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*Queer and Religious Alliances in Family Law Politics and Beyond*, edited by Nausica Palazzo and Jeffrey Redding, offers a unique and original perspective on the overlooked topic of building coalitions between queer and religious groups in the fight for the pluralization of family law. The book builds upon existing socio-legal scholarship focused on recognizing “unconventional” families, such as non-conjugal unions, polyamorous relationships, and polygamous forms. These families exhibit a subversive attitude, challenging the archetypical model of family relationships—namely, the “traditional” nuclear family (dyadic, heterosexual, and conjugal).

The underlying premise of the book is that legal recognition of unconventional families is desirable for two primary reasons. Firstly, the misalignment between legal regimes and the reality of modern family relationships endangers the interests and needs of non-traditional families. Secondly, misrecognition or non-recognition undermines the social respect and dignity of both queer and religious minorities. Thus, the book explores possible alliances, coalitions, and friendships between queer and religious groups as a means to achieve a pluralistic approach to

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family law. In other words, as the editors point out: “This book’s creative approach to pressing legal and policy questions has the potential to reduce tensions and build increased mutual understanding” (p. 9).

While it may initially seem counterintuitive, the book argues that various degrees of convergence between queer radical activism and religious conservatism are not only feasible but, to some extent, desirable. The contributions in the book can be broadly grouped into two categories: those advocating for *strategic alliances* between queer and religious groups and those highlighting the possibility of authentic *friendships* based on shared values. Throughout the volume, doubts, criticisms, and potential drawbacks of such alliances and friendships are also addressed, demonstrating a comprehensive and critical approach to the complex issue.

The majority of the authors advocate for the opportunity for *strategic alliances* between queer and religious groups, emphasizing their instrumental role in diversifying and pluralizing family regimes. Contributions pointing to this direction include those written by Croce, Gedicks, Wilson and Valek, Belcher-Prigat and Naaman, and Kessler. Although they present different arguments and express occasional doubts about the feasibility of such alliances, a *fil rouge* can be discerned. They all seem to agree that, as both queer and certain religious subjectivities stand at the margin of politics and society, they have a strong interest in challenging existing hierarchies and traditional legal regimes. This goes beyond the rhetoric of equality and inclusivity, aiming instead at fostering diverse family values and pluralism in our legal systems.

One aspect of potential convergence is the struggle for the legal recognition of non-monogamous families, such as polyamorous or polygamous relationships. Both supporters of polyamory and polygamy share a strategic interest in overcoming the “monogamous norm” for non-monogamous relationships to be legally recognized. Furthermore, Gedicks shows how arguments based on natural law theory, despite

fallacious, have proved detrimental in the US for both polygamous Mormons and LGBT+ individuals seeking marriage equality. Therefore: “Skepticism must accompany all calls for coercive state action justified only by the so-called “natural” law” (p. 44).

Another area of potential convergence is the abolition of state-sponsored marriage, as explored by Wilson and Valek, as well as Belcher-Prigat and Naaman. Both the contributions acknowledge that feminist and queer theorists and activists have long advocated against marriage as a hetero-patriarchal institution, reproducing traditional family norms. These groups, by advocating against marriage, resist regimes of normalization. Conservative-religious perspectives also find reasons to abolish state-sponsored marriage. As demonstrated by Wilson and Valek, after the legalization of same-sex marriage in the US, conservatives and religious parties argued that “eliminating the state’s role in marriage freed churches from having to recognize a definition of marriage contrary to their religious beliefs” (p. 55). Belcher-Prigat and Naaman, in their analysis of the Israeli case, argue that the prospect of the Israeli State’s intervention in the interpretation and application of marriage and divorce “might lead religious conservatives to prefer an alternative that removes the state entirely from (religious) marriages” (p. 114). Both contributions explore possible alternatives to marriage, such as the deregulation of marriage law by replacing it with contracts or civil unions. Despite sharing a common premise, Wilson and Valek, and Belcher-Prigat and Naaman draw different conclusions. The former authors look at the abolition of marriage suspiciously, highlighting potential drawbacks for both queer and religious groups. The latter authors, by contrast, view the abolition of marriage as a potential solution to the problems that arise from the religious monopoly over family law in Israel, serving the interests of both religious and queer communities. However, they also express skepticism about the possibility of such a convergence of interest between queer and religious groups.

Palazzo's chapter follows a similar line of criticizing existing family legal-regulatory schemes and advocating for diverse, more flexible arrangements that benefit both queer and religious communities. Palazzo emphasizes that in the US, in response to LGBT+ advocacy for same-sex marriage, opponents strategically promoted recognition laws that were open not only to same-sex partners but also to relatives and friends. Of course, conservative parties were not motivated by an authentic desire to promote plural family values. "The idea was to grant legal recognition to same-sex couples while at the same time preserving traditional marriage, as well as diluting the symbolic value of same-sex couple recognition into a larger basket of desexualized relationships" (p. 126). On the one hand, such actions expanded family law definitions, thereby benefiting queer politics. On the other hand, when considering the hidden goal of harming same-sex relationships, those initiatives become problematic and might indicate a "hurtful" queer and religious alliance instead of a "healthy" one. These "hurtful" convergences obstruct certain types of legal reforms, such as the introduction of plural or same-sex marriage, thus hindering the struggle for equal access to marriage. In other words, these "hurtful" convergences point at "abolishing an option that is cherished by a social group" (p. 134) rather than endorsing a framework of family legal pluralism that allows individuals to pursue their life plans. From this perspective, the feasibility of queer and religious alliances is uncertain. On the other hand, if both parties challenge the attachment to the marital model, there is potential for "healthy" strategic alliances, ranging from the recognition of non-monogamous relationships to non-conjugal families within a legal pluralistic framework.

The concept of family law pluralism is a recurring theme in the book. According to Croce: "in a truly post-secular society the legal order should allow people - whether queer or religious - to produce "their own law" and make available a plurality of regulatory models" (p.15). A legal pluralistic model of regulation may help queer families to avoid normalization and assimilation. Introducing "sexuality-

based personal laws” presents a possible approach to achieving this objective. Similarly, Kessler examines the legal structure of Israeli’s legal system of “personal status” and evaluates how conflicts that emerged between religious and secular factions have been resolved within this framework. The Israeli legal system’s flexibility and pluralism are explored as a possible means to reconcile religious and queer interests in recognition, challenging the normativity and hierarchy of different legal regimes.

Ultimately, the second group of contributions highlights the convergence or lack thereof between queer and religious groups regarding common values. These chapters seem to imply that, under certain circumstances, authentic friendships may emerge rather than strategic alliances. Valenzi delves into the history of the Waldensian church, which became the first religious institution in Italy to religiously recognize same-sex unions. Through its progressive interpretation of biblical texts, the Church formed a coalition based on authentic friendship that affirms the dignity of same-sex relationships. Gusmano also emphasizes how the shared values of solidarity and redistribution provide a foundation for joint efforts of queer and religious groups to recognize the legitimacy of various forms of platonic caregiving relationships, considering the crucial role of these networks in providing emotional, psychological, and material support. However, Gusmano acknowledges potential obstacles standing in the way to forming coalitions and notes that religious groups are more inclined to recognize queer relationships when sexuality is not a central concern. Redding concludes the volume by exploring a convergence of “political, religious, and sexual interests defying easy categorization” (p. 197) in pandemic times. Through a comparison of the Coronavirus and HIV pandemics, Redding finds that queer and religious groups share existential interests in preserving community ties and a right to associate, which extend beyond the narrow concept of family ties and recognition.

Eventually, Klesse's contribution challenge the distinction between strategic alliances and friendships I previously suggested. Klesse questions the very idea that queer and religious communities can share a common set of values. This circumstance not only hinders the formation of authentic friendships but also raises doubts about the desirability of strategic alliances with communities whose deeply rooted values are hostile to queer sexuality and intimacy. In other words, as long as religious groups perpetuate traditional norms such as heteronormativity, mononormativity, and existing privileges ensuing from their social and legal status, a coalition is not worth sacrificing the ethic of inclusivity that characterizes queer politics. Therefore, consistent with the overarching theme of legal pluralism in the volume, Klesse advocates for the abolition of marriage and its replacement with more flexible, pluralistic frameworks.

In conclusion, it is praiseworthy how *Queer and Religious Alliances in Family Law Politics and Beyond* addresses the largely unexplored issue of queer and religious alliances comprehensively, while also acknowledging the challenges and complexities that arise from these alliances or their absence. Despite the complex issue of feasibility, the arguments advocating strategic queer and religious alliances to work towards the pluralization of family law are compelling and well-founded. Moreover, the book raises significant issues that warrant further debate and emphasizes the need to explore concrete solutions for a plural legal framework that benefits diverse family configurations.