Towards a Political Ontology of Eros: From the Symposium of Plato to the Commonwealth of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri

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Περάληψη
Η έννοιες του Έρωτα και της Αγάπης δεν απαντώνται συχνά στην πολιτική φιλοσοφία. Στην πολιτική παράδοση της νεωτερικότητας και των συμβολαιικών θεωριών ο άνθρωπος συλλαμβάνεται με μονοσήμαντους τρόπους στη βάση της μοναχικότητας, της εχθρότητας ή της ιδιοκτησίας. Τα ανθρωτοπαράδοτη έννοια της πόλεως όσο και των θεωριών του κοινοτισμού και της αλληλεγγύης. Η αντιδημοκρατική και μονοδιάστατη θέση του πολιτικού, συνοδεύτηκε από τη συγκρότηση του νεωτερικού υλιστικού και θετικιστικού μοντέλου γνώσης, που διαμόρφωσε την κατανόηση του ανθρώπου πάνω στη βάση της ταυτότητας και της αντικειμενικότητας, και χωριστικοποίησε αφενός το υποκείμενο από το αντικείμενο, αφετέρου το υποκείμενο της γνώσης από το υποκείμενο της βούλησης. Ο άτομισμό, η κυριαρχία, ο ανταγωνισμός και ιδιοτελής δράση, αποτέλεσαν στοιχεία των σύγχρονων κοινωνιών που συγκροτήθηκαν στον αντίποδα των ιδεών τόσο της κλασικής πολιτικής θεωρίας, που βασιζόταν στην αρχαία δημοκρατική έννοια της πόλεως όσο και των θεωριών του κοινοτισμού και της αλληλεγγύης. Η αντιδημοκρατική και μονοδιάστατη θέση του πολιτικού, συνοδεύτηκε από τη συγκρότηση του νεωτερικού υλιστικού και θετικιστικού μοντέλου γνώσης, που διαμόρφωσε την κατανόηση του ανθρώπου πάνω στη βάση της ταυτότητας και της αντικειμενικότητας, και χωριστικοποίησε αφενός το υποκείμενο από το αντικείμενο, αφετέρου το υποκείμενο της γνώσης από το υποκείμενο της βούλησης. Ο μοντέλο αυτό γνώσης αναπτύχθηκε μέσα από τους μηχανισμούς κανονισμοποίησης και προσαρμογής στην κοινωνία ως τέτοια που είναι. Από την άλλη πλευρά, τα επαναστατικά κινήματα του παρελθόντος όπως και η ίδια η κοινοτιστική παράδοση, επιδιώκουν να αποκλείσει τη διαφορά. Ακόμη περισσότερο, παραγνωρίζοντας τον παράγοντα της πολυπλοκότητας που συνδέεται με την ανθρώπινη συνείδηση και αισθαντικότητα, συρρίκνωσε τα προτάγματα της στον αγώνα για μεταβολή των υλικών συνθηκών.

Έχοντας υπόψη τις παραπάνω περιπλοκές, ο Έρως επιλέγεται ως θεματική και ως πρόταση ίασης με τη μορφή τόσο της οντολογικής δύναμης συγκρότησης διευρυνόμενων μονάδων ζωής, δημιουργίας και εξισορρόπησης των δυνάμεων της καταστροφής μέσα στον οίκο και τον κόσμο, όπως απαντάται στην φαινομενολογία του Levinas. Η προσέγγιση που αναπτύσσεται εν γένει ακολουθεί την πρόταση των Hardt και Negri σχετικά με μια επαναστατική επανεφεύρεση της Αγάπης υπό την μορφή του πολιτικού προτάγματος. Ο Έρως επιφορτίζεται με την αποστολή της Αγάπης, στην παρούσα εισήγηση, καθώς αυτός είναι ο τρόπος ή ο μηχανισμός ο οποίος διαμορφώνει την κοινότητα. Η Αγάπη είναι ο πλούτος και η επινοητικότητα των φτωχών. Η Αγάπη είναι μάθηση μέσα από την οποία μπορούμε να αλλάξουμε ήθη και συνήθειες, καθιερώνοντας μια ηθική που δεν περιστέλλεται στο εγώ, αλλά απευθύνεται στον άλλο. Πέραν αυτών, προτείνεται πως ο Έρως όπως παρουσιάζεται στο πλατωνικό συμπόσιο, επιτρέπει ίσως να συλλάβουμε την καλλιέργεια της πνευματικότητας, ως το έδαφος πάνω στο οποίο μπορεί να δομηθεί ένας από τους δυνατούς τύπους κοινότητας.

Λέξεις-Κλειδιά: Έρως, αγάπη, συμπόνια, κοινό, κοινότητα, υποκειμενικότητα, πολλαπλότητα, ηθική, πολιτική, οντολογία, φαινομενολογία

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**Abstract**

The concepts of Eros and Love do not often appear in the political philosophy. In the political philosophy of modernity and the contractarian theories, the human being is conceived in biased categories such as those of loneliness, enmity and property. These anthropological qualities are related to the political terms according to which modern societies were constituted. Individualism, sovereignty, competition and egoistic action comprise the factors of the modern societies, which were developed in opposition to the values of the classic political theory of the democratic polis, as much as to those of communitarianism and solidarity. The anti-democratic and one-dimensional constitution of the political, came with the constitution of the modern materialistic and positivistic model of knowledge, which shaped the understanding of the human being in terms of identity and objectivity; it caused, on the one hand, the split between the subject the object, and on the other hand, between the subject of knowledge and the subject of will. This kind of knowledge was developed through the normalizing mechanisms of adjusting to the society as such. On the other side, the revolutionary movements of the past and the communitarian tradition, disregarding the singularity of the subjectivity, and the need of the human being and societies for multiplicity, restricted their struggles to the efforts for the imposition of the same, attempting to exclude difference. Nevertheless, ignoring the complexity which is connected to the human consciousness and affectivity, they limited their imperatives to the alteration of the material conditions.

Keeping in mind all the aforementioned complications, Eros is chosen as a topic and as a method of healing, in the form of the ontological force of constituting expanding units of life, creation and balancing the forces of destruction within the being and the cosmos, as it was presented by Plato and Freud, but also in the form of compassion, power of empathy, that exceeds the egoistic closed-mindedness, and allows the self to take care of the other, as it appears in Buddhism and other spiritual traditions. These two principles comprise the ontological and ethical dimensions of the phenomenon, and purpose of this text is to connect them with the political dimension. The context of the transition from the ethical to the political is set with an interpretation of the Ethics of the Other as it is met in the phenomenological analysis of Levinas. The approach that will be explicated in general, follows Hardt’s and Negri’s suggestion of a revolutionary reinvention of Love in the form of a political imperative. Eros is charged with the mission of Love, according to the present suggestion, for this is what constitutes subjectivity as multiplicity and as a becoming, and this appears also to be the mechanism which constitutes the community. Love is the wealth and the ingenuity of the poor. Love is learning through which we can change habits, instituting, thus, a new ethics that is not folding back to the self but opens up to the other.

**Keywords:** Eros, Love, compassion, common, community, subjectivity, multiplicity, ethics, politics, ontology, phenomenology
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“Love is an ontological event in that it marks a rupture with what exists and the creation of the new. Being is constituted by love”.


Introduction

The examination of the subjectivity in many contemporary philosophical and scientific fields denotes a difficulty in locating a particular aspect of the being as the ‘I’. The understanding of the subject as characterized by an internal multiplicity, indicates the inability of the absolute unity of a static ego-centered perception of the self, which has served in the past as a criterion for the understanding of the subjectivity by the prevailing western approaches of the human being. The subject exceeding the closed core of the ego is rendered capable of coexistence in the context of a non-totalizing multiplicity. But how does the multiplicity maintain a form of coherency? In the interplay of the subjectivity with collectivity, the indispensable prerequisite is a technology of forming the subjectivity as well as the community through the ages, and it is no other than the power of Eros. Eros as one of the primordial techniques of humanity, like language, constitutes a desire of expansion towards the other. Love forms a language of interaction and a social foundation which renders capable all the other languages.

Eros in this context will be described as a technology of the community and as a power of recognition of difference and interconnection. This technology is the mystical Eros of Plato and Freud manufacturing social bonds with endurance through time. Love as agape without being juxtaposed to Eros, and without being necessarily considered as the sublimated ‘higher’ form of it, corresponds to a philosophical and social principle, which is closely related to the ethics, as well as to a sense of responsibility towards the other; it can also be referred to as empathy or compassion, as an ethical attitude which permits one to get into the position of the other, to understand the situation as the other experiences it, and to do whatever she/he considers most appropriate for the other person’s relief. The purpose of this paper would be, based on the initial idea of Hardt and Negri’s concept of Love, to examine the ontology of Eros and Love in a revolutionary political context, and to present Love as one of the contemporary world’s essential ‘machines’ of resistance and creation.

I. The political ontology of multiplicity

The traditional perception of politics has been related to enmity, sovereignty and representation. In our era it is generally acceptable that these ideas have been related with the suffering of humanity. The reversal of the traditional constitution depends to a degree on the ability to transcend the traditional structures of knowledge and epistemology, which have been related to a reproduction of one-dimensional thought, power and competition. The latter produced the dominating forms of reason

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1 Technology in this respect has an intertemporal and historical significance. Since the human being coexists through love, this dimension goes beyond the ages but the way that this experience is perceived and constituted, depends on the socio-historical conditions. According to Foucault the subject is constituted in a symbolic system through particular and real practices which can be analyzed historically. “There is a technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across symbolic systems while using them”. Foucault, Michel, “On the Genealogy of Ethics”, Rabinow Paul (ed.), Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth I, The New Press, New York, 1997, p. 277.

2 Eros in this context will be used with both significances of love/ Eros as a force of uniting beings and elements, and love/compassion as empathy and care of the other.


4 Pettman, op. cit., p. 19.
since modernity, when a misunderstood concept of universalism (in terms of expanding sovereignty) and objectivity was manufactured. The traditional ontology following the typical logic, treats the being as an identity. Hardt and Negri relate identity to possession and sovereignty. This was the context in which the political thought of modernity conceived the social constitution, establishing a narrow perception of a 'common-wealth' and the mainstream anthropological types such as homo-faber, homo-proprietarius and homo-economicus. The concept of the common was distorted while the concept of the subject was understood in terms of individuality cut off from inherent connections to the nature and the others. In general, we tend to perceive existence as a singular identity, failing to include multiplicity as a part of the singularity. This may sound contradictory, if perceived by means of the tautology of the logical thought, but makes also part of the ontology the subject's ability to transcend one's attachment to the idea of who she/he has been until this moment, as one opens the self to future potentialities. The reality as perceived through the polarization - that stems from the identification of being and totalization - as well as through the craving aspect of the ego, produces dualisms like those of part/whole, right/wrong, act/passion, concealing infinity as, according to Levinas, the ontological attribute of the subject.

The identity is cancelled if we consider Love as Fecundity, according to Levinas’s term that is as a plurality of possibilities which composes all beings. Hardt and Negri suggest that we consider not one ontology, but multiple. These may not constitute fixed divisions, but they are consistent with a cosmology where the universe(s) is under an ongoing change, under a constant becoming: “becoming the other”. It would be easier to understand the meaning of multiplicity as it is deployed by Hardt and Negri, if someone turns to Spinoza’s concept of parallel, in reference to which it is formed. In Spinoza the two attributes of thought and extent are relatively autonomous, as the body does not cause the thought to think and the thought does not cause the body to move. Nevertheless, their effects are of a common order and connection, since both constitute two manifestations of the same substance, the infinite active reality. Thought and extent do not constitute two heterogenous substances, two diverse realities. Whereas Descartes differentiates God from nature, excluding, thus, extent from His own nature, and Hobbes understands God as body, that is in terms of physics, for Spinoza, God exists both as infinite mental substance and as extended nature.

The aforementioned scheme can be related to a liberating project in the following way. While the fight in one field cannot resolve the problems in all the rest, like for example the fight against racial discriminations is not necessarily a solution to the problem of class inequalities, the transformations of subjects which may come through the fight for freedom in every domain, could come to a parallel relation. But this is not something that emerges naturally; instead is something that has to be pursued deliberately. While the multitude maintains its rhizomatic structure, it should at the same time, according to Hardt and Negri, maintain a form of horizontality, which means that it does not accept being manipulated, and that it simultaneously preserves the autonomy of the singularities which comprise it. A structure of this kind does not form a contradiction but a necessary democratic and pluralistic condition. The multitude does not constitute a being with a flat and immovable form, but is always in transition, going through various transformations.

7 See Levinas, op. cit, pp. 267-268.
11 Hardt and Negri, op. cit, p. 341.
12 Hardt and Negri, op. cit, p. 166.
Love indicates that multiplicity constitutes the foundation of existence, and as an element of the ontological dimension of the subject, constitutes also a prerequisite of the social. The subject as able ‘to become’, goes beyond her/ his own selfhood due to this innate ability of transcendence and is, thus, liberated from her/ his closed sense of identity and isolation. Therefore, subjectivity entails multiplicity and solidarity as psycho-noetic structures. In the basis of this understanding of the subjectivity, the political is rendered attainable. Philosophy as Hardt and Negri define it, and as it is reconstructed by Foucault, is the counterforce of fascism, which is defined by the tendency for the imposition of the same. The ability to overcome ourselves constitutes also the ability for empathy, which renders us receptive in the viewpoint of the other. The latter consists a condition which may enable processes of reconciliation and compromising of conflicts, without referring to an undifferentiated unity.

So, Hardt and Negri draw upon Spinoza’s concepts of infinity and parallelism to describe strategies of political resistance. As Spinoza maintains that there are infinite attributes through which the substance or nature manifests itself, accordingly, there are infinite possible paths of fight for liberation in society. Multiplicity even infinity do not constitute a problem, but the desideratum is to form a parallel between them in a common project. A revolutionary practice today would only be reachable through the acceptance of a multiplicity of concurrent paths of liberation.

In view of an alternative liberating project which can be conceived in a molecular as much as in an organic scale, we are summoned to investigate the ontological prerequisites, under which new political structures can take place and expand. Moreover, we are summoned to invent multiple ‘technologies’ of resistance towards globalized societies, which are not characterized by locality, and which demonstrate an excessive implementation of controls and normalizations that manifest in very specialized forms. The aspiration would be the production of individual and collective subjectivities with a totally new ontological quality. In this context the shift of personal consciousness is of critical importance. New modes of aesthetics as well as a new ontological perception of the world, hence a new perception of knowledge as production of truth needs to be structured in the place of automatized controls and mental structures. These new qualities in their turn would permit new modes of coexistence and communication, innately incompatible with the egoistic culture of the competitive and with “flexible abilities” subjects, which neoliberal capitalistic ethics produces in its current progressive state. Even the association of two people constitutes a foundation of a community; but beyond inter-subjectivity the aim would be to reach an ethical assemblage.

II. The passage from the ethical to the political: Phenomenology of the Erotic

If the ethical refers to a face-to-face relation of exclusivity with the other where the latter precedes, and in his face, according to Levinas, we encounter the divine other – where God is the present of love offered by the self in an uneconomical relationship that does not anticipate repayment - the question is, how someone can proceed to equality and universality that are related to the political. For since Enlightenment following the juridical-legislative model the political has been associated to a general impersonal idea of justice which does not discriminate between persons. So in order to move from the ethical to the political, the ontological and phenomenological conditions of the force of Eros as a force that could possibly permit this, comes under the focus of attention.

13 See Hardt and Negri, op. cit., p. 29.
Levinas's phenomenology of the other structures the living experience of the other, as an experience of the self, characterized by a primordial enjoyment which cannot be attributed by traditional existential interpretations like the Heideggerian. According to Levinas's critique, the latter restrict themselves in the egocentric tendency of the human beings, individuals and groups, to consider things or beings as extensions of themselves and treat them as material for manipulation for the benefit of the individual or the social self. But it is to the extent that someone succeeds to confront and exceed the closeness of the egoistic self that is able to come to a relationship with the other. As Levinas points, "Enjoyment is not a psychological state among others, the affective tonality of empiricist psychology, but the very pulsation of the I." In Levinas happiness appears as life itself. "Life is love of life". There is no such thing as bare existence, since value constitutes being. The reality of life, being in the state of happiness is beyond ontology. The traditional Aristotelian categorical divisions between potency and activity, according to which human beings placed in a system of means and ends exceed their limits by action, is abandoned. Human beings live from acts as much as from ideas and sentiments. We relate ourselves to life with a relation that is neither theoretical nor practical: "Behind the theory and practice there is enjoyment of theory and of practice: the egoism of life. The final relation is enjoyment, happiness."

What saves the subject from the biological impersonal life of the philosophy of life or the genus, according to Levinas, is joy and affectivity. Reason may render human society possible, but a society whose members would be only under the sovereignty of reason, would collapse as a society. Goodness as a quintessence of the ethics consists "in taking up a position in being such that the Other counts more than myself". It is therefore related to the possibility of the self to abandon the claims for power. The face of the Other raises always and a priori my responsibility towards her/him as a request for justice. The Other is for me infinity and desire, the commencement of the ethical consciousness that calls into question my freedom. The ethical consciousness is born with the Other as resistance to our naïve claims of our power, not as rivalry of a greater force, but as a need for just freedom.

Each one of us has in front of her/him multiple others and each one of them is incomparable and unique. When the call of the responsibility towards them is set in the general level of justice, mechanisms, impersonal laws and institutions, that is when we exceed the face, the other is transformed in the person of reason or in the citizen of the state and not in the object of our compassion. Nonetheless, it can be claimed, that it is possible to maintain the idea of the Other's singularity, even if the Other is considered equal with all the rest. Indeed this might be in fact the sine qua non of justice, since without the singularity of subjectivity there cannot be justice. But when the topic is set in a sphere of universality, like Hardt and Negri attempt to set it, the challenge concerns the factor of totalization which tend to disregard singularity. When singularity is eliminated, the ethical is eliminated. The question that arises is how the transition from the ethical to the political can be conceived.
A possible response, according to James Mensch could be given based on a reading of the ambivalence of the erotic relation as it appears in Levinas32. The person in love experiences the body which one caresses, that is the object of her/his passion as a part of one’s own self and simultaneously as an other who with irreversible manner always eludes33. Accordingly, duality takes place in the relation between parents and child as the face of the child embodies and simultaneously resolves the erotic relation. The intentionality which the child fulfills is at the same time the I and the Other34. Thus it directs itself through the erotic relation to what extends beyond it35.

The connection between the ethical and the political that is singularity and equality, or difference and identity, is preserved by the example of the children within family. The selection of each one of the children guarantees their uniqueness, even though they are not unique by number as members of the family. Uniqueness consists in the election that precedes the existence of each and comes into being by the paternal Eros and its intentionality36. Therefore, in this relation equality coalesce with the uniqueness of each child, and the outcome of this relationship is fraternity, according to Levinas37.

Fraternity is what guarantees the ipseity of one as a result of the erotic intentionality, which constitutes him. Thus, face-to-face relationships are constituted in the context of family relations, but the indication of a higher perception would be the transcendence of the biological bonds in our understanding of the relationships with others, in order to be able to call all the persons “brothers” or to take on this responsibility towards them38. The difference in the face-to-face relationship is inherent in the erotic relation that brings the child, so there is innate ethic in the intentionality of this relation. Simultaneously the ethical and social association is rendered possible as a phylogenetic ability. The erotic relation is, thus, constitutive of the difference and the solidarity which manifest in the relationship of fraternity39.

In this way, the social life is founded that is based in uniqueness and justice. Each one is special through the unique way in which he reconstructs the world, and through an incarnation that he does not share with anybody else40. While participating in Love he sees the face of the other as a part of a ‘we’, where each one is also brother of the other in a network of relations which joins together humanity. Opening, therefore, the erotic in the social reality, each one is equally unique41 and interconnected. All people’s fraternity does not consist ethical command towards the subject, but constitutes its own ipseity42. This way we reach ontologically the multiplicity of the existing subjects and the necessity of composing different interests into common collective aspirations. This is a problem that would be dismissed if we referred to conformed subjects of an impersonal mass. In this kind of totalizing judgments for which the decision of one person suffices, tyranny is founded. According to the analysis that preceded, the self which initially appears as ego-centered, through the social bonds as loving and familial does not collapse but is summoned to goodness.

In the version of the social contract that prevailed in the modern historical course, the political life was associated to the necessity that the brothers’ coexistence would emerge in conditions of supposed equality under the sovereignty of a powerful ‘father’, who, as a leader, would be able to guarantee the social order and their equality; that is protect them from the situation of enmity, which ap-

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32 Mensch, op. cit.
33 Levinas, op. cit. (2), pp. 257-258. In Levinas the other as hidden and simultaneously as lightened, does not yet constitute a significance and is thus conceived as the not y e t b e i n g p. 256-257. Moreover, in Levinas the ethical experience is traced not in consciousness but in bodily and carnal exposure to the other. The intentional consciousness is rooted in the body which is offered to the other. Poleshchuk Irina, Unfolding Flesh Towards the Other: Levinas’ Perspective of Maternity and the Feminine, Problemos 84(2013), pp. 138-151.
35 Mensch, op. cit.
36 Levinas, op. cit. (2), pp. 278-279.
37 Levinas, op. cit. (2), pp. 214, Mensch, op. cit.
38 Levinas, op. cit. (2), pp. 214.
peared as the inevitable consequence of their condition of natural freedom. The political as such in the theory of Thomas Hobbes and Carl Schmitt appears to presuppose sovereignty. In the political theory of modernity the imposition of power by a person or a group on the multitude was considered as the basic condition of political life. Whereas, the erotic origin of society as it was analyzed above, suggests the possibility of an alternative form of societal and political constitution. The will of renouncing the principle of enforcement over society, which discriminates between governing and governed, and its replacement from a brotherhood, brings in mind the phylogenetic myth which Freud introduces in “Totem and Taboo”. According to the myth, the brothers of the primitive horde banding together assassinate the Cronius Patriarch who leads tyrannically the horde, gathering until that moment all the benefits and goods for himself and depriving the rest of the pleasure. The patriarch is he who leads, refusing to restrict himself under the terms of equality which define the political. In Hobbes’s political theory, which introduces the constitution of sovereignty in modern political philosophy of liberalism, the political is defined through the fundamentally a-political principle of the sovereign monopoly of violence. The myth forms a comment of denunciation of the patriarchal hierarchical society. The brotherhood, thus, symbolically attempts to implement a form of societal organization without sovereignty. The myth of patricide is, according to Castoriadis, above all a political myth, with the intention to render possible – in psychoanalytical terms – the conception of society as an object of constitution in the form of a ‘society of equals’: “Freud, by virtue of his authorship of Totem and Taboo (and not just by virtue of that) belongs to the democratic and egalitarian tradition”.

The treaty of the brothers, as well as their commitment to ally with each other, and thwart anybody who would attempt to take over as the source of authority or sovereignty, is the fundamental term without which, the myth of patricide could not ever refer to the constitution of the society. History, in the light of the phylogenetic myth is conceived, according to Castoriadis’s approach, not as destiny, but as creation. Society appears as (actively) constituting and not as (passively) constituted. Nevertheless, in the context of Freud’s narrative, the historical process of civilization manifests tendencies of regression: the hierarchical patriarchal structure, after a brief period of matriarchy, is restored and the primitive democratic equality is abolished. According to the myth’s incitement, the community is summoned to transcend a past of subjugation, which is represented by the father as a leader of the inherited society of the past, and activate the creative powers of Love and compeer fraternity.

III. Eros: Flow of energy and power of reconciliation
The Freudian theory correlated the human constitutions with the human erotic predisposition which he refers to as the libidinal element. As such, Freud defined the dynamic energetic flux of the...
human being which leads to life, unification and creation, and that would be namely the drives of life.49 Passing through three different phases of forming his theory of drives in a second phase Freud recognizes a totally contrary to the drives of life force, a force of entropy, which is related to the phenomena of aggressiveness, violence and dissolution of life; a tendency for destruction that directs towards the other or the self, which he defined as drives of death. The principle of death, however, is connected to the principal characteristic of the instinctive life, which is the need for reducing the tension that comes from the stimuli, and the fulfillment of the principle of pleasure. In Freud’s latter work there can be traced elements which permit the assumption that dualism is transcended, with the recognition of the fusion of the two drives as the generic energetic force which moves life, even though Freud does not admit this explicitly and while this represents mostly Jung’s position. Towards this direction points, however, the explanation of the two manifestations as a result of the need to maintain the homeostasis, in the context of the element of inertia which is attributed to the principle of nirvana. Herbert Marcuse developed further this hypothesis.

In this respect, the regressive factor was interpreted in correlation with the need for fulfillment of pleasure. The concept of sexuality is broadened and transformed into the force of love or Eros, which refers to the formation of any kind of composition or unification, social as much as sexual, and represents the creative forces in general. "In this way the libido of our sexual instincts would coincide with the Eros of the poets and philosophers which holds all living things together". Thus, through its plasticity, the protogenic energy is organized and modified into sociability. With the prevalence of Eros on the disastrous impulses, the ‘cathode’ towards death is deterred, and the consequence of this is the formation of growing units of life. The dualistic perception is bent, as with the recognition of the libidinal components of the drives it was not possible to detect instinctive impulses, which are not a product of Eros; as it has not been possible to trace the two qualities as entirely distinguished. There is, hence, a common root which can be differentiated, a commutative energy which is neutral as such, but can ally with either a creative or a destructive force.

There might be some propinquity between the organismic function of the erotic mechanism, as Freud conceived it, and the medical approach of therapeutic Eros that is introduced to the Platonic Symposium by the doctor Eryximachus. Medicine, according to Eryximachus is “the science of the erotic tendencies of the body for filling and emptying”. A good doctor is he who can lead to the right diagnosis between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ Eros.

“And he who can cause alteration so the body instead of one eros will obtain the other, and who knows how to inspire eros to those [elements/areas] where eros does not exist, whereas it should, or to take [eros] away, from where it exists, he is indeed good in his job. So, he should be able to reconcile all those that are hostile with each other within the body, and make them feel eros for each other”.56

49 Since in Freud there cannot be found, as for example in Maslow, a tendency for perfection in the sense of self-actualization, the most amazing human creations are attributed to a tendency of escaping instinctive satisfaction and sublimation. However, it can be claimed, that love’s pursuit to conjoin organic life in expanding units and as force of creation, serves in Freud as a principle towards some kind of human fulfillment.


50 See relatively, Freud, op. cit, pp. 30-39, 44-46.

51 Freud, op. cit, p. 47.


53 Freud, op. cit.

54 Freud, op. cit, p. 44.

55 “We could either drop the term ‘libido’ or use it as synonymous with physical energy in general”. Freud Sigmund, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 1989, p. 128. And in the Reflections on War and Death, Epikouroso, Athens, 1998, p. 72, he mentions, “very rarely an act is the result of one and only impulsive stimulation, which in either way must be composed of love and distraction” (translation mine).

56 Plato, Symposium, 186d (translation mine).
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Eros here appears to be this element upon the harmony of which the treatment is dependent. It seems to be the catalyst and the indispensable precondition of the cure. Thus Eros is designated as a technology of therapy of the individual body as much as the social, restoring the ruptured bonds of the elements which are in enmity.

The unity of the two opposing manifestations of the drive-energy, derives from an interpretation of the instinctual life which is neither monistic nor dualistic. Since it overturns the prevalence of monism, it prevents from the location of an inherent and independent catastrophic force providing, thus, the conceptual tools to political philosophy for a critique of the civilization. The 'plasticity' of the drives and their ability of exceeding negativity indicates the significant role that the social processes and constitutions play in general in the socio-historical formation of the instinctive processes.

In his epistle to Einstein, seeking for a resolution to the problem of war Freud suggests that the only way to oppose the destructiveness of war is the empowerment of the forces of Eros. Whatever restores the affective bonds between people necessarily resists war. The bonds which Freud recognizes are of two kinds: relationships of Eros that exceed the sexual intentions, and bonds of identification. The first arises with the transition from Eros as a passion identical to life and desire – as the starting point of human creativity - to Love as an affect free from self-interest, and as responsibility for the other, as it appears in Levinas’s work. Love in this form takes place as transcendence of the self in quest of the other. The second factor, which is mentioned as identification, is related to the creation of common ground of interest that humans can share and which create feelings of community. This concerns what Hardt and Negri refer to as creation of the common.

The above analysis reveals, that what we call evil or negativity is a corruption of Love, as well as of this which Hardt and Negri call common. There cannot, therefore, be traced an innate rhizome of negativity but the latter is instead considered to arise as a distortion of creativity. The destructive negativity involved in social phenomena like nationalism, racism and fascism constitute, according to Hardt and Negri, perverted forms of Love, imposed by the privatization which capitalism caused to emerge, but also by corrupted forms of the common as they were implemented in the corporation, the family, the state.

All the obstacles imposed to existence, according to the non-dualistic understanding, do not stem from the innate evil of human nature but they constitute distorted forms of Love; blocked forms of Eros in mental and bodily level. It can, therefore, be offered an explanation, for example, to the problem of voluntary subjection (εθελοδουλεία- ethelodouleia) – the love of people towards their own slavery as if it was their salvation – or an explanation for the identification of the victim with the victimizer. The cause for the corrupted forms of Love is often the slip from the common to the same or to a process of (identical) unification. This mistaken perception of Love is often expressed in a narrow understanding of the mandate to love thy neighbor as loving those that are more proximate, those most like ourselves. Excluding those who are outside and different, and including those who seem to be closer, is the way people’s feelings of attachment to attraction and aversion tend to fulfill

57 This interplay between the drives of love and death brings in mind the Empedoclean pair of enmity (γείκος) and friendship (φιλότης), and the final interpretation seems to be in kind of accordance with the Heraclitean teaching, which compromises the opposites, as it teaches that all is unified within oneness. See, Plato, Sophist 242d in Heraclitus, Complete Works, Zitros, Athens, 1999.

58 Freud Sigmund, Civilization and its Discontents, Martino Publishing, USA, 2010. Herbert Marcuse would delve deeper into Freud’s initial insight, that no matter which are the benefits of a productive community, that alone will not suffice in order to hold people’s instinctive tendencies. Those constituting the multitude should connect to each other in libidinal relations. Marcuse indicates that the capitalistic social model – at least in its basic structure (before neoliberalism) - progresses by channeling the energy that comes from the repressive mechanisms into the productive process and also by turning them into destructive forces. The civilizational process turns out to progress in the expense of people’s happiness. Whereas in Freud this consists an unchangeable and timeless ‘principle of reality’, Marcuse succeeds to show its socio-historical character and actual cause. Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1974.

59 Freud, op. cit. (56b), pp. 75-76.

60 Hardt and Negri, op. cit, p. 192.
love’s mandate. Whereas, the authentic form of Love would include alterity; the Love of the Other. In final analysis the neighbor, as Hardt and Negri state, is only a place keeper; we should imagine in this place the embodiment of all the other possible things and beings in the world that could potentially hold this place61.

The recognition of fear, prejudice and ignorance as symptoms of mistaken perception, may provide the means for the transformation of Love62. For Hardt and Negri people’s attachment to distorted forms of Love is what needs cure through the experimentation with new forms of subjectivity and communitarianism: "What distinguishes the beneficial forms of love instead is the constant interplay between the common and singularities”63.

What is needed is a political ontology of Love64 which will replace the ontology of the radical evil, and will support the aforementioned undertaking65. For Hardt and Negri who follow the Spinozian ontology, the republic is not constituted in opposition to the human nature but as a progressive development of it. According to Spinoza, people from their own nature desire the political society, and it can never occur that they dissolve it totally66. The causes for the constitution of the political society in Spinoza seem to be common with those of the other contractarian theories of the seventeenth century; fear and loneliness drive to the formation of coalitions, since this way it is easier to secure what is necessary for life. But the civil constitution does not contradict with the desiring nature of the human being67. Desire is what forms the emotional life that directs to Love and serves the struggle for life. The object of desire is social coexistence, which is invested with the instincts of Eros and constitutes the common68. Spinoza seems to be the ‘absolute realist’, since he recognizes that the path to social life is not without obstacles, but these do not arise from an inherent unsocial nature; they arise from ignorance, fear and prejudice. Thus, if these obstacles are about to be transcended, what is needed is the power of pedagogy, the true exercise of mind and will. In the basis of its political dimension, the erotic element in Hardt and Negri is connected to learning69. The particularity of the Spinozian approach, according to Hardt and Negri is in a more profound level the edification of the mind and body that is rooted in the motion of Love.

IV. Eros: aesthetic and pedagogic force of the Polis

To the Greeks as well Eros has a pedagogic character. The city – Polis - used to be the ‘conservatory’ of upbringing and constituting higher spiritual and ethical beings. The demands that the ancient polis projected to its citizens were high, concerning the responsibilities in the public sphere, as well as the abilities and the elements of moral character and ethos in the private sphere. Rightly, the matter of

61 Hardt and Negri, op. cit, p. 182.
63 Hardt and Negri, op. cit, p. 182.
64 Badiou claims that we should not disassociate love from politics, and he connects it to the communist hypothesis, of the free associations and equality. This effort should be an undertaking of correcting the previous communist attempts by including a positive and creative experience of the difference of the Other, but without the absolute Other of the transcending power. Badiou Alain, In Praise of Love, Patakis, Athens, 2013, p. 74.
65 Hardt and Negri mention that when it comes to love, it makes political philosophers uncomfortable due to the sentimentalism which it has mistakenly been associated with in the past, and due to the Christian content that is often related to.
67 Related to this aspect is Levinas’s critique on Freud. In Freud even if desire for pleasure has a role in sociability is also an impediment in social coexistence. Levinas, op. cit, p. 276.
68 Hardt and Negri, op. cit, pp. 191-192.
69 See Laurie Timothy and Stark Hannah, How to do Politics with Love: Pedagogy and Politics in Hardt and Negri and Deleuze and Guattari, Paper presented at Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Conference for the Cluster for Organizations Society and Markets (COSM), (September 24 2015), University of Melbourne https://www.academia.edu/16472340/How_To_Do_Politics_With_Love, where it is stated that when Hardt and Negri use the term Love in political context they refer to learning, while, conversely, when Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of Love in learning context they may refer to politics.
citizenship was of a broad significance. All those elements that the city was expected to cultivate to the subject, but also all those that the ancient citizen was expected to exercise himself, constitute the *virtue*; all these qualities constitute internally and externally the human perfection, the good and virtuous (*καλὸν κάραθον*) person.

What moves Eros for the ancient Greeks is beauty (*κάλλος*), understood as a kind of inspiring harmony. This kind of Eros is understood in Plato with a spiritual significance. Beauty was not just a quality of the body, but primarily quality of the personality; beauty is always a psychic quality. The body would contain mental and psychic attributes; a quality of will and act; properties which constitute psychic events that today we would ascribe to the concept of the face. The flesh is not something that is ignored, it is just indissoluble from the spiritual-physic element and projection of it. In the context of a non-dualistic understanding, matter forms the manifestation-concentration of the energy of consciousness. Let us keep in mind that in the ancient understanding of nature there is not a concept of inert matter. People did not admire landscapes as objects of aesthetic theory. Same as in Spinoza, the whole nature is full of motion and life, and beauty in this is “the presence and the action of natural forces and divine beings, of Nymphs, Satyrs, Achelous River etc.”. This is why still life does not exist in the art of the ancient Greeks, nature does not appear as landscape, and what prevails is the admiration for the human body.

The philosophical and political use of Love or Eros that Hardt and Negri implement, constitutes a correction of its platonic version where Eros appears as the son of ‘wealth’ - and ‘way’ – (πόρος) and ‘poverty’ (πενία). Following the Italian and French feminists, Hardt and Negri maintain that Diotima does not point to sublimation of wealth and beauty, but to a force of defining according to the differences, which introduces a new perception of the common that leads to freedom. The common, in this respect, is not based on the old dialectic of the one and multiple, but is compatible and internally composed by multiplicities. In political context there can be conceived a multitude of groups which themselves constitute singularities and consist of subjects understood as singularities comprised by multiplicities.

In this new understanding, Love is perceived as the “wealth of the poor”. As solidarity and social production includes ingenuity and invention, Hardt and Negri recognize as the fundamental attribute of the poor not lack but their power, revealing, thus, a new perspective. The body that unites in community is more powerful than each body is alone. Love is a process of producing the common and the subjectivity. This process is not just a means of production of commodities, but end in itself. Love is, therefore, a force of creation and productivity in economical as well as in philosophical terms. In the context of political economy and biopolitical production it is not restricted to private sphere or in reproduction, but it creates affectionate networks, forms of cooperation, social subjectivities. It is an active biopolitical event, conceived and realized in the basis of the common. Philosophically speaking is what produces the being and constitutes the subjectivity. The being is not the unchangeable space where life takes place but constitutes the field where we may intervene and transform it.

That which is conceived by the mind it is possible to be realized (or materialized). On the other hand, in the course of history, often there are practices, movements or mechanisms that appear and take shape, and thought follows in order to understand and explain them. For Plato first something is

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71 Sykoutris, op. cit., p. 49.
72 Sykoutris, op. cit., p. 53.
73 Sykoutris, op. cit., p. 53.
74 Sykoutris, op. cit., p. 48.
75 op. cit.
76 Hardt and Negri, “Preface”, op. cit., p. xii.
77 Hardt and Negri, op. cit., p. xii.
79 op. cit.
80 For Foucault instead, the social forms constitutions and mechanisms and the philosophical method, as he implemented through the genealogic research, maps and analyses the socio-political processes. Hardt and Negri as well, state that instead of constituting an internal world, that is ignored, it is just indissoluble from the spiritual-physic element and projection of it.
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conceived as an idea and after is formed in the material world. By raising the beauty in the context of the republic in a universal evaluative criterion, citizens would obtain a unique sensitivity towards whatever would appear as ugliness, concerning someone’s acts, speech, mind, livelihood and death. The aesthetic criterion corresponds to the ethical, and the community is the field where this aesthetic criterion can be cultivated and flourish. Accordingly, the political life does not concern some kind of technical administration of the affairs, but the art of virtuous living itself. The awareness that the care of the others improves our ethical and spiritual perfectibility, and that love towards the others in a community of beings who dwell in togetherness forms the actualization of Eros, constitutes fundamental quality of the psychic ‘tropos’ – mode – of the ancient Greek, which is expressed through the Socratic incitement of the care of the self. Today this model of unity can be the spark for the constitution of communities, which would work for their autonomy and spiritual growth. Eros is not just a feeling, it is the harmony of the souls for the individuals and the constitution for the community.

Community life which is inspired by the ‘divine’ Eros, as it is introduced by the poets in the Platonic “Symposium” and the ‘demonic’ Eros, as it is introduced by Socrates through Diotima’s discourse, is ruled by virtue which provides kind acts, and by bliss which is the reward as well as the cause for this type of acts. Therefore, in the Symposium love appears as an ethical and pedagogical problem, not only as an object of psychological research and aesthetic theory. The community, thus, becomes the field where individual consciousness can pursue existence not as an end in itself, but as a means for the accomplishment of virtue.

A slight digression is necessary here in order to examine in a more profound manner the actual meaning of Eros, in the way that Diotima expands it, and in the way that contemporary science maybe is the position to comprehend it. The demonic element stands between the divine and the humane world, it mediates and carries messages (ομιλία και διδάκτος - oral communication and dialect) between the two worlds. According to Diotima, by being in the middle, it fills the empty space, in order to connect the universe with itself: «Εν μέσῳ δὲ ὁ αἰμωτέρων συμπλήρω, ὥστε τὸ πάν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συνδεδεθάναι». Eros is, thus, the element that constitutes the emptiness, which, as the contemporary quantum theory indicates, is not ‘nothingness’ or ‘void’, but, instead, what we call ‘empty’ is constituted by infinitesimal matter, or better, ‘information’, which is characterized by consciousness. Probable because of this, still unexplored enough for us, connection between material reality and subjectivity of consciousness, Diotima relates Eros to the art of divination of the ancient priests, which was connected to sacrifices, initiations, spirituals and magic. So, because the divine realm is separate, and does not contact directly the humane, ‘demons’ are charged with this obligation and Eros is one of them. Eros here is designated as a cosmic principle that fills the emptiness of the universe.

This aim is served by Diotima. Sykoutris, op. cit., p. 124.

For the theory’s deficiencies, in reference to the explanation of consciousness and for an attempt of expanding it, see Baer Wolfgang, Introduction to the Physics of Consciousness, Journal of Consciousness Studies 17(3-4) (2010), pp. 165-191.

Plato, Symposium, 202e και 203a.


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is the medium between the realm of Gods and the realm of humans and explains the 'supernatural' phenomena like clairvoyance, telepathy etc.

Goddess Aphrodite's two faces as presented in “Symposium” by Pausanias, Υράνια (Urania) and Πάνδημος (Pandemos), may well refer to two models of Eros, and also to two models of society, if we accept that Eros is the one who mobilizes humans to create societies. Eros as Pandemos refers to the love of the mass, which is characterized by sensual pleasure, without an ethical purpose to fulfill, and as such ephemeral excluding the psychic connection; this is contrasted in the discourse of Pausanias with Eros as Heavenly, who is “very significant for the public and the private life, as it makes the lover and the loved one to care very much for their virtue”90. The way in which we contact each other in the everyday life through our relationships, reflects the way in which we see the others and the quality of the relationships on which we would like to found our social bios.

The situation of the society reveals the situation of the psyche, according to Plato. A society whose members see in the face of the other their spiritual brother, is a society that has the intention and the mode to live reconciled and to resolve differences in a peaceful and creative way.

What is the psyche as microcosm, can be studied in the macrocosm of the community. The psyche of the spiritual being within the empirical society does not form a sublimated principle, a 'closed' to itself spiritual entity that strive to secure its individual metaphysical destiny, as it was maybe understood by the Christian ascetic spirituality, but 'specific force and energy'91; a spiritual force that asserts for itself a more expanded and liberating than the 'fortified' around the ego, defensive form of existence. In this struggle it is like the psyche ruptures its primordial biological enclosure and opens to the multiplicity that inherently brings with it without rejecting the possibility for spiritual transformation.

The chariot race of the souls in Phaedrus constitutes the symbolic representation of the human struggle for spiritual and ethical upgrowth, an effort for the discovery of the self. "If we stick to the experiential picture of the psyche, then we have to say, that the psyche is a theatre of passions, contradictions and misconceptions, as, more or less, the republic in its common empirical state"92. This disharmony appears to the uncultivated and abandoned to its instinctive impulses psyche and those will be the characteristics of the society which is founded on the conviction that the necessary humane psychic and mental structure is of this kind. The social and political world which is structured under the chaotic forces of sovereignty and cruelty, interacts then with the individual psyche and, failing to provide the means for an exodus from its regressive inclinations, it renders it its poor and blurry reflection. Then, it is the mind only that can bring an order to the disrupting nature of the most fundamental humane mechanism which is desire. Desire should not be suppressed but liberated, for it may become the vehicle that leads to personal and social creation. The mind transforms the chaos into cosmos and Eros may turn the vision into action. This order and synthesis is never definite, but consists always in a dynamic process, based on multiplicity and alteration, replacing the uniformity and solidification. The objective good of a community which is founded on the spirituality of its members could be freedom.

Conclusion

The aim in this text was to present the force of Eros and Love, or love and compassion, as another primordial technology of constituting the being and as a healing, which is able to adjust imbalances of the individual and collective life. Politically, Eros is defined as a force of connecting singularities in expanding networks of social relations and solidarity. The constitution of the common through multiple experimentations of forms of social coexistence with duration through Love, as Hardt and Negri have indicated, will not come from just a spontaneous or automatic process. The tropos

90 Plato, op. cit., 185b (Translation mine).
91 Theodorakopoulos Ioannis, “Introduction”, in Plato, Phaedrus, Estia, Athens, 2000, p. 17
92 Theodorakopoulos, op. cit, p. 18.
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(mode) of the erotic ways of coexistence and co-formation of the spiritual course of each person passes through learning (as a form of expanding awareness) and through the constitution of new habits and customs (ήθη), which may develop as healing for the attachment to corrupted forms of Eros, and can be established through the collective constitution of our desires; this is something related to the process of emotional and political pedagogy. New habits and new forms of practices should be exercised individually, through multiple forms of the Care of the Self, as well as socially, through autonomous and self-organizing forms of collective existence which will be constituted for a transformation of humanity into a more aware and compassionate form of life.

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