

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH SEMINAR ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE

Directed by Dr. Josef Maria Seifert

The seminar will last five days (March 8-13, 2024) consisting of two distinct parts.

The first part, “Understanding Love with Dietrich von Hildebrand, Josef Pieper, and Josef Seifert” will be of take place March 8-11, while the second part, “Spousal Love and The Meaning Of Human Sexuality,” is takes place March 11-13. You can register for both sessions or only one.

The official language of the event will be **English** but short contributions in German, Italian, Spanish and French will be admitted.

Goal

Just as in all research seminars offered by the Dietrich von Hildebrand Institute of Philosophy and Realist Phenomenological Research (DHIP), the goal of this seminar is to be a guide for each participant to philosophize about some urphenomenon (original datum). This seminar is dedicated to the nature of love. We aim to avoid any kind of reductionism that does not do justice to that urphenomenon of love but reduces it to sexual *libido*, to a search for one’s happiness, to self-love, to sympathy, to fulfilling one’s social needs, to respecting other persons, etc.

The important texts used should serve only to help discover the nature of love itself, thus allowing criticisms of the books used.

The DHIP Seminars are guided by the words of Thomas Aquinas:

“Studium philosophiae non est ad hoc quod sciatur quod homines senserint, sed qualiter se habeat veritas rerum. — The study of philosophy does not aim at knowing what people thought but what the truth of things is.”
(Thomas Aquinas, De Coelo et Mundo, I, 22, no 9)

Seminar Description

First Part (March 8–11, 2024)

Understanding Love With Dietrich Von Hildebrand, Josef Pieper, And Josef Seifert

The text we will use as starting point of our philosophizing about love will be Dietrich von Hildebrand's *Das Wesen der Liebe*¹ / *The Nature of Love*,² arguably the most comprehensive and rigorous philosophical work on love of all times. (The Director of the Seminar had the unique opportunity as a very young man to discuss this work with Hildebrand, chapter by chapter, repeatedly and extensively, during ten years prior to its publication in 1971.)

The book answers many crucial questions about the essence of love, as it disclosed itself to him in so many rich and intense experiences of love during his long and dramatic life.

But also negative experiences of disappointed or betrayed love, or of pure opposites of love from their first moment on, such as when we are the object of envy or hatred, can provide an experience of love as their opposite.

A properly philosophical understanding of the essence of love, however, always requires our ascent to the pure essence and idea of love, in the light of which the limits and defects of all earthly human love become patent, and through which we discover the object of the deepest human longing for perfect love.

Besides Hildebrand's masterwork, we will also take into account some further developments and corrections of Hildebrand's answers,³ always seeking beyond all texts and their meaning the "thing of love itself."

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The following are some of the most important questions addressed and answered in Hildebrand's *The Essence of Love*:

- Do we love another person for his or her own sake?
- Is love an irrational feeling of attraction or an adequate spiritual response to the other person in virtue of her intrinsic preciousness as person? Is love a "value response"?

¹ *Das Wesen der Liebe*, Dietrich von Hildebrand. *Gesammelte Werke* III (Regensburg: J. Habel, 1971), 2e Aufl., italienisch-deutsch (Milano: Pompiani, 2003).

² Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, trans. John F. Crosby with John Henry Crosby (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2009) – abbr. NL, also in Italian and Spanish, *La esencia del amor*, (Pamplona: EUNSA, 1998),

³ See, for example, Josef Seifert, *True Love*. (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine Press, 2015); ders., "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*, vol 91, Nr. 4: 737-745.

⁴ See, for example, Josef Seifert, *True Love*. (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine Press, 2015); ders., "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*, vol 91, Nr. 4: 737-745.

- Or is it a mere immanent striving, an appetitus that just aims at our happiness and fulfilment? (Hildebrand NL ch 1, Seifert TL⁵)?
- Or is love motivated by our pleasure or happiness and is the beloved person just taken as a means for them?
- Is the “mine of love” fruit of a sincere self-donation or of a will to possession? (Hildebrand NL ch. 8),
- Is love a response to some values in a person, possessed by him/her (intelligence, beauty or kindness) or to a unique central value that the person possesses in himself/herself qua person?
- What is that value and dignity of the person as such that enkindles love? Is it the same intrinsic dignity that inspires respect (*Achtung*), or does it require a knowledge and being moved by an inner beauty of this value of the person as such?
- Do all persons possess the same dignity and value as a whole that calls for love or are there 4 quite different sources and dimensions of this value of the dignity of persons, some of which not every person possesses, as Seifert argued?⁶
- Is love a pure response of the intellect, does it consist in a judgment “How good that you exist!” (Pieper)⁷, or is it a feeling (an affective response of the heart), or a pure act of the will, as many medieval philosophers thought, or is it a response of the heart that calls for a free sanction of the will (Hildebrand), or is it originally a response of the intellect, of the will *and* of the heart that should unite into *one love* that proceeds from all our faculties of intellect, will, and heart (Seifert, TL)?
- Is its desire for union (*intentio unionis*) or its benevolence (the *intentio benevolentiae*) the primary characteristic of love? Is the desire of union an egocentric element of love that takes away from the purity of its moment of self-donation or is it an increase of self-donation, a super-value response (Hildebrand NL ch. 6, and 11) and important part of one of the three gifts (forms of self-donation) of love?
- What is the benevolence of love (the *intentio benevolentiae*)? (Hildebrand NL ch. 7, Seifert⁸)?

⁵ Josef Seifert, *True Love*. (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine Press, 2015) – abbr. TL.

⁶ Josef Seifert: “Is the Right to Life or is another Right the most Fundamental Human Right?”

- das ‘Urgrundrecht’: Human Dignity, Moral Obligations, Natural Rights, and Positive Rights?”, *Journal of East-West Thought*, Winter Nr. 4 Vol. 3, December 2013, pp. 11-31; „Dimensionen und Quellen der Menschenwürde“, in: Walter Schweidler, Herbert A. Neumann, Eugen Brysch (Ed.), *Menschenleben – Menschenwürde. Interdisziplinäres Symposium zur Bioethik*, Hans-Jürgen Kaatsch and Hartmut Kreß (Ed.), *Ethik interdisziplinär*, Vol. 3, (Hamburg/München/London: LIT Verlag, 2003), pp. 51-92. Also Google Book:

https://books.google.at/books/about/Menschenleben_Menschenw%C3%BCrde.html?id=52zLgeLiEZMC&redir_esc=y
Auch im Dialog mit dem Islam:

https://www.academia.edu/5764183/Menschenw%C3%BCrde_und_Menschenrechte_Dialog_mit_dem_Islam
Und mit Kant:

“Grandezas Y insuficiencias de la filosofía kantiana de la dignidad humana. Un análisis crítico”, in: Ignacio García de Leániz (ed.), *De nobis ipsis silemos. Homenaje a Juan Miguel Palacios*, (Madrid: Encuentro, 2010, pp. 173-204.

⁷ Josef Pieper, *Über die Liebe* (München: Kösel, 1985), also in English: *About Love*, (Chicago: Tranciscan Herald Press, 1974); Faith Hope and Love.

⁸ Josef Seifert, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on Benevolence in Love and Friendship: A Masterful Contribution to Perennial Philosophy,” in *Journal of Philosophical Inquiry and Discussion: Selected Papers on the Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand, Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 85–106. Also audio/video registration <http://www.hildebrandlegacy.org/main.cfm?r1=7.50&r2=1.00&r3=1.00&r4=0.00&id=109&level=3>.

- What are the different 3 credits of love (Hildebrand NL ch. 3, 11)?
- How is love related positively and negatively to moral virtue (DH NL ch. 12)? What is the role of fidelity in love DH NL ch. 12, 13?
- Are there fundamentally different categories of love, each of which has a different essence (*logos*)?
- Is agape (caritas) a new kind of love that transforms all categories of love (spousal love, friendship, parental love) into the same category of the love of neighbor, or does it constitute itself in the love of God, is the ground of the category of love of neighbor (to a person foreign or even enemy to us), but also permeates and perfects all categories of love, fully respecting, preserving and fulfilling the specific *logos* of spousal love, friendship, parental and filial love (Hildebrand, NL ch.11)?
- What are the true relations between love and happiness and the sources of true happiness in love? (a. Loving self-donation as condition of true happiness of love – you are mine only possible if I am thine?, b. being loved?, c. the more of the self-donation of love, Überwertantwort - overvalue-response, when the beloved becomes a source of our happiness, when we take a supreme interest in his or her happiness, or when we give our life for him or for her?). Does the self-donation of love make ourselves lose interest in ourselves and our happiness? Or do, on the contrary, full “Eigenleben” (as our intimate life proper connected to happiness and pain, translated by Crosby as subjectivity) and transcendence of self-donation heighten and require each other mutually, such that he who loses his life for love, will gain it and happiness will be bestowed more richly on him?, (Hildebrand NL ch. 9. 10).
- What are the valid and invalid criteria of an *ordo amoris*, an order according to which we should love a person more than others? (Hildebrand NL ch. 14, Scheler⁹)

⁹ Max Scheler, „Ordo amoris“, in Max Scheler, Schriften aus dem Nachlaß, Band I, herausgegeben von Manfred S. Frings, mit einem Anhang von Maria Scheler, 3. Aufl. (Bern: Bonn, Bouvier-Verlag, 1986; 1.-2. Auflage im Francke Verlag), Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 10, S. 345-376.

2nd Part (11.3-13.3.24)

Philosophy (Theology) of the Body: Spousal Love and the Meaning Of Human Sexuality

Not sex is the key to spousal love (Freud) but love (spousal love) is the key to sex (Hildebrand).

The characteristics of sexuality and of spousal love and their proper relation - sexual union as expression and fulfillment of spousal love and at the same time in the fertile days as source of new life and arch-act of parental love - have been analyzed in an outstanding phenomenological depth and clarity in their relation to purity by Dietrich von Hildebrand in the first part of his book *In Defense of Purity*¹⁰. One might say that in terms of a purely philosophical acuteness of the study of the essence of human sexuality and its quite different “faces” depending on true love and purity or their absence, Hildebrand’s philosophy of sex is an impressive return to an adequate return to “things themselves”. The relation between marriage and the procreative meaning of sex, the mutual gift of spousal love and the immense gift of a new person’s life, in relation to spousal love have been treated in Hildebrand’s book on *Marriage*¹¹ and in his booklet, *Humanae Vitae – A sign of Contradiction*.¹²

The topic of spousal love (understood in a literal and wider sense that also includes the love of God) has also been treated in a wider context of a philosophy and theology of the body in two masterworks of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II that will be important texts for the second part of the Seminar.¹³

Starting in a wider notion of spousal love that is characterized by the total and faithful self-donation and can also be found in the love of God, Karol Wojtyła as great philosopher has likewise presented a profound analysis of spousal love and of the sexual union in the narrower sense in his great phenomenological masterpiece that he completed as philosopher prior to becoming Pope¹⁴ and that also contains his literal interpretation of the biblical *Song of Songs* about marital love and the mutual sexual self-donation. Thereby John Paul II broke with a tradition of exclusively symbolic

¹⁰ *In Defense of Purity*, 7th ed. *Purity. The Mystery of Christian Sexuality* (Steubenville, Ohio: The Franciscan University Press, 1989).

¹¹ *Marriage. The Mystery of Faithful Love*. Foreword: John Cardinal O’Connor, Archbishop of New York, (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1984).

¹² See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Die Enzyklika „Humanae Vitae“ - ein Zeichen des Widerspruchs*, (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1968). See also the further development of this latter point in Josef Seifert, „Der sittliche Unterschied zwischen Empfängnisregelung und Kontrazeption“, in *Menschenwürde und Elternschaft* (Hg. Ernst Wenisch), (Valendar: Veritas-Verlag, 1983), and the same author, „The Problem of the Moral Significance of Human Fertility and Birth Control Methods. Philosophical Arguments against Contraception?“ in *Humanae Vitae: 20 Anni Dopo*, Acts of the Second International Congress of Moral Theology, Rome, 1988, pp. 661-672.

¹³ Karol Wojtyła, *Uomo e donna lo creò* (Vatican City: Città Nuova Editrice/Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987), *Man and Woman He Created Them. A Theology of the Body*, transl., introduction, and index by Michael Waldstein, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). This work Karol Wojtyła has written long before he became Pope John Paul II, but published only after. See also, particularly on the self-donation of an inalienable person Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by H.T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).

¹⁴ See Karol Wojtyła, *Man and Woman He Created Them. A Theology of the Body*, transl., introduction, and index by Michael Waldstein, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).

interpretation of the *Song of Songs* and found its interpretation in terms of a “theology of the body” a worthy reading of the Bible. Also his grasp of the heroism of spousal love in his reading of the Song of Songs and of the Book Tobit are most remarkable new, human and yet deeply spiritual readings of these texts.¹⁵

DATE

March 8 (12 P.M. lunch, 2 P.M., first session) – March 13 (Departure at 2 P.M. after lunch)

PLACE:

Guest Tract of
Zisterzienserinnenabtei Mariastern
A-6914 Hohenweiler, Gwiggen 1

Telefon: +43(5573)82234

Fax: +43(5573)82234-6

APPLICATION/ACCEPTANCE:

Physical participation in the seminar as well as participation by Zoom requires an application sent to: Professor Josef Seifert: E-Mail j.seifert@hildebrand-phil.institute; J.Seifert@lmu.de; or: jmbseifert12@gmail.com.

Acceptance for physical participation including 3 meals and a coffee break is restricted to 24 persons. There are 12 guest rooms available at the convent, 4 of which are double rooms. If some of the participants are willing to share a double room, the maximum capacity in the convent would be for 16 participants. With single occupancy only 12 participants can room at the convent. Please indicate your preferences.

An additional eight participants could take part in the seminar, but would have to live outside of the convent facility. They could still take part in the daily meals.

Daily mass is available at 7:15 A.M. (Sunday 8:15 A.M, with the breakfast offered at 7:30.)

Two morning sessions will be held (except Sunday) each morning at 9 and 10: 30 A.M. , two afternoon sessions from 2 - 3:30 and 4 - 5:30 p. m.

12 more participants can participate via Zoom. They need as well to apply. Applicants for participation via net, if accepted, can use the Zoom-Link <https://lmu-munich.zoom-x.de/j/61962605287?pwd=UnFSb2p5eEUzS1dzTE5hODRGL0Rzdz09> that allows them to join the lectures and discussions live and also to participate in them.

Lecturer: Professor Josef Seifert and/or invited speakers and participants that have been contacted and whose names will be communicated later. Extended discussions and contributions of participants will be planned in the final program later. A diploma of participation and/or of academic success with a small paper can be obtained from GSA and DHIP.

¹⁵ Both found in his *Man and Woman He Created Them*.

Fees

I. Seminar Fees

- **Seminar Fee for 5 days physical participation in whole seminar:**
 - **Full price: 400 € (80 €/day)**
 - **Reduced student fee: 200 € (40 €/day)**
 - **Participation via Zoom: 100 € (20€/day)**
- **Seminar fee for physical participation in first Part (3 days: 03, 8-11)**
 - **Full Fee: 240 €**
 - **Reduced student fee: 120 €**
 - **Per Zoom: 60**
- **Seminar fee for physical participation in second Part (2 days, 03, 9-11)**
 - **Full Fee: 160**
 - **Reduced student Fee: 80 €**
 - **By Zoom: 40 €**

Payment of seminar fee by advance transference (preferred)

To DHIP Account

Volksbank Hochrhein,

IBAN: DE85 68492200 0002 1561 48

BIC: GENODE61WT1

Bankadresse: Volksbank Hochrhein

Bismarckstr. 29

79809 Waldshut

Name of account:

Gustav-Siewerth-Haus GmbH

Oberbierbronnen 1

79809 Weilheim

II. Fees for Meals and Lodging

- 8 single rooms and 4 double rooms with private bath are available. 16 persons can lodge at the conference site if 8 of them agree to share a double room (which will reduce their fee from 87/day to 67/day); on your application please indicate your preference.
- Room and Board for 5 days (Room and 3 Meals per day plus coffee break x 5): 435 € (87 € pro Day) 335 € (67/day) for those who sleep in double rooms.
- Meals only (for participants who lodge outside the conference center but partake physically in the seminar and have their meals in the conference center) 39.40 /day

- Payment to the convent (our host) through bank transfer (preferred):
BankAustria, IBAN: AT021200088014956000 BIC: BK AUATWW
Kreissparkasse Ravensburg, IBAN: DE08 6505 0110 0000 2308 94.
UBS AG, CH-8098 Zürich, IBAN: CH35 0021 3213 L835 0120 0