

The Idea of Community in Dietrich von Hildebrand and Julián Marías

La idea de comunidad en Dietrich von Hildebrand y Julián Marías

FRANCISCO PANTALEÓN*

Abstract: Dietrich von Hildebrand's metaphysical investigation of the nature of community offers compelling insights into the formation of a community bound by specific values called *virtus unitiva*. But this is discussed with an ontological and axiological slant, which makes it difficult to understand how it bears on concrete reality. But Julián Marías's philosophy proves to be a fertile ground for suggesting areas in which Hildebrand's metaphysics of community may be incarnated in the here and now, specifically through the Marían notions of *vigencia* and *convivencia*. Values, which are at the center of Hildebrand's philosophy, can in some way find their concretization in *vigencias*, which are the concrete realities that permeate the social fabric, and are therefore the latent values held by a community. In this way, *vigencias* can likewise help explain the contents and scope of a *virtus unitiva*, the unifying power that binds persons in a *communio personarum*. Through a mutual enrichment of these two philosophers' ideas of community, the rich metaphysical insights articulated by Hildebrand, which have received less attention, can be brought to inform the community life lived by each one.

Keywords: Community, values, *virtus unitiva*, *vigencia*, *convivencia*.

Resumen: La investigación metafísica de Dietrich von Hildebrand sobre la naturaleza de la comunidad ofrece ideas convincentes sobre la formación de una comunidad unida por unos valores específicos denominados *virtus unitiva*. Sin embargo, se discute con un sesgo ontológico y axiológico, lo que dificulta la comprensión de su relación con la realidad concreta. Pero la filosofía de Julián Marías resulta ser un terreno fértil para sugerir áreas en las que la metafísica de la comunidad de Hildebrand puede encarnarse en el aquí y ahora, concretamente, a través de las nociones marianianas de *vigencia* y *convivencia*. Los valores, que están en el centro de la filosofía de Hildebrand, pueden encontrar de algún modo su concreción en las *vigencias*, que son las

* University of Asia and the Pacific. Email: francisco.pantaleon@uap.asia. ORCID: 0009-0007-3663-5883

realidades concretas que impregnan el tejido social y, por tanto, los valores latentes que posee una comunidad. De este modo, las vigencias también pueden ayudar a explicar el contenido y el alcance de una *virtus unitiva*, el poder unificador que vincula a las personas en una *communio personarum*. A través de un enriquecimiento mutuo de las ideas de comunidad de estos dos filósofos, las ricas ideas metafísicas articuladas por Hildebrand, que han recibido menos atención, pueden aportar información a la vida comunitaria vivida por cada uno de ellos.

Palabras clave: Comunidad, valores, *virtus unitiva*, vigencia, convivencia.

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The framework of recent studies in personalist philosophy illustrates the community and its types as concentric circles, as the common explanation in sociology has held. The largest circle is representative of the greater social sphere while the innermost circle represents the family as the nucleus of society, and in between are various forms of communities.¹ There are also ideas put forward in sociology that attempt to explain the nature of communities as a mere construct, a mental creation of persons for the convenience of living together with persons other than themselves. Hence, some questions still demand a satisfactory answer. Where does a community come from? Do persons create a community or are they born and inserted into it? What unites persons with each other in a society? Is there a difference between relationships, communities, societies, and other groups or collectives?

These questions are not new; they must simply be rediscovered in greater depth. There are already answers waiting to be unveiled and their operative potencies to be unleashed. I have in mind Dietrich von Hildebrand's *Metaphysics of Community* (1932) and Julián Marías's *The Structure of Society* (1955). Between these two, Hildebrand's work seems to have received less attention because it has not yet made its way to the English-speaking world. Apart from the original German, only a Spanish translation has been made of one of the most important works of Hildebrand-and perhaps the most important work in social ontology to date.² It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Hildebrand's ideas on community have scarcely been discussed save by a few scholars. But this should not hinder us from drawing out the abundant insights in this monumental work.

Even then, a thorough elucidation of his *Metaphysics of Community* is a weighty task, so I reckon it more feasible to make a comparative study between Marías's ideas on community and social forms, which are already relatively known in the personalist tradition, and Hildebrand's ideas on community. Furthermore, the philosophical method employed by Marías makes for a great prelude to Hildebrand's social ontology. The reason is that Marías begins with concrete reality –human life– and begins to theorize *from* it, to reach the level of abstraction, that is, of ontology. Seeing Marías's philosophy and philosophical method as prefatory to Hildebrand's social ontology not only provides the opportunity to enable a dialogue between the two thinkers, but also offers the chance to im-

¹ J. M. BURGOS, *Personalist Anthropology: A Philosophical Guide to Life*, translated by James Beauregard, Wilmington, Delaware, Vernon Press 2022, pp. 222-227.

² An English translation is currently being prepared by the Hildebrand Project.

agine how the axiological and ontological slant of Hildebrand's notion of community can be brought to bear on concrete reality.

1. Dietrich von Hildebrand: Value, *Virtus Unitiva*, and the Community

The human person "is destined to be a member of communities," Hildebrand writes in his *Metaphysics of Community*.³ But that "destiny" is, in my interpretation of Hildebrand, twofold. First, in the sense that the human person is meant to be in the community and that, by his very constitution *qua* person, man finds himself included in a community (or in several communities), in whatever form and level it may appear, and realizes himself in it. Second, in the sense that the person possesses the power to form communities, to create internal bonds with another person or several others; and if not to create a community, then to strengthen the values that permeate and bind the community one finds himself in.⁴ What gives rise to this twofold characteristic of man's vocation to communal life? It has to do with Hildebrand's theory of value. Without any difficulty, man finds intrinsic value in living in a community and in forming communities.

The presentation of his notion of community is unique in that he elucidates these communitarian dimensions of persons through his distinctive axiological approach. Dr. Alessandro Salice even claims that Hildebrand proposes the clearest expression of social ontology, especially in answer to the deadlock met by many thinkers attempting to think through a social ontology: "What is the specific glue that connects the individuals to each other?"⁵ He sees the various forms of community (from dyadic relationships to vast groups formed in the first-person plural "we") as built on specific values and the proper response to values. This axiological character is at the center of his whole philosophy. But unlike other philosophers who have conveniently used the term ambiguously while developing their philosophies, Hildebrand makes it a point to clarify what he means by it.⁶ He uses the term "value" to refer to those

³ D. VON HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad: Investigaciones sobre la esencia y el valor de la comunidad*, translated by Urbano Ferrer and Sergio Sánchez-Migallón, Madrid, Editorial Universidad Francisco de Vitoria 2023, p. 137. The quoted translations throughout this paper are mine.

⁴ HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, p. 232.

⁵ A. SALICE, "Communities and Values. Dietrich von Hildebrand's Social Ontology," in A. Salice, H.B. Schmid (editors), *The Phenomenological Approach to Social Reality, Studies in the Philosophy of Sociality 6*, Springer International Publishing Switzerland 2016, p. 249.

⁶ M. BURKE, "The axiological interpretation of community according to Dietrich von Hildebrand," Master's Thesis, University of Dayton 1967, pp. 1-22.

things that have an importance-in-themselves, those which are objectively good, which is radically distinct from that which is subjectively satisfying.⁷

What makes his axiological system even clearer is that he demands a “value response” to every value. The value of something, its objective preciousness, has to be met with the adequate response –and for Hildebrand, the response to each value is singular. That is, there is an adequate, or proper, value response to *each* value. For instance, the proper value response to a gift is gratitude; anything apart from this response is inadequate. “To every good endowed with a value, as well as to everything tainted by a disvalue, an adequate *response* is due.”⁸

But the question to face is where this reality of value comes from in the first place. Why do persons, things, and events, among others, have value? For Hildebrand, the answer lies in how value emerges from the fact that there is such a thing as *importance*. For the “question of importance has as much an original and objective meaning as the question of truth and existence.”⁹ One cannot speak of being or existence without considering the degree of its importance, because “[i]mportance is as *fundamental as being* [emphasis is in the original].”¹⁰

We cannot conceive of any “neutral” reality. Reality, whatever exists, “necessarily calls forth the question of its meaning, its importance.”¹¹ The meaning of reality so greatly depends on the extent to which we appropriately recognize its importance, especially in the moral domain. Nevertheless, an important distinction must be made between what is “subjectively satisfying” and what is “objectively good” (or as Sr. Magnifica Burke alternatively puts it, objectively precious).¹² Only the latter is, for Hildebrand, what can constitute true values. For values are inescapably linked to the Divine: “Whatever is good and beautiful, all that possesses a value, is a reflection of His eternal light and imitates God according to its own fashion.”¹³ He also says, “Every value of a created being in a specific way reflects God, who is the sum of all values.”¹⁴ “Hence, the objectivity of values

⁷ D. VON HILDEBRAND, *Ethics*, Steubenville, Ohio, Hildebrand Press 2020, pp. 63-65.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹² Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹³ D. VON HILDEBRAND, *Liturgy and Personality*, Steubenville, Ohio, Hildebrand Press 2016, p. 7.

¹⁴ D. VON HILDEBRAND, *Christian Ethics*, New York, David McKay Company, Inc. 1953, p. 162.

must be met with an adequate response from man, because “each value [is] a reflection of God” –and before God, there is always a proper response.¹⁵

This is of utmost importance because the reflection of the Divine in values is a testament to the profound and intrinsic unifying force that values possess, and each bond receives depth and intensity to the degree that each party respects the value that unites them. In other words, the more secure each party is in their adherence to the values that bind, the stronger the unity.¹⁶ Only values have this unitive quality that creates an internal bond between persons. Hildebrand says that every value, insofar as it is a value, has the potency to unite persons and serve as the ambit around which a community forms itself, and he calls this unitive force “*virtus unitiva*” (literally, “unitive power” or a power that unites persons).¹⁷ For instance, the *virtus unitiva* that tethers members of a state is justice; and justice, as the *virtus unitiva* of a state, acts as the nerve of the community. It is the *virtus unitiva* –e.g., justice– that creates the “community *corpus*” that is not and should not be viewed as a *corpus* with independently-functioning organs, but a *corpus* whose members are bound by a specific *virtus unitiva*.¹⁸

There is also a possibility that communities are not created despite the presence of values between persons, such as when we happen to get along very well with a stranger during our commute and our contact terminates after alighting the train. In this case, the *virtus unitiva* of values is not absent but operates with less intensity and does not culminate in the formation of a community. In place of a community, what is formed is what Hildebrand calls “interpersonal situations,” which can be either powerful or weak. It must not be forgotten that, while communities are interpersonal situations, not all interpersonal situations are considered communities.¹⁹ This is possible because there are some values that, though intrinsically important, are not powerful enough to form a *corpus*.²⁰ In any case, one cannot lose sight of the fact that values play

¹⁵ HILDEBRAND, *Liturgy and Personality*, p. 8.

¹⁶ HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, pp. 121 and 124.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁸ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁹ HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, p. 171. See K. Wojtyła, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM, Vienna, Austria, Lang 1993, p. 283: “Marriage as such is not yet a society, but simply a very intimate interpersonal community (‘two in one flesh’).”

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 171. See also M. Crespo Sesmero, “Responsabilidad compartida y solidaridad ante los valores. Un análisis fenomenológico,” *Veritas* 4, no. 21, 2009, p. 318. “[L]os valores morales poseen una fuerza unificadora y constitutiva de grupos mayor que cualquier otro tipo de valores.”

a decisive part in the real construction of a community: “value unites... all persons who come within its ambit of influence,” each to a greater or lesser extent—because some values are more valuable than others— “[and] it brings about unity in the most profound manner.”²¹ This is Prof. Michał Bardel’s basis for saying that the most important community-forming principle is “the *community-creating power of values*.”²²

For Prof. Bardel, there are four principles derivable from Hildebrand’s social ontology that express the diverse ways in which communities form: (1) A mutual identification with another’s life, (2) a social act that creates a lower-order community, (3) a vital circle of *mutual belonging*, and (4) a *virtus unitiva* that forms a community.²³ Prof. Bardel rightly interprets the centrality of values in the formation of communities, in particular the *virtus unitiva*, and how the fourth principle alone has the power to form genuine communities.

However, to narrow the act of creating communities to these four principles seems to overlook the equally central place of *persons* in forming a community. Certainly, Hildebrand sees higher-order communities emerging from individuals brought together by values that have unitive force, that are *virtutes unitivae*, but only when there are persons “fully perceptive” and “responsive to them.”²⁴ The community has a destination but, more importantly, the individuals that form a community have a destination, too, and it is they who have primacy.²⁵

Hildebrand, much like Karol Wojtyła and Julián Marías, is unwavering in his stance that persons are irreducible to the community, that individuals cannot be compromised for the ends of the community, and that we must not dilute the individual in the face of community life. This is wholly opposite to the Aristotelian position that the good of the community is a better and more godlike end to attain. This Aristotelian position is echoed later in the twentieth century by the Austrian philosopher and sociologist Othmar Spann, whom Hildebrand is suspected to have had in mind when he wrote his *apologia* of the metaphysics of the community. Among other things, Spann contended that the “whole gives to its members their reality and their structure,” which in effect undermines the value of the individual as simply a member whose function

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

²² M. BARDEL, “The Island Community of Spinalonga Seen in the Light of Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Phenomenology of Community,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91, n. 4, 2017, p. 661.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 660-661.

²⁴ HILDEBRAND, *Liturgy and Personality*, p. 14.

²⁵ Cf. HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, 233.

and value are contingent on the whole.²⁶ This aspect of Spann's social theory is summed into two: "(1) that society itself is the true reality; and (2) that the whole is primary, and thus that the individual exists only as a component or member of the whole."²⁷

But clearly, Hildebrand vehemently opposed this in his formulation of the community. In tune with many other personalists, Hildebrand notes: "More important than the good of any natural community is the salvation of the individual soul. The demands of the latter take precedence."²⁸ That is, persons have primacy over communities. But this does not in any way denigrate man's need for communities. Rather, the human person is perfected within the community, never without it, for in it he consciously and freely abandons himself to the *virtus unitiva* of the values a community upholds.²⁹

Hence, it might appear confusing why Hildebrand writes in another work, "It is true that individuals sustain the community (though not *vice versa*)."³⁰ Does this not seem to contradict what has been said thus far? The crucial aspect to consider is how Hildebrand qualifies this apparently jarring statement. In what follows this striking line, he clarifies—though it is not immediately evident—that what the community does is sustain the *inclusion* of each individual *in* the value that unites them, through the individual's exercising of that very value.³¹ There is thus no trouble affirming the consistency of his position that persons ontologically precede communities. We can imagine here the strong dynamic between an "emergent" and "supervenient" feature in persons and in communities. Communities *emerge* because they are formed *from the individual*, and persons remain included in the community because of that *supervenient* (i.e., "coming from above") unitive power that corrals individuals in a community.

²⁶ B. LANDHEER, "Othmar Spann's Social Theories", *Journal of Political Economy* 39, n. 2, 1931, p. 243. <https://doi.org/10.1086/254199>

²⁷ *Ibid.*, "Othmar Spann's Social Theories," p. 241.

²⁸ HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, p. 394.

²⁹ Plato, in his *Crito*, relates Socrates' obedience to the laws of Athens which is to exact his punishment of death. Instead of assenting to Crito's pleas to escape and flee to Thessaly, he wills, as a citizen of that state, to give up his life in respect of Athenian law. Hildebrand would disapprove such an attitude, for it suggests a form of community in which laws are given power to dilute the conscience of the personal subject.

³⁰ D. VON HILDEBRAND, *My Battle Against Hitler: Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich*, translated and edited by John Henry Crosby and John F. Crosby, New York, Image 2016, p. 329.

³¹ *Ibid.*

There should be no ambiguity here: the person is the very principle from which the *virtus unitiva* of communities emerges since communities are always a *communio personarum*, a communion of persons. “Opposite to what happens in the sphere of the organism, persons create the community and are not maintained by the whole. The parts are prior to the whole.”³²

The wholeness that each person is further perfected when they are as a whole: although “the parts are ontologically prior to the whole, they constitute the whole and the whole is dependent on their existence.”³³ More than that, the primacy of the person can be understood by recognizing the inherent value in him: “the values that an individual person can possess are much higher than those which a community can possess.”³⁴

It is precisely for this reason –the fact of man’s being whole *in himself* but meant also to be *within* a whole– that the person’s ontological superiority over the community does not at all impede the serious ontological significance of the latter. The person and the community are, as it were, co-causes of each other’s good because the person creates the community and the community perfects the person: the “person can come in his full personality only as a member of community [*sic*]; and the higher the rank of value of the community, the more he fulfills his ultimate meaning as a person.”³⁵

We must note, however, that there are degrees to which the community perfects persons. The reason behind this is that communities differ by degrees. There are specific axiological ranks that Hildebrand assigns to different kinds of communities, and the higher the axiological rank of the community, the greater its facility for perfecting its members. But before we can ascertain how that hierarchy of values is determined, it is requisite to understand the kinds of communities Hildebrand describes.

Dr. Hrvoje Vargić outlines six distinctions in Hildebrand’s taxonomic classification of communities: the distinction between (1) duopersonal and pluripersonal communities, (2) communities whose existence depends on its members and those that do not, (3) communities formed either experientially or objectively, (4) material or formal communities,

³² HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, p. 152.

³³ H. VARGIĆ, “On Truth and Totalitarianism: Assessing Contemporary Relevance of Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Political Philosophy,” Doctoral Dissertation, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, 2022, p. 129.

³⁴ HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, p. 322.

³⁵ H. VARGIĆ, “On Truth and Totalitarianism,” p. 123.

(5) primary or secondary communities, and (6) communities that have *organs* that represent it in a particular way apart from other members.³⁶ These distinctions are not meant to be visualized in a diagram that conveniently describes the way the classifications branch out; rather, it must suffice to view these as distinctions in the repertory of possible kinds of communities, the way they are formed, and what constitutes them. That is to say, “[d]ifferent communities also have different realms of meaning and different functions.”³⁷ Appended to this formation of communities is “[h]is idea... that when a number of persons turn together to some value, they are unified in it in a way directly analogous to the way in which a single person is recollected in value.”³⁸

With these six distinctions of communities found in Hildebrand’s work, he efficiently provides a set of criteria to determine their realm of meaning, their power for perfection, their unitive efficacy; in a word, the intensity of their *virtus unitiva*. Now, the effects of this unitive power are proportional to the extent to which a community embodies each of eight criteria that determine the genuineness of any community. This is drawn from the *Metaphysics of Community* and is outlined by Sr. Burke with great brevity and accuracy.³⁹ They are the following:

1. The unity in the community;
2. The love that permeates the community;
3. The shared good that organizes the community;
4. The specific value actualized by the community;
5. The specific works carried out by the community;
6. The spiritual and cultural development enabled by the community;
7. The acquiring of mutual benefits for members of the community;
8. The provision of objective goods for the members of the community.

In fact, these criteria occupy such a central place in Hildebrand’s idea of community that, Sr. Burke says, “the study which Dr. von Hildebrand made of communities is an axiological study but not properly speaking a metaphysical one.”⁴⁰ Sr. Burke’s claim is a loaded one and this study’s focus cannot afford to lock horns with such delicate propositions. In any case, this strong axiological slant is, as much as it seems, not the end of Hildebrand’s social ontology.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-132.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁸ CROSBY, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, p. 204.

³⁹ BURKE, “The axiological interpretation of community,” pp. 59-62.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Hildebrand admits in the conclusion to his *Metaphysics of Community* that the diversity of the kinds of communities, the various values –and the *virtus unitiva*– specific to each community, and the repertory of possibilities in which communities can find themselves in the axiological hierarchy, “impede us from encountering a common denominator for all communities.”⁴¹ But, for Hildebrand, this is not a hurdle because, as each community is an ontological reality of its own, they nevertheless have “an importance and value... by which they glorify God,” and that is what is most sought in a genuine communion of persons, whether it is a duopersonal or multipersonal community.⁴² For what matters is that each person within the community achieves his perfection precisely *in* the community, in communion *with others*.

A genuine community facilitates the personal realization of each member. This is why various forms of communities exist to provide and sustain an aspect of the good in the life of a person. The person, for instance, eventually has to enter a professional community in which he exercises his professional vocation; he will also likely enter an academic community for his educational formation, through which the latent faculties of the human person are molded; there is also nation-state into which persons are inserted as citizens, overseeing justice among its members and distributing the adequate material means for each one’s realization, and so on.

The multiplicity of communities and their possibilities are all there for the good of the person, each existing –if genuine– for the many dimensions that serve the person’s good. Yet the person must be responsible for joining communities; he cannot simply be dragged into one. But how about the family or country one is born into? There is a demand for the person to critically appraise these communities and the traditions that invigorate them and *make himself* a part of it. Without both the freedom and necessity to be a part of those communities, he will only find himself alienated from it.

Emphasis has been made on Hildebrand’s idea of community as resting firmly on his axiological system. But it would seem that the difficulty that one comes across in community creation through his articulation of values and value responses, is that the *concrete* reality of the community is, in a way, shrouded by the *theoretical* conclusions about the community. That is, the interpretations that Hildebrand makes about the commu-

⁴¹ HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, p. 393.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 394.

nity –its forms, hierarchy, etc.– risk departing from concrete reality, from the life of each one, when it is left at the level of theory.

In no way does this make Hildebrand's ideas about community less relevant. Rather, this fact invites us to resurface from the metaphysical domain in which Hildebrand operates, and to carry its consequences into concrete reality; that is, life as it is lived by each one, because that is where reality is chiefly encountered. Hence, this is the area where the social philosophy and philosophical method of Julián Marías can contribute to the discussion.

2. The limits and possibilities of Hildebrandian social ontology

The philosophical method I am referring to is grounded in the philosophical biography of Marías. He is deeply Ortegan in his methodology, and this term –“Ortegan”– has begun to mean that distinctive way in which José Ortega y Gasset philosophized; that is to say, to philosophize *through*, or better, *from* individual concrete human life.⁴³ Marías masterfully summarizes this in the philosophical method of vital reason. For him, reason is life and life is reason, and thus life functions as the very organ of comprehending or giving an account of reality. From this perspective, living is the instrument for organizing the contents of reality, and that which confers reason on reality.⁴⁴ This is why living is understanding and understanding is living, for any human reality is “intelligible only from the vantage point of life itself, only when it is referred to the reality in which it is rooted. Only when *life itself functions as reason* can we understand something human.”⁴⁵

The disagreement many have against this line of reasoning is that it brews a kind of subjectivism, an absolutization of the self. But this is far from any form of subjectivism and, as we shall see, will turn out to be a disagreement of no great concern. Each person's life is the primary

⁴³ José Ortega y Gasset was the teacher and close friend of Julián Marías. The latter was greatly indebted to the former for the launching of his philosophical trajectory, and before long further broadened the possibilities of Ortega's philosophy. As much as Marías is inexplicable without Ortega, Marías arrived at philosophical depths that Ortega himself was unable to penetrate. A staple introduction to Ortega's thought is his *Meditations on Quixote* (1961), translated into English by Evelyn Rugg and Diego Marín. Marías also produced a philosophical biography of his mentor in two volumes: *Ortega. Circunstancia y vocación* (1973) and *Ortega. Las trayectorias* (1984).

⁴⁴ J. MARIAS, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, translated by Frances López-Morillas, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971, p. 173.

⁴⁵ MARIAS, *Obras*, volume 2, 2nd edition, Madrid: Revista de Occidente 1962, p. 173, as quoted in H. C. Raley, *Responsible Vision: The Philosophy of Julián Marías*, Clear Creek, Indiana: The American Hispanist, Inc. 1980, p. 123.

reality, the fundamental reality, because it is the one that “remains after I eliminate all my ideas, theories, or interpretations; it is what is left when I direct my attention to what I find to be irreducible, whether I like it or not, and what obliges me to forge ideas, theories, and interpretations.”⁴⁶ It is *in my life* that all other realities are firmly rooted, for “[e]very reality, whatever it is, appears or is presented to me *within my life*.”⁴⁷

From this it becomes apparent that we cannot simply settle for ontological conclusions, since they only constitute *interpretations* of reality, they are *approximations* of reality—they are not *reality itself*. We can say this of Hildebrand’s idea of community. The strong dependence on the ontological distinctions between kinds of communities, and the axiological hierarchies that determine the ontological rank of different communities, are undeniable proof of the theoretical nature of Hildebrand’s metaphysics of community. But, as I have said, this is not a critique of his social ontology; rather, the value that Marías’s philosophy adds to Hildebrand’s is to have the latter’s philosophy see concrete reality. Marías’s thought will help incarnate his metaphysical interpretations in the life of each one. That is when it will cease to be mere interpretation and will acquire real operative consequences under the character of *reality*.

3. Julián Marías: *Vigencias, Convivencia, and the Community*

In Marías’s social philosophy, there are, in my reading, two indispensable ideas. The first is his expansion of Ortega’s notion of *vigencias*. The second is his claim that between personal life and community life, there lies interposed an interindividual life, which is a conception of man’s relationality beyond the traditional binary opposition between individual and society—as sociology and political science have stubbornly been holding. However, we must note that for our purposes, we cannot afford to retrace the whole development of Marías’s social *vigencias* because one will then be forced to turn to the murky territory of sociology, in which Marías develops his socio-historiographical method—building on Ortegian systems—the “theory of generations.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ J. MARÍAS, “The Idea of Metaphysics,” in Aloysius Robert Caponigri, *Contemporary Spanish Philosophy: An Anthology*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press 1967, p. 350.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

⁴⁸ At the encouragement of Ortega y Gasset, Marías delivered a course on the theory of generations at the Instituto de Humanidades in Madrid, a school that both Ortega and Marías started. This course was subsequently collected into a book. An English translation was later made by Harold C. Raley, *Generations: A Historical Method* (1976).

Vigencias is something that can hardly be translated into the English language without the risk of truncating its meaning in Spanish. Ortega was the first to expand its exclusively juridical meaning: “Ortega introduces two new meanings to the use of the term. The first is an extension of its application; instead of restricting it to the juridical sphere he uses it in its full range. Secondly, he applies the substantive *vigencia* to any reality ‘in vigor’ insofar as it is in force.”⁴⁹ But we must proceed with great caution because Marías uses *vigencias* primarily as an aspect of his historiographical method, and so its insertion in community formation is rarely talked about in his works. His chief concern in using *vigencias* is the elucidation of such concepts as “historical situation” and the “historical level” of societies. He employs the term “society” rather than the term “community.” The reason for this, I can only suspect, is that he understands “community” to be conveniently vague, in the sense that it can encompass such a wide array of meanings: from duopersonal relationships to pluripersonal communities, as we have seen in the discussion of the breadth of Hildebrand’s work.

In any case, Marías recognizes the unitive power of *vigencias* in organizing society. He says, “*vigencia* is the state or condition of being ‘in force’ (*vigente*); that which is *vigente* (Latin *vigens*) is *quod viget*, that which is very much alive, that which has vigor.”⁵⁰ This can come in many forms and shapes: customs, language, and most importantly, beliefs and ideas.⁵¹ However, *vigencias* are somewhat of a paradox because they are not readily evident even though they permeate social life. They are discovered only in two ways, according to Marías. First, retrospectively; when certain *vigencias* no longer function in society, they emerge on the surface of our historical awareness. This can be seen in the case of the West’s exponentially swift acceptance of homosexual dispositions when, many centuries ago, the societal acceptance of such tendencies was not “in force,” that is, it was not a *vigencia*. But only retrospectively do we recognize that it *was* in fact a *vigencia*. Second, through a kind of “theoretical attitude that suspends the force of the *vigencia*,” which allows us to abstract the *vigencia* that is currently in force and articulate its contents and scope.⁵²

⁴⁹ J. MARIAS, *The Structure of Society*, translated by Harold Raley, Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press 1988, p. 46.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ For a dense discussion on beliefs and ideas as *vigencias*, see Lourdes García del Portillo, “La filosofía de Julián Marías como método para pensar la justicia social y la felicidad,” *SCIO: Revista de Filosofía* 16, 2019, pp. 83-113.

⁵² J. MARIAS, *The Structure of Society*, p. 63.

This directs us to an important aspect of *vigencias*: they appear to serve as foundational realities for “traditions.” Traditions, what have been “handed or passed down” (Latin *tradere*), are evident and concrete social realities—unlike *vigencias* which are not immediately evident. It would not be presumptuous to identify “tradition” as the maximum expression of *vigencias*, even though Marías subsumes tradition under *vigencias*. I would posit it to be the other way around: traditions consist of those which are deliberately (and almost forcefully) passed down through generations, from father to son, while *vigencias* are the prevailing “contexts” in which a person is *born into*, or the stuff that makes up the circumstance a person finds himself *in*.

Traditions appear to the human person as more well-defined realities, more outlined in their content, than *vigencias*, which run hidden through the veins of the social fabric. The notion of tradition is necessary to understand that moment in a person’s life, usually at his coming of age, in which he examines the traditions handed down to him and decides whether to absorb or discard them. This moment, so important to the stability and cohesion of communities, in which each person finds himself having to grapple with the stuff of his society’s traditions –because he is born into it– lacks articulation in Hildebrand’s idea of community but can be understood with Marías’s concept of *vigencias*.

Vigencias are far from being merely theoretical aspects of social life. They are, first and foremost, concrete realities that permeate the relational atmosphere of a society. Marías is fond of using the example of football which, especially in Spain, is a strong *vigencia*. Football must be acknowledged because it is something that conditions Spanish life: whenever there is a game in my city, I must consider my usual commute time because the trains and buses will likely be crowded, the news outlets and my social media feed will be filled with game recaps and league standings, sports analyses and predictions for next season, etc. The busyness of the streets may inconvenience me and the ruckus that it causes in the media may be an incredible nuisance, but the fact is that I *must* come to terms with it because it is part of my social life. It is strongly *in force*.⁵³

Football is an example of what Marías would call a “general *vigencia*” because football is something that “extends throughout an entire society and which is binding on all the individuals who compose that society.”⁵⁴ In Spain, everyone has to deal with football, in one way or

⁵³ *Vigencias* are never “enforced” because that means it is not a *vigencia* to begin with, and external mechanisms are needed to “force” people to behave in a certain way.

⁵⁴ J. MARIAS, *The Structure of Society*, pp. 50-51.

another, to a greater or lesser extent. The point is that it is something unavoidable whenever one navigates through Spanish social life. Marías contrasts the reach of general *vigencias* to partial *vigencias*, which are *vigencias* that apply only to societies *within* a greater society –Marías gives them the name “insertive societies,” for they are the kinds of societies that find themselves as part of a larger society. In Spain, Marías identifies the Andalusian, Catalanian, and Basque regions as examples of insertive societies, which operate through a system of *vigencias* that apply only to themselves.⁵⁵ In the United States, one can think of the sociopolitical *vigencias* that permeate “red states” and “blue states,” both of which are different insertive societies.

At the same time, the unavoidable coexistence of multiple partial *vigencias* runs the risk of breeding contradictory *vigencias*, that is, *vigencias* that clash with each other. This is when one sector of society holds firmly to one thing while another sector professes the opposite. The partial *vigencias* of red states and blue states, for instance, especially in concerns surrounding the human person, are utterly polarizing –almost dehumanizing. Partial *vigencias* then compete to gain sufficient traction and, if victorious, evolve into general *vigencias*. That sector of society whose partial *vigencias* were made obsolete must then adapt, maybe with reluctance, to this new general *vigencia*, if they wish to remain part of the greater society. This should not be surprising if and when this happens because the *vigencias* that are most in opposition to each other consist of either beliefs or ideas, since those two are most deeply felt by the human person and are, in some way, factors that contribute to each one’s personal identity.

The possibility of having a unique set of *vigencias* in both the larger society and insertive societies testifies to the supraterritorial efficacy and applicability of *vigencias*. The reason for this is that *vigencias* are not determined by any kind of boundaries except the set of individuals conditioned by them. “Only insofar as it exerts itself on real individuals is a *vigencia* concrete and specific.”⁵⁶ This brings to question whether different sets of *vigencias* may clash with each other. Marías would say it is possible because just as generations have an “age” –that is, they come and pass– so do *vigencias*. In other words, *vigencias* come into force and dissipate; each one may vary in its duration, length of gestation, and length of decline, but what is of concern to us is their constitutive temporality. Some *vigencias* may last longer than others, like the custom of

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

the need for university education (a *vigencia* which, today, seems to be in decline and is gradually being replaced by a *vigencia* that favors skills and experience).

At this point, something must be said of a *vigencia's* power to form communities and whether it is capable of such a task, to begin with.⁵⁷ Marías claims that there are different social forms and that each has a particular mission to fulfill.⁵⁸ But what are these social forms and how do they emerge? It comes from the most immediate reality we encounter: *my* life, *your* life, the life of *each one*. For we find that, in each one's life, we live with others. We do not simply co-exist with other persons who may happen to be our parents or siblings, neighbors or fellow citizens; we *live with* other persons. This *living-with* is, in Spanish, captured by that so apt a word: *convivencia*. It is a word that, like *vigencia*, cannot be appropriately translated without diluting its meaning. We may understand it –*sit venia verbo*– as “co-living” or “living together with others.” We “co-live” (*convivir*) with others to different degrees and intensities.

These different degrees of *convivencia* are principally manifested in two social forms: *solitude* and *company*.⁵⁹ But the *living-with* that constitutes *company* unfolds in two ways: interindividually and socially. Hence, we can draw from Marías three social forms of *convivencia*: with myself, with other individuals, and with society.⁶⁰ That is to say, *convivencia* occurs in three social forms of radically distinct levels: (1) the *living-with* of solitude, (2) the *living-with* between individual persons, and (3) the *living-with* among members of a society. Marías interestingly considers the aloneness or solitude of a person to be a form of *convivencia* because when I retire within myself in solitude, I enter into myself where I can be alone *with myself*. The interindividual situation is the primary form of living because, from the moment of birth, I find myself *with particular* persons: my parents and my siblings. I do not yet at this point discover and consider myself a part of “society”; in fact, it does not cross my mind until a certain level of maturity. The co-living of society is a complex phenomenon, but *vigencias* help us discover our *insertion* in society. When I realize that I act a certain way and am conditioned by peculiar social pressures, that is when I discover that social *vigencias* impose themselves

⁵⁷ For a detailed elaboration on the types and hierarchy of *vigencias*, see Juan Manuel Monfort Prades, “La vida humana y las creencias colectivas en Julián Marías,” *Boletín de estudios de filosofía y cultura Manuel Mindán* 15 (2020): 249-262.

⁵⁸ J. MARIAS, *Reason and Life: Introduction to Philosophy*, translated by Kenneth S. Reid and Edward Sarmiento, New Haven: Yale University Press 1956, p. 54.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

on me, and I begin to realize that I am part of a collective in which these *vigencias* thrive.

The distinction between these three social forms is not insignificant since they constitute three modes of social reality. Nevertheless, for our purposes, the latter two –interindividual and social life– are of greater importance because it is only with these two modes of *convivencia* (as types of *company*) that the system of *vigencias* can be applied. Hence, the strictly social is most apparent in these two. Now, at first, it might appear that interindividual life is not so different from social life. The common saying is that the human person is born into a society, that the person is a constitutively social being. No doubt this is true, but their truth must be qualified because they do not include the fact that the person is not chiefly born into a society, into a collective, but into a family. We must protect ourselves from the danger of reducing the family to simply being the basic social unit of society, as so many for so long have been saying.

Reducing any social form, like the family, to typify a subset of a larger collective –by viewing it simply as a unit of a larger organ or as a member of a *corpus*– is a grave mistake. These smaller social forms, like the duopersonal form of conjugal love and filial love, are, in fact, the primary form of living, the foremost situation in which each person finds himself from birth. “We could say that *personal life with others* is primary, anterior to persons in their isolation and the social or collective condition, present in the form of customs, prevalent practices, or institutions.”⁶¹ When a child begins to recognize he is living together with others (*conviviendo*), what he discovers is not a society but an interindividual condition.⁶²

Within interindividual relationships as a form of *company*, Marías claims that they are the situations in which we find a person’s primary mode of realization.⁶³ The reason for this is not easy to explain, but it starts from concrete human life. Persons have distinct projects, that is, the circumstance they find themselves in, the trajectories that constitute their life, the vocation they were called to, their temporal distension, etc. Given the uniqueness of each one’s life, of each one’s circumstance, the completion of our distinct projects is never realized in the same way, for

⁶¹ J. MARIAS, *Persona*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1996, p. 50.

⁶² Cfr. MARIAS, *Reason and Life*, p. 257. “Interindividual relationships are constituted in the life of each of us, they are doings of mine, executed on account of something and with a view to something, which therefore have a meaning for me; I understand them and am responsible for them. If we understand by society something different from individual life, then so far there is no society.”

⁶³ H. C. RALEY, *A Watch Over Mortality: The Philosophical Story of Julián Marías*, Albany, State University of New York Press 1997, p. 52.

their realization unfolds in our respective trajectories. But within inter-individual relationships, like the love between a man and a woman, there occurs a fascinating phenomenon when each party's projects converge. In other words, there is a point where each party takes upon himself or herself the project of the other. Marías calls this a "crossing of projects" or an intersection of projects.⁶⁴ This happens when the projects of the man and the woman "cross paths" and meet at the junction and begin to flourish in *union*—but never in *uniformity*.

This intersection of projects is strongly evident in our lives. When a mother brings a child into the world, a radical change affects the trajectory of her life project. She thinks about how to raise the child, sacrificing some of her work to be at home with the child. She may even give up her profession entirely for the sake of the child if her circumstance demands it. In doing so, her project—a big part of it, at least—becomes, as it were, the project of the child. The mother meets the child's project, and they cross paths, in order for them both to be realized, to draw closer to their completion, because the child cannot work on his project alone and *needs* another. This is only one instance of that "crossing of projects" that characterizes the life of interindividual relationships and, often to a lesser extent, the greater social sphere. The crossing of projects becomes harder to achieve in a larger society because multiple projects, multiple trajectories, will have to coincide. The great mystery of human freedom makes such a noble task incredibly difficult to accomplish.

The form of *convivencia* that is "society" is more intelligible in light of *vigencias*. It is also the case that interindividual relationships may be conditioned by (partial) *vigencias*—like the traditions of a family, or quirks and manners of expression known only to a group—but only a society possesses the robust mechanism of a system of *vigencias*. *Vigencias* are, like human life, concrete realities. It is hard to deny that "[s]ocial facts [*vigencias*] are of this sort; they are beliefs or customs. They are not 'things', they are not nature, but they *are* realities because I have to reckon with them, they constrain me. They are human realities, because I encounter them in my living-with other persons and they refer to them."⁶⁵ Despite this, society is not the primary form of realization (unlike interindividual relationships) since my insertion in society is *posterior* to my being in an interindividual relationship.

⁶⁴ MARÍAS, *Persona*, p. 80.

⁶⁵ MARÍAS, *Reason and Life*, pp. 259-260.

In any case, the presence of *vigencias* in both types of *company* (interindividual relations and society) is not a fact that can be overlooked so easily. *Vigencias* are diffused in both these social forms because they have such a strong influence on our perspective of human finalities.⁶⁶ This means that *vigencias* determine, in large part, what we think of the human person, how we behave toward persons, what to make of the human condition, and how we think of the person's end. This cannot be taken lightly because each one's project is determined by our perspectives on human finalities. In real social situations, it happens that there are *vigencias* that either bring persons to their proper ends or do the opposite. Today, *vigencias* of the latter kind are most apparent, especially in the social forms of the West. Thus, we now confront the task of elevating *vigencias*, which are ever-present in interindividual relationships and society, so that they prove to be efficient means for the realization of the person rather than for his depersonalization. I surmise that an answer has been proposed in Hildebrand's social ontology, so we return to him.

4. Synthesizing Hildebrandian and Marías ideas on community

Hildebrand's notion of values and Marías's idea of *vigencia* function on different planes but they can converge in (1) the possibility of *vigencias* serving as a *virtus unitiva*, (2) *vigencias* counting as a kind of value, insofar as the *vigencia* in question is objectively good, (3) determining the axiological ranking of social forms and communities, not just through *virtus unitiva*, but also through *vigencia*, and (4) specifying the scope of what can be considered a "community" through the social forms of *convivencia*. As we pointed out earlier, there is a need for the elaborate social ontology of Hildebrand to be brought to the level of the concretely real. This is the reason why Marías's ideas of *vigencias* and *convivencia* are, for our purposes, what enriches Hildebrand's notion of value and *virtus unitiva*.

First, the possibility of *vigencias* serving as a kind of *virtus unitiva*. A *virtus unitiva* for Hildebrand is that which has the power to unite persons and, from that unity, form a community of persons. A *vigencia* for Marías is that which is in force in a society, which conditions persons' conduct with others and with themselves. However, the two concepts differ in their origin. Hildebrand says that the *virtus unitiva* of a community comes from the value that the members of a community hold. Conjugal love, for instance, is the value that unites spouses and creates an internal

⁶⁶ See MARÍAS, *The Structure of Society*, pp. 201-208.

bond that becomes the foundation for the duopersonal community between the two of them. But Marías holds that *vigencias* cannot be created by individual persons but only received by them from society.⁶⁷ Individuals receive existing *vigencias* that impose themselves on society. In other words, persons are born and raised into a system of *vigencias* and they must deal with those *vigencias*; otherwise, they fail to integrate into that society.

But there is no problem integrating the Hildebrandian *virtus unitiva* with the Marían *vigencia* because the persons in a community must discover, recognize, and respond to values. This means that values are not made only when there are persons who hold them and respond to them, but that there can already be values present and it is only a matter of persons incarnating them and making them patent to other persons in the community. The admission of persons as members of the community involves the same process through values and *vigencias*: persons *must* recognize and respond to values in the same way that they *must* recognize and respond to *vigencias*. To ignore these values is tantamount to refusing to be in communion with the community; similarly, not to deal with the *vigencias* of a society is to alienate oneself from it. Hence, *vigencias*, which are social pressures that “force” us to conduct ourselves in a particular way relative to others in society, share the unitive force of the Hildebrandian *virtus unitiva*. Still, we must not forget that their power to unite varies, depending on the degree to which they possess ontological and moral intensity.

Second, the possibility for *vigencias* to be considered values in the Hildebrandian sense. *Vigencias* can come in the form of customs, language, beliefs, ideas, and the like. But the values that have unitive force primarily come in the form of *moral values*.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, as the inevitable reality of *vigencias* has shown, and as Marías has explained through his notion of *vigencias*, social forms can be constituted from elements beyond the unitive force of moral values. One may refute this position, reasoning that, as Hildebrand would say, being or existence cannot be “neutral”; there is always an importance (or lack thereof) attached to all beings or whatever exists. It is in that sense that it receives a “moral” character because it can either be objectively good or only subjectively good. Hence, it would seem that even *vigencias* are moral, in one way or another. There is truth to this that, perhaps, was not recognized by Marías. *Vigencias* have an intrinsic moral quality: because *vigencias* are

⁶⁷ RALEY, *A Watch Over Mortality*, p. 53.

⁶⁸ HILDEBRAND, *Metafísica de la comunidad*, p. 86.

realities, and all realities must have an aspect of ontological importance, then *vigencias* must possess some importance –some *moral* value.⁶⁹

What is the consequence of seeing *vigencias* as having moral value? The most apparent one is that customs, language, beliefs, and ideas are thus seen in light of their moral quality, rather than their merely being “in force” in a society. The football *vigencia* we spoke of earlier, is there a moral quality inherent in it? Certainly, because we see, for instance, the good it does for the unification of the Spanish people. It goes beyond being a sport and serves, as it were, as a symbol of Spanish life. Only if there were to be a fanaticism for football would it render negative value, i.e., *disvalue*. To some degree, the growing emphasis on the economic dimension of football acts as a disvalue, a negative *vigencia*, because it decreases the unitive power of football as a *vigencia*, as a practice that unites Spain. Recall that, for Hildebrand, values are the quality of a thing being objectively good. If *vigencias* are social realities, something that concretely and profusely permeates the community, then it must have the quality of being objectively precious. Not only that, persons sustain the *vigencia* –they keep it alive– because they find it good and precious to them, which reveals the value, the importance, of social *vigencias*.

Third, since we said that *vigencias* can serve as a form of value, then *vigencias* can serve as a determinant of the axiological ranking of social forms and communities. Hildebrand says that the axiological rank of a community is dependent on eight criteria. Still, it would be helpful to include the intensity to which persons recognize and adopt the existing system of *vigencias* as another rubric under the first criterion (the unity in the community) among the eight criteria for the axiological ranking of communities. The bond within different social forms intensifies the more each of its members recognizes the *vigencias* that are in place and conducts himself accordingly. The reality of *vigencias* accounts not just for moral values, but also other social realities valuable in themselves: customs, language, beliefs, and ideas. If the axiological character of communities is determined by the *virtus unitiva* alone, it seems that the foundation of the community lacks sturdiness.

When we look at communities today, we hardly find their members declaring that they are communities because they share the same moral

⁶⁹ See MARÍAS, *The Structure of Society*, p. 64. “These forces have a specific point of applicability: the individuals affected by them. Only insofar as it exerts itself on real individuals is a *vigencia* concrete and specific. And the way men react to them is also a part of the reality of *vigencias*; their functioning consists of their action complemented by the personal reaction they arouse.”

values. In the United States, certainly, there are the Democrats –most of whom advocate for access to abortion –and the Republicans– most of whom reject the legalization of abortion. Yet these two communities, the “blues” and “reds,” are part of a greater community, the United States, in which they do not necessarily share moral values that serve as the American community’s *virtus unitiva*. What we have instead are social forms that hold their partial *vigencias* but also share general *vigencias*. Now, the point of making an axiological ranking of communities is to discover which communities are most suitable for the realization of persons. But the criteria of Hildebrand’s social ontology do not account for the social realities encompassed by *vigencias*. Hence, positioning *vigencias* as among the criteria that determine the axiological ranking of communities will efficiently reckon with both the ontological significance of the community and the saturation of *personal life* within it.⁷⁰

Fourth, Marías’s notion of *convivencia* helps clarify the scope of what can be considered a “community” in Hildebrand’s social ontology. Hildebrand considers duopersonal relationships very much a community just as pluripersonal communities. But Marías says that the community between two persons and communities of multiple persons is not just a matter of quantitative and qualitative differences but of *radical* distinctions. Hence, he says that duopersonal relationships are, strictly speaking, not communities but merely interindividual relationships. The term he gives this is *convivencia*, “living-with.” Interindividual relationships are a form of *living-with* one another. But communities are also another, distinct form of *living-with*, and to a greater extent because it involves multiple persons who are *living-with each other*. This notion of *convivencia* allows us to be more precise when identifying what makes a community.

Communities, for Hildebrand, are formed through the unitive power of values and value responses shared by persons. But this catchall view of “community,” which extends its definition to include duopersonal relations, seems to erase the distinctive character of “relationships.” Hence, the perspective of Marías, through the notion of *convivencia*, seems more appropriate in clarifying what is meant –and what *can be meant*– by “community.” *Convivencia*, “living-with,” as the measure of what counts as a community then becomes more feasible than the *virtus unitiva* and values for a simple reason, and it is that *convivencia*, living together with others, is an immediately concrete social reality in a way that values are not.

⁷⁰ See MARÍAS, *Persona*, p. 154. “In the end, it is the key to the existence of what deserves to be called, strictly speaking, societies, which have very diverse degrees of coherence, duration, and saturation.”

These four possibilities of mutual enrichment between Hildebrand's and Marías's ideas on the person and community are a rich source for expanding their operative potential. As much as their conception of society and community is built on different if not wholly opposite philosophical methods, the common denominator between them is that they affirm the need for the human person to be designated a special place in the community. That is to say, various social forms and communities, for both Hildebrand and Marías, can never supplant the primacy of persons. The community is indeed indispensable for the perfection of the human person, but only because each of its members is incommunicably his own. In other words, the community or any other social form is *for* the human person because it is *from* the human person.

This study has attempted to present a juxtaposition of Dietrich von Hildebrand's ideas of value, *virtus unitiva*, and community and Julián Marías's ideas of *convivencia*, *vigencia*, and society. As they are both personalist philosophers, the two share similar conclusions about what a community should be but differ primarily in what communities should constitute. Hildebrand is admirably consistent in his axiological approach, as it has been the constant temper of his philosophy and methodology. Marías, however, takes on the perspective of philosophizing *from* concrete human life and departing from there to the level of *abstract* theory. Although they richly inform each other's philosophies on the community and the various social forms, the flexibility of Marías's ideas –since they are drawn from the immediate reality of human life– has proven to be an effective source for elaborating on Hildebrand's idea of community, particularly the dialogue made between *virtutes unitivae* and *vigencias* –both powerful concepts that wield the capacity for community creation.

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