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Love and Politics: A Convergent Reading of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and Kierkegaard's Works of Love

Andrés Roberto Albertsen
Luther Seminary

LOVE AND POLITICS: A CONVERGENT READING OF HEGEL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT* AND KIERKEGAARD'S *WORKS OF LOVE*

by

ANDRÉS ROBERTO ALBERTSEN

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation got its start when I realized that a convergent reading of Hegel and Kierkegaard may be possible on the topic of love and politics. That is not a capricious topic, but one that has become central in contemporary political philosophy besides being at the heart of what Christianity is about, and I will address it with the goal of making love politically operative today. So, before I immerse myself into Hegel and Kierkegaard, I will investigate some contemporary political philosophers who, although with different perspectives, agree that love is a significant concept for philosophy and politics: Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Martha Nussbaum, and two authors who have been writing collaboratively, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. And since I want love to be politically effective and not a mere ideal, I will submit these political philosophers to what I, inspired by Merold Westphal, call the motivation and enablement test: what would motivate us as their readers to try to enact this love; and even if we are so motivated, how might we be enabled to do so to any significant degree?

Hegel and Kierkegaard are two prolific and complex authors, so I will concentrate on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and Kierkegaard's *Works of Love,* devote one chapter to each of these works, and submit these authors as well to the motivation ad enablement test. Next, I will attempt the convergent reading that prompted this dissertation. Finally, I will reread and review my expected convergent reading considering what I intend to learn from and with the contemporary political philosophers and offer an overall goal and more immediate goals toward a politically operative love for today.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The main academic goal of this dissertation is to prove that there can be a convergent reading of Hegel and Kierkegaard. This is a project that is worth pursuing in its own right, but I want it to serve a bigger project, the project of making love politically operative today.

My bigger project is that the word and the concept of "love" has something to contribute to the discussion about politics that would be missing unless this word and this concept were used, not merely as an ideal but as a desirable and feasible political project that anyone, whether Christian or not, could feel motivated and enabled to pursue, within the limits of a confined area or on a wider basis. Although the pursuit of such a political project of love could be the initiative of a particular individual, it will not have any chance of coming to fruition unless it is embraced by other people as well, and they all work together to carry it out.

This is how I made up my mind about the topic for my dissertation. I came to Luther Seminary in 2011 with an already developed interest in Søren Kierkegaard, pragmatism, and public theology, and with the intuition that these apparently dissimilar interests could be combined in one project. When I then decided to do independent studies on pragmatism with prof. Patrick Keifert, I discovered that the most prominent representatives of this school of thought draw heavily on Hegel, and since I prior to that already sensed an affinity of Kierkegaard with pragmatism, I began to wonder if there

was more affinity between Hegel and Kierkegaard than I until then had imagined possible. When we ended our independent studies on pragmatism reading the radical pragmatist Roberto Mangabeira Unger, who argues that "love is the ultimate ideal of social cohesion," and when I later engaged in another series of independent studies with prof. Keifert, this time on Hegel and his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and I realized how foundational love is in Hegel's thought, I began to see the shape of my project: It would be on love and politics with Hegel and Kierkegaard as my main conversation partners. It should be added that I in the meantime had done independent studies on Kierkegaard with prof. Paul Sponheim, which had confirmed how fertile Kierkegaard´s thought and in particular his understanding of love were for the discussion about society and politics. When I later did independent studies with prof. Hansen on Luther's theology and ethics of love in dialogue with late modern political philosophy and I, on the one side, revisited the role of love in Luther's social thought and, on the other side, found out that Mangabeira Unger was far from being the only contemporary political philosopher who associates love and politics, I definitely arrived at the outcome that a discussion on love and politics based on Hegel and Kierkegaard would unite the interests I came to Luther Seminary with and the interests that were generated at Luther.

Hegel and Kierkegaard are two prolific and complex authors, and the first challenge was to determine what works of their respective authorships I would concentrate on. I chose Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*[1] and Kierkegaard's *Works of Love.*[2]

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[1] G. W. F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Philosophy of Right and *Works of Love* are, first, works on social and political thought that have been able to transcend the historical context in which they were written and are frequently referred to in the contemporary discussions. Second, both authors find fault with the political liberalism and market economy of their times. And third and most important of all, Hegel and Kierkegaard are thinkers with a common Lutheran heritage who had to face the "radically new situation" in which the Enlightenment had placed the classical Christian belief,[3] and who in these two works, more than in any others, exemplify the "extraordinarily important role" that "love" plays in their thought.[4] Moreover, the "love" that plays such a crucial role in my authors' works is, as can be expected of heirs of Martin Luther, a love that "is not static or contemplative, but busy, present in the world, acting for the neighbor."[5] It is God's love with which we love; it is God who loves us first so that love can flow through us to others.

Since its first edition in 1820-21, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* has been praised as a foundational work. In his 2008 Introduction to this work of Hegel, Stephen Houlgate says that it is "one of the greatest works of moral, social, and political philosophy, comparable in scope and profundity of insight to Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, and, in the twentieth century, Rawls's *Theory of Justice*."[6] Paul Franco, in turn, in his 1999 *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*, claims: "For the past thirty years or so, there has been a tremendous revival of interest in Hegel's social and

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[3] Daphne Hampson, *Kierkegaard: Exposition and Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

[4] Mark C. Taylor, "Love and Forms of Spirit: Kierkegaard vs. Hegel," *Kierkegaardiana* 10 (1977): 95.

[5] Hampson, *Kierkegaard*, 180.

[6] Hegel, *Outlines*, vii.

political philosophy. At first largely motivated by the quest for the origins of Marx's project, this revival of interest has begun to focus on Hegel as a thinker in his own right, and one with perhaps something more profound to offer than Marx."[7]

I decided to focus my reading of the *Philosophy of Right* on the topic of love, and in this way, I would avoid the dilemma of having to choose whether I would read this work in abstraction from Hegel's metaphysical theory of thought and reality contained in his *Science of Logic*, or I would give due consideration to its relation to the author's metaphysical project. I will instead follow in the steps of Alice Ormiston and the authors of a tradition of Hegelian scholarship for whom love is a "human *experience* of an infinite principle—in either intuition or faith."[8] Ormiston places herself in the interpretive approach that Emil Fackenheim calls the "Hegelian middle":

> From the outset and throughout, the Hegelian system seems faced with the choice between saving the claims of an absolute and therefore all-comprehensive philosophic thought, but at the price of loss of any actual world besides it, and saving the contingent world of human experience at the price of reducing philosophic thought itself to finiteness … Hegel's thought dwells in the middle between these extremes, and how it can dwell there is its innermost secret.[9]

In Ormiston's words,

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[7] Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), ix.

[8] Alice Ormiston, *Love and Politics: Re-interpreting Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 5.

[9] Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 76-77. I would also say that I understand that Fackenheim does not accept the reduction of philosophical thought to finiteness because he believes that philosophy must account for the conviction that human experience is more than a random sequence of contingencies, but in another sense I would say that philosophical thought as well as any kind of thought is finite, conditioned, and terminable. I am persuaded by Richard Rorty's standpoint that philosophical thought is a chosen unstable vocabulary, and that Hegel, under the cover of the new super-science that Kant called "philosophy," "invented a literary genre which lacked any race of argumentation, but which obsessively captioned itself *System der Wissenschaft* or *Wissenschaft der Logik*, or *Encyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*." See Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972-1980)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 147-48.

> It comprehends Hegel's project neither as an attempt to establish the truth of the finite world solely in terms of the abstract logical Idea (the right-wing Hegel) nor as a limiting of all knowledge and being to the finite human (the left-wing Hegel), but as finding a basis of infinity within human experience, which must perpetually be actualized in the finite secular world, in order to achieve the rise to the philosophical consciousness that vindicates it.[10]

By exploring Hegel's work, including *The Philosophy of Right*, in terms of what she calls "the *experience* of love," Ormiston is doing at least three things: 1) she is recognizing that it is problematic to separate Hegel's thought from its metaphysical assumptions; 2) she is offering a "meaningful way into Hegel's metaphysics;" and 3), "in focusing on the experience of love, rather than religious faith per se" she is trying "to reveal the significance of this interpretive tradition to more secular readers, who may have steered clear of it because of its apparently religious preoccupations."[11]

I will read Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* along the lines of the interpretive approach termed the "Hegelian middle," agreeing with the scholars who consider that Hegel never abandoned the beautiful idea of "a nation of men [sic] related to one another by love"[12] which he conceived in his early theological work "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate." This is the reason why Hegel's main claim in the *Philosophy of Right* is that "family and State are analogs of each other and that law is to accomplish in the State[13]

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[10] Ormiston, *Love and Politics*, 5.

[11] Ormiston, 5.

[12] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox and Richard Kroner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 278.

[13] What make things more complicated today is that the state understood as "nation-state" has been "overflown" by the global economy. Today we need to think in terms of a "world polity" and I agree with Westphal that Hegel's "own logic" calls for "internationalism," even when Hegel holds on to his national view of the state. See Merold Westphal, *Hegel, Freedom, and Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 246n27.

what love does in the Family."[14] That the "I" is "We" in the sense that "I am who I myself am *and* I am who We are" without dissociation, and that "the We is itself an I" in the sense that there are "social wholes" which although "dispersed in a plurality of *I's*" have a "life of their own" and "cannot be reduced to the sum of contributions of their various members,"[15] is a fertile and suggestive idea, one that Hegel already introduced in the *Phenomenology*. This "human interrelatedness" assumes and demands a "work of articulation" be done by love in order to make sure that differences are not neutralized but recognized in their proper place.[16] That "work of articulation" should happen in the state as well as in the family.[17] The state, then, becomes the "embodiment of love" through the law, and I commend Hegel's definition that "individuals have duties to the state to the extent that they also have rights against it," so that "in the state duty and right are *united in one and the same relation*."[18] The laws should "provide to each citizen[19] that

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[14] Merold Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics" (unpublished manuscript, April 18, 2009), PDF file, 19.

[15] Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 31-32.

[16] Richard Beardsworth, "A Note to a Political Understanding of Love in our Global Age," *Contretemps* 6 (January 2006): 6-7.

[17] It is noteworthy that Steven B. Smith, in what he considers to be an objection to the "conciliatory function of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*," in reality is exposing that "love" is the foundation always at play in Hegel's thought. Smith protests that "Hegel sticks to the belief that following a period of estrangement there will come one of reconciliation and synthesis ... But it is not clear ... why this period of reconciliation is likely to occur at all. At a practical level, the skeptical shattering of traditional customs and shared beliefs is more likely to lead to the intensification of feelings of estrangement and anomie than to the acceptance of fate. Furthermore, the increase in our powers of self-reflection and autonomy is more likely to lead to the cultivation of eccentricities and personal peculiarities than to a revivified sense of community. There is arguably nothing more to connect the first and second negations of this process than mere wishful thinking." See Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 192. It is true that it would be "mere wishful thinking" unless we can presuppose the founding experience of love.

[18] Hegel, *Outlines*, 236. The quotes are from § 261.

[19] I will not myself use the word "citizen" in this taken-for-granted sense in which Westphal uses it here, because "citizen" is "a member of a state who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection," and there is an outrageously high number of inhabitants of this world who do not fit into this category.

sense of belonging, that sense of really mattering to others, in short, that sense of being loved that makes one's homeland truly a home for body, soul, and spirit."[20]

Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* has had less resonance in the world of scholarship than Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. However, the fact that "*Works of Love* came out the same autumn [the exact date was September 29, 1847] in which Marx and Engels undertook the task of drawing up the *Communist Manifesto*, published in February of the following year" invites us to read it as a "program script" that presents a "view of life" with its own political implications.[21] And Darren Surman is representative of the increasing interest *Works of Love* has met in recent years when he argues in his dissertation that "Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* is an eminently political text" that should be incorporated "into current theorization of love as a political concept by showing how it models political sensibilities that can be responsive to contemporary problems of political and social injustice."[22]

Kierkegaard agrees with Hegel's portrayal of the relational formation of the "I" that is "We" and the "We" that is "I," which also results in a space of freedom that should be "positive" rather than merely "negative," and propounds that the individual should make use of that freedom in an intentional effort to love the "neighbor." Merold Westphal mentions three reasons why the intentional effort is required: 1) there is no guarantee of any gratification from the loved neighbor; 2) on the contrary, it can involve "self-sacrifice and self-denial;" and 3) it is epistemologically incapable of being

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[20] Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics," 23.

[21] Gregor Malantschuk, *The Controversial Kierkegaard*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 9.

[22] Darren Edward Surman, "Love's Praxis: The Political in Kierkegaard's Works of Love" (PhD diss., University of Alabama, 2012), 24.

justified.[23] Further, no one, absolutely no one, is excluded,[24] and I subscribe to Backhouse's argument that

> Rather than reading Kierkegaard as disliking passionate preference because he is solipsistic, anti-material or indeed anti-life, instead the opposite is true. Kierkegaard posits neighbour love precisely *because* it is expansive, world-affirming and people oriented. His misgivings about passionate preference arise ... because it excludes so many people, withdrawing into tighter and tighter circles of sameness, and thus abstraction away from reality.[25]

Kierkegaard "sublates" (*aufhebt*) Hegel with his proposal of "neighbor love" that implies a "way of existing in the real world, honestly," and of taking part in civic life without having to "endorse simplified (and thus falsified) versions" of our society.[26]

I am convinced that we need both Hegel and Kierkegaard to make love politically operative. I will argue that with their differences, with their different audiences, and despite Kierkegaard's misunderstandings about Hegel, a convergent reading of both authors is possible. Hegel provides the enablement, and Kierkegaard the motivation.

However, as I anticipated at the beginning, I am not starting right away with my main authors. I will start with four contemporary political philosophers and how they think about political love: Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Martha Nussbaum, and two authors who have been writing collaboratively, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.

In his *False Necessity*, Roberto Mangabeira Unger quite simply argues that love is "the ultimate ideal of social cohesion."[27] In *The Self Awakened*, Unger explains that there

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[23] Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics," 29-30.

[24] Westphal, 28.

[25] Stephen Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 196.

[26] Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, 201.

[27] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy* (New York: Verso, 2001), xcvii.

are two extreme and insufficient answers to the question of "what does and should hold society together": coercion "imposed from above" and love "given by people to one another."[28] Coercion and love cannot hold society together if they are isolated from one another and if we expect them to play their roles in a direct and immediate manner. Coercion becomes effective in the form of the "rule of law" and love becomes effective in the "experience of trust," and especially in "the ability to trust strangers rather than just other members of a group united by blood."[29] Unger claims that the third instrument that helps to bind society together is "the social division of labor."[30] And then Unger refers to two recurring issues in his work: that nobody should be forced into a life in one particular role in a hierarchy of classes or castes[31] and that there is no natural and unique way of giving institutional form to the "rule of law."[32]

In his *The Religion of the Future,* Unger argues that the main problem in our moral experience is "our contradictory need for one another and our need to protect ourselves against the jeopardy in which we place one another"[33] and that the way to deal with this contradiction is through "love in the circle of intimacy and by cooperative activity outside this circle."[34]

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[28] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *The Self Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 247.

[29] Unger, 248.

[30] Unger, 248.

[31] Unger, 248-50.

[32] Unger, 250.

[33] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *The Religion of the Future* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 155-56.

[34] Unger, 156.

Martha Nussbaum likewise associates love and politics. In her *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*, she works out what she calls a "political psychology," resuming a project that John Rawls had left unfinished. After noting that emotions "are not just impulses, but contain appraisals that have an evaluative content,"[35] she argues that a "decent society" not only requires good institutions, but also "an enthusiastic endorsement of its basic ideas of justice."[36] Therefore, a deliberate and planned effort is needed to cultivate, shape, and foster the appropriate "political emotions" through "political rhetoric, public ceremonies and rituals, songs, symbols, poetry, art and architecture, the design of public parks and monuments, and public sports," and, perhaps, above all, "public education."[37] And that effort has to be done in a way that is respectful of free speech and of the diverse views of life that coexist in a pluralistic society.[38]

Nussbaum contends that all the political emotions that should be cultivated "have their roots in, or are forms of, love," by which she means "intense attachments to things outside the control of our will."[39] To Nussbaum "what gives respect for humanity its life, making it more than a shell" is love.[40]

Meanwhile, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri make a programmatic statement about the relationship between love and politics in their co-authored *Multitude* that I will unpack in the next chapter.

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[35] Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 6.

[36] Nussbaum, 10.

[37] Nussbaum, 17.

[38] Nussbaum, 390.

[39] Nussbaum, 15.

[40] Nussbaum, 15.

> People today seem unable to understand love as a political concept, but a concept of love is just what we need to grasp the constituent power of the multitude. The modern concept of love is almost exclusively limited to the bourgeois couple and the claustrophobic confines of the nuclear family. Love has become a strictly private affair. We need a more generous and more unrestrained conception of love. We need to recuperate the public and political conception of love common to premodern traditions. Christianity and Judaism, for example, both conceive love as a political act that constructs the multitude. Love means precisely that our expansive encounters and continuous collaborations bring us joy. There is really nothing necessarily metaphysical about the Christian and Judaic love of God: both God's love of humanity and humanity's love of God are expressed and incarnated in the common material political project of the multitude. We need to recover today this material and political sense of love, a love as strong as death. This does not mean that you cannot love your spouse, your mother, and your child. It only means that your love does not end there, that love serves as the basis for our political projects in common and the construction of a new society. Without this love, we are nothing.[41]

I start with the contemporary authors because I want to join the current conversation, and because I want to have the current conversation in mind when I discuss Hegel and Kierkegaard. And, invigorated by my discussion of Hegel and Kierkegaard, strengthened in my faith, willing to reconsider how I will live it out, and confident in my ability to persuade others, in the last chapter I will return to the contemporary authors and give shape to a project of political love that I will take up in my context, and that I will invite others to take up in their contexts as well. The writing of this dissertation is part of the ongoing discernment of my vocation, and I am eager to invite others to join in the

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[41] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 351-52. I agree with David Nirenberg that the idea of recuperating "the public and political conception of love common to premodern traditions" that Hardt and Negri champion only makes sense if we also deal with the long "history of disappointment" caused by "love and its politics" and with his claim that "the fantasy that love can free interaction from interest is itself one of the more dangerous offspring of the marriage of Athens and Jerusalem that we sometimes call the Western tradition." See David Nirenberg, "The Politics of Love and Its Enemies," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 3 (2007): 575-76. Slavoj Žižek points repeatedly to a similar problem when he argues that the political regimes in the twentieth century that have legitimized their power by invoking the people's love for their leader and, vice versa, the radiating love of the leader for his people, are the "totalitarian" ones, of which the North Korean regime is the perfect example. See for instance Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (New York: Verso, 2010), 98-99.

conversation, and to contradict me. The worth of this project depends on the conversation it will stimulate, and the guidance it will offer to those, starting with myself, who are embarked in the process of making love politically operative and of changing the world for the better.

I will finish this introduction with two explanatory notes. One about how I read a text, and the other about my examples from news events.

Usually, I try to be faithful to the authors I discuss, and I practice what I would call charitable reading. But I will also openly confess to a sin. When I discuss, or refer to, or quote an author, it is often not to disagree, but to affirm something I agree with, and this raises a problem that I am aware of. Sometimes, when I encounter something that I agree with, I may rush to refer to it, or even to quote it, without the patience to closely examine what the author is saying in their context. This is also related to the fact that I often struggle to find my own words to express a thought, and therefore, I make the words of another author my own. Of course, I do credit the author and the source when that happens, and I also ask respectfully to be judged first for the way in which those quotes substantiate and back up my own argument, and only secondly for my grasp of the purpose and reasoning of the author that I am quoting.

It is striking to me that Kierkegaard, by own confession, had a similar problem. He was not the kind of author who would provide a thorough and historical account of another author's thought. In Joakim Garff's words, Kierkegaard "read zigzag style, surfing and zapping from one point to another, and he honestly confessed his selective

tendencies."[42] Johannes Sløk confirms it: "It is very difficult for him [Kierkegaard] to concern himself objectively with another author: he invariably views him [sic] from his own positions and, accordingly, he sometimes fastens upon quite accidental and unrelated things. He had a tendency—of which he was well aware—to evaluate others on the basis of highly arbitrary associations which might be aroused by some peculiar phrase or the like."[43] His childhood's nickname, "The Fork," fit him well. However, there is one thing that makes me completely different from Kierkegaard even when we may have a similar way of approaching another author's texts. Kierkegaard believed that "great geniuses" and he was not embarrassed to imply that he was a "great genius," and he certainly was one, "'great geniuses'", he argued, "cannot really read a book, because 'when they read they always develop themselves more than they understand the author.'"[44] I, on the contrary, have this approach, not because I am genius, but because of my shortcomings as a scholar and my limitations in my command of the English language.

My second explanatory note is about my examples from news events. Several of my chapters were initially drafted years ago, and some of the examples from news events that were up to date then, are dated now, and I have chosen not to substitute newer examples for the dated ones, because of time pressure and, more importantly, because I am convinced that more up to date examples will not significantly alter the argument I am making in this dissertation.

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[42] David Lawrence Coe, *Kierkegaard and Luther* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 57.

[43] Coe, 72n27.

[44] Coe, 57.

CHAPTER 2

LOVE AND POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Project for the Chapter

The issue of love has become central in contemporary political philosophy. It has been fascinating to discover how some contemporary political philosophers use the word and the concept of "love" to contribute something to the discussion about politics that would be missing unless this word and this concept were used.[1] And I am especially interested in exploring whether those philosophers are able to make love politically effective rather than leaving it as a mere ideal. The political philosophers on whom I will concentrate are Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Martha Nussbaum, and two authors who have been writing collaboratively, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.

In each case, I will give some biographical data and background information, and flesh out how their understanding of love as a political concept fits in and relates to their social and political project. I will highlight their commonalities and differences by putting them into dialog with each other. Finally, I will submit these political philosophers to what I call the motivation and enablement test: what would motivate us

[1] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, for instance, argue that "love has been so charged with sentimentality that it seems hardly fit for philosophical and much less political discourse." They think that "it is unwise to leave love to the priests, poets, and psychoanalysts," because love is to them "an essential concept for philosophy and politics, and the failure to interrogate and develop it is one central cause of the weakness of contemporary thought." See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 179.

as their readers to try to enact this love; and even if we are so motivated, how might we be enabled to do so to any significant degree?[2]

Roberto Mangabeira Unger

Roberto Mangabeira Unger was born in Brazil in 1947 and grew up in the United States.. He is a political philosopher who teaches at Harvard. He was 29 years old when he received tenure from the Harvard Law School and he is the only South American faculty member of the school. In parallel with his academic work, he is an engaged politician in his native Brazil, where he once run for president and has served twice in the federal government as Minister of Strategic Affairs.

Roberto Mangabeira Unger disagrees with what he calls "deep-structure social analysis" and with what he calls "positivist social science." He disagrees with the former because he does not assume that there only exist a limited number of indivisible types of social organizations that succeed each other in a particular sequence and according to a prewritten script. And he disagrees with the latter because he denies that society can be seen only from the perspective of the "resigned insider" who takes for granted its existing structure.[3] These wrong ideas, Unger argues, mislead us into the view that there are only two kinds of politics: the revolutionary substitution of one indivisible system for another one, and the reformist management or humanization of the existing system. He holds that society is something made and imagined. Change does not happen by necessity. If there

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[2] Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics," 32.

[3] My friend Dr. Charles Djordjevic, in a private communication with me, observed that from the point of view of people who call themselves positivists, the thought wouldn't be that they accept the system. Rather, it would be that science studies facts and that the only facts open to study right now are the ones the current system has. They need not deny the possibility of revolution or radical change. They simply think this outruns science.

is clarity about the direction of the overall change wished to be achieved, it can be produced by loving people bit by bit and step by step. He claims that ultimately it is love that holds a society together.[4]

Unger makes a sharp distinction between altruism and love. Altruism is "generosity offered from on high by an individual who has advanced to a higher state of insight and of life."[5] "The higher being is less needy" and, "in particular, less needy of other people."[6] The altruistic person is not benevolent because he or she "is incomplete without the other person."[7] The altruistic person "is benevolent out of a surfeit of his [sic] own goodness as well as out of insight into the truth about the cosmos or about humanity,"[8] he says—as preposterous as the claim of having that insight may appear. "Altruism is unilateral both in practice and in intention. Its value and efficacy do not depend on any particular response or counter-performance by its beneficiary."[9] "Although altruism may subject the altruist to rigorous demands, and even at the limit require that he [sic] sacrifice his life, it need impose no inner torment on him [sic]."[10] A person's altruism "cannot be devalued by going unrecognized. It runs no risk of being rejected because it expects nothing in return."[11] Altruism, says Unger, presupposes that the main problem of moral life is selfishness, and that the ideal should be to arrive at the

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[4] Unger, *False Necessity*, xcvii.

[5] Unger, *Religion*, 171.

[6] Unger, 171.

[7] Unger, 171.

[8] Unger, 171.

[9] Unger, 171.

[10] Unger, 172.

[11] Unger, 172.

end of our lives blameless, after having fulfilled our obligations to one another in agreement with certain rules.[12]

Unger believes that the main problem of moral life is not selfishness, but the contradiction between the fact that we need others in all aspects of our experience, that we are human beings only through the connection with them, and the fact that every connection endangers our freedom, autonomy, and self-construction.[13] This understanding of moral life fits his view of society as something imagined and made and turns love into the central moral experience. Love, contrary to altruism, is a relationship in which none of the lovers, no matter their outward social circumstances, is in a superior position toward the other/the others. The lovers want and need each other,[14] and they have to throw down their shields and place themselves "in the zone of heightened vulnerability" where they are "more able to imagine and to give, receive, or refuse love."[15] Love requires from the lovers "the unprotection of the self and the recognition of its need for the other, the acceptance of the risk of rebuff or failure,"[16] and, first of all, "the imagination and acceptance of the other person, as who that person both is and might become, not as the projection of our need."[17] The acceptance of the other person is in the other person's "whole individuality," with his or her specific features… taken as

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[12] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, "The Shortcomings of Religion and the Coming Revolution," Big Think, aired on August 27, 2014, YouTube video 24:14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmZXUDEocxA.

[13] Unger, *Religion*, 172. See also Unger, "The Shortcomings of Religion and the Coming Revolution."

[14] Unger, *Religion*, 173.

[15] Unger, *False Necessity*, cxvii.

[16] Unger, *Religion*, 46.

[17] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 227.

incarnations of a self that both speaks through them and transcends them," and "in the face of" his or her "inexorable hidden and threatening being," so that this acceptance "always has something of the miraculous" about it.[18] Love, unlike altruism, does seek

> a response: that the beloved accept the love and love in return. Because it seeks a response, it may fail. Love may be rejected, at the outset or later. It may be as hard to accept love as to love. The love of the other represents a form of grace, freely given or denied. No degree of moral perfection on the part of the lover can ensure the desired result.[19]

But when it thrives, love means that "you experience the existence of the other person as a confirmation of your own. The acceptance of his [sic] otherness in its individuality helps you discover and strengthen your own distinctive being. Through the affirmation of the other, you enter more fully into the possession of your self."[20] A thriving love will in addition be able to "survive repetition and routine in encounter, and to transform them."[21]

A relationship of love can, but does not necessarily, include "fellow feeling" and/or "erotic attachment." In the "circle of intimacy," love is "warm," but outside this circle, love is "cooled down." Next to the circle of intimacy, we have the "circle of communities," where love becomes "allegiance or loyalty," and further away from the circle of intimacy love becomes "trust" and "cooperative activity," which in turn can and should be organized into certain institutions and practices.[22] "No sharp break separates

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[18] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Passion: An Essay on Personality* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 221.

[19] Unger, *Religion*, 173.

[20] Unger, *Passion*, 223.

[21] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 159.

[22] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 247-51.

total love between man and woman from love among friends, and ultimately from love within a broader group."[23]

This love that is the central moral experience, according to Unger, cannot be disconnected from religion. Unger argues that there are three inescapable features, indeed flaws, in the human condition: mortality, that is, we are doomed to die; groundlessness, that is, we cannot look at the beginning and end of time and understand the framework of our existence; and insatiability, that is, we feel compelled to seek out the unlimited from the limited.[24] Religion is to Unger "a vision of the world, or of ultimate reality" that "responds to the irreparable flaws in the human condition" and

> requires a commitment of life in a particular direction for which the grounds it can supply must always seem inadequate by the standards that we are accustomed to apply to less important decisions. In demanding from us more than it can justify by argument, it also requires us to put ourselves, in the course of actions motivated by faith, into the hands of others. In overstepping the bounds of reason, faith makes us vulnerable.[25]

Unger doesn't believe in a God who supposedly guarantees that the flaws in the human condition will in the end be overcome. He subscribes to a godless religion he proposes as the religion of the future. It demands that we accept "the terrible truth" about the human condition, without assimilating "our corrigible susceptibility to belittlement to the certainty of death and the fragility of our protections against nihilism." It wants us to grasp our life while we have it with the conviction of its incomparable value and assume "the determination to achieve… a greater life, increasing our share in the power of

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[23] Unger, *Passion*, 222.

[24] Unger, *Religion*, 23.

[25] Unger, 257-58.

transcendence that the salvation religions attribute preeminently to God" (Unger 2014) [26] by participating in the transformation of the world, so that we may die only once.

Martha C. Nussbaum

Martha Craven Nussbaum is an American philosopher born in 1947, who currently serves as professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago. She converted to Judaism when she married Alan Nussbaum in 1969, and although their marriage ended in 1987, she never reverted to her former last name, and she stayed involved in Judaism. It was as late as in 2008 that she had her *bat mitzvah*.

Over the years, she has worked on a myriad of topics, but two have prevailed in the most recent years: the principles of social and global justice and the structure of the personal emotions, and the two are connected.

The main fruit of her effort to map out the principles of social and global justice was the elaboration, in association with the Indian economist Amartya Sen, of the theory of "Capabilities Approach." It explains that development should not be measured exclusively in terms of economy but in terms of the extent to which it secures to all "at least a threshold level" of ten central capabilities.[27] (Nussbaum 2011) And it is not by chance that the fifth capability is the emotions:

> Being able to have attachments to things and peoples outside ourselves: to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence: in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability

[26] Unger, 238.

[27] Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 33.

> means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)[28]

In turn, in her work with the structure of human emotions, Nussbaum has fascinatingly reconstructed how, when we are babies, we are needy and experience a lot of pain. We demand "to be held and comforted" on the assumption that we are "the center of the universe" and the others are "our slaves."[29] Nussbaum argues that "this personal call for comfort, in its infantile form, is sheer narcissism. Unreformed, it will surely defeat any thought of justice, since it does not even involve the understanding that other people are real."[30] However, the goal is that we "gradually become able to see others as whole people who have needs of their own, and we develop genuine love and concern for them, and guilt about the excessive demands we have made of them, and probably still want to make."[31] In other words, the goal is to take on a position in which we could both give and receive "consolation of a non-narcissistic kind."[32] This consolation is "addressed to all," it "takes the needs of others as seriously as one's own needs," and it "commits itself to moral laws that apply universally."[33] It "can only become real in action through a dedication to universal justice, both social and global."[34]

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[28] Nussbaum, 33-34. The whole list of the ten capabilities is presented on those two pages.

[29] Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Mourner's Hope," November 4, 2008, in *Boston Review*, https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/nussbaum-the-mourners-hope/.

[30] Nussbaum.

[31] Nussbaum.

[32] Nussbaum.

[33] Nussbaum.

[34] Nussbaum.

It is therefore clear that Nussbaum cannot deal with the topic of social justice without referring to the emotions and that she cannot deal with the development of a sound emotional life without referring to social justice.

The book in which the connection between the two topics has most clearly come to fruition is *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*. In this book, Nussbaum argues that "all societies need to think about the stability of their political culture over time and the security of cherished values in times of stress."[35] A dry intellectual endorsement of a set of principles independent of any emotional attachment to them would be too fragile a basis for a lasting political order. Societies therefore have "to focus on the cultivation of emotions."[36] Of course, we do need institutions and laws. For instance, "compassion, however altruistic, can't run a fair tax system."[37] We also need "laws and institutions [to] protect us against the damage of bad civic passions" and we "don't want to wait until most people love each other before we protect the civil rights of the vulnerable."[38] Sometimes, the force of a good law is what painfully and slowly starts a process of emotional change, and leads to the creation of decent sentiments. Nussbaum's project, however, "is not a study of the emotional consequence of good laws," but to prove that "good laws rarely come into being or remain stable over time without emotional support."[39]

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[35] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 2.

[36] Nussbaum, 2.

[37] Nussbaum, 214.

[38] Nussbaum, 315.

[39] Nussbaum, 316.

She speaks about "aspiring" societies,[40] that is, "real societies—imperfect, yet aspiring toward justice and human capability."[41] They are societies that have "some definite goals and aspirations in view" in line with the list of capabilities, in "the form of constitutional entitlements or other legal mandates," or in the form of "more diffuse aspirations in the spirit of constitutional principles."[42] These societies, Nussbaum argues, are not only possible, but in many respects actual, and something close to the whole of them has existed in some places and times.[43]

What this means, then, is that Nussbaum presupposes that good institutions exist, or can be realized quickly, and that the focus should be on the ongoing work to improve, perfect, and render the political principles and institutions stable. In view of this goal, Nussbaum considers that it is necessary to create and cultivate public emotions in order to engender and sustain the commitment to projects that require effort, sacrifice of narrow self-interest, and the continuous treatment of others as equals, without marginalizing or stigmatizing them.[44] Nussbaum holds that "all of the core emotions that sustain a decent society have their roots in, or are forms of, love" and by love she means "intense attachments to things outside the control of our will."[45] Love can take many different forms. It can be the love of parents for children, the love of comrades, romantic love, love for sport teams, for democratic principles, and even the love for the nation. All these forms of love can be efficacious in prompting cooperative and unselfish behavior

[40] Nussbaum, 164.

[41] Nussbaum, 200.

[42] Nussbaum, 117.

[43] Nussbaum, 24.

[44] Nussbaum, 3.

[45] Nussbaum, 15.

provided that they have some features in common, such as, "a concern for the beloved as an end rather than a mere instrument; respect for the human dignity of the beloved; [and] a willingness to limit one's own greedy desires in favor of the beloved."[46]

The deliberate and planned effort that is needed to cultivate, shape, and foster the appropriate "political emotions" happens through "political rhetoric, public ceremonies and rituals, songs, symbols, poetry, art and architecture, the design of public parks and monuments, and public sports," and, above all, "public education."[47] And it has to be done in a way that respects free speech and the diverse views of life that coexist in a pluralistic society. Indeed, it is a project that requires us to put aside any comprehensive view of life. At the same time, Nussbaum argues that spaces have to be left for citizens "to have particular relationships with people and causes they love, in the part of their lives that is carried out apart from politics, under the aegis of whatever comprehensive view of life they favor."[48]

At the end of the book Nussbaum asks herself what is more important in a just and decent society, if it is the behavior that actually takes place and the outcome achieved, or if it is what motivates the behavior, how the outcomes are brought about, and the emotional tone involved. She concludes that

> the citizen who really feels love of others is very different from the merely law-abiding dutiful citizen… Loving citizens are likely to be much more resourceful in action, but even if this is not the case—even if somehow or other the dutiful citizen were to do all the same things—we still should admire and prefer the citizen whose imagination and emotions are alive to the situation of the nation and of its other citizens.[49]

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[46] Nussbaum, 382.

[47] Nussbaum, 17.

[48] Nussbaum, 386.

[49] Nussbaum, 395.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri

Michael Hardt, born in 1960, is an American political philosopher and literary theorist, professor of literature at Duke University and professor of philosophy at The European Graduate School.[50] In the 1980s, he travelled around Central America and met militants fighting for liberation who taught him the joy of political activism. Many American political activists who go outside of the United States act out of the guilt of being privileged people and think that they are the ones who have something to give. Hardt, by contrast, became involved in political work in Central America as well as in the "Sanctuary Movement" in the United States because he learned that doing so was a better and more joyful way to live, and that he would be the main beneficiary of it.[51]

Antonio Negri, born in 1933, is an Italian Marxist sociologist and political philosopher. In the 1960s and 1970s, besides teaching at the University of Padua, he became a leader in the student and worker movements at a time when the Red Brigades and other terrorist groups also arose in Italy. Negri was arrested in 1979 under emergency laws that had been passed after the kidnapping and murder of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978 that made it possible to detain a terrorist suspect two years without charges and four years without trial. They went so far as to accuse him of being "the mastermind of all terrorism in Europe,"[52] but when he finally was brought to trial, four

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[50] Srdjan Cvjeticanin, "Michael Hardt. Professor of Political Literature at The European Graduate School / EGS. Biography," The European Graduate School, accessed April 6, 2024, https://egs.edu/biography/michael-hardt/.

[51] Ed Vulliamy, "Empire Hits Back," review of *Empire*, by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *The Guardian*, last modified July 15, 2001, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/jul/15/globalization.highereducation.

[52] Michael Hardt, "Talking into Being: The Complete Interview with Michael Hardt," interview by Leonard Schwartz, in *Rain Taxi*, accessed April 8, 2024, https://raintaxi.com/talking-into-being-the-complete-interview-with-michael-hardt/.

years after first being detained, all that the judges tried to prove, based mainly on his writings, was that he was the leader of a tenuously connected network called *Autonomia*. In 1983, while the trial was underway, Negri was elected to the Italian parliament and therefore the trial was suspended, and he was released from prison. Only two months later, the parliament voted to rescind his immunity. However, Negri managed to escape to France, and he spent fourteen years exiled in that country. In the meantime, Negri was convicted in absentia to thirty years in prison. In 1997, after plea-bargaining a reduction of the sentence to 13 years, he voluntarily returned to Italy to serve the end of the sentence. He spent two years in prison, two years with work release, and two years under house arrest, and finally, in 2003, he was completely released. It is remarkable that it was in prison that Negri wrote some of his most influential works.

The progressive radicalization of Michael Hardt's political views to the left led him to Antonio Negri. They met while the latter was exiled in France and began a collaboration that has lasted to this day.

Together, Hardt and Negri have written *Empire*,[53] *Multitude*,[54] *Commonwealth*, *Declaration*,[55] and *Assembly*.[56]

Although there are differences in the amount of power or sovereignty that each nation-state possesses, even the most powerful one cannot control entirely what happens within its own borders. Even less can any nation-state control what happens beyond its

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[53] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[54] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*.

[55] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York: Argo-Navis Author Services, 2012).

[56] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

borders. As they say in their eponymous book, it is "Empire" that exerts sovereignty,[57] "Empire" here meaning a "network power" that includes the United States, other dominant nation-states, capitalist corporations, several multinational institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and even some non-governmental organizations.[58] Empire is the political companion to globalization. Indeed, Empire not only ensures that capital, goods, and services can be traded across the borders of more and more nations; Empire is the "capitalist order" that the political and economic powers have colluded to bring about.[59]

In Empire, the immaterial labor performed for instance by health care workers and flight attendants, among many others, "that produces immaterial products, such as information, knowledges, ideas, images, relationships, and affects"[60] has taken over the hegemonic role that industry used to play. The number of workers mainly engaged in immaterial labor is still relatively small, but the fact is "that the qualities and characteristics of immaterial production are tending to transform the other forms of labor and indeed society as a whole."[61]

Immaterial labor, say Hardt and Negri, is not limited to "the strictly economic domain."[62] It "does not merely create means by which society is formed and maintained;"

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[57] Sovereignty is the idea that "one must always rule and decide," whether it is "the monarch, the state, the nation, the people, or the party." Otherwise, we would fall into anarchy. Anyway, the power of the sovereign is never unilateral. Sovereignty "requires the consent of the ruled" and a willingness to "negotiate the relationship with the ruled." See Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 328-33.

[58] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, xii. See also Michael Hardt, "Talking into Being: The Complete Interview with Michael Hardt."

[59] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 8-9.

[60] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 65.

[61] Hardt and Negri, 65.

[62] Hardt and Negri, 66.

it "also directly produces social relationships,"[63] and "becomes immediately a social, cultural, and political force"[64] that changes "who we are, how we view the world, how we interact with each other,"[65] and thus blurs the frontiers between living and producing.[66] In order to highlight how deep an effect immaterial labor has upon all aspects of life, Hardt and Negri also call it "biopolitical."[67]

Immaterial labor goes hand in hand with what the authors call "the common." "The common" is, on the one hand, what makes it possible for the individuals to "interact and communicate"[68] and thereby engage in immaterial labor. It ranges from "the common wealth of the material world," including "the air, the water, the fruits of the soil, and all nature's bounty,"[69] to "languages, forms of speech, gestures, methods of conflict resolution, ways of loving, and the vast majority of the practices of living."[70] On the other hand, and more importantly, "the common" is what results from immaterial labor.[71] So crucial is the importance that Hardt and Negri attach to the concept of "the common" that they prefer not to refer to "individuals," but rather to "subjectivities" or "singularities." They explicitly distance themselves from the "possessive individualism" according to which "every aspect or attribute of the subject from its interests and desires down to its

[63] Hardt and Negri, 66.

[64] Hardt and Negri, 66.

[65] Hardt and Negri, 66.

[66] Hardt and Negri, 148.

[67] Hardt and Negri, 94.

[68] Hardt and Negri, 188.

[69] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, viii.

[70] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 188.

[71] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, viii.

soul" is considered a property "owned by the individual."[72] They remind us that nobody would be who they are unless they were immersed in "the common;" and it doesn't make any sense to be jealously watchful of what belongs to whom. No communication would be possible without a common means through which it could flow; and nothing could be produced in isolation from "the common."[73] Hardt and Negri say,

> The production of subjectivity and the production of the common[74] can together form a spiral, symbiotic relationship. Subjectivity, in other words, is produced through cooperation and communication, and, in turn, this produced subjectivity itself produces new forms of cooperation and communication, which in turn produce new subjectivity, and so forth. In this spiral each successive movement from the production of subjectivity to the production of the common is an innovation that results in a richer reality.[75]

The "open and expansive network"[76] of individuals who bring the biopolitical production into existence constitute what Hardt and Negri call the "multitude." The members of the multitude do not have to give up their differences, but neither should they cling excessively to them. Hardt and Negri provide an illustrative example when they compare the "multitude" with the Internet where "the various nodes remain different but are all connected in the Web," and "the external boundaries of the network are open such that new nodes and new relationships can always be added."[77] Another distinguishing

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[72] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 203.

[73] Hardt and Negri, 349.

[74] Some of the examples that come to my mind are Common Creative Licenses, Wikipedia, and Firefox, among many others.

[75] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 189.

[76] Hardt and Negri, xiv.

[77] Hardt and Negri, xv.

characteristic of "multitude" is that it is composed of singularities with the capacity "to act of their own accord in a common way."[78]

Empire makes use of all its forces to transform the singularities of the multitude "into divisions and hierarchies," to reduce "the common to a means of global control," and to expropriate "the common as private wealth."[79] To deprive the multitude of its capacity to resist and rebel, Empire has also fabricated "new figures of subjectivity."[80] Hardt and Negri have distinguished four: the indebted, the mediatized, the securitized, and the represented. With immaterial labor, workers "generate wealth more autonomously"[81] than in traditional industry, and the exploitation happens not so much through profit as through rent. And here it is that the figure of the indebted enters the picture. Since almost nothing can be achieved without incurring debt, workers already enter the labor market with debt, and knowing that they have to sell their "entire time of life" to pay it off.[82] In consequence, although they obviously produce, they see themselves as consumers rather than producers, given that "they work to pay their debts, for which they are responsible because they consume."[83] The connection to the media and the communication technologies that is needed for the production of immaterial labor and that leads the workers to be on their jobs 24/7 and wherever they happen to be, can also

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[78] Michael Hardt, "The Politics of Love and Evil," TVO Today, updated January 7, 2006, https://www.tvo.org/transcript/795855. This capacity is what distinguishes the multitude from other social subjects, like the people, the masses, or the working class. The people are a subject that can become a unity and delegate its sovereignty, despite its differences. The masses are subjects that can make their differences fade away and act in a common way if they are cleverly led. The working class is an exclusive and narrow concept. See Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, xiv-xv.

[79] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 212.

[80] Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*, 9.

[81] Hardt and Negri, 12.

[82] Hardt and Negri, 12.

[83] Hardt and Negri, 12-13.

absorb so much of their attention[84] that they overlook the fact that information can also be exchanged for the purpose of "collective action and unsubordination,"[85] and here we have the figure of the mediatized. Our authors argue that we live in societies where militarization is on the increase, the rise in prison population is not proportional to the rise in crimes rates, and we submissively accept being both "objects and subjects of surveillance,"[86] on account of a "generalized social fear"[87] that leads those who have a job to take great care in being good at it lest they lose it and become unable to pay their debts, and this is what results in the figure of the securitized. Finally, the figure of the represented corresponds to citizens who have given up on active participation in political life and delegated representation, sometimes even without exercising the right to vote, essentially capitulating to elected representatives who are much more responsive to lobbies, sponsors, and dominant media than to their constituencies. That citizen's power has, moreover, been restricted to begin with because all nations are subordinated to the "global power structure."[88]

Because of Empire, poverty is the material condition of the multitude—notwithstanding that it is "a poverty that is full of wealthy, capable subjectivities."[89] "The production of the common always involves a surplus that cannot be expropriated by capital or captured in the regimentation of the global political body,"[90] and in this surplus

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[84] Hardt and Negri, 16.

[85] Hardt and Negri, 17.

[86] Hardt and Negri, 21.

[87] Hardt and Negri, 24.

[88] Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*, 28.

[89] Hardt, "The Politics of Love and Evil."

[90] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 212.

resides the power of the multitude to revolt. Multitude is indeed "the living alternative that grows within Empire."[91] The same biopolitical labor that reproduces the system can be repurposed to sabotage the system.[92]

While the authors recognize "that in certain political actions, in certain political demonstrations—the really good ones—you do have a feeling of something really like love,"[93] they ask themselves what the force is that can animate the multitude to stay connected after or beyond the work they have been assigned under Empire. These authors do not hesitate to call it love. Certainly, there are forms of love that are functions of Empire, and there are forms of love that the authors define as love gone wrong. But there is also the love that prevents the multitude from remaining "a fragmented reality."[94]

Forms of Love that Are Functions of Empire

The most obvious form of love that is a function of Empire is the love of the bourgeois couple and the nuclear family. It presupposes the distinction between the

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[91] Hardt and Negri, xiii.

[92] Malcolm Harris, "The Multitude Claps with One Hand, Exodus in Egypt, and Other Musings on Insurrection," in *Destructural*, last modified February 1, 2011, https://destructural.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/the-multitude-claps-with-one-hand-exodus-in-egypt-and-other-musings-on-insurrection/. An example of biopolitical labor sabotaging the system would be what happened during the demonstrations against the government in Alexandria, Egypt, in January of 2011, when some demonstrators soon discovered that it would be their responsibility, as demonstrators, to make sure that the city would not be torn apart, because the government and the police would not do it. What the government wanted was chaos to be created, so that the demonstrations would lose support. Therefore, demonstrators created what they called the "Popular Committee for the Protection of Properties and Organization of Traffic," and started making sure that the electricity, water, gas, were protected, and that ambulances would be able to get through the crowds of demonstrators. "We want to show the world that we can take care of our country, and we are doing it without the government or police," one of the members of the committee said. See Souad Mekhennet and Nicholas Kulish, "Volunteers Work to Keep Order in Chaos of Egypt," *New York Times*, January 31, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/01/world/middleeast/01alexandria.html?partner=rss&emc=rss.

[93] Eleanor Wilkinson, "Love in the Multitude? A Feminist Critique of Love as a Political Concept," in *Love. A Question for Feminism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Anna G. Jónasdóttir and Ann Ferguson (New York Routledge, 2014). The author is quoting Michael Hardt.

[94] Hardt, "The Politics of Love and Evil."

private and the public sphere and restricts love to the private. According to this understanding, in the public sphere what prevails is the rational calculus of interest and that the individual is on his or her own, unless those individuals associate with others in the same condition to further their mutual interests. And this, which Hardt defines as solidarity, presupposes that the individuals already know what their interests are.

Friendship, argues Hardt, is also compatible with Empire, insofar as it is understood "as an interaction and union or solidarity that doesn't transform the subjects involved."[95]

Love that is a function of Empire must be love that has been stripped of any political content.[96] Michael Hardt has described five ways in which love is stripped of political content, is made sterile as a political concept.

The first is the already mentioned love restricted to the couple and the family, and it could be understood in broader terms as a form of "identitarian" love, which is the love directed towards those who are closest or most like you.

The second way of stripping love of political content is by segregating "eros" from "agape," or by what, in other terms, would be the separation between the personal and the social/political. And Hardt argues that this segregation is also maintained when "agape" is subsumed under "eros," or when "eros" is subsumed under "agape."

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[95] Michael Hardt, "About Love. 2007. 1/6," European Graduate School Video Lectures, aired on June 24, 2007, YouTube video 9:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ioopkoppabI.

[96] Hardt considers it pedagogically useful to speak in terms of a degradation. By definition, a degradation assumes that a previous stage existed when love did have a political content. Hardt recognizes that this is true about the Judeo-Christian tradition, but he makes it very clear that he is not proposing a return to any concept of love of the past. It would rather be a "return to where we've never been, [to] a love that hasn't yet been realized." See Surman, "Love's Praxis," 17. Also see Michael Hardt, "About Love. 2007. 2/6," European Graduate School Video Lectures, aired on June 24, 2007, YouTube video 9:51, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2P0OU6GlelE.

The third way of corrupting love as a political concept is by thinking of it exclusively in terms of merging into a unity, destroying or sublimating any difference, and making what previously was different, the same. This is how "the contemporary dominant notion of romantic love in our cultures" is understood: "the mandatory sequence of this corrupted romantic love—couple-marriage-family—imagines people finding their match, like lost puzzle pieces, that now together make (or restore) a whole.[97] This "unifying" love and the above mentioned "identitarian" love "mutually reinforce each other, in a kind of a circle: love of the same and love making the same or love becoming the same."[98]

The fourth way of corrupting love as a political concept is by reducing it to charity, especially toward the poor. Charity here is not understood "for the creation of equality;" rather, it "conceives the poor as object rather than subject of love."[99] The most refined form of charity promoted by Empire, as Slavoj Žižek has shown repeatedly, is the option of doing our "ecological or social duty by buying a product," and Žižek's favorite example is the Starbucks cappuccino which includes in the price both "money for organic agriculture" and "for helping the poor."[100]

The fifth and final way of divesting love of political significance is by conceiving it as powerless. This is the case, says Hardt, when love is understood merely as a passion, a feeling, or "something that happens to us."[101]

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[97] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 183.

[98] Surman, "Love's Praxis," 21. He is quoting from the lecture delivered by Michael Hardt about love to the European Graduate School in 2007. See Michael Hardt, "About Love. 2007. 1/6."

[99] Surman, "Love's Praxis," 21.

[100] Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, 236.

[101] Surman, "Love's Praxis," 22. I would argue with Žižek "there is always something traumatic/extremely violent in love. Love is a permanent emergency state. You fall in love… You lose

Forms of Love Gone Wrong

To Hardt and Negri, "evil does exist,"[102] but it is not a "fundamental, invariable element of human nature."[103] They suggest understanding evil as forms of love that go bad. Its more conspicuous forms happen when the "identitarian" and the "unifying" loves operate outside the limits of the private sphere.

Hardt and Negri argue that populism, nationalism, fascism, white supremacy, and various religious fundamentalisms are forms of identitarian love that have gone wrong based on "the pressure to love most those most like you and hence less those who are different,"[104] even if that results in those who are different being excluded, subordinated, or scapegoated. Meanwhile, certain forms of patriotism are forms of unifying love that has gone wrong since they are based on the "notion of setting (or pushing) aside differences and alterity in order to form a united national people, a national identity."[105]

Love in the Multitude

Here love has recovered its political content. It is a love "that extends beyond our standard concepts of rationality, beyond the rational calculus of interest, a love that has

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control… The entire balance of your life is lost. Everything is subordinated to this one person." Therefore, to make this love powerless what is needed is "to domesticate or erase this excess of love." Žižek says that marriage and dating agencies are good at that when they offer you to encounter love "without falling in love": "We will enable you to find yourself in love, without the fall." Žižek adds: "I think this fits perfectly to our daily narcissistic metaphysics. You know the old story that I repeat all the time; we want coffee without caffeine, we want beer without alcohol, and we want love without its dangerous moment, where you get lost." See Slavoj Žižek, "Slavoj Žižek on Love as a Political Category. Transcription of a Talk by Slavoj Žižek Given on Subversive Festival 2013," in Daily Struggles, accessed April 10, 2024, https://daily-struggles.tumblr.com/post/50765863638/slavoj-%C5%BEi%C5%BEek-on-love-as-a-political-category.

[102] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 191.

[103] Hardt and Negri, 190.

[104] Hardt and Negri, 182.

[105] Hardt and Negri, 183.

developed a different relationship between reason and the passions, a different kind of rationality." Love is to Hardt not merely a passion, but a "notion of reason that isn't excluded from the passions."[106]

In contrast to the "identitarian" kind of love, love can be reanimated as a political concept if it can be applied both to those closest and those furthest away. Instead of being forced "constantly to repeat the same," love can "mark rupture with the existent" and change to be "the creation of the new."[107]

Regarding the need to unite "eros" and "agape," or the personal and social/political, Hardt and Negri say that you have to love your spouse, your parents, your child, if you have such loved ones, but it should be possible to love spouse and children and also the people, because there is a connection and a continuum between the personal and the political.[108]

The problem with reducing love to charity is that it overlooks that the poor, despite their material lack, are "endowed with powers of invention and production." Precisely because of their material lack, they can embrace the risky adventure "of the production of the common and the production of subjectivity"[109] instead of greedily clutching their own stuff.

To contradict the powerlessness of love, Hardt and Negri introduce Spinoza's understanding of love. Spinoza argues that we human beings strive to increase our power

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[106] Hardt, "About Love. 2007. 1/6."

[107] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 183.

[108] Leonard Schwartz, "A Conversation with Michael Hardt on the Politics of Love," *Interval(le)s* II.2-III.1 (Fall 2008/Winter 2009): 816.

[109] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 180. One example would be the many young people in Nicaragua joining the Sandinistas after the devastating earthquake in Managua of 1972 and the government's failed response. They had nothing else to lose.

to act and think, our power to be agents who bring about certain effects. Joy is to Spinoza the way to greater power of acting and thinking; sadness, conversely, is the way to lesser power of acting and thinking. Love is a kind of joy, the joy that consists in "the increase of our power to act and think, together with the recognition of an external cause,"[110] whereas hate, unsurprisingly, is a kind a sadness, the sadness that consists in the decrease of our power to act and think, together with the recognition of an external cause. Other individuals constitute the most obvious "external cause," that Spinoza is referring to in his austere and distilled language, and as Michael Hardt expressed it in an interview that I cannot find on the web anymore, we do "often find that in the company of (and in conversations with) certain people, we are more intelligent." However, "love is deeply ambivalent and susceptible to corruption;"[111] it can easily turn into hate. Therefore, Hardt and Negri insist that "a training or education in love"[112] is required so that we do not limit ourselves to associations with others who are most like us or to become the same, but we dare to take the risk of having encounters with other singularities in the common with the goal of producing "a new common and new singularities,"[113] and thus both more power and more joy.

Discussion between These Authors

Mangabeira Unger admits that "social democracy" is "the single most attractive emergent model of social organization in the world today – the least oppressive, the most respectful of felt human needs, and therefore also the most likely to attract the most

[110] Hardt and Negri, 181.

[111] Hardt and Negri, 182.

[112] Hardt and Negri, 195.

[113] Hardt and Negri, 184.

diverse support of the most thoughtful citizens."[114] According to Unger, it is defined by six commitments arranged in three pairs. The first pair are commitments to protect some groups from the instability to which the market exposes them: the workers who are granted stability in their jobs, and the owners of productive assets who will not be forced to sell unless they decide to do so. The second pair are commitments to guarantee the permanence of certain valued forms of business organization: the small businesses, including agrarian ones, and the family businesses, no matter how large or small. Finally, the third pair are commitments to certain macroeconomic policies on the distribution of income and wealth. One is the commitment to the making of periodic deals between government, big business, and organized labor about the distributive impact of economic policy, and the other is the commitment to a high level of social entitlements available to everyone.[115] Unger recognizes that it is not a model easy to attain and that its results will remain uncertain even when it is attained. Moreover, the champions of this model are constrained by their endorsement of "the particular institutional versions of market economics and representative democracies that have come to prevail in the course of modern Western history."[116] Even though at its best it may protect the majority of the people from extreme poverty, it also denies "the majority of working men and women an opportunity to have anything more than an instrumental attitude toward their own work."[117] What is fatal, says Unger, is that it encourages people to demobilize and "settle down to the prosaic but primary task of taking care of one another and making a practical

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[114] Unger, *False Necessity*, 25.

[115] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 196-98.

[116] Unger, *False Necessity*, 26.

[117] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 202.

success of their life in common," taking for granted "the established institutional order of social life."[118] Therefore Unger's project is to insist that social democracy is not enough and that something better can be established. He counts on the "masses of ordinary people" who want access to the opportunities of "advanced production and learning," to be "the real force" that can propel the transformation to the democratization of the market and the creation of "the institutions of a high-energy democracy," that he advocates.[119]

The model of social organization Martha Nussbaum favors is what Unger would call a kind of social democracy. A society "aspiring to justice" is for Nussbaum a "nation-state" that aims at human development, one in which "each person is an end," and all are considered equal with the same political and civil liberties and "entitled to support for their vulnerability." This means not only that each person is protected against violence and fraud, but also that they are guaranteed access to "health, education, a decent level of welfare, shelter and housing," at the same time that an active effort is made to reduce, although not eliminate, the level of material inequality through a tax system that brings forth a "significant redistribution."[120] Nussbaum argues that a nation that gives these goals and commitments "the form of constitutional entitlements or other legal mandates"[121] can actually live up to them with the support of the right political emotions, "albeit in a form that will require ongoing work to improve and perfect."[122] She

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[118] Unger, *False Necessity*, 26.

[119] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 207.

[120] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 118-23.

[121] Nussbaum, 117.

[122] Nussbaum, 23.

doesn't consider that there are "nonemotional factors" that could impede the realization of such a society.[123]

Hardt and Negri reject "social democracy" in at least two forms. The first is the form that is hostile to globalization, defends a greater control of the economy by the nation-state,[124] and fosters the making of agreements between "big business and the institutional labor unions." These agreements allow for some limited gains for a restricted number of workers, but they leave out "growing categories of workers," including those involved in what these authors call "biopolitical production," who cannot "be forced to fit into the traditional labor union structures."[125] The other is the form open to the global world that gives up state control with policies of deregulation, privatization, and the like. In the opinion of these authors, this second form of social democracy does show "a greater understanding of the economic value created through the social and cooperative development of biopolitical labor-power," but only to make it "available for capitalist profit and development."[126] The main problem with social democracy, according to Hardt and Negri, is not that it delivers precariously on its promises of "equality, freedom, and democracy,"[127] but that it insists on managing and containing the biopolitical production "that belongs to the common."[128]

In the opinion of Hardt and Negri, any attempt either by the capitalist or by the state to organize the biopolitical production "only disrupts and corrupts the processes of

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[123] Nussbaum, 24.

[124] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 233.

[125] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 272.

[126] Hardt and Negri, 272.

[127] Hardt and Negri, 19.

[128] Hardt and Negri, 272.

self-organization already functioning within the multitude."[129] These authors argue that through the biopolitical production, the multitude is already making use of its autonomy and taking the freedom to create a "new society within the shell of the old."[130] They list a series of reforms for which the multitude could struggle, and for which in certain places it is in fact already struggling, in order to enhance its freedom and autonomy. These would also be the reforms that could be pursued by conventional means (capital being the means to which the authors refer)[131] if there were a wish to cooperate with biopolitical production. The authors mention reforms that would improve the physical, social, and immaterial infrastructure, and reforms that would expand the multitude's freedom. The physical infrastructure, which is inseparable from the environment that needs to be protected, could be improved by giving everybody access to "clean drinking water, basic sanitary conditions, electricity, access to affordable food, and other physical necessities to support life."[132] The social infrastructure could be improved by providing access to an education that will train subjectivities in working with "language, codes, ideas, and affects," and first and foremost "with others."[133] The immaterial infrastructure could be extended by giving everybody access to wired and wireless network connections and developing types of patents and copyright licenses that make it possible to share knowledge and research.[134] In order to expand the multitude's freedom, the authors

[129] Hardt and Negri, 302.

[130] Hardt and Negri, 301.

[131] Hardt and Negri, 307.

[132] Hardt and Negri, 307.

[133] Hardt and Negri, 308.

[134] Hardt and Negri, 308.

propose that everyone should have the freedom to migrate within and across the borders of their countries so that they can choose with whom and where they will participate in biopolitical production.[135] They propose as well to separate income from work by guaranteeing everybody a minimum income, and to establish "mechanisms of participatory democracy at all levels of government," so that the multitude can practice "social cooperation and self-rule."[136]

All Hardt and Negri's reform proposals have a striking similarity to Unger's plan of granting ordinary persons "the educational and economic means for independent self-development and cooperation"[137] that in his view should be removed and protected from the short-term political discussion.[138] According to Unger, the educationally and economically endowed and equipped individual will be in a better condition to leave behind safe and monotonous forms of work[139] and participate "in the collective practices of accelerated innovation" without having to fear "the dangers and threats to which it gives rise."[140] Such an individual will be able to engage him- or herself in all kind of cooperative activities yet guarded from humiliating forms of dependence,[141] and to develop a model of living appropriate to what Unger calls "spirit," which he defines as "a being overflowing its circumstance and towering over its station in life."[142]

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[135] Hardt and Negri, 309.

[136] Hardt and Negri, 309-10.

[137] Unger, *False Necessity*, lxxviii-lxxix.

[138] Unger, lxxxiii.

[139] Unger, lxxix.

[140] Unger, lxxxii-lxxxiii.

[141] Unger, lxxxii.

[142] Unger, lxxix.

Martha Nussbaum has a narrow understanding of what politics is. She fully endorses John Rawls' variation of "political liberalism" that makes politics into "merely one part of what people are asked to care about,"[143] although a central one, because it has to do with what Rawls calls the "basic structure," that is, "all those institutions that influence people's life chances pervasively and over the entire course of their lives," including the family.[144] Nussbaum also follows Rawls in arguing that the principles that rule politics "should not be built upon any comprehensive doctrine of the meaning and purpose of life," be they "religious or secular," but "on principles that can become over time the object of an overlapping consensus among people who hold many different religious and secular comprehensive conceptions of the good and yet are themselves reasonable in the sense that they are willing to treat each other with equal respect and to propose and accept fair terms of cooperation."[145] As a supporter of what Unger calls a social democratic model, and with the help of science to understand human nature, in particular of "the results of empirical psychology, the study of animal behavior, and clinical observations of human development,"[146] Nussbaum is very clear in enunciating the political principles that she wants to see as objects of an "overlapping consensus." She argues that those principles should show equal respect to the people who hold the many different religions and comprehensive views, and ideally become "a part" or "a

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[143] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 386.

[144] Nussbaum, 16-17.

[145] Martha C. Nussbaum, "An Account on What I Was Up to in *Political Emotions*," in "Why Love Matters for Justice: Martha Nussbaum's Political Emotions // Workshop Session 1," in UCL Laws, aired on December 9, 2014, YouTube video 38:13, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anK8IPxnwK0.

[146] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 138. Nussbaum even adds on the same page that "imaginative literature" could be of help to understand human life, as long as it is done with "critical alertness," since literary works often articulate views of the goals and purposes of a society that are partisan and would have to be excluded from any overlapping consensus.

module" of the comprehensive doctrine of each citizen.[147] Once the individuals have complied with the political principles that are objects of the overlapping consensus and that allow the coexistence of all, they should be able to abide by their particular comprehensive religious or secular views of life. However, Nussbaum is realistic enough to admit that a society will have to cope with the fact that more often than not there will be individuals whose comprehensive views are at odds with the political principles embraced by the majority. The challenge for a society is to respect the freedom of each individual to hold his or her own comprehensive view of life at the same time that it provides a way to express the dissent with the political principles that will not cause the disintegration of the corresponding society.[148]

Unger agrees with Nussbaum that politics cannot be a substitute for religion.[149] "No program for social improvement," he argues, "is capable of bearing the full weight of our ultimate anxieties about us."[150] However, unlike Nussbaum, Unger argues again and again that we are too timid and small-scale minded in "our political beliefs and aspirations,"[151] and that it is precisely "in religion that our vision of who we are and of what we can hope for is most powerfully represented and developed."[152] Therefore he disagrees with the separation of "religious conviction from political life"[153] defended by the form of political liberalism to which Nussbaum subscribes. If we do not give a public

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[147] Nussbaum, 128.

[148] Nussbaum, 131.

[149] Unger, *Religion*, 60.

[150] Unger, 61.

[151] Unger, 61.

[152] Unger, 260.

[153] Unger, 259.

voice to religion, Unger continues, we unnecessarily "weaken the contest of visions on which the progress of democracy depends."[154] At the same time, says Unger, no religion can be allowed to have a public voice and influence politics unless it also allows itself to be criticized by other religions. For to Unger, prohibiting the religious criticism of religion is and would be "unacceptable both to religion… and to democracy, especially to a democracy more real than the democracies now existing."[155]

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe the configuration of the "network power" that is Empire as a "pyramidal structure… composed of three progressively broader tiers."[156] In the first narrow tier they place the United States and other dominant nation-states that exercise military and economic hegemony.[157] In the second tier they place the transnational corporations and the sovereign nation-states that articulate the command that comes from the first tier, through the means of satisfying needs of growing sectors of the population and creating the expectation that even more needs could be met within the imperial system.[158] And in the third and broadest tier of the pyramid they place the "groups that represent popular interests in the global power arrangements,"[159] among which they include the minor nation-states, the media, religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).[160] It is not by chance that they name religious institutions between the media and the NGOs. These authors consider that in the same

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[154] Unger, 260.

[155] Unger, 260.

[156] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 309.

[157] Hardt and Negri, 309-10.

[158] Hardt and Negri, 310.

[159] Hardt and Negri, 311.

[160] Hardt and Negri, 311-12.

way as the media, religious institutions play an ideological and communicative role,[161] and although in their view religious institutions generally serve "repressive political forces," the authors think they could also operate as forces of resistance.[162] These authors also note that in the same way as the NGOs, religious institutions are often devoted to "relief work" and "the protection of human rights."[163] The authors recognize that "nonprofit and religious charity organizations provide enormous assistance for those in need," and at the same time that they judge that these organizations "cannot change the system that produces and reproduces poverty," they are pleasantly surprised that "so many people who begin in volunteer charity work pass to activism and protest against the economic system."[164]

Hardt and Negri pay particular attention to fundamentalism. They argue that there are not only religious fundamentalisms, but also nationalist, racist, and economic types of fundamentalism.[165] Regarding religious fundamentalism, they make two observations that are worth mentioning. The first is that when religious organizations turn fundamentalist, they often abandon their representative role and "tend to become the state themselves."[166] The second is that although the fundamentalisms present themselves as wanting to re-create a social formation from the past that supposedly is more consistent with the

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[161] Hardt and Negri, 342.

[162] In the Afterword by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri of Bruce Ellis Benson, Peter Heltzel, and Charles Amjad-Ali, *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2008), 309.

[163] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 36.

[164] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 279.

[165] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 32-38.

[166] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 312.

corresponding sacred texts,[167] in reality they are not "backward-looking at all," but have "a political project against the contemporary social order"[168] and the "processes of globalization" that appeal to the losers and all those who have been excluded from the benefits of that order and of those processes.[169] Precisely because these fundamentalisms expose some of the unsurmountable problems of the current imperial order, Hardt and Negri do not consider them merely as reactionary forces, but as groups with liberating potential that should become integral parts of the multitude.[170]

Hardt and Negri also make it clear that they do not believe in any transcendent power nor in any sovereign or figure of authority that claims to "stand above" society and rule over it.[171] Above all, they question what they call "the primary form of power that really confronts us today,"[172] that is, the power of "capital and law intertwined together,"[173] which structures "the conditions of possibility of social life" from what they describe as a "transcendental plane of power" using an expression borrowed from Kant.[174] Although they do not have faith either "in the immediate and spontaneous capacities of society,"[175] they do believe that society is able "to organize itself with no

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[167] Hardt and Negri, 147.

[168] Hardt and Negri, 148.

[169] Hardt and Negri, 150.

[170] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 35-38. Also see Chris Fox, "From Representation to Constituent Power: Religion, or Something Like it, in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*," *JCRT (Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory)* 9, no. 2 (Summer) (2008): 36.

[171] Benson, Heltzel, and Amjad-Ali, *Evangelicals and Empire*, 310.

[172] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 5.

[173] Hardt and Negri, 8.

[174] Hardt and Negri, 6.

[175] Hardt and Negri, 15.

superior power over it."[176] The authors are convinced that when the multitude organizes and forms itself, it can display "enormous power, wisdom and virtue without the guidance of a higher power of any kind."[177] Since the multitude takes on the function of the transcendent power, Negri has said provocatively in a work of his exclusive authorship that "democracy is the project of the multitude, a creative force, a living god."[178]

Hardt and Negri specifically reject the discouraging notion that the imagination and desire of the multitude will never be able "to go beyond the limits of power, be they transcendent or transcendental."[179] This is related to a criticism that Mangabeira Unger levels at the major religious orientations to the world which, he suggests, "assure us that, appearances notwithstanding, everything will indeed be all right"[180] using what he describes as "a two-sided ticket,"[181] which is at the same time "a license to escape the world" and "an invitation to change it."[182] One side of the ticket counteract the other and this, says Unger, has the discouraging effect of making participation in changing the world optional rather than mandatory.

What Unger calls "altruism" is the same as what Hardt and Negri call "solidarity." They agree that it is a bad concept because in their understanding the altruist or the

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[176] Benson, Heltzel, and Amjad-Ali, *Evangelicals and Empire*, 310.

[177] Benson, Heltzel, and Amjad-Ali, 311.

[178] Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*, Theory Out of Bounds, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 307. Quoted from Fox, "From Representation to Constituent Power: Religion, or Something Like it, in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*," 37.

[179] Benson, Heltzel, and Amjad-Ali, *Evangelicals and Empire*, 313.

[180] Unger, *Religion*, 37.

[181] Unger, 47.

[182] Unger, 198.

person or group in solidarity offer their sympathy believing that they are the most fortunate and the least needy, and pretending to know what the others need, without recognizing that they themselves will also have to change.[183] Unger, Hardt, and Negri would say that what Nussbaum calls "love" is actually what they call "altruism" or "solidarity." Sarah Fine points to that in her discussion of the instrumental value that Nussbaum assigns to patriotism, citing Nussbaum's own words: "We must be extremely vigilant about the values we encourage people to love and pursue."[184] Who are the "we?" Sarah Fine asks. The political leaders, the public intellectuals? Fine adds that "this is now in danger of sounding patrician, antidemocratic, undemocratic, of drawing a line between us, a 'we' who fashion the right story, and a 'them' who are supposed to embody it and be inspired by it. It is as though 'we' remain above the crowd, separated from the dangers of exclusive populism, supervising, state-managing."[185]

Fred Baumann takes Fine's critique one step further when he says that although it is never specified who the "we" are, for him it is clear that Nussbaum is talking to and even assuming that she is part of "the new ruling class, the credentialed, well-to-do progressively minded." Nussbaum, he says, assumes that others are "fundamentally passive people who let themselves be arranged in the most appropriate way. They have

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[183] See above on pages 16-17 and 33. See also Michael Hardt, "Michael Hardt on the Poors, the Multitude, and the Commons. A Conversation with Andrew Reszitnyk," interview by Andrew Reszitnyk with questions co-authored by Tyler J. Pollard, McMaster Humanities, aired April 28, 2014, YouTube video 1:16:58, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSXQQa3D4BY.

[184] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 213. See also Sarah Fine, "Patriotism," in "Why Love Matters for Justice: Martha Nussbaum's Political Emotions // Workshop Session 5," in UCL Laws, aired on December 10, 2014, YouTube video 1:06:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnaqMcLUQ3Y.

[185] Fine, "Patriotism."

entitlements, not rights, which implies an entitler, hence a ruler."[186] That new "ruling class" in which Baumann sees it fit to include Nussbaum is the class of the "professional politicians among the powerful organized interests" that Unger likewise dismisses. Unger laments that they are the ones who "now run the world" by practicing "a normal politics of marginal redistributive adjustments," at the same time that they "flatter themselves on their practicality" and are "contemptuous of ideology and dismissive or despairing of popular mobilization."[187]

Without denying that she knows full well which values she wants to inculcate in the people, Nussbaum explains that by "we" she is only referring to the "we" who write philosophy, and that she does think that it is legitimate to write some things in the global public realm, and make recommendations, and offer persuasive arguments. But she recognizes that she cannot impose anything nor control that it happens in what she deems to be the right way. If people ever are going to make her proposals real in their lives, it will be the people in each country who will have to do it, she says. All her power depends on her ability to persuade someone, she adds, but she is not a citizen of all the countries she writes about, so she herself cannot enact such change. In the specific case of the United States, she continues, although she is a citizen, she is a particularly impotent one, because in her estimation the positions she favors are not even on the political map.[188]

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[186] Fred Baumann, "Falling in Love with Social Democracy," review of Political Emotions, by Martha C. Nussbaum, in *Law & Liberty*, last modified July 28, 2014, https://lawliberty.org/book-review/falling-in-love-with-social-democracy/.

[187] Unger, *False Necessity*, xxv.

[188] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Answer to Sarah Fine," in "Why Love Matters for Justice: Martha Nussbaum's Political Emotions // Workshop Session 5," in UCL Laws, aired on December 10, 2014, YouTube video 1:06:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnaqMcLUQ3Y.

The Motivation and Enablement Test

Love will only be politically effective insofar as it passes what I, inspired by Merold Westphal, call the motivation and enablement test. Westphal asks two questions to which it is imperative to respond: What would motivate us to try to enact this love? And, how we might be enabled to do so to any significant degree?[189]

The main reason why Westphal asks these questions is that he equates political love with the neighbor love commanded by the biblical God, and this is a love that is not spontaneous and that "runs counter to our natural self-love."[190] To Westphal, what motivates us to try to enact the political love is the promise that God has loved us first (1 John 4:19). Westphal certainly knows that the reality of such a God is not guaranteed, but he postulates that "a powerful rationale" could be given "for hoping… that there is a truly personal God, one who first loves and then commands love."[191] Westphal would say that the "infinite debt of gratitude" (Westphal 2008) [192] many experience because of the mere fact of being alive asks for someone to whom the gratitude can be addressed and before whom the responsibility can be assumed, and it cannot just be other persons. Westphal imagines in addition that "a Godless world" could easily turn into a world in which love would be no more than "the demand to be loved."[193] He also reminds us that "only by being loved do we develop the capacity to love," as psychology teaches.[194] In turn, what

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[189] See Merold Westphal, *Levinas and Kierkegaard in Dialogue* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 54-57, 71-72. Also Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics," 32-33.

[190] Westphal, *Levinas and Kierkegaard*, 71.

[191] Westphal, 72.

[192] Westphal, 56.

[193] Westphal, 72.

[194] Westphal, 72.

enables us to enact the political love is to Westphal the "real connection" (Westphal)[195] with the God who loved us first, with "the fountain of forgiving love that gives us both our own sense of worth and our capacity to love others"[196] with God's love.

I will now subject Unger, Nussbaum, Hardt, and Negri to this test, and in each case I will not limit myself to imagining how they would answer Westphal's questions. I have wanted to share Westphal's own answers to his questions precisely because I consider that it is also relevant to ask whether those authors deem political love to be spontaneous or deliberate, whether they judge that it conflicts or accords with their understanding of who people in general assert themselves to be, whether they require a God or a functional equivalent of God, and how they deal with the psychological teaching that we need to be loved in order to love.

My Authors Subjected to the Motivation and Enablement Test

Motivation is a central issue of concern to Nussbaum. A society "that aspires to justice and equal opportunity for all"[197] needs to motivate its people to be willing, when needed, to sacrifice "their personal self-interest for the sake of the common good,"[198] and "to keep at bay" the tendencies to denigrate and subordinate others by means of disgust, envy, and inflicting shame.[199] That motivation should be generated through the cultivation of the political emotions that, as explained above, to Nussbaum all "have their

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[195] Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics," 33.

[196] Westphal, *Levinas and Kierkegaard*, 72.

[197] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 3.

[198] Nussbaum, 43.

[199] Nussbaum, 3.

roots in, or are forms of, love."[200] To do so, says Nussbaum, it is necessary to take into account how people really are. And people are heterogeneous, Nussbaum reminds us. They have "different opinions, histories, and personalities," and "they can be expected to love, mourn, laugh, and strive for justice in specific and personal ways."[201] Acknowledging this heterogeneity, Nussbaum examines people from what she calls a "eudaimonistic" perspective, which means that her guiding principle is that each person appraises the world from the viewpoint of his or her "evolving conception of a worthwhile life."[202] Not everybody will be plainly egoist,[203] but predominantly they will have a strong sense of their self-interest.[204] Nussbaum trusts that the persons themselves will recognize when it is to their benefit to sacrifice their self-interest. She also knows that people are capable of "deliberately cruel and ugly behavior toward others that is not simply a matter of inadvertence or neglect, or even fear-tinged suspicion, but which involves some active desire to denigrate or humiliate."[205] Nussbaum definitely does not want to "ask of people what they cannot deliver, or can deliver only with great strain,"[206] and she also adds that "we should not want a political culture that simply pats people on the back, rather than trying to make things in the world better and more just than they currently are."[207] The right balance has to be struck "between aspiration and

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[200] Nussbaum, 15.

[201] Nussbaum, 382-83.

[202] Nussbaum, 11.

[203] Nussbaum, 11.

[204] Nussbaum, 221.

[205] Nussbaum, 165.

[206] Nussbaum, 117.

[207] Nussbaum, 117.

acceptance,"[208] and Nussbaum agrees with Rabindranath Tagore's continuous emphasis on the "surplus" that "any realistic portrait of human beings" must include: "the creative vision of a distant goal."[209] Tagore says that "it is an insult" to our humanity if we fail to invoke in our minds "a definite image" of our "own ideal" selves and of our own ideal environments, which it is our mission "to reproduce externally."[210]

Though Nussbaum herself does not distinguish motivation from enablement, I imagine that she would say that effective political love is less demanding when it can be pursued in a nation[211] in which everyone is fully integrated and accepted[212] and where it is continuously encouraged through the cultivation of the right public emotions by means of "political rhetoric, public ceremonies and rituals, songs, symbols, poetry, art and architecture, the design of public parks and monuments, and public sports," and above all, "public education."[213] Nussbaum would agree that we need to be loved in order to love, and although she believes that we should all aspire to become better persons, she rejects perfection and invulnerability as both impossible and undesirable. The human is and should be lovable in spite of "the messiness of the 'merely human,'" Nussbaum

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[208] Nussbaum, 117.

[209] Nussbaum, 117.

[210] Nussbaum, 117.

[211] The nation is the primary unit of analysis to Nussbaum, and she uses the term in the sense of "nation-state" or "state," not in the sense of a specific ethnic group of a state. To her, the nation is the largest unit to which we can have an "attachment" and an "erotic investment" that can allow us to consider it our own, as well as what she calls a "fulcrum" on which global concern can be leveraged. See Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 17, 223, and 406n17.

[212] Nussbaum explicitly says that immigrants also should be fully integrated and accepted, and this is attained, she argues, when a non-xenophobic patriotism is taught, the rights of "legal immigrants" are protected, and "rational and consistent policies and laws concerning illegal immigrants" are approved. See Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 255-56.

[213] Nussbaum, 17.

argues.[214] The political love that can give stability and tenacity to a nation aspiring to justice that Nussbaum describes doesn't require a God nor a religious foundation, but recognizes the right of everybody to have his or her own religious beliefs.[215]

To Mangabeira Unger what motivates us to enact political love is ultimately religious because it is in religion that the vision of "who we are," "what we can become," and "what we can hope for" is "represented and developed."[216] And Unger is not interested in the religious vision we merely profess or claim to have, but in the embodied vision that "we act out in our relations to one another," that is "bound to institutions and practices,"[217] and that provides the foundation for the whole "experience of life."[218] Unger argues that all over the world people believe in "the idea of the greatness, of the divinity, of the ordinary man and woman."[219] This idea has been inspired, Unger holds, by three different sources: the three Semitic monotheistic religions that share the belief that all human beings have been created in the image of God; the cause of democracy associated with the belief in the inalienable rights of all human beings; and "the worldwide popular romantic culture, with its message of the inexhaustible potential for subjective life of the common person."[220] The problem is that the great majority of the world's population faces the fact that their everyday experiences of life contradict this

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[214] Nussbaum, 16.

[215] Nussbaum, 387.

[216] Unger, *Religion*, 260, 327.

[217] Unger, 231.

[218] Unger, 235.

[219] Unger, 222.

[220] Unger, 222. Unger adds that even societies that "remain alien to the message of the Semitic monotheisms have been shaken by the promises and pretenses of democracy and romanticism." See Unger, 141.

belief. Many people therefore stubbornly insist on believing that they can be the artificers of their destiny and raise themselves "beyond the plane of ordinary existence" in an individual manner,[221] and so they content themselves with being belittled and give up any spirit of ambition and nonconformity,[222] or they look for an escapist solution.[223] Unger contends that none of these are satisfactory ways of honoring the idea of our greatness. He suggests that there is a way of achieving a greater life that recognizes our necessary and desirable connections with others, that defies belittlement while coming to terms with the flaws in the human condition, and that launches us in an "experimental and gradualist" program of reconstruction of society[224] that, however, does not "estrange us from the present moment."[225] With these elements Unger puts together the godless orientation to life he calls the religion of the future and that should motivate us to enact what he understands to be political love.

Unger repeatedly points to the fact that the social bond among people in contemporary societies has been weakened. It is not satisfactory, he says, that "our responsibility to strangers in the societies of the present is largely reduced to money transfers organized by the state through the system of redistributive taxation and social entitlements."[226] The problem is not only that money supplies a "fragile social

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[221] Unger, 31. This is the "individualist response to the evil of belittlement" that Unger calls "Prometheanism." See Unger, 31.

[222] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *España y su futuro: ¿Un país en transformación?* (Madrid: Ediciones Sequitur, 2013), 12.

[223] Unger, *Religion*, 224.

[224] Unger, 211.

[225] Unger, 190.

[226] Unger, 185.

cement,"[227] but that the financial cost becomes increasingly unsustainable. Unger explains that even though there are three main sectors in the economy of the most developed countries — the new economy of the knowledge-intensive and flexible firms, the old economy of the mass-production industries, and the expanding caring economy of the publicly financed services for the "sick, imprisoned, young, old, mentally ill, and destitute"[228] — it is almost exclusively from the new economy that governments extract resources to pay for the caring economy and cooperate with the renewal of the old economy.[229] Unger proposes that "every able-bodied adult should at some time [have] a responsibility to take care of other people outside his own family,"[230] with the intent not only of strengthening social solidarity, but also of lightening the financial burden on the new economy. However, the deficit of social solidarity is not limited to the fact that "the inhabitants of the new, old, and caring economies" have ceased "to encounter and to know one another."[231] The problem is more serious when a society is racially divided, neighborhoods are not integrated, schools are segregated, and people are not interacting with others who are different. Some would say that this describes the contemporary society of the United States. If so, then what is needed is a rebuilding of the institutions of solidarity, so that people can meet in person and strangers can be turned into

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[227] Unger, 185.

[228] Pete Davis, "What Does It Mean to 'Humanize the Caring Economy'?," in *Pete Davis*, last modified July 2, 2016, https://petedavis.substack.com/p/what-does-it-mean-to-humanize-the-caring-economy.

[229] Unger, *False Necessity*, xcvii.

[230] Unger, *Religion*, 313.

[231] Unger, *False Necessity*, xcvii. Mangabeira Unger talks about "social solidarity" without using the word "solidarity" in the very specific meaning it has for Michael Hardt. Mangabeira Unger uses the word "altruism" when he refers to what Hardt defines as "solidarity."

neighbors.[232] Unger would endorse any project intent on encouraging "sustained, authentic in-person interactions in shared missions among individuals from divided groups."[233] These initiatives for participation in direct care for each other and for the building of social solidarity are the most concrete enablers of political love that Unger proposes.

Hardt and Negri find motivation in the series of protests that began in Tunisia in December of 2010 and spread quickly to Egypt (most familiarly through events in Cairo's Tahrir Square) as well as to other countries in North Africa and the Middle East, like Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, and Syria, protests that have been referred to as the "Arab Spring." Those protests were followed in February and March of 2011 by the occupation of the Wisconsin statehouse, in mid-May of the same year by the encampments in the central squares of Madrid and Barcelona in Spain of the so-called *indignados* (outraged), and at the end of May 2011 by the occupation of the so-called *aganaktismenoi* (also meaning outraged) of Syntagma Square in Athens, Greece. In July of 2011, a protest began in Israel when hundreds of people pitched tents on Tel Aviv's Rothschild Boulevard; in August, riots erupted in Tottenham, England, and subsequently throughout that country; and finally in mid-September of the same year the "few hundred pioneer occupiers" who "brought their tents to New York's Zuccotti Park" initiated the movement that would become known as "Occupy Wall Street"[234] and that soon "spread

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[232] Pete Davis, "From Despair, Work," in *Pete Davis,* last modified November 9, 2016, https://petedavis.substack.com/p/from-despair-work.

[233] Pete Davis, "Solidarity Is a Project," in *Pete Davis,* last modified October 11, 2016, https://petedavis.substack.com/p/solidarity-is-a-project.

[234] Hardt and Negri, *Declaration,* 2-3.

to over 100 cities in the United States and actions in over 1,500 cities globally."[235] Hardt and Negri argue that all those protests, although they arose in response to "specific local conditions," did in fact have an influence on each other, and succeeded in holding together "without contradiction their singular conditions and local battles with the common global struggle" against Empire.[236] They had as well some shared characteristics, for example, the strategy of encampment, the organization as a "multitude" with practices of decision making that would ensure that "all participants could lead together," and the interest in "the common," in opposition to the social and economic injustices of the capitalist order.[237] Moreover, these struggles were able to unsettle and even to invert the figures of subjectivity fabricated by Empire to deprive the multitude of its capacity to resist and rebel so that instead they could become figures of power.[238] Hardt and Negri explain that we are mistaken if we think that we can just be ourselves without considering how subjectivities have been produced or need to be transformed. They say, "Even if there were some original or primordial human nature to be expressed, there is no reason to believe it would foster free, equal, and democratic social and political relations. Political organization always requires the production of subjectivities."[239]

The fact is that the people who took part in the aforementioned protests were able to denounce untenable financial debt and instead to become "indebted to one another" by

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[235] "About," OccupyWallStreet, accessed April 11, 2024, http://occupywallst.org/about/.

[236] Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*, 4.

[237] Hardt and Negri, 4-6.

[238] Hardt and Negri, 7.

[239] Hardt and Negri, 45-46.

empowering their "social bonds."[240] People were able to disentangle themselves from the web and the social media, and when they took the risk of meeting each other in person, they discovered that they could create "new knowledges *and* new political affects… in the corporeal and intellectual intensity" of their interactions.[241] In a way that is hard to explain, many protesters achieved "a state of fearlessness," and, as is well known, "power cannot survive when its subjects free themselves from fear."[242] And once people realized that they did not need to let themselves be defined by their financial debts, that their interactions in physical proximity could enable the display of unimagined "intelligence, affective capacities, and powers of linguistic invention,"[243] and that fear could be overcome, they also refused to be represented and decided instead to make their own decisions.[244]

Although they knew already in 2012 when they published *Declaration* that some of these protests had had only limited success, Hardt and Negri consider that all the protests launched "constituent processes" that have not ended and that eventually will organize social relations in a new way in agreement with the desires of the multitude,[245] while those processes in the meantime maintain "pressure" and keep the veil stripped "from ignorance and domination, obedience and fear."[246] The authors insist that nothing made it possible to predict that such a succession of protests would occur and that many

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[240] Hardt and Negri, 34.

[241] Hardt and Negri, 39.

[242] Hardt and Negri, 43.

[243] Hardt and Negri, 29.

[244] Hardt and Negri, 29.

[245] Hardt and Negri, 7-8.

[246] Hardt and Negri, 53.

people all of a sudden would discover the power of being together.[247] They were "events" that happened because "a subjective *kairos*" broke "the relations of domination" and overthrew "the processes" that were reproducing "the figures of domination."[248] In Hardt and Negri's view, it is a fact that "throughout history unexpected and unforeseeable events arrive that completely reshuffle the decks of political powers and possibilities," and therefore they are convinced that political events such as the wave of protests designated as the "Arab Spring," and all the ones that came next, "will come again."[249] Their response to the enablement test is that "we can't know when the event will come. But that doesn't mean we should just wait around until it arrives… We must prepare for the event even though its date of arrival remains unknown."[250] Although the ideal circumstances for the production of "political affects" provided by the encampments cannot be reproduced at will, a key way of preparing for the event is to make the most of all other opportunities for the construction of those affects. In no way do Hardt and Negri require a God or a functional equivalent of God for the purposes of motivation and enablement.

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[247] It is worth noting that the pamphlet-length book published in October of 2010 by the former French Resistance fighter, Stéphane Hessel, *Indignez-vous!*, with its call to young people to fight for democratic values, to take that fight to the streets if necessary, and to do so nonviolently but with great determination, helped inspire some of the uprisings that took place months later. Actually, the names given to the protestors in Spain and Greece were taken from the translation into the respective languages of the title of Hessel's book (in the Spanish translation the title is *¡Indignaos!*). It took the author and the editors by surprise that the book would sell more than 3.5 million copies worldwide and be translated into more than ten languages in only a few months. Hessel has said that he "didn't realize that things were happening in the world" when he wrote the book, and that it is "a pure coincidence" that the book had such an influence on the events that happened. See Stéphane Hessel, "Stéphane Hessel on Occupy Wall Street: Find the Time for Outrage When Your Values Are Not Respected," interview by Juan González, in *Democracy Now!*, aired October 10, 2011, https://www.democracynow.org/2011/10/10/stphane_hessel_on_occupy_wall_street_find_the_time_for_outrage_when_your_values_are_not_respected.

[248] Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*, 31.

[249] Hardt and Negri, 102.

[250] Hardt and Negri, 102.

CHAPTER 3

HEGEL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT*

Project for the Chapter

Love is the concept that organizes Hegel's vision of society. From the beginning of his writing, Hegel is concerned with what can give cohesion to society and prevent the alienation of the individuals that form it. Hegel's best guess is that it would be love. But what kind of love? From early on in his writings, Hegel makes one attempt after the other to conceive a form of love that would accomplish that function. These attempts reach a point of maturation in his *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel develops his argument of how "love" materializes in a modern society.

Although love has a foundational role in Hegel's vision of society, it does not stand alone. Several authors agree that there are certain "essential intuitions" regarding "practical philosophy"[1] that have been part of Hegel's thought since the beginning of his career and that are an integral part of the *Philosophy of Right* as well. It is appropriate to construct a list of such intuitions. They will help us understand the structure of the *Philosophy of Right* and the precise role that love has in it.

[1] This is the wording of Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*, Princeton monographs in philosophy, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7-8. And Axel Honneth would agree with Robert B. Pippin and the many philosophers who by "practical philosophy" mean "an account of the distinct sorts of events for which we may appropriately demand reasons or justifications from subjects whom we take to be responsible for such events occurring." See Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

After constructing my list of essential intuitions, I will thoroughly describe the content and structure of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Then I will look back and explore how Hegel talked about "love" in his *Early Theological Writings* and in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and next I will return to the *Philosophy of Right* and dwell at length on all the references to "love," both the explicit and the implicit ones. I will also consider the words "recognition" and "reconciliation" that Hegel introduces in the *Philosophy of Right* with the purpose of referring to what in broad terms is love. Hegel uses these new words because he wants to illuminate particular aspects of love, and I am convinced that we would not be able to understand the words "recognition" and "reconciliation" in the sense they have to Hegel without connecting them with love understood in a broader sense. Such a broader connection has both conceptual and practical consequences. Through a study of the explicit and implicit references to love, as well as of references to love using other words, I will support my argument that the *Philosophy of Right* is the exposition of how "love" materializes in modern society. I will also highlight my argument showing the structural affinity between family and state in the *Philosophy of Right*. Finally, I will unpack the theological foundation of Hegel's political love and subject it to the motivation and enablement test.

Hegel's Essential Intuitions

The first of the essential intuitions have been part of Hegel's thought since the beginning of his career and that are an integral part of the *Philosophy of Right* as well is that thinking is the most distinguished activity in which a human being can engage.

Hence Hegel proposed that he become a person of *Bildung*,[2] that is, not only passively to "become educated," but also actively to make himself "into a cultivated-educated person" through "self-activity, self-development, and self-direction."[3] Terry Pinkard says that Hegel applied himself to this purpose "with a striking confidence in his own intellectual powers,"[4] and with the vocation of becoming part of a "new elite" of "men of *Bildung*" who would "rule the country"[5] and "shape the new world."[6] In Hegel's understanding, theoretical work is a main component of such *Bildung*, and its impact on the practical world is an integral part of it too. This is why he wrote in a letter that he was "daily ever more convinced that theoretical work accomplishes more in the world than practical work. Once the realm of ideas is revolutionized, actuality will not hold out."[7] More generally, Hegel believed that *Bildung* and sociality go hand in hand, and that young people needed *Bildung* in order to distance themselves from "immediate desires, inclinations, and thoughts," and engage in the deliberations "about the right thing to do in

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[2] *Bildung* is a German word related to the German noun for "image" (*Bild*) and the German verb meaning "to form, shape, construct" (*bilden*) that is translated into English as "cultural formation," "taste," or "cultivation." It involves what happens in schools and universities and goes beyond it. Terry P. Pinkard defines it as "a multipurpose term that included the ideals of education, art, culture, and the formation of cultivated taste." See Terry P. Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16.

[3] Pinkard, 49.

[4] Pinkard, 16.

[5] Pinkard, 49.

[6] Pinkard, 270.

[7] Letter to Immanuel Hiethammer quoted by Pinkard in Pinkard, *Hegel*, 270. In his *Encyclopedia* (see § 6), Hegel makes a distinction between actuality and existence, and argues that something is made actual not by merely existing, but when it has become capable of withstanding rational criticisms and of maintaining itself undeterred by opposition. See Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 23. Pete Davis gives an example that corroborates the truth of Hegel's claim: the paper that the law school student Evan Wolfson wrote in 1983 on the constitutional right to same-sex marriage. It was only 32 years later that the Supreme Court of the United States legalized the right of all couples to marry, but the Supreme Court decision would not have happened without the initial push of that seemingly inconsequential student paper. See Pete Davis, *Dedicated: The Case for Commitment in an Age of Infinite Browsing* (New York: Avid Reader Press 2021), 94.

particular circumstances."[8] In the words of Allen W. Wood, *Bildung* was to Hegel "simultaneously a process of self-transformation and an acquisition of the power to grasp and articulate the reasons for what one believes or knows." By "acquiring a genuinely rational comprehension of things," the individual would also go through "a process of liberating maturation through a struggle involving selfhood and the overcoming of self-conflict."[9] However, he did not consider philosophy proper to be "suitable for everyone."[10] To him, philosophy was "the way in which modern social practice came to a full understanding of itself,"[11] and it had its true place in the university as the core discipline that had trained him to become a man of *Bildung*, and through which he would train others into the same "new, cultured, and cultivated elite."[12] Being a man of *Bildung*, he could also discern the extent to which social reality was penetrated and shaped by thinking.[13]

The second of Hegel's essential intuitions is that there is "a primal unity of thought and being" that moves the subjective and the objective worlds toward convergence.[14]

Hegel joins the authors who consider that the dichotomy between subject and object is unsustainable. To him, on the contrary, most types of knowledge are different

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[8] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 306.

[9] Allen W. Wood, "Hegel on Education," in *Philosophers on Education: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Amélie Rorty (London: Routledge, 1998), 302.

[10] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 321.23.

[11] Pinkard, 324.

[12] Pinkard, 324.

[13] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 24.

[14] Ormiston, *Love and Politics*, 3-4. Ormiston says here that Hegel adopts this intuition from the romantics, particularly Hölderlin.

forms of knowledge of oneself. Hegel makes the bold claim that not only social or ethical knowledge are forms of knowledge of oneself, but also the natural sciences. We can get knowledge of the world, Hegel claims, because there is a correspondence or an affinity between the structures of the world and the way we think about them.[15] This is the third of his essential intuitions.

The relations to others define what and who every being is,[16] and therefore it is a mistake to consider any individual atomistically and in isolation from others. Agreeing with Aristotle, Hegel states that no individual in isolation from the community can be self-sufficient.[17] Indeed, before they think of themselves as individuals, persons already move in a "framework of ethical bonds."[18] At the same time, Hegel considers that the aspiration of individual autonomy is inalienable.[19] The challenge is how to reconcile individual autonomy with the ties to the other. This is the fourth of Hegel's intuitions.

The fifth of Hegel's intuitions is that the constitution of the individual(s) does not precede the formation of the community.[20]

The sixth of Hegel's intuitions that I think it is necessary to include in this list is that it is neither tradition nor contingency that give authority to a norm.[21] However much

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[15] Dudley Knowles, *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right* (London: Routledge, 2002), 13.

[16] Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 19.

[17] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 14.

[18] Honneth, *Struggle*, 14.

[19] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 10.

[20] Honneth, *Struggle*, 12; Honneth, *Pathologies*, 12.

[21] Terry P. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11.

individuals acknowledge a norm as authoritative and give it "attitudinal support,"[22] it does not become truly authoritative until individuals subjectively affirm it as good and regard it "as coming from their own wills."[23] Rather than being tied up to a rule of external behavior or a coercive law, a norm has to "be internalized by practical training" so that it becomes a habit.[24] Otherwise, it would be an example of what Hegel called "positivity," which in normative terms was the main matter Hegel had to resolve.[25]

Reason is not opposed to "the empirical inclinations and needs of human nature."[26] As Hegel expressed it in his 1810 year-end speech as rector of the Gymnasium in Nuremberg, it never made sense "to separate 'head and heart or thought and feeling,'"[27] much less so in modern times. Empirical desires and inclinations can be part of my selfhood as long as they fit with the totality of my values, goals, and projects, and "I have identified myself with them and I am 'with myself' in them."[28] This is Hegel's seventh intuition.

Hegel's eighth intuition is that society should be organized as a community of free individuals connected by "a form of solidarity based on the recognition of the

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[22] Robert B. Pippin, "Brandom's Hegel," *European Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (2005): 393.

[23] Frederick Neuhouser, "Summary of Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom," *The Owl of Minerva* 36, no. 1, Fall/Winter 2004 (2004): 1-2.

[24] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 8.

[25] Pippin, "Brandom's Hegel," 393.

[26] Honneth, *Struggle*, 12.

[27] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 290.

[28] Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 48.

individual freedom of all" its members.[29] Each individual should recognize the freedom of the other as a prerequisite of his or her own self-realization.[30]

Hegel's ninth intuition is the finding that the development toward the ethically integrated community of citizens who recognize each other as free happens through a "process of recurring negations"[31] that only in "a retrospective and reconstructive" sense can be called teleological.[32] History "is not merely illustrative;" rather, it is "essential in human self-knowledge,"[33] and it does not progress along a predetermined path that anybody could know in advance.

The ethically integrated community of individuals who recognize each other as free is not reached once and for all. As a result of the relationships of mutual recognition, subjects "are always learning something more about their particular identity" and this condition leads them to demand again and again to be recognized anew. In this way, "the movement of recognition that forms the basis of an ethical relationship between subjects consists in a process of alternating stages of both reconciliation and conflict."[34] This is the tenth and last intuition of this list.

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[29] Honneth, *Struggle*, 14.

[30] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 18. In similar terms, Molly Farneth argues that Hegel wants to achieve "nondomination, reconciliation, or solidarity." See Molly B. Farneth, *Hegel's Social Ethics: Religion, Conflict, and Rituals of Reconciliation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 5.

[31] Honneth, *Struggle*, 15.

[32] Pippin, *Hegel's Practical*, 238.

[33] Pippin, 177.

[34] Honneth, *Struggle*, 17.

Content and Structure of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

Hegel has very specific reasons for naming his book *The Philosophy of Right*. What he intends to express with the word "right" exceeds what we normally designate by it. According to the Collins Concise English Dictionary, the first three meanings of "right" as a noun are: "1. any claim, title, etc., that is morally just or legally granted as allowable or due to a person;" "2. anything that accords with the principles of legal or moral justice;" and "3. the fact or state of being in accordance with reason, truth, or accepted standards." Hegel's conception of "right" includes all those meanings but also goes beyond them to embrace all the conditions that make it possible for an individual to be free in a particular society. As the title of the book indicates, he approaches the topic philosophically, and this, according to Hegel's understanding of what philosophy is, means that it is rational thought that substantiates his claims—not faith, authority, nor revelation. He is not concerned "with what is or has been *believed* to be right, but rather with the *truth* of right."[35] The truth of right in all its aspects is, to put it as succinctly as possible, "freedom made actual" (§ 4, 26).[36]

For Hegel, right is freedom recognized by others. Right would be meaningless without freedom, and both freedom and right would be merely claims or airy ideas if there were no recognition of them as such.[37]

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[35] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's "The Philosophy of Right,"* trans. Alan White, Focus Philosophical Library, (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2002), ix.

[36] All the quotes from and references to *The Philosophy of Right*, unless otherwise indicated, will be from Hegel, *Outlines*. In each instance I will indicate in brackets only the paragraph or § number if the reference is to the main paragraph, and I will add the letter R (Remark) or the letter A (Addition) if the reference relates to a remark or addition to that paragraph. Following a comma, I will indicate the page on which the quotation/reference occurs in this edition.

[37] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 111.

In the Introduction to his work, Hegel specifies that freedom is made actual in the will of the subject (§ 4A, 26). Freedom reveals itself imperfectly in the capacity of the subject to distance him- or herself from "every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature, by needs, desires, and impulses, or given and determined by any means whatever" (§ 5, 28). This is the freedom that Hegel calls "negative" (§ 5R, 29). Freedom reveals itself imperfectly as well in the capacity of the "I" to leave its "undifferentiated indeterminacy" and differentiate itself by willing "something" (§ 6, 30), which necessarily is contingent, or arbitrary (§ 15, 37). This is the freedom called arbitrary (§ 15, 37). Freedom becomes "concrete" (§ 7A, 33) when the will is "with itself" (§ 23, 43). The will is "with itself" when the person has achieved control of him- or herself, and when all his or her aspects "belong to and fit well into one another, and when there is "a relation between me and an 'object' or 'other' whose difference or otherness has, however, been overcome."[38] Concrete freedom is the synthesis between the two imperfect and one-sided forms of freedom, the negative and the arbitrary. Concrete freedom adopts from arbitrary freedom the restriction to a determinate aim, and from the negative freedom, the need of "an unrestricted experience of self,"[39] so that the will manages to be with itself in that particular and determinate "something" that is willed and that imposes a restriction on the will. In this third moment of concrete freedom, what happens is that "in its restriction, in this other, the will is with itself" (§ 7A, 33).

[38] Wood, *Hegel's Ethical*, 45.

[39] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 14.

The concept of the will "as being at home in a determination" opens the way for the transition to "the level of interhuman relations,"[40] and it is no coincidence that Hegel mentions "friendship and love" as good examples of feelings in which we possess this kind of concrete freedom. In these feelings, "we restrict ourselves gladly in relating ourselves to another, but in this restriction [we] know ourselves as ourselves"; thus in "treating the other as other," the friend or the lover "arrives at the feeling of his [or her] own selfhood" (§ 7A, 33). In friendship and love we accept that we are not satisfied in ourselves alone and we "approach one another with uncertainty and timidity, yet with trust,"[41] overcoming or putting aside any attempt to control, dominate, or absorb the other as well as any attempt by the other to control, dominate, or absorb me. Instead, I allow him or her to be a separate free person and make a claim on his or her freedom at the same time that I concede him or her permission to make a claim on my freedom.[42] In friendship and love we obtain the genuine freedom of being "in a restriction, yet without restriction," of being "limited, yet without limits."[43] Friendship and love oppose absolute autonomy, but through the mediation of mutual recognition, they enhance the relative autonomy of the involved persons.[44] It is precisely in mutual recognition that Hegel grounds freedom and hence right. Robert R. Williams says it well: "The genesis of right… coincides with the recognition of the other as other. Right is present whenever the

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[40] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 127.

[41] Williams, 97. Williams is here quoting from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with Commentary*, trans. Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 107.

[42] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 84.

[43] Williams, 128.

[44] Williams, 85.

other is recognized as counting, as carrying weight against one's freedom and vice versa."[45] Recognition is an operative concept that runs through the whole of the *Philosophy of Right*.[46]

Rather than a framework that permits, protects, and guarantees individual freedom, "right" is to Hegel "the realm" in which everyone's freedom can be actualized[47] and embodied in social reality in an objective way (see § 28, 46). Yet it is not only the third and concrete form of freedom that has to "be embodied objectively in social reality," but also the first "two incomplete and one-sided models of freedom," since they "represent necessary stages in the process of actualizing individual freedom."[48] Hegel puts it as follows: "Every stage in the development of the Idea of freedom[49] has its own special right, since it is the existence of freedom in one of its own determinations" (§ 30R, 47).

The Philosophy of Right is divided into three parts that correspond to the three concepts of "free will" that Hegel has distinguished in the Introduction: "Abstract Right," that corresponds to imperfect "negative freedom;" "Morality," that corresponds to imperfect "arbitrary freedom;" and "Ethical Life," that corresponds to "concrete freedom."

According to Honneth, by advocating for this structure Hegel is arguing that "two conditions must be fulfilled" before the subjects have the ability to realize themselves in

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[45] Williams, 117.

[46] Williams, 1.

[47] Axel Honneth, *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, trans. Joseph Ganahl (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 21.

[48] Honneth, 24.

[49] An idea of something is to Hegel the full realization or actualization of it.

the realms of family, civil society, and state that make up what he defines as "Ethical Life." Subjects must learn to understand themselves as "legal subjects" who possess rights and as "moral subjects" who are accountable to their consciences, and they have to do so without succumbing to "taking either legally defined freedom or moral autonomy for the whole of individual freedom."[50] Nevertheless, regarding the order of presentation in his *Philosophy of Right* Hegel specifies in his *Encyclopedia* that "this course followed by our exposition does not in the least mean that we would make ethical life later in time than right and morality, or would explain the family and civil society to be antecedent to the state in the actual world. On the contrary, we are well aware that ethical life is the foundation of right and morality."[51]

Abstract Right

First, the "I" claims to be a person who as such is free in him- or herself. The "I" as a person is capable of abstracting from everything to the point that "every concrete restriction and value is negated and without validity" in the claim of being a person (§ 35R, 54). This is not a truism, because the "I" could also identify a person as somebody dependent on another or as part of a group.

Concurrently, the "I" as a person claims to have a "capacity for rights" (§ 36, 55), which means to have a permission or a warrant given by others to act in a way expressive of his or her freedom.[52] Nobody is a person with the "capacity for rights" unless they are "recognized" by others. This recognition should be reciprocal and independent of the

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[50] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 28-29.

[51] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 134. The quotation is from §408 Zusatz of the *Encyclopedia*.

[52] Knowles, *Hegel*, 89.

particular interests or motives of both the ones being recognized and the ones granting the recognition. In Hegel's words, "the imperative of right is: 'Be a person and respect others as persons'" (§ 36, 55).

Hegel does not provide a foundation for the claim of each "I" to be a person with a "capacity for rights" demanding recognition by others and granting recognition to others. He says that only from a certain moment in history has the "I" been able to make the claim to be a person in this sense. He corroborates that people make those claims after they have "learned in the course of history that they *can* make them, and *can* get them recognized" in so far as they also recognize the identical claims made by others.[53] The fact is that "there are no rights save in the framework of declaration and recognition."[54] He also argues that simply because a person can claim a certain right does not mean that he should. Hegel blames what he calls "uncultured people" for being the ones who stubbornly insist on their rights, in so doing exhibiting cold hearts and "restricted sympathies" (§ 37A, 55).

The main right for which a free person has a capacity is the right to property, that is, a right to things, and Hegel understands this in the broad sense to include even the person's body and life (§ 40R, 56). Persons acquire property in order to satisfy certain needs (§ 41A, 58), and the most fundamental of those needs is the need to make his or her distinctiveness objective, to supersede "the pure subjectivity of personality" (§ 41A, 58), to translate his or her freedom "into an external sphere" (§ 41, 57). By exposing ourselves

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[53] Knowles, 103.

[54] Knowles, 103. Here Knowles is quoting Arthur C. Danto, "Constructing an Epistemology of Human Rights: A Pseudo Problem?," in *Human Rights*, ed. Ellen Frankel Paul, Jeffrey Paul, and Fred D. Jr. Miller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 30.

through the things that we possess and by letting our will become objective in property (§ 46, 61), others are able to recognize and "identify the workings of our will" in them (§ 51, 65).[55]

Hegel argues that we have to take possession of our property and that every human being has first of all to take possession of him or herself and become his or her "own property and no one else's" through his or her "self-consciousness's apprehension of itself as free" (§ 57, 69). The difference between the possession of ourselves and the possession of other kinds of property is that the possession of ourselves is inalienable. This is why Hegel condemns slavery (§ 57A, 71). Contract is, on the other hand, the means through which to negotiate and transfer the possession of other kinds of property. Confirming the operativeness of the concept of recognition in this section of Abstract Right, Hegel adds that "contract presupposes that the parties entering it *recognize* each other as persons and property owners" (§ 71R, 83).

Although the matter of "what and how much I possess" is inconsequential so far as the property right is concerned (§ 49, 63), Hegel does say that "everyone must have property," (§ 49A, 64) and he even admits that the fact "that everyone ought to have subsistence enough for his needs is a moral wish" (§ 49R, 64). Hegel anticipates that he will return to the issue of subsistence later in his argument (§ 49R, 64).

For freedom to be actual, Hegel argues, we claim recognition for ourselves as persons who are bearers of rights, we give recognition to others as bearers of rights, and we recognize that the rights should be enforceable through the imposition of punishment. For without such a recognition of rights, there would be no wrong. This is why Hegel

[55] Knowles, *Hegel*, 116.

distinguishes between the appearance and the semblance of rights. A contract is for instance a social institution in which right makes its appearance and shows a correspondence with its essence. When wrong happens and a right is infringed, what was an appearance becomes a mere semblance, without genuine existence. This negation of right has therefore to be negated with the punishment, so that right can be reasserted (§ 82, 93).

Nothing guarantees that people will respect each other's rights. People can do wrong and thereby violate the right of others. Hegel distinguishes three kinds of wrongs. The first is the non-malicious wrong. The offender does not intend to infringe any right, but it happens anyway. In this case, in Hegel's terms, "the semblance here is a semblance from the point of view of right," but not from the point of view of the offender who thinks that he is doing and only wants to do whatever is right (§ 83A, 94). The second wrong is fraud. The perpetrator of fraud withdraws from the intersubjective agreements that have provided recognition to the rights, and by treating the rights "as a means to his own private end," he creates a semblance of right in order to deceive the other party and make it assent to the perpetration of the wrong. The third kind of wrong is crime. The person who commits a crime wills the wrong and does not even make use of a semblance of right. He "attacks the person in his totality and coerces him directly."[56]

Punishment rather than revenge presupposes the presence of someone capable of making an impartial judgment, someone capable of disregarding individual circumstances, and someone capable of judging in agreement with the norms in force, that is, someone who can exert moral agency and reflect on his or her own actions and

[56] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 153.

judgments. The demand for appropriate punishment is therefore what compels Hegel to make the transition to the section he calls Morality (§ 103 and 104, 107-108).

Morality

Although the need to deal with what Hegel calls Morality emerges from the consideration of the punishment of criminals, what Hegel in effect offers in this section is "a general investigation of the subjective freedom of the moral agent."[57]

Freedom is now located, not in a piece of property, but in the "subjectivity of the will" (§ 106, 109), and the focus is on the motivation of the subject: "the self-determination and motive of the will," as well as "its purpose" (§ 106A, 109). This "inner conviction" of a human being is insurmountable and determines his or her "worth" (§ 106A, 110). Here, Hegel is not thinking of just any human being, but of an educated person, one who "develops an inner life and wills that he [sic] himself shall be in everything he [sic] does" (§107A, 110). This right of subjective freedom is to Hegel "the pivot and centre of the difference between antiquity and modern times" (§ 124R, 122), and it can only "become actual as right" when it is "recognized."[58]

The "subjectivity of the will" expresses itself in action (§ 113, 114) and Hegel considers that a subject is responsible for the actions that can be attributed to his or her will (§ 117, 116). Although a subject cannot predict the consequences of his or her action, he or she should take responsibility for the consequences that "belong to the action" as an integral part of it (§ 118, 117). Hegel also postulates what he calls "the right of the objectivity of action" (§ 120, 119), and one of the aspects that give objectivity to action is

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[57] Knowles, *Hegel*, 166.

[58] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 178.

its ability to match the will of others (§ 112, 113). We cannot attribute any intention to a certain action and neither can we claim any intention for a certain action. The action itself limits the discretion of the subject to define what his or her intention is. This suggests in addition that the subject, if he or she thinks about it, will "act in accordance with those intentions which he [or she] knows that his [or her] actions bespeak to others."[59]

However, Hegel does acknowledge desire and gratification of passion as legitimate motivation for an action, that is, "the right of the subject to find his [or her] satisfaction in the action" (§ 121, 120). This satisfaction does not need to be synonymous with a narrow and egoistic self-satisfaction. It would be inhuman to pretend that the subject should limit him or herself to do "what duty commands," and that it would be even better if duty is done "with abhorrence" (§ 124R, 123).

The good is when we do the right thing toward others in a voluntary way, and this realizes freedom (§ 129, 126). It is crucial to Hegel that the good be inseparable from the "right of the subjective will" (§ 132, 127). The subjective will should have the right to see as good "whatever it is to recognize as valid" and to make its own judgment instead of uncritically endorsing others' claim to moral authority. Furthermore, the subject's "knowledge of the value which the action has" should determine the extent to which the action is "imputed" to the subject "as right or wrong, good or evil, legal or illegal" (§ 132, 127). The good as the right thing done by the subject in a voluntary way becomes "my duty," "a moral duty that "is not just something that must be done, but something that I myself am responsible for doing."[60]

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[59] Knowles, *Hegel,* 176.

[60] Stephen Houlgate, "Right and Trust in Hegel's Philosophy of Right," 8.

The problem is how to determine what is the good that it is my duty to do. Hegel blames Kant for making considerations that "are entirely formal," without telling us "in what it is that our duty consists in the specific circumstances of action."[61] It does not make sense to Hegel to do justice at the expense of the survival of the world (§ 130, 126). Perhaps it is the "conscience," defined by Hegel as "the subject's absolute inward certainty of himself [or herself] (§ 136, 132) and "a sanctuary which it would be sacrilege to violate" (§ 137R, 133), which should have "the power to judge, to determine from within itself alone, what is good in respect of any content" (§ 138, 134). But for Hegel, conscience is fallible. It is not enough to will the good (§ 140R(d), 141). If all that matters is "my" conviction, then "logic requires" that I also acknowledge the same right in others, and this could be dangerous. The example that Hegel gives to illustrate the danger of this stance is that I would have to admit that others would be "quite right to maintain in accordance with their faith and conviction that my actions are criminal" (§ 140R(e), 146-147).

Conscience should in turn be "subject to the judgement of its truth or untruth" out of a sense of "whether what it takes or declares to be good" can actually be proven from "the content of the good it seeks to realize" (§ 137R, 133). Under normal circumstances, says Hegel, conscience will just have to assent to "what is recognized as right and good in contemporary customs." However, when those "contemporary customs" "cannot satisfy the better will," what is called for is a withdrawal to inner conviction. The subject will have to "find in the ideal world of the inner life alone the harmony which actuality has lost" (§ 138R, 134).

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[61] Knowles, *Hegel*, 200.

Evil happens when the advantage and the particular will of the subject takes priority over the universal, disregarding what Hegel calls "the right of the objectivity of action" (§ 120, 119). Often the subject will be able to deceive others and even the self by pretending that the evil action is "good in the eyes both of himself [or herself] and others," and this is hypocrisy (§ 140, 138). However, it can also happen that the distinction between the particular will and the universal gets lost. Then "a good heart, a good intention, a subjective conviction" have become the exclusive "sources from which actions derive their worth" and consequently "there is no longer any hypocrisy or evil at all" (§ 140R(e), 145).

It is Hegel's view that the subject will focus on "moral authenticity or creativity" if morality stands by itself.[62] Neither abstract right nor morality can exist "independently" (§ 141A, 153). They need what Hegel calls "ethical life" to provide them "support and foundation." "Ethical life" is what will make sure that the good and the "subjective will" will concur without making the latter worthless (§ 141A, 152-153).

Hegel makes clear that what he calls "Abstract Right" and "Morality" are not "mere abstract ideas or theoretical concepts."[63] Each of them is the result of a process of historical development "in which the human spirit collectively has successively deepened its knowledge of itself,"[64] and they both exert tangible influence on social processes that occur in the world.[65] Hegel argues, however, that "Abstract Right" and "Morality" would upset social reality if we treated them as absolutes and allowed them "to establish

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[62] Knowles, 220.

[63] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 21.

[64] Allen W. Wood, "Hegel's Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 217.

[65] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 21.

themselves in society in complete independence."[66]At the same time, it is necessary to defend the role that these limited conceptions of freedom will retain in the sphere of "concrete freedom" that Hegel calls "Ethical Life." On the one hand, the lasting significance of "Abstract Right" is to allow the individual, "if necessary, to withdraw beyond all concrete commitments and social roles" and to insist instead on his or her "own indeterminacy and openness."[67] On the other hand, the lasting significance of "Morality" is to make sure that the individual will be able to reflect on the degree to which his or her actions and interactions are expressions of genuine freedom.[68]

Ethical Life

Agents are only concretely free when they "pursue the good knowing it to be good."[69] This happens in the realm of what Hegel calls "Ethical Life," which is comprised of three "nested domains of value": family, civil society, and state.[70] This concrete freedom has a subjective aspect in the norms that rule those domains of value incorporated by the agents, and an objective aspect in the institutions themselves (§ 144, 154).[71] On the one hand, ethical substance provides content and end to subjective freedom, and on the other, subjective freedom is what makes it possible to bring about

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[66] Honneth, 23. Hegel says that "it is one of the commonest blunders of abstract thinking to make private rights and private welfare count as valid in and for themselves in opposition to the universality of the state" (§ 126R, 124–125). On the contrary, "formal right" as well as "particular welfare and the happiness of the individual" are subordinate to "the so-called 'general good,' the welfare of the state" (§ 126R, 124).

[67] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 36.

[68] Honneth, 38.

[69] Knowles, *Hegel*, 223.

[70] Knowles, 221.

[71] Knowles, 224.

ethical substance.[72] These domains of value with their subjective and objective aspects have so much power over the agents (§145 and 146, 154–155) that they become part of their essence and identity in a form that not even faith or trust do (§ 147, 155–156). There is no alien authority imposing itself on the consciousness.[73] Even when the agents themselves may not have participated in the arrangement of those domains of value, their spirits should bear witness to them as to their own essences, the essences in which they have a feeling of their respective individualities, and in which they live as in their own elements, which are not distinguished from themselves (§ 147, 155).[74] They become their "second nature" (§ 151, 159). However, this identification of the agent with the institutions is not random. The agents "must feel and/or think of themselves as free within" these institutions.[75] This, says Dowley, is what Hegel refers to when he says that "adequate knowledge of this identity depends on thinking in terms of the concept" (§ 147R, 156). If the "philosophical rationale of our constitutive identities" is challenged, "we should be able to say how a rational enquirer might endorse them."[76]

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[72] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 201.

[73] Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History: An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1991), 101.

[74] Houlgate, *Freedom*, 101.

[75] Thomas A. Lewis, "Beyond the Totalitarian: Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion in Recent Hegel Scholarship," *Religion Compass* 2, no. 4 (2008): 561. In the same article, Lewis argues that "the precise nature of this 'requirement'" has produced at least two "points of contention" in the pertinent scholarship. One is "whether everyone must at least feel herself or himself to be free (even if not everyone can give a rational account of this freedom)." And if the answer to this question is affirmative, the second point of contention is if "merely feeling oneself to be free is enough" or if "genuine freedom" requires "everyone to be able to articulate this freedom in rational terms." Lewis contends that Hegel's philosophical system requires that everyone should "be able to reflect self-consciously on this freedom," even when Hegel is not totally consistent on this point. See Lewis, "Beyond the Totalitarian: Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion in Recent Hegel Scholarship," 561-62.

[76] Knowles, *Hegel*, 230.

With "Ethical Life," we achieve mutual recognition in the sense that our rights and duties match. I receive recognition from others in the form of a right and in turn I owe recognition to others in the form of a duty: "every right corresponds to a duty on the part of someone else who honors that right and fulfills his [sic] duty toward it, and vice versa"[77] (see § 155, 161).

The Family

The encounter with another sometimes brings forth a confrontation that makes us fear "a loss of self."[78] In an effort to preserve our independence, we have the option of engaging in a struggle that could end in the death of one of the two. It would unlikely be the literal death of one of the rivals; a much more likely result would be the reduction to slavery of one of rivals and in that way, an "unequal recognition" of them.[79] However, in the encounter with another, instead of fearing "a loss of self," we could find our "independent selfhood" to be "insufficient," and "unsatisfying."[80] Then love would be a much more satisfying option. Love will require "the renunciation of my independence" (§ 158A, 162), but it will give me back a "concrete" and "genuine" independence in a union with the other.[81] Love does not eliminate, nor dominate nor compel the other by force. It only makes the other lose "its foreign or alien character"[82]: "I count for something in the

[77] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 207.

[78] Williams, 209.

[79] Williams, 210. The author is referring to the famous section "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.

[80] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 210.

[81] Williams, 212.

[82] Williams, 209.

other, while the other in turn comes to count for something in me" (§ 158A, 162). Love accomplishes a "mutual reciprocal recognition."[83]

Love is the feeling that unites a family, and a new family starts (§ 172, 171) when a man and a woman consent to unite themselves in marriage. Although "the state of being in love" is the most important "originating factor" (§ 162A, 165), Hegel does not consider that marriage can be based "on love alone" (§ 161A, 164). It can neither be a contract for the exchange of sexual favors; the feeling of love should be converted into what Hegel calls a "rightfully ethical love" (§ 161A, 164) in which the parties commit themselves to love, trust, and share their entire existence with each other (§ 163, 165).

Hegel argues that there are natural differences between the sexes of the spouses that have "intellectual and ethical significance" (§ 165, 168). Only the man has a role in the state, can grasp "the more advanced sciences, philosophy, and certain forms of artistic production" (§ 166A, 169), engages in labor outside the home, and is the head of the family (§ 171, 171), whereas all what the woman is supposed to do is restricted to the family and the home (see § 166, 168–169).

Hegel considers that the family created by marriage is a new "person" (§ 169, 171). It is not the abstract person with the abstract right to express his or her freedom in whatever way they wish as long as they respect the rights of others to their freedom. It is "a universal and enduring person" with rights in order to access the property that will become the resources for the "common purpose" of providing for the needs of its members (§ 170, 171).

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[83] Williams, 208.

This love between spouses acquires objectivity in the children, who have the right to be educated, cared for, and even disciplined by the parents with the use of the common resources of the family (§ 174, 173). Under normal circumstances, the children will live their "early years in love, trust, and obedience" (§ 175, 174), without the need of explicitly claiming their rights, but Hegel does foresee the possibility that the parents fail to comply with their duties. In that case, society has the right and the duty to intervene and compel parents to comply (§ 239, 219).

Hegel also anticipates that the spouses can become totally estranged from each other, and in that case divorce and dissolution of the marriage should be permitted, he argues (§ 176, 175). Being an ethical bond, "marriage requires the recognition of society as a whole to be instituted or dissolved;" "it cannot simply be entered into or dissolved at will."[84] In an intriguing way, Hegel argues that the death of one of the spouses will result, not only in the dissolution of the marriage, but also in the dissolution of the family. This is what he calls "the natural dissolution of the family" (§ 178, 175). He argues as well that the dissolution happens "once the children have been educated to freedom of personality, and have come of age," and in that way have "become recognized as persons in the eyes of the law and as capable of holding free property of their own and founding families of their own" (§ 177, 175). This is what he calls "the ethical dissolution of the family" (§ 177, 175).

[84] Houlgate, *Freedom*, 104-05.

Civil Society

"Civil society" is the domain of value that Hegel places between the family and the state, although he acknowledges that its formation happened after the state and that it only functions within the state. Its creation is, in Hegel's evaluation, an accomplishment of the modern world for the satisfaction of needs for which the family cannot provide. The persons who seek the satisfaction of those needs in civil society, and who often will act on behalf of their families, are what Hegel calls concrete persons, what under normal circumstances means to him male heads of families (§ 182, 180–181).

Hegel insists that each person should act in the domain of civil society in the pursuit of his own goals.[85] It is an inalienable achievement of the modern world, Hegel affirms, that "persons should be able to formulate for themselves the private ends from which they will derive satisfaction."[86] Hegel has also learned that a person will only satisfy his own needs, however molded they may be by "contingent caprices, and subjective desires" (§ 185, 182), if he stays in contact with others and contributes to the satisfaction of their needs (§182A, 181). In that way, civil society is "a system of complete interdependence, wherein the livelihood, welfare and rightful existence of one individual are interwoven with the livelihood, welfare, and rights" not only of some, but Hegel says "of all" (§ 183, 181). In civil society there is "free play," Hegel says, "for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of birth and fortune," and "waves of every passion gush forth" (§ 182A, 181).

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[85] In this section, I will use exclusive language because Hegel is presuming that the main actors in civil society are men. Later, in the section on the State, there is a paragraph where Hegel makes it explicit that he excludes "at least children, women, etc.," when he says "all" (§ 301R, 287).

[86] Knowles, *Hegel*, 263.

Two things hold in check the arbitrariness with which the actors in civil society conduct themselves: the fact that they have to care for the needs of their families, and their obligation to help in meeting the needs of others. However, in Hegel's view this is not enough to prevent civil society from affording, more often than not, "a spectacle of extravagance and want as well as of the physical and ethical degeneration common to them both" (§ 185, 182). Nothing can guarantee that the needs of all will be satisfied.

Hegel assigns an important role to education. Thus he considers it possible to form the desires. Education is the "hard work" that can and should liberate the individual from "the pure subjectivity of demeanour," "the immediacy of desire," and "the empty subjectivity of feeling and the arbitrariness of inclination" (§ 187, 185). Although Hegel places education in civil society, education is not limited to equipping individuals to function in civil society nor to putting a further check on the arbitrariness with which the actors in civil society conduct themselves. Its function is to provide the *Bildung* that Hegel always aspired to for himself and for others.[87] The main purpose of education is "liberation and work towards a higher liberation still" (§ 187R, 185).

Hegel states that civil society "contains three moments." The first one is the system of needs, which consists in "the mediation of need and the satisfaction of the individual through his work and through the work and satisfaction of the needs of all others." The second is the administration of justice, which makes sure that the infractions against right will be punished. Finally, the third moment includes the police or public

[87] See above pages 64-65.

authority, which more correctly should be called policing authority,[88] which prevents injustices from happening, and the corporation, which can help convert certain particular interests into common interests (§ 188, 186).

Hegel describes what he calls "the system of needs" by manifesting his surprise at the fact that there happens a "mutual interlocking of particulars" even when "at first sight everything seems to be given over to the arbitrariness of the individual." Moreover, "out of the conditions of the modern world," "political economy" has arisen as a science that will find "laws for a mass of contingencies" (§ 189A, 187).

The main problem with civil society, says Hegel, is that it cannot cancel out people's natural inequalities that turn into inequalities "of skill and resources," and even into inequalities with regard to "moral and intellectual education" (§ 200, 192). Aware of this problem, Hegel describes what he considers the positive aspects of the system of need and does not overlook the negative aspects. For instance, he views it as liberating that human beings will seek to satisfy social needs rather than only natural needs. Social needs are the needs that emerge when the natural needs are combined with "spiritual needs arising from ideas" (§ 194, 189) and are recognized as such by the others who will satisfy them. What makes them liberating is that they are not dependent on external necessities; they are self-made (§ 194, 189). At the same time, Hegel is not blind to the fact that for some people their social needs and the possibilities of getting them satisfied will grow without limit, while others will find that they only have means, if they have means at all, to satisfy a very limited number of their social needs (§ 195, 190).

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[88] This is the name chosen by Alan White in his translation of the *Philosophy of Right*. See Hegel, *Hegel's "The Philosophy of Right,"* 151.270.

Another example of Hegel's awareness of the pros and cons of the system of needs is his praise for the division of labor. Most of the products that human beings consume are the result of the work of other human beings (§ 196, 190) and this work is more effective when labor is divided. The division of labor requires from each individual competence in one particular skill and makes his work less complex and more productive. The problem is that Hegel envisions that a machine will finally take the place of the human being and leave many people without work (§ 198, 191).

Hegel discerns that there is no one unified system of needs, but rather three subsystems, each with its own "needs, means, and types of work relative to these needs, modes of satisfaction and of theoretical and practical education" (§ 201, 193). Hegel calls them estates[89]: the agricultural estate, the business estate; and the estate of civil servants (§ 202, 193). Hegel admits that "the question of the particular estate to which an individual is to belong is one on which natural capacity, birth, and other circumstances have their influence," but the "the essential and determining factors are subjective opinion and one's particular arbitrary will" (§ 206, 195). Nobody can be forced to belong to a certain estate. However, every individual needs to make himself a member of one of the estates "by one's own act," and "through one's energy, industry, and skill," for in this way one will gain "recognition both in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others" (§ 207, 196–197). The estates are not social classes, as Marx would define them, depending on whether a person is a capital owner or an employee of a capitalist, but "vertical segments" of the society that gather together "all those who earn their living on the land,

[89] Hegel distinguishes between "estate" as an occupational sector and "Estate" (with a capital E) as the sectorial assembly of the legislative power.

or by way of trade, or as civil servants."[90] Hegel believed that there is a confluence between the interests of workers and owners, and that riches should not necessarily "inspire either pride or envy, pride in their owners, envy in others" (§ 253R, 226).

This differentiation between the three estates, says Hegel, arise from "logical necessities."[91] The agricultural estate is the substantial or immediate state, the business estate is the reflective one, and the estate of civil servants is the universal one (§ 202, 193). Knowles says provocatively that Hegel "seems to segment society [respectively] into those who don't think at all, those who think only of themselves and their customers, and those who think of the interests of everyone."[92] Said in a more refined way, in the agriculture of subsistence[93] there is little need of reflection and of asserting one's own will. What takes precedence is the life of feeling and therefore it is an estate based on the family (§ 203, 193–194). In the business estate, whether one is engaged with craftsmanship, manufacture, or with trade, what takes precedence is reflection, required to do the work that will earn the person a living by mediating the person's "needs and work with those of others" (§ 204, 195). Therefore, it is the prototypical example of the modern world's civil society. Finally, in the estate of civil servants what takes precedence is the attention to "the interests of society." The civil servants should be "freed from direct labour" to meet their needs, "either by having private means or by receiving an allowance from the state which claims its industry," so that their private interests can find

[90] Knowles, *Hegel*, 271.

[91] Hegel, *Outlines*, 351. The quotation is from the explanatory note to § 202 on page 193.

[92] Knowles, *Hegel*, 271.

[93] Hegel distinguishes the agriculture of subsistence from agriculture conducted as a factory, which corresponds to the second estate (§ 203A, 194).

satisfaction in the work for the whole of society (§ 205, 195). The estate of civil servants therefore prefigures "the life of the state."[94]

The administration of justice, which is the second moment of civil society, entails that individuals know their rights and that those rights are recognized and enforced when they are violated (§ 209, 198). Above all, the administration of justice will guarantee that "offences against property or personality are annulled" (§ 230, 315). The main right that needs to be enforced is the one that asserts that "a human being counts as a human being in virtue of his *humanity*, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc." (§ 209R, 198). In order for the administration of justice to fulfil its function in the proper manner, Hegel considers that "the right to the public administration of justice" is of the highest importance. This right includes "the publication of the laws" and "the possibility of knowing that the law has been actualized in a particular case (of knowing the course of the proceedings, the legal argument, etc.)." Although the specific issue dealt with in a certain trial "affects the interests of the parties alone," Hegel insists that "the right at issue and the judgement thereon, affects the interests of everybody" (§ 224, 210).

It is not enough to annul the offences against property or personality once they have been committed. It is also necessary to hinder wrong and to promote subjective well-being.[95] This is the function of the third moment of the civil society, the moment of the policing authority and the corporation. At the same time that civil society must protect and defend the rights of its members, says Hegel, it also depends on its members to comply with their duties (§ 238, 218).

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[94] Hegel, *Outlines*, 351. The quotation is from the explanatory note to § 202 on page 193.

[95] Hegel, *Hegel's "The Philosophy of Right,"* 176. The reference is to the Supplement to § 230 from Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of Right from 1822/23.

Hegel gets very specific when he details the functions of the policing authority. He mentions, among others, the following functions: 1) to oversee and eventually carry out by itself undertakings with public utility such as drainage, water supply, street-lighting, bridge-building, etc. (§ 235, 216–217 and § 236 Addition, 218);[96] 2) to regulate "the differing interests of producers and consumers," so that they do not "come into collision," with policies of pricing of "the commonest necessaries of life," and of "defence of the public's right not to be defrauded" (§ 236, 217); 3) to take care of the public health (§ 236A, 218); 4) to supervise education, if necessary compelling "parents to send their children to school," and "to have them vaccinated" (§ 239A, 219); 5) to act "as trustee to those whose extravagance destroys the security of their own or their families' subsistence" (§ 240, 219); and 6) to fight against poverty. Hegel considers that it is not possible to delimit the powers of the policing authority in a clear way, and that there will always be a danger that it "acquires a measure of odium" and draws into its orbit more than it should (§ 234A, 216). Hegel says that optimally the members of civil society should recognize that the regulations of the policing authority do not come from "an authority which is seen to be external to them," but emerge "from their *own* will." This requires the transformation of their own will "from one which looks primarily to increase personal wealth, into one which actively, consciously and willingly seeks to promote the welfare of all."[97]

Poverty not only leaves material needs unsatisfied; it also causes social and spiritual deprivation. Hegel suggests that it should be measured according to the extent to

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[96] Hegel, *Outlines*, 354. The reference is to the explanatory note to § 235 on page 217.

[97] Houlgate, *Freedom*, 115-16.

which it leaves people "more or less deprived of all advantages of society, the opportunity of acquiring skill or education of any kind, as well as the administration of justice, health-care, and often even the consolations of religion, and so forth" (§ 241, 220). Although Hegel mentions that extravagance, laziness of disposition, malignity, and other vices can be causes of poverty (§ 240, 219 and § 241, 220), he knows that poverty is not only due to personality defects. It can also have its cause in "contingencies, physical conditions, and factors grounded in external circumstances" (§ 241, 219). Besides, the problem of poverty is more serious because the formation of civil society rules out access to the "natural means of acquisition" as well as the protection of the extended family "in the wider sense of the clan" (§ 241, 219–220). Society has to discover "the general causes of penury and general means of its relief," and then organize "relief accordingly" (§ 242, 220) with the necessary universal and obligatory "regulations and ordinances" (§ 242R, 220).

What Hegel fears the most is poverty resulting in the creation of what he calls "a rabble of paupers." The rabble not only lacks certain advantages of society. It loses "the sense of right and wrong," and "of integrity and of honour in maintaining oneself by one's own activity and work;" all this while "at the other end of the social scale," only "a few hands" concentrate the wealth in a disproportionate way (§ 244, 221). Hegel insists that "poverty in itself does not turn people into a rabble; a rabble is created only when there is joined to poverty a disposition of mind, an inner indignation against the rich, against society, against the government, etc." A further consequence is that the people composing the rabble becomes so "frivolous and idle" that they lose the "honour to

secure subsistence" by their "own labour," as well as the interest in claiming their "right to receive subsistence" (§ 244A, 221).[98]

Since inclusion, membership, and consequently recognition in civil society depend on access to property and opportunities to work, the weakening—if not the complete disappearance—of recognition becomes one of the marks with which the poor also have to cope. As long as the poor keep "some hope for recognition and improvement in their situation, they "may accept their poverty peaceably," but when that hope fades away, then it is that they develop the "rabble-mentality."[99]

Hegel considers different remedies to poverty. One is the option that the poor receive subsistence directly from the wealthier class or "from other public sources of wealth" like "rich hospitals, monasteries, and other foundations." This option has the inconvenience that it violates "the feeling of individual independence and honour" of the persons who receive the help (§ 245, 221). Another option would be to give subsistence to people indirectly through giving them work, and the inconvenience of this, suggests Hegel, is that "the volume of production would be increased" without a proportionate increase in the "number of consumers" (§ 245, 222). A third option would be "the colonizing activity," that is, the option that the poor move away to a colony where they can earn a living with their own work and benefit their motherland at the same time (§ 248, 223). Hegel observes that "in modern times, colonists have not been allowed the

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[98] Hegel emphasizes that both poverty and wealth corrupt civil society. "The rabble-mentality," he says, can also appear in the wealthy when "the rich man thinks that he can buy anything." See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood and H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 454. The quotation is from an explanatory note to § 244. Hegel considers that it is wrong to "pursue profit and personal gain with a callous indifference to the dignity and welfare of others." See Houlgate, *Freedom*, 113.

[99] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 247-48.

same rights as the inhabitants of the motherland," and that "the result of this situation has been wars and finally independence." This, far from being a problem, is an advantage. Hegel is convinced that "colonial emancipation proves to be of the greatest advantage to the mother country." He makes a curious comparison when he says that "the emancipation of the slaves [also] turns out to the greatest advantage of the owners" (§ 248A, 223–224). However, it is clear that Hegel realizes that none of the proposed options will eradicate poverty and prevent the creation of the rabble. He implies that "the important question of how poverty is to be abolished," is to him an open and not yet definitively solved question (§ 244A, 221).

In the business estate, the confluence that Hegel believed to exist between the interests of owners and workers in a certain trade, industry, or profession should manifest itself in an authorized corporation under the surveillance of the state (§ 252, 224 and § 255A, 227).[100] Hegel considers it a general rule that "in civil society that which is common to particular persons really exists only if it is legally constituted and recognized," and therefore a corporation has also to be authorized to exist as such (§ 253R, 226). Hegel has no confidence in the efficiency with which their own officials will administer the corporations (§ 289R, 279), which is why he suggests that the surveillance of the state over the corporation should include the filling of corporate positions of responsibility "by a mixture of popular election by those interested with confirmation and determination by a higher authority" (§ 288, 278).

[100] Williams says that the term "cooperative" perhaps captures what Hegel is referring to better than the term "corporation." See Williams, 228.

Membership in a corporation is what makes the person "somebody," says Hegel, and what frees him from having to provide "further external evidence to demonstrate his skill and his regular income and subsistence" (§ 253, 225). Otherwise, the business of the individual would be merely self-seeking, his livelihood and satisfaction would be unstable, and he would have to "try to gain recognition for himself by giving external proofs of success in his business," and doing it unceasingly (§ 253R, 226). In addition, Hegel notes dryly that "a day labourer" or "a person who is prepared to undertake casual employment on a single occasion" cannot become a corporation member (§ 252R, 225).

Hegel expects the corporation to help transforming the will of the members of civil society "into a genuinely *ethical* or *social* will."[101] The corporation should look after its own interests, determine the requisites for admission and how many will be admitted, protect members against contingencies like poverty,[102] and provide education, thus becoming "a second family for its members" (§ 252, 225). Since the corporation has the explicit goal of making all the members contribute to the common end, it can limit what each member will earn, and it will make sure that the work of one member will not endanger the work of another (§ 253R, 226).

A corporation, according to Hegel, does not have to be economic. Thus churches, scholarly societies, and even municipal governments qualify as corporations.[103]

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[101] Houlgate, *Freedom*, 116.

[102] Knowles rightly observes that the corporation, according to Hegel, does not make "a significant contribution to the elimination of poverty in general," first because admission into it is restricted, and second because by banning day labourers from admission, it excludes "those who may most need work." See Knowles, *Hegel*, 294.

[103] Hegel, *Hegel's "The Philosophy of Right,"* 268. See also § 270R, 248 and Westphal, *Hegel*, 43.

The State

Hegel already dealt with the action of the State when he described the action of the administration of justice, the police (also called public authority or policing authority), and the surveillance of corporations. Important as these functions are in order to ensure the proper functioning of civil society, Hegel emphasizes that the state is different from the civil state, and that the "specific end" of the state cannot be "laid down as the security and protection of property and personal freedom." In that case, "the interests of individuals" would be "the ultimate end of their association" in a state, turning "optional" the membership in it (§ 258R, 228). The state prevents civil society from succumbing to "disruption and chaos."[104]

Beyond the organisms of the state, the state should exist first of all in what Hegel calls "custom," that is, a "second nature" (§ 151, 159) developed through *Bildung* (§ 151A, 159-160), and "mediated in individual self-consciousness" that finds precisely in the state its substantial and concrete freedom (§ 257, 228 and § 260, 235). It is only as member of the state "that the individual himself has objectivity, truth, and ethical life" (§ 258R, 229).

Hegel considers three moments in the actualization of the state: 1) the individual state, and therefore "the constitution or right within the state;"[105] 2) "the relation of the individual state to other states," and therefore, the "right between states;" and 3) what he calls "the spirit which gives itself actuality in world-history and is the absolute judge of states" (§ 259, 234).

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[104] Timothy C. Luther, *Hegel's Critique of Modernity: Reconciling Individual Freedom and the Community* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 213.

[105] Hegel uses the word "constitution" here in the broad sense of a particular political order.

The state Hegel talks about is “the modern state,” in which the “universal,” that is, the interest of the society as a whole, is not equivalent to the sum of the individual interests, nor is it the fact that the individuals identify themselves so completely with the state that everybody’s “subjective end” coincides “with the state’s will” (§ 261A, 237). No, the universal has to be “activated,” but it is so “bound up with the complete freedom of particularity and with the well-being of individuals” that it “does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the cooperation of particular knowing and willing” (§ 260, 235). “Particular interests should in truth not be set aside or, indeed, suppressed; instead, they should be harmonized with the universal, so that both they and the universal are upheld” (§ 261R, 237). Hegel further specifies that this will happen when “my obligation to what is substantial is at the same time the existence of my particular freedom” and hence “duty and right are united in one and the same relation” (§ 261R, 236). Hegel goes on to say that “the state is actual only when its individual members have a feeling of their own selfhood” and that “it is stable only when the aims of the universal and of particular individuals are identical.” “The end of the state” is indeed “the happiness of the citizens,” says Hegel. “If all is not well with them, if their subjective aims are not satisfied, if they do not find that the state as such is the means to their satisfaction, then the footing of the state itself is insecure” (§ 265A, 240).

“Political disposition” or “patriotism pure and simple” is to Hegel the “trust (which may pass over into a greater or lesser degree of educated insight), or the consciousness that my interest, both substantial and particular, is contained and preserved” in the state’s “interest and end,” and in the state’s “relation to me as an individual” (§ 268, 240). The interest of the state “may include passing laws on matters

as “property and public health,” as well as “a degree of public regulation of economic production and trade.”[106] Patriotism, therefore, is not primarily “a readiness for exceptional sacrifices and actions.” It is rather “the disposition which, in the relationships of our daily life and under ordinary conditions, habitually recognizes that the community is one’s substantial basis and end” (§ 268R, 240-241). Genuine patriotism rather than force is what “holds the state together” (§ 268A, 241). Patriotism is to Hegel “the subjective element or specification” of the sovereignty of the state.[107]

Hegel makes it clear that “every people has the constitution appropriate to it and suitable for it” (§ 274R, 263). Nobody can impose a constitution on a people, because “a people’s constitution must embody its feeling for its rights and its condition, otherwise there may be a constitution there in an external way, but it is meaningless and valueless” (§ 274A, 263). It is only “over a long period of time” that a constitution will change “into something quite different from what it was originally” (§ 298A, 285). Notwithstanding this, Hegel considers that a constitutional monarchy is the typical modern state. A constitutional monarchy[108] is a political organism with three elements: 1) the legislative power, which determines and establishes the universal; 2) the executive power, which subsumes the “individual cases and the spheres of particularity under the universal;” and 3) the crown, which is the subjective will that binds up the two other powers into a subjective will “with the power of ultimate decision” ((§ 273, 259).

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[106] Houlgate, *Freedom*, 121.

[107] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 337.

[108] In this case, “constitutional” has the more restricted sense of defining the political order with the three elements mentioned.

Correctly understood, the division of powers is a good thing to Hegel because it guarantees "public freedom" (§ 272R, 257). This is what happens for instance when judges are not allowed to be legislators (§ 211R, 199). Simultaneously, Hegel argues emphatically that the powers of the states "must certainly be distinguished, but each of them must form a whole in itself and contain within itself the other moments" (§ 272A, 258).

Hegel addresses the three elements of the constitutional monarchy in reverse order. So important is the person of the monarch in Hegel's model that the people would be "a formless mass and no longer a state" without him (§ 279R, 269). The monarch—and Hegel favors hereditary succession—is the person who gives personality to the state "as a self-determining and completely sovereign will" (§ 279A, 271). The monarch "is bound by the concrete content of the counsel he receives," and under normal circumstances, he will often have "no more to do than sign his name." His signature will be the only way of reaching "the point beyond which it is impossible to go" (§ 279A, 271) and he is "above all answerability for acts of government" (§ 284, 276).[109]

It is the executive power that includes the administration of justice, the police (also called public authority or policing authority), and the surveillance of corporations. The executive power is carried out by "the executive civil servants" and "the higher advisory officials… organized into committees" with their respective "supreme heads who are in direct contact with the monarch (§ 289, 278). The monarch appoints the civil

[109] Dudley Knowles distinguishes two opposed readings of the power of the monarch in the *Philosophy of Right*. On the one side, there is a "hard reading" that gives the monarch the power to cut short "the weighing of pros and cons" and make a decision "by saying 'I will'" that "inaugurates all activity and actuality" (§ 279R, 267). On the other, there is a "soft reading" that considers that "the monarch's particular character" is irrelevant since "he has only to say 'yes' and dot the 'i'" (§ 280A, 272). See Knowles, *Hegel*, 329.

servants to office taking into account their knowledge and competence (§ 291, 280), and their tenure is conditional on them fulfilling their duties (§ 294, 281).

Hegel wants to distinguish the legislative issues that should advance "the universal business of government" (§ 298, 284) and provide for the "well-being and happiness" (§ 299, 285) of the individuals from the particular issues that are "the proper function of administrative officials or of state regulation" (§ 299R, 285), and therefore under the competence of the executive power. However, the fact that this distinction cannot be "a hard and fast one" (§ 299R, 285) supports Hegel's overall argument in favor of "the unity of the state" (§ 300A, 287). The same concern for the unity of the state is what makes him favor members of the executive power being part of the legislature (§ 300, 287).

Hegel is emphatic when he argues that a people is not a formless "aggregate" of individuals, but an organic whole composed of members of different estates, corporations, families, communities, etc. (§ 303R, 291).[110] For this reason, Hegel does not believe that "every single individual" should have a vote nor that "all individuals should share in deliberating and deciding on the grounds that all are members of the state." He adds that "the concrete state is the whole, articulated into its particular groups. The member of a state is a member of such a group, i.e. of an estate, and only as determined in this objective way does he come into consideration in relation to the state"

[110] It is noteworthy that there is a problem to Hegel if "the lower levels, the mass of the population" is "unorganized." He says that "it is of the utmost importance that the masses should be organized, because only so do they become a power or a force. Otherwise they are nothing but a heap, an aggregate of separate atoms" (§ 290A, 280).

(§ 308R, 294).[111] While members the estate of civil servants occupy the positions of responsibility in the executive power, the agricultural and business estates acquire their "political significance and efficacy" by turning into the Estates[112] that comprise, respectively, the upper and lower houses of the legislature. Hegel insists that "a free and indeterminate election" will not ensure that all the branches of society are represented in the process of making decisions. On the contrary, such an election would put power into the hands "of a few, of a faction," of one "particular and contingent interest" (§ 311R, 297).

Hegel does not conceal that in his view "the highest civil servants necessarily have a deeper and more comprehensive insight into the nature of the state's organization and requirements" than the representatives of the agricultural and business estates who comprise the two houses of the legislature. "Even without the Estates," the civil servants would be "able to do what is best, just as they also continually have to do while the Estates are in session" (§ 301R, 288). Hegel adds that "the real significance of the Estates lies in the fact that it is through them that the state enters the subjective consciousness of the people and that the people begins to participate in the state" (§ 301A, 289). In this way, however much their role is "merely supplementary" in ensuring "the business of the state in itself" (§ 314, 298), the Estates become "a guarantee of the general welfare and public freedom" (§ 301R, 288).

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[111] Steven B. Smith rightly says that Hegel "is skeptical of any attempt to return to some form of democratic participatory *gemeinschaft* based upon immediate face-to-face relations." See Smith, *Hegel's Critique*, 6.

[112] Here used in the sense of "sectorial assemblies." See footnote 89 in this chapter.

Even when the human will becomes "fully free" in the state, "the existence of the state is itself vulnerable and precarious, because it stands in a relation to other sovereign states which no authority can oversee." (Houlgate 1991)[113] In the relationship between states, "there is no mutual recognition that issues in a higher union."[114] A war between states can always erupt. "Objective human existence," as Stephen Houlgate formulates so well, is indeed "forever exposed to the risk of death and destruction."[115] War can narrow the freedom in the state in the same way that wrong can narrow the freedom of abstract right, evil can narrow the scope of moral conscience, and poverty can narrow the freedom of the members of civil society.[116]

The Concept of "Love" in Hegel's Previous Work

Hegel makes his first attempt at conceiving a form of love that would give cohesion to society and prevent the alienation of the individuals that form it in a fragment called "Love," probably written in late 1797 or early 1798. Here Hegel argues that "love proper" requires the existence of "living beings who are alike in power and thus in one another's eyes living beings from every point of view; in no respect is either dead for the other. This genuine love excludes all oppositions… [I]n love, life is present as a duplicate of itself and as a single and unified self."[117] Love, Hegel continues, "deprives man's opposite of all foreign character." Although "in love the separate does still remain," it

[113] Houlgate, *Freedom*, 124.

[114] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 335.

[115] Houlgate, *Freedom*, 125.

[116] Houlgate, 124-25.

[117] Hegel, *Early*, 304-05.

does it "as something united and no longer as something separate."[118] "Consciousness of a separate self disappears, and all distinction between the lovers is annulled."[119] Hegel therefore, as Molly Farneth has argued, "imagines love as a source of unity that is so powerful that particularity is lost, difference is overcome, and conflict is impossible."[120]

However, there is problem with this way of conceiving love that Hegel himself admits in the last paragraph of the fragment: the institution of property undermines its applicability. As he says, "the lovers are in connection with much that is dead; external objects belong to each of them."[121] The possession of property makes its owner a "separate individuality"[122] and puts the lovers in opposition to each other, in so doing preventing the annulment of all distinctions between them, except in marriage and family where property is in common. In this way, as Molly Farneth argues, neither the institution of property nor the conception of individual freedom that accompanies and enables this institution are compatible with this conception of love as unity without difference. And since the conception of individuality, the individual freedom, and the institution of property are features of the modern world that Hegel would not give up, he prefers to think that it is his conception of love that needs to be adjusted.[123]

A year later, Hegel made another attempt to articulate how love could give cohesion to a society in his work "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate." Here he talks

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[118] Hegel, 305.

[119] Hegel, 307.

[120] Molly Farneth, "How to 'Love Thy Neighbor': Lessons from Hegel on Conflict and Reconciliation," Boston University Institute for Philosophy and Religion, aired on December 11, 2017, YouTube video 1:22:23, https://youtu.be/P6XvHulKW4w?si=f4eZmfoT7rwKOoZ8.

[121] Hegel, *Early*, 308.

[122] Hegel, 308.

[123] Farneth, "How to 'Love Thy Neighbor.'"

about love as the central feature of Christianity. According to Hegel, what Jesus referred to when he proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God was "the living harmony of men [sic], their fellowship in God," in which "their many-sided consciousness chimes in with one spirit and their many different lives with one life."[124] Hegel adds that love is "the living bond which unites the believers"[125] and develops "the divine among men [sic]."[126] Love therefore, in Alice Ormiston's words, "as an experience of the infinite, is an infinite that can live only in and through the finite."[127] Hegel asks a rhetorical question that to him would have an obvious negative answer for the rest of his life: "Is there an idea more beautiful than that of a nation of men [sic] related to one another by love?"[128]

Hegel does not seem to be clear in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" about whether love annuls or preserves the differences between the lovers. One the one side, he does say that love as a "living bond which unites the believers" is "a feeling in which all oppositions, as pure enmities, and also rights, as unifications of still subsisting oppositions, are annulled."[129] On the other side, he insists that there should not be lordship nor submission in love,[130] and that love does "overcome hostility," but it should not be at the price of domination or conquest.[131] In the same line of thinking, he says that the joy of love "communes with every other life and recognizes it [as life], yet it recoils if

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[124] Hegel, *Early*, 277.

[125] Hegel, 278.

[126] Hegel, *Early*, 277.

[127] Ormiston, *Love and Politics*, 20.

[128] Hegel, *Early*, 278.

[129] Hegel, 278.

[130] Hegel, 244.

[131] Hegel, 247.

it senses an [exclusive] individuality in the other."[132] We do not know whether this means that Hegel is thinking of non-exclusive individualities that could be preserved in a relationship of love. What Hegel is clear about is that we cannot achieve the living bond of love by means of an intentional effort of developing "a similarity in mind, in interest, in numerous relationships of life" that would diminish the individualities of each of the lovers.[133] Hegel argues that "this community of life, this similarity of mind, is not love."[134] Instead, such intentional effort results in a "community of worship" interested in "spreading the faith" in order to enlarge itself,[135] whereas the love that would unite the whole nation would at best be recognized as "the highest life," but it would remain "inactive and undeveloped;" it would remain "unliving."[136]

Hegel does conceive of "a loving circle, a circle of hearts that have surrendered their rights against one another over anything their own, that are united solely by a common faith and hope, and whose pleasure and joy is simply the pure single-heartedness of love."[137] Here the institution of property does not get in the way of love, but Hegel implies that to him it is not a possibility that could become widespread. Hegel anticipates a concept that he developed fully in the *Philosophy of Right* when he says that what would be required for true love to become widespread is the "objectification" of "the oneness or the love of the members" of the communion.[138] As long as that does not

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[132] Hegel, 279. Hegel also uses the expression "exclusive individuality" in the *Philosophy of Right*, § 34.

[133] Hegel, *Early*, 279.

[134] Hegel, 279.

[135] Hegel, 280.

[136] Hegel, 281.

[137] Hegel, 290.

[138] Hegel, 290-91.

happen, true love will indeed remain "unliving," and we will need to settle for a state of affairs in which "church and state, worship and life, piety and virtue, spiritual and worldly action," will not be able to "dissolve into one."[139]

Hegel makes a new effort at conceiving love as a source of social cohesion in his *Phenomenology of Spirit,* first published in 1807, when he discusses the commandment to love the neighbor in §425. Here, we should bear in mind that Hegel said in the "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" that the precept "love thy neighbor" has the "turn of phrase" of "a command in a sense quite different from that of the 'shalt' of a moral imperative."[140] The precept only has the form of a command as "the sequel to the fact that, when life is conceived in thought or given expression, it acquires a *form* alien to it, a conceptual form."[141] Strictly speaking, love proper cannot be commanded, because it supposes that "the lover's reason and inclination are in harmony."[142] So, this is a commandment, although strictly speaking only a commandment in the form that "is directed to the individual in his [sic] relationship with other individuals," Hegel says in the *Phenomenology*. It needs to be "active" as well as "intelligent," so that the individuals to whom the commandment is addressed can distinguish evil from good and determine what evil should be removed from the other and how to be good to the other. However, Hegel continues by asking whether "intelligent, substantial beneficence" is indeed an assignment for the individual, or whether it should rather be an assignment for the

[139] Hegel, 301.

[140] Hegel, 213.

[141] Hegel, 213.

[142] Hegel, 212n37.

"state."[143] As Molly Farneth clarifies, with "state," Hegel is not referring exclusively to the government, but "he is thinking of something more like civil society working in concert with laws and governmental institutions."[144] "In its richest and most important form," Hegel argues that "intelligent, substantial beneficence" should be "the intelligent universal action of the state."[145] In other words, Hegel is beginning to be more specific about what he meant in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" when he referred to the need of giving "objectification" to love. Restricted to the "single and isolated" performance of one individual toward another individual, love would be more a "sentiment" than an action," and as action it would always be "contingent," "transitory," and easy to be "undone," if not "even perverted into something bad."[146] Restricted to the "single and isolated" performance of one individual toward another individual, the commandment to love the neighbor would be a mere "Ought."[147] Then we would be back in the situation Hegel described in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," where love is recognized as "the highest life," but "remains unliving."

"Love" in the *Philosophy of Right*

First, Hegel talks about love as a feeling. That love is a feeling does not make it empty of content. It is "a feeling for actual living individuals" (§ 180R, 179), and it is implicit in this work that love as a feeling will involve certain actions in favor of the

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[143] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 255.

[144] Farneth, "How to 'Love Thy Neighbor.'"

[145] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 255.

[146] Hegel, 255-56.

[147] Hegel, 256.

other person. It also entails "the consciousness of my unity with another, so that I am not in isolation by myself but win my self-consciousness only through the renunciation of my independence and through knowing myself as the unity of myself with another and of the other with me" (§ 158A, 162). The "renunciation of my independence" is not something that I do reluctantly. On the contrary, "I do not wish to be a self-subsistent and independent person," and I realize that "if I were, then I would feel defective and incomplete" (§ 158A, 162). Hegel says that this is "the first moment in love" (§ 158A, 162). "The second moment is that I find myself in another person, that I count for something in the other, while the other in turn comes to count for something in me" (§ 158A, 162). In this way, Hegel says that love "is the most tremendous contradiction" (§ 158A, 162), for the reason that I am willing to renounce my independence, and by doing it, I recover my independent identity, without which the unity with the other would not have any chance of subsisting either. This is why Hegel prizes "friendship and love" as feelings that are paradigmatic examples of freedom: they lead us to "restrict ourselves gladly in relating ourselves to another, but in this restriction [we] know ourselves as ourselves" (§ 7A, 33). Hegel had already made this point in his earlier fragment entitled "Love," when he argued that in a relationship of love each of the partners is enriched by giving to the other: "The lover who takes is not thereby made richer than the other; he is enriched indeed, but only so much as the other is. So too the giver does not make himself poorer; by giving to the other he has at the same time and to the same extent enhanced his own treasure."[148] In specific cases, the feeling of love also includes what Hegel calls "the

[148] Hegel, *Early*, 307.

impulse of love between the sexes" (§ 19R, 40) and it can result in the "the state of being in love" (§ 162A, 165).

However, love as a mere feeling can also be unreliable. As a feeling, love "is exposed in every respect to contingency" and it can be "transient, fickle, and purely subjective" (§ 161A, 164). This is also the reason why it cannot be the foundation of right (Preface, 11) nor appealed to as an argument in any discussion about right (§ 272R, 257).

Hegel considers that the feeling of love has to be converted into an ethical bond by going beyond "the contingency of passion and the transience of particular caprice" (§ 163, 165). This will happen in the frame of the family, and the "family" to which Hegel refers is the modern nuclear family. It requires first of all the marriage of two persons.

Marriage can have its "originating factor" in "the state of being in love" (§ 162A, 165), or in the "contrivance of benevolent parents" (§ 162R, 164). The latter option means that the inclination to marry will arise from the fact that each partner "grows acquainted with the other from the first as a destined partner" (§ 162R, 164). Either way, Hegel expects on the one side that "in the actual wedding both decision and inclination" will come together (§ 162R, 164). Yet what holds up the marriage is not the feeling of love (§ 161A, 164), but the continuous commitment of the two persons "to make themselves one person," and "to renounce their natural and individual personality to this unity of one with the other" (§ 162, 164), or in other words, the two persons' "self-conscious love" (§ 161, 163).[149]

[149] Hegel makes two problematic assumptions. The first one is that marriage should be between a man and a woman (see § 162A, 165). The other is that a woman "has her substantial vocation in the family" (§ 166, 169) and "is destined in essence only for the marriage relationship" (§ 164A, 168), whereas the husband has the "prerogative to go out and work" for the living of the family, "attend to its needs, and to control and administer its resources" (§ 171, 171). Even though Hegel insists that "the difference in the

In a previous work Hegel had admitted that "adultery, willful desertion, incompatibility, [and] bad economic management" could be reasons for the dissolution of a marriage, but that these in no way made divorce necessary nor automatic. Given that marriage is an ethical union, the only reasons for its dissolution would be the reasons considered as such by the partners themselves.[150] In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel reiterates that "since marriage has feeling for one of its moments, it is not absolute but subject to fluctuations and potentially dissoluble" (§ 163A, 166). "There is no merely legal or positive bond which can hold the parties together once their dispositions and actions have become hostile and contrary" (§ 176, 175). Hegel postulates that "a third ethical authority" (§ 176, 175) apart from the two spouses, and it could be "the church or the law-court" (§ 176A, 175), should assist the spouses in coping with the "whims of hostile disposition or the contingency of a purely passing mood" so that they do not lead to their "total estrangement" (§ 176, 175). Either of those ethical authorities might "grant divorce" only once it has established that the "estrangement of the two parties" is "total" (§ 176, 175).

The family is constituted when the married spouses have children. Children, says Hegel, have the right to be educated and disciplined by the parents (§ 174, 173), and the best way to do it is by encircling them with love and trust and "instilling ethical principles" into them "in the form of feeling." This is what will teach them "to stand on their own feet," so that they at the appropriate time can leave "their parents behind them"

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natural characteristics of the two sexes has a rational basis" (§ 165, 168), I consider that the rejection of these two assumptions of Hegel does not invalidate his main argument.

[150] Hegel, *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with Commentary*, 136. This work is quoted and commented by Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 219.

(§ 175, 174). Hegel contends that this is also the reason why "on the whole children love their parents less than their parents love them" (§ 175A, 174). Nevertheless, I assume that Hegel includes the children when he says that "the family, as the immediate substantiality of spirit, is specifically characterized by love." Also for the children it holds that their disposition will be to have "self-consciousness" of their individualities "within this unity as the essentiality that has being in and for itself, with the result that one is in it not as an independent person, but as member" (§ 158, 162).

Hegel argues that the institutions of marriage, family, and private property, as well as "the relations and work involved in civil society," and the whole "legal order," are not "degrading to love and the freedom of feeling" (§ 270R, 245). On the contrary, they eliminate from the mere feeling of love its unreliable characteristics and enhance its attributes.

Hegel explicitly mentions in a footnote the commandment to love the neighbor when he quotes from Herr von Haller's book *Restoration of Political Science*. Von Haller's argument is that the commandment is part of "the natural, divine, law, given to everyone by nature the all-bountiful" that was established in the minds in order "to make legislation and a constitution superfluous." Hegel mocks van Haller's argument with a forceful question: how would von Haller make sense of the fact that "legislation and constitutions have appeared in the world despite" the "implanting" of this natural and divine law (Hegel's Footnote to § 258R, 232-233)?

Hegel refers implicitly to this commandment in his discussion about poverty. In line with his reflections about the commandment in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, he says that "public organization" based on the "discovering" of "the general causes of

penury and general means of its relief" is the best means of combating poverty. "Poor relief" cannot be "reserved solely to the particularity of feeling and the contingency of its knowledge and charitable disposition." However, "public organization" will never be enough. "Despite all public organization," Hegel says, "poverty and, in general, the distress of every kind to which every individual is exposed… has a subjective side which demands similarly subjective aid, arising both from the special circumstances of a particular case and also from love and sympathy" (§ 242, 220).

Love, Recognition, and Reconciliation

"To recognize" means to acknowledge a person in his or her difference and otherness from me, and in a way that gives him or her honor and worth and sees him or her as "an irreplaceable individual."[151] This recognition is not unilateral, but mutual, and it will not always happen without conflict.[152] It is not only I who have to recognize the other as a person with his or her singular worth, but also the other person who has to recognize me. I only become a flourishing person, with self-confidence and self-respect, through the recognition of others.[153] And the recognition provided by others will only be

[151] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 64.

[152] Following the English psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott, Axel Honneth describes how our first struggle for recognition happens when we as newborn children realize that the "phase of undifferentiated intersubjectivity" or "symbiosis" that unites us to our "mother" or primary caregiver will not last forever. This struggle takes place when our "mother" begins anew to look after other commitments, and we have to come to terms with the fact that she is "outside" of our "omnipotent control." This triggers a "process of disillusionment" that comes along with "outbursts of aggression" in which we try to destroy our "mother's" body. However, sooner or later we realize that our attempt to destroy her body is in vain. On the contrary, we can trust that she will continue to provide the care we need, although not with the automatism that we in our misunderstood omnipotence thought that we could ensure. Then we recognize her as a person in her own right. In turn, our "mother's" partial detachment helps us recognize that we to a certain extent also can stand on our own, and that it is as two independent persons that we can develop a relationship of love. A relationship of love, in Honneth's interpretation of Winnicott, includes both "the capacity to be alone," and "the capacity for boundary-dissolving merging with the other." See Honneth, *Struggle*, 98-105.

[153] Michael James Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 245-47.

genuine in so far as I recognize them, that is, in so far as I attribute them the authority to confer recognition.[154]

Generally, says Dean Moyar, we are convinced of the worth of our purposes and we do not expect that anybody will challenge our actions. To the extent that nobody does challenge our actions, we obtain an "indirect recognition." When instead somebody does challenge a certain action and compels us to provide all the reasons we had for acting as we did in the disputed case, we do expect to obtain "direct recognition." These challenges to our actions are precisely what impel "the transformation of norms over time."[155]

A relationship of mutual recognition has a "behavioral dimension." It means that we have to meet "each other in a certain affirmative attitude," and treat "the other in the way that the relevant form of recognition morally demands."[156] Furthermore, a relationship of mutual recognition brings about an ethical transformation of all the parties involved, because they are compelled to overcome their "natural egoism" and see in the other or the others "a limit on subjective freedom and a liberation from arbitrary subjective freedom."[157] A crucial specification is also that recognition does not happen once and for all. It is "never something which is 'done,' finished, satisfactorily completed,"[158] but rather something that we need to extend to others and that others need to extend to us over and over again, because we are all in a continuous process of

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[154] Paddy McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed April 15, 2024, https://iep.utm.edu/recog_sp/.

[155] Dean Moyar, *Hegel's Conscience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 145.

[156] Honneth, *Pathologies*, 51.

[157] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 265.

[158] Liz Disley, *Hegel, Love and Forgiveness: Positive Recognition in German Idealism* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 16.

remaking ourselves. We do not recognize each other as "fixed" things with our "own established characteristics," but as the sort of things that have "the power to shift and change," and that do "shift and change," and therefore need renewed recognition.[159]

A relationship of love, as conceived by Hegel, presupposes a relationship of mutual recognition, and, vice versa, love is a component in any of the forms of reciprocal recognition presented by Hegel. Hegel does not expect that I recognize and love everybody else in the same way that I can recognize and love one person in particular. But Hegel argues that through participation in the institutions of ethical life, like family, civil society, and state, the members of a whole society can engage in "recognitional relations"[160] and to a certain extent, love each other.[161] Outside the sphere of interpersonal relationships, the relationships of recognition and love will be more effective when they take place through the institutions of ethical life.[162] The standard by which to judge the appropriateness of a certain institution is precisely the degree to which it allows the relationships of recognition and love. The institutions of ethical life are in

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[159] Disley, 17.

[160] Pippin, *Hegel's Practical*, 203.

[161] The fact that we can engage in "recognitional relations" within the institutions of ethical life confirms Dean Moyar's point that in general recognition is indirect. We act within those institutions "on purposes that are objectively valuable," and our action is indirectly recognized "because it expresses or achieves that value." Moyar gives an illustrative example: If I want to pass a law on "equal housing," I want recognition of "the value of the legislation itself," and not of my particular agency (unless I am running for public office, which is an option Moyar does not consider in his example). What I could do in favor of the passage of the law is to "appeal to our sense of reciprocity as members of the same political community," and "illustrate this reciprocity with a scenario of direct recognition," by organizing "a face to face encounter" of some of "those without adequate housing" with the legislators. In this way, we can also remind ourselves that the institutions should be at the service of concrete individuals. See Moyar, *Hegel's Conscience*, 155-56.

[162] In an effort to specify what forms "love" takes in the different institutions of ethical life, Knowles says that "family life is characterized by love, civil society is the sphere of self-interested or self-referentially altruistic behaviour," "corporations educate and express such sentiments as solidarity, loyalty and fraternity," and finally, patriotism is "the sentiment particularly appropriate to citizenship." See Knowles, *Hegel*, 316.

themselves networks of "intersubjective practices and relations"[163] kept alive through relationships of recognition and love. Axel Honneth specifies that there are not "special, freestanding" types of actions through which reciprocal recognition is expressed, but that reciprocal recognition is rather "an extra dimension" in the actions through which we express our commitment to and participate in the institutions of ethical life.[164]

We should note here that according to Molly Farneth, Hegel defines what proper neighbor love is when, at the end of the Spirit chapter of *Phenomenology,* he describes the conflict between two individuals, "the wicked consciousness" and "the judging consciousness." The first individual, acknowledging that there is a duty of indeterminate content, and nevertheless claiming to be "both dutiful and virtuous," decides to embrace his or her subjectivity and run the risk of coming into conflict with others. The second individual, by contrast, believes that duty has an objective component that does not "simply arise from within a particular individual," and therefore he or she accuses the first one of "evil and hypocrisy." The problem, however, is that the second individual is busier judging the wicked consciousness than engaging in "dutiful action" him or herself. In reality, "for the judging consciousness, every action is suspect," because nobody can detach him or herself from his or her particularity even when making every effort to fulfil

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[163] Honneth, *Pathologies,* 50. We should add that according to Honneth's persuasive interpretation, all the institutions of ethical life that Hegel refers to have "a positive legal framework" sanctioned by the state that guarantees that they will "continue in existence" and be "accessible to all members of society without any restrictions." This is why he cannot consider "friendship" as an institution of ethical life. Honneth argues that if the definition of an "institution" is broadened to include "action practices" with "the form of intersubjectively shared routines and habits" that "have enough 'firmness' and stability not to be permanently subject to the 'caprice' of our feelings," then "friendship" would be an institution to be added to the first domain of value of ethical life. This would be consistent with Hegel's understanding of the sphere of ethical life as a whole as "communicative relations" that "have an institutional character in the sense that they represent habits with sufficiently robust associated motivations" and "are open to internal changes and new adaptations" at the same time. See Honneth, 68-72.

[164] Honneth, 51.

the duty. As a result, in its judgment, "the judging consciousness exposes *itself* as base and hypocritical."[165]

The declaration of the judging consciousness brings the wicked consciousness to make a confession. Confession to Hegel "is not an abasement, a humiliation, a throwing-away" of the penitent "in relation to the other." The penitent's "utterance is not a one-sided affair, which would establish his [or her] disparity with the other: on the contrary, he [or she] gives himself [or herself] utterance solely on account of his [or her] having seen his [or her] identity with the other," and expects the other to contribute his or her part.[166] In the confession, the wicked consciousness recognizes that he or she is accountable to the judging consciousness, and that the latter is right in considering that he or she is "a particular and fallible individual." The wicked consciousness points out as well that the same goes for the judging consciousness.[167]

It takes the judging consciousness a little while, but finally his or her hard heart breaks, he or she sees him or herself in the wicked consciousness and offers forgiveness.[168] He or she does not offer forgiveness with a condescending attitude. His or her forgiveness includes the acknowledgment that both consciousnesses are fallible and "can be wrong about the content or meaning of their own actions."[169] Through the acts of confession and forgiveness, the two consciousnesses achieve reconciliation and reciprocal recognition.[170] Eventually, the acts of confession and forgiveness will be

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[165] Farneth, *Hegel's Social Ethics*, 65-68.

[166] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 405. The quotes are from § 666.

[167] Farneth, *Hegel's Social Ethics*, 69.

[168] Farneth, 72.

[169] Farneth, 74.

[170] Farneth, 72.

repeated, and any of the consciousnesses can be either the penitent or the forgiver, because they "stand in equal positions of responsibility" to each other for their commitments, and "could come into conflict again" over judgments or actions.[171]

In their acts of confession and forgiveness, the two individuals view and treat each other as they treat themselves, they recognize each other as sources of authority and accountability, they acknowledge their unity with each other, they find themselves in each other, in short, they love each other. We need reciprocal recognition in order to actualize neighbor love. Neighbor love requires a symmetrical distribution of power. All the involved participants in a relationship of love need to be in a position in which they can exercise authority and be accountable for it. Neighbor love is not possible if one of the participants in the relationship stands in a position of domination and holds all the authority and none of the accountability. Love can indeed, according to Farneth's reading of Hegel, be a source of social cohesion. It will not be cohesion in the sense of undifferentiated unity or politics without conflict. It will be cohesion in the sense of a standing together in relationships, social practices, and institutions in the midst of ongoing conflict and difference.[172]

The Structural Affinity between Family and State:
The State as the Embodiment of Love through the Law

Neither marriage/family nor the state have their foundation in a contract, according to Hegel (§ 75, 85-86). In the case of marriage, although it does begin in contract, with two persons who arbitrarily choose each other, "it is precisely a contract to

[171] Farneth, 79.

[172] Farneth, "How to 'Love Thy Neighbor.'"

supersede [*aufheben*] the standpoint of contract, the standpoint from which persons are regarded in their individuality as subsistent units" (§ 163R, 165). In the case of the state, it can neither be "a contract of all with all, or of all with the monarch and the government" (§ 75R, 85). Such a thing would imply to Hegel the impossible presupposition that an individual has the "arbitrary will to separate himself [sic] from the state" (§ 75A, 86). Hegel says that contrary to the comprehension of the state as based on a contract, "we are already citizens of the state by birth," and "permission to enter a state or leave it must be given by the state" (§ 75A, 86).

Hegel has three reasons to reject the view of marriage/family and state as institutions based on contracts. The first is that contracts proper "only concern abstract personality as such," that is, they only view the contracting parties in their condition of persons who assume the particular commitments specified in the contract, whereas both family and state involve our whole persons and "presuppose substantial relations" (§ 40R, 56). The second reason is that contracts are "contingent or optional" in the sense that it is not necessary to enter into a contractual relationship in order "to be fully human," and that the participation in a contractual relationship will "not significantly affect who I am."[173] Instead, to Hegel to enter the married state is both "our objective determination" and "our ethical duty" (§ 162R, 164), and being part of family does affect who we are to the point that "one is in it not as an independent person but as a member" (§ 158, 162). Similarly, Hegel argues that "it is absolutely necessary for every individual to be a citizen of a state," (§ 75A, 86), and that it is only as member of a state that "the individual himself [sic] has objectivity, truth, and ethical life" (§ 258R, 229). The third

[173] Westphal, *Hegel*, 39.

reason is that contractual relationships are self-centered; they serve as means for the attainment of our private ends. Hegel, on the contrary, abhors marriage being "degraded to the level of reciprocal use governed by contract" (§ 161A, 164). And the state is to Hegel the individual's "final end;" it has "supreme right against the individual," who in turn has "the supreme duty" of being "a member of the state" (§ 258, 228).

Hegel asseverates that "the ethical aspect of marriage consists in the parties' consciousness of this unity as their substantial aim, and so in their love, trust, and common sharing of their entire existence as individuals" (§ 163, 165). Marriage, then, "is not simply the means to something other than itself, but is itself the end, the goal, the aim," of something that is "not a fact," but "a task" requiring certain attitudes (love and trust), and certain things to do (sharing of their entire existence). The parties do not lose their individualities; it is as individuals that they share their existence, and "in sharing they create a reality which is more than the sum of their individualities."[174]

The state is to Hegel "a We of the same sort as the family."[175] We could say that the ethical aspect of the state consists in the parties' (citizens') consciousness of this unity as their substantial aim, and so in their patriotism and common sharing of their entire existence as individuals. Also the state is a task that requires the active participation of all individuals, in a affective way, through the sentiment of patriotism,[176] as well as in a political and cultural way. In the strictly political sense it means the "self-determining action in accordance with laws and principles," that is, the "active citizen involvement in

[174] Westphal, 49.

[175] Westphal, 50.

[176] See above pages 98-99 how Hegel defines patriotism.

determining the laws which regulate individual behavior."[177] It is "infinitely important and divine," says Hegel, "that the duties of the state and the rights of the citizens, as well as the rights of the state and the duties of the citizens" are defined by law (§ 258R, Hegel's note, 233). As the laws are discussed, approved, and put into practice, citizens take on their rights and duties, aware of the fact that they "have duties to the state to the extent that they also have rights against it (§ 261, 236), inasmuch as "in the state duty and right are united in one and the same relation" (§ 261R, 236). Patriotism and law accomplish in the state what love as feeling and activity accomplish in the family.[178]

Hegel also makes an implicit comparison between the role of sexuality in marriage and the role of civil society in the state. In marriage, says Hegel, "the sensuous moment, the one proper to natural life, is put into its ethical place as something only consequential and accidental, belonging to the external existence of the ethical bond, which indeed can subsist exclusively in reciprocal love and support" (§ 164, 166-167). That means that sexuality is not viewed merely as the fulfillment of "psychobiological needs" nor as "the be-all and end-all of human life and love," but as "the outward and visible expression of an inward and invisible love."[179] Similarly, Hegel argues that the economic activity of civil society is put into its ethical place in the state when it stops being "an end on its own terms" and instead "is transformed by becoming an external embodiment of the We which is the state."[180] In Merold Westphal's words, the state is

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[177] Westphal, *Hegel*, 52. Westphal adds on the same page that "it is debatable whether Hegel fully appreciates his own requirement for political participation and whether the constitutional monarchy he envisages provides sufficiently for it."

[178] Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics," 19.

[179] Westphal, *Hegel*, 47.

[180] Westphal, 53.

rational "only insofar as economic life is transformed to become the expression of noneconomic values."[181]

The affinity between marriage/family and state is not only structural; it is also thematic. This is obvious in the correspondence between love as attitude in the family and the sentiment of patriotism as love of country. However, this thematic affinity also appears in the correspondence between love as activity in the family and law in the state. Through the law, the state becomes "the embodiment of love."[182] In the same direction, Robert R. Williams argues that "the state is supposed to mediate the structures of difference constitutive of civil society and to bring difference back to the unity of a community with a sense of joint membership and shared identity similar to the family."[183] This is what the state does. It broadens the sense of joint membership, participation and shared identity, characteristic of the family, to the wider society, converting it into a vigorous community.[184]

The Theological Foundation of Hegel's Political Love

Hegel considers that the state has a "divine aspect" that gives it "being in and for itself" as well as "majesty and absolute authority" (§ 258R, 230). Moreover, the existence of the state conforms to "God's way in the world," and the state's full actualization is "God" (§ 258A, 233-234). In that sense, the state has a religious foundation.

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[181] Westphal, 54.

[182] Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics," 23. Westphal adds on the same page that Hegel does not answer how the state can be "the embodiment of love." According to Westphal, he does not answer what the laws must be in order "to provide to each citizen that sense of belonging, that sense of really mattering to others, in short, that sense of being loved that makes one's homeland truly a home for body, soul, and spirit."

[183] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 263.

[184] Williams, 263.

To Hegel it is important that we define what exactly we mean when we talk about religion.[185] Religion proper, according to Hegel, concerns itself through "intuition, feeling, [and] representational knowledge," with "God as the unrestricted principle and cause on which everything hangs" (§ 270R, 243). Therefore, "it is in being… related to religion that state, laws, and duties alike acquire for consciousness their supreme confirmation and their supreme obligatoriness" (§ 270R, 243–44). However, religion is also what provides "the place where human beings are always assured of finding a consciousness of the unchangeable, of the highest freedom and satisfaction, even within all the mutability of the world and despite the frustration of their aims and the loss of their interests and possessions" (§ 270R, 244).[186]

Since the state conforms to God's way in the world and is "spirit that is present in the world" (§ 270R, 243), Hegel opposes the form of religion that commands "indifference to worldly interests, the march of events, and current affairs," and only offers itself "as a solace in face of injustice or as hope in compensation for loss" (§ 270R, 243). He also opposes the form of religion that pretends to be "sufficient to determine and administer the law," and reminds us that certain theocratic regimes have led "to the harshest bondage in the fetters of superstition and the degradation of human beings to a level below that of animals" (§ 270R, 243). Hegel also opposes the form of religion that

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[185] Hegel says that "we ought not speak of religion in wholly general terms," and that we even "need a power to protect us from it in some of its forms and to espouse against them the rights of reason and self-consciousness" (§ 270R, 243).

[186] In this last quotation, Hegel is referring to religion as one of the components (together with art and scientific philosophy) of what he calls "absolute spirit," on which his account of what he calls "objective spirit" (which is the purpose of the *Philosophy of Right*) depends. Hegel postulates that although participation in the institutions of ethical life allows for the "overcoming of one's alienation from the world," the reconciliation of human beings with "the goodness and purposiveness of the universe" is only complete in religion, art, and scientific philosophy. See Frederick Neuhouser, "On Detaching Hegel's Social Philosophy from His Metaphysics," *The Owl of Minerva* 36, no. 1 (2004): 38.

gives rise to "the religious fanaticism which, like fanaticism in politics, discards all political institutions and legal order as barriers cramping the inner life of the heart and incompatible with its infinity" (§ 270R, 245). Such a form of religion, based on the belief that God can provide guidance in a direct way, can only produce "folly, abomination, and the demolition of the whole ethical order" (§ 270R, 245). Finally, Hegel rejects the form of religion that claims "as its own the spiritual as such and so the whole ethical sphere," conceiving the "state as a mere mechanical framework for the attainment of external, non-spiritual, ends" (§ 270R, 248-249). A form of religion that claims "unrestricted and unconditional authority" (§ 270R, 252) is unacceptable to Hegel.

The religion that Hegel identifies as being "of a genuine kind" is a form of religion that "recognizes the state and upholds it," "has a position and an external expression of its own," and is entitled to the "assistance and protection" of the state "in the furtherance of its religious ends" (§ 270R, 246). Hegel goes so far as to say that "since religion is the moment that integrates the state at the deepest level of disposition, the state should even require all its citizens to belong to a church" (§ 270R, 246). Hegel does not want the state to "interfere with the content" of the faith of a particular church, and he considers that it should have the broadmindedness to tolerate minority communities "which on religious grounds decline to recognize even their direct duties to the state," and will only fulfil them in a passive way (§ 270R, 246-247).[187] In addition, Hegel does not see the Christian schisms, and in particular the Reformation, as a "bad thing for the state."[188] On the contrary, "far from its being or its having been a misfortune

[187] Hegel explicitly mentions Quakers and Anabaptists as examples of these minority communities. See § 270R, Hegel's note, 247.

[188] Knowles, *Hegel*, 322.

for the state that the church is divided, it is only as a result of that division that the state has been able to reach its appointed end as a self-consciously rational and ethical organization" (§ 270R, 253). "The state first emerged historically as an independent rationality"[189] as mediator of the religious disputes and differences that broke out after the Reformation.

The reference that Hegel makes to the Jews deserves a special mention. They should be granted civil rights quite simply because they are human beings (§ 270R, Hegel's note, 247). Even if it were true that Jews tended to isolate themselves, the state cannot pay them back in kind. By recognizing the Jews, and doing it without requesting that they first relinquish "their peculiar customs and usages,"[190] the state "not only allows the Jews to be;" Hegel says that "it also accords them a sense of worth and significance that in turn gives them some sense of being at home within, and of 'having a stake' in, the state."[191] We could therefore say, with Shlomo Avineri, that Hegel "makes Jewish emancipation into a criterion of whether a state is conscious of its own universal nature."[192]

Although Hegel does not say it in explicit terms, the form of religion of a genuine kind that he favors is Protestantism, and more specifically, Lutheranism, and as Merold Westphal correctly says, this does not mean that he wants a state run by Lutheran pastors. What he does want is the life of the state permeated by the spirit of Protestantism.[193]

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[189] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 329.

[190] Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 170.

[191] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 333.

[192] Avineri, *Hegel's Theory*, 170.

[193] Westphal, *Hegel*, 180.

Hegel, in Westphal's view, does not associate Protestantism first with the doctrine of justification by faith alone, but with "an ellipse whose two foci are the consecration of the Host by faith alone and the repudiation of the three monastic vows along with the life-world they symbolize."[194] The first focus means that each individual has "the responsibility for judging what is true and right and making it a self-transforming personal possession," even to the point of "making the individual's reason the criterion or standard by which the judgment is to be made."[195] The second focus means that the sacred and the secular, or in other terms, state and religion, can be reconciled, and in this way, the state turns out to be "the divine will, in the sense that it is spirit present on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of a world" (§ 270R, 244).[196] Protestantism is to Hegel the form of religion that separates itself from "the isolation of inwardness or otherworldliness" and becomes involved in the world, and that at the same time wakes the society up "from secular self-sufficiency" and makes it ponder over "its ethical and religious foundations."[197] Hegel cannot conceive of a "revolution without a reformation," and vice versa, a "religious reformation" would be inconceivable without "a political and economic revolution."[198]

The form of Protestantism that Hegel favored did not match one specific denomination. Many who called themselves Protestants did not display what Hegel defined as the Protestant spirit, and on the contrary, many who did not consider

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[194] Westphal, 159.

[195] Westphal, 154. Westphal considers that Hegel is unfaithful to Luther when he makes the "principle of subjectivity" slip into a "principle of autonomy." See Westphal, 151-58.

[196] Westphal, 160.

[197] Westphal, 161.

[198] Westphal, 176.

themselves Protestants did display the Protestant spirit.[199] Besides, the persons and communities that embodied the Protestant spirit needed to face the challenge and questioning from different religious views. In this manner, it would be correct to say with Robert R. Williams that the state, as Hegel conceives it, has a "religious basis" that does not suppress difference. This religious basis preserves difference and sustains a state that is "inclusive, nonsectarian, religiously and culturally pluralist, and independent of any particular religion."[200]

Hegel Subjected to the Motivation and Enablement Test

Hegel says that "it is a striking modern innovation to enquire continually about the motives of human actions" (§ 121A, 120). We presuppose, says Hegel, "a gulf between the objectivity of actions and their inner side, the subjective motives" (§ 121A, 120), together with an ability of each individual to distance him- or herself in a reflective way from the social norms. Therefore we can look "into people's hearts" (§ 121A, 120) and ask what motives cause an individual to act in a certain way. Hegel considers that the interest in doing what is good and right, as well as the satisfaction of desire and the gratification of passion are legitimate motives of actions, and notes that they do not need to contradict each other. We can also look at the issue from the other end and ask if a person is motivated and has the capacities that he or she needs in order to do what we judge to be good and right. That said, we should also take into account that an individual has already been socialized into certain social institutions before he or she is able to break up with them in a reflective way. No individual can constitute him- or herself apart from

[199] Westphal, 180-81.

[200] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics*, 332.

the social institutions, and the social institutions are not "external structures" that we can "choose to enter in order to pursue ends or satisfy needs" that we have acquired "prior to, or outside of, social life."[201] This also means that an individual can be doing what is good and right without having a "conscious" and voluntary relation to the social institutions of which he or she is part,[202] and that laws and institutions can embody love "independently of whatever subjective relation (such as affirmation, rejection, or indifference) social members might have to their laws and institutions."[203]

Hegel argues that the process of socialization into the institutions of Ethical Life carried out mainly through education forms our "desires, dispositions, and values" into patterns of habit that give us a "second nature" (§ 151, 159) and constitute us "motivationally" in a way that makes our participation in those institutions "largely spontaneous."[204] Hegel gives the example of the ability to "walk the streets at night in safety" that individuals in certain countries can enjoy. The thought does not strike them "that this might be otherwise," because the "habit of feeling safe" has given them a "second nature" that spares them from having to reflect on the fact that this ability to walk the streets at night in safety "is due solely to the working of particular institutions" (§ 268A, 241).

However, a love that is only objectively embodied will not be complete without the subjective appropriation and consent to the laws and institutions. Hegel prefers that individuals have a conscious and voluntary relation to their social institutions. He goes to

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[201] Neuhouser, *Foundations*, 14.

[202] Neuhouser, 84.

[203] Neuhouser, 82.

[204] Neuhouser, 112.

the extreme of saying that a human being will die if habit erases "the opposition between subjective consciousness and spiritual activity" and makes the human being reach the point of feeling so "completely at home in life" that it becomes spiritually and physically dull" (§ 151A, 159-160). Habit, in addition, does not necessarily deprive us of the ability of giving an account of why we act as we do if asked nor of questioning whether a certain habit remains advisable.[205] Hegel calls that conscious and voluntary relation to the social institutions "disposition" (§ 158, 162). This means two things: that the individuals can distance themselves from their institutions, and that they are "the producers," or more precisely, "the re-producers of their institutions" in the sense that "they see those institutions as sustained by and therefore dependent on their own collective activity."[206]

In order to be the re-producers of the institutions that embody love, all that is needed is that individuals act according to their "particular" wills. That a will is particular does not necessarily mean that it is egoistic and self-interested in a very narrow sense. Normally, Hegel would say, we take into consideration that we are connected to others, through sentiment or obligation.[207] Frederick Neuhouser explains that "particular" means two things: that it comes from the "distinctive" position that a certain individual holds in the world;[208] and that it comes from the spiritual inclinations of an individual.[209] For Hegel, this means that individuals "can work for the collective good without sacrificing"

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[205] Neuhouser, 112-13.

[206] Neuhouser, 87.

[207] Neuhouser, 89.

[208] Neuhouser, 90. Neuhouser adds that "distinctive" does not necessarily mean "unique," because many individuals can share the same distinctiveness. See Neuhouser, 301-02n9.

[209] Neuhouser, 90. Neuhouser explains that "spiritual" means that they are not merely sensible, immediate, contingent, and animal-like, but that they are inclinations that correspond to what the individual, through the process of socialization, has come to view as defining who he or she is and what his or her ethical duties are. See Neuhouser, 302n10.

their particular wills.[210] They learn that it is only through their membership in the family, the civil society, and the state that they gain recognition in their "own eyes and in the eyes of others" (§ 207, 197) and that they are fully who they should be. Hegel rules out the possibility for individuals to be mere "discrete, unattached beings whose interests are wholly private," and whose membership in the institutions of ethical life could have "a purely instrumental significance."[211] Hegel wants us to honor the fact that we are bodily subjects with concrete material needs, beings who depend on each other for the satisfaction of those needs. An identity that would try disengaging us from the interdependence founded on our "material neediness" would be a lie. We should be motivated to find fulfillment in identities united to our membership in the institutions of ethical life that attend to our mutual material neediness.[212]

In their condition of members of civil society, individuals can "pursue their own particular ends"[213] and simultaneously act in accord with the good of the social whole without even having to have a conscious relation with that goal.[214] Put in Hegel's own words, this means that "if I further my ends, I further the ends of the universal, and this in turn furthers my ends" (§ 184A, 182). Conversely, as members of a family or a state,

[210] Neuhouser, 91. It should be clarified that a purely egoistic will does fit into the definition of "particular will." Pursuing purely egoistic wills is not of necessity harmful to the social whole, but Hegel's presumption is that individuals will act taking into consideration the interests of other persons besides themselves and be willing to subordinate private interests to more universal ends. See Neuhouser, 91-92.

[211] Neuhouser, 92.

[212] Neuhouser, "Detaching Hegel's Social Philosophy," 41-42.

[213] Neuhouser, *Foundations*, 87.

[214] Neuhouser, 88.

individuals need preferable to be able to "consciously embrace the good of the whole as their own."[215]

According to Hegel, only certain forms of art, religion, and philosophy are compatible with the purpose of objectifying love, precisely the forms of art, religion, and philosophy that teach us what love is and why we should try to enact love in an objective way in our societies. Those particular forms of art, religion, and philosophy can contribute to giving us the right "subjective disposition," and committing us again and again to the purpose of objectifying love through our participation in the institutions of ethical life. Hegel also recognizes that philosophy is out of reach to many members of society, but not so art and even less so religion, and this is the reason why he deals extensively with identifying the kind of religion that would cause objective love to be achievable.[216]

By making membership in a family imperative, Hegel agrees with the fact that we need to be loved in order to love. Political love is to Hegel neither wholly spontaneous nor wholly deliberate. Hegel seems to have found a middle way between spontaneity and deliberateness. To Hegel, the connection between religion and the possibility of objectifying political love is close and unbreakable.

Hegel is right that the idea of subjecting an author to the motivation and enablement test is historically conditioned. It is, as he calls it, a "modern innovation" characteristic of a certain epoch "inquire continually about the motives of human actions" and "presuppose a gulf between the objectivity of actions and their inner side, the

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[215] Neuhouser, 91.

[216] Neuhouser, "Detaching Hegel's Social Philosophy," 39.

subjective motives." Hegel assumes that we through "rationality" can find out what the right action would be, and he defines "the higher moral standpoint" as the ability to find "satisfaction in the action" and advance "beyond the gulf between the self-consciousness of a human being and the objectivity of his [sic] deed" (§ 121A, 120-121). Hegel has provided the readers with tools and learning to enable us to do what he estimates is the right thing to do, but he fails in the motivation test because he does not answer what would be required to find satisfaction in the action and bridge the gulf between what he has called the self-consciousness of a human being and the objectivity of the deed.

CHAPTER 4

KIERKEGAARD'S *WORKS OF LOVE*

Project for the Chapter

Søren Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* was published on September 29, 1847, in an edition of 500–525 copies. So important was it that in 1852 it became one of only a few of his works published in a second edition during his lifetime.[1] I agree with George Pattison that it is "the central work in Kierkegaard's entire authorship."[2] Regarding the work's subtitle, "Some Christian Deliberations in the Form of Discourses," Kierkegaard explained that by his choice of the word "deliberation" he was presupposing that the reader does not "know essentially what love is" no matter how much they accept the commandment to love the neighbor. To Kierkegaard, a "deliberation" intends to have the effect of a "gadfly" that has its time "before action," and aims to provoke the reader to sharpen his or her thought.[3] The word "discourse" has a similarly precise meaning to

[1] The others were *Either/Or*, *For Self-Examination*, *Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*, *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air*, *Practice in Christianity*, *This Must Be Said*, *The Moment*, and *The Concept of Anxiety*. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), ix.

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (New York: HarperPerennial, 2009), ix. The quote is from George Pattison's Foreword.

[3] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 469. The quote is from JP 2, 1613 / Pap. VIII[1] A 293. From now on, all the citations from this edition of *Works of Love* will appear in brackets in the text with the corresponding page number. Occasionally, as I do in this footnote, I will cite Kierkegaard's journals, notebooks, and loose papers and will do it mainly from the collection in seven volumes edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by G. Malantschuk, with index by N. Hong and C. Barker, Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, eds., *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, 7 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967-1978). Following what is usual in Kierkegaardian circles, I will refer to this collection as "JP," with the volume number after a space and then the entry number after a comma. After a slash, I will then give the reference to the Danish original, *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, vols 1–16, ed. P.

Kierkegaard. Rather than present authoritative teaching, "discourse" invites the readers to ponder the subject matter "in the light of their own questions and concerns" and prepare to let themselves be changed.[4] Kierkegaard does not have patience with questions asked out of "curiosity and idleness" (95) nor with the wish "to remain at [a] protracted distance" (96). Kierkegaard makes it clear from the very title of his book that "Christian love is sheer action" (99), and that neither his own nor his readers' efforts in defining love with accuracy should be an excuse "to find an escape, to waste time," (96) and thereby "to defer action."[5] So that there is no doubt, Kierkegaard insists that "what love does, that it is; what it is, that it does—at one and the same moment" (280).

Love, to Kierkegaard, is "something everyone can do or everyone ought to be able to do" (359), and therefore it is not at all "an obligation or accomplishment for the specially endowed, the extraordinary."[6] Kierkegaard also makes it clear that he does not want to encourage anybody "to get busy judging" others. What he intends with his book is to speak "admonishingly to the single individual," to each particular "listener" as well as to himself (14). He does it in the following terms: "You have nothing at all to do with

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A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr and E. Torsting. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909–48); supplemented by Niels Thulstrup; (Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1968–78), also using the abbreviations accepted in Kierkegaardian circles. From now on, I will provide these citations in the text in brackets. At times, however, I will cite from the newer edition Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al., 11 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007-2020); Bruce H. Kirmmse and Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, eds., *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, 12 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007-2019).When the citation is from this edition, I will also do it in the text, as accepted in Kierkegaardian circles, using the abbreviation "KJN" with the volume number after a space and then the entry number after a comma. After a slash, I will then give the reference to the newest Danish original, also using the abbreviations accepted in Kierkegaardian circles, Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al., 28 vols. (Copenhagen: Gad, 1994-2012).

[4] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, xvi. The quotation is from George Pattison's Foreword.

[5] M. Jamie Ferreira, *Kierkegaard* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 133.

[6] Bruce H. Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 308.

what others do unto you—it does not concern you;… You have to do only with what you do unto others, or how you take what others do unto you" (383-384).

Works of Love is divided into two series of deliberations, most of them structured around key biblical verses. The fact that in the first edition each part has a separate title page, and that the second part starts with new pagination, has generated doubts about the unity of the work. However, as Pattison has observed, the whole book appears to have been written between January and July of 1847, with a "consistency of thought and style" that suggests the author knew "where he was going" as soon as "he began writing in earnest."[7] Neither can it be a coincidence that there is only one "Conclusion" to the deliberations— at the end of the second part.[8] According to M. Jamie Ferreira, "the deliberations are meant to be read as a whole," and "qualifications are made in certain deliberations that apply to others, though they will not be repeated there." "We are," as Ferreira says, "expected to remember as we go on from one deliberation to the next."[9] This may also be the reason why Kierkegaard himself says in the "Preface," repeated at the beginning of each part of the book, that his deliberations "will be understood slowly but then also easily, whereas they will surely become very difficult if someone by hasty and curious reading makes them very difficult for himself" (3 and 207). Meanwhile, George Pattison, without disregarding the connections between the deliberations, maintains that each of them is "a self-sufficient entity," and that it "can be read," "appreciated," and "made fruitful in its own terms."[10] Pattison adds that Kierkegaard

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[7] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, x. The quotation is from George Pattison's Foreword.

[8] Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 146n12.

[9] Ferreira, 141.

[10] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, xvi. The quotation is from George Pattison's Foreword.

would feel himself justified in writing the book if even one reader got something valuable out of even only one of the deliberations.[11] That corresponds to what Kierkegaard tells his sister-in-law Sophie Henriette Glahn Kierkegaard in the letter he sent with his own copy of the first edition of the book. Although he makes it clear that he is not committing her to read it, he says that she might find it worthwhile to read either the whole book or "any single part of it" (474–75).

Bruce Kirmmse, for his part, finds a clear thematic difference between the two parts of *Works of Love*. The first part, he says, puts forward the notions of the neighbor and the demands of the Law, and compels us "to confront the radical absoluteness of Christian ethics and our inability to live accordingly." In that way, he continues, "we are led to the threshold of grace." The second part, he argues, invites the reader to identify with somebody who "has been through the crushing experience of the Law," and who attempts, by the grace of God, to be "the loving one."[12]

M. Jamie Ferreira does not agree with Kirmmse. She considers the decision to publish two series of lectures on works of love not to have been guided "by any theological or concept rationale," and reminds us that in fact, Kierkegaard had initially had the intention to do a single series of lectures "on erotic love, friendship, and love" (JP 5, 5996 / Pap. VIII[1] A 82).[13] She does argue that the book alternates between "two different rhetorical contexts, or contexts of discussion": the context of "commandment"

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[11] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*. The quotation is from George Pattison's Foreword.

[12] Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden*, 312.

[13] M. Jamie Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 102.

that concentrates "on (formal) *unconditionality*," and the context of "fulfillment" that concentrates "on (material) '*actuality*.'"[14]

In this chapter, after pointing out that love is to Kierkegaard a need deeply rooted in our nature as human beings, I will offer a lengthy account of the distinction that the author makes between preferential and commanded love. It will include an explanation of how commanded love to Kierkegaard does not necessarily conflict with preferential love, but requires us to turn the subjects of preferential love into "neighbors." My account will also explain how commanded love does not conflict with self-love as long as we turn it into what Kierkegaard calls "proper self-love." Then, I will present the reasons why Kierkegaard considers commanded love to be a concept that could not have arisen in a human heart, and more specifically, a Christian concept. Subsequently, I will argue that although Kierkegaard does not explicitly associate commanded love with any political project in particular, he does presuppose and favor a very distinct social and political order, the model of the enlightened despotism of the first half of the nineteenth century in Denmark. Kierkegaard cannot hide his dissatisfaction with the dissolution of that social and political order that was taking place as he was writing *Works of Love*. Later on, I will expound on some of the political proposals inspired by commanded love that Kierkegaard puts forth, despite not wanting to make any proposals of that kind. Finally, I will subject Kierkegaard and his concept of commanded love to the motivation and enablement test.

[14] Ferreira, 101. See also M. Jamie Ferreira, "Equality, Impartiality, and Moral Blindness in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 25, no. 1 (1997): 72-74, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40018069.

Preferential Love and Neighbor Love

Kierkegaard argues that "a life without loving is not worth living" (38); "to love people is the only thing worth living for, and without this love you are not really living" (375). Moreover, "to love and be loved by an individual human being" is to Kierkegaard a need that is "deeply… rooted in human nature," and belongs "essentially… to being human" (155). "Who, indeed," Kierkegaard exclaims, "has ever been more impoverished than someone who has never loved!" (175). Kierkegaard repudiates the person who thinks, with "proud independence," that he or she "has no need to feel loved," while he or she, on the other hand, "needs other people—not in order to be loved by them but in order to love them, in order to have someone to love" (39). This attitude of false independence, says Kierkegaard, would not have a purpose other than gratifying the person's "proud self-esteem" (39). What can happen, Kierkegaard implies, is that a person could find him or herself in the situation of having to continue loving without being loved in return, because this is what we have to do, regardless of the response with which our love for the other is met (39).[15] Kierkegaard does not recommend that we do "without the other's love as the norm;" he reminds us that the "need to be loved" (39) "does not preclude a willingness to be hated by the other, should that be the response our love for the other meets."[16] Kierkegaard says that we have to love the other person with all his or her "imperfections and weaknesses," also when he or she "has changed completely," when he or she "no longer loves you but perhaps turns away indifferent or turns away to love another," and even when he or she "betrays and denies you" (174).

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[15] Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 39.

[16] Ferreira, 39.

There are at least two ways of loving: the one Kierkegaard calls preferential, passionate, celebrated, spontaneous, or worldly, that includes erotic love and friendship; and the one he calls commanded or Christian love, that is synonymous with love for the neighbor.

Preferential love depends on "inclination" (50) and on the "good fortune" of falling in love and finding "this one and only beloved" or "this one and only friend" (51). We might need to "go a long way"— so long that we might need to "wander the world around" —in order to "find the beloved or the friend," and nothing guarantees that we will succeed (51). Once we have found the beloved or the friend, to love him or her with preferential love means to encircle and love "this one and only beloved," or "this one and only friend," (53), to the exclusion of all others (52). Kierkegaard adds that "admiration" is an intrinsic component of a relationship of erotic love or friendship; "the more intense the admiration is, the better" (54). Kierkegaard accepts that the beloved or the friend can be loved both "faithfully and tenderly" (53) with preferential love, making erotic love "life's most beautiful happiness" and making friendship "the greatest temporal good" (267). Since the beloved and the friend are "the choice of passion and of inclination," there is no need to command preferential love (373). What defines both erotic love and friendship is their objects, that is, the person with whom you fall in love or the person with whom you become friends (66). This also means that the beloved and the friend can change and that we can lose them. If death happens, it will, whether we like it or not, deprive us of the beloved or the friend (65).

Kierkegaard argues that two different forms of "selfish" self-love (151) corrupt preferential love. One is the form of self-love that can eventually taint preferential love,

for instance the self-love that makes "an unfaithful person" want "to jilt the beloved," or "to leave the friend in the lurch" (54). The other is the form of self-love that belongs to preferential love by its very nature. Kierkegaard considers that "even if passionate preference had no other selfishness in it, it would still have this, that consciously or unconsciously there is self-willfulness in it—unconsciously insofar as it is in the power of natural predispositions, consciously insofar as it utterly gives itself to this power and assents to it" (55). Although this self-willfulness expresses itself in "devotion and unlimited giving of oneself" (54) to "one single person," the fact is that precisely in this "devotion and unlimited giving of oneself" the lover is relating him or herself to him or herself in self-love (55) and the beloved or the friend have become "the other self" or "the other I" (53). Kierkegaard makes the astute observation that "even though self-love is reprehensible, it frequently seems as if a person does not have the strength to be alone in his self-love." He says that the two I's need to find each other so that they can both "find the strength for the self-esteem of self-love" (57). To Kierkegaard, the lover demonstrates that his or her love is actually self-love when he or she says, "I cannot love anyone else, I cannot stop loving, I cannot give up this love, it would be the death of me, I am dying of love" (55).

Commanded love, on the contrary, does not depend on inclination, attraction, nor good fortune. It is a "responsibility," "a way of being for another" that is not "optional."[17] The neighbor whom we shall love is "everyone" (44), "the whole human race, all people, even the enemy" (19). One "single person whom one does not wish to love" and whose needs one does not care about is enough to disqualify a person from this kind of love

[17] Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 132.

(49). Kierkegaard affirms that "there is not a single person in the whole world who is as surely and as easily recognized as the neighbor" (51–52), and he gives the following definition: "when you open the door that you shut in order to pray to God and go out the very first person you meet is the neighbor" (51). M. Jamie Ferreira is true to Kierkegaard here when she summarizes that our responsibility regarding commanded love should be determined by "the other's needs" rather than by "their attractiveness."[18] Kierkegaard says that the neighbor can indeed be "the ugly," who has nothing to offer to inclination and passion. There will be cases in which inclination and passion will merely turn away and say, "Is that anything to love!" (373). Love for the neighbor is not defined by the object, but "by love," says Kierkegaard (66). According to Kierkegaard, the neighbor is the one "whom one shall love," even when he or she is "the un-lovable object," because love for the neighbor "is not to find the lovable object but to find the un-lovable object lovable" (374).

To Kierkegaard, there is a sense in which differences do not matter and a sense in which they do matter when it comes to loving the neighbor. Differences do not matter when we are determining who one's neighbor is, because the neighbor is everyone, as articulated above. But differences do matter when we are determining how to love the neighbor, because the first ones we have to love are those we see, and what we have to see is precisely "their distinctive needs and the particular setting in which they live."[19] Kierkegaard says that "in loving the actual individual person it is important that one does not substitute an imaginary idea of how we think or could wish that this person should

[18] Ferreira, 132.

[19] Ferreira, 134.

be" (164). Kierkegaard insists that everyone should be loved according to his or her "distinctiveness" (269), not in domineering way and neither in a small-minded way. When we love in a domineering way, we lack the "flexibility" and "pliability to comprehend others." We demand our "own from everyone," we want "everyone to be transformed" in our image, we want everyone "to be trimmed according to" our "pattern for human beings," and if we make an exception with one particular person, it is only to impose on him or her our own idea of what he or she should become (270). Kierkegaard says that "the rigid and domineering person" displays the same features "whether he [or she] is a tyrant in an empire or a domestic tyrant in a little attic room." In a domineering way, he or she refuses "to go out of" him or herself; he or she wants quite simply "to crush the other person's distinctiveness or torment it to death" (270-271). In turn, the small-minded person is to Kierkegaard the "enviously imperious" and "cowardly timorous" person who does not recognize the distinctiveness he or she has been given and therefore cannot believe in nor promote the distinctiveness of anyone else (271). "The small-minded person" clings "to a very specific shape and form that he [or she] calls his [or her] own" and locks him or herself up in a frightened alliance with others who conform to that "very specific shape and form" (272).

Kierkegaard does not recommend commanded love at the expense of preferential love. "If in order to love the neighbor you would have to begin by giving up loving those for whom you have preference, the word 'neighbor' would be the greatest deception ever contrived" (61). What he proposes instead is that we "preserve love for the neighbor" in both "erotic love and friendship" (62). Considering the beloved or the friend as neighbors will purify erotic love and friendship from "the anxiety" that makes them "dependent

upon their objects," and that "can kindle jealousy" or "bring one to despair" (66). Considering the beloved or the friend as neighbors will also prevent us from loving them in what Kierkegaard calls "obedience," and "adoration" (19-20), that is, a relationship of love among human beings in which "the one worships and the other is the one worshiped" (125). "If your beloved or friend asks something of you that you, precisely because you honestly loved, had in concern considered would be harmful to him [sic], then you must bear a responsibility if you love by obeying instead of loving by refusing a fulfillment of the desire" (19–20), says Kierkegaard. So that there is no doubt, Kierkegaard adds: "If you can perceive what is best for him better than he can, you will not be excused because the harmful thing was his own desire, was what he himself asked for [sic]" (20). Only by loving the beloved as neighbor will it be possible for a "person aflame with erotic love… to give up the erotic love if the beloved required it" (21).

Just as Kierkegaard talks about a selfish self-love, he also talks about a "proper self-love" (18). It is only by loving ourselves in the right way that we can love the neighbor, to the point that "to love yourself in the right way and to love the neighbor correspond perfectly to one another; fundamentally they are one and the same thing" (22). Kierkegaard gives several examples of people who fail to love themselves properly: "the light-minded person [who] throws himself [sic] almost like a nonentity into the folly of the moment and makes nothing of it;" "the depressed person [who] desires to be rid of life, indeed, of himself [sic];" "someone [who] surrenders to despair because the world or another person has faithlessly left him [sic] betrayed;" "someone [who] self-tormentingly thinks to do God a service by torturing himself [sic];" and "a person [who] presumptuously lays violent hands upon himself [sic]" (23). In Kierkegaard's view,

people have to learn to love themselves in the right way. Kierkegaard is convinced that "the most dangerous traitor of all is the one every person has within himself [sic]," one that either makes us love ourselves in a selfish way or that holds us back from loving ourselves in the right way (23). To love ourselves in the right way means to preserve in it the love for the neighbor (62). It means to love the neighbor as "the merciful Samaritan" did (22), precisely because in a situation like the one in which the man who fell among robbers was, we would also need "a kind of care" that looks after the "the physical, material, [and] bodily pain and suffering."[20] It means not to love the neighbor more than ourselves, as we would do if we loved them in "obedience" and "adoration," precisely because we also would prefer that the other person abstain from fulfilling one of our desires if he or she perceives that that would be best for us. To Kierkegaard, it is inappropriate to love ourselves in obedience and adoration, or to dare "to love another person in this way," or to dare "to allow another person to love" us in this way (19). In short, to Kierkegaard it is not by chance that the commandment is to love the neighbor "as yourself," that is, we have to do it with "equal regard," not loving "ourselves more than others," nor loving "others more than ourselves."[21]

Neighbor love is to Kierkegaard "the highest a person is capable of doing," no matter how "ludicrous," "frustrating," or "inexpedient" it "may seem in the world" (86).

Neighbor Love as a Christian Concept

Kierkegaard first indicates that "neighbor love" is a Christian concept in the subtitle of his book, "Some Christian Deliberations in the Form of Discourses." This

[20] Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 34.

[21] Ferreira, 35.

means, first and foremost, that his book is "not about love but about works of love" (3). In a Christian sense, to Kierkegaard love means "the works of love."[22]

As noted at the outset, Kierkegaard introduces each of his book's two sets of deliberations with a "Preface." The first of those prefaces includes "guidance for the reader"[23] and a prayer. The second includes the same "guidance for the reader," but no prayer. As Ferreira aptly suggests, readers may need more than one reminder of how best to approach the book, but God only needs to hear the same prayer once.[24] In Ferreira's estimation, this prayer "sets in place at the outset the indispensable parameters of Kierkegaard's discussion of love's works."[25]

Kierkegaard's opening prayer deserves to be quoted *in extenso*,

> How could one speak properly about love if you were forgotten, you God of love, source of all love in heaven and on earth; you who spared nothing but in love gave everything; you who are love, so that one who loves is what he is only by being in you! How could one speak properly about love if you were forgotten, you who revealed what love is, you our Savior and Redeemer, who gave yourself in order to save all. How could one speak properly of love if you were forgotten, you Spirit of love, who take nothing of your own but remind us of that love-sacrifice, remind the believer to love as he is loved and his neighbor as himself! O Eternal Love, you who are everywhere present and never without witness where you are called upon… There are indeed only some works that human language specifically and narrowly calls works of love, but in heaven no work can be pleasing unless it is a work of love: sincere in self-renunciation, a need in love itself, and for that very reason without any claim of meritoriousness! (3–4).

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[22] In a Journal entry from 1849, Kierkegaard specifies that, Christianly, love cannot be a mere feeling: "This is the esthetic definition of love and therefore fits the erotic and everything of that nature. But from a Christian point of view love is the works of love. Christ's love was not intense feeling, a full heart, etc,; it was rather the work of love, which is his life" (JP 4, 2423 / Pap. X[1] A 489).

[23] Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 17.

[24] Ferreira, 17.

[25] Ferreira, 17.

To Kierkegaard, the Triune God is then, "the source of all love." Kierkegaard elaborates on it when he makes a comparison with the springs from which a lake emanates and argues that "just as the quiet lake originates deep down in hidden springs no eyes has seen, so also does a person's love originate even more deeply in God's love… Just as the quiet lake originates darkly in the deep spring, so a human being's love originates mysteriously in God's love" (9-10). Quoting 1 John 4, Kierkegaard states that "God is Love" (62) and that we can love because "God loved us first" (336). Love is the hallmark of humanity's likeness to God (62) and a gift that God "implanted in the human heart" (163). Not for nothing, "the first remark" ever made about humanity was God's remark that we need companionship, that "it is not good for the man to be alone" (154).[26] "We can be like God only in loving" (63). Yet these are not self-evident facts to Kierkegaard. "We have to believe in love—otherwise we simply will not notice that it exists" (16). We have to believe that God is love, that God implanted love in our hearts, and that we shall love. We even have to believe that there is love in others. As Kierkegaard says it, "love is to presuppose love; to have love is to presuppose love in others; to be loving is to presuppose that others are loving" (223). These are thoughts that, in a turn of phrase typical of Kierkegaard,[27] could not have arisen in any human being's heart. "Take," says Kierkegaard, "a pagan who is not spoiled by having learned thoughtlessly to patter Christianity by rote or has not been spoiled by the delusion of being a Christian—and this commandment, 'You *shall* love,' will not only surprise him

[26] Kierkegaard is referring to Genesis 2:18.

[27] Inspired by 1 Corinthians 2:9.

but will disturb him, will be an offense to him" (25). To Kierkegaard, there is no doubt that "the divine explanation of what love is" came about through Christianity (110).

Christianity is the belief that "God brings up love in a person… in order to send love out into the world, continually engaged in the task" (190). Christ was the perfect example of this. "In him," Kierkegaard says, "love was sheer action" (99). "There was no moment, not a single one in his life, when love in him was merely the inactivity of a feeling that hunts for words while it lets time slip by, or a mood that is its own gratification, dwells on itself while there is no task—no, his love was sheer action" (99–100). Referring to the exchange between Christ and Peter set forth in John 21:15–17, Kierkegaard argues that in the same way that Christ felt the incessant need to love, he also "humanly" felt the genuine need to "be loved by an individual human being" (155). Likewise should nobody deprive him- or herself from the blessing that it is to love and be loved (157). Kierkegaard does not understand that someone might want "to be exempt from loving as if it were a compulsory matter, a burden one wished to cast off" (172). Kierkegaard says that by abiding in Christ's love, every Christian should work "so that his [sic] love might become like this" (99).[28] Christ is the "prototype," the best model of how we should love (264).

[28] Kierkegaard refers to John 15:9–10. To abide in Christ's love means to keep his commandment to love "while recognizing," says Kyle A. Roberts in a specification that refers to page 99 in *Works of Love*, "that only because of Christ's abolishment of the law through the sheer action of love is such an aspiration even thinkable." See Kyle A. Roberts, "Lazarus: Kierkegaard's Use of a Destitute Beggard and a Resurrected Friend," in *Kierkegaard and the Bible*, ed. Lee C. Barrett and Jon Stewart, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception, and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 145. With an implicit reference to John 15:7, Merold Westphal points out that this dwelling or abiding that the gospel of John talks about, "in the history of Christian spirituality," means "the life of prayer." See Westphal, "The Politics of Love and Its Metaphysics," 33.

Kierkegaard repeats several times that God should be the middle term in any relationship of love: "Christianity teaches that love is a relationship between: a person—God—a person, that is, that God is the middle term" (107). This means that "it is God who is to teach each individual" in the relationship how he or she is to love (113). Otherwise, it is "the participants' merely human definition of what they want to understand by loving, what they want to require of each other, and their mutual judgment by virtue of that" that becomes "the highest judgment" (112). That God is the middle term in a relationship does not dispute that the love of others should be an end in itself, but it does means in addition that "one loves God by loving one's neighbor."[29] God "does not ask for anything" for Godself (161) and is "continually pointing away from" Godself (160). God "is too exalted to be able to receive a person's love directly" (160). In Kierkegaard's words,

> A person should begin with loving the unseen, God, because then he himself will learn what it is to love. But that he actually loves the unseen will be known by his loving the brother he sees… God does not have a share in existence in such a way that he asks for his share for himself; he asks for everything, but as you bring it to him you immediately receive, if I may put it in this way, a notice designating where it should be delivered further, because God does not ask for anything for himself, although he asks for everything from you (160-161).[30]

The belief that God does not ask for anything for Godself could be the reason why Kierkegaard occasionally says that the neighbor could also be the middle term in a relationship of love. It is impossible, says Kierkegaard, to define what love genuinely is without God or "the neighbor" as "the middle term" (119). "The neighbor" is to

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[29] Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden*, 308.

[30] In addition, it is important to clarify that Kierkegaard applies to "God" the masculine pronoun, as this and many other quotations show. I will in my own text try to avoid the pronoun and will instead repeat the word "God" as many times as needed.

Kierkegaard "self-denial's middle term that steps in between self-love's *I* and *I*" so that self-love can happen in the right way (54). "The neighbor" is as well "self-denial's middle term" that steps in "between erotic love's and friendship's *I* and the *other I*" so that it can become neighbor love (54). We need "the middle term 'neighbor,'" Kierkegaard, says, in order to avoid loving the beloved or the friend "in a divisive way" or "so preferentially in the sense of an alliance that one has nothing at all to do with other human beings" (142).

Another aspect of what it means to have God (or the neighbor) as the middle term in a relationship of love is that it will help us to avoid worshiping another person or letting another person worship us. Every person, according to Kierkegaard, is only "God's bond servant" (107). This is the reason why a person should keep away from belonging "to anyone in love unless in the same love he belongs to God" (107–108). In like manner, a person should keep away from possessing "anyone in love unless the other and he himself belong to God in this love" (108). Nobody should take another person captive "as if that other person were everything" to you, and nobody should allow him- or herself to be taken hold of as if you "were everything to that other" (107–108). We would deceive ourselves if we imagined that we are God or if we loved another person as God, and we would deceive others if we let them believe that we are God or if we let them love us as God (108). God as the middle term in a relationship of love will also make sure that it does not become so intense that "the God-relationship" is disturbed or that we quite simply forget God and therefore turn a blind eye to the fact that "the God-relationship can require even the happiest love as a sacrifice" (129–30).

In order to prove that love requires the renunciation of any claim of meritoriousness, Kierkegaard insists that we should love without expecting a reward, not even "the reward of proud self-consciousness," making ourselves "anonymous," and exhibiting a magnanimous will "to annihilate" ourselves (276). Only then will we be able to be God's co-workers in love, active powers in the hands of God (279). In fact, as Ferreira says, "whatever we give to another has already been given to us (at the very least by our parents and our society)."[31]

The Distinction between Religion and Politics in Light of the Social and Political Order that Kierkegaard Favored

Kierkegaard abhorred what he called the "disastrous confusion of politics and Christianity,"[32] and made a sharp distinction between religion and politics. In the first place, he considered that religion and politics follow inverse logics: "Political action is preoccupied with having the masses on its side; religious action attempts to have God on its side and therefore it can disregard the force of the number."[33] In the second place, Kierkegaard held that religion and politics have different relations to the world. Political action is concerned with the levels of temporality and finitude, and to it, the successful

[31] Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 139. Kierkegaard makes the comparison with the child who gives his parents "a present, purchased, however, with what the child has received from his parents." In this case, "all the pretentiousness which otherwise is associated with giving a present disappears when the child received from the parents the gift which he gives to the parents." See JP 2, 1121 / Pap. VIII[1] A 19.

[32] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Corsair Affair and Articles Related to the Writings*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 53.

[33] Michele Nicoletti, "Politics and Religion in Kierkegaard's Thought: Secularization and the Martyr," in *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community: Religion, Ethics, and Politics in Kierkegaard*, ed. George B Connell and C. Stephen Evans (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992), 184. The author is quoting Kierkegaard's Journal Pap. XI 2 A 413, and it expresses what Kierkegaard thought about the issue already when he wrote *Works of Love*, although the entry is from 1855.

realization of an idea is more important than the means and instruments utilized.[34] Certainly "it is the task of the state," and therefore of politics, says Bruce Kirmmse, interpreting Kierkegaard's thinking, "to see to it that various things that people need are available to them reliably and at reasonable cost. This is the case with roads and highways, street illumination, public water supply, and public safety."[35] "Well-intentioned temporality," according to Kierkegaard, should be in the business of making every effort to remedy "all need" (326), and "it rejoices when it succeeds in making temporal conditions the same for more and more people" (72). Kierkegaard admits that "people unite," and it is "indeed praiseworthy," he adds, "to alleviate poverty, to bring up orphan children, to rescue the fallen" (294). Nonetheless, he makes it emphatically clear that in his view the complete eradication of the dissimilarities of earthly life is both unattainable and undesirable (70.72). In contrast, religion, and particularly Christianity, would in its essence become "empty and worldly" if we tried to apply to it the criterion of success, of quantitative results and of power.[36] Christianity, to Kierkegaard, "does not make worldly distinctions" (71). Christianity "does not want to take away" nor side "in partiality" with temporal dissimilarities of any form, neither of high rank nor the one of low rank (71), and it does not endorse them either. These social differences are not inherent to who we are. They are, in Kierkegaard's words, jest, trumpery, often to one's

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[34] Nicoletti, "Politics and Religion in Kierkegaard's Thought," 184-85.

[35] Bruce H. Kirmmse, "Call Me Ishmael—Call Everybody Ishmael: Kierkegaard on the Coming-of-Age Crisis of Modern Times," in *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community: Religion, Ethics, and Politics in Kierkegaard*, ed. George B. Connell and C. Stephen Evans (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992), 170. This quotation is Kirmmse's paraphrase from Søren Kierkegaard, *The Moment and Late Writings*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 109. It is later than *Works of Love*, but it expresses Kierkegaard's thought at the time of publishing this work.

[36] Nicoletti, "Politics and Religion in Kierkegaard's Thought," 185.

ruin" (126) and therefore he understands that a proper understanding of "Christian equality" requires that "even if it is the one who stands at the very top, even if it is the king, he [sic] is to lift himself up above the difference of loftiness, and the beggar is to lift himself [sic] up above the difference of lowliness" (72).[37] "The religious," Kierkegaard says, "is the transfigured rendition of what a politician, provided he actually loves being a human being and loves humankind, has thought in his most blissful moment, even if he will find the religious too lofty and too ideal to be practical."[38]

In the third place, "even the respective virtues of politics and religion are different. In political affairs, in order to achieve a successful result, calculation of probabilities and prudence have predominant importance; in religion, however, it is most important to be able to risk everything with no calculation of the odds."[39] In 1854, Kierkegaard would formulate it in an illuminating and concise way: "Politics is: never venturing more than is possible at any moment, never beyond human probability. Christianity is: wherever there is no venturing beyond the probable, God is unconditionally not along; this, of course, does not mean that he is along wherever and whenever there is a venturing beyond the probable."[40]

In a Journal entry from 1850, Kierkegaard would say that "Christianity is indifferent toward each and every form of government; it can live equally well under all of them" (JP 4, 4191 / Pap. X^3 A 679). Christianity was to Kierkegaard "inwardness, inward deepening," and therefore "Christianity's perfection… is to be able to live,

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[37] David James Lappano, *Kierkegaard's Theology of Encounter: An Edifying and Polemical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 146-47.

[38] Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 103.

[39] Nicoletti, "Politics and Religion in Kierkegaard's Thought," 185.

[40] Nicoletti, 194n2. The quote is from JP 4, 4943 / Pap. XI 1 A 502.

according to its vigor, under the most imperfect conditions and forms, if such be the case."[41] During his whole life, Kierkegaard "kept himself at a distance from active participation in politics"[42] and from enrollment in any party.[43] In "An Open Letter" from 1851, prompted by an attempt of the theologian A. G. Rudelbach to enlist him in a campaign in favor of civil marriage without consulting with him first, Kierkegaard challenges the reader to point out in his publications "a single proposal for external change, or the slightest suggestion of such a proposal, or even anything that in the remotest way even for the most nearsighted person at the greatest distance could resemble an intimation of such a proposal or of a belief that the problem is lodged in externalities, that external change is what is needed."[44] Kierkegaard defined himself as "a religious author." His main matter of concern was not politics, but pertained "to Christianity," to the issue that he narrowed down to the phrase "becoming a Christian."[45] Christianity, in Kierkegaard's view, was a religion that did not need the state. Kierkegaard did not believe that Christianity needed to be saved by the institutions of the state. It was rather the other way around. The institutions of the state were dependent on Christianity. In the "Open Letter" previously mentioned, Kierkegaard said that external

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[41] Kierkegaard, *Corsair Affair*, 54.

[42] This is a testimony from Kierkegaard's friend and distant relative, the philosopher Hans Brøchner, in a letter to C.K.F. Molbech of February 17, 1856. See Bruce H. Kirmmse, *Encounters with Kierkegaard: A Life as Seen by His Contemporaries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 251. This testimony is corroborated by Kierkegaard himself in a letter to Conferentsraad J. L. A. Kolderup-Rosenvinge penned in August of 1848, where he explicitly says that he kept "away from politics." He liked to hear someone versed in political matters talk about it, he said, but for him "to follow politics, even if only domestic politics," was "an impossibility." See Søren Kierkegaard, *Letters and Documents*, trans. Henrik Rosenmeier (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 253.

[43] In another letter to Conferentsraad J. L. A. Kolderup-Rosenvinge from August of 1848, Kierkegaard said: "One thing is a certainty: no one belongs less to any party than I do." See Kierkegaard, *Letters and Documents*, 260.

[44] Kierkegaard, *Corsair Affair*, 53.

[45] Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 23.

conditions and forms could neither hinder nor help anybody in becoming a Christian.[46] On the contrary, Christianity is to Kierkegaard "infinitely higher and infinitely freer than all institutions, constitutions, etc." whenever "it is true in true inwardness."[47] That did not rule out the fact that Christianity, to Kierkegaard, was "being used by statecraft to organize the states" (JP 4, 4191 / Pap. X^3 A 679). If for no other reason than that, Kierkegaard could not altogether ignore the political issues.

In fact, Kierkegaard "concerned himself quite a bit with the theoretical aspects of politics" in his youth.[48] He made "his first entry into public life" as early as in 1835 with an address to the University Union, in which he opposed the views expressed by one of his former schoolmates, Orla Lehmann, who years later would become one of the most prominent National Liberal activists for a free constitution for Denmark. Kierkegaard's original address was followed by a "journalistic duel" with the same opponent.[49] Kirmmse's interpretation of this debate with Lehmann is that "Kierkegaard did not attack the liberals' position *per se* but rather their lack of genuine leadership and originality and their merely 'aesthetic' posture."[50]

Politicians would in the following years be repeated targets of critique for Kierkegaard. He would accuse them of being self-serving and unable to rule, all while he would presuppose and favor one determinate social and political order. Johannes Sløk has argued rather persuasively that the same Kierkegaard who in an excess of humility stated

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[46] Kierkegaard, *Corsair Affair*, 54.

[47] Kierkegaard, 55.

[48] Kirmmse, *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, 251.

[49] Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden*, 50.

[50] Kirmmse, 50.

that he knew "too little" about politics[51] not only presupposed but also favored a determinate social and political order. Such was the model of the enlightened despotism of the first half of the nineteenth century in Denmark, according to which the society was a community in which each member had his or her place and work, so that all needed each other and could serve each other.[52] Sløk emphasizes that this social and political model is not something on which Kierkegaard ever explicitly reflected. This society model was for him the obvious background for the literary, philosophical, and theological problems that he intended to resolve. State theories were never subjects of study for him. He never mentioned Hobbes, Locke, and Burke, and when he occasionally referred to Rousseau or Spinoza, it is not with their state theories that he was dealing. Sløk is right in considering that Kierkegaard's theoretical knowledge about state philosophy derived from the authors with whom he dealt most thoroughly, and who had also developed theories about the state. Apart from the New Testament authors, this meant Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel. Those authors had in Sløk's view strengthened Kierkegaard in his view of an organic society as the model.[53]

Kierkegaard's preference for that model comes to expression in *Works of Love* when he states that "in a worldly sense, there is only one person, only one, who acknowledges no other duty than the duty of conscience, and that is the king" (136). "The king," he continues, is "in the external world" the only one who should and ought to rule "according to his conscience" (137). The preference for that model also comes to

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[51] Kierkegaard, *Letters and Documents*, 253.

[52] Johannes Sløk, *Da Kierkegaard Tav: Fra Forfatterskab til Kirkestorm* (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel, 1980), 47.

[53] Sløk, 51-52.

expression on *Works of Love* when Kierkegaard argues that "the dissimilarity of earthly life… belongs to every human being in particular by birth, by position, by circumstances, by education" (70). The dissimilarities of earthly life, according to Kierkegaard's view, serve the purpose of a harmonious coexistence of all members of society, but they should not define who each individual is in the deepest sense. In consequence, there were some limitations that shrank the range of dissimilarities admissible to Kierkegaard. He excluded bond servitude and slavery or any scenario of human beings not recognized as fully human. Kierkegaard celebrated that the era was past "when only the powerful and the prominent were human beings—and the others were bond servants and slaves" (74),[54] and contradicting his belief that Christianity "does not make worldly distinctions" (71), he attributed it specifically to Christianity to have put an end to the inhuman separation of people from one another (69). The caste system that permits "one human being to

[54] In this statement, Kierkegaard seems to be referring to the fact that the adscription that had been imposed on peasants in 1733, forbidding men "between the ages of fourteen and thirty-six… to leave their holdings," was abolished in stages between 1788 and 1800. See Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden*, 12-21. See also Birgit Løgstrup, "Ophævelse af stavnsbåndet 1788-1800," danmarkshistorien.dk, Aarhus Universitet, last modified November 8, 2011, https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/ophaevelse-af-stavnsbaandet-1788-1800/. Although Kierkegaard seems to celebrate that slavery was a matter of the past, he did not ignore that slavery was a reality in the Danish colony in the West Indies until 1848. Maybe this is what he referred to when he associated the institution of slavery with the worship of money: "To make money is earnestness; to make much money, even if it were by selling human beings, this is earnestness" (320). King Christian VII signed a decree in 1792 prohibiting the transatlantic slave trade under the Danish flag as from 1803, making it possible for the import of enslaved laborers to continue during the winding-down period. After 1803, the condition of slavery continued for those who had been shipped to the islands before and for their children. In Denmark, the Assembly of the Estates of the Realm decided in 1847 that "the children that were born to enslaved laborers in the future would be free, and that slavery would entirely cease in 1859." However, a rebellion of the slaves in the West Indies accelerated the schedule and forced the Governor-General Peter von Scholten to abolish slavery with immediate effect in 1848. See "The emancipation of the enslaved in 1848," The Danish West Indies. Sources of History, Rigsarkivet, Denmark, accessed April 17, 2024, https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/history/slavery/the-emancipation-of-the-enslaved-in-1848/. Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez has drawn attention to the fact that some contemporaries to Kierkegaard owned slaves in the West Indies and lived as absentee property owners in Denmark, where they supported the arts with money earned with slave labor. See Eliseo Pérez Álvarez, *A Vexing Gadfly: The Late Kierkegaard on Economic Matters* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 31-34 and 93.

disclaim kinship with another," and "to say of another human being that he does not exist, is 'not born,'" as well as any other system in which the dissimilarities of earthly life can separate "one from another" (69) were totally unacceptable to Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard also celebrated that the era was past "when those called the more lowly had no conception of themselves or only the conception of being slaves, of not merely being lowly human beings but of not being human beings at all" (80). Although he does not say so explicitly, for Kierkegaard this also was an accomplishment of Christianity. Kierkegaard also attributed it to the beneficial influence of Christianity that women, in comparison with men, were not seen any more as "disdained" beings nor as beings "of another species" (138). Conditions of extreme poverty, of orphan children left to their own devices, and of fallen who are trampled upon, are also unacceptable to Kierkegaard, and therefore, as said before, he considers it praiseworthy that people unite "to alleviate poverty, to bring up orphan children, to rescue the fallen" (294).

Kierkegaard insisted that the dissimilarities of earthly life should be considered together with a fundamental equality that all individuals share without exception: the "kinship of all human beings" that Christianity has imprinted in us in a deep and forever memorable way. This kinship is secured by "each individual's equal kinship with and relationship to God in Christ," and it comes to expression in the fact that "the Christian doctrine addresses itself equally" to each single individual with the message that God has created them and Christ has redeemed them (69). "Christianity," Kierkegaard says, "has not wanted to storm forth to abolish dissimilarity, neither the dissimilarity of distinction nor of lowliness," nor "to effect in a worldly way a worldly compromise among the dissimilarities" (88). Yet what Christianity wants, in Kierkegaard's view (and it is

compatible with the social and political model that he favored) is “the dissimilarity to hang loosely on the individual,” so that “in each individual there continually glimmers that essential other, which is common to all, the eternal resemblance, the likeness” (88).

Kierkegaard’s advice to everybody, in accordance with the social and political order that he presupposed and favored, was “devoutly [to] take pride in leading a quiet life,” (74) without busying him- or herself with “changing the shape of the world,” or his or her situation (136). There was no need either of uniting in alliances with others who shared the same dissimilarity of earthly life (73) in order to fight against it, except in the case mentioned above of uniting to alleviate poverty, take care of orphan children, and rescue the fallen (294). What these alliances normally did, Kierkegaard says, was “to do away with one dissimilarity” by putting another dissimilarity in its place (73). Kierkegaard did not give any advice to politicians or public officials in particular.

To Kierkegaard, the stability of this social and political order required the intentional adoption of the Christian faith by individuals. Curiously enough, Kierkegaard did not say outright that an individual had to become Christian in order to come to terms with the dissimilarity of his or her earthly life, and provide validity and seriousness to the system. No: Kierkegaard said that an individual becomes a Christian “by overcoming the temptation of dissimilarity” (70).

It is not easy to say to what extent the social and political order Kierkegaard favored was the system that was at work in Denmark or whether he had an idealized version of the model in his mind. What is sure is that Kierkegaard, to his big regret, had to admit in *Works of Love* that the social and political order he presupposed and favored had begun to dissolve. In fact, the four advisory provincial Assemblies of Estates

established in 1834 with the limited power of making recommendations about "personal and property rights, taxation, and the public duties of the king's subjects,"[55] had in the course of the 1840s become fora where the demand for "a liberal, representative constitution"[56] was loudly voiced. However, it would not be until March 21, 1848 that a big crowd of perhaps 15,000 led by "the civic representatives of Copenhagen" got King Frederick VII to put an end to absolute monarchy in Denmark in a peaceful way. The king dismissed his ministers, and promised the appointment of a new ministry, the enactment of a broader freedom of the press, and the summoning of a Constitutional Assembly.[57] Unlike the liberal revolts against other European monarchies in 1848 that ended in failure, the Danish "revolution" of 1848 was successful and the constitutional monarchy came to stay.[58]

The attempts "to emancipate people from all bonds, also beneficial ones," and "to emancipate the emotional relationships between people from the bond that binds one to God and binds one in everything, in every expression of life" (114), were, in Kierkegaard's evaluation, the first evidence of the incipient dissolution of the social and political order that he favored. The beneficial bonds to which he referred were the bonds that permitted each member of the community to contribute from his or her place to the thriving of all. Those beneficial bonds were closely associated with each "person's bond service in relation to God, to whom every human being, not by birth but by creation from nothing, belongs as a bond servant" (115).

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[55] Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden*, 46.

[56] Kirmmse, 65.

[57] Kirmmse, 66-68.

[58] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Revolutions of 1848," Britannica, last modified March 5, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/event/Revolutions-of-1848

Both "the powerful and the distinguished" on the one side and "the lowly and the powerless" (72) on the other were damaging, said Kierkegaard, the beneficial bonds between individuals. The powerful and distinguished were damaging those bonds "by becoming arrogant" (70) and feeling entitled to consider themselves the only human beings (74).[59] Kierkegaard calls it a form of corruption (75), the corruption of despising other people and intimating that they, the powerful and distinguished, did not exist for the people that they despised, just as the despised people did not exist for them. The powerful and distinguished could not make their claim in a shameless way, says Kierkegaard. "In order not to offend and incite" (75) they needed to do it "in a more hidden and secret way" (74). The more "smoothly, dexterously, tastefully, elusively" they did it, the better—and yet all the while keeping the double secret that there were other people who did not exist for them and that they did not exist for these other people (75). Kierkegaard implies that the powerful and the distinguished, with their corruption, are responsible for the growth of poverty and the neglect of orphans and fallen (294).

Meanwhile, the lowly and the powerless were damaging the beneficial bonds between individuals "by groaning under the dissimilarity of earthly life," (70) and "longing enviously for the advantages denied them in earthly life" (70). This was also a form of corruption, and Kierkegaard says that the fact that the powerful and distinguished still had "so much power that it could be dangerous to break with them," prevented the lowly from rising in rebellion or repressing "entirely every expression of deference" (80). They had instead to keep the secret as "a secret of hidden exasperation, a remotely

[59] Unfortunately, this is a problem that persists to this day, and Michael Sandel gives many telling examples. See his Michael J. Sandel, *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020).

intimated painful dejection" that transformed "the power and honor and eminence into an affliction for the powerful, the honored, and the eminent," without letting them "find anything specific to complain about" (80).

Although it was unacceptable to him that women were disdained in comparison with men or that they were considered as beings of another species (138), the proposal of establishing women as having "equal rights" with men was unacceptable to Kierkegaard (139) because he also considered it damaging to the beneficial bonds between individuals. He contemptuously defined women's access to equal rights as "a fragment of externality" that would be obtained "by defiance" and "in a worldly way" (139).

Another sign of the dissolution of the political and social order that he favored was to Kierkegaard the dismissal of each "person's bond service in relation to God" (115) on the understanding that "all this about a God-relationship is actually a delusion, a retardation" (114). This dismissal manifested itself in at least two different ways. In the first place, it manifested itself in what Kierkegaard considered the foolishness of believing that there could be freedom "without God in the world" (115), and consequently, that human rights could take up the place of God (115). In Kierkegaard's view, nothing and nobody could take the place of God. "If God is dismissed," he said, "the place will indeed be vacant" (115). In the second place, the dismissal of each "person's bond service in relation to God" (115) manifested itself to Kierkegaard in the fixation with numbers. "For Christ, as for God's providence," Kierkegaard says, "there is no number, no crowd; for him the countless are counted, are all individuals" (69). The truth and accuracy of any decision, and much more of a decision regarding "the Law's requirement" does not depend on the number of people who support a certain

interpretation of what the Law's requirement is (115). If a decision is wrong, Kierkegaard says, it is wrong no matter how large the number of its supporters is (117), while on the other side, "the good" have no need to form any alliance, "does not unite two nor hundreds nor all people in an alliance" (73). Even though we decided to try to reach "an agreement among, a common decision by, all people, to which the individual then has to submit" (115), Kierkegaard doubts that it would be possible "to find the place and fix a date for this assembling of all people" (115). He asks if it would be "all the living, all of them" and what the reason would be for excluding the dead (115), and, should it even be possible to assemble all people, whether they would be able "to agree on one thing" (115). Kierkegaard continues, "Or is perhaps the agreement of a number of people, a certain number of votes, sufficient for the decision? How large is the number?" (115). What concerns him even more is that the wait for this uncertain agreement would become the excuse for an individual to postpone his or her acting in according with the Law's requirement (115–116). If we followed the logic of this argument, Kierkegaard says, then "in order to have to begin to act, the individual" would first have to "find out from 'the others' what the Law's requirement is, but each one of these others" would in turn have to "find this out from 'the others'" (116). The "crowd" is to Kierkegaard the group where an individual who does not relate him or herself to God can take refuge and hide without losing the appearance of "an earnest person." "Along with the crowd," says Kierkegaard, such an individual who has "forgotten the one and only earnestness," which is to relate him or herself to God, can "be noisy…, laugh or cry, be busy from morning until night, be loved and respected and esteemed as a friend, as a public official, as a king, as a pallbearer" (103).

Kierkegaard expressed his strongest disapproval of what he considered the dissolution of the social and political order that he favored in a text he called "A Self-Defense." Originally, he intended to include it in *Works of Love* as the final chapter, but in the end, he left it out of the published text and preserved it in his journal instead. In that text, Kierkegaard observes that he as a person and an author was "regarded with low esteem, laughed at, insulted, mistreated" by a public opinion that had become hostage of the crowd (457).[60] He places that circumstance side by side with what he defines as the "demoralization" of Denmark and the weakening of its government brought about by the same crowd that had acquired a disproportionate and dangerous power (460). Given that Denmark was a "small nation," with "a language of its own," and "only one large city," Kierkegaard says that people knew "each other too well," had become "afraid of each other," and were therefore "easily tempted to form a party" or to enter an alliance with others (458). People did not ally with others with the purpose of advancing noble causes, but rather to seek plain and unapologetic advantage (458). What made matters worse in Kierkegaard's estimation was that those parties or alliances pampered "the people into a cowardly, timorous, false, and impious kind of modesty," and not without ignition coming from the press, they suppressed individual accountability, and gave everybody impunity to engage in "town gossip, backbiting," and "the continual talking among

[60] Kierkegaard refers to the dispute he had in 1846 the Danish literary and satirical magazine, *The Corsair*. The magazine had for a long time exempted Kierkegaard from its harsh ridicule and it had even praised some of the pseudonymous works, but after a nasty review of another of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works, Kierkegaard responded complaining, ironically, that it "was unjust for him to be the only important Danish author who had not been 'abused' in *The Corsair*." *The Corsair* took him at his word, and made Kierkegaard "the object of its ridicule in a long-lasting, sustained attack that went beyond the boundary of criticism or even ridicule of Kierkegaard's ideas, making fun of his physical appearance, the uneven length of his trousers, his supposed arrogance, and many other things, both in texts and in cartoons." The affair "fundamentally changed" Kierkegaard's life. See C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6-8.

people about people" (458).[61] Denmark was too small, says Kierkegaard, "to have both a public opinion and town gossip," and therefore "town gossip" had become "public opinion" (460). As a result, "mediocrity" and "demoralization" had emerged as the new standards. Kierkegaard is categorical: "In no country in Europe is town gossip so dominant as in Denmark" (459). "Rabble-barbarism," he denounced, had become "the judge of morals," (459). Kierkegaard claimed to be the only one who had the courage to protest that "envy and cowardice and flabbiness and rabble-barbarism" were "at work in the demoralization of Denmark" (460). In other circumstances, such a denunciation could have made him the "object of the government's persecution" (460), but this was not true in his case. It was instead the government that had lost power to the crowd, and the same was true about the governments "all over Europe" (460). Kierkegaard said that one did not "need to be a big politician" to see that it was all over Europe that the governments had lost power (460). The fact that Kierkegaard laments the weakening of the power of governments is the obvious proof that he both admitted and disapproved of the dissolution of the social and political order that he favored. In what could be read as a rejection of the right to vote, he even adds that children were being brought up "to mock and scorn everything" they did not understand (460).

The Constitutional Assembly passed the constitution that transformed Denmark into a constitutional monarchy with universal (male) suffrage in May 1849 and King Frederick VII signed it into law on June 5, 1849. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard reiterated his

[61] This way of acting corresponds to what Kierkegaard in the published text of *Works of Love* calls "small-mindedness," the way of acting of a person who lacks the courage to be the distinctive person that he or she is before God, and who therefore does not believe in anyone else's distinctiveness either (271–72). Such a person "feels a clammy, uncomfortable anxiety upon seeing an unfamiliar distinctiveness," and all he or she can do, says Kierkegaard, is to enter into a "petty alliance" with other small-minded persons (272).

preference for the social and political order of the enlightened despotism long after that, when he in a journal entry of 1851 wrote that statesmanship in modern states was not how one managed to be a cabinet minister, but how one managed to become a cabinet minister. The person interested in such a position, says Kierkegaard, presupposing that it could only be a man, consumed "his wisdom in a kind of introductory science to becoming a cabinet minister" without concerning himself with what was involved in actually governing or ruling. Kierkegaard predicted that this would lead to "the disintegration of states." He expressed his nostalgia for "former days, when life was quieter," and it is not a coincidence that the recommendation that Kierkegaard, in agreement with the social and political order he favored, had given to everybody in *Works of Love* was explicitly to lead "a quiet life" (74). When the system that he favored was at work, says Kierkegaard, "there were only a few who could hope to become cabinet ministers, and they had the time to prepare themselves to be that." "Nowadays," by contrast, Kierkegaard says in 1851, "the possibility is open to everyone, and the urge to become a cabinet minister is so great that it takes a whole new skill to force one's way through, if possible, to become one." The problem, Kierkegaard insists, is that "they train for this, consume their time and effort in this study," and then they can become cabinet ministers, but they ignore what it means to be cabinet ministers (JP 4, 4215 / Pap. X^4 A 249).

In a lengthy journal entry from 1851, Kierkegaard reflects on the responsibility of the clergy for the dissolution of the social and political order that he favored and on the crucial role that the church had as the guarantor of a system where citizens are clear and cognizant of their roles. In Kierkegaard's view, Christianity could have remained "in the

original apostolic situation," having "nothing whatever to do with the state," but this is not what happened. Christianity decided "to involve itself with the state and benefit from it after a fashion," becoming instead a State Church. Yet it is implicit in Kierkegaard's reasoning that the state, and not the church, made the most out of this involvement of Christianity with it. At least in Denmark it meant that the clergy undertook "the task of guaranteeing the state a continuing and sufficient foundation of citizens" who were "politically indifferent, i.e., genuinely religiously engaged." The clergy taught people to be "concerned with what is higher" and simultaneously subservient "to all authority," and in this way the clergy provided the state with the people who could sustain it, "good, peaceable citizens, who did not occupy themselves with wanting to govern or with bullying the government." Kierkegaard faults the clergy on the dissolution of the social and political order he favored, precisely because it was not convincing enough in "explaining the cause of the religious, which is political indifferentism." On the contrary, the clergy accepted that everyone could get "involved in political affairs," and even that everything turned into politics, to the point that the clergy itself became "the first to rush to Parliament" (KJN 8, 165-166 / SKS 24, 167-68, NB22:124).

Kierkegaard's Political Proposals

Kierkegaard argues love rather than "justice" should be the organizing principle of a society (265–66). "Justice, "this fateful word 'justice,'" as he refers to it in the last sentence of *Works of Love* (386) as the organizing principle of a society would suppose that there is some kind of organization or institution—Kierkegaard does not specify what—with the power and competence to divide, assign, and determine what each person can lawfully call his or her own, and to judge and punish "if anyone refuses to make any

distinction between *mine* and *yours*" (265). According to this model, the individual would have "the right to do as he [sic] pleases with this contentious and yet legally entitled mine; and if he seeks his [sic] own in no other way than that which justice allows, justice has nothing with which to reproach him [sic] and has no right to upbraid him for anything" (265). Only "as soon as someone is defrauded of his [sic] own, or as soon as someone defrauds another of his own, justice intervenes, because it safeguards the common security in which everyone has his own, what he [sic] rightfully has" (265).

It is worth trying to explain why Kierkegaard considers that what each individual receives as his or her own or is entitled to call his or her own is contentious, in spite of its eventual legality. The first reason Kierkegaard gives is that he does not believe that it would be possible "by means of calculations and surveys or in whatever other way" to find the "one temporal condition" that would bring about "worldly similarity" "if this condition became the only one for all people" (72). Kierkegaard is unequivocal in stating that he does not believe that worldly similarity can ever "be achieved in temporality" (72). Even if the attempt were made to guarantee everybody the access to that one temporal condition, it would be false to call it "worldly similarity" and worse still to call it "justice" or "equality" (72). Another reason why the determination of "what each can lawfully call" his or her own is "contentious" is to Kierkegaard that it often is the legitimization of the *status quo* at a certain point in time and place. Kierkegaard adds: "But sometimes a change intrudes, a revolution, a war, an earthquake, or some such terrible misfortune, and everything is confused" (265). The further difficulty, Kierkegaard insinuates, is that any state or condition of *status quo* is the result of a revolution, a war, an earthquake, or another terrible misfortune that has already

happened. In reality, it is not one specific change that creates confusion. The confusion about what it means "to secure for each person" his or her own has been there from the beginning (265).

The main reason for the contentiousness of what each individual receives as his or her own or is entitled to call his or her own is that we according to Kierkegaard are completely unable "with unconditioned truth to judge every human being according to a universally given criterion" (230) because no human being is equal to another. Kierkegaard argues that within the human species "each individual is the essentially different or distinctive," and that that is the reason why "one human being, honest, upright, respectable, God-fearing, can under the same circumstances do the very opposite of what another human being does who is also honest, upright, respectable, God-fearing" (230). To Kierkegaard, the "God-relationship" is the mark of the distinctiveness of each individual, and its preservation is what prevents everything from getting oriented towards the exterior and from finding "its completion paganly in political or social life" (230). Kierkegaard does not believe that a social and political order can abolish the God-relationship or that the God-relationship needs the protection and the authorization from a certain social and political order, but he would prefer a social and political order that does not explicitly aim at obstructing the individuals' cultivation of their respective distinctiveness and God-relationship.

Kierkegaard does not unpack how his suggestion that love should be the organizing principle of society could be made politically effective. What he said in a journal entry from 1850, in regard to a shift in the interpretation of Christianity

occasioned by the eventful year of 1848,[62] gives us, though, a significant clue. He said that the impact of "the social and communistic movements" and the demand of the "rebellion in the world… to see action" had caused that the conflict about Christianity would "no longer be doctrinal." It would instead be a conflict "about Christianity as an existence," that is, the problem would "become that of loving the 'neighbor.'" In conjunction with that, "attention" would be "directed to Christ's life," and Christianity would "become essentially accentuated in the direction of conformity" to Christ's life (JP 4, 4185 / Pap. X^3 A 346).

Love includes to Kierkegaard the inexcusable demand to alleviate poverty. In responding to that demand, Kierkegaard says, "the cares of the poor" should take precedence over the cares of whoever is responding to the demand. When somebody is "thinking about his [sic] own cares instead of thinking about the cares of the poor," when somebody is "seeking alleviation by giving to charity instead of wanting to alleviate poverty," then that person is not doing a "work of love" (13–14). To Kierkegaard it is crucial to respect the kinship of all individuals, and for that reason, he is at pains to distinguish between mercifulness and generosity. Generosity for Kierkegaard is "linked to external conditions" (316): it depends on having the means, and more specifically, on having money "to be generous, beneficent, benevolent" (315). However, it is not the capacity to be generous that makes somebody merciful. Kierkegaard's concern is that the rich can be generous without being merciful, and this is how they act when they single out and abandon the poor by treating them as pitiable objects of their misunderstood

[62] In that year not only took place the "revolution" that transformed Denmark into a constitutional monarchy, but also liberal revolts against other European monarchies with diverse results. See Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Revolutions of 1848."

mercifulness who have no choice but to bow and thank them for what in reality is sheer mercilessness (322).

Kierkegaard denounces that "distinguished" persons who in the exclusive company of peers are "willing to make every concession to the similarity of human beings" (77) are not serious about their beliefs unless they also have "fellowship" (73) with the "miserable" (77) people conspicuously different from them. One thing, Kierkegaard argues, is to recognize "at a distance" that the other persons are neighbors, and fail to act accordingly, and another is to recognize them as neighbors "close at hand" and "do act accordingly" without being able to "do otherwise" (78). "At a distance the neighbor is a shadow that walks past everyone's thoughts on the road of imagination," but the challenge is to recognize the person that actually walks by as a neighbor and engage in the imperative and "thankless task" of loving them.

In Kierkegaard's view, "Christian equality," that is, the kinship of all individuals, and "its use of language" is "so scrupulous" that it not only requires us to feed the poor; it requires us to stretch the language and call it a "banquet" (82). Kierkegaard says that according to common language usage, a "banquet" is a meal to which the invited are "friends, companions, relatives, riches neighbors—who are able to reciprocate" (82). Nobody would call a meal for the poor and the lowly a banquet, even when the food is not merely "'substantial and edible' like poorhouse food, but actually choice and costly," and there are "ten kinds of wine" (81-82). Yet Kierkegaard is emphatic: "The one who feeds the poor—but still has not been victorious over his mind in such a way that he calls this meal a banquet—sees the poor and the lowly only as the poor and the lowly" (83).[63]

[63] The organization Loaves & Fishes founded in 1983 by Daniel and Chris Delany with the philosophy of "nonjudgmental hospitality" of the Catholic Worker Movement to feed the hungry and

"The greatest beneficence," said in agreement with his strong commitment to the distinctiveness of each individual, is to Kierkegaard "in love to help someone… to become himself, free, independent, his own master, to help him stand alone" (274). Therefore it should be provided in such a way that "it looks as if it were the recipient's property," that is, "the one who loves" has to make him or herself "unnoticed so that the person helped does not become dependent upon him—by owing to him the greatest beneficence [sic]" (274). In a journal entry from the year before he wrote *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard said that "only a wretched and worldly conception of the dialectic of power holds that it is greater and greater in proportion to its ability to compel and to make dependent." It is the other way around: "the art of power lies precisely in making another free" (406, quoting JP 2, 1251 / Pap. VII[1] A 181). Kierkegaard does not consider the fact that beneficence, if left to the initiative of the individuals, can easily run the risk of incurring the abuses that he rejects. A social and political order could be better fitted than the individual initiative to guarantee decent levels of welfare to everybody and to provide it in ways that help the beneficiaries to become independent and stand on their own feet.

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shelter the homeless in Sacramento, California, does not see the poor and the lowly only as the poor and the lowly. This is why it treats people as guests and not as mere clients. "Guests are made to feel welcome; hospitality is extended. Clients are expected to make (and keep) appointments. No appointment, no service. Guests are accepted as friends, given the benefit of the doubt, and not kept waiting. Clients are expected to wait patiently, however long it takes, and then listen up when their turn comes. Guests are treated as equals; they do not have to justify their presence. Clients must prove their need with ID and detailed questionnaires. Guests are free to kick back, relax, and catch a few rays. Clients have to be scrutinized, toe the mark, or seek services elsewhere. Guests are free to ask questions, criticize, and challenge the system. Clients are expected to be grateful for any service rendered, and no talking back, please. Guests are free to help themselves to seconds. Clients are notified that one is sufficient. Guests are free to come and go as they please. Clients need permission." See LeRoy Chatfield, *To Serve the People: My Life Organizing with Cesar Chavez and the Poor* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019), 301-03.

In a text written in 1846, approximately a year before *Works of Love*,[64] Kierkegaard notes that he has never denied that "with regard to all temporal, earthly, worldly goals, the crowd can have its validity, even its validity as the decisive factor, that is, as the authority."[65] He is referring to decisions that can be made and issues that can be resolved through popular vote and majority decisions. This is not the case when the topic is the ethical or the ethical-religious. Here the truth is not dependent on how many people support a certain position.[66] In *Works of Love,* the distinction between practical and ethical-religious matters is not always sharply defined. Kierkegaard says that it is praiseworthy that people unite "to alleviate poverty, to bring up orphan children, [and] to rescue the fallen" (294). Yet he expresses a deep skepticism not only about the issues that could be submitted to a vote, but also about who should have the right/obligation to vote, and what number of votes would be required to make a decision (115). Although Kierkegaard does not offer solutions, he points to a problem that requires consideration in any political project.

Kierkegaard does express a deep aversion to alliances and parties. It comes to expression most clearly in "A Self-Defense," the text referred to above[67] that Kierkegaard left out of the published version of *Works of Love*. Kierkegaard claims in that text that "an alliance very easily confuses the cause with advantage and pampers the people into a cowardly, timorous, false, and impious kind of modesty" (458). Moreover, it makes the individuals who join an alliance cease to be human beings, says Kierkegaard: "no one is a

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[64] I refer to first of the two "Notes" concerning his work as an author included under the common heading of "The Single Individual" in *The Point of View*.

[65] Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 106. The quote is from a footnote by the author on that page.

[66] Kierkegaard, 106.

[67] See above pages 163-164.

human being, but everyone is an alliance-fellow with his alliance [sic]" (458). The published text of *Works of Love* also includes words of dismissal of alliances and parties, for instance in the context of Kierkegaard's references to the dissimilarities of earthly life that Christianity, according to him, allows standing, although he does consider it praiseworthy that "people unite… to alleviate poverty, to bring up orphan children, to rescue the fallen" (294). Kierkegaard says that "everyone who in despair has clung to one or another of the dissimilarities of earthly life so that he centers his life in it, not in God, also demands that everyone who belongs to the same dissimilarity must hold together with him [sic]" (73). Kierkegaard adds that it is not with the purpose of uniting "in the good" that those alliances are formed (73). Those alliances are formed instead as ungodly alliances "against the universally human," to such an extent that "the one in despair calls it treason to want to have fellowship with others, with all people" (73). In the same context, Kierkegaard makes the abrupt claim that "the good forms no alliance, does not unite two nor hundreds nor all people in an alliance" (73). The highest that a person can achieve is "to be able to be an instrument in the hand of Governance," says Kierkegaard (86). Therefore, "anyone who forms a party and alliance or is a member of a party, of an alliance" is someone who "steers on his own [sic]" (86). For that reason, "all his achievement [sic], even if it were the transforming of the world, is an illusion" (86), exactly because he or she is refusing to be an instrument in the hand of Governance (86). Alliances are to Kierkegaard unavoidably expressions of self-love in which many self-loving people hold together (119). Kierkegaard rightly points to the inhumanity of holding together with some people while ignoring or even hating others who are

members on equal footing of the same society.[68] He is also right in claiming that it is not the number of adherents of an alliance or party that gives legitimacy to the cause that it stands for. However, he is wrong in stating that an alliance or party necessarily will pursue a cause that is not for the good. He also seems to exclude the possibility that an individual can retain his or her individuality, distinctiveness, and independence, even while joining an alliance or a party.

In the "Open Letter" from 1851 in which he denied his enrollment in the party supporting civil marriage and the separation of church and state, Kierkegaard says that "if at a given time the forms under which one has to live are not the most perfect, if they can be improved," it should be done "in God's name."[69] "There are situations," he says, "in which an established order can be of such a nature that the Christian ought not put up with it, ought not say that Christianity means precisely this indifference to the external."[70] In parallel, he reiterates his repudiation of institutions and constitutions "won in a social and amicable political way, by elections or by a lottery of numbers."[71] This seems to be contradictory, but what Kierkegaard argues is that the traditional political bargaining is not the only form of effecting change, at least not where what he calls matters of conscience are involved. Kierkegaard gives two examples. The first one is about the Sanhedrin making preaching punishable. The apostles, Kierkegaard says, did not "form a group and send an appeal to the Sanhedrin." They did not either take the issue up "at a synodical meeting." Nor did they combine with people who otherwise were their enemies

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[68] Charles K. Bellinger, *The Trinitarian Self: The Key to the Puzzle of Violence* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 25.

[69] Kierkegaard, *Corsair Affair*, 53.

[70] Kierkegaard, 56.

[71] Kierkegaard, 55.

in order to manage a majority vote so that they could "obtain freedom of conscience to proclaim the Word."[72] Kierkegaard says that the apostles were not bound to "party solidarity;" each one was "bound to God as a single individual."[73] What they did, therefore, was to continue proclaiming the Word, taking the risk, each of them individually, of exposing themselves to suffering and even martyrdom.[74] The other example Kierkegaard gives is about Luther deciding to marry. Kierkegaard says that Luther "did not go around with hearty nonsense to every Tom, Dick, and Harry, friends and acquaintances, casting a world-historical glance at the Church's past." Neither did he try to enlist supporters behind the idea of signing a petition or of going to a hypothetical parliament where there already was a party interested in giving priests the freedom to marry.[75] In order to reinforce the implausibility of this scenario, Kierkegaard imagines Luther speculating that if he with his supporters could get together with the representatives of the party interested in the same thing, it would be possible to "squeeze a few points from the opposition" and then "squeeze their way through" with "a very scant simply majority." And if the circumstances showed that the majority could not be achieved, always according to this hypothetical and implausible scenario that Kierkegaard paints, Luther would have had the option of withdrawing the petition instead of exposing himself to a defeat.[76] No, says Kierkegaard, this is not in any way what Luther did. All what Luther did was to counsel with God and with his conscience. He had

[72] Kierkegaard, 57.

[73] Kierkegaard, 57.

[74] Kierkegaard, 57-58.

[75] Kierkegaard, 58. The quote is from a footnote by the author.

[76] Kierkegaard, 58. From a footnote by the author.

to endure some spiritual struggles, but as soon as he made up his mind, he ventured to marry a nun "in spite of the Pope" and "in spite of all public opinion."[77] The proponents of any political project should consider if the change they propose can be accomplished through political bargaining or if it requires the solitary witness of a hero.[78]

In *Works of Love,* Kierkegaard does not explicitly consider the option of a solitary witness accomplishing political change. What Kierkegaard does is to warn that the self-denial required from a Christian witness is not a "merely human self-denial." In the case of the "merely human self-denial," the person denying him or herself does "venture into danger," and does it without fear for him or herself and without regard for him or herself, but it is a danger "where honor beckons to the victor, where the admiration of contemporaries and onlookers already beckons to the one who simply ventures" (196). On the contrary, the Christian witness, "ventures into battle with the powers that be who have his life in their hands and who must see in him a troublemaker—this will probably cost him his life" [sic] (196). In the meantime, "his contemporaries, with whom he has no immediate dispute but who are onlookers [sic], find it ludicrous to risk death for the sake of such fatuousness. Here there is life to lose and truly no honor and admiration to gain!" (196–97). The solitary heroic witness who accomplishes political change does venture "into battle with the powers that be" without expecting approval from contemporaries with whom he or she does not have any immediate dispute (196).

In 1848, Kierkegaard would say in a journal entry that "the older forms of tyranny," among which he mentioned "emperor, king, nobility, clergy," and remarkably

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[77] Kierkegaard, 58. From a footnote by the author.

[78] Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden,* 376.

also "money tyranny," had become "powerless." The problem, he continued, was that "another form of tyranny" had emerged to substitute the older forms, a form of tyranny that was "the most dangerous," the one he called "the tyranny of the fear of men," namely, the "fear of the crowd, of men, of the majority, of the people, of the public" (JP 4, 4131 / Pap. VIII[1] A 598). For that reason, "only martyrs" would be able "to rule the world," or more definitely stated, "no human being," but "only the divine," with the assistance of the martyrs willing to suffer in unconditional obedience to God.[79] The kind of martyr suited to rule the world, Kierkegaard says, is the "martyr of the future." The "martyr of the future" will be able to determine by himself[80] and in obedience to God "what kind of mistreatment and persecution he will suffer, whether he will fall or not, and if he will fall, the place where he will fall, so that he succeeds, dialectically, in falling at the right place so that his death wounds the survivors in the right spot."[81] When the tyrant dies, Kierkegaard continues, "his rule is over;" on the contrary, when the martyr dies, "his rule begins."[82]

In a letter to his friend Conferentsraad J. L. A. Kolderup-Rosenvinge from August of 1848, Kierkegaard refers to what he viewed as "the law of confusion" governing the most recent European events. "Everything," says Kierkegaard, was "movement." "Nothing" was "really established." He says: "They wish to stop by means of a revolution and to stop a revolution by means of a counterrevolution." Then he asks: "But

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[79] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 235. In another journal entry, Kierkegaard says that it is "the mass" wanting "to be the tyrant" that explains the need for the rule of the martyr (JP 3, 2649 / Pap. IX B 63:13). See Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 281.

[80] It does not seem to occur to Kierkegaard that the martyr could be a woman.

[81] JP 3, 2649 / Pap. IX B 63:13. See Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 280-81.

[82] Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 281-82.

what is a counterrevolution if it is not also a revolution?"[83] There were, Kierkegaard suggests, "competing teleological visions of how government should operate and function," and "of how society should be," and consequently, says J. Michael Tilley, interpreting Kierkegaard's thought in the letter, we will see a "back and forth struggle between two (or more) competing visions" that splits apart the societies.[84] What is needed, Kierkegaard says, is not "a fixed point *to which* one wants to get," but "a fixed point *from which to set out*," and "a purely political movement," which by definition "lacks the religious element or is forsaken by God," cannot provide it. Only a religious movement will, says Kierkegaard, and he predicts that "the movement" of his time, which appeared "to be purely political," would "turn out suddenly to be religious or the need for religion."[85] Precisely the martyr of the future would be, according to Kierkegaard, "that single individual" who, by providing "the fixed point *behind*," would embody the religious movement and accept "in advance" to be sacrificed and to lay down his life in order to conquer.[86]

Kierkegaard Subjected to the Motivation and Enablement Test

Kierkegaard says that "the expression of the greatest riches is to have a need" (38) and that the main and "deepest" need (67) is to him the "need to love and be loved" (155), a need that is deeply "rooted in human nature" (155). To Kierkegaard, this need stems from our likeness to God. God Godself implanted love "in the human heart" (163),

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[83] Kierkegaard, *Letters and Documents*, 260-61.

[84] J. Michael Tilley, "J. L. A. Kolderup-Rosenvinge: Kierkegaard on Walking Away From Politics," in *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries*, ed. Jon Stewart, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 81.

[85] Kierkegaard, *Letters and Documents*, 262.

[86] Kierkegaard, 262-63.

and "we can be like God only in loving, just as we also… can only be God's coworkers—in love" (63). Kierkegaard says that this love implanted in our hearts has a need "to express itself."[87] Since we have this deep need to love and to be loved, we do not need a commandment to tell us to love, but we do need a commandment to tell us "how" to love, the commandment to love the neighbor. This commandment is therefore "grounded in the structure of our humanity;" it is not "arbitrarily imposed from outside."[88] Kierkegaard explains that "essentially the commandment is not forbidding but commanding" (41). However, the commandment does forbid "loving in a way that is not commanded" (41). The commandment is meant to bind and guide "this great need" that we have to love and to be loved "so that it does not go astray and turn into pride" (67); we need the commandment to love so that we do not "restrict it preferentially."[89]

Ferreira reminds us several times of an example that Kierkegaard conveys in a journal entry from the same year in which he published *Works of Love*— that of the child "giving his parents a present, purchased, however, with what the child has received from his parents" (JP 2, 1121 / Pap. VIII[1] A 19).[90] The same happens with our love, Kierkegaard infers. We love with the love that God, who is Love, has implanted in our hearts. We cannot "create love in another person" (216) nor in ourselves. Moreover, the God-implanted love with which we love is a love that puts us in debt, and it is not because we have to repay in love installments the love we received first, as if it were a "bookkeeping arrangement" (176). We do not run into this debt "by receiving;" we run

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[87] Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 41.

[88] Ferreira, 41.

[89] Ferreira, 41.

[90] Ferreira, 18 and 257. See also Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 39, 137, 139, and 146n11.

into it “by giving” (176–77). The more we love, the more we become indebted with those we love. The task is never completed and there is always more to do (177–78).

Kierkegaard argues that we can only love by presupposing that love is in ourselves as well as in the other person’s heart (216), in the same way that we presuppose that “the germ” is present in “the grain of wheat” (218). Yet the presence of love in us and in the others is not something obvious and self-evident. As Kierkegaard says, “it is easy enough to presuppose love where it is obviously present” (218); however, “love is never completely present in any human being” (218), and besides, “there is nothing,” Kierkegaard says, “no ‘thus and so,’ that can unconditionally be said to demonstrate unconditionally the presence of love or to demonstrate unconditionally its absence” (14). Kierkegaard insists that we have to “believe in love” (16), and that only then will we be able to love “forth” the love that is already present, and thereby draw “out the good” (217), which is the right way of loving.

Kierkegaard does not intend to present the commandment to love the neighbor as easier to fulfill than it actually is. He is convinced that the commandment to love the neighbor that orders us how to love is offensive “to flesh and blood” and foolish from the perspective of a “cultured person” appreciative of what we ordinarily call “wisdom” (59). Kierkegaard makes it very clear that to him the commandment to love the neighbor exposes us to “a double danger” by forcing us to struggle on two fronts: first with ourselves, in our inner beings, and then outside ourselves, with the world (192). Kierkegaard has no doubt that we “will fare badly in the world” if we earnestly try to fulfill the commandment (191). For those reasons, the command to love the neighbor, recognizing the neighbor in the other—even in the friend or the lover—as well as in

ourselves, and being a neighbor to the other, is unequivocally to Kierkegaard a command from God with "divine origin" (42). Kierkegaard says that "each one individually, before he [sic] relates in love to the beloved, the friend, the loved ones, the contemporaries, must first relate to God and to God's requirement" (112).[91]

The relationship to God takes place in the conscience. The conscience is the connection between God and the human beings. Conscience is to Kierkegaard "the locus of the God-human relationship."[92] In Kierkegaard's words, "to relate to God is precisely to have a conscience" (143). In Kierkegaard's judgment, "a person could not have anything on his conscience if God did not exist, because the relationship between the individual and God, the God-relationship, is the conscience, and this is why it is so terrible to have even the slightest thing on one's conscience, because one immediately has along with it the infinite weight of God" (143). "In the conscience," Kierkegaard says, God "looks at a person," such that the person "must look" at God "in everything" (377).

We receive the commandment to love the neighbor through the conscience or, in other words, "in the Christian sense love is a matter of conscience" (137). Given that this commandment from God that we receive through the conscience is both offensive and foolish, and given that it exposes us to a "double danger," Kierkegaard believes that we can only fulfil it, to the extent that we can fulfil it, "in grace and out of grace, utterly in God's power." This reference to grace is, to be sure, not from *Works of Love,* but from a

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[91] Kierkegaard forgets to say that, in accord to his understanding of neighbor love, an individual must relate to God and God's requirement even before he or she relates to him or herself.

[92] Mark A. Tietjen, *Kierkegaard, Communication, and Virtue: Authorship as Edification* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 121.

journal entry from 1847. In that entry, Kierkegaard "conceived of his whole life and work as a Christian philosopher and writer in relation to grace,"[93] indicating that he once again had to "steer into the open sea, [and] live in grace and out of grace, utterly in God's power" (JP 5, 5962 / Pap. VII[1] A 222). Grace is to Kierkegaard a "gift of love from God"[94] with which God reminds us that God always loved us first, empowers us to fulfil the commandment to love the neighbor, forgives us when we fail, and immediately sends us back to the task of trying to fulfil the commandment. Kierkegaard says: "Is this not Christianity? It is indeed God in heaven who through the apostle says, 'Be reconciled'; it is not human beings who say to God, 'Forgive us.' No, God loved us first; and again the second time, when it was a matter of the Atonement, God was the one who came first—although in the sense of justice he was the one who had the furthest to come" (336). The love with which God loved us first, says Kierkegaard, is at once "the greatest leniency and the greatest rigorousness" (377). To some people there is leniency in God's rigorousness, while to others there is rigorousness in God's leniency. For instance, "God's rigorousness is leniency in the loving and the humble, but in the hardhearted his leniency is rigorousness" (377). "To the person who refuses to accept" God's salvation, there is rigorousness in the leniency "that God has willed to save the world" (377–78), and that rigorousness is even greater "than if God had never willed it but would only judge the world" (378). To Kierkegaard, God's grace does not remove the need for our striving nor prevent acting. On the contrary, God's grace and our striving are two sides of

[93] Derek R. Nelson, "Grace," in *Kierkegaard's Concepts*, ed. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald, and Jon Stewart, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 123.

[94] Nelson, 121.

the same coin. Grace is not "a free ticket, as a way of requiring everything of God and nothing of oneself."[95] In another journal entry, in this case from 1852, Kierkegaard says that grace should instead be "the basis of courage and mobility for action." He adds that "Christianity's intention" is that grace should give us "the courage and the desire to exert" ourselves and make us "venture all the more intrepidly," precisely because we will not lose our "eternal salvation," no matter "however badly things turn out" (JP 2, 1489 / Pap. X5 A 8). Our striving, as much as it is required by God, due to its intimate connection to God's grace, is devoid of "any claim of meritoriousness" (4). Kierkegaard proclaims that God "is too sublimely transcendent ever to think that to him a human being's effort should have some meritoriousness. Yet he requires it, and then one thing more, that the human being himself not dare to think that he has [sic] some meritoriousness" (379).

It is a big mistake, says Kierkegaard, to think that Christianity has nothing to preach about "rigorousness" or that it could be equated with "a certain sentimental, almost soft, form of love," according to which we would be able to "spare" ourselves and our "flesh and blood," and "have good days or happy days without self-concern" (376). Kierkegaard compares Christianity to the "handing over," not of "a bouquet of flowers," but of a "very sharply honed two-edged instrument" (198). It is an excellent instrument, but it is also dangerous, and one cannot recommend it without also warning against its potential danger.[96] Sometimes, says Kierkegaard, "the highest responsibility" should lead a preacher "to preach **against** Christianity in *Christian*—yes, precisely in *Christian*

[95] Nelson, 120.

[96] Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 128.

sermons" (198). Kierkegaard believes that "Christianity is so sure of itself and knows with such earnestness and rigor that it is people who need it that for this very reason it does not recommend itself directly but first startles people—just as Christ recommended himself to the apostles by predicting in advance that for his sake they would be hated" (199). Christianity, says Kierkegaard, compels us to make a choice: "either to be offended or to accept Christianity" (200-201). And to accept Christianity is not something different from letting God address us with the commandment to love the neighbor. As Kierkegaard sums it up, "to love people" is not just "the only thing worth living for;" it is also "the only true sign that you are a Christian" (375).

Kierkegaard knows that he cannot compel us to make the choice to subject ourselves to God's commandment to love the neighbor. What he wants is that we make our choice—whatever that choice is, and it is certainly not a choice that we at any time can make once and for all—with full knowledge of what it means and of what consequences we probably will face, and without easing up "on the requirement" (127). But Kierkegaard also makes it clear that we are not left to our own devices if we do make the choice to follow God's commandment. We can make that choice, Kierkegaard says, with the belief that God loved us first, implanted love in ourselves as well as in everybody else, and offers us to rely on God's still operative grace. In this case, we will be motivated and enabled to love as God commands us to do it, and to persist in our striving in spite of our failures, the opposition we will face, and the absence of visible results.

However, as it has been shown above, Kierkegaard incurs several contradictions and sets exaggerated and very restrictive requirements that introduce barriers to the

effective performance of works of love. He makes the command to love the neighbor compatible with the persistence of temporal dissimilarities, while he praises social reforms like the end of slavery, the abolition of the caste system, and the recognition of some women's rights. He seems to argue that we can love the neighbor without entering any alliance, while he praises the union of people to alleviate poverty, bring up orphan children, and rescue the fallen. He maintains that neighbor love goes hand in hand with a quiet life, while it also requires us to become "Christian witnesses" willing to risk our lives and be perceived as troublemakers. He holds that neighbor love calls us to help other people, but that we should be invisible to the people helped. Thus, while I consider that Kierkegaard passes the motivation test because he has an unsurpassable skill in talking to each individual reader and compelling us to make a choice, I think that he fails the enablement test.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CONVERGENT READING OF HEGEL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT* AND KIERKEGAARD'S *WORKS OF LOVE*

Project for the Chapter

A convergent reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* would be possible even when the two authors did not know about each other. But this is not the case. Hegel died in 1831, the year after Kierkegaard had entered the University of Copenhagen as theology student and long before Kierkegaard published his first book, which happened in 1838, so he was obviously not able to read anything written by Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard, on the contrary, did read Hegel and became familiar with him and his system.

Kierkegaard's reading of Hegel and of other authors influenced by Hegel, including the Danish Hegelians, followed the patterns of most of his readings. Kierkegaard, by his own admission, did not read to acquire an objective and thorough understanding of what he read, but to find points of view with which he either agreed or disagreed, and that gave him the opportunity to develop and further his own argument. His reading practice confirmed a thesis he enunciated in 1837 about "great geniuses," that they "are essentially unable to read a book," because "while they are reading, their own development will always be greater than their understanding of the author" (JP 2, 1288 / Pap. II A 26).

Since we know that Kierkegaard read Hegel, I will start this chapter with a fast survey of the references to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* in Kierkegaard's work. In line with his reading practice, most of the references are to the "Good and Conscience" sub-section of the "Morality" section (§§ 129 to 141), and Kierkegaard's interpretation evolves over time and corroborates that he is more interested in constructing his own argument than in understanding Hegel in an objective way.

After that review, I will show how much the two authors have in common, based on my extensive reading and study of the *Philosophy of Right* and *Works of Love* in the previous two chapters. And since I have tried to provide a more objective reading of the *Philosophy of Right* than Kierkegaard ever intended to provide, I will in the subsequent section of the chapter clarify where I think that Kierkegaard misunderstands Hegel. This will further clear the way for a convergent reading of the two works.

However, before the convergent reading, there is one more step that I see it necessary to take, which is to explain why, if Hegel and Kierkegaard agree on so much, they are so different, and had different audiences, as I also will explain in detail. In my reading, none of those differences are mutually exclusive. On the contrary, I consider that the distinctive views of each author are incomplete on their own, and this is precisely why I can put forward the convergent reading to which I will devote the last section of this chapter.

Kierkegaard's References to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

Throughout his authorship, Kierkegaard made several explicit references to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Most of those references are to the "Good and Conscience" sub-section of the "Morality" section (§§ 129 to 141). The first one appears in

Kierkegaard's dissertation from 1841, *The Concept of Irony*,[1] in an appendix to the first part entitled "Hegel's View of Socrates." In this text, Kierkegaard assents to Hegel's characterization of Socrates as "the founder of morality"[2] and recalls Hegel's distinction between "morality" and "ethics," or what is commonly called "ethical life."[3] Kierkegaard correctly summarizes that to Hegel "ethics is in part unreflected ethics such as ancient Greek ethics, and in part a higher determination of it such as manifests itself again after having recollected itself in morality," and this is why he, in his *Philosophy of Right*, "discusses morality before proceeding to ethics."[4] Continuing his accurate summary of Hegel's thought in the *Philosophy of Right*, Kierkegaard says that in the "Good and Conscience" sub-section of the "Morality" section, Hegel discusses "the moral forms of evil, hypocrisy, probabilism, Jesuitism, the appeal to the conscience, [and] irony."[5] What Hegel presents there, says Kierkegaard, is "the negatively free individual," who "is free because he [sic] is not bound by another, but he is negatively free precisely because he is not limited in another."[6] Without using the word "love," Kierkegaard refers to Hegel's concept of "love" in the *Philosophy of Right* when he adds that the individual only is "in truth (i.e., positively) free, affirmatively free" when he or she, "by being in his [sic] other is in his own."[7] In short, the young Kierkegaard wholly agrees with Hegel that "moral

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[2] Kierkegaard, 227.

[3] This is also what I call it in this dissertation.

[4] Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 227-28.

[5] Kierkegaard, 228.

[6] Kierkegaard, 228.

[7] Kierkegaard, 228.

freedom is arbitrariness; it is the possibility of good and evil."[8] In order to prove it, Kierkegaard quotes directly from of the *Philosophy of Right*: "To have a conscience, if conscience is only formal subjectivity, is simply to be on the verge of slipping into evil" (§ 139, 135).[9] Coinciding with Hegel, Kierkegaard praises Socrates for having arrived "at the definition of knowledge that made the individual alien to the immediacy in which he had previously lived" and forced him or her to act "with a conscious knowledge of why he [or she] acted" rather than "out of fear of the law."[10] On the other hand, and also coinciding with Hegel, he deplores that the state "had lost its significance for Socrates,"[11] because in his opinion, it is only in the ordered totality of the state that moral excellence stops being optional and instead becomes something to be pursued in earnest.[12]

Kierkegaard had already shown his agreement with Hegel's view of moral conscience in a journal entry from 1840, where he said, "I become conscious simultaneously in my eternal validity, in, so to speak, my divine necessity, and in my accidental finitude (that I am this particular being, born in this country at this time, throughout all the various influences of changing conditions). This latter aspect must not be overlooked or rejected; on the contrary, the true life of the individual is its apotheosis, which does not mean that this empty, contentless *I* steals, as it were, out of this finitude, in order to become volatilized and diffused in its heavenward emigration, but rather that the divine inhabits and finds its task in the finite" (JP 2, 1587 / Pap. III A 1).

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[8] Kierkegaard, 228.

[9] Kierkegaard, 228. Kierkegaard quotes from the original in German.

[10] Kierkegaard, 228.

[11] Kierkegaard, 230.

[12] Kierkegaard, 230.

In one of the pieces of A's Papers contained in the first part of *Either/Or* edited by the pseudonymous Victor Eremita, Kierkegaard makes the author say what could be read as a "paraphrase" from the Preface to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right.*[13] The sentence reads, "Every individual, however original he [sic] is, is still a child of God, of his age, of his nation, of his family, of his friends, and only in them does he have his truth."[14] In one of his letters to A in the second part of *Either/Or*, B (Judge William) offers, both in terms of content and methodology,[15] the view of marriage already presented by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right.* This is what he does when he pursues the task of showing "that romantic can be united with and exist in marriage—indeed, that marriage is its true transfiguration."[16]

Kierkegaard again refers to the "Good and Conscience" sub-section of the "Morality" section of the *Philosophy of Right* in his pseudonymous *Fear and Trembling* of 1843.[17] In that writing, the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio treats different aspects of the story of the binding of Isaac in three "Problemata": 1) whether there is a teleological suspension of the ethical; 2) whether there is an absolute duty to God; and 3) whether it was ethically defensible for Abraham to conceal his undertaking from Sarah, Eliezer, and

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[13] This observation is made by Jon Stewart in his Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 223-24. The sentence from the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right* to which Stewart refers is the following, "Whatever happens, every individual is a *child of his time*" (15).

[14] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or. Part I*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987), 145.

[15] Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations*, 229.

[16] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or. Part 2*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987), 31.

[17] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

Isaac himself. In each case, the pseudonymous writer addresses the problem in dialog with Hegel.

In the first "Problema," the pseudonymous writer specifically refers to the *Philosophy of Right*'s "Good and Conscience" sub-section. Sounding like Hegel, the writer states that "the ethical as such"—and he is referring to what is commonly known as the "ethical life"—"is the universal," and that the individual, having "his [sic] τέλος in the universal," has the "ethical task" of continuing "to express himself in this, to annul his singularity in order to become the universal."[18] The writer adds that "as soon as the single individual asserts himself in his singularity before the universal, he sins, and only by acknowledging this can he be reconciled again with the universal."[19] If this were true, the writer continues, "then Hegel is right in 'The Good and Conscience,' where he qualifies man only as the individual and considers this qualification as a 'moral form of evil' (see especially *The Philosophy of Right*), which must be annulled [*ophœvet*] in the teleology of the moral in such a way that the single individual who remains in that state either sins or is immersed in spiritual trial."[20] In fairness to the writer, it should be said that he does not entirely misrepresent Hegel's point in the "Good and Conscience" sub-section. However, the writer continues his line of argument by saying that "Hegel is wrong in speaking about faith; he is wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against Abraham's enjoying honor and glory as father of faith when he ought to be sent back to a lower court and shown up as a murderer."[21] The writer comes to "the thesis" of this

[18] Kierkegaard, 54.

[19] Kierkegaard, 54.

[20] Kierkegaard, 54.

[21] Kierkegaard, 54-55.

"Problema," and "indeed of the work as a whole,"[22] when he states that "faith is namely this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal—yet, please note, in such a way that the movement repeats itself, so that after having been in the universal he as the single individual isolates himself as higher than the universal."[23] I agree with Jon Stewart that the writer is not trying to revert to the "different forms of subjectivism and relativism"[24] that Kierkegaard, in accordance with Hegel, dismissed in *The Concept of Irony* as potentially evil.[25] The writer claims that there is "a higher form of individualism" "based on faith and a relation to God," that requires a "teleological suspension of the ethical" and "cannot be made sense of by means of normal human understanding or discursive rationality."[26] This is precisely why he conceives faith as a paradox.[27] This is also the reason why in the third "Problema" he argues that Abraham cannot justify his actions in a rational way and has instead to "remain silent."[28] The writer insists that there must be in a person "a residual incommensurability in some way such that this incommensurability is not evil" and that prevents "the ethical—that is, social morality" from being "the highest."[29] As the writer argues in the second "Problema," there is indeed "an absolute duty to God," that the individual eventually will have to obey. However, the individual will never be able to "reassure himself [sic] that he is

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[22] Jon Stewart, "Hegel's View of Moral Conscience and Kierkegaard's Interpretation of Abraham," *Kierkegaardiana* 19 (1999): 65.

[23] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, 55.

[24] Jon Stewart, *Idealism and Existentialism: Hegel and Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century European Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2010), 131-32.

[25] Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 228.

[26] Stewart, *Idealism and Existentialism*, 131.

[27] Stewart, 131.

[28] Stewart, 131.

[29] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, 55.

legitimate."[30] To the writer, this is what faith is about, and, as Jon Stewart beautifully summarizes it, "the very nature" of faith "is that it cannot rest in the quiet complacency of having done the right thing." On the contrary, "the nature of faith involves by its very nature the uncertainty and the possibility of being mistaken," and this is why it "is not a matter of certainty, but of fear and trembling" inexorably involving "anxiety."[31]

Some interpreters have called attention to the fact that the position that Kierkegaard voices here through his pseudonym Johannes de Silentio could be interpreted as giving "*carte blanche* to any kind of evil or self-serving act" using the excuse that one "has received a divine command to do something that is in conflict with ethics or law."[32] However, this is not what Kierkegaard argues. I agree with the interpreters who maintain that the meaning of the teleological suspension of the ethical is that "the *status* of the ethical as *the highest telos* is suspended," but that "the validity or significance of the ethical" remains in place.[33] The suspension of the ethical "is teleological in the sense that the movement of faith is the means of enacting the suspension, but faith still relates non-teleologically to the ethical since faith does not become a higher normative standard that sublates the ethical."[34] Any action, thus, can only be judged according to purely ethical criteria and it is impossible to invoke religious reasons to justify an action or to make it "immune to scrutiny."[35] In other words, faith

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[30] Kierkegaard, 62.

[31] Stewart, *Idealism and Existentialism*, 134.

[32] Stewart, 139.

[33] J. Michael Tilley, "Rereading the Teleological Suspension: Resignation, Faith, and Teleology," in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook 2012*, ed. Heiko Schulz (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 166.

[34] Tilley, 166.

[35] Tilley, 168.

cannot be "an excuse to avoid the universal"[36] or to justify terrorist violence against innocents.

In the particular case of the command received by Abraham, Johannes de Silentio pokes fun at the glorification of Abraham which sometimes is recited in the form of the cliché that "he loved God in such a way that he was willing to offer him the best."[37] As the writer rightly adds, "'the best' is a vague term,"[38] and if "we homologize Isaac and the best,"[39] we are leaving "the anxiety" out of the story.[40] Johannes de Silentio does not want anybody "to do just as Abraham did,"[41] and he wonders whether it is "possible to speak unreservedly about Abraham without running the risk that some individual will become unbalanced and do the same thing."[42] He emphatically says that "it is only by faith that one achieves any resemblance to Abraham, not by murder."[43] Moreover, according to de Silentio, Abraham "must love Isaac with his whole soul," and "since God claims Isaac, he must, if possible, love him even more, and only then can he *sacrifice* him."[44] This is certainly not what a murderous fanatic does. As Edward Mooney has rightly argued, "the murderous fanatic typically harbors hate, indifference, or contempt for his victim."[45] What is more, according to de Silentio, Abraham has to remain silent,

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[36] Tilley, 168.

[37] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, 28.

[38] Kierkegaard, 28.

[39] Kierkegaard, 28.

[40] Kierkegaard, 28.

[41] Kierkegaard, 28.

[42] Kierkegaard, 31.

[43] Kierkegaard, 31.

[44] Kierkegaard, 74.

[45] Edward F. Mooney, *Knights of Faith and Resignation: Reading Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 82.

and "he feels the pain of being unable to make himself understandable to others," without having any "vain desire to instruct others."[46] Again, this is not what a fanatic would do. On the contrary, "the zealot or fanatic typically sees himself as partisan of a cause, pledged to bring 'truth' directly to the benighted."[47] As interpreted by de Silentio, Abraham "had faith that God would not demand Isaac of him, and yet he was willing to sacrifice him if it was demanded. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for human calculation was out of the question, and it certainly was absurd that God, who required it of him, should in the next moment rescind the requirement."[48] Anyway, "he climbed the mountain, and even in the moment when the knife gleamed he had faith—that God would not require Isaac."[49] He was undoubtedly "surprised at the outcome;" he had already made the movement of resigning his property claim on his son, and upon receiving him back now as a gift from God, "he received Isaac more joyfully than the first time."[50] De Silentio goes on to say that even if Isaac had had to be sacrificed, "Abraham had faith" and "he did not have faith that he would be blessed in a future life but that he would be blessed here in the world" because "God could give him a new Isaac, could restore to life the one sacrificed."[51] This highlights again that Kierkegaard is not providing justification to any fanatic, because a fanatic is typically not "one who happily and expectantly

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[46] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, 80.

[47] Mooney, *Knights of Faith and Resignation*, 83.

[48] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, 35-36.

[49] Kierkegaard, 36.

[50] Kierkegaard, 36. Referring to pages 265-266 of *Works of Love*, Jamie Aroosi states that for Kierkegaard love is precisely "the relationship that exists when an individual overcomes a possessive relationship with others in favor of a relationship of mutual respect." See Jamie Aroosi, *The Dialectical Self: Kierkegaard, Marx, and the Making of the Modern Subject* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), Location 1909.

[51] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, 36.

welcomes his victim's return."[52] Therefore, the author of *Fear and Trembling* is in agreement with what Kierkegaard had stated in his journal entry from 1840, that an individual will never be justified in setting out for a "heavenward emigration," but has to find his or her place and task "in the finite" (JP 2, 1587 / Pap. III A 1).

Kierkegaard deepens the criticism of Hegel made by his pseudonym in *Fear and Trembling* in a journal entry from 1847 in which he attacks "a secular view which refuses to acknowledge any transcendent sphere which has a demand to the individual."[53] This is, says Kierkegaard, an attempt "to deify the world and contemporary opinion," denying "that one's ultimate judgment and ultimate responsibility are to God," that amounts to "the abolition of the relationship of conscience" (JP 2, 1613 / Pap. VIII[1] A 283). Kierkegaard considers that "the abolition of the relationship of conscience" is an "impiety" for which the Hegelian philosophy is responsible. More than this, this "impiety" is in Kierkegaard's view "the fundamental damage done by Hegelian philosophy" (JP 2, 1613 / Pap. VIII[1] A 283).

Kierkegaard reiterates this strong criticism of Hegel three years later in *Practice in Christianity*, where he makes his pseudonym Anti-Climacus ask why Hegel had "made conscience and the state of conscience in the single individual 'a form of evil' (see *Rechts-Philosophie*)." This was clearly a distortion of Hegel's position, because, as Kierkegaard had admitted in his *The Concept of Irony*, what Hegel argues in the *Philosophy of Right* is only that certain forms of individualism run the risk of slipping into evil. But overlooking the fact that he was misrepresenting Hegel's view, Anti-

[52] Mooney, *Knights of Faith and Resignation*, 83.

[53] Stewart, *Idealism and Existentialism*, 134.

Climacus responds to his own question by saying that he did it precisely "because he deified the established order."[54] "The deification of the established order," Kierkegaard's pseudonym continues, "is the smug invention of the lazy, secular human mentality that wants to settle down and fancy that now there is total peace and security, now we have achieved the highest."[55] In further proof that Kierkegaard through this pseudonym is sharpening the criticism made through Johannes de Silentio in *Fear and Trembling*, he does not say that a particular individual could find him or herself needing to suspend teleologically the ethical in order to respond to a call from God. Instead, Anti-Climacus says that "every human being is to live in fear and trembling, and likewise no established order is to be exempted from fear and trembling. Fear and trembling signify that we are in the process of becoming; and every single individual, likewise the generation, is and should be aware of being in the process of becoming. And fear and trembling signify that there is a God—something every human being and every established order ought not to forget for a moment."[56]

In a journal entry from 1850, the same year in which he published *Practice in Christianity* under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard ignores his previous insistence on the need of the individual to find his or her place and task in the finite, and even specifically in the state. Kierkegaard denounces that Hegel's "universal," which includes the state, is an "abstraction" and that "the single individual in his [sic] God-relationship is "higher" than what Hegel considered to be the "the universal."

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[54] Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991), 87.

[55] Kierkegaard, 88.

[56] Kierkegaard, 88.

Kierkegaard contends that "Hegel basically regards men, paganly, as an animal-race endowed with reason," where "'the single individual' is always lower than 'race.'" Instead, to Kierkegaard "the human race always has the remarkable character that, just because every individual is created in the image of God, the 'single individual' is higher than the 'race.'" (JP 2, 1614 / Pap. X^2 A 426).

Kierkegaard did not forget in his later years that he had once been sympathetic to Hegel's views. In a journal entry from 1854, admitting that he had "childishly babbled after" Hegel in his dissertation *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard takes away from the state any "moral significance." He denies that "true virtue" could only appear in the state, and he does not give the state any role in the improvement of human beings (JP 4, 4238 / Pap. XI^2 A 108). However, in the same journal entry Kierkegaard admits that the state is a "necessary," "useful," and "expedient" evil. Kierkegaard adds that "the state is human egotism in great dimensions, very expediently and cunningly composed so that the egotisms of individuals intersect each other correctively." With this, Kierkegaard seems to refer to the "mutual interlocking of particulars" that happens in the system of needs moment of civil society described by Hegel. However, Hegel does not have any illusion that this mechanism will satisfy the needs of all. Hegel admits that, even with the efforts done through education, through a rigorous administration of justice, through public authority, and through the corporations to make people sensitive to the needs of others, he is at a loss about how to definitively solve the problem of poverty, and he is aware that great inequality corrupts civil society.[57]

[57] See above pages 92-95.

Commonalities between Hegel and Kierkegaard

Hegel and Kierkegaard agree that love is the unifying thread in their authorships, particularly in the *Philosophy of Right* and *Works of Love*, respectively.

In the case of Hegel, it comes to expression in his conviction that "unification as such is itself the true content and aim" of the state (§ 258R, 229). This is why the state is comparable to the family according to him. "The ethical aspect of marriage," says Hegel, "consists in the parties' consciousness of… unity as their substantial aim, and so in their love, trust, and common sharing of their entire existence as individuals" (§ 163, 165), and in his view, the same applies, more broadly, to the family and the state. That unification is, as he views it, not a fact, but a task, something that must be accomplished and that is of major significance. Merold Westphal says it well when he points out that to Hegel unification "is not simply the means to something other than itself, but is itself the end, the goal, the aim of the attitudes and activities which constitute it." Therefore, Westphal continues, "the We formed by love," in the family and in the state, "is its own reward."[58]

In the case of Kierkegaard, the vigorous centrality of love comes to expression in the lines of *Works of Love* where he says that "to love people is the only thing worth living for, and without this love you are not really living." "To love people," Kierkegaard continues, "is the only blessed comfort both here and in the next world; and to love people is the only true sign that you are a Christian" (375).

They also agree that the law is not opposed to love, or, in other words, that the adherence to social norms and the intersubjective bond of love are not antithetical, as

[58] Westphal, *Hegel*, 49.

long as the norms are not a mere imposition that demand uncritical compliance but are in force with the conscious consent of the people.

Hegel for his part argues that the commandment to love the neighbor cannot be restricted to the "single and isolated" performance of one individual toward another individual. If the goal is to provide "intelligent" and "substantial beneficence," then neighbor love is in the first instance an assignment for the "state."[59] In the same line, patriotism, according to Hegel, is not primarily "a readiness for exceptional sacrifices and actions." It is rather "the disposition which, in the relationships of our daily life and under ordinary conditions, habitually recognizes that the community is one's substantial basis and end" (§ 268R, 240-241). This means that both neighbor love and love of the country to Hegel generally come to expression in the compliance with the norms of the state.

In the case of Kierkegaard, the accord of social norms and love comes to expression in his recommendation to lead "a quiet life" (74) in subjection to all "beneficial" bonds (114). Kierkegaard goes to the extreme of recommending to every human being to not busying themselves with changing the current conditions, "Do not busy yourself with changing the shape of the world or your situation, as if you (to stay with the example), instead of being a poor charwoman, perhaps could manage to be called 'Madame'" (136).

Hegel and Kierkegaard agree as well that the individual is born in a social world and has been subject to change in the course of history.

So prominent is this fact to Hegel that one of the intuitions that were part of Hegel's thought since the beginning of his career is precisely the claim that the

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[59] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 255.

community precedes the constitution of the individual. It was in the course of history that the "I" discovered at a certain moment that it could insist upon being a person with a capacity for rights and expect that those rights would be recognized by others.[60] "The right of the subject's particularity, his [sic] right to be satisfied, or in other words the right of subjective freedom," Hegel argues, "is the pivot and centre of the difference between antiquity and modern times" (§ 124R, 122), and therefore a discussion about relationships and social practices should engage the changes in the course of history.

Kierkegaard expresses the same idea when he states that "none of us is pure humanity" (70). "Just as little as the Christian lives or can live without his body [sic], so little can he live [sic] without the dissimilarity of earthly life that belongs to every human being in particular by birth, by position, by circumstances, by education, etc." (70). However, as it was argued more extensively in chapter 4, Kierkegaard excepted bond servitude, slavery, misogyny, conditions of extreme poverty, the reality of orphaned children left to their own devices, and the scenario of fallen trampled upon from the acceptable dissimilarities of earthly life. Kierkegaard praises Christianity for having imprinted "the kinship of all human beings" and thereby motivated humanity to do something about those evil and unacceptable dissimilarities (69). Kierkegaard welcomes that "the abominable era of bond service is past" (115), but he indicts the obsession with emancipating ourselves from all bonds (114). We should stay tied to God and to other people through the "beneficial" bonds, as Kierkegaard calls them.

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[60] In words of Dean Moyar that offer an accurate interpretation of Hegel's thought, "a long process of practical education in society's norms" turned individuals into agents with the capacity for "free action" and for taking "responsibility for one's actions (and beliefs and desires)." This capacity is "not natural or innate, but is developed through the *expectations* of others that one do so and through having to respond to the consequences of failing to take responsibility." See Moyar, *Hegel's Conscience*, 146.

To both authors, consciousness is something we must develop.

To Hegel it requires education, which is "the art of making people ethical" (§ 151A, 159). It starts in the family, where education goes hand in hand with discipline and has the "positive aim" of "instilling ethical principles" into the child "in the form of an immediate feeling without opposition, so that thus equipped with the foundation of an ethical life, his [sic] heart may live its early years in love, trust, and obedience;" and "the negative aim of raising children out of the natural immediacy in which they originally find themselves to self-subsistence and freedom of personality" (§ 175, 173-74). Hegel specifies that the aim of discipline is to deter children "from exercising a freedom still in the toils of nature and to lift the universal into their consciousness and will" (§ 174, 173), and he warns against giving reasons to the children when they are not ready yet "to decide whether the reasons are weighty or not." Such a practice would give too much influence on the children's whim and make them "forward and impertinent" at a moment when the main concern should be fostering in them "the feeling of subordination" and "the longing to grow up" (§ 174A, 173). The education provided in the family continues with the *Bildung* offered at school that can and should distance and liberate the individual from "the pure subjectivity of demeanour," "the immediacy of desire," and "the empty subjectivity of feeling and the arbitrariness of inclination" (§ 187, 185).

Kierkegaard, for his part, shares Hegel's aversion to education separated from discipline when he accuses his "little nation" of Denmark of bringing up children who would "mock and scorn everything they do not understand" (460). "What many, indeed most, people call conscience is not conscience at all, but moods, stomach reflexes, vagrant impulses, etc.—the conscience of a bailiff," says Kierkegaard (JP 1, 684 / Pap.

X1 A 51). Although it is often "presupposed and stated that every human being has a conscience," Kierkegaard is convinced that "there is no accomplishment (neither in the physical, like dancing, singing, etc., nor in the mental, such as thinking and the like) which requires such an extensive and rigorous schooling as is required before one can genuinely be said to have a conscience" (JP 1, 684; Pap. X1 A 51). And this is so because to Kierkegaard, developing the consciousness equals "forming the heart" (12), dethroning inclination (50), and exercising ourselves in "self-denial" (52). Then we will be prepared to accept that the neighbor we shall love is "one who is equal" (60). There is "the beloved, for whom you have passion's preference." There is the friend, for whom you also "have passion's preference." There is "the cultured person… with whom you have a similarity of culture." There is the one "who is more distinguished than you," and the one who is lowlier than you (60). However, to love the neighbor in any of them requires us to find in them the one who is equal based on the equality we all share before God (60).

Both authors agree that we develop self-consciousness and become singular individuals in society and must stay in society. They want people to be singular individuals in their social relationships.[61] As Kierkegaard says it in words Hegel could have said too, we have an "innate need for companionship" (154). Kierkegaard rightly says that "in the Christian sense, a person ultimately and essentially has only God to deal with in everything" (377). However, he immediately adds that a person "still must remain in the world and in the earthly circumstances assigned to him [sic]" (377). Both authors agree that severing themselves from their circumstances and the communities they belong

[61] Lappano, *Kierkegaard's Theology of Encounter*, 72.

to or asserting themselves with an autonomy that gives them unlimited or irresponsible freedom are not choices for the individuals that they can approve of.

Hegel and Kierkegaard also agree that epistemology and ethics are not separate enterprises. Therefore, Hegel succinctly declares in one of the initial paragraphs of the *Philosophy of Right* that the truth of right in all its aspects is "freedom made actual" (§ 4, 26), and Kierkegaard declares, with the same capacity to be succinct, in the two prefaces of his *Works of Love* that his deliberations are "not about *love* but about *works of love*" (3 and 207). With a turn of phrase typical of him, Hegel states that "we ought to will something great. But we must also be able to achieve it, otherwise the willing is nugatory" (§ 124A, 123). Love is what it does, says Kierkegaard: "What love does, that it is; what it is, that it does—at one and the same moment" (280).

Hegel and Kierkegaard agree that we do not need to be moral saints, heroes, geniuses, or possess any exceptional quality to act ethically. Clearly, Hegel prefers what he calls "the educated person," who "develops an inner life," "wills that he himself shall be in everything he does [sic]" (§ 107A, 110), tries intentionally to act for the benefit of others and the society, and can explain why his or her actions will accomplish that goal. However, Hegel maintains that the institutions of "Ethical Life" make it possible to act ethically and do what is good and right even for a person who does not have a "conscious" and voluntary relation to the institutions of which he or she is part. According to Hegel, participation in the institutions of "Ethical Life" even stimulates the development of individual consciousness.

Kierkegaard, for his part, insists that Christianity "addresses itself to simple, everyday people" (18), and that love "is something everyone can do or everyone ought to

be able to do" (359). "Love," Kierkegaard adds, is not "jealous of itself and therefore bestowed on only a few." On the contrary, "everyone who wants to have love is given it" (360). Kierkegaard says that "in the world there is incessantly the pressing question about what this one can do, what that one can do, and what that one cannot do" (79), but when it comes to loving the neighbor, Kierkegaard takes a stand that "calmly assumes that every person can do it" (79).

Both Hegel and Kierkegaard have a distinctive view of women vis-à-vis men. "The difference in the natural characteristics of the two sexes," says Hegel, "has a rational basis and consequently acquires an intellectual and ethical significance" (§ 165, 168). Women, says Hegel, have their "substantial vocation in the family," (§ 166, 169) while men have it in the state. Although they are "capable of education," Hegel argues, women "are not made for activities which demand a universal faculty such as the more advanced sciences, philosophy, and certain forms or artistic production" (§ 166A, 169).

Kierkegaard celebrates that the woman is not seen anymore "almost like an animal," as "a disdained being in comparison with the man, a being of another species" (138). However, although she "in inwardness before God" is "absolutely equal with the man" (138), outwardly, "the man is to be the woman's master and she subservient to him" (138). Kierkegaard judges that the efforts "in the name of Christianity" by what he calls "fatuous people" trying to make it "obvious in a worldly way that the woman should be established in equal rights with the man" would only be "a mediocre compensation in the fragment of externality" obtained "in a worldly way" and "by defiance" (139).

Hegel and Kierkegaard agree on having strong reservations against universal suffrage and majority voting. Hegel simply says that "it is not important that an

individual should have a say as abstract individual;" what matters instead, Hegel argues, is that "his [sic] interests are made good in an assembly whose business is with the general interest" (§ 309A, 295-296). For that to be possible, Hegel knows that we must be able find deputies who at once have the insight to treat the affairs of people as if they were their own (§ 309A, 295) and can give preference to the general interest (§ 309, 295). The relation of the deputies "to those that select them" cannot be "that of agents with a commission or specific instructions," Hegel explains (§ 309, 295). Kierkegaard, on his part, holds that there are subjects that quite simply cannot be subjected to a vote, and even if a subject could be, it would be important to determine beforehand who would be given the right to vote, if unanimity would be required, if "the agreement of a number of people, a certain number of votes" would be "sufficient for the decision," and, in that case, "how large a number" would be necessary (115).

Hegel and Kierkegaard agree that we should protect the individual feeling of independence and honor of the members of society. This is why Hegel is hesitant about a remedy to poverty that would consist of delivering food and other resources to be able to live to the needy in a direct way (§245, 221). The terms Kierkegaard choose are that "the greatest beneficence" is "to help someone… to become himself, free, independent, his [sic] own master," and this is why he insists that the helper, and this would include someone delivering food and other resources, "must make himself [sic] unnoticed so that the person helped does not become dependent upon him—by owing to him the greatest beneficence" (274). We cannot, Kierkegaard insists, substitute generosity for mercy, restrict generosity to money, and give the impression that only the wealthy can be generous (315). It follows of itself that if the good and merciful person has something to

give or do, they should be glad to give or do it (324), but we should all remember that public displays of financial generosity that are gratifying to our egos and oppressive towards the persons who receive the money are not acceptable ways of showing concern for others. The poor and the lowly should not think that their fate is to be pitiable objects of mercifulness, and that they have no choice but to bow and thank the rich or the authorities for their misunderstood mercifulness toward them. According to Kierkegaard, the poor and the lowly bear witness to the fact that true mercy is not measured by how much money we give nor by anything specific that we need to do (322).

Hegel and Kierkegaard agree, finally, that we are not necessarily subordinated to our social world. What this means to Hegel is that the will should be able to develop the capacity to be "with itself," and in this way, to be "related to nothing except itself… released from every relation of dependence on anything else" (§ 23, 43). Usually, it will assent to "what is recognized as right and good in contemporary customs," and withdraw to inner conviction and "find in the ideal world of the inner life alone the harmony which actuality has lost" when "what is recognized as right and good in contemporary customs cannot satisfy the better will" and the will "fails to find itself in the duties there recognized" (§ 138R, 134). Hegel is a defender of habit. However, he also postulates that habit can kill us when it makes us feel so "completely at home in life" that we do not need to strive anymore to produce and assert ourselves to attain our ends. In that case, we "become spiritually and physically dull" and consequently, dead in life (§ 151A, 159-160).

Kierkegaard agrees that we are not subordinated to our social world when he states that "Christianity's essential view of the human race" is "first and foremost to view

all these countless ones separately, individually as the single individual" (138). Love, as Jamie Aroosi interpreting Kierkegaard maintains, has an "individuating effect" that makes us "find our true selves" behind the roles assigned to us by the social world, changes the relation we have "with ourselves and others," and gives us "a principle by which to act" that puts us above the social world. According to Kierkegaard, the individual who follows the commandment to love the neighbor will act, under normal circumstances, "according to the dictates of the social world," but "in case of conflict," they will comply with their "own loving motivation." By not being subordinated to the social world, Kierkegaard's loving individual does exist "as a de facto threat to the stability of the social world."[62] Kierkegaard has a purely negative view of habit. He argues that "the lukewarmness and indifference of habit" can change love "from itself," and make it lose "its ardor, its joy, its desire, its originality, its freshness" (36). Kierkegaard adds that habit is an enemy difficult to combat because "the struggle is actually with oneself in getting to see it" (36).

Kierkegaard's Misunderstandings about Hegel

Kierkegaard misunderstands Hegel on three central points. Although they are not misunderstandings that appear in *Works of Love,* we need to consider them before we can move forward with the argument of this chapter.

The first one is the misunderstanding that the Hegelian system does not include ethics. This is what is argued, for instance, through the pseudonym Johannes Climacus, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, when it is stated "that

[62] Jamie Aroosi, "The Ethical Necessity of Politics: Why Kierkegaard Needs Marx," *Toronto Journal of Theology* (2019): 5.

through Hegel a system, the absolute system, was brought to completion—without an ethics,"[63] with the further problem that the teachers of Hegel's philosophy as a result of this alleged omission, according to Kierkegaard's pseudonym, lead the youth astray and make them forget their true ethical obligations.[64]

In a sense, the very existence of the *Philosophy of Right*, that Kierkegaard knew, quoted, and commented on in several of his works as shown above, refutes this accusation. What Kierkegaard is implying instead, and I am following Jon Stewart, is that he has a conception of ethics different from Hegel's.

To Hegel, as he argues in the *Philosophy of Right*, morality and ethics are linked to the political order, the work relations, the familial relations, the role of the judiciary, etc. What is moral and ethical, and it can only be judged in retrospect, is what furthers the construction of what Hegel calls a "rational state."

Kierkegaard, on the contrary, centers his conception on ethics on the individual needing to act without being able to determine in advance what the morally correct action is. In the voice of his pseudonym Climacus, Kierkegaard argues that it is impossible to justify an action we are about to undertake because "there is always a gap between the reasons and arguments given for an act and the demands of morality" that "can only be spanned by a free decision of the individual."[65] Also to Hegel the individual finds him or herself, whenever they act, in the predicament of having to do it without sufficient knowledge to determine what the morally correct action is. The difference is that to

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[63] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 119.

[64] Kierkegaard, 118.

[65] Jon Stewart, "Kierkegaard's Criticism of the Absence of Ethics in Hegel's System," *ARHE* 2, no. 3 (2005): 54.

Hegel that individual predicament "is not and cannot be" the object of the scholarly inquiry that Hegel calls "science."[66]

Another misunderstanding of Hegel on the part of Kierkegaard is that he wrongly attributes to Hegel what was the appropriation of Hegel made by the Danish bourgeoisie of his time. In the Preface to *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard, through his pseudonym Johannes de Silentio, argues that ideas can be bought at a "bargain price,"[67] that it is assumed as "a sign of urbanity and culture" that "everyone has faith," and that there is a complete system presented by authors who write in such a way that their books "can be conveniently skimmed during the after-dinner nap," and who are "careful to look and act like that polite gardener's handyman in *Adresseavisen* [The Advertiser] who with hat in hand and good references from his most recent employer recommends himself to the esteemed public."[68] The bought ideas cannot substitute for the fact that each generation, and more precisely, each individual, has to begin "all over again,"[69] at least when it comes to what Kierkegaard's pseudonym calls "the essentially human."[70] The passions of love and faith cannot be learned from a previous generation[71] and to learn them are tasks "for a person's lifetime"[72] without need to go any further. Kierkegaard's pseudonym makes it clear that the target of his critique is not Hegel himself, but rather those who had misappropriated his thought turning it into a commodity. Hegel worked hard and

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[66] Stewart, "Kierkegaard's Criticism of the Absence of Ethics in Hegel's System," 55.

[67] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, 5.

[68] Kierkegaard, 7-8.

[69] Kierkegaard, 122.

[70] Kierkegaard, 121.

[71] Kierkegaard, 121.

[72] Kierkegaard, 122.

passionately on developing his thought without a hint of condescension with his readers, and he argued that philosophy could not give "instruction as to what the world ought to be" (16) and could therefore not save each generation from what Kierkegaard's pseudonym formulates as having to begin "all over again."[73] Hegel would also have argued that the commodification of ideas infringes the narrow limits of the realm of civil society where things can be bought and sold for money.

Kierkegaard shows a dislike for anything or anyone who positions themselves in the place that corresponds to God. This is what he calls deification. We would be able to find bibliographic references where Kierkegaard complains about the deification of majorities, the principle of equality, voting, statistics, science, and the established order. Regarding the deification of the established order, it is in *Practice in Christianity*, through the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, that Kierkegaard accused Hegel straightaway of deifying the established order, repeating as evidence a distorted interpretation of § 139 of the *Philosophy of Right* that supposedly makes "conscience and the state of conscience in the single individual 'a form of evil.'"[74] As I argued in chapter 3, Hegel sees the state as the embodiment of the "universal," word by which he designates the interest of the society as a whole. The universal is not equivalent to the sum of the individual interests, and it does not require that everybody's "subjective end" coincides "with the state's will" (§ 261A, 237). The universal, Hegel continues, must be "activated," and it is so "bound up with the complete freedom of particularity and with the well-being of individuals" that it "does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and

[73] Kierkegaard, 122.

[74] Kierkegaard, 87.

through the cooperation of particular knowing and willing" (§ 260, 235). Hegel accepts that we in modern times "lay claim to our own views, our own willing and our own conscience" (§ 261A, 237) and conceives a state that acknowledges all that. Kierkegaard is therefore plainly and simply wrong when he in his own voice or in the voice of some of his pseudonyms charges Hegel with deifying the established order. A deified established order would not permit dissent nor the assertion of individual views.

Hegel's Audience

Despite agreeing on so much, Hegel and Kierkegaard have differences as well. One big difference is that they expected to address different audiences with their respective works. I want to be thorough in my description of the audience of each author and I will start with Hegel.

Hegel avowedly wanted to "play his part"[75] in the process of modern social and political reform upon which Prussia embarked in 1807. In the 1810s, the reform supporters had begun to face more and more noticeable opposition by antireform defenders, and in 1815, with the defeat of Napoleon, the movement in favor of reform had lost its impetus. Hegel however, who was a close observer of what was going on in Prussia, did not lose hope that the reforms would prosper. As Terry Pinkard summarizes, "for him, opposition was to be expected, but the social forces that were propelling reform were not going to vanish just because the representatives of an outmoded form of life were upset at the loss of their place as the lead actors on history's stage."[76]

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[75] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 425.

[76] Pinkard, 425.

The Berlin University, created in 1809 according to Wilhelm von Humboldt's design, with the goal of promoting the *Bildung*[77] of the students and thereby preparing them "to be fully modern citizens of a fully modern state,"[78] was one of the pillars of this movement of reform. This new university sustained Hegel's hope in the success of the reforms, and was the place where he could see himself playing a role.

The occasion for Hegel to play an active role in the modernization of Germany came when the Prussian Minister of Culture, Karl Sigmund Franz Freiherr vom Steim zum Altenstein invited him to assume the Philosophy chair at the Berlin University. There had been an attempt to bring Hegel to Berlin the year before, but it had failed.[79] Allegedly, a considerable number of students had begun to raise "the flag of revolution… pursuing vague and undefined aims," and Altenstein "called Hegel to Berlin to cure the political immaturity of the young men by a philosophy which would patiently explain the evolution of social and political realities."[80] Hegel accepted the offer with delight and he and his family arrived in Berlin in the first days of October of 1818, just in time for the beginning of the winter semester.[81]

Hegel gave his inaugural lecture in Berlin on October 22, 1818 and he started it by asserting his "*official capacity as a teacher of philosophy*" to which he had been

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[77] See above pages 64-65.

[78] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 427.

[79] Pinkard, 328-31.

[80] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Robert S. Hartman, ed. Robert S. Hartman (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1953), xiii. The editor Robert S. Hartman adds in his introduction that "this does not speak against Hegel but rather for the Prussian state. For what state, before or since, has thought to find the cure for its political ills in the teaching of a philosopher, recognized as the greatest of his time in spirit, independence, and integrity, and subsidized him for quiet production, content to follow rather than to command him?" See Hegel, *Reason in History*, xiii.

[81] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 412-17.

"graciously appointed by His Majesty the King."[82] Hegel recognized that in previous years, when "the *political totality of national life and of the state*" had been at stake, "*the inner life of the spirit* could not attain *peace* and leisure," that is, spirit had not been able to turn "inward in order to 'collect itself' before moving outwards again." Now that "the *German nation* at large had salvaged its *nationality*" (here Hegel was presumably referring to the defeat of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna) it became possible for "the *free realm of thought*" to "flourish independently within the *state*." Precisely "the cultivation and flowering of the *sciences*," Hegel continued, was "one of the most essential *moments*—even of *political life*." Therefore, he said, "in this university—as the central university—the *center* of all spiritual culture [*Geistesbildung*] and of all science and truth, namely *philosophy*, must also find its place and be treated with special care."[83]

In his design for the university, von Humboldt had proposed that the professors teach their subjects based on their own research. Publication was secondary to von Humboldt. The priority to him was "a dynamic, evolving view of knowledge," communicated in lectures aimed at preparing the students to "integrate" the knowledge "into their own lives," and to become "self-determining men of taste and learning, who would emerge as the proper leaders and state officials of a modern, free form of life."[84]

Hegel lived up to von Humboldt's expectations for the Berlin University. He lectured on the philosophy of right seven times from 1817 up to his death in 1831. The

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[82] See George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Inaugural Address, Delivered at the University of Berlin 1818," translated by H. B. Nisbet, 1999, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed April 18, 2024, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/1818/inaugural.htm. The use of italics in the quotes from this inaugural lecture are based on Hegel's manuscript.

[83] See Hegel, "Inaugural Address."

[84] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 427-28.

first time was in Heidelberg, while he was professor at the university there. The six remaining times occurred in Berlin, and each series of lectures was different from the others, reflecting the "variations in the historical circumstances in which they were delivered."[85] He published his *Philosophy of Right* in 1821, as he says in the first line of the Preface because he needed to put into the hands of his audience a textbook for the lectures on the philosophy of right, which he had to deliver in the course of his professional duties at the university (3). As he had done earlier with his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* from 1817, he arranged the book in "numbered paragraphs that would then serve as the basis for discussion and extrapolation in lectures."[86]

So his students were the first addressees of the *Philosophy of Right*, and Hegel was aware that he was educating the "future and current members of the ruling class about the political world they were to rule."[87] In a letter of October 30, 1819, to a friend, the classicist Georg F. Creuzer, Hegel stated that "one even finds majors, colonels, and privy councilors attending one's lectures here."[88] It is also known that Johannes Schulze, appointed by Altenstein to be in charge of *Gymnasia* and universities, attended "all of Hegel's lectures between 1819 and 1821," and that "after many of the lectures, the two men would retire to Shulze's apartment to discuss matters further or would take long walks and talk over items Hegel had covered in the lectures."[89] Hegel did not pretend that any of his students would engage in "radical political action" after listening to his

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[85] Andrew Fiala, *The Philosopher's Voice: Philosophy, Politics, and Language in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 144.

[86] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 375.

[87] Fiala, *The Philosopher's Voice*, 145.

[88] Hegel's letter quoted by Fiala, 145.

[89] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 462.

lectures. “Radical political action” was precisely, as mentioned above, what Altenstein had called Hegel to Berlin to prevent. What Hegel set out to do instead was “to help his students understand political life” so that they could “develop into productive members of the ruling elite.”[90] Hegel expected the executive brand of government to be staffed with civil servants who had acquired *Bildung* through attending his lectures at the university.[91]

Kierkegaard’s Audience

It is not possible to determine who Kierkegaard expected to be his audience when he published *Works of Love*. What I can say at the outset, though, is that Kierkegaard, unlike Hegel, did not try to speak in any deliberate way to future or current members of the ruling class. Kierkegaard gave full evidence of that with a comment he made about the judges that he could have made about any other type of government official. He said: “Let the judge appointed by the state, let the servant of justice work at discovering guilt and crime; the rest of us are called to be neither judges nor servants of justice, but on the contrary are called by God to love” (293).[92]

Kierkegaard argues that “Christianity is neither blind nor one-sided” and that “it surveys equably all the dissimilarities of earthly life” without “divisively” taking sides with any single one (70). However, Kierkegaard does manifest his preference for the lowly and poor and addresses them directly at several points in his book. For instance, when he tells “a rather simple, indigent, poor charwoman, who earns her living by the

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[90] Fiala, *The Philosopher's Voice*, 145.

[91] Pinkard, *Hegel*, 488.

[92] Kierkegaard did meet three times with King Christian VIII, the last absolute monarch in Denmark, during 1847. See below pages 226-231 the details about those meetings and Kierkegaard’s considerations about the right way to approach the king.

most menial work" that she should not busy herself with "changing the shape of the world," as if she "instead of being a poor charwoman, perhaps could manage to be called 'Madame'" (136). With that speech to her, Kierkegaard is echoing what Christianity would say "in confidence to every human being" (136). He does not consent to the employment conditions that her boss offered her. Kierkegaard also addresses the poor and the lowly when he tells them that they may think that their fate is to be pitiable objects of mercifulness, that they have no choice but to bow and thank the rich or the authorities for their misunderstood mercifulness toward them (322). But this is not true, Kierkegaard argues. Also, the poor and the lowly can become themselves and stand alone, free and independent, as their own masters (274), and even be able to practice mercifulness, because mercifulness can be shown even if it can give nothing and is able to do nothing (322). "Oh, be merciful! Do not the envious pettiness of this earthly existence finally corrupt you so that you could forget that you are able to be merciful, corrupt you so that a false shame would stifle the best in you!" (322), Kierkegaard tells the poor. At the same time, Kierkegaard does not conceal his contemptuousness of those who had made money into a god. He says, "To make money is earnestness; to make much money, even if it were by selling human beings, this is earnestness. To make a lot of money by contemptible slander—this is earnestness. To proclaim some truth—provided one also makes much money (it does not depend on its being true but on one's making money)—this is earnestness. Money, money—this is earnestness. This is how we are brought up; from earliest childhood we are disciplined in the ungodly worship of money" (320). It is also clear that Kierkegaard does not like the distinguished person who "proudly" and "slyly" flees "from one distinguished circle to another" without ever

associating with the lowlier as equals (75). In the same way, Kierkegaard denounces the pastors who are silent about mercifulness and talk instead about generosity. He accuses them of being partners in the worship of money and the oppression of the poor (315). However, there is one moment in his book where Kierkegaard must recognize that he is one of the fortunate, and that his contemptuousness of the rich could backfire like a boomerang. Therefore, he also tells the poor, "Be merciful to us more fortunate ones!" (326). "Be merciful, be merciful toward the rich! Remember what you have in your power, while he has the money! Do not misuse this power; do not be so merciless as to call down heaven's punishment upon his mercilessness!... If the rich person is stingy and close-fisted, or even if he is close-fisted not only with money but just as stingy with words and repelling—then you be rich in mercifulness!" (323). He asks a rhetorical question, "which is more merciful: powerfully to remedy the needs of others or quietly to suffer and patiently to watch mercifully lest one disturb the joy and happiness of others?" (326). Kierkegaard justifies his plea to the poor to be merciful toward the rich arguing that "if money is also to have the power to make merciless those who have no money, then the power of money has indeed conquered completely" (323).[93]

A lot was at stake for Kierkegaard when he was working on *Works of Love* and when he later published his work. First, Kierkegaard was convinced that he was writing

[93] Lee C. Barrett III agrees that Kierkegaard stresses different aspects of love depending on who he is talking to. "To those who need to reform their desires, intentions, and motivations, Kierkegaard emphasizes the rigorous requirements of interiority," that are independent of the "environmental constraints." To those who doubt their "capacity to love, Kierkegaard offers the reassurance that love is possible in any circumstances." To those who need to learn how to love the neighbor in a concrete way, "Kierkegaard stresses the importance of attending to material and social circumstances." See Lee C. Barrett III, "The Neighbor's Material and Social Well-Being in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*: Does it Matter?," in *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999), 165.

on the most precious topic on which he could have chosen to write. “To love people,” he says, “is the only thing worth living for, and without this love you are not really living” (375). “Moreover,” he continues, “to love people is the only blessed comfort both here and in the next world; and to love people is the only true sign that you are a Christian” (375).

Second, Kierkegaard loved to write,[94] and he had the strong sense that he could be working on his last book. Kierkegaard’s father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, had cursed God as a young man and he believed that he had committed an unforgivable sin. His punishment was, so he believed, that he would not see his children live more than thirty-three years. In fact, his son Søren Michael died at the age of twelve in 1819, his daughter Maren at twenty-four in 1822, his daughter Nicoline at thirty-three in 1832, his son Niels Andreas at twenty-four in 1833, and his daughter Petrea at thirty-three in 1834. Only his sons Peter Christian and our author, Søren Aabye, lived more than thirty-three years, but Peter Christian had just turned thirty-three when his father died in 1838, and Søren Aabye was only twenty-five when his father died. Although our author presumably was aware that the belief that his father had had was more of a superstition,[95] he did refer to it in a journal entry on the day of his birthday, May 5, 1847, when he was working on *Works of Love*: “How strange, that I have turned 34. It is utterly inconceivable to me. I was so sure that I would die before or on this birthday that I could actually be tempted to suppose that my birthday was erroneously recorded and that I will still die on my thirty-

[94] This is how Kierkegaard described the process of writing a book in *The Moment*: It consists of tagging “after the thoughts, and just like an artist in love with his instrument,” of conversing “with the language,” and drawing forth “the expressions just as the thought requires them.” See Kierkegaard, *The Moment and Late Writings*, 91.

[95] This is how it is defined by Stephen Backhouse in Stephen Backhouse, *Kierkegaard: A Single Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 54.

fourth" (KJN 4, 123 / SKS 20, 123, NB:210). Kierkegaard confesses in *Works of Love* that he had thought "too much about death" (353). Had he done it in detachment from "the thought of the eternal," he says, death would only have been "an empty" and "brazen" "jest." However, since he had thought of death together with the eternal, he believes that it had "a remarkable capacity for awakening," a capacity from which he himself had benefited and that he expected to be able to pass along to his readers (353). What better thing could he be doing when he was coping with the thought of death than writing a book on the topic of love?

Christian love, to Kierkegaard, is "sheer action" (99); it has to be occupied "incessantly in action" (188). It is not possible, says Kierkegaard, to deal with or reflect about love "at the distance" (79). Since it was crucial to him to match the mode of communication with what he intended to communicate,[96] Kierkegaard believed, and this is the third point, that he could only write about love if the very act of writing about it was a work of love. Kierkegaard hesitated about the feasibility of such a task until he concluded that "to want to praise love" could indeed be "a work of love" if it was done "in the love of truth," (366), that is, without seeking "to gain earthly advantages," and without "proclaiming all sorts of deceptions" in order to "win the approval of people" (366).[97] The purpose of the work of love of praising love, says Kierkegaard, is "to win people to it, to make them properly aware of what in a conciliatory spririt [sic] is granted to every human being—that is, the highest. The one who praises art and science still sows

[96] Mark Stapp, "Kierkegaard's Work of Love" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2009), 22.

[97] In a note in the margin of a draft of *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard suggests that a different kind of discourse, "a discourse about love 'to a certain degree,' with significant cautionary stipulations and sagacious rules," would "be gladly received in the world." See Pap. VIII^2 B 59:23, translated in *Works of Love* on page 454, also quoted by Stapp, "Kierkegaard's Work of Love," 158.

dissension between the gifted and the ungifted. But the one who praises love reconciles all, not in a common poverty nor in a common mediocrity, but in the community of the highest" (365).

While Kierkegaard insists on the importance of not being blind to reality nor calling good what is evil,[98] he demands that the recipient of a work of love is respected in his/her capacity to be "free" and "independent," and to stand alone, being his or her own master (275). Kierkegaard understands that love demands that we also love the unloving. He argues that "it would be a weakness, not love, to make the unloving one believe that he [sic] was right in the evil he did," but the result cannot be either that the person that he calls "the one who has been overcome" feels "repelled from the one who lovingly deals him [sic]" the "merciful blow" (338–39). The task, says Kierkegaard, is simultaneously "to thrust away from oneself and to win for oneself," "to be as rigorous as truth requires and yet as gentle as love desires in order to win the one against whom the severity is employed" (339). For an author who has undertaken the work of praising love, "to win people" does not mean to win them for him or herself, but to win them "for the truth" (367).

In order to be both rigorous and gentle towards the "single individual" to whom he writes and in order to go unnoticed as the loving one, Kierkegaard knows that he has to avoid being confused "with someone who has mastered Christian love."[99] He knows as well that he cannot even "take credit for this work" nor leave the reader "in the position of feeling that he or she is a passive beneficiary"[100] of his generosity.

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[98] Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 207.

[99] Stapp, "Kierkegaard's Work of Love," 200.

[100] Stapp, 45.

Kierkegaard applied different strategies to fulfil these purposes. One of these strategies was to present himself to the readers as "the most self-loving person" (372). Kierkegaard knew that his public reputation of being someone "lazy and unserious"[101] exemplified by his eccentric "habit of walking the streets" (JP 5, 5892 / Pap. VII[1] A 105) played in his favor and made him into someone nobody would look to "for advice on how to live a selfless life, devoted to others."[102] This public image became even more important to Kierkegaard's purposes when the so called *Corsair* affair[103] converted him into a "walking caricature in the city"[104] that everyone felt entitled to mock. In *The Point of View*, Kierkegaard says that "these daily drenchings of rabble-barbarism" supported what he intended to do in *Works of Love* in the sense of "having an adequate cooling effect so that the religious communication would not become too much direct or would not much too directly gain adherents" for him.[105] Kierkegaard continues, "The reader could not directly relate himself to me, because I now had in place… the danger of laughter and grins, which scare away most people. Even those whom it would not scare away would be disturbed by the next, the thought that I myself had voluntarily exposed myself to all his, had plunged myself into this, a kind of insanity."[106] In a note in the margin of a draft of *Works of Love,* Kierkegaard says that the author of a truthful discourse about love "must at least be prepared to be regarded as not loveworthy at all"

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[101] Stapp, 134.

[102] Stapp, 134.

[103] See note 60 of the previous chapter.

[104] Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 406. The quotation is also included in Stapp, "Kierkegaard's Work of Love," 139.

[105] Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 67.

[106] Kierkegaard, 67.

(454, in a translation of Pap. VIII^2 B 59:23), and this is exactly what he admits he had prepared himself to be (373).

Another strategy employed by Kierkegaard to distract attention from himself, simultaneous with the one of presenting himself as a "self-loving person," was to structure his work as a long prayer to God.[107] Only the preface to the first series of discourses of *Works of Love* includes an explicit prayer, but it makes sense to believe that by suggesting that the whole work could be read as a prayer, Kierkegaard was inviting his readers to consider their own relationship to God, rather than their relationship to him as an author. Kierkegaard believed that God had to be "the middle term" in any relationship of true love. God had to be "the third party" in the relationship that could prevent it from turning "unhealthy, either too ardent or embittered" (339). The lover, says Kierkegaard, can only accomplish his or her work insofar as he or she annihilates him or herself (278), and becomes "God's co-worker" (279), or, in other terms, "an active power in the hands of God" (279). This also means that the work of love of praising love would only be a true work of love if was "directed primarily at God."[108]

Not contradictory to the strategy of suggesting that his work was a long prayer is the idea that his work had him as the first addressee. He says in *The Point of View*, "'Before God,' religiously, when I speak with myself, I call my whole work as an author my own upbringing and development, but not in the sense as if I were now complete or completely finished with regard to needing upbringing and development."[109] Kierkegaard's conviction that God played a role in his works makes him go so far as to

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[107] Stapp, "Kierkegaard's Work of Love," 212-19.

[108] Stapp, 213.

[109] Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 12.

say that he regards himself "rather as a *reader* of the books, not as the *author*."[110] Joakim Garff refers to this account by Kierkegaard about his own work when he makes this statement: "The idea of 'the role of Governance in the works' might at first look like rampant megalomania, but on further inspection and reflection we can see it was close to the opposite of that—it was the experience that one's autonomy was limited. Kierkegaard was not only the person who did the writing; he was also the person who… was written."[111]

Despite the strategies implemented in order to avoid being confused with someone who had mastered Christian love and to make sure that the readers did not feel obligated toward him in any way and that he would not feel any sense of accomplishment, it was not in Kierkegaard's power to determine whether he had acted out of love. This is why Kierkegaard says: "No one else can decide this for certain; it is possible that it is vanity, pride—in short, something bad, but it is also possible that it is love" (374).

What is certain is that Kierkegaard did want to have a public impact with his work. It was not at all his intention to "stand apart from life" (JP 6, 6580 / Pap. X^2 A 413). On the contrary, he wanted to grasp "life actively" (JP 6, 6580 / Pap. X^2 A 413). In the Journal entry from 1850 from which I am quoting in this paragraph, Kierkegaard says, hyperbolically, that "not a single person" was "so foremost on the stage" as he was. He adds that he is "recognized by every child," that he is "a stock figure" in some

[110] Kierkegaard, 12.

[111] Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 557.

plays,[112] and that his "name is a byword" (JP 6, 6580 / Pap. X^2 A 413). I presume that he attributes that notoriety to both the *Corsair* affair and his prolific work, and he is careful to clarify that it is not a notoriety that has gained him any "earthly reward" (JP 6, 6580 / Pap. X^2 A 413). On the contrary, he is "not applauded at assemblies," he is "mocked on the streets," and what is very telling, his notoriety does not come from fashioning his life in a way "compatible with an appointment as cabinet minister" (JP 6, 6580 / Pap. X^2 A 413). Kierkegaard distinguishes his way of being engaged in life with the lives of those he targets as "hypocrites." They argue, says Kierkegaard, that love makes them be engaged in life, but Kierkegaard repudiates it as a "self-love" that correlates the active participation in life with the grasping "after advantages." The misunderstood love of the "hypocrites" has public consequences. He accuses them of an earnestness that does not exhibit the imagination to "retreat from life" and constitute themselves as single individuals, but instead "chase" into "the flock." He accuses them as well of a patriotism that for the sake of being sympathetic toward "the nation's woes and welfare" has made the nation "a market town, the promised land of narrow-mindedness and mediocrity" rather than a country concerned with "belonging to history." Probably referring to the deliberations of the constitutional assembly in 1848–1849, he says that the hypocrites have such a blind faith in the majority that they would be willing to make "whoredom into virtue and murder into justice" if there were a majority in favor of it. They also assign disproportionate importance to "the 17th amendment to the 16th amendment

[112] Mark Stapp mentions at least two plays featuring Kierkegaard as a character: The Danish newspaper Flyveposten's anonymously written *Collegium Politicum: A Touching Comedy in Six Scenes* and Hans Christian Andersen's *A Comedy in the Open Air: A Vaudeville in One Act, Based on the Old Comedy "An Actor Against His Will."* See Stapp, "Kierkegaard's Work of Love," 107-08.n11. A more complete list of plays is offered in KJN 7, 549-50.

concerning nothing" as if "a little amendment" could be enough to save their consciences and prevent evil from triumphing. There are circumstances, he says, when what is called for is not to cast a ballot and defer to the majority decision, but to stand "absolutely apart, not in order to remain silent, no, in order to stand as a bothersome and of course mistreated reminder that there is a God" (JP 6, 6580 / Pap. X^2 A 413).

This Journal entry from 1850 confirms that Kierkegaard cared about his country. In it, Kierkegaard makes the implicit statement that "in a time of moral dissolution" such as Kierkegaard considered they were going through in his country, he served better by writing a truthful book about love than by being complicit "with the corruption" (KJN 7, 54 / SKS 23, 57, NB15:82). This is what he accused the "hypocrites" of: they had the gall to flatter themselves in imagining that they were better than their times on the mere basis of being able to propose an amendment. (KJN 7, 54 / SKS 23, 57, NB15:82).

It is worth nothing that in 1847, in the same year when he was working on and later published *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard met three times with the King, King Christian VIII, the last absolutist monarch in Denmark. On the three occasions, it happened at the initiative of the king. Although the only report on the encounters we have is the one that Kierkegaard wrote in his journal in 1849, a whole year after King Christian VIII's son, King Frederick VII, had abolished the absolute monarchy, it does shed light on Kierkegaard thinking about political matters. On the first occasion that they met, Kierkegaard told the king that he believed that all his "work was, among other things, beneficial to every government." However, "the point in it" was that he "was and remained a private citizen" and that the king agreed to speak with him "privately." "Otherwise," he said, "people would insinuate some mean-spirited interpretation" (KJN

5, 228 / SKS 21, 220, NB9:41). What he intended to say, I believe, is that he did not aspire to become an official adviser to the king, but that he could serve his country better by teaching his countrymen and women what neighbor love was. The acceptance of an advisory role, even informally, would have run against all what he had stood for so far. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard was conscious that even in a private conversation the king was not any interlocutor. Kierkegaard supposedly told the king on their first encounter that he had always said to himself that in the end the king would be the man with whom he would have "the best relationship" because the king had intellect and rank enough to not "be petty" with him (KJN 5, 229 / SKS 21, 220, NB9:41). To speak privately with him, as Kierkegaard wanted, was particularly challenging to the king, because the king "rlly did not approve of anyone being a private citizen: he thought it was part of royal governance to assign absolute everyone to his task," and this would have been the case if Kierkegaard had been appointed to a "official position." Kierkegaard recognizes that he had a greater incentive to meet with the king when he "began to think of taking an official position" (KJN 5, 235 / SKS 21, 226, NB9:42). However, the best favor Kierkegaard could do the king was precisely to take him out of his role as king by conversing with him privately. The fact that Kierkegaard made the claim to be treated as "a private citizen," based on his service to God, "a higher power" on which he had "staked" his life, put a very definite limit to the absolute power of the king that ultimately also was beneficial to the king.

On the second occasion when Kierkegaard met with King Christian VIII, the king expressed his worries about communism. Kierkegaard had directed his deliberation of *Works of Love* about mercifulness, the seventh of the second series of deliberations,

"against communism" (JP 4, 4124 / Pap. VIII[1] A 299). "Wanting to alleviate poverty" (14) was a concern of Kierkegaard, but in his deliberation on mercifulness he argues it can be practiced even with nothing to give and nothing to do (316). He does so in order to protect the poor person from being "singled out, given up, as the pitiable object of mercifulness, who at most is able to bow and thank—if the rich person [or the government] is so kind as to practice mercifulness" (322). That seemed to be the argument against communism, that it dehumanized the poor person with its alleged focus on money and material equality. Kierkegaard would also refer to communism in a journal entry from 1848 where he praised communism for fighting for human rights, but accused it of giving in to "the tyranny of the fear of other hum. beings" and thereby overlooking "what Xnty assumes as a matter of course: that all hum. beings are equal before God, that is, essentially equal" (JP 4, 4131 / Pap. VIII[1] A 598). However, what Kierkegaard chose to say when the king brought up the topic on communism during their second encounter of 1847, was to assure him that in his understanding, "the entire movement of the time would remain a movement that had no contact whatever with kings." Although there would be "a battle betw. one class and another," he was pretty sure that "the king would in a way be above the fray," that is, the figure of a governing ruler would always be needed (KJN 5, 230 / SKS 21, 221, NB9:42). On his second encounter with the king, Kierkegaard also took the opportunity to reiterate his disdain for what he calls "the crowd" and point out that indirect battle is the best way to make evident its lack of ideas. Additionally, Kierkegaard made an assertion that would have been prophetic if he effectively made it in those terms in 1847. However, since he only put it in writing in 1849, his knowledge of the peaceful ending of absolute monarchy in Denmark in 1848

could have colored what he said: "What in larger countries became violence would in Denmark be naughtiness" (KJN 5, 231 / SKS 21, 221, NB9:42).

The third time Kierkegaard and the king met in 1847, Kierkegaard brought him a copy of *Works of Love*[113] and read a section of the deliberation of the first series about love as a matter of conscience to him. In that section, Kierkegaard distinguishes between matters of conscience considered in a worldly sense and in a Christian sense. "In a worldly sense," says Kierkegaard, "there is only one person, only one, who acknowledges no other duty than the duty of conscience, and that is the king" (136), provided it is a king with absolute power. In the Christian sense, on the contrary, everybody are kings, and even "the most lowly, the most disregarded servant," says Kierkegaard, "has the right [and the duty] to say regally to herself [or himself] before God, 'I am doing it for the sake of conscience!'" (136). Kierkegaard recalls that his reading of that section of his book moved the king, "it moved him, as he was in general easily moved" (Journal NB9:42, 1849). What the king probably did not think about was that, in comparison with the "simple, indigent, poor charwoman" that Kierkegaard gave as an example of lowliest and "most disregarded" person who in the Christian sense has the duty and the right to consider herself as a queen, he had a disadvantage. The king, because of his absolute power, did not have a predetermined frame for the unfolding of his life. Maybe Kierkegaard should also have read to the king a section of *Works of Love* that appears right above the section that he did read. "Christianity," says Kierkegaard there, "has not wanted to topple governments from the throne in order to place itself on the throne; it has

[113] The book had just appeared. It had appeared on September 29, 1847, and Kierkegaard's audience with the king took place on October 3, 1847.

never contended in an external sense for a place in the world, of which it is not" (135). Kierkegaard argues that Christianity's only place is "in the heart's room," but that it notwithstanding "has infinitely changed everything it allowed and allows to continue" (135) and it has done so precisely by converting everybody into kings and queens with a relationship of conscience to all what we do.

On his third audience with the king, Kierkegaard also took the opportunity to tell him "quite straightforwardly" after having gotten the king's permission, how he considered that "a king ought to be." Kierkegaard said that in his estimation a king should be "ugly." He added that the king "should be deaf and blind, or at least act as if he were, because this would get him out of many difficulties." In this way, Kierkegaard said, "a foolhardy, untimely remark that, in having been said to the king, acquires a sort of significance," would be "brushed aside" with a pretending not to have heard "Pardon me?"[114] A king, Kierkegaard said, "must not say much but ought to have a proverb he utters on every occasion, and that is therefore meaningless." On top of all that, a king "must take care to be sick once in a while," because that will arouse "sympathy." Kierkegaard was emphatic, according to his own journal, in insisting that the king could not govern "talking with every subject." Kierkegaard seemed to agree with Hegel about the role of the monarch[115] on at least two points: that the monarch's particular character should be irrelevant in a well-organized state (§ 280A, 272), and that he should be a jealous guardian of his [sic] power to make "ultimate decisions" (§ 300, 287).

[114] Kierkegaard may be referring to Ecclesiastes 7:21-22.

[115] See above page 100.

On his third meeting with the king, and after Kierkegaard had mentioned that his only travel plan was eventually Berlin, the conversation brought them to the roles that first Hegel and later Schelling had played as articulators of "the philosophy" of the Prussian government. Kierkegaard in no way wanted this role for himself in Denmark (KJN 5, 234 / SKS 21, 225, NB9:42).

Kierkegaard ended his report about his three audiences with the king with two main remarks. The first is that the relationship with the king had been beneficial to him. In a time when "vulgarity" and "petty envy," "owing to the wretchedness of the situation in Denmark," had nearly deprived him of the condition of "private citizen," the publicity about his audiences with the king, even when the content of the conversations was not revealed, did give him some protection. Kierkegaard recognizes that he could have made more of the relationship to the king "at whatever moment it might have become necessary." The second remark is that the king had enriched him "with many psychological observations," because he as an absolute king and consequently a totally free human being, became an unwilling research study participant on how a human being bounds him or herself "in the concerns and considerations of finitude" (KJN 5, 236 / SKS 21, 227, NB9:43) in a worldly sense.

Other Differences between Hegel and Kierkegaard

Hegel's approach is descriptive and Kierkegaard's, prescriptive. Hegel tried to explain the past and the present, and he left the future to the imagination. However, he made two important qualifications. The first one is that his explanation included an educated guess and prediction about how that which already was would unfold its full implications. The second is that, rather than endorsing the rhetoric of revolution, he

viewed modern society as the result of a slow, evolutionary process of transition that took place over the course of many centuries.

In the Preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that his purpose is "to apprehend and present the state as something inherently rational" (14-15); he does not intent "to construct a state as it ought to be" (15). Philosophy, as he understands it, cannot go beyond its contemporary world, and is instead "its own time apprehended in thoughts" (15). This understanding of what philosophy is comes to expression for instance when Hegel explains that a constitution cannot be given to a nation in an external way, because "a constitution is not just something manufactured," but "the work of centuries." A constitution, says Hegel, will be "meaningless and valueless" unless it embodies a particular people's "consciousness of rationality," and "its feeling for its rights and its condition" (§ 274A, 263). However, in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel advocated several practices that were not in force in the Prussia of his time but were in line and in continuity with the reforms that had already been introduced. This is the case when Hegel recommends "publicity in legal proceedings and for the so-called jury-courts" (§ 228R, 214). The same happens when Hegel defends "the necessity for a division of powers within the state," which he did not mistake for "the false doctrine of the absolute self-subsistence of each of the powers against the others" (§ 272R, 257), and when he defends the "freedom of public communication," which he did not mistake for the "freedom to say and write whatever we please" (§ 319, 302). Hegel did not favor majority voting because he could not see the point in giving the individual a say as an abstract individual (§ 309A, 295), but he went beyond current practices when he wanted the individuals to be represented as members of particular estates, and when he invited them to participate

in public opinion at whatever time they had something on their minds they were eager to express and assert (§ 308R, 295). In this manner, the individuals should be able to trust that the deputies would take into consideration the interests of everyone as they figured out the general interest (§ 309A, 295-296) through their deliberations in common and their efforts to "reciprocally instruct and convince each other" (§ 309, 295). The demand for approval of the taxes by the Estates and the openness to conscientious objection to military service (§ 270Rn98, 247) were also innovations.[116]

Jeffrey Stout remembers in *Democracy & Tradition* that modern democracy defined itself as "a revolutionary departure" against its "predecessors and competitors" when it "came into existence." To a certain extent it was, Stout admits. But he adds, as if he were paraphrasing Hegel, that "the rhetoric of revolution obscures the slow, *evolutionary* process of a transition that actually took place over the course of many centuries and has yet to unfold its full implications."[117] The social and political model that Hegel depicts in his *Philosophy of Right* was, with Stout's words, the product of a "slow, evolutionary process of transition" that "took place over the course of many centuries," and when he argued that certain political arrangements and institutions still lacking in his Prussia were also "necessary means to freedoms,"[118] he was not proposing something completely novel, but he was envisioning how his model could continue unfolding its implications.[119] Stout's words about what "a complete break with tradition would seem to require" could also be applied to the way in which Hegel argues in the

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[116] M. W. Jackson, "Hegel: The Real and the Rational," in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 25.

[117] Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 203.

[118] Jackson, "Hegel: The Real and the Rational," 25.

[119] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 203.

Philosophy of Right, and in fact, they are in my view inspired by the way in which Hegel argues. I would therefore say, with Stout's words, that we do not find in the *Philosophy of Right* "a transcendental point of view, wholly independent of… the ethical life of a people," nor "a point of view so discontinuous with that of the traditional past as to be incapable of arguing with it."[120]

Kierkegaard, on the contrary, is clearly prescriptive. He writes *Works of Love* because he is convinced that his contemporaries had forgotten what love is (JP 3, 2410 / Pap. VIII[1] A 196). Kierkegaard argues that after the commandment to love has been put forward for centuries in Christianity and Judaism it is easy to forget that this commandment could not have arisen in any human being's heart, and that it would be a surprise, a disturbance, and an offense to a pagan "not spoiled by having learned thoughtlessly to patter Christianity by rote" nor "by the delusion of being a Christian" (25). However, addressing each individual reader, Kierkegaard tells them, "You have to do only with what you do unto others, or how you take what others do unto you" (384). "Essentially," Kierkegaard continues, "you have to do only with yourself before God" (384). The response to the commandment can only be given, not through a feeling or a mood, but through "sheer action." Love, as Kierkegaard understands it, does not accept "anything in advance" nor gives "a promise in place of action." Kierkegaard defines that "it never rests satisfied in the delusion of being finished; it never dwells indulgently on itself; it never sits idle marveling at itself" (98-99).

Hegel repeatedly insists that we are only abstract individuals unless we are in association with others. Kierkegaard, on the contrary, repeatedly warns and cautions that

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[120] Stout, 203.

association with others can be a way of avoiding personal responsibility, surrendering individual distinctiveness, and disregarding the distinctiveness of others. He argues that association with others will further self-love even when the world, as he says, will call it love when a self-loving person "wants to hold together in self-love with some other self-loving people, particularly with many other self-loving people" and is willing to "sacrifice a portion of his own self-love in order to hold together in the united self-love" (119). Therefore, Kierkegaard has a very restrictive view of what can be accomplished in association with others.

Hegel is all about outward changes in society. Kierkegaard, on the contrary, argues that "Christianity makes only infinity's change and therefore quietly," because "outwardly the old more or less remains"[121] (138). "Make Christianity your own," Kierkegaard tells his reader, "and it will show you a point outside the world, and by means of this you will move heaven and earth; yes, you will do something even more wonderful, you will move heaven and earth so quietly, so lightly, that no one notices it" (136). P. G. Ziegler has, in my view, persuasively argued that the fact that Kierkegaard says "you will move," and "you will do something," and that only "more or less" the external *status quo* will be maintained, indicates that action in the world to Kierkegaard goes hand in hand with "infinity's change,"[122] action, however, that should be done in a way that does not forget that Christianity is "a higher order of things" that "wants to be

[121] "More or less" is not an exact translation of the original "*paa en Maade*," which literally means "in a way." However, the original also makes it clear that Kierkegaard is not arguing that outwardly the old will remain the same, but that there will be changes.

[122] P. G. Ziegler, "A Christian Context for Conscience? Reading Kierkegaard's Works of Love Beyond Hegel's Critique of Conscience," *European Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2007): 33-34.

present everywhere but not to be seized" (138), and "has never wanted to conquer in a worldly way" nor "been a friend of the trumpery of novelty" (135).

A Convergent Reading

The views of either Hegel or Kierkegaard are incomplete on their own. Therefore, I propose a convergent reading.

We need both a top-down approach as Hegel's and bottom-up approach as Kierkegaard. Both approaches should be pursued together.

In agreement with his preference for what I with Johannes Sløk have called the model of the enlightened despotism of the first half of the nineteenth century in Denmark, Kierkegaard did not mind the preservation of the dissimilarities of earthly life. He only took exception to bond servitude and slavery, or any scenario of human beings not recognized as fully human. As I have said above, he also considered that conditions of extreme poverty, of orphan children left to their own devices, and of fallen who are trampled upon, were unacceptable. Otherwise, following Kierkegaard, the command to the individual is to love the neighbor, and this, as Jamie Aroosi has argued, "might help humanize" those who are around.[123] Aroosi gives an example. In a context like the Nazi Germany, it would compel individuals to provide sanctuary for neighbors facing persecution,[124] and this would not be a small thing. However, Kierkegaard's approach can only have an ameliorating effect, and should be accompanied by a Hegelian approach

[123] Jamie Aroosi, "Searching for a Secular God: A Prolegomena to a Political Theory of Love," in *Kierkegaard and Political Theology*, ed. Roberto Sirvent and Silas Michael Morgan (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2018), Location 3059.

[124] Aroosi, Location 3051.

that can give a collective response to systemic injustices.[125] Aroosi rightly mentions that racial inequity in the criminal justice system, the unequal pay to women for equal work, poverty, and the income and wealth disparity are issues that are left unchallenged unless we also adopt what I am calling a Hegelian approach[126] that takes into account the larger social and political reality.[127] Such a Hegelian approach does not suspend the commandment to love the neighbor addressed to the individual, but, as Aroosi argues, precisely because I want to love the neighbor and tend to his or her situation, I need to recognize when that situation is symptomatic of a problem that will remain ignored if I only focus on my individual relationship to the neighbor and do not see their situation in its political context.[128] The focus on the command to the individual can also make us overlook that it will often be the case that someone's problems will not be solved by doing one specific thing, and that no "one-shot solutions" and not even "few-shot solutions" will be effective. The investments in time and resources that those cases require surpass what can be expected of an individual trying to fulfill the commandment to love the neighbor.[129]

Kierkegaard shows that he is aware of at least one of the limitations of an approach focused on the individual when he talks about what he calls "the greatest beneficence." "The greatest beneficence," says Kierkegaard, is "in love to help

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[125] Aroosi, Location 3051.

[126] Aroosi, Location 3059.

[127] Aroosi, Location 3075.

[128] Aroosi, Location 3075.

[129] Judith Lichtenberg, "Absence and The Unfond Heart. Why People are Less Giving than They Might Be," in *The Ethics of Assistance: Morality and The Distant Needy*, ed. Deen K. Chatterjee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 85.

someone… to become himself, free, independent, his own master, to help him stand alone" [sic] (274), and to do it on one condition: "The one who loves" has to "make himself unnoticed so that the person helped does not become dependent upon him—by owing to him the greatest beneficence" [sic] (274), and more precisely, the one who loves has to give "in such a way that the gift looks as if it were the recipient's property" (274). Kierkegaard recognizes that this is not "the way in which the greatest beneficence is most often done in the world" (274). He admits that the fact that he is inviting us to help others to stand alone and to become independent is "the greatest contradiction" (275), and that it is not surprising that it is difficult to do in the right way for any of the involved parts. Typically, the benefactor has trouble making themselves invisible and the person benefited does not care. On the contrary, the person benefited is "inexhaustible in praising and thanking" (275) their benefactor and expose themselves to the danger of believing about themselves that they are nothing else than a "pitiable object of mercifulness, who at most is able to bow and thank" (322). Moreover, Kierkegaard admits that only the omnipotent God can carry out "the greatest good" of making another person free. Properly understood, Kierkegaard argues, "only omnipotence can withdraw itself at the same time it gives itself away, and this relationship is the very independence of the receiver." In opposition, "one human being cannot make another person wholly free, because the one who has power is himself captive in having it and therefore continually has a wrong relationship to the one whom he [sic] wants to make free" (405 quoting JP 2, 1251 / Pap. VII[1] A 181). Kierkegaard knew that the lack of a decent level of material welfare prevented an individual from becoming wholly him or herself, free, independent, their own masters, capable of standing alone. The remedy for that lack

could for obvious reasons not be given in a direct way by the omnipotent God, and it could not be entrusted either to the individual initiative because it is rare, if not impossible, that one individual will be able to contribute to the material welfare of another individual without incurring the abuses described above. Therefore, Kierkegaard cautiously lauded the collaborative enterprise of alleviating poverty, bringing up orphan children, and rescuing the fallen (294). And it is to Hegel, rather than Kierkegaard, that we should recur if we want to define the specific contours of a social and political order that can guarantee decent levels of welfare to everybody and to provide it in ways that help the beneficiaries to become independent and stand on their own feet.

When we do recur to Hegel, however, we must take into account that Hegel recognizes that even when we do our best to consider the issues in their political context and find collective responses, "poverty and, in general, the distress of every kind to which every individual is exposed," also "has a subjective side which demands similarly subjective aid," and therefore there is still a role for neighbor love at an interpersonal level in Hegel (§ 242, 220). Likewise, Kierkegaard's denunciation of the "distinguished" persons who in the exclusive company of peers "make every concession to the similarity of human beings" (77) without having any "fellowship" (73) with the "miserable" (77) people conspicuously different from them could be read as implying that policymakers will not devise effective policies unless they are in direct contact with the people whose condition they are concerned with.

Although Kierkegaard identifies the very specific circumstances in which an alliance would be acceptable, he also raises strong objections to any kind of alliance. Kierkegaard argues that an alliance can be exclusive (142); it can be selfish; it can be

subordinated to the interests and concerns of a domineering leader (270-271); it can be a place of protection and safety for small-minded people who fear change and fear the world (271-272); or it can be a group whose members evade taking responsibility for their individual actions and choices (103). However, none of these objections are insuperable. It is possible to forge the kind of alliances that David Lappano calls "alliances of critical action for hope and love"[130] rather than focus on direct and solitary action without allies.[131] Hegel referred not only to the possibility, but to the need for the masses to organize. Only organized, says Hegel, "do they become a power or force. Otherwise, they are nothing but a heap, an aggregate of separate atoms" (§ 290A, 280).

If I understand him correctly, Hegel would prefer the change brought about by the organized effort of the people, but he would not object to the direct and solitary action of an individual preferred by Kierkegaard, willing even to give their own life, as long as the individual meets Kierkegaard's requirements. The individual does not have to show off and exaggerated eagerness to die.[132] The individual must be able to determine when and under what circumstances he or she is willing to die.[133] The individual must make sure that he or she is the one exposing him or herself to suffering; his or her solitary action cannot make him or her complicit in the suffering of others, and much less can it be the cause of the suffering of others nor the cause of the aggravation of the suffering of others.[134] Finally, the individual's gesture must be "an act of communication" that signals

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[130] Lappano, *Kierkegaard's Theology of Encounter*, 249.

[131] Lappano, 249.

[132] Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, 135.

[133] Kierkegaard, 136-37.

[134] Aroosi, "The Ethical Necessity of Politics," 6.

to others that he or she still identifies him or herself with his or her community, even as they reveal their "alienation from" the community, and hold its other members responsible for the injustices that the gesture is openly censuring and condemning.[135]

This convergent reading of Hegel and Kierkegaard passes the motivation and enablement test because it preserves and upholds from Kierkegaard all what made him undergo the motivation test with success and from Hegel all what made him undergo the enablement test with success. To develop a compelling political conception of love that can propel deep democratic change in our world today, I now need to reread and review this convergent reading considering what was learned from and with the contemporary political philosophers in the second chapter.

[135] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 299.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

Impediments to Making Love Political Operative

The main academic goal of this dissertation has been to prove that there can be a convergent reading of Hegel and Kierkegaard. In this dissertation, that project, that is worth pursuing in its own right, serves a bigger project, the project of making love politically operative today.

The contemporary political philosophers I worked with in the second chapter introduced me to the concept of political love, and they have helped me identify some of the impediments to making love politically operative. I will begin this chapter by listing some of those impediments.

The main impediment is to take the existing and established institutional order of social life for granted, and therefore believe that it cannot be changed. As a result of this, we see disengagement and indifference on the part of political subjects when the appropriate response should instead be rebellion and resistance in the face of structural alienation and exploitation.

"Neoliberalism" is the prevailing institutional order of social life in many parts of the world today. "Neoliberalism," unlike "classic liberalism," is an institutional order that "aspires to be a complete way of life and a holistic worldview," and its main feature is that capitalism does not have its own sphere anymore, but rules in almost all areas of

life.[1] In almost all areas of life we are considered self-sufficient individuals motivated by self-interest who have the freedom to pursue our interests through market mechanisms. Adam Kotsko has persuasively demonstrated that neoliberalism is an order that, by making market mechanisms rule in almost all areas of life, seeks in an intentional way both to hide the operation of systemic forces that significantly reduce the agency of the individuals and to disparage protest and political debate.[2] "If you fail," and you will, Kotsko makes us understand, neoliberalism will only blame you. Yes, "it is your fault, and yours alone. You are in control of your destiny, and if your destiny is miserable, then misery must be what you deserve."[3]

The fact that "neoliberalism" creates an illusion of agency and freedom for the individual that it cannot make good on and fulfill could make us believe that susceptibility to what Mangabeira Unger calls "belittlement" is "an irreparable defect in human life."[4] This is not true. With our actions, feelings, thoughts and creativity we can go beyond what the forms of society and thought we participate in "bless, allow," and

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[1] Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 14. The author adds, "In some cases this meant creating markets where none had previously existed, as in the privatization of education and other public services. In others it took the form of a more general spread of a competitive market ethos into ever more areas of life—so that we are encouraged to think of our reputation as a 'brand,' for instance, or our social contacts as fodder for 'networking.'… We are always 'on the clock,' always accruing (or squandering) various forms of financial and social capital." See Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 14. Kotsko asserts that "we have to be in a constant state of high alert, always 'hustling' for opportunities and connections, always planning for every contingency (including the inherently unpredictable vagaries of health and longevity). This dynamic of 'responsibilization,'… requires us to fritter away our life with worry and paperwork and supplication, 'pitching' ourselves over and over again, building our 'personal brand'—all for ever-lowering wages or a smattering of piece-work, which barely covers increasingly exorbitant rent, much less student loan payments." See Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 142. Kotsko also offers the example of the privatization of prisons, which he sees not "just a matter of warehousing prisoners for the sake of job creation and corporate profit," because it has the additional advantage that "incarcerated workers can also be made available to private enterprises eager to cut labor costs." See Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 138.

[2] Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 10.

[3] Kotsko, 142.

[4] Unger, *Religion*, 26.

"make sense of," and there is "no social role in any society" that "can do justice to any individual human being" and make room for "all the activities that we have reason to value" and "all the powers that we have cause to exercise and to develop."[5]

This capacity to exceed the limits of our roles in society is a precondition for political love, and Mangabeira Unger gives two words of caution that we should ponder very seriously. The first is that we should not make any individual believe that they can make themselves and achieve whatever they want in isolation from others.[6] The fact that we can exceed the limits of our roles in society does not disprove that "we are made by the grace of others, through connections with them, in every realm of existence."[7] Mangabeira Unger's second word of warning is that humanity will not necessarily progress towards forms of society that will honor and promote the individual capacity to become the radical originals that they supposedly are meant to be. Progress requires "the cumulative reformation of the institutions and practices of society."[8]

The distinction between a private and a public realm becomes an impediment against making love politically operative when we renounce the possibility of agreeing on what a substantive public interest and the common good would look like. No realm of life, and much less the economic realm, can be set aside as private and ruled in a supposedly neutral and apolitical way that shields the corresponding realm from being included in the formulation of the common good. It is also an impediment against making love politically operative that hopes and dreams are confined to the private sphere and

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[5] Unger, 23-24.

[6] Unger, 31-32.

[7] Unger, 32.

[8] Unger, 30.

cannot translate into larger projects to be furthered in the public sphere.[9] At the same time, the private realm where we connect with family members, sexual partners, spouses, friends, etc., is crucial for the development of our sense of self-worth and confidence, and if a person's sense of self-worth and confidence is diminished for one reason or another in the private realm, their capacity to enact political love in the public realm will be damaged.[10]

The merely instrumental attitude toward their own work that many workers have and the acceptance that the "prosaic but primary task of taking care of one another and making a practical success of their life in common"[11] is all what life is about is another impediment against making love politically operative. Unfortunately, "most people," as Alice Ormiston puts it, "tend to remain focused on their own selfish situation and regard their true existence… as outside their working hours." They lead "a largely privatized existence," and do not have much "sense of how they might contribute to the decisions affecting their lives."[12] It cannot be right that the only options for the individual "outside the circle of intimacy and love" are either consumption or, if someone wants "a way of living for something larger than" themselves, then "the deadly ordeal or war" and

[9] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, "The Boutwood Lectures. Corpus Christi College. Cambridge University. First lecture: The transformation of society," accessed April 20, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20160705203045/http://robertounger.com/english/docs/corpus1.pdf.

[10] Valerie Miller, Lisa VeneKlasen, Molly Reilly, and Cindy Clark, "Making Change Happen: Power. Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice, Equality and Peace," Resource from JASS (Just Associates), accessed April 20, 2024, https://justassociates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/mch3_2011_final_0.pdf, 7. The authors are not credited on the cover of the publication. They are only named in a subsequent note.

[11] Unger, *False Necessity*, 26.

[12] Ormiston, *Love and Politics*, 96-97.

"martyrdom for the nation" that, unfortunately has often been "poisoned by illusion and deception," and ended in "suffering, exhaustion, and disillusionment."[13]

Another impediment against making love politically operative is the fact that we can have beliefs that in a direct or indirect manner oppose it, and those beliefs can be so deeply ingrained in us that we do not want to put them up for discussion and much less change our mind about them. Besides, there can be lobbyists and media outlets serving powerful interests that want us to keep the beliefs that counteract political love unchallenged.[14]

The weakening of the social bond among people in contemporary societies is the last impediment against making love politically operative I will mention here. We cannot make love politically operative unless we are connected in an "unmediated" and "embodied way" with people who are different from ourselves, and especially, with members of the four groups that Roberto Mangabeira Unger identify as the very young, the very old, the infirm, and the needy outside our own families.[15] In most of the so-called developed countries, society and economy are composed, according to Unger, of four sectors. The first is the sector of the advanced forms of production and learning, the second is the sector of the mass-production industries, the third is the sector of the caring economy with a significant percentage of jobs created and paid by the state, and the fourth is the sector of unstable and precarious work. Unger observes that, depending on the country in question, the state will, to a further or lesser extent, "collect money from

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[13] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 205.

[14] Jamie Aroosi, "On the Necessity of Incivility," The Philosophers' Magazine, last modified April 26, 2022, https://www.philosophersmag.com/essays/282-on-the-necessity-of-incivility.

[15] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 205.

whoever has it—especially from participants in the first sector" and "distribute it to the beneficiaries of social entitlements—particularly members of the third sector."[16] However, what he wants to emphasize is that in those countries "social solidarity comes down to the movement of checks through the mail," because "the different sectors are different worlds," and "people in one have almost no acquaintance with people in the others." This way, "the social bond is thinned to the point of breaking."[17] Unger argues persuasively that love will not be politically operative unless what he calls "social solidarity" becomes real first.

Hardt and Negri have also drawn attention to the fact that "physical proximity" is needed to construct what they call the "political affects" that are a prerequisite to "political action."[18] The weakening of the social bond among people conspires against that. The challenge to the multitude is that although social media are useful communication mechanisms, they cannot "replace the being together of bodies and the corporeal communication that is the basis of collective political intelligence and actions."[19] They argue that during the encampments and occupations of 2011, throughout the United States and around the world (and there have been others in more recent years), the participants were able to create "new political affects" due to being together for a certain time.[20]

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[16] Unger, 204.

[17] Unger, 204.

[18] Hardt and Negri, *Declaration,* 18.

[19] Hardt and Negri, 18.

[20] Hardt and Negri, 18.

People should feel comfortable in their identities, and their sense of self-worth and confidence should be affirmed, but the focus on one identity to the detriment of others can involuntarily isolate people and prevent political love from being enacted. Identity should not become an unbridgeable chasm that keeps people from identifying common problems, taking upon themselves their responsibility to one another, and acting in concert.[21]

I will not end this section of the chapter without mentioning that the frustrated losers in the neoliberal system can become preys of talented demagogues who will provide them "an illusory hope, founded on false premises and on unacceptable mechanisms of exclusion in which xenophobia usually plays a central role."[22] To cope with the insecurity and fear that neoliberalism both causes and escalates, the same people who can become prays of the demagogues may also seek to be part of "some form of community"[23] that will appeal to "love" in a different sense than or even contrary to the "political love" as I have been trying to define it in this dissertation.

Key Concepts and Terms

Politics

Politics is the ongoing process of discussing, discerning, determining, and pursuing the common good. It is more than the expression of the clash between interests in which the strongest prevails. Change cannot happen unless politics is done. Politics affects all areas of life and even if we would agree with Martha Nussbaum that people

[21] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, "Making Change Happen," 8.

[22] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 4. The authors are quoting Chantal Mouffe.

[23] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 5.

should have a part of their lives "carried out apart from politics," where they can "have particular relationships with people and causes they love," a political decision is required to make that possible.[24]

Everyone can have their say in the political process. However, the reality is that the members of what Hardt and Negri call "the multitude" can have a very weighty say if they want to assert it. More than the members of any other group in society, they can do politics while they are at work. They can either perpetuate what these authors call the system of Empire, or they can, while they are working, engage in "collective action and unsubordination."[25] However, the political work should be done while working when possible and outside working hours as well.

Although joy cannot be compelled nor sustained in an artificial manner, politics can be done with joy, and when the political work done with other people succeeds, joy is felt as well.

Power

Struggle and failure are inevitable when we try to make change happen. Change does not happen by necessity. Power is necessary to make change happen. As Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, "power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change… [T]here is nothing wrong with power if power is used correctly."[26]

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[24] See above page 24. However, I agree with Mangabeira Unger that the doctrine that "politics must be little for individuals to become big" is "poisonous" and wrong. See Unger, *Self Awakened*, 205.

[25] Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*, 17. See above page 31.

[26] In his speech "Where do We Go From Here?," pronounced in Atlanta, Georgia, on August 16th, 1967, at the tenth annual session of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. See Martin Luther

Usually, power is seen as "a win-lose kind of relationship," that is, a zero-sum game. This means that you can only reach power by taking it from someone else, and once you have it, you need to hold onto it to prevent others from taking it from you.[27] However, the reality is that power can also be "dynamic, relational and multidimensional, changing according to context, circumstance and interest," and "its expressions and forms can range from domination and resistance to collaboration and transformation."[28]

The one-dimensional and controlling type of power could also be called "power over."[29] Power over is exerted in a visible form when "contests over interests" are "negotiated in public spaces with established rules," by the formal decision-makers (elected, appointed or otherwise).[30]

Power over is exerted in a hidden form by actors who try to control "who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda." Often it is groups like women, racial minorities, immigrants, and the poor that those actors want to exclude from the decision-making tables.[31]

Finally, power over is exerted in an invisible form when problems, ideas, and concerns are kept from the decision-making tables and "from the minds and consciousness of the people involved, even those directly affected by the problem."

King, Jr., "Where Do We Go From Here?," Stanford University, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, accessed April 20, 2024, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/where-do-we-go-here

[27] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, "Making Change Happen," 4.

[28] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 4.

[29] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 4.

[30] When we consider visible *power over*, we also need to take note of the distinction between government and governance. Visible power over is not only exerted from state institutions, created, controlled by, or affiliated with the government, but also from "a variety of other quasi-state and non-state spaces for decisionmaking." To honor that reality, "governance" is the proper term to use. See Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 15.

[31] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 9.

Invisible power over tries to influence how people understand and find their place in the world, what beliefs they hold, and how they define what is "normal," what is "true," and what is "acceptable." Invisible power over can make people think that poverty, racism, sexism, corruption, etc. are not injustices that need to be faced, it can make people blame the victims for their suffering, and it can even make the victims blame themselves.[32]

The three forms of power over, visible, hidden, and invisible, should be considered in relation to the spaces of engagement and the levels of power. According to John Gaventa's definition, spaces are the "opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships that affect their lives and interests."[33] These spaces are not neutral containers waiting to be filled. They are "shaped by power relations, which both surround and enter them."[34]

Gaventa identifies at least three different spaces. First, the "closed spaces," also called "provided spaces." These are the spaces where decisions are made for "the people" by certain actors behind closed doors, without the need for consultation with other actors. Second, the "invited spaces," which are more or less regularized or institutionalized spaces where participation of people in different capacities is expected. And third, the "claimed," "created," or "third spaces," which arise from the mobilization of people around a certain issue or from people joining together with a common purpose. The third spaces are normally taken by less powerful actors against more powerful ones.[35]

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[32] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 10.

[33] John Gaventa, "Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis," *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*, 37, no. 6 (November 2006): 26, https://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/finding_spaces_for_change.pdf.

[34] Gaventa, 26.

[35] Gaventa, 26.

These three spaces "exist in dynamic relationship to one another," and they "are constantly opening and closing through struggles for legitimacy and resistance, co-optation and transformation." Closed spaces can create invited spaces to seek legitimacy and to channel discontent, and at the same time, third spaces can push for the opening of more invited spaces.[36] Beneficial change will not necessarily happen because spaces for participation open. To assess "the transformative potential of spaces for participatory governance," we must consider what is happening at once in the surrounding spaces.[37]

The levels of power Gaventa identifies are the local, national, and global. They are not easy to distinguish from each other, and what happens at one level is interconnected with and influenced by what happens in the other. A bad coordination between what happens at the different levels of power or the absence of it, stands in the way of effective change.[38]

As said above, "power over" is not the only type of power that exists. The more life-affirming, relational, and transformational types of power are "power with," "power to," and "power within."[39]

Power with does not require that you take power from others and prevent them from taking it back. You acknowledge instead the conflicts of interest where they exist, and you try to find "common ground," or you seek to "transform or reduce" the conflicts to "build collective strength." Power with is not a zero-sum game, but instead "multiplies

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[36] Gaventa, 26.

[37] Gaventa, 27.

[38] Gaventa, 27.

[39] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, "Making Change Happen," 4.

individual talents, knowledge and resources."[40] Power with means that you can understand the concerns of others and you are able to mix those concerns with your own agenda. Power with is exerted when we let ourselves be affected by another we are in relationship with and when we affect others. As Edward Chambers has argued, power with is "infinite and unifying, not limited and divisive," as well as "additive and multiplicative, not subtractive and divisive," so that "as you become more powerful, so do those in relationship with you."[41]

Power to has to do with the potential any person has to make a difference. This potential can be increased with "new skills, knowledge, awareness and confidence." There is no power with without power to.[42]

Power within pertains to "a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge" and "is the capacity to imagine and have hope." There is no power to without power within.[43]

Power can be exerted in a way that can make us change our minds. Power can be exerted by association with others. Power can be exerted through willingness to sacrifice.

We must consider that all types of power are usually being exerted at the same time.[44] In any situation there will probably be someone or some group trying to exert power over. When different people and groups happen to be gathered around a decision-table of any kind, it is not enough to treat them as equals. They will be people and groups who do not necessarily have the same interests nor the same power to assert their

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[40] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 6.

[41] Adam Kahane, *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010), 131.

[42] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, "Making Change Happen," 6.

[43] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 6.

[44] Miller, VeneKlasen, Reilly, and Clark, 6.

interests, and these power dynamics must be considered and acknowledged. Ideally, enough power within, power to, and power with should be exerted so that nobody exerts power over unless it is with the informed and conscious consent of those over whom power is exerted.

Transformative and fundamental change happens in the "rare moments" when social movements or social actors, filled with all the power within, to, and with they can muster, are able to work effectively across the dimensions of form, space, and level at the same time, that is, "when they are able to link the demands for opening previously closed spaces with people's action in their own spaces; to span across local and global action, and to challenge visible, hidden and invisible power simultaneously."[45]

Love

Love should be defined in opposition to interest. Interest is a narrow way of defining who we are, and this is especially so when interest is reduced to "economic self-interest."[46] I am assuming that we in essence and at heart don't know what we want nor what is best for us. I am assuming that we, as loving individuals, do have the desire and the will to get connected with others, and that it will be through a genuinely engaged connection with others that we will at frequent intervals redefine what interests we will pursue.

We can train ourselves to give and receive love. Love is not "spontaneous or passive" nor anything that simply happens to us.[47] We should also keep in mind that

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[45] Gaventa, "Finding the Spaces," 30.

[46] Michael J. Thompson, "Hegel's Anti-Capitalist State," *Discusiones Filosóficas* 14, no. 22 (2013): 46.

[47] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 180.

"there are no guarantees." When it comes to love, "there is nothing automatic about its functioning and results" because "love can go bad" and block and destroy the process.[48]

It is important as well to always remember that we need to relate in love to singular individuals and not to mere abstractions or fictions. This will protect us from the endorsement of a "simplified (and thus falsified)" version of society[49] that could conceal certain individuals and groups and their concerns and exclude them from the decision-making tables. And it will also protect us from the temptation to "over-rationalize" our response to challenges posed by migrants, refugees, the global poor, "those with whom we perceive a relation of enmity," etc., and in consequence to find bad excuses and acquiesce for instance to the unfair detainment in detention facilities of migrants and asylum seekers, approve the inhumane treatment of unwanted enemies in the form of torture or extra-judicial killings, etc., and not act at all when a task seems overwhelming, as it is the case with the alleviation of global poverty.[50]

Power and Love

It is common to see power and love as opposites. We imagine that we must ignore the interests of the other when we exert power and that we must ignore our own concerns when we love. But power and love are not "mutually exclusive." They are "rather complementary aspects of a conjugal partnership." "Some acknowledgment of the other's interests" will enhance the ability to achieve purpose. And some regard for the concerns

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[48] Hardt and Negri, 195.

[49] Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, 201.

[50] Charlie Thame, "Love, Ethics, and Emancipation. The Implications of Conceptions of Human Being and Freedom in Heidegger and Hegel for Critical International Theory" (PhD diss., Aberystwyth University, 2013), 400.

of the self will allow a healthier loving.[51] Said in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., we do not need to identify power with "a denial of love," nor to identify love with "a resignation of power," because "power without love is reckless and abusive," and "love without power is sentimental and anemic."[52]

Hardt and Negri also insist that love and power are not opposed. Love with its power constitutes what the authors call "the common" and forms the society with its institutions.[53] Love with its power can also combat the forms of love gone bad, and take the form of "indignation, disobedience, and antagonism."[54] And finally, love with its power makes the multitude and organizes it in social forms that allow the multitude to keep going in always renewed forms.[55] These social forms are "open, constitutive, and horizontal." Should the organizational form solidify "in fixed relations of power," love should be able to exceed it, overflow its limits and reopen the organization so that it can be reconfigured with the participation of all.[56]

Individual and Collective

There are individuals and collectives. However, we cannot define who an individual is without considering how they are related to others, that is, how they are part of a collective. And we would not have individuals nor a collective without what Hardt and Negri call "a common world": "if we did not share a common world, then we would

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[51] Kahane, *Power and Love*, 132.

[52] Luther King, Jr., "Where Do We Go From Here?"

[53] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 195.

[54] Hardt and Negri, 195.

[55] Hardt and Negri, 195-96.

[56] Hardt and Negri, 196-97.

not be able to communicate with one another or engage one another's needs and desires; and if we were not multiple singularities, then we would have no need to communicate and interact."[57]

Adam Kahane puts it this way, "we cannot walk far and fast collectively if we cannot walk individually, on our own two feet."[58] And I would correct him saying that we should be carried if we are unable to walk on our own feet, and if we have any agency, we should exert it to ask for help, to make ourselves vulnerable enough to receive the help, and to thank for the help received.

Unless individuals band together in the right way, the individual agency can, even with the best of intentions, counteract a laudable collective goal, or the individual subjectivity can be taken captive. To band together in the right way, individuals must organize as what Hardt and Negri call a "multitude," that is, "an irreducible multiplicity," in which "the singular social differences that constitute" it "must always be expressed and can never be flattened into sameness, unity, identity, or indifference."[59] Connected to others in a multitude, each individual will be more powerful, insightful, and resourceful than if they were alone, and together they will "form a social body" which in turn will also be more powerful than any of the individuals alone.[60] In addition, even when the individual subjectivity can be taken captive by a bad form of collective, the individual can transcend the captivity of their subjectivity.

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[57] Hardt and Negri, 184.

[58] Kahane, *Power and Love*, 169.

[59] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 105.

[60] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 180.

There will be circumstances when an individual will have to subordinate or sacrifice their individual concerns to the concerns of a collective, or when one collective will have to subordinate or sacrifice their own concerns to the concerns of another collective, but ideally, we should be able to expand, "little by little, the range of our ordinary interests and sympathies, so that they become more penetrating and inclusive."[61] In this way, there will be less concerns that will need to be subordinated or sacrificed, or we will educate ourselves and learn that what otherwise would have been interpreted as the need to subordinate and sacrifice individual concerns is indeed welcomed change for the better.

Christian Faith and Political Love

We engage in politics, and especially in a project of political love, with our whole selves. This includes our faith. Both the faith we profess to have and the faith we in fact have. Faith is one of the factors that could counteract the effects of the "disciplinary reason" that makes it possible for people to get integrated in their societies without experiencing any "fundamental lack in their lives."[62]

We should not try to engage in politics leaving aside our faith. On the contrary, we should take ownership of our faith and be attentive to the fact that we do not necessarily hold our beliefs in good faith, but because we want to believe them. Often, we have an underlying self-serving desire or motive to believe as we do.[63] We would all benefit from a public discussion about religion that could encourage us to rethink if we

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[61] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 187.

[62] Ormiston, *Love and Politics*, 97.

[63] Aroosi, "On the Necessity of Incivility."

conscientiously and critically want to embrace our own cultural and religious roots. And I agree with Mangabeira Unger that no religious tradition should be exempted from critical scrutiny, even criticism from other religious traditions.

To Hegel, faith can be a habit, and it would be possible to talk about a culture and a social environment imbued with Christian values and principles. To Kierkegaard, instead, there are no Christian faith nor Christian values and principles apart from the individual ad conscious practitioners. J. Michael Tilley has said that "one could be devoted to God in such a way that one does not demonstrate love for others (except perhaps in trying to help others into a genuine God-relation, that is, loving another by proselytizing), or one could dispense with belief and love of God altogether and claim that the only important thing is that one love others."[64] He adds that Kierkegaard has an understanding of Christian faith that precludes both options, and I would say that the same does Hegel.

Christians should be champions of political love, but we should not restrict it to Christians. Christians should champion political love with an attitude and a language that invite others to embrace it without having to fully accept or adopt Christian principles. Kierkegaard himself tried to go in that direction when he talked about the God-relationship which is the third party that prevents a relationship between human beings from becoming unhealthy and "either too ardent or embittered," in the "less dogmatic, even secularly palatable"[65] terms of "the idea," "the true," "the good" (339). Even if we

[64] J. Michael Tilley, "Interpersonal Relationships and Community in Kierkegaard's Thought" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2008), 160-61.

[65] Lappano, *Kierkegaard's Theology of Encounter*, 173.

do not renounce the reference to the God-relationship, we should find the way to talk about God "in a truly inclusive, and nondenominational, fashion."[66]

Mangabeira Unger, as it has been argued before, criticizes the major religious orientations to the world, including Christianity, for assuring us "that, appearances notwithstanding, everything will indeed be all right,"[67] and using what he describes as "a two-sided ticket,"[68] which is at the same time "a license to escape the world" and "an invitation to change it."[69] One side of the ticket counteract the other and this, says Unger, has the discouraging effect of making participation in changing the world optional rather than mandatory. Unger does not believe in a God who supposedly guarantees that the flaws in the human condition will in the end be overcome. He subscribes instead to a godless religion he proposes as the religion of the future. It is a religion that demands that we accept "the terrible truth" about the human condition, without assimilating "our corrigible susceptibility to belittlement to the certainty of death and the fragility of our protections against nihilism." It wants us to grasp our life while we have it with the conviction of its incomparable value and assume "the determination to achieve… a greater life, increasing our share in the power of transcendence that the salvation religions attribute preeminently to God" [70] by participating in the transformation of the world, so that we may die only once.

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[66] Aroosi, "Searching for a Secular God," 255.

[67] Unger, *Religion*, 37.

[68] Unger, 47.

[69] Unger, 198.

[70] Unger, 238.

I agree with Mangabeira Unger in questioning what he calls "the two-sided ticket" that makes the higher religions ambivalent when it comes to transforming the world, but I disagree with his proposal of a godless religion. I believe in an omnipotent God as described by Kierkegaard, who can withdraw Godself at the same time God gives Godself away, "and this relationship is the very independence of the receiver" (405). As Kierkegaard so beautifully puts it, "it is incomprehensible that omnipotence is able not only to create the most impressive of all things—the whole visible world—but is able to create the most frail of all things—a being independent of that very omnipotence" (405-406). Such a God does not provide us with a "two-sided ticket to either escape the world or change society."[71] Such a God, that also Hegel would relate to, makes the call to participate in the change of the world mandatory without deluding ourselves with any illusion of what Mangabeira Unger calls the greater life with an increased "share in the power of transcendence that the salvation religions attribute preeminently to God."[72]

Overall Political Goal and More Immediate Political Goals

I agree with Mangabeira Unger that we need to reconsider how we understand the categories of revolution and reform. It is not true that "the institutional and ideological orderings of social life are indivisible systems, whose individual parts stand or fall together." We should therefore have a form of political life that is "revolutionary in its outcome" and "gradualist in its method," that is, we need to be willing to "change

[71] Unger, 238.

[72] Unger, 238.

everything in social life, one thing at the time."[73] This is why I consider it important to have an overall political goal and some more immediate goals.

My overall political goal can be best be expressed with the words of the legendary American labor leader and civil rights activist Cesar Chavez, "In the final analysis, however, it doesn't really matter what the political system is… We don't need perfect political systems; we need perfect participation."[74] Everyone should be able to claim their voices and be heard in "the liveliest and most open-minded continual public mulling over" anything that concerns the common good.[75] This is not just a formal goal, but a substantive one. Political love that comes up against and evens out the relations of power and exploitation is required to get to the point of perfect participation and political love is needed to continue effecting the changes that will make sure that everyone becomes and remains fulfilled participants. Perfect participation requires that some people build power together with others,[76] and that other people give up some of their power.

Perfect participation as here defined is also what Hardt and Negri aim at when they argue in favor of a "growing autonomy of the multitude from both private and public control."[77]

"Perfect participation" as here defined is likewise what Hegel had in mind when he asserted that "unification as such is itself the true content and aim" of the state (§

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[73] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 182-84.

[74] Cesar Chavez, *An Organizer's Tale: Speeches* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 82.

[75] Andrew Shanks, *Civil Society, Civil Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 209.

[76] In an essay published in 1970, Cesar Chavez included himself ("we who are poor," he writes) and gave some examples on the poor building power, "We build power through boycotts, strikes, new unions—whatever techniques we can develop. These attacks on the *status quo* will come not because we hate but because we know America *can* construct a humane society for all its citizens." His words are still valid today. See Chavez, *An Organizer's Tale*, 82.

[77] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 311.

258R, 229), understood not simply as "the means to something other than itself," but as being "itself the end, the goal, the aim of the attitudes and activities which constitute it."[78]

The nation-state is a limited and insufficient frame for the accomplishment of perfect participation. Kierkegaard was not completely wrong when he defined the state as "human egotism in great dimensions" (JP 4, 4238 / Pap. XI^2 A 108). However, there is a lot that can be done within that frame without detriment to the people of other nation-states. Furthermore, Kierkegaard did unintentionally give a strong argument in favor of an active role for the state guaranteeing social entitlements for everyone when he talked about beneficence and claimed that "the one who loves" has to "make himself unnoticed so that the person helped does not become dependent upon him—by owing to him the greatest beneficence" [sic] (274), and more precisely, the one who loves has to give "in such a way that the gift looks as if it were the recipient's property" (274).

The proposals I am sharing here are mostly thought for the American context, but some of them would also be applicable in other contexts. They are, I hope, proposals that further the development of what Mangabeira Unger calls "political, economic, and social institutions and practices that both equip the individual and multiply his [sic] chances of changing pieces of the established setting of his work and life as he goes about his ordinary activities."[79]

Cesar Chavez made some proposals to promote participation in 1970 that are still waiting to be brought to fruition and that could be pursued as more immediate goals toward the full enactment of my overall political goal. For instance, Chavez wants to give

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[78] Westphal, *Hegel*, 49.

[79] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 206.

American Indians "more than token representation" in the different levels of government. He does not want anyone to be disenfranchised because they cannot comply with residency requirements. He does not want it for anyone to be "prohibitively expensive" to vote. He wants to abandon the whole voter registration practice and give the right to vote to all 18-year-olds and even convicts. He wants elections to last up to 72 hours and to include Saturdays and Sundays. He wants to significantly reduce the time it should take for an immigrant to become a citizen. He wants more accountability from elected officials. He wants to reform the system of campaign financing to make it "as easy for a poor man [sic] as for a millionaire to put his [sic] case before the people." He wants to make sure that minority groups are given "a proportionate number of seats in every governing body affecting them."[80]

In line with Cesar Chavez's proposals, Mangabeira Unger also wants to reconstruct democracy to promote participation. He wants political mobilization to go hand in hand with institutional organization. He wants to combine representative with direct democracy to oppose "oligarchy in all its ever-changing forms," to remind us that structures can be changed, to help us enlarge our interests and sympathies and make them "more penetrating and inclusive," and to make change come from within society and its people. He wants to find ways to accelerate the speed of political transformation. He wants certain places or sectors of a nation to experiment with alternative rules. And he wants to "strengthen the guarantees and the capabilities of the individual" and prompt them to engage in social and institutional experimenting by giving everyone access to "a

[80] Chavez, *An Organizer's Tale*, 80-82.

basic, minimum set of material resources… in the form of either a social-endowment account on which they can draw or a claim to a minimum income."[81]

To promote participation, Mangabeira Unger also wants, and I agree, to give more people "access to the types of education, expertise, technology, and credit" that will allow them to engage "in the advanced sectors or productions," and he wants to expand the "advanced economic practices" beyond "the narrow, favored sectors in which they have traditionally flourished."[82] To help forward these proposals, Mangabeira Unger thinks that it would be convenient to "develop new varieties of association or coordination between public and private initiative" and "different regimes of contract and property" that could coexist in an experimental way.[83]

Perfect participation requires, in addition, that we all get to know and interact with people who are different from ourselves, or said in Mangabeira Unger's terms, we need to make "social solidarity" real. His proposal is that individuals should give up not only money, but also some of their life for that purpose. "Every able-bodied adult," he argues, "should in principle hold a position in both the caring economy and the production system" and give up part of their lives to care for others outside their own families.[84] A program for national solidarity that would provide opportunities and incentives to spend periods of one's life engaging in communities different than one's own beyond the divisions of race, culture, and class would also serve the same purpose.[85]

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[81] Unger, *Self Awakened*, 186-91.

[82] Unger, 202.

[83] Unger, 203-04.

[84] Unger, 204.

[85] "An Intervention in the Democratic Party for Strong People and an Open Nation," The Progressive Alternative, accessed April 20, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20161021094213/http://www.progressivealternative.org/intervention. Also

The series of reforms for which the multitude could struggle, and for which in certain places it is in fact already struggling, to enhance its freedom and autonomy that Hardt and Negri propose,[86] and which have overlaps with both Chavez's and Mangabeira Unger's proposals, would also serve as immediate goals towards perfect participation.

Final Remarks

Writing this dissertation has been a long process. I have been in the process with the expectation of fulfilling the requirements for an academic degree and as part of the ongoing discernment of my vocation. Throughout the process I have asked myself if I have or expect to have any other audience apart from my adviser and my readers. And I do. I am my audience. I am the one who in a humble and very imperfect manner has already been trying to make love politically operative in my context as pastor, public leader, and engaged resident of a small community in Minnesota.

I want to get better at it, and I am continuously asking myself who else I want to invite to join in the conversation. I am trying to figure out if I am part of or should more actively become part of a "multitude" as defined by Hardt and Negri, and to what extent I am complicit with the current system or I could rebel, resist, and work for change together with others. I am in this métier as a Christian, and as a Christian who is conscientiously and critically reembracing my own tradition after carefully reading Hegel and Kierkegaard and finding how they converge on the topic of love and politics. I am ready to be in this métier with others who are not Christians.

Martha Nussbaum argues that personal loves are needed to make political love possible. She refers to them as the "imaginative engagement with the lives of others and by an inner grasp of their full and equal humanity." See Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 380.

[86] See above pages 41-42.

I want to be alert against the possibilities of love going wrong, and I do not want to substitute what Mangabeira Unger calls “altruism,” or what Hardt and Negri call “solidarity” for love. Although I have enumerated a not exhaustive list of more immediate goals towards my overall political goal, I do not consider myself credentialed to insist obstinately that my immediate goals are the ones that we should strive for. The immediate goals will be dependent on the circumstances and the spaces and the people with whom I will be striving for perfect participation, and thereby, for love made politically operative.

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