

CHAPTER 5

THE BACKGROUND OF POPULATION DECLINE



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Abstract

This chapter endeavours to explore, or at least initiate and inspire exploration into, the underlying causes of *population decline* observable in the so-called ‘Western’ and ‘developed’ world, attempting to look beyond aspects of law and jurisprudence. This is approached with a holistic perspective that also takes into account the results of other scientific disciplines. The chapter touches upon the ‘global paradox’ wherein the developing and impoverished parts of the world struggle with the challenges of *overpopulation*. The chapter perceives a universal (shared and European) *crisis of values* as the principal cause of population decline. Exploring the scope of these issues, it elaborates on the processes of *secularisation* and, indeed, *desacralisation* that have dismantled the sanctity of marriage and the commitment to childbearing, eroded the family as a *community of love*, and subsequently degraded fundamental values represented by the family, such as loyalty, trust, solidarity, altruism, gratitude, and respect. The chapter also engages with the power of *faith and love*, the value represented by these concepts, and the relationship between faith and science, giving attention to each idea proportional to its significance for the subject. It explores the Christian ‘good human project’ as a civilisational value, as well as its precursor, the idealised human archetype of the *virtuous person* and the *good and caring patriarch* (known as the ‘good farmer’ in Hungarian civil law). Contrastingly, it investigates the complications arising from the *incursion of dominance*, including systems of dominance related to private property, as well as non-ownership systems. The chapter discusses the *replacement of female dominance with male dominance* and the possibility of a redistribution of roles and the subsequent cooperative accord. It proposes that the resolution to the demographic crisis could be found in the creation of a *civilisation of love*, which indispensably requires a rearrangement of current *value priorities* and

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the promotion of *happiness research* as a new scientific field. Meanwhile, it views the revolution and apparatus of sexuality as one of the false paths of *selfish individualism*. Freedom must be protected from distortion into licentiousness, and fundamental rights (and core values) must be safeguarded against *abuses* by the legal system.

Keywords: Population decline; overpopulation; holistic perspective; crisis of values; community of love; good human project; phenomenon of dominance; civilisation of love; happiness.

1. Introduction

In addition to our many modern crises (climate crisis, mass migration, global pandemics, the threat of world war), all of Europe – including, notably, the developed and wealthy countries of Western Europe – are now also faced with a *demographic crisis*. There is more demand for coffins than cradles: more people are dying than are being born. The reason for this is, to use a coldly objective phrase, a *lack of social reproduction*. A gap in birth and death rates causes a society's population to decline. In the long run, this will lead to the extinction of the race of humans constituting the society in question. This extinction also implies the slow decay of affected national cultures, as well as of European (Western) civilisation as a whole. Numerous books have been published on the topic, although none have entered the spotlight of media, politics, or society, as if this issue was merely the least significant of the many severe crises facing the world today.¹ In reality, however, it may be the most critical. Moreover, not only do all of these crises end up amplifying each other, but it is quite possible that they are all triggered by the very same causes.

In the history of Europe – much like in the history of the world and of humanity – a number of great civilisations have perished (e.g. Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire), giving rise to the scientific discipline of *civilisation and empire research*. It would behove us to learn from history – the greatest practical teacher of all – and to avoid repeating the same mistakes. Looking at the fraternal war between Russia and Ukraine, however, and observing its escalation, the inadequate and insufficient response of the European Union, the USA, and the UN, and the drift towards the third ‘nuclear world war’ threatening the extermination of all humanity, may suggest that perhaps Hegel was right after all: ‘History teaches us that man learns nothing from history’. It would be high time to finally refute this well-known opinion, otherwise, humanity will forever remain a hotbed of violence, aggression, and war. This reminds me of that ‘most despondent creation’ of Hungarian literature, Mihály Vörösmarty's poem titled *On Mankind*: ‘Man pains the Earth. Beyond the spate / of years of war and

¹ Pokol, 2011; Murray, 2018.

peace, / the curses of fraternal hate / upon her brow increase. / And should we think he'll learn in time, / he plots an even viler crime: / from dragon's teeth will spring his budding grain: / All hope is vain! All hope is vain!' Yet we must have hope because *anomie*, the state of total hopelessness, is a severe *mental disorder* on both the individual and societal levels; it is a state of being in which living, having children, giving birth, and being born are all pointless. I believe that there is hope (being the central of the three – *faith, hope, and love* – between faith and love), but more on this later.

If we view the unborn population solely as missing labour, then we can of course replace them either by permitting illegal immigration or by deliberately encouraging legal migrants to settle in a particular country. However, without integration and assimilation, this type of 'social reproduction' can save neither the host nation's culture, nor the European civilisation permitting it. The reason being, that it is evident that social reproduction is a much richer and more complex concept and process than simply replacing labour (*human power*). Its primary (core) condition is, of course, having a sufficient number of births, which in turn naturally (or rather, biologically) requires a sufficient number of heterosexual marriages, a willingness to have children, and a readiness to create new families. The birth of every child is also, in a way, the 'birth' of a new *mother* and a *father*, as well as two *grandmothers* and two *grandfathers*, together forming a family community. A declining birthrate is also a decline in *motherhood*, *fatherhood*, and *families*. Thus, it also matters what kinds of marriages and families we are discussing. A traditional (natural) marriage between a woman and a man creates a *unit* capable of biological reproduction, allowing these two people to form a *couple* for the rest of their lives. Their child will be born as a result of a union of their gametes and gene pools: this new human will be a reproduction of the *parent couple*, and will later, after a long and laborious *socialisation* (educational, nurturing) process, also serve as a reproduction of the society he or she is born into, as well as its material and intellectual (mental, cultural) values. Ideally, there should be no 'broken links' in this causal chain, but in reality, we see weaknesses and breaks in several of these links. To continue our journey, we need to fix the faulty links, then replace and tighten the chain. To properly address the demographic crisis in a broad interconnected system, we need to uncover the causes of the crisis (or rather, of the multiple simultaneous crises) and apply a targeted 'treatment'. A proper treatment first requires an accurate diagnosis. Unfortunately, lawyers are not doctors, and certainly not specialists. Still, they are able to 'convene' a *council* of demographers, sociologists, psychologists, biologists, human ecologists, geologists, theologians, economists, geneticists, historians, and philosophers, and then try to synchronise their opinions (diagnoses). Finally, with appropriate caution and wisdom, they can engage in *social engineering*, translating the final report and the recommended therapy into the language of law. That said, it is important not to undertake an impossible task, unless there is a compelling reason to do so. I believe that the (potential) demise of society, national culture, and (Christian) European civilisation is such a compelling reason. Therefore, in this chapter, I attempt the seemingly impossible task of comprehensively exploring the background of the demographic crisis.

2. A global paradox

Currently, there are two simultaneous *demographic* crises in the world. One is *population decline*: this is the crisis we are currently experiencing and is characterised by a lack of social reproduction. The other is the exact opposite, *overpopulation*: this occurs when societies exceed the socio-economic and environmental carrying capacities of their natural environment. Konrad Lorenz considered overpopulation to be one of the eight deadly sins of civilised humanity.² It is a *global paradox* that underpopulation is prevalent in developed, wealthy, Euro-Atlantic *Western* civilisations with Judeo-Christian roots, while overpopulation predominantly affects poorer, developing non-Christian countries and continents (Africa, Asia, and the Middle and Far East). In general, overpopulation is indeed the greater concern as it also relates to the issue of the ‘ecological footprint’, that is, the life-style of the current generation of humans destroying the prospects of future generations. According to noted Hungarian biologist Vilmos Csányi, the Earth is only capable of supporting 2.5 billion people at average European living standards, not 8 billion.³ To put it in stark terms, the extinction of the human population would be directly beneficial to the Earth, but likely only temporarily if overpopulation continues unchecked, or even if it is merely slowed and not reversed. Drastic legislative restrictions on birth rates (e.g. China’s one-child policy) cannot be considered permanent solutions; they merely postpone the issue, which fundamentally stems from the growth-driven economy, in other words, the constant forced expansion (or rather, *deliberate increase*) of production and consumption — in short, *profit-seeking*. It would be more important to restrict these mechanisms than the number of births. However, liberal dogma often obstructs efficient governmental interventions in the ‘free-market’ economy and its market relationships. Some *ecologist* scientists have already devised proposals for *non-growth-based development* paradigms, using *happiness indices* for comparison instead of indicators of national income and gross national product, but these ideas have not, as of yet, achieved widespread use. I hope that it will not take an *apocalyptic climate catastrophe* or a *nuclear world war* to lend momentum to the concept of environmental, economic, political, and social sustainability. We are already aware of what we should be doing, but out of habit, or due to advertising and marketing pressures, we continue to do the wrong thing. Similarly, the vast majority of young people would prefer to live in a happy marriage and have a large family (they understand what they should be doing); yet, they do not marry (or do so too late) and end up only having one child instead of three. Their *hierarchy* of values is good in theory but poorly realised in practice. Accordingly, more attention should be paid to fundamental values and their hierarchy, and to the desired state of happiness. This applies to individuals just as much as to the state and society as a whole.

² Lorenz, 1988, pp. 18–20.

³ Csányi, 2015.

3. Core values – guiding principles

Every adult with proper discernment to manage their affairs and live a self-aware life also has fundamental principles by which they live their life, set their goals, and choose the path leading to those goals. In addition, they will use the appropriate tools and methods for asserting their interests without violating their principles. In good marriages, spouses will similarly have common principles and values around which they organise their shared marital lives. This is also true for families, with the family members passing down and retaining the core values of their ancestors. Individuals pass down their *personal*, *marital*, and *familial* values, keeping *tradition* alive; in short, this involves the transmission of proven, tried-and-true values from generation to generation. This sense of tradition encompasses a respect for not just abstract values but also for parents, grandparents, and ancestors. The values of a society or nation are composed of the organising principles of family life, written into law as a constitutional value system, the system of the most fundamental communal guiding principles. This does not merely include principles of law, the constitution, or human rights; rather, it also allows us to derive the society's moral and legal values from the habits of its members' everyday lives, as well as from moral norms, religious commands, philosophies, scientific conclusions, culture, historical experiential knowledge, common beliefs, and ideals.

Károly Szladits spoke in great detail of the *general cultural ideals of humanity*,⁴ which can be applied to the *correct interpretation* of written laws. Thus, there is an almost bewilderingly abundant supply of sources whence values can be derived. The real difficulty arises in the criteria used for the selection and compilation of values based on said criteria, as well as the inflation, devaluation, and possibly contradictory interpretations of the selected values. The main selection criterion could be the following: we consider a value to be something that *serves the good of the people*. However, this definition would immediately provoke heated debates in mass society and mass democracy and in our world of global infocommunications. Everyone will have different opinions on what serves the good of whom. As we live in a profit-oriented world, we could also use the criterion of *what people can profit from*, but this is also highly debatable as most of the profits could go to very few people, with only scraps remaining ('trickling down') for the others. We could also apply an exclusionary selection criterion: anything that has *previously failed* in the course of social development or anything that has caused human tragedies and, therefore, has a *negative evaluation* attached to it *cannot be considered a value*. But what exactly is failure, and how extensive would a tragedy have to be to qualify? Moreover, how many people would have to evaluate this negatively, how negative would their evaluation have to be, and who would be doing the evaluation?

As an example, let us examine the ideas of marriage, having children, and founding a family. Monogamous marriage between a man and a woman may have

⁴ Szladits, 1941, p. 158.

developed very early as a result of natural evolutionary development, even before the agricultural revolution, and would have later also perfectly met the needs of private property, settlement, and farming. In fact, Pope Benedict XVI was convinced that *monotheism and monogamy* were two sides of the same coin and were in perfect harmony with each other in terms of *exclusivity and permanency*.⁵ This explains why the Bible and the Catholic Church considered marriage a *sacrament* and deemed it *indissoluble*. Children born from such a marriage were considered a *gift* from God and a *blessing* for the parents. However, *secularisation* – the separation of state and church – put an end to this ‘high valuation’ with the introduction of *civil marriage*. The number and rate of divorces started to rise sharply, whereas the number of marriages and children decreased. Thus began a decline in the reproductive role played by marriage and family. In lieu of marriage, more and more people opted for loose and temporary, ‘alternative’ forms of cohabitation and transient relationships as couples or partners; extended ‘scheduled’ *polygamy* and *promiscuity* became common. With the devaluation of marriage, childbearing, and the traditional family model, their ancillary values – *fidelity, unconditional trust, selfless support, mercy, and self-sacrificing love* – also lost their value. As these marital and familial values are also common core values, their decline also resulted in a weakening of their regulatory effect on society. J. B. Peterson⁶ describes this scenario in even starker terms: ‘When basic axioms of faith are challenged, the foundation shakes and the walls crumble’. The consequence of this is the aforementioned *anomie*: individuals (and eventually masses) losing their sense of purpose, searching aimlessly for meaning, and losing hope, all of which eventually results in serious mental disorders (e.g. depression, panic disorders). In the absence of solid core values, an increasing number of people feel that they must use immoral means to have a chance of achieving adequate living conditions and a tolerable quality of life. We see more and more unusual, and even extreme, lifestyles and behaviours, with a marked increase in the number of riots, often without the people participating in them even knowing who or what they are fighting against, or why. The end result is often *burnout syndrome*, a complex of burnout symptoms, accompanied by physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion.

Sadly, many examples similar to the fading of marital and family values can also be found in regards to fundamental freedoms, human rights, the values of democracy, and the rule of law: freedom of opinion and speech versus political correctness, freedom of the press and media versus fake news and manipulation, freedom of conscience and religion versus secularisation and desacralisation, and so on. Every (previously absolute) value is open to questioning and its strictures can be loosened, opening it up to *erosion* (and make no mistake, this ‘erosion’ of values is as dangerous as that of fertile soil). What is more, many deem our existing values as harmful, unnecessary constraints only serving to restrict the expansion of individual freedoms. Core values do indeed have a restrictive role, but they should be seen as

⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, (2005) p. 10, s. 11.

⁶ Peterson, 2021, p. 131.

a *protective barrier* (like at the edge of a cliff) or a *guardrail* (like along highways). This protective role and function can be derived from the virtue of *moderation* or the fundamental legal requirement of *intended purpose* (the prohibition against abuse). All of this aims to ensure that *liberty* is not distorted into *libertine* behaviours, self-destructive dependency, or the violation of other people's freedom and dignity. This system of values is also a *framework of values*, much like the boundaries of a sports field. The game can be freely played within the boundaries, but still only with strict adherence to the rules and the principle of *fair play*. Similarly, the exercise of fundamental freedoms, human rights, and statutory civil rights also demands a minimum requirement of formal *legality*, but beyond that, decency, adherence to moral principles (*fair play*), the exercise of rights in accordance with their *intended purpose*, and respect for the inviolable civil and fundamental rights of others are also expected. For instance, freedom of speech cannot extend to the defamation or humiliation of others, the incitement of hatred, or calling for violence. Freedom of religion or atheism cannot include the right to blaspheme or to commit violent acts against other people's faith, religion, or church. Likewise, the right to assemble can only be practiced in a peaceful manner. If these rights are too often exercised in an immoral and improper manner, the entire value system collapses. According to Peterson,⁷ 'Under such circumstances, chaos emerges. ... It is our destiny to transform chaos into order. ... [M]aking what is – and what was – clear and fully comprehended can only protect us'.

4. The loss of common European values

Member State and European Union politicians often like to refer to 'common European values' without ever specifying a single one. Even when they do manage to mention one, it is never the sanctity of heterosexual marriage, nor childbearing or the family, but rather transgenderism or the rule of law. Without specifics, these 'values' are just as empty and meaningless as most other abstract legal concepts. When trying to affirm or refute something by referring to it as a general, abstract concept, it is always necessary to *clearly, plainly, and unambiguously* specify what we are talking about. Specific assertions, facts, or refutations can be debated or explained, and these types of debates can end in consensus; these types of explanations can be accepted. Without this constraint, however, general statements can become an offensive tool, usable as a weapon against anyone. General concepts becoming dogma are particularly dangerous: they exempt their followers from conscious thought and pre-emptively exclude any possibility of debate. It is no coincidence, therefore, that

⁷ Peterson, 2021, p. 259.

Lorenz also considered the creation of dogmas⁸ to be one of the eight deadly sins of civilised humanity. When enforced on the masses, dogmas can be a veritable *weapon of mass destruction*. However, before they become such tools of mass destruction, the ordinary effect of dogmas striving for unquestioned dominance is *value destruction*, acting retroactively ('of the past let us wipe the slate clean'). This is, in fact, the *tyranny* of certain new values – or rather, dogmas presumed to be new and valuable – to the detriment of proven, but old (traditional) values.

Despite our understanding of the pitfalls of fascism and communism, such dogmatic ideas and movements striving for unquestioned dominance are still being 'mass produced' today and have caused a *general crisis and chaos of value*. Many, including Pál Bolberitz,⁹ believe that the main cause of this is *secularisation*, a process that began in the 17th century and is still ongoing today. Some 'side effects' of the institutional separation of church and state were the spread of *atheism*, which eventually led to bloody totalitarian dictatorships in the 20th century, as well as the derogation (degradation, erosion) and neglect of Christian faith and value systems. One – but far from the only – example of this would be the *desacralisation*, or 'becoming profane', of the 'sanctity of marriage'. In addition, secularisation was also cited as the reason why the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg removed crosses from the classrooms of Italian state schools, and the removal of the cross – the symbol of Christlike (self-sacrificing) love – from the streets, squares, and public spaces of French cities is still ongoing. On the other hand, this very same court considers the use of the red star – the symbol of communism – to be protected by the freedom of speech and expression. Europe is tired of these contradictions. It is exhausted and burned out; its soul is severely damaged. According to Douglas Murray,¹⁰ 'Such visible failure and a sense of lost moorings can be – for the individual as for society – not only a cause for concern but an exhausting emotional process. Reason and *rationalism* had led men to do the most unreasonable and irrational things. It had been just another system used by men to control other men'.

5. Unholy – inhuman

The desacralised, unholy individual can become increasingly empty, devoid of values, 'godless, and thus, *inhuman* and unloving. Sadly, it is possible that this process will continue, repeat, or worsen throughout the 21st century. To quote Sándor Gallai,¹¹

8 Lorenz, 1988, p. 75, p. 81.

9 Bolberitz, 2014, pp. 58–62.

10 Murray, 2018, p. 217.

11 Gallai, 2019, p. 16.

Europe has the highest ratio of secular population in the world, and it is the only continent where the population is declining. It appears that secularisation and the advancement of a materialistic worldview have dangerously devalued families, and have reduced fertility to such an extent that the net population loss of European societies has become alarming.

According to Béla Pokol, this will lead to *demographic collapse*.¹² Douglas Murray¹³ believes this to be the '*strange death of Europe*':

Yet despite having lost our story we are still here. And we still live among the actual debris of that faith. Few people among the crowds flowing through Paris flock to Notre-Dame to pray, but yet it is there. [Here I should interject that they are currently rebuilding the cathedral, because it burned down!] Westminster Abbey and Cologne Cathedral may still dominate the places in which they stand, and though they have ceased to be places of pilgrimage they still signify something, though we do not know exactly what. And of course the glorious debris we live among is not only physical but also moral and imaginative.

As a lawyer, the question that immediately occurred to me was: does this 'glorious debris' of our faith (still) exist in law? And as a lawyer trained to favour precise definitions, I immediately challenge myself: but we do not even know what faith is! Finally, as a wise elder, I riposte: well, do we even know what law is? What we do know, however, is the common thread between those two concepts, which is that both of them aim to *improve* and *elevate* humankind, and aid the progression of civilisation in its journey towards *humane humanity*. Both share this common goal, which makes it all the more unfortunate if they end up hindering each other in achieving this goal, or if they fight each other instead of cooperating to achieve it. Another common thread is that both faith and law are systems of core values, behavioural norms, and organising principles, although their methods are different: the norms of faith are written in the human heart and attempt to act from *within* (to encourage good deeds and deter evil), whereas the law operates from *without*, using the coercive power of the government. *Good morals* – which also encompass Christian morals– provide a solid foundation and framework for law, from wherein morals and law can *work together*. Considering the current flood of constitutional fundamental rights and human rights, does the Christian value system of faith and morals still exist, or is law (once again) only preoccupied with its own values (which are actually scavenged from various places, as we have seen), as were the atheistic National Socialist or communist systems of law? After the fall of atheistic communism in our country, in the current age of selfish individualism, the following questions should keep arising in every individual again and again: Do I have faith?

¹² Pokol, 2011, p. 185.

¹³ Murray, 2018, p. 210.

Do I have fundamental principles and values that can guide me in controlling my fate and living my life? The same questions arise on a societal level: do we, and can we, still have common fundamental values and guidelines to help us organise and operate our society and our state, which are slowly but surely disintegrating due to the selfishness of the individual? Universal fundamental freedoms and human rights lay claim to this role, and even to the faith placed in them, but what is it that motivated these *universal* norms, what is their historical background? These needed to be assembled from elements of the *moral world order*, *world religions*, *human culture*, and *civilisation*.

In the Fundamental Law of Hungary, the National Avowal gives us more precise (European and Hungarian) answers to our questions:

Declaration 1: ‘We are proud that our king Saint Stephen built the Hungarian State on solid ground and made our country a part of *Christian Europe* one thousand years ago’.

Declaration 12: ‘We hold that the family and the nation constitute the principal framework of our coexistence, and that our fundamental cohesive values are loyalty, faith and love’.

However, these now constitutional values give rise to further questions. Is Europe still Christian? Is this foundation still solid? Is there still loyalty in marriage, in the family, in the nation? Do we still have faith, do we still believe, do we dare to believe in anything, in anyone? Do we still know what it means to love someone, or what the power of love is capable of? Hungary’s Fundamental Law presumes the affirmative to these questions. Even its very name expresses that it wishes to be the *foundation* of Hungarians’ personal lives and their communal (familial, societal) coexistence. This foundation and its values are what need to be strengthened and solidified; this individual and communal value system is what needs to be protected so that these values can strengthen, fortify, and even protect us, if need be.

6. The power of faith

Faith is a resource: it is a helpful tool for becoming a person, a good person, and, in fact, a progressively better person. It is also a guarantee of this improvement persevering over time. To live a life of humanity and dignity, one must have faith; there must be a *benevolent God* whose image one bears, to whom one compares oneself, and to whose judgement one wants to measure up. Someone who sets standards for one’s life, words, and actions, especially when the individual is incapable of practising the virtue of *temperance* (*temperantia*). According to Csányi,¹⁴ most human

¹⁴ Csányi, 2018, pp. 137–139.

ethologists agree that ‘the capacity for religious faith may have played an essential evolutionary role in the formation of communities’, and, I would add, in the ability for humans to become *humane*.

Among the genes regulating a group of neurotransmitters affecting human motivation and pleasure, one, the VMA2 gene, was found to occur much more frequently in those inclined towards spirituality than in those less so inclined. The media latched onto these findings and began talking about the ‘God gene’. ... [N]aturally, this gene does not actually provide any evidence whatsoever concerning the existence or non-existence of God. All this shows is that there are *genetic reasons* for certain individuals to be more receptive to the concept of a transcendent world that is beyond them and surpasses them.

The human constructive urge drives us to ‘build religion from spirituality’. How do others respond to this?

Naturally, when a religious community is formed, with its own rules, ideas, and unique culture, even those less inclined toward spirituality can be swept up by this culture, resulting in the establishment of a religion operating with well-formed, social technologies.

In this sense, it could be said in Europe, even the atheists are Christian. In addition, one thing we know from the survivors of concentration and forced labour camps is that there are two things that can help people survive these horrors: *faith* and *family*.

7. Faith and science

It is well understood that God’s existence can be neither proven nor disproven using scientific methods. But why would we even want to? The world’s most famous geneticist, Francis S. Collins, responsible for the mapping of the human genome, is an advocate of peaceful collaboration between faith and science:¹⁵

The scientific and spiritual worldviews both have much to offer. Both provide differing but complementary ways of answering the greatest of the world’s questions, and both can coexist happily within the mind of an intellectually inquisitive person living in the twenty-first century. ... [S]cience alone is not enough to answer all the important questions.

¹⁵ Collins, 2018, pp. 246–253.

Even Albert Einstein saw the poverty of a purely naturalistic worldview. Choosing his words carefully, he wrote, '*Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind*'. But what exactly does 'comfortably coexist' mean here?

I hope you are reassured by the potential for harmony between faith and science. ... [S]cience can be a form of worship. Indeed, believers should seek to be in the forefront among those chasing after new knowledge. Science is not threatened by God; it is enhanced. God is most certainly not threatened by science. ... [L]et us together seek to reclaim the solid ground of an intellectually and spiritually satisfying synthesis of all great truths.

Let us now project the viewpoints of the human ethologist and the medical geneticist onto state and legal science. This is particularly justified as legal professionals tend to envision themselves as *engineers* of society, constructors *par excellence* of state and social circumstances (and relationships between people). Yet none among them have ever constructed a perfect state, a perfect society (let alone a perfect human), a flawless economy, or a perfect system of law. And why not? This is because the constructors themselves are imperfect, as are the people who create and operate the state and society. A religious command may prescribe '*be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*', or '*be blameless and pure, so you may appear before the judgment seat of Christ*', but these only *obligate one to strive*, just as one should aspire to goodness, to avoid evil, to overcome evil with good, and so on. The explanation is that the strictness of religious moral law and the love that forgives foreseeable law-breaking both act to steer the believer onto the path of God. That which is above humanity (faith and love) elevates humanity and brings it closer to God; that which is beneath humanity ('predatory' evil and violence) drags humanity downwards, towards the world of instinct. When treading on a slippery slope, it is easier to slide down than to climb up. The path of faith and love is difficult, but straight, and leads upwards. As a pilgrim's song says, 'The path of God is a certain path, Only in Him I trust, His holy Word is a well of pure water, Which refreshes and nourishes me' (Hungarian Evangelical Hymnbook 352). Accordingly, both the separation of state and church and the relationship, alliance, and collaboration between science and religion need to be thoroughly reconsidered in order to adequately protect and realise our fundamental values. This is especially true for issues relating to marriage, child-bearing, and family, as fundamental values deserving of special protections, as well as the ancillary values they carry (loyalty, trust, selflessness, gratitude, solidarity, sacrificial love, mutual respect, etc.). As an example, consider the indissolubility of marriage: even if the Catholic Church does not abandon this dogma, it could take the (factual) number and rate of divorces into consideration and further relax its stance on annulment.

8. The good human project

It is believed that life on Earth began approximately 4 billion (4,000 million!) years ago. If calculated from the emergence of the first proto-humans, the process of becoming human began ‘merely’ 2.5 million years ago and is, in fact, an ongoing process, never to be completed. In my opinion, the process of *becoming human*, as a consequence of both natural and societal evolutionary development, has shifted slightly and has acquired an additional adjective: it is now about *becoming a good person*. This adjective is always subject to *enhancement*; every person can always strive to become *better and better*, and even the *best ever*, but *absolute goodness* can never be attained. The concept of goodness is also in a continual state of change, undergoing enrichment, purification, and increasing in value. The state of *being a good person* can also be described using various synonymous terms: a *humane, honourable, upright, genuine, kind, amiable, friendly, just, and virtuous* person is also a *good person*. This process of becoming a ‘multifaceted’ good person is the *project, plan, and duty* of every single individual. We all possess both the rights and the responsibilities inherent to this process. Success in the *good human project* is only possible if that is included in each individual’s *personal life plan* and if every family is committed to supporting this life plan as well. Good people create good families, which, in turn, create good societies and states. This works on a reciprocal basis. Good states are also trying (striving) to make their citizens good people. As Aristotle penned,¹⁶ ‘Political science spends most of its pains on making the citizens to be of a certain character, viz. good and capable of noble acts. ... [B]ecause the good man sees the truth in each class of things, being as it were the norm and measure of them’. Goodness and virtue, therefore, are the prime attributes of a good person, and are accompanied by justice, rationality, moderation, and the other core virtues.

It is not merely the state-structured society that attempts to shape its citizens into good (better) people: every smaller community within a society endeavours to do the same for the benefit of both the individual and the community. This is especially and primarily true for the family, which is the smallest *natural and fundamental* unit of society. Who could enumerate or say how many times advice and exhortations are uttered in a marriage or family, or how many times one is asked to be a good husband, father, wife, mother, child, boy, girl, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild? All this is accomplished not through coercion or force but through the *power of love*. That power, in turn, is nourished by the *power of faith*. Loving each other to deliver people from evil and to bring them into good. Loving the other person, either because they are a good person, or to shape them into a good person. Bibó István considered the good human project to be the *main purpose* of

¹⁶ Aristotle, 1987, p. 23, p. 67.

European societal development.¹⁷ In Europe, Christianity, ‘shaped the ideals of the good sovereign, the good noble, the good knight, the good citizen, and the good farmer. ... [T]hat each could both provide and receive something, and so to allow even those of low social status a modicum of self-respect. ... This worldview could not only justify the existing power differentials and the glaring contradictions of the available social opportunities, but also made it possible to form a critique or – to use an anachronistic phrase – a revolutionary critique of these powers’. In addition to its key values of *brotherhood and loving thy neighbour*, the Christian system adopted two human ideals from the preceding European culture: the ideal of the *virtuous man* from Greek philosophy and the ideal of the *bonus et diligens pater familias* from Roman civil law. In Hungarian civil law, the *good farmer* became the equivalent of the *good* and caring patriarch, whom Károly Szadits called both a ‘*decent man*’ and a ‘*good man*’.¹⁸ These three human ideals – the virtuous man, the good and caring patriarch, and the good man (the image of God) – have become closely interconnected during the development of European society, and all three remain relevant today. Greek philosophy, Roman civil law, and Christian morality are the *value sources* and foundational pillars of the European Union. ‘It would be wise to accept this as historical fact, to take it more seriously than we have so far, and to apply it in practice as well’¹⁹ because *it is good to be good*, particularly if the goodness comes from love.

9. Masterless nature, fatherless society

According to scholars that adopt an evolutionary perspective, the most substantial lifestyle transformation (*paradigm shift*) in the history of humanity was the *Neolithic* or *Agricultural Revolution* approximately 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. Until then, humanity had been leading a migratory hunter-gatherer lifestyle and existed in harmony with nature, living off the land. Humanity claimed (or, in Biblical terms, subjugated) a portion of nature, settling down, cultivating plants, domesticating animals, fabricating tools and other useful objects, constructing houses, stables, and other economic structures, and dedicating considerable time to labour and study. Humans cultivated the land, but in turn, the land cultivated them. They tamed animals and were themselves tamed. They entered the natural cycle, respecting and adhering to its laws. They learned to manage resources sustainably. What they took from nature, they replenished, keeping their resources in balance. They considered their labour and the produced goods as their own property, expected others

17 Bibó, 1986, p. 31, p. 44.

18 Szladits, 1941, p. 365.

19 Lenkovics, 2022, p. 238.

to respect this, and similarly respected the property of other people. They involved their family in their work, with family members assisting one another in larger tasks. The husband performed what work was needed in the outside world, while the wife managed household chores. They exchanged or sold surplus produce and livestock, acquiring what they lacked through trade with others. They learned how to handle money, storing cash reserves just as they did reserves of food, fodder, and firewood, in order to provide year-round for their family. They raised their children to work, sharing their knowledge and bequeathing their estate and wealth to them. They had paternal and marital authority because they earned it. The family farm was, thus, the basic unit of the civil economic system. Good farmers had good reputations, earned respect from others, and had well-deserved (property and labour-based) human dignity and self-respect. They had rights but also burdens, obligations, and risks. Nevertheless, they were free, dependent on no one and nothing, except the laws of nature.

This model of society and family was what inspired Ágost Pulszky to claim that '[p]rivate property is a necessary consequence and requirement of the development of individual personality'.²⁰ Similarly, the Hungarian Constitutional Court states that the constitution protects the right to property as the material basis of individual autonomy [64/1993. (XII. 22.) ABh.]. In 1905, Ákos Navratil wrote²¹ that socialism could never prevail because it would require changing humanity's 'fundamental economic nature'. Unfortunately, he was mistaken. Socialist nationalisation and forced collectivisation, followed by capitalist industry and industrial-scale agriculture ended up successfully altering, and essentially eliminating, family farms and people's fundamental economic nature. It was replaced by a type of human nature more familiar with *wage labour and consumption*, with the family as the basic unit of consumption. Here, the *paternalistic state* is what provides care for the family, mothers, and children on a *social property* basis, with the *welfare state* providing similar care on a capitalist market economy basis. If social security is guaranteed, there is no longer a need for good farmers, good husbands, or good fathers: life can go on without them. The prevailing 'double income family model' neither requires nor tolerates male dominance, nor, indeed, female dominance. The status of 'single mother' is increasingly seen as acceptable, or even privileged and, thus, encouraged. In wealthy countries, 40–60% of children *grow up without a father*, presenting the growing issue of a *fatherless society*. Psychologists believe that this lack of *paternal authority* and *paternal love* – characterised by *discipline, task-giving, and holding the child responsible* – with children no longer being able to place unconditional *trust* in their father or feel *gratitude* towards them, results in negative long-term effects, the study of which is still in its infancy. What is indisputable is that with the disappearance of good farmers and good fathers, nature has become masterless, and society fatherless.

²⁰ Lenkovics, 2018, p. 303.

²¹ Navratil, 1905, p. 56.

10. Familial and social solidarity

In ancient human communities, the law on the *mandatory sharing of food* was considered paramount.²² This law was both a necessary condition and a guarantee for survival. No one hunted an animal, caught a fish, or gathered edible plants merely for their own consumption. Everyone had an *altruism account*, which was kept by the community, and the more instances of ‘sharing’ could be found in this altruism account, the more valuable one was considered to the community as a person. This was the individual’s life insurance: arousing feelings of gratitude and an obligation of reciprocity in others. This remains the measure of a person’s *humanity* today: the value of a person is the total amount of gratitude felt towards them by others.

Today, it is not only food but generally all ‘goods’ that must be shared in the name of *equal opportunity* and *social security*. This is served by large, *institutionalised* social insurance distribution systems, including *public education* institutions that provide free basic education and subsidised secondary and higher education, the *public healthcare* system, the *pension system*, and the *social care and support system*. Due to socialisation, no one feels a sense of gratitude for these anymore. During socialism – operating on a social property basis – this applied to even more aspects of Hungarian society. These aspects included the state and local council *rental housing system* – which represented about 40% of all available housing – as well as the *public education system*, *vacation system*, *cultural support system*, and *public transport* subsidies. With ‘social ownership’, everyone felt even more *entitled*, owing neither thanks nor gratitude to anyone. The historical consequence of this is what is known as the system of *second-generation* human rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations, which is itself largely a consequence of the rivalry of the ‘bipolar world order’. The range and especially the extent of these rights have always varied significantly from country to country, and after the collapse of the socialist pole, they have been in global decline. This decline has resulted in more pushback in the former socialist countries, where the strong *sense of entitlement* and *mass democracy* continues to maintain them, albeit at a lower level.

All of this is noteworthy for us because the extensive system and significant extent of second-generation human rights have relieved and continue to relieve massive burdens from the shoulders of families, as well as from those raising children or providing care for the sick and older adults. From the perspective of the state bearing these burdens, this system could even be seen as a family support system, which could theoretically have encouraged families to have more children. In fact, the exact opposite happened. Childless couples or families with just one child opted to use their private savings gained from public spending to increase their own well-being (spending on larger apartments, foreign vacations, more expensive cars, or entertainment). In the former socialist countries, this was also exacerbated by the

22 Michel and Schaik, 2019, p. 62.

compulsion to close the welfare gap. The lesson from this is that having society and the state support marriage, families, and childbearing can only work if it is done *purposefully, with well-defined conditions, and with appropriate controls.* However, there is currently no consensus on how all of this affects illegal migration, genuine and fake refugees, or global migrants. It should be noted that immense familial solidarity and cooperation is required from the migrants themselves in order to finance their human smuggling operations in the hope of some kind of future return, mainly in the form of social support received from the target country — which, of course, is obviously not intended for that purpose.

11. Neighbourly solidarity

The history of Europe is principally a *history of war*: wars between countries and peoples, as well as wars fought within them. The most common catalysts for wars have typically been *border disputes*, that is, disagreements about where one country, principality, city, or estate ends and another begins. Fundamentally, of course, these disputes are about the limitations of *dominion* and sovereignty. The pursuit and extension of dominion, over larger territories and more people, is motivated by economic and political *interests*. The zenith – and one hopes, the culmination – of this history was the two horrendous world wars of the 20th century, originating from Europe. The European Union's most significant achievement and merit is that since its inception, there has been no war either among or within its Member States, and no new world war has originated from there. All this is due to the Christian and democratic values of the founding fathers, especially Robert Schuman. *Acts of violence were replaced with gestures of love; the love of weapons was exchanged for the weaponry of love.* It became apparent that hatred begets hatred, meaning that it will keep accumulating in the world, initially manifesting as aggression, then erupting as violence, and eventually degenerating into war. The interminable chain of anger, contempt, scorn, humiliation, degradation, defamation of nations, religious persecution, racial and class hatred, vengeance, retribution, and violent retorsions had to be broken, and indeed the Member States successfully achieved this goal. To do this, they first had to reconcile the varied interests of heavy industry, which is pivotal in wars (the Coal and Steel Community), then extend this reconciliation to the entire economy (the Economic Community), continue with harmonising policies (the European Union), and finally practice shared sovereignty on crucial issues, enabling free movement across borders, and helping the peripheries close the gap. This circle continues to expand with common educational, scientific, cultural, and environmental cooperation. However, forcing further 'unification' (especially 'imperial dreams') cannot be permitted (the current state of affairs has already proved too much for Great Britain!). Europe requires more time, a natural 'gestation period',

for further integration, which must be respected. ‘Migration’ within the Union (the free flow of labour) from East to West is already in effect, which is advantageous for Western Europe due to the partial replenishment of the populations and labour force of these countries. However, this same process only exacerbates depopulation and its negative consequences in the eastern periphery.

Alongside peace, the other great value provided by European civilisation is *the institutionalisation of social solidarity*. This germinated from the third tenet of the triadic motto of ‘liberty, equality, fraternity’ – fraternity – and fundamentally originated from the Christian faith. If every person was created by God, no longer a slave but a child of God, then that means every person is a sibling with intrinsic and inalienable dignity, obliged to respect their own humanity, their dignity as a person, and, thus, also the dignity of every other person as well. As emphasised in the opening sentence of the Preamble to the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ‘... recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’. Article 1 of the Declaration conveys the same content, supplementing it with a universally applicable behavioural norm: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of *brotherhood*’. Human ethologist Csányi assigns such importance to this sentence that he qualifies it as a ‘*global thought of the global mind*’.²³ The *spirit of brotherhood (fraternity)* is an easily understandable concept to adherents of any world religion, as well as to non-believers. However, in the language of European Christians, it is named *brotherly love*, extended to all humans as *neighbourly love*. It is the second greatest commandment, after the love of God. *Love your neighbour as yourself*. Respect the human dignity of your human-sibling as your own.

But what does modern psychology have to say about neighbourly love? Erich Fromm puts it like this:²⁴

The most fundamental kind of love, which underlies all types of love, is *brotherly love*. By this I mean the sense of responsibility, care, respect, knowledge of any other human being, the wish to further his life. This is the kind of love the Bible speaks of when it says: Love thy neighbor as thyself. Brotherly love is love for all human beings; it is characterised by its very lack of exclusiveness. If I have developed the capacity for love, then I cannot help loving my brothers. In brotherly love there is the experience of union with all men, of human *solidarity*, of human at-onement. Brotherly love is based on the experience that we all are one. The differences in talents, intelligence, knowledge are negligible in comparison with the identity of the human core common to all men. In order to experience this identity it is necessary to penetrate from the periphery to the core.

²³ Csányi, 2018, p. 20.

²⁴ Fromm, 1993, pp. 64–65.

This weighty and meaningful definition helps us better understand the unity between Christ and the church of his followers, the parable of the vine and the branches, the significance of the fruits of active charity and everyday gestures (feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, taking in the homeless, ministering to the sick, and visiting those imprisoned), as well as the *power* and universal validity of neighbourly love. To actively practice neighbourly love, all we need is to *develop the capacity for love*. To achieve this, however, we need to experience the loving community of a family.

It is clear from Fromm's definition that neighbourly love encompasses *human solidarity*. In addition to freedom and equality from the triadic motto of European enlightenment and citizenship, Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union also emphasises the following values: democracy, the rule of law, justice, solidarity, and equality between women and men. With the experiential knowledge of 40 years of the socialist slogan of 'everyone is equal' behind us, we can better understand the idea of *complementing equality with justice*. However, the idea of exchanging *fraternity* for *solidarity* – especially if this occurs under the aegis of secularisation – is far more controversial. That said, I share the views of János Zlinszky,²⁵ who argues that 'in the language of Christians, solidarity is *neighbourly love*'. Given that not every person in Europe is a follower of Christ, and there are increasingly many non-believers and even believers who are not Christians, it is reasonable to omit the term 'neighbourly love' from a European Union document, especially since it can be replaced with a synonym. By following the logical path from brotherly spirit, brotherly love, and neighbourly love to human solidarity, we arrive at the same conclusion. Solidarity and communities built in the spirit of solidarity are as vital as food and water. The desire for interpersonal union (love) is just as strong and deeply rooted as hunger and thirst. Even the blindest adherents of *selfish individualism* must take into account the human need to belong to a community, just as atheists must consider the faith of Christians. Thus, it is reasonable to refer to social solidarity in Europe as *neighbourly solidarity*. The primary arenas for education and socialisation towards this ideal are marriage and the family; however, these areas also serve as its advanced educational institutions and universities. The seemingly impossible instructions from Christ – repay with bread, turn the other cheek, overcome evil with good – find their practical application and fieldwork in the family, a *love community*. What works within the familial sphere will likely also function on broader societal scales. Conversely, what fails within the domain of the family might not be worth trying to impose on a grand societal level. Of course, these are merely the most likely outcomes. It is always worth making the attempt.

25 Zlinszky, 2007, p. 20.

12. The incursion of dominance

In marriages, pre-marital relationships (engagements, ‘dating’) and cohabitation, one of the most prevalent sources of conflict, and often grounds for separation or divorce, is one party’s dominance over the other – treating them not as an equal, but as a *subordinate*. To put it in more severe terms, perceiving the other as an *object* instead of a subject: a *non-person*. Fromm cites²⁶ Max Stirner, who provided an exemplary illustration of ‘the bourgeois obsession with property’: ‘Persons are transformed into things; their relations to each other assume the character of ownership’. This is a clear violation of human dignity. According to the essence of human rights and the protection of core constitutional rights, a person can never be a *legal object*, only a *legal subject* (person). Human dignity is *inviolable*. Special care must be taken to protect it in hierarchical, public authority, and administrative legal relationships, as well as in certain similar relationships pertaining to civil law (labour law, marital and family law, and individuals in schooling, or those residing in homes for children and older adults).

Bibó also observed this ‘obsession with property’ and the ensuing incursion of dominance, uniquely in connection with ‘socialist state property’. When the basic unit of the economy became the *family farm* (including not just agriculture but also small-scale industry and private trade), it became clear that as the owner made strategic and tactical decisions in management, they also ended up deciding the fate and future of the *family*. Typically, this was the man, the *husband and father*, who acted as a caring provider to decide the fate of his wife and children. Ownership and *management* authority also functioned as paternal authority. The only way this would not pose a problem is if the good farmer was also a good husband and father. *Matriarchy* was replaced by *patriarchy*. With the increase in size, concentration, and centralisation of private property and economic units, the degree of proprietary (economic) power likewise increased proportionally, concentrating and becoming centralised in the hands of fewer people, extending over dozens, hundreds, and then thousands of workers. Legal authority *over property* transformed into decision-making authority *over people*. Today, in the era of transnational monopoly capitalism and globalisation, the decisions of corporate leaders affect the destinies of hundreds of thousands or even millions of people, often entire nations. This too is a form of *dominance*, apparent even without a visible empire, conspiracy, or total political dictatorship. However, proprietary (economic) power grew into the most conspicuous example of complete and unlimited *dominance* over people through the merger of socialist *state* property and political *public power*. Hence, Bibó proposed, ‘The solution cannot be found in the nationalisation of property, nor necessarily in its collectivisation, but in the *dissolution and humanisation* of property relations’. The fight is, therefore, not

26 Fromm, 1994, p. 75.

against property, but rather against the *phenomenon of dominance over people*, and more recently against the emergence of *global hubs of dominance*.

In seeking the meaning of European societal development, Bibó believed²⁷ that ‘the ever newer incursions of dominance appearing after revolutionary reforms are necessary developments of history, and to struggle against them is in vain; ... Nevertheless, a remedy must be found for this state of affairs. The task is not a simple *change of regime*, but the elimination of the *phenomenon of dominance*’. Without this, ‘political mass hysteria will become common and extremely dangerous, driving people to the ideology of violence as an ultimate desperate act’. This same idea was articulated in the third declaration of the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ‘Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law’. Tyranny and oppression, subjugation, and dominance can occur not only along an ideological–political–public power axis but, as seen in the introduction to this chapter – from the very beginning of the agricultural revolution – on a family farm basis, within marriages, and within families. Bibó adds that²⁸ ‘with the clear articulation of the programme on social freedom, humanity cannot rest until it finds the correct organisational forms, the *moral impulses* under which this programme of freedom can be realised without the *incursion of dominance*’. Bibó was a true democrat. Even during the communist dictatorship, he was unafraid to say that,

[M]odern democracy aims at the elimination of the concept of dominance, the phenomenon of dominance. The moral requirement of modern democracy is *equal human dignity*, which means that under the banner of the freedom programme, every person has the right to express their dissatisfaction with the minority governance and their intention to participate in its removal.

Choosing a different minority, however, merely offers a chance – but by no means a guarantee – against the further incursion of dominance. If the incursion of dominance (any type of dominance, whether it stems from the public state authority, capital ownership, or even a civil movement) is humiliating and an affront to dignity, which is not permissible. Thus, the respect for equal human dignity – not just the dignity of others but also the unconditional respect for everyone’s own human dignity – must become a *moral impulse*. With this, the prohibition of violating human dignity would become a prohibition against the *incursion of dominance*. This prohibition would, thus, be inscribed as a *principle of natural law* into the ‘heart of humanity’, becoming an essential part of human nature. Now, in the early 21st century, the incursion of dominance shows itself to be human nature again and again; reversing it would necessitate a paradigm shift. But what would be the opposite of dominance, of

27 Bibó, 1986, p. 93.

28 Bibó, 1986, p. 94.

dominance incursion? Service, self-sacrificing love, solidarity, mutual cooperation, and support. Being humane to one another, being a blessing to one another. Is this possible? As Bibó put it, it has to be, there is no alternative. The battle against the incursion of dominance and the phenomenon of dominance must be waged and won within marriages and families, and then, through families, successfully brought to victory in society as a whole.

13. Non-proprietary dominance

The incursion of dominance often rears its head within marriages and families even without an underpinning of ownership, without the one imposing dominance having to possess any property. ‘How can people feel like owners of property when they haven’t any property to speak of?’ Fromm posed in his book *To Have or to Be?*.²⁹ The answer is somewhat enigmatic: perhaps the greatest enjoyment is not so much in owning material things but in owning living beings. In a patriarchal society, even the most miserable of men in the poorest of classes can be an owner of property – in his relationship with his wife, his children, and his animals, over whom he can feel he is the absolute master. At least for the man in a patriarchal society, having many children is the only way to own persons without needing to work to attain ownership and without capital investment. Considering that the whole burden of childbearing lies with the woman, it can hardly be denied that the production of children in a patriarchal society is a matter of crude exploitation of women. In turn, however, the mothers have their own form of ownership, that of their children when they are small. The circle is endless and vicious: the husband exploits the wife, she exploits the small children, and the adolescent males soon join the older men in exploiting the women, and so on. The male hegemony in a patriarchal order has lasted roughly six or seven millennia and still prevails in the poorest countries or among the poorest classes of society. Emancipation of women, children, and adolescents seems to take place when and to the degree that a society’s standard of living rises. Perhaps the only thing I would add is that, in the absence of pension systems, healthcare, and social homes, having a great number of children used to represent – and still does represent – a sort of insurance policy for old age.

As for the enjoyment of dominance over other living beings, Bibó believed that it was caused by the universal human fear of death, or more broadly by fear in general:³⁰

It is another human being who can invoke the greatest fear in me If I want to feel powerful and strong, despite the mortal dangers threatening me, despite the fear

²⁹ Fromm, 1994, pp. 74–75.

³⁰ Bibó, 1986, pp. 11–13.

tormenting me, the most immediate way seems to be by forcing my fellow humans to submit to my will. And in turn, others forcing me to submit is something that can greatly intensify the fear within me. Against this rises the need to be free from the coercion of others.

While this may be the cause of dominance, Bibó himself deems it a false path:³¹ 'I can free myself from fear precisely by neither suffering under the oppressive yoke of my fellow human beings, nor holding a fellow human under my own oppressive yoke'. This would certainly be beneficial advice, worth following in every marriage and family. From this and the previous lines of thought, several essential conclusions can be drawn. a) It is the wealthiest countries where the highest level of emancipation, legal equality, and protection of rights for women, children, and youth has been achieved. Presumably, this is because these countries require less paternal and proprietorial dominance for survival, allowing life without existential fear. b) In the world's poorest countries and social strata, 'overpopulation', male dominance, and the subjugation of women (wives and mothers) and children are prevalent. c) With global migration originating from overpopulated countries, the 'population transfer', and the consequent 'civilisation transfer', patriarchal systems and male dominance may yet return to the Western world. d) The total (biological) 'equalisation' of genders fails to resolve this severe issue; on the contrary, it exacerbates it, complicating its solution. e) The solution to the problem is the eradication of the phenomenon of dominance in traditional marriage and family, including a 'redesign' of the male role and a re-distribution of roles without the incursion of dominance.

14. Players and roles

The *roles played* (or more precisely, the *burdens shared*) within marriages and families between men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, have undergone enormous changes in the last 100–200 years. We have not yet reached a point of equilibrium, however, and indeed, the pace of change continues to be frantic. These changes are, in part, positive and, in part, negative. The positive aspects include legal equality between women and men, full societal enfranchisement, equality within marriage, and a fairer distribution of duties and burdens. The negatives can be seen when they lead to a war between the sexes, the erasure of the male sex (or both sexes), the biological equalisation of the sexes, and to a complete uniformisation of 'people'. Negative changes can have unforeseeable consequences both for individual personalities (human nature) and for society, potentially causing 'a war of the sexes' or even a 'clash of civilisations'. That said, the

31 Bibó, 1986, p. 12.

positive aspects of these changes need to be stabilised, universalised, and supplemented with further changes.

To evaluate these changes as positive or negative, we must also consider the underlying reasons, the role shifts that have occurred in socio-economic life, and the everyday lives of individuals and families. The *Industrial Revolution* significantly transformed the agrarian nature and structure of the economy. Today, the *family farm* is no longer a fundamental, defining, or formative element of the national economy in the agriculture, industry, or service sectors. Even the *national economy* itself has been integrated into the global economy, which is dominated by the giant companies of transnational monopolistic capitalism. This represents a global *incursion of dominance* on national economies (and also national legal systems, national constitutions, and even human rights). Labour performed on one's own property has been largely replaced by outside labour (wage labour), with external workers labouring on someone else's property, creating a society of *wage labourers*. Men (as husbands and fathers) are no longer the sole providers or heads of families. The 'good and caring patriarch' known from Roman law, and with it the Hungarian *good farmer*, were abstracted into legal concepts and general standards of conduct. Their role in the family needs a thorough reconsideration and redesign.

Similarly, the socio-economic role distribution of women has changed, as has their participation in the division of labour within families and societies. Wage labourer husbands (fathers) never received wages sufficient to support their families (let alone build up savings), which forced women to also integrate into the society of wage labour. In addition, this process was promoted by women's emancipation movements, placing the aspirations of a 'career' and a family in opposition to each other. The model of the *dual-income family* became dominant, in which the woman is as much a provider as the man. However, even their combined income often proves insufficient to provide them with a decent quality of life, once we also consider the costs of child-rearing. Couples end up taking on consumer debts, repaying them together if they can. Alongside women's employment and provision for the family, significantly less time and energy remain for the family, child-rearing, and household management, increasing the demand for men (husbands and fathers) to involve themselves in these areas.

Thus, these significant alterations in external socio-economic and social circumstances reshape the internal relationships between spouses and within families. The change in the division of labour, duties, and burdens between the sexes and in public and all other roles have become new research subjects in several scientific fields, including family law, sociology, psychology, economics, and human ecology. *Men's studies* has even become a subject of research in its own right. *Gender studies* specifically focus on these changes and this area of study. While the word 'sex' denotes *biological sex*, easily and clearly defined, 'gender' denotes *social sex*, which is more complex and variable, dependent on time, space, culture, religion, and upbringing. Biological sex (*male* and *female*) is universally recognised as genetically determined within the natural world, while social concepts of gender, *masculinity* and *femininity*,

are exclusively human social phenomena, dependent on time and place. ‘It includes the qualities that characterise our behaviour as a result of changes in social and cultural traditions and roles, which are instilled in us from birth by our environment, and which largely determine our behaviour’.³²

It is pointless and harmful to blame and condemn the male sex exclusively for all harms suffered by women – even from a historical perspective. This largely explains why men do not wish to form long-term commitments, marry, or have children (become fathers). In an increasingly fatherless society, it would be important to make marriage, family, and having children a more attractive proposition for men, as it was before, but in a different way. ‘Once family and dealing with children also become important within the male value system, it will liberate man from worrying exclusively about their workplace and social status. In this spirit, the popular Hungarian slogan ‘Change diapers to live a longer life!’ should very much be taken to heart by men’.³³ ‘The objective of the epidemiological branch of gender studies is to analyse, through objective methods, how the best quality of life, as well as the healthiest and most meaningful ways of living can be ensured for both women and men amidst the new challenges of the 21st century. Consequently, there is currently a greater need for *familism* than for *feminism*’. This is likely the most important issue of our times. It is at least as essential as the social question raised at the end of the 19th century, which, regrettably, Christianity allowed Marxism to answer. Such is the issue of gender today; hence if we leave the matter exclusively to representatives of other interpretations, the consequences will likely be similar. The redesign of the male–female relationship and the strengthening of the family are tasks of paramount importance as they are the natural and fundamental constitutive elements of a society to be rebuilt from small communities, a democratic community without dominance. Since even the smallest community consists of sovereign individuals, it is vital to prevent the further spread of selfish individualism and to alter the *dominating nature* of individuals, the *urge to dominate* others.

15. Biblical roots

Péter Popper commences his inquiries with the Biblical narrative of creation.

Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground’. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female

³² Kopp and Skrabski, 2020, p. 58, p. 69.

³³ Kopp and Skrabski, 2020, pp. 62–63.

he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'. (Genesis 1:26-28). God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Genesis 1:31).

In Popper's interpretation,³⁴

Behold the blissful beginning. Man became the lord of the entire created world, of all living beings, except for other people. Man was not given power over his fellow man. Man cannot rule over man. And with this, we have come to Satan's principal temptation of love. Sadly, the motto 'Man is not property!' is not inscribed in human hearts. Satan despises freedom! He despises all forms of freedom, favouring only subjugation, dependency, and slavery. He also despises relationships of freedom, equality, and symmetry.

Humans exercise Biblical authority to rule through the societal and legal institutions of possession and property. The essence of possession is *actual* (physical) *dominance* over the possessed entity, and the essence of property is absolute and exclusive *legal authority* over the subject of property rights. Interpreting these essences broadly according to their own interests, humans have extended their dominion and power over other humans as well. This would explain why 'most deadly conflicts are motivated by acquisition and possession. Strangely enough, it seems that in human relations, the impulses and instincts of acquisition and possession have been humanised the least'. Nevertheless, as Popper writes in *The Scripture: The Old Testament*,³⁵ 'Power over people is reserved by God for Himself. Therefore ... any kind of physical, material, political, spiritual-emotional ownership or exercise of human power over another human is forbidden and blasphemous'. This applies to both male and female dominance within a marriage or a family, but even to parental authority over children, or vice versa! Instead of dominance, the *goal should be unity* between men and women: 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24). This unity precludes the incursion of dominance over the other party and should benevolently permeate family life and, through it, radiate throughout the entire social community. Even if this would not completely erase the phenomenon of dominance, the currently unbearable oppressive incursion of dominance could be reduced, at least to a tolerable level. Like Bibó, Fromm harbours no illusions:³⁶

With the slow collapse of the old-fashioned, patriarchal type of ownership of persons, wherein will the average and the poorer citizens of the fully developed industrial

34 Popper, 2002, pp. 69–71.

35 Popper, 2004, p. 82.

36 Fromm, 1994, p. 75.

societies now find fulfilment of their passion for acquiring, keeping, and increasing property? The answer lies in extending the area of ownership to include friends, lovers, health, travel, art objects, God, one's own ego. Persons are transformed into things; their relations to each other assume the character of ownership. 'Individualism', which in its positive sense means liberation from social chains, means, in the negative sense, 'self-ownership', the right – and the duty – to invest one's energy in the success of one's own person. Our ego is the most important object of our property feeling.

However, this negative appraisal is justified only against the type of selfish individualism that prevails at others' expense. Non-selfish, *altruistic individualism* that enriches the value of one's self, enriches one's personality, motivates others, and, thus, promotes a greater degree of freedom and prosperity within the community (the family and the society) is not only tolerable but outright beneficial. Such a development and actualisation of personality is generally a laborious, contentious process, feasible only through much sacrifice and *self-control*. This can also delineate a possible route for diverting the phenomenon of dominance as self-possession in a more positive direction, transforming it into a force for good. So, what is the meaning and the correct interpretation of the Creator's command to 'rule over' the creatures of the Earth in the Book of Genesis? To answer this, three sub-questions must first be addressed: *over what, why, and how should you rule?* Over nature, things, and objects, but never over other people, because they are subjects (persons), not objects! Rule to preserve living nature, to enhance and improve it. Rulers should demonstrate caring, shielding, and protective love towards their subjects. Under such rulership, living nature becomes a *blessing* for humans, and humans also become a blessing for nature and other humans.

16. A civilisation of love

According to jurisprudential practices, every child has the right to *be part of a family*; to live in a harmonious, peaceful community of love; and to experience parental, fraternal, and grandparental affection. The right to love is, therefore, a fundamental, indeed *the* fundamental human right, a formative force for personality and societal structure; a superhuman power, so to speak. It is not a vacant, contrived abstraction but a communal value grounded in millennia of experiential knowledge, a *generalised ideal* derived from the effectiveness and utility of gestures of love. It is an intrinsic motivational force that could and should be further encouraged and amplified with external support and the power of the law. As love has the capacity to elevate people, it is both understandable and justified that humans have recognised love as a *divine force* and respect it as such. Through love, humans can reach God,

and God can, in turn, reach humans. Love functions reciprocally, as tangible acts, as an abstract concept, and even as a societal organising principle; love is a *win-win* game. Consequently, love *creates peace* between individuals and on a societal level, while its absence or its antithesis (hate) leads to violence and warfare. Thus, love is of the *highest value*, both as a principle for individual living and as a societal organising principle.

For the followers of Christ, the God of the religion of love is himself love incarnate: *Deus caritas est*. This is the title of the first encyclical of the recently deceased Pope Benedict XVI. Thus, where love is present as a fundamental value and a social organising principle within a country's constitution, God will also be present there. Let us, therefore, review this encyclical in greater detail. The Pope took the title, which expresses the essence of Christian faith and religion, from the First Epistle of John: 'God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them' (1 John 4:16). These words declare 'the Christian *image of God* and the resultant *image of humanity* and of *human destiny* with singular clarity'. This remains true despite the word *love* having many different meanings in different languages, or even within a single language.

We speak of a love of country, a love of one's profession, love between friends, a love of work, love between parents and children, love between siblings and relatives, a love of one's neighbour, and the love of God. Among these diverse meanings, the love of a man and a woman stands out, with an inseparable interplay between the body and the soul, and the promise of enduring happiness. This is understood to be the *archetype* of love, beside which every other form of love pales.

The Greeks called this kind of love *eros*. The love between friends was called *philia*. Christian love was *agapé*. It is this *agapé* that tempers the preceding two types of love, especially *eros*, at times when it degrades rather than uplifts mankind. The Song of Solomon in the Old Testament provides practical guidance for elevation and purification. The love that elevates and purifies *seeks to become definitive* in two senses: exclusivity – 'this one person only' – and also in the sense of 'eternity'. Behold, the *sanctity of monogamous marriage till death do us part*. In this, *eros* and *agapé* 'can never be completely separated'. *Eros* is the ascending, covetous love ever seeking the happiness of the other: caring, self-sacrificing, living for the other. Symbolically, the same love and strong desire permeate the relationship between God and His creation, humankind, as well as between Christ and His Church. This mutual love 'may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agapé*'; it is a love that forgives, a unity created by love, 'a unity in which both God and man remain themselves and yet become fully one. St. Paul's puts it this way, "He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him"' (1 Cor 6:17). Similarly, humans become 'whole' in the unity of man and woman. 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24). Two

important conclusions follow: ‘First, *eros*, is somehow rooted in man’s very nature. The second: from the standpoint of creation, *eros* directs man towards marriage, a bond that is unique and definitive. The monogamy of marriage corresponds to the monotheistic image of God’. An increasing number of people – including atheists and those who remarry – believe that both of these concepts (exclusivity and perpetuity) are *fictitious*. However, according to Elemér Hankiss, humans cannot live without fiction.³⁷ Most human ideals, ideas, and guiding principles are purely fictitious. We know that reality is different, but fiction makes it more manageable for us. Perhaps, fiction is a castle of air, but those can often end up stronger than castles of stone. By aspiring towards and through them, we can become better and more humane individuals.

The *disarming power* of active gestures of love may seem like fiction when contrasted with gestures of violence. Many deem the commands of Jesus to ‘turn the other cheek’ and ‘throw back bread’ as unattainable. According to Bibó, this does not mean we should ‘passively endure being stoned, but rather that we should find the gesture which arouses shame in the assailant over his own actions’. If we are unable to find such a gesture, ‘we have no choice but to defend those entrusted to us to the best of our ability, even using violence as a last resort, if no other means are available’.³⁸ This would be the case of *counter-violence*, applied in *exceptional cases of legitimate defence situations*, as a *last resort*. ‘When facing a destructive enemy, it is better to fight than to do nothing. And against an intolerable tyranny, it is better to rebel than to do nothing’. Intolerable tyranny can also exist within marriages and families. The appropriate gesture of love can be most effective at disarming violence within the family, and possibly in a school environment.

There also exists (known) gestures of love that can be effective against a state oppressing its citizens or against a foreign (e.g. colonising) power oppressing the state. Against a colonising power operating through gestures of violence, Mahatma Gandhi successfully – though not without sacrifice – applied gestures of love in the form of nonviolent resistance and non-cooperation. Using the *weapon of love*, he convinced the world and rallied it to his and his country’s side, overcoming the much stronger oppressive power. Gandhi learnt much from Jesus; the Christian world could likewise learn much from him:³⁹

Non-violence is therefore in its active form goodwill towards all life. *It is pure love*. I read it in the Hindu scriptures, in the Bible, in the Quran. Non-violence is a perfect state. It is a goal towards which all mankind moves naturally though unconsciously. Man does not become divine when he personifies innocence in himself. Only then does he become truly man. Therefore, though I realise more than ever how far I am

37 Hankiss, 2014, pp. 405–412.

38 Bibó, 1986, pp. 44–45.

39 Gandhi, 1998, pp. 63–64.

from that goal, for me the Law of complete Love is the law of my being. Each time I fail, my effort shall be all the more determined for my failure.

Gandhi's creed of *pure love*, or the law of complete love, deserves much more attention in international politics and international law; *non-violence* could play a much larger role in preventing and managing conflicts, especially wars. (I will note here that Leo Tolstoy was also an advocate of *peaceful solutions based on love*!) I am convinced that *non-violence* can be extremely effective in preventing and managing marital and familial conflicts, as well as wars. The taming and *humanising* of marriages, families, societies, and the world itself is the most viable path to building a *civilisation of love*. The *law of love* is universally valid, independent of time and space. Love is not the exclusive privilege nor the exclusive obligation of the great world religions and their believers. The law of love is the *supreme moral law and core value* of familial and social life, and is an obligation of all states, whether they be solidary and redistributive, democratic, or social constitutional states. At the centre of the concentric circles of love stands the *family as a community of love*, educating its members to be able to give and receive love, and repay love with gratitude. According to Pope John Paul II,⁴⁰ '[t]he family is fundamental to what Pope Paul VI called the "*civilisation of love*", ... the family is the *centre and the heart* of the civilisation of love'. Civilisation itself ultimately is nothing but '*the humanisation of the world*'. In the age of globalisation, this means building a distinctive, global system of solidary (loving) institutions, or expanding and developing the specialised institution system of the United Nations, which was designed to perform such functions. This could be served by a *quasi* world government and a *redistributive financial world system* linked to this function (not serving global capital and its profit-seeking, the further enrichment of the increasing number of super-rich global companies, or their owners).

17. Studying happiness

Every individual's most fervent wish is to be happy. However, the practice of studying happiness as a branch of human sciences is still very new. According to Y. N. Harari,⁴¹ '[s]cholars began to study the history of happiness only a few years ago, and we are still formulating initial hypotheses and searching for appropriate research methods'. 'This is the biggest lacuna in our understanding of history. We had better start filling it'. For instance, by using indicators such as the '*happiness index*' instead of material wealth indicators – gross national product, national income, per

⁴⁰ Vereb, 2010, p. 174, pp. 194–195.

⁴¹ Harari, 2020, pp. 335–352.

capita national wealth – we can affirm the existence of values that are greater and more significant. These values include clean air and drinking water, uncontaminated arable land, nutritious foods, strong familial bonds, dense and sustaining social networks, having children, and so forth. It is no coincidence, then, that this notion originated from Bhutan, one of the poorest countries in the world, materially speaking. In our context, significant attention was given to the study of happiness by Mária Kopp and her husband, Árpád Skrabski. In their book *The Ways and Mazes of the Search for Happiness*,⁴² they wrote,

True happiness, as defined by Aristotle, is not merely a mood or a state, but rather a constant striving. It is our shared values and virtues that differentiate humans from the animal kingdom, and it is also these values which can make us happy, such as wisdom, knowledge, courage, love, humanity, justice, temperance, spirituality, and transcendent experiences. The search for the purpose and meaning of life is the true essence of happiness. If we consider this to be the most important thing, then even if we lose everything (our material goods or our health), we can still live a complete, harmonious, ‘healthy’ life.

According to this passage, happiness is the *supreme value* in the lives of individual people, and its significance is incalculable. Of course, people do not discard or damage their valuables; on the contrary, they hold them in high regard and safeguard them carefully. As we have seen earlier, the papal encyclical *Deus caritas est* considers the mutual affection, desire, and love between man and woman as such a value. They ascend to pure love, ‘offering the promise of happiness’ to both parties, their children, and their families. This is the ‘archetype of love’, beside which every other form of love pales. This is the ‘love ever seeking the happiness of the other’, which radiates to other members of the family as a community of shared love; parents want happiness for their children, and grandparents want happiness for their grandchildren. The starting point, however – and this can be neither glossed over nor denied – is the instinct for the preservation of the species, the desire between a man and a woman: sexuality. Ever since the 1960s, the world has been in what we might call a *permanent* sexual revolution. Today, this revolution continues to expand in new directions, increasing in momentum. This movement also has its *professional revolutionaries*, who Bibó considered just as much the greatest enemies of democracy as the *professional reactionaries*. Where is the boundary between these two values – love and sexuality – and where are their respective limits? It is worth examining the subject more thoroughly, with a mature, wise, and placid eye.

⁴² Kopp and Skrabski, 2020, p. 12.

18. The revolution of Eros

Once again, I cite Kopp and Skrabski here:⁴³

Sexuality has the capacity to elevate humanity into the transcendental realm, but it also has the potential to reduce it to a bestial state. This choice is dependent on the quality of the interpersonal relationship between partners. It's not only sexual assault that bestialises the perpetrator, but any act within or outside a relationship where sexuality becomes an end in itself. This elicits disgust in many, who would therefore deem sexuality immoral – although permissible – even within marriage. This is the source of prudery, which has already ruined many relationships. Based on his experiences as a confessor, Catholic theologian professor Tamás Nyíri wrote about the *demon of shame* and the *angel of erotica* [emphasis author's own]. Within a relationship, sexuality can make a person part of the transcendental, divine world, serving as the medium for the full, physical and spiritual union between a woman and a man. It allows one to recognise the transcendental dimensions of the other, sense God's presence in them, and desire to unite with the thus recognised divine being. The Song of Solomon in the Bible and the verses of the mystics use images of sexuality to talk about the union of the soul with God.

Péter Popper⁴⁴ expressed similar views in his own writings. The Song of Solomon is 'a compiled collection of songs about love and consummation ... How did it ever become a part of the canonised texts? Supposedly Rabbi Akiba was the one who insisted on canonising the Song of Solomon, because he interpreted it as an allegory. The Shulamite represents Israel, the Shepherd is a symbol of God, and love is a metaphor for the mystical attraction driving God and Israel towards each other. Christian interpretation relates these symbols to Christ and the Church' (185). In St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we read, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church' (Eph. 5:31–32). The longing people have for God and Christ's self-sacrificing love for humans are most vividly described through this metaphor, the strongest desire and union between man and woman.

Csányi also touches on the theological (re)interpretation of sexual desire in his book on St. Teresa of Ávila, titled *The Perfume of Perfection*.⁴⁵

As an example, we have the beautiful erotic poem of King Solomon, the *Song of Solomon*. It was incorporated into the Old Testament of the Bible, evidently by divine inspiration. This has led to millennia of attempted explanations. Origen, the most

43 Kopp and Skrabski, 2020, p. 158.

44 Popper, 2004, p. 185.

45 Csányi, 2013, pp. 95–96.

significant early exegete, deemed the Song of Solomon to be erotic only in its words and form; in truth, what matters to the reader is the allegorical meaning, wherein the bridegroom is God and the bride represents initially the Jewish people and later all other nations longing for ultimate redemption. Origen wrote extensive volumes on the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon. Later, those who accepted only the literal interpretation were considered heretics worthy of imprisonment.

According to Csányi, the story reveals the importance society and the church placed on the interpretation of the text. ‘This is of course understandable, as society then, like now, rested on a network of interpretations’. The content, purpose, and limits of *modern interpretations* are still hotly debated today. To be certain, let us consider some more opinions.

On this same topic, Hungary’s own Nobel Prize-winning scientist Albert Szent-Györgyi wrote:⁴⁶

Sex and hunger are the strongest appetites in man and therefore evoke the strongest feelings in him. While hunger has often led to war and revolution, sex has not. It has no political import; it is important only ecologically. All the same, it is the strongest driving force in life; without it, of course, life would cease. In sex, the sublime and the vulgar are separated only by a hair’s breadth. Christian religions could never find a consistent attitude towards it, making it a sin before marriage and giving it their sanction after marriage. Overlaying it all was the residual feeling that anything having to do with fornication was evil – this is the legacy that has been passed down to us by religion. Today, our young people finally seem to be shaking off this anti-natural legacy; perhaps as a result the world will one day soon see a more sensible attitude towards sex.

The sexual revolution began in the 1960s and was largely influenced by two significant scientific advancements: antibiotics and the contraceptive pill. People were liberated from the psychological burden of the fear of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. This *feeling of liberation* – by extended interpretation – became a symbol in itself: one of liberation from all other religious, moral, legal, traditional, or customary restrictions, prescriptions, expectations, fears, and anxieties. A symbol of *total liberation* from total and non-total dictatorships, powers, and dominions. This feeling of total liberation then extended further – and even more expansively – against marital and familial *commitments*, considering them severe and enduring restrictions on freedom. Many men and women increasingly referred to *childrearing* as a form of voluntary *slavery*, which could be most easily avoided by not having children. This philosophy, of course, would result in them becoming extinct without descendants, and if there are too many such people, it will also cause the extinction of the human race and human society. The question then arises: can one

46 Szent-Györgyi, 1983, pp. 264–265.

be *liberated* from any or all natural laws and human virtues (such as wisdom, insight, temperance, and self-control)? Can one be liberated from the mandates, obligations, prohibitions, and commands of *human dignity* (having been created in the image of God), *humanity*, and *humaneness*: ‘do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not commit adultery, honour your father and your mother, love your neighbour’? The answer is obvious: no! Liberation cannot be limitless; freedom cannot be for its own sake. It has human and societal *purposes* that must be respected, thus keeping freedom within bounds. This applies to the *freedom of the angel of erotica*, that is, to *sexual freedom* as well.

19. Liberty, not libertine

While it might seem simple to delineate the boundaries of sexual freedom in general terms, the issue becomes thornier in the context of specific circumstances and situations. The complexity is heightened by the many nuances on either side of the boundary: affinity, attraction, desire, sexual intercourse, lasciviousness, debauchery, promiscuity, indecency, perversion, licentiousness, (soft and hard) pornography, and so forth. All the while, the Seventh Commandment is simplicity itself: You shall not commit adultery! In his book *The Ten Commandments*, Kálmán Cseri wrote,⁴⁷ ‘This is where we all feel sin weighing down on us the most severely. If our lives require any kind of reformation and renewal, this is certainly where it would be needed the most. Issues of sexuality, love, marriage, and family are painful for almost everyone. It pains those who have yet to enter into it, those who are fed up with it, those who lack it, and those who have moved beyond it’. According to Cseri, the strict and original interpretation of the commandment is that ‘committing adultery actually means to commodify, to sell something’. Nevertheless, even the Bible itself uses it in a much broader sense (sodomy, debauchery, indecency, adultery, etc.). In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus expands this interpretation even further: ‘You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart’ (Matthew 5:27-28). Jesus is, of course, consistent: ‘For out of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander’ (Matthew 15:19); he wants to eradicate sin at its root. In the sacrament of marriage, all of this is transfigured, and even raw sexual intercourse can transform into a *manifestation of love*. This is even more true of *refined eroticism*, and in fact, by denying the other, these experiences can become a sin.⁴⁸ ‘Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote

⁴⁷ Cseri, 1994, p. 157, p. 160.

⁴⁸ Cseri, 1994, pp. 169–170.

yourselves to prayer. Then come together again' (1 Cor. 7:5). 'Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure' (Hebrews 13:4). What this tells us is that everyone must decide personally where the boundary is, and those who are married should decide by mutual agreement. The one thing we can be certain of is that human sexual freedom cannot be the freedom of the instinctive being within, cannot be an end in itself, and cannot be used to objectify one's partner. It is no easy task, but then, neither is becoming and being human.

The commandment of 'You shall not commit adultery' is rightly placed between 'You shall not kill' and 'You shall not steal', encompassing some aspects of both. Of course, it is quite capable of unleashing the demon of shame on its own. Saint Augustine, who had led a licentious life in his youth, was tormented by it even in his older years as a scholar. According to one of his quotations, 'Lord, You advised me a better course though You allowed me a less good'. This might have also been Apostle Paul's *thorn*: 'Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a *thorn* in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness". Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me' (2 Corinthians 12:7–8). Thus, instead of the messenger of Satan, the demon of shame, or the self-tormenting guilt, let us choose and call upon the *angel of eroticism* in our lives, and let us find joy in it. We can even be thankful for it, but without abandoning the humanisation of sexuality, the virtues of moderation, and self-control.

20. Summary

The prevailing crisis of values intensifies the crisis of (traditional) marriage and family, which, in turn, exacerbates the general crisis of values.

Fundamental freedoms and human rights were originally designed to protect the individual against state overreach and eventually mandated active enforcement by the state. More recently, they have become weapons used by individuals and artificial minorities against the majority and their values, such as marriage and family, as well as against the democracy of the majority.

The family, once a unit of farming and manufacturing, has morphed into a unit of consumption. Welfare states have rendered the provident individual, the good father, and the good farmer redundant, leaving nature 'masterless' and society 'fatherless'.

The mass integration of women into the workforce and wage-earning society has devalued motherhood, disrupted the balance of burden sharing within marriages and families, and overburdened women.

The ‘social security’ of survival has elevated another strong instinct: the continuation of the species, but only in its pleasure-seeking function, thereby becoming a crucial element of a hedonistic worldview.

Politics, with the media as its ally, has gained excessive powers of manipulation over society, including families, individuals, and particularly children.

Secularisation (the neutralisation and ‘de-clericalisation’ of the state) and the de-sacralisation (‘desanctification’) of people’s value systems have, in essence, resulted in the ‘devaluation’ of society.

The ongoing global migration from overpopulated countries might result not in the replacement of workforces and populations, but rather in population and even civilisation transfers.

Faith adds value to the societal value system and is a natural and renewable resource. The shared goal of both faith and science is the success of the good human project.

Europe serves as a functional role model and example for the world, representing the civilisation of societal solidarity and brotherly love, with the family as its primary building block: a community of love. Everyone, especially children, has a right to live in *harmonious* families.

Our fundamental values are the love between a woman and a man (eros), their unity in marriage (agapé), and the family as a community of love. These, along with their associated values (loyalty, trust, selflessness, gratitude, and respect), are sources of happiness, and their protection is in the overriding interest of children (the future generation).

21. Conclusions

In this chapter, I attempted to uncover, over an extended timeline and within a wider context, the reasons behind population decline – essentially the absence of societal reproduction – and sought to inspire further contemplation and reflection on this matter. If population decline is a symptom indicating the malaise of the ‘Western’ (developed and affluent) world, it is insufficient to merely treat the symptom; the ailment should be addressed in its totality. As they say in human medicine, it is not the disease that needs to be treated, but the entire patient – taking their physical, emotional, and intellectual state into consideration. This often requires more than a general practitioner; consultation with specialists may be required. Similarly, legal science needs to be *embedded with the social sciences* and even more broadly, *scientific perspectives*, for the diagnosis of such complex underlying issues and prescription of effective and targeted therapies.

The examination is simultaneously facilitated and complicated by the global paradox wherein most of the world, including the so-called ‘developing’ and impoverished three-quarters of it, faces a *crisis of overpopulation*. In these regions, the birth rate should be lowered, depending on the available renewable natural resources and the requisites of sustainable development. Both *under-* and *overpopulation* necessitate population policy interventions, impacting individual, familial, and societal values and *value priorities*. However, these interventions would operate in opposite directions to meet the opposite requirements. Childbearing needs to *increase* in the West and *decrease* in other parts of the world. The Earth cannot support eight billion people at the current average standard of living (let alone the ‘ideal’ standard)! From an environmental perspective, ‘Western’ population decline is beneficial; however, from the standpoint of culture, science, and human civilisation’s current accomplishments, it is both detrimental and perilous. *Societal reproduction* implies much more than simply maintaining the population count. The collapse or demise of Western civilisation would lead to massive cultural regression. This assertion is in no way an advocacy for ‘white superiority’. Just as the *non-derogation principle* is foundational for the conservation of nature and all living organisms, protecting the *achieved level of human civilisation* is crucial. Christian morals and European humanism did, do, and can continue to play a significant role in this in the future. As proof, it is enough to consider the support and aid provided to impoverished countries in fields such as university education and scientific pursuits, as well as other areas, and the Western countries can provide similar contributions in health, social, technological, and other domains to the ‘developing’ areas of the world. The same applies to individual nation-states, their societies, and cultural identities: their diversity enriches the world, preserving and expanding the values of universal civilisation. Hence, addressing their demographic crisis and promoting social reproduction in a broader sense are essential as their values are worthy of preservation and replication.

The *life principles* of individuals, families, and generations and the social *organising principles* emerging from them form a *framework of values* within which individual freedoms and fundamental societal liberties can coexist without transforming into licentiousness or their own antitheses. Legal textbooks often describe *legal principles* as the *mortar* binding and solidifying legal norms, constructing them into a system – a *legal system* – much like how bricks are used to build cathedrals. The solid foundation of the legal system is the *constitutional value system*. National constitutions have already incorporated universally valid fundamental freedoms and human rights as civilisational *foundational values* and ‘global thoughts’. These can act as *cohesive* forces within societies and *sustaining* forces for individuals, just as the *hoops* of a barrel hold it together, allowing it to be filled with excellent wine. If someone cuts the hoops, invoking the ‘liberation’ of the barrel staves, they will end up destroying the barrel and spilling its valuable contents. Likewise, overly pursuing individual freedoms and selfish individualism can break down societies and the smaller communities within them, including marriages and families.

According to universally valid norms and values, ‘the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society’, and, thus, deserves protection by society and the state. The family unit was formed thousands of years before Christianity as a community based on love, with values such as *loyalty, trust, altruism, gratitude, solidarity, cooperation, mutual support*, and *self-sacrifice*. These became the fundamental values of *Christian morality*, as well as foundational elements of *social capital*. All of these values are based on love – the *fountainhead of neighbourly love* (extending to all humans) is ultimately the love between a man and a woman (*eros*), the love within marriage, which is characterised by *exclusivity* and *perpetuity*. Through marriage, a complete (physical and spiritual) unity of a *husband-wife* and a *parent couple* is formed (*agapē*), while still preserving their *individual identities*. In fact, in a good marriage, the personalities of both partners are not only preserved but fulfilled, allowing them to enrich each other. They ‘love the other person to deliver them from evil, and to bring them into good’, and they do the same with their children as parents. Through familial *socialisation*, every child becomes an adult with a mature personality, capable of giving and receiving love, thanks to the unity of the *strict paternal* and unconditional *maternal love*. No institution outside the family is capable of achieving this level of education and socialisation to the same extent. Elevating human identity through the development and improvement of education, culture, and civilisation (in short, enhancing people’s *human qualities*) became the main function of marriage and family. This is the *essence of familism*. Thus, it is the fundamental right of children to *live in families*, and it is crucial to protect the institution of marriage and family, and to preserve and restore the *stature and values of fatherhood and motherhood*.

Social reproduction is clearly a concept that goes beyond merely having more children, also extending to the *reproduction of masculinity and femininity, fatherhood and motherhood*. Indeed, beyond simply reproducing a *community of love*, the family also reproduces *cultural identity* and the *civilisational value community*. This affords an opportunity to *further construct the civilisation of love and fraternal solidarity*. Of course, it also extends to the reproduction of core values (created, preserved, and passed on from generation to generation) represented by marriage and the family, values that constitute societal capital such as loyalty, trust, altruism, and gratitude. These values can also be considered the barometers of *individual and societal happiness*.

This complex perspective also places new challenges and tasks before the law. Marriage and the family are not merely legal institutions but are also natural and societal ones, expanding beyond the reach of legal systems. They are rich sources and repositories of value, requiring legal protections and an expansion of the legal tools available to them. The same applies to childbearing and the protection of children. The fundamental values surrounding marriage, the family, and childbearing must be transformed into legal values and principles, organising the lives of individuals and society. The Fundamental Law of Hungary, particularly its National Avowal, has embarked on this path, and this progress must continue. The now constitutional

values – *Christianity, faith, loyalty, love* – must be expanded, their content must be concretised, and they must be defended against abuse, erosion, and deliberate destruction, as well as from distortion into licentiousness. The idealised human image of European civilisation, which can be separated into three elements – the *virtuous* (humane, kind) individual, the *good and caring patriarch* (the ‘good farmer’, good husband, and good father), and the *ideal of a good person capable of self-sacrificing love* – is still far from being realised. This *human ideal*, well-known from Greek philosophy, Roman private law, and Christian ethics, awaits reproduction. The rehabilitated and renewed marriage and the family, with their rich stores of value, may be capable of raising and socially replicating such individuals (husbands and fathers, wives and mothers, children and grandchildren). Robust families are *vital resources* for their members, for society, and for the nation as a whole. As *communities of love*, families can save the soul of Europe; as the *civilisation of love*, Europe can, in turn, save the world.

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