primary tasks for us to address, first in De Singularitate 1 and the Intermezzo that follow this section and then throughout the second half of the book: a theory of political organization adequate to the multitude. The terrain of organization is where we must establish that the multitude can be a revolutionary figure and indeed that it is the only figure today capable of revolution.

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**DE SINGULARITATE 1:**

**OF LOVE POSSESSED**

Let your loves be like the wasp and the orchid.
—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

All the theoretical elements we have accumulated thus far—from the multitude of the poor to the project of altermodernity and from the social productivity of biopolitical labor to the exodus from capitalist command—despite all their power, risk lying inert beside one another without one more element that pulls them together and animates them in a coherent project. What is missing is love. Yes, we know that term makes many readers uncomfortable. Some squirm in their seats with embarrassment and others smirk with superiority. Love has been so charged with sentimentality that it seems hardly fit for philosophical and much less political discourse. Leave it to the poets to speak of love, many will say, and wrap themselves in its warm embrace. We think instead that love is an essential concept for philosophy and politics, and the failure to interrogate and develop it is one central cause of the weakness of contemporary thought. It is unwise to leave love to the priests, poets, and psychoanalysts. It is necessary for us, then, to do some conceptual housecleaning, clearing away some of the misconceptions that disqualify love for philosophical and political discourse and redefining the concept in such a way as to demonstrate its utility. We will find in the process that philosophers, political scientists, and even economists, despite the imagined cold precision of
their thinking, are really often speaking about love. And if they were not so shy they would tell us as much. This will help us demonstrate how love is really the living heart of the project we have been developing, without which the rest would remain a lifeless heap.

To understand love as a philosophical and political concept, it is useful to begin from the perspective of the poor and the innumerable forms of social solidarity and social production that one recognizes everywhere among those who live in poverty. Solidarity, care for others, creating community, and cooperating in common projects is for them an essential survival mechanism. That brings us back to the elements of poverty we emphasized earlier. Although the poor are defined by material lack, people are never reduced to bare life but are always endowed with powers of invention and production. The real essence of the poor, in fact, is not their lack but their power. When we band together, when we form a social body that is more powerful than any of our individual bodies alone, we are constructing a new and common subjectivity. Our point of departure, then, which the perspective of the poor helps reveal, is that love is a process of the production of the common and the production of subjectivity. This process is not merely a means to producing material goods and other necessities but also in itself an end.

If such a statement sounds too sentimental, one can arrive at the same point through the analysis of political economy. In the context of biopolitical production, as we have demonstrated in the course of Part 3, the production of the common is not separate from or external to economic production, sequestered neither in the private realm nor in the sphere of reproduction, but is instead integral to and inseparable from the production of capital. Love—in the production of affective networks, schemes of cooperation, and social subjectivities—is an economic power. Conceived in this way love is not, as it is often characterized, spontaneous or passive. It does not simply happen to us, as if it were an event that mystically arrives from elsewhere. Instead it is an action, a biopolitical event, planned and realized in common.

Love is productive in a philosophical sense too—productive of being. When we engage in the production of subjectivity that is love, we are not merely creating new objects or even new subjects in the world. Instead we are producing a new world, a new social life. Being, in other words, is not some immutable background against which life takes place but is rather a living relation in which we constantly have the power to intervene. Love is an ontological event in that it marks a rupture with what exists and the creation of the new. Being is constituted by love. This ontologically constitutive capacity has been a battlefield for numerous conflicts among philosophers. Heidegger, for instance, strenuously counters this notion of ontological constitution in his lecture on poverty that we read earlier. Humanity becomes poor to become rich, he argues, when it lacks the nonnecessary, revealing what is necessary, that is, its relation to Being. The poor as Heidegger imagines them in this relation, however, have no constitutive capacity, and humanity as a whole, in fact, is powerless in the face of Being. On this point Spinoza stands at the opposite end from Heidegger. Like Heidegger, he might say that humanity becomes rich when it recognizes its relation to being, but that relation for Spinoza is entirely different. Especially in the mysterious fifth book of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, we constitute being actively through love. Love, Spinoza explains with his usual geometrical precision, is joy, that is, the increase of our power to act and think, together with the recognition of an external cause. Through love we form a relation to that cause and seek to repeat and expand our joy, forming new, more powerful bodies and minds. For Spinoza, in other words, love is a production of the common that constantly aims upward, seeking to create more with ever more power, up to the point of engaging in the love of God, that is, the love of nature as a whole, the common in its most expansive figure. Every act of love, one might say, is an ontological event in that it marks a rupture with existing being and creates new being, from poverty through love to being. Being, after all, is just another way of saying what is ineluctably common, what refuses to be privatized or enclosed and remains constantly open to all. (There is no such thing as a private ontology.) To say love is ontologically constitutive, then, simply means that it produces the common.

As soon as we identify love with the production of the com-
mon, we need to recognize that, just like the common itself, love is deeply ambivalent and susceptible to corruption. In fact what passes for love today in ordinary discourse and popular culture is predominantly its corrupt forms. The primary locus of this corruption is the shift in love from the common to the same, that is, from the production of the common to a repetition of the same or a process of unification. What distinguishes the beneficial forms of love instead is the constant interplay between the common and singularities.

One corrupt form of love is identitarian love, that is, love of the same, which can be based, for example, on a narrow interpretation of the mandate to love thy neighbor, understanding it as a call to love those most proximate, those most like you. Family love—the pressure to love first and most those within the family to the exclusion or subordination of those outside—is one form of identitarian love. Race love and nation love, or patriotism, are similar examples of the pressure to love those who are the most like you and hence less those who are different. Family, race, and nation, then, which are corrupt forms of the common, are unsurprisingly the bases of corrupt forms of love. From this perspective we might say that populisms, nationalisms, fascism, and various religious fundamentalisms are based not so much on hatred as on love—but a horrifically corrupt form of identitarian love.

An initial strategy to combat this corruption is to employ a more expansive, more generous interpretation of the mandate to love thy neighbor, reading the neighbor not as the one nearest and most like you but, to the contrary, as the other. "The neighbor is therefore... only a place-keeper," says Franz Rosenzweig. "Love is really oriented toward the embodiment of all those—men and things—that could at any moment take this place of its neighbor, in the last resort it applies to everything, it applies to the world."55 The mandate to love thy neighbor, then, the embodiment of each and every commandment for the monotheistic religions, requires us to love the other or, really, to love alterity. And if you are not comfortable with scriptural exegesis as explanation, think of Walt Whitman's poetry, in which the love of the stranger continually reappears as an encounter characterized by wonder, growth, and discovery. Nietzsche's Zarathustra echoes Whitman when he preaches that higher than love of neighbor is "love of the farthest."56 Love of the stranger, love of the farthest, and love of alterity can function as an antidote against the poison of identitarian love, which hinders and distorts love's productivity by forcing it constantly to repeat the same. Here then is another meaning of love as a biopolitical event: not only does it mark rupture with the existent and creation of the new, but also it is the production of singularities and the composition of singularities in a common relationship.

A second form of corrupt love poses love as a process of unification, of becoming the same. The contemporary dominant notion of romantic love in our cultures, which Hollywood sells every day, its stock in trade, requires that the couple merge in unity. The mandatory sequence of this corrupted romantic love—couple—marriage—family—imagines people finding their match, like lost puzzle pieces, that now together make (or restore) a whole. Marriage and family close the couple in a unit that subsequently, as we said earlier, corrupts the common. This same process of love as unification is also expressed in many different religious traditions, especially in their mystical registers: love of God means merging in the divine unity. And it is not so surprising that such notions of mystical union often use the conventional language of romantic love, invoking the betrothed, divine marriage, and so forth, because they are aimed at the same goal: making the many into one, making the different into the same. Similarly, various forms of patriotism share this notion of setting (or pushing) aside differences and alterity in order to form a united national people, a national identity. This second corruption of love as unification is intimately related, in fact, to the first identitarian corruption of love: love of the same, love making the same.

One philosophical key to our argument here, which should be clear already, is that the dynamic of multiple singularities in the common has nothing to do with the old dialectic between the
of the hive, weary of the constant harping, makes all the bees virtuous and eliminates vice, but as soon as he does so, the work of the hive comes to a halt and the society of the hive falls apart. The fable is aimed, obviously, at social moralists and rationalist utopians. Mandeville, like Machiavelli and Spinoza before him, insists that, instead of preaching how people should be, social theorists must study how people are and analyze the passions that actually animate them.

Mandeville's fable scandalized eighteenth-century English society, as it was meant to, but some, including Adam Smith, read it as a confirmation of capitalist ideology. Smith takes Mandeville's polemic that vice, not virtue, is the source of public benefit—people work out of greed, obey the law out of cowardice, and so forth—to support the notion that self-interest is the basis of market exchanges and the capitalist economy. If each acts out of self-interest, then the public good will result from market activity as if guided by an invisible hand. Smith, of course, a stalwart advocate of sympathy and other moral sentiments, is not advocating vice but simply wants to keep misplaced moral imperatives and well-intentioned public control out of the economy. What Smith bans most adamantly from the marketplace is the common: only from private interests will the public good result. "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner," Smith famously writes, "but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages." Our love for one another has no place in the realm of economic exchanges.

We get a rather different, updated fable of economic life when we focus on not the society within the hive but bee pollination activity outside it. For honeybees, flowers located within flying distance of the hive constitute a positive externality. Bees fly from one apple blossom to another, one cherry blossom to another, gathering nectar to transport back to the hive. As a bee collects nectar, its legs rub pollen off the anther of the flowers, and when it proceeds to an-
other, some of the pollen from its legs rubs off on the stigma of the next flower. For the flowers, then, bee activity is a positive externality, completing the cross-pollination necessary to produce fruit. The economic fable of these bees and flowers suggests a society of mutual aid based on positive externalities and virtuous exchanges in which the bee provides for the needs of the flower and, in turn, the flower fulfills the bee’s needs.59

We can imagine Mandeville and Smith frowning at this fable because of its suggestion of virtue and purposeful mutual aid as the basis of social production. We are hesitant about the bee pollination fable too, but for a different reason: the kind of love it promotes. Bees and flowers do indeed suggest a kind of love, but a static, corrupt form. (We know, we're anthropomorphizing the bees and flowers, projecting human traits and desires onto them, but isn't that what all fables do?) The marriage between bee and flower is a match made in heaven; they are the two halves that “complete” each other and form a whole, closing the common down in sameness and unity. But isn’t this union a model of the productivity of the common, you might ask? Doesn’t it produce honey and fruit? Yes, you might call this a kind of production, but it is really just the repetition of the same. What we are looking for—and what counts in love—is the production of subjectivity and the encounter of singularities, which compose new assemblages and constitute new forms of the common.

Let’s switch species, then, to write a new fable. Certain orchids give off the odor of the sex pheromone of female wasps, and their flowers are shaped like the female wasp sex organs. Pollination is thus achieved by “pseudocopulation” as male wasps move from one orchid to the next, sinking their genital members into each flower and rubbing off pollen on their bodies in the process. “So wasps fuck flowers!” Félix Guattari exclaims with rather juvenile glee in a letter to Gilles Deleuze. “Wasps do this work just like that, for nothing, just for fun!”60 Guattari’s delight at this example is due in part to the fact that it undercut the industriousness and “productivism” usually attributed to nature. These wasps aren’t your dutiful worker bees; they aren’t driven to produce anything. They just want to have fun. A second point of interest for Guattari is undoubtedly the way this pollination story reinforces his lifelong diatribe against the corruptions of love in the couple and the family. Wasps and orchids do not suggest any morality tale of marriage and stable union, as bees and flowers do, but rather evoke scenarios of cruising and serial sex common to some gay male communities, especially before the onslaught of the AIDS pandemic, like passages from the writings of Jean Genet, David Wojnarowicz, and Samuel Delany. This is not to say that cruising and anonymous sex serve as a model of love to emulate for Guattari (or Genet, Wojnarowicz, or Delany), but rather that they provide an antidote to the corruptions of love in the couple and the family, opening love up to the encounter of singularities.

When the wasp and orchid story appears in print in Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus, several years after Guattari’s initial letter, the fable has been refined and cast in the context of evolutionary discourse. Deleuze and Guattari insist, first of all, that the orchid is not imitating the wasp or trying to deceive it, as botanists often say. The orchid is a becoming-wasp (becoming the wasp’s sexual organ) and the wasp is a becoming-orchid (becoming part of the orchid’s system of reproduction). What is central is the encounter and interaction between these two becomings, which together form a new assemblage, a wasp–orchid machine. The fable is devoid of intentions and interests: the wasps and orchids are not paragons of virtue in their mutual aid, nor are they models of egotistic self-love. Deleuze and Guattari’s machinic language allows them to avoid asking “What does it mean?” and focus instead on “How does it work?” The fable thus tells the story of wasp–orchid love, a love based on the encounter of alterity but also on a process of becoming different.61

Mandeville’s bees (at least according to Smith’s reading) are the model for a capitalist dream of individual free agents trading labor and goods in the marketplace, intent on their own self-interest and deaf to the common good. The dutiful worker bees, in contrast,
joined with their flowers in a virtuous union of mutual aid, are the stuff of socialist utopia. All of these bees, however, belong to the bygone era of the hegemony of industrial production. Wasps who love orchids, instead, point toward the conditions of the biopolitical economy. How could these wasps be a model for economic production, you might ask, when they don’t produce anything? The bees and flowers produce honey and fruit, but the wasps and orchids are just hedonists and aesthetes, merely creating pleasure and beauty! It is true that the interaction of wasps and orchids does not result primarily in material goods, but one should not discount their immaterial production. In the encounter of singularities of their love, a new assemblage is created, marked by the continual metamorphosis of each singularity in the common. Wasp–orchid love, in other words, is a model of the production of subjectivity that animates the biopolitical economy. Let’s have done with worker bees, then, and focus on the singularities and becoming of wasp–orchid love!

INTERMEZZO

A FORCE TO COMBAT EVIL

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. —William Shakespeare, Hamlet

As a motor of association, love is the power of the common in a double sense: both the power that the common exerts and the power to constitute the common. It is thus also the movement toward freedom in which the composition of singularities leads toward not unity or identity but the increasing autonomy of each participating equally in the web of communication and cooperation. Love is the power of the poor to exit a life of misery and solitude, and engage the project to make the multitude. As we continue our study, we will have to identify how this march of freedom and equality can be made lasting, strengthened, and consolidated in the formation of social and political institutions.

All of this sounds good, you might say, for a political theory designed for angels, not humans, but people do not always act on the basis of love, and they often destroy the common. Is it not more realistic, then, rather than assuming that humans are fundamentally good, to conceive of them as fundamentally evil? Indeed such a “realist” or, really, pessimistic position is the dominant view in Euro-Atlantic political philosophy, from Thomas Hobbes’s notion of a “war of all against all” to Helmuth Plessner’s proposition of a political anthropology in which humans are characterized by “potentially unlimited intraspecies aggressiveness.” From this perspective, a political anthropology based on love, which does not take into account
the evil that lurks in human hearts, is naïve at best. Believing that people are what we want them to be and that human nature is fundamentally good is dangerous, in fact, because it undermines the political and conceptual tools necessary to confront and restrain evil. By focusing instead on how dangerous humans are, such authors maintain, and specifically on how human nature is characterized by discord, violence, and conflict, such a theory can treat this evil, contain it, and thereby construct a society that holds evil in check.

We agree that a realist perspective, with its mandate for political thought to understand humanity as it is, not as we want it to be, is extremely important. Humans are not naturally good. In the terms we developed in the last chapter, this corresponds to the ambivalence of the common and love, that is, the fact that they can take negative as well as positive forms. And furthermore the spontaneous actions of a multitude of people, as we said, are not necessarily anti-systemic or oriented toward liberation. In fact people often struggle for their servitude, as Spinoza says, as if it were their salvation.²

The problem with the pessimistic conceptions of political anthropology, however, is that after justly dismissing any fundamental goodness, they pose evil as an equally fundamental, invariant element of human nature. Evil is posed by some in religious terms as transcendent (sin, for example) and by others as a transcendent element (a radical evil that marks a limit of human society). Saint Paul manages to grasp these two formulations in a single verse: “I would not have known sin except through law” (Romans 7:7). If evil is radical, then one must try to neutralize and contain it; even if evil and sin are recognized as “necessary illusions” that result from the “sleep of reason,” as Kant says, they must be regulated. The form of law (and thus the practices and theoretical mechanisms that grant law the function of controlling the entire set of social behaviors according to a priori norms) has always in this metaphysical frame constituted the transcendental complement of an ontology of radical evil.³ In most political discussions, though, metaphysical foundations are not required. The evil in human nature is simply confirmed empirically: look at all the evil that humans have done and continue to do every day—the wars, the cruelty, the suffering! This amounts to something like a secular theodicy: How can humans be good when there is so much evil in the world and when they so often act in evil ways? Whether on religious, philosophical, and/or empirical bases, then, pessimistic political anthropologies treat evil as an invariant feature of human nature, which must be constantly restrained and contained in society.

What we are confronting here, though, is a poorly posed question. It is a mistake to ask whether human nature is good or evil, first of all, because good and evil are contingent evaluations, not invariants. They are judgments that arise after the exercise of the will. Spinoza, for example, like Nietzsche after him, explains that humans do not strive for something because they deem it good but instead deem it good because they strive for it. Foucault poses Spinoza’s point in more clearly political terms when he claims, in a debate with Noam Chomsky, that the question of justice—just war in this case—arises only after political action: the proletariat does not make war on the ruling class because it considers that war just but rather considers class war just because it wants to overthrow the ruling class.⁴ To say that good and evil, like just and unjust, are relative terms that depend on relations of force is not to say that they do not exist, but rather simply that they are not fixed, invariant foundations.

Whether human nature is good or evil is a poorly posed question also because basing the analysis of political anthropology on invariants of any sort leads to a dead end. The question is not what invariant defines human nature, in other words, but what human nature can become. The most important fact about human nature (if we still want to call it that) is that it can be and is constantly being transformed. A realist political anthropology must focus on this process of metamorphosis. This brings us back to the issue of making the multitude, through organization and self-transformation. Questions of good and evil can only be posed after the making of the multitude is initiated, in the context of its project.

By arguing against the fixity of evil in human nature, we do not intend to make it impossible to use the term. Evil does exist. We
see it all around us. But the problem of evil has to be posed in such way that its genealogy can be understood, thereby giving us a key to combating it. The pessimistic view of political anthropology registers the existence of evil but by treating it as an invariant blocks any attempt to understand its genesis: evil just is.

Our proposition for political anthropology is to conceive of evil as a derivative and distortion of love and the common. Evil is the corruption of love that creates an obstacle to love, or to say the same thing with a different focus, evil is the corruption of the common that blocks its production and productivity. Evil thus has no originary or primary existence but stands only in a secondary position to love. We spoke earlier of corruptions of love in racisms, nationalism, populisms, and fascisms; and we similarly analyzed not only the destruction of the common through capitalist expropriation and privatization but also institutionalized corruptions of the common in the family, the corporation, and the nation. This double position of evil as corruption and obstacle presents us with some initial criteria for our investigation.

Having posed the problem of evil in this way allows us to return to Spinoza's conception, which served us as the model for a politics of love. We should start with this typically Spinozian geometrical sequence: at the level of sensations he identifies a striving (conatus) of and for life; this striving is built upon and directed in desire ( cupiditas), which functions through the affects: and desire in turn is strengthened and affirmed in love ( amor), which operates in reason. The movement of this sequence involves not negation—striving is not negated by desire, or desire by love—but rather a progressive accumulation, such that desire and love are increasingly powerful strivings for life. And this process is immediately political since the object of all the terms of this sequence is the formation of collective social life and, more generally, the constitution of the common. "Since fear of solitude exists in all men," Spinoza writes, "because no one in solitude is strong enough to defend himself, and procure the necessaries of life, it follows that men naturally aspire to the civil state; nor can it happen that men should ever utterly dis-

solve it." This passage resembles those of other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors who theorize the negation of the state of nature in the formation of society, but the key difference is that Spinoza poses this as a positive, cumulative progression: the striving toward freedom and the common resides at the most basic level of life; then desire sets in motion the construction of the common; and finally love consolidates the common institutions that form society. Human nature is not negated but transformed in this sequence.

Spinoza, however, is the ultimate realist. He recognizes that the social construction of the common through love does not function unimpeded and that humans are the authors of the obstacles. On the surface his explanation is that humans create these impediments and evil in general out of ignorance, fear, and superstition. Since to combat evil, then, one must overcome ignorance and fear and destroy superstition, education in the truth of the intellect and the correct exercise of the will are the antidotes to evil. But any Stoic could tell us that! Spinoza's difference resides at a deeper level where the education or training of the mind and body are grounded in the movement of love. He does not conceive evil, as does Augustine, for instance, as a privation of being; nor does he pose it as a lack of love. Evil instead is love gone bad, love corrupted in such a way that it obstructs the functioning of love. Consider ignorance, fear, and superstition, then, not just as the lack of intelligence but as the power of intelligence turned against itself, and equally the power of the body distorted and blocked. And since love is ultimately the power of the creation of the common, evil is the dissolution of the common or, really, its corruption.

This gives us a Spinozian explanation for why at times people fight for their servitude as if it were their salvation, why the poor sometimes support dictators, the working classes vote for right-wing parties, and abused spouses and children protect their abusers. Such situations are obviously the result of ignorance, fear, and superstition, but calling it false consciousness provides meager tools for transformation. Providing the oppressed with the truth and instructing them in their interests does little to change things. People fighting for their
servitude is understood better as the result of love and community gone bad, failed, and distorted. The first question to ask when confronting evil, then, is, What specific love went bad here? What instance of the common has been corrupted? People are powerfully addicted to love gone bad and corrupt forms of the common. Often, sadly, these are the only instances of love and the common they know! In this context it makes sense that Spinoza thinks of ethics in a medical framework—curing the ills of the body and mind, but more important, identifying how our intellectual and corporeal powers have been corrupted, turned against themselves, become self-destructive. Maybe this ethical and political therapeutic model explains why Freud was so fascinated by Spinoza.

But this is not only a therapeutic model. Ethics and politics come together in an “ontology of force,” which eliminates the separation between love and force that so many metaphysical, transcendental, and religious perspectives try to enforce. From a materialist perspective instead, love is the propositional and constituent key to the relationship between being and force, just as force substantiates love’s powers. Marx, for example, speaks of the “winning smiles” of matter and its “sensuous, poetic glamour,” writing, “In Bacon [and in the Renaissance in general] materialism still holds back within itself in a naive way the germs of a many-sided development.” These forms of matter are “forces of being,” endowed with “an impulse, a vital spirit, a tension,” even a “torment of matter.”

There is something monstrous in the relationship between love and force! But that monstrosity, the overflowing force that embodies the relationship between self and others, is the basis of every social institution. We have already seen how Spinoza poses the development of institutions in the movement from the materiality of conatus or striving all the way to rational, divine love, composing isolated singularities in the multitude. We find something similar, albeit from a completely different perspective, in Wittgenstein’s meditations on pain, which is incommunicable except though constructing a common linguistic experience and, ultimately, instituting common forms of life. Spinozian solitude and Wittgensteinian pain, which are both signs of a lack of being, push us toward the common. Force and love construct together weapons against the corruption of being and the misery it brings.

Love is thus not only an ontological motor, which produces the common and consolidates it in society, but also an open field of battle. When we think of the power of love, we need constantly to keep in mind that there are no guarantees; there is nothing automatic about its functioning and results. Love can go bad, blocking and destroying the process. The struggle to combat evil thus involves a training or education in love.

To clarify, then, we should individuate and bring together three operations or fields of activity for the power of love. First, and primarily, the power of love is the constitution of the common and ultimately the formation of society. This does not mean negating the differences of social singularities to form a uniform society, as if love were to mean merging in unity, but instead composing them in social relation and in that way constituting the common. But since the process of love can be diverted toward the production of corrupt forms of the common, since love gone bad creates obstacles that block and destroy the common—in some cases reducing the multiplicity of the common to identity and unity, in others imposing hierarchies within common relations—the power of love must also be, second, a force to combat evil. Love now takes the form of indignation, disobedience, and antagonism. Exodus is one means we identified earlier of combating the corrupt institutions of the common, subtracting from claims of identity, fleeing from subordination and servitude. These two first guises of the power of love—its powers of association and rebellion, its constitution of the common and its combat against corruption—function together in the third: making the multitude. This project must bring the process of exodus together with an organizational project aimed at creating institutions of common. And all three of these guises are animated by the training or Bildung of the multitude. There is nothing innate or spontaneous about love going well and realizing the common in lasting social forms. The deployment of love has to be learned and new
habits have to be formed through the collective organization of our desires, a process of sentimental and political education. Habits and practices consolidated in new social institutions will constitute our now transformed human nature.

It should be clear at this point that love always involves the use of force or, more precisely, that the actions of love are themselves deployments of force. Love may be an angel, but if so it is an angel armed. We saw earlier that the constitutive power of love and its creation of the common imply what we might call an ontological force involved in the production of being, the production of reality. The combative figure of love’s force becomes clearer, though, when we focus on the revolt against and exodus from hierarchical institutions and the corruptions of the common. And furthermore making the multitude and forming its institutions of the common entail what might be called a constituent political force. But really these three forces of love are not separate. They are merely different guises of love’s power.

The link between love and force, we should be clear, does not come with any guarantees either. We know that the racial, patriarchal, identitarian, and other corruptions of love are not lacking in force. In fact they often wield a surplus of force as if to cover over their deviation from love’s dedication to the common. Is the force of love, then, indistinguishable from the force of its corruptions? No; worrying about the use of force in this way is a false scrupulousness. We can easily enumerate several criteria available for distinguishing love’s force. First, the content of the link between love and force is the common, which composes the interaction of singularities in processes of social solidarity and political equality. Second, the direction of love’s force is oriented toward the freedom of those singularities. Third, the organizational forms of this exercise of force are always open, constitutive, and horizontal, such that every time it is solidified in fixed vertical relations of power, love exceeds it and overflows its limits, reopening organization again to the participation of all. Fourth, the relation between love and force is legitimated in the consensus of singularities and the autonomy of each, in a relationship of reciprocity and collective self-rule. Fifth, this force is always directed toward consolidating this process in institutions that can allow it to continue ever more powerfully. And the list could go on.

The real difficulties are not at the conceptual level of distinguishing criteria but in the political field where we must conduct the battle. Even when we understand clearly the powers of love and its corruptions, even when we face with open eyes the evil in our societies, the love gone bad and the corrupt forms of the common to which we and others are addicted, there is no guarantee of success. Giacomo Leopardi, in his famous poem Lenta giusneta, captures the fragility of love and the singularities struggling in common against the seemingly ineluctable destiny of death and destruction. The looming volcano Vesuvius towers above threateningly, but the delicate flowers of the Scotch broom continue indefatigably to push up its slopes. It would be easy to enter the struggle if we were guaranteed victory beforehand. Leopardi celebrates the fact that love constantly battles, regardless of the enormity of the forces stacked against us. Victory is possible and fear of the volcano defeated only when hope is organized to construct human community.

Finally, let us return to the pessimistic political anthropologies we set out from in order to emphasize the political difference marked by our conception of evil and the means to combat it. Even among authors whose work is very close to ours, we recognize a recent tendency to link a notion of evil as an invariant of human nature to a politics aimed at restraining evil. One fascinating occasion for developing this line of reasoning is a passage in Paul’s epistles that proposes the figure of the katechon (the one that restrains). The katechon, Paul explains, restrains “the lawless one,” a satanic figure, and thus holds off the apocalypse until its proper time (2 Thessalonians 2:1–12). This mysterious “restrainer” has generally been interpreted in Christian theology as a sovereign power: in the early Christian era Tertullian identifies the katechon as the Roman Empire, and in the twentieth century Carl Schmitt proposes that it is a Christian Empire. Regardless of the specific referent, these authors concur that
the *katechon* is a lesser evil that protects us against a greater one. This notion corresponds perfectly to the implications of a pessimistic political anthropology. If we accept that evil or intraspecies aggressiveness or some such element is an invariant of human nature, then restraining evil will be one if not the central task of politics, limiting us to a politics of the “lesser evil.”

Our conception of evil as a corruption of and obstacle to love in the creation of the common leads instead to a politics of not restraining but combating evil. Since evil is secondary to love, we are not limited to external containment but have access to its inner mechanisms. Love is the battlefield for the struggle against evil. Moreover, the primacy of love indicates the power we have in this fight. If evil were primary, we would be helpless against it. We would need to trust in an Empire to restrain it and hold death at bay. But since evil derives from love, the power of evil is necessarily less. Love is stronger than death. And thus acting through love we have the power to combat evil. Such a politics of love has no need to accept the rule of a lesser evil. This is not to say we should imagine we can defeat evil once and for all—no, the corruptions of love and the common will continue. What it means, though, is that the battle is ours to fight and win.

In the second half of this book, from this point on, we seek to discover within the movements of the multitude the mechanisms of the common that produce new subjectivity and form institutions. But before leaving this discussion we should consider one terrible historical experience of the relation between love and force in the socialist and Bolshevik conceptions of the party. The premise is rational and understandable: nothing is possible when we are isolated and only unity makes effective and multiplies the value of indignation and individual revolt. Militants thus go forward hand in hand to create a compact group, armed with knowledge and passion. That would be the spark to transform society. The conclusion, though, is false: surreptitiously but implacably the party’s determinations of norms and measures, its decisions (even the right to life and death) become separated from the experience of the movements and ab-
sorbed by the logic of capitalist alienation, turning bureaucratic and tyrannical. What should give force to multiplicity is transformed into the violence of identity. Unity is projected as a transcendent value, and the slogan of revolution serves to corrupt the common. No, the party will not defeat evil. Today the memory of that corruption only pushes us further to discover a force to combat evil.
52. Macherey, “Présentation.”
59. On pollination as an example of a positive externality, see Boutang, Le capitalisme cognitif.

INTERMEZZO


4. EMPIRE RETURNS

1. See, for example, Philip Gordon, "The End of the Bush Revolution," Foreign Affairs 85, no. 4 (July–August 2006), 75–86.
4. Giovanni Arrighi situates the failure of the coup and its imperialist project in an even longer historical frame: "The new imperialism of the Project for a New American Century probably marks the inglorious end of the sixty-year long struggle of the United States to become the organizing center of a world state. The struggle changed the world but even in its most triumphant moments, the U.S. never succeeded in its endeavor." Giovanni Arrighi, Adam Smith in Beijing (London: Verso, 2007), p. 261.
7. Niall Ferguson is the most prominent pro-imperialist critic of the United States, chastising it for not doing what it takes to be a proper imperialist power. See Colossus (New York: Penguin, 2004).
8. For an example of a neoconservative who attempts to break with the ideology, see Francis Fukuyama, After the Neocons (London: Profile, 2006).

examples of those who maintain the faith, see the essays by Richard Perle, Norman Podhoretz, Max Boot, and others organized in the symposium "Defending and Advancing Freedom," Commentary 120, no. 4 (November 2005).
17. For a nuanced analysis of how "blood for oil" is an insufficient frame for understanding the 2003 invasion of Iraq, see Retort, Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 38–77.