COMMUNITY AND AFFECT: POLITICAL POTENTIAL OF LOVE AS TRANSCENDENCE

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ABSTRACT

There is a tendency within contemporary leftist discourse to understand romantic love as being endangered by the economic relations of late capitalism. This analysis often calls for the protection of romantic love that is then understood as having a transcendental dimension, much in line with the theological discourse. At the same time, leftist discourse excludes love – especially love understood as transcendence – from the conceptualization of community and politics. By analyzing Badiou's ideas of love, politics and truth – in relation to some other leftist thinkers – I argue that there is a political stake in the leftist discourse that generates this gesture of eliminating both affective and transcendental dimension from the sphere of politics. This is done in order to preserve the ultimate truth of the communist future, the truth Marxist discourse projects from its very beginnings, and that would be contaminated by allowing for the affective dimension to play role in it. By engaging with the theory of Melanie Klein and the way Esteban Muñoz uses it – together with the philosophy of Ernest Bloch – in an attempt to generate a particular political philosophy, I am suggesting that both the understanding of the community and the imagining of political future would benefit from acknowledging the affective dimension and the epistemic transcendence, i.e. the acknowledgment that there is no certain truth about the future.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

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Signed _____ (Petar Odak)

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1. Introduction

The initial impulse that generated the topic of this thesis came in a series of questions. First set of questions was generic one, the one that is constantly reiterated in the debate on the concept of love throughout the history of Western thought, up to today. Those are questions such as: what is love? What are the different types of love? How to distinguish between them? Do these different types of love really belong to the same register? Could it be claimed that love is just a term we, in a non-self-reflective romantic gesture, carelessly attach to the large number of disparate phenomena? Is naming something love nothing but a reification? After that followed the set of questions that were still somewhat abstract and general, but aimed towards more concrete aspects regarding the notion of love. These were: how to understand love in a political way? What are the politics of romantic love? Is there such a thing as the love within the community? If yes, how to understand this communal love? What is the role of affective dimension in the politics? How to assess it?

This thesis, of course, was not triggered by the attempt to answer the first set of questions, not even to address them in an extensive manner. However, all of these questions framed a background upon which my thesis developed, it is therefore important to acknowledge them. In addition, although I did not engage with all of them, they played a part in narrowing down my scope towards what remained as the central aspect of this thesis.

At the center of my thesis stands the question of how to understand community by taking into account its affective dimension – more particularly, by taking into account the emotion of love. The particular idea of love I am interested in is the love as transcendence. In other words, I am interested in the ways this idealized, transcendental notion of love can be used politically. In order to execute my argument, I am engaging with two discourses that are considered not only to be disparate, but also conflicting – the Marxist discourse on the one hand, and the

theological on the other. My claim is that, if we are to have an insight into the ways concepts of love, community and politics are understood in the contemporary political discourse in general, it is useful to look into these two intellectual traditions, as they stand on the opposite sides of the said political discourse. The investigation of both the moments they converge – either explicitly or through the more subtle, unacknowledged overlapping – and the moments they remain strongly oppositional can offer us a perspective of wider significance.

What I claim is happening with the leftist discourse is either the rejection of theological notion of love or relying on it up to the point where it starts to cross the particular line. That is the line that stands between the love within a couple or romantic love on the one hand, and the idea of love playing a role in politics - what I call communal love - on the other hand. In addition, romantic love in leftist discourse tends to be conceptualized in a way that allows for the transcendental dimension to be acknowledged. When it comes to the community, on contrary, any mention of transcendence is firmly rejected from leftist position.

The way I see it, if love is to be understood as the transgressive force at all, it has to be understood as transgressive both on the level of relations within the couple and the relations within community. Moreover, I will claim that, in order to refer to love in a political manner, even tactically, we have to grant it transcendental status. This is where I see its power, in this post-secular surplus, this extra that cannot be absorbed within the materialist discourse. The question of belief in this 'extra' is irrelevant for my argument, because I claim that whenever we talk about love we implicitly assume this extra, and when we explicitly deny it we are moving from love towards some other, rationally more accessible concepts. Let me now offer a short overview of my argument and the way it is structured through chapters.

In the chapter following this introduction, titled "Setting up a Scene: Conceptual/Theoretical Framework", I offer the short overview of the concept of love and the concept of transcendence,

together with the typological models through which they are understood in the Western thought. I also state what kind of understanding of those concepts will I be using throughout my thesis, and why. I also address the theoretical traditions I will be using in my argument, and the reasons I decided to engage with them.

In the chapter titled "Transcendence of Romantic Love", I will address romantic love in order to show similarities between the materialist and religious discourse. I will claim that materialist discourse allows for transcendental love when it comes to eros, but not when it comes to community, and this is something I want to look into. My final claim here is that when shifting its analytical focus from relations within the couple towards communal relations, materialist discourse moves from affective dimension towards ethical one – it rejects the transcendental aspect that I think is something that needs to be saved in any attempt to find the political potential of Christian tradition.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, titled "Communal Love and the Epistemic Transcendence of Political Future", I explore the ways community could be understood if we take into account its affective dimension. I also engage with the question of what exactly is the political stake for the Marxist tradition that generates this refusal of the affective dimension in the sphere of politics. I look into the concept of radical love - taken from the queer theology - and the way it could serve my attempt to understand community in a political way, but through the notion of love. I also engage with the particular way Muñoz reads Kleinain psychoanalysis and philosophy of Ernest Bloch, by focusing on the concepts of reparation, hope and epistemic transcendence, and the way they relate to the idea love and the affect in general.

2. Setting up a Scene: Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

The main argument of my thesis is developed exactly by engaging with different theoretical traditions investigating love and related concepts, so the specific section that offers a theoretical framework might seem somewhat redundant. However, because love is such a complex concept surrounded by extensive and diverse parlance, I believe it is necessary to set some preliminary general theoretical framework at the very beginning of my discussion. Since I agree with Lauren Berlant's (2011:683) claim that love is one of those "magnetic ideas" that induce anxiety whenever the demand to formulate its final definition is posited, and in order to somewhat eliminate that anxiety, I will not attempt at offering a final definition of love: I do not believe that task is achievable, nor necessary. Instead, I will offer a brief overview of the way love is understood in the Western thought, mainly by focusing on its typology and the ways these different types of love relate to each other. In addition to love, I will also engage with the concept of transcendence, as it will play an important role in my overall argument. Finally, I will explicate theoretical traditions I am using in order to answer my main question – how to understand love in a political way? - and the reasons for choosing those specific perspectives.

2.1. What is Love?

For a start, there is not one, but different kinds of love. The model of typology of love that is still most widely used – not only in philosophy and theology, but through its implicit, unacknowledged assumption in the mainstream discourse as well – comes from the classical antiquity and is based on three different Greek words for love: *eros*, *philia* and *agape*. For

example, both Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP) start their entry on love with this distinction. [1]

Here, eros stands for the desire, bodily love, or love that is based on the sexual desire aimed at the particular object. Within theological tradition, this kind of love was often contrasted with *agape*, in IEP defined as "paternal love of God for man and of man for God but […] extended to include a brotherly love for all humanity" (Moseley, 2018). The most definitive engagement with this distinction is developed in Nygren's fundamental book *Eros and Agape* (1963). His contrasting of these two is stark and definitive:

"There cannot actually be any doubt that Eros and Agape belong originally to two entirely separate spiritual worlds, between which no direct communication is possible. They do not represent the same value in their respective contexts, so that they cannot in any circumstances be rightly substituted for one another." (31)

This strong separation between the two "spiritual worlds" is something Nygren is persistent about, and something he exclaims almost axiomatically. For sure, he offers historical, linguistic, textual and philosophical exploration of the relationship between the two concepts, in order to prove they are significantly different, and he succeeds in that. Agape belongs to the Christian, whereas eros belongs to the Greco-Roman cultural tradition. He argues against the long and problematic tradition of comparing or even mixing the two in the Western philosophy that he claims is coming from the misreading of Plato. He explains that agape is kind of love that is not seeking to satisfy one's desire, whereas eros is the exact opposite, having the self-satisfaction as its ultimate goal. However, even if he succeeds to explain why these two are so different, his final conclusion - that the Plato's eros and biblical agape (as it is articulated, for

[1] C. S. Lewis (1971), in his book on Christian understanding of love, adds another type to this model, coming from Greek word *storge* that means love within the family. However, this type of love is not that widely used, so I am not engaging with it in this overview.

example, by Saint Paul) are not just different, but "essentially incommensurable, since the necessary point of comparison appears to be lacking" (Nygren, 1963:31) – is simply an assertion we are supposed to accept. It is, as Grant (1996) argues, a way for him to come up with what he claims to be a specific Christian idea of love.

So, although Nygren's book has been highly influential within the field of theology, his categorical separation between eros and agape is not accepted any more in contemporary theology, nor in the mainstream religious discourse in general. There are at least two arguments through which Nygren's position is criticized. First one claims that it is impossible to distinguish between eros and agape, and assert that God participates in one, and not in the other. Even Benedict XVI, often considered to be highly conservative pope, in his encyclical "Deus Caritas Est" (2005), claims the unity of eros and agape, as both participate in divine love. Second argument, articulated, among others, by Grant (1996) is that there is another type of love that is completely omitted in Nygren's account, and that is *philia* – friendship, or friendly love[2]. Grant claims that the introjection of this type of love in the binarism of agape/eros would help us to recognize the fluidity of these concepts.

Both of these points are important for my discussion in general, because they warn us about the problematic aspects of subscribing to neatly arranged models like this one. It is impossible to claim that there is no libidinal investment in every kind of love, including the love for God[3]. It is also impossible to clearly distinguish between all of them. For example, already in the classical antiquity – where I am tracing this model from – we have Plato's (1989) understanding of eros as a path towards wisdom and truth, that is quite different from the idea of eros as bodily love. Finally, among the most important questions in this paper stands the one that asks: where

[2] The discussion on *philia* is firstly articulated by Aristotle (2004).

[3] Numerous discussions of erotic aspects of Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* come as the most obvious example for the libidinal investment in the idea of God.

to allocate communal love? Is it the philia or agape? If it is one of those, or both, is it completely separated from the eros?

It is not necessary to answer these questions, but it is to acknowledge them. Following this, although the problems with this model are obvious, I still decided to stick with it; maybe it is not without its internal contradictions, but I see it as the model through which Western thought still approaches the concept of love. The same goes for agape and its distinction from eros: I believe it speaks directly to the tendency of Western discourse (including popular discourse, and including materialist discourse I will explicitly engage with) to still understand love through this binarism of body/soul, self-interest/self-giving, sacred/profane etc. In addition, I am sticking with the idea of agape because Nygren's understanding of agape and its specificity insists on transcendental aspect of love, which will be important part of my argument. Finally, there is an obligatory moment implied in agape. As Grant (1996:3) puts it: "The central message of Christianity is agape; the central requirements of Christians is to live by agape". This ethical imperative that follows from love understood as an emotion is important for my understanding of community.

2.2. Transcendence

Since it forms an essential part of my argument, concept of transcendence needs to be explored to some extent as well. According to Merold Westphal, a philosopher of religion, and the author of *Transcendence and Self-Transcendence: On God and the Soul* (2004), the concept of transcendence in philosophical theology "suggests that God or the gods are above and beyond the worlds of nature and history and thus above and beyond ourselves as individuals and communities" (Westphal, 2015). He distinguishes between cosmological, epistemic and ethical-religious transcendence. By standing for the idea that God is above the world, that he

is the creator, cosmological transcendence marks the crucial distinction between pantheism and theism. Ethical-religious transcendence "signifies that God's transcendence is that of a person who sees us and speaks to us in a voice not our own" (Westphal, 2015). This is where the ethical imperative to see and acknowledge the other comes from. Although all of these speak to my argument[4], in my discussion I will mostly understand transcendence through the concept of epistemic transcendence.

Epistemic transcendence stands for the notion that God is rationally inaccessible, that it is impossible to absorb him within the referential frames we have at our disposal, that our linguistic and conceptual apparatus is insufficient for this task. In my usage, when applied to love, transcendence will signify both inability to understand love within the materialist discourse in particular, and the secular discourse in general. The call for recognition of our tendency to understand romantic love through is transcendental dimension is relying exactly on this type - epistemic transcendence. My call for recognition of affective dimension – namely, love - in the community, and the open-endedness of our political projections into future also relies on the idea of epistemic transcendence.

The question that could arise here is: if epistemic transcendence signifies that there is something outside of what is rationally accessible, what is it that we can actually know about this transcendence? The answer, again, would be that we do not really know. The only thing we can know about this transcendence, here ascribed to love, is that it is rationally unreachable. This is the approach that is strongly connected with the theological discipline of negative or apophatic theology, a discipline that does not try to answer what God is, but what God is not. This is because God is simply unknowable. Of course, the question of God can never be

[4] It could seem that the ethical-religious transcendence relates more directly to my argument, as it stands as a starting point of any ethical and/or political project. However, since my focus here is on affective dimension, i.e. love, ethical dimension interests me only insofar it follows form the emotional investment. At the same time, I am fully aware of the impossibility of definite distinguish between these.

approached only through the negative theology, as the Bible itself is full of positive statements about God. However, negative theology is important because it is through its lenses that we can recognize and claim that something remains outside of our rational scope. This is the same approach I am attempting to employ with the concept of love and, towards the end of the thesis, with the idea of political future.

2.2. Theoretical Framework: Marxism, Theology and Jose Esteban Muñoz

In order to understand love in a properly political way, I claim that it is necessary to engage with two lines of thought that are usually perceived as not just disparate, but conflicting – that is materialist/leftist/Marxist position on the one, and the position of Christian theology on the other hand. It is exactly because these two fields stand, at least nominally, at opposite sides of today's discourse in general, and when it comes to the questions of love, politics and community in particular, that I see the engagement with the two as being potentially highly illuminating. I believe that looking into the moments these two converge, and the moments they remain strongly oppositional, can give us some insight into those concepts (love/politics/community) that will be of a more general significance. My claim is that there is a strong similarity in the way these two discourses engage with the idea of romantic love, love between the couple – they both tend to idealize it, and position it outside of the sphere of politics. When it comes to the idea of community, they differ. Theological discourse allows or, better, even insist on the notion of love when it attempts to understand relations between human beings, relations that go beyond romantic (or familial, or friendly) love. Leftist discourse, on contrary, insists that the question of community is the political question and the sphere of politics, for them, is detached from the affective dimension as such.

Theological concepts of agape (together with distinction between agape and eros) and epistemic transcendence I already explained in previous paragraphs. Another theological concept I will engage with is Patrick Cheng's (2011) idea of radical love or, as he describes it, "love so extreme that it dissolves our existing boundaries" (10). It is not a concept that he elaborates in detail, but I chose to go with this term, as it allows for both political and transcendental understanding of love at the same time.

When it comes to my engagement with theology, there is one thing that needs to be addressed. Since I am exploring the relation between the Marxist and the theological discourse, it would make sense for me to look into the rich and long tradition of liberation theology, as it is a discipline that emerges directly on the intersection of the two (see, for example, Gutiérrez, 2004; Sobrino, 2004). However, when liberation theology reaches towards the Marxist discourse, it does it in a way that takes the political claim and turns it into ethical one. Affective dimension, again, is usually left out. In addition, my interest here is invested in the way leftist discourse could benefit from its engagement with the theological one, not vice versa. What I want to preserve is the transgressive politics of leftist discourse, but politics that accepts the affective and transcendental dimension. For these reasons, I decided that liberation theology, although its existence needs to be acknowledged, will not be in the focus of my paper.

As I already stated, another discourse I am engaging with is leftist discourse. When it comes to Marxism, or leftist theory, the question that automatically pops out is: what leftist theory? The tradition is long and rich, sometimes including lines of argumentation that are in opposition. Here, I decided not to look into the history of Marxism, but to focus on contemporary Marxist theory. My focus will be on Badiou - self-proclaimed and widely recognized as Marxist philosopher - since he explicitly engages with the Christian tradition, in an attempt to find its political edge that can serve what he considers to be progressive political

goals. In addition, he published a book on love that, although in many ways specific, can be seen as representative for the leftist discourse when it comes to romantic love in general. I will briefly relate him to the wider leftist discourse on love in order to offer an argument for his representativeness. I will also relate him briefly to the history of Marxist thought, in order to claim that - when it comes to his understanding of love, truth and politics – he follows and is representative for the Marxist tradition in general.

Finally, instead of naming the final line of my argument as queer theory, I decided to frame it specifically through José Esteban Muñoz. The reason for this is that he is a thinker that goes against the grain of the dominant narrative of queer theory, by looking into psychoanalysis and by, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, explicitly distancing himself from the "paranoid" approach towards the political sphere in which queer theory to some extent remains trapped (Muñoz, 2009:12). He claims that the pessimistic and negative approach to the cruelty and injustice of the world surrounding us has its political potential, but also has its limits. This is why he is interested in the ideas of hope and utopia, following Marxist philosopher Ernest Bloch. In addition of going against the grain of queer theory, this is another theoretical gesture through which he goes against the wide-accepted position, this time in relation to contemporary Marxist discourse that does not consider Bloch's idea of utopia to have political edge sharp enough. However, I find the way Muñoz reads Bloch, especially Bloch's idea of "not yet conscious" as relating directly to my overall argument.

When it comes to psychoanalysis, Muñoz looks into Melanie Klein's object relation theory. Although I will use Kleinian theory already when I discuss romantic love (where I will stick to Klein strictly as a psychoanalyst), her theory will play much stronger role in the chapter that deals with communal love, through the way Muñoz extracts aspects of Kleinian theory – reparation, depressive and paranoid-schizoid position – in order to render specific political

theory. I will link both his reading of Bloch and his reading of Klein to some aspects of theological discourse (love, hope, epistemic transcendence), and to the question of how to understand love in a political way, or how to understand community through the concept of love.

3. Transcendence of Romantic Love

In this chapter, I will deal with the idea of romantic love, by engaging mostly with the leftist discourse and comparing it with the theological one, to the extent it is necessary to show similarities between the two. I will claim that the way materialist discourse understands romantic love is actually aligned with the traditional theological distinction of eros and agape. By implicitly relying on this these two and understanding them within the binary model, leftist position tends to project the idea of romantic love that is outside of politics[5]. That is to say, if Marxist perspective understands that love is affected by politics, it – implicitly or explicitly – suggests that love should somehow remain outside of it. Further on, I will claim that materialist discourse allows for transcendental aspect of love when it comes to the couple in a relationship, but not when it comes to the community, and this is something I want to look into and put into question. In other words, my claim here is that, when shifting from couple to community, materialist discourse tends to move from love towards ethics. It abandons this transcendental moment that – and this is the main claim of my thesis - I argue is something that needs to be preserved if we are to look for the political potential of Christian discourse.

3.1. Romantic Love in Late Capitalism

First, it is important to assert that there are a significant number of contemporary theorists that could be framed as leftist/anti-capitalist, and that see theoretical engagement with the concept of love as being of serious importance. Most often, they frame love as being threatened within the economic relations of late capitalism, claiming that what is considered to be its true nature

[5] This claim that love is outside of politics will be especially important in the Chapter 5, where I will address the possibility of communal love.

is under attack (no matter how anxiety-inducing it is to decide what love's true nature is). The essence of the argument, to summarize it here briefly, is that the mechanism through which the contemporary Western subject approaches surrounding world in general is the same mechanism through which it exercises its relationships, even with the most beloved ones, that end up being treated as commodities, objects of its instable and narcissistic desire. This is, the argument follows, another instance where the cold and individualistic nature of the system of consumer capitalism needs to be confronted. This outline is, for sure, somewhat simplified version of the more complex argument – but this is what lies at its core. Let us now, before I turn to my main source, briefly look at some of those thinkers.

Zygmunt Bauman (2003), through his concept of "liquidity", understands romantic love as dissolving within the economic relations of neoliberal liquid modernity. His understanding of social relations in modern/postmodern age relies on the distinction between solidity and liquidity. Partly following Freud's thoughts on civilization, Bauman claims that the modern age gave people solidity – which stands for security, certainty - in exchange for them giving up on some aspects of freedom. This is, for Bauman, what constitutes modernity. With the postmodern age, however, we are encountering a twist – and this is where the concept of liquidity comes into play. Postmodern social life puts an emphasis back on the desire for more freedom, accepting the lack of stability and certainty in order to gain that freedom. In general, he claims that

"[a] trust is difficult to sustain by the experience of late-modern or postmodern life; by society which has lost much, perhaps all of its fleshy substance and muscular solidity since it neither demands much nor has much to offer in exchange; society evaporating from individual life together with the commandments once voiced in its name and the safety nets bearing its factory labels." (Bauman, 2013:69)

What neoliberal system of consumer capitalism and competitive market relations produce is a "man with no bonds" (Bauman, 2003:1), an individual whose position in the fragmented modernity is determined, above all, by her/his insistance on freedom that is, in its final instance, understood as the lack of commitment towards the others.

This is similar with Eva Illouz´s (2012) understanding of the fetishism of autonomy in the social context of late capitalism. Her long term sociological project aims to understand love not as an individual psychological question that is to be explained by tracing the personal history from early childhood onwards, but to situate it within the social, economic, and political structures of contemporary Western societies, by analyzing, for example, the institution of marriage as a "self-regulated market of encounters" (Illouz, 2012:41). Illouz (2007) uses the term "emotional capitalism" in order to signify the "progressive fusion of the market repertoires and languages of the self during the twentieth century" (108). Through this concept of emotional capitalism she attempts, and this stands at the core of her overall argument, to refute the idea that emotions vanished from the social world of late capitalism. She sees this idea as being frequently present in the accounts of the way relationships work within the system of consumerist capitalism. For her, what is happening is more nuanced.

"Emotional capitalism is a culture in which emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other, thus producing what I view as a broad, sweeping movement in which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behavior and in which emotional life – especially that of the middle classes – follows the logic of economic relations and exchange." (Illouz, 2007:5)

However, although emotions are present in the age of late capitalism, they are present under the very specific condition – that is the condition of the current economic regime. This is already visible in the quote above, but she makes it clear by claiming that in "the culture of

emotional capitalism, emotions have become entities to be evaluated, inspected, discussed, bargained, quantified, and commodified" (Illouz, 2007:108-109).

Certainly, both of these authors offer a more complex understanding of the capitalist relations and postmodern social life than I could offer here, but what I wanted to emphasize is that there is a tendency in their argument to somewhat pessimistically reflect on the ways these relations affect the practices of love. In other words, this tendency is present in the leftist discourse in general, and I chose those two thinkers here because of their relevance for the argumentative construction I am developing in this thesis.

3.2. Badiou and the Re-Invention of Love

Now, I will shift my focus to Alain Badiou, whose understanding of love will stand at the center of this chapter. More particularly, I will focus on the book *In Praise of Love* (2012) that comes in a form of an interview[6] that the journalist Nicolas Truong conducted with Badiou. It might seem unusual – or even tricky, in scholarly sense – to center the chapter on the analysis of this type of text. However, there are several reasons I decided to do it.

First, I believe there is a special quality to the publications that are made in a somewhat relaxed way as this one is: they allow for the unquestioned assumptions to be more visible and easily accessible. It is not surprising that this book was written in a scholarly less rigorous way then the majority of Badiou's philosophical production. Therefore, my aim is not to put it under the same scrutiny in order to easily locate its potential blind spots, but to look at it in order to point at the parts of the argument that it shares with the rest of the leftist discourse – the only

[6] On its covers, this book is described as a "conversation". However, I believe this term to be misleading, as it is basically a series of Truong's questions to which Badiou offers considerably long answers.

difference being that here, these parts are more explicit. This is connected with the second reason, and that is the quality of this text that sometimes resembles that of a manifesto: it offers not just an analysis (as, for example, Bauman and Illouz do) but a call for action: re-invention of love. It does not really offer a concrete steps for that action – outside of the implied necessity to fight capitalism on all grounds - but the way this piece is written strongly suggests that something big is at stake when it comes to love. It is also interesting to contrast this book – regarding both its content and its political claims on the one hand, and its style and language on the other – with Badiou's most famous works, above all *Being and Event* (2015). The mathematical language he is appropriating in *Being and Event* (2015) is in stark contrast with the way he understands romantic love in *In Praise of Love* (2012). This is important because it also shows, as I will claim later, his insistence to understand politics and community, unlike love, exclusively through the rationalist discourse. Finally, I find Badiou to be the most interesting among the leftist authors writing on love because, although the understanding of love within contemporary economic relations stands as his point of departure, and implicitly saturates the whole of his argument, he is actually going beyond it and offering a more general vision of love as such.

In this chapter, I will first outline Badiou's understanding of romantic love and assess its shortcomings, which I will critically consider by using Melanie Klein's psychoanalysis, especially her concept of reparation. Afterwards, I will relate Badiou's vision of love with the theological one. Finally, I will finish by offering an alternative understanding of romantic love, still within the Kleinian framework which I consider highly important and fruitful when it comes to the understanding of both romantic love and, as I will claim in the Chapter 5, communal love.

3.3. Romantic Love and Desire

In general, my claim is that any discourse that calls for protection of love in the face of the consumerist individualization, and that rejects instant gratification of the bodily desire in favor of the long-lasting love, relies on several conservative assumptions. First, it assumes that there is one particular way of exercising romantic love that is outside of this mechanism – this is usually monogamous lasting love. Second, it implies the existence of a subject that is capable of establishing completely emphatic and non-narcissistic relations with other subjects. Finally, it implies that this kind of love and this kind of subject existed sometime in the past.

In addition, this discourse takes for granted a particular notion of romantic love, which is in fact a historical construct that can be traced back to the late 18th century. It is then, when, for the first time, love – what we today understand as romantic love – started to play a role in the marriage arrangements in the West. As the quality of life increased, together with the rapid development of market economies, Western societies experienced the growth of individualism. This, together with the development of cities and urban areas and the fact that spatial mobility became more accessible to the wider population, resulted with more possibilities to meet the diverse range of people and engage in sexual and romantic relations. These changes on the material level were reflected on the cultural practices. First, it was the new capitalistic class and then the educated middle class that adopted these new understandings, manners and lifestyles. Art and, especially, literature captured and reinforced this new pathos of romantic love (Karandashev, 2017:38-39). Following this, what we are facing in the leftist attempt to defend romantic love from the capitalist economic relations is sort of a paradox, because it is exactly the rise of the capitalist modes of production what allowed the concept of romantic love to emerge in the first place.

When it comes to Badiou in particular, he claims that love is threatened on two, mutually connected, levels. Our contemporary desire for risk-free love that he sees being perfectly embodied in the online matching agencies, goes directly against what love is supposed to be – a strong and unpredictable force. We are treating love as the mathematical calculation that can bring us the perfect match with the other. He sees it as being analogous with arranged marriages, "not done in the name of family order and hierarchy by despotic parents, but in the name of safety for the individuals involved" (Badiou, 2012:8).

Another threat, coming almost as an opposite of the sterility of risk-free love, is the idea that love is nothing but a romanticized cover for the bodily desire and biological sexual urges, "a variant of rampant hedonism and the wide range of possible enjoyment" (Badiou, 2012:8). This approach to love is, for Badiou, perfectly adjusted to the values of individualistic consumerism. It is interesting to look at the language Badiou uses here. "Rampant hedonism" – it is hard to read these words without, at least loosely, associated them with the idea of an excessive eros, bodily love as it is understood in theological tradition. It is the love that is of lesser value when compared to other types of love: above all, agape, in the way Nygren understands it, and I outlined in the previous chapter. However, even more than Nygren – who predominantly focuses on the self-interest as a crucial aspect of eros – the expression "rampant hedonism" in the context of sexual pleasure evokes Saint Augustine, probably the most influential writer coming from the Christian tradition.

For Augustine (1890), sex and sexual desire are associated with sin and death, because they come as the effect of the initial Fall of Adam and Eve. The Fall, as described in the Genesis 3[7], stands for the moment Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, after they ate

[7] All Biblical references are taken from the *21st Century King James Version Bible*, available online at https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/21st-Century-King-James-Version-KJ21-Bible

the fruit from the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil. For Augustine, it is exactly this Fall that caused the basic disorder between flesh and spirit, and that created lust and desire. Before the Fall, man and woman were not aware of their bodies in the way they became after the Fall, they were not seeing parts of their bodies as being connected with the sexual desire. After they transgressed the one rule God imposed on them, they felt shame for the first time, a shame related to their bodies that they suddenly had to urge to cover.

For sure, sexuality existed before the Fall – so it is not evil in itself – but sexual desire emerged with the Fall, and it stands for "a drive towards disorder, towards chaos and evil, since it is connected with the curse of death, the consequence of the Fall" (Jeanrond 2010:46-47). This is why desire, in Augustine, is always presented in a negative light:

"Thus it is a duty of virtue to live for one's country, and for its sake to beget children, neither of which can be done without bodily pleasure. For there is pleasure in eating and drinking, pleasure also in sexual intercourse. But when it is preferred to virtue, it is desired for its own sake, and virtue is chosen only for its sake, and to effect nothing else than the attainment or preservation of bodily pleasure. And this, indeed, is to make life hideous; for where virtue is the slave of pleasure it no longer deserves the name of virtue." (Augustine, 1890: 569)

This understanding of bodily pleasure as something morally questionable is what I see as being immanently present in the leftist discourse Badiou stands for. For sure, it would be ridiculous to conflate these two accounts of desire – Badiou's and St. Augustine's – and to claim that Badiou actually claims that lust is morally transgressive. My claim is not that there is no difference between these two positions, but that there is a line that connects them. Or better, that there are remnants of theological understanding of lust within the contemporary leftist discourse that allows for claims such as this one: "In sex, you are really in a relationship with yourself via the mediation of the other. The other helps you to discover the reality of

pleasure. In love, on the contrary, the mediation of the other is enough in itself" (Badiou, 2012:19). This is where Badiou briefly engages with Lacan, in order to dismiss the idea that love could ever be just a romantic cover for a pure sexual relation. It seems that what we are essentially dealing with here are the two different types of "mediation". In sex, the mediation stands for the fact that the other is just used, s/he is a tool, a "medium" through which we satisfy our sexual desire. In love, on the contrary, this "mediation of the other" stands for the appreciation of the presence of the other, "as he or she is" (Badiou, 2012:19). Although, as I mentioned, he briefly touches upon Lacan here, Badiou does not acknowledge at all the notion that stands as one of the pillars of the psychoanalytic (not just Lacanian) theory when it comes to inter-personal relationships, and that is an idea that we cannot ever really see the other "as he or she is". Furthermore, poststructuralist theory puts into question the very idea that there is such thing as "the other as he or she is". All of these claims – that there is no other as such, and that we can never see other as such – Badiou does not even take into account, or argue against. He simply ignores them, in order to reiterate the theological epistemological gesture of stark differentiation between lust and romantic love, as if the two were separable. Here, we are getting to another aspect of the eros as it is understood in theological tradition: eros as the relation of self-interest.

Before exploring love in relation to self-interest, it is important here to state clearly that I am not suggesting Badiou is drawing directly and exclusively from the tradition of Christian theology, without being aware of it. Christian theology itself follows the long tradition of the philosophy that predates it, so what connects Badiou's thought with the theological discourse is the fact that they both belong to this same tradition of Western metaphysics. However, what I find interesting is the way he, despite the obvious similarities, strongly denies any connection of his conception of love with the theological one, as I will show later on.

3.4. Romantic Love and Self-Interest

The rejection of self-interest as the possible, or even necessary, aspect of love is strongly rejected in Badiou's account. For him, the most valuable and irreplaceable asset of romantic love is its role of a perfect antidote to the narcissistic individualism of late capitalism:

"In today's world, it is generally thought that individuals only pursue their own self-interest. Love is an antidote to that. Provided it isn't conceived only as an exchange of mutual favours, or isn't calculated way in advance as a profitable investment, love really is a unique trust placed in chance" (Badiou 2012:16-7).

This speaks directly to the Nygrens (1963) understanding of eros as being possessive and self-oriented, in contrast with agape, self-giving love. Again, this is not to claim that these two accounts of romantic love are identical, but that they share a common ground. And although Nygren's understanding of eros/agape distinction was widely criticized, it seems that, as Jeanrond (2010) claims, following Engberg-Pedersen, there is the "continuing presence of Nygren's dogmatic approach to love in the […] collective subconscious of many scholars" (28). Here, Jeanrond is explicitly refereeing to exegetes and theologians, but I believe this statement can be applied to the broader context of Western philosophical thinking on love.

However, instead of axiomatically dismissing the idea that any self-interest could or should be absent from love, it is necessary to critically address this idea. Going back to Badiou, the question here stands as: does love really have to be a consciously calculated exchange in order for it to represent the pursuit of self-interest? How to understand self-interest in the context of love? In order to engage with these questions, I would like to turn to the psychoanalytic theory of Melanie Klein, mostly to her concept of reparation.

3.5. Klein and Reparation

I am now turning towards psychoanalysis, as my overall understanding is that, in order to fully understand both relationship within the couple, and the relationships within the community, we need to take into account psychological and affective dimension. Within the rich and diverse psychoanalytical tradition, I see Melanie Klein as the author that is most fruitful for my discussion. Both her writings on the complexities of interpersonal relationships and the way her theory was appropriated by queer theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and José Esteban Muñoz, that used it to generate a sort of political theory, is highly fruitful for the understandings of love, community, and politics. What makes Klein and her object relations theory specific is her innovative idea of positions. The classical Freudian psychoanalysis explains individual growth through the stages of psychosexual development (Freud, 2011). Although Freud never really claimed that the path through those stages leads to an end in which an individual is a complete, mature and healthy subject, his theory of the stages still has a strong teleological undertone that Klein's theory of positions manages to avoid. It is not only that we never come to an end in any sort of the final stage, where our development is finished once and for all, but we shift between the positions throughout our lives. As Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) puts it:

"In Klein, I find particularly congenial her use of the concept of *positions* – the schizoid/paranoid position, the depressive position – as opposed to, for example, normatively ordered *stages*, stable *structures*, or diagnostic *personality types*. […] The greatest interest of Klein's concept lies, it seems to me, in her seeing the paranoid position always in the oscillatory context of a very different possible one: the depressive position." (128)

So, these are the two positions Klein (1975) distinguishes between: paranoid-schizoid and depressive position. First one stands for the anxiety and the feeling of frustration by the lack of

response to subject's needs in infancy. This results in the splitting of both the subject and the object (usually it is the mother), into a good part and a bad part, without any possibility to emotionally integrate the two. Depressive position, on the other hand, designates the realization of the violent feelings towards the mother or her substitute. This aggressive feelings in the depressive position are acknowledge, which is opens the possibility for those feelings to be dealt with through the process of reparation. Let us consider this in more details.

Although Klein does initially situate paranoid-schizoid position in the early infancy, it is actually, as I already hinted, not temporally constrained. In the same way, depressive position – which is, again, the psychic constellation that reparation is integral part of – is not just the developmental stage that follows the less mature one (paranoid-schizoid) and in which we stay for the rest of our lives. We oscillate between the two, coming back to the splitting mechanism, and overcoming it through reparation, because "the ego will always tend to slip back to a more persecuted state so that working through towards a depressive position will need repeating throughout life" (O'Shaughnessy, 2013:4). There is no final conclusion to our development in which we can happily assert that we can finally love in a pure way - outside of the love/hate dynamics - and that we finally see other as separate from ourselves.

It is exactly the way that the complex of love/hate plays out throughout our lives what stands among the central concerns of Kleinian psychoanalysis. In short, love and hate are emotions that every subject initially feels for the first object in her/his life – the mother's breast, which stands for the mother herself (or any other substitute object that represents first person we establish relation to). Need for love comes from the infant's dependency on others and is fulfilled when its needs are met, resulting in the feeling of security. However, not all of infant's needs can be fulfilled all of the time, and this lack is what generates the feeling of hate and aggressive impulses towards the mother (Klein, 1975:306-309). This is what generates the

splitting of other into bad/good dichotomy. Finally, the subject becomes able to carry through the process of reparation – accepting the guilt to the extent that is not overwhelming, making him/her capable of moving beyond the good/bad split in the other, and accepting that the other is separate of oneself – with the final result of "re-creating of [the subjects] inner world and of internal peace and harmony" (Klein, 1940:134). This love/hate relationship then goes on to the other paternal figure (usually father), and further on to the siblings, friends, romantic partner, society and the surrounding world in general.

By application of Kleinian theory, the idea that there is such thing as love without self-interest stands as an illusion. The idea that love can exist outside of the urge to protect one-self, completely omits the very basic fact that there is a developmental trajectory that needs to be taken into account. Our dependency on others in infancy structures the way we will approach others throughout the rest of our lives. In addition, our dependency on others does not end once we leave infancy and childhood and enter the adulthood. Desire for love is necessarily structured around our initial narcissistic need for security and safety. Moreover, as Klein (1970) argues, even our desire to give love to others is strongly structured by our initial feeling of maternal attention or the lack of it:

"Since in being identified with other people we share, as it were, the help or satisfaction afforded to them by ourselves, we regain in one way what we have sacrificed in another. Ultimately, in making sacrifices for somebody we love and in identifying ourselves with the loved person, we play the part of a good parent, and behave towards this person as we felt at times the parents did to us – or as we wanted them to do" (Klein, 1970:311-312).

Claiming the opposite – that romantic love can and should stand outside the self-interest – renders love as something that is resistant to the individual emotional development and talks

directly to the Nygren's idea of agape, love that is completely self-giving. It also portrays love in an idealistic fashion, it "sacralizes" it.

3.6. Sacralization of Love?

To summarize Badiou, these seem to be our two options when it comes to love within the contemporary discourse: it is either the series of hedonistic sensual adventures or calculated sterile project of finding the perfect match. Badiou rejects both of these, claiming that we need to re-invent love. For him, love is the "cosmopolitan, subversive, sexual energy that transgresses frontiers and social status", an energy that refuses to be confined within the risk-free model (Badiou, 2012:2). The problem here is that Badiou axiomatically posits this idea of love as an energy that transgresses social boundaries. He posits this claim at the center of his conceptualization of love to the extent that we could even claim that this boundary-transgressing is what, for him, love makes love. However, it does not take more then to look around us in order to realize that the pool of one's potential partners is strongly limited by parameters of economic and social status, cultural and educational background. I am not claiming that love, once faced with these social divisions, is necessarily defeated. Indeed, romantic love, especially its sexual component, stands as a space of possible libidinal transgressions that can, in its final instance, have political effects even within the wider social sphere. However, to understand romantic love as the force that necessarily breaks the boundaries is to portray it in a highly idealistic fashion, it is to put it on the pedestal that evokes a transcendental understanding.

Simon May (2011) claims that what is happening in the contemporary Western metaphysics is the tendency to understand love as category situated outside of the secular understanding of

our social existence and social life. He perfectly summarizes the essence of his argument as follows:

"Though this faith in love as the one democratic, even universal, form of salvation open to us moderns is the result of a long religious history that saw divine love as the origin of human love and as the model to be imitated, it has paradoxically come into its own because of a decline in religious faith. It has been possible only because, since the end of the eighteenth century, love has increasingly filled the vacuum left by the retreat of Christianity. Around that time the formula 'God is love' became inverted into 'love is God', so that it is now the West's undeclared religion – and perhaps its only generally accepted religion." (May, 2011:1)

This is exactly what I see happening in the Badiou's understanding of romantic love, and, by application, in the contemporary leftist discourse in general. However, I believe there is one particular distinction that needs to be added to May's claim, which is that this sacralization of the concept of love stands for the romantic love, not the communal one – this is something I will explore in the following chapter.

In addition, this idea that romantic love comes as something that is needed to fill the void created by the decline in spirituality and religious beliefs and practices, again, has to do with the very particular understanding of romantic love that has its roots in the 19th century Europe, as I already explained. It is as if what happened with the rise of market capitalism is the exchange of places between God and love, love coming in the place God previously occupied.

To some extent, this claim may stand, but the gesture through which the specificity of this modern idea of romantic love is overemphasized, in its final instance, being aware of it or not, tends to disregard two important facts. First is that in Christian theology, the idea of love and the idea of god were always somewhat entangled. In that sense, this "shift" from god to love that May (2011) describes would be better understood as a continuation of the mixing of the

two - the topic on which, as we saw previously, Nygren wrote the whole book - then a sudden rupture in our cultural understanding of the role of love. Second fact that is not taken into account in this claim that there is something very specific in the way we understand love today is the fact that the Christian understanding has its roots in the earlier, Greco-Roman philosophy. Here, again, it would be more productive to acknowledge these connections and long traditions, instead of claiming such strong differences between discourses and cultural-historical periods. This is not to claim that there are no differences and changes, but that they are to be understood in more nuanced ways then the idea of a sudden shift allows for.

The aim of this chapter was two-fold. First, it was to explicate the convergences between the materialist and theological discourse when it comes to romantic love. Second, it was to give us background upon which, by the way of comparison, we can assess the possibility of community to be understood through the affective dimension - namely, through the concept of love. I engaged with the object relations theory of Melanie Klein, as I argue that her understanding of romantic love gives an excellent critique of the idea that love exist outside of the self-interest. Even more then for the idea of romantic love, I consider Klein's theory - when used as political theory by Muñoz in his imagination of the community, politics and futurity - to stand as an immensely fruitful source to interrogate the question of communal love. This is what I will be discussing in the following chapter.

5. Communal Love and the Epistemic Transcendence of Political Future

In this chapter, my aim is to propose an understanding of community that will take into account the affective and transcendental dimension of it, particularly, the way they intersect through the concept of love. First, I will look into what happens when Badiou, from tis leftist position, explicitly engages with the Christian legacy. Through this, I will reassert that the leftist discourse does not perceive love as a space that can generate community or inter-communal relations. In order to show that more closely, I will go back to Badiou's book *In Praise of Love* (2012). I will discuss Badiou's claim that love – romantic love – stands outside the politics and its repercussions for both the idea of romantic love and the idea of communal love. Then, I will look into the question of community.

For that purpose, I will use Patrick Cheng's term "radical love", because it allows for both political and transcendental understanding of love at the same time. I will also engage with Jose Esteban Muñoz's reading of Klein and Bloch. The purpose of this chapter is to assess the question of how can we understand community by taking into account its affective dimension, and what are the political horizons this can open. These horizons, I claim, are in the realm of utopia and epistemic transcendence.

5.1. Saint Paul and Universalism

Before going to the question of politics in relation to the possibility to understand community through the concept of love, it is useful for my overall argument to look what happens when Badiou engages with the Christian legacy in order to find its political edge, to find something he thinks we could use today, in our current context, in an attempt to project a sort of political

futurity. The only occasion Badiou extensively explores Christian thought in this manner is his book *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (2003). It is important to briefly engage with this book for several reasons. First, it will shed another light on the conservative undertones of Badiou's approach to the understanding of politics in a broader sense. Second, it will show that, for Badiou, affective dimension cannot play a role when it comes to politics, even in an occasion like this one, where his argument relies on the direct dialogue with the Christian tradition. Finally, and related to the previous two, I see Badiou's approach as exemplary for the contemporary leftist discourse in general. In addition to this book, I will briefly touch upon other Badiou's texts, in order to offer an adequate general overview of some important aspects of his philosophy, as this is directly related to his understanding of love, community and politics.

At the very opening of his book, Badiou acknowledges that it may seem somewhat surprising that he decided to make Saint Paul a central figure of his text. After all, this Christian thinker is often considered conservative, and "is frequently tied to Christianity's least open, most institutional aspects: the Church, moral discipline, social conservatism, suspiciousness towards Jews" (Badiou, 2003:4). Indeed, Saint Paul is often considered to be the practical, pragmatic figure that in fact founded Christianity. It is not Jesus Christ, but Saint Paul who stands as the founder of Christianity as an organized religion (Lenoir, 2013:46).

This is the way Zizek, another prominent contemporary leftist thinker, sees Saint Paul as well. He also rejects the attempts to critically dismiss Paul as someone who, at the very beginnings of what we now consider to be the Christian idea, already departed from Jesus Christ and distorted his authentic message in an attempt to create an organized religion.[8] On contrary, Zizek (2000) claims that "one should insist that such a 'defense of the authentic' is

[8] Among the most important thinkers that stand for this idea is Nietzsche, in his text *The Anti-Christ* (2013).

the most perfidious mode of its betrayal: *there is no Christ outside Saint Paul*" (2). This means that for Zizek – as well as for Badiou, as we will see later – Christianity is important only insofar it is a social institution, because institutionalization is a condition for it to become part of the realm of politics. For both of them, to claim that the authentic Christian ideal existed only while it was articulated by Jesus is to limit its political potential. It is already here visible that this practical, pragmatic aspect that is present in Saint Paul, is exactly the reason why both Badiou and Zizek – often considered to be the two most important living Marxist philosophers – choose Paul's writings, among the long and diverse Christian philosophical tradition. It is the politics of Saint Paul, not the love as it was articulated by Jesus what they are interested in.

This is why, although the idea of love stands as one of the backbones of Christian theology (Jeanrond, 2010), Badiou does not really engage with it in his reading of Saint Paul. In the rare occasion he does, he uses the idea of love not as an affect or emotion, the way he does in his book on romantic love discussed in previous chapter. That is because here, Badiou is not really interested in the idea of love per se, nor he tries to offer his own understanding of it. The only thing that interests him is the way love is treated in Paul's political philosophy. Therefore, he threats love as a political statement, best captured in the maxim to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Badiou, 2003:89). Love in this quote, as well as in Badiou's reading of Paul in general, does not stand for an affective relation, but for the universalist imperative. Indeed, what is at the core of this book is not the idea of love, but the idea of universalism.

The best starting point to understand what the universalism Badiou finds in Saint Paul stands for, is the famous quote, from Paul's letter to the Galatians, where he asserts that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Badiou, above all, focuses on the breaking of the boundary between Greeks and Jew that stands as the initial moment of generating new,

Christian community. For him, this is the central aspect of Saint Paul's thought – the call for breaching the boundaries that divide us, in the name of the universal singular truth that emerges from the event. In order to understand this properly, it is necessary to offer a brief explanation of the idea of event that stands as the most important concept of Badiou's philosophy.

Initially formulated in his book *Being and Event* (2015), and then developed throughout his career, event is best summarized as something that disturbs the current situation, something that appears on the scene and changes it inevitably. Since it is something that is excluded and unrepresented in the present situation, once it enters the situation, the event cannot be absorbed and integrated within the existing structure. The tools we have at our disposal are not enough for us to access the event, and then integrate it. Therefore, event necessarily changes that very structure it enters. In the context of Christianity, this event is the resurrection of Christ, exactly because "the resurrection remains totally incalculable" (Badiou, 2003:17). Finally, what emerges from the event, this restructuring of the scene, is the truth - universal, singular truth. But let us come to that.

First, it needs to recognize that Badiou's fascination with Paul's universalism has to do with his critical stance towards the current political practices in the West. What he sees happening in our age is the exact opposite of the universalism. We are facing political fragmentation, or what he calls "communitarianism" of the political struggle that does not allow for a universal political subject to emerge. The only unifying factor - but the one which universality is false - is what he calls "monetary abstraction, whose false universality has absolutely no difficulty accommodating the kaleidoscope of communitarianism", and that stands as the only logic we all follow together, without any difference (Badiou, 2003:6-7). That logic is the logic of consumerist capitalism. Related to this is the only way, or at least the dominant way,

mainstream politics is practiced today – that is, as already implied, identity politics that work perfectly with the monetary abstraction of the late capitalism.

> "What inexhaustible potential for mercantile investments in this upsurge-taking the form of communities demanding recognition and so called cultural singularities-of women, homosexuals, the disabled, Arabs! And these infinite combinations of predicative traits, what a godsend! Black homosexuals, disabled Serbs, Catholic pedophiles, moderate Muslims, married priests, ecologist yuppies, the submissive unemployed, prematurely aged youth! Each time, a social image authorizes new products, specialized magazines, improved shopping malls, "free" radio stations, targeted advertising networks, and finally, heady "public debates" at peak viewing times." (Badiou, 2003:10)

This stands as a usual criticism of identity politics coming from the left (see, for example Zizek, 2007; Fisher, 2013; Lilla, 2017). What is claimed is that not only the identity politics do not present a threat for the exploitive capitalist system but, in the process through which those politics are appropriated and commodified, they actually serve the system, both on the level of generating particular market niches, and on the level of what Badiou calls "the destruction of all politics" (Badiou, 2003:7). For him, the vanishing of the political as such is the final instance of this kind of identity politics. Related to this is Badiou's criticism aimed at the "cultural and historical relativism that today constitutes at once a topic of public opinion, a 'political' motivation, and a framework in the human sciences" (Badiou, 2003:6). Cultural and historical relativism as the framework in the human sciences - this is the moment where Badiou's idea of singularity of truth becomes relevant.

For Badiou (2015), truth follows from the event that disrupts the current structure, as a cluster of discourses that offer us an insight into something that was hidden, excluded. This is why the truth, in his political philosophy, signifies the possibility of a political change, or revolution – exactly because it uncovers the power relations that, in the situation prior to the event, went unnoticed.

"The real characteristic of the political event and the truth procedure that it sets off is that a political event fixes the errancy and assigns a measure to the superpower of the State. […] Empirically, this means that whenever there is a genuinely political event, the State reveals itself. It reveals its excess of power, its repressive dimension. But it also reveals a measure for this usually invisible excess. For it is essential to the normal functioning of the State that its power remains measureless, errant, unassignable. The political event puts an end to all this by assigning a visible measure to the excessive power of the State." (Badiou, 2005:145)

The fact that the truth is always related to the particular event means that the truth is - in that sense, but only in that sense - particular. Badiou rejects the idea that different social or identity groups could have different, particular truths. For him, "there is no doubt that universalism, and hence the existence of any truth whatsoever, requires the destitution of established differences and the initiation of a subject divided in itself by the challenge of having nothing but the vanished event to face up to" (Badiou 2003:58). For Badiou, again, there is only one truth, the truth that is opened to everyone, and in order to access this truth we must not be constrained by our mutual differences.

This is Badiou's call for the universal political subject. He positions himself strongly against the claims coming from the poststructuralist theory and identity politics that call for the recognition of the multiplicity of truths, and the unmasking of the illusion of the universal. Universal truth, in that discourses, stands as nothing but a gesture of subsumption of the wide diversity of marginalized identities and experiences under the dominant - albeit never really made explicit - identity of the one who holds the power (rich white straight men).

To be fair, Badiou does acknowledge that there are differences between us, but immediately after this recognition of differences he goes on to assert that "these categories must be absented from the process [of truth], failing which no truth has the slightest chance of establishing its persistence" (Badiou 2003:11). In other words, if are to recognize the truth, and therefore open the window of opportunity for a political change, we must go beyond our differences, those

differences have to be seen irrelevant for our political project. This is what Saint Paul stands for, and this is what we, according to Badiou, must preserve from the Christian thought.

To summarize, Badiou's appropriation of Christian legacy through his focus on Saint Paul's universalism should be read as his attempt to refute the fragmentation of the current political sphere by identity politics, and the erosion of the idea of universal truth by historical and cultural relativism. I read his elimination of affective dimension from the realm of politics in the same line. Affective dimension does not align itself with the rationalistic discourse of the Marxist political projections into the future. The same goes for transcendence, the concept that, if it is allowed in the space of politics, would contaminate the idea of one truth accessible to everyone, as epistemic transcendence explicitly goes beyond the secular rationalistic discourse, proclaiming it insufficient.

This is why Badiou is careful to avoid, or even explicitly exclude, the transcendental dimension from his reading of Saint Paul. Even though he accepts the resurrection as the event that opened up the access to the truth, he still insists that "it is rigorously impossible to believe in the resurrection of the crucified" (Badiou, 2003:5). In other words, even if this event opened us up to the truth, "what we are dealing with here is precisely a fable" (Badiou, 2003:4). This is the only way leftist political position is able to engage with theological discourse – exactly by eliminating what is specific for that discourse. Let us now look how Badiou situates politics in relation to love as a transcendental category.

5.2. Badiou and the Politics as the Space of the Enemies

For Badiou (2012), love is outside politics, and it needs to be "rigorously separated from politics" (72). Also, "the 'politics of love' is a meaningless expression" (Badiou, 2012:57). The

reason behind this is that love is a space that exists between the two, not within the collective. Finally, politics, for Badiou, is the space of enemies, not the space of love:

"What we must say, as love is our theme, is that love and political passion should never be confused. The problem politics confronts is the control of hatred, not of love. […] In other words, in politics, where enemies do exist, one role of the organization, whatever that may be, is to control, indeed to destroy, the consequences of hatred." (Badiou, 2012:71)

Let us address all of these claims, as there are several strange assumptions in this gesture of strong distinguishing between the love and politics. First, it is interesting that Badiou posits a stark opposition between hate and love – allowing for one and not the other in the space of politics. He does not acknowledge possibility that these two might be connected. This might be because his use of hate here does not really belong to the affective dimension. Just from this quote, it could be somewhat unclear what does hate stand for. However, by taking into account the rest of the text, where hate is not mentioned anymore, but the concept of enemy is mentioned repeatedly, I see this sudden appearance of hate as an effect of the particular genre of this text as being less rigorous, as I claimed earlier.

What I see happening here is Badiou, without specific clarification, using the idea of hate not as an emotion, but as a signifier of hostile political relations. From this, I conclude that the quote above – and Badiou's argument in general, as I already argued – essentially rejects emotionality in general, not just love, from the sphere of politics. At the same time, the way the term hate found its way into the discourse that nominally rejects emotionality could be read as symptomatic. Again, exactly because of the less rigorous nature of this text, we could read it as the resistance of the affective dimension that is supposedly excluded. The claim would then be that regardless of how strong we try to conceptualize politics as exclusively rationalistic discourse, emotionality can never really be excluded from politics.

Let us now look into the way he understands love in relation to politics. First thing that needs to be asserted is that to say politics of love is a meaningless expression is to completely disregard political struggles taking place within the realm of love, or political struggles necessary for some forms of love to become possible. The most obvious example is the same-sex love that has a long history of struggle to become legitimate within the socio-political realm. Moreover, even within the legally and culturally recognized heterosexual partnership, love is often hardly distinguishable from what socialist feminists name emotional labour, reproduction of everyday existence, and labour power – cooking, cleaning, giving emotional support, and sexual satisfaction – usually performed by women. In a world without gender equality and without equal opportunities for the alternative forms of love to flourish, to talk about love as something that exists outside politics is indeed peculiar. It is especially surprising to encounter this claim of love being outside of politics in the context of leftist discourse, as the understanding of romantic love within the context of economic relations has a strong tradition in the Marxist thought that can be traced even back to Engels (2010), but especially with the concept of unpaid housework and emotional labour that is widely discussed in the tradition of socialist feminism (see Dalla Costa, 1971; Vogel, 2014; Federici, 2012).

The same goes for Badiou's often-repeated assertion that love is an event happening between the two individuals:

"Firstly, love involves a separation or disjuncture based on the simple difference between two people and their infinite subjectivities. This disjuncture is, in most cases, sexual difference. When that isn't the case, love still ensures that two figures, two different interpretive stances are set in opposition. In other words, love contains an initial element that separates, dislocates and differentiates. You have Two. Love involves Two." (Badiou, 2012:27-28)

This seems like nothing but a laconic and nonchalant disregard of love practices that are not confined within the couples culture and normative monogamy of contemporary Western societies. The ideas of non-monogamous relations, polyamory, free sex communes etc. are completely ignored here – and by that, implicitly de-legitimized - in the same way friendly love is. We could argue that what Badiou is getting at with his insistence on the two is an abstract philosophical model, not unusual in the history of Western thought, where the ultimate relation is the relation towards the other that opens up to us as we open up to her/him. Taking this into account, my claim here is not that there is something specific in the way Badiou understands love, but that he subscribes to the model that is exclusive of alternative loving relations. Also, as its final effect, this fixation on the two renders communal love as practically impossible.

In addition to this, it is even claimable that with his assertion that love is outside of politics, Badiou, actually, contradicts himself. If love is really outside of politics, how come that it is exactly the politics - neoliberal policies of late capitalism - what constitutes the threat that is endangering love, and that stands as an initial impetus of his argument. It seems that Badiou is concerned about the current state of love, while at the same time ascribing it some status of a forceful boundary-breaking power. Of course, to be fair, we could claim that what Badiou posits is that love indeed is powerful, but we need to make sure there is a space in which this power of love can be exercised. However, what else is this concern about the possibility for love to be transgressive, if not the concern with the political conditions, the call for political engagement that will protect love from the terrible threats of our age.

For sure, again, we can assume that Badiou´s theoretical treatment of love is prescriptive rather than descriptive - hence his claim that love "needs to be reinvented" (2012:1) - but even this reinvention is not possible outside of politics. There is no space for this new love to emerge that is not already contaminated with the politics, because it is exactly politics what we need if

we are to reinvent love. This is why Dubey (2012) claims that "Badiou's new definition of love, which is at the heart of the book, sounds like something very old, although stated in a novel way". Badiou claims to offer a new vision of love, but is basically reiterating the way love is often understood in the history of Western thought, including religious thought. The particular model he is reiterating here is the one I described in a previous chapter, a historical construct that can be traced back to the rise of market capitalism in the late 18th century and early 19th century.

Finally, through his claim that there is no love outside of politics and that love always consists of two, Badiou equates the idea of love with the romantic love. The fact that he never mentions friendly or familial love could be explained by the acknowledgment that his focus in this particular text I am analyzing is limited to romantic love.[9] However, even if we could claim that the omission of friendly love has to do with the particular focus he chooses, and that maybe that does not mean he is dismissing the possibility of friendly love, this omission of friendly love is still an interesting gesture. It could be claimed that the explicit acknowledgment of friendly love would present a link towards community, which would then allow for the appearance of love in the sphere of politics and this is something Badiou persistently avoids. So it is already here, in this gesture of de facto equating love with the love between the couple, that we can see that Badiou does not think that love, or affective dimension in general, should be taken into account when our analysis moves from the couple towards the society in general.

Finally, while friendship as a form of love is just avoided in Badiou's text, when it comes to the politics and community, he is clear that love is not playing a role there, as seen from his

[9] The idea of friendship is highly interesting one. This might be a right place to mention another important philosopher that extensively engaged with the idea of love, and the idea of friendship in particular. Jacques Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* (2006) speak directly to the discussion I am carrying here. However, since he could not be aligned with Marxist position, nor the theological one, his theory remains outside of the scope of this thesis. This is not to say that some future project that would attempt to continue this discussion would not benefit from engagement with his philosophy.

quotes above. Affective dimension of politics is explicitly denied in Badiou's text. This is the aspect of his gesture of separating love from politics that I find most interesting – that is Badiou's understanding that politics is the space of enemies, where, again, love does not and cannot play a role.[10] This is particularly surprising when we take into account the fact that he posits difference at the center of what he calls the event of love, and claims – in a way that resembles the Platonian tradition - that from this difference love generates truth, that love is a "truth procedure" coming with the "truth about what it is to be two and not one" (Badiou 2012: 39). What, then, stops love at the gates of politics? If love emerges from the difference and offers the perspective towards the world that is not coming from one, it would make sense that exactly this notion of difference in the midst of love could come as a way to understand communal relationships, to understand what it is to be community and not one. However, Badiou (2012) denies this possibility, claiming that "to say 'Love one another' […] can lead to a kind of ethics, but not to any kind of politics" (57).

This is also where he explicitly denies any connection between his position and the Christian one:

"Christianity grasped perfectly that there is an element in the apparent contingency of love that can't be reduced to that contingency. But it immediately raised it to the level of transcendence, and that is the root of the problem. This universal element I too recognize in love as immanent. But Christianity has somehow managed to elevate it and refocus it onto a transcendent power. It's an ideal that was already partly present in Plato, through the idea of the Good. It is a brilliant first manipulation of the power of love and one we must now bring back to earth." (Badiou 2012: 65-66)

[10] It is important to note that this position is not a novelty in the history of Western thought. For example, it strongly resembles Carl Schmitt's (2007) distinction between the friend and the enemy as the main framework through which to understand the social field in general.

What is crucial in this quote is his dismissal of anything that can resemble the gesture of ascribing transcendent power to love as such. The resemblance of his understanding of romantic love to the classical theological distinction between agape and eros I outlined in previous chapter is passing unaddressed here. The fact that his understanding of romantic love is in line with the theological understanding of transcendental love is also unakcnowledged.

Another interesting aspect here is Badiou's categorical distinction between politics and ethics. The way I understand it, any successful communitarian politics is based on cooperation through which individual follows her/his self-interest, but is also capable of taking interests of others into account, and here we are already within the field of ethics. Only if we understand ethics as a discourse that deals with the individual moral position - or even the moral values of a wider social context, but that is not really concerned with the ways these ethical principles should be established and practiced - it could be claimed that ethics itself is never enough for the emergence of any kind of community. But even in that case, politics without ethics is just an abstract idea incapable of generating any kind of fruitful long-term cooperation. The distinction and relationship between politics and ethics is a highly contentious one, and the one that is directly related to my attempt to understand community through the concept of love.[11]

Finally, what I see happening in Badiou's approach to love is a two-fold gesture – first, the idealization of romantic love by situating it outside of politics and, second, the negation of love as an affective entity that can generate inter-subjective community, or even inter-communal

[11] We could claim that, historically looking, the key moment in which legalistic discourse – that is part of the politics - through which we approach the idea of the community emerged, was after the World War II, through documents such as UN Convention of Human Rights or The Geneva Conventions. We can explain it as an effect of the realization, first articulated by Hannah Arendt (1979), that once Jews were stripped of their citizenship and their political rights in Nazi Germany, once they were just humans appealing to other humans and their empathy, they were destroyed (Agamben 1995:132). In the light of this, legalistic discourse of human rights seemed as the only way to maintain both communal and inter-communities relations. However, I claim that this notion of the need to protect the lives of the others that lies behind the legalistic discourse cannot be explained only in rational terms, be it within the explanatory realms of legal studies or political philosophy.

politics. His claim that community bases itself around the notion of identity that is necessarily exclusionary, and therefore politics is necessarily the field of enemies, gives up on the difference and love as the starting points of the truth process that opens up new possibilities.[12] In the rest of this chapter, I will explore some of these possibilities.

5.3. Reparation, Affect and Community

For a start, the psychoanalytic discourse in general puts into question the stark opposition between love and hate, and the idea that the two can ever be neatly separated. Freud himself came up with the concept of ambivalence to explain exactly this entanglement between love and hate, and the way one often unconsciously plays under the other one, the one that is explicitly noticeable (Freud, 2004:57-58). However, I see Kleinian psychoanalysis, especially in the way it is appropriated by Muñoz, as a particularly fruitful line of psychoanalytic thought, mostly because of her ideas of reparation and positions outlined in the previous chapter.

Exactly through the Kleinian framework that understands loving relation as a never-ending project with a goal that is clear but never entirely reachable, love as a continuous progress that, nevertheless, has its lapses, we can assess the idea of the enemy in politics. For sure, it is important to acknowledge that the idea of enemy has a long tradition in political philosophy. However, my interest in Klein comes from the fact that, her being a psychoanalyst, her theory naturally took into account exactly the affective dimension I am interested in. This was then picked up by queer theorist such as Kosofsky Sedgwick and Muñoz, who applied her theory

[12] Badiou's insistence on the hostility of the politics somewhat reminds of Sara Ahmed's (2005) understanding of the community as something that is always established through the gesture of exclusion of the Other. However, Ahmed this exclusion understands though the concept of hate, i.e. she remains within the framework of the affective economy. For Badiou, on contrary, and as I already argued, emotions in general are outside the space of politics.

on a wider social context, in an attempt to generate a specific political theory. This is what, in my attempt to understand politics and community through affective dimension, interests me above all.

When it comes to the idea of enemy, it is the mechanism of splitting through which we threat others within the political sphere as either friends or enemies that plays significant role in the realm of politics. The enemy can become friend and vice-versa – this possibility to transition from appreciating to hostile and hostile to appreciating within any loving relation (familial, communal, romantic, friendly) opens the space to recognize the potential of love within the political sphere, e.g. love within the community and between communities. At the same time, it is important to recognize that, as Muñoz claims, love for Klein is "not just a romantic abstraction", but an act of "striving for belonging that does not ignore the various obstacles that the subject must overcome to achieve the most provisional belonging" (Muñoz 2006:683). This is why call for love in the space of politics does not necessarily assume idealized and impossible love that, as Badiou (2012:31) asserts, art, literature and theology often stand for, but a love that is a process.

The main reason Muñoz goes towards Klein is her model of psychic positions that she posits instead of stages or personality types, as I argued in previous chapter. This allows for a more nuanced and less deterministic understanding of politics. Muñoz explains that the "depressive position for Klein is not a stage that must be moved beyond. There are ways in which such occupations of the depressive position lead to reparation, where love helps one surpass paranoid and schizoid feelings" (Muñoz, 2006:681). The love he is talking about is not just the love within the couple, but the love that can be understood in the broader sense, as the love within community. This is because this "depressive positionality […] gives us the ability to know and experience the other who shares a particular affective or emotional valence with us"

(Muñoz, 2006:682). What follows from this is that the affective dimension is the one that can generate relations that can breach the boundaries between individuals in community.

The idea of reparation I explained in the previous chapter comes as relevant once again, in the context of a communal affect. Following Hortense Spillers, Muñoz talks about an "old-fashioned place" that stands for the communal belonging that can be produced exactly through affective exchange of reparation (Muñoz, 2006:682). Although explicitly emphasizing that, in contrast with the past, today we must look for this place in a non-secular context, his attention to love in the process of generating community does not subscribe to entirely materialist perspective. Actually, his need to emphasize that we should think in the non-secular terms is symptomatic – it implicitly acknowledges that there is something his discourse shares with religious/spiritual one. If this resemblance was not implicitly present, there would be no need for Muñoz to emphasize that they, after all, do not really overlap. Following this, I see his idea of community based on affective relation as allowing for a sort of transcendental aspect to it.

Most importantly, his focus on affective dimension is what I claim secularist and leftist discourses are missing when they are trying to conceptualize community. This affective dimension is something Muñoz recognizes repeatedly, for example by claiming that "as a group or a pair we share happiness and grief, ecstasy and sorrow, and so forth. This affective commonality is a site for commonality and even sociality" (Duggan and Muñoz, 2009: 281). Thus, again, it is exactly though affective dimension that the connection that can breach our boundaries could be established. The recognition of the other and our mutual interest is, for sure, an ethical and political question, but it is a question that must take into account our emotional existence as well.

Another important reason, strongly related with the one discussed above, for which Muñoz engages with Klein is her concept or reparation. If applied to a broader socio-political context, reparation allows for the hope as political category to emerge:

"Reparation is part of the depressive position; it signals a certain kind of hope. The depressive position is a tolerance of the loss and guilt that underlies the subject's sense of self—which is to say that it does not avoid or wish away loss and guilt. It is a position in which the subject negotiates reality, resisting the instinct to fall into the delusional realm of the paranoid schizoid." (Munoz, 2006:687)

This is the reading of Klein that Muñoz shares with Eve Sedgwick (2003). They both see the current political activism of marginalized groups as having a tendency to align itself with the paranoid position, which stands for the political position in which political energy is spent almost entirely on the criticism of the current situation. Muñoz, instead, calls for the political perspective that will be more future-oriented. In addition, this paranoid position is often recognizable within the politically progressive parts of academia - what Sedgwick (2003) calls "paranoid reading", and Muñoz summarizes in assertion that "the dominant academic climate" today "is dominated by a dismissal of political idealism" (Muñoz, 2009:10).

This current "paranoid" political situation is what pushes Muñoz to engage with the ideas of hope, utopia and not-yet-conscious that he finds and appropriates from the Marxist philosopher Ernest Bloch, and that I will turn towards soon. Before that, however, it is important to look into the queer theology of Patrick Cheng, as I see his term "radical love" to speak both to the idea of love and to the idea of hope, especially as they relate to the concepts of politics and community. I also see it as a link between the affective dimension that Muñoz' reading of Klein brings into the idea of politics and community, and the dimension of epistemic transcendence in the realm of politics, that Muñoz' reading of Bloch focuses on.

5.3. Radical Love

In his introductory book on queer theology, Patrick Cheng (2011) defines radical love as "a *love so extreme that it dissolves our existing boundaries* […] that separate us from other people, that separate us from preconceived notions of sexuality and gender identity, or that separate us from God", following this definition by claim that "radical love lies at the heart of *both* Christian theology *and* queer theory" (10).

His argument for claiming that love lies at the center of both comes exactly from his understanding that love is that which transgresses or challenges boundaries. Boundaries challenged in Christian theology are human/divine, death/life, time/eternity, and they come as the immediate effect of what is the central backbone of Christianity – that is the belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was both human and God; he died, but came back to living; finally, he promised the eternal life for all. When it comes to queer theory, boundaries that are challenged are those that relate to sexuality and gender, such as gay/straight, male/female. (Cheng, 2011:10).[13]

Cheng's idea of radical love, in this sense, resembles Badiou's understanding of romantic love described earlier in this thesis. Let us remind that for Badiou, love is a "cosmopolitan, subversive, sexual energy that transgresses frontiers and social status" (2012:2). This seems quite close to the idea of radical love that transcends boundaries. However, there is a crucial difference between Badiuou's and Cheng's account of boundary-breaking. As I already claimed, for Badiou this boundary-breaking nature of love stops at the romantic love. For

[13] Cheng's limiting view of transgressive potentiality of queer that constrains it only to the issues and boundaries that have to do with gender and sexuality, is for sure somewhat too narrow understanding of what queer is or could be. Both queer theory and the political activism that situates itself in line with or close to the queer theory, often insists on the transgressive potentiality of queer that goes beyond the gender issues.

Cheng, on the contrary, love as a boundary-breaking force on the level of community stands at the very beginnings of Christianity – it is the initial building of Christian political community.

For the early Christians, "coming together as a community was an act of subversion. It was the creation of a radically new 'family' or 'body' that transcended biological relationships and the established social order" (Cheng, 2011:106). At that initial moment "church was an external community of radical love. That is, the church was a new community that dissolved traditional boundaries that kept people apart such as biological relationships, social class, and physical attributes" (Cheng, 2011:72). In other words, love was at the center of this initial Christian community, love is what allowed for the breaking of the boundaries. Since Cheng is, after all, a *queer* theologian, he goes on to relating this idea to the alternative forms of families - same-sex marriages, polyamorous relationships, broader networks of friendship that goes beyond the biological kinship, etc. – as they appear in the experiences of queer community. However, what interests me here is the potential for broader applicability of the idea of radical love, through understanding that love – communal love – has the power to go beyond particularities in order to establish community.

This, again, brings us back to Badiou, more specifically to his idea of universalism that comes from the Pauline Christian tradition, as I explained at the beginning of this chapter. It could seem that we are dealing with the same idea, in just a slightly different framework. Badiou's claim that Saint Paul's political revolution consisted of his call for the new, Christian community can go beyond the existing boundaries – above all the boundary between Jews and Christian – resembles strongly Cheng's idea that the radical love of initial Christian community broke several social boundaries. However, there is an essential difference here – Badiou does not recognize love as having any part in this boundary-breaking. For Badiou, as I claimed earlier, the Pauline project was entirely political one, and being political for Badiou signifies

the space which is outside of the affective dimension. Cheng, being theologian deeply invested in the politically transgressive power of love, on the other hand, insists on the affective dimension in this process of breaking the boundaries.

This I see to be not just a minor conceptual difference, but a difference of a crucial importance. Badiou's call to go beyond the differences towards universalism that will allow us to achieve a political goal that we all supposedly share, in its final effect, results in glossing over our differences, putting them into brackets, therefore reproducing the inequalities and power relations these differences generate. This is because, by claiming that the only way to exercise transgressive politics is by adopting universalistic standpoint, he implicitly posits the these differences and the inequities that they produce, outside of the political sphere. What Cheng is offering with his concept of radical love is not ignoring the differences in the name of an illusionary universalistic subject, but the possibility of community that will cooperate by acknowledging those differences, and breaching them through affective relation. Moreover, this affective dimension of community needs to be understood in the transcendental way, as something that is not possible to completely integrate into the materialist or secularist discourse. This is exactly the dimension that gives love the ultimate power in the political sphere.

Finally, for Cheng, the ultimate space of radical love is the space of Christian eschatology. Eschatology is theological discipline that deals with what Christian theology terms the last things. In other words, it attempts to answer the question of the ultimate purpose, both on the individual human level, and on the cosmological one. For Cheng, it is the futurity what stands as the horizon of radical love, as "the boundaries between female and male, life and death, and punishment and reward will be subject to eschatological erasure at the end of time" (Cheng, 2011:136). Here, again, he is insisting on the boundary-transgressing character as what is

essential for love. Unlike contemporary leftist discourse that only allows for romantic love within the couple to be understood as transgressive, Cheng centers love – a radical love – in the very heart of all the relations, including the communal ones.

Following this, the question that naturally emerges is: why does the leftist discourse, represented here by Badiou, draws the strict line between the couple and the politics, or the community? Why does it only allow for love in the former case, and claims that the political management of conflicting desires and needs in the society can be the only way through which we ought to understand community? Also, the related question that arises is: is this something we can recognize as being part of the leftist discourse in general? I claim the reason for that lies in the unwillingness of the left to accept the ambiguity of future. By insisting that the space of politics is outside of affective exchange such as love it holds to the illusion that politics belongs entirely to the rational discourse. This is where Badiou's understanding of love as the event through which truth emerges comes as an important argument to look into.

5.5. Love and Truth

As I already briefly mentioned, Badiou's approach to love somewhat resembles Platonic tradition. For Plato (1989), there is a trajectory in love, starting with the animalistic desire that needs to be transcended towards intellectual understanding of love. This intellectual understanding stands for the beauty, as it is represented in the world of ideas. The world of ideas or forms is never fully accessible to humans, but through love and appreciation of beauty, we can get a glimpse of it (Moseley, 2016). Although Badiou's argument differs, he still claims that there is something important at stake when it comes to love, as love is a trajectory towards the truth. Here, we are dealing with the truth procedure that comes up with the event, as I explained above, because a loving encounter, for Badiou, is an event.

"[Love] is a quest for truth. What kind of truth? You will ask. I mean truth in relation to something quite precise: what kind of world does one see when one experiences it from the point of view of two and not one? What is the world like when it is experienced, developed and lived from the point of view of difference and not identity? That is what I believe love to be." (Badiou, 2012:22)

From this, it is clear that Badiou's interest in love comes from his interest in the truth as such. To posit the quest for truth in the heart of the attempt to conceptualize love seems like a grandiose gesture, as it implies that there is such a thing as accessible truth. For sure, this is the moment where contemporary Marxist theory strongly differs from poststructuralist/postmodern dismantling of the idea of the ultimate truth, often criticized as relativist and apolitical, as I argued previously on the example of Badiou.

This is what I see as being the root of Badiou's acceptance of transcendence in the context of romantic love, but not in the context of communal love. Since romantic love, with its transcendental dimension, stands outside of politics, the space of politics is not contaminated by its rationally uncontrollable affective dimension, nor it is eroded by the idea of epistemic transcendence. This is necessary in order for the universal truth of the future communist political project is not put into question by either irrationality of affect, or open-endedness of epistemic transcendence, with its claim that some things are beyond our rationalistic scope.

This is something I see Badiou sharing with the Marxist tradition in general. For sure, the question of truth is a big philosophical question. However, in the case of Marxist philosophy, we are dealing with a very specific truth, and that is a truth of political future. In this sense, Marxism – since at its center lies the idea about the very specific future – is as eschatological as Christianity, although its projections of futurity differ both in content and nature. The difference comes from the fact that theological discourse accepts the limits of the human rational ability to fully comprehend the said future, whereas Marxism, more or less explicitly, insists on the scientific and rational understanding of the truth of what is to come.

Marx himself cleared the space for his idea of the socialist future by emphasizing the difference between his theoretical and political position, and the ones utopian socialist before him - such as Henri de Saint-Simon, Robert Owen or Joseph Fourier - stood for. What he is offering is a discovery of inevitable truth, because his scientific method of dialectical materialism, by looking into the past, gave as the truth about the future (Marx, 2008). Engels termed this Marxist method as a scientific socialism:

"To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat. To thoroughly comprehend the historical conditions and this the very nature of this act, to impart to the now oppressed proletarian class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific socialism." (Engels 1908:139)

This is why, although Marx recognized that "these [utopian] socialist and communist publications contain also a critical element", as "they attack every principle of existing society" and, therefore offer "the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working-class" (Marx, 2008:80), he rejected their political potential in total. This is because "they reject all political, and especially all revolutionary, action; they wish to attain their ends by peaceful means, and endeavor, by small experiments, necessarily doomed to failure, and by the force of example, to pave the way for the new social Gospel" (Marx, 2008:79).

This is the tradition I see Badiou being in line with, the tradition that insists on the certainty of its political truth, therefore rejecting both affective and transcendental dimension from the possible ways of conceptualizing community and politics. The concept of utopia[14] is, therefore, often dismissed in the Marxist discourse. It is the concept that Marx himself, while developing

[14] The concept of utopia is highly complex and contentious one in the philosophical tradition in general, but especially within the Marxist discourse. The way I am using it here, as it will be evident from my discussion of Muñoz and Bloch, is to signify political optimism that does not, however, claim that it holds the truth about the political future that is coming.

his method of historical materialism, argues against. However, this is exactly the concept I would like to engage with in the last subsection of my thesis, in an attempt to look, once more, into the possibility of understanding community and the politics outside of the model that takes the universal truth as its starting point.

5.5. Love, Hope and Not-Yet-Conscious

In the history of Christian theology, love and hope are often understood as relating to each other. Here, I want to briefly introduce the way Søren Kierkegaard, following Christian tradition, understands the relation between the two. Kierkegaard is useful for my argument because his philosophy is deeply related to the theological questions, and because he explicitly engages with the concepts of hope and love, and the way they relate to the idea of community. For him, love and hope are inevitably connected, as there is no hope without love. Also, the hope for oneself is always connected with the hope for others: "without love [there is] no hope for one's self, with love [there is] hope for all others; to the same degree as one has hope for one's self, to the same degree one hopes for others, for to that same degree one is loving" (Kierkegaard, 1995: 210). The hope, thus, stands between the one and the community – it is through the hope for a better future for us that we simultaneously hope for a better future for the other. Through this, the axis of hope-love allows for projections of the communal love. These projections, however, as long as they are within the realm of hope, are inevitably uncertain.

Uncertainty is what lies at the very heart of the idea of hope. Saint Paul himself posited that "we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it?" (Romans 8:24). In other words, if we claim that we know, with full certainty, what is following, if we claim we have the ultimate and unmistaken answer about our future,

there is no place for hope anymore. There is, also, no place for an open-endedness, i.e. there is no place for political alternatives to one and only truth.

This question of the political future and the possibility of offering a detailed blueprint for the political community to come, stands as the schism within the leftist discourse from its very beginnings. The most vivid embodiment of this debate is the famous disagreement between Marx and anarchist Bakunin, as the anarchist position rejects the imposition of a political structure of the future society, recognizing it as an authoritarian gesture, and calls for the process of developing of this new structure, a process which outcome we cannot predict from our current perspective (Thomas, 1980; Gouldner, 1982).

Although this debate has a long history, this suspicion towards the certainty of the project of political future is what the Marxist discourse still categorically refutes as apolitical and passive stance. If we look at the Saint Paul's verse that immediately follows the one quoted above, we can see the reason for this claim more clearly: "But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:25). For sure, this could be read as a call for patience in the sense of passivity – sitting back and hoping God will do the all work that we will benefit from. This understanding of the social and political existence is something Christian discourse is often accused of, especially from the Marxist position. As I argued earlier, these are the very grounds on which Marxist discourse rejected utopian socialism that preceded it. Finally, this is the main reason behind the leftist' rejection of the possibility of understanding community through the idea of love: our political project loses some of its confidence and certainty if we allow for the transcendent category such as love to be recognized as playing an important part in it. This is, once again, why Badiou refuses to acknowledge the affective dimension in the sphere of politics – in order to reiterate the grand truth of the communist future. However, there

is another way that Saint Paul's quote could be read, and that is a call for patience about our knowledge regarding the forms of futurity we are projecting our desires and needs to.

It is also important to recognize that even in the Marxist discourse there are thinkers that do not completely deny this uncertainty hope stands for. Ernest Bloch's political interest in the concepts of hope and utopia are strongly related to his recognition of what we do not actually know – what he terms "not-yet-conscious".

"That is: a relatively still Unconscious disposed towards its other side, forwards rather than backwards. Towards the side of something new that is dawning up, that has never been conscious before, not, for example, something forgotten, something rememberable that has been, something that has sunk into the subconscious in repressed or archaic fashion." (Bloch, 1996:11)

For Bloch, then, the not-yet-conscious is the conscious to come.

For sure, Bloch shows an interest in the discipline of psychoanalysis, evident from the fact that his term not-yet-conscious is developed directly from the engagement with psychoanalytic discourse. However, he is highly critical of the particular psychoanalytical notion of unconscious because, according to him, it posits the consciousness into the past. In his assessment of psychoanalysis, he claims that:

"People thought they had discovered that everything present is loaded with memory, with past in the cellar of the No-Longer-Conscious. What they had not discovered was that there is in present material, indeed in what is remembered itself, an impetus and a sense of being broken off, a brooding quality and an anticipation of Not-Yet-Become; and this broken-off and broached material does not take place in the cellar of consciousness, but on its Front." (Bloch, 1996:11)

This anticipation of not-yet-become is only accessible through not-yet-conscious that, as Muñoz claims, in only "knowable, to some extent, as utopian feeling" (Muñoz, 2009:3).

Moreover, for Bloch, we will get to know, we will acquire the knowledge of the future to come. This means his position is not only optimistic because it is aimed towards future but, and these two are closely related, because this consciousness will be acquired. Where it was not conscious, the conscious will come. This position is not surprising when we take into account that, after all, Bloch is a Marxist thinker. His understanding of future speaks directly to the eschatological notion that is present in the Marxism. In addition, the tool for uncovering this future conscious is the Marxist tool par excellence, because "[e]very age contains its horizon, its Front over which this Not-Yet-Conscious flows when the block of static and regressive thinking is lifted" (Bloch, 1996:11). This means that, in Bloch's argument, what is stopping us from reaching the conscious is the oppressive ideology that is imposed upon us.

This is the main difference between not-yet-conscious and epistemic transcendence: epistemic transcendence does not allow for this breach towards the fully knowledgeable, it does not see human subject as ever being capable of rationally conquering what is unknown. Although I read this insistence on the claim that what is not conscious will become conscious as another attempt to reassert the idea of human rationality that has its roots in Enlightenment, I still consider this aspect of Bloch's intervention into the Marxist tradition to be highly valuable. Not-yet-conscious and the call for concrete utopia is political statement situated somewhere between the big truth of Marxism and the epistemic transcendence of theological discourse. Where Badiou, and contemporary Marxist discourse in general, posit the truth, Bloch posits hope.

Finally, I want to go back to Esteban Muñoz once more, and his reading of Bloch, with the claim that "[t]he not-quite-conscious is the realm of potentiality that must be called on, and insisted on, if we are ever to look beyond the pragmatic sphere of the here and now, the hollow nature of the present" (Muñoz, 2009:21). Muñoz's main attempt is to emphasize the need for

politics that is oriented towards future. His message is aimed at the tendency of queer activism and theory to constraint itself to criticism of the present, instead of allowing itself to project the idea of different future. At the same time, his engaging with Bloch could be read as the implicit criticism aimed at the contemporary leftist theory and activism that abandoned the ideas of hope and utopia. In fact, he is explicitly addressing the fact that Bloch is forgotten in the Marxist discourse of the present, and acknowledging that his work "was taken both by liberation theology and the Parisian student movements of 1968" (Muñoz, 2009:2). Finally, Muñoz states it clearly that for him, hope is "both a critical affect and a methodology" (2009:4). In this merging of the affective and political dimension is where I see the ultimate political potential hope in connection to love.

Instead of insisting on the understanding of the community and the politics as untouched by the transcendental dimension represented by love as its generator, and the hope as the refusal of certainty of the ultimate truth of our political project, I claim that the best way to understand community is exactly through the notion of love as transcendence. First, because to allow for love is to add the affective dimension to the idea of community and, by this, to offer a more complex understanding of the space of politics. Second, because what this position offers is less definite, but more fruitful understanding of the politics to come, the structure of which is not known to us.

This is why I claim that the transcendental dimension that the materialist discourse allows for romantic love, should be seen as unavoidable in any attempt to conceptualize community and politics. Finally, this is where the power of love lies – in the perspective that allows it to remain crucial exactly in its transcendental sense even in the sphere of politics. This imperative is not only necessary in order to understand the community now, but to allow for alternative, still unknown, forms of communal relations in the future.

Conclusion

In this thesis I argued that, in order to understand community, we need to take into account its affective dimension. I explored the tendency of the leftist discourse to idealize the idea of romantic love to the extent that it frames it in a way similar to theological discourse, allowing for its transcendental dimension. This is in contrast with the way left understands relations within community. Since community is part of the sphere of politics, leftist discourse refutes the idea that the affective dimension can play a role there. I related this to the political project of the left: since Marxist philosophy claims that the future of communism is inevitable political truth, it rejects any idea that would contradict the rationalistic discourse this political truth is established in. Understanding of politics through engagement with emotional dimension stands as one of those ideas. Finally, I related this to the leftist suspicion to any kind of claims on transcendence in the sphere of politics, including epistemic transcendence that signifies the limits of our knowledge, and of our secular discourse.

By engaging with the authors that challenge this position, I argued for the contrary. Not only that the only way to understand community is by looking into its emotional dimension, but in order to generate political project aimed at future, it is important to recognize the limits of our rational discourse and the necessity of open-endedness of the blueprints for the future political structures. Finally, part of these political projections has to be love, taken in its transcendental meaning, as a force that can breach the boundaries towards the mutual political goal. Unlike the monolithic category of truth, love does not ask for the universal subject, but for the affective collective of differences.

At the very end, I would like to briefly acknowledge the limitations of my research. First, as the question of love is one of the ultimate philosophical questions, with long and diverse tradition of attempts to come to terms with it, it may seem that my engagement with just the

leftist discourse and the theological one is insufficient. However, I believe that the combination of these two gives a scope that is wide enough to generate some broader conclusions. Second problem is related to the fact that, when dealing with the leftist discourse, I am mostly focusing on one author – Badiou. In my thesis I offer reasons for choosing Badiou, as well as reasons I find him to be representative for the leftist discourse I am interested in. Nonetheless, and although I do not think that engagement with the wider set of leftist thinkers would drastically change my argument, it would probably result in a more nuanced argument. However, because of the technical limitations of this thesis, that endeavor had to remain outside of it. This is something that could be done in the future.

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