Wiley, A.Terrance. "Love in action: Dorothy Day's Christian anarchism." *Angelic Troublemakers: Religion and Anarchism in America*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 55–106.
Bloomsbury Collections. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501306730.ch-002>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 07:54 UTC.

Copyright © A. Terrance Wiley 2014. Released under a CC BY-NC-SA licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>). You may share, re-use, or adapt this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence. Any adaptations must also use a CC BY-NC-SA license.

2

Love in action: Dorothy Day's Christian anarchism

No honest and serious-minded man of our day can help seeing the incompatibility of true Christianity—the doctrine of meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and love—with government, with its pomp, acts of violence, executions, and wars. The profession of true Christianity not only excludes the possibility of recognizing government, but even destroys its very foundations.

LEO TOLSTOY, *The Kingdom of God Is Within*

I

A religious conversion, says William James, is a conversion in which “religious ideas become the center of one’s spiritual energy.”¹ It is precisely the fact that conversions entail the centering of certain ideas that makes reflecting on conversion narratives so insightful. Conversion narratives ordinarily tell much about a given narrator’s essential characteristics or about what the narrator *takes to be* his or her essential characteristics. Dorothy Day’s religiosity and concomitant normative political commitments are best understood in relation to her conversion to Roman Catholicism, in 1927 at the age of 30, after being raised in a nominally Episcopalian household and living estranged from institutional religion for nearly a decade.

Day had difficulty identifying the factors that led up to and instigated her conversion to Catholicism. As she put it, “A conversion is a lonely experience. We do not know what is going on in the depths of the heart and soul of another. We scarcely know ourselves.”² Yet, just as do most

religious converts, with the passing of time and after reflection, she did attempt to situate the shifting contours of her religious faith in a larger narrative. Perhaps what separates Day from the typical convert is that she was a gifted writer, who spent probably the better part of her vocation as a writer representing to the public the character of her religious faith, her spiritual pilgrimage from Union Square to Rome, as she describes the shift or relocation in her first book-length autobiography. Throughout her life, Day continually interpreted and reinterpreted her past in the light of subsequent experiences and vice versa. This is especially on display in Day's book, *From Union Square to Rome*, a text that Day presents in the form of a letter to her brother John Day Jr, a communist. She offers John reasons for her turn from Union Square to Rome. That is, Day explains why she felt unsatisfied in the world of the nonreligious radical left, which she figuratively refers to as Union Square.

While Day's book-length autobiographical texts, *From Union Square to Rome* and *The Long Loneliness*, dwell the most on her conversion, nearly all of Day's postconversion writings, whether strictly autobiographical or not, explicitly or implicitly offer reasons for her conversion and share her sense of the meaningfulness of certain of her experiences in relation to the deepening of her religious faith. What Day gives throughout her writings might be referred to as an ongoing conversion narrative qua apologia. So understanding Dorothy Day's religious ethics and normative social philosophy begins with her spiritual autobiographical notes as they manifest in her vast body of writing. Day depicts her turn to Catholicism as a gradual blossoming of faith. Day's was very much a conversion that began and culminated with love.

Day begins her conversion narrative by describing her first awakening. It came in 1913, during her final year of high school. It was during that year that she encountered or read intently for the first time Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Peter Kropotkin's humanistic and lyrical anarchist writings. These writers awakened her to the power of prose and to the nature of the social injustice around her. Masterful writers do this for us. They help us see our surroundings and ourselves in a different light. Sometimes they bring us to tears and leave us in a fit of anxiety: could life be meaningless or absurd? But at other times great writers call our attention to the beauty of smiles, flowers, and reconciling lovers. They transform us by transforming our perspective. The best literature demands our attention and puts us in the mood—in the frame of mind—to perceive things differently.

In her second book-length autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, Day recalls how reading Sinclair's romantic realism in *The Jungle* transformed her many walks through Chicago's immigrant neighborhoods. In particular, Sinclair's stunning documentation of Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood and the plight of immigrant workers heightened Day's sensitivity to injustices in her hometown, a place that she had assumed she knew well. Even during

her teenage years, Day felt that such injustice demanded a constructive response; she decided that she would respond through writing; she would be a leftist writer. Years later, she would quote from one of her favorite Dostoevsky stories, *The Insulted and the Injured*, in order to elucidate the character of her vocational aspirations and to explain in particular how her commitment to social justice informed her writing. Dostoevsky's story is about a young author whose first book is rather well received. What draws Day's attention is the reaction of the author's father to the powerfulness of the book. In a chapter, in *Loaves and Fishes*, that takes its name from the title of Dostoevsky's story, Day quotes the father's reflection on how his son's book had moved him: "What's happening all around you grows easier to understand and to remember, and you learn that the most downtrodden, humblest man is a man, too, and a brother."³ Day goes on to say, "I thought as I read those words, that is why I write."³ Day became a writer with the idea of "brotherhood" (the unity of humanity) and the suffering and injustice experienced by the downtrodden in mind: she wrote in the shadow of a profound contradiction that demanded correction.

Uncertain about the best means by which to pursue her vocation as a writer, Day decided to accept a scholarship to study at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Never the keenest (formal) student, she was reluctant to matriculate yet grateful for the opportunity provided by the scholarship. She arrived on campus in the autumn of 1914. Immediately, Day immersed herself in the radical literature—anarchist, socialist, and communist—of the early twentieth century. Growing increasingly militant politically and rebellious culturally, she joined the socialist party, hoping to fulfill her desire to constructively channel her compassion. Also, she began to shy away from institutionalized Christianity, as did many socially conscious bohemians in the 1910s. Neither agnostic nor atheist per se, Day felt that religion was an "opiate of the people" that would "impede" her work as an activist and writer: "I wanted to have nothing to do with the religion of those whom I saw all about me. I felt that I must turn from it as from a drug. . . . I hardened my heart. It was a conscious and deliberate process."⁴ So Day's initial conversion to leftist radicalism entailed movement away from religion, particularly Christianity.

For a season, she was satisfied. But forever restless and fitting for a radical activist born at the turn of the twentieth century, Day would leave college before completing the coursework for a degree. And no less appropriate, for a bohemian journalist with socialist commitments, with two years of college behind her, Day relocated to New York City. She would settle in Greenwich Village, America's bohemian enclave, then home to the likes of Eugene O'Neil and William Faulkner, and still a bastion of leftist political radicalism. It was a time of war, revolutionary fervor, and technological innovation. America would soon enter World War I; the Bolsheviks would soon sweep away the Tsar in Russia; Henry Ford's automated assembly line,

introduced in 1913, would soon transform industry and society. These events and social developments defined the era in which Day came into herself as an activist. From the mid-1910s up until her conversion to Catholicism in 1927, Day would write for several nonreligious leftist publications, including the *New York Call*, the *Masses*, and the *Liberator*, and work with important organizations on the radical left such as the No-Conscription League and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or the Wobblies). Day had left Chicago and later the University of Illinois to become a writer and an activist. By most accounts, she had met with success. She had worked with Max Eastman. She had written a novel, *The Eleventh Virgin*. She had interviewed Trotsky. She had participated in boycotts and pickets and contributed to several important causes. Yet still, Day experienced an enduring sense of incompleteness or even emptiness.

Retrospectively, Day would characterize her sense of incompleteness in terms of her disappointment with the ideals prevalent among left activists. In particular, by the late 1910s to early 1920s Day felt that socialist and communist activists generally possessed what she regarded as a truncated conception of humanity and in consequence they misdiagnosed the problems confronting humanity. According to Day, communists and socialists were to be commended for being committed to social justice and for even loving the poor. Yet few of the activists with whom Day worked deemed it as imperative to love both oppressed workers (i.e. brothers) and exploitative capitalist employers (i.e. enemies). So she relates in *From Union Square to Rome*, “I will not deny that often the Communist more truly loves his brother, the poor and the oppressed, than many so-called Christians. But, when in word and deed the Communist incites brother to kill brother, one class to hate and destroy other classes, then I cannot feel that his love is true.”⁵ Day interpreted the unwillingness of most communists to love their enemies as the result of a failure to appreciate the radical interconnectedness of creation. And their refusal or inability to love their enemies made it difficult for Day to imagine how communist and socialist activists could enact the kind of social change that she regarded as necessary. This dissatisfaction left her searching for more. On Day’s telling, this dissatisfaction spelled the beginnings of her ultimate turn toward God and the Roman Catholic Church (Catholic Church or Church). Moreover, her assessment of the short-comings of communism would lead her toward anarchism.

Around the same time that Day was growing dissatisfied with nonreligious leftist activism, she found herself in the throes of broken relationships, namely the one with her then partner, Forster Batterham, with whom she would eventually have a child. Experiencing an identity crisis wrought by a crisis of community, that is, the experience of relational crises, Dorothy Day carried around a heavy heart in the lead up to her conversion to Catholicism. On one level, it was a broken heart, in a broken world, that moved her to long for a more spiritually meaningful life. But negative experiences are

rarely enough to inspire conversions like Day's, and it would in fact be inaccurate to say that it was simply a broken heart that led her to God or religion. Certainly political disillusionment and relational grief factored in. Yet, there were positive forces at play too.

To begin, during the mid-1920s, Day had begun to love the natural environment; she had begun to feel at peace and closer to the divine when in certain natural settings. In particular, there were the long walks, inspired by restless moods, along the Staten Island seashore, where Day had purchased a beach house (with the earnings from the sale of her novel, *The Eleventh Virgin*, to a Hollywood film production studio). The rush of the tide and the setting of the sun elicited in Day a sense of divine presence. In addition to this, after birthing a child, Tamar Theresa, in 1926, Day says that as she embraced her infant daughter, she was overwhelmed by feelings of inexhaustible love. In such moments, Day felt that her capacity to love was unbounded, yet she also felt in those moments that only "God" could properly receive such an outpouring of love. Beautiful and sublime, nature and Tamar Theresa inspired in Day a reverence for life and religious passion that ushered her along a path toward God.

A combination of painful and joyful encounters transformed Day's notions about love and its significance. On one hand, Day experienced love's absence: she experienced the absence of "true love" among nonreligious leftists and she suffered heartbreak in relationships, which provoked a yearning for a more complete love. On the other hand, Day experienced abundant love as an overwhelming force: being present in nature and in the presence of her infant daughter inspired feelings of love and a desire to worship. Ultimately, then, her preoccupation with love moved Day toward God in stages. Appropriately, the section in *The Long Loneliness* in which she announces and explains her final decision to convert is entitled "Love Overflows."

Love is undoubtedly the key term in Day's religious-ethical vocabulary, with her conception of it giving shape to her religious-ethical commitments and normative political vision. In *The Long Loneliness*, where Day presents her most detailed and articulate account of her reasons for converting to Roman Catholicism, she explicitly relates her idea of love to what might be referred to as the problem of disunion, which is the cause of what Day herself memorably terms *the long loneliness*. For Day, disunion—one human from another and humans from God—is the principal problem that human persons must surmount. To put it differently, Day contends that what it means to be human is to long for communion. She therefore asserts that the primary "longing of the human heart is for . . . communion."⁶ Interestingly and importantly, the disunion-communion dichotomy undergirds or extends from Day's conception of the human person; human persons are constituted such that our hearts, "longing" to overcome disunion and *the long loneliness*, long for *communion*.

Day's elaboration on this thesis about the quest for communion brings together her reasons for converting to Roman Catholicism and points toward the anarchist position that she would subsequently develop. Above we saw that Day, in *From Union Square to Rome*, found communists' and socialists' understandings of love wanting. On Day's view, their conceptions of love were underinclusive. Continuing her habit of clarifying the character of her religious faith by contrasting it with the communist alternative, Day tells us in *The Long Loneliness* that "If I could have felt that communism was the answer to my desire for a cause, a motive, a way to walk in, I would have remained as I was. But I felt that only faith in Christ could give the answer. The Sermon on the Mount answered all the questions as to how to love God and one's brother."⁷

Few passages have been more important for radical activists in America than chapters five, six, and seven in *The Gospel of Matthew*. And no biblical passage was more important for Dorothy Day, as her mature political philosophy flows largely from her understanding of the implications of the Sermon on the Mount, with its love imperative, as will be evident shortly. For now, I would like to reflect on Day's invocation of the Sermon on the Mount's lesson on love in the light of her thesis regarding the yearnings of human hearts.

Day's invocation of the Sermon on the Mount sets the stage for her answer to what she identifies as the principal problem confronting humanity and one of the most illuminating passages in Day's corpus. To a degree, the entire narrative in *The Long Loneliness* leads up to the extended passage that I have in mind, a passage that Day begins with an ardent assertion: "Community is the answer to the long loneliness."⁸ Several pages later, she reiterates and hones her point: "The only answer in this life, to the loneliness we are bound to feel, is community. The living together, working together, sharing together, loving God and loving our brother, and living close to him in community so we can show our love for Him."⁹ Finally, exuding conviction, Day declares in the first-person plural: "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."¹⁰

Community, then, is the answer to the problem of the long loneliness and the above statements, when taken together, qualify Day's conception of community in a way that it is crucial to appreciate. In particular, the above statements reveal that what Day cherishes and commends, in the light of the Sermon on the Mount, is not merely community as such. Rather, it is the act(s) of loving in community. Day's understanding of love's relationship to community can be restated paradoxically: love creates community and community provides the context for acts of love. Over time, as she moved from Union Square to Rome, Day came to see the way in which loving other persons could create a community *made whole by the transformative power of God's grace*. It is in this way—that is, Day's understanding of God's

active role in the temporal order—that Day's conception of love differs most substantially from nonreligious or even non-Christian conceptions of love. The implications of this difference will be clear in the next section. What should be evident already, though, is that it was Day's longing for a community created through love—or love sustained by community—that moved her to convert to Roman Catholicism. In accord with this, Day brings *The Long Loneliness* to a close with a simple but arresting testament to love that equals the best letters on Christian love in the English language. The passage's shortest sentence is probably its most telling: "The final word is love."¹¹

To grasp the full theological or religious implications or meaning of Day's centering of *Christian* love, we must consider how Day deploys Catholic teaching (ideals, concepts, doctrines, and dogmas) in order to explicate her understanding of love's significance or function. With this in mind, I would now like to turn to a more substantial reflection on Day's religious faith as she comes to express it in explicitly Christian, especially Roman Catholic Christian, terms, so as to set the stage for an acute analysis of her political philosophy.

II

Importantly, conversions can enhance communicative and interpretive capacity by multiplying the lenses and vocabularies that converts have on hand. Converts often creatively interpret or translate their preconversion principled commitments into the idioms or parlances provided by the traditions to which they have converted. In Day's case, her discipleship as a Catholic Christian was an ongoing process of negotiating her many pre-Catholic commitments with her understanding of her duties and responsibilities as a Catholic layperson. In other words, Day's life as a Catholic entailed explicating her pre-Catholic commitments in Catholic terms and interpreting Catholic beliefs and teachings in terms of her extra or pre-Catholic commitments and experiences. This dialectical process of mutual enhancement and interpretation resulted in a fascinating melding of radical leftist and Catholic ideals. Consistent with this, Day put to use Christian, particularly Catholic Christian, concepts in order to describe her developing sense that fundamental social problems confronting modern persons were in actuality, at bottom, religious problems.

That this is so is revealed by Day's invocation of general Christian and specifically Catholic ideals, concepts, doctrines, and dogmas, especially as they relate to questions about the nature of God, the human person, and reality generally speaking. Day's identification of a lack of community, a paucity of neighborly love, and the denial of God as central problems confronting humanity hints at the kind of social order that she would find

ultimately satisfactory. The character of Day's religious ethics and the sources of her anarchism, then, are on display in Day's interpretation of Christianity and Catholic teaching.

In this section I reflect on four vital facets of Day's Catholic commitments (or four vital facets of Day's interpretation of Christianity and Catholic teaching) as they relate to the ideas of love and community, so that we can see how Day extends Christianity and Catholic dogma and social teaching in anarchist directions (and vice versa). While the four facets in question are interrelated, so that my analysis of them will overlap, it might be helpful to enumerate them in the order in which they will be presented. First, I will consider Day's characterization of the problem of disunion or separation in terms of the Christian idea of sin and discuss her thesis that it is love that bridges separation and thus overcomes sin. Second, I will discuss Day's employment of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, concentrating on the way in which Day invokes it in order to buttress her argument in favor of compassionate love and ultimately as a rejection of hatred and cruelty based on difference, especially in terms of nation or race. Third, I will comment on the significance of Day's appropriation of several themes or ideas presented in French personalist philosophy, as it is in the terms of French personalism that one can begin to grasp Day's postconversion conception of God, the human person, ultimate reality, love, and community. Particularly important, the conception of God and the person that Day enunciates, in the terms of French personalism, functions to elevate the importance of human agency and underwrites her criticisms of centralized authoritative entities such as the modern territorial state. Finally, I will discuss the way in which Day brings the above facets together through her argument about the ethical implications, for all practicing Catholics, of the Catholic counsels of perfection, which will reveal that Day's religious-ethical commitments have a strong perfectionist quality and give a prominent role to certain moral absolutes (or categorical imperatives). The significance of this, for our purposes, lies in the fact that Day's moral perfectionism, when combined with moral absolutism, motivates an anarchist ethic.

Sin is a central category in Christian thought and so perhaps it is unsurprising that the idea of sin factors into Day's rendering of Catholic Christian ideas in a way that it is crucial for us to understand. In practice, Day offers little by way of extensive commentary on the idea of sin—particularly regarding its origin or nature. But the idea is always in the background and is one of the more important keys to understanding Day's conception of the Christian love ethic, as, in many respects, Day's conception of love and sin can only be understood in relation to one another. I have already indicated how love is related to the problem of the long loneliness. On some levels, the phrase "the long loneliness" is merely a special way of naming or describing sin or the nature of sin. Similar to many Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians, Day regarded disunion or separation, particularly a

turning away from God, to be the cause, effect, and incident of sin. Such Christians regard sin as disobedience or unfaithfulness to God, divine law, or moral law and, in practice, disobedience or unfaithfulness to God, divine law, or moral law—which is technically an act of sin or sinning—separates or disunites human persons from one another and separates the disobedient agent from God.

To understand Day's conception of sin we must only keep in mind the primacy that she gives to love and recall love's function or effect. Remember that Day offers love in community as the solution to the long loneliness and the problem of disunion. Sin, in this frame, constitutes a failure or refusal to love. We can therefore say that, for Day, love constitutes something of an antidote to sin. This is a simple but profound correlation. By conceiving of sin as a failure to love, Day is able to register her sense of love's importance as a theological and religious-ethical category. Christians have recourse to no more meaningful negative terms than sin and its relative, hell. So it is ordinarily revelatory to trace a given person's invocations of these terms. Day suggests that because the final consequence of sin or sinning is hell, a failure to love leads to hell. She quotes Georges Bernanos to make this point: "Hell is not to love anymore."¹²

Day's juxtaposition of hell and love is important mostly for its implicit positive dimension: If the cessation of love is hell, then it would appear that love is redemptive; love redeems in that it overcomes disunion or separation—a multitude of sins.¹³ To this end, Day intimates,

Love and ever more love is the only solution to every problem that comes up. If we love each other enough, we will bear with each other's faults and burdens. If we love enough, we are going to light that fire in the hearts of others. And it is love that will burn out the sins and hatreds that sadden us.¹⁴

Although Day never explicitly announces that "Heaven is to love," she does identify "the kingdom of God" as a place where persons would love completely and perfectly. In this way, she belongs to a contingent of twentieth-century American Christians who posited the beloved community as a normative ideal to be sought after as a matter of religious devotion. To appreciate the multiple bases on which Day maintains that striving for the beloved community is a religious-ethical duty, we should consider in turn her construal of the Catholic doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, her invocation of personalist philosophy, and her understanding of the Catholic Counsels of perfection.

Paradoxically, Day posits the unity of creation and at the same time presents disunion or separation as a problem confronting human persons. This assertion of the unity of creation, which is at the core of Day's religious ethics and normative political vision, is an ontological or metaphysical

claim about ultimate reality.¹⁵ In order to communicate this conviction, Day broadly interprets, perhaps idiosyncratically, the Catholic doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, a doctrine derived from several Christian scriptural texts, especially Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians*.¹⁶

According to Day, all human persons belong to and are united through the Mystical Body of Christ.¹⁷ This mystical body transcends time and space, so that, through it, each person simultaneously attains an identity with Christ, saints, and sinners. In Day's own words, "We [Catholic Workers] think of all men as our brothers then, as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. 'We are all members, one of another,' and, remembering this, we can never be indifferent to the social miseries and evils of the day. The dogma of the Mystical Body has tremendous social implications."¹⁸ And a few years later she says, "We are those who are sinned against and those who are sinning. We are identified with Him [Christ], one with Him. We are members of His Mystical Body."¹⁹

Day's interpretation of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and the theory about reality that she derives from it are important for several reasons. To begin, by positing the interrelatedness of persons in Christ, Day is able to assert that what we do to or for another human being, we do to or for Christ, so that to act unjustly or lovingly in relation to a particular person is to do the same to Christ. Second, because all persons share an identity with Christ, all persons suffer with Christ. Finally, because each human person shares an identity with saints and sinners alike, all persons suffer with one another, and so have reasons to be concerned with the actions of other persons. Crucially, Day extends the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ in a way that profoundly elevates the stakes of human agency and motivates a concern for social evil and misery, so that persons "can never be indifferent to the social miseries and evils of the day." The way in which Day approaches and construes the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is indicative of how Day weaves other Catholic teachings and practices into her life. As Mel Piehl notes in *Breaking Bread*, Day's invocation and application of Catholic doctrines, allowed her to integrate "sacramental notions with seemingly secular concerns."²⁰

Day's texts are replete with examples of her subtle interweaving of the sentiment embodied in the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ with ostensibly sociopolitical concerns. In most cases, this interweaving is done in order to commend love and community and to condemn sin and disunion. And, the effectiveness of Day's writing is the fruit of her ability to express her response to social phenomena and relate the phenomena in question back to a principle that moves her. To study Day's corpus is to witness her at work reinterpreting Catholic faith in the light of her experiences, and those experiences in the light of the reinterpreted principles of her faith. This proclivity manifests clearly in Day's frequent allusions to and invocations of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. Three examples should suffice

to demonstrate how this is so and show why the doctrine was so important for Day's religious ethics.

The example that I begin with is perhaps the one in which it is most clear that the idea inherent in the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ actually informs Day's interpretation or description of social reality. Meditating on the dictates of Christian love, Day attempts to convey the powerful effects of love in action and to make evident the significance of the unity of humanity. She does this by defining compassion—which is best thought of as an aspect of love—and connecting it with the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. Day relates,

Compassion—it is a word meaning “to suffer with.” If we all carry a little of the burden, it will be lightened. If we share in the suffering of the world, then some will not have to endure a heavy affliction. It evens out. What you do here in New York, in Harrisburg, helps those in China, India, South Africa, Europe, and Russia, as well as in the oasis where you are. You may think you are alone. But we are members one of another. We are children of God together.²¹

In the above, Day does not use the term “the Mystical Body of Christ.” Instead, she employs Catholic doctrinal content in order to put into words the value and nature of compassion. As Day sometimes employed the term “compassionate” as a verb, we might say that, in the above, she invokes the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ so as to encourage “compassionating” or compassionate action. Importantly, compassion, as an aspect of love, overcomes disunion, and so paradoxically, it is inspired by both the unity and disunion. We are one, says Day, and can alleviate suffering in the world, if we will only suffer with one another, if only we will be conscientious about how what *we do here* affects others.

Perhaps no example better illustrates the depth of Day's compassion than her reflection on a stint that she did in a Washington DC jail after participating in a women's suffrage picket in 1917. Day would repeatedly refer to this jail experience throughout the rest of her life. Such experiences affirmed her belief in doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and in turn shaped how she would interpret and describe her experiences.

With the suffragist movement in full swing, movement participants had decided to stage a protest outside of the White House. Day had joined the suffragists in their demonstration because she found their agitation inspiring. Yet she had never been interested in electoral politics or parliamentary reform—Day never cast a vote in a political election. But while Day did not identify with the suffragists' objectives as such, her participation in the protest was fateful.

Jail terms have often been a source of radicalization. This is true of Thoreau, Kropotkin, Gandhi, Norman Thomas, Rustin, Bertrand Russell,

Dostoevsky, Angela Davis, and countless others. It also proved true for Day. Two things impressed her. First, Day was repulsed by the violence that she witnessed in jail, with the way that the prison guards treated prisoners. Second, Day was struck by the kinds of persons who were in prison. To begin, Day found prison to be full of persons overwhelmed by sadness and even despair. Then, there was the fact that in modern society, particularly modern American society, there is an arbitrariness about who ends up in jail, although it is in fact largely the dominant class, in terms of race and economic class, that determines the legal rules, so that class and race largely predict who goes to jail. The criminal justice system is a window into an unjust social system and peering through that window profoundly affected Day's impression of modern society.

In *From Union Square to Rome*, Day speaks of the way in which her time in jail instigated what for the lack of a better term I will call a quasimystical experience. Only, to be clear, she did not lose herself in God per se. Rather, she suffered with others—she empathized and “compassionated” with human persons—and experienced an erasure of boundaries between herself and others. The dire conditions in the jail and the isolation left her to reflect on the human predicament. Such reflection thrust her into *communion*, which is in many respects a state of being compassionate. She intimates,

I suffered not only my own sorrow but the sorrows of those about me. I was no longer myself. I was man. I was no longer a young girl, part of a radical movement seeking justice for the oppressed, I was the oppressed. I was that drug addict, screaming and tossing in her cell, beating her head against the wall. I was that shoplifter who for rebellion was sentenced to solitary. . . . I was that mother whose child had been raped and slain. I was the mother who had borne the monster who had done it.²²

A psychologist or psychiatrist might say that Day's extreme identification with others signaled a mental breakdown. But Day would never reduce experience to the sensational response to material phenomena, and so she would cull the experience for spiritual edification and illumination. This experience, I want to suggest, informed Day's understanding of Catholic doctrine, particularly the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and the idea that persons are one in and through Christ, and thus participate in the sufferings of others.

In jail, Day confronted squarely how suffering marks the human condition. Such confrontation is difficult and Day recognized specifically the psychological risks associated with loving in such a sorrowful context. The act of love expressed in a broken world threatens to break the lover's heart, psyche, or spirit. But loving under such circumstances is more than simply potentially tragic. It is also a practical challenge. The question is, and it is a serious one, in the personal domain as well as in the public, how we muster

the courage and the strength to love in the light of our vulnerability and our collective problems. According to Day, in practice this is precisely where faith and liturgy must meld with hope and grace to provide the persons in question with the capacity to love. The Catholic Church's liturgical tradition provides persons with the spiritual resources and practices to make God's grace operative. This grace in turn gives persons the strength to love in the particular way that is necessary for communion between or among individuated persons and God.²³ So God's grace saves—through love and the sacraments—the faithful from the hopeless abyss.

With her faith in the power of God's grace, Day maintains that there rests no middle ground between indifference and identification. There is a religious-ethical imperative to confront reality and identify with suffering persons; we are called to love one another; we are one in Christ. By confronting pain and hardship that other persons suffer, we evade indifference or complacency in the face of social suffering, and we avoid (willed) complicity in suffering and injustice. And, for Day, compassion includes a concern for the immediate sorrow or suffering among persons and consists of a concern to alleviate the suffering and the cause(s) of the suffering that inspires the compassion in the first place. Thus, even while one identifies with both perpetrators of injustice and the subjugated, one's ultimate concern is to eradicate the injustice.²⁴ Gandhian philosophy greatly influenced how this orientation toward victims and perpetrators would be understood by many mid-twentieth-century activists, including Day. First, liberation is posited as something that liberates both the oppressed and the oppressor. Second, love for both the oppressed and the oppressor conditions the means that may be employed in order to effectuate liberation. Normative proponents of nonviolence predicate the value of nonviolent means largely on the way in which such means are said to avoid or minimize harm to oppressors. Therefore, to identify with either oppressed or suffering persons in the way that Day suggests is to be prompted to question social practices that are unjust or result in unnecessary suffering. This is clearer with the third example that I would like to discuss.

I noted above that Day repeatedly returned to her 1917 jail experience. Consistent with this, she reflects on the experience in *The Long Loneliness*. That account differs slightly from the one in *From Union Square to Rome* in that Day construes compassion or identification with the suffering of others in a way that links it directly to social justice. That is, in the account that follows, Day's empathy and compassion are directed in more stridently political terms, as she explicitly calls into question the fairness of the so-called justice system. As Day alludes to double standards and hypocrisy, in a way, the whole social order is put on trial:

I lost all feeling of my own identity. I reflected on the desolation of poverty, of destitution, of sickness and sin. That I would be free after thirty days

meant nothing to me. I would never be free again, never free when I knew that behind bars all over the world there were women and men, young girls and boys, suffering constraint, punishment, isolation and hardship for crimes of which all of us were guilty. . . . Why were some caught, not others? Why were some termed criminals and others good business men? What was right and wrong? What was good and evil? I lay there in utter confusion and misery.²⁵

Day's compassionate and emotional response to the injustice and suffering and hypocrisy that she perceived in early twentieth-century America is unsettling. It has been nearly a century since she experienced that misery in jail and almost six decades since she published *The Long Loneliness*. But the questions that Day asks remain important ones, ones that continue to haunt many Americans, myself included.

One of the things that keeps many persons from being distressed or disturbed by other persons' suffering or oppression, in the way that Day was, is that they find it difficult to feel a sense of compassion for persons with certain skin colors, persons engaged in certain professions, persons who eat certain foods, speak in certain languages or with certain accents, worship certain gods, wear certain clothes, engage in certain kinds of sexual intercourse. Day invoked the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ in order to combat what we might call "indifference rooted in difference" and interpreted the doctrine's significance in the light of a context in which hatred motivated by nationalism, racism, classism, and sexism was rampant. So, although she does not explicitly refer to the doctrine in the three passages that I have just presented, I want to suggest that the doctrine shaped how she understood compassion and identity, and so shaped how she would ultimately describe her experiences, including the fateful jail term.

So with the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, Day found a powerful way to express her belief in the interrelatedness of creation and a way to commend love and community in the face of the unjust conditions of twentieth-century American society. And she also managed to relate compassion to the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ in a way that allows her to characterize compassion as a religious-ethical value or virtue. She thus suggests that persons have a religious-ethical duty to be compassionate because "we are members of one another" and "children of God together," thus framing racism and indifference rooted in difference as contradicting Christian ideals. Christian activists have often made such claims about the implications of Christian love for human interaction. What is unique with Day, once again, is how she brings her normative vision together by construing and applying the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ in a way that heightens the significance of human agency and hence personal responsibility and sociopolitical action, particularly love in action.

The full significance of and reasons for Day's emphasis on love in action and personal responsibility are perhaps best understood in the light of her appropriation of French personalist ideas, as it is in the terms of personalism that Day asserts that each person has a personal responsibility to love in order to create community with God. Day began her study of French personalism after becoming acquainted with Peter Maurin, the itinerant ascetic French Catholic immigrant with whom Day would cofound the *Catholic Worker* in 1933. French personalist philosophy emerged as an alternative to Marxism and existentialism—which personalists understood to be committed to materialism and nihilism respectively—and became increasingly important during the 1930s with Emmanuel Mounier's publication of the journal *Esprit*. In some respects French Catholic personalists such as Mounier and Jacques Maritain merely reformulated standard Thomism in a distinctively modern vernacular in order to counter certain negative tendencies—moral relativism, individualism, and materialism—that they regarded as prevalent in modern philosophical thought.²⁶ By the mid-1930s Day often drew from the language of French personalist philosophers such as Mounier, Maritain, and the Russian immigrant Nicolas Berdyaev, as the three offered Day language with which to express her view that God is love and the idea that it is through acts of loving that one actualizes one's self, creates community, and brings the presence of God into one's life. In the end, the personalist elements that Day appropriates are quite basic.

Day believes, with Maritain, Mounier, and Berdyaev, that the spiritual and the material are inseparable, which allows Day to explain how God is active in history and to give an account of the divinity or spiritual essence of the human person. More to the point, the idea of the inseparability of the spiritual and material allowed Day to argue for the positive value of human action in the temporal order. As such, Day drew inspiration from Berdyaev's assertion that "Christianity does not depend on constant miracles, but very much on the creative, even daring, activity of Christians in the world, working together with God's grace."²⁷ In addition to a belief in the inseparability of the spiritual and the material, Day insists that the universe is (essentially) personal and that God is the *ultimate* person. Moreover, according to Day, God is the ultimate *loving* person. Day, on the basis of her encounter with personalist philosophy, asserts that the personal God is the creator of human beings who, because created in the image of God, must be regarded as individual *persons*. This last point is what makes personalism important and distinctive and is a point that Day develops in profoundly important ways. For, it probably would not be going too far to say that a personalist conception of personhood underwrites her entire normative vision in that it informs or represents her theological anthropology.

There are at least two noteworthy aspects of Day's conception of personhood. First, for Day, persons by definition exist primarily or even solely in relation to other persons. Persons are relational beings. Persons cannot be

disunited (from other persons and still be persons). Persons were made for and are meant for communion. Second, Day insists that personhood implies freedom (of the will). And to exercise freedom (of the will), persons must assume personal responsibility for their actions. To recognize the dignity of human persons is to recognize and respect the fact that they have this (God given) freedom of the will. Day brings these two aspects of personhood together in a way that is especially important. On Day's view, love in action is the means by which human persons commune; and, community is the theater of love; and to fully realize one's personhood entails acknowledging the personhood of other persons and treating them in accord with this; therefore, persons have a responsibility to create and preserve community and by extension a duty to love.

Day's enunciation of personalism is distinctively theological both in that she posits a divine personal creator and insofar as she contends that the ultimate actualization of personhood is realized in relation to God. According to Day, for human persons, being in relationship with God—the ultimate person—represents communion at the highest level. God created a world in which loving—which is always interpersonal—brings human persons into communion with one another and with God. And, for Day, love brings God and human persons together in a special way, as human persons can love God only by loving other human persons. Drawing from several biblical texts, especially 1 John (4.40), and positing what has been referred to as the “anthropological experience of God,” Day intimates that “we can only show our love for God by our love for our fellows.”²⁸

This familiar Christian theory about how human persons relate to God is especially important for our purposes because it shapes Day's normative sociopolitical vision—it means that her political vision is a religious vision. To greater and lesser degrees most religionists' political visions are extensions of their religious visions, as religionists typically assert the necessity of certain social conditions as preconditions to the full expression and exercise of their religiosity. In Day's case, social conditions are important because they structure human interaction and thus determine the possibility of communion with God: persons must live in community in order to love one another and by extension God; only in this way, says Day, can human persons reasonably hope to approximate fulfillment in the temporal order.

Many religionists offer similar understandings of reality and such an understanding is often the stuff that theocratic visions are made of. Day, however, eschews theocratic politics by several means and none was more important than her view that the universal dignity of the human person means that all persons must be treated as though they are free, responsible persons. (We could even say that all persons possess a right to autonomy. This right we might call an “enabling right.”²⁹ It is an enabling right because it is a right that a person must have in order to achieve

self-actualization.) Because, according to Day, love in action must always be a free exercise of the will, persons should not be forced to belong to a community and they certainly cannot be forced to love. Love, then, or at least Day's conception of it, moves her beyond theocratic ethics. Indeed, rather than a source of a theocratic vision, the ideas above, when taken together, inform Day's anarchism.³⁰ Crucially, for Day, freedom and love go together. They stand together against coercion and violence. It is easy to see how such ideas might become a source of anarchism. One only has to give them primacy and insist on never violating the principles that they are thought to entail. Day assumes precisely this posture, as we will soon see.

As we have already seen, Day's religiosity had a rare intensity to it. And to Day, religious faith and religious practice are inseparable. Indeed, to have (a certain) faith is to be committed to (a certain) practice. Day's conversion to Catholicism meant a complete devotion to God, which entailed rigorous spiritual discipline. She bears witness by attempting to embody Christian ideals, in particular love. With Day, religious fidelity and spiritual discipleship involve questing for moral perfection. In many respects, Day's emphasis on moral perfection is simply an extension of her emphasis on (personal) responsibility.

Day's special concern for moral perfection motivates a turn to one of Western Christianity's richest spiritual traditions and thus one of Christianity's most exacting moral regimens, the pre-Reformation radical Gospel tradition and the Catholic counsels of perfection.³¹ The pre-Reformation radical Gospel tradition is so called because its adherents literally interpreted certain passages from the Christian Bible, especially the New Testament, and attempted to make the principles that they derived from their literal interpretations of those passages the basis of their day-to-day activities. The Christian "martyrs" (i.e. Christian witnesses) of ancient Rome are often pointed to as the early members of this tradition and early to late medieval Roman Catholic mystics, ascetics, and monks kept the radical Gospel tradition alive. Indeed, it was a contingent of medieval monks who were inspired by and derived from a literal interpretation of Jesus's comments in the New Testament Gospels about how to "be perfect."

The counsels consist of three vows of perfection: perfect chastity, perfect charity, and obedience (living in community). These three vows were preserved in Catholic practice by Francis of Assisi and the earliest mendicant orders in the first part of the thirteenth century. Historically, within the broader Catholic Church, the counsels, as opposed to precepts, have generally been regarded as supererogatory; whereas precepts are regarded as binding for all members of the Catholic Church, the counsels of perfection are taken to apply only to persons with special vocations. Yet Day maintained—in the face of criticism from other Catholics—that all persons could and ought to seek perfection and strive to adhere to the counsels: "We have been criticized

for holding up the counsels of perfection as norms of human conduct. It is sad that it is always the minimum that is expected of lay people.”³² On Day’s view, only by means of a literal interpretation of biblical texts could one truly comprehend the Gospel. Moreover, she believed that literally interpreting the Sermon on the Mount and attempting to live in accord with the norms that it holds out sets one on the path toward righteousness or perfection: “I know it seems foolish to try to be so Christ-like, but God says we can. Why else His command, ‘Be ye therefore perfect.’”³³

Striving for moral perfection is crucial for Day because, as I have already suggested, human spiritual fulfillment and the realization of the kingdom of God—the beloved community—hinges on human action. And, as we might expect, Day regards the task of becoming a loving person as the most important aspect of the ethical quest for perfection. There are many bases on which one might criticize Day’s insistence that persons seek perfection. Christian critics of this kind of perfectionist ethics have often contended that perfectionists are committed to an unrealistic conception of humanity or social life. Along these lines, ethical stances similar to Day’s are commonly dismissed as naïve or regarded as a sign of naiveté. Yet, in truth, the religious radical who puts love first in the way that Day does has rarely been naïve. In Day’s case, her commitment to social justice and sensitivity to social suffering rendered her too aware of the distance between her ideal and the status quo to be guilty of naiveté.

William D. Miller perfectly captures the tone of Day’s ethical strivings in the title that he bestowed on his wonderful historical study of Day and the Catholic Worker movement—*A Harsh and Dreadful Love*. Rarely do titles radiate so much light on the subject matter. That title was, of course, borrowed from a line in another one of Dostoevsky’s stories from which Day frequently and faithfully quoted. Invoking the memorable words of Fr Zossima (from Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*), Day would often relate: “Love in practice is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams. Active love is labor and fortitude.”³⁴

That Day had no illusions about the struggles that come with endeavoring to live out the Christian love ethic is apparent in nearly all of her descriptions of its demands. According to Day, love constitutes an attitude or disposition in relation to another person that takes intrinsic interest in that person’s well-being. Love is kind. Love is patient. Love is longsuffering. It is thus maximally gentle and peaceful and by extension minimally coercive. In *From Union Square to Rome* she intimates:

Love is the best thing we can know in this life, but it must be sustained by an effort of the will. It must lie still and quiet, dull and smoldering, for periods. It grows through suffering and patience and compassion. We must suffer for those we love, we must endure their trials and their sufferings.³⁵

Day appreciated both the fact that love is harsh and the fact that the quest for perfection could be daunting. She realized that the goal that Christian perfectionists seek after can sometimes seem ethereal. And there are always temptations to give in to despair or to abandon the love ethic as unviable for human persons. She also understood the fact that the problems that we face are grave and intractable: racial hatred, starvation, economic exploitation, war, and so on. As well, the human population is large, the earth immense, and the problems seemingly infinite; thus we might be tempted to make general problems the center of our attention; in that case most causes will appear to be lost causes.

Day resists these temptations by calling for an ethical posture centered on the concrete particular at particular moments. The greatest moralizers share with the great teachers and great coaches a gift for isolating fundamentals in order to make complicated tasks or problems manageable. The prophetic Christian moralist as exhorter is always an instructor. To that end, Day provides instructions to the Christian disciple who is endeavoring to adhere to the love ethic. In other words, Day recommends a way to approach ethical action. Day's response to this problematic establishes her as one of the most important commentators, Christian or otherwise, on ethical striving in the contemporary world.

Breaking ethical action down to the fundamentals, she shifts the focus from the general to the specific and from the abstract to the concrete for practical reasons. By doing this, by personalizing normative ideals, she brings such ideals to a level where "the possible" is made tangible. Ethical life consists of specific acts in accord with particular principles. For an individual person to comply with (i.e. assume responsibility for) particular ethical ideals or principles is always plausible. Day, in light of the facts of modern social life, pushes for the same kind of reclamation of responsibility that Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi advocated for. What we must do, says Day, is stress the implications of irresponsibility and responsibility. Our social criticism must be a call for personal responsibility—individual action amid a collectivity in the midst of a complicated scenario. Further and perhaps most significantly, it is imperative that we appreciate the fact that ethical action is action in time, meaning action at a particular moment. So again, while the quest for perfection is a struggle, Day insists that the focus remain on the individual person and the possibility of perfection. An acknowledgment of the power of human action or particular acts, mediated by divine grace, must be at the heart of our ethics.³⁶ Day thus writes,

One of the greatest evils of the day [even] among those outside of prison is their case of futility. Young people say, What good can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of

love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.³⁷

Day suggests, then, that the challenge to “Be ye perfect” is a challenge for persons to *become* perfect *by* being perfect. Being is becoming in that every particular act is constitutive of the actor, so that action brings to life a new being. Becoming is in actuality being or an effect of being in the sense that one becomes through acts at particular instances in time and space. You *are* what you *did* insofar as what you *did* shapes what you *are doing* and *will do*. One seeks perfection, which suggests an orientation toward the future, by being intently engaged in particular moments—moment by moment—and in particular interpersonal encounters—encounter by encounter. Day insists that persons interested in becoming perfect can do so by seeking to be perfect. To be perfect means adhering to Gospel norms and ideals at particular moments. When someone asks for your coat, at that moment you have been presented with an opportunity to be *and* become perfect. According to Day, you should thus give them your coat along with your shoes. This, she once said, was foolishness in Christ. This is the way to be perfect, the way toward perfection. Day proposes concentration on the minute against the larger background as a means by which to generate hope. Hope is the fruit of doing. So understood, the seemingly impossible demands made by Christian love (commandments) become palpable.

Day’s preoccupation with the particular, perhaps paradoxically, is married to a concern with the ultimate end, communion, which is both occasioned by and indicative of religious-ethical perfection. (Thus, perfection constitutes both the means and the end.) It is in this way that Day’s rigorous religiosity represents an example of moral perfectionism.³⁸ Her ethics can be defined as perfectionist in that she believes that persons have a religious-ethical duty to cultivate a capacity to love and she seeks to promote institutions that establish and maintain the conditions for the maximization of interpersonal loving-kindness. In this sense she is committed to a teleological ethics: she posits a *telos* (i.e. an end) that moral action ought to be calibrated so as to attain.

It is commonly believed that teleological ethics must be consequentialist ethics. Yet this is not the case. Therefore, we must be careful not to assume that Day’s ethics, if perfectionist, must also be consequentialist. While value maximizing ethical orientations can be consequentialist, it is not necessary for them to be so. Perfectionist moral theories, which are teleological, can include a proposition for moral agents to seek some end or *telos*, without being consequentialist, as moral perfectionists do not have to define the rightness of moral acts merely in virtue of the consequences of the acts, as do act-utilitarian moral theorists, for instance.

In addition to the above, it is crucial to appreciate that embracing a brand of teleological ethics does not commit one, on the basis of principle, to rejecting deontological commitments, where deontology is taken to include categorical imperatives that entail acting in accord with some moral principle, rule, or duty (the right) independent of consequences (for the good).

On my view, perfectionism is compatible with both deontological and consequentialist ethics. Consistent with this, perhaps we might say that Day is committed to a version of perfectionist deontological ethics or deontological perfectionism. Importantly, Day commends the promotion of love and institutions that facilitate the development of personhood, yet her interrelated conceptions of love and personhood presuppose certain categorical imperatives or unconditional duties.³⁹ For example, as will be clear shortly, Day suggests that a consistent Christian conception of the human person, as explicated in terms of personalism, entails an absolute prohibition against coercion, since, according to her, love and coercion are incompatible. So Day's brand of moral perfectionism entails striving for greater levels of loving-kindness and the promotion of community. Day evaluates social practices and institutions based upon the degree to which they promote community and loving-kindness among persons. Institutions must encourage personal responsibility and this responsibility implies resistance to institutions and practices that impede the expression of love.

Significantly, for Day and other Catholic Workers, the assuming of personal responsibility is nearly always equated with radical social action that is designated with the terms revolution or revolutionary. Consistent with this, she relates that taking personal responsibility means "beginning with oneself, starting here and now, not waiting for someone else to start the revolution."⁴⁰ For Day, recognition of one's essential nature—a person created by a personal loving God and meant for communion—prepares one for responsible action and this responsible action makes it possible to establish and realize the kingdom of God. In her words, "the new social order as it could be would be if all men loved God and loved their brothers because they are all sons of God!"⁴¹ So Day issues a Christian-inspired prophetic call: Love God and your neighbor. Do it now. That's the beginning and the end of the revolution.

This can actually be stated in Thoreauvian or Transcendentalist terms: Day posits self-reform (or moral reform of the self) as tantamount to social reform. Since Day seldom invoked Thoreau or any other nineteenth-century American activists, for that matter, it is difficult to say for certain the degree to which persons such as Thoreau or William Lloyd Garrison directly influenced her. Nonetheless, Day's ethics share an unmistakable and remarkable affinity with Thoreau and several other nineteenth-century

religious radicals. Mel Piehl suggests this much in his wonderful study on Day and the Catholic Worker movement. According to Piehl, the Catholic Worker's "social activism, egalitarianism, and concern for individual liberty . . . revealed its American provenance," so that at times "the movement resembled nothing so much as a Catholic version of the American tradition of perfectionist utopianism and religious revivalism that went back to the early nineteenth century and before."⁴²

One dimension of moral perfectionism that I have endeavored to highlight in this section is the emphasis that Day, as a perfectionist, places on moral agency. It is probably this emphasis on moral agency and its revolutionary implications that most clearly connects Day with nineteenth-century religious radicals. Importantly, Day and Thoreau emphasize moral perfection and responsibility in a way that leads them to adopt similar attitudes toward political authority. In a word, they value moral freedom or moral autonomy so much so that they are led to reject as illegitimate most forms of political organization. As I argued in Chapter 1, Thoreau adopts an attitude toward authority and the territorial state that is best described as anarchist.

I have thus far bracketed the question of precisely how Day's religious commitments connect with anarchism. This I have done in order to keep our attention focused on her religiosity. But even while so far in this chapter I have concentrated on Day's religiosity, for the most part, I have considered only the aspects of her religious beliefs that I regard as relevant to her political philosophy or at least our consideration of her anarchism. In many respects, the crucial parts of Day's anarchism have already been presented in that, as Mark and Louise Zwick note, Day's "nonviolent anarchism is the assumption of personal responsibility and love in a world of objects and impersonal structures."⁴³ In the following sections I will break down how this is so.

III

By around 1930, Day had already embraced an anarchistic ethic. Yet newly converted, and still trying to get her bearings in her new world, she had yet to settle into a community or social organization. From 1929 through 1932 she spent time between New York City and Mexico City, writing occasional editorial and news pieces for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the ecumenical pacifist organization, and *Commonweal*, a leading liberal Catholic weekly. Day's stint with *Commonweal* proved surprisingly pivotal to her later career as a lay Catholic activist. *Commonweal*'s editor George N. Shuster represented what we might call a well-connected Catholic. As an editor of a leading Catholic paper, his contacts included American Catholics from coast-to-coast and of all walks life. It is to George Shuster that the world owes Dorothy

Day's friendship and collaboration with Peter Maurin, a French Catholic itinerant ascetic. Shuster had encouraged Maurin to be in touch with Day, as they—Day and Maurin—“thought alike.”⁴⁴ Born in France in 1877, Maurin was a lay Catholic amateur social philosopher who believed in the literalness of the Christian Bible no less than Day. Maurin and Day met in 1932 and would launch the Catholic Worker movement a year later.

The first issue of the *Catholic Worker* appeared in 1933. It was May Day and the Great Depression showed few signs of abating. Selling papers for a penny per copy, Day had found a way to continue her vocation as a writer and satisfy a longing to be involved in a spiritually inclined, politically radical project. She and Maurin had envisioned a paper that would provide a Catholic (religious) alternative to the *Daily Worker*, the leading American socialist paper of the period. Up to that point there had been no radical paper targeting America's growing Catholic population. Through the *Catholic Worker*, Day and Maurin hoped to spread the Gospel of the Church; in particular, they would provide commentary on Catholic social teaching, as indicated in the papal social encyclicals, in order to advocate for workers and publicize distinctively Catholic proposals as to how to deal with the crisis of modernity—economic depression and oppression, statist repression, militarism, racism, spiritual decadence.

The paper's name signaled at once a leftist orientation and a possible conservative one. In truth, the Catholic Worker movement combined traditionalism and radicalism that defied categorization and baffled critics on both the left and right. But it was mostly persons who hoped that, despite the name, the paper would take a moderate approach who would be disappointed again and again during the years that followed the *Catholic Worker*'s emergence. Indeed, Mel Piehl is correct to call the Catholic Worker movement “the first major expression of radical social criticism in American Catholicism.”⁴⁵

Catholic Workers were committed to anarchist and pacifist criticism of the social order and particularly criticism of the modern social order from a Roman Catholic Christian perspective. From 1933 through the 1970s, Day creatively connected orthodox Catholic teaching with radical leftist ideas, and built a case for strong anarchism on the basis of her conception of love and the personal responsibility that it entails, such that, in general, her criticisms of the modern social order, particularly the inherently coercive practices of the centralized territorial state and capitalistic materialism, flow directly from her normative conception of love.

IV

Dorothy Day was neither a political scientist nor a social theorist. And it would be going too far to assert that she provided a systematic analysis

of the modern social order. Nonetheless, a careful survey of Day's work does yield a basic theoretical or descriptive account and criticism of the modern social order that takes as its primary objects the territorial state or states and the capitalist economy or economies. Day criticizes the territorial state for its operational mode (centralized, impersonal, and underinclusive procedure), its effects on social life (it undermines mutual aid and personal responsibility), and for the ends (protection of capital) that it seeks. She criticizes capitalist practices for being excessively materialistic, exploitative, and oppressive.

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Day's anarchism is the fact that it is in part motivated by her particular criticisms of the centralized character of the modern territorial state. It is widely accepted among contemporary social theorists that the modern territorial state is a centralized bureaucratic organization. The *modern territorial* state is differentiated from other kinds of political organization based on the fact that a modern territorial state divides earth into political geographic units with borders, regulates the movement of human bodies across earth, and asserts authority to regulate, with violence if necessary, the behavior of persons, that is, political subjects, who occupy the terrain over which a given state claims as its territory. Modern territorial states are notable as well for the fact that they are comprised of bureaucratic offices, departments, and agencies charged with regulating an array of social practices and activities.

In the context of the United States, since the mid-nineteenth century, the American state has steadily increased in size and scope. But the most exponential growth, over the shortest span of time, came arguably during the period spanning the mid-1930s with the emergence of New Deal social security and welfare programs, through the establishment of clandestine national security agencies during the Cold War, and the implementation of racial justice and urban reconstruction programs during the Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon presidencies of the 1960s.

By the latter part of the twentieth century, most if not all territorial states, including the American state, had begun attempting to regulate nearly every aspect of human life. In the American context, the modern American territorial state has grown exponentially for reasons that have to do with the competing ideologies proffered by left and right wing liberal actors respectively. Since the turn of the twentieth century, liberal Democrats have tended to contend that Americans need a strong centralized (federal-level) state in order to protect the economic interests of the poor, working, and middle classes; they propose a welfare state. Liberal Republicans have tended to contend that the state is needed for protection from social deviants and foreign aggressors; they propose a military state. No matter the causal factors, it might be said that Americans reside in a national security social welfare state.

Day's normative political commitments led her to regard this unfolding of the modern territorial state and the expansion of federal governmental power and authority as a horrifying development. To be sure, the twentieth century hosted a large cast of critics of the welfare state; some couched vicious racism in terms of antigovernment rhetoric that endures one decade into the twenty-first century; others genuinely objected to social welfare provisions on the basis of free-market oriented classical liberalism. Therefore, we understand little of import about Day simply by knowing that she found the welfare state problematic. It is her reasoning that is of the essence.

In general, Day identifies two problems with the territorial state that are important to discuss. First, the territorial state, as it endeavors to monitor and regulate human behavior, has a tendency to "encroach" on almost all areas of social life, negatively impacting the social institutions and practices that are necessary for flourishing communities. Second, as a hierarchical centralized (bureaucratic) political decision-making entity, the territorial state employs coercion in order to enforce its decisions. On one level, these two objections are merely two ways of saying the same thing: the territorial state does not respect and thus does not promote personal responsibility and the moral freedom or autonomy that responsibility implies.

Of the criticisms of the state that Day presents, the one that she mentions most often is the fact that territorial state social welfare initiatives have usurped local and individual aid initiatives. According to Day, the rise of the welfare state, in response to social dislocations caused by unjust inequalities resulting from technological innovations and population increases, population increases that themselves led to extensive unemployment and underemployment, undermined community. The rise of the welfare state undermined community by displacing local and community-based voluntary and mutual aid societies, replacing them with centralized and so impersonal bureaucratic agencies, which has the ongoing effect of engendering persons' increased reliance or dependence on the territorial state.

So, according to Day, territorial state intervention, to meet authentic needs in the face of a depressed economy during the 1930s, only exacerbated and compounded existing social problems. For, the amplification of state power(s), in order to meet welfare needs during one crisis, always becomes a reason for future interventions; and these periodic interventions entail a steady increase of territorial state powers and functions that serves to convince persons that it is essential for the territorial state to intervene; this in turn spawns among persons a declining sense of mutual responsibility (for one another as members of the Mystical Body of Christ), which is problematic, for Day, in that, as we saw in our reflection on the idea of the Mystical Body of Christ and personalism, self-actualization is predicated on assuming personal responsibility and in recognizing the unity of humanity. In the face of these developments, Day cries, "It is strange and terrifying business, this all-encroaching state, when it interferes to such a degree in

the personal practice of works of mercy.”⁴⁶ By interfering with the personal practice of works of mercy, the territorial state impedes persons’ efforts to put love in practice, so that the territorial state undermines the ability of persons to live in accord with the dictates of the Sermon on the Mount.

Day’s postconversion discipleship can be understood, at least in part, as an effort to warn others of the dangers of giving over to the territorial state the responsibility to care for one another. As do most prophetic social critics, she appeals first to those who profess to care: “If every family that professed to follow scriptural teaching whether Jew, Protestant, or Catholic,” would put love in practice, “there would be no need for huge institutions. . . . Responsibility must return to the person with a hospice and a center for mutual aid, to the group, to the family, to the individual.”⁴⁷ Huge institutions tend to deflate our sense of responsibility, even though most people get the sense that many such organizations—nursing homes, psychiatric wards, orphanages, prisons—are ineffective precisely because they are impersonal. Day complains repeatedly that “the system is all too big, too ponderous, too unwieldy.”⁴⁸

Against this backdrop, she appeals to decentralization, a central norm in her political thought. “Everything,” pleads Day, “needs to be decentralized into smaller institutions.”⁴⁹ On Day’s view, the principal way to reestablish responsible modes of being would be to break things “down into smaller units that are workable according to man’s nature.”⁵⁰ Breaking things down into smaller units would awaken persons to their mutual dependency, and by extension underscore the importance of persons acting responsibly. Ultimately, a move away from centralized bureaucratic institutions, Day says, would spell the “beginning of an order in which men could be conscious of their dignity and responsibility.”⁵¹ Day and other Catholic Workers advocate “a personalism which takes on ourselves responsibility for changing conditions to the extent that we are able to do so.”⁵² It is with this interest in taking responsibility that Catholic Workers established houses of hospitality, or Catholic Worker houses. These houses of hospitality provided a space where “the works of mercy could be practiced to combat the taking over by the state of all those services which could be built around mutual aid.” The houses of hospitality represent an effort to “take care of those in need rather than turn them over to the impersonal ‘charity’ of the State.”⁵³

From Proudhon, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy to George Woodcock and Paul Goodman, most anarchists have given primacy to the fact of universal human dignity and have stressed the indispensability of persons recognizing that they are responsible for and dependent on other persons. Indeed, it is Proudhon and Kropotkin who established mutual aid as a vital term in the anarchist pool of ideals. Day’s special contribution to anarchism is the way in which she managed to so articulately relate the anarchist ideal to an ethic of compassion and care. Few examples could better convey Day’s

penchant for melding anarchism with this ethic than her subtle effort to define anarchism in her piece "The Scandal of the Works of Mercy." Day writes, "Anarchists that we are, we want to decentralize everything and delegate to smaller bodies and groups what can be done far more humanely and responsibly through mutual aid."⁵⁴

Day's explication of anarchism in terms of humaneness, responsibility, and mutuality was intended to instruct through irony. During the 1930s and 1940s, anarchists were widely depicted as nihilistic, reckless purveyors of violence. It is against this backdrop that we must understand Day's suggestion that an anarchist ethic is motivated by compassion, an interest in personal responsibility, and a concern with how institutional arrangements affect human personality and sociality. Her point is that, rather than it being anarchists who are irresponsible or callous, it is actually the territorial state's agents and agencies—large and hierarchical entities—that are inhumane, impersonal, and destructively irresponsible. According to Day, it is precisely for these reasons that anarchists reject the territorial state and hope to establish a social order based on mutual aid.

Day's objection to the existence of the territorial state on the basis of its undermining of mutual aid and personal responsibility differs from Proudhon and Kropotkin, of course, in that Day's objection is an extension of her Roman Catholic commitments. Personalist ideas, the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, and moral perfectionism are implicit in Day's commendation of decentralized institutionalized practices. That Day construes the value of decentralization in the way that she does evinces the importance of her conceptions of God, the human person, love, and community for her normative political vision, revealing the special way in which Day's anarchism is religious or has religious values as its source.

Now, in truth, it is quite complicated to say precisely how certain aspects of Day's anarchism relate to her Catholicism and vice versa. To be sure, Day often explicitly pointed to the compatibility of her anarchist emphasis on decentralization with Catholic social teaching. For example, she often invoked the Catholic doctrine of subsidiarity, an idea that proved particularly amenable to anarchist interpretation, so as to support her decentralist project. Yet Day's invocation of the doctrine of subsidiarity actually puts on display both how intertwined Day's Catholicism was with her anarchism and how complicated it is to tell the one from the other.

The Catholic doctrine of subsidiarity emerged from interpretations of ideas about the proper relationship between government and nongovernmental social institutions presented in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. The clearest statement of the idea was probably presented by Pope Pius XI, who maintained that, "It is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and/or industry."⁵⁵ Although the principle of subsidiarity as

presented in Pius XI's encyclical is ostensibly compatible with an anarchist position, Catholic popes who have invoked the doctrine have hardly meant to commend anarchism *per se* and few Catholics who endorse the principle of subsidiarity take it as a path to anarchism. This includes French personalists Mounier and Maritain, who both endorsed a version of the principle of subsidiarity yet explicitly rejected anarchism. It also includes many members of the 1930s "Catholic consensus" who gave their wholehearted support to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies with the idea that they were being faithful to the spirit of Pope Pius XI's encyclical in which the idea of subsidiarity is most clearly delineated. Since most Catholic social thinkers maintain or assume that the territorial state is necessary for the procurement of at least some goods, the doctrine of subsidiarity is typically understood as a principle specifying the proper scope of the territorial state's authority.

Day pushed the doctrine of subsidiarity to its limit. She does this in at least two ways. First, Day refrains from specifying which responsibilities might be delegated upward, as she had a profound faith in the capacity of individual persons to cooperatively manage the most vital aspects of social life without assistance from above. In addition, and related, Day maintained, on moral grounds, that individual persons must come to mutual agreement about which organization(s) or at what level within an organization important decisions will be made or which agency will fulfill certain functions.⁵⁶

This concern about decision-making processes points to and connects with the second aspect of Day's criticism of the centralized bureaucratic character of the modern territorial state that I alluded to above. While the above consideration of her criticism of centralization might give the impression that Day rejects the territorial state simply because it fails to promote mutual aid, love in action, or personal responsibility, in actuality Day objects to the territorial state's exercise of power and assertion of authority on a more basic level than that. Deeming its operational mode inherently problematic, she rejects the legitimacy of the territorial state on the basis of its centralized and so necessarily underinclusive and impersonal decision-making process or procedure. To understand exactly how Day arrives at this position, it is essential to appreciate (1) how Day's conception of love relates to coercion and (2) her assumptions about the centrality of coercion to the practices of the territorial state.

According to Day, because territorial states—including representational democracies—are centralized bureaucratic organizations, they by definition have hierarchical and exclusive decision-making processes, which locate authority to decide with a select group of persons.⁵⁷ Furthermore, in political philosophical terms, we can say that territorial state political officials are granted authority, understood as a right, to coerce; the right to coerce in practice amounts to a right to force persons to perform or refrain from performing certain acts.⁵⁸ Since modern territorial states do not govern or rule with the consent of the governed, as a general matter, territorial

state officials assert authority over persons who have not consented to the authority of the state. Day concludes in the light of this that in practice, through the territorial state, a segment of society forces its will on another segment of society. (Again, even in democratic territorial states, the decision-making process is exclusive, so that some persons can be said to be ruled by others.) This description is important insofar as the repudiation of coercion is a key part of Day's normative political philosophy.

As I indicated earlier, Day's Christian-inspired conception of the person is incompatible with theocratic politics. (This is because of Day's conception of love and love's centrality to Day's idea about how one fully expresses personhood.) By noting how Day's conception of love precludes a theocratic vision, I meant to signal the fact that when carried into the political domain, Day's conception of the person and idea of love have significant political philosophical implications. To reiterate, Day's idea of the universal dignity of the human person, inspired by her interpretation of the Gospel and a central component of her personalism, entails an absolute rejection of coercion, so that Day's ideal society—the beloved community—can reasonably be described as a society without coercion.⁵⁹

Coercion, for Day, especially in the sense that is relevant to political philosophy, always operates on the basis of the threat of violence. Violence in this sense is the act of subjecting a person to physical—and the psyche is undoubtedly physical—harm or the threat of such harm in order to force a person to perform some act or set of acts that a given person would not perform but for the fact of the inflicted harm or violent threat. To be sure, coercion and violence are terms that can be defined more or less broadly and how they are defined undoubtedly shapes whether or not it is possible in practice to avoid coercive or violent action. And like most contemporary proponents of nonviolence, Day was (1) conscious of the fact that there are varying degrees of coercion and violence and (2) aware of the implications of how we define coercion and violence. Day insisted that we refrain from using the fact that in practice it is difficult to realize a given ideal as a reason to outright discount it. In addition, Day, following other nonviolent theorists, maintained that persons committed to the principle of nonviolence must always refrain from intentional killing and always use the least harmful, nonlethal means available in order to accomplish a given just end. Most people recognize that it makes a difference whether we use guns or speech to make our points. So, although persuasive speech—as opposed to unpersuasive speech—and direct action methods do perhaps have a coercive element, they most definitely do not have the same effect as whips, electricity, clubs, or bullets, and thus constitute a categorically different kind of coercion, if we want to classify nonviolent direct action as coercion at all.

Two interconnected concerns ground Day's position on coercion. First, according to Day, coercion, or the act of coercing, is antithetical to love

as action, so that one cannot engage in an act of coercion and at the same time perform an act of love. Therefore, the coercer and coerced are both diminished by the coercive encounter. Finally, Day maintains that to be coerced is to be denied moral freedom or autonomy, which is precisely why Day maintains that Christian love precludes recourse to coercion.⁶⁰

Day's clearest articulation of this point comes in a passage in which she defines pacifism and anarchism in terms of love, and suggests that love entails a refusal to coerce or exercise authority over other persons. Day relates, "Pacifism and anarchism, when you get down to it, mean that we try always to love, rather than coerce, 'to be what we want the other fellow to be,' to have no authority over others, to begin with that microcosm man, or rather, with ourselves." This concise statement sums up Day's entire political philosophy. Pacifism and anarchism both entail a commitment to love; and love, as an ethical norm, prohibits coercion. Anarchism and pacifism, then, are at least superficially identical, on Day's view, as they stand for a repudiation of coercive means to ends, a refusal to wield "authority over" others. Ultimately, Day's normative conception of love is combined with her description of the territorial state and expressed in the form of a syllogism: coercion is wrong; the territorial state coerces; thus persons (committed to avoiding wrongful action) must not support or cooperate with the territorial state.

It is vital to take careful note of the grounds on which Day builds her case for anarchism. She bases her anarchism on a principle of nonviolence. Further, notice that an idea of moral autonomy or freedom is inherent in the principle of nonviolence as Day explicates it. This is significant because it points to an unmistakable yet underappreciated dimension of Day's ethics: Day embraces a strand of voluntarism.⁶¹ Voluntarism, of course, is a theory about the essential role of voluntary action in moral and social life. Implicit in the conception of voluntarism that is important for political philosophy is an idea about the place of coercion in social and political life. Social critics and theorists often juxtapose coercion and voluntariness of action. An excellent example of how coercion and voluntary action are often mutually defined is presented in the work of medieval Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas, probably the most important Roman Catholic thinker for the largest number of Roman Catholics in the twentieth century (including French personalists).

In his *Summa*, Aquinas asserts that "just as it is impossible for a thing to be at the same time violent and natural, so it is impossible for a thing to be absolutely coerced or violent, and voluntary."⁶² Here, Aquinas presents what has probably become the standard Catholic understanding of the nature of moral autonomy or freedom: voluntary action and coerced acts are mutually exclusive.⁶³ Day more or less accepts this understanding of the concepts in question.⁶⁴ Yet formal definitions of principles seldom explain the whole of a given normative political philosophical position, and merely accepting

Aquinas' definition of voluntary action makes one neither a voluntarist nor an anarchist. So, to be clear, the point here is not that Aquinas commended voluntarism or opened up a pathway toward anarchism. Instead, the fact that Aquinas has spelled out a conception of voluntary action that has been developed in strikingly different ways highlights the distinctiveness of Day's Catholicism.

In ethics, what counts most is the priority, place, or weight that is given (or not given) to this or that value or principle. To that end, in order for Aquinas' understanding of voluntary action to become a basis for voluntarism as such and by extension anarchism, one must privilege or give priority to voluntary action or moral autonomy. Day, of course, does precisely this, which distinguishes her from Aquinas and others. Again, Day claims that coercion is *absolutely* prohibited (by love) and she concomitantly attributes absolute value to moral autonomy or voluntary action. In a word, Day stresses the importance of moral autonomy or voluntary action to the point that it becomes a source of anarchism.

Voluntarism as I am using the term should probably be qualified with the term *political* so as to make clear the fact that voluntarism in the sense that I am employing it is not a doctrine about the metaphysics of the will per se. *Political* voluntarism, to repeat, is a claim about the place of consent and so coercion in the sociopolitical sphere. And, I assume that in the fullest sense, (voluntary) consent and coercion are mutually exclusive. Indeed, voluntary consent renders coercion superfluous and effectively employed coercive means makes it impossible to realize voluntary consent in a particular case. For Day, and many other anarchists, it is imperative that persons, especially adults, relate and associate on the basis of mutual consent. Specifically, persons, as moral beings or agents, should not be coerced into belonging to any particular organization. Association should be voluntary. In particular, participation in or contribution to the practices of political organizations or governments should be voluntary. Stated negatively, one does not have a moral obligation or moral duty to participate in practices that one does not regard as morally appropriate or valuable to society for practical or principled reasons. And one certainly does not have a moral obligation to defer to commands of other persons. This principle registers a respect for the dignity of the person and protects moral autonomy.

Now, clearly this means that in some cases persons will refuse to participate in practices that many or perhaps even most other persons regard as essential to the common good. In such cases, the persons who *do* participate in or regard the given practices as valuable might accuse the "resisters" of failing to discharge a moral duty or fulfill a moral obligation. Anarchists such as Day can in some instances agree with this kind of accusation, assessment, or judgment. Yet what Day cannot do, given her brand of anarchism, is suggest that the resisters be violently forced to participate in or contribute to the practices in question. To employ violence or coercion in this way would be

to violate the moral autonomy of the resisters, which would mean violating a fundamental component of Day's anarchism. In light of the above, I would contend that Day bestows a value on voluntary participation that is constitutive of political voluntarism.

Let me try to clarify this matter about what gives rise to political voluntarism with a hypothetical case. Let us grant that coercion is only necessary, as a practical matter, to the degree that a given person, person 1, wants some other person, person 2, to perform (or not perform) some act that person 2 does not in fact want to perform. Say that there are two persons—person 1 and person 2—who find themselves more or less in this situation. Person 1 can respond in multiple ways. I will note four. Person 1 might (A) simply accept and respect person 2's preference and nonperformance of the act in question; (B) offer an argument or range of (persuasive) reasons, exclusive of the threat of force, for action in accord with the command or request; (C) physically harm or threaten to physically harm person 2 or an associate of person 2, if person 2 refuses to perform the said act; or in certain cases (D) employ physical force in order to force person 2 to perform the given act. For the purposes of political voluntarism, it is scenarios C and D that are of concern in that in those cases a coercive factor is introduced.

So what exactly is the issue between nonviolent anarchists such as Day and persons who reject anarchism or political voluntarism? In short, it is the question as to whether any person or persons, particularly persons organized into a political unit, ever have a veritable moral reason to *physically* force other persons to perform any act or acts that such persons, for moral reasons, do not want to perform. Some say that force is sometimes morally appropriate, both in intra-group and out-group relations. Day, of course, embraces a moral principle that entails the absolute prohibition of options C and D. Persons, including persons organized as political entities, never have a right to use force. In this way, Day universalizes the Anabaptist claim that Christians do not have "a right to the sword." Persons (and certainly Christian persons), if they are to act in accord with right/love, must operate strictly on the basis of persuasion and mutual consent. Thus person 1 does not possess a right to force performance or violently punish nonperformance. In the above scenario, from Day's perspective, if person 1 chooses option C or D, then person 1 is morally wrong in that person 1 has failed to respect the moral autonomy of person 2 (the resister). Again, Day rules out coercion because she believes that it is antithetical to the dictates of Christian love and the idea of moral autonomy that it implies.

Notice that nothing that I have said about Day's commitments bears on whether she can maintain that persons have moral obligations or duties outside the context of consensual or voluntary relationships. Rather, persons are free to sin, as Christians often put it. Persons who find the behavior of others problematic must give special concern to nonviolent ways to encourage cooperation. And, to be sure, Day conceded that it is difficult to even imagine

how a society could or would operate on the basis of consent and without coercion. But she maintained that this must remain the ideal guiding our actions and our deliberations about how to best shape our relations. We should attempt in practice to make certain that all of our associations are as voluntary as is possible. For Day, this was a religious duty.

Day's commitment to anarchism and the important role that voluntarism plays in her ethics can be gleaned from the following:

The word anarchist is deliberately and repeatedly used in order to awaken our readers to the necessity of combating the "all-encroaching state," as our Bishops have termed it, and to shock serious students in to looking into the possibility of another society, an order made up of associations, guilds, unions, communes, voluntary associations of men, on regional instead of national lines, where there is a possibility of liberty and responsibility for all men.⁶⁵

On the basis of the value that she attributes to liberty and responsibility, Day encourages persons to seek alternatives to the territorial state and to "look into the possibility" of a social order comprised of "voluntary associations." And to voluntarily associate is, of course, to associate by consent. Importantly, voluntary associations should be decentralized social organizations, as decentralized organizations are thought to facilitate participation thereby eliminating (in theory yet perhaps only minimizing in practice) the necessity of employing coercive means to regulate behavior. Decentralization, then, is an essential value for Day because she posits a decentralized social order as one in which love—and the principles or ideals that it implies (nonviolence and moral autonomy or personal responsibility)—will be most effectively promoted and protected.

Since Day's conception of love, with its concomitant idea of moral freedom or autonomy, leads her to embrace a strand of voluntarism, it should be evident that her ethics share an affinity with the American revolutionaries and radicals that I discussed in Chapter 1. Following Staughton Lynd, I noted that there has been a tendency among American revolutionaries and radicals to assert moral freedom as the primary political philosophical value and to conclude that such a political philosophy requires establishing a society comprised of voluntary associations. There are compelling reasons to regard Day as a full-fledged member of this group of American revolutionaries or radicals. That a Roman Catholic Christian can be said to belong to this tradition might have seemed odd or doubtful to the nineteenth-century Unitarian reformers who found even Congregationalism stultifying and too amenable to various forms of (nonvoluntarist) authoritarian organization.

Yet, the fact that a Roman Catholic can belong to this tradition should hardly surprise us, at least if we recognize and appreciate the way in which what we refer to as the Protestant Reformation was in actuality a Roman

Catholic affair. It should also not surprise us if we keep in mind the degree to which what we call modernity, particular in relation to the principles of toleration and consent, has profoundly transformed European and American institutions, the Roman Catholic Church included, and the way that Catholic clerics and laypersons understand the role of authority and the individual in social life. Day joined a Catholic Church quite different from the Church in its earlier emanations. In particular, the Church's ecclesiastical hierarchy in Day's time differed remarkably from the pre-Reformation period. The Church's move toward tolerance began in the nineteenth century with the abolition of the Church's claim to temporal authority or power, that is, secular political authority, was formalized with the 1849 Constitution of the Roman Republic, and culminated with the Lateran Treaty of 1929, just two years after Day's conversion. With the signing of that treaty, the Roman Catholic Church ceased to be a state-supported religion in Italy, and assumed a less formal political role in society.

By the 1930s, the Catholic Church had repudiated coerced belief and the employment of violent means to punish sin or heresy. The Church had become a voluntary association, in the sense that, as a practical matter, individual persons could refuse to join or decide to leave the Church and church authorities would only have persuasive speech as recourse against a person's decision about church affiliation. In the light of this, Day could assert that there is "tremendous freedom . . . in the Church, a freedom most cradle Catholics do not seem to know they possess. They do know that a man is free to be a Democrat or a Republican, but they do not know that he is also free to be a philosophical anarchist by conviction."⁶⁶

Day regarded this freedom as a license for her preference for voluntary associations and the fact that she commends voluntary associations is pertinent to the question of how to classify the variety of anarchism that she espouses, as it reveals that she does not reject all forms of political organization *per se*. To be sure, one might define the *political* so that the idea of coercion and violence are a necessary part of it. In that case, we would have to say that Day rejects *political* organization as such. While many theorists, including some anarchists, define the political in precisely these terms, doing so makes it difficult to adequately understand the normative commitments of proponents of nonviolent anarchism. That is, it obscures the character of the normative political philosophy of persons such as Day. In particular, it makes it difficult to appreciate that anarchism is often presented as a form of political organization (or government). On my view, at least in theory, coercion and violence are not necessary characteristics of politics or political organization.

Indeed, as with Thoreau, Day's anarchism can be interpreted so that she is understood as arguing that a particular form of political organization (or government)—that is, anarchy—is preferable to other forms of political organization.⁶⁷ In particular, Day proposes an anarchist order, with voluntary associations, as an order that ought to replace the (inherently violent and

coercive) representative democratic order because voluntary associations make "liberty and responsibility" possible, and liberty and responsibility are preconditions to the actualization of personhood and the realization of community among persons and between humanity and God. According to Day, an anarchist social order provides a way to formally register respect for human dignity as she understood it. Therefore, we can say that, for Day, only political organizations or institutions that operate on the basis of explicit universal consent *and* replace coercion/violence with cooperation and persuasion can be morally legitimate.

It should be clear why Day contends that representative or constitutional democracy is inconsistent with the idea of moral autonomy that she embraces. As I noted in the introduction, only consensus or unanimous direct democracy, where all laws governing a given society were consented to by each person subject to those laws, is compatible with the idea of moral autonomy that most anarchists present, Day included. Any other political authority lacks legitimacy from the perspective of persons committed to the idea of moral autonomy (again, as I have presented it). What this reveals is the way in which Day, as an anarchist, regards questions of legitimacy as inseparable from questions of justice. Importantly, the fact that territorial states are illegitimate means that they are also unjust, insofar as they employ violent and coercive means in order to force persons to perform certain acts. And by extension, the fact that territorial states lack legitimate authority means that persons are under no moral obligation to comply with their laws and commands. We could even say, then, that Day's anarchism *is* a *form* of government or at least a political philosophical norm that restricts the means (procedure) through which an entity can govern, that is, make decisions of a political nature.

The above analysis brings to the fore why or how it is helpful to differentiate between anarchists who reject government as such and those who contend that some form of government might be morally acceptable. As I indicated in the "Introduction," some anarchists maintain that all promise making is morally prohibited and thus rule out *all* types of political organization. Day does not take this track. In fact, she regarded the practice of promising and contracting as vital to the perpetuation of certain voluntary associations and regarded voluntary associations as central to a flourishing communal life. In consequence, Day belongs to the collection of anarchists who have proposed replacing one sociopolitical form with another, not dispensing with political organization per se.⁶⁸

V

So far I have concentrated mostly on Day's claim that the centralized and coercive character of the modern territorial state generates practices

that implicitly and explicitly violate human dignity or aspects of human personhood. But Day rejects the authority and legitimacy of the modern territorial state on multiple distinct yet connected grounds and so, if we are to adequately understand Day's anarchism, we must give attention to (1) Day's theory about how the territorial state is related to capitalistic economic practices and the role of violence in the capitalistic social order and (2) her constructive proposals about how persons should attempt to move beyond the territorial state and the capitalistic economic order. The following analysis of Day's criticisms of capitalism will lay the ground for a consideration of her positive prescriptions and reveal that Day advocates for the abolition of the state via nonviolent means, namely through the creation of decentralized cooperatives and communes, and is therefore best classified as a *strong* anarchist, one who rejects the idea that there are general political obligations and additionally maintains that individual persons have a moral duty to oppose and actively seek alternatives to the territorial state.

Day is unrelenting in her criticisms of capitalist economies. Her principal criticism of capitalist economic practices is directed at the way in which such practices involve exploiting persons qua workers and transforming persons qua employees into instruments employed by employers merely as a means to financial gain. Day tellingly follows socialists and communists: workers are paid slave wages and thus are little more than slaves. For Day, chattel slavery and wage slavery are merely points on a continuum. Moreover, with the division of labor and the emergence of modern means of production, and the ownership of the means of production by a minority class of persons, most persons are given stultifying work, and forced to perform dehumanizing tasks, under dehumanizing conditions. In addition, capitalist economies (1) create economic crises marked by extreme deprivation and (2) establish and sustain unjust wealth inequalities, particularly in terms of access to land. This gives rise to an economic system revolving around usury and to a situation in which a multitude of persons are slaves of debt.⁶⁹

But that is not all. Day also complains that capitalist economies, with the advent of the advertising industry, attempt to generate superfluous needs that in turn distort human desire in a way that undermines personality or persons' psychological states, and undermines community. In *Loaves and Fishes*, Day observes that "newspapers, radio, television, and battalions of advertising men (woe to that generation) deliberately stimulate our desires, the satisfaction of which so often means the deterioration of the family."⁷⁰ As a general matter, according to Day, capitalism creates conditions under which persons are unfulfilled and insecure, thus leading to anxiety, interpersonal violence, pervasive thievery, vicious competition, and other ills. Life in capitalist societies has been and is diminished, especially from a Christian spiritual perspective. Indeed, capitalism (along with the emergence of the territorial state) has created a spiritual crisis by denying the primacy of the spiritual.

The capitalist's logic, taken to its (fullest logical) conclusion, can be understood as the assertion of material possession(s) as an end in itself. We might say that instead of positing possession of material goods as an ultimate end, the capitalist moralist (i.e. capitalist economist) posits pleasure as the chief end, and wealth as a means to that end. In either case, from Day's vantage, capitalism is underwritten by or underwrites a materialist perspective, thus producing materialistic subjectivities. So, Day rejects capitalist practices, on the basis of the features that I have enumerated, because these practices constitute the denial of the dignity of the human person and represent idolatry insofar as the capitalist worldview is materialistic.

These criticisms of capitalist economic practices connect with Day's political commitments in that, according to Day, capitalism's sustenance is contingent on the existence of the modern territorial state. A consequence of the exclusiveness of the territorial state's decision-making process and its centralized power structure is that the powers that the territorial state makes available to certain classes of people are employed in a way that serves narrow (class) interests to the detriment of the persons excluded from power. In practice, all territorial states are controlled by wealthy and technical elites (technocrats) who are able to collectively impose their will(s) on the majority of persons, especially the poor, through the state apparatus. And the territorial state's existence has facilitated the unequal distribution of natural resources, including land, and the state protects the property of the dominant class through its legal regime, that is, its violent or coercive enforcement mechanisms. Day minces no words,

Class war does exist. We cannot deny it. It is here. Class lines are drawn even here in America where we have always flattered ourselves that the poor boy can become president, the messenger boy, the head of a corporation. The very fact of the necessity of national security laws, old age and unemployment insurance, acknowledges the existence of a proletariat class.⁷¹

Day's reference to national security laws is especially notable. These laws give shape to the territorial state's national security apparatus, which consists of the armed forces, clandestine intelligence agencies, and an armaments industry, with its research and manufacture units. In the American context, clandestine intelligence agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the National Security Agency (NSA) engage in a range of operations, including assassination, sabotage, spying, and black propaganda. The CIA, of course, has been known to topple governments and corporations said to threaten the security of the United States of America and kill persons who allegedly pose a threat to international stability. The FBI operates domestically, and has sabotaged a series of grassroots activists, organizations, and social movements in the

American context. It is difficult to say what else these clandestine agencies have done and are doing. And it is just as difficult to accurately describe the character of the armaments industry, as so much happens under a shroud of secrecy. However, what is indubitable is that most armaments research and manufacture companies, such as Boeing, Raytheon, and Lockheed Martin, are not technically a part of the territorial state proper, yet they conduct research and produce weaponry by means of financial resources provided by the territorial state's national security apparatus. Day refers to this horrifying configuration variously as the war economy or the military industrial complex, borrowing Dwight Eisenhower's often used term. According to Day, the "whole modern economy is based on preparation for war."⁷² Day may go too far here, as there are certainly economic practices that are not necessarily based on war. Yet the national security apparatus and the modern economy (or economies) do intertwine in ways that make it difficult to ascertain where the one ends and the other begins.

Under capitalism, economic considerations and the economic interests of the dominant class dominate decision-making processes about how to use state power. And police power, preparation for war, and actual war are employed (i.e. exploited) both to mobilize populations (1) in a way that reinforces the strength of territorial state agencies and actors and (2) in order to forward the economic interests of select social classes. With respect to the American domestic sphere, Day presents the American territorial state's violent intervention in favor of capitalist-managers against workers in the labor-capital disputes and strikes from the 1880s through the early twentieth century as examples of the territorial state's role not merely in defending the private property (in terms of accumulated wealth, in the form of land and money) of the dominant class, but as an entity organized so as to protect and pursue the special interests of an elite clique to the detriment of large segments of society.⁷³ On the international front, according to Day, America and other territorial states have been and are engaged in militarism as an extension of colonialist and imperialist projects that originated in the needs of capitalist economies in terms of natural resources, consumer markets, financial markets, or cheap labor.

Related to all of this, territorial state actors have repeatedly shown themselves to be indifferent to questions of morality and justice—from violent crackdowns on labor demonstrations in 1930 to Hiroshima and Dresden. Day found the events leading up to World War II particularly elucidative. Worldwide, capitalists and politicians were mostly indifferent to the suffering of the Jews in France, Poland, and Germany during the Nazi reign. But they were not simply indifferent; for, capitalists and state officials, even in purportedly democratic states, collaborated with and supported Hitler throughout the 1930s in order to protect financial interests and to check the power of the Soviet Union. For many, few historical events have seemed to demonstrate the necessity of the state and the importance of

coercion and violence more than Nazism, the Holocaust, and World War II generally speaking.

Yet, according to Day, it was precisely the emergence of the modern territorial state and the concentration of power that came with it that made the Holocaust possible and even likely. (This is especially so given the territorial state's call for blind obedience to its authority and its claim to have the right to conscript persons into the military.) Moreover, and more to the point, the very racist sensibilities and economic interests that gave rise to the territorial state are social facts that render the territorial state complicit in the social evils that its defenders have claimed that the state is needed in order to counteract. Day's charge is incisive: "The modern States which built up a Hitler, which did not depopulate concentration camps and gas chambers by providing living space, giving asylum or by imposing economic sanctions, are monstrosities."⁷⁴ The Holocaust, according to Day, did not demonstrate the necessity of the state; it demonstrated its inadequacy. By pointing out that American governmental officials had not been willing to combat Nazism when it first arose, Day calls into question the revisionist accounts of the 1930s and 1940s. On Day's view, territorial states not only possess too much power and claim too much authority for themselves. They also consistently and incessantly engage in and facilitate unjust practices. They are vehicles of evil that totalize the social sphere and complicate or at least attempt to complicate everyone in their unjust practices.

Day concluded that the modern territorial state, with its bureaucratic centralization and rationality, its protection of resource inequalities (i.e. the private property of the wealthy elite), and its military industrial complex, constituted a hindrance to community and communion, a detriment to interpersonal love and mutual aid. This is because of what Day understood such love to rule out. It rules out nationalism. It rules out racism. It rules out the use of violence. It rules out hatred. It rules out usury. It rules out capitalizing or profiting from the misery and labor of others, as do capitalist money lenders and employers. These things, which love rules out, sow discord and division and separate human persons, one from another. In particular, territorial state practices undermine love and render persons remote from one another and thus God. Territorial state practices are fundamentally impersonal and divisive, so that they contradict truths inherent in Christian revelation. That is, territorial state practices implicitly and explicitly deny the unity of humanity, the dignity of individual persons, and the primacy of love that is implied by the idea that persons are all members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

It was the fact that territorial states engage in practices that are antithetical to love that left Day in agreement with Tolstoy. For Day, Christian love, properly understood, requires going beyond the territorial state (and the capitalist economy), since the territorial state is a coercive and violent entity that sustains and perpetuates an arrangement marked by exploitation and

oppression. To Day, Christian love implies anarchism; indeed, it entails *strong* anarchism. Because the territorial state is unjust and makes us agents of injustice and the causes of suffering, persons should attempt to replace it with some other type of political organization.⁷⁵ To that end, Day and other Catholic Workers advocated “a complete rejection of the present social order and a non-violent revolution to establish an order more in accord with Christian values.”⁷⁶ In announcing a commitment to abolishing the territorial state through nonviolent means, Day belongs to a significant line of anarchists who have advocated and continue to advocate for nonviolent rather than violent revolution.

Popular perception notwithstanding, nonviolent anarchists probably outnumber anarchist proponents of violent revolution. Part of this has to do with the conditions under which anarchist thought has developed. Anarchism emerged in tandem with the rise of Marxist variants of communism and socialism and has been regarded as an alternative to Marxist political theories and revolutionary strategies. Consequently, anarchists have tended to reject hierarchical centralized organizations, including political parties and the territorial state, as a means by which to realize the ideal society. As David Graeber has argued, because the rejection of Marxist communist revolutionary strategies has fundamentally shaped the development of anarchist theory in general, anarchism can properly be regarded as a philosophy of means: “Marxism has tended to be a theoretical or analytical discourse about revolutionary strategy; anarchism, an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice.”⁷⁷ Anarchist discourse about practice has focused on the morally acceptable and practically efficacious means through which to realize ideal ends. Anarchist social theorist Murray Bookchin in his classic work, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, states well the general anarchist idea of the inseparability of means and ends: “There can be no separation of the revolutionary process from the revolutionary goal. A society based on self-administration [i.e. inclusive administration] must be achieved by means of self-administration.”⁷⁸

Because anarchists have asserted the inseparability of means and ends, many anarchists have gravitated to nonviolent theories of social change, so as to give an account of how it is possible to enact noncoercive or nonviolent social change. In consequence, anarchist thought converges at critical points with pacifist thought, even if not all anarchists have been pacifists. Quakers and other Christian pacifists were among the principal early theorists of nonviolent social change. For Christian pacifists interested in participating in the social sphere without endorsing or employing violence, a critical challenge was establishing how in practice one could be socially or politically engaged and remain a faithful (nonviolent) Christian. In early nineteenth-century America, opponents of slavery began to argue that certain kinds of nonviolent action or resistance could transform the social order. At least since the nonresistance of William Lloyd Garrison in

the 1830s, religious radicals have consciously theorized the revolutionary implications of principled noncooperation with unjust or evil actors.

Thoreau, to repeat points made in Chapter 1, was influenced by and contributed to the theory of nonviolent social change. Recall that Thoreau posited the possibility of a "peaceable revolution" being effectuated by a coincidence of refusals (to serve or support unjust institutional practices). Nonviolent theories of social change developed from the mid-nineteenth century and were nearly fully developed by the time Day reached maturity. In the American context, nonviolent activists drew inspiration from Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government," Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within* (1893), Richard Gregg's *The Power of Non-Violence* (1934), Gandhi's activism in South Africa and India, and the thought and praxis of radical pacifist A. J. Muste. With such inspiration, Americans in the early to mid-twentieth century had begun to propose noncooperation and withdrawal of support from existing authorities as the means by which to make revolution.

Day, of course, was also influenced by and contributed to the development of nonviolent theories of social change. Enunciating a position not too different from Garrison, Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi, Day contends that in order to abolish the territorial state, persons must only withdraw their support from it, which is to refuse to contribute to its unjust practices. Day suggests that taking personal responsibility entails noncooperation with or the withdrawal of support from both the territorial state and capitalistic enterprises. On her view, the territorial state and the war economy survive only because there are everywhere persons *willing* to serve in the military, work in the armaments industry, pay taxes, and so on. What is needed, say Day and Catholic Workers, is persons willing to refuse cooperation: "Refusal to pay taxes, refusal to register for conscription, refusal to take part in civil-defense drills, non-violent strikes, withdrawal from the system are all methods that can be employed in this fight for justice."⁷⁹ To refuse service is to *will* a revolution.⁸⁰

As we might expect, Day links habits of consumption to the maintenance of the military industrial complex and the capitalist social order and thus politicizes or moralizes the question of consumptive habits in a way that brings Thoreau to mind. In an especially telling passage in *Loaves and Fishes*, Day maintains that responsible persons must "avoid being comfortable through the exploitation of others" and insists that persons "can [at least] avoid physical wealth as the result of the war economy."⁸¹ As I indicated in the first chapter, Thoreau regarded asceticism or voluntary poverty as an indispensable part of liberation in the context of modern capitalistic economies. Day follows Thoreau: "There may be ever-improving standards of living in the United States, with every worker eventually owning his own home and driving his own car; but our whole modern economy is based on preparation for war, and this surely is one of the great arguments for poverty in our time."⁸²

Day commends voluntary poverty for several reasons, two of which I will mention. First, from a strictly moral vantage, it is commendable to evade complicity in exploitative and oppressive economic practices; indeed, it is probably only by embracing voluntary poverty that one can avoid committing certain wrongs, given the fact that in modern societies most commodities are produced and most wealth is accumulated by exploiting and defrauding the destitute, the involuntarily poor.⁸³ Voluntary poverty is also important as a type of withdrawal or refusal in that it can have palpable practical consequences. In short, the (politically conscious) voluntarily poor person is essentially engaged in a perpetual boycott and a permanent strike, such that voluntary poverty can be revolutionary.

To be clear, while I have thus far presented Day's prescription to modern social injustices in mostly negative terms, a key aspect of Day's thought and praxis was the emphasis that she gave to positive or constructive alternatives to the status quo. In a fashion once again comparable to Thoreau, Day encourages persons to develop alternative social arrangements through radical experimentation. In many respects, Day prescribes negative action primarily in service of the positive: persons are encouraged to withdraw from certain social practices so as to undermine those practices and thus create space for the emergence of new institutions and novel forms of political organization. Revolution, then, consists in a radical transformation of social practices that includes political and economic matters.

Integral to Day's normative project is the idea that activists should develop alternative economic practices. She regarded the establishment of decentralized local-based economies as particularly promising:

We are beginning the farm as humbly as we began *The Catholic Worker* which started with no staff, no headquarters, no mailing list and no money. But this small beginning is part of our propaganda. St. Francis says you cannot know what you have not practiced. From now on when we write about the land movement as a cure for unemployment we will be writing about a small group of people who are on the land. . . . This experiment, written about from month to month, should be of interest to groups of families, to the unemployed, to the college graduate who comes out of school and does not know which way to turn.⁸⁴

Day's radical experimentation constitutes an attempt to put ideals (love) into practice and to write about the experiment in order to inspire others to initiate their own experiments, so that the deed (experimentation) is both itself propaganda and the source of propaganda. Day envisaged the emergence of farm communes and cooperative economic endeavors that would eventually usurp capitalistic practices, thus rendering them unnecessary.⁸⁵

In the long term, small villages, with surrounding farms, would replace the overcrowded capitalist metropolis. In such villages, the "means of

production and distribution" would be worker-owned, thus eliminating "a distinct employer class."⁸⁶ Wealth would be collectively and more or less equally distributed (yet not necessarily collectively owned or controlled). And labor would be as united as is possible.⁸⁷ Doing away with the employer class, says Day, would lessen the need for repressive mechanisms prevalent in capitalistic social orders ruled by territorial state actors. Therefore, for Day, economic experimentation constitutes an extension of the refusal to contribute to the territorial state's political processes. One withdraws in order to create cooperatives. In fact, according to Day, the revolution itself can be "accomplished by decentralized co-operatives." This, says Day, would be "revolution from below."⁸⁸

Day regarded a nonviolent revolution from below, effectuated through decentralized cooperatives, as a way to generate social change through means that would prefigure the beloved community, and thus be not only consistent with the dictates of Christian love, but also be an expression of it. As should be clear, Day embraced strong anarchism, as she both denied the legitimate authority of the state and advocated its elimination. It should also be clear that religious reasons informed her rejection of the territorial state and capitalist economies. And Day is in good company. Agrarian idealism has been espoused by Russians Tolstoy and Kropotkin and American Southern Agrarians, such as Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren. And in the midst of urban decay and the emergence of massive permanent unemployment across the globe during the twentieth century, it is easy to appreciate why radical communarians have proposed an agrarian return as the solution to contemporary social problems. Uninhabited land abounds. Farming, said Day, is dignified work, if there is any. With a return to the land, unemployment and food crises would be solved at once. We should also keep in mind the crime and social fragmentation that has plagued poor people displaced from the land and thrust into crowded inhospitable urban jungles across the world in recent decades, from Rio de Janeiro to Mumbai, before we dismiss Day's vision.

However, a few questions remain. In particular, after reflecting on Day's criticisms of the modern social order and her prescription, one is probably left with questions about the viability of her program. Does not Day overstate the chances of realizing a nonviolent revolution from below? I will address this question in a roundabout way. At various points in this chapter I have described Day's anarchism in a way that suggests that she shares much in common with certain right-libertarians and with democratic socialists. It might be edifying to ponder exactly how Day is similar to or different from certain right-libertarians (who posit the existence of the territorial state as an impediment to economic freedom, innovation, and growth) and democratic socialists (who criticize capitalist economies). This may appear to be an odd direction in which to carry my analysis of Day, yet taking

up the question about how Day's normative political philosophy compares with certain strands of right-libertarianism and democratic socialism will allow us to consider pertinent aspects of the larger American political-ideological landscape and at the same time shore up our understanding of Day's anarchist commitments.

VI

Students of American political philosophies, theories, or ideologies will probably be unsurprised by the fact that, as a political philosophical matter, it is quite difficult (and perhaps impossible) to differentiate a (consistent) right-libertarian from Day. And there are good reasons for this difficulty. To begin with, from the mid-nineteenth century up to present, many anarchists on both the political left and the right have used the term libertarian synonymously with the term anarchist. Right-libertarians, at least *radical* right-libertarians, belong to what Murray Rothbard has referred to as the Old Right, and the Old Right emerged in response to New Deal policies and the rise of the welfare or managerial state. According to Rothbard,

[T]he Old Right was born and had its being as the opposition movement to the New Deal, and to everything, foreign and domestic, that the New Deal encompassed: at first, to burgeoning New Deal statism at home, and then, later in the '30s, to the drive for American global intervention abroad. Since the essence of the Old Right was a reaction against runaway Big Government at home and overseas, this meant that the Old Right was necessarily, even if not always consciously, libertarian rather than statist, "radical" rather than traditional conservative apologists of the existing order.⁸⁹

Crucially, major contributors to the Old Right—Ludwig von Mises, F. A. Hayek, and Frank Chodorov, for instance—were repulsed by any suggestion that they were conservative.⁹⁰ Chodorov, for his part, once quipped, "As for me, I will punch anyone who calls me a conservative in the nose. I am a radical."⁹¹ Chodorov was clearly no absolute pacifist, yet he and other members of the Old Right were staunch critics of American imperialism, which placed them closer to leftists such as Day than is often appreciated.

The Old Right's decline was precipitated by the emergence of the Cold War; for, as the politics of the Cold War took shape, the political right realigned around national security issues, and in the process the libertarian mantle was (ostensibly and ironically) taken over by anti-Soviet interventionists, that is, war hawks, of the New Right. Whereas members of the Old Right had opposed militarism, members of the New Right, such as Barry Goldwater or William F. Buckley Jr, trumpeted the need for a strong American military, to

counter the Soviet Union and the communist menace, and framed this as a defense of liberty and freedom. Even though anti-imperialist and antistatist libertarian activists have often eschewed identification with the Republican Party, and either opted to align with the Libertarian Party or altogether rejected electoral politics, often-enough such activists have entered into alliances with the Republican Party, given its historical anti-interventionism (pejoratively derided as “isolationism”), antifederalism, and antitaxation stance.

The synthesis or attempted synthesis of libertarianism with conservatism and the alliance of certain libertarians with the Republican Party led to the development of conservative-libertarianism, which has obscured the character of right-libertarianism. In practice, right-libertarianism is often reduced to conservative-libertarianism.⁹² But, importantly, the Old Right and *radical* right-libertarians should be distinguished from *conservative* right-libertarians and the New Right that is so often identified with the contemporary Republican Party.

Keeping the distinction between radical right-libertarians and conservative-libertarians in mind is actually easier to do when the focus is on certain political philosophical principles, particularly normative conceptions of political authority and obligation. So, once again, it is imperative to acknowledge that there are in fact right-libertarians, such as Walter Block and Roderick T. Long, who are consistent antiauthoritarians and anti-imperialists. Long's social thought represents an illustrative example. Equating anarchism with libertarianism, Long refers to himself as a “market anarchist” and a right-libertarian. As a substantive matter, he maintains that he is committed not to eliminating government as such, but only to abolishing any centralized governmental entity that is controlled by a small segment of society. In Long's words, “anarchy is a situation in which government is extended to include everybody . . . [This] diffused legal system is preferable on pragmatic grounds because anarchy multiplies checks and balances: handing all power over to a single monopoly agency [i.e. the state] is too risky.”⁹³ Long, then, more or less presents a case for decentralized government by explicit and universal consent.

Radical right-libertarians such as Long espouse political philosophical commitments that overlap at important points with the vision that Dorothy Day embraced. This fact has potential practical political implications or implications for a possible social movement. Indeed, there are reasons to believe that there will likely be a major anarchist or libertarian social movement in America and beyond in the coming years. And if there is a widespread anarchist/libertarian social movement in twenty-first-century America, it will likely consist of a reshuffling of the political-ideological landscape such that left- and right-libertarians (and this includes various kinds of anarchists) unite around a mutual opposition to centralization and authoritarian institutions. For this to happen, the similarities will have to

be made clear and explicit. It will be critical too for the differences to be confronted, analyzed, and debated. In practice, the viability of any coalition between right- and left-libertarians will likely hinge on economic-related questions, and it is on the economic front that the differences between Day and right-libertarians are most on display.

Crudely speaking, left-libertarians are generally libertarian-socialists whereas radical right-libertarians are generally libertarian-capitalists. Indeed, because so many right-libertarians are unmistakably procapitalism, a large number of contemporary radical right-libertarians in fact self-describe as anarchist-capitalists (anarcho-capitalists) or market anarchists. Day, of course, sides with the leftists, including left-libertarians, with respect to economic issues. Day thus embraced a theory of the emergence of the territorial state that many radical right-libertarians disagree with.⁹⁴ And Day doubted that capitalism could be sustained outside of the context of the modern territorial state, with its concentration of power in the hands of wealthy elites and technocrats. Finally, Day and radical right-libertarians such as Walter Block or Roderick Long take different stances with respect to the question of the *moral* permissibility of practices such as usury. Indeed, Long and other radical right-libertarians assert that persons have a right to private property and understand this right to include a right to sell or alienate one's labor power and the right to purchase persons' labor power or employ others as workers.⁹⁵

The differences are unmistakable. Yet, it is unclear what follows (especially as a political philosophical matter) from this moral disagreement about capitalism or economic rights. To appreciate why this is so we have to keep in mind Day's conception of the means by which a revolution can and should be accomplished. Because Day's commitment to nonviolent revolution is an extension of her commitment to love or moral autonomy, her criticisms of capitalist economic practices would not necessarily stand in the way of a person with her commitments from collaborating with radical right-libertarian proponents of capitalism. This owes to the fact that Day and radical right-libertarians share a commitment to noncoercive institutional practices; and they both assert that an ideal social order is one in which coercion is nonexistent and where governmental or political entities operate based on the universal consent of the relevant population of persons. Thus, radical right-libertarians, no less than anarchist proponents of nonviolent revolution, would have moral reasons to rely on purely nonviolent means as a way to abolish the territorial state.

Ironically, in practice, left anarchists such as Day might encounter greater difficulty in entering into sustained coalitions with leftist progressives, including democratic socialists, than with radical right-libertarians. This is because such leftists typically take the fact of centralization for granted. The late Michael Harrington and Cornel West are two leading leftists of this type. Michael Harrington served as an editor for the *Catholic Worker* in the

1950s. His departure from the Catholic Church influenced his decision to part ways with the Catholic Worker. And Harrington decided to leave the Catholic Church in part because of his conversion to Marxist socialism. By the late 1950s, Harrington regarded anarchist politics as impractical. Centralization was unavoidable in the postindustrial social order. After reaching this conclusion, Harrington would go on to give a great deal of his energy to lobbying government, that is, seeking to influence the legislative process. Harrington was aware of the limitations of this approach; yet he regarded Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programs as promising—even if limited—developments, developments that could over time result in a socialist state, or the socializing of the state.

Cornel West, a close collaborator with Harrington during the 1970s and 1980s, shares much in common with Harrington. Importantly, if anarchists, especially Christian anarchists, are to unite with democratic socialists, then it would be with someone similar to West, in that he is a prophetic Christian and because he is sympathetic to the libertarian cause. West favors a form of “democratic and libertarian socialism” that provides mechanisms that engender universal “participation in the decision-making processes of those major institutions which guide and regulate our lives.” This emphasis stems from West's Christian conception of the role of the human person in social life. According to West, it is an egalitarian mandate: “all human creatures are made in the image of God and thereby endowed with a certain dignity and respect that warrants particular treatment, including a chance to fulfill their capacities and potentialities.”⁹⁶ Yet, significantly, West stops short of endorsing libertarian decentralization and thus joins contemporary democratic socialist critics of decentralists.⁹⁷

In general, most democratic socialists assume (1) either that centralization is inevitable or desirable and (2) that radical reform is an effective way to promote social change and social justice. These two assumptions motivate a politics that centers in many respects on seeking control of the territorial state apparatus. Consistent with this, West has concentrated his energies on two things in the political sphere. First, West has supported efforts to cultivate interracial grassroots activism with the hope of catalyzing a social movement that forces the state to transform its practices in the areas of criminal justice, foreign policy, treatment of the poor, and its relationship to the business elite—holding elites accountable to the demos. In addition, West has supported progressive politicians at various levels, hoping to put into political office persons committed to progressive politics. One gets the sense that West believes that large-scale social change and movement in the American context revolves around the electoral process, particularly at the national level. West thus belongs to a tradition of radical activists that includes William Jennings Bryan, Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas, and Ralph Nader, although West has never accepted a party's nomination of him as a candidate for political office.⁹⁸ In the following chapter we will

see that, during the last part of his career, Bayard Rustin anticipated West, becoming toward the end of the 1960s one of America's most vocal critics of decentralist projects. He and other leftists predicate their rejection of decentralist projects such as Day's on practical reasons. On their view, Day's program is unrealistic and bound to fail. At best it will have no impact. At worst it will sap energy from more productive activist projects. I mention this only in order to point to an issue that will have to be addressed if there is to be a sustainable coalition between social democrats such as West and strong anarchists of Day's mold.

Day recognized the challenge presented by democratic socialists as a serious one, yet she stopped short of conceding the inevitability of centralization. Instead, she conceded only that realizing the nonviolent revolution from below would be an arduous and slow process. This is no trivial issue, as it is impossible to generate significant social change or sustain a social movement unless the persons involved see some prospect of progress. Acknowledging this potential *motivation problem*, Day once issued a warning to young activists: "We have a big program but we warn our fellow workers to keep in mind small beginnings."⁹⁹ So, we might say that, on Day's view, the major difficulty with her prescribed action is that it requires more patience than many social justice activists possess. Appropriately, Day responds to what I am calling a motivation problem with a theory of social change. Implicit in Day's theory of social change are both a religious conception of time and, at least ostensibly, a nonreligious theory of perpetual (nonviolent) revolution. I say ostensibly nonreligious in that Day's theory of revolution is best understood in relation to her Christian conception of time (and grace).

Day mentions her "sense of time" explicitly during an interview with biographer Robert Coles in a response to a question about whether or not she could be properly described as overly idealistic. After reflecting intently on the question, which she had heard many times before, Day interrupted the silence with a telling response: "Sometimes when people call me a utopian, I say no, I just have a different sense of time than many others have."¹⁰⁰ Day's sense of time differs from others in at least two related ways.

First, she explicates a Christian vision of time that is often referred to as a realized eschatology. The "eschaton" is often taken to refer to the end of time or the final period of time. To articulate a realized eschatology is to assert that there is no fundamental division between time and the period beyond time. Along these lines, taking solace in St. Catherine's notion that "'All the way to heaven is heaven,' because He had said, 'I am the way,'" Day announces that "time and eternity are one."¹⁰¹ The conception of time that Day adduces in response to the democratic socialist challenge relates back to our earlier consideration of Day's perfectionism. It is a sense of time that is inflected with a religious sensibility, making it impossible to understand Day's movement through space over time without reference to her religiosity.

I indicated earlier the way in which Day understood personal responsibility to require a radical concentration on the concrete present—particular acts at specific moments. Recall that Day suggests that in order to become perfect, one must concentrate on being perfect. A more just social order, contends Day, begins with *each* of us devoting ourselves to imaginative and creative means by which to transform ourselves into instruments of justice. The fact that an ideal seems difficult or impossible to attain does not rule out its viability as an ethical norm. The ideal—an anarchist social order—is a possibility if only we will pursue it incessantly. The realization of this possibility—the beloved community—is contingent upon each person assuming moral responsibility for his or her actions at all times. One must lay one brick at a time, and hope that others lay theirs. We as individual persons must perform “daily duties, simple and small, but constant.”¹⁰²

This relates to the second way in which Day's sense of time differs from others. Day, perhaps paradoxically, takes a longer view of history than many others. She maintains that individual persons and communities can transcend time through a faith that unites them with ancestors and descendents. She relates,

We are communities in time and in a place, I know, but we are communities in faith as well—and sometimes time can stop shadowing us. Our lives are touched by those who lived centuries ago, and we hope that our lives will mean something to people who won't be alive until centuries from now. It is a great “chain of being,” someone once told me, and I think our job is to do the best we can to hold up our small segment of that chain.¹⁰³

To understand how all of this relates to the question of the practicability of Day's decentralist project we must appreciate the essential aspects of the alternative theory of social change that Day and other nonviolent activists and theorists, especially anarchists, have been articulating for nearly a century.

Such activists and theorists have made two moves worth noting. First, as I have already suggested, they have pressed for a reconsideration of the types of acts that qualify as veritable means through which to effectuate revolution. Second, they have offered reconceptualized notions of how (time as a unit should be employed) to measure the effects of the chosen revolutionary means. This can be stated more simply. Many nonviolent and anarchist theorists and activists regard certain acts or actions as revolutionary that others are inclined to discount as revolutionary (or political); and these theorists and activists maintain that the larger social consequences of revolutionary action is difficult to assess immediately and so the immediate evaluation of revolutionary action should focus on the degree to which the chosen means prefigure the sought after end.

David Graeber aptly captures the essence of the meaning that revolution has for many radical nonviolent and anarchist theorists and activists in his essay, "The New Anarchists," where he suggests that we should "stop thinking about a revolution as a cataclysmic break" and instead focus on what constitutes revolutionary action. According to Graeber, "Revolutionary action is any collective action which rejects, and therefore confronts, some form of power or domination and in doing so, reconstitutes social relations." He continues,

Revolutionary action does not necessarily have to aim to topple governments. Attempts to create autonomous communities in the face of power . . . would, for instance, be almost by definition revolutionary acts. And history shows us that the continual accumulation of such acts can change (almost) everything.¹⁰⁴

In Day's case, a Christian conception of time (or temporality-logic) shapes what might be called a nonviolent revolutionary view of sociopolitical action and so undergirds a conception of perpetual revolution. With something like Graeber's view of revolution in mind, Day lauds the patience that inspires the doing of small things. This is how the revolution will be continued. The territorial state and centralization may be inevitable for *now*. But radical social action—withdrawal, refusal, experimentation—in the now interrupts the status quo and over time can change everything. As Thoreau said, "Revolutions are never sudden."

What differentiates Day from many other nonviolent and anarchist theorists and activists is that Day's anarchist vision of a beloved community was religious all the way down. This should be clear by now. Yet to make it clearer, we can conclude our analysis of Day by returning to Day's conversion narrative. In a passage in *From Union Square to Rome*, where Day is attempting to explain to her brother John Day why Marxist communism is misguided, Day targets a central tenet of classical Marxist communist social theory and posits the indispensability of religion to the realization of the beloved community: "Communism is a good word, a Christian word originally, but to expect to achieve a state of society in which all is held in common, where the state will 'wither away' through state socialism, maintained through a dictatorship of the proletariat, this is impossible for a reasonable person to believe. It is only through religion that communism can be achieved."¹⁰⁵

Day regarded religion as indispensable to social justice movements not simply because many oppressed persons are religious and so will be averse to contributing to movements that are militantly atheistic or antireligious. Instead, Day has in mind the role that religious practice itself plays in engendering the strength to strive after and struggle for freedom and social justice. And, in truth, Day does not have in mind just any religion. According

to Day, the Catholic Church is the principal vehicle of the Holy Spirit in the temporal order and the Church's sacraments keep the Christian disciple spiritually nourished and so able to see beyond the shadow of time and place. More to the point, Day had her doubts about whether it is possible to maintain what William James referred to as the strenuous mood without the sacramental ritual life provided by the Roman Catholic Church and its priests. So, in the end, Day's response to the challenge posed by democratic socialists—and to the motivation problem—is clearly a religious one.

It is not clear whether a large number of non-Catholic Christians, non-Christians, or atheists would find Day's expression of perpetual revolution compelling, given how tied up it is with her idiosyncratic theological assumptions, which raises a vital question for students of religion, ethics, and politics. Is Day's normative vision inclusive enough to be viable in a pluralistic society? I will not discuss this issue in depth in this work, yet I will say that I do not think that a Catholic Christian anarchist such as Day will, in practice, have problems accounting for how to deal with the problem of tolerance or inclusion. But even if Day can give an account of how non-Catholics can be included in decentralized anarchist social orders, Day's conception of the role of the Catholic Church and its priests raises other issues. In particular, can anarchism become the predominant or even a prevalent form of political organization? If Day's view of the essential role of the Catholic Church in social life is correct, then it must be asked, can non-Catholic anarchists cultivate the habits and the qualities of character necessary for the sustenance of an anarchist social order?

Day never addressed this issue directly and it is difficult to say precisely how she would respond to it. Yet, I suspect that she would suggest that we cannot know what is practical until we have actually put love in action, which is precisely why, in Day's radical imagination, experimentation and faith must combine. For Day, experimentation is a religious duty in that it is our responsibility as persons to live in ways that makes possible the emergence of the beloved community. It is an experiment precisely because a certain uncertainty circles our quests for revolutionized social relations. In *Loaves and Fishes*, Day intimates that Catholic Worker houses were home to a

slipshod group of individuals who were trying to work out certain principles—the chief of which was an analysis of man's freedom and what it implied. . . . We were trying to overcome hatred with love, to understand the forces that made men what they are, to learn something of their backgrounds, their education, to change them, if possible, from lions to lambs. It was a practice in loving, a learning to love, a paying the cost of love.¹⁰⁶

Day was concerned to understand what a Christian must become and what a Christian must do. Her answer was radical. A Christian must become

love and must love beyond the state. This is a profound responsibility that Day would have us take up. And it is daunting, for me, to even think about what it would mean for me to truly put love in practice. Yet even if we find the idea of displacing and replacing the territorial state as untenable or impractical, we should not avoid asking the ethical questions. What must I do? Who must I be and become? Given the horrors and the oppression that mark our social milieu, what is unacceptable is the idea that we can do no better than the status quo. We can do better and we must. Day reminds us of this. We will not do better until we take up these questions with her urgency and reclaim moral responsibility. We do well, then, to give Day more of our attention than we have, even if her prophetic witness is unnerving in what it asks of us.

Reflecting on Dorothy Day's life has given rise to a series of questions that a person might pose to herself or himself. Should I be a Christian? Should I be a Catholic Christian? What are the moral obligations that one takes on as a Catholic Christian? What are the dictates of Christian love? Is it possible to live up to the Christian love ethic? Does Christian love imply absolute pacifism? Does absolute pacifism imply strong anarchism? These are profoundly important questions for any human person who has been presented with them, but especially pressing for the person who answers yes to any or all of them.

In the next chapter, I would like to reflect on a person who answers in the affirmative to more than one of the above questions. Specifically, I will consider issues related to the above questions via a descriptive ethical case study of the religious-ethical and sociopolitical philosophy and practice of African American public intellectual and social activist Bayard Rustin. Reflecting on Rustin's life will shed surprising light on the above concerns and thus the question that animates this work as a whole. What are the sources of anarchism and the implications of anarchism for other moral values and ethical commitments?