

UNIVERSAL SELFLESS LOVE AS A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

STATEMENTS AND COMMENTS AT 3rd TRIGLAV ZOOM

Compiled by Jacques Baudot

This paper presents the interventions of participants, comments on the connexions these remarks have to previous discussions of the Circle, and on issues that ought to be further examined. These comments and suggestions are in italics and noted as *JB*.

Nitin Desai : Reasons for Introducing Love in Politics

In the past three decades the world has been dominated by neo-liberal economics based on individualism and efficiency narrowly conceived and measured. To introduce love in politics means fighting individualism and also a simplistic and “economistic” definition of efficiency.

JB. At some point the Circle should have a debate on the origins and different meanings of “individualism”.

There is a second reason to introduce love in politics: it is to combat another tendency of our time which is the growing focus on hate and fear in political strategies and debates. This is evident in India and also present in other countries. Peoples are repeatedly told what and whom they should be afraid of, that such and such community is “bad”...

Sad that Gandhi is forgotten in his own country.¹ He believed in kindness, in a gentle approach to politics. He said that in gentle ways one can shake the world. And he believed that we cannot change the world unless we change ourselves. To illustrate this, there is the story of the mother who came to see Gandhi asking him to cure her son who loved sugar excessively. *Come back in ten days*, said Gandhi. She did, and Gandhi cured the boy. Very grateful, the mother could not resist asking the reason for the ten days. *Because*, said Gandhi, *I had to cure myself of my love for sugar before I could help your son.*

JB. Fundamental importance of this answer from Gandhi. Should be one of the elements to put a bridge between private morality and public morality.

There is a link, between the perversion of politics in India and the prevalence of neo-liberal economics in this same country. Today we have to see sustainability not only as regards the relations between humankind and nature, but also on the ways human beings relate to each other. There is an ecological sustainability and a social or human sustainability. Each of us

¹ Point 4 of the Agenda had the following quote from Gandhi: « *Love is the strongest force the world possesses, and yet it is the humblest imaginable...A love that is based on the goodness of those whom you love is a mercenary affair, whereas true love is self-effacing and demands no consideration...Wherever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer him with love. In a crude manner, I have worked it out all my life. That does not mean that all my difficulties are solved. I have found, however, that this Law of Love has answered as the Law of Destruction has never done.* »

has to be more mindful of others. Forgiveness has to prevail over resentment and hate. We are at least aware of the damages we are inflicting on the biosphere. Let's also care about each other.

Dirk Stryker: Martin Luther King on Love, Power and Compromise

The quote of Martin Luther King in our agenda is most important.² I agree that Power without love is abusive. And, love without power is anemic, is close to nothingness. Power emanates from the drive to realize oneself. Power is associated with masculinity. Power, simply by being exercised, separates, divides. Love evokes feminist values, the home, the security of the family. Love unifies. Without love, we live in isolation. Without power, we are insignificant. Every individual and every society needs love and power. Connecting the two is positive for each of us and for the world. In order to have justice, we need to put power and love together.

Dominique Michal: Love in Politics Means Active Engagement of Citizens

Love is a human experience. Not a political statement. A number of philosophers, essayists, politicians have brought together love and politics. To no avail. Has love ever been in the driven seat of politics ? I doubt that history could give an example.

The challenges humankind faces today are extraordinarily difficult: climate change, violence, wars, authoritarian regimes, huge number of peoples displaced...I look at my little hamlet in the middle of France. How could my neighbors and myself feel part of the world? Same question for the youth: How could our children hope for a better future? Peoples feel excluded. Politicians simplify everything in order to appear in control.

Where is the solution? Here is a quote: *“Love is profoundly political. It is our deepest revolution and it will come when we understand this truth.”* Thus, love is the way to bring back to the people the problems we are facing, and also the solutions. Love is not just about tolerance. Not just about accepting the fact that there are different views. As William Penn said, love is about the active engagement between citizens. We need each other.

Therefore the solution is to rethink democracy. Authority has to be less “vertical”. To bring back care and love a number of decisions, a lot of power has to be given back to the small communities, typically the village, or the “quartier” in a city. The example of the situation of refugees is revealing. Ordinary citizens are helping them. Love cannot be far from the eyes. Citizens can take care themselves of a number of problems. They have to be trusted by the central government. And governments, public authorities have to listen to us, citizens. Is this an utopia? Perhaps, but there is no other path possible.

JB. See the documents on the Triglav meeting on Rurality, the Local and the Global, Triglav website, Activities, Gatherings, Poussignol, France, 2017.

² Point 3 of the Agenda had the following quote from Martin Luther King: « *What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love. And this is what we must see as we move on.* »

Peter Baas: Political Ethic: Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Reflections inspired by the life of a Dutchman who was one of the leaders of the Resistance against the Nazis and then the President of the first tribunal in the Netherlands in charge of the trial of criminals of war. This man (1904-1992) was perfectly consistent in the direction he gave to his life, in solving the dilemmas he was confronted with and in the choices he had to make. Such consistency was due to his firm application of two principles : he had a deep respect for the democratic system, the rule of law and the related institutions; and, his relationships with other human beings were shaped by his catholic education and the observance of the commandment “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

That commandment, never proclaimed but consistently applied, transcended his personal interest (s) and rejoined, contributed to the common interest, or common good. For example, he opposed without hesitation social and political movements inspired by “Christian values” that became pro-Nazi. During the war, he took many dangerous initiatives, such as helping Jewish individuals to hide and escape the Gestapo, for the simple reason that one has to do what he or she must do. Being a human being, you have to help your fellow human beings. After the war, as President of the Tribunal judging war criminals, he applied the law but never took revenge. He understood the need to contextualize the crimes committed. He was firm, but also forgiving. And he insisted on leaving open the possibility of rehabilitation of the individuals on trial.

The simple, clear but very demanding principles that animated this man were translated into real life action. This is an inspiring example. A perfect harmony between the motivations and actions of the self and the service of the common good. Today, we have “only” to add respect for nature to such an example of a life combining so well love for oneself and love for the common good of society and the human family.

JB. A very inspiring example indeed of the concrete practice of love in private and public life, without “proclamation”, discreetly and efficiently. See this statement in relation with the “Zoom” meeting on Common Good and Social Justice, Triglav website, Activities, Gatherings, 23 January

Torben Brylle: Societies Have Varying Conceptions of Universal Love

Subject is topical, difficult and important.

Regarding selfless love, a central issue is the linkages between the individual level and the generalization to society as a whole. And there are different ways in which the concept of love expresses itself in different societies.

JB. This point should be further examined. According to the Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion (1980 and 1996) “Love: The Latin terms are amor and caritas and the principal involved in friendship (jen standing as the Chinese synonym). Amor and eros are the types of love based on desire, and caritas and agape the sense of a higher or selfless type of love.” Greek terms are philia, eros and agape. Philia developed the connotation of the kind of love Then are 12 very interesting paragraphs on philosophers ranging from Hesiod to Freud, Jung

and Nygren. For instance: Paragraph 5: “The Confucian idea of jen, having among its meanings “love of fellow men” appears to be an Eastern equivalent of “philia.”

Adding to the difficulty and the importance of making selfless love a force in our world, is the fact that there are now competing values.

See the new book of Francis Fukuyama, *Liberalism and its discontents*, March 2022.

JB. Here are a few quotes from this book “intended to be a defense of classical liberalism, or if that term is too fraught with certain historical connotations, then what Deirdre Mc Closkey labels “humane liberalism” (...) Classical liberalism is a big tent that encompasses a range of political views that nonetheless agree on the foundational importance of equal individual rights, law and freedom (...) Populists on the right and progressives on the left are unhappy with present day liberalism not, I would argue, because of a fundamental weakness of the doctrine. Rather, they are unhappy with the way that liberalism has evolved over the last couple of generations. Beginning in the late 1970s, economic liberalism evolved into what is now labeled neoliberalism, which dramatically increased economic inequality and brought on devastating financial crises that hurt ordinary people far more than wealthy elites around the globe. It is this inequality that is at the core of the progressive case against liberalism and the capitalist system with which it is associated (...)”

Taken from Francis Fukuyama, Liberalism and its Discontents, [First published in Great Britain in 2022], Profile Books. March 2022. Preface, pages VII and IX.

Values that “we”(or were) considered universal are challenged. The concept itself of universality is challenged.

How can we make sure that there is a universal foundation of values that we can all relate to? Such a foundation is necessary to ease communications among peoples, societies, and governments.

Currently, we are experiencing a situation where peoples are withdrawing into their own country, society, community, or group which holds their same beliefs. But at the same time all peoples are interlinked, notably by the state of our planet. Retreating to any form of individualism, or nationalism is an impasse.

Arthur Dahl: The Baha'i Understanding of Love

1. The Baha'i religion has a very broad conception of universal selfless love. For instance: “Love is the cause of God’s revelation unto man, the vital bond inherent, in accordance with the divine revelation, in the reality of things (...) Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world (...)

2. “By learning to love the unknown and unknowable, we learn also to love the unknown qualities and potential in ourselves, in others, and in the natural world. This is what unites us with all humanity and nature.”

3. For the Baha'i, the problems that humankind is facing can largely be ascribed to the complete absence of such love in so many individuals and institutions in today's societies.

4. When leaders consider the impact of policies before them, they will need to give thought to what so many might term the human spirit – that essential quality which seeks meaning and aspire to transcendence. These less tangible dimensions of human existence have tragically been viewed as confined to the realm of personal belief and lying outside the concern of policy makers and administrators. But experience has shown that progress for all is not attainable if material advancement is divorced from spiritual and ethical advancement. Only by assuring that material progress is consciously connected to spiritual and social progress can the promise of a better world be fulfilled.

5 The global challenges now facing humanity are a severe test of its willingness to set aside short-term self-interest and come to terms with this stark spiritual and moral reality: there is but one, interconnected human family and it shares one precious homeland.

6 Fostering unity, by harmonizing disparate elements and nurturing in every heart a selfless love for humankind, is the task of religion.

7 Peace must first be established among individuals, until it leads in the end to peace among nations.

8 Love is truly the only path to peace and sustainability.

JB. Paras 1 and 2 are important for a "definition", or at least an "understanding" of selfless love, presented as "universal selfless love".

Para 3 implies that there were in the past societies governed with love. Do you, Arthur, have examples? And, does it really matters? Is it not sufficient to demonstrate that in today's world the need for politics and policies inspired by selfless love is imperative?

Para 4, three points that are familiar to the Circle and crucial:

- *The "human spirit" and the need for "transcendence".*
- *The separation between a "private realm" and a "public realm" in terms of ethics and morality, language...The reference to selfless love and politics aims at negating this separation. It could be said that the essence of a liberal democracy is to abolish the dichotomy between private and public values. In the first Zoom meeting on Harmony with Nature, Harlan Wilson argued the opposite and he noted that "love" can be totalitarian. "Our" position should be, I think, that in a democratic liberal state, the regal power can be exercised with love.*
- *The point that "material progress" and "spiritual and moral progress" have to go together. Kant... The Charter of the UN...The emphasis on material progress since the industrial revolution...The questioning of the very notion of "progress"...The SG of the UN saying now in his report Our Common Agenda that we have to redefine the notion of progress...*

Para 5: “interconnections”, “human family” ...Shared by all, I think, as a reality for the interconnections and an ideal for the human family. Interconnections: at one extreme organized crime at a planetary level and at the other extreme the noosphere.

Para 6: the task only of religion? The exclusive role of religion on spiritual matters was made by a participant of our initial seminar in Bled, Slovenia, in 1994, and vehemently rejected...

Para 7: this para. might be misinterpreted; international institutions and international law are indispensable instruments for the maintenance of peace.

Para 8: are we totally comfortable with the word “sustainable”? Nitin Desai also used it in its intervention above but, as the drafter of the Brundtland report, he told us his personal preference for the notion of “responsible development”. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 goals, “sustainable”, “sustainability” and “sustained” are abundantly used, as if their meaning was self-evident. Development itself is no longer a clear concept.

Norbert Devraene : Love is a Verb

L’amour, substantif abstrait, n’existe pas. Ce qui compte, c’est le verbe aimer, car l’amour est toujours quelque chose d’actif. L’amour est action. Il n’est pas simplement dans les idées.

Il en est de même pour Dieu. Voir le livre de Maurice Zundel : Je ne crois pas en Dieu. Je le vis.

JB. Avec ces deux phrases, tout est dit.

Si quelqu’un n’est pas du même avis que moi, il n’est pas pour cela mon ennemi. Il faut accepter les différences d’opinions, de vues.

JB. Certes, mais il faut aussi dénoncer la haine, le mépris de la vérité, les mensonges délibérés, l’intérêt personnel déguisé en intérêt général, en résumé tout ce qu’incarnent les Trump, Bolsanaro et autres sinistres criminels.

Aimer est action, et chaque petite action compte. Elle est une contribution au monde. Ma petite action rejoint l’universel.

JB. Pour “l’amour est action”, voir Martin Luther King, Gandhi et l’exemple donné par Peter Baas. Pour “chaque petite action compte”, voir le thème familier des “interconnections”, ou simplement “connections”, revoir Laudato Si’, et, plus bas, la remarque d’Elisabeth Raiser.

Translation:

Love, as an abstract substantive, does not exist. What matters, is the verb, for love is action. Love is nothing when it remains in the realm of ideas.

The same for the idea of God. See the book by Maurice Zundel, **I do not believe in God. I make “it” part of my life.**

JB. With these two sentences, everything is said.

- If somebody disagrees with me, that does not make him my enemy. One has to accept differences of opinions, of views.
- *JB. Yes, but within limits. One has to strongly condemn hate, contempt for truth, personal interest disguised as general interest, that is everything incarnated in Trump, Bolsanaro et others similar sinister criminals*
- Love is action and every little action counts. Each contributes to the situation in the entire world; my small action reaches the universal.
- *JB. On love is action see Martin Luther King, Gandhi and also the example given by Peter Baas. On every small action counts, see the point on interconnections, or simply on connections, see again Laudato Si' and, below, the point made by Elizabeth Raiser.*

Shingu: Love is a form of Entanglement

Love is entanglement. It is a sum. In quantum mechanics, “things” that get together become one. But in becoming one, they do not lose their identity. When black and white get together, black does not become white and white does not become black. As One but not losing their individual identity. It is the same with love. Two persons become one, but without losing their identity. Love in an entanglement of minds. Electrons meet whatever the distance between them.

Group Discussion:

Dirck Stryker: By the year 2100, humanity may be extinct. That is, if we continue on the same path. The risk is real. Disappearance of Homo Sapiens.

Dominique Michal: agrees; and we should try to reinvent the ways our distant ancestors manage to survive when confronted with big catastrophes. Back to the small... And, religion can help.

Arthur Dahl: Also agree on the risk of extinction. The world, politicians, informed peoples have been long aware of the risk. At least since the Stockholm conference of 1972. This knowledge had and still has only a very limited effect on governments and the big corporations, those who have the power to change the course the world is taking. But greed and selfishness continue to prevail. And governments are corrupt, in the sense that they are “in the hands” of these huge private interests. How to fight this collusion? This is what we have to find out.

Michael Zammit-Cutajar, at the beginning of his intervention (see below) strongly disagreed with this risk of extinction of humanity. The use of this word is “depressive”. It “does not lead to action.” And, regarding corporations, the solution is “to make the actions against the destruction of the environment profitable”. Also, Barbara Baudot pointed out that this mention of a risk of extinction is a perfect example of an “ethic of fear”. The only result is “to freeze people in their fear”. The alternative is to bring in our thinking about nature very

different ideas and perspectives coming from the arts, from philosophy, from poetry, from all sources of knowledge. Then, our understanding for nature is enriched and our actions against its misuse are more efficient. The education system has a decisive role to play in this critical effort. We must focus on a broad approach to inspire a love for nature. Fear will lead us nowhere.

Dirk Stryker, intervening again after Barbara Baudot and after the second intervention of Nitin Desai (see below), came back to his assertion that extinction is a real possibility towards 2100, if we do not change course. “We should not put our heads in the sand. Most people love this planet. It is our home. Are we going to do what is required to ensure its conservation ? It is that serious. When people realize this, it is perhaps out of fear. But you cannot fear something for which you have no experience. Love has to be linked with power. And there is progress in this regard. In the Glasgow COP, a lot of people from the business community attended. Their power is needed to overcome the political obstacles to put these processes on track. What is certain is that we cannot keep our heads in the sand and think that we will get through with the current half measures. That is not going to work.

JB. Regarding this difference of view, or sentiment, on the interpretation of the damages inflicted to our “common home”, it should be noted that the SG of the UN has used such words as “suicide of humankind”, “war on nature”, “nature is fighting back”...

Michael Zammit-Cutajar: The Key to Love in Politics is Love your Neighbor as Yourself: But who is my Neighbor?

A few remarks/questions/food for thought:

1. The key is Love your neighbor as yourself... This is the foundation of social justice.

Problems start when one has to define “neighbor”. It is relatively easy to love one’s neighbor across the road. For instance, not to get nasty when this neighbor park his car in front of your driveway.

It is a totally different matter when your neighbor, when the neighborhood is global.

2. Love also means peace. Here “we” are very selective. Were there no wars before the 24th of February 2022? What about the war in Ethiopia? One has to look very broadly at this issue or war and peace.

3. I was never drafted. I was not exposed directly to war. I often wonder what I will have done if I had been in a situation where I will have been asked to shoot and kill. In the recent past and in some countries, some people could say no and be placed in a non-combatant unit. Others were shot, or put in jail for years. Not a simple matter.

4. Love in global politics. For instance, does this mean that one would have to choose between the US and China, presumably the two superpowers of tomorrow? I would not know where to place myself.

JB. Four important illustrations of the difficulty to apply love in politics, broadly conceived. Not at all a rejection of the idea. On point 4, however, it is debatable whether “love”, even “selfless love” should apply to this sort of choice. It might be more appropriate to “rank” the different powers on the world scene according to the universal values mentioned in the Charter of the UN and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For, if the universality of these values is denied, or even questioned, nothing is left, not even the notion of international relations.

Nitin Desai: Love for the Planet: A Sense of Responsibility

First time that we see some steps forwards in the negotiations on the central issue of climate change. Two positive signs:

- Countries are more willing to do things, to accept policies for issues that do not require immediate attention but are known to have potential devastating effects in the future. In that sense, the traditional short-term perspective of most governments seems to be less prevalent.
- There is a certain willingness of accepting a sense of responsibility, differentiated but nevertheless responsibility for the current state of planet Earth. Particularly in the 1990s, in the world conferences in Rio, Copenhagen and a few other places, nations got together and asked what is it that we share and what is it that we need to do together? But this was not followed by concrete actions. Now, the same questions lead to some actions. This is far from being enough. But it is a positive step.

Second, our democracies started with the cry *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. Since that, liberty embedded itself in people’s minds. For example, many more peoples are involved today in politics that one hundred or two hundred years ago. But equality and fraternity have not embedded themselves that clearly in people’s mind. For equality, we all know the situation. And fraternity, which is the most important, is missing. Fraternity was what the Copenhagen Summit of 1995 was about.

And love is about fraternity. You cannot have a relationship with a woman, or a man, or a family if your focus is liberty. The relationship has to be shaped with the notions of equality and fraternity. And we need to have the same notions of equality and fraternity built into the ways countries relate to each other and, within countries, the ways people relate to one another. To me, this is the message, in its simplest way, of love into politics. It means equality and fraternity as firmly established in people’s minds as liberty is. If the new social summit of 2025 proposed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations was to make equality and fraternity as firmly established in people’s minds as liberty, then we will get close to the realization of the idea of bringing love into politics.

JB. This second and most interesting point of Nitin calls for a number of rejoinders, comments and questions. For now, only a few remarks. First, the individualism you denounced in your first intervention seems to be a wrong practice of liberty. It is liberty interpreted as selfishness and blind pursuit of one’s own interest. Liberty and freedom needs to be defined. Second, many people in the world (perhaps a majority) are deprived of liberty

as conceived in the Declaration of 1789. Moreover, in the “liberal democracies” themselves there are not only strong libertarians forces (see the US) but also reactionary forces that want to limit liberties that they consider destructive of the traditional social order, or social fabric (see the US and the “right” or “extreme right” movements in most European countries.) Thus, liberty is currently in great danger. As to the word “fraternity”, today some people choose to reject it as meaning only “us”, men...But, the General Assembly of the U.N. in its resolution 75/200 (2020) established the International Day of Human Fraternity (February 4). And, a reference to this International Day appears in resolution 2686 of the Security Council adopted unanimously on 14 June 2023 (seventh preambular paragraph)...

Torben Brylle: Coping with the Concept of Responsibility in Politics

I thank Nitin for his remarks on negotiations at the international level. Indeed, collaboration at the international level is a critical issue. What collaborative structures can we imagine in today's world? Are the ones we have now sufficient in terms of the challenges we meet, given the most dramatic and the less dramatic scenario for our future?

JB. The SG of the UN in his report Our Common Agenda developed the idea of a “reinvigorated multilateralism”. This will be on the agenda of the Summit for the Future, scheduled for the fall 2025.

Those negotiations on the health of our planet cannot be separated from the question of economic and social development. Today, across the world, this development is very skewed. The new social summit in 2025 proposed by the Secretary-General of the UN is therefore an important initiative.

The issue of responsibility also calls for more reflection. How do we cope with the concept of responsibility at the individual level, in society, and at the global level?

Konrad Raiser: Introducing Love into Politics Challenges the Claims of realism

Intervention is about the/our understanding of love.

As a theologian, I will rely on one of the great theologians of the 20th century, Paul Tillich, who wrote *Love, Power and Justice*.

Love is the urge to unite what is separated. This definition fits with the agenda for this meeting and with the quote of Martin Luther King.

Love is more than a strong sentiment. Love is a manifestation of the power and dynamic of life, seeking fulfillment by overcoming vulnerability, exclusion and separation.

This contrast with the widespread feeling that our lives are basically struggles for survival, a struggle in which the “fitted” win – a polarized version of a Calvinist approach – and that power is basically the energy to survive in this constant struggle for life. Power means imposing one's will, even against resistance. This is the classical definition of power by Max Weber. And we follow largely this understanding of power, imposing one's will in situations of conflicting interests and struggle.

To introduce love into the politics of power, to seek, in the words of the agenda, “the unifying power of love into politics”, means to change the understanding of power. Turning to Hannah Arendt and her *Human Condition* in which she talk of power not “over”, or “against”, but power “with”, power as the capacity to act together, power that accept its legitimacy from the collective will to achieve.

Introducing this understanding of power means a strong criticism of the so-called realist view and practice of power in politics in which struggle, competition and resistance are viewed as given in the nature of the human community. So conceived, power is constantly in danger of becoming restless, as pointed out by Martin Luther King.

Introducing love into politics challenges the claims of realism, challenges the assumption that establishing a viable order presupposes to impose one’s will and to seek obedience as a response. Instead of trusting the productive capacity of competition, love and power seek to enlarge the scope of cooperation. Instead of imposing one’s will or to win against resistance, one would listen to the adversary and seek to understand the interests of the other. Instead of establishing power by drawing lines of demarcation, one would follow a practice of inclusiveness. Instead of accepting that a defensive order may create a deeper enmity, one would seek reconciliation, even at the cost of appearing weak.

This way of exercising power would mean a complete reversal of the widespread understanding of what power is in politics. It will appear in the eyes of many as rather “blue eyed” and unrealistic. Such was the concern of Reinhold Niebuhr. His understanding was that the actualization, the institutionalization of love into a social context could happen in the form of justice. For him, justice is the actualized manifestation of love into society.

Such an approach, however, put us back in the situation where the problem is to establish justice, and law and order. For me, introducing love into politics not only changes the understanding of power and how it is exercised, but also changes the understanding of justice. Justice not just as retributive justice, but justice as transformative justice.

This is only an introduction to the subject. There is a great potential in introducing love as the surge to unify what is separated. Introducing love into our understanding and practice of politics, would change and qualify our practice of power as well as of Justice.

JB. Here and there a number of calls are made for the elaboration of a new humanism. Should the Circle make a contribution to this search, the views expressed above on love, power and justice would be essential building blocks.

Margo Picken: Love as the Essence of Human Rights

Quoting an Australian judge I interviewed in 2012: “If you ask for the essence of human rights, I think it is love. You can love another person, even if the person has done very wrong things, because you realize that you share with him the phenomenon of the common existence of our specie. Love one another, the golden rule is the foundation of universal human rights.”

For those of us involved in the human rights movement since the beginning (for me, Margo, the beginning was in the early 1970s with the setting of an Amnesty International office in New York with the United Nations) the present task is to reclaim human rights.

Half a century ago our task was to legitimize human rights and we made a lot of headway. Working with the churches, catholic and protestant, with the trade-unions, with jurists and with many other groups and personalities, we had an extraordinary force and network pressing for the legitimization of human rights. And the more legitimacy human rights gained, the more they were contested, particularly of course by the governments violating them. But they were there, present and influent on the international scene.

During the Cold War there was the splitting of what was united in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: on one side, the West with the civil and political rights , on the other side, the East with the economic, social and cultural rights, resulting in the two international covenants adopted by the General Assembly in December 1966. This was an unfortunate split, but at least the notion of human rights in itself, and its universality, were not seriously contested.

When the Cold War ended, amidst contrasted proclamations of “end of history” and “war of civilizations”, the United States and the European Union linked human rights with free-market economies and neo-liberalism. Then, the universality of human rights began to be challenged. At the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993, a number of governments, particularly from Asia, declared that human rights were representing only Western values. To promote human rights was to be neo-colonialist, or neo-imperialist.

Another development has been the multitude of claims made on human rights. Any group of peoples being or feeling victimized, discriminated in some way, invokes its “rights”. Then, human rights as they had been elaborated and as they had evolved with great care, on the basis of agreed values, tend to lose meaning. What was special to them disappears.

Thus, bringing together love and politics is very crucial. And the question is how?

What Konrad was saying is very persuasive. Are there, for instance in Germany, politicians who are reflecting on the same thoughts? In the U.K. today there is a dearth of political leaders expressing stimulating views. The opposition to the government is hardly audible. At the same time, not only in the UK but in many countries, rightists governments and parties are implementing carefully thought, coherent, ruthless and effective policies and strategies. They ruthlessly pursue their agendas of fear. For example, the way Netanyahu prepared his return to power was in this regard a perfect model.

Do “we”, those of us across the world with an opposite agenda, need to take a leaf from their book? Obviously, not in becoming ruthless. But what forces do we need to put together to get our agenda through?

There is progress. Peoples are more informed. Protests are more widespread. Linkages are made between groups fighting for the environment, for human rights, for justice. It is now

understood that these different causes – justice, climate and nature, human rights – are parts of a whole.

JB. Adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development mentions human rights in its Declaration but conspicuously ignore them in its operative part, i.e. the 17 goals and their 169 targets. Six years later, in September 2021, the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his already mentioned report Our Common Agenda denounced a “continuous erosion of human rights” (page 15), called for a “strong commitment to the universality and indivisibility of human rights” (page 16) and proposed to the world “a renewed social contract anchored in human rights” (chapter II, pages 22 to 37). The last paragraph of your statement, Margo, offers the only hope for even the beginning of an implementation of this central message of Our Common Agenda. In particular, there is no possibility that the United Nations would take even a “small leaf” from the “book” of the ruthless and cynical dictators of our time.

Elizabeth Raiser: Optimism and Love: Like Power the More We Share it Grows

There is a saying: Power is like love. The more we share it, the bigger it grows.

Regarding the essential role of governments, in Germany the present government is actively encouraging the participation of citizens in public affairs. For example, the Minister of the Economy created when he was in the EU a platform called “Europe Calling” in which several thousands of people participated. He has continued such practice as Minister, sharing his views and dialoguing with a large audience.

Encouraging also were the comments of Nitin on signs of progress in international negotiations.

We must remember that we are not locked in a desperate situation. The small things that we can do as private individuals are important. Even if we do not have “power”, what we do counts. And we can share and cooperate.

JB. Small things that we do as private individuals count, even if we do not have “power”. This point is extremely important. In a meeting devoted to Universal Selfless Love as a Political Philosophy and Practice it was logical and good that the quote from Martin Luther King³ came to play a central role and that, in particular, the affirmation that “love without power is sentimental and anemic” would remain unchallenged. Subjected to slavery, then to segregation, “the Negro stood up and confronted his oppressor (...) We gain manhood in a nation that had always called us “boy” (...) (Yet) the Negro still lives in the basement of the

³ The statement given in footnote 2 is part of a speech entitled « Where do we go from there ? » delivered by King in Atlanta, Georgia, for the Tenth annual session of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization formed to serve as a channel through which local protest groups of the South of the United States could coordinate their activities. The date was 16 August 1967. Seven month later, on April 4 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated in the Lorraine Motel, Memphis, Tennessee. This speech has been found in the site of Stanford : the Martin Luther King Jr Research and Education Institute. All the citations given in this paragraph come from this source.

Great Society (...) the richest, most powerful society in the history of man left the Negro far behind (...)" A community in that situation has no choice but to use power, "to organize our strength into economic and political power (where) the Negro has been confined to a life of voicelessness." Use of power through different means, including strikes and boycott, but King rejected violence, as did Gandhi. " I still stand by non-violence (...) I am concerned about a better world, about justice, about brotherhood, about truth (...) Trough violence you can murder a murderer, but you cannot murder murder (...) you may murder a liar, but you cannot establish truth (...) Darkness cannot put out darkness, only light can do it (...)" These are extraordinary thoughts and words. Their noblesse and appeal are as strong and relevant today and for the whole world as they were in 1967 for "the Negro" and for the United States. And, it is equally true and important to remember that small good things done in ordinary life and circumstances by "us", ordinary citizens of all countries, matter.

Also, it is noticeable that particularly since the war in Ukraine a number of peoples (at least in Germany) change their lifestyles. They are, for instance, more careful about using their cars. Terrible events have positive effects...We should reject pessimism.

Noriko Hashimoto: Learning Love from Nature

First observation: Human interdependence with nature is challenged by Machines. The late Professor Imamichi said the following: "Humans are creating various machines that have structures totally inconceivable in nature and are trying to bring nature under their complete control. Human beings not only occupy the dominant position in nature but are also overpowering it and interposing machinery between nature and themselves." Machines, technology, are "rushing us", are always" in motion", while nature is the teacher of "waiting and enduring". Since human beings "are in essence part of nature", by making our inner selves truly calm we can regain the meaning of waiting. Stressing temporality means emulating nature. It fosters "an awareness of waiting" and the patience "to wait the unfolding of time."

Second point: The transcendence of beauty and artistic activities. The aim of artistic activities is Beauty and, according to Plato, Beauty is also Goodness. These activities help us recover from dehumanization. The virtue of "waiting and enduring" will be gained by art. Daisetsu Susuki wrote: "Draw bamboos for ten years, become a bamboo, then forget all about bamboos when you are drawing. In possession of an infallible technique, the individual places himself at the mercy of inspiration." To become a bamboo and to forget that you are one with it when drawing, this is the Zen of a bamboo. It is the moving with the "rhythmic movement of the spirit which resides in the bamboo as well as in the artist." It is penetrating into the life of the objects. It is the reaching of transcendence l by intuition.

Thirdly: Love and trust nature. Let's learn from Raku Jikinyu, the famous ceramist from the 15th century whose family had worked clay since several generations. He burns teacup-clay for individual cups one by one by fire and use bellows for making whirlpool of an air current. Thus, he gets help from natural phenomena. On the teacup, are red and green colors, separated and together. Red is from the input of sufficient oxygen and green from less oxygen. Jikinyu

says he put each cup into chaos. The mixing of red and green gives unpredictable results. Nature must be entrusted. The teacup comes from the powers of nature. Consciousness and unconsciousness, the artificial and the natural, the necessary and the accidental, are also to be combined. Human beings must entrust nature, borrow its powers and leave in harmony with nature.

Fourth: Suggestions from “Yaman-Ba”. In a No-play, “Yamamba” is a young lady who dance, play, and sing very well. She decides to go to the Buddhist temple, “Zenko-ji”, with her retainer and servant. In the deep bosom of the mountain, they lose their way. Darkness comes. Suddenly, an aged-lady, in fact the Mountain Crone, appears and says “Please stay one night in my hermit’s cell”. They accept. In the old days, the crone was a famous dancer and singer called Kusemai. She says about herself: “A mountain crone is the woman who helps people. However, lowly women cannot see me, and people recognize me as an evil spirit.” The sound spreading in the gorge becomes an echo traveling over the top of the trees. And reciters sing: “It will bring you an opportunity to hear the silent voice which you can hear in your enlightened heart.” Kusemai says: “I will come again and do my song and dance in the light of the moon.” And Yamamba says: “I have waited so long for this wonderful occasion. I will show you my true form.” Her expression is similar to what the poem says: I lament this transient sorrowful world. My transient self is like the empty shell of a cicada, on my sleeve. And she disappears. We, the audience, believe Mountain Crone is going to heaven.

Since a number of years, and particularly in relation with the search for a harmonious relation between humankind and nature, the Circle has emphasized the need for the use of different sources of knowledge, from science to metaphysics and poetry. Legends and fairy tales are among the vehicles for a re-enchantment of the world. In the Triglav site, see in particular the documents in the concern Harmony with Nature.

Elizabeth Demski: **The Absence of Love in Politics**

I am very concerned about the situation in the United States. I fear that the Republican Party might win the mid-term elections, which are taking place a few days from now. This is terrifying. It would be a catastrophe for the United States and for the world.

Elizabeth’ fear was only partly confirmed, but now, in June 2023, Trump is still the “republican” favorite for the next presidential election.

Positive developments in the attitudes and behavior of people, in Germany at the local level, were mentioned by Elizabeth Raiser. They modify their styles towards more simplicity, more sobriety, more respect for the environment. This is indeed important, and is occurring, I think, in other parts of the world. But it is hard to see it in the United States. With a few exceptions in cities and regions with a more open outlook on the world, conservatism prevails.

At the same time, poverty has grown, and so have the number and assets of the very rich. The gap between rich and poor keeps increasing. The middle-class is squeezed and much smaller.

In addition, particularly in the Southern states, republican policies are very much against women. Why a large number of women continue to vote republican is a good question. They

seem to have bought the republican story about traditions, women needing protection, women comfortable at home and raising their children, etc...But women's support of today's Republican Party is still hard to understand.

Summary by Jacques Baudot

There has been continuity and a sort of “crescendo” in the subjects discussed by the Triglav Circle since its beginning in the mid-1990s. First, the objective was “simply” to enrich the international discourse on social development with ethical and spiritual perspectives. Then, a great attention was given to the search for a harmonious relation between humankind and nature, a subject putting in question the very notions of development and progress. And lately, with the meetings on the Common Good and Universal Selfless Love as a Political Philosophy and Practice, the core of international relations and international cooperation are touched upon. We considered these subjects because they were clearly emerging as aspirations in the spirit of the time, and we tried, among many others large and small organizations of the civil society, to make a contribution. Some of us, in this Triglav Circle, are convinced that nothing else but a new civilization will secure the future of the human family. Others are more incremental in their vision of the reforms needed and more modest in their assessment of the human capacity for positive change. But, all of us share the basic universal values without which there is no human family. Only cynicism and violence. So, let's continue our discussions.

