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 organizations 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 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 in essence 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

[1]This is what Lawford-Smith (2019, 9–10) calls the "citizen-exclusive" state. The "citizen-inclusive" state contains citizens who aren't officials. I focus on the former since I doubt the latter is a group agent. See Lawford-Smith (2019, 31–56) for some reasons for this doubt.

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

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

[4]For 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).

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

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. 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.[8] 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 staying 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.

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

[6]The 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).

[7]This 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.

[8]I've taken this insight from Ebels-Duggan (2008). In fact, her view is that love consists solely in respect for agency.

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 is 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

[9]There 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).

[10]How 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 of. 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.

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 common. Consider the relationship between lord and serf, king and subject, boss and worker. These are riven by asymmetries in power. This makes the relationships bad and 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]

Let me emphasize two things about these inegalitarian relationships. First, they are intrinsically objectionably, rather than objectionable for their causal consequences. To see this, consider the relationship of master to slave. Such a relationship could be instrumentally good. The master might be a wise and benevolent master, who intervened in their slave's life only to their benefit. This might mean the relationship overall improved the life of the slave. Nonetheless, such a relationship would be objectionable; it is objectionable in itself. Second, these relationships are objectionable in the sense that they are bad in themselves and people have a claim against being in them. They're bad in themselves in that it makes people's lives worse to be in inegalitarian relationships. Much like it is good for you to have good friendships and other egalitarian personal relationships, it is bad to be subordinated. Subordination is one of the constituents of ill-being. People have a claim against being in such relationships in that we owe it to people not to subordinate them, and to free them from subordination. Much like it wrongs someone to steal from them or touch them without their permission, it wrongs them to subject them to asymmetric power.[12] So asymmetries of power have weighty moral import: we should go to great lengths to avoid some having asymmetric power over others.[13]

[11]For 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).

[12]This view is defended at length in Niko Kolodny's forthcoming book, *The Pecking Order*.

[13]What about the relationship between doctor and patient or teacher and student? These look like they involve asymmetries of power, but they don't seem objectionable. This is because, as we'll see in the course of this section, both internal and external barriers to the misuse of power ameliorate the problem with power asymmetries. In anodyne versions of these relationships, both barriers are in place, so the relationships are not objectionable.

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. On the face of it, this is both bad for us and violates our rights; we have a claim against being subordinated by the state. A solution to this problem would show how to mitigate the objection to the state's relationship to its citizens. It would show us how we can live under a state without suffering subordination.

Let me be clear about the nature of this problem. The problem is a problem with the state, conceptualized as a group agent, having asymmetric power over its citizens. There is a distinct problem with officials of the state having such power, but this problem is plausibly more tractable, and in any case is not my focus.[14] Thus, at this point, it may be useful to reiterate the reasons for thinking of states as groups agents. First, doing so fits ordinary language We often talk about states having aims and performing actions. We say that Russia wants NATO expansion to cease or that China aims for hegemony in the Western Pacific; on the face of it, these claims presuppose state agency. Second, ascribing agency to states fits with plausible functionalist accounts of mental states. If all a desire (for example) is is something that plays a particular role in a causal network, then states can have desires: states can have features that play the requisite role. Third, thinking of states as group agents fits with social scientific theories. Realist theories of international relations, for example, say that states pursue their interests; this presupposes that states *have* interests. More generally, many economic theories talk about firms with preferences; this presupposes that organizations like states can have preferences. These three reasons identify why we should think of organizations generally, and states in particular, as group agents.[15]

Nonetheless, one might deny there is a real problem with asymmetries

[14] I present a solution to this problem in Lovett (2021).

[15] For these points, see n.4.

of power between group agents and flesh-and-blood agents. Niko Kolodny (2019, 112) takes this view. He asks, rhetorically, "[w]hat would it even mean to be the equal of Indonesia, say, or the Roman Catholic Church?" (2019, 112). The idea is that, since it makes no sense to say that a flesh-and-blood agent is subordinated by a group agent, flesh-and-blood agents can have no claims against such relationships. Now on the fact of it this is implausible: it makes perfect sense to talk of subordination to a group agent. To be subordinated to such an agent is just to be under their asymmetric power. But what's driving this rhetoric, I believe, is the idea that inegalitarian relationships should be thought of in terms of social hierarchy. On this view, what it is one to be superior and another to be inferior is for the two to occupy a place in a defined social structure, a structure like hereditary caste. Such structures organize society into different levels and ascribe greater moral worth than those in the higher levels. Plausibly, group agents don't occupy a place in this sort of social structure; it perhaps makes little sense to ascribe more moral worth to Indonesia than to a flesh-and-blood individual.

Yet this is an unduly narrow conception of inegalitarian relationships. We don't need society-wide structures that assign different worth to people in order to have objectionable relationships of domination or subordination. All we need is asymmetries of power. To see this, just think about a very simple case. Suppose two people are stuck on an island, and one of them has a gun. The person with a gun wields power over the other person. They make them gather food and water; they make them get to work building a boat. Here it is artificial to see these two people as forming a society; they stand in nothing like the relationship that members of different castes stand in. And, more importantly, talk of unequal moral worth is wholly out of place in this case. The person with the gun does not ascribe themselves more worth than the person without it, they just back up their commands with the threat of violence. Yet here is a deeply objectionable relationship. The asymmetry of power in this case, and that asymmetry alone, is sufficient to create an objectionable relationship of subordination. Thus, there is a serious problem with the relationship between state and citizen: the state's asymmetric power over its citizens threatens to subordinate them.

Can this problem be solved? I think that it can. 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 enor-

mous power is ameliorated. There are two reasons to endorse this key idea. First, it helps make sense of why some anodyne 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.[16] 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 get 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

[16]See Schapiro (1999) for a Kantian way of spelling out this idea.

goes, greatly ameliorates the problem with one having that power.[17] 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.

Importantly, love is an *especially* robust internal barrier to the misuse of power. To see this, let's contrast love with more minimal attitudes the state could take towards its citizens. A loving state will care very deeply about both its citizens autonomy and their well-being. Compare this to a state that cares about both its citizens well-being and autonomy, but not enough to count as loving its citizens. This latter state will be more likely to mistreat its citizens. This is because one can care about someone and still mistreat them. One can make mistakes. To put the point in terms of dispositions, even when one is generally disposed to improve someone's well-being or support their autonomy, this disposition doesn't always manifest itself; one can have the general disposition to benefit someone while, on some particular occasions, not actually doing what most benefits that person. But the more one cares about someone, or the greater the extent to which one has the relevant dispositions, the less likely is one to make such a mistake. The less likely one is to use one's power over someone in a way that impairs their well-being or subverts their autonomy. And so love is a more robust barrier than more minimal attitudes are to the misuse of power. Love is an especially good way to mitigate worries about subordination.

I want to consider one reason to resist this claim. Suppose a master loves their slave. Does this really make their relationship less bad? One might have a contrary intuition. To alleviate this intuition, the key point is that I have not 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

[17] One 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).

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 unloving master and slave. And so the problem of state subordination can be alleviated by the state loving its citizens. So, failing some other wholly adequate solution to the problem, the state should love its citizens. It should love them in order to mitigate the threat of subordination that its great power over them creates.

A wholly satisfactory alternative solution to the problem of state subordination would dispense with the need for love. So let us consider some alternative possibilities. One idea is that a different attitude—respect—is sufficient to resolve the problem. The thought is that we can fully address our worries about state subordination by demanding the state respect its citizens: we needn't demand that it loves them. To evaluate this position, we need a clear notion of how love and respect relate. A natural view here is that respect is simply a more minimal notion of love. Respect involves some concern for well-being: when you respect someone, you are at least minimally disposed to make their life go better. And respect involves concern for autonomy. When you respect someone you will not violate their rights. The natural view is that love is more demanding than respect along every dimension: it involves much deeper concern for both well-being and autonomy.[18] If this is correct, then love is a straightforwardly more robust barrier to the misuse of power than is respect. One is less likely to misuse one's power over someone the more one cares more about their autonomy and their well-being. Love, thus, is a better solution than respect to the problem of state subordination. That is not to say respect is worthless: respect does help with the problem. But we should favor the loving state over the merely respectful state.

There is an alternative way of conceptualizing respect. One might think that respect involves just as much concern for autonomy as love, but less concern for well-being. And, additionally, one might think that deep concern for autonomy is a fully adequate internal barrier to the misuse of power. So it doesn't matter whether someone is disposed to wield their superior power in a way that benefits who they have power over. All that matters is whether they're disposed to wield it in a way that supports their autonomy. On this

[18]For this kind of idea, see Velleman (1999, 366).

view, love is not a better solution to the problem of state subordination than is mere respect. This, however, seems like an incorrect account of what sorts of internal barriers ameliorate the problem with subordination. It does seem to help that the person with superior power is disposed to improve the welfare of the person they have power over. Imagine you have power over someone because that person is disposed to do whatever you ask, although your merely making requests does not violate their rights. It would seem to ameliorate the issue with this inequality if you cared about their well-being, and so were not disposed to make requests the fulfillment of which hurt them. Thus, I suspect love is a better internal barrier to the misuse of power than respect, however we conceive it. Love provides a better solution to the problem of state subordination than do any more minimal attitudes.

Let's look at a second alternative way to solve this problem. One might think that we should erect external barriers to the state's misuse of power. Such a barrier would consist in something external to the state that prevents it from misusing its power. These barriers seem to ameliorate the problem with asymmetries of power; if a boss can abuse a worker, but the threat of union intercession prevents it, that ameliorates any relationship of subordination. The idea is that, likewise, external constraints on the state's misuse of power might solve the problem of state subordination. We can trace this kind of idea back to at least Locke: Locke thought that resistance by the people could be the external check on the state's use of power (Locke 1690, ch. 29).[19] But, in recent years, the thought has been advocated most strongly by republicans. Republicans often suggest that robust democratic institutions and independent judiciaries furnish us with external constraints on the state's misuse of power (Pettit 1997, 172–183, Lovett and Pettit 2018, 381). Democratic institutions let the voting public constrain the state. Independent judiciaries help plaintiffs constrain the state. The general idea is that, in appropriate circumstances, ordinary citizens can constrain the state. This, one might think, provides a fully satisfactory solution to the problem of state subordination.

One might worry that ordinary citizens are not a properly external constraint on the state. For a start, one might worry that ordinary citizens are part of the state. But we can dispense with this source of the worry imme-

[19]Locke'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.

diately: as we've defined it, the state is an organization made up of officials. Most citizens are not officials, and so are not part of the state. Nonetheless, one might still worry that insofar as ordinary citizens influence the state, they do so via influencing these officials. Voters cast their votes and election officials tally them; plaintiffs bring their cases and judges adjudicate them. One might think this precludes voters and plaintiffs from being a properly external check on the state. But that seems wrong. To take an analogous case, suppose a judge threatens to imprison you if you misuse your power over someone. This threat can constrain you. But, to work, it requires you have certain internal attitudes. It requires that you don't want to be imprisoned, and that you see the threat as credible. The threat influences your behavior only via these attitudes. That doesn't mean the threat is not an external constraint on your use of power. Likewise, the fact that voters and plaintiffs influence the state by influencing things internal to it doesn't mean they cannot provide an external constraint on the state. So perhaps ordinary citizens can externally constrain the state.

Unfortunately, however, this is nonetheless not a fully satisfactory solution to the problem of state subordination. There are two issues. First, there's an issue of feasibility. To fully solve the problem of state subordination, the external barriers on the state's misuse of power 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. Yet it is very difficult to impose external constraints on enormously powerful entities. To constrain such an entity from misusing its power, one must be able to identify when it misuses its power and punish it for doing so. But very powerful entities can obfuscate whether they misuse their power and can deter attempted punishments. The state, of course, is an entity of enormous power and obviously states regularly do obfuscate their wrongdoings and retaliate against individuals who try to punish them. This makes it very difficult for anyone, and especially for citizens who are under the power of their state, to constrain it in the comprehensive manner that would be required to fully resolve the problem of state subordination.

The example of the United States is probative here. The kind of institutions that might enable ordinary citizens to effectively constrain a state all exist in the United States: the U.S. has elections, it has a judiciary, it has a reasonably vibrant civil society. These no doubt do help prevent the U.S.

state misusing its power. But they are patently insufficient to wholly prevent the misuse of such power. 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. These institutions make it more costly for the state to kill, jail and exile its citizens and so plausibly reduce the chance that such abuses become utterly routine, or matters of policy.[20] Yet that falls very far short of the comprehensive 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. So the necessary external constraints simply do not seem to be feasible.

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 of 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, which is not a fully satisfactory solution to the problem.

Thus neither respect nor external constraints provide us with a fully satisfactory solution to the problem of state subordination. That doesn't mean the state should refrain from respecting its citizens, nor that we should avoid constraining it externally. Both help with the problem, and so we should aim for both. But neither fully solves the problem. And so to mitigate the threat of state subordination to the greatest possible extent, the state must love its citizens. This completes the relational argument for the ideal of the loving state.

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

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.[21] That excuses us from loving all. It does so in the sense that it wholly justifies us in not loving everyone; we make no moral mistake by refraining from universal love. 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.[22]

[21] For this kind of thought, see Wolf (1982).

[22] For 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.

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 individuals. Now, notwithstanding this, we do sometimes talk about the interests of states. The Russian state, for example, has an interest in free passage though 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.[23] 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 is good reason to at least deny that reasons to love are noninsistent. For a start, I think that there is

[23]Kolodny (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.

little motivation for thinking reasons of love are insistent. The best motivation for this view comes from the idea that "love is not a matter of rational obligation" (Jollimore 2011, 15): we may choose who we love and are very rarely obligated to love anyone. But one doesn't need to think that reasons of love are noninsistent to believe this. One needs merely recognize that loving someone requires big sacrifices to our existing projects and relationships. We flesh-and-blood agents are not required to make such sacrifices. Thus the fact that we may choose who we love need not be due to the fact that reasons of love have a specific noninsistent character. Rather, it is down to the interplay between our reasons to love and our reasons to carry out our current projects and maintain our existing relationships. This interplay generates permission, rather than obligations.

One might, however, object to this position. One might think that if we had insistent reasons to love everyone, and the personal value of our project and relationships merely excused us from this duty, that would leave a moral residue. We would have reason to feel regret for not loving people, and perhaps reason to apologize to them or compensate them. But there is no such residue, and so one might prefer the view that the only reasons to love are noninsistent. To address this objection, we need to distinguish two notions of an excuse. On one notion, when one is excused for doing something, one is rendered blameless for it but it is still wrong. Being excused in this sense leaves a moral residue. One should regret one's wrongdoings, even when one is blameless. But I intend a second, broader, notion of excuse. To be excused for doing something in this second sense means one is fully justified in doing it, one does nothing wrong by doing it. The child who's late for school because their bus was delayed is excused in this sense: they've done nothing wrong. This kind of excuse leaves no moral residue; there is no wrongdoing for the child to regret. This second sense of an excuse is the sense in which we're excused for not loving everyone; we flesh-and-blood agents make no moral mistake by not loving universally, we are fully justified in not loving all. So the position I've just advanced is compatible with the view that not loving people needn't leave any moral residue.

This undercuts the motivation for thinking that reasons to love are noninsistent reasons: we don't need to think this to secure the idea that, for us, love is not a matter of obligation. But is there any positive case to be made that reasons to love are insistent? I believe that there is. 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. Reasons to love, on the high-regard account of love, are indeed insistent reasons.

Let us now turn to some overgeneralization worries about the "no excuses" argument. There are two such worries. The first concerns non-state organizations. Does this argument not 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.[24] 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.

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

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 love less weighty.[25] 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.

[25]For this point, see Jollimore (2011, 114), Keller (2013) 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.

This is why states should treat their citizens better than they do foreigners.[26]

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.[27] Others think that the weighty reason against coercion precludes state legitimacy. They think coercion, and *a fortiori* state coercion, is a grave wrongdoing.[28] 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, 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,

[26]The 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.

[27]Hobbes (1996) held a specific version of this view.

[28]See, for example, Huemer (2013, 3–19).

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.[29]

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

[29]This 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.

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 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.[30] 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

[30]For these points, see Ebels-Duggan (2008, 156–57).

not absolute, presumption against interfering in its citizens' choices.[31]

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 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.[32] But states should try to enact the will of the people. In this sense, they should be democracies. Note that it is critical here that there be a causal connection between what the people want and what the state does. If a dictator just so happened to enact everything the people wanted, that would not get us all we value from democracy. States should be democratic in the sense that citizen preference should drive, should determine, state policy.

[31] In 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.

[32] Or so said Tocqueville (1899, 118–19) about France.

The most prominent contemporary justifications of democracy have difficulty capturing this causal connection. These views say that states should be democracies because equality is valuable. The basic idea is that inequalities of power are objectionable, and democracy facilitates equalities of power between flesh-and-blood citizens.[33] These views don't capture the import of their being a causal connection between what people want and what the state does. To see this, consider the following case. Imagine that we got rid of government by human beings. We replaced it with government by algorithm. The algorithm we replaced it with, let's stipulate, produces perfect legislation. It institutes far better legislation than any human government could.[34] In this situation, everyone has equal power: none at all. Thus, egalitarian justifications of democracy's value see nothing problematic about this situation. Yet, intuitively, there is something problematic about being governed by the algorithm. It's not merely valuable for citizens to get equality (and good policy), it is also valuable for policy to manifest what people want. This is the sense in which states should be democratic.

The loving state will be 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

[33]For this view, see Christiano (2008), Kolodny (2014), Viehoff (2014) and Wilson (2019).

[34]This case is from Zuehl (2016, 18–19). Kolodny (2014, 312) essentially bites the bullet on this sort of case.

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.[35] 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, write a book, start a business.[36] 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.[37] One's objection

[35] As Velleman (1999, 360–61) thinks.

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

[37] For this idea, see Kolodny (2019, 112).

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 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. 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. For the state to love its citizens, it must adopt their collective ends as its own.

Let's compare this defense of democracy with one further alternative. I've mentioned that many people justify democracy by appeal to equality; the second common justification involves an appeal to autonomy. The core idea here is that the state, due to its coercive nature, poses a serious threat to its citizens autonomy. This threat can be resolved by democracy. Rousseau expresses this view when he insists that "[t]he people, subjected to law, ought to be its author" (Rousseau 1968, 2.6.10). His view is that when we are forced

to obey the laws of a democratic state, we are really just obeying our own will. More recently, Stilz endorses a similar view: she claims that "[o]nly if a state facilitates its subjects' collective self-determination can its enforcement powers be reconciled with their autonomy" (Stilz 2019, 90). The idea is that when our joint intentions are manifested in government policy, the coercive enforcement of that policy does not impair our autonomy. Perhaps these autonomy-based approaches can explain why a causal connection between government policy and citizen preference is important: it is only when there is such a connection that citizens are only coerced into acting in line with their own will.

However, there are two very serious problems with such approaches. First, state policy in democracies does not match the will of each and every citizen. It at most matches that of a majority of citizens. And, additionally, the actions of state officials don't match the will of each citizen; judges, police officers, prosecutors have a lot of discretion. This means that actual instances of state coercion will very often fail to match the will of the coerced citizens. So, at best, this seems like a radically incomplete solution to the problem of state coercion.[38] Second, citizens in real-world democracies are often apathetic, ignorant and irrational. They don't vote, they don't know much about politics, and when they reason about politics they bend the evidence to show their side in the best possible light. This undermines the idea that individual citizens have much of an autonomous influence on government policy. Autonomy requires engagement, knowledge and rationality. But, insofar as citizen influence on government policies is meant to disable the threat to citizen autonomy, the influence itself should surely be autonomous influence. Thus, it is at best unclear how well this approach can justify democracy in our real, non-ideal situation.[39]

So neither egalitarian nor autonomy-based approached provide fully satisfying explanations of why states should be democratic. Egalitarian defenses do not explain why there should be any causal connection between state policy and citizen preferences, and autonomy-based defenses are very difficult to flesh out convincingly. Thus the fact that we can get a defense of democracy, in the relevant sense, out of the ideal of the loving state redounds strongly to the credit of that ideal.

[38]For more on this point, see Christiano (1996, 24–29)

[39]I spell out this point at greater length in Lovett (2020).

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.[40] 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 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.[41] But this further claim seems to me simply false. Imagine you beloved

[40] Nozick (1974) is the canonical source of this view.

[41] These 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

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.[42] History is violent: force, fraud, theft must surely 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.[43] 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,

(2007).

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

[43]For this view, see Murphy and Nagel (2002, 36–7).

and should, prefer to give some size benefit to the first than a greater benefit to the second.[44] 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.[45]

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.[46] 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 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

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

[45]On 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).

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

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 the 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. The idea here is that our evidence often permits a range of beliefs about the moral quality of someone's character or actions.[47] 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.[48] 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.

[47]Here I am endorsing a version of what Schoenfield (2014) calls 'permissivism.'

[48]For this point, see Jollimore (2011, 46–72). Both Keller (2004) and Stroud (2006) take a similar view, but they think the relevant sort of epistemic partiality requires epistemic irrationality. If we're epistemic permissivists, I don't think it needs to.

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 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.[49] But such claims are almost never put to explanatory work.[50] 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.[51] 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

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

[50] I 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.

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

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 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.[52] 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.

[52]For this account, see Coll (2013, 30–32).

9 Concluding remarks

There is a widespread sense in liberal political thought, and especially in the Anglo-American political tradition, that the state is something to be constrained. The idea is that the ideal state is a state that is limited from the outside; the best we can hope for, when it comes to the state-citizen relationship, is a state that is confined within its proper boundaries. It is not so clear, I have argued, that comprehensive constraints on the state are feasible. States have enormous power and have a way of whittling down the barriers to the exercise of that power. But, more importantly, there is something deeply unambitious about this kind of political ideal. On this ideal the state is the enemy of its citizens. It is prevented from visiting great harm on them only by expedience and by their own resistance. We can surely demand more from the state than such enmity. In this paper, I have spelt out a more ambitious, a more demanding, ideal for the relationship of state to citizen. The state should not be merely hemmed in by external barriers. It should be animated by internal attitudes. It should love its citizens. And that, as we've seen, means it should be a liberal state, a democratic state, a welfare state and an egalitarian state. The ideal state is the loving state.[53]

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