Chapter 4

Homo Amans: A Personalist Response

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Abstract The *Homo amans* project has called for a re-examination of the notion of persons as *Homo economicus*, an outdated notion that does not fully account for the whole human person. The authors have proposed the concept of *Homo amans* as a model for considering the nature of persons and their role in the economic sphere. This essay responds to the authors' initial challenge from the perspective of the philosophy of personalism, specifically in the areas of philosophical anthropology, the virtues, some aspects of contemporary neuroscience, and how these might be brought into dialogue with economic theory.

4.1 Introduction

I am grateful to Patrick Nullens and Jermo van Nes for their invitation to participate in the project, "*Homo Amans: A Relational Anthropology for Work and Economics*." This project seeks to develop an adequate philosophical anthropology that sees the human person "as phenomenologically constituted by the virtues of faith, hope, and love...since multidisciplinary yet complementary study has shown that human persons are questing, expecting, and relational beings" (Nullens and Van Nes, Chap. 2, p. 9, this volume). This is captured in the phrase '*Homo amans*.' Nullens and Van Nes attempt to bring this anthropology into conversation with the discipline of economics as a viable alternative to the limited and outdated notion of human beings as *Homo economicus*.

Rather than an attempt to summarize the discussion paper and the project (the other essays in this book have already admirably done so), this essay turns to the key questions the authors put forward at the end of the paper. These act as a *de facto* summary of their work as well as a plan for future development:

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1. How is love best defined, and how does it relate to other virtues in general, as well as faith and hope in particular?
2. Are we naturally predisposed to love, and if so, how does this generate trust?
3. Is there any connection between trust and the virtues of faith, hope, and love, and if so, how are they interconnected?
4. How can the virtue of love develop over a person's life-time, and what factors encourage people to promote well-being in the contexts of home, school, and work?
5. Which areas of the neural system are required to facilitate a person acting intentionally to promote overall well-being?
6. Does gender make any difference to the promotion of well-being in companies and organizations?
7. How is love understood inter-culturally and inter-religiously in relation to global economics?
8. How can technology damage and stimulate human relationality in the future? (Nullens and Van Nes, Chap. 2, pp. 24–25, this volume)¹

In reading the paper, I discern three continuous and intertwined threads. *First*, philosophical anthropology, our notion of the human person, *second*, virtue ethics as a valuable and necessary aspect of personhood, *third*, the field of economics and how it might be transformed by a vision of the human person as *Homo amans*.

It is this author's opinion that the first of these three threads, philosophical anthropology, is the foundational and most vital feature. If we get persons right, that is, if we can develop a robust and adequate notion of what it means to be a human person, then the outline for the two subsequent threads is already present. In what follows, then, we will consider first and foremost the vision of the human person, and then make some final comments on how such a vision might move into and inform the discipline of economics.

4.2 Philosophical Anthropology: What Is at Stake?

Nullens and Van Nes are fundamentally correct in asserting that the vision of person that has long survived in economic theory, that of *Homo economicus*, is badly outdated and in need of reformulation. In addition, it is not only that particular and utilitarian vision of *person* that is outdated, the *philosophical presuppositions* about persons, society, and economics are not only outdated, but fundamentally in error. *Homo economicus* does not provide an accurate description of who we are, either then or now. Those presuppositions move from the particular world view of the modern era and in doing so embrace, to a greater or lesser degree of consciousness, a certain scientific world view that is truncated and incomplete.

¹ See the "Discussion" section immediately prior as well.

All political questions and all economic questions are, ultimately, *ethical questions*, since they are directed at some good, including the question of how the good life is to be lived individually and in community. How we understand persons is the first step in raising these larger sociopolitical questions – anthropology and ethics are distinct but deeply interwoven. Our notion of person delimits what is and is not possible in the larger societal framework. Getting anthropology right, then, is the essential first step in addressing all social questions, including, here, the question of economics.

Philosophical anthropology is almost as old as human thought itself. The question arises early in the history of western philosophy.² While the earliest Greek philosopher asked questions of nature, they considered themselves very much a part of that natural world. Socrates began to ask questions of virtue and the soul, and it was Plato and his student Aristotle who gave direct attention to questions of philosophical anthropology. The Christian tradition continued to raise these questions, and did so in a new way in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Many of our contemporary notions of personhood were first formulated during the patristic period of Christianity, as early believers sought to understand how God, in light of Christian revelation, could be both one and three. Their essential answer was to conceptualize *three persons and one God*. Initially they made use of the Greek Platonic tradition (consider Plato, Plotinus, and Augustine), and at the height of the Middle Ages, the work of Aristotle (for example, in Albert the Great and his student, Thomas Aquinas).³ Questions about personhood continued to be asked as the West moved forward from the Christian synthesis of the Middle Ages into the early modern era, and into the profound changes in human thought that occurred during and in response to the scientific revolution). It was, however, in the move to a scientific paradigm, that the question of personhood became progressively fragmented, as science adopted a physicalist vision of the universe, first evident in physics and chemistry, and later in nineteenth century biology. We live now in an era that has been called both post-modern and post-Christian. The term “post-” can be quite misleading, as it does not really describe a complete rupture with modern thought, but developed out of it and in reaction to it. We live now in an era frequently marked by fragmentation – social, spiritual, intellectual, moral, in which grand narratives have been rejected and relativism is a common presence.⁴

Given this intellectual, cultural, and spiritual environment, is it even possible today to articulate a robust and comprehensive philosophical anthropology, one that is capable of responding to the eight questions that Nullens and Van Nes propose at the end of *Homo amans*? In response to this question, I will argue below that the

²This is not to say that questions of person did not emerge in Eastern tradition or that they are not vital and relevant today. I am confining my comments here to the western philosophical tradition; no devaluation of Eastern philosophical traditions is intended, and in fact, Eastern traditions will emerge later in this paper in a consideration of persons, virtue ethics and technology.

³The development of Greek philosophy, and its transmission into early Christianity has been extensively studied. For an overview see, for example, Guthrie (1975); Copleston (1993a, b).

⁴A classic text in this regard is Lyotard (1979).

answer is, and must be, *yes*. If such a response is not possible, then we can have no guidance in thinking about persons, about ethics and about human activity in the world, including the authors' questions about economics. There is in fact a contemporary philosophical vision, one with ancient roots in both East and West, that can respond to these fundamental human questions – the philosophy of personalism.

4.3 Personalism

In what follows, as a response to the question about persons, I will outline a particular tradition within the broader philosophy of personalism, Integral Personalism, that is capable of bearing fruit both anthropologically and in the field of economics.

In the first instance, personalism can be broadly defined as “any philosophy that considers personality the supreme value and the key to the measuring of reality” (Buford [n.d.](#)). Personalism has also been defined as “a ‘current’ or a broader ‘world-view,’ since it represents more than one school or one doctrine while at the same time the most important forms of personalism do display some central and essential commonalities. Most important of the latter is the general affirmation of the centrality of the person for philosophical thought” (Williams and Bengtsson [2020](#)). There are a number of characteristics common to personalist thought, evident in numerous personalist philosophers including a fundamental distinction between persons and animals and the rest of the natural world, the dignity of the human person, persons as possessing an interior/subjective life (persons as conscious subjects rather than merely objects), the realities of freedom and self-determination, and the social/relational nature of human persons (Williams and Bengtsson [2020](#)).⁵

Within this broader personalist framework I will focus on one specific current of personalism, that of Integral Personalism, as a personalist response capable of providing a sound philosophical anthropology capable of addressing the fundamental anthropological, ethical and economic questions facing humanity today.

⁵Williams & Bengtsson delve into these characteristics in detail in their *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article. These aspects will be presented and developed below in the section on Integral Personalism.

4.4 Integral Personalism: Philosophical Anthropology⁶

Integral Personalism is the name of the philosophical position developed by Spanish philosopher Juan Manuel Burgos (1961–), which seeks to bring into conversation the best elements of both ancient and modern philosophical tradition.⁷

4.4.1 *Philosophical Anthropology*

Burgos has argued that an adequate contemporary philosophical anthropology ought to contain the following features:

1. *Explanation and Understanding*: Philosophical anthropology seeks to move beyond description to a deeper level of explanation and understanding. It must ask the fundamental human questions – What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of death? What is love?
2. *Metaphysical or ontological perspective*: Anthropology must move beyond the early modern reductionist conceptions of persons arising from phenomenism, from the notion that we are merely the bundle of our conscious experiences, as Hume believed, and recognize the continuity and permanence of identity and personhood rooted in being.
3. *Integration*: It must offer us a comprehensive notion of personhood that stands against attempts at reductionism or fragmentation, and that takes into account all dimensions of person: physical, psychological, spiritual, cognitive, affective, dynamism, and that is able to draw upon all of the hard sciences as well as the human sciences – sociology, psychology, economics, history, philosophy, theology, etc.

⁶While I will be focusing on one particular personalist strand of thought (Integral Personalism), it is important to note that there are multiple personalist currents in existence today, including *Anglo-American Personalism* (representative philosophers include, in the United States, Borden Parker Bowne, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Peter A. Bertocci, Martin Luther King Jr., Thomas Buford, Randall Auxier, James McLaughlin; in England Michael Polanyi, Austin Farrer, John Macmurray, Richard T. Allen, Charles Conti, Simon Smith;) *Phenomenological Personalism* (Max Scheler, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Edith Stein, Viktor Frankl, Josef Seifert); *Communitarian Personalism* (Emmanuel Mounier); *Dialogical Personalism* (Martin Buber, Emanuel Lévinas, Romano Guardini), *Classical Ontological Personalism* (Jacques Maritain). Authors working in the Integral Personalist Tradition today include Elio Sgreccia, Elias Bermeo, Xosé Manuel Domínguez, Rosa Zapién, J.L. Cañas, James Beauregard, Sergio Lozano, Alfonso López Quintas, Denis Larrivee, Gregorz Holub, Raquel Vera.

⁷The majority of Burgos' work has not yet been translated into English, but a notable exception is Burgos (2018). The reader is referred there for a detailed explication of his thought. His major work on philosophical anthropology is *Antropología: una guía para la existencia* (2013). It is currently in the process of translation into English. I will refer when possible to English language translations to his work; translations from the Spanish-language editions are my own.

4. *Scientific character*: Philosophical anthropology in particular, and the human sciences in general must reclaim their character as sciences, broadly understood as investigation, as the search for knowledge, each discipline according to its methods and content, and each discipline recognizing its limitations and boundaries, rather than the common position of scientism, the belief that only the hard sciences provide valid knowledge. Science is far broader than physics, chemistry, and biology.
5. *Experiential character*: A robust anthropology must analyze and take into account the whole of human experience, not merely the sensory/perceptual aspects recognized in the biological sciences. Our experience of the world includes the experience of ourselves and our own subjectivity, and involves sensation and perception, but also cognition and affectivity, understanding and the organization of knowledge that allows for its transmission to others, e.g. in a communal process of scholarship (Burgos 2013, pp. 18–9).

4.4.2 Integral Personalism – Structure

4.4.2.1 The Structural Centrality of Person

In keeping with the personalist tradition in general, Integral Personalism places the person at the structural center of thought. It is the notion of person that is the central vision that bears fruit in anthropology and in ethics. While this may at first appear an obvious philosophical move in personalist thought, the history of the concept of person belies this. In Aristotelian thought, for example, persons were not thought of in and of themselves but rather in relation to something else – the animal kingdom. To begin with a concept of person that is derived directly from persons is a relatively recent move in philosophical thought (Burgos 2018, pp. 204–5).

4.4.2.2 Personalist Categories

This notion brings us to a central point in Integral Personalism, and one that can flow out into economic theory, with which this project is explicitly concerned. As noted above, Aristotle the biologist sought to categorize living things by kingdom and species. He conceptualized human beings as part of the animal kingdom, that is, as a type of animal, with many features in common with other animals. The species distinction, that which differentiated human beings from other members of the animal kingdom, was the human capacity for rationality – we are *rational animals*. Along with this, Aristotle refined the notion of substance that was carried forward in western thought – Boethius’ individual substance of a rational nature, Aquinas thought on substance. The notion lived in the scholastically trained Descartes, and continues to manifest itself in various ways in contemporary thought; it underlies, for instance, notions of a mind body dualism, mind-body medicine, etc. There

remains a notion present that a human being is composed of distinct and separable parts that need to be linked together in some way. Dualism stood at the foundation of Greek thought, and has accompanied us on the journey, influencing our fundamental vision of persons at every turn.

The philosophy of persons often continues to experience a category problem, a consequence of the Greek ballast of organic and animal categories applied directly to human beings (Burgos 2007, pp. 58–64). In other words, a critical conceptual problem in the philosophy of person has been the making of what Gilbert Ryle termed a category mistake – the application of one category of thought onto something which is a poor or incomplete fit. The inevitable consequence is that once this transfer is made, some aspects of persons are highlighted, while others are obscured by the very category in use (Ryle 2002, p. 19ff).⁸ An example would be the classical Aristotelian definition of human beings as rational animals. As long as we are placed in the category of the animal kingdom, it is difficult to recognize aspects of human persons that are univocal to us, such as freedom and our capacity for self-determination.

This is a critical point to consider in the philosophy of person – does the use of terms drawn from biological and animal categories directly and completely apply in the same manner when they are applied to persons? The term instinct has been used of both human beings and animals, but there is a crucial difference – animals *must* follow their instincts, while human beings *may* follow theirs. The category of instinct does not allow for the reality of human freedom, for the reality that we can freely choose to act against instinct when we decide there is a higher purpose to be served. The “instinct” for self-preservation exists in all living things. Yet, when Maximillian Kolbe offered to take the place of another prisoner chosen for execution in the Auschwitz concentration camp, he overrode his own instinct for self-preservation, knowing with certainty that he would die as a result.⁹ These actions and experiences do not exist in the animal kingdom, and to apply animal categories to human beings typically obscures what is most univocal about us – Freedom, self-determination, self-sacrifice for a higher good, love, etc.

⁸Ryle includes in this concept the polysemic character of words. When we speak of human “mind” and animal “mind” does the word “mind” *mean the same thing*? We have direct access to our own minds, and by report of the minds of other persons, and we see the obvious similarities. We do not, however, have direct access to the “minds” of animals, though when this is discussed, there is often an implicit assumption that the word “mind” means exactly the same thing both the human and the animal sphere, rather than recognizing that we are to some extent speaking metaphorically.

⁹There had been an escape from Auschwitz and as a result ten prisoners were chosen to be executed. Kolbe, a Polish Roman Catholic priest, offered to take the place of one of them. He died by lethal injection August 14th, 1941. He was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 10, 1942. <https://blog.franciscanmedia.org/sam/martyr-of-auschwitz>. Accessed 3/20/20.

4.4.2.3 Personalist Method

If the *Homo amans* project is to consider the virtues of faith, hope, and love, and furthermore to consider trust, empirical scientific methods will be of only the most limited utility. A methodology is needed that can capture the fullness of what it means to be a person. Integral personalism has developed a method of investigation (Integral Experience) that gives proper place to the typically empirically studied aspects of human knowledge (sensation and perception) but is broader in perspective. Briefly, knowledge begins with experience, in keeping with both the hard sciences and empirical philosophy (Locke, Hume, etc.). Our experience, though, is integral. It is not merely blind sensation and the integration of percepts through neural processes. Integral Experience recognizes that our most fundamental contact with the world, our direct experience of the world and ourselves, also has, from the outset, cognitive and affective aspects. In other words, human experience has an intellectual-affective-sensitive structure from its origin. This is our most direct contact with the world and ourselves, an originary experience upon which knowledge at more complex levels is based. We explore and process our experience, seeking for example stable or universal categories to help us understand our experience, and we also reflect critically on our experience in a more systematic way that allows us to share our knowledge with others. Human experience extends far beyond the sensory and perceptual, and it has characteristics unique to us as persons (Burgos 2016, pp. 41–79).¹⁰

4.4.2.4 Personalism and the Transformation of Society

There are few public intellectuals today who are philosophers dedicated to meaningful social change (*Homo amans* presents a noteworthy exception to this statement). Personalist thought in its twentieth century European expression, beginning with the work of Emmanuel Mounier and arising, as it did, between the two world wars, sought to directly influence society since “Every human being is called, by means of his action, to influence and modify the world which surrounds him” (Burgos 2018, p. 212). In the specific case of personalist philosophy, the philosopher “promotes a philosophy that vindicates the very special dignity of the person with respect to everything that exists” (Burgos 2018, p. 212).

¹⁰This book chapter provides an overview of Integral Experience as an epistemological model. For a more comprehensive treatment, see Burgos (2016).

4.4.2.5 The Three-Dimensional Structure of the Person

I have alluded above to the necessity of getting the model of persons right before one proceeds to consider human action and the transformation of society. Integral Personalism offers this model of person:¹¹

A brief explanation of certain aspects of this diagram can clarify the nature of the person as conceptualized in this anthropological model.

The first thing to point out about this anthropology is that it is *dynamic*. A person is a unity, and a dynamic unity, a being who thinks, feels, and acts. “Person” is both noun and a verb. Dynamism is what characterizes our nature; we are relational beings, in relation to ourselves and to others, social by nature and living in community. To be a person is to be with.

A second aspect of this model is that persons are considered *ontologically prior* to relation. Some accounts of person view us as being created *by* relationships, that is, there is no person considered present until one is in relation with others. This view, however, overlooks a most fundamental reality. There is someone there to start with. Relationships are not creative in this sense, but formative. We are born

¹¹ Figure by Juan Manuel Burgos. Used by permission.
From an earlier diagram by Mollenido (2006). Also used by permission.

into a relational world, and we grow and develop in this same world. Personhood is ontologically prior to relation, including all forms of human social relations.¹² This can be conceptualized by comparison with a well-known statement from the religious domain: “Grace builds on nature.” In order for grace to be active in us, there must first be a structure, a person in whom it can act. So with persons vis a vis relationships.

A third point to consider is that *a person is a unity*. This is depicted in the diagram above through the dotted lines inside the diagram. In the three-by-three matrix above, each of the nine individual areas is conceived as an aspect of the whole person, not a distinct, separable part. Persons are not bundles of distinct actions or activities, they are persons, unified and active in all aspects of their being and activity.

Fourth, there are *three levels* of person to consider, body, psyche, and spirit. Our corporeality is an essential aspect of our personhood – it is more than mere organism; it is the locus of our psyche and spirit. The body has not only a physical and organic meaning, but a personal one.

Fifth, the term “spirit” here is not used in an exclusively religious sense, but more broadly to include all aspects of persons that exist beyond the physical aspects of corporeality and the psychological processes of conscious life. Love, aesthetic experience, moral experience are spiritual aspects of the person.

Sixth, *knowledge and affectivity* are distinct but equally important aspects of the person. The history of philosophy has tended to downgrade affectivity, viewing it as something that has the ongoing potential to interfere with our rational capacities, seeing affect as an enemy of reason. To do this is to fail to see human affectivity as an integral aspect of our being, ever present and ever operative in our actions and our knowing.

Seventh, and lastly, this is an anthropology that is anti-reductive in nature. It stands in its structure against two trends of our technological and scientific age: gradualism and functionalism. *Gradualism* suggests that we become persons, in a slow process of development, typically sometime after the very beginning of life. Many points have been arbitrarily named down through the centuries as the moment of personhood, and with more specificity in recent years – 14 days, at the time of implantation in the uterus, a certain number of weeks after conception, when measurable EEG activity is present in a fetus, at the point of viability outside the uterus, in children when certain aspects of personal activity are objectively observable. *Functionalism* points to this last, “personal activity,” that is, a person is defined as a

¹² This is a point of contrast within in the personalist tradition as some view person as ontologically prior to relation (as Integral Personalism does) while other personalist traditions, such as aspects of the Anglo-American tradition, view relationship as ontologically prior to and creative of person. Dialogical personalism, for example, while it recognizes the spiritual aspects of persons in relation, tends to see relationships as first creative of persons, then formative. See, e.g. Buber (1996). In Buber’s case, relation and ontological priority can be debated, given that his focus is on the I-You relation and relationality in general, hence, “there is no I as such but only the I of the basic word I-You” (p. 54), and “Man becomes an I through a You” (p. 80).

person when certain functions, arbitrarily assigned, become objectively observable or measurable. The necessary corollary of this view is that when such functions are no longer evident, person is no longer present. A person is, rather, a unity, not a collection of functions. There are probably relatively few moments in our lives when every aspect of person is evident. When we sleep many aspects of personhood are absent. And yet, we do not typically assert that a sleeping person is not a person. Functionalism becomes a prominent concern, for example, at the end of life, in cases of dementia and in the criteria for death. The broader question of who counts as a person will pervade a personalist view of economics as well.

4.4.3 Integral Personalism – Key Anthropological Features

Here I will touch briefly on some of the critical features of personalist anthropology which can be of assistance in approaching economic concerns.

4.4.3.1 Human Freedom

If we focus on the material or the organic, as the empirical sciences do, we are forced to reach a conclusion of determinism. Physical reality is subject to the law of cause and effect, and biological life to the law of stimulus and response. In fact, there is a long history of argument, going all the way back to Democritus in ancient Greece, that, for these reasons, human beings have no free will. There is, however, a fundamental flaw in the presuppositions that underlie arguments against free will – the belief that we are exclusively material beings, living organisms to be sure, but subject to deterministic laws. To assert this is to ignore the spiritual aspects of persons evident in the diagram above. There is much about us that is simply not explainable from the perspectives of matter and organism. Love, freedom, and self-determination, the moral life, many of our human social emotions, make no sense from an organismic perspective. Happiness is not a physical or a biological concept, but a human one.

4.4.3.2 Good and Evil: Ethics

I mentioned above that if we are to understand the fullness of persons, we must approach anthropology in categories specific to persons, abandoning the Greek ballast of animal views of persons, but also contemporary neuroscientific views of persons that also view us in purely biological categories. All ethical thinking presupposes freedom, and the hard sciences give us no way to conceive of freedom. Beings driven solely by instinct do not live the moral life, they live an organic one. An animal that kills its prey is not acting in an ethical manner – it is following instinct and the self-preservative drive of hunger. Moral experience, the experience

of good and evil, is a category specific to persons. Postmodern relativism has often made this difficult to see. If we accept that there are no longer any grand narratives, and that all aspects of all cultures are relative and deserving of equal respect, then we effectively blind ourselves to the reality of good and evil. Pure relativism is quite rare – many of us are relativists in some areas but ethical absolutists in other areas. Here in the United States, for example, we have seen doping scandals in sports, baseball and cycling being but two examples; Lance Armstrong was stripped of his seven *Tour de France* titles for this reason. Our sense of fairness and justice, which emerges in the deep sense that cheating in these arenas is wrong, suggests a moral sense within us that extends beyond relativism. “Do good, avoid evil” is the most fundamental precept of the moral life. This can only be fulfilled in freedom, with free will, and specifically, by persons.¹³

4.4.3.3 The Primacy of Action and Love

Augustine introduced the concept of love into philosophical thought. Nullens and Van Nes also bring it into the center of their discussion of *Homo amans*. An integral vision of person recognizes the nature and activity of love as it pervades our personhood and our relationships with others at many levels. If persons are dynamic beings, rather than static ones, then love stands at the foundation of many of our most important actions; “personalism emphasizes the primacy of love as the guiding factor in human activity and as a decisive thematic action, which gives meaning to life in the context of interpersonal relations” (Burgos 2018, p. 229). In light of the *Homo amans* project, it is necessary to consider how love can inform economic thought, moving away from the utilitarian self-interest of *Homo economicus* and toward a different conception of persons. What would happen in theoretical and practical economics if we took seriously Wojtyła’s personalistic norm: “A person is an entity of a sort to which the only proper and adequate way to relate is love” (Wojtyła 1993, p. 41).

4.5 Philosophical Anthropology: Love and the Virtues

In light of what has been presented here, how might we understand love from within a personalist perspective? To begin with, love can be seen as *a dynamic activity of the whole person, encompassing both affectivity and knowledge, and impacting every aspect of the person, body, psyche, and spirit*.

¹³ On good and evil as a category specific to persons, see Burgos (2018, pp. 220–1).

4.5.1 *Phenomenology of Love*

As Nullens and Van Nes make explicit mention of the phenomenological method in their paper, it may be helpful to turn to one personalist philosopher who has given us a detailed phenomenology of love: Dietrich von Hildebrand.¹⁴ In his work *The Nature of Love*, von Hildebrand (a student of Edmund Husserl also influenced by the phenomenological work of Max Scheler) wrote of love most essentially as a value response: “The self-giving and commitment proper to every kind of love...is necessarily based on the fact that the beloved person stands before me as beautiful, precious, as objectively worth of being loved. *Love exists as a value response*” (von Hildebrand 2009, p. 17). Von Hildebrand notes four characteristics of values:

- (i) They have the ability to *bestow delight* upon us
- (ii) They *address themselves to us* in specific ways, making us aware of them and imposing an obligation to respond
- (iii) They call forth from us an *appropriate* response
- (iv) The value response called forth in us by values has a character of *transcendence and submission* to the value, of abandoning ourselves to the value before us (von Hildebrand 1953, p. 32ff).¹⁵

That which we see as valuable delights us, reaches out to us, and elicits a response from us, that is, we are affected by value. As noted above, we must think of persons in categories specific to persons, that is, we must move directly from experience as persons and not draw upon categories outside personhood to attempt to understand ourselves – to fall into such a category error is to blind ourselves to that which is uniquely human and belongs to persons.

Love is a polysemic word.¹⁶ It is the love between persons as persons that is perhaps the supreme category specific to persons, pointing to capacities and actions unique to us. Love is expressed in the free gift of self to another, and a life lived in the practice of the virtues is one that makes such a gift possible.

¹⁴Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889–1977) was a member of the early Göttingen circle of Husserl’s students and a contemporary of Adolf Reinach, Edith Stein, Romano Guardini, Roman Ingarden and others. Von Hildebrand’s work is being intensively studied, and his works appearing in new translation, through The Hildebrand Project, centered at Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio, <http://www.hildebrandproject.org>

¹⁵Furthermore, he identifies value as one of three categories of importance: the merely subjectively satisfying, the objectively good for the person and the important in itself (=value).

¹⁶On the polysemic nature of the word *love*, see Pieper (2012, pp. 145–62).

4.5.2 *Love and Ethics*

Anthropology is distinct from, but has a deep connection to ethics. To get persons right makes it possible to get ethics right. In light of persons as integral, dynamic beings, the word “person” is both a noun and a verb. To be a person is to be acting, to engage with oneself and with the world, and to do so with all of our personhood – body, psyche, and spirit, embracing our knowledge and affectivity. In addition, the virtues of faith, hope, and love are dispositions and activities of the whole person, manifested by the whole person in relation to other persons and to the community. Love is the gift of self to the other, and the receiving of that same gift. The virtues can be seen as manifestations of love, united by it and directing us toward the good.

Here, we can see how the vision of persons outlined above is entwined with *Homo amans* as person and as an ethical being. A person is a unity. An ethical vision that seeks both the individual and the common good can be an activity of the whole person, and the virtuous life is an integral life directed toward these goods. Love is the foundation and the unifying force of this type of life. St. John of the Cross, in his work *The Spiritual Canticle*, depicts each of the virtues as flowers woven into a garland: “all the virtues and gifts the soul (and God within her) acquires are like a garland of various flowers within her.”¹⁷ John further notes that the weaving of the garland of the virtues is not a matter of acquiring one particular virtue individually and then adding it in, but rather that the garland is “made at the same time,” that is, the virtues are acquired not individually or sequentially, but concurrently – to grow in love is also to grow in faith and in hope. It is, again, an activity of the whole person, enacted in community.

4.6 *Homo Amans* and Neuroscience: What Might the Relationship Be?

The *Homo amans* project makes frequent reference to neuroscience and how it might interface with the project, touching specifically on the domains of social neuroscience, neuroscience and morality, including decision-making neuroscience, and biological bases of altruism.

Approaching this question as a clinical neuropsychologist, I would offer several considerations with regard to what role neuroscience in general might play in the *Homo amans* project.

¹⁷ St. John of the Cross (1991, p. 592, stanza 30, no. 6).

4.6.1 *The Worldview of Neuroscience*

My first comment is a word of caution. The scientific world view, in terms of the hard sciences and the empirical method, can only offer limited help at the level of conception. Neuroscience is structured conceptually in the same manner as biology and the other empirical sciences. This means that at the theoretical level at least, there are assumptions of materialism and determinism operative that do not allow for the existence of free will, and so cannot serve as a basis for thinking about *amans*, which entails freedom and choice.

A second caution is that neuroscience must be approached at its cutting edge if it is to make any significant contribution to philosophy in general and the *Homo amans* project in particular. The era of examining specific discrete brain regions – for example, Broca’s Area in the frontal lobes for expressive language or the primary occipital cortex for vision, effectively came to an end with the arrival of functional neuroimaging in the 1990’s. This allowed for an examination *in vivo* of some of the things happening in the brain during different aspects of thought. The current neuroscience understanding of the brain is to view it as a connectome, that is, the entire network of connectivity between each of the brain’s 80–100 billion neurons. The neuroscience technique of diffusion tensor imaging, for example, is able to highlight axonal pathways in the brain and illustrate connectivity in ways that did not yet exist even a few decades ago. It is now possible to visualize the human brain as a complex matrix of connections and interactions across many regions. The understanding of a variety of neuropsychiatric diseases is being transformed by this level of understanding.¹⁸

The recent field of neuroeconomics defined as “a research program founded on the thesis that cognitive and neurobiological data constitute evidence for answering economic questions,” provides a case in point (Clarke 2014, p. 195). It has been brought into dialogue with Confirmation Theory (Clarke 2014, p. 195), and as a resource to enrich contemporary economic models (Fumagalli 2017, pp. 210–20). Decision making has been a particular point of interest at the intersection of neuroscience and economics.¹⁹ The intersection and utility of neuroscience has also been challenged (McMaster and Novarese 2016, pp. 963–83).

¹⁸For an overview of this level of understanding of the human brain, see for example, Sporns (2012). To speak of brain regions exclusively is, today, to speak an outdated language.

¹⁹See for example, Mudrick et al. (2019, pp. 67–86); Hamoway and Conigliaro (2016, pp. 27–9).

4.6.2 *Neuroscience: Normative or Informative for Homo Amans?*

Given these cautions, neuroscience can provide a great deal of useful information that can be useful to the *Homo amans* project, but should not be looked to at a normative or theoretical level. Areas of neuroscience that could provide useful information to the project would certainly include social neuroscience, as well as developmental neuroscience and the neuroscientific aspects of both psychiatry and neurology. Neuroscience, in this sense, can help flesh out understanding of human persons, but it is important not to adopt the materialist or deterministic underpinnings of the empirical methods of neuroscience.²⁰

In addition, the data neuroscience provides must be correctly understood. Functional neuroimaging data (fMRI), for example, is not a depiction of the actual process of thought; thus, claims that functional neuroimaging may someday be able to engage in “mind reading” are overblown, science fiction rather than fact. FMRI measures energy use by neurons as we engage in various cognitive or emotional activities, the point being that the more active neurons are, the more energy they use. It is important not to confuse the purely physical with more complex processes. Uncertainties about the nature and reliability of neuroimaging data is evidenced, for example, in the fact that it is typically not accepted as evidence in legal proceedings, because it can be misleading. If a defense attorney points to a neuroimaging scan, for example, and indicates a specific place or lesion in the brain, and then argues that this is the *reason* that their client committed the act for which they are on trial (and thus should be held less than fully accountable), it must be said in response that many others may have virtually identical lesions observable on neuroimaging who do not commit similar crimes. Furthermore, it is important to separate out the data of neuroscience from the hype about it. Mirror neurons provide a perfect case study for this. The discovery of mirror neurons occurred first in monkeys, and, from this, leaps were made to their *possible* role in humans. Realistically, mirror neurons appear to activate in response to observed action and may play a role in intention detection. However, once they were on the scene, many claims about them were made without adequate empirical justification. They have been implicated as being involved in such far flung issues as Schizophrenia, hypnosis, sexual orientation, smoking, music appreciation, obesity, degree of male erection, psychopathy, business leadership, love, mass hysteria, substance abuse, and self-awareness in other

²⁰ On the preeminence of the empirical perspective in neuroscience, see, for example, Gazzaniga et al. (2009, p. 4), where the authors write, “Philosophy can add perspective, but is it right? Only scientific method can move a topic along on sure footing.”

mammalian species. New findings in neuroscience can become fads, but in time the expectations prove overblown.²¹

Another caution about neuroscience data arises in the context of models of decision making developed in neuroscience that are taken over into neuroeconomics. Much of the contemporary literature on decision making from a neurobiological perspective has arisen from several now classic studies by the American neuroscientist Benjamin Libet.

These studies point to the stark and necessary distinction between neuroscience data and the *interpretation* of that data, a distinction that often goes unnoticed. Libet conducted studies of what were termed conscious intentions to act. For example, experimental subjects were asked to view an analogue clock with a circulating dot in the place of the second hand, while being monitored by surface EEG. They were asked to press a bar at some point in the rotation of the dot. Subjects were later asked when they were first conscious of their intention to press the bar. In a consistent and replicated finding, EEG activity was recorded prior to the subject's reported conscious intention to act, by several hundred milliseconds. The finding has been replicated more than once. Difficulty has arisen, though, in discussion of what the data actually meant (the interpretive aspect). Some have argued that given that our conscious intention to act is preceded by frontal neural activity we do not have free will, but rather, our brains make decisions for us prior to our conscious awareness. Some have supported this conclusions while others have rejected it.

The debate continues.

An additional issue not often attended to in these debates is the nature of language itself. Empirical experiments require operational definitions of the matter under study – the language must be as specific and as concrete as possible in order to be measured accurately. But this is only one aspect of human speech. Experimental conditions are, by design, as literal and concrete as possible. Once the data is collected, though, it must be interpreted. It is here that neuroscientists make a leap, often unnoticed, from literal to metaphorical speech. While experimental conditions are carefully laid out in the methodology section of research articles, and data are scrupulously reported, the interpretation and reporting of the meaning of such data is a different cognitive and linguistic process altogether. Here scientists often move to metaphorical speech without identifying the shift, and it is here we run into a common problem – scientists are not philosophers. Their training is in science, not in philosophy, the philosophy of language or in logic. For example, while EEG parameters are well-defined, terms such as “free will,” “voluntary,” “consciousness,” “unconscious” and “intention” typically are not. An assumption is made that we all agree on the meanings of those terms, and also that they mean the same thing

²¹ For an overview of how mirror neurons were discovered and the many things in which they have been implicated, see Hickok (2014). The areas mentioned above for mirror neurons are from a much longer list on pages 24–5 of this book. Eric Racine has done extensive research on public perceptions of neuroscience, and perceptions of neuroimaging in particular. See Racine (2010), esp. Chapter 5, “Public Understanding of Neuroscience Innovation and Emerging Interpretations of Neuroscience Research,” 97–119.

across species.²² This has been an unspoken and often unrecognized source of confusion in the discussion of Libet's findings since the 1980's. When examining decision-making models, whether in neuroscience or in economics, our use of language, and the move from the concrete and literal to the metaphorical should always be considered.²³

4.6.3 Anthropology

Neuroscience can, at most, provide us with a partial anthropology, and this limitation places boundaries on what is essential a philosophical/theological project. The field of neuroscience, a child of the discipline of biology, follows biology's empirical methods and presuppositions, operating in the world of the organic. That which is specifically and univocally personal (what I have outlined above as the level of spirit) cannot be accessed by empirical methodology in the way that matter and organism can. In order for *Homo amans* to provide a comprehensive and robust philosophical anthropology, it is the data of the human sciences that must hold sway, drawing as needed on the hard sciences, but keeping them in their proper context, and recognizing their conceptual (empirical, physicalist and deterministic) limitations.

4.6.4 Ethics

Ethics is not an empirical science: it is a human science. In the world of *Homo amans*, it is the disciplines of philosophy and theology that must be drawn upon to develop an ethical vision (including by the field of economics, which aims at certain goods). This is not to say that neuroscience has no role to play. It can, and has, informed us about the neural networks underlying processes of decision making, and human moral life has become subject to neuroscientific study. Moral enhancement is a field of neuroscientific endeavor. It can tell us about brain areas and networks active during certain types of tasks, but it cannot tell us what is or is not moral, nor can it direct us to what goods we ought to seek. Neuroscience studies the world as it *is*; ethics studies the world, and the person, as we *ought* to be.

²² Libet himself does not define such terms in his work. See, for example, his discussion of the implications of his experimental findings, Libet (2002, pp. 291–9). The bibliography to this article lists many of Libet's now-classic experimental studies.

²³ For a detailed discussion of the different aspects of language employed in science and in conversational speech, see Beauregard (2019).

4.7 Philosophical Anthropology, Ethics and Economics

The *Homo amans* project asks if a new philosophical anthropology, that of *Homo amans*, grounded in faith, hope, and love, can become a viable substitute for *Homo economicus*. If the life of the virtues, intertwined and lived, can inform economic theory, it will be important for economic theory to integrate two fundamental concepts: human dignity and the common good. *Homo amans* has articulated three principle virtues – faith, hope, and love. It is important that these virtues are not thought of as distinct, but as interrelated virtues, and related to the other virtues as well, including the classic cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. This catalogue of virtues, and the many subordinate virtues related to them, can serve as a guide for economic thought in light of a robust anthropology that gives attention to human dignity and the common good.

Human dignity is a much-debated topic today. Some have argued that it is essential, some, in contrast, that it does not exist. Some years ago the bioethicist Ruth Macklin argued that human dignity is a “useless concept” that ought to be replaced with the more concrete notions of respect and autonomy (Macklin 2003, pp. 1419–20). Human dignity was on the minds of many in the post-World War II era, when the nature and extent of the violations of persons received widespread attention. This was the era in which the world saw the creation of documents like the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and, in which respect for the dignity the human person was integrated into numerous bioethical documents.

A common denominator to the question of dignity is that it is typically referenced, but not defined. There seems to be an assumption that everyone knows what dignity is, but as soon as one tries to define it, words often fail. This ought to be addressed in light of the current project.

Dignity is, first, a question of the whole, integral person. It is question of fundamental value. Recognition of dignity is the recognition that there is something precious, unique, unrepeatable, deeply valuable about each human person. As Kant asserted, each of has a dignity, not a price. Furthermore, the question of dignity is not a question of definition or ascription – we do not assign dignity to persons, we recognize that dignity is present and inherent. Perhaps a fundamental reason that the post-World War II era was the time that saw the creation of illuminating documents on human dignity and human rights is that the world, as a community, was forced to reckon with the concept of dignity by having witnessed its profound violation across the decades and in time of war. Events like those witnessed across Europe from 1939 to 1945 forced us to ask why the Nazi concentration camps were so deep a violation of persons and the dignity of persons.

Never since, has the entire human community been brought face to face in the same way with the questions of persons, violations, and dignity. This is perhaps a reason why the notion of dignity has receded, and in particular, why the question of dignity is sometimes opposed outright in first world countries. Dignity is a “useless concept” only when one’s own dignity is not subject to violation or annihilation. By its violation, the presence and nature of dignity is thrown into sharp relief. It is

borne within us, not conferred – or withdrawn – by the state or any other organization. Human persons are bearers of dignity.

Furthermore, the question of dignity is one that science cannot help us answer, especially an empirical science grounded in physicalist views. If dignity is to be recognized and understood, it will happen from a direct examination of the human person that reveals all the uniqueness and preciousness of what it means to be human, to be a person.

The common good is the second concept to be considered in a contemporary economic vision, if such a vision wishes to give pride of place to persons rather than capital. The personalist philosopher Jacques Maritain reflected on the question of the common good in the mid-twentieth century. At the outset, he stated that we desire to live in community because we are social by nature, and also because it is necessary for our flourishing as persons (Maritain 1966, p. 47).

How, then, can we bring these thoughts about persons into the economic sphere? I want to suggest that such a discussion can be centered around the notion of human dignity. Economic decisions, like political ones, are fundamentally moral decisions, as they affect the individual and the common good. The personalistic norm is a norm that can be brought into economic theory. Life in community promotes the good of the individual, and includes many aspects, including public services, sound economic functioning, law and governance, customs, institutions, culture (Maritain 1966, p. 52). At the same time, the common good is more than the sum total of individual goods. In Maritain's words, it is "the good *human* life of the multitude, of a multitude of persons; it is their communion in good living. It is therefore common to both *the whole and the parts into which it flows back and which, in turn, must benefit from it.*"

Economics is, at its foundation, a moral activity, given that it aims at some good. Different economic theories have identified different goods to be sought. An economic theory that looks to the good of both persons and the community, that grounds itself in a notion of person, would be an ethical activity that takes into account the nature and activity of the whole person, individually and in community, and this common good as well.

There are already theoretical models of how this can be accomplished. As an example, consider a document that weaves together the themes that have been mentioned here – the dignity of persons, the common good, the virtues and the question of economics. In 1986, the United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops published *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986).²⁴

In this document, the U.S. Bishops clearly stated that they were not offering an economic "blueprint," nor a particular economic theory. Their purpose, rather, was to "discover what our economic life must serve, what standards it must meet" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. vii). They present, rather, six

²⁴A chapter-length work does not allow the author to delve into these principles in detail. They are presented here in their basic outline, and are developed within the document itself. http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf

overarching themes that are in consonance with what *Homo amans* has investigated, and that can provide guidance for economic considerations:

- (v) Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person.
- (vi) Human dignity can be realized and protected only in community.
- (vii) All people have a right to participate in the economic life of society.
- (viii) All members of society have a special obligation to the poor and vulnerable.
- (ix) Human rights are the minimum conditions for life in community.
- (x) Society as a whole, acting through public and private institutions, has the moral responsibility to enhance human dignity and protect human rights (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, pp. viii–ix).

Recognizing that economic questions are fundamentally moral questions, they then identify a series of moral norms in relation to economic activity. It is here that the consonance with *Homo amans* becomes even more explicit:

1. “The commandments to love God with all one’s heart and to love one’s neighbor as oneself are the heart and soul of Christian morality” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 16).
2. “Commutative justice calls for fundamental fairness in all agreements and exchanges between individuals or private social groups” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 17).
3. “Distributive justice requires that the allocation of income, wealth, and power in society be evaluated in light of its effects on persons whose basic material needs are unmet” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 17).
4. “Social justice implies that persons have an obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 17).
5. “Basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons.”
6. “Basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 18).
7. “The common good demands justice for all, the protection of the human rights of all” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 20).
8. “The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 20).
9. “The fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 21).
10. “Increasing active participation in economic life by those who are presently excluded or vulnerable is a high social priority” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 21).

11. "The investment of wealth, talent, and human energy should be specially directed to benefit those who are poor or economically insecure" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 21).
12. "Economic and social policies as well as the organization of the work world should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1986, p. 22).

Love, faith, hope, justice, and a pervasive notion of both the individual and the common good are all evident in this response to the economic realities of the 1980s. One can argue that they have ongoing relevance today as the fundamental economic issues addressed in the letter have become more pressing. On March 26, 2020, the New York Times reported in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic that applications for unemployment benefits had substantially increased, reporting over three million people filing, compared to 200,000 just three weeks earlier (Casselman et al. 2020).

In the national and international picture, the economic struggles that began at the end of the last decade have fueled populist movements of the right across the western world. This author suggests that the principles articulated above can provide food for thought in addressing the larger questions of economics in light of the human person.

In light of all of the above, brief responses to seven of the questions the authors raised are presented here:

Question 1. How is love best defined, and how does it relate to other virtues in general, as well as faith and hope in particular?

Love is a dynamic activity of the whole, integrated person, an action of self-donation in which we transcend ourselves. Love is integral to all the virtues, and can be conceived of as a manifestation of the specific virtues.²⁵

Question 2. Are we naturally predisposed to love, and if so, how does this generate trust?

The nature of the human person, as described here, answers "yes." We are naturally disposed toward self-transcendence, to relationship, and it is the life of the virtues, love first of all, that stands at the root of our mutuality, in which trust is born.

Question 3. Is there any connection between trust and the virtues of faith, hope, and love, and if so, how are they interconnected?

All of the virtues are interconnected; we cannot develop one virtue without other virtues being included in the process. They form a crown of personhood that guide us in the way we think and act, that help form our predispositions and attitudes. To encourage one virtue is to encourage virtuous living in general, so in the process, all the virtues grow.

Question 4. How can the virtue of love develop over a person's life-time, and what factors encourage people to promote well-being in the contexts of home, school, and work?

²⁵ See, for example, Pieper (2012).

Virtues are not a matter of one-trial learning. They develop slowly, through observation of virtuous persons, guidance by them, and our own actions. They eventually become stable dispositions and habits of action.

Question 5. Which areas of the neural system are required to facilitate a person acting intentionally to promote overall well-being?

The inevitable answer from contemporary neuroscience must be, our entire connectome, the whole human brain in all its connectivity and interaction, from individual neurons to local and to far flung networks that subserve all of our human activity. We must, however, be cautious in looking too exclusively to the brain, a single though important organ, to find answers to questions like this one. It is the whole person who intends, the whole person who acts, the whole person who loves, has faith in and hopes for. Human flourishing and human excellence and happiness are the results of the integrated functioning of the whole human person. It is the role and responsibility of the state, and of its economic systems, to promote this well-being

Question 6. Does gender make any difference to the promotion of well-being in companies and organizations?

While the issue of gender was not addressed in this essay, the answer to this question may be a qualified yes. Men and women are different, to be sure, but this difference ought not to blind us to our fundamental equality in personhood and dignity. Notions of gender have been addressed across the human sciences. Recent neuroscientific research has been more mixed when it comes to identifying gender difference, and the validity of the notion of male and female brains has been called into question.²⁶ It is likely that we would do better, in terms of workplace-related issues, to give thoughtful consideration to the gender roles that exist in any given society, and the often unconscious expectations and disparities they create about men and women in the workplace.

Question 7. How can technology damage and stimulate human relationality in the future?

Technology can help us connect to others, but it can also isolate us. There is no substitute for in-person, human connection. Technology is a place where virtue ethics can play a central role, as demonstrated by the philosopher Shannon Vallor, in her book *Technology and the Virtues*, a comparative philosophical study of virtue ethics across three global traditions: the classical virtue tradition

²⁶ See, for example, Rippon (2019). Rippon, herself a neuroscientist, surveys the several centuries of research on the human brain, especially on assumed differences between the brains of men and women, and concludes that many of the “findings” of the neurosciences of the past are heavily marked by biased presuppositions that have not been verified in contemporary research. She alerts the reader throughout the book to the existence and enduring power of neuromyths, false beliefs about the brain, disproven by neuroscience, that often take on a life of their own, for example, the myth that we use only 10% of our brains. This belief was disproven the first time a functional neuroimaging study was completed.

of the West, beginning with Aristotle, Confucian ethics and Buddhist ethics. Drawing on this comparative study, she articulates a catalogue of virtues and argues that they can be instrumental in coping with the reality of increasingly rapid technological change across societies (Vallor 2016).²⁷

4.8 Conclusion

The model of *Homo amans* presented by Nullens and Van Nes address many problems that need to be addressed in both philosophical anthropology generally and the specific discipline of economics in its historical context. The model of *Homo economicus* is laden with numerous presuppositions, as highlighted by the authors, and its reductionism is a severe limitation. They have created the model of *Homo amans* as an alternative to the limitations of earlier economic models and visions of persons.

This essay has presented an anthropological vision which presents the human person as a dynamic unity, active, and capable of learning and living the virtues, including the key virtues of faith, hope, and love. Some of the strengths and limitations of neuroscience were also examined as this field has been identified as a contributor to economic theory. An economic vision consistent with the *Homo amans* project was presented.

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²⁷ She names (on page 120, as principal virtues, additional subsidiary virtues): honesty, self-control, humility, justice, courage, empathy, care, civility, flexibility, perspective, magnanimity, and technomoral wisdom (prudence).

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