the other happy or the interest in his well-being, but it is a specific kind of goodness felt toward the other. There is not just the desire to make the other happy, but also a breath of goodness that confers happiness as a gift on the other. The flowing goodness of *intentio benevolentiae* is not merely a momentary attitude, but it is continual and superactual.⁵⁴⁹ Thus, *intentio benevolentiae* is not the mere wishing well to others, which is present in all positive affective value-responses to persons, since wishing others well “involves no deep solidarity with them, no deep interest and concern for their well-being, and no act of making their well-being our own concern.”⁵⁵⁰

In love, a specific situation happens in which the good of the beloved becomes an objective good for me (e.g. his health or well-being is objectively good for him and for me too). Whatever happens to the beloved I do not just consider from the aspect of value or the objective good for

⁵⁴⁶ Hildebrand, 131.

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 135–38. Sometimes the absence of *intentio unionis* in love is interpreted as selflessness, but this is false. In some forms of love *intentio unionis* recedes in the background to give way for the benevolence. But this does not mean that *intentio unionis* is not present. In other forms, such as the spousal love, absence of *intentio unionis* would be completely contrary to love. Thus, the ideal of “disinterested love” is not only impossible, but it also lessens or completely destroys love and, in some cases, my own *Eigenleben* (e.g. as in the love for God). Cf. Hildebrand, 141.

⁵⁴⁸ Hildebrand, 51.

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, *Art of Living*, 37.

⁵⁵⁰ Hildebrand, 52.

me, but also from the aspect of objective good for the beloved. Everything affects me under this aspect, e.g. I suffer when the other is suffering, and I rejoice when he prospers.⁵⁵¹ The objective good for the person insofar as it is the good for the *other* person is decisive here to understand the nature of *intentio benevolentiae*. The interest in the good of the other already represents at least a modest victory of love in contrast to the mere egoism which can stem from desiring some objective goods for ourselves. It is natural to desire goods for us, but desire to seek another's good can only come from love.

The interest in the good of the other which happens in love possesses a distinct moral quality and "entails a kindness that the same interest in our own good and even the interest in intrinsically valuable goods do not entail."⁵⁵² This distinct quality can be observed both in distinction to the point of view of value and objective good for myself. The first distinction we can observe when the beloved person is treated unjustly. We should reject injustice even if it is directed towards our enemy, a response to the value or disvalue is purely objective and refers equally to everyone. But, when the injustice happens to the person we love, it is not just that we are indignant to the disvalue, but we are also sad because the injustice is committed against *this person*, and because it is an objective evil *for* him. My response is not merely objective, but it also has to do with the fact that the evil befalls this person whom I love.

Furthermore, the distinctness of objective good for the other can also be observed in relation to the objective good for me. When I grasp that something is objectively good for me, I yet do not know whether the same good is objectively good or evil for another person. For example, receiving salary increase is good for me, but I yet do not know if it will confer any objective benefit to another person. Love has a specific power to bridge this gap between the objective good for myself and for another person. In love, the objective good for the other becomes also the objective good for myself whether directly or indirectly.⁵⁵³ Objective goods for myself address me directly, but objective goods for the beloved person address me indirectly. By my self-transcending sharing in the other, these goods become objectively good for me precisely

⁵⁵¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 147.

⁵⁵² Seifert, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand on Benevolence in Love and Friendship: A Masterful Contribution to Perennial Philosophy', 91. The fact that the interest and affirmation of the objective good for the other person has a distinct moral quality led some authors to argue that objective good for the other is a fourth category of importance. Cf. Fritz Wenisch, 'Self-Regarding and Non-Self-Regarding Actions, and Comments on a Non-Self-Regarding Interest in Another's Good', *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (2013): 120–34.

⁵⁵³ Cf. Hildebrand, 152–163. As Josef Seifert correctly notes, this phenomenon of other persons' good becoming indirectly my own good is not present in certain forms of love, such as love of neighbour and love of one's enemy. There we are solely interested in the other person's good, without this good also becoming ours. Cf. Seifert, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand on Benevolence in Love and Friendship: A Masterful Contribution to Perennial Philosophy', 95.

because they are good for the other. On the other hand, the beloved person is always a direct beneficial good for me and through him being a direct objective good for me, many of the beneficial goods for him become also objectively good for myself (such as, his intelligence or beauty). So, *intentio benevolentiae* is presupposed when we speak about indirect goods for the other, but not when direct goods are in question. Indirect good for myself through it being first a good for the other is a fruit of *intentio benevolentiae*.⁵⁵⁴

My way of relating towards objective goods for myself and objective goods for the other is also different. For example, virtues are great objective goods for a virtuous person, but they are not supposed to be enjoyed as such. Truly virtuous person does not experience his virtues, he only experiences a certain harmony and peace resulting from them. On the other hand, virtues of another person we are supposed to enjoy and through value-response to the virtues of the other, experience them as a gift.

Although *intentio unionis* and *intentio benevolentiae* are indispensable in every kind of love, they can be present in a different way and in a different degree depending on the quality and rank of love in question.⁵⁵⁵ For example, in parental love *intentio benevolentiae* has priority over *intentio unionis*, since the parental interest in the well-being of children is more important than the desire to achieve unification with them. In friendship, both intentions are balanced, but benevolence has a certain advantage since *intentio unionis* does not aim at becoming one with the friend, but only at a certain accordance with him. In spousal love *intentio unionis* aims at becoming one with the other and it takes precedence over *intentio benevolentiae*, even though this is achieved by wanting to make the other happy and giving oneself to him. Finally, in the love for God *intentio unionis* prevails, but the *intentio benevolentiae* is also present and it cannot be reduced to the pure value response, even though in some sense it coincides with the value response. This might be counterintuitive since God as a supreme being is not in need of any goods that we could possibly confer to him, but here the *intentio benevolentiae* of the one who loves God takes the form of him wanting to please God in all things.

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. Seifert, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand on Benevolence in Love and Friendship: A Masterful Contribution to Perennial Philosophy', 97.

⁵⁵⁵ Hildebrand distinguishes between nine basic categories of love and explains how *intentio unionis* and *intentio benevolentiae* are present in each of them. These categories are: parental love, love of children towards parents, love among siblings, love as such, friendship, spousal love, thematic holy love, love towards neighbour and love of like-minded persons. In his book *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*, Hildebrand is not analysing the love for God, but he does so in *The Nature of Love*. Here we will restrict ourselves on touching upon some of those forms which are most important for the scope of our work. Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, chap. 5.

3.3.3. *Ordo Amoris*

Correctly understood love should be rightly ordered. Hildebrand calls this structuredness “ordo amoris”.⁵⁵⁶ In a more general sense, ordo amoris signifies the role something should play in our lives and the degree of importance it should occupy in it. In this “Schelerian” meaning, ordo amoris gives the answer when a thing should have a priority over another, implying the obligation to prefer the higher goods over lower ones. In the narrower sense (which Hildebrand focuses on), ordo amoris refers to the love properly understood. Here, ordo amoris answers the question which persons, if any, we should love more than others and in which way.

Ordo amoris encompasses both loves which are morally obligatory and those which are not.⁵⁵⁷ It also refers to the degree of “love as such”, which abstracts from the categorial nature of love. For example, if we ask whether a person loves more his friend or his brother, we are comparing the degree of love although these two loves are very different and cannot be compared except from the point of view of “love as such”.

There are several different factors which are important to determine which person I should love more than the other. The first and decisive factor is the rank of the value of some good, which in the context of love for persons would mean the objective lovability of a person. Applied to the general understanding of ordo amoris, higher goods include some “surplus of positive importance” in comparison to lower goods. This also implies that, *ceteris paribus*, we should admire more the higher than the lower goods. This seems to be different with regards to persons since it does not seem right that we should love more a saint than our spouse. The love towards neighbor also should not depend on the moral qualities of a person, each neighbor as neighbor should be loved equally. Nevertheless, in some types of love, the rank of value plays a role. For example, we should love more the friend who is kind, noble and trustworthy, than the one who possesses the opposite qualities. There exists also the opposite kind of moral requirement not to form personal friendships with people who are morally bad.

A second decisive factor to determine the ordo amoris is the objective ordering of persons one to another. This ordering is not only psychological but objective, such as the ordering of the parents to a child. This objective ordering of persons as a factor for ordo amoris can be visible from the fact that a parent should love his children more than some other children which are

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, chap. 14.

⁵⁵⁷ E.g. love for God and one’s neighbour is morally obligatory, while the same could not be claimed for spousal love or love between friends. Here we can speak of obligation only in a broadly analogous sense. Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, chap. 12.

not his, or that we should love more a close friend than a mere acquaintance. There are two kinds of ordering of persons which should be considered in this regard. The first plays a decisive role in the love of friends and love between man and a woman and it has to do with the “word” which God has “spoken” between the persons. Here the mutuality is presupposed, and the relation is visible in the fact that two persons encounter each other in certain spheres of goods and values. The other shows itself in his specific beauty and I am revealed to him in a similar way.

Ordo amoris should also be considered when a person is one-sidedly ordered to another. If a person turns towards me and commits himself to me, this already gives me the reason to love him or her more than the one who loves me less. His love issues a “call” to me, even though his personality does not particularly attract me. Obviously, this call happens outside the love of friendship and the spousal love, since there cannot be a requirement that I return this kind of love to another person. It is more that I should show concern for the other person or bestow him with some good deeds. So, if a person loves me and I play a more important role in his life, I should love him more than someone who does not love me, even if I find the other person more attractive, interesting, humorous etc.

Another factor important to determine the ordo amoris is the categorial identity of a love. Here, the question is whether there exists an obligation to give a certain degree of love-as-such with regards to categorial identity of a love. For example, it is obvious that we should love our spouse more than anyone else since this directly stems from the nature of this love and the commitment given to the spouse. Clearly, this “more” refers to the love-as-such since we can only love one person spousally. In normal circumstances, the spouse should occupy the primary place in my heart, but there can also be situations where the spousal love is imperfect and where another person (like a parent or a friend) because of its extraordinary personality presents an exceptional value datum before me and keeps occupying central place in my life. Hildebrand tries to resolve this situation by saying that the other person occupies my heart materially and qualitatively, even though formally the spousal love should have primacy. Here, two hierarchies emerge: the first based on the value rank of the “special” person and the second based on the formal nature of spousal love as such. The first primacy emerges based on the person’s individuality and not based on the categorial nature of love as such.

In contrast to the spousal love, the love between friends is not so clearly demarcated from other categories of love, since this love encompasses a great categorial range. We can have friends

we know for a long time, those with whom we have a specifically deep relationship, or those we simply like. The place which the friend should occupy in my heart according to the *ordo amoris* differs according to the nature of friendship, its sublimity and depth. This love does not involve any obligation to love one friend more than another, even though a particular “word” spoken between friends can grant this priority.⁵⁵⁸

Different situation occurs in the love of parents towards their children. Here the objective ordering of persons towards each other has priority over value response to the individuality of each person. Love towards a small child has a specific character in relation to the love for an older child. In one sense, the young child can claim a greater love from parents from any other love, apart from their spousal love. The parents should give the priority position in their lives to a young child in terms of care, attention, concern etc., but also a priority love *as* love, i.e. the privileged position in their hearts. *Ordo amoris* gives this priority over friends, adult siblings etc. since it refers to a child, and it gives the priority to a child over all other children since it is *my* child (whether biological or adopted).

Obviously, legitimate preference of *ordo amoris* can also be coupled with illegitimate preference for persons. This illegitimacy in principle comes from disregarding other objective requirements. For example, there is nothing wrong with recommending my friend for a job position and wishing that he gets it, but it would be wrong to insist that he gets the position even if there are candidates with objectively better qualifications. In this situation, objective duties overweigh the preference of *ordo amoris*, even though this preference does not cease to exist. Obviously, morally relevant duties have a specific weight. If I promise a friend that I will come at a certain time for our meeting, I should certainly try to keep that promise. But, if on the way I encounter a person in danger, I should try to help this person first, even if this will result in me being late for the meeting. However, even in such situations *ordo amoris* plays a role. For example, if two children are in danger, the parent should have the duty to help *his* child first and then to help the other.

It can be said that this analysis of *ordo amoris* as the answer to the question which persons should we love more than others is the *ordo amoris* in the sphere of I-Thou communities, but it can also be translated by analogy to the sphere of we-communities. In this sphere a certain *ordo amoris* in a wider sense exists, as we will see in the next chapter. This analysis also gives

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 57–60.

foundations for Hildebrand's political critique. For example, Hildebrand is vocal in criticizing nationalism as a disordered form of love, or a "collective egoism."⁵⁵⁹ It is present wherever the nation is ranked higher (or, we can say: loved more) than the communities of higher value, such as the family or the mankind. The German nationalist is firm in maintaining that the good of his nation is of a higher rank than the common good of Europe or humanity. Disorder of this love reaches its high point when the nation is placed above the Church. Disorder of a different kind and quality also happens when the nation is ranked higher than the individual and where the individual is viewed as mere means to be exploited for the ends of the nation or of the state.⁵⁶⁰ Similar error is found in all collectivist regimes which place the value of the community above the value of the individual person.

We see here how the *ordo amoris* when analyzed in relation to the communities is of the utmost relevance to understand Hildebrand's philosophical critique of different political malaise of his time. In the next chapter we will analyze the rank of value of different communities and the comparison of the value of an individual person to the value of different communities. Since love for Hildebrand is a value response, the rank of value of different communities will also determine the rank and priority of love we should give to each of them. Thus, the analysis of the rank of value of different communities which will follow in the next chapter will also be an implicit continuation of the analysis of *ordo amoris* from this chapter.

3.4. Community

Hildebrand's philosophy of community is built around the notions of person, value, and love. We have started in the same way and our analysis is culminating in the investigation into the value and essence of community. Hildebrand did this investigation in his seminal work *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*, which serves as the groundwork for his philosophical opposition to National Socialism and Bolshevism. Because of its complexity and precision, the book was regarded by some as "perhaps the most perfect" of Hildebrand's writings⁵⁶¹. The work builds around many of the central notions of Hildebrand's philosophy, such as the person, value, and love, even though he will later dedicate separate volumes to some of these topics.

Through his political works, Hildebrand wants to defend the dignity of the human person by overcoming the dangers of individualism and collectivism. Critique of these two distortions

⁵⁵⁹ Hildebrand, 'Austria and Nationalism', 249.

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 250.

⁵⁶¹ Crosby, 'The Philosophical Achievement of Dietrich von Hildebrand. Concluding Reflections on the Symposium', 329.

was among the central themes of his political and social philosophy. Nevertheless, his main motive was not to critique errors, but to offer his positive vision of the relationship between the person and the community. The notion of value is another important aspect of Hildebrand's philosophy of community since it provides the basis for establishing the unitive principle (*virtus unitiva*) of communities, as well as their hierarchy. Finally, Hildebrand builds on his understanding of loving unification between persons to explain the genealogy of communities, especially I-Thou communities where interpenetration of loving looks plays a central role.

We will elaborate Hildebrand's vision of community first by showing how his understanding of the person, love and value plays a role in his understanding of communities, and then proceed to analyse the nature of different communities and the relations and hierarchy between them.

3.4.1. Person, Love and Value as Foundations of Community

As it was said, the person is for Hildebrand is an exemplary substance and the utmost "world for itself" among natural beings. The person is both the world for itself and capable of connection and unification with others. He is also predisposed to act as a member of a community and to form a community structure. In Hildebrand's words, "man as a spiritual person will never be understood if we do not recognize his ordination to community to form a new totality, his being ordered to and called to community."⁵⁶² This relationship goes in both ways, i.e. community cannot be properly understood "if the individual person is not grasped in the full depth of his being" and "every attempt to degrade the individual in his ontological dignity and value takes its toll on community."⁵⁶³ The person can come in his full personality only as a member of community; and the higher the rank of value of the community, the more he fulfils his ultimate meaning as a person.⁵⁶⁴

Earlier we have said that that man is the fullest substance among natural beings and to the highest degree the world for itself, but also that only in the spiritual contact with other persons does the man find its fulfilment. The essence of the human person shows both the character of being a "world for itself" incapable of merging with other substances and possessing the ability to reach the other person in transcendence. Reaching the other person can happen in different

⁵⁶² Dietrich von Hildebrand, "Die korporative Idee und die natürlichen Gemeinschaften," *Der katholische Gedanke* 6 (1933): 49. In: Premoli de Marchi, "Dietrich von Hildebrand and the Birth of Love as an I-Thou Relation," 148.

⁵⁶³ Hildebrand, 'Individual and Community', 328.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Mass and Community', in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 325. See also: Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 185.

ways and on several different levels. We have seen that there are important differences in the levels of participation in the being of the other, from the mere intentional directedness to the interpenetration of loving looks and becoming one in love. Now we can add that not only *actual* participation can happen, but also the lasting connection, which exists everywhere where there is unifying relationship between persons, like in friendship, collegial relationships etc.⁵⁶⁵ Such lasting connection is always present in becoming one with the other. This connection is both superactual and objective since it is different and partly independent from the stances of both involved persons. When a superactual stance is communicated and when the other person accepts it and responds to it, the interpenetration of loving or hateful looks happens which is an objective, superactual relation between persons. This interpersonal reality is something in between the persons, but it cannot create a lasting connection if it is based on hate or animosity which act as specific separators between persons. The unifying contact can only be brought about by love or related stances. This signifies the connection which ideally can lead to establishment of a community, even if it is still not the community in the strict sense.

It is important to note that not every unifying contact with another person needs to be in the form of mutually facing each other. That is the I-Thou mode, but there is also we-mode in which the persons stand next to each other, and their contact is not frontal.⁵⁶⁶ There are also different levels of the we-contact. If two people experience something at the same time, this is already a modification of the personal experience compared to experiencing it on our own. The next level happens when both persons know that the other is here next to them in a certain togetherness, even though still neither of them explicitly addresses the other. They do not “see” each other, but only stand next to each other. Further increase of connection is given when both persons experience something “jointly” from the very beginning. They are looking in the same direction and jointly intend the object. The high point of the we-connection happens in the joint execution of acts and stances. If two persons jointly address the third, they both become the subjects of this act. Similar thing happens with stances, e.g., when parents jointly grieve the loss of a child. In both cases, there is a joint participation in the act and the execution of it. The we-mode is the equally fundamental mode of unification as the I-thought mode.

Both modes form different types of communities, depending on whether the members primarily stand next to each other or mutually facing each other.⁵⁶⁷ The distinction here is made

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 121.

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*, 34-36.

⁵⁶⁷ This does not prevent I-Thou contacts to happen in a we-community, and vice versa. Cf. Hildebrand, 38-39.

depending on whether the community is ~~built~~ based on I-Thou relation of we-relations. “In the I-Thou relation the two persons face one another; for each the other is a Thou. In the we-relation persons stand as it were next to one another, and hand in hand they face some good, the truth, some other person.”⁵⁶⁸ I-Thou community builds on the first type of relation, i.e. on any kind of love, and we-community is built on the second, i.e. in the relation of individuals to the whole.

Now, it is important to note that even the deepest union between persons is still not a community, but the other factors are needed as well.⁵⁶⁹ The community, such as family, nation, or the state, is a new whole which is constituted by the persons and which incorporates them in a new unity.⁵⁷⁰ On the other hand, friendship is a connection between persons which is not a separate whole consisting of persons, but it is precisely the *connection* between those persons. Ontologically, the connections can be marked as accidents while communities cannot, even though they are also not substances in the strict sense. The connections are essentially duopersonal (between two persons), while the general essence of community does not presuppose anything regarding the number of persons constituting it, i.e. it can be both duopersonal and pluripersonal. Even though duopersonal relationships and communities arising from them are constituted based on mutual love, love is not the only foundation for a community. In many communities there is the objective theme of these communities, a realm of certain goods and values, which provides foundation for the establishment of a community and unification of its members.⁵⁷¹ To understand this point more deeply, we have to see how values can act as founding and unifying force for a community.

Whenever the interpenetration of loving looks between persons happens, the incorporation of these persons in a certain value domain happens too. The man is essentially ordered to the world of values and God as the epitome of all values. He is not connected to all value domains equally. To some domains, like the moral and religious ones, he is connected objectively based on his nature (even if he does not understand or accept this), but to some others (e.g. intellectual or cultural ones) his connection is based on his special talents or interests. In the first case, we can speak of the incorporation of the person in a certain value domain, but in the second we have two elements: the value domain is being realized in the person, and the value domain takes the person into itself. Each person is usually incorporated in several value domains not just objectively based on its nature, but also subjectively, by understanding certain values and

⁵⁶⁸ Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard*, 184.

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 127–28.

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 126-127.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 127.

responding to them. In this way each person is incorporated in the value domain of the “person” as such, of beauty, law, knowing, and morality.⁵⁷²

A completely new level of incorporation happens when two persons are connected through love. In love, persons are always incorporated in a certain value domain.⁵⁷³ This is already clear from the fact that love is a value response to the preciousness and beauty of the other person. Obviously, love is firstly a response to the overall beauty of the person, but the lover can also respond to particular qualities of the beloved, such as his intellect, good humor or moral uprightness. Still, every loving relationship incorporates the persons in one identical value domain. The interpenetration of loving looks situates both persons *in* a value domain, which is formally something new in comparison to the individual incorporation of each person.

This interpersonal sphere has the potency to realize values to a much higher extent than they can be realized by individual persons alone.⁵⁷⁴ The “word” spoken in the interpersonal realm has a “metaphysical added value” in comparison to one merely spoken on the inside of the person. This new level of realization of value happens already in some basic forms of contact between persons, but it reaches its peak in the loving union. Even if the lover and the beloved are incorporated in different value domains, there exists *one* “place” in their overall being which incorporates the identity on the basis of which their relationship is built.⁵⁷⁵ This “place” is found in a different and more hidden dimension than one in which the particular value qualities are found. It is so intertwined and connected to the overall being of the person that it leads directly to the overall value character of the person. By responding to the overall beauty of the other person, the lovers are situated in this deeper and more hidden sphere. The value domain which here dominates is then also a value domain in which both persons are incorporated in their relationship.

The ability of a loving union to incorporate persons in a certain value domain is founded on the fact that the value domains themselves possess the “virtus unitiva” founded on their nature as values.⁵⁷⁶ Similarly, disvalues have disuniting and isolating effect on the person who gives

⁵⁷² Obviously, a certain domain can be more dominant than others, such as when a professor is fully dedicated to the intellectual pursuit. Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*, 78.

⁵⁷³ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 129.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 83.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 95.

⁵⁷⁶ Introducing “virtus unitiva” of values as a central element of forming communities, puts Hildebrand at odds with “the view generally held by both phenomenologists and contemporary authors, according to which what a group is has to be explained merely by referring to the group’s or its members’ subjective features.” For a more detailed discussion on this issue, see: Alessandro Salice, “Communities and Values. Dietrich von Hildebrand’s

itself to them. By “virtus unitiva” of value Hildebrand implies that the good unites persons, and the stronger their commitment to the good, then the closer their unity.⁵⁷⁷ “Virtus unitiva” is in effect already in every contact with the world of the good and the beautiful. The experience of beauty of art or the goodness of the virtuous man can open us to the connection with other people and to God. The power of the good and beautiful unites us with all the people connected to this world of the good and beautiful. Every being affected by the world of values includes connecting with the other not just outwardly, but also with its “inner side”. This way “virtus unitiva” of value helps to overcome egocentricity and isolation and enable the unification between persons. Also, “virtus unitiva” becomes increased if the other person is incorporated in the same value domain as us. The closer the correspondence of values, deeper the unity.⁵⁷⁸

The values unify metaphysically and objectively all persons affected by them even if the persons involved do not experience unification. All persons are in this way connected already by being incorporated in the world of values as a whole. This happens before any experience of unification. This “virtus unitiva” of the world of values cannot be “proven” or formally deduced, since it is a material fact founded on the essential link between the value and unity of persons.⁵⁷⁹

Therefore, on all levels of unification the world of values plays an irreplaceable role. Every loving turn towards the other is founded on the value of that person. The “voice” of the value of the other makes them attractive to us. Every unification is also accompanied by the incorporation of both persons in one or more value domains. This allows us to speak about two-fold direction in which the virtus unitiva of values is unfolded: first, from the “inside” due to the value-rootedness of love; and second, from the outside, since the world of values objectively unifies both persons incorporated in it. The higher the value domain, the deeper the unification. For this reason, only in the highest value domain of religion can the true “becoming one” exist. On the other hand, the disvalues cannot unify the persons objectively. Every relationship thematically based on false values or sins must in turn rest on at least some values, such as the value of the person as such, to be able to produce a unifying connection.

Social Ontology,” in *A. Salice, H.B. Schmid (Eds.), The Phenomenological Approach to Social Reality, Studies in the Philosophy of Sociality 6* (Springer International Publishing Switzerland, 2016), 240.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. Crosby, ‘The Philosophical Achievement of Dietrich von Hildebrand. Concluding Reflections on the Symposium’, 329–30.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 114.

⁵⁷⁹ This essential link is synthetic, not analytic, since the nature of value comes before the unification it creates. Cf. Hildebrand, 116.

3.4.2. *The Nature of Different Communities and Community as Such*

The community represents a new individuum distinct from its constituents. It is a new real whole and it cannot be reduced to a collection of units, like “all people of Polish origin” or “all red-haired women”. These and similar groupings based on different subjective criteria do not form a new whole, they do not have anything in common apart from these subjective criteria. The real unity which represents the “corpus of community” is different not just from the arbitrary collection of units “cum fundamento in re”, but also from a real *generic* unity.⁵⁸⁰ The unity of species is not a new real whole, the aggregate of individual dogs as units of their species is not a “community of dogs” of which the dogs would be members.⁵⁸¹ On the other hand, the community such as the nation is a real whole which consists of persons, members of a nation, as their real parts. This unity is real and exists regardless of our perception. So, the community is not based only of the actual connection between persons, but the persons constituting it are forming a new objective unity different from their actual connections. Not all people who are connected already form a community. Wherever there is a community, the members are objectively and really connected in a new real whole.

To examine the relationship between the members of a community and the community itself, we can first examine the examples of non-communal connections.⁵⁸² When several pieces of metal melt together, a new individual piece comes into being, but the previous pieces cease to exist without becoming the real parts of the new piece. The new composite does not consist of pieces. At the same time, it is not simple unity, but a complex homogeneous material. This kind of fusion is sometimes erroneously taken as a model of personal union.⁵⁸³ However, this fusion is incomparably weaker than the conscious and spiritual union of persons. No union of individual parts happens in the fusion of metal since individual parts cease to exist. In the personal union individuals do not cease to exist - they stand forth more fully and properly in their individual existence.

On the other hand, living organism have organs as real parts of the whole, which are at the same time relative wholes themselves. They are not arbitrarily divided and have certain “borders” which divide them as something distinct from other organs, but at the same time they are ontologically real parts of the bigger whole. Organs cannot exist without an organism - they

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 135.

⁵⁸¹ A community of dogs could not also exist because the community can be formed only by persons.

⁵⁸² Cf. Hildebrand, 137–41.

⁵⁸³ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 125.

are essentially ordered towards completion in a bigger whole. Here the unity of the whole is the prerequisite for the existence of parts. The parts cannot become independent unities separated from the whole. The third case is a real whole which consists of other independent wholes that function as real parts of a bigger whole. For example, the tones are independent unities but can also serve as real parts of the melody. When serving as parts, they continue to exist as real individual unities. Here the parts are ontologically prior to the whole, they constitute the whole and the whole is dependent on their existence. Communities belong here. They are constituted by real wholes which serve as their parts. As parts, they are building a new unified whole, but they themselves do not cease to be unities different from the bigger whole. Still, the person is always ontologically superior to the community because it is a substance in an exemplary way, while communities are not real substances.⁵⁸⁴

However, the essence of the community is not adequately grasped in analogy to the organism. In the community the parts are ontologically superior to the whole and in the organism it is vice versa.⁵⁸⁵ Only a secondary analogy can be useful here to realize that the parts can constitute the whole in different ways. Another false analogy of a community is that to a person where communities are characterized as “collective persons” (*Gesamtpersonen*).⁵⁸⁶ Since communities are not substances, they cannot be conceptualized as persons. Persons as substances cannot be merged in a new person, nor serve as a material for forming a new person of community. The communities do not possess the personal being, the consciousness or the inner unity and simplicity which characterizes persons. They are not just ontologically lower but are different kinds of beings than persons. Communities do not possess the “inner being” as persons do, although they possess a certain “inner side”.⁵⁸⁷ Purely material beings have only the external aspect, but the communities we can observe both from the outside and the inside. We can observe a certain state from the outside, but we can also become its citizen and understand it from the inside. The two perspectives reveal different aspects of a community but point to the same reality which unites them.

Communities come in different forms and many distinctions can be made among them. The first distinction is between duopersonal and pluripersonal communities. The first can

⁵⁸⁴ They can be called substances only analogically, but they are also not mere accidents. The substance-accident distinction is not fully fitting to adequately determine the nature of community. Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*, 142. See also: Hildebrand, ‘Individual and Community’, 328.

⁵⁸⁵ The possible exception could be in the example of the Church as a mystical body of Christ, but here we will leave such examples aside and focus only on the natural communities.

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 146.

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 148.

essentially be composed only of two persons (e.g., marriage) and the second can consist only of three or more persons (e.g., state, nation, or the family).⁵⁸⁸ The characteristic of being duopersonal or pluripersonal for each community is essential, and not just accidental. The state or a nation could not exist as duopersonal in principle, not just practically. Another question is *how many* members does the pluripersonal community have. It is obvious that the states normally have more members than families, e.g. the state with three members would be something atypical and maybe even practically impossible, as well as the nuclear family with thousand members. But this is an empirical question, not an essential one. At the same time, there are communities like the religious order which are essentially directed towards having more members, which can still at times have only two members. E.g., mankind and the Church can consist only of two persons, even though they essentially aim at having more members.

Further distinction is between communities whose existence is closely linked to certain individuals and those with whom this is not the case.⁵⁸⁹ Some communities cease to exist if one or all its members die. This is the case with marriage if one of the spouses dies, as well as with all duopersonal communities, but also with families if the parents die. Communities like the nation, state, mankind, or the Church continue to exist even if individual members die. they also include the deceased members as members (a deceased father of the nation is still its member). Nevertheless, they can continue to exist only if they have at least some living members.

Another distinction is that between communities with the experientially and objectively founded membership.⁵⁹⁰ To some communities, like the circle of friends, I can belong only based on some experiences. Only through some other-directed stances (*fremdpersonale Stellungnahmen*)⁵⁹¹ I can become a member. On the other hand, I belong to the nation or the mankind even before I am aware of it. I am “born into” them. Some communities depend on subjective attitudes and behaviours of members and to some people belong objectively.⁵⁹² For

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 196. It is important not to confuse them with I-Thou and we-communities because for this distinction the number of members is not essential, but whether persons face one another or stand next to one another.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 198.

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 201.

⁵⁹¹ Some authors proposed to translate this term as “etero-directed”. Since the Greek word *héteros* means “other, another, different”, the translation would be the same as our “other-directed”. Due to simplicity, we prefer to use the English word instead of the technical Greek term. Cf. Salice, ‘Communities and Values. Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Social Ontology’, 242.

⁵⁹² In the latter it is “the objective theme of these communities, or some objective realm of goods and values, which build up the community from within, holding its members together and uniting them.” Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 127.

example, I cannot just find myself in a marriage, I must consciously and actively enter it. To enter to a circle of friends I must act in certain ways, e.g., by showing filial love. To the mankind, nation, or a family I belong objectively, regardless of my stances towards other people or the community itself, and before I am conscious of the existence of this community.

Further difference is between the formal and material communities.⁵⁹³ The state and the association are formal communities; the circle of friends, nation and mankind are material, and marriage, family and the Church are both material and formal communities. In the most formal community, association, a material connection between members, such as love, is not required. The members of the association are united by its goal and the good that it serves.⁵⁹⁴ Association is formally clearly delineated so it can be legally encompassed and described. Materially it is empty, and it does not require material connection between its members. The social act of establishing the formal community encompasses the members from the outside and connects them as mutually unrelated persons. The circle of friends on the other hand is completely without a form, it is not clearly delineated and cannot be legally encompassed. It is materially full and requires a meaningful connection between its members. The material community grows from the inside, the body of community is established from the material connection between members. It cannot be established merely by an act of will, as the formal community can. For this reason, we say that material communities are organic, while the formal ones are much more artificial (even though not exclusively). *Virtus unitiva* of the value domain in which the members are incorporated is also the constitutive principle of material communities, while in the formal communities it is present only indirectly. In many communities both formal and material elements overlap. Sometimes the formal element organically grows out from the material one (e.g. in marriage), and sometimes they are merely anorganically overlapping (e.g. when group of people pursuing cultural aims form an association).

The fifth difference is between the primary and secondary communities.⁵⁹⁵ Secondary communities presuppose other, more fundamental communities for their existence. They do not connect independent persons in the community if those persons are not already connected in a more primitive community. For example, the nation which can exist only if the persons form the most basic community called “the life circle”. Primary communities (e.g., mankind)

⁵⁹³ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 207.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 127.

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 219.

do not presuppose other communities but connect persons who are not necessarily connected in any other community.

Finally, there are communities, like the Church and the state, which not only have members, but also *organs*.⁵⁹⁶ Organs represent the community in a different and specific way in comparison to other members, embodying some of its official functions. This kind of division is not present in the communities such as the mankind or the nation. Another distinction is connected to this one, namely that some communities have the authoritative structure, and some do not. Still, these two distinctions do not overlap. The family has authoritative structure, but it does not have organs. Authoritative structure is also present in the state, the Church, religious order, but not in the nation, the mankind, in duopersonal communities and cultural circles.

Different communities also have different realms of meaning and different functions. The higher a community's realm of meaning is, the more it will be concerned with the ultimate meaning and authentic destiny of the individual.⁵⁹⁷ In the supernatural community of the Church, the ultimate meaning of the community and the individual coincide. With regards to the mankind, the moment which builds unity is the world of values and the epitome of all values: God. All men are objectively associated to the world of values and to God into a specific kind of potent unity. Mankind is purely a metaphysical community, and its realm of meaning is the ultimate destiny of man, their association to God and the world of values.⁵⁹⁸ Thus, the meaning of mankind and the natural meaning of the individual person largely coincide.⁵⁹⁹ When one becomes aware of his membership in the community of mankind, he must also become aware of his metaphysical situation, his nature as God's creature and his natural orientation towards God. This is the real "theme" of mankind, which proves every humanitarian or positivistic understanding to be erroneous. The mankind does not have a specific task or a purpose to achieve, like the Church or the state. Mankind is specifically supra-individual since it encompasses everyone who ever existed and who will exist. It is also the ideal type of the objective community and a purely material one, without authoritative structure or division between members and organs.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 220.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Mass and Community', 325.

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 228.

⁵⁹⁹ Hildebrand, 'Individual and Community', 330.

In marriage the central theme is the spousal love and secondarily the value of the person in his or her individuality.⁶⁰⁰ For each spouse the other person is the “theme” of their relationship, and for both this it is their common love. This community has an objective form coming from the social act which gives them the possibility of a total self-gift to the other and this objectively incorporates the marriage in the deepest value domain of the person. To the realm of meaning of marriage also belongs the possibility of generating new spiritual persons from the closest union of spouses, as well as building a common life. Marriage is essentially duopersonal and individual community with experientially founded membership, it is both material and formal community, without strict authoritative structure and without official functions and organs.

The family also has the love of members as its central theme, albeit in a different sense than marriage. It has an intimate inner space which duopersonal communities do not possess. The realm of meaning is the union, and loving communion is the central theme. The realm of meaning allows the development of three types of love: parental, love of children and love of siblings. Nevertheless, as an objective community it is not constituted through the love of its members. It is a community of life and this falls into its realm of meaning. It is a pluripersonal community with objectively founded membership; primarily material, but also with formal perfections so it can be legally encompassed. It is also a secondary community based on marriage and it has authoritative structure, but without the division of organs and members.⁶⁰¹

The nation is primarily a cultural community with the individual type of culture and development of certain ethos and the ways of life as its realm of meaning. The realm of meaning encompasses different value domains, but none of them fully. The central element of a nation is built by a cultural entity, or the spirit of a nation which fills its inner space and carries the individuals as a medium on which they “feed” themselves. It must also be noted that power and the affirmation of it do not fall into the realm of meaning of a nation. Speaking of the “pride of a nation” in this context is completely misguided.⁶⁰² The membership of a nation is objective, and its existence depends on the primary community of *people (Volk)*. It is also a supra-individual community not limited to a life of one generation, it is pluripersonal, purely material, without authoritative structure and without division of members and organs.

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 230.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 234–39.

⁶⁰² Cf. Hildebrand, 242.

The state is characterized by the highly delineated borders of its realm of meaning, even though the states historically tended to overstep these borders, by usurping the realm of meaning of the family, the religious realm or with different ideals of the state omnipotence of conservative or socialist persuasion.⁶⁰³ The realm of meaning of the state is to in the interpersonal public affairs, like guaranteeing and affirming the rule of law, public security and law enforcement, protecting individual rights, the protection against external forces and safeguarding public health, and more indirect realms, like that of education, economy, arts, and science. The state is a pluripersonal, supra-individual community with objectively founded membership and with authoritative structure with organs and members. It presupposes the “life circle” for its existence. As a formal community it is established through a social act. It is also a material community since it is based on the sphere of publicity which comes to be in a life circle.

The life circle is found everywhere where people based on geographical and historical moments understand themselves in their outward life as belonging to each other.⁶⁰⁴ It is established wherever people outwardly stand in a living contact and it goes hand in hand with the establishment of interpersonal reality, which is a spiritual place for community-building power. This living contact is the most primitive form of “having to do” with others with regards to the exterior dimension of a person. This community is purely factual and least spiritual, and as such it does not have a realm of meaning which would unite it. It provides a pure matter for the community, and it is devoid of any content and form. It is a pluripersonal, supra-individual community, with objectively founded membership and without authoritative structure or division on organs and members.

Finally, the association is devoid of content, and it does not possess a realm of meaning, but it is an empty formal moment which gives purely formal element to the community.⁶⁰⁵ It is established by a social act on the basis of its purpose or theme (e.g. protection of the environment) which serves as a connecting point. The association is a pluripersonal (even though in certain occasions it can consist only of two persons), supra-individual, primary community with experientially founded membership and it is an ideal type of a formal community, with quasi-authoritative structure and the division on organs and members.

⁶⁰³ This insight is essential for Hildebrand’s criticism of the doctrine of the omnipotence of the state. Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Ceterum Censeo...!’

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 246.

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 249.

3.4.3. Relations and Hierarchy Between Communities

Communities need to be examined not in isolation but in their manifold connections and relations.⁶⁰⁶ Hildebrand distinguishes three different types of relations between communities: mutual exclusion, crossing and interpenetration. The Church is the simplest example of mutual exclusion. In principle, a person cannot belong to two churches.⁶⁰⁷ The second case is of marriage and religious order where the existence of one community does not exclude the other, but the same person cannot belong to two of them. The different communities of the same type mutually reinforce each other, but they involve the whole person, so a person can only belong to one. The mutual exclusion can also happen on the purely material basis, even though they do not involve the whole person, like in the case of political parties (e.g., someone cannot meaningfully be a libertarian and communist at the same time due to the irreconcilable nature of the parties' ideals). Finally, the mutual exclusion can exist with the mutually disparate communities (e.g. one cannot at the same time belong to a religious order and a sexual cult).

In the case of mutually “crossing” communities the same person belongs to different communities, but they do not actually interpenetrate each other.⁶⁰⁸ This is always the case with meaningfully disparate communities (e.g., belonging simultaneously to a circle of friends and to a company). Even if the whole circle of friends would work for the same company, those communities would not be identical due to their disparate realms of meaning. These communities stand next to each other because of disparity of their realms of meaning and there is no one direct route from the lower to the higher community.

Hildebrand opposes the view of the universal hierarchical building of communities, in which every higher or broader community builds on the lower one, in the sense of really involving the lower community as its member and increasing or widening its realm of meaning.⁶⁰⁹ This implies that there is a hierarchical “line of meaning” leading from the lower to the higher community, i.e., from marriage to family, clan, tribe, people and nation to the state and mankind. Even in the case of marriage and family, where it seems that marriage provides basis for the family and is contained in it, the family does not encompass marriage fully. The loving union as the realm of meaning of marriage is much broader than in a family. In the family, the spouses are mostly jointly directed towards the children, in marriage they are directed towards

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 255.

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 257.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 264.

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 267–80.

each other. It is equally wrong to speak of the increase of the “line of meaning” with regards to the loving union as a realm of meaning of both family and marriage (although this increase can happen with regards to the community of life as a realm of meaning of both communities). The real centres of meaning of marriage and the family are not connected by a straight line.

There is an increase of different lines of meaning in different communities: e.g., the sphere of public affairs reaches its peak in the state, the community of life in the family. But there are many lines of meaning which reach their peak in different communities. There is no increase of one universal line of meaning. The increase is also not connected with broadening of the line of meaning. Although this is sometimes the case (e.g., with the municipality and the state), it cannot be applied universally. For example, the clan has a broader realm of meaning than the family, but the line of meaning at the same time increase from the clan to the family in terms of increase of seriousness and universality of its tasks.

Although there is no hierarchical building of communities in the form just described, there is the case of interweaving of different communities.⁶¹⁰ The weakest form of interweaving happens when the lower community encompassed by the higher is not its real member. This way the state encompasses marriage, but we cannot say that the spouses are its “elements” in the way cities or municipalities are. Similarly, the association is encompassed by the state due to its formally delineated nature and publicity, but it is still not its building block as the city or the municipality.

The broader community can also encompass as its real part the lower one which is its “first neighbour”, like the clan encompasses the family or the people encompasses the tribe. The lower community is the element of the higher one but not exclusively since persons are also its members. Here the higher community encompasses the lower one only partially, since the realm of meaning of the lower community is not necessarily increased in the higher one. The third case happens with more separated communities, like the family and the mankind, where their realms of meaning have much more in common. The mankind encompasses the family not just through the clan or a tribe, but also directly and above other communities. Still, their realms of meaning do not overlap fully and mankind is not directly divided on the families as its building blocks.

⁶¹⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 281.

The higher level of connection between communities is interpenetration.⁶¹¹ This happens, for example, where the nation and the state overlap in their scope. Here not only that the state encompasses the nation, but they also interpenetrate and organically fulfil each other, even though their realms of meaning are different. The state supplements the nation as a material community by giving it the form, but they always remain distinct. Analogously, the Church aims by to encompass the whole mankind and their realms of meaning are much more related, i.e. the realm of meaning of the Church is the final fulfilment of the realm of meaning of mankind. Both communities remain distinct even though they are directed to each other.

Even though Hildebrand criticizes the position of universal hierarchical building of communities, he nevertheless argues that there is a value hierarchy among them. The failure to adequately grasp this hierarchy is one of the chief errors of political movements and ideologies he opposed.⁶¹² Different criteria are relevant to evaluate this hierarchy. Firstly, there is a value of unification as such. In the act of love, the return of love and mutual interpenetration of looks signify the realization of a certain value. Also, each unity involves some type of increase of the dominion of the good. By incorporating themselves in a certain value domain, the persons are also realizing this value domain. When persons unite “in the name” of something they contribute to the increase of this something, whether it be value or an idol.⁶¹³

Moreover, there is also a value of unity which is in all spheres of being something valuable in comparison to disunity and chaos. This value is also found in the unity of persons, but only if this unity is based on values. There are also “good works” a certain type of community can realize. These works can differ from community to community, but each community has a specific domain of possible goods which it can realize. The unity also has, apart from the value it has as such, the twofold meaning for the unified persons. First, it is an objective good for the unified persons, insofar as it advances their legitimate interest and brings happiness, support and motivation to them. Secondly, the unity possesses the enabling situation for increase in “radiance” of being of both persons and the acceptance of this radiance by the other. All these aspects should be examined when to grasp the true value hierarchy of communities.

There are also false criteria for measuring the rank of value of communities. First of these false criteria is the width or the scope of the community.⁶¹⁴ Often it is considered that wider the scope

⁶¹¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 295.

⁶¹² Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Individual and Community’, 331.

⁶¹³ Obviously, there is increase in value only if that which is realized is a real good and not an idol.

⁶¹⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 324.

of the community, the greater its rank of value. In this view, the interest of the family should be subdued to the interest of the clan or a tribe, the interest of a tribe to that of the state etc. However, many of the highly ranked communities could encompass only a few or only two persons, such as marriage or friendship; while many low ranked communities, such as an association, can have a lot of members. For example, in terms of the value of the unity and bestowing objective goods for the person on the members, marriage and family rank higher than nation or the state. Narrower scope also does not mean the community automatically ranks higher. The width or the scope simply does not imply anything with regards to the rank of value of community.

The second false belief is that the community ranks higher the longer its life span is.⁶¹⁵ The highest rank would be attributed to the “supra-individual” communities, whose life span is not connected to the life span of its members, such as the nation, state, cultural circle, mankind, Church etc. Much lower would be “individual communities” whose life span is connected to the life span of its members, such as family, marriage, or a circle of friends. This position could lead to absurd consequences, e.g., a company could live longer than a single marriage, so we could conclude that the company ranks higher in value than marriage. The life span of a community does not presume anything with regards to the value rank of a community unless this community exists eternally. The same applies to individuals: a state could live longer than an individual, but it still ranks lower in value.⁶¹⁶ On the other hand, it must be noted that communities which aim at the life-long membership (e.g. marriage or Church) are marked with a higher level of depth and seriousness.

Final false criterion for evaluating the rank of value of a community is the extent in which the community possesses a value distinct and separate from the value of the individual person. For example, specific value of the nation or the state is to a higher degree than the family or the mankind separable from the value of the individual person. This is so because the protection of justice is to a higher extent separable from the value of individual person, than it is the case with the realm of meaning of the mankind, which encompasses the metaphysical situation of all individual persons.⁶¹⁷ In reality, the rank of value of the community is higher the more “spiritually connatural” is the realm of meaning of the community to that of the person.

⁶¹⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 327.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard*, 183.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 331.

The right criteria to evaluate the rank of value of communities is the realm of meaning of community, or the thematic realm, since some communities do not have the realm of meaning in the strict sense. Since there is no one universal hierarchical building of communities, the rank of value of communities should be analysed in relation to different realms: religious, metaphysical, the realm of love, culture, human development and of law and forming the public life.⁶¹⁸ These realms differ both formally and essentially.

The communities whose realm of meaning is purely supernatural possess the highest rank of value in all relevant aspects.⁶¹⁹ Hildebrand here speaks only about the ideal content of such communities, regardless of whether they actually exist. The most notable community here is the Church whose realm of meaning is mysteriously presented through Jesus Christ, and which ranks much higher than any other community.⁶²⁰ With regards to natural communities, often one community cannot be ranked above the other. Some communities do rank higher in certain value dimensions, but this does not allow us to derive a universal conclusion with regards to the overall value rank of these communities. This is so in the realm of metaphysical communities, where the most notable community is the mankind.⁶²¹ As a fully objective community, its value of unification is specific and even though it might seem that here there is no loving unity, it is present in the metaphysical connectedness of all men. This original and deepest community directs a person toward God and towards unity with all men. The unity of mankind is much fuller and deeper than that of a nation, state, or people. This community also advances the legitimate interests of the person, primarily by helping him to understand his metaphysical position in the cosmos. In toto, mankind has a superior rank of value in comparison to the state, nation, and the people. Only duopersonal communities of love are higher than mankind in some respects.

In the realm of love or “unification as such” is the family, duopersonal friendship, the circle of friends, and marriage. In all duopersonal communities, love is the utmost realm of meaning and mutual unification in love is the theme. The “name” in which the marriage is established is the total unity in love, which ranks higher than the “name” of any other natural community,

⁶¹⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 334–35.

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 335–42.

⁶²⁰ There are also other aspects in which the Church ranks higher than other communities, but we will refrain from enumerating all of them. There is also a special case of religious orders, which represent the communities *in* the realm of supernatural, but not supernatural communities. As such, they are not comparable to the Church in their value rank in most of the fore mentioned aspects.

⁶²¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft, Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, 342–46.

except the mankind.⁶²² The sacramental marriage established “in the name of Christ” is even higher than the mankind. Since the connection between members here is the greatest (except in the case of Church), in terms of the value of unity this community ranks the same as mankind (even though in a different way) and higher than the state, nation and even the family. With regards to value development of the person and bestowing happiness on him, this community ranks higher than all other natural communities apart from duopersonal communities aimed at spiritual becoming one through the interpenetration of looks in the “thematic holy love”.

The family also belongs to the realm of love. In terms of value of unification, family ranks lower than duopersonal communities of love, but higher than the nation, state, people etc. The same position family holds related to the “name” in which the community is established, as well as to the meaning it has for the person. In terms of unity, this is the highest among natural communities together with the mankind. Regarding happiness it bestows on members, it surpasses all natural communities (except duopersonal loving communities), including mankind.

The realm of meaning of the state encompasses the centrally important public affairs and protecting the basic security.⁶²³ The value of unity surpasses that of a nation and people, but it is lower than that of mankind, family, marriage. The same position the state holds related to the “name” in which the state is established and the value development of the individual. With regards to the objective victory of love and bestowing objective goods for the person, the position is the same, apart from the fact that it ranks lower than the nation since it reaches deeper in the inner life of members and provides more necessary gifts to the person. The nation in all the relevant aspects ranks lower than the mankind, marriage, family and all duopersonal communities of love. In many aspects it is also lower than the state, but it surpasses the state in terms of the objective good for the person, depth and organicity of unity, value development and cultural development of the individual.

To conclude, we can once more highlight the fact that there exists no universal hierarchy of communities, but only the hierarchy of different communities related to the different realms of meaning.⁶²⁴ There is no one common denominator to rank the value of communities, but we can do it only from different aspects. The demands of the higher-ranking community always

⁶²² Cf. Hildebrand, 346–58.

⁶²³ Cf. Hildebrand, 358–62.

⁶²⁴ Hildebrand also brings some secondary criteria for evaluating the value rank of communities, such as the ethos which lives in the community consciousness, the role which love plays in the community, etc., which we will refrain of analysing here.

have priority over the demands of the lower ranking ones. The demands of the state cannot take priority over the demands of mankind and the Church. Moral demands which are valid for the individual person, are also valid for him as a member of a community. Also, the value of the individual person is always higher than the value of any natural community.

3.4.4. *State and Authority*

Some further remarks need to be made with regards to the state, its value, and the authority it exercises. Hildebrand's conception of the state is far removed both from the view which divests the state from all value and authority and reduces it to a mere interest group devoted to furthering the interests of individuals, as well as from the view which gives the state unlimited competences and even deifies it as a being of the highest value and dignity.⁶²⁵

Firstly, the value of the nation and the state should be delineated. There is value in the existence of different peoples and national identities.⁶²⁶ The plurality of people and nations is something enriching which stems from the existence of many beautiful national identities. On the other hand, the existence of many states in the world is not an objective value, but a mere fact. The conception that each nation needs to have its own state in Hildebrand's view is "a typically modern illusion".⁶²⁷ The existence of states which encompass plurality of nations (e.g. Switzerland) is something wholly legitimate. There would be no disvalue even if the whole world would live in one state if that state would allow for the existence and peculiarity of individual nations.

If we take the example of monarchies which were building new states through marrying, we can see that mere fact that two states ceased to exist and a new one emerges from the point of view of value is completely indifferent.⁶²⁸ Only if the new state would in some important respects be better than the previous ones it would make sense to say that it is good that the two prior states ceased to exist and a new one emerged (and vice versa if the new state would be worse than previous ones). Nor there is value in the fact that a certain people are incorporated in this or that concrete state, although there is value in the existence of this ethnic community in its individuality and specific life-form (assuming that it is not grounded in objective

⁶²⁵ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Zur Begrenzung des Staates', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 285.

⁶²⁶ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die sittlichen Grundlagen der Völkergemeinschaft', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 274.

⁶²⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 276.

⁶²⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Zur Begrenzung des Staates', 287.

injustice). Moreover, in certain occasions some national values rank much higher for the community of people than the statehood itself. For example, the death of Beethoven or Goethe was a much bigger loss for the German nation than the end of already dead Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in the year 1803.⁶²⁹ It is also erroneous to assert that the existence of a certain state-form is essential for the existence of its citizens. Man is not primarily a citizen of the state, but an individual person. Before belonging to the state, he is belonging to many other communities, like the family, marriage, humanity, etc.

Misunderstanding the true nature and value of the state and the nation leads to serious errors, like failing to recognize that the highest love for a thing does not lie its idolization.⁶³⁰ Whenever we place a certain good on a place in the hierarchy of values where it does not belong, when we absolutize it or simply ignore the objective hierarchy of values, we are not doing justice to it. Idolization of the state or a nation stems from pride and concupiscence, and not from a humble and reverent centre. The true love is the one which places the good on the place where it objectively belongs in the hierarchy of values.⁶³¹

The state is a community dedicated to giving form and authoritative regulation to the public life.⁶³² In jurisprudence, law-making, government and administration is the realm of meaning of the state most authentically unfolding. True function of the state lies in the realm of inner policy, where it forms the true authority in the public life. However, the state also deals with the foreign policy where it enters into relations with other states. There, the state functions as an “authorized representative” of the community of people. In the foreign policy the state does not have a true authority like in the inner policy, it is a mere private person in relation to other states. In the domain of inner policy, the state is the legitimate judge and arbiter between different individual interests, while in the international domain, it is a mere “party” without an authoritative function “above party lines”⁶³³. The community of people whom the state represents in the international arena is a legal party like the individual, and its claims are individual claims. Hildebrand espouses the pre-liberal grounding of the political authority by

⁶²⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 288.

⁶³⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die sittlichen Grundlagen der Völkergemeinschaft’, 272.

⁶³¹ The traditional term “societas perfecta” should not be used to justify idolization of the state. Whatever was legitimately claimed with the term “societas perfecta” about the value of the state should not be interpreted as if the state would possess a higher rank of value in all respects than the family, humanity, or any other community. The state is in no way a universal endpoint in which all other communities should be incorporated. Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Zur Begrenzung des Staates’, 292.

⁶³² Cf. Hildebrand, 286.

⁶³³ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die sittlichen Grundlagen der Völkergemeinschaft’, 272.

claiming the state has an authority characterized by acting in the name of God. However, this applies only to the internal policy and not to the foreign policy arena.

The conflicts between the states in the international arena therefore should objectively be resolved by the supranational authority. This objective necessity exists even if such authority does not actually exist at present. If this authority does not exist, the states are in the situation similar to the situation of individuals before the legal authority was established. But this does not change the fact that there is objective right and wrong even if there is not legal instance which could authoritatively decide it. Hildebrand believes that this supranational legal authority should also have the power to enforce legal obligations.⁶³⁴ For this reason, he supported the idea behind the League of Nations as a first expression of the supranational community of peoples.

Sovereignty of the state does not absolve it from moral obligations. The sovereignty means only that the state has autonomy in regulating its inner matters, and that it represents an authoritative instance for governing and administration of justice. The state has the power to create legal obligations, but this power does not extend to the obligations stemming from the natural law. The state is the endpoint of positive law, but it is itself under obligations of natural law towards other states and humanity. When the state negates these obligations, it undermines its foundations.

Hildebrand warns against the widespread error which wants to limit the moral sphere to the individual person. While communities cannot be the carriers of moral values the same as individuals can, they are not allowed to act contrary to the moral order. The moral order penetrates the communities too. Some spheres of community life, such as those of economy and the law possess a relative autonomy and their own laws, but they are not completely independent from morality.⁶³⁵ The domain of moral values has the highest “autonomy” and independence so that all other value domains are subordinated to it. The moral values are also present in the activities of the state, although its realm of meaning is not in the realization of moral values in the strong sense. But if a state acts against the objective justice (e.g., when it assaults the rights of another state) this act carries a moral disvalue. There is no double morality – one valid for individuals, and another for the state. There is one moral sphere and both states and individuals should observe its demands.

⁶³⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 278, 280.

⁶³⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Zur Begrenzung des Staates’, 293–94.

The sphere of morality has a normative role for positive law.⁶³⁶ Negating this necessarily implies substituting the right with might. This leads to conceiving war as the regular way of resolving conflicts between states instead of resolving them through legal means. Obviously, saying that disputes should be resolved legally does not mean that a certain state does not have a moral right to defend itself. It only means that legitimacy of the self-defence is to be determined legally. For those who view the war as an expression of virility and might of a nation, this demand can be seen as denigration of a nation's strength.⁶³⁷ This romantic conception of war in which a nation brutally fights for his own right at the expense of others, is no way a true expression of virtue and strength. True virtue and strength must observe what is objectively just and valuable and aim for that.

Similarly, loving one's own nation cannot imply the indifferent or hateful attitude towards other peoples.⁶³⁸ Every true love opens the lover not just towards the beloved, but also towards loving others in general. The same applies to communities – whoever loves his community by committing injustice to other communities is betraying a false love. The saying “my country, right or wrong” is not a sign of a true love but only an illusion.⁶³⁹ Obviously, this does not exclude the care for the preservation and furthering of the national identity and culture. This is something legitimate and even willed by God. Recognizing this fact demands that we affirm the peculiarity and uniqueness of each nation and grant it the right to freely develop in its unique identity. The legitimate love for a nation allows that we love more our nation than the others, but it does not allow that we deny their rights. The latter would represent a form of collective egoism.

Earlier we have said that there is no moral imperative in the existence of many states. Why then war would be morally wrong if it is aimed at destruction of an opposing state? The answer lies in the fact that when concrete individual states wage wars against each other, the conflict is not found in the domain of goods which are under the competence of the state, but around goods which are in the domain of people and of the nation. The state is attacked as the holder of these goods.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁶ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die rechtliche und sittliche Sphäre in ihrem Eigenwert und in ihrem Zusammenhang', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 87.

⁶³⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Die sittlichen Grundlagen der Völkergemeinschaft', 278–79.

⁶³⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 273.

⁶³⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 274.

⁶⁴⁰ Different thing are the anarchical revolutions. They are primarily directed against statehood and its vital nerve. They want to destroy the specific value which is embodied by the state. Cf. Hildebrand, 'Zur Begrenzung des Staates', 287.

Finally, we have said that the state is a community with an authoritative structure. Understanding the nature of authority is essential for having an adequate conception of the state. To understand which kind of authority the state embodies, it is helpful to distinguish between two basic types of authority: theoretical and practical.⁶⁴¹ Theoretical authority (e.g. the Church) is the instance which is incomparably superior in understanding and can utter claims which require theoretical assent. On the other hand, practical authority has the power to create obligatory states of facts characterized by oughtness. The typical response to the theoretical authority is belief, and to the practical one obedience. The state is an example of the practical authority.

The commands of a practical authority become something valuable and obligatory from the mere fact that they are willed and commanded by this authority. It has the power to transform neutral facts into something valuable and obligatory through the act of commanding.⁶⁴² The nature of obligation stemming from the true practical authority is a categorial one.⁶⁴³ Categorial obligations reign objectively above us even without our explicit consent. We have a strong obligation to obey the expressions of the will of the true authority if they remain inside its sphere of competences. Like moral values that generate duties not dependent on our will, the true authority is likewise independent of our will and stands “sovereignly” above men.⁶⁴⁴ Such is the authority of the Church and the State, while president of an association receives its authority from the will of the members, and so its authority depends on the will of the members.

However, this position should not be equated with voluntaristic absolutism. What Hildebrand is saying is that practical authority can make objective obligations even though they are not inherently morally good. For example, requiring citizens to pay a certain percentage of tax becomes an obligation primarily because the state decreed it, not because there exists an apriori moral duty to pay this or that amount of tax. Hildebrand stresses that the fact that the practical authority commands something makes this command a duty for us and not the material goodness of this act.⁶⁴⁵ As long as someone insists that the act which is commanded must be materially good, we are not dealing with the true practical authority. Only when the duty stems

⁶⁴¹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Das Wesen der echten Autorität’, in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 243–45.

⁶⁴² However, the practical authority cannot make an objective evil into something morally obligatory – only a neutral content can be transformed in this way. Cf. Hildebrand, 347.

⁶⁴³ Cf. Hildebrand, 346.

⁶⁴⁴ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Autorität und Führertum’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 1 (December 1933): 6.

⁶⁴⁵ Hildebrand, 7.

only from the will of the authority, we are dealing with true authoritative subordination. This kind of strong authority in which the mere fact of willing something is enough to establish and obligation, regardless of the content of that which is willed, can be present only in the absolute person, God. The only true ultimate authority is God, and all human authority must be grounded in it. The person can possess the authority over another only insofar he participates in the majesty and the authority of God. His authority is always connected to the office the authority holds and never on the high value the person himself possesses, his personal perfection or holiness. Only the authority of God is absolute. Every human authority is partial and limited to its sphere of competence.⁶⁴⁶

For communities with an authoritative structure the necessity of having an authoritative instance is not merely a practical-utilitarian necessity, but a formal necessity to execute things “in the name of God”. The representativeness of God is radically different in different authoritative communities. It is incomparably higher in the Church. The authority of the state is much more partial and limited even than the one parents in the family possess. In the State, the sphere of law is the most intimate sphere of meaning which essentially demands this representation of God. Determining and protecting justice, giving commands and punishments can objectively hold only if grounded in God. Of course, this authority is sharply limited. As soon as the authority oversteps its sphere of competences, this represents a serious usurpation and tyranny.

From the above arguments it is clear why Hildebrand’s opposes the “democratic worldview”. In his view, this worldview wants to ground authority in the will of the majority, it negates the respect for objective laws which should form the public life and makes the majority an arbiter of right and wrong.⁶⁴⁷ He states on the other hand that the will of any number of individuals, no matter how big, cannot ground the obligation for the individual to respect the commands of the authority.⁶⁴⁸ This is why the naturalistic and mechanistic worldview is incapable of grounding the true authority. Obviously, the “democratic worldview” Hildebrand criticizes is only one philosophical approach to the question of democracy. As we will see in more detail later, many authors who supported liberal democracy were not relativists and democracy does not have to be inherently relativist. Although there are ambiguities inherent to the democratic system, democracy does not have to negate objective right and wrong. It would be more correct

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Das Wesen der echten Autorität’, 351.

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Die Menschheit am Scheideweg’, in *Menschheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 255.

⁶⁴⁸ Hildebrand, ‘Autorität und Führertum’, 8.

to say that Hildebrand fights against the democratic worldview which was dominant in his political surroundings: the one characterized by factionism, lack of true authority and without regard to the objective moral law.

Similarly, Hildebrand claims that the elected official who holds the office endowed with authority cannot be considered as a mere exponent and representative of the will of the majority. The way of electing the authority is of no consequence for grounding the authority, since the authority is connected to the office itself and not to the person who is holding the office. Therefore, if the fact of the election would be understood as authorization and grounding of the authority, this would undermine the true authority.⁶⁴⁹ The true authority can, on the contrary, be exercised in the democracy as well as in an oligarchy, the republic or in a monarchy. Hildebrand considers plurality of political systems to be in principle legitimate, including democracy and authoritarian state. His main concern is negating God as a source of authority and overstepping the legitimate sphere of competences where the state's authority can be exercised. The second problem is not unrelated to the first, as we will see shortly.

Hildebrand's view of the authority of the state can be challenged from several perspectives. Hildebrand is right when he wants to avoid the pitfalls of reducing the state authority to the mere derivative of the will of majority. He is also more than justified in limiting this authority with the sphere of objective morality. However, he does not consider deeply enough many nuances in-between. For example, is it necessary to ground the practical authority in God? We can answer that in the affirmative insofar anything that is objective and valuable needs to find its ultimate grounding in God. But, in terms of proximate causes there can also be other ways to ground the true authority. For example, the political community and the authority of the state can be grounded in the constitution which invokes certain moral principles which come before the state and transcend it. These moral foundations of the political community certainly possess the objectivity and autonomy of their own and can serve as valuable foundations for the order based on natural law and limited competences of the state. Such political order is not relativist, on the contrary. It does try to align itself with objective right and wrong, even though it does not necessarily invoke God as foundation of objective moral and legal order.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁹ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Autorität und Führertum II', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 2 (December 1933): 7.

⁶⁵⁰ This is not to say that a democratic system cannot invoke God, on the contrary. We have examples of political systems (such as the USA) which invoke God as foundation of political order. Our argument just wants to show that there can also be moral grounding of political community.

On the other hand, there are questions of a practical kind, namely the procedural ones, to which democracy offers certain solutions and which Hildebrand does not seem to appreciate enough. Hildebrand is right when he says that the way of electing authority cannot provide moral grounding for this authority. We can expand his argument and apply it to making political decisions: the will of majority cannot make a political decision moral. However, there is a valid question that remains unanswered – the question of procedural legitimacy. Political decisions that fall within legitimate competences of the state and which do not contradict objective moral law, can become obligatory for citizens to follow if they have procedural legitimacy.

The clearest example in modern society is the referendum. A question decided on the referendum done according to the agreed upon procedures, becomes obligatory for citizens. For example, if majority of citizens would decide on a referendum to change the administrative division of the country by changing the number and size of counties a country has, this decision would possess a true authority and would create an objective obligation. Obviously, something completely different would happen if a majority would decide something immoral on the referendum (e.g. to remove certain fundamental rights from a group of people) – this decision would not have a legitimate authority since it oversteps the boundaries of the state and of objective moral law.

Hildebrand is correct when he recognizes that in principle plurality of political can be legitimate, but he does not appreciate the procedural safeguards which from a practical standpoint present a real improvement in structuring the political system. In a society where pluralism is a sociological and political fact, such safeguards are necessary for the system to function. As we will see in later chapters, they even serve as protections against totalitarianism. Hildebrand says that true authority needs to be grounded in God, but we have many examples of tyrannies which claimed that they are acting “in the name of God”. Obviously, Hildebrand would say that we need to distinguish between real God and a mere idol – and he would be correct. That is essential, as we will try to prove in this work. However, procedural safeguards are valuable for making it harder for totalitarian idols to establish themselves as dominant forces in society.

Hildebrand is a phenomenologist, but he is also influenced by political understandings of his time. The democracy he was witnessing was deeply flawed and imbued with many shortcomings. Those who espoused “democratic worldview” in practice often attacked the Church and negated many of her moral teachings. Consequently, the attitudes among Christian

thinkers were also largely antagonistic to liberalism. Only later the idea of Christian democracy will be elaborated in more detail, as well as the grounding of the state not on religion but on Christian moral principles. This needs to be considered when assessing Hildebrand's political theory. This theory contains both deep phenomenological insights, as well as certain ideas which could be considered as historical contingencies. The division between the two we will elaborate further in the coming chapters.

4. Hildebrand's Philosophical Critique of National Socialism, Communism and Liberalism

Nothing is more decisive for Hildebrand's personality and philosophy than his love for truth. To this beautifully testifies the memorial plaque put on the house where he lived from 1935 to 1938 by the Viennese Catholic Academy: "His love for truth led him to the Catholic Church and to uncompromising fight against National Socialism."⁶⁵¹ Even though Hildebrand's criticism of Nazism is primarily based on philosophical arguments, he also received a deep strength and illumination from his Christian faith.⁶⁵² The background of his philosophical opposition lies in the domains of realist phenomenology and personalist philosophy.⁶⁵³ This also serves as an counterexample to some scholars who have considered phenomenology mostly as an apolitical movement and claimed that phenomenology has not developed a political philosophy.⁶⁵⁴ It is also an example of a healthy political activism of phenomenologists contrary to ill-conceived ones, such as in the example of Heidegger's temporary allegiance with National Socialism, Husserl's and Scheler's German nationalism and war boosterism in World War 1, or Sartre's Stalinism (if Sartre is to be counted among the phenomenologists).⁶⁵⁵ Phenomenology influenced both Hildebrand's personalism and his anti-Nazi stance.⁶⁵⁶

Hildebrand was not a conflicting personality, and his primary interests did not lie in the political sphere. The central aim of his political works is the defense of the dignity of human person inside the human communities.⁶⁵⁷ But he clearly saw the signs of times and considered his personal mission to respond to the danger of National Socialism. This made him say that he has not come to politics, but politics came to him.⁶⁵⁸ He did not intentionally look for political conflict, but the conflict with National Socialism was inevitable. His opposition to National

⁶⁵¹ Ernst Wenisch, 'Der Kampf gegen den Totalitarismus: Das Zeugnis Dietrich von Hildebrands 1933 - 1938', *Aletheia: An International Yearbook of Philosophy* V (1992): 346.

⁶⁵² Cf. Crosby and Crosby, 'A Fateful Decision', 3; Josef Seifert, 'Vorwort', in *Dietrich von Hildebrands Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), 9.

⁶⁵³ Seifert, 'Vorwort', 9.

⁶⁵⁴ See, for example: Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 203–4.

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. Michael Gubser, 'Phenomenology Contra Nazism: Dietrich von Hildebrand and Aurel Kolnai', *Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica* 20, no. 1 (2019): 116.

⁶⁵⁶ Gubser, 117. Gubser here uses the term "anti-Fascism" but does not reflect well Hildebrand's positions, since he clearly distinguishes between Fascism and National Socialism, and his view of fascism is much more favourable than his view of National Socialism. Hildebrand takes a clear stance against National Socialism but his stance to fascism is much more complex, as we will try to show shortly.

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. Karla Mertens, 'Vorwort', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg*, ed. Karla Mertens (Regensburg: Verlag Josef Habbel, 1954), 17.

⁶⁵⁸ Balduin Schwarz, 'Vorwort', in *Wahrheit, Wert Und Sein, Festgabe für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag* (Regensburg: Verlag Josef Habbel, 1970), 9.

Socialism and Bolshevism takes a dominant place in his work in 1930's and remains a theme of his reflections until the end of his political career.⁶⁵⁹

Hildebrand's political writings were mainly written in the journal *Der Christliche Ständestaat* during his Vienna years. Nevertheless, Hildebrand's political project began already before his Vienna years in which he published papers against Nazism. Already in 1930, he published the book *Metaphysics of Community* in which he focuses mainly on the essential analysis and avoids going into the practical discussions of his time, but the book still represents a clear and unmistakable statement against the Nazi ideology.⁶⁶⁰ Hildebrand's political analyses predominantly criticize National Socialism and to a lesser extent, even though no less sharply, Communism.⁶⁶¹ Thirdly, he also criticizes liberalism both as a predecessor of the totalitarian regimes, as well as an erroneous theory in itself.

From the arguments he attacks and the political and social phenomena he analyses, we can see that Hildebrand's political writings are both strongly contextual (i.e. tied to the historical and cultural context he is writing in) but also imbued with universal and transtemporal insights. For example, he will criticize tendencies which were dominant at the time, like quietism, trying to build bridges with Nazism, falling into false oppositions or trying to overcome evil with a mere reactionary attitude. At the same time, he will offer insights which are in many respect useful for today's political debates. Thus, to understand Hildebrand's political work, one needs both to understand the context of his writing, as well as grasp that which is universal and essential in his analyses.

When commenting on dominant attitudes of the time, Hildebrand strongly rejects the idea expressed by Goebbels that today exist only two real fronts: the Bolshevist front and the anti-Bolshevist front led by National Socialism.⁶⁶² This kind of simplified thinking led the National Socialists to label *Der Christliche Ständestaat* on several occasions as "Marxist".⁶⁶³ Regardless of the labels, Hildebrand and his collaborators remarked that rejecting Bolshevism in no way

⁶⁵⁹ For example, murders committed by National Socialism and Bolshevism were used as an example in his posthumously published work *Moralia*. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Moralia: Nachgelassenes Werk, Gesammelte Werke*, IX. (Regensburg: Verlag Josef Habel, 1980), 38.

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. Salice, 'Communities and Values. Dietrich von Hildebrand's Social Ontology', 239.

⁶⁶¹ Critique of Nazism and Bolshevism in *Der Christliche Ständestaat* takes such a dominant place in Hildebrand's essays that he does not hold back from criticizing them even in the texts which were written on the occasion of Christmas and Eastern. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Weihnachten 1934', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 55 (23 December 1934): 3-4; Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Ostern 1935', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 16 (21 April 1935): 371-72.

⁶⁶² Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 39 (27 September 1936): 923.

⁶⁶³ Cf. Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 226.

requires supporting Nazism, since different falsities are not true antitheses, only truth is a true antithesis to all falsities. Hildebrand insists that there is only one true front in history - for and against Christ. In political realm of his day, this meant that true front is between totalitarian regimes of Nazism and Bolshevism on the one hand, and the Christian West on the other.⁶⁶⁴ The second group may also include those who do not consider themselves as Christians in the religious sense of the term. The unifying features of the Christian West, as we will see later, are the reverence for truth and objective morality, giving primacy to the spiritual sphere in man, ordering human life towards the world of values and to God, etc.

Conversely, Hildebrand also opposed the call for a unified front of Catholics and Communists against Nazism.⁶⁶⁵ Although they share the same enemy, these two conceptions of the world are fundamentally opposed to each other. The danger of Bolshevism in his time could be considered even greater than that of Nazism, since the latter was open and straightforward, while the former was much better concealed.⁶⁶⁶ This remark shows that Hildebrand was aware of the more subtle dangers in the political arena. Fighting the enemy at hand – the Nazism, did not leave him blind for other political dangers. Therefore, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* remained faithful to its principles and opposed the front against National Socialism which was close to Communism and proposed the third way.⁶⁶⁷

Hildebrand stresses again and again that there can be no “building bridges” between Catholicism and National Socialism since they are essentially irreconcilable.⁶⁶⁸ This is not merely an empirical impossibility but stems from the insight in the essential structure of National Socialism. The materialistic view of man, dethronement of truth, negation of objective moral view and omnipotence of the state, are all among essential characteristics of both Nazism and Communism. Thus, Hildebrand’s position towards the “brown pest” of Nazism, as he called it, could be only complete opposition. Paraphrasing the words of Cato the Elder, he proclaimed: “*Ceterum censeo*, I propose that Carthage [i.e. Nazism] must be destroyed.”⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Falsche Fronten’, 923.

⁶⁶⁵ Cf. Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 198.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Des Heldenkanzlers große Tat’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 52 (2 December 1934): 4.

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 204.

⁶⁶⁸ See, among other places: Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 6 (January 1934): 3–6.

⁶⁶⁹ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Ceterum Censeo ...!’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 45 (14 October 1934): 5.

From a religious point of view, Hildebrand considers that National Socialism is an outright heresy.⁶⁷⁰ The explicit conflict between the two is inevitable, even though in certain times the tension could be relieved through diplomacy or other practical means. This essential necessity does not mean that human freedom does not play a role in different political developments. Nazis are indeed human beings that could in principle change their mind and change the whole movement to a good political worldview, but this change would inevitably require breaking allegiance with the essential precepts of National Socialism.⁶⁷¹ There is no evolutionary development from National Socialism to Catholicism, but only conversion and total rejection of Nazi doctrines. There can also be no hope that National Socialism will “come to reason” or do away with its radical elements.⁶⁷² Only a radical conversion of every National Socialist can be hoped for.

One of Hildebrand’s most important traits was his close contact with reality and his rootedness in truth about reality which allowed him to be free from the influence of his surroundings.⁶⁷³ This enabled him to philosophically defend the view that one should not strive under all circumstances to conform to the demands and spirit of the time.⁶⁷⁴ The decisive question is whether something is true and good in itself, and not what is popular or believed by dominant figures of the time. There is a clear distinction between the question which ideas are alive in the intersubjective consciousness of the people and strongly influence it in a certain epoch or, in other words, what is the *Zeitgeist*; and the question whether these ideas are true or false. The *Zeitgeist* can never serve as a legitimate ground for accepting certain ideas, but only the truth can serve this purpose. There is an imperative of holding to one’s true convictions even though this will often require sacrifice.⁶⁷⁵ This was not just a theoretical proclamation for Hildebrand, but he testified to it with his life. He lost the professorship in Prague due to his strong opposition to nationalism. After hearing the objections to his position, he could only respond: “It is the

⁶⁷⁰ See, among other places: Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Die Letzte Maske fällt!’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 31 (8 July 1934): 3.

⁶⁷¹ Cf. Buttiglione, ‘The Philosophy of History of Dietrich von Hildebrand’, 176–77.

⁶⁷² Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Letzte Maske fällt!’, 240.

⁶⁷³ Cf. Ernst Wenisch, ‘Einleitung’, in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1938 (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte)*, Ed. Ernst Wenisch, vol. 43, A (Mainz: Grünewald, 1994), 14.

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Geschäft und Gesinnung’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 23 (20 May 1934): 14.

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), 13.

battle which is a part of my mission – I cannot make compromises with it to secure my career.”⁶⁷⁶

What worried Hildebrand is that, despite the open evil of Nazism, many people became illusioned by it. And this is not just among the broad masses of people, but also among faithful Catholics. Among them there was a group of Catholic nationalists who supported National Socialism,⁶⁷⁷ but the illusion was present also among wider Catholic groups, including Catholic intellectual circles which were the primary audience of *Der Christliche Ständestaat*.⁶⁷⁸ According to Hildebrand, the fact that Nazism managed to impress certain Catholics reveals that the world of religion for them was something purely theoretical and academic, which does not possess centrality and importance in their thinking and feeling as it should. For persons who are truly nourished by genuine Christianity, such idols would be obsolete. As Hildebrand explains: “Enslavement to an idol always proves that the soul of the person in question is not filled with true goods. When a disvalue is elevated to the status of an idol, it demonstrates that the person remained completely untouched by true values. If, on the other hand, a genuine good is elevated to the status of an idol by overestimating its value, it demonstrates that the person had not been sufficiently filled with higher values – and, ultimately, with God.”⁶⁷⁹ In turn, Hildebrand could clearly see the disvalue of National Socialism precisely because of his deep contact with the world of values.

Der Christliche Ständestaat distinguished between two groups of Catholics led astray by National Socialism: those who under the pressure of circumstances considered purely exterior closer alignment between Catholicism and National Socialism and the true enthusiasts who aimed to build an essential synthesis between the two.⁶⁸⁰ The latter group wanted to build ideological and theoretical bridges between two worldviews, so the journal pointed most severe criticisms towards them. In this regard, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* entered the strong polemic against the Catholic journal *Schönere Zukunft* which expressed that some Christian postulates are aligned to the goals of National Socialism, such as the fight against the Treaty of Versailles.

⁶⁷⁶ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Memoiren’, in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1938 (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte)*, Ed. Ernst Wenich, vol. 43, A (Mainz: Grünewald, 1994), 14.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 5.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. Ebneith, 19:26.

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Die Scheidung der Geister’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 25 (27 May 1934): 3.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 97.

It also recognized that racial politics of National Socialism is irreconcilable with Christian teachings, but *Der Christliche Ständestaat* objected that it is wrong to put in the forefront the good things of National Socialism, instead of the clear critique and outright rejection of the evil regime.⁶⁸¹ For the similar reasons, Hildebrand was disappointed by the pastoral letter from bishops gathered in Fulda which expressed its stance towards the regime, firstly by affirming its different characteristics which are in line with the Catholic teaching and only later by rejecting falsities and evils.

There was also a danger of getting used to evil and accepting it as normal. Hildebrand explains that getting used to evil in general, and to National Socialism in particular, stems from habit or certain adaptability of the person which makes its life more bearable, but it also may diminish or even destroy spiritual wakefulness and alertness of the person.⁶⁸² However, one should never give way to habit and get accustomed to values or disvalues. There is a widespread danger of getting used to immorality of state's conduct when the state gradually goes deeper in immorality in its laws, official statements, and daily affairs. Then, there is a great risk that people will become morally accustomed to it, their initial indignation will subside, and they will lower their ethical judgement.⁶⁸³ Precisely this is what happened with National Socialism, according to Hildebrand. Initial laws that the regime passed provoked indignation in people, but after many atrocities committed by the regime, people stopped being sensitive to them. Thus, Hildebrand insists, one should be on constant guard not to fall into this moral blindness.⁶⁸⁴

There are two other dangerous stances towards National Socialism which Hildebrand criticizes. The first is the stance that each of the different and opposing opinions must contain a part of truth and that siding with one of the positions must mean a "partisan" partiality.⁶⁸⁵ Hildebrand disagrees and insists that a certain position can be essentially false, while another might be essentially correct. This does not exclude the possibility of some accidental truths in the erroneous position or truths which become distorted in the overall system.⁶⁸⁶ All goods in

⁶⁸¹ Cf. Ebneith, 103.

⁶⁸² Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die Gefahr der sittlichen Abstumpfung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 45 (10 November 1935): 1071.

⁶⁸³ Cf. Hildebrand, 1071.

⁶⁸⁴ Hildebrand, 1072.

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Wahre und falsche Objektivität, eine Pfingstbetrachtung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 23 (9 June 1935): 540.

⁶⁸⁶ For example, this could be observed in the opposition between Arianism and Catholicism in the early centuries of Christianity, where truth essentially lied in Catholicism. Cf. Hildebrand, 539.

regimes like Nazism are accidental, while their essence is corrupt.⁶⁸⁷ The essentially evil regimes distort all and any goods which they recognize.⁶⁸⁸

Another dangerous stance, especially typical for the German mentality, is the thought that in each historical occurrence there must be some signs of God at work which possess a hidden value.⁶⁸⁹ Here Hildebrand also insists that we must distinguish between occurrences which happen through the power of the human will and those which do not. As for the latter, i.e. the events which happen through “force majeure” (e.g. when a great personality dies) we are entitled to say “let it be Thy will” and try to find the hidden meaning of these events. But when it is the matter of events which happen through the human will, our stance must be completely different, especially if it is a question of movements radically opposed to truth, morality, and God. Of course, God can also speak through such movements, but his call can only be to fight such movements without reserve and to defend the good wherever we can. The voice of God in temporal occurrences which clearly contradict the will of God can only be the call to fight and oppose such occurrences.⁶⁹⁰ The fact that something occurred and reigns in certain epoch is in no way a sign that God wills it. So, the claim that Bolshevism and National Socialism are reigning in some countries and so they must be the will of God and contain something valuable in themselves is completely false. Their content clearly shows the character which is contrary to God’s will.

Despite his strong criticism and opposition, Hildebrand does not fall in a mere reactionary attitude. In his own words, “reaction is not overcoming”.⁶⁹¹ A pure negation is not a step forward.⁶⁹² At the same time, he does not claim that the truth is a mere middle between the extremes. The middle is often far from being golden. Truth is rather above and beyond the extremes.⁶⁹³ He aims to truly overcome the errors he opposes by seeing the value of being as well as the hierarchy of the world of values. He insists that it is not just enough to be able to see a certain value, but also to understand its place in the hierarchy of values. For it might be

⁶⁸⁷ Hildebrand insists that for an objective judgement of political ideas it is necessary to distinguish their essential and non-essential (or accidental) traits and to defend essential truths, as well as rejecting essential errors. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Wahre und falsche Objektivität, eine Pfingstbetrachtung’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 23 (9 June 1935): 539.

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Die seelische Haltung des Radikalismus’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 1 (December 1933): 14.

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Wahre und falsche Objektivität, eine Pfingstbetrachtung’, 540.

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 540.

⁶⁹¹ Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Vom Ursprünglichen, vom Eigentlichen und vom Wahren’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 55 (23 December 1934): 8.

⁶⁹² Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Die seelische Haltung des Radikalismus’, 14.

⁶⁹³ Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard*, 17.

argued that even Nazi ideology sees some values, like the value of vitality, but it completely distorts them by elevating them above other values (like the spiritual ones) which are of a higher rank.

Hildebrand argues that the times in which he writes his political essays do not leave any room “liberal harmlessness, for just comfortably carrying on, for vacillation between good and evil, for a ‘classroom idealism’ backed by no genuine commitment.”⁶⁹⁴ Everyone is put to the test and in this situation the only true response can be strong and committed defense of truth. Now, rejecting Nazism should not lead to the disinterested academic rejection. The correct response must be deep indignation. The first is based on the false liberal understanding of objectivity where objectivity is identified with neutrality. This stance considers that a person needs to “stand above” every fight, struggle, and opposition if it wants to be objective. It has foundations in relativism and subjectivism.⁶⁹⁵ But, this is a false notion of objectivity. Values and disvalues demand a specific positive or negative response, not cold neutrality. Neutrality is a correct stance towards beings not endowed with value or disvalue. Neutral attitude towards beings endowed with value represents un-factual and un-objective stance. As Hildebrand says: “The criterion of objectivity is not the lack of emotional response, it is not an ethos of intellectualistic neutrality, but a correct relation between the value and meaning of an object, and the content of the response to this object.”⁶⁹⁶ Therefore, the neutral and disinterested objectivity is an incorrect and un-objective stance towards criminal and evil regimes such as National Socialism and Bolshevism. The correct response can only be indignation and a clear rejection.

Another great danger Hildebrand warns about in this context is the danger of quietism, which was widespread also among Catholics of his time. This quietism calls for depoliticization of Catholicism and withdrawal in the purely religious sphere.⁶⁹⁷ This view claims that instead of being active in the realm of politics, Catholics should deal with purely religious matters. This view stems from too strong separation between the supernatural realm and the natural, worldly realm of politics, in which the worldly realm is considered as unimportant from the supernatural point of view.⁶⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Hildebrand argues to the contrary. It is wrong to consider that

⁶⁹⁴ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Die Scheidung der Geister’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 25 (27 May 1934): 3; translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby, in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 300.

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Wahre und falsche Objektivität, Eine Pfingstbetrachtung’, 539.

⁶⁹⁶ Hildebrand, ‘Eritis sicut Deus’, 4.

⁶⁹⁷ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Quietistische Gefahr’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 10 (10 March 1935): 227.

⁶⁹⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Noch einmal: Katholizismus und Politik’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 46 (17 November 1935): 1095.

the political realm does not have anything to do with the supernatural, since all sphere of life are subordinate to the religious sphere.⁶⁹⁹ Every Christian is called to “consecrate” the Earth and leave the mark of the Kingdom of God on Earth. This Kingdom is not merely a matter of one’s inner life, but as much it is a matter of public and professional life of an individual.⁷⁰⁰ Instead of politicizing Catholicism, we are called to Catholicize politics. In times when the regime expressly advances totalitarian claims and constantly oversteps the objective moral law, shunning away from the political sphere represents a desertion of duty.⁷⁰¹

While some Austrian Catholics remained limited to religious sphere and shrank from political debate, others took an optimistic stance towards National Socialism. Both stances are erroneous. The latter does not recognize the essence of National Socialism and the former ends in pessimist resignation and desertion of God-given mission. For Hildebrand, both optimism and pessimism are not authentic Catholic stances towards reality, since they are not based on objective givenness and truth about reality.⁷⁰² A Catholic believes both in the original sin and salvation through grace, so his true stance can and should be only supernatural virtue of hope. Hope allows us both to see the viciousness of totalitarian regimes and be confident in the ultimate victory of the good.

Hildebrand’s political critiques of Nazism and Communism cannot be understood without an equally strong opposition to liberalism. A sort of “mission statement” published in the first issue of *Der Christliche Ständestaat* expresses its opposition to “false conceptions” of economic and racial materialism and omnipotence of the State, but also against liberal individualism.⁷⁰³ Precisely in disaffection with liberalism Hildebrand sees the roots of affection with Nazism and Communism. This disaffection is manifested in several ways. First, the subjectivism and relativism of the past few centuries have prompted a yearning for the realm of the objective: a longing for objective being and for the realm of objective values. Second, there is a growing aversion to the dominance of the mechanical and external, and accompanying yearning for the organic and meaningful. Finally, liberal individualism left the man “hungry” for genuine organic community, instead of artificial and arbitrary social

⁶⁹⁹ Hildebrand, 1096.

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 1095.

⁷⁰¹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Quietistische Gefahr’, 227.

⁷⁰² Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Optimistischer und pessimistischer Illusionismus’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 23 (7 June 1936): 535–37.

⁷⁰³ Cf. Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 18.

structures.⁷⁰⁴ Hildebrand also sees the desire for the authoritarian state as a consequence of excessive parliamentarism which left the people yearning for a true authority, including that of the state.⁷⁰⁵

Hildebrand does not criticize liberalism merely as a root of National Socialism and Bolshevism but also as an erroneous theory in itself.⁷⁰⁶ Even though evil of National Socialism is much more gruesome, in his opinion liberalism is also an erroneous political worldview. Its chief error is individualistic conception of the human person, discrediting the spiritual nature of the person and separating it from the world of supernatural and from God. Liberalism therefore naturally led to gradual negation of the value of the human person. Hildebrand argued that the lucky circumstance was that liberalism was inconsequential in its practical application – it did not carry out all its first principles to the full implementation.⁷⁰⁷ In fact, it was Bolshevism and National Socialism that carried out the final consequences of liberal anti-personalism.⁷⁰⁸ National Socialism, Liberalism and Bolshevism share the same materialistic conception of the world in which the human person is deprived of its dignity, spirituality, and connection to God.

Certain clarifications need to be made in this place. When Hildebrand criticizes liberalism, he has in mind a certain atheistic and materialistic worldview, and not a certain political system. His critique does not go so far as to negate all positive elements which could be found in liberalism, such as the respect universal human rights, rule of law, equality of citizens in practicing their freedom, observing tolerance, which belonged to legally protected goods and which got destroyed by totalitarian systems.⁷⁰⁹ Also, his critique is not primarily directed towards a particular form of government or structuring of political institutions, but towards a worldview which negates the spiritual dimension of human person, rejects the notion of truth, separates man from God, etc. In this regard, Hildebrand's understanding of liberalism needs to be made more precise. It would be a sweeping generalization to say that all liberals are relativists or materialists.⁷¹⁰ Hildebrand never engages in a direct dispute with liberal thinkers,

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Der Kampf um die Person', 3.

⁷⁰⁵ Hildebrand, 'Autorität und Führertum', 6.

⁷⁰⁶ See, among other places: Hildebrand, 'Österreichs Sendung', 3.

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die Weltkrise und die menschliche Person', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1955), 245.

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katholischen Weltanschauung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 41 (11 October 1936): 972.

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. Wenisch, 'Einleitung', 23.

⁷¹⁰ For example, it would be erroneous to call Isaiah Berlin a relativists. Even though his approach to truth and value differ in some important respects from Hildebrand's, they do not represent a straightforward relativism. Cf. Jason Ferrell, 'The Alleged Relativism of Isaiah Berlin', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 11, no. 1 (1 March 2008): 41–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230701880497>.

nor does he specify which strand of liberalism he attacks. However, it is clear from his writings that what he attacks is the so called “Liberal epoch” which started after the Renaissance and which is characterized by relativism, materialism, negation of free will, atheism, etc. As a description of a general tendency which was widespread in some philosophical and political theories, this characterization is useful. But it is not applicable for analyzing all forms of liberal thought, especially the one aimed not at fundamental philosophical analysis but to a more practical analysis of how to structure the political institutions.

The extent to which a critique of a certain ideology takes place in Hildebrand’s political writings is directly correlated to the political situation in which he writes. After fleeing Germany and arriving to Austria with the imminent Nazi danger hovering in the air, his writings predominantly focus on attacking Nazism. Less often, but no less sharply, he also criticizes Communism. Even though he believed that Communism is equally flawed ideology as National Socialism, the threat of Nazism was more strongly felt by him and so his critique is more focused on Nazism. Finally, Hildebrand also criticizes the ideology of liberalism. He believes it to be fundamentally erroneous doctrine but devotes least of his writings to criticize it.

We can also observe that quality of Hildebrand’s critique is correlated with the depth in which he analyses certain ideology. When analyzing National Socialism, Hildebrand is much more detailed, often citing speeches of the Nazi leaders or the NSDAP Party Program. Here, he is much more on point in recognizing the fundamental precepts of the Nazi ideology. Hildebrand’s critique of Communism is, on the other hand, less thorough. He rarely, if ever, analyses the Communist writings and criticizes Communism in much more general terms. We can say that his analysis addresses the root ideas of Communism but would at the same time benefit from a more detailed argumentation. Finally, Hildebrand’s analysis of liberalism is least thorough and, as we said earlier, is only applicable in we understand liberalism as an atheistic and materialistic worldview. This obviously does not reflect liberalism in all its contemporary forms, but it can be used as a starting point for analyzing some modern liberal doctrines. Having this in mind, we can say that Hildebrand political analysis is helpful in many ways but that it could also benefit from further refining and deepening. This is not surprising since Hildebrand’s political writings are essayistic, and he does not create and full political philosophy of his own. For this reason, one of the purposes of this dissertation will be to further reflect on some points of Hildebrand’s political analysis and putting it into today’s context.

There is definitely a great value in Hildebrand's political work. The insight into the essential structure of National Socialism and Communism enabled Hildebrand to understand the evil of these two regimes much before the worst atrocities have happened. It is interesting to note that most famous and comprehensive critiques of totalitarian regimes, like Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,⁷¹¹ Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism*⁷¹² and *The Open Society and Its Enemies*,⁷¹³ *The Authoritarian Personality*⁷¹⁴ by Theodor Adorno and others or Erich Fromm's *The Escape from Freedom*⁷¹⁵ emerge only later in 1940s and 1950s, while Hildebrand started his philosophical critique of Nazism already in early 1920s with utmost decisiveness and prophetic intuition of the future atrocities that will happen.⁷¹⁶ This was precisely possible because of Hildebrand's non-reductionistic phenomenological approach which gave him tools to analyse both essential, and non-essential, or empirical essences, like those of National Socialism, Bolshevism and Liberalism. Obviously, the above-mentioned studies are much more thorough and systematic than Hildebrand's political writings which were delivered mainly in the form of essays. However, the brilliance of Hildebrand's political writings does not lie in its detailedness or thorough systematizations, but in his insight into that which is essential in the analysed phenomena and concise elaboration of intuited essences.

4.1. Preliminary Considerations: Clarifying Hildebrand's Stance Towards Authoritarianism and Fascism

While rejecting Nazism, Communism and liberalism, Hildebrand supported the authoritarian corporate state and was a great admirer of the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. Also, his position towards fascism was somewhat dubious. For both reasons, the legacy of his political struggle is still not unequivocally accepted among contemporary thinkers. Therefore, it is worthwhile to shed light on Hildebrand's stance towards authoritarianism and fascism before going deeper into his philosophical critique of Nazism and Communism. This will enable us to see more clearly what Hildebrand's political allegiances were, what were merely contingent factors determining his political analyses, and what is genuinely valuable and essential in his work.

⁷¹¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1973).

⁷¹² Karl R. Popper, 'The Poverty of Historicism, I.', *Economica* 11, no. 42 (May 1944): 86–103.

⁷¹³ Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945).

⁷¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950).

⁷¹⁵ Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Discus/ Avon books, 1965).

⁷¹⁶ Cf. Seifert, 'Vorwort', 16.

One of the reasons why Hildebrand criticizes National Socialism, Bolshevism and liberalism is the false anthropology which negates the spiritual sphere of the person, separates it from God and the world of values. On the other hand, Hildebrand admired Dollfuss because Dollfuss saw the individual man as a spiritual person made in God's image and endowed with immortal soul, a substance which is immeasurably superior to any natural community.⁷¹⁷ He did not believe in the omnipotence of the state but accepted that state's competences are limited. More than anything, Hildebrand admired Dollfuss's motto "instaurare omnia in Cristo" and his wish to build Austria on Christian principles.⁷¹⁸ He wrote numerous praises of his personality and political stances.

Despite admiring Dollfuss, Hildebrand was not a strong defender of the corporate idea.⁷¹⁹ The main purpose of *Der Christliche Ständestaat* was to criticize Nazism and not so much to defend the corporate regime. Only after a long discussion with a Catholic publicist and journalist Friedrich Funder he accepted the title of the journal to be *The Christian Corporate State*. Hildebrand's closest collaborator Klaus Dohrn had further disagreements with the name since he thought that the Christian corporate state was identified by some with an authoritarian and fascist regime, from which they wanted to distance themselves.⁷²⁰

Even after naming the journal, both Hildebrand and Dohrn considered fight against Nazism and not promoting the idea of the corporate state to be the main purpose of the journal.⁷²¹ In one editorial in 1934, they also clearly expressed that *Der Christliche Ständestaat* has no tendency of being an official journal of the regime.⁷²² Hildebrand insisted on building the state on Catholic foundations but also recognized that this can be done through different systems of government, corporate state being one of them. There is also not one single form of the State based on *Quadragesimo Anno* encyclical, on which Dollfuss's regime based its constitution.⁷²³ For them, corporatism was more a social than political issue in which they saw the means for overcoming the class struggle; and these social foundations can reside in different forms of states, since the encyclical did not provide uniform outline for building one form of the state.⁷²⁴

⁷¹⁷ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Das Erbe von Dollfuß', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 30 (28 July 1935): 708.

⁷¹⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Instaurare Omnia in Christo', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 17 (1 April 1934): 3–5.

⁷¹⁹ Cf. Wenisch, 'Einleitung', 26.

⁷²⁰ Cf. Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 14.

⁷²¹ Cf. Ebneith, 20.

⁷²² Cf. Ebneith, 105.

⁷²³ Cf. Ebneith, 150.

⁷²⁴ Ebneith, 158–59.

They also considered corporatism useful for winning over the workers and the socialist majority to the Dollfuss' Christian regime.⁷²⁵

Hildebrand and his collaborators were at the same time in agreement that they are ready to defend the principal foundations of Dollfuss regime, but not its every practical move.⁷²⁶ What Hildebrand himself explicitly supported was building the state on Catholic foundations, and not doing it in a corporatist way. *Der Christliche Ständestaat* was primarily focused on the level of the spirit and spiritual clarification of different ideological movements and worldviews, and only secondarily – and in connection to the first – to daily politics.⁷²⁷ It can also be noted that analyses and commentaries on political actualities came in much bigger quantity from Klaus Dohrn, than from Hildebrand himself.⁷²⁸ When Dollfuss violently suppressed the workers strike in 1934, Hildebrand defended the reasons behind it but still regretted the disproportionate use of force by the regime. Hildebrand admired Dollfuss and defended the principled foundations of his regime but did not dogmatically support its every practical move. Hildebrand's fight was on the level of first principles, not daily politics.

What might seem confusing is Hildebrand's fierce criticism of totalitarianism and simultaneous support for Dollfuss' authoritarian regime. For this reason, it is helpful to clarify matters as Hildebrand understands them. Firstly, he insists that authoritarianism is not the same as totalitarianism. Totalitarianism is in principle an illegitimate political form since it oversteps the boundaries of the state authority and penetrates all spheres of life of its citizens, including their private life and intimate sphere, and demands from citizens the full allegiance of conscience in all matters. In totalitarianism the idea of truth is abolished and its place is taken by the idea of power.⁷²⁹ It also oversteps the boundaries of objective moral law and it is therefore an illegitimate form of government.⁷³⁰ On the other hand, authoritarian government remains in the political sphere, does not penetrate in the private sphere of its citizens and does not necessarily overstep the boundaries of the state.⁷³¹ It is therefore among the legitimate forms of government and it is a matter of the country's interior politics if it wants to establish an

⁷²⁵ In autumn 1933, Hildebrand and Dohrn even considered collaboration with the Socialists in the fight against National Socialism. Later course of events, including the prohibition of the Socialist Democratic Party, made this collaboration impossible for them. Cf. Ebneith, 10.

⁷²⁶ Cf. Ebneith, 19.

⁷²⁷ Cf. Ebneith, 29.

⁷²⁸ Wenisch, 'Der Kampf gegen den Totalitarismus: das Zeugnis Dietrich von Hildebrands 1933 - 1938', 341.

⁷²⁹ Buttiglione, 'The Philosophy of History of Dietrich von Hildebrand', 180.

⁷³⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Autorität und Führertum'.

⁷³¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Österreichs Sendung'; Hildebrand, 'Autorität und Führertum'; Buttiglione, 'The Philosophy of History of Dietrich von Hildebrand', 180.

authoritarian regime, if only for a certain period. According to Hildebrand, it is a matter of internal policy of the state to decide which form of government it will choose - monarchy, republic, parliamentary democracy, authoritarianism or even dictatorship; and in this question other states do not have the right to interfere.⁷³² On the other hand, totalitarian state oversteps the legitimate authority of the state and does not accept the boundaries of natural law, and therefore is not among the morally legitimate choices.

While the totalitarian constitution always bears a great morally relevant disvalue, with the authoritative constitution this is not necessarily the case. Hildebrand believes that authoritarianism might be necessary and willed by God for a limited time.⁷³³ The fact that an individual or a party governs dictatorially does not diminish its authority in comparison to the authority which is elected by the majority. On the other hand, the illegitimate authority is not just the one which negates being the representativeness of God, but also the authority legitimate in itself, but which oversteps its objective sphere of competences.⁷³⁴ Two great errors of the human history are, on the one hand, rejecting the true authority, and on the other, the idolization of the legitimate authority. These two positions are incorporated in the anarchy and deification of the State, and both equally lead to chaos. In Hildebrand's view, both an overt secularization and an overt sacralization of the State are erroneous.

Hildebrand's legitimation of authoritarianism and his vehement support for Dollfuss was not well received by all his collaborators in *Der Christliche Ständestaat*. One of such critics was Aurel Kolnai, a Jewish phenomenologist, who admired Hildebrand as a philosopher and shared his positions against National Socialism, but at the same time expressed disgust with his support of Dollfuss' regime. Nothing expresses this revulsion better than Kolnai's own words: "What a shame he [Hildebrand, op.] is a toady of Austrofascism. (...) There is no philosophical thinker whose thought I am so close to (I've known that for years!) – and yet I shudder to shake hands with him when I think of his vomit-making Regime-salon Thursday evenings and his apotheosis of Dollfuss."⁷³⁵ The claim that Austrian corporate state ended up in fascism was common among the critics of the time⁷³⁶, so Kolnai's position was not at all an isolated case.

⁷³² Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Souveränität des States und erlaubte Einmischung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 12 (22 March 1936): 271.

⁷³³ Hildebrand, 'Autorität und Führertum II', 7.

⁷³⁴ Hildebrand, 8.

⁷³⁵ Quoted in Gubser, 'Phenomenology Contra Nazism: Dietrich von Hildebrand and Aurel Kolnai', 123.

⁷³⁶ Cf. Ebner, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 164.

Hildebrand himself distinguished corporate-authoritarian and fascist constitution as two distinct forms of constitutional arrangement.⁷³⁷ He describes the main camps that existed in Europe after 1933: liberalism, fascism, and Bolshevism. In this constellation, National Socialism is not considered to be its own government form, but a bastard of fascism and Bolshevism. Among these alternatives, some Catholic politicians following the “spirit of the times” believed that they should either accept some form of fascism veiled by Catholicism or a form of Catholic parliamentarism. Hildebrand praises Dollfuss for rejecting both alternatives and choosing “something completely new”.⁷³⁸ Thus, in his view, Dollfuss’ Christian corporate state was something new and distinct compared to Fascist Italy.⁷³⁹ Despite having similarities, two regimes differed fundamentally.

Hildebrand believed that Dollfuss was not a fascist but a “Catholic statesman who, in a decisive moment in the history of the nation, was compelled to make use of extraordinary means to defend the very essential reason of existence of his country.”⁷⁴⁰ Hildebrand knew that Dollfuss was brought up as democrat, but believed him to be free from errors of democratic ideology which, among other things, rejected grounding authority in God.⁷⁴¹ He believed that Dollfuss (who was also a self-proclaimed democrat), was pressured by circumstances to establish an authoritarian government in Austria in 1934.⁷⁴² Dollfuss took authoritarianism as a necessary cross which he understood as a matter of necessity in the face of the imminent Nazi danger.⁷⁴³ It can be said that Dollfuss restricted political freedoms in order to defend civil freedom of its citizens.⁷⁴⁴

Still, the conception of *Der Christliche Ständestaat* was that the authoritarian regime should only be a transitory stage.⁷⁴⁵ This was also the idea of Dollfuss who counted that the authoritarian rule could last two to three years after which the Nazi danger for Austria would

⁷³⁷ He also did not reduce National Socialism to Fascism, or vice versa. Cf. Hildebrand, *Engelbert Dollfuß*, 47.

⁷³⁸ Hildebrand, 59.

⁷³⁹ This position is not extravagant or isolated to circles around Hildebrand. For example, among contemporary authors, Kevin Passmore argues that corporatism is not intrinsically fascist but “at its simplest it means that decisions about policy are taken by organized bodies representing the interests concerned – trade unions, employers’ organizations, groups representing families or farmers, and so on – rather than by the government or parliament.” Cf. Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*, 141.

⁷⁴⁰ Buttiglione, ‘The Philosophy of History of Dietrich von Hildebrand’, 180.

⁷⁴¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *Engelbert Dollfuß*, 47.

⁷⁴² Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Des Heldenkanzlers große Tat’, 5.

⁷⁴³ Hildebrand, 5.

⁷⁴⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Autorität und Führertum’; Hildebrand, ‘Autorität und Führertum II’.

⁷⁴⁵ Cf. Ebner, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 164.

pass.⁷⁴⁶ Even though the regime was authoritarian, the 1934 Constitution never mentioned authoritarianism as its forming principle, even though it mentioned other principles, such as the Christian, the German, the federalist, and the corporative.⁷⁴⁷ The restoration of the true authority in service of truth and objective hierarchy of values, as well the restoration of Austrian Christian identity against irrationality and relativism of National Socialism in Hildebrand's eyes gave Dollfuss's regime legitimacy.

One year after the cancellation of parliament in Austria and establishment of an authoritarian government, Hildebrand observed that several improvements have happened, including economic growth, creating a Christian constitution, strong opposition to National Socialism and Bolshevism, awakening the Austrian spirit, etc.⁷⁴⁸ According to Hildebrand, these improvements came also from the advantages which authoritarian regimes display over parliamentarism, such as that one person can more effectively lead when not disturbed by perturbations of parliamentary parties and when he or she is not dependent on the whims of majority, as well as on principled and tactical compromises characteristic of those dependent on the will of the parliament (if they have the dominant majority in the Parliament, then they depend on whims of their party).⁷⁴⁹ On the one hand, this argument should not surprise us if we take into the account the situation with parliamentarism in the late 1920's and early 1930's, which was dominated by parties who put their own interests above the common good, and were at the same time incapable of forming a lasting government, etc.

On the other hand, Hildebrand's attribution of the positive improvements to the success of the regime can certainly be challenged. For example, the big question is whether the economic growth can be attributed to the regime or is it the result of the global economic upturn which came after the Great Depression. Some authors criticize the efficiency of Dollfuss' economic reforms and attribute much of the positive gains to other causes.⁷⁵⁰ One of the dominant reasons can also be the upturn in the global economy after 1933 which made itself felt also in Austria, and which was not so much connected to the policies of the government.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁶ Wenisch, 'Der Kampf gegen den Totalitarismus: das Zeugnis Dietrich von Hildebrands 1933 - 1938', 338.

⁷⁴⁷ Cf. Eric Voegelin, *The Authoritarian State: An Essay on the Problem of the Austrian State*, ed. Gilbert Weiss, trans. Ruth Hein, vol. 4, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 252.

⁷⁴⁸ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Blick in die Zeit: zum Jahrestag des autoritären Regimes in Österreich', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 16 (March 1934): 18–19.

⁷⁴⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 18.

⁷⁵⁰ Cf. Senft, 'Economic Development and Economic Policies in the Ständestaat Era', 35.

⁷⁵¹ Cf. Senft, 36.

Nonetheless, these observations in favor of authoritarianism are merely of a practical, and not principled relevance. Hildebrand does recognize that the legitimacy and success of the authoritarian regime will depend on who is the authoritarian leader. Countries find many blessings if they have a leader like Dollfuss, but the opposite can also be the case, as it is seen from the example of Germany.⁷⁵² Therefore, the essential difference between legitimate and illegitimate authoritarian government lies in the question whether the leader serves power and his own autonomy or truth and the world of values.

Hildebrand had a strong sense of the Austrian tradition and its Western and Catholic character which led him to a closer support of Monarchism, especially after the Schuschnigg's regime started building closer connections to the Third Reich.⁷⁵³ He wrote praises for the whole Habsburg family, which he considered as key defenders and promoters of the Austrian Catholic identity, the spirit of the West and the mission of peace.⁷⁵⁴ For Hildebrand, restoration of the Habsburg Monarchy was in no way connected to imperialism which he opposed in principle. He equally believed that the Monarchy in the future could encompass only Austria and that the mission of the Habsburg Monarchy was essentially the mission of peace.

Hildebrand's position could be more accurately described as legitimism than monarchism. Essentially, legitimism insists on the legal continuity of the state authority and rejects revolutions and changing the authority by force.⁷⁵⁵ Legitimism can be in favor of different forms of government in different states. For example, in the states which were republican from the beginning, like Switzerland or the USA, a legitimist will be a republican, but in old monarchies like Spain, Portugal or Austria, legitimists would support the monarchy. Still, Hildebrand insists that in Austria the support for the Monarchy is much more than supporting a certain form of government. It is much more supporting a certain worldview, and cultural and political program.⁷⁵⁶ Hildebrand was more concerned with the questions of worldview, than the practical questions of how to structure the government. So, his positive support for certain forms of government is never so strong as his claims in the realm of essential analysis. He

⁷⁵² Cf. Hildebrand, 'Blick in die Zeit: zum Jahrestag des autoritären Regimes in Österreich', 18.

⁷⁵³ Cf. Wenisch, 'Einleitung', 31.

⁷⁵⁴ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Habsburg und die österreichische Sendung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 47 (22 November 1936): 1114–15; Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Kaiser Karl', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 14 (5 April 1936): 319–20; Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Kaiserin Zita', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 19 (10 May 1936): 439–40.

⁷⁵⁵ Hildebrand, 1114.

⁷⁵⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 1114.

understands that government is also a prudential domain, which does not allow for the equal level of certainty as the domain of apriori.

Finally, let us mention Hildebrand's position towards fascism. It looks surprising when Hildebrand in September 1936 writes that fascism, "despite certain concessions to state omnipotence" is on the opposite side of Nazism and Communism, namely the one which is fundamentally aligned to the culture of the Christian West.⁷⁵⁷ In his opinion, this is because fascism does not negate the reverence for truth, and it is committed to the idea of objective law, primacy of the spirit and protection of human rights inside of its totalitarian idea of the state. All these claims can and should be challenged. However, Hildebrand says that differences Austrian corporate state, Italian Fascist state and English democracy are much smaller than the differences of these regimes on one hand, and Nazism and Bolshevism on the other.⁷⁵⁸ Since we know that Hildebrand was principally opposed to the "democratic worldview", we can understand that he speaks more about the practical forms in which English, Italian and Austrian states are formed. Despite having important differences, they are not at all close to the difference they have with National Socialism and Bolshevism.

Hildebrand was not blind to the essential precepts of fascism. He did recognize the differences between Dollfuss' corporate state and Mussolini's Fascist state, despite sharing some common traits like the break with the liberal ideology and parliamentary-democratic form of government.⁷⁵⁹ For example, he indicated that fascism referred to the tradition of pre-Christian Rome and Dollfuss wanted to revive the Christian Middle Ages. Although Mussolini with time and out of political considerations wanted to bring fascism closer to Christianity, for Dollfuss Christianity was a genuine beginning and an end. Moreover, fascism starts from the intellectual roots of German idealism (mainly in the thought of Giovanni Gentile) and a certain omnipotence of the state, although of a different and less radical form than the one displayed by the Third Reich and the Soviet Russia. On the other hand, the Christian corporate state accepts the pre-given limitations on its sphere of competence and respects the individual person, as well as the other communities, Church, marriage, and the family.

Still, Hildebrand considered Mussolini to be a "partner and a friend" of both Dollfuss and of Austria.⁷⁶⁰ He also believed that partnership with Italy was needed for spreading the Austrian

⁷⁵⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', 925.

⁷⁵⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 925.

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Engelbert Dollfuß: ein katholischer Staatsmann*. (Salzburg: Pustet, 1934), 60.

⁷⁶⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 113.

mission.⁷⁶¹ His lenient attitude towards fascism can largely be attributed to historical and real-political factors. Fascist Italy was supporting Dollfuss' Austria in its independence and against Hitler's expansionism. Before 1937, it was probably among the key factors which prevented Hitler from entering Austria by force. The lack of widespread clear condemnation of fascism was also a historical fact at that time. Fascist Italy was a respected member of the League of Nations before 1937.⁷⁶² Many world leaders even had sympathies for Mussolini. In 1933, Winston Churchill praised Mussolini calling him a personification of the Roman genius.⁷⁶³ Only in January 1936, Mussolini switched sides and made it known that Italy will not oppose the German influence in Austria.⁷⁶⁴ This was probably the key moment which opened the way for annexation of Austria.

In this context, it could hardly be objected to Hildebrand that he did not foresee that political tides will turn and that Mussolini will side with Hitler. Even though, when writing the obituary for Dollfuss in 1934, he was aware of "Mussolini's initial sympathy for the Third Reich"⁷⁶⁵, he did not see it as a fundamental alignment of two ideologies and the basis for the future political alliance. Hildebrand's strength was never in analysing the daily politics and predicting political currents. His biggest strength was in seeing and analysing the essences, firstly apriori essences, but also empirical ones. However, precisely because this, it is surprising to see that Hildebrand was not clearer in condemning the essential evils of fascism. Fascism in fact shared several essential traits which Hildebrand condemned in Nazism and Communism.

For example, Fascism understood the individual as the means for the state and promoted the doctrine of state omnipotence. Already in 1925 Mussolini praised the "iron totalitarian will" of the Fascist movement.⁷⁶⁶ In October the same year he said: "Everything for the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State."⁷⁶⁷ In 1932, *The Doctrine of Fascism* by Mussolini was published. In it, Mussolini explains that "the Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State, which stands for the conscience and the universal, will of man as a historic

⁷⁶¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 51.

⁷⁶² Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Italien und die gegenwärtige öffentliche Meinung der Welt', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 8 (23 February 1936): 178.

⁷⁶³ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 297.

⁷⁶⁴ Kershaw, 272.

⁷⁶⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, *Engelbert Dollfuß*, 52.

⁷⁶⁶ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 291.

⁷⁶⁷ Kershaw, 292.

entity.”⁷⁶⁸ As Nazism, fascism asserts its conception of the state in contrast to liberal individualism, by reasserting “the rights of the State as expressing the real essence of the individual.” The same document states that “Fascist conception of the State is all embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism, is totalitarian, and the Fascist State — a synthesis and a unit inclusive of all values — interprets, develops, and potentates the whole life of a people. No individuals or groups (political parties, cultural associations, economic unions, social classes) outside the State.” Finally, “for Fascism the State is absolute, individuals and groups relative. Individuals and groups are admissible in so far as they come within the State.”

Later theorists inspired by Mussolini insisted that everything is encompassed by the state and that state is an organism which has life of its own.⁷⁶⁹ Mussolini’s most known intellectual Giovanni Gentile was also speaking of the “totalitarian State”. According to him, nothing outside the State did not make sense, she needed to encompass all segments and forms of society, she was the embodiment of the national will. “Totalitarian” essence of Italian Fascism was not dedicated to “exclusive political organization and political movements, but towards the entirety of will, thoughts and emotions of a nation”.⁷⁷⁰ Repression and violence were the most important elements of establishing the totalitarian state.

Totalitarian state strived to encompass all spheres of life, from cradle to the grave. Deification of the leader was important element to achieve this. “Thoughts and wishes of Duce need to become the thoughts and wishes of the masses”, said Gentile.⁷⁷¹ Building the personality cult among masses was largely successful and Mussolini was soon described as “divine”, “God on Earth”, he who knows all the answers and is the only one who can help people in desperate situations.⁷⁷²

All three Totalitarian states – the USSR, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany aimed at the “total dedication” of citizens. The paradox was that the Fascist Italy was the only one among these three which explicitly proclaimed that it is building a totalitarian state.⁷⁷³ However, Mussolini’s Italy never managed to accomplish totalitarian rule in practice, while the Third Reich and

⁷⁶⁸ Benito Mussolini, *The Doctrine of Fascism*, 1932, <https://sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/2B-HUM/Readings/The-Doctrine-of-Fascism.pdf>.

⁷⁶⁹ Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, 75.

⁷⁷⁰ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 292.

⁷⁷¹ Cited in Kershaw, 296.

⁷⁷² Cf. Kershaw, 298. Similar comparisons were used to describe Stalin for whom one NKVD member said that “he was like god to us”. Cf. Kershaw, 382.

⁷⁷³ Kershaw, 308.

Soviet Russia did. So, when Hildebrand says that fascism made “certain concessions to state omnipotence” this can only come from looking at the matters from a practical and historical perspective. In it, the totalitarian ideal is far from being achieved in Fascist Italy. On the other hand, looking at the intent and first principles of the Fascist movement, speaking of “certain concessions” is certainly misplaced. The doctrine of state omnipotence was the very root of fascism.

Furthermore, Fascist movement was relativistic and pragmatist in nature. After 20 years of its existence, Mussolini stated that fascism was not a fruit of a developed doctrine but that that it arose from the need for action; its aim was practical, and not theoretical.⁷⁷⁴ Principles were less important than the power and the might. The Party Program was used opportunistically, only when it served political purposes, otherwise it was ignored.⁷⁷⁵ Mussolini described himself as being at the same time "aristocrat and democrat, revolutionary and reactionary, proletarian and antiproletarian, pacifist and antipacifist" and believed that "everybody is free to create for himself his own ideology."⁷⁷⁶

Nothing portrays this relativism of the fascist ideology better than Mussolini's own words: “Fascism is super-relativistic movement because it has never attempted to clothe its complicated and powerful mental attitude with a definite program but has succeeded by following its ever-changing individual intuition. Everything I have said and done in these last years is relativism by intuition... If relativism signifies contempt for fixed categories and men who claim to be the bearers of an external objective truth... then there is nothing more relativistic than Fascist attitudes and activity... We Fascists have always expressed our complete indifference toward all theories... It is sufficient to have a single fixed point: the nation... From the fact that all ideologies are of equal value, that all ideologies are mere fictions, the modern relativist deduces that everybody is free to create for himself his own ideology and to attempt to carry it out with all possible energy.”⁷⁷⁷ Although Hildebrand understood that fascism is a relativistic doctrine⁷⁷⁸, somehow he was not persistent and clear in condemning fascist relativism. From this it can also be seen that attributing the reverence for truth to fascism

⁷⁷⁴ Kershaw, 144.

⁷⁷⁵ Cf. Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, 462–63.

⁷⁷⁶ Cited in: Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 168.

⁷⁷⁷ Cited in: Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, 462–63.

⁷⁷⁸ Cf. Josef Seifert, ‘Personalistische Philosophie und Widerstand gegen Hitler. Zum Kampf Dietrich von Hildebrands gegen den Nationalsozialismus, seine Ideologie und seinen rassistischen Antisemitismus’, in *Dietrich von Hildebrands Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), 113.

is not justified. Even though there undoubtedly were some proclamations and actions of Italian Fascist that could resemble a truth-seeking attitude, it is clear that fascist fundamental ideas were not such. The same can be said about the practice of the Fascist Italy, which sided with Hitler, introduced racial laws, and committed atrocities in the World War II.

The relativism and anti-personalism of the Fascist movement finally became clearly manifested in the anti-Jewish laws of 1938. The laws which were not officially requested, were nevertheless promulgated by Mussolini's regime to appease Germany. Fascism did differ from National Socialism insofar racism and antisemitism were not essential parts of their ideology. So, what is visible from the promulgation of these laws in Italy is more the relativistic nature of the Fascist regime which adopted any policy or principle which seemed politically beneficial at the time. It also shoved anti-personalism through its disregard for the dignity of the individual person and the subordination of individual persons to the opportunistic aims of the state.

Finally, contrary to Hildebrand's insistence on legitimism, Fascism was revolutionary in its precepts, and it advocated for overthrowing the existing regime. It wanted to dispense with the Senate and the Monarchy, and to establish a new Italian republic. In the 1925 *Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals* drafted by Giovanni Gentile, Fascism was described as "the faith of all Italians who rejected the past and who are yearning for renewal".⁷⁷⁹

Considering everything just said, it is clear that fascism contains several precepts which in Hildebrand's conception can only be considered essentially false. Even though practical reasons behind not-attacking Fascist Italy can be understandable, Hildebrand never considered that practical reasons should blur the essential analysis. Therefore, Hildebrand's stance towards fascism represents one of the weaker points of his political philosophy. While he could not be blamed for not predicting the turn of political events with the Fascist Italy, the lack of clear critique of the fundamental ideas of fascism is a definite weakness in his writings. This does not mean that Hildebrand fundamentally supported fascism, on the contrary. We can only say that he openly accepted the support of the Fascist Italy for Dollfuss' regime. This support dulled the blade of his philosophical critique.

It is clear that the main reason why Hildebrand does not attack more strongly fascism is that fascism was not the enemy of Austria at the time. It would be contextually misplaced to expect that *Der Christliche Ständestaat* would attack fascism, when there was no foreign-political

⁷⁷⁹ Kershaw, *Do pakla i natrag: Europa 1914.-1949.*, 473.

danger from fascist states, and no fascist party offered a significant inner-political opposition to Dollfuss' regime. Also, the places where Hildebrand offers false acclamations of fascism are mainly in the sidenotes and do not represent the significant part of his analysis. This does not make them any less wrong, but only serves to show that they should not blur the truly valuable contributions of Hildebrand's analysis. These positive contributions primarily lie in Hildebrand's analyses of National Socialism, Communism and their connections to liberalism. This will now analyze in greater detail through the key criticisms Hildebrand offers against the mentioned political ideologies.

4.2. Arguments Against National Socialism, Communism and Liberalism

4.2.1. Epistemological Arguments

As we have noted earlier, Hildebrand argues that the contemporary intellectual crisis in Europe divides people into two camps: the enemies of Christian Western culture and those who still hold on (in greatly varying degrees) to the foundations of this culture.⁷⁸⁰ One of the defining traits of the Christian West in Hildebrand's view is the stance towards the question of truth. Christian West is characterized by a profound reverence for the question of truth, as well as by a clear consciousness that the question of truth stands at the beginning of all decisions and cannot in any way be subordinated to practical considerations.⁷⁸¹

This is completely opposed to the worldview incorporated by National Socialism. This worldview is characterized by what Hildebrand calls the "dethronement of truth". By it, he neither refers to the lies of German propaganda, nor to Hitler's mentality which uses speech merely to produce a reaction in the public without any interest to express true facts. He refers "to a much more widespread mentality, in which the question of truth or falsehood has lost any interest and is replaced by other arbitrary and subjective measures."⁷⁸²

To portray this, Hildebrand mentions the address of German Minister of Culture Schemm to professors at the University of Munich in 1933, in which he shows a complete antithesis to the reverence for truth: "From now on, what matters to you is not to ascertain whether something is true, but rather whether it is in line with the National Socialist revolution."⁷⁸³ These words

⁷⁸⁰ Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', 923.

⁷⁸¹ Hildebrand, 923.

⁷⁸² Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'The Dethronement of Truth', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 18 (1 July 1942): 3, <https://doi.org/10.5840/acpapro1942185>.

⁷⁸³ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 39 (27 September 1936): 923; translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 294.

and the fact that Schemm actually became the Minister of Culture, Hildebrand considered paradigmatic for the spirit of National Socialism.⁷⁸⁴ Essentially the same thought was expressed by Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf*: “The can be no foreign-political movement guided by any other standpoint than: Is this of benefit to our people now or in the future or it might to it damage? ... Party-political, religious, human, in general all the other standpoints are completely excluded.”⁷⁸⁵ In a similar manner, the relativistic spirit of National Socialism is expressed by Hermann Göring: “I thank my Creator that I do not know what objective is...”⁷⁸⁶ And on another place: “My measures did not suffer from any kind of legal concerns or from any kind of bureaucracy. I had no justice to exercise, but to destroy and to eradicate.”⁷⁸⁷

Therefore, in National Socialism, the question of truth as such is suppressed in favor of purely subjective factor. As Hildebrand explains: “The question of the truth or falsity of a worldview which alone should be decisive for our positive or negative response to it, is deposed from its seat of judgement. This connotes a still deeper breach with any adherence to objective truth than is to be found even in radical skepticism. When the latter denies the existence of objective truth, it necessarily takes seriously the question of truth as such. Here, however, the question of truth has been trivialized. The faculty for discerning the seriousness of the question of truth has died; the interest in the elementary question ‘What is true?’ has been extinguished.”⁷⁸⁸ This is a radical break with the culture of the Christian West, whose essential trait is reverence for truth.

This break happened in three stages.⁷⁸⁹ The first was rationalistic stage which overrated the mere natural knowledge and negated the aid of the supernatural, revealed truth. The second stage was the denial of absolute knowledge of truth which happened in different forms of empiricist theories. Empiricism resulted in modern scientism and positivism, which was the third stage in which objective truth was reduced to a very narrow domain. Obviously, both positivism and scientism accept certain facts as objectively true, but the sphere of objective

⁷⁸⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Memoiren’, 45.

⁷⁸⁵ Cited in: Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Wahres Deutschtum’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 48 (1 December 1935): 1145.

⁷⁸⁶ Hildebrand, 1145.

⁷⁸⁷ Hildebrand, 1145.

⁷⁸⁸ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Falsche Fronten’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 39 (27 September 1936): 923; translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 295; see also: Hildebrand, ‘Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katolischen Weltanschauung’, 973.

⁷⁸⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘The Dethronement of Truth’, 7–8.

facts is severely reduced in these theories. What Hildebrand resents these theories the most is the negation of the genuine apriori truths outside the domain of logic and mathematics.⁷⁹⁰

Fortunately, the negation and reduction of truth was only theoretical and was not embodied in the lived experiential indifference to truth. Another factor which kept the society from slipping into practical disregard for truth was the artistic and cultural heritage which was steeped in Christianity and its reverence for truth, and which from the Renaissance to the 19th century served as a kind of buffer. In the end, practical and existential negation of truth happened in the 20th century.

Hildebrand speaks that in former times all doctrines – regardless of how erroneous they turned out to be - were introduced with the pretense that they were true. Even theories which the objective truth and the possibility of a knowledge of it (e.g. relativism, skepticism, agnosticism) were, paradoxical as it may be, proposed in the name of truth.⁷⁹¹ Later, National Socialism and Leninism completely ignored the question of truth and substituted it with purely subjective measures. It is interesting that Hildebrand mentions that Marx's historical materialism was introduced as a fact, i.e. with a pretense on truth, but also maintains that Communism implies disregard for truth the same as National Socialism. This would imply that later Communist thought and practice moved away from the pretense on truth, while the works of Marx still contain it. This is certainly one of the points in which Hildebrand's analysis should be more nuanced.

One could say that Marx establishes his historical materialism as “truth”, but this understanding of truth would be far away from Hildebrand's understanding. Marx and Engels “know only a single science, the science of history.”⁷⁹² This science enables them to discover the indubitable laws of historical progress and prophecy the coming of the Communist utopia. On the other hand, they conceive all religion and philosophy as ideology.”⁷⁹³ Ideology is fundamentally determined by the economic conditions, and not by and transcendent standard of truth. Marx and Engels formulate this thesis in their book *German Ideology*: “The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of

⁷⁹⁰ For a detailed discussion on this point, see Hildebrand's book *What is Philosophy?*.

⁷⁹¹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘The Dethronement of Truth’, 4.

⁷⁹² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *A Critique of The German Ideology*, Marx/Engels Internet Archive (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), chap. 1, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>.

⁷⁹³ Seifert, ‘Personalistische Philosophie und Widerstand gegen Hitler. Zum Kampf Dietrich von Hildebrands gegen den Nationalsozialismus, seine Ideologie und seinen rassistischen Antisemitismus’, 113.

ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking, and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.”⁷⁹⁴ Consequently, every such ideology is essentially relativistic.⁷⁹⁵ More widely understood, ideology is a theory which is not ordered towards truth but to foreign-political or personal aims and therefore represents a “false consciousness”.⁷⁹⁶ So, what the ideology serves is definitely not truth as such but some lower (practical, economic, political) goal. As we will see shortly, Hildebrand does recognize that this happens in communism, but does establish that the same process starts already in Marx’s works.

Disregard for truth in National Socialism is not just a theoretical position, but it has utmost practical consequences. Its criminal activities are embedded in the sea of lies. It is present in numerous such acts, from accusing Communists of burning the *Reichstag* to justifying mass murders by the government council as a response to it.⁷⁹⁷ The latter presents the crowning achievement of the regime based on lies, as if the conclusion from the government council which “legalized” the killings after the fact, could turn black into white, injustice in justice, lies into truth.

In National Socialism the truth is dethroned, and the primary question becomes whether an idea or a theory stems organically from the nationhood (*Volkstum*). The question whether something is “organically evolved” (*organisch* gewachsen) and suitable (*artgemäß*) to individual mentality of a nation, becomes the last measure of truth and validity. In the same way, saying that certain ideas are “foreign to people” (*volksfremd*) or a national mentality or contrary to the spirit of the National Revolution is the most important criterion for rejecting an idea as false.⁷⁹⁸ For example, Jewish mathematics is refuted not because it is wrong, but because it is not Aryan.⁷⁹⁹ Here the error of relativism is connected to that of omnipotence of the State,

⁷⁹⁴ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Ed. by C. J. Arthur (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974), 47; cited in Seifert, ‘Personalistische Philosophie und Widerstand gegen Hitler. Zum Kampf Dietrich von Hildebrands gegen den Nationalsozialismus, seine Ideologie und seinen rassistischen Antisemitismus’, 113–14.

⁷⁹⁵ For a longer elaboration see Josef Seifert, ‘Die Philosophie als Überwindung der Ideologie’, in *Al di là di occidentale e oriente: Europa*, ed. Danilo Castellano (Napoli/Roma/Benevento/Milano: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1994), 27–50.

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Seifert, ‘Personalistische Philosophie und Widerstand gegen Hitler. Zum Kampf Dietrich von Hildebrands gegen den Nationalsozialismus, seine Ideologie und seinen rassistischen Antisemitismus’, 113.

⁷⁹⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Eritis sicut Deus’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 32 (15 July 1934): 3.

⁷⁹⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Der “Sklavenaufstand” gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 7 (January 1934): 4.

⁷⁹⁹ Hildebrand, ‘The Dethronement of Truth’, 5.

since the competences of the state spread so wide as to negate the elementary importance of knowing the truth and its essence.

Hildebrand explains that after the first Fall every individual person and individual nation is exposed to the possibility of error and one-sided distortion of the objective truth.⁸⁰⁰ This of course does not exclude the possibility that a certain individual or nation at the same time has a specific potential to reveal certain truths. Moreover, every individuality, also that of a people or a nation, is called to develop to a higher perfection by submitting all its one-sidedness and blindness to the corrective of objective truth. For this reason, individuality of a person or a people cannot be considered as an ultimate value. Much higher stands the person as such in its dignity and capability for love and knowing. The task of adequately understanding the being and correctly transforming this understanding into language is by all means prior to considerations whether something is suitable for a certain individuality or certain people.⁸⁰¹ Finally, the norm of “organic evolution” does not take into account that there exist also “organically evolved” errors. Even though they do have a living contact with people, they remain errors and as such cannot claim the right to existence.

What results from this epistemological distortion is a full-fledged pragmatism. This is so because every research of truth now necessarily serves purely political or practical goals. It can be argued that pragmatism is also a form of relativism in the wider sense, since inside this theory the question of truth stops being decisive and the question of utility for political or practical goals takes its place. The result of such investigations is probably called truth, but the nature of such result is radically different from the nature of truth correctly understood (as something valid in itself, and not serving as direct means for another goal, whether political or otherwise).

The most deserted pragmatism is present in Bolshevism.⁸⁰² For the truth to exist, there must also exist a real spiritual realm, while, on the contrary, Bolshevism expresses contempt for the spiritual. It comes about as a form of *ressentiment* of proletariat to which all values seem like a playful luxury. The ultimately decisive questions are the questions of economy, only they have necessary seriousness and serve as life’s foundation. On the contrary, everything spiritual is considered as an outgrowth of illegitimately dominant bourgeois class and its mentality. Likewise, Communism substitutes the question of truth with the question whether a certain

⁸⁰⁰ Hildebrand, ‘Der “Sklavenaufstand” gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes’, 4.

⁸⁰¹ Hildebrand, 4.

⁸⁰² Cf. Hildebrand, 3.

position corresponds to proletarian mentality, or it stems from bourgeois thinking.⁸⁰³ The idea can be rejected as bourgeoisie without ever considering if it is true or not.

Hildebrand highlights that Communism is essentially the same as National Socialism in its relativistic and pragmatic conception of the world. While National Socialism subordinates the question of truth to the question of utility for National Revolution, Communism in an analogous way gives the last importance to the question of economic utility.⁸⁰⁴ All moral, religious, and epistemological questions are subordinated to economic questions in the hierarchy of importance. Consequently, all spheres of life are seen as a function of economic relations. In Marxist theory of knowledge there are many consequentialist and utilitarian moments according to which everything what is of benefit to the Party or to proletariat, including all lies, is justified.⁸⁰⁵ Inside such theory there can be no real observation of truth as such. So, the “dethronement of truth” again happens.

Subjectivism and relativism Hildebrand sees as characteristic traits of his time. They were the roots of dethronement of truth, and they need to be overcome if the truth wants to be enthroned once again. Many intellectual currents clearly show the temptation of falling into subjectivism or making subjectivity decisive for the questions of truth and good and evil.⁸⁰⁶ Its widespread presence in the spirit of the times makes subjectivism even more seductive, since it appeals to underlying presuppositions that people hold intersubjectively in their consciousness. Subjectivism and relativism in their different forms were revered by the liberal epoch, argues Hildebrand.⁸⁰⁷ The possibility of knowing the objective truth was negated. This happened in less radical form in the transcendental idealism and in a much more radical form in nominalist positivism. The objective being was eliminated through the widely accepted proclamation of George Berkeley “esse est percipi”.⁸⁰⁸ If the being is that which is perceived by us, in turn this

⁸⁰³ Hildebrand, ‘Die Weltkrise und die Menschliche Person’, 241.

⁸⁰⁴ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Warum Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus?’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 45 (8 November 1936): 1066.

⁸⁰⁵ In Lenin’s Empirio-criticism there are many places which sound objectivists and realist, while at the same time condemning relativism and idealism. However, communism is essentially an ideology which dethrones the truth rightly understood. Seifert, ‘Personalistische Philosophie und Widerstand gegen Hitler. Zum Kampf Dietrich von Hildebrands gegen den Nationalsozialismus, seine Ideologie und seinen rassistischen Antisemitismus’, 113.

⁸⁰⁶ Cf. Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Vom “Heldischen”’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 47 (28 October 1934): 8.

⁸⁰⁷ Hildebrand, ‘Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katholischen Weltanschauung’, 973.

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. Robert J. Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2001), 27.

means that there exists really no objective being. Between the pure phantasm and that which really exists there is no real difference.

What firstly comes out of this epistemological subjectivism and relativism is the negation of objective values. Good and evil are identified with a mere positive or negative feeling.⁸⁰⁹ This kind of stance can only lead to disorder and perversion of the whole image of the world.⁸¹⁰ National Socialism and Bolshevism arise against this background of the liberal epoch and not only appropriate subjectivistic and relativistic traits but bring them to the extreme. This is so, Hildebrand argues, because despite its subjectivism and relativism, the liberal epoch still held an inconsequent reverence for the question of truth.⁸¹¹ Atheism, materialism, positivism all had a concern for truth and believed it to be the ultimate judge of the value of a certain theory.⁸¹² Now, Bolshevism and National Socialism break with any and every possible reverence for truth. They signify the derivation of last practical consequences of the “dethronement of truth”.

These theories are also deeply antithetical to Christianity. Christianity is built on the reverence for truth, and it prohibits moving away from truth because of any other standpoint.⁸¹³ In the essence of Christianity lies the claim that Christianity is true. Now, this question stops being decisive, but the last decisive question is whether it correspond to the ethos of the Germanic race.⁸¹⁴ Besides not being decisive anymore for the ultimate questions, people also lose the interest for the question of truth and order themselves by merely subjective views. So, it is to in the sphere of religion, where man often decides to find his own religion when he considers what to believe in. In this way, he ends up believing in something he created himself. Subjective willfulness analogously reigns in the spheres of law, morality, and culture. It is not anymore decisive of the legal norm is objectively just, but whether it corresponds to Nordic ethos. “Just is that which corresponds to the needs of German people”; “moral is that which corresponds to Germanic racial sensitivities”, is festively declared.⁸¹⁵ Essentially, these claims have the same root as Protagoras’ “man is the measure of all things” – the magna carta of all subjectivist

⁸⁰⁹ For an example of such subjectivism in with regards to good and evil, see: Alfred J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), ch. 6.

⁸¹⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katolischen Weltanschauung’, 973.

⁸¹¹ Hildebrand, ‘Falsche Fronten’, 973.

⁸¹² Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Weltkrise und die Menschliche Person’, 241.

⁸¹³ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Letzte Maske fällt!’, 4.

⁸¹⁴ National Socialist program says: “We confess allegiance to Christianity insofar as it is in keeping with the Germanic racial sensibility.” Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Falsche Fronten’, 923.

⁸¹⁵ Hildebrand, ‘Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katolischen Weltanschauung’, 973.

relativism. The difference is that in National Socialism they receive the practical consequences as never before in history.

Relativism is deeply problematic for another reason. It serves to disarm any possible rational opposition to National Socialism. If there is no truth, how can we objectively ground or criticism of murders, humiliations, concentration camps, etc.? Every such opposition can in response be described as a matter of personal taste.⁸¹⁶ If truth is dethroned, there can be no solid ground from which to criticize an evil regime.

National Socialism discredits every objectivity, including true objectivity, as liberal war poison. Hildebrand argues that this attitude is a sign of spiritual inertia, which is a characteristic element of stupidity.⁸¹⁷ This stupidity consists much less in the lack of intellectual giftedness and spiritual power of understanding, but much more in being blinded by prejudice, in spiritual disorder, in being stuck in periphery, in mixing what is essential and non-essential, in too quick generalizations. This is typically visible in the examples when someone says that a person belongs to another nation or race and this fact in some way distorts his perception of this person. Here the essential traits of the person which should serve as primary measures of our stance towards him or her are mixed with the non-essential ones, such as belonging to a certain (foreign) nation or being of a certain race. National, racial, and other similar characteristics cannot serve as foundations of judging the person since there is a much bigger and more important difference between the good and bad German person, than between noble German and noble Frenchman.⁸¹⁸

Hildebrand also criticizes radicalism of Communism and Nazism. Even though originally the word “radicalism” signified something which stems from the roots, in political realm this term means something completely different. Radicalism in politics is characterized by impatience, operating violently, not valuing other standpoints, opposing every kind of negotiation and dialogue, fanatical convictions, etc.⁸¹⁹ This radicalism, typical of National Socialism and Bolshevism, reduces the manifoldness of truth into one-sided forms. Radicalism is one-sided, and truth can never be one-sided. Therefore, every radicalism falsifies truth, and it also shows signs of aggression foreign to truth. Of course, National Socialism does contain some truths,

⁸¹⁶ Cf. Seifert, ‘Personalistische Philosophie und Widerstand gegen Hitler. Zum Kampf Dietrich von Hildebrands gegen den Nationalsozialismus, seine Ideologie und seinen rassistischen Antisemitismus’, 109.

⁸¹⁷ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Illegitime Maßstäbe als Zeichen geistigen Niederganges’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 30 (1 July 1934): 3.

⁸¹⁸ Hildebrand, 4.

⁸¹⁹ Cf. Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Die seelische Haltung des Radikalismus’, 13.

but at the same time, every truth it discovers, it also corrupts.⁸²⁰ Its corresponding spiritual stance is an escape and flight from reality, a kind of flight into illness inside the political and social realm.

Hildebrand sees the roots of the anti-rational and anti-intellectual stances of his day in the sterile intellectualism of the liberal epoch.⁸²¹ This sterile intellectualism was closely intertwined with relativism. This relativism was in turn assumed by the present epoch and brought to the extremes, which had devastating consequences. In Hildebrand's words: "Man has equally lost the sense for true objectivity and true organic rootedness. In the helpless relativism and the subjectivistic lack of contact with the objective logos of being, which man fully assumed as heritage of the liberal epoch, man does not see any more that the world of moral values reveals itself in its objective validity..."⁸²² In short, the man has substituted the eternal, objective values for the man-made morality.

4.2.2. Anthropological Arguments

One of the chief errors in the essence of National Socialism, Bolshevism and liberalism Hildebrand sees in anti-personalism which denies the spiritual nature and consequently also the dignity of the human person. In Bolshevism, this comes from the anthropological materialism which sees man as nothing more than self-organized matter and which equally negates the sphere of the personal being.⁸²³ This view necessarily leads to anti-personalism and collectivism in which the individual is merely a means for the whole and which approaches with hatred everything spiritual in man. This also necessarily ends in depersonalization of man and seeing him merely in terms of utility. The man is practically turned into a mere "thing", the same way the slaves were considered in the Roman Empire.⁸²⁴ Such view is especially visible in the sphere of economics which Communism absolutizes and subordinates the man to it.⁸²⁵ Instead of being the end of the economic activity, man is seen as a product of economic relations and as means for achieving economic ends. Thus, the autonomy of man and his subordination to God are inverted and autonomy of economics is absolutized, and man is subordinated to economic sphere.

⁸²⁰ Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), 14.

⁸²¹ Hildebrand, 'Der "Sklavenaufstand" gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes', 4.

⁸²² Hildebrand, 5.

⁸²³ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Warum Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus?', 1066.

⁸²⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katholischen Weltanschauung', 972.

⁸²⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Warum Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus?', 1066.

Certain clarifications need to be made in this place. Hildebrand is right in saying that communism views man as a purely material and economic being. For Marx, what men are “coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.”⁸²⁶ However, viewing man as an economic being in Marxist view serves also to achieve liberation of man. The Communist revolution and the abolition of private property also serve to liberate man from economic servitude. So, in principle communism is a humanist doctrine. However, since it is based on false materialistic anthropology, in practice the man ends up as a servant of the economic system.⁸²⁷ Since there is nothing spiritual in man, he can aim only towards practical purposes. Basically, only human activity which could potentially have meaning is work. Even though in principle man should reach liberation through work, he ends up serving the economy with his work.

In several places Hildebrand warned about practical idolization of work in which the man is so to speak “swallowed” by work.⁸²⁸ This always happens when work takes a dominant place in the life of man. In this kind of lie, man loses himself and starts living merely on the periphery and from the outside. Consequently, his contemplative life and all non-utilitarian activities done by him are negated, which results in an unrest and organizing the whole life in a technical manner. Idolization of work was brought to its full consequences in Bolshevism and resulted in stifling of all religious life, destruction of marriage and family life and heightened social tensions.⁸²⁹ If the man lives primarily in and through his work, then the abyss separating the intellectual and the worker, artist and tram conductor, statesman and the farmer, is unbridgeable since the nature of their work is so different. On the contrary, if all men are made in God’s image, they always have something deep and inalienable in common which comes before all their differences in other aspects.

On the other hand, National Socialism proclaims the doctrine of primacy of blood and race as unheard newness and redeeming truth which will enable the overcoming of the liberal individualism. As Bolshevism understands man as a more developed, self-organized matter, National Socialism understands it as merely a more developed living being. Its spirituality is a

⁸²⁶ Marx and Engels, *A Critique of The German Ideology*, Preface.

⁸²⁷ This is beautifully shown by Joseph Pieper how totalitarian “Worker’s States” emerge from subordinating man to the economy and the idolization of work. Cf. Josef Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990).

⁸²⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Die Stellung des Menschen zu Beruf und Arbeit’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 6 (9 February 1936): 129.

⁸²⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 129.

function of vitality, and the whole spiritual life is a consequence of his blood and race.⁸³⁰ The Communist deification of the economic sphere, in Nazism becomes the deification of race and blood.

Hildebrand described racism as fully artificial theory which has no grounding in human nature.⁸³¹ This Racism is most clearly visible in Hitler's address in a Party conference in Nuremberg in 1933, where he declared: "Between men of higher and lower races there is a greater difference than between men of a lower race and apes."⁸³² In this racist ideology, human nature is merely a function of race. In other words, a merely biological moment of race – apart from being scientifically an unclear notion – is declared to be a decisive foundation of man's being.⁸³³ Hildebrand considers this position to be nothing more than the development of Darwinism of the liberal epoch. Now the National Socialism, as well as Bolshevism, draws the practical consequences of this position by treating persons as mere descendants of apes and aims to breed them as men have bred horses and rabbits. A Darwinist professor negated the essential difference between man and animal but was not in agreement to treat the man as an animal; Hitler drew the practical consequences of such positions.⁸³⁴ This devaluation of the person has its practical consequences in sterilization laws, eugenic measures, marital laws based on race, and in stances towards the sick and "feeble minded".⁸³⁵ It also ends in attempt to mechanize life in a rationalist manner through the idea that they can "breed" people and arbitrarily interfere with their reproduction by "rationing" it.⁸³⁶

Denying the essential difference between humans and animals, and consequently denying the spiritual nature of man and unity of humanity, undermines the foundations of authentic society which presupposes the dignity of man and fundamental rights which every man possesses simply by virtue of being human.⁸³⁷ National Socialist view of a man leaves him with no rights,

⁸³⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Österreichs Sendung', 4.

⁸³¹ See, for example: Hildebrand, 'Memoiren', 15.

⁸³² Cf. Hildebrand, 'Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katholischen Weltanschauung', 972.

⁸³³ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Das neue Österreich und das Dritte Reich', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 19 (15 April 1934): 3.

⁸³⁴ Hildebrand, 'Die Weltkrise und die Menschliche Person', 245.

⁸³⁵ Hildebrand, 'Die Letzte Maske fällt!', 3.

⁸³⁶ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Der Chaos der Zeit und die Rangordnung der Werte', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 5 (January 1934): 3.

⁸³⁷ Hildebrand, 'Against Anti-Semitism', 265. Hildebrand uttered those words in 1941, seven years before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will establish in its Preamble that the "inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". Cf. United Nations, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: United Nations Dept. of Public Information, 1948).

no legitimate claim to freedom. The man is devoid of his worth, and he becomes subordinated to the racial community - a clear example of anti-personalism brought to fruition.

National Socialism and Communism view the man “from the bottom up”, i.e. as if the lower spheres of being determine and define the higher ones.⁸³⁸ In this conception, the lower the sphere the more real it is. Consequently, the mistrust for all higher life in man and his spiritual nature arises. This position can be observed in different philosophers and intellectuals, such as Sigmund Freud, for whom all spiritual life is seen as a determinant of sublimated drives. In Nazism this view takes the form of vitalism, in which the vital-physical sphere determines the higher spheres.

Hildebrand rejects the vitalism espoused by the National Socialist ideology by arguing that the spiritual sphere in man has an immense priority over the purely vital-physical sphere.⁸³⁹ Hildebrand understands the world of being hierarchically.⁸⁴⁰ The lowest sphere is the sphere of pure matter which is the most mechanical and least endowed with meaning. Above it is the sphere of living beings which possesses more substantiality than mere matter. Here, the principle of organicity comes in the place of the mechanical principle. The sphere of life reaches its highest value in the human being where it has the serving function to the spiritual person. The most decisive step in the hierarchy of being is that from the sphere of living beings to the sphere of spiritual persons. Spiritual persons are substances to the highest extent in the created world, they possess consciousness and free will, they are beings which possess themselves. There is a qualitative abyss between spiritual acts such as knowing and loving, and merely psychological impulses. The spiritual sphere is not just higher than the sphere of life, but it also directs and “reigns” so to speak over it. The spirit is the forming principle of the body and not vice versa.

Spiritual sphere is also higher than the psychological sphere, which is rooted in the vital sphere but not identical to it.⁸⁴¹ To this sphere belong feelings such as fatigue and the feeling of freshness, but also virtues such as the physical bravery, love of life and the vigor of vital forces, confidence in life, as well as a certain charm which some personalities possess. These all are true values rooted in the psychological sphere. Nevertheless, the realm of specifically spiritual values, such as the moral or intellectual values, is incomparably superior to the mentioned

⁸³⁸ Hildebrand, ‘Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katolischen Weltanschauung’, 972.

⁸³⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’, 4.

⁸⁴⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Der Chaos der Zeit und die Rangordnung der Werte’.

⁸⁴¹ Hildebrand, 4–5.

psychological values. This also implies that communities cannot be built simply on a racial criterion which can never be a sufficient and foundational forming principle for building a community, but this can only happen based on spiritual values.⁸⁴² A racial element does not have a necessary *virtus unitiva* to form a community.

Similar arguments Hildebrand provides against National Socialist racist doctrines.⁸⁴³ Race is not a decisive moment in the human person and does not determine its value. As it was already said, human person is primarily a spiritual being made in God's image, which possesses dignity regardless of race or nation to which it belongs. Also, apart from this ontological value, much more decisive than race or nation to determine the moral quality of the human person is the question whether he is by his free will ordered to God, which weight he gives to good and evil in his life and how deeply rooted he is in the world of values. Even the question how talented and successful man is in his vocation is more important characteristic of his than his race.⁸⁴⁴

Hildebrand also posits anti-personalism as antithetical to Christian revelation since the whole Creed unconditionally presupposes the spiritual nature of the human person and the unique value of the person's immortal soul. The primacy of the spiritual sphere over the vital and over mere matter was one of the fundamental elements of the Christian Western culture.⁸⁴⁵ Also, the essential difference between humans and animals is expressly visible in the fact that the second divine Person took on the human nature and died for all human beings on the cross.⁸⁴⁶ Denying the primacy of the spiritual sphere also contradicts *philosophia perennis* and the Christian teaching in which, as expressed by Thomas Aquinas, the soul is the form of the body and not the function of the bodily-vital sphere. It proceeds directly from God, and it is not a product of physical generation. Furthermore, National Socialism denies the unity of human nature and the community of mankind, which is an indispensable presupposition of the Christian doctrine. Finally, when anti-personalism is carried to its final consequences it always implies atheism as rejection and even hatred of God.⁸⁴⁷ Subordinating the spiritual and personal to non-personal and material puts an insurmountable obstacle to the path of God. This is present both in all forms of pantheism, as well as in atheism both of which put substitutes in the place of God.

⁸⁴² Hildebrand, 5.

⁸⁴³ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Illegitime Maßstäbe als Zeichen geistigen Niederganges'.

⁸⁴⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 4.

⁸⁴⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', 924.

⁸⁴⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Ceterum Censeo ...!', 3–4.

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Der Kampf um die Person', 6.

Hildebrand also attacked antisemitism with equal fierceness. Antisemitism often cloaked purely natural animosities in religious argumentation. Sometimes the false antithesis was posited between Christian-German on the one side and Jewish on the other.⁸⁴⁸ This antithesis contains an equivocation since the terms Jewish and Aryan-German are used in a racial or national sense and the terms Christian and Jewish are used in a religious sense. These two pairs do not have much with each other and belong to completely different spheres of reality. Inside the Church there are Aryans and non-Aryans, and outside the Church there are Aryans, heretics, fallen away Christians as well as Jews. In both the Aryan-German and Jewish group there are schismatics, heretics, fallen away Catholic and many others. All these categories interpenetrate each other and establishing an antithesis between Jewish and German-Christian categories can only be judged as nonsense. The race as a merely biological moment does not have the power to serve as the forming principle of a human community, so the racial antisemitism must be decisively excluded.

But there is also another kind of antisemitism which does not build on philosophical racism, sometimes it even rejects it, but affirms that Jews are a disastrous element for any constructive culture and for the healthy life of nations.⁸⁴⁹ It is a form of cultural antisemitism not grounded in a deeper philosophical theory, but mostly stemming from the popular understanding of the role Jews play in the public life. It accuses the Jews of contaminating Western philosophy and art with destructive spirit, it often claims that Jews are responsible for demoralization of business life, that they are racketeers and ruthless capitalists, or on the other hand, that they are spearhead of Communism, of spreading revolution and dissension wherever they go. It considers the Jews as a foreign body in a certain country and wants to revoke their big influence which they often won.⁸⁵⁰

This kind of antisemitism is not based on the philosophy of National Socialism, but on the merely natural animosities against Jews, which are present in many countries, including Austria. Sometimes it is based on historical antagonisms between peoples, sometimes on negative human experiences, sometimes on the variety and difference among peoples which is harder to comprehend. As such, these arguments are often not completely false, but the problematic part is the generalization on the Jewish people as a whole. In Austria, these antagonisms were on the one hand confessionally based, and on the other, they arose in the

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Falsche Antithesen', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 17 (26 April 1936): 391.

⁸⁴⁹ Hildebrand, 'Against Anti-Semitism', 265.

⁸⁵⁰ Hildebrand, 'Falsche Antithesen', 392.

times of industrialization which was strongly influenced by Jewish “big capital” and which produced strong social *ressentiment*.⁸⁵¹ The social and political unrest of the World War I increased those antisemitic tendencies, especially after persons of Jewish origin took higher positions in the press and in the society.⁸⁵² Even though this form of antisemitism is not based on the philosophy of National Socialism, at the same time National Socialism employs it as its demagogic weapon. Nazis used antisemitism of this kind to weaken the resistance towards National Socialism and breaking the moral defense line against it, especially in the countries such as Austria, Hungary, Poland, France, and even United States.⁸⁵³ It is often coupled with different “conspiracy theories” about Jews, their secret societies, and occult practices.

Demagogic and philosophical antisemitism are equally incompatible with building a genuine community as since both invoke the diminishment of the rights of some citizens. Hildebrand argues that the limitation of certain rights can be justified only in the case when the person is morally or mentally irresponsible or if it has a proven lack of loyalty to the country. On the other hand, antisemitism does not meet these criteria since it aims to place restrictions on individuals solely because they are Jews. Although they might be negative influences on society from some Jewish people, the same can be said of Aryans and all other people. As the German poet Hebbel says: “A Jew is neither better nor worse than any other human being.”⁸⁵⁴

Hildebrand opposed antisemitism also from religious and cultural standpoint. He argued that Israel is the “representative people of humanity” as it is revealed by the Old Testament. It became a representative people of humanity not through its natural disposition but by divine election, which was a free act of God. Israel fulfilled its vocation in a twofold way. Firstly, through the special spirit it radiated and by which it was permeated: “Israel was the only people conscious of man’s metaphysical situation before God, the only people whose life unfolded *in conspectus Dei* – in the sight of God.”⁸⁵⁵ Only in this perspective, man’s true greatness and depth can be correctly grasped.

The history of Israel does not concern a particular people, but it has a real and ultimate significance for every human being and humanity as a whole. In the Old Testament, we encounter all of the decisive and most important human stances in their classical forms: the

⁸⁵¹ Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 182.

⁸⁵² Ebneith, 183.

⁸⁵³ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Against Anti-Semitism’, 266.

⁸⁵⁴ Hildebrand, 267.

⁸⁵⁵ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘The Jews and the Christian West’, in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 271.

faith of Abraham, the trust in God of Isaac, the powerlessness of man and his surrender to God in Job, the struggle of man with God in Jacob, the repentance of David, the most ardent love in Song of Songs, the pride and falling away from God in Solomon, the holy reverence of Moses.⁸⁵⁶ Israel is indeed the home of universal humanity in which all depths of human existence are illuminated. Moreover, Israel was the only people whose inner point of unity lay not on racial or cultural, but on religious level. True belief in God and awaiting of the Messiah constituted the form of the unity of Israel.

The second respect in which Israel was the representative people of humanity is contained in the fact that it is the only people to whom God spoke and to whom he revealed himself.⁸⁵⁷ God revealed to the Jews that which is of the ultimate significance to humanity as such; he revealed himself through the prophets as the redeemer of mankind. He also incarnated himself as a Jew thus bestowing on the Jewish people the representation of humanity in the deepest and clearest way. This representativeness had the most decisive influence on the Christian West and its thought and imagination, primarily through liturgy which was filled with the Old Testament motives.⁸⁵⁸

As with relativism, Hildebrand traces the roots of anti-personalism to various liberal theories of Modernity. Anti-personalism is partly the reaction to the rationalist liberalism and partly the heritage of liberalism.⁸⁵⁹ From his writings it is visible that Hildebrand identifies liberalism with the theories based on individualistic anthropology which detaches man from God and other humans and denies his spiritual nature. The main sin of the liberal epoch was not just individualism, but all-encompassing negation of the true value of the human person. Thereby man was made a central point of the Cosmos and he was “freed” from being God’s creation. By negating the spiritual soul in man, there was no more foundation for claiming that man has a special dignity in the Universe. There were also no ground to speak about the immortality of the soul.⁸⁶⁰ Man was seen merely as a piece of matter, which is portrayed clearly in the words of Georg Büchner: “The thoughts are the secretion of the brain, like the urine is the secretion

⁸⁵⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 273.

⁸⁵⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 274.

⁸⁵⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 275.

⁸⁵⁹ Hildebrand, ‘Das neue Österreich und das Dritte Reich’, 3. As we have noted earlier, historically this does not necessarily describe the dominant understanding of Jews among Christians. One of Hildebrand’s contributions is that in these elaborations he is going against dominant currents of his time. Cf. Pope John Paul II, ‘We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah’.

⁸⁶⁰ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Die Unsterblichkeit der Seele’, in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1955), 25.

of kidneys.”⁸⁶¹ Similarly, freedom of will was negated and man lost the possibility to freely determine himself and not merely to be determined by the causal chains influencing him from the outside.

However, as Hildebrand notes, “the practical consequences of this devaluation of the person were never drawn. A certain reverence for the dignity of the person, his inalienable rights, and his freedom of opinion lived on.”⁸⁶² A lucky circumstance is that men are sometimes in practice wiser than their theories.⁸⁶³ It was left to Bolshevism and National Socialism to draw the ultimate consequences of this devaluation of the human person and to develop the radical anti-personalism. Similarly, the materialism of the Communists was in no way a proletarian finding, but a heritage of bourgeois philosophy – Baron Holbach, Lamettrie and Büchner were no proletarians.⁸⁶⁴ Nor was biological materialism a creation of the Nordic race, but a fruit of the liberal intellectuals. The difference between liberalism and the totalitarians regimes is not in the anthropological view of the man, but in the ethical and practical consequences which the latter drew from the anthropological presuppositions.

Out of the weariness and disappointment with the individualism of the liberal epoch, which dominated non-Catholic Europe for centuries many people have turned to sub-spiritual and subhuman sphere to fill in the yearning left by the individualism and separating man from God and from other human beings. But, those who are doing so, have not grasped the real cause of the trivialization of the cosmos, namely, “the separation of the world from God, who is the epitome of all values and the archetype of all that exists, in whom all that exists has its meaning and value, and to whom all existence ultimately leads.”⁸⁶⁵ By extinguishing the “light that lights every man”, naturally every being, including man, lost its meaning and value. This had the biggest consequences in devaluating the spiritual sphere in man since when man is detached from God, the highest in him becomes most strongly falsified. Therefore, Hildebrand considers the rehabilitation of the spiritual person and the whole spiritual sphere as “*unum necessarium*”, the task of highest urgency in our time.⁸⁶⁶ Only the rehabilitation of the human being as a

⁸⁶¹ Cited in: Hildebrand, ‘Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katolischen Weltanschauung’, 972.

⁸⁶² Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Falsche Fronten’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 39 (27 September 1936): 924; translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 297.

⁸⁶³ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Weltkrise und die Menschliche Person’, 245.

⁸⁶⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 245.

⁸⁶⁵ Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’, 3; Translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 308.

⁸⁶⁶ Hildebrand, ‘Der “Sklavenaufstand” gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes’, 6; Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’.

spiritual person and the specifically spiritual sphere in him can fulfill the longing of a humanity disappointed by liberalism – the longing for genuine community, for the organic and the objective.⁸⁶⁷

The subjectivism of the liberal era also produced the yearning for that which is objective and stable. This also made some people to posit antithesis between spirituality of the human person, which is considered merely subjective, and all the which is objective, such as material objects and laws of nature. Nevertheless, Hildebrand argues that it is wrong to consider the human spirituality as something merely subjective.⁸⁶⁸ While it is true that human possess freedom which allows them to deviate from objective *logos* which governs being and behave in this sense “non-objectively”, this does not mean that the human person is excluded from the realm of objectivity and that he is not capable of behaving in accordance with the objective *logos* of being. In Hildebrand’s words: “Insofar as he is a spiritual, personal substance with a conscious existence that unfolds in meaningfully motivated acts such as knowing, willing, and loving, the human person is not something ‘subjective’... indeed, he is a higher, much *more* potent being. Above all, he is a being who possesses and incomparably greater fullness of meaningful activity.”⁸⁶⁹

Humans discover their potentialities to love, know and will as objective facts. Therefore, the person and his abilities are not something merely “subjective” or illusory which exists only in subjective consciousness, but they are objective *par excellence* since they are to the highest extent the image of God, the source of all objectivity. Moreover, even though his freedom enables the person to deviate from the objective *logos* of being, the person also can form objectivity of a much higher kind through his ability to know the truth and freely affirm the realm of objective values, thus forming a much stronger connection with the objective *logos* of being. “The realm of conscious, when it is wedded to the objective meaning of things and their place in the world of values, soars to spectacular heights far above all non-personal being, including the unconscious sphere to be found in the person.”⁸⁷⁰ Rational insight into the essence

⁸⁶⁷ Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’, 5; Translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 314.

⁸⁶⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’, 3–4.

⁸⁶⁹ Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’, 4; Translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 309.

⁸⁷⁰ Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’, 4; Translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 310.

of an object and free, consciously sanctioned response to the clearly grasped value is much more objective and “full-bodied” than impressions or drives and strivings arising from the vital-physical sphere.

Human person is not just more objective, but also more organic than all other living beings. Humans are not just causally connected to the objective world but can also touch it through intentional, meaningful responses. Humans possess consciousness, self-consciousness, freedom, responsibility which not to be found in plants and animals. Human person is the prototype of the organic and not the lower life-forms. The overemphasis on technology produced by the Enlightenment devalued the person which became viewed as something artificial and non-organic. But the return to organicity does not lead through the cult of the vital sphere but through the rediscovery of the spiritual person. Spiritual acts, such as conscious rational penetration into the essence of an object is much more organic than ethnically linked beliefs which are formed anonymously. Free and conscious response is equally much more organic than obscure, ethnically linked emotion of antipathy to foreigners.

4.2.3. *Ethical Arguments*

Hildebrand believes that to correctly understand political circumstances, one must see them under ethical framework. The source of “disease” in Europe he saw in de-moralization of the world.⁸⁷¹ Kindness, love, empathy, and religiosity are banned from legitimate domains of life. The *causa exemplaris* of this life becomes the machine and technology and they serve the purpose of interpreting and clarifying all elements of life.⁸⁷² However, the true morality must clearly grasp the world of values and their hierarchy, and on such foundations build a unified picture of the world. The man is ordered to this world which stands as pre-given before him. Each separation from this law draws historical consequences, a certain punishment which is inherent to the violation of the objective moral law.⁸⁷³ The separation from the world and hierarchy of values was, among other things, the result of the “scientification” of the world which characterized the liberal epoch and which ended up in absolutization of the scientific domain and neglect or outright negation of other domains, including that of values.⁸⁷⁴ It is not

⁸⁷¹ Cf. Paul Stöcklein, ‘Zeitige Aufklärung über Hitler, das mutige Wirken Dietrich von Hildebrands in Österreich 1933 - 1938, Erinnerungen und Zeugnisse’, in *Dietrich von Hildebrands Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), 78.

⁸⁷² To portray this, Hildebrand recalls a Communist film in which the hero of the story was not a man, but a tractor and the breeding bull. Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Weltkrise und die menschliche Person’, 240.

⁸⁷³ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Abfall und Strafe’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 5 (January 1934): 10–11.

⁸⁷⁴ Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Vom Ursprünglichen, vom Eigentlichen und vom Wahren’, 8.

enough simply to see a certain value but one needs to grasp its place in the overall hierarchy of values. Failure to grasp this hierarchy is a typical characteristic of different modern systems and theories which predate National Socialism and Communism. Now, the false view of morality is taken a step further.

Epistemological and anthropological errors of National Socialism, Communism, and liberalism lead to wide-ranging ethical errors. Dethronement of objective truth led to the negation of objective moral law, and idolization of the vital while negating the spiritual dimension in the human person resulted in corresponding glorification of the military ethos. Hildebrand argues that conviction that there exists an objective moral law independent of all subjective interests, arbitrariness, or mere power, is another foundational element of the Christian Western culture.⁸⁷⁵ Obviously, in the history of the Christian West there always have existed *de facto* breaches of the law, whether committed by individual rulers or democratic masses. Still, there always has been an adherence, at least to some extent, to the conception of objective law. The question of right and wrong was considered to be independent of anyone's egoistic wishes. This belief in objective law free from arbitrariness of individuals and nations is a heritage of the Christianity and underpinning of the League of Nations. National Socialism breaks with this tradition by repeatedly declaring that there is no objective right or wrong, and that "right is what is good for the German people".⁸⁷⁶ This did not just remain on the level of principles, but the Third Reich employed it many times in practice: e.g. by numerous breaches of international treaties, so as to serve its own national interests.⁸⁷⁷ This theory was prepared by various forms of relativism and positivism which pre-date National Socialism, but National Socialism was the first to draw out the full consequences of this view in praxis by programmatically renouncing justice as the foundation of states.⁸⁷⁸

This ethical stance naturally also reflected in the sphere of law, where the objective, for all times and peoples valid natural law was described and rejected as an outgrowth of liberal humanitarian rationalism.⁸⁷⁹ Similarly, all past morality was described by the communists as an outgrowth of the bourgeois class interests. This way, no true morality could be established since the idols of individualism were just replaced by the idols of the tribe. At the same time,

⁸⁷⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', 924.

⁸⁷⁶ Hildebrand, 924; See also: Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 275.

⁸⁷⁷ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Verwirkte Gleichberechtigung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 11 (15 March 1936): 247.

⁸⁷⁸ Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', 924.

⁸⁷⁹ Hildebrand, 'Der "Sklavenaufstand" gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes'.

the world of objective being was completely ignored and negated. The fact the positive law needs always to observe the precepts of the natural law to prevent morally negative acts and support the morally positive ones was ignored and negated. Radical break with all objective morality, with all the foundations of justice and humanity, characterizes both the National Socialist ideology and its practice. The consequence of it is that the Third Reich excluded itself from the community of nations and of law, which also implies that it loses the right to claim equal treatment for itself as the other nations enjoy.⁸⁸⁰ Similarly, negating the pre-existence of objective moral values independent of one's subjective willfulness excludes one from a rational discussion about principled questions. This is because to participate in a rational discussion, to criticize a certain position and defend another one, one needs to implicitly hold that there is a pre-existing hierarchy of values to which all, including himself, can refer to.⁸⁸¹ Similarly, if one negates the existence of the natural law, i.e. the objective law and objective precepts of right and wrong, for him every discussion about the topic of right and wrong becomes a waste of time.

What Hildebrand implies but does not explicitly analyze is the similar relativism found in communism. As it was noted earlier, morality is in Marxist theory a part of the superstructure and therefore as such, it is a mere justification of the dominant modes of production and social relations. Man produces morality based on his economic situation. Now, in Marxist analysis, the main social unit and the unit of analysis for understanding the man and society is class. Consequently, also all morality is a class morality; it was either used to justify the "domination and the interests of the ruling class, or ever since the oppressed class became powerful enough, it has represented its indignation against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed."⁸⁸² In this understanding, no morality is ultimately objective but the moral right or wrong are determined according to the class interest the moral statement expresses. Engels accepts the last consequences of this position. If no moral system possesses absolute finality, how can one argue in favor of proletarian morality? The answer is simple. The proletarian morality does not either possess the absolute finality, it is certainly the morality that "contains the maximum elements promising permanence which, in the present, represents the overthrow

⁸⁸⁰ Hildebrand, 'Verwirkte Gleichberechtigung', 247.

⁸⁸¹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die sittlichen Grundlagen der Völkergemeinschaft', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 269.

⁸⁸² Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring. Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, Marxist Internet Archives (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1947), chap. 9, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/index.htm>.

of the present, represents the future, and that is proletarian morality.”⁸⁸³ This is the closest as it gets to objectivity.

As Nazism describes the natural law as an outgrowth of liberal humanitarian rationalism, similarly all past morality was described by the communists as an outgrowth of the bourgeois class interests. In its place, both systems put a collective morality: National Socialism that of the racial and national community, communism that of the class. In the end, there is no rational moral debate but only class struggle and propaganda. Since the questions of right and wrong are determined before reasoning simply by belonging to a certain class or race, what is left is only propaganda techniques and instrumentalization of morality to defeat the enemy (the bourgeois, Jews, capitalists, etc.). Concentration camps, gulags, etc. were only a practical implementation of such moral precepts.

Denial of the objective law is also among the main reasons why Hildebrand rejects what he calls the “democratic worldview”. For him, democracy represents the view in which the individual is the sole source of justice and injustice, and the majority determines what is good and what is evil. In other words: the will of the individual comes into place of objective norms. Consequently, all true authority is negated, and the source of authority is relegated to the sphere of community life.⁸⁸⁴ Instead of hoping that the majority will choose what is objectively right independent of their will, many modern democrats believe that their voluntary choice creates right and wrong.

As we have noted earlier, Hildebrand criticizes here only one form of liberalism, but this view cannot be applied to the liberal tradition in general. What Hildebrand has in mind is the popular dominant mentality of the pre-totalitarian epoch, and not the original philosophy of modernity which at least in principle wants to preserve some precepts of the natural law (such as in Locke or Tocqueville). So, we can limit Hildebrand’s criticism by saying that it is applicable to those forms of liberalism which make the individual the sole source of justice and injustice, and in which there is objective good and evil beyond that which is decided by the will of the majority.

Second ethical error stems from subordinating the spiritual to the vital sphere in man. Blindness for the existence of the spiritual sphere and as distinct from vital-physical sphere and denying the true objectivity which started with liberalism developed in the stance which subordinated

⁸⁸³ Engels.

⁸⁸⁴ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Die Menschheit am Scheideweg’, in *Menschheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1955), 255.

morality to mere custom and convention. Anonymously built customs, which largely stem from the vital sphere of man, in which the awareness of values is fully embedded in local lifestyle habits and in which moral cognition is interpenetrated with egoistic utilitarian considerations, proves destructive for understanding and realizing objective moral values.⁸⁸⁵ Relativism and subjectivism resulted in abandoning the world of moral values in their objectivity and intrinsic importance. The true objectivity of moral values was substituted with the pseudo-objectivity of custom, which is dependent on various historical and psychological factors.

In Nazism, from the cult of the vital sphere emerges the moral value blindness which goes beyond the value blindness which characterized the liberal-democratic epoch.⁸⁸⁶ By abandoning truthfulness as a cardinal virtue, the virtues of justice and love were also destroyed. As a result, a military ethos was established and counterposed to “bourgeois” prudence and temperance; the brutal virility was put in the place of humility and meekness.⁸⁸⁷ Ironically, this reordering of the world of values was praised as a return to the Christian “popular ethos” and destruction of errors of liberalism. Nazism idolizes virility and espouses the “heroic military ethos”. This military ethos is characterized by anti-rational and at the same time hyper-voluntaristic essence.⁸⁸⁸ The supporter of the military morals puts might in the place of right; for him, the hand-grenade and revolver come into place of spiritual grounding of morals.⁸⁸⁹ As a reaction against liberal rationalism and it claims that the sphere of law needs to be purified from the influence of reason and become founded on the vital instincts of the Nordic race.⁸⁹⁰

From this dimension of Nazism, we can see both its anti-liberal and anti-Christian character: by attacking reliance on reason characteristic of liberalism and by attacking the supernatural order espoused by Christianity. Even though Hildebrand will on many places show the resemblances of liberalism and Nazism, there are also points of antagonism as in the case of liberal rationalism and National Socialist anti-rationalism.

This anti-rational ethos is clearly expressed in National Socialist public declarations, speeches, poems, songs, decrees, and edicts. In this military ethos which idolizes the brutal “masterful” of the “noble, Nordic man who relies solely on himself and his own strength and who arbitrarily disposes over his own country (and others’ as well), we encounter not only a pagan ethos alien

⁸⁸⁵ Hildebrand, ‘Der “Sklavenaufstand” gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes’, 5.

⁸⁸⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 6.

⁸⁸⁷ Hildebrand, 6.

⁸⁸⁸ Hildebrand, ‘Das neue Österreich und das Dritte Reich’, 3.

⁸⁸⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die sittlichen Grundlagen der Völkergemeinschaft’, 269–70.

⁸⁹⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Weltkrise und die Menschliche Person’, 240.

to Christianity, but the purest form of an utterly arrogant rebellion which rejects the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.”⁸⁹¹ Explicit elimination of the objective law, glorification of arbitrariness, megalomaniac hubris and strutting displays of brutality and ruthlessness can be seen in speeches and in physiognomy of National Socialist leaders. Christian virtues of justice, humility and love become substituted with the ideals of physical bravery, health, and vital strength.⁸⁹²

It also found its way to practical implementation in the sterilization laws and their attitude to the destitute and incurably sick to the sadistic torture in concentration camps; from the unprecedented murders of June 30 [1934], which were subsequently ‘legalized,’ to the preparations for the murder of Chancellor Dollfuss. National Socialist state proclaimed, propagated, and has put into effect things that made a mockery of objective moral law and the most elementary principles of humanity: policy of sterilization, legislation regulating marriage, unparalleled persecution of Jews, arbitrary defamation of countless individuals, pharisaical trials, etc.⁸⁹³ These and similar precepts and policies of Nazism embody horrific immorality and deserve only the strongest condemnation.

In Nazism, the stronger has the right to oppress the weaker. Here, morality is a mere invention of the weak, sick, poor, and naturally deprived persons, with the purpose to overpower the strong and vigorous.⁸⁹⁴ Empathy and benevolence are considered to be signs of weakness; contrition and humility a pitiful sign of lack of vigor and manliness. Brutality, cruelty, and pride are conceived as true virtues and characteristics of the *Übermensch*. This is not merely a sign of paganism and barbarity. The pagan world still had the ideals of justice and the good, which National Socialism fully abandoned. Cruelty of the Barbarian world was the sign of primitiveness and unconscious surrender to instincts, while in National Socialism it is a consciously aimed ideal.⁸⁹⁵ On the contrary, in a Christian State which Hildebrand supports, there can be no place for the military morals. Christian State must always take care of the poor and sick and consider them as its full-fledged members.⁸⁹⁶ National Socialist military morals

⁸⁹¹ Hildebrand, 4; Translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 289. See also: Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Crux spes unica’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 4, no. 12 (28 March 1937): 276.

⁸⁹² Hildebrand, ‘Das neue Österreich und das Dritte Reich’, 4.

⁸⁹³ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Gefahr der sittlichen Abstumpfung’, 1072.

⁸⁹⁴ Hildebrand, ‘Die Weltkrise und die Menschliche Person’, 241.

⁸⁹⁵ Hildebrand, 241.

⁸⁹⁶ Hildebrand, ‘Das Erbe von Dollfuß’, 709.

understands the weak, the poor, the sick, the disabled, as a “faulty product” and an enduring burden for the human community.⁸⁹⁷

Hildebrand argues that both National Socialism and Bolshevism are a product of “uprising of slaves” against the spirit born out of *ressentiment*,⁸⁹⁸ a feeling so vividly described by Max Scheler.⁸⁹⁹ In Bolshevism, it is the *ressentiment* of the proletariat, the people who developed the inferiority complex due to their economic and social disadvantages. It pits the economic sphere against the spiritual as a radical consequence of its materialistic worldview. On the other hand, everything spiritual is seen as a reflection of bourgeois mentality and thus discarded with hatred. In National Socialism, it is not the *ressentiment* of the proletariat but of the common citizens, the half-educated, less-gifted people who cannot come to terms with authentic culture, who revolt against the realm of spirit out of *ressentiment*.⁹⁰⁰ This semi-literacy speaks clearly in all enunciations of the Third Reich which are flooded with phrases, contradictions, lack of criticism and taste. Here is not the economic sphere idolized, but the vital. Those weak in spirit (which is not the same as “poor in spirit” of which the Sermon on the Mount speaks) want to compensate their inferiority complex with the cult of vitality in which they aim to discredit the life of spirit as weak, bloodless rationalism. Moreover, this cult of vitality is not the result of the overflowing of vitality typical of the healthy and strong personalities, but a lack of spirit which subordinates objective values to the blood and the race. It is a typical “uprising of slaves” who lack spirit to posit health against moral and intellectual values and to view the human person in his connection to the “Nordic race” and to make the leadership and education of people dependent not on moral and intellectual values, but on the Aryan descent.⁹⁰¹

4.2.4. Socio-political Arguments

In socio-political realm, Hildebrand criticizes totalitarianism, nationalism, and collectivism. In the roots of all these theories is the false conception of the relationship between the individual and the state. Hildebrand strongly opposes both individualism and collectivism. He says that individualism fails to understand the individual person and the collectivism fails to understand community.⁹⁰² The most important thing that brought this false conception is anti-personalism.

⁸⁹⁷ Hildebrand, ‘Falsche Fronten’, 925.

⁸⁹⁸ Hildebrand, ‘Der “Sklavenaufstand” gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes’, 3.

⁸⁹⁹ Cf. Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, transl. by Louis A. Coser (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998).

⁹⁰⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Der “Sklavenaufstand” gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes’, 4.

⁹⁰¹ Hildebrand, 4.

⁹⁰² For a more detailed exposition of Hildebrand’s criticisms against individualism and collectivism, see: Hildebrand, ‘Individuum und Gemeinschaft’.

If the vital-psychical sphere is idolized and the spiritual person is rejected, the true community can never be built.⁹⁰³ The true community can only be built among persons. The community is truly appreciated in proportion to the appreciation of the human person. When the person is degraded to a mere bundle of sensations and when the true value of the human person is misunderstood, the failure to understand true community necessarily follows. Communities which are rooted in the spiritual sphere of man are much more authentic and organic than those rooted in the vital-psychical sphere, like the racial community which stems from the tribal commonalities and shared customs or practices. The nation which is rooted in the spiritual sphere stands higher in value and organicity than the racial community which is rooted in the sphere of the unconscious. For the same reason, the family, marriage, and mankind are higher in value and organicity than the nation.

Every anti-personalism ends by replacing the authentic community with a mass or pan-psychic totality.⁹⁰⁴ There are several important differences between a mass and the community.⁹⁰⁵ True community always has an inner principle of unity based on its realm of meaning, while in a mass, such principle does not exist, but individuals are accidentally and un-organically lined up next to each other. A mass does not have an element of meaning and the structure corresponding to it, and so it is a mere unformed conglomerate of people which does not constitute any definite spiritual space in which an individual member could have a place and role. Secondly, the roles of individuals in the community are distinct from each other and the individual can preserve his individuality, while a mass imposes uniformity on individuals robbing them of their individuality. Thirdly, a mass is detrimental to a person's spirituality since it robs him of responsibility and moves him to unconsciously surrender to something dark and intangible. On the other hand, communities give definite responsibilities to individuals, and even those with authoritative structure require conscious obedience and not an unconscious surrender.

A mass awakens sub-rational and instinctual aspect of the person and exercises an illegitimate influence on the person.⁹⁰⁶ Dynamic influences and suggestions substitute arguments and acting from the spiritual core of the person. The pseudo-emotionality and falling under the

⁹⁰³ Hildebrand, 'Der Kampf um die Person', 5.

⁹⁰⁴ Hildebrand, 5.

⁹⁰⁵ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Masse und Gemeinschaft', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 2 (12 January 1936): 31–33.

⁹⁰⁶ For a more detailed exposition of different illegitimate forms of influence on the person, see: Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Legitime und illegitime Formen der Beeinflussung', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 355–405.

influence of passions and slogans which leave the person unaffected when alone, in a mass gathering have a serious potential for taking a hold of him. On the other hand, the true community makes the person even more conscious and responsible and allows the individual to retain a critical stance towards ideas presented to him. Communities in fact enable the person to gain more clarity in certain matters which are difficult to grasp on one's own. A community unites persons as spiritual beings in an ordered and meaningful way, and supports in a positive way their personal responsibility, maturity, and critical thinking.

In the true community the individual can develop his full personality and the higher the realm of meaning of community, higher can a person fulfill its ultimate meaning. But when the community oversteps its realm of meaning, when it is idolized or its significance exaggerated as it happens with totalitarian communities, the danger of the individual being taken over by a mass automatically arises. The yearning for overcoming individualism of today increases the danger of people giving themselves to exhilarating and impersonal atmosphere of a mass. Here the hunger for supra-personal becomes substituted with the sub-personal, the hunger for a genuine community is answered with being swept along by illegitimate influences. Here, too, the anti-personalism is at the root of the problem: elevating the community above the spiritual person is detrimental both for the community and for the individual person.

The subordination of the person to a natural community is most visible in collectivism.⁹⁰⁷ In the collective, the person becomes depersonalized and so the collectivism and depersonalization are essentially connected.⁹⁰⁸ In Communism, the individual person in all its spheres of life is merely means and the property of the economic collective. The person becomes the slave of a mass, and it is viewed merely as a work machine.⁹⁰⁹ National Socialist collectivism is primarily expressed in the belief that the racial collective is superior to the individual person; the person is merely an instrument of a nation and has no individual rights. A form of collectivist understanding can be clearly visible in the essay of Othmar Spann, the Austrian philosopher, who in the twenties and thirties had a great prominence in German speaking Catholic circles.⁹¹⁰ Spann said: "It is the fundamental truth in all social science... that

⁹⁰⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', 923.

⁹⁰⁸ Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard*, 187.

⁹⁰⁹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die Stellung des Menschen zu Beruf und Arbeit im Sinne der Enzyklika "Rerum Novarum"', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1955), 205.

⁹¹⁰ Cf. Ebner, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 75.

not individuals are truly real, but the social whole, and that the individuals have reality and existence only so far as they are members of the whole.”⁹¹¹

It was mentioned earlier that the liberal epoch left people yearning for the true community. Liberal individualism left men and women hungry for a genuine community which then got substituted with various collectivistic ideologies.⁹¹² This fact drew some people to National Socialism and some of them believed that the revival of German nationalism restored the sense of community they were missing. In the place of liberal individualism and the deification of the well-being of the individual, in Communism comes the deification of the state, which in its foundation is merely a mass and the dictatorship of the economic sphere; and in National Socialism comes the deification of racial community, in which the individual is engulfed and considered as mere means for the ends of the racial community.⁹¹³

The instrumentalism which conceives the individual as mere means for the state corresponds to the idea of a totalitarian state, that is, the state to which the individual belongs with its whole being, including its most intimate *Eigenleben*, and which has the last word over all other communities, such as marriage, family, or the Church.⁹¹⁴ The state omnipotence of the Third Reich is in a close connection to anti-personalism, as it is visible from the decree to the Interior Minister Frick: “You tell us that your children don’t want to be manual workers and that they strive towards something else. But your children are nothing, the null. For your son exists only the State and the national economy and he must in the decisive sense make himself useful to them. That is the meaning of nationalism. Everything else is the theory of my own ego, of individualism, that is, the theory which brought our people to the brink of disaster.”⁹¹⁵ In this conception, the individual has no other meaning and no other value than to become useful to the state. He is merely a means for the intrinsically valuable state. In the place of his relation to God steps in the relation to the state. National Socialism negated the fundamental fact that the child belongs to no one, but it is ordered to become a child of God and develop its own individual existence; that it is an end in itself and that no one can claim possession over it.⁹¹⁶

The omnipotence of the state which expands the competences of the state to all spheres of life is one of the essential traits both of National Socialism and of Communism. Communism is

⁹¹¹ Quoted in Hildebrand, ‘Individual and Community’, 327.

⁹¹² Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’.

⁹¹³ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Österreichs Sendung’, 4.

⁹¹⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die letzte Maske fällt!’, 4.

⁹¹⁵ Hildebrand, ‘Das neue Österreich und das Dritte Reich’, 4.

⁹¹⁶ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Schulfragen’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 22 (May 1934): 12.

totalitarian since oversteps its legitimate sphere of competences and robs the individual from any personal freedom and it violates its intimate personal sphere.⁹¹⁷ The omnipotence of the National Socialist and the Communist state goes far beyond any past forms of state omnipotence. Communist state is endowed with the despotic power and the individual person is violently subordinated to it.⁹¹⁸ It is also characterized by the negation of all true communities, especially those founded in the spiritual sphere of man, such as the nation, family, marriage, not to mention the supernatural communities such as the Church or the religious order. The hateful campaign against those communities follows from Communist materialism and deification of the economic sphere whose autonomy becomes “threatened” by those natural communities.⁹¹⁹

It must be stressed here that Marx himself, although considering the economic sphere as the most important determinant of society, nevertheless criticized “commodity fetishism” of the capitalist system and believed it to be a contributing factor of dehumanization.⁹²⁰ Consequently, the communist utopia was conceived in terms of liberation of man from any dependence on economy. This also explains why communism was so attractive to the working class which was often oppressed and exploited. However, Hildebrand is right in his emphasis on “economy error” in communism which introduced the worse enslavement of the workers than it was practiced by capitalism. Medicine proved to be worse than disease.⁹²¹

In a similar way, Hildebrand explains that National Socialism is not just a political system, but a worldview which demands incorporation of all spheres of life in the sphere of the competences of the state. It demands not just the monopoly on the education of children but also the right to decide which children should be allowed to come to the world, i.e., which parents should be allowed to procreate.⁹²² Through its sterilization laws and by limiting the freedom to choose one’s marriage partner, the state wants to breed citizens useful for its goals. Similarly, claims such as the one that marriage is not primarily a private matter, but the concern of the people must be rejected as erroneous. This view does not represent a form of selflessness but a negation of it since marriage primarily concerns the communion in love between two

⁹¹⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Warum Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus?’, 1067.

⁹¹⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Der “Sklavenaufstand” gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes’, 3.

⁹¹⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 3.

⁹²⁰ Cf. Karl Marx, *Capital Volume One*, Marx/Engels Internet Archive (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/index.htm>, ch. 1, section 4.

⁹²¹ Cf. Pope John Paul II, “Centesimus Annus” Encyclical Letter on the Hundreth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum’, 1 May 1991, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

⁹²² Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Das neue Österreich und das Dritte Reich’, 4.

persons and the coming into existence of a new human being out of this intimate and loving union.⁹²³

The competences of the National Socialist state are also extended to the sphere of culture. We have mentioned earlier how the Minister Schemm claimed that in the Universities the focus should not be on researching the truth, but on working on furthering the national revolution. Here the state claims the power even to negate the elementary meaning of knowing the truth. Similarly, in the field of arts, the state claims the power to decide what is artistically good and bad among private artworks, and not just those publicly funded. For example, the state would label certain art as “degenerate” and in this way took any legitimacy from it. Such labels reached even artists like Felix Mendelssohn and Gustav Mahler whose art was discredited simply because of their Jewish origin.

The radical omnipotence of the state has also wide-ranging consequences for National Socialist economy. The problems of economy are not dealt with in their relative autonomy and by considering the laws which govern the economic sphere, but primarily from the precepts of the ideology and ethos of National Socialism.⁹²⁴ The National Socialist economic plan can only be understood on the background of its ideology. So, in Germany reigned the economically unproductive hypertrophy of military thinking far beyond the economic production, and so it resulted in economy which favors production of arms and military build-up.

The omnipotence of the National Socialist state is not just gradually, but principally different from the usual forms of the state omnipotence. It is not that the competences of the state are merely formally extended, but also materially, so that not just the autonomy of the sphere of meaning of the state is the highest goal, but also the victory of a certain worldview.⁹²⁵ It can be easily seen how certain elementary interests of the state, such as securing the objective law or economic well-being of people, give way to the Party ideology, like the idol of race or the military ethos. The omnipotence of the state is here just means for achieving other goals. It is not just that all other interests are subordinated to the interests of the state, but it is the totalitarian demand of the National Socialist worldview which uses the omnipotent state’s force for its purposes. The legitimate spheres of the state, nation, family, culture, and economy are all equally subordinated to the totalitarian claim of the National Socialist worldview. The

⁹²³ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Scheidung der Geister’, 4.

⁹²⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Das neue Österreich und das Dritte Reich’, 4.

⁹²⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 5.

similar phenomenon happened in the Third Reich and in the communist countries, where the state ended being the vehicle for the Party interests.

In his later works, Hildebrand likewise condemned the practices of abortion and euthanasia as expressions of totalitarian collectivism rooted in a utilitarian spirit and disregard for the value and rights of the individual human person.⁹²⁶ This observation will prove very informative for assessing the political evils of today, as we will see in the final chapter.

Totalitarianism runs into a direct conflict with Christianity.⁹²⁷ The doctrine of the omnipotence of the state, argues Hildebrand, is heretical in every form, and in National Socialism it far surpasses anything that has ever existed before.⁹²⁸ According to the Christian understanding, the state has a sharply limited sphere of competence. A person belongs to the state insofar he or she is a citizen, but not with the totality of his or her being. The person's being in most important aspects transcends the boundaries of the state, and in the last instance, he is created by God and belongs to God alone. Also, his membership in the Church is prior in importance to his membership in the state. The Catholics should never absolutize the political sphere or cloak it with a mystical aura.⁹²⁹ Those who support the slogan of "the totalitarian state" show that they are not truly filled with the spirit of Christ. Only Christ can have a "totalitarian" claim on us, by expecting from us to fully give ourselves to him in all spheres of our lives. On the contrary, "only a soul that is starved and alienated from God could concede a 'totalitarian' claim to earthly goods."⁹³⁰ The act of subservience to the earthly community should never be conflated with the true gift of self to Christ or to the other person.

In essence, both National Socialism and Communism believe in the power of the state to fundamentally transform the world and make the state the means of salvation.⁹³¹ This is in contradiction to the Christian teaching, since the position of the Church is that the Earth cannot simply be transformed from the "outside" through the state laws, but primarily from the "inside" through the personal transformation in Christ.⁹³² Socialists believe from its

⁹²⁶ Cf. Seifert, 'Personalistische Philosophie und Widerstand gegen Hitler. Zum Kampf Dietrich von Hildebrands gegen den Nationalsozialismus, seine Ideologie und seinen rassistischen Antisemitismus', 148-150.

⁹²⁷ For different definitions of totalitarianism, see: Ebneht, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 78.

⁹²⁸ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Ceterum Censeo ...!', 4.

⁹²⁹ Hildebrand, 'Die Scheidung der Geister', 4.

⁹³⁰ Hildebrand, 4; translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 302.

⁹³¹ Hildebrand, 'Autorität und Führertum II', 9.

⁹³² For a longer exposition how this transformation can be achieved, see: Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1998).

materialistic conception of history, that the new economic system will bring paradise on Earth. Communism wants to substitute the bourgeois man with the new type with the means of bloody terror. Nazism wants to establish a totalitarian racial state based on the propaganda of the “Nordic man” also with the brutal means of power. They share a naïve, mechanistic belief in the process of change which should happen from the outside and with the use of repression.⁹³³

Another socio-political error Hildebrand criticizes is nationalism, which he considers to be a great heresy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁹³⁴ The “terrible error” of nationalism starts with identifying the nation and state and ends up in idolization of the nation, i.e. making the nation the ultimate goal, the highest good and the highest criterion for the whole life. Hildebrand argues that the idolization of the State was an ancient error which blossomed already in Sparta, nationalism is much more modern. This modern nationalism can be found, for example, in Fichte’s *The Addresses to the German Nation* and it is the legitimate child of liberalism and of the French Revolution.⁹³⁵ The essence of nationalism can be more easily understood if we contrast it to genuine patriotism. Genuine patriotism and genuine love towards one’s nation are both morally positive and even obligatory attitudes. This love affirms the value that resides in the national community, considered as a spiritual place with a distinct cultural character, in which the individual is placed, and which nourishes him like a spiritual soil. The affirmation of a general value of a nation takes on a concrete form in affirmation of one’s own nation, “love for the ‘divine idea’ which this particular nation represents, a special familiarity and solidarity with it, gratitude for everything that one receives from it, a special understanding one possesses for it, and finally the task one is given through belonging to it.”⁹³⁶ All these elements are contained in genuine patriotism and true love of one’s nation.

This attitude does not exclude the recognition of other nations as something justified and valuable, i.e. it does not involve placing one’s own nation above the others. This certainly does not mean that one will not love his own nation more intensely, but he will not refuse to grant the other nations the right to develop freely. Analogously, one can certainly love his own family more than others, but this does not mean that he will not grant to others the legitimate rights they might possess. Nationalism happens where one places his own nation above others in a

⁹³³ Hildebrand, ‘Autorität und Führertum II’, 9.

⁹³⁴ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Österreich und der Nationalismus’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 54 (16 December 1934): 24.

⁹³⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, *Engelbert Dollfuß*, 10.

⁹³⁶ Hildebrand, ‘Österreich und der Nationalismus’, 24; translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 249.

way that he believes he can ignore their rights and legitimate wishes, and that his country may trample others underfoot if that would be advantageous to its interests. This attitude is no more a true love towards one's country but a collective egoism.

This collective egoism is manifested in disavowing respect and concern for foreign nations and applying different standards when evaluating the rights of one's own and of foreign nations. It fails to see that nations are ordered towards each other, that they need one another, and that every delusion of self-sufficiency sterilizes the genius of one's own nation.⁹³⁷ The collective egoism of nationalism is also found whenever one places the nation above the communities of a higher value, such as the family, mankind or the Church, or when the individual person is viewed as a mere means for the nation to exploit, that is, when the good and the existence of the nation is placed above the good of the human person.⁹³⁸

The nationalistic ethos is based on idolization which cannot be grounded in the true recognition of value, and it even prevents the recognition of value proper to a certain good.⁹³⁹ Nationalists never see the true value of their nation and the deeper significance of the national genius, but they always see its power, glory and political influence.⁹⁴⁰ Essentially, this is not a true love towards a nation, but the self-assertion, the will to power, the drive for prestige, and self-glorification. The true love is always authentic to the extent that it participates in the love with which God loves it. It always involves the affirmation of the true value of the object of love inside the objective hierarchy of values. And every love becomes diminished by absolutization of the object of love.⁹⁴¹ The highest love for something is the one which puts it in the right place in the hierarchy of goods and not the one which removes it from the objective hierarchy of values.

While National Socialism idolizes the nation, socialist ideology falls into an opposite error. By giving the primacy to the economic sphere it trivializes the concept of a nation and blocks the

⁹³⁷ For example, Austrian nation was enriched by different German, Italian, French, Spanish, Slavic and Latin influences, which gave her a specifically universal spirit of the Christian West. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Österreich und die Lateinische Kultur', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 50 (13 December 1936): 1187.

⁹³⁸ Inside the order of the earthly communities bonum commune is above the bonum privatum. But the eternal salvation represents a bonum privatum which far exceeds all possible goods of the community. Cf. Hildebrand, 'Die Weltkrise und die Menschliche Person', 238.

⁹³⁹ It goes without saying that characteristic traits of a nation have the potential to embody both positive and negative values. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Illegitime Maßstäbe als Zeichen geistigen Niederganges', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 30 (1 July 1934): 4–5.

⁹⁴⁰ Hildebrand, 'Österreich und der Nationalismus', 25.

⁹⁴¹ Hildebrand, 'Ostern 1935', 371.

possibility of awakening the national consciousness and rediscovering the genius of a nation.⁹⁴² Instead of giving the nation too much value, it strips it from all true value and relevance. The Communist internationalism does not recognize the organicity and genuine value of lower communities such as the nation and the family.

The Austrian state, in Hildebrand's opinion, rejects both the deification of the state and of the willfulness of the individual.⁹⁴³ It does not extend its sphere of competences to all spheres of life. In it, the individual is not subordinated to the state in his whole being, but only insofar he is a citizen. It conceives the authority as arising not from the will of the majority but from the authoritative power of God, which in the name of God gives orders, prohibits, and commands. But this authority is not extended beyond the legitimate sphere of competence of the state.

Only in God is everything what he wills, simply because he wills it, strictly obligatory. So, the relative authority of the natural entities such as the state can only be founded on the strong authority of God if it wants to make claims to our allegiance without our prior consent.⁹⁴⁴ The state authority is one kind of a true authority. This character of a true authority is connected to the office and not to the person who occupies it, and it is not dependent on the fact in which way the authority is selected, e.g. through the hereditary or elective monarchy, or as an elected president of a republic, etc.⁹⁴⁵ The decisive question is not how the authority is elected but whether it rules in accordance with the natural law. The true authority can be exercised in the democracy as well as in an oligarchy, the republic or in a monarchy.

Nevertheless, the authority of the state is always strongly limited and has clear borders. When the state needs to step in according to the principle of subsidiarity in cases where the lower communities fail in the activities of their domain, these lower communities still keep their spheres of competences for themselves. The state must always fully respect the relative autonomy of the marriage, family, nation or the Church and it should equally never harm the inviolable rights of the individual person or to infringe on the intimate sphere of the individual.⁹⁴⁶ Instrumentalization of marriage for the ends of the state is likewise

⁹⁴² Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Österreichs grosse Deutsche Stunde', in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1938 (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte)*, ed. Ernst Wenisch, vol. 43, A (Mainz: Grünewald, 1994), 161.

⁹⁴³ Hildebrand, 'Österreichs Sendung', 4.

⁹⁴⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Das Erbe von Dollfuß', 708.

⁹⁴⁵ This can be made clearer if we make the comparison with the domain of the Church: for example, the abbot in a convent is elected by the monks, but his authority does not come from this election, but from being the representative of God. It is even more so with the Pope who is elected by the cardinals and whose authority comes directly from God and not from the cardinals. Cf. Hildebrand, 'Autorität und Führertum II', 7.

⁹⁴⁶ Hildebrand, 'Das Erbe von Dollfuß', 709.

illegitimate.⁹⁴⁷ Marriages find themselves in the spiritual realm of the state, they are incorporated in the state and have a legitimate claim on its protection; but they also have a side which goes beyond the earthly realm of state.⁹⁴⁸ For example, free choice of marriage partner is outside the sphere of competences of state, as well as racial and national limitations. The state does not have the right to decide which children should be born or to limit the free choice of the marriage partner. Its competences are limited to putting limitations in accordance with the natural law and positive commands of the Church, but in any case, it does not have the right to enter the intimate sphere of marriage. As far as the state oversteps its objective sphere of competences pre-given in the order of things, it stops being a legitimate authority and becomes an arbitrary tyrant.

4.2.5. *Cultural Arguments*

Culture is another field in which Hildebrand opposes National Socialism and Communism. Here, the conception of the “Austrian mission” and the “Austrian spirit” play a central role for rejecting National Socialism. Hildebrand’s understanding of the breadth and complexity of “mission” of Austria can be summed up in the following way: “The mission is Catholic, it concerns humanity as a whole; it is Western; and it is German.”⁹⁴⁹ Its contemporary mission is parallel to that which Austria had in Turkish wars and in the Counter-Reformation.

Austrian spirit Hildebrand considers to be supranational and Catholic. Austria is conceived as a microcosm of the West.⁹⁵⁰ For Hildebrand, both Austria and the West had an expressly Catholic character. This does not mean that Catholicism or Christianity can be identified with the Western or Austrian culture.⁹⁵¹ Indeed, there are many things taken from Christianity which essentially tied with the Western culture, but there are also those which do not present a necessity to be incorporated in a Christian culture (one can imagine the Catholic China which would have some completely different cultural expressions than the Western culture).

Even though Austria is a part of the German culture and the German nation in the wider sense, its identity is primarily not influenced by the Germanic, but by Latin influences which naturally

⁹⁴⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Ehe und Staat’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 41 (13 October 1935): 976.

⁹⁴⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Staat und Ehe’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 42 (20 October 1935): 1003.

⁹⁴⁹ Hildebrand, ‘Österreichs grosse Deutsche Stunde’, 162. For a longer discussion on the definition and meaning of the “Austrian mission”, see: Rudolf Ebner, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1976), 129–68.

⁹⁵⁰ Hildebrand, ‘Österreich und der Nationalismus’, 26.

⁹⁵¹ Hildebrand, ‘Noch einmal: Katholizismus und Politik’, 1096–97.

interpenetrate with Catholic influences.⁹⁵² Some of the important traits of the Latin spirit are the sense for the form, preference of light and reason instead of the chaotic darkness, harmony of the inner life and its external expressions, possession of a common sense which protects from any form of doctrinarism, as well as the deep sense for humanity and for the common human affairs.

Supranational and Catholic mission of Austria is against any kind of nationalism. Nationalism acts detrimentally on an individual nation by destroying it from within. Worse still, for Austria nationalism is the negation of its very meaning and essence. In Hildebrand's view, Austrian patriotism and Austrian nationalism exclude each other by definition. Even though its population is almost entirely German, Austria is not a mere branch of the German nation or a mere portion of the German culture, but it is the embodiment of the noblest and unique German spirit, characterized first and foremost by the mission of universality. This mission is opposed to any form of spiritual provincialism, and especially the one embodied in the idea of the annexation of Austria to Germany.⁹⁵³ Likewise, every form of autarky is far from the German spirit, since the foreign cultural influences (e.g. Balzac, Cervantes, Calderon, Dostoyevsky, and others) played a decisive role in forming the German culture. This gives Germans a special ability to understand foreign cultures and adopt them to their own culture.

Austrian culture integrates the essence of East and West, the spirit of North and South, and Germanic and Latin culture. Hildebrand argues that every imperialistic and colonial attempt to Germanize other countries was always far away from its mission;⁹⁵⁴ in fact, it was the negation of its essence. It never wanted to militantly subjugate its neighbors, but to organically unify different cultures. This was nicely expressed by the old saying, "*Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria, nube!*" (Let the other countries wage war, you, O happy Austria, expand by marrying!⁹⁵⁵). Austria, as the embodiment of the universalist, federative and dynastic principles, of the Catholic and Western ideas, was charged with the mission opposing nationalism, and being a bastion against National Socialism and Communism. It also had the commitment to the *bonum commune* of Europe, for true Austrian spirit is also European. Its

⁹⁵² Cf. Hildebrand, 'Österreich und die lateinische Kultur'.

⁹⁵³ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Der Genius Österreichs und der Provinzialismus', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 31 (4 August 1935): 731–33. The journal *Der Christliche Ständestaat* also opposed the annexation as an illegitimate imperialism. Cf. Rudolf Ebner, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1976), 89.

⁹⁵⁴ We will assess whether this is historically correct in later parts of this chapter.

⁹⁵⁵ Hildebrand, 26; translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 252.

mission was also to preserve the true German spirit, and first and foremost to preserve the spirit of Christianity.⁹⁵⁶

Hildebrand repeatedly opposes the thesis of identification of the National Socialism and Germany.⁹⁵⁷ Consequently, the claim that opposing and criticizing National Socialism means attacking Germany is also erroneous.⁹⁵⁸ It is not just National Socialist regime is not identical to Germany, but it is also opposed to the German culture. The same goes for Soviet Russia. The Russian spirit is not identical to Communism. Hildebrand also mentions that majority of people in Germany and majority of people in Russia inwardly reject National Socialism and Communism, even if they do not express it outwardly.⁹⁵⁹ Both National Socialist and Communist regimes represent a radical break with the true spirit of culture and of a nation.⁹⁶⁰ This claim is obviously hard to prove since both regimes will amass nearly a total support in the future.

The un-German character of National Socialism can be observed in several points. First, the nature and strength of the German nation lies primarily in the realm of spirit, both in theoretical knowledge, art, and sublime spiritual music, as well as in extraordinary personalities. Its strength lies not in the vital-physical sphere which National Socialism idolizes, or in the grace and charm of the temperament, but in the specific expressions of spirit. Even though transferring a nation's central point to the vital sphere is a general misconception of the national genius, in the case of Germany this is an even more serious error since its cultural riches lie in the domain of spirit. This is also justifiably expressed by the popular understanding of Germans as "poets and thinkers". Germans are specifically "unfrivolous", the sub-spiritual sphere is never sufficient for them. This fact also makes them prone to creating idols, since they always aim to ground lower spheres of life spiritually and metaphysically.⁹⁶¹

Having said this, we can understand why the brutal atmosphere of National Socialism, its hostility towards the spirit, its terminology and its overall military ethos is a terrible deviation of the German essence. In Hildebrand's words: "Anyone who has read *Faust*, who has listened

⁹⁵⁶ Cf Hildebrand, 'Österreichs Sendung', 5.

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Deutschtum und Nationalsozialismus', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 26 (3 June 1934): 3–5.

⁹⁵⁸ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Klarheit muß werden!', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 1 (6 January 1935): 3–6.

⁹⁵⁹ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Volk und Regierung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 13 (31 March 1935): 300.

⁹⁶⁰ Hildebrand, 301.

⁹⁶¹ Hildebrand, 'Deutschtum und Nationalsozialismus', 4.

to the works of Mozart and Beethoven, or who has felt the unique nobility and the deep, distinguished preciousness of the German nature, need cast only a single glance at the shrill, demagogical mentality of National Socialism, which aims only at producing external effects, to see that nothing less German could possibly be imagined. It is no exaggeration to say that not a single word in all the speeches of the representatives of National Socialism is even remotely related to German literature. Anyone who regards the programmatic text *Mein Kampf*, so full of slogans and pseudo-education, as a product of the German spirit, has never sensed even a hint of the genius of the glorious German nation. In his book, demagoguery and slogan are, in fact, elevated to the level of principles. Anyone who has immersed himself in the calm and lovely world of the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm; anyone who has been embraced by the chaste poems in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*; anyone whose soul has been expanded by the radiantly golden richness of spirit found in a poem of Goethe's; anyone whose heart has been moved by the angelic, sublime beauty of Mozart's music, can feel nothing but deep revulsion at the sound of the Nazi *Horst Wessel Lied*, and must inevitably feel that here two irreconcilable world have confronted each other."⁹⁶²

The true spirit and essence of the German nation is contained in the works of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Leibniz, Goethe,⁹⁶³ Hölderlin, von der Vogelwiede, Kepler, Albert the Great and Eschenbach, among others, and not in the expressions of Nazism, which represent a hysterical mixture of brutality and sentimentality, the endless stream of empty slogans, of triviality and kitsch.⁹⁶⁴ In fact, Hildebrand argues, National Socialist program, its poems and literature represent the absence of any culture. It is the compilation of the lowest passions, of cheap generalities and phrases, of lack of understanding for German essence and tradition.⁹⁶⁵

Finally, the whole German history was marked by federalist thinking and opposed to any form of mechanicistic unitarism.⁹⁶⁶ The principle of organic formation of the state in contrast to the mechanic centralization, corresponds not just to German history, but also its spirit. The centralist unitarism embodied by Bismarck's Prussia and espoused by National Socialism is contrary to German spirit and tradition. The tendency of National Socialism to delete the glorious 2000 years history of German culture and return to some "original" Germanic spirit

⁹⁶² Hildebrand, 4; translated by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby Hildebrand in *My Battle Against Hitler, Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Hildebrand Legacy Project, 2014), 256.

⁹⁶³ Goethe was labelled and rejected by the Nazis as an 'internationalist'. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Volk und Regierung', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 13 (31 March 1935): 301.

⁹⁶⁴ Hildebrand, 'Deutschtum und Nationalsozialismus', 4.

⁹⁶⁵ Hildebrand, 'Die letzte Maske fällt!', 5.

⁹⁶⁶ Hildebrand, 'Deutschtum und Nationalsozialismus', 5.

can only be laughable.⁹⁶⁷ In general, antiquarian returns to “original times” are not possible, but only new beginnings are possible. Every call to go “back” and re-awaken some original form of our existence negates the historical existence of man.⁹⁶⁸

Nevertheless, even though National Socialism is an un-German ideology, in another sense it represents a type of distortion typical for the German culture. It shares several important traits with Bismarck’s Prussia, including the mechanic centralism, giving priority to might over right, over-emphasis on the military strength, idolization of strength and vitality. The notion of German national awakening contained in the Prussian German ideology Hildebrand believes to be typically un-German and artificial.⁹⁶⁹ The Prussian spirit, characterized by militaristic and nationalistic mentality, by its Protestant constitution, by the non-musical, hardened, arrogant and prideful essence, is an exact antithesis to the true spirit of Germany and Austria.⁹⁷⁰ But National Socialism is a typically German distortion also in another sense. It embodies a specific “Teutonic fury” and Teutonic antipathy to a Latin form, a fierce anti-Roman sentiment, the subjectivistic religiosity of Luther, a Hegelian idolization of the state, a Nietzschean cult of the *Übermensch*, subordinating the spirit to vitality, etc.⁹⁷¹

Hildebrand believes that there is a specific metaphysical trait in the German spirit, which makes it impossible for a German to remain a longer time without being enthused by something great and which also conceals the danger of building idols. When a German loses contact with true values, he does not become a cold sceptic or a harmless egoist but a fanatical idolator; if he stops believing in God, he does not remain in a godless world, but creates idols for himself.⁹⁷² He never loses a formal contact with the metaphysical sphere and is always in danger of making a worldview of everything. And here National Socialism comes in with its nationalistic spirit, idolization, and omnipotence of the state, and the “metaphysics of the stomach”. Obviously, all these traits are a perversion of the true German spirit and not its true embodiments.

While Germany is “occupied” by the National Socialist regime, the mission of preserving and furthering the German culture falls on Austria. Hildebrand considers Austria to be not just a political territory, but also a spiritual space which is a living symbol of the German culture, of

⁹⁶⁷ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die letzte Maske fällt!’, 5.

⁹⁶⁸ Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Anfang und Vollendung’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 12 (February 1934): 6.

⁹⁶⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Österreichs grosse Deutsche Stunde’, 162–63.

⁹⁷⁰ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Italien und das Abendland’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 2 (13 January 1935): 37.

⁹⁷¹ Hildebrand, ‘Wahres Deutschtum’, 1145–46.

⁹⁷² Hildebrand, 1146.

its history and tradition, and in a special way the heritage of Europe.⁹⁷³ Its mission cannot be reduced to just preserving its autonomy from the attack of the Third Reich. Austria, Hildebrand believes, has a twofold mission. First, as the bulwark of the Christian West, it now stands as a defender of the whole Western cultural tradition against National Socialism and Communism. In Hildebrand's words: "Austria was always throughout its glorious history a bulwark of the culture of the Christian West. Here came the great downfall of the Reformation to standstill – here before the doors of Vienna collapsed the advance of Islam against the Christian West. God has today confined a great mission to a small Austria, to save the culture of the Christian West... Dollfuss has unrolled the flag of Christ against Liberalism, Bolshevism and National Socialism."⁹⁷⁴ Secondly, the mission of Austria to preserve the true German culture from the destructive fury of the "brown heresy".⁹⁷⁵ Both of these aspects of the Austrian mission require a strong political opposition to National Socialism and Communism. Of course, the mission of Austria is not exhausted in its opposition to National Socialism and Communism. Even when these threats are long gone, Austria will still have a God-willed task of developing the German culture of Austrian provenience.⁹⁷⁶

Hildebrand argues that the Christian West is a type of an organic and objective community - it finds itself objectively in existence regardless of whether people are conscious of its existence.⁹⁷⁷ Today's nations of Europe are the true children of the European community and differentiations of a distinct spiritual physiognomy of the Western culture. The unity of the Christian West is not a nation which contains other nations within itself, but the one which existed prior to different European nations and from which these different nations have developed.⁹⁷⁸ This unity was not just the feeling of togetherness and solidarity, but an objective relatedness, a true spiritual-vital individuality of a specific kind. This spiritual unity of the West has different roots, from greco-roman antiquity, the spiritual world of the Old Testament, the Germanic, Celtic and Slavic influences, and finally Christianity. Christianity can be considered as the most important forming principle of the Western culture, and without Christianity there would be no Western culture.

⁹⁷³ Hildebrand, 'Das Erbe von Dollfuß', 707.

⁹⁷⁴ Hildebrand, 'Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katholischen Weltanschauung', 974.

⁹⁷⁵ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Wer ist ein Emigrant?', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 47 (24 November 1935): 1123.

⁹⁷⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Österreichs grosse Deutsche Stunde', 162.

⁹⁷⁷ Like nations and supranational cultural communities, the Christian West can also fall apart and cease to exist, as it was the case with the Roman Empire. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die geistige Einheit des Abendlandes', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 3 (December 1933): 7–12.

⁹⁷⁸ Hildebrand, 8.

The Western culture shows an organic interpenetration of various complementary principles: spirit and matter, observance of the form and the high regard for the material content, contemplation and productive activities, activity and passivity, individual and community, the right attitude towards relationship between the essential and universal on the one hand and the concrete and individual on the other (or, in other words, between philosophy and history).⁹⁷⁹ These principles are put in a correct order, e.g. with the spirit being given the primacy over the matter, but without a false spiritualism and Gnosticism; the contemplative life having the primacy over the active life, but not in a way of promoting the escape from the world, etc.

Different philosophical currents which characterize modernity signify the falling away from the spirit of the Western culture, including nationalism and negating the genius of a nation, rationalist individualism and the consequent lack of communal consciousness, positivistic and atomistic view of man which does not understand the meaningful unity of the members of community, the overtaking of the organic by the mechanic, all forms of subjectivism, idolization of the state, dominance of the technology over contemplation, and especially aberrations such as antisemitism and racism.⁹⁸⁰

This mission of Austria Hildebrand sees as specifically exemplified by Chancellor Dollfuss.⁹⁸¹ Hildebrand believed that Dollfuss incorporated Austrian spirit and possessed a specific Austrian charm in its character.⁹⁸² Dollfuss was “the incarnation of the new Austria, Austria which carried a world-historical mission of German culture, of the whole Western culture and of the Catholic world.”⁹⁸³ In this manner, Hildebrand also justified the friendship between Dollfuss’ Austria and Italy, which share deep spiritual and historical connections based on the Christian Western culture, regardless of any political and contingent differences.⁹⁸⁴ Dissatisfaction with the political regime in Italy must not be a reason to conceal the greatness of Italian people and their culture.

When reading Hildebrand’s descriptions of the Austrian mission, the German and Austrian genius and identity, one is left with the impression that there is a certain degree of idealization of certain traits of Austrian and German culture. For example, one can offer counterexamples for Hildebrand’s praise of Austria and Habsburgs as promoters of peace. We can mention the

⁹⁷⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, 8–10.

⁹⁸⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 10–11.

⁹⁸¹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Das Erbe von Dollfuß’.

⁹⁸² Hildebrand, ‘Memoiren’, 112.

⁹⁸³ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Bundeskanzler Dr. Dollfuss’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 34 (29 July 1934): 1.

⁹⁸⁴ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Italien und das Abendland’, 37.

Thirty Years War in which the involvement of Habsburgs was, among other things, driven by the contest for European dominance with the French House of Bourbon.⁹⁸⁵ Similarly, Austria was an active (and not very peaceful) participant of the World War I. It has also participated in the partition of Poland in 1772 and 1795.⁹⁸⁶

Likewise, it seems hard to historically confirm the fact that Austria never wanted to military subjugate and germanize its neighbors. The history of smaller nations within the Empire, such as Polish, Croatian, Slovak or Ukrainian, was never that of full autonomy and cultural independence. Southern Poland and Northern Italy were also conquered by military means. The rule of Austria in smaller kingdoms and provinces sometimes provoked rebellion and opposition from the people.⁹⁸⁷ Among the reasons listed for the opposition were also the oppressive cultural influences. Thus, the later part of the 19th century and early 20th century was in important ways characterized by the emancipation of different nations from the empire.

Similarly, some contemporary authors have raised several legitimate issues with interpreting the notion of the genius of a nation.⁹⁸⁸ There are obviously different, even conflicting currents in the history and culture of any nation, including Austria. As noted earlier, in Austria between two world wars there existed conflicting political and cultural forces, including the socialist, Catholic and liberal-nationalist one. There are also changes and discontinuities inside different historical processes. For example, the Kingdom of Prussia was a significant historical moment in the German history which also determined the German spirit, although Hildebrand puts as strong opposition between Prussianism and the true German spirit. Also, before the unification of the German Empire in 1871, there were several German kingdoms, with some similarities as well as differences in culture and tradition. This federalism of Germany before Bismarck is also one of the reasons why it is hard to posit the strong antithesis between German “mechanistic unitarism” and Austrian federalism.

⁹⁸⁵ Cf. N. M. Sutherland, ‘The Origins of the Thirty Years War and the Structure of European Politics’, *The English Historical Review* CVII, no. CCCCXXIV (1 July 1992): 589–90, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/CVII.CCCCXXIV.587>.

⁹⁸⁶ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, ‘Partitions of Poland’, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 17 October 2021.

⁹⁸⁷ Among many examples, we can mention the Croatian National Renewal (1830. – 1848.) which emerged largely in opposition to oppressive cultural influences of Austria and Hungary. For further reference, see: Jaroslav Šidak, *Hrvatski Narodni Preporod - Ilirski Pokret*, 2nd ed. (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1990).

⁹⁸⁸ For a longer discussion on this topic, see the conclusion in: Paweł Kazmierczak, ‘Personalism versus Totalitarianism: Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Philosophical-Political Project’, in *Cheikh Mbacke Gueye (Ed.), Ethical Personalism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 189–204.

Moreover, antisemitism in Austria was very strong in popular consciousness before Hitler came to power, likely even stronger than in Germany. As Hannah Arendt notes: “As an ideological force, competing with other more respectable ideologies for the acceptance of public opinion, it [antisemitism] reached its most articulate form in Austria.”⁹⁸⁹ Hitler was Austrian, and he utilized the popular antisemitism for his ideological purposes. Therefore, there are certain traits in National Socialism which are not explicitly Prussian, and which were even characteristic of certain parts of Austrian culture. This is also a case with nationalism and tensions between nation and the state, which was, as Tim Kirk argues, “the most pressing political issue in Europe during the last decades before the First World War, and nowhere more so than in Austria-Hungary, where the pressure from nationalism threatened to blow the state apart.”⁹⁹⁰ Even though the Habsburg empire was transnational in its outlook, in practice nationalistic tendencies were present not just in smaller nations within the empire, but within Austria itself.

So, the real question is how to adequately interpret the true identity or the genius of a certain nation. The phenomenological approach would certainly be to intellectually intuit the essence, but is there such an essence and if yes, which kind of essence exists in nations? The first question can be answered positively already from the fact that there are observable and relatively stable differences between nations, so that it makes sense to speak about the differences between the Western and the Chinese culture – people intuitively understand that there is such a difference. This also means that there are characteristics, some of which are more central (i.e. essential) than others, which give nations and cultures certain uniqueness and differentiation from other nations and cultures.

Now, if such essence exists, we can certainly claim that it is not the necessary and intelligible, or the apriori essence, but an empirical one. As such, it possesses a lower degree of intelligibility and necessity. Hildebrand himself would admit that to avoid deception in grasping of the empirical truths, we need to confirm our intuitions in the subsequent streams of experience and that it is not enough to intuit only once the such-being of the thing in question, as it is the case with the apriori truths. And there are without a doubt different and even conflicting experiences and empirical facts which unveil before us when we analyze the essence of a certain nation or a culture So, how then to grasp the “true essence” of a certain nation in this case?

⁹⁸⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 42.

⁹⁹⁰ Cf. Kirk, ‘Ideology and Politics in the State That Nobody Wanted’, 84.

Paweł Kazmierczak indicates that this would necessarily lead to some arbitrariness in determining what the “genius of the nation” is and that Hildebrand resolves the dilemma “by using the conservative yardstick of history and tradition of the nation, by reference to its ‘golden age’”⁹⁹¹. What Kazmierczak calls arbitrariness is the inherent lack of necessity and intelligibility which is characteristic of empirical essences. To this we can also add the problems with human cognition since the data given to us to examine essences of past nations and cultures is chiefly given through historical documents, which themselves could suffer from one-sidedness and distortion. Furthermore, in case of Austria Hildebrand would likely not accept that he is just considering the “golden age” and disregarding the rest. His position could be analogously derived from his writings on love where he says that seeing the other as precious does not mean that the lover does not see his faults, but that he sees and interprets them in a different light: as unfaithfulness towards his true self. So, any faults the Austrian Empire or the Habsburg Family made in the past would in this interpretation be judged as unfaithfulness to the true essence of the Austrian nation and culture. This presupposes that seeing the true essence of the other or of the nation would require loving it, which makes it nearly impossible for any outside observer who lacks Hildebrand’s love for Austrian identity, to offer counter arguments.

However, we can say that the true essence of any nation must also be good and beautiful (i.e. valuable), and as such it necessarily is “ideal”, although in its concrete historical existence it is coupled with mixed empirical elements. In this sense, it can be useful to refer to the “genius of the nation” as its noblest ideal which would help one to cherish a particular national identity and culture. When speaking of this one should avoid any oversimplification and one-sidedness, but also accept that there cannot be the same degree of precision when speaking of the genius of the nation like when speaking of apriori essences.

Regardless of the certain ambiguity of the term “Austrian mission” and the “genius of the nation”, arguing against Nazism and Communism by saying that they are contrary to the Austrian identity, judging by Hildebrand’s own standards, can only be understood a secondary consideration and not an essential argument against these ideologies. Hildebrand himself warned against refuting Nazism by saying that it “is not in conformity with the traditions of Switzerland, the genius of France, the American way of life, etc.”, instead of proving the falsehood of racism, biological materialism or cult of the *Übermensch*.⁹⁹² For him, this was a

⁹⁹¹ Kirk, 84.

⁹⁹² Cf. Hildebrand, ‘The Dethronement of Truth’, 6–7.

milder form of the dethronement of truth which substitutes the question of truth as the ultimate criterion with merely secondary, contingent measures. The question of suitability to a culture or a national identity, regardless of how noble this culture and mission might be, can never serve as an ultimate criterion for rejecting a doctrine or a political system.

The same argument must also be applied to Hildebrand's analysis of the discrepancy between National Socialism and the Austrian mission. The assertion that Nazism or Communism contradicts the authentic spirit of Austria, or the Christian West might very well be true, but it is not the ultimate reason why one should reject these ideologies. If there exists a genuine beauty in that which is good in any culture, and if National Socialism and Communism are embodiments of evil, then these ideologies will contradict authentic spirit of any culture or nation. Evil is opposite to beauty, the same as it is to the good. Therefore, Hildebrand's analyses of the relation between the Austrian spirit and the Austrian mission compared to the essence of National Socialism and Communism are useful to portray more vividly the evils of these two ideologies, but they are not the essential critiques. Conversely, the possible weakness or even one-sidedness of this part of Hildebrand's analysis does not affect his fundamental critique of National Socialism and Communism.

4.2.6. Arguments on Religion

Another sphere in which Hildebrand criticizes National Socialism, Communism and liberalism is their understanding of religion. In the 1920s and early 1930s, many Catholics have been drawn to National Socialism through proclamations of the National Socialist leaders which were apparently favorable to Christianity. Even though there was an increasing trend in National Socialism to explicitly reject Christianity, which later became clearly manifested and condemned by the Church in the 1938 encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge (With burning concern)*, nevertheless many Catholics pinned their hopes in occasional proclamations by Hitler that he opposes "neo-paganism" and promotes the so called "positive Christianity".⁹⁹³

Hildebrand was not impressed by Hitler's views on religion to say the least. On one occasion in a conversation with a Dominican prior in 1933, he expressed this with a blunt honesty: "Hitler is so stupid that he does not know what the word 'God' means; when he uses this word, this in no way represents the statement of belief in a true God."⁹⁹⁴ He insisted that it is not just enough to analyze the explicit utterances of the National Socialist leaders regarding their stance

⁹⁹³ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Ceterum Censeo ...!', 3.

⁹⁹⁴ Hildebrand, 'Memoiren', 34.

to Christianity, but also to look at the essence of the ideology and assess whether it is compatible with the spirit of Christ and the teachings of the Church. In this view, National Socialism espouses several doctrines which represent an outright heresy from the Christian point of view even if they are presented as a form of positive Christianity. So, Hitler's espousal of the "positive Christianity" might be in the best case taken as a sign that he will not conduct policies hostile to the Church, but in no way can they mean that National Socialism could be Christian.⁹⁹⁵

The meaning and nature of a belief can be determined only by understanding its object. Only by understanding the nature of the object, can one determine whether it represents a true ideal (religious or otherwise) or a mere false idol.⁹⁹⁶ It is a matter of necessity that those who do not wish to serve the true God will inevitably worship and become slaves of idols.⁹⁹⁷ And by understanding the nature and essence of the object which National Socialism worships, we can understand that it can in no way be considered as a true religious ideal.⁹⁹⁸

The "positive Christianity" of National Socialism is completely un-Christian. Its Party program states: "We confess allegiance to Christianity insofar as it is in keeping with the Germanic racial sensibility."⁹⁹⁹ This doctrine reduces religion to the function of the feeling of the Nordic Germanic race and thus negates both Christianity and the religious sphere as such.¹⁰⁰⁰ This conception takes an innerworldly and completely subjective criterion as a measure of the true religion. What is written in the Party program is also present in numerous enunciations of the National Socialist leaders. For example, in the words of the National Socialist theorist and ideologue Alfred Rosenberg who said that "man creates God himself."¹⁰⁰¹

National Socialist conception of religion is also a form of the "dethronement of truth" which was analyzed earlier. Here, the decisive question stops being whether Christianity or religion in general is objectively true, but whether it corresponds to the racial sensibilities of a certain race and its racial ethos. This completely contradicts the true meaning of religion since religion

⁹⁹⁵ Hildebrand, 'Ceterum Censeo ...!', 3.

⁹⁹⁶ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Idol und Ideal', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 1, no. 24 (20 May 1934): 3–6.

⁹⁹⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Religion und Sittlichkeit', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1955), 58.

⁹⁹⁸ From this we can see why Hildebrand conceived his work as the battle against mythophilia and idolatry. Cf. Stöcklein, 'Zeitige Aufklärung über Hitler, das mutige Wirken Dietrich von Hildebrands in Österreich 1933 - 1938, Erinnerungen und Zeugnisse', 63.

⁹⁹⁹ Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', 923.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Hildebrand, 'Ceterum Censeo ...!', 3.

¹⁰⁰¹ Cited in: Ebneith, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift Der Christliche Ständestaat, Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 70. In this regard, Rosenberg's doctrine explained in *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* could be considered as an official National Socialist teaching on the religious sphere.

is a revelation of God and thus it cannot be measured by purely immanentistic standards. In Hildebrand's words: "If a man would say that he confesses Christianity because it corresponds to his natural capacities, instead because it is God's truth, he has understood nothing about the character of Christianity and about the essence of all religion, and he cannot formally belong to believing Christians."¹⁰⁰²

Pretension to be a revelation of God which is above any human standard of judgement and not judging the revelation with the innerworldly and human measures is in the essence of religion.¹⁰⁰³ Catholicism conceives the supernatural sphere as incomparably higher in value and meaning than the natural sphere.¹⁰⁰⁴ "Positive Christianity" of National Socialism impoverishes and distorts religion since it removes its supernatural and eternal essence, and subordinates it to something merely human and profane. It uses the terminology of the supernatural taken from Christianity and fills it with merely natural content and pagan ethos.¹⁰⁰⁵ As a consequence, it renounces the character of God's revelation from religion and with it, it renounces its essence of being a religion.¹⁰⁰⁶

This subordination of the religious sphere to the merely natural and innerworldly realities can also be seen in using the terminology of "Catholic Germans" (*katolische Deutsche*) instead of "German Catholics" (*deutschen Katholiken*).¹⁰⁰⁷ This terminology signifies that the national community of Germans is a superordinate category and the membership in the Church a subordinate one. It understands the man as primarily German. Being German is man's deepest and most comprehensive characteristic and being a Catholic as a secondary *differentia specifica*. In reality, it is not that Germans are divided into Catholics and non-Catholics, but that the members of the Church are divided in numerous different nations.¹⁰⁰⁸ It is also not the case that the Church and the nation are two communities of an equal importance which interpenetrate each other, so that the terms "Catholic Germans" and "German Catholics" would basically mean the same thing. There exist an objective hierarchy of communities in which the Church is incomparably superior to the nation both in its value and in its ontological rank.

¹⁰⁰² Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Endlich klare Entscheidung!', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 21 (26 May 1935): 492.

¹⁰⁰³ Hildebrand, 'Die letzte Maske fällt!', 3.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Hildebrand, 'Noch einmal: Katholizismus und Politik', 1095.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Die neue Welt des Christentums', in *Menscheit am Scheideweg: gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1955), 483.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Endlich klare Entscheidung!', 941.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Dietrich von Hildebrand, 'Gefährliche Schlagworte', *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2, no. 19 (12 May 1935): 443.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Hildebrand, 443.

This position is much more contrary to the spirit of Christianity than the typical form of atheism, since atheism acknowledges, at least in principle, that the question whether the religion is objectively true or not is of final importance.¹⁰⁰⁹ When skeptics or atheist deny that religion is objectively true, they necessarily take seriously the question of truth as such. On the contrary, in National Socialism this most important question for evaluating religion becomes trivialized and reduced to a purely subjectivistic domain. In fact, National Socialist view is not even a form of paganism since it in principle dethrones the religious sphere; it does not establish a new religion in the place of Christianity, but it distorts the true meaning of religion in general.¹⁰¹⁰ Even though the pagan world of the antiquity did not have a clear understanding of God, of the act of Creation, or the consciousness of the man's need for salvation, nevertheless it had a deep reverence. The whole life of the pagans of antiquity was imbued with the attitude of "religio".¹⁰¹¹

Therefore, the "positive Christianity" is the falsification of Christianity and the embodiment of the spirit of Antichrist.¹⁰¹² Both National Socialism and Communism display a dreadful hatred toward God; and murderous atrocities are a direct consequence of this hatred.¹⁰¹³ The deceptive nature of the term "positive Christianity" later became evident, among other things, in Hitler's explanation to Goebbels in 1937 that "Christianity is the parole for the annihilation of clerics" and his later addition in 1939 that "one does away with the churches the best when one presents himself as a positive Christian".¹⁰¹⁴ The masks have fallen also on the practical level when the open persecution of the Church started happening.¹⁰¹⁵ The request to sterilize cloistered Franciscan fathers, the defamations of the Sisters of Mercy, both in its horrendous nature of the penalty as in its biased justification of the nasty sentence to five years of penitentiary and loss of civil rights, the bloody assault on the leaders of the German medicine in favor of the charlatans, renouncing the ultimate truths of Christianity as "religious squabble", the confinement of the members of evangelical churches to concentration camps, renaming Charles

¹⁰⁰⁹ Hildebrand, 'Falsche Fronten', 923.

¹⁰¹⁰ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Die letzte Maske fällt!', 3.

¹⁰¹¹ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Die Menschheit am Scheideweg', 262.

¹⁰¹² Hildebrand, 'Ceterum Censeo ...!', 4.

¹⁰¹³ Hildebrand, 'Eritis sicut Deus', 3.

¹⁰¹⁴ Paul Stöcklein, 'Dietrich von Hildebrand, Erinnerungen an die Persönlichkeit und ihre Zeit (Vornehmlich 1933-1938)', in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1938 (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte)*, ed. Ernst Wenisch, vol. 43, A (Mainz: Grünewald, 1944), 371.

¹⁰¹⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, 'Memoiren', 150.

the Great into “Charles the Slaughterer”, mass sterilization, the treacherous murders home and abroad – all these came out to be the fruits of the National Socialist “positive Christianity”.¹⁰¹⁶

The similar view, even though much more explicitly anti-religious, can be found in Communism when it proclaims that religion is merely a human invention which people designed to ease their sufferings. Also, the Communist doctrine teaches that religion is a part of the superstructure, that is, a form of ideology, which is always ultimately determined by the material and economic conditions of a society. In the words of Marx: “If he wants to speak of an ‘essence’ of religion, i.e., of a material basis of this inessentiality, then he should look for it neither in the ‘essence of man’, nor in the predicate of God, but in the material world which each stage of religious development finds in existence.”¹⁰¹⁷ Here, too, religion is subordinated to and judged by a completely innerworldly standard. The economic pragmatism of the Communist worldview considers religion as a “canny invention” of the bourgeoisie for stultification of people – as a mere tool of economic predominance of the capitalist class.¹⁰¹⁸

Where National Socialism puts the feeling of a Nordic Germanic race, Communism puts economic relations. Every belief in a personal God in these ideologies becomes impossible since both economic relations and the racial feelings are in the last instance impersonal. National Socialism and Communism are the final stages in the process of the secularization understood as separation of man and the world from God.¹⁰¹⁹ While Communism is more straightforward in its anti-religious stance, Nazism has the same anti-religious character, although much more perfidiously concealed.

Hildebrand also criticized the National Socialist call to return to Germanic religion and spirituality of their predecessors.¹⁰²⁰ He considered that such antiquarian returns cannot mean the new beginning, but they represent the beginning of an end. This made him dislike the term “the faith of our ancestors” and the phrase “ancestral deposit of the faith of our people”.¹⁰²¹ Religion and relationship to God can never be merely traditionally accepted, but they always must involve a free choice on the part of a person. As Hildebrand puts it: “If we would only arrive to the faith of our ancestors, then we would all still be pagans.”¹⁰²² He considered

¹⁰¹⁶ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Endlich klare Entscheidung!’, 492.

¹⁰¹⁷ Marx and Engels, *A Critique of The German Ideology*, 172.

¹⁰¹⁸ Hildebrand, ‘Der “Sklavenaufstand” gegen den Geist, ein Beitrag zur Rehabilitierung des Geistes’, 3–4.

¹⁰¹⁹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Die Weltkrise und die Menschliche Person’, 246.

¹⁰²⁰ Kassiodor (Dietrich von Hildebrand), ‘Anfang und Vollendung’, 6.

¹⁰²¹ Stöcklein, ‘Zeitige Aufklärung über Hitler, das mutige Wirken Dietrich von Hildebrands in Österreich 1933 - 1938, Erinnerungen und Zeugnisse’, 66.

¹⁰²² Stöcklein, 66.

important that man, in the words of the Scripture, leaves his mother and father. The faith is always a play between the undeserved grace and the free collaboration of man.¹⁰²³ Therefore, it cannot be reduced merely to something that one accepts simply because he inherited it from his forefathers.

Another error connected to understanding of religion which Hildebrand criticizes is the earthly messianism which believes that the world can be renewed only from the outside through state laws. It embodies the danger of imbuing the political sphere too much with the religious sphere so as to sacralize politics and oversee its this-worldly character and difference from the sphere of religion and the Church.¹⁰²⁴ Hildebrand argues that this kind of earthly Messianism and “hypertrophy of the political” is one of the chief errors of Communism and National Socialism. It rejects the notion of the original sin and believes that the Paradise on Earth can be established through purely human endeavors.

Certain clarifications should be made in this place. Communism does indeed consider, as Hildebrand claims, that the perfection of man can be achieved through purely external means, i.e. through the ideal economic system (as in Communism), similarly as Nazism wants to do it through perfect State laws.¹⁰²⁵ However, it would be overly simplified to say that communism represents the “hypertrophy of the political” the same as National Socialism. Even though the political sphere did hypertrophy in the communist countries, ideologically in communism there is a much bigger hypertrophy of economic than of the political sphere. The transformation of society to the Communist utopia will happen through the revolution, but in early Marxism this revolution is understood much more as a historical inevitability determined primarily by the economic factors, and not political action. In Marx’s words, communism is not “a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call

¹⁰²³ Hildebrand writes: „The faith is a grace given by God; nevertheless, it requires great cooperation from our side: *Qui fecit te sine te, non te iustificat sine te* [who created you without you will not save you without you] (Augustine)... On one side is the faith a pure grace – we cannot give it to ourselves – and on the other hand it is the free response from us. These both facts are mysteriously interwoven. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Über den Tod* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1980); cited in: Stöcklein, ‘Zeitige Aufklärung über Hitler, das mutige Wirken Dietrich von Hildebrands in Österreich 1933 - 1938, Erinnerungen und Zeugnisse’, 67.

¹⁰²⁴ Hildebrand, ‘Noch einmal: Katholizismus und Politik’, 1096.

¹⁰²⁵ Here we can shortly note that describing Hildebrand as the „child of integralism“ by the publisher of his memoirs and essays against National Socialism should be taken *cum grano salis*. Hildebrand is an integralist in the sense that he considers that the political sphere is ordered to the religious one. On the other hand, he is not an integralist in the sense that Kingdom of God can in principle be identified with any concrete State or political system. We must limit ourselves with this short note on this problem since further exploration of it would lie outside the scope of our work. Cf. Der Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte, ‘Zur Vorliegenden Edition’, in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933-1938* (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte), vol. 43, A (Mainz: Grünewald, 1994), 7–9.

communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.”¹⁰²⁶

The economic structure of society is “the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure.”¹⁰²⁷ So, the economic and not political forces are the most important determinant which is driving the revolution. In Marx’s conception, liberation is “an historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the development of industry, commerce, agriculture, the conditions of intercourse.”¹⁰²⁸ Of course, this does not mean that the revolution will not be achieved through political means. The proletariat will at one point need to overthrow the bourgeoisie and usurp the power of the state in order to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. As the Communist manifesto prophesies: “The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.”¹⁰²⁹ But usurping political power will be only a transitory stage before the eventual coming of the Communist society in which the state will eventually become unnecessary and “wither away”, as Lenin puts it.¹⁰³⁰ So, Hildebrand is on point when claiming that communism wants to transform society through purely external means, but his analysis requires nuance in the sense that the understanding of transformation is only secondarily political.

On the other hand, Christian conception is that the transformation of man can primarily be achieved in his interior, through collaboration of human free will and supernatural gift of grace.¹⁰³¹ The decisive renewal of the face of the Earth must start from the individual. Only when the individual opens to the workings of grace, so that he removes all the obstacles for the full collaboration of his free will and the grace, can the world in the central aspect be renewed and improved for the better.¹⁰³² The decisive battle is fought in the man’s heart and not in the new state constitution. This is not to say that there is no purpose in establishing the state on

¹⁰²⁶ Marx and Engels, *A Critique of The German Ideology*.

¹⁰²⁷ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx/Engels Internet Archive (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1859), Preface, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Contribution_to_the_Critique_of_Political_Economy.pdf.

¹⁰²⁸ Marx and Engels, *A Critique of The German Ideology*, part B.

¹⁰²⁹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, in *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, Marxists Internet Archive, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 98–137, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>.

¹⁰³⁰ Vladimir Lenin, ‘The State and Revolution’, in *Collected Works*, vol. 25 (Lenin Internet Archive (marxists.org), 1999), chap. 3, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev>.

¹⁰³¹ Cf. Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ*.

¹⁰³² Hildebrand, ‘Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katolischen Weltanschauung’, 974.

Christian foundations or that Christians should not use laws and the state as tools to renew the world, on the contrary. This was also well recognized by Dollfuss who built Austria on the Christian constitution but also said: “What is the benefit of the new constitution, the concordat, if every one of you does not become a new man.”¹⁰³³

The earthly messianism embeds the political sphere so strongly in the religious sphere and it views it in a sacral light, so that it disregards its innerworldly character and blurs the borders between the earthly kingdoms and the supernatural foundations of the Church as a Kingdom of God on earth.¹⁰³⁴ It represents a kind of hypertrophy of the political sphere. The head of this kingdom will obviously not be God but the earthly messiah. That is why Hitler was described both as Christ and as a Holy Spirit by the National Socialists.¹⁰³⁵ On the other hand, in Communist countries, the earthly messianism became embodied in the “cult of personality” of the great leader.¹⁰³⁶

Earthly messianism of National Socialists was embedded in the idea of the Third Reich as a quasi-theological concept. In this understanding, the development of the Third Reich can be traced back to the Holy Roman Empire as the First Reich which started with the coronation of Otto I as emperor in 962 and was abolished by Napoleon in 1806; and the Second Reich, or the German Reich which was the Hohenzollern empire (1871-1918).¹⁰³⁷ In this conception the Reich was conceived as being of a higher, transcendent order,¹⁰³⁸ which encompassed the German people and in Austria it took shape of “the theology of the Anschluss”. Thus, the work of Hildebrand and of other collaborators of *Der Christliche Ständestaat* aimed at rectifying the theology of the Reich and opposing the idea of bringing Austria back “home to the Reich”.¹⁰³⁹

The aim to transform the face of the earth through mere human power requires the negation of the original sin as its prerequisite. Only if the man is not tainted by the original sin can the utopia of the paradise on earth be established. And since this is not the case, paradise on earth

¹⁰³³ Hildebrand, 974.

¹⁰³⁴ Hildebrand, ‘Noch einmal: Katholizismus und Politik’, 1096.

¹⁰³⁵ Hildebrand, ‘Endlich klare Entscheidung!’, 941.

¹⁰³⁶ This was most strikingly exposed by the famous “secret speech” of Nikita Khrushchev on the cult of personality of Stalin. Cf. Nikita Khrushchev, ‘Speech to 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U.’, 25 February 1956, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm>.

¹⁰³⁷ David Nicholls, *Adolf Hitler: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO Europe, 2000), 264–65; quoted in Paweł Kaźmierczak, ‘Dietrich von Hildebrand and Political Theology: Catholic Austria versus National Socialism’, in *The Problem of Political Theology*, ed. Paweł Armada, Arkadiusz Górnisiewicz, and Krzysztof C. Matuszek (Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum, 2012), 153.

¹⁰³⁸ In Hildebrand’s conception, the state did have a transcendent mission, but it also embodied the legitimate *res publica*. Cf. Hildebrand, *Engelbert Dollfuß*, 63.

¹⁰³⁹ Kaźmierczak, ‘Dietrich von Hildebrand and Political Theology: Catholic Austria versus National Socialism’, 153.

cannot be achieved, which can also be seen from the failure to establish it by different political utopias. On the contrary, as we have seen from the history of political utopias, paradise on earth must be established through force and violence. In the end, instead of the paradise, guillotines, concentration camps, gulags and mass terror were established. The society which rejected the truth about man turned against the man himself.

On Christmas 1936, Hildebrand described this development vividly: “The earthly messianism propels men to form the world even more dreadfully, to accumulate injustice, to increase suffering. It leads to stifling all freedom, to spilling of streams of blood, with filling the life with terror and anxiety. This we are experiencing for the last 19 years in Soviet Russia, for the last four years in the Third Reich, for the last half a year in Spain. (...) They are speaking about the start of a new era, about the emergence of a new ethos, about the turning point which will bring about a new golden age. Streams of blood, murders, injustices of all sorts, sacrilege, lies, hypocrisy, slavery are the fruits of the earthly messianisms.”¹⁰⁴⁰

As for the critique of the view of religion in liberalism, Hildebrand’s arguments can be already intuited from earlier chapters. Liberalism separated man and the world from God and espoused atheism. It wanted to “liberate” man from his status of a created being, to negate his metaphysical situation and to separate him from all obligations which stem from something greater than him. This fundamental attitude was characterized by negating any “religio”, any obligation to objective reality which demands obedience and submission, any observance of the important in itself and, most importantly, refusal to give oneself to God as the ultimate foundation of all values.¹⁰⁴¹

On these roots, it built a new humanism which turned against man. However, liberal epoch was also a period of compromise. On the religious and philosophical level, it waged a war against Christian teaching and at the same time brought a radical anti-clericalism, while on the sociological, legal and cultural level it retained many of the Christian elements.¹⁰⁴² In the relation to religion as well as in the earlier mentioned spheres, liberalism is viewed as foundation for National Socialism and Communism, and the latter two were seen to bring the process of secularization which started with liberalism to its final consequences.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Dietrich von Hildebrand, ‘Weihnachten 1936’, *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 3, no. 51/52 (25 December 1936): 1211.

¹⁰⁴¹ Hildebrand, ‘Die Menschheit am Scheideweg’, 256.

¹⁰⁴² Cf. Hildebrand, 252.

5. Assessing Contemporary Relevance of Hildebrand's Political Philosophy

After thoroughly analyzing Hildebrand's political ideas, we can ask ourselves how relevant they are for understanding the political situation of today. Hildebrand's political writing were deeply philosophical and analyzed the political phenomena from first principles and in the light of eternal truths, which makes the relevant for today. At the same time, his writings were deeply contextual and influenced by the historical and cultural situation in which he was writing. Hildebrand himself was not so much interested in commenting on the daily politics, nor he was especially talented in predicting political events. He was a true philosopher who wanted to gain deep insight into the essence of things. For this reason, we can say that his analyses are stronger the more genuinely philosophical they are, and the weaker points lie in his analyses of the empirical, the contextual and real-political situation. We will first briefly mention these weaker points to clear the path for the truly valuable parts of his contributions.

Hildebrand supported the state built on Christian foundation. Although this is a noteworthy goal, his concrete political allegiances can be considered largely out of context today. For example, Hildebrand's support for monarchy can hardly be considered as a relevant proposition for today, as well as his legitimization of Dollfuss' corporatism. Likewise, his insistence on legitimism today could hardly make one a supporter of the corporate state. While the principles of overcoming the social struggles laid out in *Quadragesimo Anno* could still be helpful today, a specific state form which arose in Austria in the 1930's is hardly applicable in today's context (which obviously does not mean that certain fundamental principles cannot be applied nowadays).

The weakest point of Hildebrand's political philosophy is his lenient and in times supportive attitude towards Fascist Italy, which was strongly conditioned by Mussolini's support for the Dollfuss' regime. He could hardly be blamed for not predicting that Mussolini will eventually side with Hitler, this was also not clear to the dominant political figures of the time. However, his analysis of the essence of fascist ideology is in several aspects false. Although there are indications that he understood certain problematic points in the fascist ideology, such as relativism and omnipotence of the state, he did not offer clear enough refutation of these and other errors in fascism. Admittedly, due to the context in which he writes, it would be misplaced to expect that condemnation of fascism should take a significant part of the essays in *Der Christliche Ständestaat*, still in the places where he does talk about the Italian Fascism, his position should have been clearer and more insightful.

Final potentially weaker point in Hildebrand's political thought is his understanding of the genius of the Austrian nation, of the Christian Western culture, and of the Austrian mission. Since in this domain we deal with empirical essences, the precision and clarity are inherently limited. Some point in Hildebrand's descriptions do leave the impression of at least slight one-sidedness or exaggeration of certain traits of the Austrian or German identity, and disregard for others. Hildebrand would likely respond that the traits he is describing represent the true identity of the nation, and that the negative aspects represent the unfaithfulness to this true identity. Regardless of whether we accept this as true or not, these analyses in the domain of cultural arguments are of secondary importance for Hildebrand's philosophy. Therefore, their possible refutation does not shake the foundations of Hildebrand's political philosophy.

The greatest strength and the biggest contribution of Hildebrand's political analysis lies in the domain of essential analysis of National Socialism, Communism, and to some extent, liberalism (insofar as the form of liberalism which is criticized is correctly understood), as well as offering positive vision of building society on Christian principles and foundations of truth and natural law. Hildebrand deeply and thoroughly shows the dangers of the dethronement of truth, negation of objective moral law, anti-personalism, omnipotence of the state and separation of man from God are at the root of the great political evils of the 20th century. Although when criticizing liberalism, he is having in mind a certain form of liberalism as an atheistic and materialistic worldview, he is insightful in showing the interplay between liberalism and the totalitarian systems. Liberalism both shares some fundamental precepts of National Socialism and communism and provides the emptiness in man against which the totalitarian systems establish themselves.

These analyses provide quality foundations to understand many tendencies inside contemporary political systems. Some of these tendencies we will try to explicate in the following passages based on earlier insight we drew from Hildebrand. Obviously, our analysis will necessarily be limited and will not be able to go into depth of each particular issue. There are many issues which could be analyzed from Hildebrandian perspective, each of which would deserve a book of its own. For this reason, we will need to satisfy ourselves with merely glancing upon different issues, but at the same time philosophically analyzing with the understand we have from the preceding chapters. Our aim will be to examine whether there is a danger today of the political evils that Hildebrand addresses in National Socialism and communism. Considering that today's Western countries are broadly speaking liberal-

democratic, we will specifically address the possible connections and influences between liberalism and totalitarianism.

Hildebrand recognizes relativism as one of the fundamental errors which underpin the political evils of his (and our) day. This statement needs to be investigated more closely. The central claim of relativism is that all truths are relative. But, as the classical rebuttal goes, if all truths are relative than relativism is also relative, so we do not have any obligation to accept it. On the other hand, if relativism is not relative but absolute, then at least one truth is absolute, and relativism defeats itself. Another problem with relativism is that it is practically impossible to live by it. In real life we must act and make decision, and to do that we need to be able to determine which action is better and which is worse objectively. In concrete situations, we are also many times ask ourselves questions to which we need an objectively true answer to know how to act. For example, when thinking if we should marry someone, we ask ourselves if we really love that person, if that person really loves us, will he or she be a good spouse and parent, etc. To all these and similar questions, we want to find an answer that is true and not just *true for us* but *objectively true*. It might appear to me that another person loves me (so, her love is *true for me*) but that she really does not. Acting on this appearance would not be the best course of action and it might lead to contrary outcomes than those I would like to happen.

Already early Greek skeptics recognized this problem when defending their relativistic positions. In response they acknowledged that in practical situations they really do choose a certain course of action at the expense of all other courses of actions, but that the principle for choosing a certain course of action is merely what *appears* to them to be a better decision, without claiming that this is *objectively* so.¹⁰⁴³ So, they act on appearances and not on truth. But this position also seems untenable. For at least in some situations there will be competing appearances which might also appear equally impressive or convincing. And how should then one decide if not on the basis of something more solid than a mere appearance? And if after some deliberation one of these appearances starts appearing more convincing than others, would this not necessarily be because of some *reasons* which support it and which seem stronger than the reasons which support another appearance? Now, one might go into an infinite regression by saying that all these reasons only appear to him more convincing than the opposite ones and that he does not claim, that they *really* are so. Nevertheless, at one point he

¹⁰⁴³ For a more detailed elaboration of this point, see an insightful introduction by Filip Grgić in: Sextus Empiricus, *Obrisi pironizma*, ed. Filip Grgić (Zagreb: KruZak, 2008).

will have to stop and claim that some reason or argument really is based on something more solid than a mere appearance, whether it be truth or something like truth (a substitute for truth).

And he could also apply his test to his own central principle, namely that decisions should be made on appearances. Some other principles for decision-making may certainly *appear* as equally, if not more, convincing. For example, to someone a feeling of excitement might *appear* as the best principle of decision-making, to a masochist it might be pain, and to a third person it might be truth understood as something reachable which is beyond mere appearance. The convincingness of the appearance must necessarily be grounded in something deeper and more solid.

So, in practical actions and decisions there can be no real relativists. Most people who would be called relativists by themselves or others are really only relativists with regards to certain question (which they might consider outdated or not progressive enough) and not to others. On a theoretical level, relativism necessarily refutes itself, but on the practical level that what we call relativism takes another form. Here, the main principle is not anymore that all truths are relative, and that no truth objectively exists, but that the principle of objectivity becomes something else than the truth itself. This is necessarily so because we need some principle of higher degree than mere appearance which would provide justification for our actions. And, as Hildebrand shows, if truth itself is not the principle of our actions, then substitutes for truth take its place. Dethronement of truth leads to creation of truth-like idols, which on the outside share certain resemblances to truth, but ultimately contradict it.

Hildebrand shows how this happens in National Socialism and Bolshevism. National Socialism establishes a truth-like idol in the form of utility for National Revolution and correspondence to the sentiments of the people. Bolshevism's truth-like idols become economic considerations and utility for the aims of the Party and of the Communist Revolution. So, it is not that no truth exists but that all truth is in the function of serving the goals of the National Revolution (in National Socialism) or the Communist Revolution (in communism). Although on the theoretical level relativism negates the possibility of absolutes, in practice it destroys the old absolutes and establishes the new ones. What becomes absolute are the aims of a National Socialist revolution and the Communist Revolution as interpreted by its leaders and official organs, and not the truth itself. So, truth which is by its nature absolute becomes dethroned, and that which is relative (aims of this or that political movement) becomes absolutized.

Here we can understand the claim of Joseph Ratzinger that we live in times of “dictatorship of relativism”¹⁰⁴⁴. At first, one could ask how a system which claims that no truths and no absolutes exist can be dictatorial? Which truth should it dictatorially try to impose if there are no solid truths? What we can see now is that it will seek to implement a truth-like idol. Hildebrand mentions how Bolshevism uses every violent means to implement Communist “paradise on Earth”.¹⁰⁴⁵ This paradise on earth is a truth-like idol in whose name the dictatorial violence is implemented. Similarly, National Socialism uses violence to implement their ideological utopia of the Aryan racial community. So, totalitarian systems are relativist not in the sense that they hold no truth to be objective, but that they assign objectivity and absoluteness to idols.

Before we venture any further in our analysis, it is important to address a certain reading of Popper which establishes the thesis that claiming that there are absolute and eternal truths and values leads to totalitarianism. We claim the contrary: 1) defending absolute truths is necessary to defend ourselves from totalitarianism and 2) what leads to totalitarianism is absolutizing idols. For both positions we provide the arguments below.

With regards to the first point, we can recognize that there must be at least some truths that are considered as objective and universal and which cannot be changed, overstepped, or altered by the political authority. Human dignity comes to mind as the most important of such truths for the establishment of free and just society. If human dignity becomes relative, then the State can dispose of the human persons as it sees fit, so the State is free to discard the elderly, sick, unborn, Jews, Gypsies, minorities, etc. On the other hand, if we establish that each person has human dignity as a universal and objective fact, and if this dignity grants certain rights and responsibilities to persons, then the State cannot dispose of persons at will. At least from this point we see that supporting absolute truths is not necessarily totalitarian. Also, as we have seen earlier that it is necessary for each community to establish at least certain moral truths as objective and universal, which will serve as the foundation of the common moral standards. In today’s Western democratic societies those are primarily human rights and the rights enshrined in constitutions of different states.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Joseph Card. Ratzinger, ‘Mass «Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice»: Homily of His Eminence Card. Joseph Ratzinger Dean of The College of Cardinals’, 18 April 2005, https://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Warum Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus?’, 1067.

Now, one can argue that in the name of certain absolute truths totalitarian systems were established and human dignity was violated. We can certainly accept as a fact that some totalitarian or otherwise unjust political systems have executed the injustice in the name of certain truths which they held as absolute. We can for example examine the example of a Christian theocratic state which tortures and kills people who do not adhere to certain religious dogmas of the Church and the state. We will not now venture into historical debates whether Christendom of the Middle Ages with its inquisition and religious tribunals ever existed in such form, we will only presuppose for the sake of the argument that it had existed in the form we described above. Now, if such state would torture and kill people in the name of the dogma that Christ is both human and divine, this dogma could still very well be true but it is certain that the actions of the mentioned political authorities separated this dogma from other universal and objective truths, such as the one that each human person has dignity which grants it the right to freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, or that each person is “*sui iuris*” and that truth cannot be imposed on its conscience, but only proposed. As Hildebrand recognizes well, it is not only a problem when an objective truth or a moral law is negated, but also when it is taken out of the objective hierarchy of values. The error also lies in taking a certain value out of its proper place in the hierarchy or separating it from other objective values and truths.

So, even if this dogma of Christ being truly human and truly divine is universally and objectively true, we could argue that this state is based on truth-like idol, namely the one which separates the mentioned dogma from the totality of all other truths which are objective and universal. And one of these truth-like idols which are implicitly accepted by this state is that human persons can be sacrificed (tortured) in the name of religious dogma and pressured against their conscience to accept this dogma. So, even if the dogma of Christ’s divinity and humanity is itself true, this state is still based on the forementioned truth-like idol - an idol of the omnipotence of state which deprives the freedom of conscience as necessary mark of the dignity of the human person.

The legitimate question here would be how we can distinguish between truths which are really objective and universal, and truth-like idols which only claim to be so. Obviously the most decisive question is the material one: whether the content of this or that claim does correspond to reality and whether it really is objective and universal. But, to a liberal critic who insists on hiding behind the “veil of ignorance” this might seem too partial and anti-democratic in the sense that if our proposal is to be accepted, then still each individual or each group could claim

different and even contradictory claims to be objective and universal (as in fact is in the case in today's pluralistic societies). To this we could respond that from the refutation of relativism we have established that in principle at least some truths which are objective and universal *necessarily* need to exist.

Which are those truths is often harder to discover in a pluralistic society, but it is clear that contradictory claims cannot be objectively true in the same sense and at the same time. So, we still have the question of rationally comprehending and judging the content of each truth-claim. In the last instance, only examining the essences of things and truth-content of different statement we can discover what is true and what merely appears to be so. The phenomenological method described in the second chapter of this work provides the adequate approach for examining reality and contrasting different theories and ideologies with reality.

Nevertheless, even if we abstract from the content of truth claims, there are still certain formal conditions which enable us to distinguish systems based on truth and those based on truth-like idols. Below we list several of them, without claiming that the list is comprehensive.

1. In systems based on truth-like idols, certain truths are separated from other truths and other truths are negated

Systems based on truth-like idols can indeed recognize some real truths and center their system around them. For example, opposing unjust conditions created by the Treaty of Versailles is a truth correctly recognized by National Socialism, the need for more equal social distribution of wealth and exploitation of workers in the 19th century capitalist societies is a truth recognized by communism. Still, these truths are detached from many other truths which in turn become negated. The example of these truths can be the spiritual nature of the human person, the dignity of the human person which demands respect, the limited sphere of competences of the State, the directedness of man to the world of values and to God etc. So, the truth claims which are correctly recognized are taken out of context and divorced from many other truths.

This was well recognized by several authors, including dissidents from the totalitarian regimes, as we will see in the following passages.

2. In systems based on truth-like idols, certain truths are not put in a proper hierarchy

Apart from divorcing certain truths from many other truths, even bigger problem is that the hierarchy of truths is not correctly recognized or that it is turned upside down. Consequently, many truths which in reality rank lower than some other truths are put above those higher-

ranking truths. So, for example, the truth that a person should adhere to true dogmas mentioned in the earlier example is put above the truth that the human person has the right to be free from torture and that the person should not be compelled against its conscience to accept truths of faith. Likewise, the truth that man's economic conditions are important for his overall well-being was put above the truth that man is primarily a spiritual being with specific needs that come out of that truth. The true hierarchy of values is turned upside down and distorted.

3. In systems based on truth-like idols, the truth is considered a means instead of an end. Truth as such is always an end in itself and not merely means for something else. Instrumental and merely pragmatic approach to truth distorts its real nature. To discover and understand truth is something good in itself even if it does not serve any other purpose. All other benefits and utility derived from discovering truth (for example, getting a Nobel prize for discovering a certain truth in the world of physics or chemistry) is a superabundant effect produced by this good. On the contrary, systems based on truth-like idols reverse this fact and consider the truth to be means for other ends.

For National Socialism, the ends which the truth serves are the aims of the National Revolution. For communism, these ends are the ends of the Communist Revolution and the ends of the Communist Party. What comes as a consequence is the opposite of that Jacques Maritain says about the nature of truth: "What we need not truths which will serve us, but a truth which we may serve."¹⁰⁴⁶ In systems based on truth-like idols, the truth serves us instead of us serving the truth. The truth becomes merely and instrument for achieving power, political support, economic and financial gains, etc.

Naturally, in this constellation of things, the reason becomes instrumentalized to serve ends other than discovering the truth. As a consequence, the real science and philosophy become negated and only systems of thought that can exist are various forms of ideology: ideological science, ideologized religion, political and social ideology, etc.

4. In systems based on truth-like idols, the truth is created instead of discovered. The fourth mark which distinguishes systems based on truth-like idols is that in these systems the truth can be manufactured and created, instead of being discovered. As we have seen, in National Socialism the true is that which serves the aims of National Revolution, and in communism that which serves the aims of the Communist Revolution. What is important to

¹⁰⁴⁶ Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (London: Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1937), 5.

notice is that the aims of both of these revolutions are man-made, they are established by the leaders and ideologues of the system. Consequently, that which serves the ends of the revolution, that is, the truth, is also established by these leaders.

So, the truth loses its objectivity and independence, and it starts to become dependent on the individual or collective subjective aims of its creators. While the truth *per definitionem* must be something not owned or conditioned by anyone, which is valid for everyone equally (even though not everyone necessarily recognizes it), in the systems based on truth-like idols the truth becomes “owned” and determined by the will of the leaders and ideologues of the system.

In his book *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*, Hildebrand insightfully recognizes that there can be idols which serves as substitutes for morality. Among them, he mentions tradition, honor, pride, and others. Analogously, we can discover idols which serve as substitutes for truth. Also, if we accept the traditional precept that the true and the good converge, then some of the substitutes for morality which Hildebrand mentions may serve also as substitutes for truth.

One of such substitutes both for morality and truth is certainly tradition. In the so-called traditionalisms and some forms of conservatism the question what is true is equated with the question what is traditionally held by the people or the society through its institutions and laws. Another substitute for the true and the good might also be the notion of progress, so the question of truth becomes substitutes with the question what leads to progress, and the good becomes equated with that which is progressive. In communism, the substitute for truth and the good is the question of utility for the ends of the communist utopia; in National Socialism the substitute is the question of correspondence to the sentiments of people and utility for the ends of the National Revolution, as well as certain others (such as, idolization of the vital sphere and of the military morals). We will limit ourselves to the mention of these substitutes, even though a longer inquiry can certainly find many additional ones.

Moreover, the fore mentioned formal conditions serve as indicators and it will not be always easy to determine if a system qualifies for a system based on truth-like idols. Obviously, there is no perfect political and social system, and every system will at least in certain aspects dethrone the truth and “worship” truth-like idols. The decisive question here is whether the system is essentially based on truth-like idols or acting on falsities is more of an occasional and accidental feature of it. The systems which are essentially based on truth-like idols can rightly be called unjust *per se* while those which are only accidentally acting on truth-like idols, are

not unjust *per se* but only *per accidens*. The first type of systems should be decisively rejected since there should be no hope of purifying them or making them just (unless they change their essential nature and become something else), while the systems are among legitimate forms of political systems which we could support, work with, aim to purify and improve them, etc.

The question of truth and its dethronement should not be viewed in isolation from other connected questions, namely those of objective morality, respect for the human person, religion, and competences of the state. As Hildebrand shows, all these questions usually go hand in hand. So, the dethronement of truth should more generally be viewed as dethronement of true absolutes and establishing idols as new absolutes. The absolutes which become dethroned are truth, value (truth about the good), the truth about the person and about God. Instead of them, new absolutes (which in reality are no absolutes at all) are established. God is dethroned from its place and religion becomes an instrument for purely political or ideological goals. Now, the anthropocentric view of the world characteristic of liberalism is in National Socialism and Bolshevism abandoned but not to establish a new theocentric view, but another, that of anti-personalist materialism and vitalist collectivism.¹⁰⁴⁷ The former idol is replaced by a new, lower one.

Furthermore, the truth is dethroned, and questions of utility of a political system, a class, or a racial community are put in its place. Simultaneously, the objective morality is dethroned and, in its place, a particular morality of a certain class, race, party, etc. is established as an absolute. Likewise, military morals and vigor of vitality become new idols. The spirituality of the human person is negated, and its vital sphere is absolutized. Also, the state or the collective are in turn absolutized. All these processes usually go hand in hand and happen simultaneously.

Hildebrand's analysis is insightful because it enables us to judge the contemporary political situation from first principles. It is not necessary that some new political evil will absolutize racial, national or class interests, as National Socialism and communism did. It is important that it dethrones the true absolutes and establishes some idols as new absolutes. But the new idols can very well be something new which we did not encounter in the past. This also helps us to overcome weaknesses of the contemporary analyses of political evils. Often people will be prone to see only the concrete instantiations of evil which were encountered in the past. For example, people will see the dangers of racism or nationalism but not different and potentially more hidden idols. This is understandable but not enough to judge potential new forms of

¹⁰⁴⁷ Hildebrand, 'Die geistige Krise der Gegenwart im Lichte der katolischen Weltanschauung', 972.

political malaise in our days. Textbook examples need to be examined from their first principles and applied to different contexts and different examples. New political evils might be centered around idols which were not encountered before.

We can see that many intellectual and political currents share some fundamental errors which Hildebrand criticizes in his political writings, but it would be premature to immediately call them totalitarian. Liberalism did not commit atrocities as National Socialism and communism did, even though it shared many of the fundamental errors of these systems. Nowadays, it is easy to find resemblances with National Socialism and Communism in a certain theory or political program and automatically say that it is totalitarian. For example, one could recall many contemporary scientists and philosophers who deny the spiritual nature of man or the existence of objective morality. There are even more of them who deny the existence of God, or at least relegate this question to the private and subjective sphere. As Hildebrand shows, these theories were present well before the totalitarian systems of the 20th century came into existence, and they are present still today. However, as before, not many of them will be ready to draw practical consequences from their naturalist and materialist positions.

For a totalitarianism to emerge, there also needs to be a political power which oversteps its sphere of competences and uses radical violence to establish a system of idols, that is, ideology. So, the question is not only theoretical but also practical and political. Here, it is interesting to observe the role liberalism plays as a widespread, if not dominant ideology of the Western society of today. Hildebrand rightly shows how liberalism shares some fundamental precepts with the totalitarian regimes, but also does not appreciate enough the practical contributions which liberalism brought in terms of structuring of the institutions, and which also prevent totalitarianism to emerge. For all its philosophical faults, liberalism did contribute with some important and good achievements, such as the system of checks and balances, constitutional and international protection of human rights, separation of political powers, toleration of different worldviews in the political arena, protection of free speech etc. All these contributions serve also as a safeguard from drawing political consequences of anti-personalism and negating objective morality.

Obviously, we do not wish to claim that all these positive contributions are exclusively a product of liberalism. For example, one can argue that many of these achievements were already in some form present in Christianity or the Christian Western culture in general. One could say that the separation of the Church and state was also promoted by the Church, that the

modern human rights project and respect for human dignity enshrined in the universal Declaration on Human Rights is essentially a Christian idea or at least, that Christian thinkers and Church leaders played an important role in its establishment. This might very well be true, but at the same time it would be impossible to negate the important role that liberal-democratic forces played in this process.

The critical question that needs to be examined is the value-content of the modern liberal-democratic society. In other words, should liberalism be understood as a mere proceduralism, i.e. as the system of procedures that enable just decision-making process and elections? As Karl Popper describes it, democracy “provides the institutional framework for the reform of political institutions. It makes possible the reform of institutions without using violence, and thereby the use of reason in the designing of new institutions and the adjusting of old ones. It cannot provide reason. The question of the intellectual and moral standard of its citizens is to a large degree a personal problem. It is quite wrong to blame democracy for the political shortcomings of a democratic state. We should rather blame ourselves, that is to say, the citizens of the democratic state.”¹⁰⁴⁸ Taken to its final consequences, this view would mean that liberal democracy only provides the form, without any moral content. The moral standards are the personal problems of the citizens, and the political problem is the institutional one, i.e. how to build the institutional procedures through which the reform of political institutions could be done in a just way.

Some conservative authors when criticizing liberalism at least implicitly consider that this is what liberalism claims to be.¹⁰⁴⁹ If liberalism only provides the general procedural framework, then it should not impose any moral obligations on its citizens. If it does impose certain values, then it is in self-contradiction

Another position would be that the liberal democracy, apart from mere procedures, also provides the minimal value content for the state and the society. This would probably be closer to the classical liberal position. If we take a look at one of the champions of classical liberalism in the 20th century, Isaiah Berlin, he speaks about establishing “a society in which there must

¹⁰⁴⁸ Karl R. Popper, Alan Ryan, and E. H. Gombrich, *The Open Society and Its Enemies: New One-Volume Edition*, New edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 120.

¹⁰⁴⁹ For example, Legutko writes “They [the liberals] no longer hide themselves under the formula ‘we are creating only a general framework,’ but fight hard for their power over minds and institutions.” Ryszard Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy: Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies* (New York: Encounter Books, 2016), 121.

be some frontiers of freedom which nobody should be permitted to cross.”¹⁰⁵⁰ These frontiers were commonly called natural law or natural rights. What they will have in common “is that they are accepted so widely and are grounded so deeply in the actual nature of men as they have developed through history, as to be, by now, an essential part of what we mean by being a normal human being.”¹⁰⁵¹ These frontiers are therefore not artificially drawn and they could not be abrogated by some formal procedure on the part of some court or sovereign body. Such rules or frontiers are violated, for example, “when a man is declared guilty without trial, or punished under a retroactive law; when children are ordered to denounce their parents, friends to betray one another, soldiers to use methods of barbarism; when men are tortured or murdered, or minorities are massacred because they irritate a majority or a tyrant”.¹⁰⁵²

So, liberalism is not a mere proceduralism empty of content. Liberals like Berlin and others would certainly believe that the liberal society needs to embody certain moral absolutes, even though they would not claim that these absolutes are necessarily eternal or unchangeable. Now, this is an inherent weakness in liberalism. On the one hand, it wants to preserve certain moral values, and on the other it does not want to adequately ground them in reality. Berlin recognizes this contradiction but at the same time says that “principles are not less sacred because their duration cannot be guaranteed.”¹⁰⁵³ For him, the desire to ground values in something eternal and objective is merely a childhood craving, a metaphysical need which is a sign of political immaturity. So, the only thing left for him is to “realize the relative validity of one's convictions, and yet stand for them unflinchingly’.”¹⁰⁵⁴ In his view, this is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian.

However, the real problem of our society lies in the situation where the basic moral absolutes are not “accepted so widely”, even though they might be “grounded so deeply in the actual nature of men”. Distinction between civilized man and a barbarian in the modern society is not always clear. Pluralism accepts different moral understandings, but not when they conflict the above-mentioned basic values. But when there is a fundamental disagreement on precisely those values, it does not offer a solid method of resolving them apart from standing unflinchingly for one’s own values.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, in *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 210.

¹⁰⁵¹ Berlin.

¹⁰⁵² Cf. Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, 211.

¹⁰⁵³ Berlin, 217.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Berlin.

Similar thing happens with Popper. First, he rejects intellectual and moral relativism and considers it to be “the main philosophical malady of our time”¹⁰⁵⁵. He also wants to establish a certain objectivity through what he calls “fallibilist absolutism”, which considers that there exists such thing as truth, which is merely a regulative ideal to which we can move closer and closer, but never truly reach it.¹⁰⁵⁶ At the same time, he rejects the possibility of absolute moral knowledge and the legitimacy of intellectual intuition into natures or essences, which could serve as a source of moral knowledge. Although he admits that “there exists something like an intellectual intuition which makes us feel, most convincingly, that we see the truth”, he still claims “that this intellectual intuition, though in a way indispensable, often leads us astray in the most dangerous manner. Thus, we do not, in general, see the truth when we are most convinced that we see it; and we have to learn, through mistakes, to distrust these intuitions.”¹⁰⁵⁷

What Popper fails to grasp is the difference between apriori and empirical essences which Hildebrand elaborately explains. This leads Popper to mistakenly believe that claiming to have apriori knowledge of moral values is a first step towards totalitarianism and authoritarianism. On the contrary, Hildebrand convincingly shows that there is the realm of apriori essences. We can have a necessary knowledge of them even if we intuit them only once. At the same time, this essential and necessary knowledge cannot be falsified in the consequent stream of experiences. The truths that moral values presuppose a person or that promise implies obligation are of an apriori nature, and they cannot be falsified no matter how many instances of moral values we examine.

On the other hand, Popper’s method can be to an extent be applied to the realm of empirical essences. They do not possess the same degree of certainty and intelligibility as apriori essences, and so the method of falsification can be one of the useful tools for reaching the truth about empirical essences. It is also true that in the political realm we are most often dealing with empirical essences, which is probably among the reasons why Popper overlooked the possibility of reaching apriori truths in the public and political life. Generally, liberal presuppositions of reaching the truth through civil discourse, debate, and fallibilistic method can be useful for discussing the empirical truths in the political life. They also help us to be on

¹⁰⁵⁵ Popper, Ryan, and Gombrich, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 485.

¹⁰⁵⁶ For a longer discussion on Popper’s fallibilism, see: Popper, Ryan, and Gombrich, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 490–511.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Popper, Ryan, and Gombrich, 505.

guard from too easily accepting different claims on absolute truth in the public sphere, which might very well be mere idols. So, in this regard they are helpful.

But their usefulness only goes so far. Fallibilistic method can at best serve as an auxiliary method for reaching the truth about empirical essences, but it cannot establish the truth as such. Popper is straightforward about that since he claims that the truth as such cannot be reached but only approximated. Fundamentally, fallibilistic method presupposes the concept of truth but in practice it never fully reaches material truths of this or that object. But, unless this position wants to end up in contradictions to which relativism is susceptible, it needs to accept that at least certain truths are objective and reachable.

Now, saying that we can grasp absolutely necessary and intelligible essences does not mean that anyone can reach all truth about everything – this is possible only to God. Hildebrand himself admits that no philosopher has or will ever reach the totality of truth about the being. But this does not diminish the possibility to reach certain absolute and necessary truths in the realm of apriori, or truths with high degree of certainty in the empirical domain. When I claim that I know with absolute certainty that promise implies obligation, I in no way imply that I know everything there is to know about promises and obligations. There can be new truths I can reach, and I can penetrate deeper into truths already reached.

So, there is the fundamental weakness in both Popper and Berlin, which can be considered symptomatic of liberalism in general. Liberalism starts from wanting to escape the errors of totalitarianism and so it rejects all-encompassing ideologies and for all times valid absolutes. At the same time, it wants to escape relativism and establish certain values on which society should be based. In the last instance, it does not have the tools to really ground those values since it rejected them by falsely believing that they will lead to totalitarianism. But as our earlier analysis has shown, the problem is not with holding absolute moral convictions or truths, but with establishing truth-like idols and extra-moral values as absolutes. On the other hand, Hildebrand and the realist phenomenological movement offer the method for grasping essences in a non-dogmatic and non-naive way. By elaborating how with the help of phenomenological method one can grasp the objective moral values and objective and necessary essences, we would be able to ground society on objective moral values.

Phenomenology and liberal epistemology are fundamentally concerned with two different questions. Phenomenology is a method through which we can reach the truth about objective and necessary essences. Liberal method since Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* is primarily

concerned with the question about how to reach consensus about truths and values on which the state should be based.¹⁰⁵⁸ The second question should be appreciated, but it also needs to be stressed that if the society limits itself only to asking the second question, it will be radically limited in its capacity to defend itself from totalitarianism and ground the public life in real values, and not mere false idols.

We can examine this weakness of liberalism on a concrete problem of the modern human rights project. As Jacques Maritain elaborates, the drafters of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights agreed on a set of rights under the condition that no one asks them “why” they agree.¹⁰⁵⁹ They could agree for practical purposes that these rights exist and even that they are universal, inherent to the human person and inviolable, but when asked about the rational justification for such claims, they could not find the common ground. Different participants and groups would offer a different answer since their answers rested on different moral and metaphysical (or anti-metaphysical) convictions. It would be wrong to assert that this then was no agreement at all. On the contrary, it is a significant achievement to get people from different backgrounds and convictions to agree on a set of rights even from a purely practical perspective. Since there exist different “why’s”, it would be practically impossible to reach a common philosophical justification of values. In this case, having an agreement on a common practice for a functioning political community, is a valuable achievement. This is also analogous to the general achievement of classical liberalism: it devised a framework in which mutually opposing groups could live together without killing each other.

However, by lacking proper rational justification, these human rights were endowed with an inherent weakness which made them susceptible to mutually opposing and contradictory explanations. Even worse, they were susceptible to being hijacked by particular interests and ideologies.¹⁰⁶⁰ Since they were left without a deeper metaphysical grounding or moral content, almost any content could be inscribed in them as long as this was done through proper democratic procedures. But, as practice shows, procedures can likewise be misused by those who are more powerful or skilled in using them.

This is again paradigmatic for a liberal democratic society. Practically, it does offer useful safeguards and methodological procedures for preserving moral values and consequently,

¹⁰⁵⁸ Cf. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁵⁹ Jacques Maritain, ‘Introduction’, in *Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations* (Paris: UNESCO, 1948), I.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Cf. Mary Ann Glendon, ‘Foundations of Human Rights: The Unfinished Business’, *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* 44, no. 1 (1 January 1999): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajj/44.1.1>.

keeping the society just and free. But since it fundamentally cannot ground these values, it is under a constant threat that different idols will usurp the value basis of the society and act detrimentally both on the individual person and the society itself. One of the clear remedies here is the constant care for institutions and unceasing moral and political education of citizens, as several liberal authors have recognized.¹⁰⁶¹ But even if this is taken into consideration, the fundamental concerns remain the same. Moral and political education of citizens as a necessary prerequisite for a functioning democratic society needs grounding in objective moral values if it wants to be a true moral and political education. If this education does not offer such grounding, then it is under the same threat of being usurped by different idols.¹⁰⁶²

Both National Socialism and communism understood this weakness inherent in democracy. After the Munich putsch in 1923, Hitler decided to use the tools of parliamentary democracy to reach power. He understood parliamentarism not just as an enemy, but as a useful tool for reaching the goals of National Socialism. Similarly, Lenin recognized that “democracy is of enormous importance to the working class in its struggle against the capitalists for its emancipation. But democracy is by no means a boundary not to be overstepped; it is only one of the stages on the road from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to communism.”¹⁰⁶³ For him, democracy is a form of the state and as such, it represents, the organized and systematic use of force against persons, as well as the formal recognition of equality of citizens, which have the equal right to administer the state. In a certain stage of the development of democracy, the Marxist prophecy goes, the revolutionary class will wage a struggle against the bourgeois and in the end smash a state machine, just to establish “a more democratic state machine, but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the entire population.”¹⁰⁶⁴

In communist analysis democracy is useful as a transitory stage which would lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat on ultimately to the Communist society. Before the revolution happens, it is useful to support democracy. In Lenin’s words “the more complete the

¹⁰⁶¹ See, among others, Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, 1st edition (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁶² Here, two trajectories are possible. To describe it simply, the first would combine classical education (i.e. the education which offers objective grounding of values) and liberal proceduralism. This combination would prove much more resilient to totalitarian usurpations. The second would combine education without objective moral foundation together with liberal proceduralism. This system would be even more susceptible to totalitarianism than liberal proceduralism alone.

¹⁰⁶³ Vladimir Lenin, ‘The State and Revolution’, in *Collected Works*, vol. 25 (Lenin Internet Archive (marxists.org), 1999), chap. 5, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev>.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Lenin.

democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary”¹⁰⁶⁵. So, the democracy is not the ideal to be achieved, but potentially useful tool to achieve Communist revolution and ultimately do away with the parliamentary democracy.

This is instructive when assessing contemporary context. On the one hand, liberalism suffers from the inherent weakness of grounding fundamental moral precepts of the society which would guard it from different totalitarian attacks, and on the other hand totalitarian ideologies are prone to use democracy as a vehicle for reaching their goals. Now, this should not be viewed as a simple black and white opposition between bad totalitarians who want to hijack the goods of our parliamentary democracy. As Hildebrand shows, there are also deep affinities between liberalism and totalitarian systems. There is something inherent in the system which does not allow us to look at liberalism and totalitarianism as simple binary opposites.¹⁰⁶⁶

The idea that totalitarianism emerged as a philosophy of modernity and that it shows affinities with liberalism is not limited to Hildebrand. Among the forerunners of such analysis were often the authors of the socialist or neo-Marxist outlook who directed the analysis primarily towards National Socialism and fascism.¹⁰⁶⁷ Writing in 1941, Erich Fromm recognizes that “the structure of modern society affects man in two ways simultaneously: he becomes more independent, self-reliant, and critical, and he becomes more isolated, alone, and afraid”¹⁰⁶⁸. This isolation resulted in the feeling of powerlessness and the wish to escape aloneness. Authoritarianism emerges as a response to this desire.

Fromm views authoritarianism as a mechanism of escape from freedom which enables one “to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse one's self with somebody or something outside oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking.”¹⁰⁶⁹ Although psychologically this is a mechanism of escape and thus can be considered as an “unhealthy” or “unproductive” behavior (to avoid the language of morality and remain strictly in the domain of psychology), it is understandable since it stems from a real

¹⁰⁶⁵ Lenin.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Obviously, this also does not mean that totalitarian and liberal society are fundamentally the same. There are also important differences between them. As Popper shows, one of them is that democracy is reformable while totalitarianism presents itself as a perfect society. By being reformable, it can improve over time and develop strengthened resilience to oppose totalitarianism. On the other hand, it can also be reformed in a wrong direction so as to sink closer to totalitarianism or outright destruction. Cf. Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945). This trait is not present in totalitarian society and so no attempt on reforming it is possible. The only options which remains is Hildebrand's „ceterum censeo“.

¹⁰⁶⁷ For one of the latest examples, see: Ishay Landa, *The Apprentice's Sorcerer: Liberal Tradition and Fascism*, vol. 18, *Studies in Critical Social Sciences* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010).

¹⁰⁶⁸ Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 124.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Fromm, 163.

psychological need. Therefore, human need to be a part of something bigger and more powerful than himself becomes resolved in authoritarianism. This giving over of oneself becomes brought to extreme in the self-sacrifice of an individual for the aims of the system. In Fromm's view, the problem is not so much that fascism proclaims self-sacrifice as the highest virtue, but because sacrifice becomes an end in itself, and not a means for a deeper spiritual affirmation of the individual.¹⁰⁷⁰ It therefore becomes the pure annihilation of the individual in the hands of the collective.

There are striking similarities between these passages in Fromm's work and Hildebrand's claim that liberal individualism left people yearning for a genuine community and organicity which then got substituted with various collectivistic ideologies. The promise of National Socialism that it will restore the power and dignity to the German nation and to the Aryan race all appealed to this yearning for an organic and not merely a mechanistic community. In communism the solidarity with one's class was more of a deification of the belonging to a class (similarly as Nazism deified the belonging to a racial community), which in turn became the deification of the state once the right class came to power. On a practical level it left people susceptible to surrendering to an amorphous mass instead of a genuine community, which was visible, among other things, in the mass rallies. Both communist and even more National Socialist leaders were experts in utilizing mass psychology in such rallies.

An important difference between Fromm and Hildebrand needs also to be stressed. Fromm's analysis is helpful for understanding the psychological mechanisms behind accepting authoritarianism. But his analysis only goes so far, he does not offer deeper philosophical reasons which would give a principled foundation to oppose totalitarianism. Hildebrand goes a step further. His analysis is primarily anthropological and moral which enables him to criticize political aberrations from first principles. This allows him to see not just how collectivism and totalitarianism exploit mass psychology, but to offer reasons why accepting their claims is wrong.

Recognizing the psychological influence of propaganda and ideology is important to understand the functioning of totalitarian systems, but it is not essential. One can certainly point to examples of how other governments and political systems, as well as modern companies and non-governmental organizations use similar, or even more refined techniques of mass psychology and propaganda to promote their goals. What is essential is not just the degree of

¹⁰⁷⁰ Fromm, 294.

perfection in using the techniques since this way the difference between legitimate and illegitimate uses of the technique would be reduced merely to a difference in degree. The essential difference lies in its relation to the question of truth, including the truth about the good, about the human person and ultimately God.

Hildebrand recognizes that liberalism left people not just yearning for community, but also that its negation of the objective moral law contributed to genesis of a yearning for the objective among people.¹⁰⁷¹ Now, as yearning for community in totalitarianism becomes filled with and idol of collectivism or nationalism instead of belonging to a genuine community, the yearning for the objective opens the doors for great ideological truth-like idols to be offered as a solution. Obviously, the solution is a false one, although it responds from a genuine yearning for community and belonging.

National Socialism found the solution in offering the “great lies” to the people. The lying nature of the regime has found its justification already in Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf* where he says: “In the greatness of a lie always lies the element of ‘being believed’, since wide masses of people... because of the primitive simplicity of their character more easily fall victim to a great lie than a small one, since they themselves occasionally spread small lies, but they would be ashamed to tell a big lie. For this reason, they also cannot believe the possibility of such shameless impudence in others and so, even in the most shameless lie something is left hanging in the air, which is a fact that all lying artisans and organizations are aware of, and therefore they also wickedly implement it.”¹⁰⁷² Nazism did negate objective law but did not leave the space empty. If filled it with different truth-like idols which were convincing, but still were idols which in the end enslaved men. But these idols needed to represent great lies, and there needed to be a great ideological system.

Although it’s solutions to different problems were devoid of any complexity and nuance (e.g. Jews as responsible for war and the financial crisis), the system needed to appear grand and offer solutions to the biggest challenges of the day, at the same time instilling optimism for the glorious future which is to come. For a great lie to function, it needs to be clothed in a big ideological system which contains the utopic, the eschatological, and the quasi-religious elements.

¹⁰⁷¹ Cf. Hildebrand, ‘Der Kampf um die Person’, 3.

¹⁰⁷² Hildebrand, ‘Souveränität des States und erlaubte Einmischung’, 272.

A similar situation happens in the communist system, which uses ideology as a substitute for truth. As the Czech dissident Vaclav Havel explains in his essay *The Power of the Powerless*, the old dictatorships used brute force, but the new ones use much more sophisticated strategies. These regimes use ideology and propaganda to subordinate citizens to their agenda. In his view, aims of totalitarian systems are naturally opposed to the aims of human life and flourishing. Ideology is dangerous because its underlying message is so subtle--in the words of Havel, “It pretends that the requirements of the system derive from the requirements of life. It is a world of appearances trying to pass for reality.”¹⁰⁷³

Ideology offers justification for the power which totalitarian systems exercise on people by providing ready-made answers for people to accept without critical analysis or thought. Havel recognizes that ideology can be “extremely flexible”. This is naturally possible when truth is dethroned, and communication serves only purely practical or political goals. And like the “great lies” that Hitler talks about, communist ideology is also elaborate and complete to the extent that it is almost a secularized religion. As Havel explains: “It offers a ready answer to any question whatsoever; it can scarcely be accepted only in part, and accepting it has profound implications for human life.”¹⁰⁷⁴

Here, the propaganda comes into play to feed people with the information and “knowledge”. In fact, what propaganda offers are partial or one-sided truths in the service of truth-like idols. That is why both National Socialism and communism claim to be scientific; on the one hand we have scientific racial theories, on the other hand we have scientific socialism. Obviously, the “science” here in question, as we have said earlier, does not concern itself with the question of truth itself, but with that which is beneficial from the point of view of the National Socialist or the Communist revolution.

Hitler himself explains that “the function of propaganda is... not to weigh and ponder the rights of different people, but exclusively to emphasize the one right which it has set out to argue for. Its task is not to make an objective study of the truth, in so far as it favors the enemy, and then set it before the masses with academic fairness; its task is to serve our own right, always and unflinchingly”¹⁰⁷⁵. So, propaganda is intentionally one-sided and subjectivist. Its aim is pragmatic – to serve our own interest, not to serve the truth.

¹⁰⁷³ Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (Washington, D.C.: International Center of Nonviolent Conflict, 1978), 9, <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/1979/01/the-power-of-the-powerless.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Havel, 3.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*, 184.

However, it is important to note once more that propaganda is just the practical application. It's persuasiveness, apart from the psychological reasons, comes not from its truth content, but from the coherence with the ideological narrative. Ideology as the system of truth-like idols is a necessary background against which propaganda in a totalitarian system can be efficient and persuasive. In Havel's words: "The whole power structure could not exist at all if there were not a certain 'metaphysical' order binding all its components together... This metaphysical order guarantees the inner coherence of the totalitarian power structure. It is the glue holding it together, its binding principle, the instrument of its discipline."¹⁰⁷⁶ This corresponds to what Hildebrand is saying and to our earlier analyses insofar it shows that basing the political and social system on truth-like idols is not a mere accidental features of the systems of the 20th century, but an essential characteristic of a totalitarian system.

The dethronement of truth and the ideological approach to reality, are in an eminent way manifested in the abuse of language. As Joseph Pieper notes in his insightful essay *Abuse of language, abuse of power*: "Corruption of the relationship to reality, and corruption of communication – these evidently are the two possible forms in which the corruption of the word manifests itself."¹⁰⁷⁷ Instead of conveying reality and communicating it to others, word and language become used as an instrument of power and domination over others. The decisive distinction between language and the corruption of it in Pieper's view lies in having an ulterior motive. As soon as the truth stops being the decisive standard in the public discourse, the public discourse becomes "by its nature ready to serve as an instrument in the hands of any ruler to pursue all kinds of power schemes"¹⁰⁷⁸.

When the language becomes corrupted and starts serving tyranny, it becomes propaganda. And the purpose of propaganda is to conceal the menace and ease people into believing the ideology. What Pieper rightly shows is that propaganda "by no means flows only from the official power structure of a dictatorship", but that "it can be found wherever a powerful organization, an ideological clique, a special interest, or a pressure group uses the word as their 'weapon'"¹⁰⁷⁹. In this sense, the abuse of political power is essentially connected to the abuse of language. This all happens based on the dethronement of truth. The insightful conclusion of Pieper's analyses is when he claims that the latent potential of totalitarianism can be recognized by

¹⁰⁷⁶ Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*, 10.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Josef Pieper, *Abuse of Language Abuse of Power*, First American Edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 16.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Pieper, 31.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Pieper, 32.

observing the public use and misuse of language. So, essence of totalitarianism discloses itself in the relationship to truth and in language, and for this reason it is justified and even more – needed, to examine this relationship closely.

Again, the root problem in the cases of both National Socialism and communism is not so much using the lies and propaganda (one can say that in politics everybody uses them)¹⁰⁸⁰, but the roots of the problem lie in the dethronement of truth. Lies and propaganda are a practical consequence of the dethronement of truth. This also enables us to see why it is correct to claim, as Rocco Buttiglione does, that Hildebrand considers totalitarian any society where the idea of truth is abolished, and its place is taken by the idea of power.¹⁰⁸¹ At first this claim can be puzzling since Hildebrand describes totalitarianism as the doctrine of omnipotence of the state. But this omnipotence can only happen on the background of the dethronement of truth as its essential prerequisite. And when the idea of truth is abolished, what remains is the principle of power in any of the forms it can take (political, economic, etc.).

This also means that the modern liberal democracy is fundamentally susceptible to the propaganda and lies, as well as to totalitarianism, since – as Hildebrand shows, dethronement of truth is also present in liberalism as an ideology which underpins modern democratic society. But, if the modern society does not enthrone the truth once again, it does not really have an adequate method to oppose propagandistic use of lies in the public sphere, the same as it does not have the adequate reasons to oppose totalitarianism from a principled standpoint.¹⁰⁸²

Having said all this, it would be wrong to view liberalism as a mere vehicle for the totalitarian state. Hildebrand correctly notes that liberalism shares some fundamental anthropological presuppositions with totalitarian regimes but does not draw practical consequences from it. However, he does not appreciate enough the practical incompatibility of liberalism and totalitarianism. Liberalism does offer some important safeguards from totalitarianism in terms of structuring the institutions and the public life. The lack of extermination camps in modern liberal democratic societies does not just stem from the fact that liberalism did not draw practical consequences from its anthropological first principles, but it also comes from the fact

¹⁰⁸⁰ Another author with whom we will not deal with here but who deserves credit for describing the use of lies in the communist system is Alexandr Solzhenitsyn. See especially: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 'Live Not by Lies', *Index on Censorship* 33, no. 2 (1 January 2004): 203–7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03064220408537357>.

¹⁰⁸¹ Cf. Buttiglione, 'The Philosophy of History of Dietrich von Hildebrand', 180.

¹⁰⁸² This is most visible in modern forms of populism which uses propaganda to exploit people's grievances and offer oversimplified solutions. For some examples, see: Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom. Russia, Europe, America* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018).

that the institutions and the overall political system is structured in such a way that it is much harder for this to happen.

It is also important to recognize that fundamental contradiction between liberalism and totalitarianism does not come from the latter deifying the state and the former putting the emphasis on the freedom of the individual. In the last instance, the state is not the highest end of the totalitarian system, but it is the Blood, and the People, the Race. This is also recognized by Popper who elaborates the further consequences of this in the context of National Socialist totalitarianism: “The higher races possess the power to create states. The highest aim of a race or nation is to form a mighty state which can serve as a powerful instrument of its self-preservation.”¹⁰⁸³ In a similar manner, the Marxist would say that the state is a tool for the oppression. In the words of the Communist Manifesto: “Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another.”¹⁰⁸⁴ The doctrine of the omnipotence of the state serves merely to endow the state with unlimited political power which, once it is taken over, serves to implement some other ideological goals as the highest end.

Finally, the question who has the power becomes crucial. In totalitarian systems it is the ruling party or the leader himself that become deified.¹⁰⁸⁵ The unlimited power of the state is in his hands, so the state is merely a tool which serves the party or the leader who are the ultimate interpreters and representatives of ideology, which is itself the ultimate justification for the whole system, including the state, the rulers, and their exercise of unlimited power to achieve any aims they wish. (Here once again we see why totalitarianism is necessarily relativistic.) This also proves that possible new forms of totalitarianism will not necessarily deify the state, although they will aim to usurp its power and then extend it limitlessly. What is important is to have unlimited power in one’s hands, the type of idol in whose name this power will be exercised is secondary. Systems of idols (or ideology) is necessary to provide justification for the exercise of power, but different and potentially unlimited number of idols can serve this purpose.

Finally, let us put things in today’s perspective. Both political left and right are in principle calibrated to see the dangers of totalitarian tendencies which threaten to usurp the modern liberal democracy, although both sides are prone to recognize only the dangers which come

¹⁰⁸³ Popper, Ryan, and Gombrich, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 274.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Marx and Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’.

¹⁰⁸⁵ The role of the Party in such constellation is vividly portrayed in Arthur Koestler’s novel *Darkness at Noon*. Cf. Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, Reprint edition (New York: Scribner, 2019).

from the opposite side of political spectrum and not the ones which come from their own group. In this manner, the political left usually recognizes the dangers of racism, nationalism, and right-wing populism¹⁰⁸⁶. In Europe, liberal and socialist politicians often attack the governments of Poland or Hungary for their nationalism or approach to abortion and LGBT issues.¹⁰⁸⁷ In the US, there is a wide spectrum of intellectuals and political leaders who analyze the dangers of the so called “systemic racism”.¹⁰⁸⁸ We will not now venture into examining empirical examples of this or that political leader and the extent to which they can be considered racist or nationalist. Our analysis primarily aims to offer insights and contributions on the level of first principles, not on the empirical level.

One thing we can note, however. There seems to be a lack of understanding among the modern political elites that populism, nationalism and racism are often reactions to the dominant political narrative. Many political leaders decry populism and at the same time contribute to its growth by denigrating large groups of citizens and excluding them (at least rhetorically) from the legitimate public discourse. Such disenfranchisement and exclusion from the political life leaves people hungry for political participation. Similar thing happens with large international organizations like the United Nations or the European Union which show the lack of connection with people due to the large bureaucratization in which the people do not feel empowered to participate. Due to their large complexity, these organizations are often heavily influenced by the non-governmental organizations or lobbying groups which are skilled in promoting their particular interests through these organizations.

This is an example of how the groups with more economic and political power, and skills in navigating through the bureaucratic procedures can use democratic procedures to promote their own agendas which are not necessarily in line with the common good and the fundamental values of society. So, they often promote policies which are contrary to the values of large groups of people and leave the impression that the international community is imposing those

¹⁰⁸⁶ See, among others: Ulrike M. Vieten and Scott Poynting, ‘Contemporary Far-Right Racist Populism in Europe’, *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37, no. 6 (Studen 2016): 533–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2016.1235099>; Prerna Singh, ‘Populism, Nationalism, and Nationalist Populism’, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 3 July 2021, 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-021-09337-6>; Joseph Gerteis and Alyssa Goolsby, ‘Nationalism in America: The Case of the Populist Movement’, *Theory and Society* 34, no. 2 (2005): 197–225; Anna Kende and Péter Krekó, ‘Xenophobia, Prejudice, and Right-Wing Populism in East-Central Europe’, *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, Political Ideologies, 34 (Kolovoz 2020): 29–33, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2019.11.011>.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Cf. Daniel Boffey, ‘MEPs Back Action against European Commission over Poland and Hungary’, *The Guardian*, 10 June 2021, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/10/meps-back-action-against-european-commission-over-rule-of-law-sanctions>.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Cf. Shinobu Kitayama, ‘What is Systemic About Systemic Racism?’, *APS Observer* 33 (30 November 2020), <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/systemic-racism>.

policies against the will of the people.¹⁰⁸⁹ A consequence is that many groups of people feel like they are coerced into accepting new idols and at the same time do not feel welcomed or empowered to participate in the decision-making process at these institutions (regardless of numerous well-intentioned campaigns by these institutions which want to popularize the public participation in the decision-making processes).

And this is where populism comes into play. Populism is partly a reaction to the feeling of disenfranchisement of large numbers of people to whom it offers a possibility to express themselves, their interests, and their values in the public sphere. More often than not, populist movements are also characterized by ideology which offers truth-like idols of their own. These idols are sometimes derivations from the old idols, such as in the case of nationalism, and sometimes they are new idols which emerge out of the contemporary political and social context, like in the case of exploiting anti-immigrant sentiments.

Anti-immigrant ideologies are a problem of its own since they often include an additional anti-personalist element to it. In some, although rarer occasion, this anti-personalism is coupled with strong dehumanizing language¹⁰⁹⁰ similar to the one employed by the National Socialist regime when describing Jews in terms of sub-human categories such as parasites, bacilli, leeches, etc. Now, obviously this statement does not want to negate the fact that illegal immigration is a complex problem, that countries have the right to regulate their borders, and that there is an important difference between immigrant and asylum seekers. Having all this in mind, there is still an observable phenomenon – if only within the smaller part of political leaders and the populace – which is characterized by the anti-personalism that Hildebrand talks about. Such anti-personalism directed towards immigrants is definitely among the bigger political evils of today's society.

Those idols like nationalism which are derivatives of the old nationalistic idols are also put in a modern context and nowadays they often become directed against the supranational institutions or globalist economic expansion. Less often they are also directed towards other

¹⁰⁸⁹ This is also visible with those who are actually participating in the decision-making processes, like the smaller States at the United Nations. They often issue statements and reservations on the international political documents that are adopted, with the argument that certain statements in these documents contradict the values and customs of their nations. See, for example: 'Programme of Action Adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994' (United Nations Population Fund, 2004), 147–66, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/PoA_en.pdf.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Cf. Andreas Musolff, 'Dehumanizing Metaphors in UK Immigrant Debates in Press and Online Media', *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 3, no. 1 (15 October 2015): 47–50, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.3.1.02mus>.

nations with which their nation had historical animosities or rivalries. What Hildebrand's analysis enables us to understand is that it is of secondary importance towards which enemy nationalism is directed. What is essential is to recognize that nationalism is wrong in principle since it represents a form of collective egoism and putting the preference of one's own nation above the rights of other nations and peoples. It also goes against the needed collaboration between nations and communities of different levels. So, nationalism definitely represents one of the idols which is today offered as a false alternative to disenfranchisement and imposition of different unjust policies from the political elites. Although the initial sentiment from which these movements emerge might be justified, their proposed solution is an idol which is therefore unjust.

The modern type of nationalism is often coupled with the so called "souverenism" which absolutizes national sovereignty and promotes often radical skepticism towards international collaboration and international organizations as such. Similar as the National Socialists opposed the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, modern souverinists oppose the United Nation, the European Union, and other international organizations. This does not mean that modern political organizations do not act unjustly, the same as the Treaty of Versailles and the process of drafting it could be considered unjust towards Germany in some respects. Those grievances can be legitimate, but the response of souverinism is not.

This souverinism is illegitimate since it does not recognize two facts. First, the fact that no nation is absolutely sovereign and that in principle only God can be absolutely sovereign. As Hildebrand shows, the state is a legitimate authority, but its sphere of authority is strictly limited to the sphere of meaning of the state and especially it is limited by the precepts of the objective moral law. Also, in the international arena, the rights and interests of one nation are limited by the rights and interests of other nations. Secondly, there is an inherent need in the essence of each nation to collaborate with others. Different nations and their cultural identities mutually enrich each other and only in collaboration with other nations can one nation fully flourish. In the end, closing a nation to collaboration with the others can only be destructive for one's own nation and its people.

Finally, we can briefly mention racism¹⁰⁹¹. All previous elaborations give enough evidence to conclude that any form of racism which would put one race above the other is wrong, regardless

¹⁰⁹¹ This does not mean that the problem is less important, but that we have already treated it substantially in the larger part of this dissertation.

of many different forms the modern racism can take. We will refrain here from going deeper into the most interesting political question in today's context and this is whether the racist elements in the Western society are systemic or not – the question which is very actual in the political debates within the United States. We can just sketch a Hildebrandian answer to this question. Although he does not analyze the United States in particular, he does speak about the Christian Western culture in general. If we take the United States as a part of this Western culture (although with its important differences), then we can certainly say that racism is quite the opposite of this culture. This culture draws on the riches of Christianity and believes in the unity of the humankind and the equal dignity of every human being regardless of race or any other differences. Therefore, there can exist no racism in the essence of the cultural identity of the Christian West. That it has historically actually existed and that it represented a gross violation of human dignity and rights, that goes without saying.

As there are illegitimate idols and potential totalitarian (or at least authoritarian) tendencies on the political right, the same is true of the political left.¹⁰⁹² Let us mention just some of the threats to human dignity and freedom which arise today on the political left. One of the centrally important phenomena in the modern society is the misuse of language and the exclusion of opposing political ideas from the legitimate public discourse. All this can happen only in the context in which the truth is dethroned. This is typical for modern political ideologies which draw their roots from Marxism. As it was said earlier, in Marxist theory all philosophy, morality, and thought in general are a product of one's class consciousness and the economic conditions in which this class operates. Similar thing happens in National Socialism which rejects certain ideas by calling them Jewish. So, a claim could be discarded because it is "bourgeois" or "Jewish" without evaluating its content in terms of truth.

Nowadays, different statements and people who utter them are apriori discarded from the legitimate domain of the public speech under the pretext that they are conservative, fascist, clerical, or relict of the Middle Ages. Within the context of the United States, the saying "check your privilege" is also very popular, which in certain usages implies that all that one says is the outgrowth of him belonging to a certain racial group (i.e. whites). And by belonging to this group, everything he says is automatically illegitimate. Now, this does not imply that historically the white race did not have privileges which they should be conscious of or that

¹⁰⁹² For some more recent examples of the criticism of left-wing totalitarian threats in a modern democracy coming from the conservative perspective, see: Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy*; Zbigniew Janowski and Ryszard Legutko, *Homo Americanus: The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy in America*, 1st edition (South Bend: St. Augustines Press, 2021).

conservative people cannot say false or evil things, on the contrary. The problem lies in the fact that their political positions are apriori discarded without examining the truth-content of their claims. It is not that the statement is wrong but that the person who is saying is belongs to the wrong group.

Even more than Popper's fallibilism, some methodological presupposition of phenomenology as Hildebrand understands it are helpful in this regard to improve the conditions of the public debates of today.¹⁰⁹³ Phenomenology warns against building premature constructions and explanation which would get in our way of directly experiencing the given. This faithfulness to experience requires that we suspend, at least for a certain period, our preconceived notions about reality, and everything we inherited from the tradition, past theories and one can add – the ideology that we are promoting. We should allow reality to judge ideology and not vice versa. A connected problem are premature classifications and labelling a certain theory or statement as Thomist, Hegelian, conservative, liberal, bourgeois, Jewish, conservative etc. and implying that therefore we know everything there is to know about this theory. Explanations and theories need to be analyzed in their own respect for any merit they might have, regardless of who said them or which system of thought they are a part of. Truth is truth even if an evil person says it.

Giving priority to reality instead of preconceived concepts or system of ideas is probably the key difference between genuine philosophy and science on the one hand, and ideology on the other. Although ideology is sometimes understood in a neutral way, i.e. merely as an organized system of ideas¹⁰⁹⁴, we believe that understanding ideology in this way cannot show the difference between ideology and a genuine philosophical or scientific system. If a school of philosophical thought and an ideology are essentially the same thing, then we could at least subsume them under one name (this is basically what Marxist do by calling all philosophy ideology.) Considering all our previous analyses, we take the other view to be more convincing. Ideology is a system of ideas which gives priority to the ideas themselves, instead of giving priority to reality as it is given to us in experience. In an ideology, the ideas are the measure of all things; in philosophy and science, the reality is the measure of all ideas and theories.

In Marxism this is exemplified, among other things, in interpretations that in whichever context communism failed, that it was not a real communism. Interestingly, this is in contradiction with

¹⁰⁹³ Recall the chapter on philosophical roots of Hildebrand's thought.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Cf. Michael Freedman, 'Ideology', in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415249126-S030-1>.

certain thoughts of Marx himself. In *The Theses on Feuerbach* Marx states: “The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking, in practice.”¹⁰⁹⁵ This would imply that if the implementation of the communist system failed in practice, this fact should serve at least in part as a falsification for the communist doctrine. However, in actual communist systems this does not happen. Ultimate standard of truth becomes the reality created by communist system, even if it contradicts certain Marxist doctrines. For example, Marxism conceives revolution as a creative movement toward classless society without any kind of alienation, but in actual communist systems new forms of alienation emerge and undermine the fundamental conception of the revolutionary process.¹⁰⁹⁶

Regardless of this fact, the system remains standing as the criterion of truth. Whenever experience falsifies ideology, it is not that ideology is adjusted (at least not substantially) but the answer is prepared that reality was not what it appeared to be. Since the science of history cannot be wrong, something else must really have happened than that what we thought had happened. Part of this Popper gets right in his analyses when recognizing the fundamental impossibility of falsifying Marxism. Whatever proof or fact one would point to, the system is always right. In this regard fallibilism is compatible with the phenomenological method for directing the inquiry into reality in the public sphere. Obviously, the phenomenological method that we sketched in the earlier chapters goes much further and provides richer and more accurate approach for investigating reality. It is a method that when applied to public and social discourse can be used to discern between truths and truth-like idols, between apriori and empirical essences, between genuine philosophy and science, and ideology. In the past, phenomenology was mostly done outside the political realm, but it is a task for the phenomenologists of the future to apply and further develop the phenomenological method for the use in a public sphere.

Probably the biggest political malaise coming from the left is the widespread anti-personalism which manifests itself in the support of abortion, and to the lesser extent, euthanasia, and

¹⁰⁹⁵ Karl Marx, ‘Theses on Feuerbach’, in *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, Marx/Engels Internet Archive, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 13–15, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Hannah Arendt makes the similar point when she says: “Totalitarian politics—far from being simply antisemitic or racist or imperialist or communist—use and abuse their own ideological and political elements until the basis of factual reality, from which the ideologies originally derived their strength and their propaganda value—the reality of class struggle, for instance, or the interest conflicts between Jews and their neighbors—have all but disappeared.” Cf. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, xv.

population control policies. The issue of abortion is the clearest embodiment of the dethronement of truth, anti-personalism, negating objective morality and unjustly extending the sphere of competences of the state - all centered in one issue. It also shows how all these problems can find their place within democracy, and at the same time gain a widespread support among the populace. For this reason, we will put a bigger emphasis on this issue and leave out the questions of euthanasia and population control policies for some other studies.

Firstly, let us examine how the dethronement of truth manifests itself in this issue. There is a basic scientific fact that the life of a new human being begins at conception.¹⁰⁹⁷ This being already at a unicellular level possesses ontological traits of a complete organism and can justifiably be considered a person.¹⁰⁹⁸ Now, this fact becomes regularly relativized in the public discourse.¹⁰⁹⁹ Instead, abortion is clothed in well-sounding phrases without necessary reference to truth. One of the most striking examples is the motto “abortion saves lives” which implies that legal abortion reduces the number of maternal deaths, while it does not say anything about the fetuses. The claim that legal abortion reduces maternal deaths is in itself contested¹¹⁰⁰. However, even if it were completely true, it completely disregards the other connected truths, primarily the one that abortion terminates the life of an embryo or a fetus.

While the truth about the beginning of life of a fetus is dethroned, new absolutes are established in its stead. One of them is the so called “right to abortion” which becomes absolutized and established as a truth-like idol. Regardless of the fact that the “right to abortion” does not exist as an internationally recognized human right and that this fact is accepted even by some of those who would like that such right exists¹¹⁰¹, and if we would accept that abortion is kind of a right which stems from the right to autonomy, still it would represent an illegitimate absolutization of such right at the expense of other and more fundamental rights. Putting one’s

¹⁰⁹⁷ See the long list of references at: ‘Life Begins at Fertilization with the Embryo’s Conception’, accessed 5 January 2022, <https://www.princeton.edu/~prolife/articles/embryoquotes2.html>.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Cf. Rodrigo Guerra López, ‘Comprender El Inicio. Elementos Biológicos y Antropológicos Para La Definición Del Embrión Humano Unicelular (Cigoto)’ (VIII Jornadas De La Asociación Española de Personalismo «Bioética Personalista: Fundamentación, práctica, perspectivas», Valencia: Universidad Católica de Valencia, 2012).

¹⁰⁹⁹ For example, in 2008 Nancy Pelosi, the US Speaker of the House of Representatives, stated, “I don’t think anybody can tell you when ... human life begins.” Her sentiment has been echoed by then Senator Biden, who said that he believes life begins at conception, but that this is merely a religious opinion that could not legitimately be the basis for public policy. Cited in: Maureen L. Condit, ‘When Does Human Life Begin? A Scientific Perspective’, *Westchester Institute White Paper Series* 1, no. 1 (2008).

¹¹⁰⁰ Meghan Grizzle Fischer, *Maternal Health White Paper* (New York: World Youth Alliance, 2012), https://www.wya.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/WYA_maternal_health_white_paper.pdf.

¹¹⁰¹ Grégor Puppink, ‘Conscientious Objection in the Medical Field in European and International Law’, in *Law and Prevention of Abortion in Europe* (Amersfoort: Sallux Publishing, 2016), 129.

autonomy above other's right to life is a clear example of taking certain values out of their proper hierarchy and connection to other values. From this also comes their persuasiveness. Autonomy is certainly something important for a human person, and for this reason claims for autonomy have a strong appeal. This is even more true in our time which can be called "the age of autonomy" or of the liberal epoch, as Hildebrand calls it.

One could argue in this place that there is a tendency inherent to a liberal democratic system to expand the recognized list of human rights, and in this regard, the right to abortion could justifiably be established as a right of a new generation. If we accept this narrative, we could also argue that there is a similar expansion in terms of which human beings should be recognized as persons and bearers of rights. In the Athenian democracy of the 5th century BC citizens have enjoyed certain rights, but women, slaves and foreigners were not bearers of these rights. French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 grants a list of rights, but only to the "active citizens", which are not women, children, slaves, and foreigners. Similar things could be said of the "rights of Englishmen" in the British colonies in early Modernity. So, even if we cannot be certain that some groups of humans (like fetuses) are persons, it would definitely be in line with the fundamental precepts of the liberal-democratic tradition to err on the side of recognizing more humans as persons rather than less.

Now, the biggest problem for the liberal society comes from the fact that the demands for the widely accessible, legal, free, etc. abortion, undermine the foundations of the liberal democratic society. It is widely accepted by liberals and conservatives alike that the right to life is, if not the most fundamental, then among the few fundamental rights which need to be protected by the society and the legal system. The right to life is enshrined in the article 3 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in numerous other international treaties and national constitutions.¹¹⁰² In the terminology of Isaiah Berlin, it is among the rights that represent the frontier to our freedom which cannot be crossed. At the same time, it is consistently undermined.

And here we can see that the liberal ideology does not have the tools to fundamentally oppose the attacks on the fundamental values on which the liberal democratic society rests (in this case, the right to life and protection of this life by the state for every human being equally). Here also Jacques Maritain's observation that the modern human rights project is not morally substantiated becomes clearly exemplified. From the same human rights treaties, one derives

¹¹⁰² United Nations, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

both the right to abortion in the name of right to privacy or right to autonomy, and the opposition to abortion in the name of the right to life. Since the human rights framework is not filled with (enough) moral and anthropological content that is true, through nuanced language games and legal interpretations completely contradictory rights are derived. The aim of the interpretations is not the truth but asserting one's ideology. Manipulation of language and propaganda are all justified since the truth as such is not the standard of the discourse. What remains is the sheer exercise of power through language.

Maybe the most striking example of such contradictions in the interpretation of human rights is represented by the General Comment 36 on the right to life of the UN Human Rights Committee. In the paragraph 8, the UN Committee aims to establish that the States parties need to liberalize their abortion laws and remove the ~~remove~~ existing barriers to abortion, including the exercise of conscientious objection by individual medical providers.¹¹⁰³ The perfidious nature of this comment comes not so much from the fact that it promotes abortion as a right, but that it does so in the name of protection of the right to life. So, now it turns out it is not just that abortion is not the violation of the right to life, but it is even more – the act of protection of the right to life. If Pieper is right when he says that the first traces of totalitarianism are observable in the public discourse, then this example is where we should be looking at in the contemporary context.

Now, with the expansion of bureaucracy and political power of the international institutions, those with more skill and influence – and these are primarily specialized non-governmental organizations, interest groups and lobbyists – learned how to navigate and influence the decision-making procedures more effectively.¹¹⁰⁴ And so they managed to inscribe their own content in the framework of human rights, without caring for the question whether it contradicts the basic moral precepts of society. The ideology needed to assert itself, even if this is to be done through the sheer force and without any interest for a genuine dialogue. Democratic procedures were only the necessary tools (or obstacles) which needed to be used to gain power. But the final outcome did not care for democracy, only for assertion of ideology.

Once the political power was gained, the competences of these political institutions tended to expand precisely to implement the ideology more widely and more effectively. Concretely, the

¹¹⁰³ Similarly, in a paragraph after this one, the Comments says that the States should prevent aim to suicide but also that they should allow assisted suicide in certain circumstances. Cf. 'General Comment No. 36 on Article 6 - on Right to Life (CCPR/C/GC/36)' (UN Human Rights Committee, 3 September 2019), para. 8.

¹¹⁰⁴ Cf. Glendon, 'Foundations of Human Rights', 8-12.

“right to abortion” and several other claimed rights of the new generation were imposed on countries which did not want to liberalize their abortion laws. Even international humanitarian aid was often conditioned by the liberalization of abortion and other laws. Other rights, like the right to freedom of conscience or the right to free speech were under attack as an obstacle to the assertion of new absolutes.¹¹⁰⁵ The state and the international political institutions started overstepping its spheres of competences by entering the field of individual conscience in the matters of morality. International institutions, like the EU and the UN, started overstepping the principle of subsidiarity by interfering with national abortion policies which according to the international treaties lie outside their sphere of competences.¹¹⁰⁶ The principle of subsidiarity now started to be viewed as a procedural obstacle which needs to be overcome in order to implement ideology on all levels of society. So, here again, dethronement of truth and anti-personalism opened the door for totalitarianism. Proceduralism was merely a practical obstacle for totalitarian tendencies, but there were not fundamental safeguards.

All this serves to show how today’s society which claims to champion freedom and human rights, is very susceptible to totalitarian usurpation. Now, we do not want to claim that today we have such widespread totalitarianism as it was the case with National Socialism and communism. Despite the gruesome abortion practices, attacks on free speech and the freedom of conscience, as well as occurrences of racism and depersonalization of immigrants, the Western society is still much freer and more just than totalitarian societies of the 20th century. It would be wrong to exaggerate the problem to such an extent to disregard the positive aspects of today’s society. This would also reduce the credibility for seeing through real political evils and publicly denouncing them when they actually occur.

It should be noted that today the accusations of totalitarianism coming from both sides of political spectrum are often exaggerated and serve as a rhetorical tool to exclude the political opponents from the public debate. This we wanted to avoid. We have also attempted to provide philosophical methods for discerning between the legitimate and illegitimate accusations of totalitarianism. Like in the story of the boy who cried wolf, we do not want to cry “totalitarianism” where it is not justified. But at the same time, we want to be on guard from totalitarian tendencies from which our political system is not completely free.

¹¹⁰⁵ For a longer discussion on this issue, see: Hrvoje Vargić, ‘Priziv savjesti u medicini: pravo liječnika ili uskrata skrbi?’, *Jahr: europski časopis za bioetiku* 12, no. 1 (11 october 2021): 19–44.

¹¹⁰⁶ See, for example: Predrag Matić, ‘REPORT on the Situation of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the EU, in the Frame of Women’s Health, 2020/2215(INI)’, accessed 5 January 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0169_EN.html.

Finally, for totalitarianism to actually emerge and establish itself, two general conditions need to be met. First, there are philosophical and anthropological fundamentals of the kind we were describing in this dissertation. Secondly, there are also historical and empirical conditions which enable totalitarianism to flourish. In the past, these have included severe economic deprivation, grievances caused by the Treaty of Versailles (in the case of National Socialism) or the exploitation of workers (in the case of communism), wide mobilization of the masses etc. Hildebrand does not analyze these conditions in details and other studies on totalitarianism have gone into more depth in analyzing these occurrences.¹¹⁰⁷ Since the historical conditions are contingent, it is impossible to predict with absolute certainty that under similar conditions as the ones just described, a new totalitarianism will emerge. Some new political, economic, and historical conditions might also show fruitful for that in the future. However, it is certain that both the ideal and the empirical element need to be realized for a totalitarianism to emerge.

In our investigations we have mainly focused on the level of ideas and first principles but have not ventured into a thorough analysis of the historical, cultural, and economic conditions which contribute to the rise of totalitarianism. This we leave for some other works. However, through the analysis of essences, both empirical and ideal ones, that manifest themselves in politics, we have tried to elaborate how totalitarian tendencies emerge today and how they interact with the liberal-democratic framework dominant in most of the Western world. We have also implicitly showed that phenomenological approach to philosophy is not reserved purely for the domain of theoretical philosophy, but that it provides an adequate method for understanding political phenomena. This gives us hope and direction for conducting further phenomenological research in the field of political philosophy, the work that so far was not undertaken on a wider scale.

¹¹⁰⁷ The work of Hannah Arendt is the best example of such study. Cf. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Conclusion

In this dissertation we have examined the political philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand and have critically assessed its applicability in today's political context. Hildebrand's political thought and his philosophy in general are of enormous quality and importance but to this day it remains largely unexplored outside small circles of the personalist and realist-phenomenological philosophers. One of the purposes of our investigation was to show the relevance that Hildebrand's political philosophy possess still today, since it enables us to understand complex issues in today's politics from their first principles.

The roots of Hildebrand's philosophy can be traced back to the early phenomenological movement and his studies with Husserl, Scheler, and especially Reinach. Early phenomenologists were deeply realist and objectivist in their approach to philosophy. They wanted to overcome the dominant subjectivist and relativist philosophies of the time and establish a method which would ground philosophy as a rigorous science. Hildebrand shared those precepts but was never a mere follower of a movement or of certain philosophers. He was an original thinker who furthered the understanding of the given and achieved the full *prise de conscience* of value, love, community, and other phenomena that he investigated.

Although he never developed systematic political philosophy, his original discoveries in ethics, anthropology, social ontology, and philosophy of love provided grounds for his principled opposition to National Socialism, communism and liberalism. Another root of his philosophy was his Christian personalism which illuminated his view of man and his relationship to God and to the world of values. Although he clearly distinguished his purely philosophical work from the insights gained from revelation, his faith illuminated his philosophical insights and helped him to see more clearly the issues he was dealing with.

Hildebrand himself was characterized by his deep reverence for truth and the freedom from all passing influences of the spirit of the time, which enabled him very early on to recognize and denounce the dangers of National Socialism. Already in the early 1920s, when the gross atrocities which will be committed were still far away, he saw through the deceptive and evil nature of the National Socialist ideology. By using the phenomenological method and by looking into the essences of things, he was able to understand the fundamental precepts of National Socialism, communism, and liberalism. And from this essential analysis he was able to understand the errors of these ideologies even before they fully manifested themselves in history.

The fight he was conducting was not merely an abstract intellectual endeavor. Hildebrand personally suffered by losing the professorship in Prague and needing to flee first from Germany, and later also from Austria. Despite this, he considered that radically opposing the growing threat of National Socialism is his personal mission. Although he was not very political, he decided to opt for political activism due to the severity of the situation.

Most of Hildebrand's political works were written during his Vienna years in the 1930's. They are mostly written in the form of essays published in the journal *Der Christliche Ständestaat*, which he founded with the support of the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. In this regard, Hildebrand's writings are strongly contextual in addressing phenomena which were present in his cultural and historic milieu. Since his audience were predominantly Catholic intellectuals, he often speaks against the tendencies happening in these circles, such as the attempt to reconcile National Socialism and Christianity, or merely shrink from political debate and participation in political life. At the same time, his analyses are deeply philosophical and are able to penetrate the first principles of the things he analyses.

Through this essential analysis he was able to discover several fundamental errors on which National Socialism, communism, and liberalism rest. One of the most important errors that he discovers is the dethronement of truth which is present in all three ideologies and which we consider to be the chief insight for understanding the political evils of today. With the dethronement of truth, the fall of objective moral values also happens. The only standard which remains in this context is that which is beneficial for my party, race, class, revolution of this or that kind. Connected to this is the anti-personalism in which the spiritual nature of man is negated. The man becomes reduced to the material sphere, or his vital sphere becomes viewed as a chief determinant for his overall being. Finally, the man becomes separated from God and religion becomes viewed in purely pragmatist and instrumental terms. The truth, the good, the person, and God become instruments of ideology.

The last decisive step is the doctrine of the omnipotence of the state, which allows the state to overstep its legitimate sphere of competence and enjoy unlimited power. Unrestricted by the demands of truth, natural law, human dignity, or religion, and endowed with unlimited power, the regime is able to establish total domination, that is, totalitarianism.

What we wanted to show is that Hildebrand's analysis is not just applicable to understanding totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, but that it can be used to illuminate today's political context. Despite certain weakness in Hildebrand's philosophy in terms of understanding the

nature of fascism or the Austrian genius, as well not appreciating enough certain contributions of liberalism, Hildebrand's analysis of the fundamental ideas behind National Socialism, communism and liberalism remains actual and can be used to understand totalitarian tendencies in today's society, especially in their interplay with liberal-democratic society.

In the last chapter we have attempted to map out such application of Hildebrand's philosophy to modern political context. We have shown how the dethronement of truth can be understood more fundamentally as dethronement of true absolutes (not just truth, but also value, person, and God) and establishment of new idols, regardless of which those new idols might be – race, class, nation, or anything else. By viewing things in this light, we were able to recognize how different political evils and totalitarian tendencies exist today on both sides of political spectrum. We have made just a cursory glance on some of them: nationalism, racism, souverenism, censorship of speech and abortion. Naturally, the importance of these topics would require a much longer study for which we would need much more space than this dissertation allows. By recognizing that some issues that we raised in this regard were not sufficiently treated, we hope that they at least opened the door for understanding these phenomena within the framework of Hildebrand's political philosophy.

We also wanted to show the inherent weaknesses in the system which make our society susceptible to totalitarian inroads, as well as some concrete examples of such inroads coming from all sides of political spectrum. They might be scattered and not so widespread as in the past, but they are still there. It is the task of a philosopher to analyze the dominant ideologies and political events from first principles and create an adequate judgement on their essences, even before they fully manifest themselves in history. Such understanding gives us direction and helps in promoting and protecting human dignity in society and politics. We hope that this dissertation at least partly managed to provide this understanding.

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