

The Loving State

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Abstract

I explore the idea that the state should love its citizens. It should not be indifferent towards them. Nor should it merely respect them. It should love them. We begin by looking at the bases of this idea. First, it can be grounded by a concern with state subordination. The state has enormous power over its citizens. This threatens them with subordination. Love ameliorates this threat. Second, it can be grounded by the state's lack of moral status. We all have reason to love everyone. But we beings with moral status have an excuse for not loving everyone: we have our own lives to lead. The state has no such excuse. So, the state should love everyone. We then explore the nature of the loving state. I argue that the loving state is a liberal state. It won't interfere in its citizens' personal spheres. It is a democratic state. It will adopt its citizens' ends as its own. It is a welfare state. It will be devoted to its citizens' well-being. And it is an egalitarian state. It will treat all its citizens equally. This constitutes a powerful third argument, an abductive argument, for the ideal of the loving state.

Keywords— The state · Love · Liberalism · Democracy · The welfare state · Equal treatment

1 Introduction

What attitude should the state take towards its citizens? In this paper, I want to explore an answer to this question. The answer is that the state should love its citizens. According to this view, the state's attitude towards its citizens should be akin to a good parent's attitude to their children. It should care deeply about their welfare. It should try to promote it to the greatest extent that it can. And it should enable them, as far as possible, to form and execute their own ends. These all stand testament to its love. This contrasts with the view that it should be indifferent to its citizens, or that it should take no particular attitude towards them at all. Such a state would be a pathologically uncaring state. And it contrasts with the view that the state's attitude towards its citizens should be merely one of respect, on which it takes great care not to violate its citizens' rights. Such a state would be an insufficiently caring state.

We should demand more than mere respect from the state. We should demand love.

My aim in this paper is to survey the contours of this idea: that the state should love its citizens. It is not to establish or prove it. It is to explore it. This exploration has two parts. First, we will explore what might motivate the idea. In section 2 we'll look at what I'll call the anti-subordination argument for it. The argument is that the vast power of the state threatens its citizens with subordination. To mitigate the problem, the state should love its citizens. In section 3 we'll look at what I'll call the "no excuses" argument for it. The argument is that flesh-and-blood folk have a good excuse for not loving their fellows. That would be too demanding; they have their own lives to lead. But the state has no such excuse, so it should love its citizens. These motivations identify potential bases for the idea that the state should love its citizens. They do provide evidence for this view. But that is not my main reason for advancing them. I advance them in order to better understand how the idea might be grounded, both epistemically and metaphysically.

Second, we will explore the nature of a loving state. In section 4 we see that a loving state is a liberal state. This is because love, when directed at adults, involves adopting their ends. This precludes interference with those ends. In section 5 we see that a loving state is a democratic state. For the state should love its citizens not just as individuals but as a collective. Thus, it should adopt its citizens' collective ends. In section 6 we'll see that a loving state is a welfare state. For a loving state will care enormously about the well-being of its citizens. Such care can only manifest itself in a welfare state. In section 7 we'll see that a loving state is an egalitarian state. This is because it will have the same, maximally loving, attitude to all its citizens. Thus it will treat them equally. It is intuitively plausible that the state should be all these things. That grounds a powerful third argument, an abductive argument, for the ideal of the loving state. In section 8 I'll address a challenge to this argument. The challenge insists that everything I explain in terms of love could be explained without talking about love at all.

But let's start with some ground-clearing. First, I'll make clear how we'll be conceiving of the state. By 'the state' I mean the organization made up of officials: bureaucrats, teachers, police officers, presidents, legislators.¹ We'll assume that this organization is a group agent. It is an agent in that it can have beliefs, desires, intentions and these are rationally integrated. When it wants something, it does what it sees as instrumental to the thing.² Indeed, the psychological life of states can be rich. States can be angry, afraid, apologetic, hopeful, indignant.³ They can have very many of the attitudes flesh-and-blood agents can have. They differ from flesh-and-blood agents in their constitution. The state is made of other agents rather than muscle and bone. Several authors have defended this way of thinking about organizations in general. They think

¹This is what Lawford-Smith (2019, 9–10) calls the "Citizen-Exclusive" state.

²This conception owes most to List and Pettit (2011).

³For some exploration of this, see Bjornsson and Hess (2017).

that it fits ordinary language, metaphysics of mind, social scientific practice.⁴ These points all apply to the conception of the state as a group agent. These defenses are, in my view, compelling. But, in any case, that the state is an agent is presupposed in this paper.

Second, let's make clear how we'll think about love. One might adopt an affective conception of love. On this conception, to love someone is to have certain feelings towards them. It is to feel warmth, affection, fuzziness for them. Additionally, one might think these feelings are essentially phenomenological: there's something it is like to feel affection for someone. But it's doubtful that group agents can have any phenomenology.⁵ So, this should lead one to doubt that group agents, like the state, can love anyone at all. Yet one needn't adopt this conception of love. There is another, equally valid, practical conception of love.⁶ On this conception, love consists in a set of practical and deliberative dispositions. It consists in how we're disposed to act towards our beloved and the weight we give them in our deliberations. When I say that the state should love its citizens, I mean love in the practical sense: it should act lovingly towards them. Now, one might think that, properly speaking, neither conception of love gives up the whole story. Perhaps love involves both feeling and action. But my concern is primarily with its practical aspects and so, at the risk of improper speech, by 'love' I'll mean practical love.

What exactly is practical love? For a start, it involves concern for one's beloved's well-being. When one loves someone, one weighs their interests heavily in one's deliberations, one tries to make their life better.⁷ Yet love does not amount to such concern alone.⁸ It also involves respect for their agency, for their ability to make rational choices. Love is not just about making one's beloved better off: it is about respecting and supporting their choices. We can see this in the context of romantic relationships. Suppose your beloved decides to be a writer. You know most writers fail; most never get their work out into the world. You think they would be much better off sticking in insurance. You should perhaps mention this to your beloved. But you should not harangue them on the issue. You may lay out your views, but not insist on them incessantly. Certainly you may not force your beloved to stick with the actuarial tables; you may not threaten to divorce them if they take up writing. You should respect and support their choices. To act otherwise, even out of concern for their well-being, would be unloving.

⁴For the first of these points see List and Pettit (2011, 1) and Epstein (2015, 198). For the second, see List and Pettit (2011, 19–41) and Bjornsson and Hess (2017). For the third, see Tollefsen (2002). For some other work in this vein, see (Tuomela 2013, Huebner 2014, Tollefsen 2015).

⁵For a recent statement of these doubts, see List (2016).

⁶The distinction is from Kant (1997, Ak. 4:399). He calls the affective conception of love "pathological love". More recently, Ebels-Duggan (2008) focuses on practical love. I think this is also the best way to interpret Frankfurt's target notion, in e.g., Frankfurt (2004, 42–43).

⁷This claim is common. For some examples, see Sidgwick (1877, 213) and Rawls (1971, 190) and Frankfurt (1998, 133). Velleman (1999, 353) denies it but see Abramson and Leite (2011, 698) for a reply.

⁸This insight comes from Ebels-Duggan (2008); we will return to her work later.

What this suggests, I think, is that practical love involves a high regard for one's beloved's agency as well as their well-being. This, at any rate, is what I'll assume in this paper. The idea is that people's well-being and agency both call for a certain kind of response, in the sense that they give us reason to do certain things. That people have well-being gives us reason to make their lives better. That they have agency gives us reason to support their choices. One's level of regard for someone, we'll say, is the extent to which one acts in the way called for by such morally significant features.⁹ My working assumption will be that to love someone is to have especially high regard for them in this sense. It is to be especially responsive to their well-being and agency, to give their interest and choices great weight when deciding what to do. We'll call this the high-regard account of love. Now, to be clear, one needn't accept this account of love to accept most of the arguments in this paper. One can rely on the intuitions underpinning it alone. But it gives us a concrete, general gloss on the nature of the loving state. A loving state is one that cares enormously about the welfare and agency of its citizens.¹⁰

I can now state my central thesis more precisely. It is that the state *qua* organization, *qua* group agent, should love its citizens in a practical sense; it should be lovingly disposed towards them. Let's now turn to the bases for this view.

2 The anti-subordination argument

We begin with the anti-subordination argument. This argument starts from a claim: asymmetries in power tend to create objectionable relationships. Consider, by way of illustration, the relationship between a master and a slave. The master has enormous power over the slave. This puts them in an objectionable relationship; a relationship of subordination. This relationship might have bad causal consequences. But it is also intrinsically bad: it is bad in itself. The slave, consequently, has a claim against being enslaved. A different example is Victorian marriages. In such marriages husbands had considerable power over their wives. This created an objectionably inegalitarian relationship. It subordinated the wife to the husband. This was bad in itself, and gave the wife a claim against being so subordinated. Unfortunately, such examples are legion. Consider the relationship between lord and serf, king and subject, boss and worker. These are riven by asymmetries in power. This makes the relationships

⁹There are other ways to use the word 'regard'—this is a somewhat technical sense. For another use of it in this sense, see Riedener (2020).

¹⁰How does the high-regard account interact with other well-known accounts of love? Generally, it is not their competitor. Suppose, for example, that one thinks that love is a response to the value of one's beloved (as does Velleman 1999, 360–61). We can see the high-regard account as spelling out what the practical responses to this value consist in. Alternatively, suppose that one thinks that love consists in valuing one's beloved and one's relationship with them (as does Kolodny 2003, 150–51). One can see the high-regard account as the practical response constitutive of this pattern of valuing. I advance the account not, then, to usurp these well-known views, but as a useful guide to love's practical aspects.

bad. It gives their subordinate participants a weighty objection to being in the relationship. More generally, the claim is that asymmetries of power are morally problematic. We should be discontented, deeply discontented, when one agent holds power over another.¹¹

This leads to a problem. For states have enormous power over their citizens. States can arrest, prosecute, ruin anybody in their territory. Now, of course there are some states in which one can contest such actions in courts. But this does not really level the playing field. The state's legal resources far outstrip those of any of its citizens. Few citizens can hope to defeat a state committed to imprisoning them. And the attempt to do so will itself be ruinous. The state is not deterred by years of court battles, appeals, police harassment. The prospect of this for most individual citizens is horrifying. Thus, we have a problem. It seems that the state's existence makes all us flesh-and-blood people its subordinates. We are in an inegalitarian relationship with the state, purely by dint of its enormous power over us. A solution to this problem would show how to mitigate the objection to the state's relationship to its citizens. It would show how we can live under a state without suffering subordination.

Now, one might deny that this is a real problem. Niko Kolodny (2019, 112) suggests that relationships of unequal power are only problematic when between natural agents. He thinks this because he thinks that natural agents don't have an intelligible claim to be the equal of artificial agents. He asks, rhetorically, "[w]hat would it even mean to be the equal of Indonesia, say, or the Roman Catholic Church?" (2019, 112). The argument is that, since it makes no sense to say that a natural agent is equal to, or subordinated by, an artificial agent, natural agents can have no claims concerning such relationships. Yet this argument does not seem to work. Equality with an artificial agent is perfectly intelligible. It simply consists in it not having asymmetric power over you. This follows straightforwardly from Kolodny's own account of equality, on which equality consists partly in equalities of power (Kolodny 2014, 295–99). A claim to be the equal of an artificial agent is just a claim against being subject to its asymmetric power. Thus, distinguishing between natural and artificial agents when it comes to egalitarian relationships seems unmotivated: if subordination to natural agents is bad, subordination to artificial agents should also be bad.¹² So the problem of state subordination is a real problem. Let us see whether it admits of a solution.

I think that it does. The solution is to ensure that the state loves its citizens. The key idea here is that the problem with inequalities of power can be ameliorated by love. When the person with superior power loves those who lack it, that mitigates the badness of the asymmetry. Thus, if the state loves its citizens, then the badness of its enormous power is ameliorated. There are two reasons to endorse this key idea. First, it helps make sense of why some anodyne

¹¹For this sort of claim, see Frank Lovett (2010) and Niko Kolodny (2014). Lovett's is rooted in neo-republicanism, especially that of Pettit (1997). Kolodny's view is, additionally, rooted in relational egalitarianism, especially that of Anderson (1999) and Scheffler (2003).

¹²There may of course be relationships we cannot have with artificial agents. My point is just that there is no reason to think subordination is among them.

inegalitarian relationships are indeed anodyne. The best examples are parental relationships. Parents have enormous power over their children. They can decide what they eat, where they live, where they go to school. But, typically, this is not a problem. The relationship between parents and children is not, usually, objectionable. It's nothing like the relationship between master and slave. Part of the explanation for this is that (good) parents love their children. They have much concern for the welfare of their children, and they help their children make their own decisions, insofar as they are able. Thus love, in this case, helps disable the objection to inequality of power.

Now, there is another possible explanation of why such relationships are not objectionable. Children lack rational capacities. Perhaps this suffices to make having power over them anodyne. Yet that, it seems cannot be the whole story. For consider parents who don't care about their children's interests. Consider, for instance, the parents of some child actors. In some of these cases, the child would really be better off not being a child actor. They do not much benefit from early fame. But the parent pushes them to act anyway, because the parent benefits from it. They are the one who gets paid. Here the power the parent has over the child is objectionable. But the child in this case might be just like the children in more typical homes. Thus, it is not children's mere lack of rational capacities that explains why having power over them is permissible. This must be supplemented by parental love. The point generalizes. There are many special constraints on how parents should act towards their children. They shouldn't take bribes when making decisions for them, live vicariously through them, unreasonably infantilize them. These constraints are hard to explain if children's lack of rational capacities makes wielding power over them harmless. They're well explained if the ills of that asymmetric power must also be tempered by love: such actions are unloving.

Second, one can give a deeper explanation for why love would help make asymmetries of power anodyne. The explanation is that love is a potent internal barrier to the misuse of such power. When one loves someone, one is robustly disposed not to use one's power over them in a way that impairs their welfare or subverts their autonomy. This type of internal barrier, the thought goes, greatly ameliorates the problem with one having that power.¹³ For evidence of this, we can look to some cases. Imagine that you're the general of an army in a democracy. You could supplant the squabbling politicians. But you respect democracy too much to do so. This purely internal barrier to your intervention seems sufficient to avoid subordinating the citizenry to you. Or imagine you're Clark Kent. You could turn your powers against the citizens of Metropolis. But you are too morally upstanding to do so. Again, this internal barrier seems sufficient to prevent you subordinating your fellows. Internal barriers thus do seem to mitigate the problem with asymmetries of power.

Critically, love is an *especially* robust internal barrier to the misuse of power. To see this, let's contrast it with respect. We can think of respect as a kind of

¹³One can find a similar idea in Kolodny (2014, 296). Some are hostile to it. See Frank Lovett's (2010, 96–97). But, unfortunately, fully explaining the basis for his hostility is “beyond the scope of [his] study” (2010, fn.18).

regard for rational agency. One respects someone when one doesn't violate their right to make their own choices. This requires neither much positive support for those choices nor concern for their welfare. Love, in contrast, involves more care for agency than just non-interference, and it also involves care for well-being. Respect, then, is a less demanding notion than love.¹⁴ Thus, love is a more robust barrier to the misuse of power than is respect. The more one cares about someone's welfare and agency, the less likely one is to misuse one's power over them. The more careful one will be to not use that power in a way that hurts them or subverts their autonomy. Respect provides some barrier to the misuse of asymmetric power. Love provides a higher barrier. So love is especially good at mitigating the problem with power asymmetries.

Yet let us take a step back. Is it really plausible that love mitigates the problem with asymmetries of power? Suppose a master loves their slave. Does this really make their relationship less bad? One might have a contrary intuition. But I think two points alleviate that intuition. First, a truly loving master will free their slave, if they can. This is what regard for their slave's agency mandates. Thus, ordinarily, a master who doesn't manumit their slave does not love them. They might claim to love them. But, usually, the perdurance of slavery belies such claims. However, in some circumstances it might be impossible for a master to free their slave. The two might live in a society without manumission. Yet, second, I haven't claimed that love entirely disables the problem with asymmetries of power. I've claimed that it ameliorates the problem, without removing it altogether. That is what is happening in this case. The relationship between master and slave is still objectionable. But the problem is alleviated when the master loves the slave, when they are robustly disposed to respect their slave's autonomy and do what is in their interests. The relationship between loving master and slave, it seems to me, is much better than that between slave and unloving master. Likewise, the relationship between a loving state and its citizens is much better than that between a citizen and an unloving state. Thus, I conclude, the state should love its citizens.

Let us turn to a way to resist this general argument. Perhaps we can solve the problem of state subordination without any appeal to love. The most salient alternative is to erect external barriers to the state's use of its power. Suppose the state was prevented from misusing its power by some entity external to it. Then this, it might seem, would greatly ameliorate, and perhaps eliminate, the problem with its enormous power. This idea is often associated with Locke: Locke thought that resistance by the people was the external check on the state's use of power (Locke 1690, ch. 29).¹⁵ But, in recent years, the thought has been advocated most strongly by republicans. Pettit is a good example: he thinks that it's objectionable when one agent has uncontrolled power over another (Pettit 2012, 152–179). Thus, the state's power over its citizens is a

¹⁴For this kind of idea, see Velleman (1999, 366).

¹⁵Locke's treatises were, of course, in large part a response to Filmer (1680), who thought that the relationship between kings and citizens should be akin to a parental relationship. He thought this because he thought that kings were the natural heirs of Adam, the first man, and that gave them paternal authority over their citizens. This is not my view.

problem.¹⁶ He thinks that this is why states must be democratic, and why there must be robust, independent judiciaries (Pettit 1997, 172–183, Lovett and Pettit 2018, 381). Democratic institutions let the voting public provide a check on state power; an independent judiciary lets plaintiffs provide a check on state power. Both are external barriers that can help prevent the state’s misuse of power. One might think that these external barriers wholly suffice to solve the problem of subordination. With such barriers in place, the state’s power does not threaten to subordinate its citizens.

Unfortunately, merely erecting external barriers does not adequately solve our problem. There are two issues. First, there’s an issue of feasibility. To fully solve the problem, the external barriers would have to be very comprehensive. They would have to prevent the state from killing, jailing, exiling individual citizens at will. For imagine that a flesh-and-blood agent could easily visit these ills on you. Then this would subordinate you to them. You would not be able to look them in the eye, at least not squarely. But democracy and independent judiciaries do not, in practice, create such comprehensive barriers. The United States demonstrates this clearly. Think of Fred Hampton, Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden. These are cases where the United States has killed, jailed, exiled inconvenient citizens. Such cases are legion. They are not stopped by elections and judges. At most, these institutions make it more costly for the state to kill, jail and exile its citizens. They thus, plausibly, reduce the chance that such abuses become utterly routine, or matters of policy.¹⁷ Yet that falls very far short of the type of barrier needed to solve the problem of subordination. If someone can destroy you, even if it imposes a small cost on them, then that threatens you with subordination. It is not clear exactly what institutions could provide external barriers comprehensive enough to really solve this problem. So, in practice, this solution looks unfeasible.

Second, this solution adopts a certain conception of the relationship between state and citizen. Locke, influentially, likens a ruler to a lion: a wild beast that threatens to devour its citizens (Locke 1690, ch.7, §93). The proposed solution takes this attitude towards the state. On this solution, the state can be like a barely contained, ravening beast, a creature which would not hesitate to visit terrible ills on you, were it not for the fragile bars confining it. If those bars break, then it will have no compunction in destroying you. But it is patently objectionable to be in this sort relationship to anything. It would be terrible if your friend, parent, sibling had this sort of relationship with you. It is a relationship of enmity. Now enmity might be better than subordination. But it is still a bad relationship to have with anything, the state included. So confining the state behind external barriers might, in theory, stop the state from subordinating its citizens. But it replaces subordination with a different kind of objectionable relationship. That is not a fully satisfactory solution to the problem.

¹⁶He takes the problem to be better described as one of unfreedom rather than subordination (Pettit 2012, 26–74). I think the arguments against this in Kolodny (2019) are convincing.

¹⁷Davenport (2007) provides some evidence for this. Nonetheless, as is well known, the American state does routinely kill its citizens. See Swaine et al. (2020).

Let us, then, sum up. I've argued that love is essential to satisfactorily mitigating the problem of state subordination. Now I haven't said that love is all we need. The problem is serious, and we should take any mitigatory factors we can lay our hands on. But love is one of the things we need, it is one of these factors. So, the state should love its citizens. This completes the relational argument for the ideal of the loving state.

3 The “no excuses” basis

We now turn to the second argument for this ideal. Again, we start from a claim: we have some reason to love everyone. We have some reason to not just love our neighbors, but to love all. Here, it's important to remember that we're working with a notion of practical love. Thus, I'm not claiming that everyone has reason to feel strong affection for all. Rather, I'm claiming that everyone has some reason to act lovingly towards all. This claim gets substantial support from the high-regard account of love. On this view, to love someone is to give their well-being and agency much weight in one's deliberations, to try to protect and promote them as much as one can. We plausibly do have reason to do this. We have some reason to make each person's life better, to promote their well-being, to the greatest extent that we can. We have some reason to help each person choose and execute their ends, to protect their rational agency, to the same extent. Yet, on the high-regard account of love, to do this just is to love someone. So, we have some reason to love universally.

Now typically, this reason does not yield an obligation. We aren't duty-bound to love everyone. Why is that? A very natural answer is that it is because we have our own lives to lead. This means that we have our own personally valuable projects and relationships. Completing these projects and maintaining these relationships is good for us: it contributes to our well-being. And, thus, we have a right to implement those projects and foster those relationships. We have moral status. But if we were to love all, our projects and relationships would be imperiled. We would constantly have to sacrifice for strangers, or at least for colleagues we'd prefer to keep at arm's length. We could not lead our own lives under such conditions. That excuses us from loving all. In other words, one cannot demand of beings with our lofty moral status that they sacrifice everything for others. This would be too great a demand to levy. So, it is our moral status, our having personally valuable projects and relationships, that explains why we needn't love everyone. Universal love would frustrate those enterprises.¹⁸

But states do not have such moral status. They have projects and relationships. But these don't have any personal value; they are only valuable insofar as they contribute to the value of other people's lives. Others should refrain from interfering with those projects and relationships when such interference harms

¹⁸For a similar idea, see Velleman (1999, 372). Velleman thinks we love selectively, in part, because doing so avoids exhausting our emotions, and so impairing our lives. He is not, however, talking about practical love.

individuals. Now, notwithstanding this, we do sometimes talk about the interests of states. The Russian state, for example, has an interest in free passage through the Dardanelles. But achieving this does not improve the well-being of the Russian state: it has no well-being in the morally relevant sense. And we sometimes talk about the rights of states. But these are at most legal rights. They are not the morally weighty rights human beings have. Flesh-and-blood agents have moral status; states do not. Yet it is our moral status which excuses us from the demands of universal love. But then it is not too demanding to demand that the state love universally. So, it has no excuse for not loving everyone. So, the state should love everyone. This completes the “no excuses” argument for the ideal of the loving state.

Let’s look at challenges to this argument. One might flatly deny that we have any reason to love everyone. Perhaps this is an overblown, mawkishly Christian, view about love. What can be said in response to such a denial? For a start, the claim being denied is very weak. I am not claiming that one ought to love everyone. I am simply claiming one has some reason to love everyone. For almost all of us, almost all of the time, that reason is undermined or defeated. Yet, still, we have some reason for doing so. Nonetheless, one might persevere in the denial. The best case for doing so, it seems to me, rests on a distinction between ‘insistent’ and ‘noninsistent’ reasons. Insistent reasons are reasons that, when neither undermined nor defeated, generate requirements. Noninsistent reasons make an option rationally eligible, but never require choosing it. Several writers have entertained the idea that reasons for love might be noninsistent.¹⁹ Thus, one might claim that we have only noninsistent reasons to love everyone. And so the state’s reason to love its citizens merely permits, but never requires, it to love them.

The distinction between these two kinds of reasons comes from Kagan (1989, 378–81). He denies that there are any noninsistent reasons; I am inclined to agree. But let us put this aside. There’s a straightforward case that our reasons to love are insistent reasons. The case relies on the high-regard account of love. Imagine you could greatly aid someone’s welfare or agency at no personal cost. It cost you nothing at all to make their lives as good as you could, or to help them form and execute their ends to the greatest extent possible. Moreover, nothing undermines your reason to do so: they aren’t, for example, undeserving of such a wonderful life. In this case, you’re required to do so. But that is just to say that, in this case, you’re required to show high regard for them. So, when neither undermined nor defeated, one’s reasons to show such regard give rise to a requirement. They must be insistent reasons. And that, on the high-regard account of love, means that your reasons to love are insistent reasons. They may often be undermined or defeated but, when they are not, they give rise to requirements.

Let us now turn to some overgeneralization worries. There are two such worries. The first concerns non-state organizations. Does this argument not

¹⁹Kolodny (2003, 163) considers the idea but rejects it. Setiya (2014, 255–56) discusses it favorably but does not explicitly endorse it. Jollimore (2011, 93–94, 137–38) explicitly endorses it but uses different terminology.

imply that corporations, charities, universities should love everyone? After all, Nike has no moral status. So Nike, just like the state, has no good answer to the demand of universal love. But Nike needn't love everyone. It's not even obvious that it should love its customers. Certainly, it needn't love fickle, misguided Adidas customers. So one might think there must be something wrong with the argument just outlined. There is a good reply to this worry. Nike has a different excuse for not loving everyone. Specifically, us flesh-and-blood individuals have a prerogative to set up and take part in organizations like Nike. That means that, *prima facie*, someone wrongs you when they break up your organizations or make them unsustainable. This is because engaging in businesses, charities, universities is a part of the good life. Our lives are made better by the successful engagement in such organizations. But we could not set up or take part in such organizations were they to love everyone. A shoe company which loved universally would be an unsustainable shoe company. So Nike has an excuse for not loving everyone: if it did so, it would make itself unsustainable. And that would wrong its members.

Why does the state not have a similar excuse? The key point here is that Nike and the state differ importantly. The state maintains a monopoly on the use of force in its territory.²⁰ If people use force in its territory without its authorization, even to enforce their rights, the state will use force against them. It will send its officials to arrest them, it will put them on trial, it may imprison them. In contrast, Nike will not arrest other shoe vendors. It won't imprison the managers of Adidas, Reebok, Puma: Nike is just a shoe company. But us flesh-and-blood individuals have no prerogative to set up and take part in organizations that monopolize force in a territory. It needn't be impermissible for us to do so. But, if someone stops you from doing so, they needn't wrong you. People aren't morally required to just acquiesce to your setting up a monopoly on force. They can stop you from doing so without wronging you. But then the state cannot use Nike's excuse for not loving everyone. The state would not wrong its members by loving everyone. So, the state's coercive nature breaks the parallel between state and non-state organizations.

Let's look at a second worry. The problem here is that, on the face of it, states should treat their citizens better than they treat foreigners. The Italian state should spend more money helping needy Italians than it spends helping needy Canadians. It has special duties to Italians. States, generally, have more pressing and wide-ranging duties to their citizens than to foreigners. Yet the argument so far doesn't distinguish between the two. Thus, it would seem to imply that the state should treat them the same. And so, again, one might think that there must be something wrong with the argument. There is a good reply to this worry too. The key point is that relationships modify the weight of reasons to love. One has weightier reason to love those with whom one shares a close relationship than one does to love strangers. Love for strangers might not be entirely unreasonable. But lack of a relationship makes one's reasons for

²⁰Indeed, since Weber (2004, 33), the state is often defined in such terms.

love less weighty.²¹ That has practical consequences: one should tend to favor those who one has weightiest reason to love.

Why does this make a difference? Because states have a closer relationship to their citizens than to foreigners. States, even quite minimal states, are pervasive presences in their citizens' lives. They set the legal framework within which citizens live. They protect their citizens from foreign and domestic threats. They provide many public goods to their citizens. This long-lasting, ongoing relationship between state and citizen amplifies the state's reason to love its citizens. But most state's relationships with foreigners are tenuous or non-existing. They lack long-lasting, ongoing relationships with most foreigners. Thus, states have weightier reason to love their citizens than to love foreigners. In some cases, perhaps they needn't love foreigners at all. This is why states should treat their citizens better than they do foreigners.²²

So, we have responses to over-generalization worries. And they allow us to give a more comprehensive formulation of the "no excuses" argument. There are, in truth, many excuses for not loving someone. One excuse is that loving them would interfere with our leading our own lives. Another is that loving them would wrong others. A third is that one lacks any relationship with them. These all either undermine or outweigh our reason to love someone. But states have no such excuses, no such justifications, for not loving their citizens. Thus, states should love their citizens. So, to sum up, we have two different bases for the ideal of the loving state. The first says that we need love to mitigate the problem with the vast power the state has over its citizens. The second says that the state has no good excuse for not loving its citizens. Both imply that the state should love its citizens.

Let me tie up a loose end. We'll call a state 'legitimate' when it may coerce its citizens in order to enforce the law. Some people think that instrumentalist reasons supply state legitimacy. States may coerce their citizens because the consequences of doings so are good; state coercion forestalls anarchy.²³ Others think that the weighty reason against coercion precludes state legitimacy. They think coercion, and *a fortiori* state coercion, is a grave wrongdoing.²⁴ If one grants the arguments that I've just given, then whether the state should love its citizens is independent of these issues. For suppose that the state is legitimate for instrumentalist reasons. Then the state's legitimacy won't hinge on it loving its citizens. Still, there can be better and worse legitimate states. A loving state is a better state. So it should love its citizens nonetheless. Alternatively, suppose all states are illegitimate, that they are mafia families writ large. Then the best thing for the state to do might be to abolish itself. Still, given it exists,

²¹For this point, see Jollimore (2011, 114) and Lord (2016, 577–88). It also seems to me the best way to interpret the view in Abramson and Leite (2011). For more on what the relevant relationships are, see Kolodny (2003, 148–50), although he does not think such relationships are modifiers.

²²The status of non-citizen residents depends on their situation. Some, such as permanent residents, are probably on equal footing with citizens. Others, such as seasonal workers, are probably not: their relationship with the state is more tenuous.

²³Hobbes (1996) held a specific version of this view.

²⁴See, for example, Huemer (2013, 3–19).

the state should love its citizens. One might prefer states not to exist. But, given their historical tenacity, one should settle for love as a non-ideal second-best. Thus, whether the state should love its citizens is not too sensitive to one's prior stance on state legitimacy.

We now turn to exploring the nature of the loving state. We'll see that the loving state will be a liberal, democratic, egalitarian, welfare state. This, as I've said, furnishes the weightiest evidence that the state should love its citizens. It is, I think, widely believed that states should be all these things. That the state should love its citizens helps explain the truth of these widespread beliefs. Let's start with the liberalism of the loving state.

4 The liberal state

States should not interfere in certain of their citizens' choices. Religious choices are paradigm examples. The state should not try to ensure that its citizens are, for example, Protestants. Doing so is an impermissible interference in their personal sphere. Exactly what other choices are in the 'personal sphere' is contentious. Plausibly, the state shouldn't interfere with what career its citizens pursue, what music they listen to, what clothes they wear. Debatably, it should not interfere with how much they drink, smoke or use drugs. Equally, exactly what counts as 'interference' is contentious. At minimum, the state should not force its citizens to make certain personal choices. Debatably, the state shouldn't incentivize certain choices. It shouldn't subsidize healthy food. All may amount to interference in people's personal sphere. And this, generally, the state should not do. States should be liberal.²⁵

A loving state is a liberal state. To see this, the correct conception of love is critical. Love does not just involve a concern for one's beloved's well-being. It also involves a high regard for their agency. We made this point in section 1, but let's now flesh out what such regard amounts to. It is not achieved by mere benign neglect. Imagine, again, that your beloved has decided to become a writer. As we've seen, it would be unloving to force them to change their mind, or to incessantly harangue them about their choice. But it would also be unloving to coldly ignore their new career path, to never help them in their goals. Love requires not just that you refrain from sabotaging your beloved's choices. It requires that you support those choices.

Kyla Ebels-Duggan (2008) argues that this consists in adopting your beloved's ends. You should make their goals your goals: you should take yourself to have reason to help achieve their goals and you should adopt some presumption that what they aim for is worthwhile. I think this is correct. When you love someone, you should take their ends as your own in this sense. Now here we must be careful about how your beloved's ends are understood. When your partner

²⁵This is just one gloss on what a liberal state is. I take it to express a broadly Millian conception of such a state (Mill 1859). 'Liberal' also refers to a particular ideology in American politics, the ideology that emerged out of the early twentieth century Progressive movement. This is not my intended sense of the term.

wants to become a writer, their goal is not that *you* become a writer. They want to do the writing themselves. This determines how, upon adopting this end, you are able to help achieve it. You can't yourself put pen to paper for your partner; this would not help them be a writer. But you can, perhaps, buy them a pen and paper. More seriously, you can read drafts, talk through their ideas, give them the time to write.²⁶ This is how you help them become a writer. This is what you will do if you love them.

The liberalism of the loving state now follows straightforwardly. If the state loves its citizens, it will adopt their ends. It will take their goals as its own goals. If they aim to practice their religion, it too will aim that they practice their religion. If they want to become musicians, artists, academics, it too will aim for their musical, artistic or academic success. It cannot do this at the same time as interfering with their choices. Forcibly converting its citizens to the state religion stops them practicing their own religion. Haranguing them about the virtues of economic security won't bring them success in their chosen fields. The loving state, then, is a liberal state. Its liberalism is based on it adopting its citizens' ends.

Now this liberalism is not an unlimited liberalism. The loving state cares about its citizens' agency. But it also cares about their well-being. These two concerns must be weighed against one another. We can see this in personal relationships. Suppose your beloved is a willing addict, destroying their life with drugs. Here, plausibly, love does not require you to adopt their end. You need not set their fix as your goal. Your concern for their well-being offsets your regard for their agency. In this case, that means you might interfere with their choices a little. You can harangue them at more length about their drug use than about their writing. You probably may not coerce them into going clean, but you may nag and scold them. As with the personal, so with the political. The loving state will care about the well-being of its citizens, and that may sometimes lead it to steer them towards the good life. How much it will do so is not clear, just as how much we should steer our beloved friends or partners towards the good life is not clear. But there will likely be some (non-coercive) steering. The loving state, then, will have a strong, but not absolute, presumption against interfering in its citizens' choices.²⁷

Let's make one final point. We can now defuse what I take to be the deepest source of unease about the claim that the state should love its citizens. This unease comes down to a sense that a loving state would be too intrusive. It will interfere with its citizens' lives, it will invade their privacy or harangue them, all because it is so concerned for their welfare. It will treat its citizens like a parent treats a child. But states should not treat their citizens like children. The response to this worry is clear. Were love to involve concern for well-being alone, then the loving state might be overly intrusive. It might treat

²⁶For these points, see Ebels-Duggan (2008, 156–57).

²⁷In this way it is more similar to the perfectionist liberal state (Raz 1986, ch.15; Hurka 1993, ch.11) than a politically liberal state (Rawls 1993; Quong 2011). But a perfectionist state's liberalism comes from concern for its citizens' welfare. The loving state's liberalism comes from regard for their agency. Thus, the two are very different.

their citizens like a parent does their children. But this is to misconceive the nature of love. Love also involves care for agency. That means one cannot treat a beloved adult like one would treat a beloved child. Such treatment, when directed at an adult, would be unloving. So the loving state will not intrude excessively on its citizens lives. It will have an attitude akin to that a good parent has towards their children. But this attitude mandates very different behavior towards adults than it does towards children.

5 The democratic state

States should be democratic. That means that they should do what their citizens, collectively, want them to do. If their citizens want them to set up universal health care, they should set up universal healthcare. If their citizens want them to cut taxes, they should cut taxes. Now, how the state should determine what the people want is a delicate matter. Some use referendums; some use elections; others use revolutions.²⁸ But states should try to enact the will of the people. In this sense, they should be democracies.

A loving state is a democratic state. To see this, we will have to say more about the kind of love the loving state has for its citizens. So far, we've been talking about the state loving each of its citizens individually. But the state might also love its citizens considered as a collective. This is love for its citizens as a plurality which is not grounded in the fact that it loves each of its citizens in particular. Quinn White (manuscript) calls this attitude 'general love' and contrasts it with 'particular love'. He explicates it by example. He points out that one might love the family of one's spouse considered as a plurality. One might love each member of the family. But one's love for the family may not simply reduce to love for each member. One might not even know all the members: one might not know one's spouse's distant cousin. But, still, one can love the family. Here one loves the family, but not in virtue of loving each family member. One's attitude is a love targeted, fundamentally, at a plurality rather than an individual.

Now one might deny that there is an attitude of general love. Perhaps love can only, fundamentally, take individuals as its target. But this seems to me incorrect. For a start, there's no blanket prohibition on attitudes having fundamentally plural targets. Consider fear. I might be afraid of the angry mob without being afraid of any of its members. Together, the mob's members are mighty; individually, they are feeble. So, the problem must be specific to love. Perhaps the most serious worry rests on the idea that love is a response to the value of one's beloved.²⁹ One might think that, fundamentally, only individuals have value, and so this means love must be fundamentally directed at individuals. But this seems to me wrong. Collectives can also have wills, and these wills are not simply the wills of their members. One way to think of this is in terms of joint intentions: you and I might together intend to sing a duet,

²⁸Or so said Tocqueville (1899, 118–19) of France.

²⁹As Velleman (1999, 360–61) thinks.

write a book, start a business.³⁰ This intention is not simply the agglomeration of our individual intentions. Our intending to sing a duet together isn't just you intending to sing a duet and my also doing so. It is a distinctively collective intention. It seems quite feasible that love be a response to the value of such a collective will, or the capacity for it. And, if so, it need not be directed fundamentally at individuals. So, this worry is answerable. There is an attitude of general love.

Now for the key point. I conjecture that the state should have general love for its citizens. It should love them *qua* collective. To clear the ground for this conjecture, we first note that citizens *qua* collective are a candidate for love. They are not just a disconnected plurality of people: they are the kind of plurality that can have a joint intention. To provide positive support for the conjecture, we extend the arguments from section 2 and 3. That is simplest with the "no excuses" argument. Just as there is a question about why we can refrain from loving everyone, there is a question about why we can refrain from loving all collectives, or at least all that can have a will. Perhaps we ought to love our own family, or our spouse's family, *qua* collective. But we needn't love every family. More generally, we needn't love every collective. The explanation for this is, again, that we have our own lives to lead. The demand that we love every collective demands too much. But the state cannot marshal this excuse. The state does not have its own life to lead. Thus, it has no defense against the demand to love all collectives. So it should have general love for its citizens.

Let's now look at extending the anti-subordination argument. This is that there is a distinctive problem with group subordination.³¹ One's objection to being a member of a group over which some hold power cannot be fully answered by ensuring that nobody has any objectionable power over you as an individual. This assumption seems defensible. Suppose you're a member of a permanent minority. You have the vote, but the majority group controls what the state does. It might be that no member of the majority has more power that you do. Everyone might have one vote. Thus, you may have no objection to being subordinated *qua* individual. Nobody has more power over you than you have over them. Yet, still, you have an objection to your group being subordinated. You have an objection to the asymmetry of power between your group and the majority. Thus, the problem of group subordination cannot be solved by solving each problem of individual subordination. Such a solution leaves a residual objection. Now, if that is true, then the state loving each of its citizens as individuals won't solve the problem posed by its enormous power. It will solve each problem of individual subordination. But it will leave a residual problem. Citizens will still have an objection to the state subordinating them *qua* collective. Yet there is a simple way to solve this problem. We just require that the state love its citizens *qua* collective, that it has general love for its citizens. So, once again, the conjecture is supported.

The democracy of the loving state now follows straightforwardly. Love, we

³⁰For differing views on the nature of such intentions, see Bratman (1992) and Gilbert (2009).

³¹For this idea, see Kolodny (2019, 112).

said in the previous section, requires adopting the ends of one's beloved. It requires taking their goals as your own. This goes for general love just as for particular love. When you love a collective, you adopt the ends of that collective as your own. If you do not know what those ends are, you should try to find them out. You should solicit them, in referendums, elections, polls. The loving state will have general love for their citizens. Thus it will adopt their collective ends. It will be guided by what they, collectively, want to do. That just is to institute democracy in my intended sense of the term.³² We thus have an explanation for why the state should do as the people will. Spurning the popular will would be a failure of love.

Let's compare this defense of democracy with some alternatives. One alternative focuses on the equality of democracy. The idea, roughly, is that states should be democratic because equalities of power are intrinsically valuable.³³ The great weakness of this view is that it doesn't vindicate democracy in the sense I mean it. This is because power can be equalized without the state doing what the people will. It can be equalized by nobody having any power at all. Imagine, for example that all policies were determined by a detailed, unchangeable constitution. This, according to purely egalitarian views, would be just as good as electoral democracy. Both institutions can realize equality of power.³⁴ A second view focuses on autonomy. The idea is that democracy means the laws manifests the peoples' will, and this stops the coercive enforcement of those laws from destroying citizens' personal autonomy.³⁵ If true, this would vindicate democracy in the sense I mean it. But it is a controversial, minority view. Its main issue lies in defending the claim that forced conformity to a collective will does not destroy personal autonomy. It can seem like one's autonomy is only protected by conformity with one's individual will.³⁶ The loving state's democracy doesn't depend on this contested claim. It depends just on the claim that, for the state to love its citizens, it must adopt their collective ends.

6 The welfare state

How much should the state do for its citizens? One view is that the state should be a night watchman. It should stop theft, assault, murder. But it shouldn't really do anything else for its citizens. If someone falls ill, it is not up to the state to care for them. If someone becomes destitute, the state has no duty to house them. Protecting natural rights exhausts the state's duties.³⁷ A different view is that the state should be a welfare state. It should protect and promote the welfare of its citizens. A weak version of this view says it must just ensure

³²The term 'democracy' is of course famously contested.

³³See, for example, Christiano (2008) and Kolodny (2014).

³⁴Kolodny (2014, 312) leans towards accepting this point.

³⁵For a recent defense of this view, see Stiliz (2019, 89–154).

³⁶For more on this point, see Christiano (1996, 24–29). Now, to be clear, I myself am partial to the claim being disputed. But I am in the minority.

³⁷Nozick (1974) is the canonical source of this view.

that its citizens keep above some minimum level of well-being. It should care for the ill, feed the hungry, house the homeless. It must provide a safety net for its citizens. A stronger version of this view says that the state should try to improve its citizens' welfare to the greatest extent that it can. It should do all it can to ensure they live good, worthwhile lives. What kind of state will the loving state be?

A loving state will not be a night watchman state. This seems to me obvious. Imagine letting someone go homeless when you have housing, succumb to illness when you have medicine, starve when you have plenty. These are not loving actions. People do not allow such things to happen to those they love. This is because, when one loves someone, one cares greatly about their well-being. We can't reconcile such care with such callousness. For the same reason, a loving state won't merely be a welfare state in the weak sense. When you care deeply about someone's well-being, you don't try to just keep their welfare above a minimum level. You try to promote it to the greatest extent possible. Thus, a loving state will be a welfare state in the strong sense. It will be devoted to the welfare of its citizens. It will do all it can, consistent with its liberalism, to ensure that they live the best lives that they can lead.

Now, some libertarians might object to this. They might point out that welfare states don't pay for themselves. Taxes finance them. But, they might say, "individuals have [property] rights" (Nozick 1974, ix), and the state would be violating such rights by taxing them to pay for a welfare state. And, they could further claim, one would never violate the rights of someone one loved. So the loving state will not be a welfare state after all.³⁸ But this further claim seems to me simply false. Imagine you beloved brother won't give food to your beloved, but starving, son. They think, perhaps, that the child should pull himself up by his bootstraps. In this case I think you will have little compunction in stealing the bread from your brother's table and giving it to the child. The property rights of those we love are of less weighty import than their basic human needs. Now, we may balk at using the brother's property to maximize the welfare of the child. So prevalent property rights might stop a loving state from being a welfare state in the strong sense. But, even so, such rights won't turn it into a mere night watchman.

Indeed, I doubt property rights will even do this much constraining. On no popular theory of property rights, I believe, do they stop real world states from being strong welfare states. Consider, saliently, Nozick's theory. Nozick thought that we own something just in case we either appropriate it when it is unowned or receive it post-appropriation via a series of just transfers (Nozick 1974, 151). Just transfers are those untainted by force, fraud or theft (1974, 152). Yet little we possess today stretches back by such a series to the original appropriation of property.³⁹ History is violent: force, fraud, theft must surely

³⁸These are Nozick's reasons for skepticism of a more-than-night-watchman state (Nozick 1974, ch.7). But others reject welfare states on different grounds. See, for example, Shapiro (2007).

³⁹Nozick did not. See Nozick (1974, 231). For a recent statement of this point, see Zwolinski (2016, §4b).

have tainted almost all such series. This, according to Nozick's theory, deprives people of clear property rights over anything. So such rights pose little barrier to state redistribution. Different theories of property have like results. Suppose, for example, that we have property rights in something only if we're assigned them by just institutions.⁴⁰ Well, states are key assigning institutions, and, on their assignments, one doesn't have rights in all of one's pretax resources. Thus actual states can redistribute these resources, via taxation, to promote the common good. So citizens' property rights won't much disturb the welfarism of the loving state. It will, I think, be a welfare state in the strong sense.

Let me make one last point. It seems to me that the loving state will be a prioritarian state rather than a utilitarian state. It will not simply try to maximize its citizens' aggregate welfare. It will take improving the welfare of its less well-off citizens to be especially urgent. This is plausible because it seems how one would act when one loves many people. Imagine you have two children. One suffers a painful disability. One lives a blessed, happy life. Benefiting the first child is more urgent than benefiting the second. One will, and should, prefer to give some size benefit to the first than a greater benefit to the second.⁴¹ Thus, one will, and should, give priority to the less well-off of those one loves. As with the personal, again with the political. The loving state will give more priority to the welfare of its worst-off citizens. Now, how much more priority it will give to them is not clear, exactly as it is not clear how much priority we should give to our worse-off beloveds. But I think it will give some, and perhaps substantial, priority to the worse-off.⁴²

7 The egalitarian state

The state should treat its citizens equally. What exactly that means is contentious. But here is a straightforward way to interpret it.⁴³ Suppose the state provides some benefit to some citizen. The benefit might be a positive boon, like a road, a school, a hospital. Or it might be exemption from a rule: the citizen might get a tax break or be let off after breaking the law. In such cases, other citizens have some prima facie claim on this benefit. Now, there are many ways the state can answer such a claim. They might point out that the benefit does more good for the first citizen, or that the other citizens get compensating benefits elsewhere. But the state has to have some justification for benefiting just some of its citizens. This contrasts with individuals. I can commit random acts of kindness without having to justify myself to others. I can benefit some supererogatorily, without giving others a claim on me to such a benefit. But, if

⁴⁰For this view, see Murphy and Nagel (2002, 36–7).

⁴¹Here I am just echoing Nagel (2012, 123–25). What he says about this case seems to me clearly right.

⁴²On an extreme view, it will aim to maximize the welfare of the worst-off citizens. Then the loving state will look like a state which has taken *A Theory of Justice* very seriously. See Rawls (1971, 83).

⁴³My interpretation closely follows Kolodny (manuscript). See Scanlon (2018, 10–25) for an extended discussion of this issue.

the state commits a random act of kindness, that gives others claims on such a kindness. In this sense, the state should treat all its citizens equally.

The loving state will, in this sense, be an egalitarian state. The explanation for this rests on the observation that the state should not just have any old love for its citizens. It should have maximal love for them, the most love for them possible. This is the upshot of the “no excuses” argument. The state has no excuse for falling anywhere short of the maximum in its loving attitude to its citizens. What is this maximal attitude? It is the most concerned for each of their welfare, and solicitous of their ends, it can be without falling short on its other obligations. It amounts to always putting their welfare, and their ends, before that of those whom it owes no such duties, to giving as much weight to them in its deliberations as it can, consistent with its other obligations. But if the state has maximal love for each of its citizens, it has the same attitude towards all its citizens. The maximal love it can have for one citizen is no different than the maximal love it can have for another. The state should thus be akin to a parent. It should love all citizens equally: maximally.

From this, it follows that a loving state, at least insofar as it lives up to its other duties, will treat its citizens equally. For recall that love, as we’re understanding it, is a dispositional notion. How much one loves someone is in part a measure of how much one is disposed to act towards them. Now suppose the state gives some benefit to some citizens but not others, without adequate justification. It follows that the state is disposed to promote the welfare of the benefited citizens more. Thus, it loves them more. This means either that it loves them to an extent that violates its other obligations, or it loves its unbenefited citizens to an extent that falls short of the maximum. The second case, I think, is more typical. When the state, for example, gives good schools to some citizens but not others, without adequate justification, this evinces a failure of love. It evinces a failure to love those whom it provides for poorly to the appropriate, maximal, extent. Thus, a loving state that fulfills its duties will, when it benefit some citizens, only withhold that benefit from others if it has adequate justification for such a withholding. The loving state will, in this sense, be an egalitarian state.

8 The explanatory import of love

The loving state, I have argued, will be a liberal state; a democratic state; an egalitarian state; a welfare state. Intuitively, the state should be all these things. This is weighty abductive evidence for the idea that state should love its citizens: this idea helps explain much about the state’s proper nature. In this section, we will consider a serious challenge to this argument. The challenge is based on the thought that love consists in a high degree of care one’s beloved’s well-being and agency. The worry is that talk of love adds nothing beyond talk of such care. We can fully explain the state’s proper nature by claiming that it should have a maximal level of care for its citizens’ well-being and agency. We gain nothing by also claiming that it should love them. If this were true,

it wouldn't make it incorrect to say that the state should love its citizens. But it would sap this thesis of much of its interest. It would make it explanatorily otiose.

I think that there are good replies to this challenge. In particular, talk of love adds two things over mere talk of maximal care. First, it adds unity to our picture of the ideal state. It makes clear how the different ways that a state should care for its citizens connect. The state's duty to care for its citizens' well-being and its duty to care for their agency are not just independent duties. Rather, both follow from the fact that it should love them. Such unity is valuable in all theorizing, and so it is valuable in theorizing the proper nature of the state. Second, such talk adds to our intuitive grip on what the state should do. We often have clearer intuitions about what love involves than what high levels of care involve. Love, for example, seems prioritarian. Whether caring is prioritarian is less immediately clear. Equally, relationships seem to modify the weight of reasons to love. Whether they modify that of reasons to care is less limpid. We have intuitions about love that we lack, or have much less strongly, when it comes to care for well-being and agency. These intuitions provide a distinctive source of insight into the state's proper nature.

We can buttress this second point by focusing on the further distinctive features of the loving state. Let's consider, by way of example, how the state should form beliefs about its citizens. States do this when they assess the guilt of their citizens in courts or when they assess the truthfulness of citizens' applications for conditional benefits (e.g. disability benefits). How will a loving state approach such assessments? Well notice that love requires a kind of epistemic partiality. When we love someone, we should see them in the best possible light consistent with our evidence.⁴⁴ The idea here is that our evidence often permits a range of beliefs about the moral quality of someone's character or actions.⁴⁵ Love requires that we pick the more optimistic beliefs in that range. We should think that our beloved's character and actions are relatively good, morally speaking. So a loving state will in this sense be epistemically partial towards its citizens. It will, *inter alia*, tend to believe in their innocence and their honesty. It will not be skeptical of its citizens. Plausibly, this is the proper attitude of any state towards its citizens. Yet it is intuitively unclear whether care for either well-being or agency mandates such partiality. So, in this case, we tighten our intuitive grip on the proper nature of the state by thinking of that nature in terms of love.

Thus talk about love does add much beyond mere talk of maximal care for well-being and agency. Yet I wish to make one further point about the position that denies this: that insists that everything I explain in terms of love can be just as well explained in terms of maximal care. The point is that this position concedes much of what has been distinctive about my approach in this paper. Specifically, it explains many issues in political philosophy in terms of the attitudes the state should have. Such an approach is rare. People do sometimes

⁴⁴For this point, see Jollimore (2011, 46–72).

⁴⁵Here I am endorsing a version of what Schoenfeld (2014) calls 'permissivism.'

make claims about the state's attitudes: Dworkin, for example, claimed that the state should have "equal concern and respect" (Dworkin 1977, 273) for its citizens.⁴⁶ But such claims are almost never put to explanatory work.⁴⁷ Yet, if we explain the liberalism, democracy, welfarism and egalitarianism of the ideal state in terms of it being maximally caring, then we put claims about the state's attitudes to very important work. We orientate our approach to political philosophy, in large part, around the proper attitudes of the state. Even if one denies the fruitfulness of the ideal of the loving state, I hope to have shown the fruitfulness of this approach to the field. We can illuminate many areas of political philosophy, I believe, by thinking in terms of the proper attitudes of the state.

Let me mention two final issues. First, let me say something about what the state's duty to love its citizens implies for the duties of those citizens. For a start, it won't require them, even when they are officials, to love one another. The state can love its citizens without any official loving them. The state's attitudes needn't match those of its officials. But the state's duties will nonetheless reverberate onto its citizens. This is because we all have a duty, or at least a weighty moral reason, not to be complicit in wrongdoing. That means, roughly, that we have a duty to not knowingly contribute to wrongdoing.⁴⁸ If the state should love its citizens, it would be a wrongdoing for it to fail to do so. So, it would be wrong for flesh-and-blood individuals to contribute to such a lack of love. Concretely, that means that voters should not support unloving policy platforms. If they support policies that dismantle the welfare state, for example, then they are complicit in the state's cold-heartedness. It means that policymakers should not make unloving policy. If they make policy that interferes in their citizens' personal spheres, they knowingly contribute to the state's lack of love. And it means officials who aren't policymakers, who merely implement policy, have reason to refuse to implement unloving policy. In some cases, they should resign rather than implement such policy. So, since we all have a weighty moral reason to avoid complicity in wrongdoing, the state's duty to love its citizens will give those citizens duties to avoid contributing to an unloving state.

Second, I have not said much about what concrete measures would effectively realize a loving state. This is a difficult question, and answering it requires a better understanding of how to realize particular attitudes within organizations. That is a partly empirical and partly metaphysical issue. I plan to solve neither part now. Yet something can be said about the broader question. Specifically, organizational culture often plays an important role in determining the attitudes of the organization as a whole. Consider, by way of example, the oil company Exxon. After the Exxon Valdez disaster the company decided to make safety one

⁴⁶Scanlon (2018, 7) is also drawn to the language of 'concern.' But he later (2018, 21) disavows the understanding of concern as an attitude.

⁴⁷I suspect that this is because the state's character as a group agent has not, until recently, been properly appreciated (Epstein 2015, 13–22). Such an appreciation is required to takes these claims to be more than mere figures-of-speech.

⁴⁸For this account of complicity, see Lepora and Goodin (2013, 81–82).

of its core values. This partly involved messages from executives emphasizing the importance of safety. But it also involved seemingly trivial changes to company policies. Every meeting at every Exxon office began with a randomly chosen employee speaking for a minute on some safety issue. Teams were given gift cards or symbolic awards when they avoided accidents. Safety-promoting mottoes (“Nobody Gets Hurt”) were posted on office walls and corporate vehicles. These changes made safety one of the company’s main concerns.⁴⁹ The affirmation of safety as a value within the organization’s culture affected its attitudes. One could affect similar changes within a state. States are organizations with a particular culture. To affirm the value of the state loving its citizens within its organizational structures could affect that culture, and so realize love on behalf of the organization. This is of course only one way a loving state might be realized. But it is indicative of how a state, *qua* organization, might come to love its citizens.

9 Concluding remarks

“All men are my children, and just as I desire for my own children that they should obtain welfare and happiness...the same do I desire for all men.” Ashoka, the great Indian emperor, had this carved into rock about two thousand three hundred years ago.⁵⁰ One unsettling feature of the ideal of the loving state is how close it seems to the ideal that people like Ashoka, kings and emperors, have held up for their own rule. My view is simply that they were not altogether misguided. They were right that the proper relationship between supreme political authorities and those under their authority is akin to a parental relationship. Both should be loving relationships. But they were terribly wrong about what this meant. They were wrong in thinking that they themselves should be the relevant supreme political authority. Instead, it should be the state. And they were wrong in thinking that love demanded mere benevolence. Instead, it demands liberalism, democracy, welfarism, egalitarianism. Once we see this, we need not be unsettled by the similarities between the ideal of the benevolent king and that of the loving state. The former is a flawed, firmly premodern ideal. The latter is, I think, a magnetic, thoroughly modern, ideal.

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⁴⁹For this account, see Coll (2013, 30–32).

⁵⁰See Thapar (2012, 186).

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