



The Problem of Evil with Dr. David Schenk

Lesson 14: Van Hildebrand's Theory of Love

Outline:

Van Hildebrand's theory of love

- Love is indeed a value response. The value response theory is correct as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough.
- The lover encounters the beloved as objectively having some goodness or beauty in virtue of which the love arises.
- Any genuine love will have an in-eliminable element of partisanship. There is an attachment to that one beloved. That is essential to creaturely love.
- Real love is always going to possess a ferocity of commitment, whereby, even in the face of terrible challenges, the lover will not let go.
- In our greater loves we nurse greater partisanship, loyalty, solidarity.
- Van Hildebrand avoids the arbitrariness of the volitional theory, but still ends up endorsing that love involves solidarity with the beloved, whereby they are not substitutable.
- Love reiterates the mystery of personhood.
- Van Hildebrand offers an amplified version of a Thomistic theory of love.
 - Josef Pieper's maxim: How wonderful that you exist.
 - That is what the lover says to the beloved. That is what God says to the creature. That is what the parent says to the child.
- Central to love is cherishing the beloved, which requires a genuine value response and a further attitude of personally treasuring them.
- At the heart of love we find the phenomenon of overabundance.
- In the beloved, there is greater value than we see objectively. We are responding to what is hidden in them.
 - On Dr. Schenk's account, love is an inherently unbalancing phenomenon.
 - Where are we to locate the additional value of the beloved? It escapes both categories (subjective & objective).
 - Love is a mystery (not in a petty sense), in that it fully answers to reason, but also transcends it.
- **Two things from Van Hildebrand's theory to explain the fall of the angels:**
 - Love is a value response. The greater the value, the greater the love. The more virtue/beauty you see, the more head over heels you fall in love with them.
 - Creaturely love is necessarily partisan. It will always involve that element of loyalty reaching beyond the mere objective beauties and



virtues found in the beloved (the greater the love, the greater partisanship).

- In order to love, I cannot be dispassionate (or objective). My level of solidarity with the beloved must go beyond what the available evidence support.
- In the tension between love and honesty, which one do we follow? In which direction does God command us?
 - Dilemma: In order to love the more partisan I become. The more partisan I become, the less that it is grounded in the objectively present data.
 - We are commanded by God to love each other at least as well as we love ourselves. At the same time, God does not approve of liars?
 - Will you love and be something of a liar? Or will you be dispassionate and have no personal loves? This is the kind of dilemma that could bring down even an angel.