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# SOLIDARITY, EXEMPLARINESS, AND BILDUNG: MAX SCHELER'S SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGY IN THE DEBATE ON EUROPEANISM

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## abstract

Recently there has been a spate of interest in Max Scheler's social phenomenology (Schloßberger, 2016; Szanto & Moran, 2016; Cusinato, 2018). In this paper I aim to show that his philosophical contribution on Europe and Europeanism has its focal point on the concepts of rebuilding (Wiederaufbau) and rebirth (Wiedergeburt). My idea is that, for Scheler, the essential condition of any attitude towards socio-cultural change (Umkehr) have its center in the idea of the formation and the development of the personal singularity (Personbildung) (Scheler, 2009a; Scheler, 2010a; Scheler, 2013). And this means the growth and the expression, in a solidaristic perspective, of one's own ethical singularity (An-sich-Gutes für mich) and of one's own vocations. The idea of solidarity declined in terms of Bildung is therefore strictly interdependent on the testimony coming from Otherness-exemplar (Vorbild) (Scheler, 2009f).

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## keywords

Scheler, solidarity, exemplarity, Bildung, individuation

**1. Beyond vertical trends**

The main idea of this essay is that growing, at the level of the person, is not a vertical process or movement (of ascension or climbing, as it is commonly understood). Actually, it is not even the opposite, the horizontal and linear one, worse still if progressive. My hypothesis is that to grow up means a movement for the description of which the classic analogies drawn from references to spatial coordinates (above, below, inside, outside, high, low, near, far, large, small, etc.) are useless and even misleading. The most appropriate image to describe what happens whenever one is confronted with growth-related phenomena is – according to my point of view – a real rebirth. Connected to this first idea, there is a second one according to which the process of rebirth is a process of *Bildung* or shaping of the becoming of the whole individuality in sharing into an exemplarities dynamic (the meaning to be attributed to the latter term will be clarified later as a process and a dynamic of a relationship, not an attribute of a single person). In short, individuals *sharing the shaping of their totality* at multiple levels: merging, contaminating, conforming, emulating, imitating, admiring and, finally, inspiring each other. Their totality, however, remain unfinished until the end, so they are always being able to *become otherwise*. But this becoming is marked by a trajectory that goes from a relational, fusional and complex moment in the direction of separation, differentiation, individuation and simplification. The exemplarist theory I will try to show – and that I will call *paradigmatic exemplarism*, as opposed to the *emblematic* one – that I propose to develop has strong roots in the social phenomenology of Max Scheler and it is inherently *individuationist* but not individualist. According to my point of view, the undoubted merit of the current theories inspired by moral exemplarism and virtue ethics in philosophical debate is to emphasize the importance of virtues and their role (ethical and intellectual) in the flourishing of personality.

At the same time, the decision (probably the only one possible, given the assumptions and premises) to arrest the discourse to the moral level, of its categories, judgments, values, etc.; the idea of considering, moreover, admiration as the exemplary moral sentiment *par excellence*, as the highest point of the individual's ethical and personal maturation, risk to mask the complex composition of the *processual singularity*, and the process of *harmonization* between its different levels (biological, psychic, social, moral, and personal), simultaneously present. Given this individuationist assumption, the idea is that the greatest growth for singularity occurs when the latter is able to realize the co-participatevely openness-to-the-world (in the sense indicated by the term *Weltoffenheit*) and to open to a world of singularity. The openness to the world in the sense of Scheler means, at least in my interpretation, a sort of *openness to singularity*. This applies as much to the world of human persons as to the subhuman

and nonhuman one. “Personal”, in the sense indicated by Scheler, means that attitude and existential positioning by which an individual open himself to the singular side of the world. On the other hand, exemplarity is not the individual being that is the object of admiration (and veneration) and the source of exhortation, but the attitude and relational process in which two or more individuals are involved in an attempt of sharing their shaping. The error lies more in the insistence with which one continues to look at the sources – “from where? – and at the reasons – “why?” – instead of looking in the direction of the effects and the consequences of real life. In the case of the exemplary process, the effect must be to give access to a singular dimension of existence. As with the hierarchy of values, as with exemplarity the process gradually moves from a state of *relative dependence on-* (physiological states, psychic conditioning, commonplaces, rigid moral categories, etc.) to a relative liberation and *openness to the world and singularity*. This assumption does not mean that there is a totally differentiated individual who is “uniquely” himself or herself. Rather, it means that person includes all those layers (biological, impulsive, psychic, common and social sense, moral and finally personal) and they coexist simultaneously and in the same individual and with different sense of priorities. So this leaving the individual with the task (never definitively accomplished) of reckoning daily and until the end of his days with his constant but discontinuous becoming other-than- and (only thus) becoming himself or herself.

Try to keep in mind this fundamental fact: Scheler’s phenomenology of value has led me to think that, at the top of the hierarchy or ladder of values, the sacred (and love as the fundamental act that gives a shape and so realizes that dimension) is what enables the individual to be capable of open-himself-to-the-world (*Weltoffenheit*). So far nothing new. Guido Cusinato had already twisted Scheler’s most common interpretations by proposing this revolutionary idea (Cusinato, 2018). According to my point of view, however, the dimension of the holy and the quality of holiness express the maximum capacity of openness-to-the-world *if and only if it means the openness to a world of singularities*. The personal dimension that Scheler talks about only makes sense if one makes the effort to grasp it as the dimension of individuality and singularities. But the individuality that Scheler talks about is an individuality that is nourished by otherness, relation and process – at least in my explanation. Singularity, like personhood, is neither a state nor an innate characteristic. It is a direction, a tendency and a *teleokline* process that develops in an unpredictable and original way from a determined and already given state of affairs. Givenness, gift and revelation, in fact, are the three key-terms in Scheler’s phenomenology. The gift is what is revealed but not on the conditions and the rules of the observer. The gift (in the sense of an action) is what happens if the individual predisposes himself and opening himself to the possibility that something new may break into a non-chronological process. In this sense, the person becomes himself only *in fieri* and at the end of the process, and his life can be read and explained only retrospectively. Anyone can say of the individual, whether it is a butterfly or a human being, that it is what it is only at the end, not at the beginning. Otherwise the risk is to fall into innatism, ideality and a sterile discourse on innate potentialities, gifts, talents, vocations, etc.

So, once this premise is made, let us try to keep in mind that when I talk about exemplarity, I do not mean to refer to something that has to do with emulation, admiration and imitation of a model. According to my point of view, the dynamic and the process of exemplarity is something like a process intrinsically singularizing.

We open ourselves up to the individual when we are predisposed to accept that, for example, two snowflakes are not totally the same even if they come from the same blizzard.

**2. Ex-centricity and Rebirth**

Now, what I would like to do is to show the following points:

- The philosophical contribution of Max Scheler on *moral condition for the development and the growth of human being* is based on the concept of ex-centricity and rebirth (*Wiedergeburt*)
- the concept of openness-to-the-world (*Weltoffenheit*) plays a key-role in the process of shaping and configuration of the person (cf. Scheler, 2009c: p. 215):

These two fundamental concepts – rebirth and openness-to-the-world – have been the underlying basis of the process of individualization. That is why *epoché* could be understood – in Scheler’s view – as a deeper change of intention (*Gesinnungsänderung*) and as an authentic transformation of the way of thinking (*Gesinnungswandel*) (cf. Scheler, 2009c: p. 183).

The socio-philosophical discussion about these phenomena, according to Scheler, risks to generate a dangerous dualism between individualism and communitarianism (cf. Scheler, 2010b). My hypothesis is that Scheler escapes from this dualism through the theorizing of the relationship between the principle of *solidarity* (*Solidaritätsprinzip*) and the idea of a fundamental *solitude* – and thus of a unique and individual way of being. According to Scheler, “conversion” and “rebirth” are not only processes of the individual soul, but

also originally a collective and socio-historical phenomena. The principle of solidarity [...] in responsibility, guilt and merit affirms the extent of co-responsibility (*Mitverantwortlichkeit*), [...] for everything that happens in the moral sphere [...] [So] the pure form of co-responsibility – the consciousness of the fact that even the moral world as a whole, of the past and the future, of the stars and the sky, could be radically different, if only “I” were “different” [...] – this original co-responsibility [*ursprüngliche Mitverantwortlichkeit*] is as essential for the existence of a moral subject as self-responsibility [*Selbstverantwortlichkeit*] (Scheler, 2010a: pp. 205-207).

I would try to show that the principle of co-responsibility and solidarity could be interpreted as the process where the individuals are collectively responsible for the growth and the development of all the others.

The concepts of rebirth – in the sense of conversion (*Umkehr*) – and ex-centricity – in the sense of openness-to-the-world – represent the main inner conditions for the formation of a new ethical and non-moralistic view of the process of personal growth. Once more, in fact

conversion (*Umkehr*) is [...] the inevitable form of the new course. Here too, the necessary form of consciousness, from which only new positive ways of thinking (*neue positive Gesinnungen*) and, ultimately, new projects of political existence can arise, is constituted by a profound sense of estrangement (*Entfremdung*) from a human-historical system based on the individualistic principle of competition and envy (*individualistische Konkurrenz- und Neidprinzip*) (Scheler, 2013: p. 429)

to a slow rediscovery of the deep roots of that model-guide of the human being [*führenden Menschentypus*] (cf. Scheler, 2010a: p. 209) based on the principle of solidarity.

According to my point of view, the concept of *epoché* could be understood as an unfinished process of immanent transcendence: it implies the differentiation and the detachment from common sense, common places and stereotypical visions, family system, generational determinism, traditions, ancestor myth, etc. My hypothesis is that Scheler does not suggest an opposition between self-redemption and hetero-redemption coming from Otherness-

Exemplars. Rather, I suppose that Scheler draws and theorize a process in which the individual and otherness *share the shaping* of their own *Leitbild*.

The process of emotional sharing the shaping is characterized by a sort of liberation and a new awareness (*Befreiung und die neue Sichselbstbemächtigung*) of the power of determination (*Determinationskraft*) of tradition, heredity, family ties, etc. This is why the transformation of the individual represent an open, dynamic, shared and unfinished process. And this is why individual person is not an isolated substance.

My aim is to show that the principle of solidarity can be understood as multilayered concept, and thus it can be explained as composed of three layers or levels:

- 1) a moral level, as co-responsibility (*Mitverantwortlichkeit*);
- 2) a vital level, as reciprocal solidarity of all living beings in the global life (*Alleben*); a sort of version of the principle of solidarity between living being;
- 3) a metaphysical level, as solidarity between the becoming of the person and the world, and the becoming of its grounding and foundation.

A phenomenological reading of the idea of solidarity and co-responsible reciprocity can interpret the relationship between individuality and Otherness – i.e. between the idea of ex-centricity and the idea of openness-to-the-world (cf. Scheler, 1923b; Scheler, 1927a) – as a creative interpenetration (*Ausgleich*). I would suggest that the essential condition of any attitude towards ethical and personal transformation (*Umkehr*) can be represented by the idea of *Bildung* or development of individual person (cf. Scheler, 1925; Scheler, 1927b; Scheler, 1928). The concept of *Personbildung* can be explained as the growth and the expression of one's own ethical singularity, and this involve the idea of a *good for one individual and only for him* [*Gutes für ein Individuum und nur für eines*], i.e. the famous concept of good-in-itself-for-me (*An-sich-Gutes für mich*).

In this essay I would try to reflect on solidarity and individuation as two interpenetrated ontological factors (cf. Scheler, 2009b: p. 110). They seem to be two factors that co-participate in that metaphysical process named *openness to singularity*, and contribute together to the «determination [*Bestimmung*] of the becoming of the individual and social person» (Scheler, 2009f: p. 68).

Now, I think that the idea of *Ausgleich* could help us to understood the idea of determination in a non-deterministic way. Indeed, determination means a destination (*Bestimmung*) – taking up the distinction proposed by Scheler himself between ‘destiny’ and ‘destination’. In this way, we could also explain the central role of the ideas of *Bildung*, *Personbildung* and *Menschenbildung*. My hypothesis is that Scheler used to say *Bildung* to refer to «determination» (*Bestimmung*). *Bildung*, indeed, is an individual determination (*individuelle Bestimmung*), and it is peculiarly individual, both of cultural environments, of nations, and ultimately of each particular individual (cf. Scheler, 2009f: p. 70).

In this essay, I am only going to refer to one of Scheler's canonical definition of the person, according to which the person is exclusively the unity of a concrete center of acts (and co-execution [*Mit-vollzug*] of acts), an articulated and functional unity. So, person is not a substantial unity: it is individuated through itself and in itself. This is why the person is *individuated*, or rather, *singularized* and thus can nevertheless form a plurality (cf. Scheler, 2009f: p. 72). According to Scheler, it is clear that the process of singularization necessarily implies a process of pluralization.

But let us return to the idea of *Bildung*.

As I have already said, I believe that Scheler theorize the idea of *Bildung* as the shape of the essential nature and destination of the individual. *Bildung* – or *cultura animi* – is first and foremost an *ideal*, or rather an *ideational process* (in the sense of the ideation shown in *Die*

### 3. The stratification of solidarity and the idea of *Bildung*

*Stellung*), i.e. it is primarily a process of growth [discontinuous, non-predictable, sinusoidal and non-linear]. Through the process of *Bildung*, the individual assumes *his* peculiar shaping, *his* conformation. For Scheler, *Bildung* is a category of being, neither of knowing nor of living. *Bildung*, therefore, is equivalent to

an imprint that has become fixed, [an] overall configuration taken on by a particular [individual], not to be understood, however, in the manner of the form of a statue or a painting [...] but rather as an imprint and configuration assumed by a living totality in the form of time, of a totality that consists only of courses, processes and acts. [...] The form of a single person and no one else (Scheler, 2009a: pp. 54-55).

Once more, singularization means differentiation and distinction – or, referring to *epoché* – liberation, emancipation, detachment of the individual from organic, social and traditional power, determination and influences. This plastic process that Scheler calls *Bildung* (cf. Scheler, 2009a: p. 56) is a layered process composed of different degrees (*Stufen*), levels and senses. It is the same as the idea of solidarity.

Here I prefer to focus on the ethical-phenomenological aspect of this process, but Scheler also assigns to the idea of *Bildung* the role of an eminent metaphysical process, where he states that «*Bildung* means *humanization* – if it is considered from the point of view of subhuman nature – and at the same time, in the same process, it is an incessant attempt at *self-deification* – if it has considered from the point of view of that which imposes respect [*Ehrfurcht*], existing and being essentially above human being and all finite things» (Scheler, 2009a: p. 56). However, that does not mean we have to expect passively for a salvation or a redemption from outside.

*Bildung*, as I said, is essentially diversifying (cf. Scheler, 2009b: pp. 70-71). Conformation, in fact, is not the same as standardization and homogenization. There is a fact of fundamental importance for ethics, namely that «between human beings there is an absolutely primary axiological difference [*primärer Wertunterschied der Menschen*]» (Scheler, 2013: p. 325).

We must keep in mind that we cannot talk about *Bildung* without talking about:

- 1) on the one hand, the *realization* and embodiment of an *image guide* [*Leitbild*];
- 2) on the other hand, the ability to *become form and image* [*Bild- und Gestaltwerden*] for other individual (cf. Scheler, 2013: p. 995).

The individual is co-active in the process of formation of his own personality, and he becomes incessantly what he is *in nuce* by his essence – in the sense of the Pindaric saying: *Become what you are*.

The individual who realizes or achieves his process of singularization is not someone who knows or someone who knows much, but someone who makes for his own «a personal structure, a set of dynamic ideal schemes connected to one another to form the unity of a style» (Scheler, 2009e: p. 86), i.e. an *ordo amoris*.

According to my point of view, the deepest philosophical ambition of the idea of *Bildung* refers to the mysterious idea of image-model, image-guide (*Leitbild*) or individual process (*Beruf*). That is the problem: how should we connect the process of free self-configuration of one's *Leitbild* with the *Vorbild* coming from Otherness? Self-agency and self-acquisition [*Selbsterwerbung*], in fact, represents for Scheler only one type of activity among others. Along with it, there are multiple factors that contribute to the formation of the person (hereditary transmission, tradition, education, authority, actual personal life experience, etc.).

The question for Scheler seems to be the following:

- What are the factors that contribute to the process of growth and maturation of individual person?

- How tradition, heredity, authority, education, personal experience etc. can affect the process of individuation? (cf. Scheler, 2013: p. 177).

The idea of *Bildung* is therefore strictly interdependent on the witness of life coming from Otherness-exemplar (*Vorbild*) (cf. Scheler, 2010a). Exemplar, indeed, is based on diversity and inspiration as paradigms of existential improvement (cf. Cusinato, 2018).

Once more, the exemplarism theory that I would like to point out is based on social phenomenology and it is intrinsically *individuationist*. I think that moral exemplarism make a perspectival errore, namely to regard the *moral* aspects of the individual as the highest point of his ethical and personal growth. Moreover, the exhortative and pedagogical character of moral exemplarism are typical of some stage of the maturation of the invidual, i.e. of childhood.

So the question becomes:

- What should be added from the *outside* to that image-guide (*Leitbild*)?
- What should be added from the *outside* to enable us to actively accept the call of *our* destination?

Scheler seems to answer that many things and factors contributes to this process from the outside. And all of them are not out of our power and control, but not in the sense of our conscious will and our intentional choice.

Our life, indeed is freely determined by different factors such as heredity, the *milieu*, the condition of the group and class to which one belongs, the era in which one is born etc. If we want to consider only the positive and active factors, it turns out that the most important factor is the axiological model and example offered by a person who is always connected to our intimate sphere.

First, then, if he wants to be “shaped” – Scheler says – the whole person must surrender himself to a model that is *heilen*<sup>1</sup> and authentic, free and noble. [...] Such a model is not “chosen”. The models grab us, seducing and inviting us, drawing us imperceptibly [...]. They are those who illustrate and clarify to each person his destination [*Bestimmung*]: by commensurate us with these models, we can strive to rise to ourselves: [...] they know our true strengths and teach us to make an active use of them (Scheler, 2009b: pp. 70-71).

The authentic *Bildung*, as I said before, is necessarily diversifying. My hypothesis is that Scheler considers a great mistake to base the process of *Bildung* through models the mere admiration of great men. The risk, indeed, is to fall into prostration under the guise of virtue: a leader, a boss or a master, in short, who tells everyone what to think, what to do and what not do.

*Construction, solidification and differentiation* (*Aufbau, Erstarrung und Überdifferenzierung*) represent the key-terms for the idea of exemplariness from a schelerian point of view. Every individual life is characterized by indeterminacy and separation (cf. Zambrano, 2020: p. 57). Now, I believe that Scheler is a strenuous opponent of the passive idea of passive veneration and admiration of an idol or hero. However, on the other hand I believe that he is a strenuous opponent of the heroic image of the self-made man too, as the unique and exclusive author of his own life and happiness. In this sense, I think that the *antiheroic* exemplarist theory I would to point out involves a sort of anti-eurocentrism and anti-occidentalism: namely, it is a different way of thinking exemplars compared to the Western image of human being.

The important thing is not to get confused and to understand the difference between

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1 I propose to explained the term “*heilen*” in the sense of *Wholeness*, rather than *Holiness* or *Sanctity*.

exemplarity and the [pathological] need for a redemption coming from the outside, i.e. the passive expectation of a salvation from the outside. In this case, the risk is to leave behind from the “weight” of the *decision* regarding his free *self-configuration*. Scheler, indeed, defines the way of being of individual person as the opened decision about what he wants to be and what he wants to become. And the ideal all for human being – Scheler says – is *Allmensch* (cf. Scheler, 2009a: p. 127).

**4. Leit-bild  
and Vorbild:  
sharing  
the shaping**

My aim is to show that Scheler suggests a characteristic way of thinking about the relationship between self-redemption and the hetero-direction coming from the *Otherness-exemplar*. I believe that Scheler try to explain this process – in which the individual and the *Vorbild* of the otherness sharing the shaping of one’s *Leitbild* – as a liberation (*Befreiung und die neue Sichselbstbemächtigung*) from the power of determination (*Determinationskraft*) of tradition, heredity, family ties, etc. The transformations of the individual depend simultaneously on the dynamic relationship between these factors *and* the flourishing of one’s individuation process. As I said before, the individual is not an isolated substance. So, in order to realize the process of individuation is not so necessary to be hermetically closed or locked in relation to the outside world.

«Over a period of only 150 to 200 years», Bowen writes, «an individual is the descendant of 64 to 128 families, each of which has contributed to him or her. With all the myths, falsifications, memories and opinions influenced by emotionality, it is difficult to recognize the self or family members in the personal, present or recent past» (Bowen, 2003: p. 65).

I think that Scheler invites us to ask ourselves the following question: *what if the relational context represented only the opportunity for the emergence (or non-emergence) of individual vocations?*

I think that Scheler imagine the phenomenon of *growth* [*Wachsen*] as a non-temporal becoming. He theorizes the idea of developing into a sort of *phenomenology of self-possession* (*Phänomenologie des Sichselbsthabens*), in the direction of self-awareness. He tries to build up a *phenomenology of being-concentrated-in-himself* (*konzentriertes Insichsein*) in which are included the different “types and modes of immediate self-given being (*Arten und Weisen des unmittelbaren Sichselbstgegebenseins*).

Indeed, to be adult or mature is usually understand as to be great, to have reached the ultimate height. But that is only just one way to talk about maturity and maturation: i.e. the *heroic way*. Instead, Scheler’s *anti-heroic exemplarist theory* invites us to reflect on the vertical and aerial metaphors we use to describe our lives and our growth. Scheler says that there will continue to be a radical juxtaposition of *pure relationship* and *pure self-reference* until we try to realize that *to grow is to descend* (cf. Hillman, 2009: pp. 64-65) into oneself (in the sense of the *Sammlung*).

«Pascal encapsulates his entire doctrine within the framework of this question: has man ascended to himself? Or has he descended to himself?» (Scheler, 1997: p. 51). Scheler says: the person (whatever he or she may be), on the other hand,

is never reduced to being-member of a group, and – despite the principle of solidarity – self-responsibility is never reduced to co-responsibility [...]. Over and above all the lived experience that penetrates and spreads in the indicated places of belonging, occupying which, from time to time, hinders or favors the person as a whole (*die Person als Ganzes*), each person still feels (to some extent) an unmistakable being-himself (*eigentümliches Selbstsein*) [...] that emerges over the whole of those places, in which he knows himself [...] as solitary (*einsam*). [...] It is only the absolutely intimate person who no longer has any possible social ties with other people (through the mediation of a common person). Within the common realm he is, so to speak, in a

condition of absolute solitude (*absoluter Einsamkeit*). It is completely wrong if anyone try to say that «the human being becomes a person only if in his own experiencing he emerges and freeing himself from the whole web of experienced social relations (Scheler, 2013: pp. 1077-1079).

«Separate being presupposes an ontological, metaphysical independence [...]. Then the individual can be a destiny, that is, something that only he can achieve, something to which he adapts himself in a necessary way, although his individual life remains free» (Ibid: pp. 57-58)

Anyway, many studies have suggested that the reflection of Scheler on exemplariness are based on the moral level, and on the emulation of the virtues of others (cf. Russo, 2019). This involves the risk of a certain homologation, rigidity, and fixity. Exemplariness, indeed, does not mean moral teaching or to elevate exemplar-models to the absolute foundation of knowledge, life, discovery and the construction of ethics individuality and singularity. The influence of the exemplar on the follower cannot be understood exclusively from a moralistic perspective. In this case, indeed, we can only distinguish quite rigidly between an *active* side (the exemplar or the model) and a *passive* side (the follower), which are bound (in a negative sense) in a double way by this bond of admiration and emulation. The risk of these interpretations is, moreover, to produce a qualitative leveling of individual, value, and cultural differences.

A closer examination of the idea of *Bildung*, instead, both at the level of the individual and at the level of the community, brings out clearly the acknowledgement of the other as other: in this way, to be an exemplar means to enhance talents, plasticity, peculiarities, and specificities of the *other* person as other than his own (cf. Bellini, 2021; Ruggiero, 2018; Ruggiero, 2020). And the presence of Otherness-exemplars (in personal, social, cultural, and religious terms) take the (positive) risk of leading the person in the direction of *his* or *her* peculiar process of axiological growth.

Therefore, models are not objects that require imitation or blind submission [...]: models are only precursors that urge us to listen to the call of our person, and the moral consciousness and law that are ours in an individual way. Exemplars must make us free and make us free – insofar as they are not slaves, but free – free for the acceptance of our destination and for the fulfilment of our strength. Otherness (whether it is exemplary or merely authoritative), however, cannot “define” types, and even it cannot indicate the individuals to whom the advice is addressed; rather, it is the business of each individual to establish whether he or she really belongs to that “type” to which the advice refers; that is, to establish whether he or she is “called” (*berufen*) to follow it (*befolgen*) or not. It may happen, therefore, that if someone is not called [*Unberufener*] to follow advice of that type, following it without vocation, he behaves worse than if he had not followed it (Scheler, 2013: p. 407).

«Plato, in the myth of Er, uses a word – *paradeigma* or fundamental form – that encompasses the inner destiny of a person» (Hillman, 2009: p. 24). So, the exemplar invites to follow the *paradigm* understood not as a model in the flesh, but as a *fundamental image of one's own becoming*. «The Platonic text calls this image of life *paradeigma*, “model” [...]. So what I receive is the image that is my inheritance [...] condensed into a model that has been chosen by my soul or, better said, that is always, continuously [in the sense of *creatio continua*], “chosen” by my soul» (Hillman, 2009: p. 68).

In this essay, I have referred to the idea of image-guide (*Leitbild*) as something that can be brought to light by exercise and habit, but which can neither be increased nor diminished nor

determined (*bestimmte*) in advance (cf. Scheler, 2013: 269-271). According to Scheler's point of view, «destination» means an *indeterminate and teleokin determination* in which the final state is never univocally conditioned by the initial state (cf. Scheler, 2013: p. 317); the full and final meaning of an existence remains incomplete as to value (*wertunfertig*) and indeterminate as to meaning (*sinnunbestimmt*) until it has produced all the consequences that are possible for it. A lived existence becomes a fact with a completed and immutable meaning only if it is seen in the totality of the vital relationship, i.e. only when we are dead. To read a life backwards means that the key-word for biographies is not "to growth", rather "to take a form". So our person is not a linear process or an evolution. We are that fundamental image as a *whole*, a *totality*, and it is present all at once, like a *Gestalt*.

### 5. Existential empowerment and anti-heroic exemplarism

I have tried to show that Scheler urges us to awake our real predisposition (*Disposition*) to the realization of what is within ourselves and our actual strengths. So

educators have placed the emphasis on the need to increase, in pupils, the consciousness of their own power and, in a certain sense, to cultivate it in the form of autonomous teaching. Perhaps many forces, which do not come to realization, remain latent in a human being only because the individual in question does not have an adequate consciousness of his power (*Könnensbewußtsein*). To what extent Spinoza knew the joy that arises from power as such is revealed by the famous principle: "(profound) happiness is not a reward for virtue, but virtue itself". By "happiness", in this case, we certainly mean that joy which accompanies the highest consciousness of power and freedom [*Macht- und Freiheitsbewußtsein*]. [...] For Spinoza, therefore, the elementary form of any pedagogical indication is not "You must", but "You can this and that" (Scheler, 2013: p. 465).

Otherwise, the main risk is to fall into an *apatic dependance* in which the individual consider itself foolish, incapable and unworthy. Due to this attitude, the individual may be attracted to the oppressor and his way of life, and he might wish to become like him (cf. *Ibid*: p. 100).

Since happiness at its ancient source was *eudaimonia*, that is, a resolved *daimon*, only a *daimon* that receives what is due to it can transmit an effect of happiness to an individual's (global) life. In not receiving what is due to it, on the contrary, the absolute (and therefore personal) value of the vocation comes to pass: and it does so precisely «in the felt absoluteness of that value, in which we perceive as "possible guilt" and as "degrading", in relation to the current level of our axiological existence, the mere thought of abandoning it or renouncing it» (Scheler, 2013: p. 213). What happens in the case of renouncing one's vocation? «There exists within ourselves a level of depth [*tiefe*], in which we secretly know how things stand with regard to the "relativity" [and existential "absoluteness" of our scale of priorities] [...]; even though we may attempt to disguise that 'truth' by judgement, comparison and induction» (*Ivi*).

Finally, I would content myself with having at least succeeded in pointing out a possible path towards a solution, showing that the opposite of solidarity is not individual vocation or individual process, understood as the original axiological direction of the individual (*ursprüngliche Wertrichtung* (Scheler, 2013: p. 425), but *egoism*.

To conclude, Scheler's *solidaristic individuationism* allows for the simultaneous presence of social person, individual person and intimate person, and it implies the postulation of a non-emblematic and *paradigmatic exemplarism* (Scheler, 2013: p. 983). So, it is the experience of life itself that teaches that only certain empirical experiences, for example the disappointment we feel when the trust we had placed in someone is betrayed, or an illness, which shifts all attention to the body, or similar causes and, at the same time, the rationalization of certain life

experiences, favour the manifestation of “egoism”. Something similar also applies to historical epochs (*Zeitalter*): to the extent that egoism becomes the vital principle that governs them, they become profoundly ill or suffer senility» (Scheler, 2013: p. 549).

In conclusion, in this essay I have tried to show the deep sense of exemplariness, happiness and sacred in compliance with a profound sense of laicity. Moreover, Scheler himself states the importance of being released and independent from any positive church and confession, if we want to lead and reflect on the process of *Sammlung*, *Holiness* and *Solidarity*.

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