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THE CORE OF INDIVIDUALITY AND
THE CONSTRAINTS OF SELF-SHAPING.
FROM HUSSERL TO SCHELER
IN THE LIGHT OF THE DYNAMIC
BETWEEN PERSONHOOD AND PERSONALITY

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1. Introduction

Personality and personhood: this dichotomy brings to light an important feature of human nature. Each of us is an *individual* as well as a *person*: the significance of this pair is widely downplayed. Being an individual means being unique among others, whereas being a person means being exactly like others. This issue has the following remarkable consequence: insofar as others are persons besides individuals, a midpoint seems to occur between their uniqueness and my uniqueness. Others are individuals different from me, but they are persons like me and so they could hold sway over me. It follows that personhood seems to be the vehicle of the impact that others can have on one's own personality. This means that others could play a key role in the process of knowing and shaping myself as well as I could play a key role in the process others have to undertake in order to know and shape themselves. It seems there

is a sense in which every person I meet, encounter or come across is exactly like me. And there is a sense in which every person is completely different from me: what makes other persons different from me? Is there a common thread that weaves one's own uniqueness and others' uniqueness? Both these facets seem to be two sides of the same coin: as a *person*, I am like others, and as an *individual*, I am not like others. Such a divide seems to stem from the dynamic occurring between personhood and personality: which traits define personality? Which traits could we rely on to describe someone as a *personal individual*?

In order to answer such questions and investigate the dynamic between personhood and personality, this paper proposes to lean on a few coordinates of Max Scheler's philosophy of person since his account enables us to pinpoint that innermost core that accounts for the nature of personhood and personality. This double applicability is due to the fact that such a core characterises everyone as a *person*, but its contents vary from *individual* to *individual*. The identification of the innermost core of individuality will give me fundamental insight into *what* I am: it will provide me with steady coordinates upon which I can rely so as to grasp how my personality and my personhood play out. This identification, however, will not tell me *who* I am or even *who* I am to be: it will allow us to come to know ourselves as persons and individuals, but the contents that define *my* individuality crucially differ from the contents that define *your* individuality.¹ Self-knowledge needs a *personal* knowledge

¹ Before going any further, it is worth specifying the reason why we are now using the term "individuality" and how it is related to the term "personality". "Personality" refers to the type of person I am, shown by the way I behave, feel and think. "Individuality" refers to a deeper layer: it refers to the core of the type of person I am. Personality is related to my way of thinking, behaving and feeling. But which is the source of this way? Which is that personal core from which my specific way of thinking, behaving and feeling follows? Individuality seems to be this deeper core. The terms "personality" and "individuality" are here used in the light of these meanings: the former is grounded in the latter. My personality depends upon my individuality: how I act, behave, feel and think (my personality) depends upon the type of personal individual who I am (individuality). This research aims at identifying the innermost core of *individuality*. However, the term "personality" is used since it highlights the inherent connection with personhood. So, this research does not purport to broach the issue of personality. It intends to investigate the nature of individuality and its

too (Morelli 2015, 76), i.e. a personal knowledge of the way in which the core we will discuss has been unfolding in us up to this point in our life: «we all have our own stories» (Morelli 2015, 76).

The effort of identifying and describing the core of individuality represents the main goal of this research. However, it is not broached directly and immediately. Indeed, it is examined from a specific perspective that acts as a valuable jumping-off point: Edmund Husserl poses a philosophical question that triggers the effort of identifying the innermost core of individuality. Husserl wonders whether it is possible to relate eidetic variation to the self: if so, which constraints prevent me from an endless variation of my self? Eidetic variation is a process that enables me to grasp the essence of “something” by varying it in its hallmarks: in so doing, I come to understand what I cannot vary without distorting the identity of the “thing” I am investigating. What if we related such process of exploration to the dimension of the self? Not only could we reflect upon the boundaries of our own individuality and the constraints of self-shaping, but also we are spurred to spot the core of our own individuality.

So, the first section treats this Husserlian question, while the second leans on Scheler’s stance to pinpoint the innermost core of individuality. These two sections will enable me – as a personal individual – to realize that other persons could have a crushing impact on my process of self-shaping since they share the same structure of my individuality, even though their inherent contents differ. Husserl himself describes the other person as «eine intentionale Abwandlung meiner selbst» (an intentional variation of my self). How to account for this impact? It seems that the notion of *exemplariness* is the key to solve this tangle and it will turn out to be a remarkable midpoint between Husserl and Scheler. As a whole, this research aims at bringing to light the relevance of Husserl’s reflection to the scope of self-shaping, proposing a theory regarding the nature of the innermost core of individuality in the light of Scheler’s stance, arguing that both these philosophers ascribe to the concept of *Vorbild* a pivotal role within the process of self-shaping.²

link with personhood. Since individuality is the core of personality, we appeal to the term “personality” so as to make as clear as possible the inherent link that tethers individuality to personhood.

² Before launching into this analysis, it is worth highlighting a methodological note.

2. *What is Necessary for an Eidetic Variation of my Self*³

The jumping-off point of this research is a brief text where Husserl wonders whether it is possible to relate eidetic variation to the self: is «eine eidetische Variation meiner selbst» (Husserl 2012, 366) feasible? How to let eidetic possibilities of my self bud?⁴

First of all, Husserl describes two main manners of self-knowledge. In the light of the first manner, I come to know myself starting from my experiencing the world I inhabit. For example, while I perceive a tree, even if I am not reflecting upon myself, I somehow experience my perception, I somehow experience the way in which I perceive the tree I am now perceiving. In so doing, we achieve an *indirect* self-knowledge: we come to know some aspects of ourselves through our perceptions. We do not thematically focus on ourselves: we just focus on those experiences whereby we *indirectly* experience ourselves too. Husserl goes on farther than this and argues for the possibility of a *direct* self-knowledge. This process of direct self-knowledge is straightforwardly focused on myself: I thematically shift my attention to myself and try to gain self-knowledge in this way.

Husserl endeavours to better describe this direct way of self-knowledge and specifies that in order to really know myself, I need to know how I was in the past and how I will be in the future, that is to say, how I actually behaved in past circumstances and how I shall behave in possible circumstances. The first effort of self-knowledge requires me to reflect upon my past life: «<um> mich kennenzulernen, wie ich jetzt wirklich bin, müsste ich also meine ganze Vergangenheit, mein

The following explanation will mainly avail itself of the first-person perspective so as to render the argument as clear as possible. Moreover, the appeal to first-person perspective makes us treat questions that acquire another meaning if we treated them from a third-person perspective. We are going to examine the essence of individuality starting from what I, as a personal individual, experience of my self. We are not going to examine the essence of individuality starting from what the third-person perspective tells about me as a personal individual.

³ «Was erforderlich ist für eine eidetische Variation meiner selbst»? (Husserl 2012, 366).

⁴ In Husserl's own words: «evidenter eidetischer Möglichkeiten meines konkreten Seins» (Husserl 2012, 366).

vergangenes Mich-Verhalten unter den mir damals geltenden Situationen kennen» (Husserl 2012, 366).⁵ The second effort of self-knowledge requires me to explore the possibilities that inhabit me. Husserl maintains that this mode of self-exploration spurs me to appeal to some kind of *imagination* and wonder how I shall behave in possible circumstances: «ich kann danach auch meine faktischen Seinsmöglichkeiten erforschen. Ich kann mich in den verschiedensten möglichen Weltsituationen versetzt imaginieren und mich fragen, was ich da tun, wie da mein Verhalten sein würde. Natürlich kann ich da sehr weit abirren» (Husserl 2012, 367).⁶

So, the attempt to know oneself demands a double effort: on the one hand I have to turn to the past and bring to light my actual and past individuality, on the other hand I have to turn to the future and bring to light my possible and future individuality. While outlining this dynamic, Husserl acknowledges that this process of self-knowledge paradoxically relies upon a further and the same process self-knowledge: «um zu wissen, wie ich mich da faktisch verhalten würde, ich jetzt, der ich jetzt der und kein anderer bin, müsste mein eigenes Sein in dem vollen, vorhin umzeichneten Sinn kennenlernen» (Husserl 2012, 367).⁷ This apparent paradox ensues from the fact that, if I want to know how I will behave in the future, I need to know the core and essence of my individuality as well as the impact that my past life had on it insofar as «in mir liegt doch der ganze Niederschlag meines früheren Lebens» (Husserl 2012, 367-368).⁸ So, how to pierce the spectrum of my possibilities?

Here Husserl is drawing our attention to an issue that is as pivotal as knotty: in order to know myself I have to imagine myself in possible

⁵ In order to know myself as now I really am, I must know my entire past too and, especially, my manner of behaving or acting related to key circumstances.

⁶ So, I can explore and investigate also my factual possibilities related to my self. I can imagine my self in different and possible circumstances and wonder what I would do and how I would behave. Naturally, in so doing, I can imagine circumstances that are remarkably far away from the concrete situation that now characterizes my present.

⁷ In order to know how I would behave from a factual point of view, now I must strive to know my own self and, especially, its sense. Husserl specifies that the expression “I” is here related to the following specific meaning: what I am now, in the sense that I am this one and I am not another one.

⁸ I embrace my entire past as well as its overarching effects upon my self.

circumstances, and in order to imagine myself in possible circumstances I have to know what I can vary about myself and what I cannot vary about myself. Briefly, I need to know the *essence* of my individuality. How to grasp it? Husserl has just suggested (Husserl 2012, 367) that we should appeal to some kind of imagination: «ich kann mich in den verschiedensten möglichen Weltsituationen versetzt imaginieren» (I can imagine my self in different and possible circumstances). Now, what is Husserl referring to when using the term “*imaginieren*”?

In order to show how we could concretely relate eidetic variation to the self, Husserl spurs us to wonder whether we would be willing to mug a person, steal her money and eventually kill her. I examine myself in this circumstance and then I patently say: “I could not do that”. I am able to imagine myself in that circumstance and I am truly convinced that I could not do that. For me it is evident that I would not be that person that robs and kills another person (me myself as I am from a factual point of view). Definitively and absolutely, I react against this possible way of acting. And this reaction plays out through clear and unconditional claims like “I want”, “I can”, “I cannot”, “I do not want”.⁹

So, at the suggestion of Husserl, let us wonder about ourselves and face such a far-reaching question: would I be willing to rob and then kill somebody? I have to examine and reflect upon those possibilities tethered to my own individuality and then I could say: “No, I could not do that. It would not be me”. It seems I have to abide by strict *limits* while stretching the boundaries of my individuality¹⁰: I imagine myself robbing and killing somebody and I realize that that person could not be me. My process of self-shaping has to abide by constraints that hedge me in and seem to ensue from the core of my individuality. There is something that prevents me from identifying myself with that kind of person.

⁹ ««Jemanden überfallen, seines Geldes berauben und gar eventuell ermorden» – erwäge ich in die Möglichkeit, so sage ich mit Evidenz: „Das könnte ich nicht“. Ich kann mich hineindenken in solches Tun, in gewisser Weise es auch anschaulich machen. Aber zugleich ist mir evident, dass ich es nicht wäre, ich, wie ich faktisch bin. Gegen eine solche Handlungsweise erhebt mein Ich Protest in einem unbedingten Das-will-, Das-kann-ich-nicht» (Husserl 2012, 368).

¹⁰ See the debate revolving around the topic of moral imagination: Cf. Nussbaum 1995.

How can I draw this conclusion so firmly? How can I understand which possibilities pertain to my individuality and which possibilities exceed the range of my possible self-formation? I have surely experienced that my individuality is liable to changes, so how can I be so sure that I could not rob and then kill somebody?¹¹ Husserl appeals to specific terms to describe the kind of “mental exercise” that leads us to clearly comprehend how certain possibilities are somehow tied or untied to our own individuality. Husserl mainly employs these key terms: *hineindenken*, *umphantasieren*, *festhalten*, *überschreiten*, *mich umdenken*, *gebunden*, *frei variieren* and *frei phantasieren*. These verbs refer to acts that enable me to know myself in order to shape myself accordingly: I investigate the possibilities of my individuality by turning upside down the certainties about my self. I “overturn” myself and, in so doing, I start becoming present to myself. *Umphantasieren*, *überschreiten*, *mich umdenken* refer to this act of “self-overturning” (especially by virtue of the German prefix *-um*, which inherently provides the word with a nuance related to this idea of “overturning”). *Frei variieren* and *frei phantasieren* refer to the ability we appeal to while overturning ourselves: we appeal to an act of free phantasy, that is, by freely fantasizing we manage to grasp those facets of our individuality that act as constraints on stretching the boundaries of our individuality. *Festhalten* and *gebunden* refer to the constraints we come across while carrying out this exercise of free variation: while fantasizing about ourselves we find ourselves abiding by certain constraints that prevent us from fantasizing everything about ourselves. When we detect such constraints, we are spotting those boundaries that deeply define our personality and the possibilities of our process of self-shaping.

¹¹ These reflections of Husserl show quite clearly that he thinks that I will not rob and kill another person since *I decided not to do so*: I am taking a position, I do not want to be like the person that robs and kills another person. A pledge pointed towards future is here at stake. But how is this practical position binding? This is the question that this paper is posing. The effort of answering this question depends upon a comprehension of the process of self-shaping, that is, the process through which I become the individual I want to be. Such a process clearly subsumes a further process, that is, comprehending and grasping the core of my individuality, the essence of my individuality. How to grasp this core? How to describe it? What does this core consist of? The paper purports to answer these questions.

This entails that these acts, as a whole, set the stage for a process of *self-presence*. Fantasizing about myself allows me to pinpoint those borders beyond which I cannot go without turning into another type of individual. Fantasizing about myself allows me to gradually become present to myself since I pinpoint the range of possibilities that pertain to my individuality. This exercise of phantasy leads me to clearly assert claims like “I want that”, “I cannot do this”, “I am not that one”, “It would not be me”: all these expressions reveal different facets of my individuality so that I gradually become present to myself. I vary myself in those aspects that I regard as hallmarks of my individuality, I strive to narrow and stretch the boundaries of my individuality in the hope that I manage to go beyond them focusing on the possibilities of my self I can devise by freely fantasizing. I strive to turn myself upside down trying to be as attentive as possible to the way in which my individuality alters and adjusts to the circumstances I devise by freely fantasizing.

However insightful this freely fantasizing could be, it bumps against an obstacle: while I vary myself in my bedrocks, what do I have to keep fixed [*festhalten*]? When I say that the person who robs and then kills someone is not me, what am I relying upon to claim so? Which element of my individuality enables me to say that that person is not me? What remains fixed while I vary myself? What enables me to keep on recognizing myself within the wide spectrum of self-possibilities I devise by freely fantasizing? According to Husserl, fantasizing about my self implies two different dimensions: on the one hand, something has to remain fixed (me myself and my character), on the other hand, something has to alter (my factual self). This double process entails that my self-possibilities are inherently related to my factual self, that is to say, they are somehow *constrained* by it.¹² While I vary myself, there is something that I cannot vary: this “x” enables me to stretch the boundaries of my individuality and then say that I am not that person who robs and then kills somebody. While I vary myself, I strive to get over the

¹²«Mich also umphantasieren, das ergibt, wenn ich mich als identisches Ich der Akte und als das Ich in der Identität meines „Charakters“ festhalte, zwar die Faktizität überschreitende Möglichkeiten, andererseits aber doch nur Möglichkeiten meines faktischen Ich, wie ich jetzt bin, an mich „individuell“ (im personalen Sinn) gebunden» (Husserl 2012, 368).

obstacle of my personal and factual individuality so as to grasp those possibilities that I conceive by appeal to phantasy.¹³

While I vary myself, I realize that there are a few constraints by which I am hedged in. I come to realize that I cannot imagine everything about myself, that is, when I image myself killing a person I come to realize that I am not that kind of person. Husserl names this “x”, which I unavoidably lean on while varying myself, an “eidetic I”. So, Husserl argues that if I relate eidetic variation to my self, then I gain an “eidetic I”. If I delve into the spectrum of possibilities I conceive by appeal to phantasy, I can investigate and alter them: such possibilities contradict my self as I am now and this is the reason why if I investigate them I come to grasp my essence, that is, the “Eidos Ich”.¹⁴

Thanks to free phantasy I grasp possibilities that even withhold the evidence of my individuality. I devise variations that clearly clash with my individuality. Within this spectrum of variations, Husserl specifies how *others* play a pivotal role. This occurs since other persons are to be regarded as *variations of my self*: this entails that they could bring to light *eidetic possibilities* related to my self. The other person is an intentional variation of my self and every variation is the key to my eidetic possibilities.¹⁵ We can interpret Husserl’s thesis claiming that, since others are persons like me and individuals different from me, then they exemplify eidetic possibilities that could seriously regard my individuality too: in the light of her deeds, the other person appears to me as a person and this means that I regard her as a person, but the other person as an individual remains beyond my grasp.¹⁶

In the text we are taking into account Husserl is shedding light on our ability to vary ourselves in order to grasp those elements that constitute the basic framework of the type of individual each of us is. While

¹³ Cf. Husserl 2012, 368.

¹⁴ Cf. Husserl 2012, 368.

¹⁵ «Der Andere [ist] eine intentionale Abwandlung meiner selbst [...] und <zwar> offenbar so, dass jede solche Abwandlung [...] eine meiner eidetischen (aber nicht schon eine meiner faktischen) Möglichkeiten für mich zur Geltung und eventuell zu einer gewissen Evidenz bringt» (Husserl 2012, 368).

¹⁶ «Was er [der Andere] tut, verstehe ich ihn selbst als Person, ihn, wie er „Individuum“ ist, noch lange nicht» (Husserl 2012, 369).

examining this ability, Husserl pinpoints a sort of theoretical difficulty, which he runs into in *Phänomenologie und Erkenntnistheorie* too. This difficulty concerns the constraints we come across while varying ourselves and it arises since free varying (*freie variieren*) turns out to be not so free: as much as I am free, there are limits I cannot get over.¹⁷ My ability to vary myself is strictly restricted since I cannot get over insuperable handles. How to account for these constraints? On the one hand they circumscribe the possibilities of what I can vary and so they essentially contribute to the process of self-shaping, but on the other hand they hedge me in since they restrict the spectrum of my possibilities. How to solve this tangle? Briefly, Husserl is drawing our attention to this issue: while freely fantasizing, I cannot get over facticity. Husserl is posing the question as to how we can achieve a pure eidetic variation, that is, a variation that is completely free from factuality. This issue implies that we are wondering whether free phantasy could be absolutely free from factuality.¹⁸

At first blush, it seems that “umfingieren” and “erschauen ein eidetisches Wesen” are really simple acts that we experience. But how does “the ability to regard facts as examples that I freely vary really work”?¹⁹ How does this ability get rid of factual limits? In the text we are examining Husserl brings to light a fundamental difficulty: while varying myself in order to better know my possibilities, I come across limits that seem to restrict my activity of fantasizing. How to treat these unavoidable limits that somehow make us hedged in by them? Following paragraphs aim at recasting this problem in the light of other Husserlian remarks so as to find the best way to solve this tangle. We will

¹⁷ Husserl is specifying that my ability to focus on fantasizing about my self by means of free phantasy is notably constrained: «im Allgemeinen ist meine Fähigkeit, freie phantasierend mich umzudenken (ohne andere im Auge zu haben), höchst beschränkt» (Husserl 2012, 369).

¹⁸ «Für eine Wesenslehre kann eine jede natürlich als Exempel fungieren, aber für sie bedarf ich einer freien, von aller Faktizität befreiten Variation, also einer sich von Tatsachen freihaltenden Phantasie. Aber ist hier nicht eben die Frage, wie ich der Tatsächlichkeit ledig werde? [...] Wie gewinne ich eine reine Variation, eine völlig von Faktizität freie?» (Husserl 2012, 370-371).

¹⁹ «Die Fähigkeit, Fakta als Exempel für freie Variationen zu nehmen» (Husserl 2012, 372).

come to grasp the essence of the kind of phantasy and freedom involved in the effort of relating eidetic variation to the self.

3. Freie und träumende Phantasie: *Eidetic Variation and its Inherent Link with Exemplars (Vorbilder)*

In *Phänomenologie und Erkenntnistheorie* Husserl draws a sharp distinction between two different kinds of phantasy.²⁰ Such a dichotomy is of fundamental concern if we intend to understand the role that phantasy might play with regard to eidetic variation related to the dimension of the self. He claims:

Fingiere ich einen Zentauren, so hat das die Bedeutung: Ich versetze mich in ein mögliches Wahrnehmen, und zwar Wahrnehmen dieses Zentauren; reflektiere ich in diesem Phantasiebewußtsein, so finde ich dieses Quasiwahrnehmen [...] Ich mache nun nicht die wirklichen naturalen Thesen mit, die sich auf meine jetzige aktuelle Welt beziehen und die evtl. auch den Zentauren angehen, nämlich wenn ich ihn mir hier auf dieser Straße heranspringend fingierte. Ich stelle mich natürlich aber auch nicht auf den Boden der Phantasie, wie ich es tue, wenn ich mich der Phantasie „hingebe“ und aktuell phantasierend und träumend die phantasierten Ereignisse quasierlebe, über sie quasiurteile, zu ihnen in Gefallen und Mißfallen, in tätigen Handeln Stellung nehme – in der Modifikation der „träumenden“ Phantasie (Husserl 2015, 184).²¹

²⁰ It is worth specifying that now we are going to describe two *kinds* of phantasy: it is not a matter of two different faculties. These two kinds are grounded in phantasy itself as the disposition to conceive alternative possibilities.

²¹ Husserl is trying to describe a phantasy experience: my experience of fantasizing about a centaur implies a quasi-perception related to a possible perception of this centaur. If I now start reflecting while fantasizing, I come to realize that this experience is an experience of quasi-perception. This does not imply that I support the real and natural theses related to my world in this exact moment (such theses, for example, include the centaur itself if I imagine that it itself leaps at me). Furthermore, this does not imply that I get lost in the sphere of phantasy as it happens when I abandon myself to phantasy itself while fantasizing and daydreaming: in such experiences

When I fantasize about a centaur, I experience a quasi-perception of this centaur and I do not mingle the world of centaurs with the actual world I now inhabit. I do not make believe that the centaur leaps into the road I am now crossing. So, what do I do while fantasizing about a centaur? Husserl distinguishes «*freie Phantasie*» from «*träumende Phantasie*» (or «*reine Phantasie*»). How do they differ?

According to Husserl, I rely on *freie Phantasie* when I am appealing to eidetic variation, while I rely on *träumende Phantasie* when I daydream about something (cf. Husserl 1980, §1-19). Daydreaming implies that «*ich stelle mich [...] auf den Boden der Phantasie*»: the sphere of reality and the sphere of phantasy definitively overlap. I am not confined to quasi-perceive the centaur: *träumende Phantasie* makes me quasi-experience the fantasized events, I quasi-judge them and I take position on them through pleasure or displeasure. So, the kind of phantasy we often refer to is, in Husserl's terms, *träumende Phantasie*.

Freie Phantasie makes eidetic variation possible: if we appeal to eidetic variation, we are not lost in distant phantasy scenarios, indeed we are tremendously absorbed in the world we inhabit and we try to grasp the essence of what concerns us by varying it. In his research, geometer appeals to *freie Phantasie*: «in phantasy, to be sure, he must take an effort to attain clear intuitions from which he is exempted by the sketch or model. But in actually sketching and constructing a model he is restricted; in phantasy he has incomparably more freedom reshaping at will the figures feigned» (Husserl 1983, 159).

So, when Husserl talks about *Phantasie* in relation with eidetic variation, he is referring to *freie Phantasie*.

In *freie Phantasie*, are we completely free? Apparently it seems so. Husserl himself specifies how the geometer finds himself more restricted while actually drawing and building up models than while merely fantasizing about them. Anyway, if we focus on the phantasy exercise only, we come to realize that geometer's freedom is seriously constrained and restricted. Even when fantasizing, we are strictly "gebunden":

In the continuation of this always more perfect intuitional, more

I quasi-live these fantasized events, quasi-evaluate them, respond to them with pleasure or displeasure. This is the modification typical of dreaming phantasy.

precisely determining process of phantasy, we are in a wide measure *free*; indeed, at random we can intuitionally ascribe to the phantasied centaur more precisely determining properties and changes in properties; but we are not *completely free* provided we ought to progress in the sense of a *harmonious* course of intuition in which the subject to be determined is identically the same and *can* always remain harmoniously determinable. We are, e.g., bound by a law-conforming *space* as a frame prescribed for us by the idea of any possible physical thing whatever. However arbitrarily we may deform what is phantasied, spatial forms are always again converted into spatial forms (Husserl 1983, 358).

Eidetic variation spurs us to identify and abide by certain constraints that nourish a restricted freedom. This process of identification is grounded on an unremitting exercise: «it is necessary to exercise one's phantasy abundantly [*die Phantasie reichlich zu üben*] in the required activity of perfect clarification and in the free reshaping of phantasy-data [*in der freien Umgestaltung der Phantasiegegebenheiten*]» (Husserl 1983, 159-160).

The distinction between free phantasy and pure phantasy is a valuable issue if we aim at solving the problem that Husserl brought to light: how is it possible that while free fantasizing we go beyond facticity and, at the same time, find ourselves hedged in by it? This sort of constraints underling eidetic variation leads us to grasp the essence of what we are varying, but how to account for them? Eidetic variation does not rely upon “an empirical comparison” solely. It is a kind of empirical comparison that aims at detecting those universal essences that come to prominence “in the empirically given”. Husserl highlights that these universal essences have to be *freed* from contingency. He provides an insightful description of this process:

Let us attempt to get a first concept of this operation. It is based on the modification [*Abwandlung*] of an experienced or imagined objectivity, turning it into an arbitrary example, which, at the same time, receives the character of a guiding ‘model’, a point of departure for the production of an infinitely open multiplicity of variants [*den Charakter des leitenden ‘Vorbildes’ erhält, des Ausgangsgliedes für die Erzeugung einer offen endlosen Man-*

nigfaltigkeit von Varianten]. It is based, therefore, on a variation. In other words, for its modification in pure imagination, we let ourselves be guided by the fact taken as a model [*wir lassen uns vom Faktum als Vorbild für seine Umgestaltung in reiner Phantasie leiten*] (Husserl 1973, 340).

There is a mid point between the act of varying and the act of grasping the essence: there is a *Vorbild*, which guides us through «the production of an infinitely open multiplicity of variants». This research argues that this concept explains the difficulty that Husserl treats in the text taken into account at the beginning: how does «die Fähigkeit, Fakta als Exempel für freie Variationen zu nehmen» work? While varying a “thing” in order to grasp its essence, we are free to fantasize about its variations: the more we vary the more we identify those *Vorbilder* that help us to understand what we can vary and what we cannot vary about the thing itself. If we abide by these constraints, which we ourselves detect by varying, we come to grasp the essence we were searching for. We shift from an experienced or imagined objectivity to a *Vorbild* that guides us through the spectrum of variants and, in so doing, we gradually become aware of a unity that «runs through this multiplicity»:

It then becomes evident that a unity [*Einheit*] runs through this multiplicity of successive figures, that in such free variations of an original image, e.g., of a thing, an invariant [*Invariante*] is necessarily retained as the necessary general form, without which an object such as this thing, as an example of its kind, would not be thinkable at all. While what differentiates the variants remains indifferent to us, this form stands out in the practice of voluntary variation, and as an absolutely identical content, an invariable what, according to which all the variants coincide: a general essence [*ein allgemeines Wesen*] (Husserl 1973, 340).

So, the balance between freedom and constraints is based on *Vorbilder*, which account for the constraints we come across while carrying out eidetic variation. Far from merely restricting our freedom, these constraints *guide* us through the identification of essences. This kind of restricted freedom (*gebundene Freiheit*) defines both *freie Phantasie* and

reine Phantasie: the *identity* (of the object of my act of fantasizing) acts as constraint on my fantasizing. While I am fantasizing about centaurs and while I am eidetically varying a sound, I am hedged in by the identity of centaurs and the identity of the sound. Just as I would not keep on fantasizing about a centaur anymore if I did not abide by the constraints defining centaur's identity, so I would not keep on varying the essence of a sound anymore if I did not abide by the constraints defining sound's identity. Far from merely restricting our ability to fantasize, this *gebundene Freiheit* nourishes *freie Phantasie* and *reine Phantasie*. What here matters is the link between this *gebundene Freiheit* and the kind of phantasy implied by eidetic variation, that is, free phantasy. Husserl argues very clearly that in free phantasy we are not completely free since the identity of what we are varying is an obstacle we cannot dodge. Far from restricting our freedom, this constraint is the basis where eidetic variation could play out (cf. Husserl 1983, 357). What if we related this whole argument about eidetic variation and *free* phantasy to the self?

In fantasizing we can freely give shape, while in normal experiencing we are somehow less free and more restricted. In spite of this freedom, what we fantasize about keeps its identity fixed [*festhalten*]. This means that the possibilities that phantasy yields are restricted. Free phantasy yields possibilities that are at the same time free and restricted: while fantasizing, we ourselves are at the same time free and restricted. Such a restriction is due the identity of what we fantasy about: as much as we are free, we cannot withhold the identity of what we are fantasizing about. On the one hand, eidetic variation requires us to question the identity of the "thing" we are varying, but on the other hand the identity of the "thing" itself acts as an insuperable limit (cf. Husserl 1973, 342-343). While trying to grasp the essence of the sound, I can fantasize about a sound without a timbre and this means that I am somehow modifying its identity. But at the same time I draw the conclusion that a sound without a timbre is not a sound and this means that I am referring to the identity of the sound as the pivotal parameter that enables me to discern whether I am thinking about a sound or not. «*Die Phantasie ergibt Möglichkeiten*» (Husserl 2015, 182): by appeal to phantasy I can *yield* possibilities that are free and restricted at the same time.

This whole Husserlian portrait of the link between phantasy and

eidetic variation spurs us to pose two main sets of questions. Firstly, how does the *gebundene Freiheit* typical of eidetic variation play out with regard to the self? What remains fixed and what do I freely modify while varying myself? Which are those limits that somehow make the act of fantasizing about myself not completely free? Moreover, is there a core – in Husserl’s terms, «*das Eidos Ich*» – we can spot? Secondly, Husserl describes others as variations of my self and employs the term *Vorbilder* to describe those mid “models” that guide us through eidetic variation: what if we related the notion of *Vorbilder* to the sense in which Max Scheler employs this term?²²

4. *The Dynamic between Ordo Amoris and Ethos: Readiness for Being Affected and the Range of Possible Self-Changes*

Husserl helped us to comprehend the link between eidetic variation and the self from the point of view of its structure. This section helps us to comprehend this link from the point of view of its contents: what do we gain through eidetic variation of the self? Which is the core of my individuality I cannot change without turning into another type

²² When dealing with this question we have to specify that there is a way in which Husserlian *Vorbilder* and Schelerian *Vorbilder* radically differ. Husserl refers to *Vorbilder* as “models” that guide us through eidetic variation. Scheler refers to *Vorbilder* as exemplars that guide us through our process of self-shaping. This means that Husserl’s stance is related to a theoretical investigation, while Scheler’s stance is related to a practical and emotional relation. This paper aims at bringing to light a possible affinity between Husserl’s stance and Scheler’s stance, but it is clear that these stances refer to different meanings: the former refers to a theoretical meaning, whereas the latter refers to an axiological-practical-emotional meaning, as we shall clarify. So, we will not argue for the similarity between these two instances of *Vorbilder*. We are going to argue for the possibility of relating eidetic variation to the self in the light of Max Scheler’s remarks on *Vorbilder*. This reference implies that just as phantasy plays a role in the process of eidetic variation, so it should play a role in the process of self-shaping. We will endeavour to demonstrate that both these processes are grounded in the same kind of phantasy, i.e. free phantasy as the disposition to conceive alternative possibilities. If we relate this stance on phantasy to the scope of personal individuality, then we have to investigate phantasy as the disposition to conceive alternative *self*-possibilities.

of individual? What does the essence of my individuality consist in? Which constraints limit my process of self-shaping? My own individuality seems to be pliable and steady at the same time: on the one hand, I face circumstances that force me to question and alter some facets of my individuality; on the other hand, I have a clear sensation that some facets of my individuality cannot alter without radically transforming me into another individual. It seems there is a *core* of our own individuality we cannot question if we care about our own individuality, about that common thread that weaves every moment of our life and every facet of our individuality. Now, what is this core? How can we even grasp and recognize it?

On the one hand, we are willing to acknowledge that our individuality strictly coincides with a core that makes each of us aware to be an individual different from all other individuals. On the other hand, we have to be willing to acknowledge that such quite fixed core coexists with a deeply pliable nature: like every person, as individuals we are armed with the power to alter ourselves. But there is a deep core of our personality that somehow hinders the range of possible self-changes. But it could happen that I face an upheaval of my personality since, for example, something upsetting occurs to me and it radically changes the roots of my personality: how is it even possible? How is it possible that what I deemed to be a bedrock of my personality suddenly turns out to be something that just overshadows a deeper facet of my personality? It seems to happen all of a sudden – I feel different from the individual I was before, but it is always me. *Insofar as I have experienced how pliable my personality is, how can I presume to grasp the individual who I am?* I know that there are moments that could radically alter the type of individual I thought to be since they make me discover aspects of my personality I could not even imagine: so how I can I dare to know myself? But I have to know myself. These remarks and doubts entitle us to pose the following question: what is that core, steady and pliable at the same time, that somehow insures change and identity, that somehow insures that I could change myself without turning into someone else? *If we relate the eidetic variation to the self and examine this link focusing on its contents, then we come to face these questions.*

This paper leans on Max Scheler's thought and argues for the fol-

lowing thesis: the essence of my individuality is my *ordo amoris*, which I gradually and unremittingly discover by appeal to a specific facet of my personality: readiness for being affected. The unchangeable core of my individuality is my *ordo amoris* and the knowledge I can gain of it has no outright end. Two further layers of my individuality stem from *ordo amoris*: «*An-sich-Gutes für mich*» and *ethos*. The former calls for an unremitting effort of grasping it, the latter is that layer that is liable to change: *when I change myself I am changing my ethos since I have achieved a higher stage of knowledge with regard to my ordo amoris*.

5. *Being Subject to and Being Subject of: Ordo Amoris and Ethos*

Now, which traits could I rely on to describe my own individuality, which is as unique as somehow tethered to others, who are individuals too? In order to answer this question, we are going to lean on a few coordinates of Max Scheler's philosophy of person. In the wake of Schelerian insights it will be possible to devise a *multilayer pattern* that accounts for the nature both of personhood and individuality. This double applicability is due to the fact that such pattern fits everyone as a person, but its contents vary from individual to individual.

As a personal individual, I am both *subject to* and *subject of*: on the one hand, I am *passively subject to* what my experiences lay before me, and, on the other hand, I am *actively subject of* experiences. According to the former, I am sort of passive spectator of what I encounter in the world-of-life (cf. Husserl 1913). According to the latter, I am subject of actions, desires, beliefs, wishes, and every kind of act that demands an active role from me. This divide mirrors the double way of being into the world: on the one hand, I actively modify it and leave a mark – through my actions, wishes, efforts, and so forth; on the other hand, I am called to “listen to” what the world I live in offers.

This paragraph argues that we could relate the notion of *being subject to* to Scheler's concept of *ordo amoris* and the notion of *being subject of* to Scheler's concept of *ethos*. *Ordo amoris* and *ethos* are strictly interwoven and both contribute to define the innermost nature of personhood and personality: the former pertains to one's own unchangeable core of individuality, the latter pertains to that layer of individual-

ity liable to self-change. What are *ordo amoris* and *ethos*? With regard to *ordo amoris*, Scheler claims:

Whoever has the ordo amoris of a man, has the man himself. He has for the man as a moral subject what the crystallization formula is for a crystal. He sees through him as far as one possibly can [...] He possesses the primary determinant of what always appears to surround and enclose the man: in space, his moral environment; in time, his fate, that is, the quintessence [Inbegriff] of possibilities belonging to him and him alone. Nothing in nature which is independent of man can confront him and have an effect on him even as a stimulus, of whatever kind or degree, without the cooperation of his ordo amoris (Scheler 1973b, 100).

Ordo amoris is a sort of structure that prioritizes and assembles what I mostly care about: it embodies my way of being into the world-of-life and being emotionally affected by it. *Ordo amoris* pertains to the axiological hierarchy everyone gradually grasps by means of *fühlen* – i.e. our capacity to let us be affected by our emotional responses to the axiological richness of the world we live in – and marks off the specific way everyone loves and hates, prefers and postpones. This means that we discover our individuality in the light of our emotional responses. And the world of our emotional responses comes to light thanks to an attitude Scheler spurs us to take: the attitude of “listening to” our emotional life, of trusting our emotional responses, of reflecting upon them, of trying to grasp their meaning as well as their relation to our personal core. The notion of *ethos* proceeds straight from such core: the term “*ethos*” refers to the set of actual *rules* of my preferring and postponing values.²³ It is about the rules stemming from *ordo amoris* and steering my acting into the world. Everyone’s *ethos* highlights the specific rules of one’s own emotional life. *Ordo amoris* and *ethos* define the deepest layers of *personhood*. Their corresponding contents change from individual to individual and this variation in content is exactly what *individuality* consists in. If I grasp my *ordo amoris*, I comprehend the

²³ The term “value” is used in the light of the meaning Scheler ascribes to it: Scheler 1973a.

hierarchy of what I love and what I hate, I comprehend the key to my ethical life. According to Scheler, love and hate represent the most fundamental acts of our emotional life: if I know how you love and hate, then I have grasped the most fundamental core of your individuality. This core pertains to the systematization of one's actual judgements and preferences: this set is *ethos* itself, while *ordo amoris* is the fundamental core of the same set.²⁴

²⁴ Scheler completely recasts the meaning of the *emotional* dimension, the meaning related to that dimension where we are *affected*. Scheler spurs us to answer questions like “What affects me?”, “What am I mostly affected by?”, “What do I love and hate?”, “What do I mostly care about?”, “Which are the contents of my own *ordo amoris*?”. In order to know myself, I have to answer these questions. In order to answer these questions, what matter are not the things that I actually love and hate. These things are merely contingent. What matter are the axiological qualities that the things that I love or hate exemplify. Things affect me by virtue of the axiological qualities whose they are bearers. I love or hate these qualities and my way of loving or hating determines the corresponding axiological hierarchy that defines the core of my individuality. But what does it mean that we *love* and *hate* axiological qualities? Scheler argues that the act of hate is the antithesis of love, the emotional negation of value and the outcome of a confused love. Nonetheless, Scheler argues that «*one form of lawfulness runs through all cases of hatred – every act of hate is founded on an act of love*» (Scheler 1973b, 125). This occurs since a common thread weaves love and hate: «*they do not fall within the zone of indifference but take a strong interest in the object as the bearer of some value, this is primarily a case of taking a positive interest in*» (Scheler 1973b, 125). Furthermore, Scheler argues for a primacy of love over hate: this primacy mainly hinges upon the movement underling both of them, that is, a movement that turns to the highest value. In the act of love, the value of an object or a person is deepened, revealing its highest or most profound significance: *the movement turns to the highest value* within the scope of higher values. By contrast, in the act of hate the value of an object or a person is demeaned or degraded: *the movement turns to the highest value* within the scope of lower values. If I hate something I see the bearer of a lower value taking over the place that belonged to a bearer of a higher value. Love and hate are acts in which the perception of the value-realm is extended or narrowed: the former enables me to extend and stretch the perception of the axiological realm, while the latter forces me to shrink and narrow it. This brief overview on Scheler's stance on love and hate is the key to the comprehension of the core of my individuality. Love and hate play a fundamental role: thanks to them I can discover my *ordo amoris*. If I pay attention to the way I love and hate, to what I love and hate, to what I prefer and postpone, I start becoming gradually able to discover my own *ordo amoris*. This means that if I heed the emotional dimension I become

Thus, a set of actual rules proceeds from *ordo amoris* and such rules flow into *ethos*. Everyone's *ethos* highlights the specific rules of one's own emotional life. *Ethos* inherently pertains to the sphere of ethics, which strives for and fosters the formation of individuality. Ethics endeavours to make us dispense with the temptation to let ourselves wither. Ethics spurs us make our individuality emerge instead of evening or even squelching it. I must be willing to labour to gradually discover my individuality and shape myself accordingly. Especially, I must be willing to continuously revise the type of individual who I am becoming: is it square with what I am discovering about my self? As Guido Cusinato (2008, 2014) claims, as human beings we are "unfinished totalities": it means that there is no stage of our process of self-shaping where we could be firmly sure that nothing more is to be discovered about us. Of course there is some truth in all this, but only up to a point. Every individual is an unfinished totality that needs to arise again and again: only such a continuous movement and effort of personal re-birth sets the stage for an actual formation of the individuality of the person. Just as such formation is a process, so *ordo amoris* itself is a process of an unremitting discovery and systematization of what deeply defines the innermost roots of my own individuality. This research argues that, in the light of Scheler's stance, we could claim that the dynamic between *ordo amoris* and *ethos* plays out into the dynamic between "being subject to" and "being subject of".

As a person and an individual I am *subject to* the axiological richness of the world I live in: this movement of "listening to" gradually makes me unveil my *ordo amoris*. This dynamic works for me as well as for everyone. The point is that the content of *ordo amoris* changes from individual to individual. There are not two persons with the same contents of *ordo amoris*. Since others are individuals different from me, they are characterized by a different *ordo amoris*, but they are persons exactly like me. Furthermore, as a person and an individual I am *subject of*: a set of actual rules proceeds from *ordo amoris* and such rules flow

present to myself and this first step marks the beginning of an endless process of self-knowledge and self-shaping. I become present to myself, I gradually know my *ordo amoris* through my emotional responses to the world and in the light of this knowledge I gradually shape my *ethos*.

into *ethos*. This means that the way we prefer and postpone gives rise to corresponding ways of acting. Such ways mirror *ordo amoris* and steer our acting into the world. As a person and an individual I am *subject of* acts mirroring my *ethos* and striving to leave a mark in the world I inhabit in accordance with my *ordo amoris*, which I discover thanks to an attitude of *being subject to*. This means that in order to discover my *ordo amoris*, to know myself, to grasp my essence, I am supposed to rely on my emotional responses to the axiological richness of the world I inhabit, that is, I am supposed to be open, to be subject to, to be prompted to be affected. On the contrary, *ethos* pertains to the dimension of acting, to that sphere where I am *subject of* actions, wishes, desires, and so on. Scheler is a pivotal harbinger of an overarching reappraisal of the role up the emotional dimension. The specific nature of *ordo amoris* – and, especially of love and hate – are understandable only in the light of this reappraisal, which mainly rests upon Scheler’s interpretation of the meaning and compass of love as «the tendency or, as it may be, the act that seeks to lead everything in the direction of the perfection of value proper to it» (Scheler 1973b, 109), as we will clarify.

6. *Destiny and Fate: Individual Destiny as the Further Facet of Individuality’s Core*

Ordo amoris is the core of my individuality: in *Ordo Amoris*, Scheler describes *ordo amoris* as «the primary determinant of what always appears to surround and enclose the man: in space, his moral environment; in time, his fate» (Scheler 1973b, 100). Scheler is arguing that *ordo amoris* determines one’s moral environment and one’s fate. What does it mean?

Man is encased, as though in a shell, in the particular ranking of the simplest values and values-qualities which represent the objective side of his *ordo amoris*, values which have not yet been shaped into things and goods. He carries this shell along with him wherever he goes and cannot escape from it no matter how quickly he runs. He perceives the world and himself through the windows of this shell, and perceives no more of the world, of himself, or of

anything else besides what these windows show him, in accordance with their position, size, and color (Scheler 1973b, 100).

We could interpret this passage as follows. We cannot change our fate and moral environment as much as we cannot change our *ordo amoris*, which calls for a gradual discovery rather than a creation: we can change our *ethos* in the light of what we discover about our *ordo amoris* as much as we can interpret fate and moral environment as signs of our *ordo amoris*. We cannot change the way we are *subject to*. We cannot change the way we love and hate: we can just keep on unveiling deeper layers of what we love and hate. Nonetheless, we can change the way we are *subject of*: we can change our desires, our actions, our wishes. Such changes ensue from a new self-awareness we gain with regard to our *ordo amoris*. So, how are fate and moral environment related to *ordo amoris*?

Fate and moral environment refer to those situations that do not depend upon our choice or will: it is a matter of circumstances we find ourselves in, for example the historical and social context we are sunk into (cf. Spiegelberg 1986). They are related to those circumstances that cannot be regarded as outcomes of desert or guilt. However random they are, Scheler argues that an essential connection tethers them to the individuality of every person: they are inherently tied to the *ordo amoris* of every person since the structure and content of one's fate and moral environment depends upon one's *ordo amoris* (cf. Guccinelli 2016, 224-228). This means that my axiological sensitivity sieves the spectrum of my experiences, which are "sighted" by the selective mechanism of *ordo amoris*. This mechanism circumscribes the range of our possible experiences: «where his "heart" is attached, there, for him, is the "core" of the so-called essence of things» (Scheler 1973b, 111). Both fate and environment are based on *ordo amoris* and «are distinguished only by their assignment to the dimension of time (in the case of fate) and space (in the case of the environment)» (Scheler 1973b, 101-102). The way in which fate and environment take shape resembles and follows *ordo amoris*. Scheler is arguing that space and time are "sighted" by one's own *ordo amoris*, which makes me experience time as *my own* fate and space as *my own* moral environment. It follows that fate itself is

not to be confined to a mere sum of accidental events: indeed, it is inherently tethered to the individuality of the person.

These reflections spur us to pose the following question: if those conditions that do not depend upon me are inherently tied to the core of my individuality, which aspect of my individuality sets the stage for such a nexus? If we appeal to Scheler's thought, we can spot this missing link, which this paper identifies with *individual destiny*. In fact, under the guidance of Scheler, we have to distinguish fate («*Schicksal*») from individual destiny («*individuelle Bestimmung*», cf. Scheler 1973a, 489-494): what is this individual destiny?

Ordo amoris and *ethos* mirror my individuality, my intrinsic personality. *Ethos* depends upon *ordo amoris*. Besides *ethos*, what proceeds from *ordo amoris*? In the light of Scheler's remarks, «*An-sich-Gutes für mich*» («good-in-itself for *me*», Scheler 1973a, 490) proceeds from *ordo amoris*, which is the deepest layer of individuality. Such notion refers to the personal and unique destiny everyone is called to discover. Scheler refers to it also as our «Ruf», «das Bewusstsein des individuellen Sollens», our «persönliches Heil», our «individuelle Bestimmung», «individual-persönliches Wertwesen» (Scheler 1973a, 489-494). All these concepts refer to a common point: our own personal vocation, our own individual destiny that gradually becomes clear to us through our capacity to *fühlen*, i.e. our capacity to let us be affected by our emotional responses to the axiological richness of the world we live in. My own individual destiny is my «good-in-itself for *me*». What does it mean that this destiny is a good “in itself” and “for me”?

Scheler describes this individual destiny as subjective and objective at the same time. It is “in itself” as well as “for me”. It is neither a relativistic nor a dogmatic rift. Scheler emphasizes how the comprehension of my own individual destiny is not confined to myself: it is something that others could recognize too. I am not locked in my personality like in a prison closed off to anybody else (Scheler 1973b, 104). Just as others can find a way towards my innermost personal core, so I can help others in their effort of finding the way towards themselves: just as others can be the key to myself, so I can be the key to the personal core of another person. If we rely on this Schelerian remark and the previous outcomes, we have reasons for arguing that other persons could play a pivotal role

in the process I undertake in order to know and shape myself since they share the same structure of my personality – that is, the layers we are combing through – and since a layer of the core of my individuality – my individual destiny – is *in itself* in addition to being *for me*. Others could radically aid me in shedding light on my individual destiny.

So, others could help me to comprehend my individual destiny. This means that individual destiny calls for recognition, it demands to be unveiled: «[the individual destiny] is not something we have to posit, but something we have to recognize» (Scheler 1973b, 103). We are called to *recognize* our own individual destiny: this act of recognition is to be regarded as a gradual *process*. Like the whole process of self-shaping, this kind of recognition too is a process since it relies upon a gradual effort of discovering and unveiling. We cannot presume to identify a final stage of this process of self-knowledge: we should be always willing to question ourselves, our certainties about ourselves. If we do not dare to be always open to reorchestrate ourselves in the light of the new stages of self-awareness we achieve, then we end up being stuck. We cannot presume to immediately catch the core of our individuality, an effort of self-revision is continuously at stake:

Individual destiny is a timeless and essential value-essence [Wertwesenheit] in the form of personality. And, since it is not formed or posited by the spirit in man but is only recognized, since its fullness is only successively unveiled, as it were, in the course of our experiences of life and action, it exists only for the spiritual personality in us. Individual destiny is, therefore, a matter of insight, while fate is only something to be confirmed, a fact which in itself is value-blind (Scheler 1973b, 106).

For individual destiny – like *ethos* and *ordo amoris* – comes to light through a gradual recognition, delusions as well as errors are surely possible: «the subject can deceive himself about this [the individual destiny], he can (freely) fail to achieve it, or he can recognize and actualize it» (Scheler 1973b, 104). We can err in reckoning our individual destiny, we can be deluded into thinking that we have finally grasped our individual destiny. This process of self-knowledge is as knotty as cloudy since there is no positive image of our personal vocation (Scheler 1973b,

108): «the mode of givenness of the particular material, the unique content of individual destiny [...] is peculiar to each man alone. There is no positive, circumscribed image of it, still less a formulatable law. The image of our destiny is thrown in relief only in the recurrent traces left when we turn away from it, when we follow “false tendencies”» (Scheler 1973b, 107).

According to Scheler, there is a fundamental link that tethers individual destiny to fate, which does not end up being confined to mere «accidents of birth» (Spiegelberg 1986). Every person has to face *her own* fate: every person experiences destiny through her own *ordo amoris* and, consequently, we cannot reckon everything that is accidental to be fate. What happens to *me* is *my* fate. No matter how random fate is, it is inescapably tethered to that person whose it is fate.

We are certainly not entitled to call everything that happens around us and in us which we know to be freely willed or produced by us “fate”; nor can we call everything which comes upon us purely from the outside “fate” [...] We do require of fate that it come upon us unwilled and [...] unforeseen; however, we also demand that it present something other than a series of encounters and actions subject to casual necessity. Namely, we demand that it present the unity of a persisting and unvarying sense which presents itself to us as an essential correlation between the individual human character and the events around and within him (Scheler 1973b, 102).

Starting from this passage by Scheler, we could draw the following conclusion: we should endeavour to make *fate* turn into *destiny* and this transformation signifies an act of comprehending a unique connection, which my whole life gives rise to and in which my whole life is immersed. If each of us surveyed her own whole life, we would realize that the *connection* of each single event resembles the core of our individuality, even though we feel that *single* events might be accidental and unforeseeable: «what is revealed to us in this uniform sense [*Einsinnigkeit*] of the course of a life is a harmony of world and man that is completely independent of will, intention, and desire, on one hand, and of accidental, objectively real events, independent of their conjunc-

tion and reciprocal action, on the other» (Scheler 1973b, 102). If we endeavour to carry out this panoramic view on life (cf. Staiti 2013), we could grasp this *Einsinnigkeit*, which makes us aware that the connection of accidental events prevails of the single accidental events. This connection shows an inherent link with the core of the individuality of the person at stake. Such an awareness enables Scheler to endorse this insightful claim: «for as surely as fate embraces that content which “befalls” man and is therefore beyond will and intention, so surely does it also embrace only that content which, when it “befalls”, could “befall” this one moral subject alone» (Scheler 1973b, 102).

According to Scheler, we should recognize fate as an incontrovertible condition and lean on such awareness to spot it and then choose whether to let us be crushed by it or hold out against it. Within this framework, freedom turns out to be a dynamic between fate and destination: this dynamic marks history off since historical life itself turns out to be an enduring effort of acting in accordance with one’s own *individuelle Bestimmung* and fate’s unavoidable conditions. Naturally, such an effort could give rise to tragic situations of struggle between a person and her fate (cf. Scheler 1973b, 105-106), but we have to keep in mind that «the individual destiny of man is not his fate. Only the assumption that fate and destiny are the same deserves to be called fatalism. Fatalism is not the acknowledgment of the fact of fate itself» (Scheler 1973b, 105).

7. Love as the Key to the Core of Individuality: Readiness for Being Affected

If we lean on these Schelerian remarks and partly go beyond them, we could argue that the innermost core of individuality consists in *ordo amoris* and *individuelle Bestimmung*. *Ethos* ensues from this core. We gradually reach higher degrees of awareness about our *ordo amoris* and *individuelle Bestimmung* and, subsequently, we gradually question and change our *ethos*. *Ordo amoris* and *individuelle Bestimmung* are no liable to change: they are liable to a gradual and unremitting process of discovery and recognition. This means that we cannot change the dimension of being *subject to*, whereas we can change the dimension

of being *subject of*: the knowledge we gain in the former holds sway over the latter. This picture accounts for the structure of personhood and personality: every person has to unveil her *ordo amoris*, individual destiny and *ethos*, but every person has to unveil the specific contents of her own *ordo amoris*, personal vocation and *ethos*.

If we ponder upon this multilayer pattern, we come to realize that the key to this innermost core of individuality is a specific kind of attitude, which this paper names “being subject to” and Scheler names “love”. Scheler’s stance on love is the key to the comprehension of that sole attitude that enables us to discover the core of our individuality. Love produces an «inner growth of the value of things» (Scheler 1973b, 109): love as a specific kind of attitude that defines the roots of one’s individuality. Love enables us to turn to the highest values we can “perceive”: «it can progress from value to value, from one height to an even greater height» (Scheler 1973b, 112). Love always strives for higher values: «love loves and in loving always looks beyond what it has in hand and possess» (Scheler 1973b, 113). Love is the *readiness for being open to higher and higher values*: this endless movement underling love is the main reason of delusions. Insofar as the movement of love does not have an end, I am deluded when believing that I have attained in a finite good a final fulfilment of my love-drive. This delusion makes me overshadow my *ordo amoris* (cf. Scheler 1973b, 114-115) and makes the process of knowing my *ordo amoris* go astray (cf. Scheler 1917).

We are now in a better position to comprehend the reappraisal Scheler proposes with regard to the emotional sphere. Love is to be regarded as *readiness for being open to higher and higher values*. This love-drive is guided by *laws* in which those values and things of worth come to light for one’s heart. My heart is affected by certain things: it is not affected by everything. These things affect my heart by virtue of their values and because of the direction of my love-drive. This means that my way of loving relies upon certain laws that do not coincide with those laws that author others’ way of loving. This lawfulness inherently pertains to the acts of love. This entails that the emotional sphere, that is, the heart (what Scheler names «*das Gemüt*»), «is no chaos of blind feeling-states which are attached to, and detached from, other so-called psychic givens by causal rules of some sort. The heart is itself a *struc-*

tured counter-image of the cosmos of all possible things worthy of love; to this extent it is a *microcosmos of the world of values*. “Le cœur a ses raisons”» (Scheler 1973b, 116). The emotional sphere is infused with this lawfulness: a reappraisal of this sphere entails a deep comprehension of the link that ties our heart to the axiological dimension reality brims with. Our heart is the key to «all possible things worthy of love» and *those* things that we love are inherently tethered to our way of loving, to our *ordo amoris*, to our individuality.

The figurative expression “heart” does not designate, as both philistines and romantics think, the seat of confused states, of unclear and indefinite agitations or some other strong forces tossing man hither and thither in accord with causal laws (or not). Nor is it some static matter of fact silently tacked on to the human ego. It is the totality of well-regulated acts, of functions having an intrinsic lawfulness which is autonomous and rigorous and does not depend on the psychological organization of man; a lawfulness that operates with precision and exactness. Its functions bring before our eyes a strictly objective sphere of facts which is the most objective, the most fundamental of all possible sphere of fact (Scheler 1973b, 117-118).

We must “listen to” our emotional responses to the world in order to grasp the deepest facets of our personality. This issue entails that we can act in a way that is not square with our *ordo amoris*. This is absolutely possible insofar as our individuality is not an “x” we could immediately grasp. Indeed, we have to discover the way we love, what we prefer and what we postpone, what affects us mostly. This gradual self-knowledge enables us to gradually grasp our *ordo amoris*, but it is always a matter of a process of self-awareness: our individuality is well represented as a *multilayer* pattern. Not only there could always be a deeper layer we have to discover about our selves, but we could also be deceived into believing that something pertains to our individuality.

Hence, everyone should strive to unveil and gradually discover this *lawfulness* typical of her own heart. This process of self-awareness and self-knowledge lays the foundation for a process of self-shaping: in the light of what I discover about my individuality I endeavour to shape my-

self accordingly, that is, to act in a way resembling what I grasped about my *ordo amoris*. If we really realize that love refers to that *readiness for being open to higher and higher values*, then we become aware that we cannot identify a static end to this whole process of self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-shaping. Just as Husserl stresses that “*üben*” is a necessary condition to relate eidetic variation to the self, so the process of grasping one’s own *ordo amoris* relies upon an unremitting effort of unveiling it. The reappraisal of the emotional sphere makes us prompt to continuously question our certainties about ourselves for the sake of the identification of our own *ordo amoris*. The way we love circumscribes the range of what we can experience and of possible self-changes: «man, before he is an *ens cogitans* or an *ens volens*, is an *ens amans*. The fullness, the gradations, the differentiations, and the power of his love circumscribe the fullness, the functional specificity, and the power of his possible spirit and of the possible range of contact with the universe» (Scheler 1973b, 110-111).

Scheler propels us to discover the lawfulness typical of one’s own emotional life. The main problem to face regards the fact that the whole of emotional life has often been deemed as a dumb matter of fact, something merely subjective void of direction, autonomy, seriousness, meaning and sense. «Who tells you that there where you see only a chaos of confused states, there is not also an order of facts hidden at first, but accessible to discovery: “*l’ordre du cœur?*”» (Scheler 1973b, 118). This emotional world calls for *discovery*: we have to discover our *ordo amoris* instead of presuming to shape it. What we have to shape is our individuality and our *ethos* in the light of what we discover. Naturally, my individuality and my *ethos* might not be square with my *ordo amoris*. This may happen since I could be deluded into thinking that my current individuality is square with my *ordo amoris*. But my individuality is a *process* of knowing myself and shaping myself in the light of this knowledge: I have to be aware that there is always something more to be discovered about my self, there are always deeper layers that call for discovery.

If we endeavour to find the doorway to our heart, then we become able to discover those connections that «govern the sense and meaning of our life» (Scheler 1973b, 120). How to find this doorway? In addition

to being *subject of*, we are *subject to*. If we appeal to this facet of our personality, we become able to be no bar to the discovery of our own *ordo amoris*:

There is a *hearkening* to what a feeling of the beauty of a landscape, of a work of art, says to us, or to what is conveyed by a feeling of the characteristics of a person standing in front of us. That is, there is a heedful going-along-with this feeling and a serene acceptance of what stands at the point where it ends, so to say. We can have a good ear for what stands before us and a sharp testing of whether what we experience in this way is clear, unambiguous, determinate [...] All of this has been lost in the constitution of modern man. He has no trust in, no seriousness for, what he could hear in these areas (Scheler 1973b, 120).

We have to discover how we respond to the world, how we are *subject to* the world. If we grasp this dimension (i.e., *ordo amoris*), then we are in a better position to shape our *ethos* – our *being subject of* – accordingly. If we pay attention to the way we love and hate, to what we love and hate, to what we prefer and postpone, we become gradually able to discover our *ordo amoris* and, consequently, our individual destiny. This means that if we heed the emotional dimension, we become present to ourselves and this first step marks the beginning of an endless process of self-knowledge and self-shaping. I become present to myself, I gradually know myself through my emotional responses to the world and in the light of this knowledge I gradually shape myself. This whole process sets the stage for self-possession (cf. Morelli 2015), that is, I understand the type of individual I have already become and I understand the type of individual I will make of my self.

The essence of my *ordo amoris* needs unremittingly to be clarified, deepened and strengthened. What I have discovered about my self needs to be confirmed again. In this process of self-knowledge, I could come to know that what I deemed to represent a facet of my individuality is just overshadowing deeper layers of mine. Self-delusion is absolutely possible and I have to be prompt to face it. This passage could be summarized as follows: far from being something static (a *Bild*), I am a process (a *Bildung*). The notion of *Bildung* is useful for highlighting

the dynamic essence of one's own personality. Since I am a process, I am both liable to self-delusion and an unremitting self-knowledge. This means that I have to take advantage of my *dynamic essence* since it enables me continuously shape and reshape myself in the light of what I discover about my self. I do not have to squelch the temptation to question and better investigate my *ordo amoris*.

As Hartmann (1962) stresses, Scheler too points out that I cannot perceive the beauty of a face or the warmth of a room if I am not willing to be open to this axiological richness, to make myself possibly affected by it. Different types of *values* attract or repulse me by virtue of what I prefer and postpone, in accordance with constant rules of preference and rejection. This attraction and repulsion determine what I *actually* note, what I *actually* neglect and what I *possibly* observe. If we do not make room for the attitude of “being subject to”, we are not in a position to be affected by what could possibly attract us.²⁵ This attraction and repulsion ensue from and are defined by attitudes of *interest* and *love* that Scheler describes as *dispositions to be affected by things themselves*. This “readiness for being affected” lets the essence of individuality emerge:

Even prior to the unity of perception, a value-signal experienced as coming from things, not from us, announces, as though with a trumpet flourish, that “Something is up!” This is how the actual things as a rule announce themselves at the threshold of our environment and take their place in it from the far ends of the world [...] Man's *ordo amoris* and its particular contours are behind each such case of attraction and repulsion (Scheler 1973b, 101).

8. Concluding Remarks: The Good Fortune to be Persons Besides Individuals

Readiness for being affected is a pivotal key to self-shaping: the facet of my personality that coincides with “being subject to” enables me to gradually discover my *ordo amoris* and my individual destiny. As a

²⁵ Cf. Scheler 2007: he deals with pride as the key to “axiological closure”, and humility and reverence as the keys to “axiological sight”.

personal individual I am an *ens amans* and I know myself in the light of my responses to the world. The self-knowledge I gradually gain guides me through the process of self-shaping. Nonetheless, the process of self-shaping bumps against clear *constraints*: just as I experience constraints while eidetically varying “a sound”, so I cannot shape myself in a completely free manner. I have to abide by my *ordo amoris* and my individual destiny, which turned out to be those *constraints* typical of the process of self-shaping. Sure, self-delusion is possible: I can err in grasping the essence of the type of individual who I am. A continuous effort of unveiling is necessary.

Furthermore, we have noticed that Husserl ascribes to *Vorbilder* a pivotal role in the process of eidetic variation and we have noticed that Husserl hinted at the possibility of relating eidetic variation to the self. Scheler devises a theory of exemplariness (1911-1921, 1973a) where *Vorbilder* – exemplars – play a pivotal role in the process of self-shaping. So, what if we argued for the possibility of relating eidetic variation to the self in the light of Max Scheler’s remarks on *Vorbilder*? If we related Scheler’s view to Husserl’s remarks, the role up to *Vorbilder* in the process of self-presence is not to be confined to “guiding models”, as Husserl describes them. According to Scheler (1973a, 572-583), the bearing of exemplars²⁶ (*Vorbilder*) over personality is so powerful that they readdress *Bildung*, that is to say, the process of self-shaping, and give rise to *Umbildung*, that is to say, a transformation of such process. Exemplars spur us to embrace and pursue our individual destiny, urge us to be unwittingly influenced in order for us to grasp our authentic self. They are axiological exemplifications who caught our deep admiration, who garnered our esteem, who forcefully attracted us, who clarify our «*An-sich-Gutes für mich*» so as to make us aware of who we are so to become who we really are. They circumscribe the possibilities of our experiences, the boundaries of our possible world. Others could play a pivotal role in the process of knowing myself and, consequently, shaping myself in the light of such knowledge.

This overarching influence of others as exemplars is precisely

²⁶ See the current debate revolving around the link between exemplarism and admiration: Zagzebski 2017; Kidd 2017. With regard to the distinctions between exemplars, models and leaders, see Arendt 2006 and Ferrara 2008.

grounded in the fact that others as well as me are persons besides individuals and, consequently, I share with them the same structure of personhood and personality – i.e., *ordo amoris*, *ethos*, *individuelle Bestimmung* (which is “*in itself*” besides “for me”). This is the good fortune to be persons besides individuals: there is a common thread that inescapably ties me to others and vice versa. This thread could not be broken: it depends upon my being a personal individual. Others could have a crushing impact over my process of self-shaping and self-knowledge: they could radically question the certainties about my self, they could radically bring to light facets of my self that I did not even acknowledge or that I merely overshadowed. Nonetheless, I could make room for exemplars’ sway only if I am willing to make room for that aspect of my personality that coincides with “being subject to”: If I am not open to be affected, I could not be affected by exemplars. The possibility of exemplariness depends upon the two reasons just explained: others share the same structure of my individuality and, moreover, my individual destiny is graspable by others too by virtue of its being “in itself”. These two reasons make exemplariness possible and Scheler argues that exemplariness is the strongest mode whereby I can hold sway over others’ process of self-shaping and self-knowledge. It is worth specifying that we cannot understand the essence of exemplariness, if we do not grasp its main basis, i.e. love. Other persons could become exemplars for me since *i*) they share the same structure of my individuality and *ii*) my individual destiny is graspable by others too by virtue of its being “in itself”. But there is a fundamental condition that sets the stage for these two conditions (*i*, *ii*): if I do not *love* the other person, I would never be able to comprehend her essence: «es ist an erster stelle das durch *Liebe* zur Person selbst vermittelte „*Verstehen*“ ihres zentralsten Springquells, das uns die Anschauung dieses ihres idealen, *individuellen Wertwesens* vermittelt» (Scheler 1954, 493).²⁷ Love is the key to the comprehension of others and self-presence. Love sets the stage for exemplariness: if I do not love the exemplar I am following, I cannot be affected by her individuality.

Thanks to *free phantasy* – as Husserl accounts for it – I can vary

²⁷ «What mediates the intuition of the person’s ideal and *individual value-essence* is, first of all, the *understanding* of his most central source, which is itself mediated through *love* of the person» (Scheler 1973a, 488).

myself in the light of exemplars' sway, I can imagine myself as an individual different from the one I think to be now.²⁸ What remains fixed is the pair *ordo amoris* and individual destiny, even if they are always open to change in the light of a new self-awareness. I cannot change these deep layers of my individuality: they are liable to an endless discovery. I can change what pertains to the dimension of "being subject of": I can change the way I act, but I cannot change the way I love and hate. I can be deluded into thinking what I really love and hate, but I cannot change it. In this dimension, I am subject to. I have to nourish my readiness for being affected: this availability is the key to self-knowledge – in the light of the core of individuality – and self-shaping – in the light of its constraints, that it, the core itself. Within this whole process, others as exemplars could make me know myself better than I can even do. But if I could not appeal to free phantasy and relate eidetic variation to my self in order to grasp the innermost core of my individuality, others' sway over my process of self-shaping would vanish into the blue.

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²⁸ If I could not imagine myself as an individual different from the one I think to be now, then I could not be affected by other persons as exemplars and, subsequently, I could not even vary myself in the light of exemplars' impact on my process of self-knowledge and self-shaping.

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Keywords

Eidetic Variation; Free Phantasy; Exemplariness; Personal Individuality; *ordo amoris*; “*das An-sich-Gute für mich*”

Abstract

If we relate eidetic variation to the dimension of the self we have to face two questions: which are the constraints that limit my free fantasizing about myself? Which is

the core of my individuality that acts as parameter within the spectrum of self-changes? This paper leans on Max Scheler thought to answer such questions and develop a pattern of personhood and personality. In so doing, two dimensions of the self emerge: *being subject to* and *being subject of*. The former is the key the self-knowledge and self-shaping, while the latter plays out in accordance with the self-awareness one gains thanks to the former. This pair will be interpreted in the light of the coordinates we can find in Scheler's stance on personality: *ordo amoris*, individual destiny and *ethos*. These remarks enable us to understand that the unchangeable core of our individuality is the *mode* and *content* of our love and hate, while the range of self-changes pertains to the dimension of our actions and desires. Within this frame, an overarching reappraisal of the emotional life turns out to be the sole key to the whole process of self-shaping.