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Love, Compassion and Reason in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*

Sympathy is what we need my friend
Rare Birds (1969)

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ABSTRACT

One may say that *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (*OS*) offered in 1945 the first complete elaboration of the general approach proposed by Karl Popper, namely his 'critical rationalism', a bold generalization of the fallibilist falsificationism in the domain of the empirical sciences masterly proposed in *Logik der Forschung* (1934). The political content of *The OS* has been critically discussed. Nevertheless, not all people insist on the equally important moral dimension of the book, giving it its unity, I submit. Without morality, no critical discussion, no reason, no open society, let us say in a nutshell. I would argue that according to Popper, a strictly Christian morality of love would *not* be the appropriate emotional companion of critical rationalism, but that the less demanding moral emotion of *sympathy or compassion* is perhaps necessary to give it its force against violence. I give some support to this line of argument. In my view, Popper proposed a somewhat unarticulated critical rationalist 'emotivism' of sorts. The emotion of compassion is necessary for triggering our moral decisions and values, which are the ultimate basis of the choice for a reason against violence.

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I. A Polemical Defense of Non-Violence

Usually, a moderately oriented political philosophy is moderately defended, and the style of Aristotle, Locke, Hume, Montesquieu, Tocqueville, or of Mill and Aron or Rawls is rather moderate, contrary to the sometimes furious and accusatory styles of Plato, Hobbes, Marx, or Nietzsche and Sartre. One confirms a temperate policy with a moderate criticism of the alternatives. This is in order. In the same way, an immoderate philosophy can be expressed without any moderation, and with much violence. But with *The Open Society and Its Enemies*[1], we have to read a sort of 'violent' or very polemical defence of a moderate democratic policy and of toleration against violence and tyranny, even the one of the supposed 'wisest' (Plato). Written in New Zealand in 1942-43, it is itself a 'contribution to the war effort', and then an immoderate defence of liberal democratic moderation. Mill disguised as a Maori warrior[2].

Using perhaps unconsciously a famous pun by Hobbes,[3] Popper often claimed that progress in civilization comes from the slogan 'From swords to words!' One has to try to 'kill' ideas, never their supporters[4]. As noted, once by Lakatos, a theory in a Popperian space has something like a difficult life in a dangerous state of war. Try to refute theories, rather than confirm them! Anyway, this 'war with words' is polemical, but is nevertheless a cooperative venture, a 'friendly hostile cooperation' (*OS* [Popper, 2003], ch. 23). That nice oxymoron is not really contradictory. But against totalitarian ideologies, one may be not friendly but quite aggressive, if only because their supporters despise us as culprits of softness.[5] And one has to be ready to shoot back if they attack us[6] even in the theoretical world, the open society must be able to defend its principles with some weapons. I would accept that many critical theses defended in *OS* are too aggressive and objectionable (in particular against Aristotle), but one has to understand the context. The main

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[1] RKP, 2003, two volumes (first ed. 1945). Let me warmly thank David Miller for his corrections and remarks, and also the two tolerant and critical referees, and of course Ali Paya

[2] Many charges against Fichte or Hegel, even if borrowed partly from Schopenhauer or Kierkegaard, are not made in such a way that a majority of Academics would take seriously such a 'contribution to the war effort'. This is a pity, because Popper's longest book is full of positive and novel ideas. But admittedly anger is dense in the text (less so in the excessively long endnotes, which should not be overlooked!). Of course, many ideas came from *Logik der Forschung* (1934), the basic book on falsificationism, a kind of negative deductivism, related to the rule of inference that the falsity of the conclusion implies the falsity of at least one premise (re-transmission of the falsity). But only with *OS* there is a free use of the idea of *truth* (admitted by Popper with joy only after his meeting with Tarski in Vienna in 1935: in effect, he needed it, because he used the notion of falsity) and a generalization of falsificationism under the name of critical rationalism. The realm of what is rationally disputable and arguable, and not only meaningful, is larger than what is empirically testable (empirical science) or provable from axioms (mathematics).

[3] *Leviathan*, ch. 17. Hobbes claimed that conventions, 'without the sword, are but words', which is not utterly false.

[4] Some radical Islamists, nowadays, cruelly slaughter supporters of ideas they deem blasphemous. Fortunately, a majority of Muslims do not follow them. But they are influential and damaging.

[5] The (fortunate) mistake made by the Japanese military dictatorship and by Hitler regarding the democratic and supposedly 'soft' USA in 1941!

[6] Remember Churchill's remark of great historical importance against Chamberlain about the Munich Agreement in 1938, at a crucial moment. "You were given the choice between war and dishonour. You chose dishonour and you will have war." This choice between war and dishonour was a moral and political choice.

message to learn from *The OS* is a bold defence of critical rationality and of values such as liberty, equality, justice and peace.

II. Critical Rationalism

One of the most important chapters of *OS*, before the Conclusion (ch. 25), is chapter 24, "Oracular Philosophy and the Revolt against Reason". This chapter will be my main subject of study. It is rightly well known as the first explicit discussion of critical rationalism, opposed to irrationalism as well as to dogmatic rationalism, which has been over-represented in the history of philosophy since Plato. The typical irrationalist would claim that will (especially will to power) and strong collective passions are much more important in human life and in social life than reason, criticism, debate, impartiality and compromise, rather proofs of weakness. Force or strong collective emotions have to dominate right and reason. Against that point of view, and also against dogmatism, Popper proposed a now famous characterization of the critical rationalist approach:

> I may be wrong and you may be right, and by an effort, we may get nearer to the truth.[1]

Note how original and provocative is a definition of the rationalist attitude that begins with 'I may be wrong'. This is more akin to a moderate skepticism than, for instance, to the (dogmatic) pseudo-Euclidean style of Spinoza's *Ethics*. And let's also remark that rationality is defined by a dialogue, not only by a personal virtue. But a critical rationalist is someone who does not restrain herself from defending a bold hypothesis H, even if she is ready to discuss it with somebody who thinks that non-H is true (or any other hypothesis T incompatible with H). But she has to contemplate a second thought, namely that perhaps her favourite conjecture could be false after all, and then she says to her interlocutor: 'I may be wrong' at the same time as she proposes H as the best candidate for the choice to be made. Even if she believes sincerely that her pet hypothesis is the best one, she has a reflexive thought which pushes her to suggest to herself: 'Even if I'm now quite sure I'm right, yet I am fallible, and I may be wrong, and my counterpart, who defends non-H, may be right, to my surprise. Let me listen to his criticisms, and let's freely discuss together more deeply the problem-situation!' In this manner, a critical discussion can even be a joy. *Gaya Scienza!* Notice that a critical discussion is not a non-cooperative game (in the sense of Game Theory) where each one wishes to win or to obtain the maximal possible benefit. We have a common goal, truth, which transcends us, and our perhaps strong opposition, once formulated clearly and argumentatively, constitutes a good baseline for a common inquiry, a common and cooperative (even if often opposite) effort, because 'truth is hard to come by.'[2] A further point that is not explicit in this characterization of the critical rationalist attitude is that our efforts guided by

[1] *OS*, ch. 24, I, p. 249. All the non-referenced quotations which follow come from this chapter, followed in its own order.

[2] Cf. *CR*, ch. 19, p. 373 (and also ch. 17, 3, (8), on the 'moral framework' of a society). Notice also that, as early as 1945, Popper suggested, in the short description of the critical rationalist approach, a possible cognitive progress through more or less approximate truths, that is, false theories but nearer to the truth, years before his (unsuccessful) attempt to formalize the intuitive idea of *verisimilitude* in the Tarskian Calculus of Contents.

the regulative idea of truth would have to be controlled by another regulative idea, one of the 'argumentative function of language', in Popper's words, that is, the idea of the *validity* of an argument[1]. Logic is the organon of criticism[2]. The other discussant may discover an affirmation of the consequent in my reasoning or a gap in one of my not wholly explicit deductions (which are often enthymemes).

That is enough for a good critical debate to begin. And there is nothing more rational than a good critical debate, as Popper taught. There is some normative moral dimension in taking logic seriously: one *has to* accept all the deductive consequences of what one asserts (an infinite set) or else change one's mind about at least one of the premises. Other people are probably better than I am at deducing surprising conclusions from my own hypothesis (see the 'Robinson Crusoe argument', below). That was, in effect, what Socrates did, after all. I surmise that nothing of the sort exists for the dubious notion of ampliative, inductive pseudo-consequences: if you tell me that some Frenchmen are knaves, you are surely right, but I do not have the right to impute to you the (probably) false ampliative 'consequence' that all Frenchmen are knaves. You commit yourself only to accept all the deductive content of what you assert. In an exchange of arguments, ampliative 'arguments' cannot be critical arguments. Of course, if you generalize your position to a larger class, which is perfectly in order as a conjecture, then I may discuss critically any novel deductive consequence of what you assert now as a bolder guess than previously stated.

The modesty of each searcher for truth, the dependence on others, the necessity of intersubjective checks and especially of *social institutions* for debating are overwhelming themes in chapter 24, just as they were in the previous chapter.

Let us return to the putative debate between critical rationalism and irrationalism. Popper claimed that irrationalism is logically superior to dogmatic rationalism, because the latter demands that every proposition, including itself, be supported by argument, but this cannot be done. Then, Popper concluded that critical rationalism is more consistent, like irrationalism recognizing itself to be the result of a non-self-critical choice, in its case, an 'irrational faith in reason'. The Popperian W. Bartley III was probably right in reacting against this apparently enormous concession to an irrational fideism. His Comprehensive Critical Rationalism (CCR) escapes this irrational jump. Everything, including CCR, is open to critical examination. I do not want to discuss here this bold proposal[3]. But I submit that a critical rationalist need not confess to an irrational choice, in Popper's words, as if it were a case of a choice like that of Buridan's ass, solved by playing heads or tails (as von Neumann recommended in 1944 for such choices). 'I could have chosen irrationalism equally well, but chance made me a rationalist!' This would be deeply unsatisfactory.

The concept of choice is a very important feature of Popper's worldview. Choices appeared in the universe with animals or perhaps even unconsciously with plants. As human beings, we are

[1] See *CR*, ch. 4 (1948), in the end, and *OK*, ch. 6, §14.

[2] See for ex. *CR*, 1, p. 64, and the important ch. 20, 'What is dialectic?' (1940).

[3] See David Miller, *Critical Rationalism. A Restatement and Defence*, Open Court, 1994.

responsible for most of our choices: even if we never invented an institution (slavery, say), we are responsible for choosing to support it, to destroy it, at least to reform it, or not do anything: that is the burden of liberty. (In that example, slavery must be destroyed.)

Incidentally, the three (or four) possible attitudes in the face of a fact are an argument for the (Humean) idea that norms cannot be derived from facts, an idea endorsed by Popper with new arguments. One has to use at least one normative premise. Do not say that norms and standards (and proposals)[1] could be derived from facts, because the three possible attitudes are always our responsibility. One cannot be derived from slavery that one has to accept it or not. We have to struggle against it because it is wrong and makes human beings suffer. This gap between facts and norms is even, according to Popper, a legacy of the opening of society in the time of Protagoras and Lycophron (Critical Dualism, ch. 5, III).

III. The Moral Basis of the Choice of Reason

There is no purely logical argument in favour of critical rationalism, which to the contrary, demands the use of logic, but there are good moral considerations that plead for the choice of the critical rationalist approach. And this is exactly what Popper advanced in this dense chapter, escaping, in my opinion, a sheer 'decisionism'. Popper is just defending the primacy of morality. He puts into examination the moral 'consequences' (practical effects) of the two choices. The choice of irrationalism can give way to aggressive violence since 'anything goes', so to speak. If so, the choice of critical debate, when it is possible, is better because it is nothing but the decision to replace the bloody war between men with the 'war' between their ideas in a peaceful environment: a critical rationalist ecological niche, as Bartley would have put it, an institutional environment favourable to the emergence of different fruitful new ideas, submitted to severe criticisms, as if this was the common rule of the game. Rationality drastically reduces the kind of 'weapons' we may use. Like some competitive sports, science and rationality simulate violence without any real violence, in principle. The aversion to violence, omnipresent in the nasty Hobbesian State of Nature (*bellum omnium contra omnes*), is also for Popper a primitive attitude[2]

[1] See *OS* 2, Addendum 1 (1961), §§ 12 and 13, with a reference to an important distinction by L. J. Russell between *propositions* (There are many very poor people) and *proposals* (Let's establish some minimum subsistence income!). A proposal as such cannot be refuted, but it can be discussed: is it feasible nowadays? Has it not some bad unintentional and unwanted effects? Is there not any other proposal to solve the problem? Moral and political proposals can be and have to be critically discussed. One has to note that the first written critical discussion on the best regime (among three possible ones) is attributed by Herodotus to three Persian nobles, after the usurpation of a magus, in his *Histories*, III, 80. Popper quoted it in *OS*, I. According to Herodotus, the eventual King of the Kings, Darios, in favour of monarchy, of course, won in the end, in particular against Otanes, the supporter of *isonomia* (democracy). But the Athenians listening to Herodotus favoured *isonomia*, criticized later by Plato.

[2] I would add that before Popper, Hobbes was aware of what the former called "the paradox of freedom" (*OS*, ch. 12, II). Liberty must be limited for its own sake. The authority of a State is then necessary (against radical libertarians). The difference is that for Hobbes, there was necessarily one singular exception to the equal limitation of liberties (or rights), namely the Sovereign, preferably a monarch, as it was for Hegel. He or She is the *actor* who *represents* us (*Lev.* ch.16), but we are the *authors* of all his or her acts, even against us. Despotism. Leaders must be checked, as the 'magistrates' were in Athens, the grandmother of the open society. But Athens suffered many civil wars, according to Hobbes, the first translator of Thucydides into English. My thesis is that politics must avoid two great evils: tyranny and civil war, often linked. Popper was more concerned with tyranny, but he knew by experience in his native country that civil war can easily give way to tyranny, at least because many people suffering from a civil war can hope for a 'Saviour', establishing again some strict order, with a new dictatorship. Liberalism

So that the choice in favour of critical reasons is a moral choice in the end. With this choice come its natural companions: open and pluralistic discussions, the habit of provoking and listening to objections, never mind their origins, toleration, freedom of thought and speech, institutions fostering debates and compromises, rules of discussion, bills of rights etc.

Admittedly, the moral choice of non-violence (outside self-defence) *contra* the choice of violence is difficult to argue with non-moral arguments[1], when moral normative affirmations are of the sort: "It is bad if an innocent person suffers", or "It is bad to regard men as if they were of unequal natures according to the colour of their skin", or "There are no slaves by nature (*contra* Aristotle)", or "It is wrong to claim that women have to be subjugated", or "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong"[2]. Of course, if these assertions are moral primitives, so to speak, the irrationalists can claim that our choice in their favour is as irrational as their own choice. It seems to me that a critical rationalist defending them as giving reasons in favour of the repudiating of irrationalism is in a much better situation than if one could only say that one is a critical rationalist just because one had to choose arbitrarily, like a pure existentialist à la Sartre. But Popper insists that the moral analysis of the consequences of the two attitudes may 'influence' our choice, without 'determining' it: he always wants to save our responsibility, for instance the choice of peace over war as a rule[3]. As Rousseau and Kant did, he makes appeal to our moral consciousness in the end, as Rawls would also do later. Consult yours in reading him (or me). Admittedly, that is not a decisive argument, because our moral consciousness is perhaps only an intuition that others may not have, but there is a time when we have to stop the argumentation. If some man does not regard raping as a wrong thing, we may try to convince him, but in the end, we have to decide that compassion for the victim has to be a virtue. Perhaps education can do something in this direction. But even if you are a Platonist in ethics, you would not do better to induce him to reform his behaviour. Moral demands are not of the type 'Two and two are four'.

Anyway, I conclude with Popper that the choice of reason is a moral choice buttressed by solid moral intuitions. Surely, again, a man educated to have the habit of beating his wife would not have the same intuitions. He is wrong, even if one cannot prove as a theorem that he is wrong. One can just make it clear that he could not approve his position, if he did not know that he is not a woman. This test would simulate the empathy he should have for any other human being, I submit.

Popper then comes back to the idea that the rationalist proposes to make appeal to reason to solve our inevitable disagreements rather than only to emotions and passions. The irrationalists, who are not committed to consistency, can sometimes make appeal to reasoning, when it is in their

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claims that there is a third way, the one that Schmitt despised (checks and balances, free discussion, protection of minorities, etc.).

[1] But that was in effect Hobbes's result in ch.13 of his great *Leviathan*: the rejection of the state of nature does not come from the moral Laws of Nature, which offer a rational solution to the awful predicament of anarchy, but by a more primitive natural *fear* of immediate violent death: the strongest of all emotions, also used in the rational and artificial building of the Leviathan-State.

[2] A statement by Lincoln, quoted by Rawls as an instance of what he called (moral) 'considered judgments', against which theories of justice can be tested.

[3] But, again, pacifism vis-à-vis Nazism was a moral failure.

interests, but they usually put emotions and passions above all ratiocination. They often profess a strong contempt for the mediocrity of democracy, deliberation, science and scientific oriented philosophies. Only they are deep thinkers, whose often obscure language is only reserved for the happy few, the masters, the seers. Popper does not, nevertheless, deny the importance of emotions and passions. Every reader of *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, and every person who met him, can say how emotional and passionate he was[1]. We are contemplating a passionate defence of reason over sheer passion as a (fallible) method to try to solve human problems.

Popper makes it clear that irrationalism can be more attractive if it distinguishes and prefers good emotions and passions (love, brotherhood, admiration, etc.) to bad ones (hatred, contempt, envy, cruelty). Good emotions can support good virtues, such as *philanthropia*, friendship, tolerance, and helping the weakest. This last propensity is perhaps what was most specific to Christianity in Antiquity, and Popper adopts it as a crucial component of social justice, as Rawls later would do. Then follow deep pages about love. I like to think that they should have attracted the attention of moral philosophers: 'I hold that he who teaches that not reason but love should rule opens the way for those who rule by hate'. That is a strong thesis. It would be necessary to elucidate the relationship of the Lutheranly educated but self-proclaimed agnostic Popper with Christianity, and that has been done[2] Globally, in *OS*, he is very positive about Christian morality[3] claiming that Jesus had an important role in the advancement of an open society. He was right in praising the unique character of Jesus and of his teaching. The beauty of the Gospels engenders much (good) emotion and deep moral reflection. But it would be far-fetched to read in them a plea for critical reason, open debates on everything, fallibilism, or refusal of all arguments from authority[4] Anyway, if somebody preaching love is disappointed, but still believes in emotions as the only way to solve disagreements, he or she may replace love by its contrary, hatred. That move is what Popper is much worried about. Because hatred triggers violence.

About the Gospels, it is clear enough to read in them a universal elevation of the idea of love (*agape*, *caritas*), which is present also in St Paul. One has first to have a strong love for God, and then for all our human brothers, even unknown to us. In what way can Popper have objected to that

[1] His lifelong passion for music is well known. His positive emotions are evident when he speaks of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven or Schubert. But his negative emotions led him to abandon impartiality towards Wagner or R. Strauss.

[2] See Kiesewetter, 1995.

[3] See the Conclusion or final chapter of *OS*: 'Has History any Meaning?', with a forceful rejection of the idea that God makes or intervenes in History (Augustine and Bossuet, not quoted by Popper, and Kant and especially Hegel), with positive references to Karl Barth. Popper claims that History has no meaning by itself, but that we can and must try to give it one. We are not only pushed by past causes, but also attracted by future ends (in an open future). Let us promote humanitarian and democratic ones! Meaning is our responsibility.

[4] Even if, as I surmise, Jesus is not responsible for any fallacy, it remains true that most of his premises are supposed to be true by faith (but see the quasi-Greek stichomythia between Jesus and Pilate at the end of St John's Gospel). Of course, no critical rationalist could support the idea that some words, even in the mouth of Moses or Jesus, or any another one, should be accepted because his or her authority.

eulogy of universal love as a solution to human disagreements? Is it not true that, after all, 'all we need is love'?[1]

Not so. One of the first of Popper's arguments is that love 'certainly does not promote impartiality', whereas it is a most important value in science and in the Law. Perhaps Popper did not remember that this remark on love was already a thesis of Hume's: love as such cannot be, and should not be, impartial and equal everywhere[2]. It is natural, so to speak, to love more one's children than other children in the world. Otherwise, incidentally, we would always be in mourning. And all the more so since to love our children implies *that we should take much care of them.* There is a moral division of labour: love first your family and your own friends and care especially for them. In love, we have preferences. Of course, we may give money or some of our time to save starving children in the world, by sympathy, but not love them as ours. A vivid feature of Jesus's teaching goes against the preference we have for our siblings and close friends: his followers must prefer him to their family. His authority is charismatic in the Weberian sense. When he meets Simon, he just says: 'Follow me!', and the eventual St Peter abandons everything, job and family, to follow Him: 'The Word of God first', so to speak. This is a striking but not at all a critical rationalist attitude, nor a Kantian one[3].

We can conclude from these remarks that we have perhaps to love or preferably to like every man/woman, *a priori,* or to try, as a primary reaction when meeting a stranger, to be open with him or her. This is a feature of openness, which to my mind incidentally is the motto of the whole of Popper's philosophy. That does not imply artlessly that we should become instantly familiar with every stranger: we have to maintain a certain diffidence for a while. As Popper says, we have to know a person to love him or her[4]. But we cannot and should not *love* everybody equally and in the same manner. Love is not like a level plain, but more like a field: it has singularities and various intensities, and this is not *per se* a fault. Popper said: "We cannot love 'in the abstract'; we can love only those we know". And he added: 'Even the best Christian … cannot feel equal love for all men'. This seems to be a strong criticism of the more 'extremist' part of Christian morality. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', is thought-provoking, if only because the notion of 'neighbour' is vague. In the Old Testament, it surely meant 'other Hebrews', but Christianity eventually universalized it to all human beings. Even more: 'Love your enemies!'. This is a beautiful demand, but is it always achievable? I doubt it seriously. And the question of forgiveness is a difficult moral question.

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[1] If one follows Emmanuel Lévinas, it was already the message of the Ancient Jews: the 'face' of the other imposes on me altruistic moral behaviour. I have some doubts about the sufficiency of such a foundation of morality in a Great Society, an 'abstract society' (*OS*, 10).

[2] The impartiality of our moral concerns is also a utilitarian demand.

[3] *CR*, ch. 7, p. 182.

[4] With perhaps the exception of the romantic idea of 'love at first sight' (Romeo and Juliet). But not all such loves are successful in the long term, if not completed by discussion. One should also speak of the crowds' love for leaders or 'stars' they do not know personally. Of course, Popper was appalled by the crazy collective 'love' for Hitler even in his home town. This adulation meant of course also hatred of the Jews, the Romani people, the Slavs. But some other collective 'loves' are harmless.

IV. Friend and Foe

Anyway, Popper remarks that even this commandment recognizes that mankind is divided 'into friend and foe', and he adds that it is 'a most obvious emotional division'. I would submit the bold conjecture that this could be a critical allusion to one of the main ideas of the fervently anti-liberal and even for a time Nazi jurist and political philosopher Carl Schmitt, namely that politics is *essentially* defined by the opposition between the friend and the enemy (*Freund und Feind*)[1] This is a seemingly fascinating idea: if you pretend not to have any enemies in the world, your enemy will soon designate you as his enemy[2], *nolens volens*. Liberal democracies, pretending to replace violence by deliberation would be naïve regimes, ignoring the very essence of political matters. War and exceptional decisions made by the omnipotent Leader in a state of urgency would be the essence of Government. A great reader of Hobbes, the German jurist claimed that Sovereignty was the master concept in Politics for great thinkers before him, such as Jean Bodin and Hobbes, including Rousseau and Lenin (not so for Popper). And who is Sovereign alone decides when exceptional situations occur, and for instance, decides to make war. One should notice that Marxism-Leninism was important in Schmitt's evolution: he took seriously, not without fear, the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat, and adopted, from his reactionary point of view, the Marxist aversion to parliamentarism. Marxists think history (before plain communism) is a violent struggle between class-enemies, as Popper remarks. The complete destruction of the class-enemy is a good aim for the working class, because it is its fundamental interest (the ruling class rather wants to impoverish its adversary, in order to increase exploitation, but of course not destroy it, being a 'vampire'). Schmitt was almost fascinated by this idea of 'enemies' in the political domain, even if he himself regarded communists as his enemies.

It would require much work to compare Schmitt's and Popper's approaches, as it would be with Leo Strauss or Arendt. Let us say that Popper regards the slogan 'friend and foe' as typical of closed societies, either small and tribal, or great and totalitarian. According to him, when following only our emotions, it will be 'natural … to divide mankind into friend and foe; into those who belong to our tribe, to our emotional community, and those who stand outside it' (ch. 24, §III). It is as if, contrary to his anti-psychologist stance (*OS*, ch. 14), but admittedly not seldom consciously transgressed in *OS*, Popper suggested that behind the coldness of Schmitt's abstract distinction, was hidden a strong emotional and archaic drive, inherited from our ancestors, and as such 'natural'. Popper would have perhaps admitted the factual claim that, as a rule, when a community like a nation comes to be attacked, people tend to forget their own internal divisions in order to fight together with the aggressor. That was the case in 1914, for example, in Germany and in

[1] *The Concept of the Political*, ch. I, II. Popper quoted Schmitt in a footnote in *Poverty of Historicism* (p. 79), written for the most part in 1935, and partly in 1942. He said (*OS*, II, ch. 12, V) he was much indebted to Aurel Kolnai's book, *The War against the West* (1938), where the author, in the Conclusion, said the following: 'We reject the 'Friend and Foe' theory of Herr Professor Carl Schmitt.' This evidence seems to me to amply coroborates my conjecture. One may note that Kolnai left Vienna in 1937, like Popper.

[2] Just see once more some violent radical Islamists nowadays.

France, where even self-proclaimed Marxists joined their Government against the enemy. In France, Jules Guesde joined the 'Union Sacrée', with Catholics and 'Bourgeois', at the beginning of the Great War. But Popper refuses to accept that the definition of the enemy is the essence (if he had kept that problematic concept in his theoretical workshop) of all politics and to establish it as a normative distinction, like right and wrong. In his mind, politics, which has to be based partly on morality, is in an open society marked by another distinction: the one between the logic of (state) power and the logic of (individual) liberty[1]. Ironically, this is perhaps even more Hobbesian than Schmitt's position. The central object of *Leviathan* was the demarcation between the Sovereign's laws (interdictions) and the citizen's liberty or natural right. Of course, as a liberal, Popper insists, against Hobbes, on the desirability of a more or less minimization of the powers of the *limited* state and a Kantian-like maximization of the liberties or rights of citizens, if compatible with the same liberties for all. But Popper was not favourable to a libertarian minimization à la Nozick (*laissez-faire*), not to speak of the more radical demand of some libertarians towards deleting the State. Because the main aim we have to assign to the unfortunately necessary State is the protection of its citizens from violence but also from such misfortunes as epidemics, misery, illiteracy or unemployment. A moral demand is the origin of the most important of Popper's proposals in political matters.

What can surprise the reader, is that Popper, refusing the opposition between friend and foe, had chosen the word 'enemy' as central to his own title. He famously rejected his friend Ernst Gombrich's proposal in 1943 to replace 'enemies' by 'adversaries' ('Enemies better!') A Schmittian could welcome this: 'For once, a staunch liberal recognizes that the elimination of the opposition between us and our enemies is a blind alley! Politics again! But why does the same man criticize the opposition between friend and foe in a book whose title clearly assumes such an opposition, and even with the strong word *enemy*?' That would be, admittedly, a not bad Schmittian argument. An open society has always had and perhaps will always have enemies (but one cannot predict history), and Popper has even explained in Chapter 10 why the 'strain of civilization' is a difficult experience. It is human to have a nostalgia for the security of a more maternal, so to speak, closed society, where one is not every day confronted with personal choices to make, that is, with no psychological security. That is why we need families and close friends. My claim is firstly that it would in effect be a *prima facie* good argument for a Schmittian: one does not escape the opposition between friends and enemies so easily. What I would respond nevertheless is that even if the defenders of the idea of an open society must be prepared to have and confront enemies, who are ready in the end to destroy it, the opposition between the Open Society and its enemies is not at all *constitutive* of the former. It is just a fact, tentatively explainable, but not a conceptual feature of an open society, that *could* exist without any enemies. They are not its principle of unity, no more than they were constitutive of the Aristotelian concept of the unity of a *polis*, which was for him civic friendship (*philia politike*) and also a common and moderate constitution regulating a

[1] See *OS*, I, about Machiavelli and Pareto, and *CR*, ch. 17, §3.

multiplicity (against the excessive unity wanted by Plato). But we must not forget forever the idea of the enemy. Let's be cautious and ready.

V. Cooperation, conflict and minimizing evitable sufferings.

Another argument of Popper against putting emotions, even good ones (love, friendship, even compassion), above reason, is subtler. It is according to me the eternal problem of *cooperation* between people with different agendas, aims or even desires. Except in the fantastically utopian Marxian communism, this problem is everlasting: let's think of the free-rider problem (understood by Hume and Rousseau), which reveals itself as a multi-agent Prisoner's Dilemma. Popper maintains that if love cannot promote impartiality, 'it cannot do away with conflict either'. That is a very bold assertion. Many people, Christians and perhaps Buddhists for example, would say that love is the unique solution to human conflicts[1]. Given that he had already maintained that love cannot be impartial, and that 'abstract love' makes little sense, Popper uses then an argument with only two persons loving each other. A concrete love:

> Tom likes theatre and Dick likes dancing. Tom lovingly insists on going to a dance, while Dick wants for Tom's sake to go to the theatre. This conflict cannot be settled by love; rather, the greater the love, the greater will be the conflict. [2]

The use of emotions only can give way in the end to violence[3], while rational discussion alone can lead to reasonable compromise. I would guess something like this, in the mouth of Dick: 'Well, my dear old Tom, let's discuss. Why don't we go once to the theatre and the next time, go dancing, in turn? As for the first time, let's play heads and tails: what have you to object against this proposal of mine? Tell me yours, if any, please.' This is a (short) rational discussion: "I may be wrong, and you may be right, etc." (replacing 'truth' by 'a good compromise'). Notice that love here is not at all *replaced* by reason, it is helped by reason to solve a potentially violent conflict[4] a peaceful

[1] Incidentally, love implies compassion but is stronger.

[2] Again *OS*, 24, III. When reading it, more than forty years ago, I had the idea that Popper alluded perhaps to a masculine homosexual couple. Neither he nor I had anything against the possible use of such an example, but it seemed to me a bit strange, with 'Tom lovingly'. Surely it means 'by friendship'. As David Miller told me, 'Tom' and 'Dick' can refer to anybody unknown, as in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* (1), Act II, sc. IV. Popper seems to anticipate a bit the battle of sexes, in Game Theory, with no fair Nash equilibria. The choice envisaged by him, from the hypothesis of a strong love/friendship, is not even an equilibrium: for love, each one would attend alone the spectacle or activity he dislikes, to please the other one (with the hypothesis of non-coordination); each one, alone, will regret his decision. Popper's idea is that the use of reasonable discussion is necessary to settle coordination and cooperation problems between equals. That is a very good argument. The privilege of mankind is *Logos* and *dia-logos*. To give one's word is a mean to secure agreements.

[3] Perhaps Popper had in mind some Freudian ideas: he regards psycho-analysis as a pseudo-science, full of 'immunizing strategies' (Hans Albert), but he recognized that some of Freud's hunches would belong to a scientific psychology, even the 'ambivalence' of drives, which may be sublimated. Hard to test, but not utterly impossible.

[4] One flirts here with Hume's radical thesis that reason can be only 'the slave of the passions', but critical discussions can take place also in the search for the common good of the city and above all in science, where passions seem to be the slaves of the growth of knowledge. No science, no mathematics without emotions, no science without a passion for truth and for well conducted critical debates. But the result of a good rational examination of competitive theories has to be (provisionally) accepted as the best so far. *As rationality needs logic as an organon, it cannot be only the slave of passions.* A passionate scientist may support her preferred or even loved theory, but if it leads to inconsistencies, internal or with well tested empirical results it forbids, she has to abandon it or to revise it seriously, with grace.

discussion does not hinge on an abolition of love and friendship in concrete relations. On the contrary, many loving couples would do better with calm discussions than with insults and threats that can hurt and never be forgotten. That is also why civilization has invented a third party, the judge, in principle impartial[1].

But this is definitely not Popper's last argument 'against the idea of a rule of love'. Loving a person 'means to make him happy'[2]. Here Popper's thesis will be categorical: in his dismissal of the idea that personal and private relationships (which are the rule in an archaic tribe) could be a paradigm for social and political relations, he is consistent in stating that 'of all political ideals, that of making people happy is perhaps the most dangerous one'. Totalitarian regimes, but also classical utilitarianism[3] and excessive paternalism are his possible targets here. 'The attempt to make heaven on earth invariably produces hell': an Orwellian point before the masterpiece *1984*. There is here accordingly an intellectual mistake about what are our moral duties:

> It is our duty to help those who need our help; but it cannot be our duty to make others happy, since this does not depend on us, and since it would only too often mean intruding on the privacy of those towards whom we have such amiable intentions. The political demand for piecemeal (as opposed to Utopian) methods corresponds to the decision that the fight against suffering must be considered a duty, while the right to care for the happiness of others must be considered a privilege confined to the close circle of their friends … Pain, suffering, injustice, and their prevention, these are the eternal problems of public morals, the 'agenda' of public policy (as Bentham would have said). The 'higher' values should very largely be considered as 'non-agenda', and left to the realm of *laissez-faire*. Thus, we might say: help your enemies[4]; assist those in distress, even if they hate you; but love only your friends.

As is well known, Popper proposed to replace the Benthamite slogan 'Maximize happiness!', by the more modest 'Minimize suffering!' (ch. 9, note 2), a negativism not without any link with his conception of democracy (a regime where leaders can be eliminated without bloodshed) and of course, as he says himself, with his falsificationism in the methodology of the empirical sciences. Just as falsity is easier to grasp than truth (by the apperception of a contradiction in the

[1] See *CR*, ch. 19, p. 356.

[2] Popper refers to Aquinas, and St Thomas used the authority of Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*.

[3] In my opinion, Popper here anticipates a little the criticism of Utilitarianism by Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*, in particular its § 30, with a criticism of the grand utilitarian calculator who identifies himself or herself with the whole society by a kind of *fusion by love*, making disappear 'the distinction between persons'. Incidentally, Utilitarianism as a social morality is not egoist, as it is caricatured by Marx, but too much altruist, *demanding* that each of us do all supererogatory acts: a moral for saints and heroes, and a misunderstanding of what are our moral duties.

[4] This shows that Popper, correctly reading the Gospel, does not interpret 'enemy' here as *polemios*: a remark made by the Catholic Schmitt about the Gospel, which commands us to love our *echthros*, the neighbour who hates us, not our *polemios*, our war enemy. During a war, to help our enemy is treason. But Popper would have claimed, one has to help him if he is wounded and disarmed.

consequences of a theory, within itself or with well tested empirical reports), evil is easier to grasp than happiness (a quite subjective notion): a raped woman, a motherless child, a wounded soldier, a tortured human being, or even a sick or unemployed person, these are or should be our concerns. To alleviate suffering is also the aim of medicine since the Greeks, after all. Of course, we should not establish a systematic Negative Utilitarianism, if only because, contrary to general or positive Utilitarianism, it has an optimum, that is, the elimination of all suffering, only possible by the elimination of all sentient life. All life contains some suffering, for example the mourning for a close friend's death. It is only a liberal regulative idea for governments and other public decision-makers. It reminds me of a phrase by the great French/Swiss liberal Benjamin Constant, directed to the attention of governments: 'Be content to be just, but my happiness, I take care of it myself!' (1820).

VI. A morality triggered by compassion. Some remarks about Nietzsche and Marx.

However, even higher and quite nice emotions such as love or even compassion cannot and should not *replace* the use of critical deliberation in politics and in 'institutions controlled by reason' (but also in private life and education). But we have seen than even a 'negative' policy is itself based on a good understanding of our moral duties, and that these have to do with compassion, as it was taught for example by Rousseau (*pitié*) and Schopenhauer (*Neminem laede, immo omnes quantum potes, juva!*). They were despised by Nietzsche, whom Popper could have counted among the enemies of the open society. The smart author of *Zarathustra* literally preferred strongly hierarchical societies, with an inclination to the Hindu system of castes. His anti-Platonism has nothing to do with Popper's (on political matters), because he saw Plato as a rationalist Socratic, and did not consider his aristocratic stance, nor the system of three castes in the *Republic*. His more or less intense hatred of reason[1] and liberal discussion is the same if reason is dogmatic or critical. Nevertheless, of course, we should read him as we should read Plato, Hegel or Marx, because he is brilliant and has often awesome philosophical insights. Popper approves only of his criticism of Wagner…, but makes it clear that he does not like at all the 'blonde brutes' of the *Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche opposes 'us', the race of the masters, to 'them', the slaves, and Christianity is a revolt of the slaves. Nietzsche's case for being a precursor of *some* fascist ideas is perhaps better founded than it is in Hegel's case, except the Statolatry and the German nationalism of the latter. But Nietzsche wrote clearly, and Popper's hatred of Hegel, and Heidegger as well, has something to do with their elitist jargon.

He is much more positive with Marx, who could have been, as Popper says of him, a 'benefactor of humanity', when he condemned the effects of the unjust 'unrestrained capitalism', as Popper called it, if his very Utopian communism had not been a predictable disaster, eliminating all human institutions, with their faults, but also with their indispensable qualities: markets, property, banks,

[1] With some exceptions, e. g. his praise for the French Enlightenment in *Human, all too Human*. Perhaps Popper excused him for his excesses because he wrote lucid and clear German. Anyway, besides his genius, Nietzsche was not a friend of the open society. But neither was he a friend of State worship.

state, police, Law, division of labour, countries, money, even exchange are suppressed in 'the last phase of communism'. What remains? Perhaps *love* between associated enthusiastic workers as self-managers, with no savings, no money, no capital, no incentive and no information about the demand for commodities (a Hayekian point in favour of the market). Childish. Popper has also concocted a quite astute methodologically individualist argument against the classless society (ch. 18, II). The unity of the proletariat comes from the struggle of classes[1], a good 'dialectical' argument for Marx's praise of negative oppositions as the main forces in history. When the Revolution is finished, the working class's enemy, the Bourgeoisie, is dead. There remains only one class, and a marvellous classless society emerges (in two phases). But, Popper remarks, the struggle of classes is not a duel: if it is ended, the former unity of the proletariat has not any more reason to exist, from the Marxist dialectical argument that its consciousness of class and its unity came from its struggle against the dominant class. Differences of classes may arise again from inside the no longer unified working class. What is true of individuals is not as a rule true of collectives, which are not as unified as individuals. Differences of classes are presumably inevitable in great societies, even if the least advantaged have to be the concern of governments, for moral reasons. 'Rigid class differences' are evil, according to Popper[2]. Not because of envy, but for the sake of justice and peaceful cooperation.

VII. The ethical basis of rationalism.

Anyway, it should be clear that for Popper the preference for critical reason is in the end based on morality:

> Ethics is not a science. But although there is no 'rational scientific bases for ethics, there is an ethical basis of science and of rationalism.

These are quite strong assertions, if only because it is rare to see Popper using the vocabulary of 'basis'[3] And of course, he cannot deny that the unended quest for truth is an inspiring ideal in itself. But, more intriguingly, it appears in effect that the understanding of our genuine moral duties for Popper is not essentially a question of reason, but primarily a question of compassion or sympathy, that is, the emotion of pain when one sees others suffering. Including animals, Bentham would have added. People lacking this kind of emotion are psychopaths, or very badly educated people (as were the young Germans in the *Hitlerjugend*). Of course, this emotion has to be rationally discussed, and cannot be our sole concern. But I do not see how our moral duty of helping those who need our help could exist without it. One has to be outraged by unnecessary suffering. Most people in Antiquity and even till the 19th century were not much concerned with the slaves' suffering. We made significant progress. Slaves in America or prisoners in Nazi or Soviet camps trigger our sympathy and our moral indignation.

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[1] Almost a Schmittian point of sorts.

[2] See *CR*, ch. 19, p. 370.

[3] The basic statements in *Logik der Forschung* are better called 'test statements', themselves revisable.

In breaking down the walls of the closed society, the open society eventually extended to the whole of humanity, the domain of those deserving our moral concern when they suffer, even if one cannot help everybody. But surely Popper was right in his advice to use rational discussion and compromise instead of love for solving disagreements. In an 'abstract society', you are not committed to loving everybody you meet and everybody whose services you use, but you ought to respect them as you respect an opponent in a rational discussion, or in sports, with their impartial rules (often British, but also Japanese, etc.). But compassion is less demanding than love, and it seems to me to be the emotional basis of altruistic morality. One has not to love a fallen person in a street, but one has to help her to get up. Popper had sharply opposed altruism to egoism, and individualism to collectivism (ch. 6, V). This brings to light two possibilities hidden by the usual confusion between individualism and egoism, namely, 'collective egoism', the morality of closed societies, or tribalism, and 'individualist altruism', genuine humanitarianism, the morality most appropriate to open societies. Now, altruism, magnificently evoked in the parable of the good Samaritan, is linked with the emotion of sympathy or compassion, in moral contexts[1]. This importance of sympathy means that even reason, based on ethics, has some emotional basis, in compassion and its companion, the hatred of violence, because violence always makes people die or suffer. To like other's suffering is cruelty or Sadism. Heartfelt dislike of other's suffering is compassion. Only the asymmetry between happiness and suffering, even if their borders are sometimes fuzzy, is the rationale for the choice for critical reason over the passion of love in the end (without eliminating good passions). One has found that even superior animals can feel compassion, as Karl's dog when he was a child and sick[2] Compassion is perhaps not as noble a value as is Love, it is weaker, but it is nevertheless a fundamental element of everyday morality in an open society. It fits well Popper's 'protectionist' theory of the state, which demands that the state not only protects us against the violence of our fellow citizens (civil war, crimes) or of hostile foreigners (the state's main purposes according to Hobbes: no protection, no obedience), but also helps the weakest, those who suffer. The liberal State has to support them in such a way that they are able to manage their happiness and their own 'plan of life'[3] as they wish, in respect of the legitimate claims of others, of their protective rights, and of their liberty not to be submitted to any other master than the impartial Law, as the Ancient Greeks would have said.

Conclusion

In an open society, compassion, or sympathy, controlled by reason, is an emotion not to leave wholly to *laissez-faire*, as the stronger emotion of love has to be according to Popper, but I submit that it must be one of the virtues of good leaders and of civic and virtuous citizens in just institutions

[1] In scientific contexts, the 'friendly hostile cooperation of many scientists' implies a respect for impartiality as a result of a peaceful *dissensus*, so to speak.

[2] *The Self and Its Brain* (with J. Eccles), part. III, Springer: 443.

[3] *The Self and Its Brain*, I, §42, p. 145, with a reference to Rawls.

which protect the weak against the strong or against bad luck[1]. Admittedly, one cannot 'suffer with a great number of people', as Popper says (ch. 24, V), but we may be prepared by sympathy to help some of those who need our help, without aiming to make them happy, as love demands. In the choice of a morally based critical rationalism, there is together a passion for truth, a strong preference for non-violence over violence, which causes much suffering, and with it the appeal to help those who need our help, regarded as sources of learning and equal sources of claims. Suffering is bad. Violence must be minimized. If Popper's view on morality flirts with emotivism, it would be a rational one: one must have a critical look at our first moves of sympathy (is perhaps this case of misery a fraud?) and we have to discuss together and examine critically our proposals for alleviating suffering.[2] To insist more than Popper on the emotional basis of morality is my own point, perhaps put a little bit differently from what he said, because, refusing sheer emotivism, with no critical reason controlling it, he does not explain much which emotions bring forth our genuine moral duties, but, I hope, a point deeply with him in spirit.

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[1] Something like this is in line with Rawls's Difference Principle: see *A Theory of Justice*, §17, on fraternity.

[2] It may be that there is no morality without some strong emotions, contrary to the admirable Kantian attempt to base morality only on (Practical) Reason (with only the sentiment of Respect for the Moral Law in us). The Categorical Imperative, in particular in its second formulation (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1785) remains nevertheless a benchmark for moral behaviour (Always consider humanity ... as an end, and never simply as a means!). It is incidentally more emotional than the two other formulations, even if Kant would concentrate on the first one (Universalizability) in *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). Anyway, Popper, who admired Kantian morality, was not a classical emotivist, because there are genuine rational moral discussions (proposals are rationally debatable), but I submit that he never isolated morality from a strong rejection of violence and from a great concern for the suffering of others. He perhaps anticipated a bit the ethics of care, without its feminist background.