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*Love Matters, Hegelian Patterns*  
*A Symposium on Paul Kottman's Love as Human Freedom*

Edited by Alberto L. Siani  
with a reply by Paul Kottman

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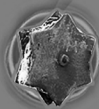
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# Freedom as Human Love

Alberto L. Siani

## Abstract

This paper offers some autonomous clues on the relationship between love and freedom, based on a critical discussion of Kottman's book *Love as Human Freedom* from the perspective of its Hegelian background. The latter is reconstructed in section one. In section two I proceed to highlight a problematic issue in Kottman's book, namely the difficulty to adjudicate, on its basis, between the authority of love in the sense of a relationship between free individuals and other competing authorities, such as the one we may refer to as "patriarchy". Finally, in section three I suggest that such a difficulty can be avoided, or at least reduced, through a fuller – though not uncritical – reappreciation of Hegel's concept of freedom, and provide some further observations on the relationship between love, freedom, and philosophy.

“Because, between ‘reality’ on the one hand,  
and the point where the mind strikes reality,  
there’s a middle zone, a rainbow edge  
where beauty comes into being,  
where two very different surfaces  
mingle and blur to provide what life does not:  
and this is the space where all art exists, and all magic.  
And – I would argue as well – all love.  
Or, perhaps more accurately, this middle zone  
illustrates the fundamental discrepancy of love”  
(Donna Tartt, *The Goldfinch*)

This paper provides a critical discussion and integration of a central thread of Kottman’s book *Love as Human Freedom*, together with some essential coordinates on how the relationship between love, freedom, and progress should be conceptually framed in my view, based on Kottman’s own Hegelian background. I reconstruct the latter in section one. In section two I proceed to highlight a problematic issue in Kottman’s argument, namely the difficulty to adjudicate, on its basis, between the authority of love in the sense of a relationship between free individuals and other competing authorities, such as the one we may refer to as ‘patriarchy’. Finally, in section three I suggest that such a difficulty can be circumvented, or at least reduced, through a fuller – though not uncritical – reappraisal of Hegel’s concept of freedom, and provide some further observations on the advantages of the latter for the

topic at hand<sup>1</sup>.

## 1. The Hegelian Background: Love and Freedom

While not aiming at an investigation of Hegel's philosophy of love and freedom, Kottman's Hegelian commitment in discussing both terms is openly declared from his initial positioning of his conception of freedom in the Hegelian line. There, "freedom is understood to be tied to a dependence on certain social relations in which independence is achieved. That is, freedom is understood to entail being in a kind of relation to oneself, as well as in a kind of mutual relation with others, in which one's actions can be experienced as one's own. Hegel saw these sorts of relationships not as natural givens, or as expression of metaphysical substances, but rather as historical achievements – consequences of certain interactions and collective practices, undertaken over time"<sup>2</sup>, such as, indeed, love. Kottman then follows Hegel in drawing together love and freedom, the former characterized as "the unity of myself with another and of the other in me" and the latter as "to be with oneself in the other" (63)<sup>3</sup>. Neither of these, however, should be understood as a definition in an

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Alessandro Siani for his precious linguistic help and two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

<sup>2</sup> Kottman (2017), p. 6. Since I will mostly be referring to this text throughout my paper, for the sake of brevity I will do so by quoting the page number in the body of the text.

<sup>3</sup> One should note that the last two quotes are both *Zusätze*, thus not strictly speaking Hegelian texts.

ahistorical, abstract sense, but rather in the Hegelian sense of apprehending one's own time in thought. Thus, "far from defining love, this 'unity' names a form of self-awareness that is historically realized *in love* as a matter of ongoing experience and practice" and "the 'feeling' of love as mutual recognition – or independence within dependence, 'the consciousness of my unity with another' – is not an ahistorical feature or ambition of human life" (163).

Accordingly, love is not just understood as a contingent feeling or emotional status but as "a deeply felt historical practice which develops in response to what we (or our ancestors) have taken to be the most profound threats to the sense we make of anything whatsoever – realities and experiences that, if left unintelligible, would threaten our ability to sustain a way of life" (6). More precisely, "the *feeling* of sexual love is the practical unintelligibility of interacting with another on the basis of ostensibly natural demands (sexual reproduction, appetite) or institutional hierarchies (sexual domination). To put it another way, lovemaking is a historical achievement because it requires the failure of sexual reproduction and sexual domination in order to 'make sense' of the deepest threats to sense" (162-163). While of course having the status of a feeling, according to Kottman love is more adequately understood as a practical response to sense-threats to a specific way of life. The feeling of love just cannot be explained in mere terms of reproduction, appetite or domination: it brings something else to light that cannot be reduced to the natural realm or to established and



accepted hierarchies and role divisions. In this way, love shows the inadequacy of our understanding of both natural and social reality and urges new, more adequate responses to this threat. These responses include not only the formulation of new hypotheses and explanations, but also the construction of institutions and practices in which the feeling of love can gain actuality, not only as a challenging new standpoint about reality, but also, more importantly, as an increasingly more powerful “authority” within reality. Behind recent processes such as the decrease of opposition to same-sex marriage, increasing availability of birth control methods, abortion, new reproductive technologies, the erosion of the gender-based division of labor, feminism, etc., “lies the expanded social authority of lovemaking and ‘love-based’ commitments, in our laws governing everything from marriage and domestic economic life, to the adoption of children, to our school and medical practices. Virtually no social, civic or political institution is being left untouched by these vast changes” (1-2).

What is more, love’s sense-making capacity places it “alongside human practices like philosophy, religion and art as an unavoidable way in which we have made intelligible the deepest threats to the sense we make of our lives” (5). Hence, in Hegelian terms, besides being a substantial part of the subjective and the objective spirit, love belongs in its own right also in the absolute spirit, with the proviso that “if love differs from philosophy or religion or art, then this is because different loving practices show how sense-

making is at the heart of how we actually *treat* each other, touch one another, speak with one another, reckon with our bodily life together – and the ways of living we correspondingly achieve and explain” (5). As an absolute spirit form, like art, religion, and philosophy, love too can provide reconciliation with ourselves and our world. Hence Kottman’s ambitious claim: “Love can account for lots of things [...] including the enormous social changes just mentioned. I do not mean that love is the *cause* of these changes – rather [...] love is a self-correcting practice through which these changes where to some extent realized, and through which they might be better explained. Ultimately, [...] love is also one way we teach ourselves that we are free and rational – capable of leading lives for which we are at least provisionally answerable and whose possibilities we open for ourselves” (5-6).

This sheds new light on the above-mentioned clarification that love is not some ahistorical form or capacity of the human mind. Just like Hegelian forms of spirit, love belongs to the historical world, not only in the obvious sense that its power and effects are placed in history, but also in the more philosophically challenging one that the *authority* of love belongs to a specific time in history as the response to an alternative, previously dominating authority and as the attempt to shape social reality in a correspondingly different way. In the next section I will try to unpack the compound of love, history, and freedom, and highlight a problematic outcome of Kottman’s way of conceiving it.

## 2. Competing Authorities?

First of all, let us try to better locate the authority of love in history. The threats in our sense-making that this authority addresses and the changes for which it can account are historically and culturally determined, and I want to suggest that they are the ones leading to what we may broadly call “modernity”. While this term does not prominently feature in Kottman’s book, I believe the reference to modernity is a necessary implication of his discourse, as both the literary (Shakespeare, the 18th century novel) and the philosophical (Hegel) sources he mostly draws on, as well as the practical and political processes he discusses, suggest. Love as human freedom is specified in terms of free individual choice, love-making, emancipation from the necessity of reproduction and sexual domination, love-based marriage and so on, i.e. all those practices that came to be at the core of modern institutional, social, cultural, and economic arrangements, and whose impact has not exhausted its propulsive force yet. It seems therefore that Kottman assigns love a function of “progress”, not only and maybe not so much in the sense that it *causes* progress, but rather in the sense that it has made certain progresses intelligible and, apparently, irrenounceable. This would be in line with Hegel’s understanding of the progressive function of the forms of absolute spirit. However, like “modernity”, also the term “progress”

does not prominently feature in Kottman's<sup>4</sup>. This is so, I suppose, because Kottman refrains from using concepts and terms, such as “progress” and “modernity”, that are inevitably tied to threads of Hegelian philosophy (and especially philosophy of history), which in turn are under a widespread suspicion of teleologism, hyper-rationalism, and ethnocentrism.

While this resistance is understandable, especially in the context of the discussion of such a sensitive issue such as love, in my opinion it may be seen as weakening Kottman's Hegelian background. First of all, this resistance may seem unjustified from a Hegel-internal perspective. True, Hegel occasionally seems to lend support to the named suspicions, and many critics of Hegel have interpreted him in such a way to underscore the implicit dangers. One may, nonetheless, employ Hegelian tools to relativize undesirable outcomes of the employed Hegelian background, drawing on the extensive attempts at actualising Hegel already available<sup>5</sup>. Since, however, Kottman does not aim at a full-fledged discussion and appropriation of Hegelian topics, and neither do I in this article, we can leave this point aside<sup>6</sup>. But

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4 Both a more specific, though brief, reference to our own time and a brief discussion of “progress” are to be found in a 2018 interview on the book: see Kottman (2018b).

5 I am not referring only to “post-Kantian” or “non-metaphysical” readings such as Pippin (1989) or Pinkard (1994), but also to works such as Houlgate (2005), Quante (2011), or Vieweg (2012).

6 Therefore, what follows does not aim to contribute to a better understanding of Hegel's theory of love and family per se, nor to an evaluation of the viability and limits of his idea of modernity and progress. I refer to my Siani (2019) for a partial discussion of such issues (in particular the last two), as well as for a clarification of the horizon in which the present article is situated.

second, and more importantly, the weakening of the Hegelian groundwork leads, in my opinion, to some problematic consequences for Kottman's argument as such.

To begin with, it risks blurring, against Kottman's own intention, the concept of freedom he associates with love. As we saw, love is freedom first of all in the sense that it liberates us from the unintelligibility of specific realities and practices threatening a way of life. This, then, opens up to a deeper level of love as freedom, in the sense of a specific, historically accomplished form of social relationships and mutual recognition. Simplifying a bit, not only love liberates us from certain threats, but in doing so it institutes, or at least calls for the institution of, a specific way of life alternative to the one incorporating those threats. Love's authority, as we saw, challenges the authority of sexual domination and sexual reproduction: "With love-based marriages and partnerships, this crisis in the authority of sexual domination and sexual reproduction becomes institutionally real – not just subjectively felt or passionately lived" (162). Here, however, it is important to remark that the authority of sexual domination and reproduction, which is the groundwork for "social, gender-based hierarchies and institutions (like patriarchal prerogative)" (157), is itself not the product of unlucky chance or of evil will, although we may be inclined to see it this way from our contemporary perspective. On the contrary,

“sexual domination is only explicable as a set of particular acts performed by particular agents – it means the enacted use of another’s body, the sexual articulation of active and subjugated being, such that a connection between agent and ‘act’ comes into view through the circumscription of another’s agency” (157). Therefore, “sexual domination should be understood as one, awful moment in the achievement of human freedom – one that [...] *can only be overcome or subjected to critique from a historical standpoint in which lovemaking has been achieved, subjectively and objectively*” (157). Kottman himself acknowledges “that this is a highly counterintuitive claim, and that it will seem outlandish to many” (157).

It is very clear that Kottman is not trying to rationalize or exculpate institutionalized sexual domination<sup>7</sup>. It is also very clear that Kottman is consistently concerned with the cognitive, emotional, practical perspective and horizontal relationships of free individuals, and not with an attempt to counterbalance them through the reference to hierarchic, and even less so with discriminatory structures<sup>8</sup>. Hence, I do not think that his claim is outlandish in the sense that it points toward some reactionary or nostalgic intention. On the contrary, if anything, I think that it is problematic because it shows that his otherwise illuminating defense and advancement of the authority of love may be too

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. 3 and 112, where he carefully endeavours to dispel this interpretation.

<sup>8</sup> This is already very clear in the way he appropriates Hegel at the beginning: “One question that Hegel’s texts raise [...] is how to understand the form of social relations, interactions and dependencies in which freedom is achievable. Hegel intriguingly suggests, in various passages, that love between free individuals –

quick in accepting and normalizing a ‘progressive’ understanding of it. Through the following critical remarks, therefore, I do not aim at a reversal of his claim, but rather I attempt to provide a more solid groundwork for it.

Retrospectively, *“from a historical standpoint in which lovemaking has been achieved”*, overcoming the authority of sexual domination and reproduction seems only natural and necessary. But seen from inside, as Kottman himself remarks, several practices that today we would deem as absolutely abhorrent and inhumane were in fact seen as only natural and necessary. The authority of sexual domination and reproduction, with the ensuing patriarchy, gendered labor division and so on, was itself, Kottman explains<sup>9</sup>, a way of making sense of otherwise inexplicable phenomena such as “reproduction, individual mortality, bodily transformation, temporal change and the cultivable satisfactions of nonprocreative sex” (105). So, already as far as their function is concerned, Kottman consistently assigns the same “authoritative” role to patriarchy and love as forms of mutual recognition and sources of institutionalization, of course with the proviso that, from the standpoint of the latter, the former looks untenable.

Besides, also as far as our own emotional relation and attachment to either forms of authority go, it is not clear based on which criterion we should

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as distinct from the ‘love’ to which one might be entitled as a member of a tribe or clan – might count as a paragon of such mutual recognition” (6).

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. pp. 77, 93-5, 108.

adjudicate competing feelings. I may feel morally and culturally comfortable only within love relationships that are based on hierarchical forms of domination and mutual recognition, or at the very least ones that are based, e.g., in the belonging to certain religious, familial or tribal traditions. I may even think that only on such basis is the use of the term “love” meaningful and adequate, and I may deeply resent the progressive loss of what was for me the natural, maybe God-given order of things. This is not an “outlandish” claim: in fact, it is just the case not only for a number of societies and cultures different from the modern Western one, but also for a number of (often powerful) communities and individuals within the latter. They may hold, against Kottman’s story, that love’s authority, with all its objective implications, threatens *their* own understanding and sense-making of reality. Just like Kottman does in order to support his own argument, it would indeed not be difficult to gather sources, literary and non, supporting the opposite argument. On which basis, then, can we be sure that love constitutes a more advanced, or at least generally more desirable authoritative source than e.g. sexual domination and gendered hierarchies? Or, to put it in other terms, why could not we, based on arguments akin to the ones employed by Kottman, reply to his book with another one titled *Patriarchy as Human Freedom?*



### 3. When Love is not Enough

One possible answer is that we, historically or culturally, have come to regard the authority of love as a sounder basis for a peaceful coexistence, as a *modus vivendi* which we – or at least a majority of us – feel more desirable and adequate. This weak, quasi-Rortyan defense of the authority of love, however, does not seem to match Kottman’s ambitious view of love as human freedom, as a revolutionary, history-changing practice whose power is analogous to that of the Hegelian forms of absolute spirit. Indeed, the Hegelian background supporting the whole argument would look like a very powerful conceptual machine aimed at a disproportionately modest conclusion. I think we can safely assume, therefore, that Kottman would not be content with a weak relativistic or culturalist interpretation of his core thesis of love as human freedom<sup>10</sup>.

A more promising way to retain the whole strength of his argument on a sounder basis is to overcome Kottman’s resistance and tying it to a stronger interpretation of Hegel’s concept of freedom. As a matter of fact, Kottman extensively draws on a central aspect of the latter, namely the idea that freedom “comes to light as a kind of social achievement”, entailing collective practices and forms of mutual recognition developed over time (6). However, as I mentioned earlier, Kottman then rather

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<sup>10</sup> In the mentioned interview, probably for reasons of context, Kottman seems to incline toward this direction, which I do not think lives up to the book’s systematic ambition.

tends to leave aside an equally central aspect, namely that Hegel's conception of freedom is structurally linked to an idea of development and progress that invests both the objective realm of institutions, laws, norms and so on, and the absolute realm of cultural and reflective practices (art, religion, philosophy). More specifically, Hegel asserts 1) that there is a distinctively "modern" conception of freedom at the basis of particular practices and institutions, including love, and that such practices and institutions cannot be actual without that basis, and vice versa; 2) that this modern freedom is necessarily tied to a rather precise hierarchical articulation of the forms of absolute spirit, envisaging the primacy of philosophy over more intuitive and representational forms (art and religion).

At the risk of an oversimplification, I would say that the title *Love as Human Freedom* reflects an idea of freedom centred only on the aspect of mutuality, recognition, etc. A more fully and consistently Hegelian approach to freedom would instead result in *Freedom as Human Love*, in the sense that love as understood by Kottman is one of the shapes or configurations of the distinctively modern idea of freedom. Both the specificity of this idea and its relationship to love are clearly spelled out by Hegel in an important passage from the *Philosophy of Right*: "The right of the subject's *particularity*, his right to be satisfied, or in other words the right of subjective freedom, is the pivot and centre of the difference between antiquity and modern times. This right in its infinity is given expression in Christianity and it

has become the universal effective principle of a new form of the world. Amongst the more specific shapes which this right assumes are love, romanticism, the quest for the eternal salvation of the individual, etc.; next come moral convictions and conscience; and, finally, the other forms, some of which come into prominence in what follows as the principle of civil society and as moments in the constitution of the state, while others appear in the course of history, particularly the history of art, science, and philosophy”<sup>11</sup>.

Admittedly, this passage, which Kottman does not take into account, does not aim at a definition or clarification of love. Still, it presents love as a specific shape, and indeed as the first one, of a new form of the world, grounded upon the right of subjective freedom, which in turn is the core feature of modernity as opposed to the ancient times. In Hegel’s account, love in the modern sense is rooted in the right of subjective freedom, i.e. in the idea that the human subject is free as such, independently of particular characteristics such as gender, religion, ethnicity, and so on, and hence that all subjects are free<sup>12</sup>. In turn, this claim is structurally connected to

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<sup>11</sup> Hegel (1820), p. 122.

<sup>12</sup> Here we may recall Hegel’s famous – and often stereotyped – thesis that Oriental despotisms know that only *one* subject is free, Greek and Romans that *some* subjects are free, and that only in modernity the consciousness is gained that *all* human subjects are, as such, free (see Hegel [1837], p. 54). It is important to remark that, for Hegel, this does not mean that all human beings are to be considered actually free in an immediate way (this would be an abstractly cosmopolitan interpretation): it “only” means that such a consciousness has been reached, but it needs to be actualized and embedded in correspondingly shaped social and political institutions, the word taken in its broadest sense. Hence, the claim that all subjects are free in modernity must not be interpreted

the idea that any normative claim has to be justified to the subject's thought and rational knowledge, and hence to the claim that, in modernity, philosophy necessarily has a primacy over other cultural forms and practices of justification, reconciliation, and orientation in the social reality, such as art and religion. On the contrary, in contexts that, whether historically or culturally, cannot be deemed "modern" in the sense put forward by Hegel, freedom is accordingly limited both intensionally, as it is tied to accidental particularities (again, gender, religion, ethnicity, and so on), and not to the subject's capacity for rational thought, and extensionally, as it pertains only to certain subjects, and not to all<sup>13</sup>.

This conception of freedom, while certainly entailing the aspects of mutuality and recognition underscored by Kottman, is more specific than the one he puts forward, because it ties those aspects to a precise view of the modern human subject and to precise requirements. This allows to address the problem mentioned above: on which basis can we adjudicate between competing "authorities" such as, in our case, patriarchy and love, given that both are the expression of different forms of mutuality and recognition, both are responses to threats to our sense-making, and both can have emotions and practices supporting them?

The first part of the answer is that, while love as intended by Kottman can as a matter of fact be seen as a shape of the modern centrality of

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in a quietist, conservative way to describe an empirically actual state of affairs.  
 13 For a development and further references see Siani (2020).

subjective freedom, this is certainly less the case for patriarchy. Practices and institutions based on love between individuals can be seen as an expression of their subjective freedom to objectify their feelings, desires, plans, insights, and so on<sup>14</sup>. On the contrary, patriarchy needs and promotes the primacy of shared, collective traditional values and customs over such individual expression. The second part of the answer is that institutions and practices based on love are open to rational and discursive justification, critique, and advancement, whereas the ones based on patriarchy are much less so, insofar as they require a commitment to values and customs that are not, or are only limitedly, open to further scrutiny. This is also why a philosophical reflection on love as human freedom, like the one carried out by Kottman, looks like a sensible, deserving enterprise, which does not seem to be the case for a philosophical defense and advancement of patriarchy as human freedom. In other words, not only from the “objective” point of view of institutions and norms structuring our social life, but also from the “absolute” one of the cultural and reflective practices orienting and – potentially – reconciling us with it, love responds in a more adequate way than patriarchy to the Hegelian assessment of the centrality of the right of subjective freedom and of the connected primacy of philosophy.

True, Kottman may retort that his idea of love

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<sup>14</sup> Again, this does not mean that such practices and institutions are always, as such, the expression of individual freedom: even the most loving relationship can include limitations of individual freedom and self-realization. This is only one of the reasons why love is not always enough.

as human freedom specifically aims at highlighting, more than and beyond what Hegel ever did, the central role of love as a peculiar dimension and shape of the actualization of freedom. After all, love is certainly able to do things that philosophy is not. I would certainly concur with this and in fact I very much look forward to further developments of his discourse<sup>15</sup>. However one wants to pursue such developments, and whichever privileged status one wants to assign love as compared to other practices, I believe one can do so more effectively on the basis that the authority of love is a shape, admittedly a central, fundamental one, of a specific historical understanding of freedom, tied to certain presuppositions and consequences<sup>16</sup>.

A fuller, broader reappreciation of such a Hegelian understanding of freedom cannot be pursued here<sup>17</sup>.

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15 In fact, I believe our understanding of Hegel's idea of freedom and its relevance for us would in turn itself benefit from such further developments, as it already benefits from Kottman's book.

16 In this sense, I think it would be possible to institute a parallel between the function of love and that of art within Kottman's Hegelian background. Admittedly, while the authority of love, with Kottman, seems to be at its beginning, ascending phase, that of art, for Hegel, seems to be at the "end" in modernity. Still, one can interpret the function of art after the Hegelian end of art in a way that shows many similarities with that of love: both of them are free individual expressions, structurally pluralistic in their manifestations, establishing non-philosophical forms of recognition and reconciliation, while at the same time calling for a philosophical interpretation in order to deploy their full meaning and strength (as a matter of fact, Kottman's book, with its many philosophical readings of artworks, is itself a good case in point from this perspective). The parallel, however, should not be drawn too far, as it is clear that love in Kottman's sense reclaims a way more powerful "institutional" authority than art after the end of art. For actualizing readings of Hegel's end of art thesis see, among others, Gethmann-Siefert (1994), Siani (2012), and Kottman (2018a).

17 Such a fuller reappreciation should obviously also account for problematic spots in Hegel's philosophy itself, and assess the extent to which such spots can be addressed using Hegel "against Hegel".

My aim was only to show that Kottman's partial appropriation of it, while apparently removing some of its most problematic aspects, risks blurring and undermining his own argument. I maintain that, in order to support not only the story he tells, but also the ongoing processes he mentions (decrease of opposition to same-sex marriage, increasing availability of birth control methods, abortion, new reproductive technologies, the erosion of the gender-based division of labor, feminism, etc.), a philosophically stronger and historically more concrete conception of freedom is required. This is not to say that one should incline toward an extremized version of Hegelian teleology, something like an end of history à la Fukuyama, or even worse, an ethnocentric perspective. It is possible, instead, to resort e.g. to a qualified, articulated pragmatistic approach<sup>18</sup> and to a broader actualization of Hegel's theory not just of love, but of emotions/feelings in general<sup>19</sup>.

At any rate, it is necessary in my opinion to tie the discourse on the historical central function of the authority of love to the distinctive centrality of the right of subjective freedom in modernity as well as to the primacy of rational discursive justification and reconciliation practices. After all, as Kottman's book powerfully clarifies, love is not just a contingent feeling or emotion, but a fundamental dimension of our self-understanding and mutual recognition. As such, not only its authority can and does come in

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18 See e.g. Quante (2011).

19 See e.g. Russon (2009).

conflict with other dimensions of our existence, but the very way each of us understands, evaluates, and prioritizes this authority can vary massively from individual to individual, from culture to culture, from time to time<sup>20</sup>. The plural character of its authority, therefore, necessarily includes a reference to discursive efforts of reflection and understanding, such as the one proposed by Kottman. It is hence not love alone, but the complex conceptual, practical, emotional, institutional network of implications it leads to, and from which, in turn, love itself is transformed, that needs to be examined, justified, criticized, and developed. To this aim, with all its transformative and self-correcting power, love alone may not always suffice, and its authority needs to refer to the mediation of a more general and encompassing one, namely that of the philosophical discourse.

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<sup>20</sup> This is also why an institutional system aimed at actualizing and advancing individual freedom cannot just ignore, or worse restrict, ways of life resorting – within some limits – to gendered structures and to authorities different from and more than love. I agree with Okin (1989), pp. 175 ff., that, while democratic-liberal societies should certainly move away from the authority of gendered structures and impositions, they should at the same time ensure that individuals living within those structures are equally entitled to protection and recognition.



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