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The Routledge Handbook of Love in Philosophy

Edited by Adrienne M. Martin

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF LOVE IN PHILOSOPHY

The Routledge Handbook of Love in Philosophy collects 39 original chapters from prominent philosophers on the nature, meaning, value, and predicaments of love, presented in a unique framework that highlights the rich variety of methods and traditions used to engage with these subjects. This volume is structured around important realms of human life and activity, each of which receives its own section:

- I. Family and Friendship
- II. Romance and Sex
- III. Politics and Society
- IV. Animals, Nature, and the Environment
- V. Art, Faith, and Meaning
- VI. Rationality and Morality
- VII. Traditions: Historical and Contemporary.

This last section includes chapters treating love as a subject in both Western and non-Western philosophical traditions. The contributions, all appearing in print here for the first time, are written to be accessible and compelling to non-philosophers and philosophers alike; and the volume as a whole encourages professional philosophers, teachers, students, and lay readers to rethink standard constructions of philosophical canons.

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Edited by Adrienne M. Martin

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INTRODUCTION

Adrienne M. Martin

A two-part idea is at the heart of this Handbook. First, love and loving relationships are a human constant, a constant that is a source of reasons, motivation, meaning, and value in human life; but, second, the nature and significance of love and loving relationships vary widely across cultures and times, and even across areas of activity within a single culture and time. Love and loving relationships, what unifies and distinguishes them, what they do for and to us, why we value them, and how it is appropriate to value them, are thus natural and important topics for philosophical inquiry. Unsurprisingly, then, such topics are persistent themes throughout the history of philosophical inquiry and thought. They are also enjoying burgeoning attention in the contemporary literature, and classes on the philosophy of love are regular offerings at many colleges and universities.

Both the historical and the contemporary literature on love encompass a broad diversity of philosophical methods. Consider: Plato's Socratic dialogues; experiential and practice-based forms of Daoism and Confucianism; Kierkegaard's narratives; a prioristic analysis and synthesis in the traditional Western, Arabic, and Indian canons; philosophical anthropology in the same; *ubuntu* in sub-Saharan African philosophy; Simone de Beauvoir's feminism; Iris Murdoch's literary-perceptual philosophy; Thoreau's and Emerson's transcendentalism; Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speeches; James Baldwin's essays; Rawlsian reflective equilibrium; recent experimentally based and neuroscientifically informed methods. All of these, and more, are deployed within this volume in service of philosophers' efforts to understand the nature and significance of love and loving relationships.

When we consider the idea that love and loving relationships are human constants that vary widely across human societies, it is natural to frame a survey of philosophical literature on the subject by areas of human life and activity. The volume is thus divided into seven Parts: I. Family and Friendship; II. Romance and Sex; III. Politics and Society; IV. Animals, Nature, and the Environment; V. Art, Faith, and Meaning; VI. Rationality and Morality; and, finally, VII. Traditions: Historical and Contemporary. This framework facilitates access to a broad diversity of methods that have been brought to bear on questions about the nature and significance of love. Readers may come to this volume with a primary interest in one of these areas, and focus on the contributions within a single Part. However, what has been striking to me, as the editor, is the numerous and fascinating themes that cut across these subject areas, and across the various philosophical methods and traditions represented here. I will therefore use this Introduction to

highlight and connect some of these themes, rather than to summarize each individual chapter or section.

Diotima's Ascent

Plato's Socratic dialogue, *The Symposium*, is perhaps the most famous philosophical treatise on love in Western history. In it, Socrates reports a speech about love he "once heard from a woman of Mantinea, Diotima" (201d). (Pause for a moment to contemplate that Western philosophy of love thus begins in large part with a woman's wisdom.) Diotima's view is that "to go aright, or be led by another, into the mystery of Love" is to ascend a ladder of appreciation or pleasure in beautiful things, beginning with the beautiful body of a mortal beloved, then

from one body to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, then from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs, and from customs to learning beautiful things, and from these lessons he arrives in the end at this lesson, which is learning of this very Beauty, so that in the end he comes to know just what it is to be beautiful.

(Symposium 211c–d)

Love, at the peak of ascent, is pleasure in and knowledge of the Platonic form of Beauty; earthly love and its pleasures are, it seems, left behind. The reader can find additional discussions of this view in the chapters by Daniel Campos and Paul Guyer, as well as a detailed bibliography for further reading in Jeremy Reid's chapter. We also see several versions of Diotima's ascent in Michael Strawser's chapter on "Love in 19th-Century Western Philosophy," through the works of Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche.

Interestingly, Eros and the erotic are, in the contemporary popular imagination, most centrally associated with lust and sex, and "Platonic" love is love between people who do not sexually desire each other. But it is in fact Eros who is the subject of Diotima's ascent, and thus the view Plato has Socrates adopt from Diotima is that what we would popularly call "erotic love" contains the potential to be trained and transformed first into "Platonic love"—as in "I love you (merely) Platonically"—and finally into a transcendent form of knowledge without attachment to any of the usual stimuli of erotic arousal or, indeed, to any person or persons at all. I will trace a series of intertwined themes, drawn from this view: The philosophical contemplation of love often leads to questions, first, about the relation between carnal erotic love and love—Divine or secular—oriented away from bodily pleasure and toward goodness or virtue. Second, setting aside or at least decentering attention to physical eroticism, questions arise regarding the relation between and relative value of attached or partial love—especially love for particular people such as romantic interests, friends, or family members—and universal or impartial obligations oriented toward all humanity, or all creation. Third, it is important not to neglect the epistemic dimension of Diotima's ascent, which brings our attention to another theme running through several chapters in this volume, regarding the idea that loving someone or something constitutes a distinctive kind of perception that generates insight and knowledge about the beloved that may be otherwise inaccessible. From here, a fourth theme develops that runs counter to those who think loving partiality is in tension with moral obligations or virtue: several chapters develop the idea that love or a loving attitude is the cornerstone of moral theory and practice. In the following, I'll say a bit about each of these themes in turn, indicating some of the chapters in which they feature most prominently. I also note chapters that raise skeptical challenges or problems to the conceptual space within which these themes and questions are articulated.

Is Carnal Love an Obstacle to the Achievement of Virtue?

That earthly love is, at best, a diminished reflection and instrument to achievement of a love that appreciates and comprehends the Divine source of all goodness and beauty is a theme that runs forward from Diotima through the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theological and philosophical traditions: Lenn Goodman, in his chapter on “Love in the Jewish Tradition,” emphasizes the practical-epistemic dimension of this theme, tracing a route from the practice of grace, piety, justice, and science to knowledge of God and His love. Ali Altaf Mian, in the course of describing a robust, complex, and multi-valenced set of views about human/earthly and divine/heavenly love(s) in his contribution on “Love in Islamic Philosophy,” reports of Ibn Sina (Avicenna), “Humans might commence by loving imperfect instances of goodness and beauty, but they eventually come to love the ultimate and perfect source of all goodness and beauty, namely God” (p. 402). In Gábor Boros’s chapter, “European Concepts of Love in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” this aspect of Diotima’s ascent continues to be central in the work of Nicolas Malbranche, René Descartes, and Mary Astell and John Norris.

In several extensions of this view, the lowest rung of pleasure in a beautiful body also presents a hazard and a potential obstacle to the possibility of ascent. At worst, that is, earthly love and in particular lustful pleasure in sex is antithetical to virtue and knowledge of Divine goodness and beauty. In “Plato on Love and Sex,” Jeremy Reid turns from the *Symposium* to the *Laws* and *Phaedrus*, where the central feature of “bad love”—which is bad indeed: controlling, obsessive, jealous, and clingy—is its focus on the beloved’s body. In these texts, there is a “good love” initially inspired by bodily beauty, but it must turn toward the beloved’s character and away from sex and sexual desire. The importance of controlling “carnal love” with reason and directing passion toward either epistemic or political ends is also a central theme running through several of the Islamic philosophies in Mian’s chapter. As for the Christian tradition, Eric Silverman identifies three models of Christian love, and emphasizes that the neo-Platonist model not only values “spiritual immaterial love over physical earthly love,” but follows on Augustine’s dim view of physical beauty and pleasure in it:

What was there, to delight me, except to love and to be loved? Yet, I did not keep to the bright path of friendship and moderation of loving from soul to soul, instead my heart was darkened, obscured, and overcast by clouds from the polluted lust of the flesh and gushing energy of adolescence, so I could not discern between serene chaste love and the darkness of lust.

(p. 412)

Secular versions of Diotima’s ascent that take a negative view toward carnal love appear in several chapters in this volume. Among the arguments that Troy Jollimore surveys (and critiques) in his chapter, “Love, Romance, and Sex,” is that of Raja Halwani, who sees self-interested sexual desire as incompatible with genuine love, which is supposed to be entirely other-regarding (p. 63). In her chapter on “Love and Marriage,” Brook Sadler demonstrates how an Augustinian anxiety about sex develops in Immanuel Kant’s arguments that the purpose of the institution of marriage is to secure the religious or moral permissibility of sexual intimacy (pp. 143–144).

Even Ralph Waldo Emerson, who rejected so much of the Christian doctrine of his time, held that sexual desire—and personal attachment more generally—should give way to love of Universal Being. In his chapter, “*Eros* and *Agape* in Interpersonal Relationships: Plato, Emerson, and Peirce,” Daniel Campos reports that it is this aspect of Emerson’s thought—that “romantic

love is training ‘for a love which knows no sex, nor person, nor partiality, but which seeks virtue and wisdom everywhere, to the end of increasing virtue and wisdom’” (p. 123)—that ultimately leads him, Campos, to look elsewhere for a philosophical understanding of his own experience with romantic love. Since Campos’s disenchantment with both Diotima’s and Emerson’s ascents arises not only from a desire to see the value in physical acts of love, but also more broadly the value of particularized interpersonal love, his ruminations point us toward the second theme I articulated above, regarding the relation between attached or partial love and obligations of impartial concern. Before turning to that, however, let me note some of the more sex-positive views represented in the volume.

For example, Jollimore argues that, insofar as there is legitimacy to the notion that sexual desire is an obstacle to good love, even of the romantic variety, it is due to the desire that love be founded in something both stable and essential to the beloved. Jollimore argues that this desire for stability, however, does not present an irresolvable tension with either sexual desire or the desire to be the object of sexual desire. (Reflecting back on the original ascent prescribed by Diotima and its uptake in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophy, it is noteworthy that Divine goodness and beauty are perhaps the most paradigmatic examples of stable and essential properties. It is plausible that the concern in contemporary Anglophone philosophy to capture the so-called “constancy” of love—that it does not change even when the beloved’s loveable qualities change—has its genetic origins in these religious ancestors. See Benjamin Bagley’s chapter on “(The Varieties of) Love in Contemporary Anglophone Philosophy” and Luc Bovens’ “What Is This Thing Called Love?” for discussions of love’s purported constancy.)

In even more direct opposition to the negative view of sex framed by Diotima’s ascent, Boros presents 18th-century French materialist, Julien Offrey de la Mettrie, who, inspired by Voltaire and tracing his philosophical ancestry to Epicurus, Lucretius, and Catullus rather than Plato, celebrated the lover of joy, *le voluptueux*, who enslaves reason to “love consisting in corporeal acts” (p. 433). Enjoying the same ancestry, Emilie du Chatelet “considers love to be the most vivid and lively passion, unrivalled in its capability to render us happy,” and offers “psychological advice to women (of the same rank) regarding how to nourish the fire of love in their partners” (p. 437).

Following in this anti-Platonic, empiricist vein, Berit Brogaard in her chapter on “Love in Contemporary Psychology and Neuroscience” presents findings in empirical psychology connecting the origins of romantic and passionate love with arousing or unusual environments. She also demonstrates that feelings of sexual attraction and dispositions toward sexual intimacy are central elements of several recent psychological theories of love. In attachment theory, indeed, unhealthy forms of attachment are purported to be evidenced by, among other things, failures to associate sex with intimacy and the tendency to use sex as “a means to satisfy unmet needs for security” (p. 473). Intimacy of both sexual and non-sexual personal forms also features in Monique Wonderly’s chapter, in “Early Relationships, Pathologies of Attachment, and the Capacity to Love,” where she argues that “an understanding of the infant–primary caregiver attachment reveals philosophically underappreciated respects in which love improves us and contributes to our identities via the role of felt security” (p. 27).

Finally, I want to indicate some points in the volume where contributors raise important challenges to common assumptions about the connection between romantic relationships and sexual intimacy. In their groundbreaking contribution, “Queer Bodies and Queer Love,” Maren Behrens argues that contemporary conceptions of love, sexual attraction, and gendered bodies create a conceptual and practical space in which queer romantic love becomes impossible. Carrie Ichikawa Jenkins, in “All Hearts In Love Use Their Own Tongues: Concepts, Verbal Disputes, and Disagreeing About Love,” provides the theoretical and conceptual resources for

identifying when disagreements about what is “really” romantic love are “verbal”—that is, when the equal rights advocate declaring “love is love” and the social conservative denying that same-sex love is “real love” are using different concepts of love—and when such verbal disputes are nonetheless serious. Jennifer Lockhart, in “The Normative Potency of Sexually Exclusive Love,” argues that supporting the plausible belief that sexual monogamy is a worthy (though not necessarily superior) lifestyle choice requires abandoning the common assumption that there is no distinctively sexual ethics.

Is Partial, Attached Love in Tension with Obligations of Impartiality?

I turn now from surveying treatments of the possible relations between sexual desire or carnal love, romantic love, and virtue to questions about the relation between attached or partial love and obligations of impartial concern. Such questions provide an organizing principle for several lasting philosophical debates and discourses about love.

In Western philosophy, the primary obligations of impartial concern are, of course, the obligations of impartial morality, but first consider a parallel within aesthetics. Paul Guyer, in “Love and Beauty in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics,” organizes several of the theories surveyed around the question of whether the “disinterestedness” of our pleasure in beauty does or does not distinguish this pleasure from the sentiment of love. For those who follow in Plato’s footsteps, the possibility and even superiority of impartial love opens up the space for conceiving of beauty as a genuine object of love. In the Earl of Shaftesbury’s work, for example, although disinterested pleasure in beauty and love of the good are distinct, they ultimately have the same object, and thus are, as Guyer says, “intimately connected” (p. 230). Later, and outside of a Platonist vein, Moses Mendelssohn makes a place for both the love of the artist (through their art) and the love of characters in a more complex model of aesthetic responses (pp. 235–237).

Now consider a worry about the relation between the attachments of love and impartial morality, which may be most familiar to the contemporary reader of philosophy from the literature spawned by Bernard Williams’s and Michael Stocker’s attacks on deontological and consequentialist moral theories. Sharon Krishek finds this worry addressed earlier, in Søren Kierkegaard’s extensive work on love and faith. In “How Faith Secures the Morality of Love,” Krishek articulates the worry thus:

If we accept the moral demand to treat all humans as equals and thus as equally deserving of our concern, it is clear how love posits a threat to this demand. The romantic lover, the friend, the parent—all these lovers naturally focus their attention on their beloveds. Such particularistic concern may either exhaust their ability to care for others (who are not their beloveds) or render them indifferent to them.

(p. 253)

Krishek argues that this worry can be resolved with a love conditioned by Kierkegaardian faith, as the latter allows a reconciliation between partialist loving relationships and impartial morality.

Williams and Stocker, however, place fundamental value on essentially partialist loving relationships without requiring any conditions on those relationships such as faith or morality. Loving relations are, on their view, unconditionally valuable, and give rise to important practical motivation and reasons. That unconditional love is valuable and loving relationships are unconditionally valuable is certainly a widespread view that plays out in a number of practically important contexts. For example, as Joseph Stramondo presents (and critiques) in “Loving and

(or?) Choosing Our Children: Disability, Unconditional Parental Love, and Prenatal Selection,” many disability advocates argue that the unconditional acceptance and love a parent should have for their child precludes prenatal selection against disability. (In the interest of noting nodes of philosophical disagreement, I should report that not only does Stramondo critique these arguments in his chapter, but Sara Protasi argues against such an idealized view of parental love in “‘Mama, Do You Love Me?’ A Defense of Unloving Parents.”) Less controversially, many people feel the pull of the possibility that one can be torn between love and moral obligation.

Katrien Schaubroeck, in “Reasons of Love,” relates Williams’s and Stocker’s arguments and develops a taxonomy of responses to these arguments where the main dividing line is between “reductionism,” whereby the reasons of love are actually a subset of moral reasons, and “separatism,” whereby the reasons of love are separate from and sometimes more important than moral reasons. The literature she surveys thus puts the philosopher in a kind of predicament, requiring abandoning either the intuitive unconditional value of loving attachment or the intuitive unconditional authority of morality.

Two chapters on non-Western philosophical traditions present similar predicaments, but the worry is not about the relation between partial and impartial forms of *love itself*, but rather between partial love and impartial morality (where morality is not itself fundamentally a matter of love). Sandy Koullas looks to African ethics, which might have been thought to evade potential conflict between love and morality, given the centrality of the concept of loving relationships, or *ubuntu*. Koullas argues, however, that the kind of relationship at the foundation of dominant modern African ethical theories is in fact a communal relationship potentially between all human beings—and it seems partial, attached loving relationships have as much potential to be in conflict with this ethical value as with impartial moral obligations in deontic and utilitarian moral theory.

In his chapter on the oldest philosophical traditions represented in this volume, “The Confucian and Daoist Traditions on Love,” David Wong organizes the comparison of these two schools of thought around disagreement about the relative priority of partial and impartial love. As Wong presents it, the central Confucian virtue, *ren*, may center on the virtue of loving persons, and Mengzi (Mencius) thus centered his theory and practice on “love with distinctions”: virtuous relations and duties of love that vary with their object, with familial love and its duties having particular importance. The Daoists, by contrast, begin their practice with attunement to the primordial and undifferentiated source of all things, *wu*. The love of the Daoist sage (*ci*) thus transcends distinctions through an openness and receptiveness to everyone and everything needing care, responsive to but not defined by their particularities.

How to find our way out of such predicaments? One way out would be to opt for morality, at least as far as practical reasons are concerned. Jens Haas and Katja Maria Vogt provide a useful argument for anyone pursuing this option. In “Love and Hatred,” they argue that love does not in fact provide final or defeasible justifying reasons, “for otherwise the same would apply to hatred, a line of thought we consider a *reductio ad absurdum*” (p. 344). Schaubroeck and Wong propose different programs for resolution that, in a certain way, amount to opting for love. Wong suggests that Daoism contains the key concept, in its idea that “we are capable of adopting multiple perspectives on ourselves and our relationship to the rest of the world.” Confucian love with distinctions may guide us insofar as we strive to love well within a system of social practices, while Daoist *ci* guides us insofar as we aim to “tune into the immediate presence of the other person in front of us,” in an effort to escape “the structure of distinctions we have established for ourselves” (p. 369). Both are worthy, even necessary endeavors.

Schaubroeck proposes that the key to resolving the predicament posed by the divide between separatism and reductionism may be to “interpret love as a guide to explore morality” (p. 296). She draws on R.J. Wallace, Troy Jollimore, and Raymond Gaita to articulate “the vision theory

of love” and suggests that the knowledge and appreciation to be gained through loving attachment may be either itself a moral perspective, or a model for a moral perspective.

Does Love Perceive Value?

The vision theory of love points us back to the epistemic dimension of Diotima’s ascent, and to the conceptions of love developed within Jewish, Islamic, and Christian philosophy: the highest and best form of love is a way of comprehending the Divine source of all goodness and beauty. As Elisa Aaltola traces in her chapter, “Love and Animals: Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch and Attention as Love,” Weil and Murdoch place loving attention in the context of another Platonic metaphor—the Allegory of the Cave from *Republic*—in order to argue that love is a distinctive epistemic capacity: “Within this allegory, attentive love is the effort to look toward the sun at the cave’s entrance, thereby finally perceiving truth, beauty and goodness, and thus reality” (p. 193). Aaltola combines the thesis that loving attention is epistemically valuable perception with Weil’s and Murdoch’s additional, Zen Buddhist-inspired directive to “un-self” and perceive non-human animals without the filters of anthropocentric logic or stereotypes. The result is an argument for “a radical alteration in how animals are perceived,” revealing “how we are interrelated to other beings, how they impact our psyches, and how they yet remain their own creatures, filled with awe-inspiring distinctness” (p. 201).

In “On the Love of Nature,” Rick Furtak finds a similar view in Henry David Thoreau’s writing:

Loving attention to the natural world, [Thoreau] claims, enables us to apprehend emotionally the values inherent in our surroundings, values available to us through our sensory experience if we are suitably attuned to them.... [H]e implores his readers to awaken to the beauty of nature by transforming their subjective orientation—and this is accomplished by becoming loving subjects who are receptive to beauty and meaning.

(p. 207)

Thus, in Weil, Murdoch, and Thoreau, we find a love that comprehends beauty and goodness in the natural world through receptiveness unconstrained by preconceived notions of that world in all its particularities. That this approach is indebted to Diotima’s ascent is obvious, but equally as important is the directive of concern for loving/perceiving the natural world and its inhabitants on their own terms, rather than as embodiments of either an abstract Form or a supernatural Divinity.

In Cheyney Ryan’s “The Morning Stars Will Sing Together: Compassion, Nonviolence, and the Revolution of the Heart,” love’s receptive perceptiveness comes together with its partiality and resistance to impersonality within Martin Luther King, Jr.’s nonviolent “revolution of values.” One of the key perceptions of the compassionate, nonviolent outlook is of basic human vulnerability constituting inviolability or sacredness. Quoting Gabriel Marcel, Ryan writes that, from an impersonal perspective, a “sleeping child is completely unprotected and appears to be utterly in our power; from that point of view, it is permissible for us to do what we like with the child.” However, from the perspective of what Murdoch might have called the loving gaze, and what Marcel calls “the point of view of mystery,” “it is just because this being is completely unprotected, that it is utterly at our mercy, that it is also invulnerable or sacred” (p. 187). King’s nonviolence, argues Ryan, is a conviction produced through love’s perceptiveness that motivates with the force of loving attachment.

The idea that love distinctively perceives and knows its object leads naturally into the final theme I will cover here: that a loving attitude or orientation might be at the heart of either or both moral theory and practice. However, I want to note some important challenges to this idea. The first appears in Diane Jeske's chapter, "Love and Friendship." Jeske argues that, conceptually speaking, love is consistent with significant ignorance, even false belief about its object:

two people can love and be friends with each other even if they have false beliefs about each other, and not just false beliefs about small, trivial things: love and, thus, friendship can exist even in the light of false beliefs about core values or key character traits.

(p. 13)

Second, the idea that love perceives value is intimately tied to the view that, when we love someone or something, we do so for *reasons*. However, it is not always so clear that we do love for reasons. Esther Kroeker, in "Reasons for Love," provides a systematic overview of recent accounts of the relationship between love and practical reasons—that is, on whether we have reasons for what we love; or love without reason; or whether, perhaps, love may sometimes unify both rational and a-rational attitudes. Kyla Ebels-Duggan, too, in "Love and Agency," argues that the relationship between love and reasons is complex—we both love for reasons (and thereby express our agency) and find ourselves passively in the grip of love. Ebels-Duggan believes that the tension is deeper than Kroeker suggests, and that a resolution to these difficulties would provide important insight not only into the character of love, but also the nature of agency itself.

Could Love Be the Keystone of Moral Theory or Practice?

As noted above, Schaubroeck argues that the best approach to the apparent tension between moral reasons and reasons of love might be to use a loving perspective, or an understanding of what love asks of us, to understand moral relations. Similar themes appear in several chapters. In some chapters, the prominent notion is that love is at the base of moral theory—that is, that true general moral principles are, at base, principles of love. In his chapter, "Moral Normativity and the Necessities of Love," Harry Frankfurt urges that there are "some ends-in-themselves which, by our very nature as human animals, we all seek and love," (p. 339) and that these natural necessities provide the normative foundations of moral obligation. In "Love and Moral Structures: How Love Can Reshape Moral Theory," J.L.A. Garcia proposes centering benevolent love as the organizing principle or virtue of moral theory and argues that this proposal has several salutary effects on moral theory, including highlighting the inadequacy of "thin" moral evaluations—like "right" and "wrong," "permitted and forbidden"—and reorienting moral discourse toward evaluations that reveal the deeper moral character of our actions.

Other chapters highlight the ways in which a love-based approach to moral theory and a loving way of life are intertwined. As we saw in our earlier look at Wong's chapter, for example, love with distinctions, *ren*, may be the central organizing virtue in Confucian practice, and the Daoist sage lives with an open and loving compassion toward all beings. This may also be a fair characterization of the chapters just reviewed under the heading of love as perception or knowledge: although the authors of these chapters are certainly developing *theoretical* accounts of the role that loving attention and orientation should play in our relationships with animals, nature, and human beings, the most powerful message is the value to be found in *living* through loving

Introduction

attention and concern. In this vein, Cheryl Hall argues, in “Caring to Be Green: The Importance of Love for Environmental Integrity,” that human societies are unlikely to develop in ways that preserve or restore the well-being of the highly complex web of life on Earth unless a critical mass of individuals within those societies live in loving attunement to what will actually support the integrity of that web.

The most explicit example of a chapter where love as theory and practice are inseparable is Shyam Ranganathan’s “Love: India’s Distinctive Moral Theory.” Ranganathan argues that the theory of “Yoga” or “Bhakti” is a unique moral theoretical alternative to virtue ethics, consequentialism, and deontology. Bhakti is, according to Ranganathan, a “radically procedural” moral theory, where the Good (which is love) is produced by a practice of approximating a procedural ideal provided by the Lord (the Right, which is also love).

In the chapters within Part III: Politics and Society, the loving way of life becomes a matter of justice. This is, of course, central in Ryan’s chapter on nonviolence: the loving perception of life’s inviolability arises from and gives rise to a life dedicated to political resistance against the injustices of war and oppression. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s nonviolence also appears in Myisha Cherry’s chapter on “Love, Anger, and Racial Justice,” where she argues that moral anger at the perpetrators of racial injustice is not only compatible with but is an expression of love of an agapic form—a universal love bound up with compassion. Colleen Murphy, in “Love and Political Reconciliation,” also refers to King’s view that anger and love are not incompatible, in her examination of the role of love in the pursuit of transitional justice for societies “dealing with atrocities taking place during the course of protracted periods of conflict and/or repression” (p. 170). Although the literature on political reconciliation has, until now, focused primarily on negative emotions, Murphy argues that cultivating the conditions for the possibility of reconciliation means cultivating loving care and recognition of the value of others.

Conclusion

These questions represent, ultimately, only a small subset of the wide array of themes in this Handbook. I hope to have provided a number of entry points for the reader, as well as something of a model for thinking about connections and contrasts across chapters and sections. I also urge the reader to consider this volume, as large as it is, a starting point for the philosophical investigation of love, rather than a comprehensive overview. The methods, traditions, and questions put forward within these pages range broadly and delve deeply, but much of importance has been left out. If there are any universally accepted propositions about love, that its nature and meaning are unplumbable is surely one of them.



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PART I

Family and Friendship



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1

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Diane Jeske

When we think about those people whom we count as our friends, we will think about people whom we have known for many years but also about people whom we have known for only a few months. We will think about people with whom we share nothing more than an interest in, say, horror movies, and also about people with whom we share our hopes, dreams, fears, and anxieties. We will think about people whom we love deeply and about people whom we think of ourselves as being fond of or as liking. Why do we describe such a disparate range of people as friends? Do all of these relationships have something in common which picks them out as friendships? Or are only some of these relationships genuine friendships while the others are ‘friendships’ only in some derivative way?

For all of their disagreements, philosophers of friendship seem to agree that our friends are people to whom we are attached by love or some relevantly similar attitude and whom we know better than we know those who are strangers or mere acquaintances. These are claims about friendship that non-philosophers will generally also take for granted. But trying to determine what knowledge of another is required for friendship is not an easy matter. We might agree, for example, that I don’t need to know whether Max brushes his teeth before or after his morning cup of tea in order for Max to be my friend. We might think that that is because I can love Max without knowing such trivial matters about him. But, then, there may be ‘important’ facts about a person that are particularly relevant to our loving him—so maybe we *do* need to know *certain* central facts about someone’s character and/or values in order to have that person as a friend. For example, if it turns out that Max has deep moral flaws of which I was unaware, then maybe I never loved Max and we never were friends even though we mistakenly believed that we were.

I am going to argue, however, that no particular knowledge is essential for love or for friendship. Two people can love and be friends with each other even if they have false beliefs about each other, and not just false beliefs about small, trivial things: love and, thus, friendship can exist even in the light of false beliefs about core values or key character traits. Importantly, I have used ‘can’ in the statement of my thesis, because I am going to argue that love, and therefore friendship, do not require, as a *conceptual matter*, knowledge of character or values. As a matter of empirical psychological fact, they might, and such matters can vary from individual to individual, so that what knowledge of one’s friend is required is determined to a large extent by the nature of the person and the nature of her friendship.

In Section I, I will discuss three elements that have been placed at the core of friendship by most, if not all, philosophers of friendship: love or some relevantly similar emotional attitude, interaction exemplifying concern, and special knowledge. In Section II, I will consider how our beliefs about another person play a role in our initiation of a friendship, while it is also the case that friendships must be formed in the absence of some knowledge and may be formed with false beliefs about the other person. In Section III, I will argue for my thesis that friendship can exist even in the presence of radically false beliefs about someone's character and/or values.

I The Best of Friends

Because of the way that 'friend' is used in ordinary discourse, it is very difficult to engage in conceptual analysis of the concept 'friend.'¹ However, we do often say of someone that he is a friend, but not a good friend, meaning that he is not a close friend. So even if it is in some sense appropriate to describe a wide range of people as friends, we can position such people along a spectrum, where our close or 'really good' friends are at one of the extremes. My focus is on what makes two people close friends.

Attitudes and Feelings: One feature that certainly seems relevant to whether we place someone in the category of close or really good friend is the nature and strength of our feelings for that person. Since Aristotle many philosophers of friendship have claimed that it is a necessary condition of genuine friendship that each party to the relationship cares about the other for that other's own sake, i.e., not merely as a means to some other end.² Thus, if Hillary cares about Bill only as a means to furtherance of her own political career, then it seems that Bill and Hillary are not genuine friends, even if Bill cares about Hillary for her own sake—the appropriate sort of concern must be mutual.

Having concern for someone, however, is a complex matter, involving both affective states and dispositions to behave in certain ways. The sorts of emotional states or attitudes commonly attributed to friends range from affection and fondness to love. Whatever analysis one offers of love, it seems that one must accommodate the idea that love is or involves deep and strong emotional attachment. Fondness and affection, however, when they occur in the absence of love, can, it seems, vary in their depth and strength. Because I am focusing on close friendship, I am going to understand friendship as involving love: close or good friends have deep and strong emotional attitudes and attachments to each other. Thus, close friendships involve what I will call 'loving concern,' i.e., a concern for another partly constituted by the emotional attitude of love.

It is important to see here that not any positive attitude toward another person will be relevant to establishing the presence of the friendship relation even in the case of a friendship that is not close and so may not involve love. Admiration and respect are positive attitudes that we can have toward other people, but we can certainly admire or respect someone without loving or even liking her. It is also possible to love or be fond of someone whom one does not admire or respect—I would think that this is true of parents with respect to new-born infants. Aristotle would deny this claim, because, for Aristotle, genuine friendship requires that both parties be virtuous and that each recognize the other's virtue. Virtuous people obviously understand virtue as inherently admirable, and so will admire their genuine friends, as opposed to friends for pleasure or utility. The core of truth in Aristotle's claim is that it may often be difficult to sustain love or even fondness in light of a total absence of respect, but it seems to be the case that it is the love or fondness that is central to friendship, not any attitudes that may be prerequisites or results of that love or fondness.

Interaction: Regardless of the importance of love for friendship, it is quite clear that mutual attitudes of love can exist between two people without its being the case that they are friends.

Friends have a relationship in which they interact with each other. While philosophers have generally agreed that friends must care about each other for the other's own sake, they have differed quite widely about the nature of the interaction that is requisite to the friendship relation.

On the Aristotelian view of friendship according to which genuine friendship is necessarily a relationship between two virtuous people, the interaction between friends is a result of their commitment to virtuous ends, both for themselves and for each other. As David K. O'Connor has put it, Aristotle views "friendships as partnerships ... in the pursuit of some common ... goals" (O'Connor 1990: 112). Of course, through such interaction friends will express their mutual concern insofar as they aim to support, mirror, and emulate each other.

To most contemporary philosophers, Aristotle's requirement that friends be virtuous people engaged in joint virtuous activities has not seemed to capture the vast majority of relationships which we confidently consider close or good friendships. Thus, they have turned their attention to that notion of friends being close to each other, and have offered competing accounts of what such closeness amounts to.

One kind of interaction or joint activity that many friends engage in is mutual self-disclosure. In fact, Laurence Thomas has made this kind of mutual 'self-disclosure' the central element of good friendships, claiming that "[t]here is an enormous bond of mutual trust between such friends ... which is cemented by equal self-disclosure, and, for that very reason, is a sign of the very special regard which each has for one another" (Thomas 1987: 217). Friends reveal themselves to each other, sometimes in conversation, telling each other about, for example, crushes they have, guilty pleasures, inappropriate behavior of which they are ashamed, or hopes and dreams which they fear would appear ridiculous to anyone other than a friend. But they also reveal themselves in behavior: crying during corny movies, laughing at jokes that might appear inappropriate or stupid to strangers, being silly.

There is undoubtedly an element of truth in Thomas's account: friends reveal themselves to each other in unique ways. But, as Thomas himself says, such self-disclosure "is a sign of the very special regard which each has for one another" (Thomas 1987: 217). So is it the revealing of the self that is distinctive of friendship or is it the special regard and its expression in the interaction between the parties to the friendship? While some kind of special knowledge of our friends seems crucial to the relationship, it is not clear that concerned interaction needs to take the form of self-disclosure.

Cocking and Kennett offer an alternative account of the sort of interaction that marks two people out as friends: "as a close friend of another, one is characteristically and distinctively receptive to be directed and interpreted and so in these ways drawn by the other" (Cocking and Kennett 1998: 503). What Cocking and Kennett mean is that friends are open to each other's interests in such a way that their own interests become responsive to and developed in light of the other's interests and concerns as understood by the other. Further, friends possess unique insight into each other—perhaps via the self-disclosure emphasized by Thomas—and share their understandings of each other, so that, over time, each friend's conception of herself changes in light of how the other perceives her. Thus, friendship is characterized, for Cocking and Kennett, by friends having their interests and self-understandings shaped by each other: each friend is shaped by the friendship in a way that she would otherwise not have been.

As with Thomas's view, there is certainly something right about what Cocking and Kennett are saying about friendship: when we love someone, we regard their interests, passions, and ambitions in a different light than we would if that person were not a beloved friend. This doesn't mean that my friend will always come to share my interests and passions, even if she is my closest friend. However, it does seem that she will try to see why I like horror movies, and

why I donate so much money to the ASPCA. That is not to say that my friend won't tease me about my passions or that she will always come to share them, but, in loving me, she will want to try to understand what it is that I care about and why I care about it. In part, this is because in loving me, she will want to understand me and to help me to pursue my ends, as long as she does not view those ends as harmful or immoral (and even then she will exert more effort to understand or to forgive). But, again, this way of regarding and responding to a friend's interests, like self-disclosure, seems to be a way in which friends express their loving concern for each other. So, at bottom, it seems plausible to say that what is crucial to friendship is that friends not only love each other for their own sakes, but that they have and continue to express loving concern in their interactions with one another. After all, even Aristotle's conception of virtuous friends engaging in virtuous projects together is a way of conceiving of people as expressing their love for each other.

Thus far, then, we can conclude that friendship is characterized by mutual attitudes of loving concern that are expressed in a history of interaction between the parties to the friendship. Unlike Aristotle, Thomas, or Cocking and Kennett, I would argue that the ways in which friends express their love for each other in their interactions will vary between friendships, and are determined by the characters and personalities of the friends, the circumstances under which they became friends and in which their friendship develops, and the unique history of their interactions. Thus, it is not always transparent to any one besides the friends themselves that their relationship is in fact a friendship, because it may look very different from the friendships familiar to an observer.

Knowledge: It is natural for us to think of our friends as knowing us better than other people know us, and, of course, such knowing seems reciprocal. For Aristotle, this knowledge will take the form of grasping the friend's virtuous character and the way in which the virtues fit together in her character in particular. For Cocking and Kennett, in order for friends to be 'drawn' by one another, they must have knowledge of each other's interests and character. And for Thomas, self-disclosure on the part of friends, self-disclosure that goes beyond that which one displays with just anyone and is or is likely to produce the friends' knowledge and understanding of each other, is definitive of friendship.

It certainly seems right that friendship involves knowledge of the other that goes beyond that had by strangers or casual acquaintances. But some qualifications are in order. First, such 'special' knowledge is not a matter of quantity. The mere amassing of information about someone is not what characterizes friendship. Rather, friendships gain their unique characters from the kinds of special knowledge that the parties have about each other, and how that knowledge has been and continues to be acquired. People do not share all of the same things about themselves with all of their close friends. For example, Lucy may share her sexual fantasies with Ethel but not with Mary, knowing that such matters make Mary uncomfortable. But Lucy may share some of her less-than-admirable snide judgments with Mary but not with Ethel, because she worries that Ethel will not approve of such venting of negative attitudes, whereas Mary, like Lucy, understands the need for it.

Some such as Thomas might claim that this differential sharing of oneself is indicative of a lack of trust and thus of something less than close or good friendship. But trust of another need not be an across-the-board trust with every facet of our characters and personalities. While Aristotle was right to say that we cannot sustain more than quite a small number of genuine friendships, given time and emotional constraints, it is also the case that most of us appreciate and need more than one close friend in order to share different aspects of ourselves. Individual persons are just too complicated and unique to make it reasonable to think that we could have a complete 'meeting of the minds' with another person.³

The second qualification is that the ways in which friends acquire knowledge about each other will also vary from one friendship to another. Some friends have as a primary form of interaction just sitting with a cup of tea and talking about events in their lives, plans and hopes for the future, and their feelings. Other friends never or rarely have these sorts of conversation, only allowing bits of information to drop during a game of golf or a shopping trip to the mall. Most friends, however, learn about each other through their interactions with and observations of the other. We come to be able to interpret friends' body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice better than of others, and, with our friends, we often learn most from what they are *not* saying in a particular situation. Sometimes the special knowledge we have is knowledge that cannot be put into words: it is knowledge of how being with the other feels, how it is to laugh or be silly with that person, to have her comfort one in difficult times, etc.

So mutual loving concern expressed in interaction and some kind of special knowledge—subject to these two qualifications—are common to various accounts of friendship. The final qualification for which I will argue is that the special knowledge involved in friendship does not preclude friends having radically false beliefs about even such important matters as their friends' characters or values.

II False Belief and Love

Consider the following case: Evelyn 'befriends' her neighbor Helga. Evelyn's ancestors were from Germany, and Helga emigrated from Germany to the US, so they bond over an interest in Germany and German culture. Helga teaches Evelyn how to bake some traditional German pastries, and Evelyn helps Helga navigate American culture. Now suppose that Evelyn learns that Helga worked as a guard at a concentration camp during World War II and still harbors some anti-Semitic sentiments. How should Evelyn view her relationship with Helga? Should she decide that she and Helga never really were friends? Evelyn will certainly say something like "I thought that I knew her," but also, "I thought that we were friends," suggesting that she is inclined to doubt whether she and Helga ever really were friends, given her ignorance of Helga's past and her racial views.

Let us suppose that when we love people we love them in virtue of who and what they are (where this may involve our history with them in some way).⁴ Now, however, the problem should be clear: how can Evelyn love Helga for who and what she is if Evelyn is deceived about who and what Helga is? Evelyn has a certain conception of her 'friend' which turns out to be way off the mark. Attitudes are directed; they have objects. If we love a person under a false description, do we really love that person? I argue that we may in fact love the person, even though we may regret having come to do so or try to extricate ourselves from that love.

Think about a case involving a desire for some object other than a person. Suppose that I say that I want to take a trip to New Jersey, because I want to visit George Washington's plantation, Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon, of course, is not in New Jersey—it is in Virginia. Is it New Jersey that I want to visit, or is it Virginia? Well, it might be said that what I fundamentally want is to visit Mount Vernon, and, due to the false belief that Mount Vernon is in New Jersey, I form the desire to visit New Jersey. The latter desire is entirely parasitic on the former, and will dissipate as soon as I realize my empirical error.

Can we say something similar about Evelyn's love for Helga? Evelyn, we might say, loves certain characteristics, believes that Helga has those characteristics, and thus comes to love Helga. It is now Helga that Evelyn loves, just as in my previous example it was New Jersey that I wanted to visit, but Evelyn has false beliefs about the nature of the person whom she loves. It is the Helga-bundle-of-properties that is the object of her love, in spite of the fact that she is

deceived about the constituents of that bundle; in fact, radically mistaken about important elements of that bundle. If I went to New Jersey, I would be highly disappointed, saying, "I would never have come here if I knew that Mount Vernon was in Virginia—in fact, I would never have wanted to come here in the first place." Similarly, Evelyn might say, "I would never have loved Helga if I knew more about her, but I didn't know and so here I am loving her." Whereas prior knowledge of Helga's past and of her prejudices may have made, for example, her warmth and charm appear sinister rather than appealing, once Evelyn has come to love Helga, there may be no going back even after her past is revealed.

Further, by the point that knowledge is acquired, there is a history of interaction. Such interaction can create fondness for a person's quirks and foibles that, without that history, may have been more likely to cause annoyance or even repulsion. We can become acutely aware of another's vulnerabilities and needs, vulnerabilities and needs that may be fairly common, but are somehow more real and more affecting when put in the context of a familiar deprecating laugh, a tolerant and affectionate smile directed toward oneself, or a simple memory of that shared drunken escapade in graduate school. Our love for another is not always *in spite of* that other's flaws, but even sometimes *because of* those very flaws. Flaws in a friend are often seen only in the context of everything that we know or believe about the person and of our history with that person, thereby taking on a different cast than they would when considered in isolation or in some other context. All of these considerations are relevant to explaining the fact that we usually have a very difficult time saying precisely why we love someone—whatever good or attractive qualities we point to are also exemplified, perhaps even to a greater degree, by other individuals for whom we have no affection, let alone love. Whatever qualities may draw us to someone, the love characteristic of friendship is often grounded on what, without the friendship, would seem to be superficial, irrelevant, or downright annoying features of the other.

So I think that Evelyn's ignorance of Helga's true nature does not necessarily undermine the claim that Evelyn loves Helga. This fact points up something quite fascinating, I think, about love and affection for another person: somehow it can latch onto another in spite of ignorance about central and important elements of the bundle-of-properties that is the person. Just as I liked Diet Coke before some of its detrimental health effects were revealed and before I knew anything about artificial sweeteners (and perhaps I even came to like it as a result of believing that it was a healthy drink, given its lack of calories), so I may love another person—not just their company or their smile, but the person—while remaining deluded about what I am really loving.

But I need to add a caveat here. Consider the case of my liking of Diet Coke—it is crucial that I had at least one true belief about Diet Coke, i.e., that it is the beverage such that, when I drink it, I am caused to have this particular pleasing gustatory sensation. Suppose that all along, whenever I thought that I was drinking Diet Coke, I was really being served Diet Dr. Pepper. Now it may be that all of my beliefs about Diet Coke are false, or, at the least, the one most significant to my liking of Diet Coke—its being the cause of *that* pleasing gustatory sensation—and, in this case, it is not at all plausible to suppose that I ever did like Diet Coke. What I liked is Diet Dr. Pepper. But I did really like the beverage I had been drinking, in spite of my false beliefs about it. I like *that* soft drink.

Now suppose that every single belief that Evelyn has about Helga is false—certainly then it would seem that Evelyn never loved Helga. But it is difficult to see how this could be the case in friendship, because Evelyn must have causally interacted with Helga in some way, and so she must have at least some true beliefs about the nature of their interactions. Of course, if the person that Evelyn knows as 'Helga Mann' is such that her real name is 'Barbara Heimer', and the person whose name is really 'Helga Mann' is some elderly retired mail carrier living in Des

Moines, IA, then Evelyn never loved Helga—she loved Barbara. But she still did love *this woman* who makes a wicked apple strudel and has supported her through, say, the death of her husband, in spite of the radically false beliefs about her character. And she loved her for who and what she is—a charming, smart, witty companion with whom she has had such-and-such interactions.

Of course, she did not know that that charming woman is a bigoted ex-Nazi camp guard. I do not want to deny that that ignorance *could* undermine any claim that Evelyn loved Helga. People differ psychologically with respect to what they will respond to with love. In most cases, my love of some other is over-determined: I love playing cards with my mother, and I cherish our playfully competitive card games. But I would still certainly have come to love my mother even if she did not like games, and I would continue to love her if she ceased to want to play cards with me. On the other hand, it may be correct to say that I never loved my friend about whom I always believed that he supported my career if it turns out that he has been undermining my career all along. His charm and wit may not have been sufficient to support my love in light of his perfidy and two-facedness. Or it might have been so. This is where it becomes a matter of individual empirical psychology as to whether love was ever present.

There is another interesting result of ignorance as well. There might be character traits such that, if we know that another has them, we are unable to develop an intimate relationship with them. For example, my father was a very stingy person, and, as a result, I am immediately turned off by a lack of generosity on the part of others. But consider a case in which I have a false belief about Ilene, i.e., I believe that she is far more generous than she really is—perhaps she has lied about the nature of her charitable donations or about the ways in which she has financially helped her friends in the past. My false beliefs about Ilene could allow me to be open to her in ways that I could not be if I knew about her lack of generosity. I might be someone who is simply incapable of loving someone who is not generous, or I might be such that, through being open to Ilene's other qualities and being willing to interact with her, I am able to love her in spite of her lack of generosity. So sometimes ignorance is important to allowing love to get a foothold beyond our preconceptions.

So let us reconsider the case of Evelyn and Helga. Evelyn may believe, and believe correctly, that if she had known from the beginning that Helga was a racist ex-Nazi, she would never have been able to come to love and to befriend her. However, given that she *has* befriended Helga, she may have come to care for her in such a way that her love survives the revelation. On the other hand, even if she has come to love Helga, the revelation may make it psychologically impossible for her to continue loving Helga. But there is yet a third possibility: maybe Evelyn never did come to love Helga, because, given Evelyn's psychology, her love never did manage to latch onto *Helga*—Helga's features simply were not enough to support Evelyn's love when they were combined with Helga's past and continuing racist attitudes. In such a case, Helga was not the object of Evelyn's love because Evelyn could never love a racist under any circumstances.

It is, however, surprising how our love, forged in ignorance, can survive acquisition of unpleasant knowledge. In the film *The Third Man* Harry's lover Anna continues to love Harry, barely registering the new information that she receives to the effect that Harry has been engaged in very cruel scams—it is not that she refuses to believe that Harry was involved in nefarious schemes, but, rather, it just does not matter with respect to her feelings and attitudes with respect to Harry. We could understand Anna's remark—"People don't change because you learn more about them"—in various ways. Perhaps Anna is saying that she loved Harry—*Harry*, whatever bundle-of-qualities he was, not some Harry constructed from her beliefs about his qualities. So why should her feelings change in light of her acquisition of knowledge—she now just knows precisely what she was loving all along.⁵ Or she might be saying that features of Harry

that drew her to him in the first place—his charm, *joie de vivre*, ability to make his intimates feel special, wit and intelligence, the fact that, as Anna says at one point, “Harry could always make me smile”—are still there, and the new revelations, in the context of what attracted her before, are simply not enough to defeat love or in fact have a different cast in the context of his other features and her history with him. That acute sense of Harry’s human needs and vulnerabilities does not dissipate merely because he is shown as morally flawed—in fact, that sense of his humanity may just become that much more acute.

I have been arguing that whatever knowledge is necessary for the love that partially constitutes friendship, this knowledge need not include true beliefs about central elements of character, values, or activities. Within friendship, as a result of intimate interaction, we gain knowledge that would be extremely difficult if not impossible to put into words: knowledge of what it is like to be in the other’s company with a sense of relaxed companionship, what it is like to be comforted by the other, what it is like to find oneself laughing at the other’s jokes, what it is like to have the other draw a smile from one, as Harry could always do with Anna. There are also *abilities* derived from interaction—the ability to know when the other is uncomfortable or anxious, the ability to infer that the other thinks that a third party in conversation is a complete idiot, the ability to be able to make the other laugh in spite of her sadness or stress. These types of knowledge and abilities are crucial to our sense of being ‘close’ to someone, and this sense can persist even in the light of shocking revelations about the other. We have a kind of knowledge with accompanying abilities that no listing of propositions about the other could ever convey,⁶ and this is often more important to the grounding of our love than are certain facts about character and/or values.

III The Opacity of Persons and the Risks of Friendship

I have argued that we can be close friends with people even when we are ignorant of important features of their character. Such cases can, however, generate difficult epistemic problems, because even if a revelation changes our attitudes toward the other, it may be difficult for us to determine whether our previous attitudes were ones of love: was it the case that our love was overdetermined in such a way that the revealed faults or wrongs were not sufficient to have undermined the love? This can be the case even if our coming to realize that our friend has these faults or done these wrongs, at this point in the game, destroys whatever love did exist. And if we previously loved the other, we may very well have been friends with her, and, thus, may have some obligations to her in virtue of that relationship. But I don’t think that we should find the persistence of such obligations problematic or troubling. It is important to keep in mind that in any situation, we are bound to have competing reasons or obligations. Revelations about friends that devastate us will certainly alter our desires and may alter our moral reasons as well. Thus, there will be cases in which what we are, all-things-considered, required to do is to betray a friend: loyalty to intimates is not a supreme value that will always trump more impartial concerns. This is true even in cases where we have not had to confront devastating new information about the other party to the intimate relationship.

While many will probably think that my hypothetical Evelyn ought to end her relationship with Helga, I think that it is important to see what can be said in favor of her not doing so: we need to consider how important loyalty is to friendship and how difficult it is to understand its proper limits. Intimacy makes us acutely and sometimes painfully aware of another person’s needs, vulnerabilities, flaws, and foibles. In seeing their faults in context, we are able to be more understanding, more sympathetic, than we would be if we had only a partial view. Just being able to think about failings in conjunction with, say, a familiar pained or insecure expression in

the eyes can allow us to understand and sympathize in ways that would not otherwise be possible. This is part of both the value and the danger of friendship. We often think that acting on our impartial duties is well served by empathetic engagement and concern; for example, we think that a greater identification with other persons will aid us in promoting general welfare. But such identification and engagement can also make it, psychologically, nearly impossible to do what we ought, all-things-considered, to do. Friendship demands a unique focus on another person, foregrounding that other's needs in the way that intimacy makes possible. Once that intimacy is established, we have obligations to protect and care for that other, who is now uniquely vulnerable to our actions and responses. If loyalty was not an expectation that we had of our friends, none of this openness and unique responsiveness would be possible. We all have flaws, and most of us have at least one pretty serious moral failing, and so one of our basic needs is to be able to have someone understand those flaws in context and perhaps even like us *because of* our flaws and of how they fit into the entire picture of our characters. Put quite simply, we need to know that our friends are there for us in times of trouble even when the trouble is of our own making, or is the result of an element of our character that we never revealed to our friend.

Friendship, then, is a risky proposition, given that it can come to exist in spite of ignorance of significant facts about the other party to the relationship. But we cannot wait for full disclosure before we enter into friendship, because certain revelations can only occur in the secure environment of friendship or can only be read off of behavior by someone already close to us in various ways. None of this should be surprising, since human persons are imperfect and opaque characters, and our ethics of friendship needs to acknowledge this.

Notes

- 1 I have argued elsewhere that we should understand friendship as having neither necessary nor sufficient conditions. See Jeske 2008.
- 2 For discussion of loving friends for their own sakes, see Badhwar 1987. Aristotle, of course, offered the first discussion of this requirement of friendship in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Pakaluk 1991 provides excerpts from important works on friendship in the history of philosophy, while Badhwar 1993 offers a good selection of more recent articles on the topic.
- 3 However, popular culture still leads us to expect this with our romantic partners, which may explain why so many romantic attachments dissolve.
- 4 I am adopting a view according to which love is a response to a person's qualities. Advocates of such a view include Keller 2000 and Kolodny 2003. Famously, Frankfurt 2004 rejects the qualities view in favor of what is known as the 'no reasons' view. For a nuanced discussion of the merits of both views, see Jollimore 2011, chapter 1.
- 5 It is not clear, then, what Anna is loving, given, as I said above, that we seem to love people in virtue of who and what they are. Perhaps erotic love is different—perhaps, when we are sexually attracted to someone, there is some sense in which, at least initially, we love whatever person inhabits *that* body. I am not sure, however, that this is ultimately intelligible.
- 6 This is not to say that we are loving the person independently of her qualities. Rather, it is just to say that the qualities to which we are responding may be ones that are only understood via interaction and experience and that it may not be possible to convey in words how these qualities combine in a way that causes love.

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2

EARLY RELATIONSHIPS, PATHOLOGIES OF ATTACHMENT, AND THE CAPACITY TO LOVE¹

Monique Wonderly

In both everyday discourse and the relevant psychological literature, one often finds references to an infant's *love* for her primary caregiver. Yet most philosophical accounts of love suggest against the possibility of genuine infant love. Such accounts characterize love as a sophisticated attitude, requiring mental capacities that are beyond the infant's ken. While I agree that infants are incapable of love, I will argue that the infant–primary caregiver bond can nonetheless inform philosophical accounts of love. By examining our earliest attachments, we can better understand how romantic love often improves us and contributes to our agential identities. Also, our earliest attachments provide insight into how we both acquire the capacity to love in youth and continue to develop it via later attachments in adulthood.

First, I explore several important similarities and differences between infant attachment and romantic love. I then employ an expanded conception of security, along with literature on pathologies of attachment, to show how infant attachment can play an instructive role in elucidating love.

Attachment in Infancy and Adult Romantic Partnerships

Twentieth-century American poet, Margaret Fishback, opens “Love Affair” with the following verse: “Someday he’ll think me rather silly/But now he loves me willy-nilly” (1945). Fishback refers here not to romantic love, but to an infant’s love for his mother. Such locutions are not unfamiliar in everyday discourse. We often find it remarkable just how much infants seem to unconditionally adore or *love* their primary caregivers in the manner that Fishback’s poem suggests. Psychological literature on the infant–primary caregiver bond lends support to such conceptions of infant love. Sigmund Freud, for example, claimed that the mother serves as the infant’s “first and strongest love-object and as the prototype of all later love relations” (1949: 70). Harry Harlow posited that the “initial love responses of the human being are those made by the infant to the mother” (1958: 673). Finally, according to John Bowlby, “for babies to love mothers ... is taken for granted as intrinsic to human nature” (1969: 242). Bowlby’s research, in particular, played a vital role in establishing a connection between infant–primary caregiver attachments and love relationships in adulthood.

Bowlby and his colleague, Mary Ainsworth, pioneered the development of “attachment theory.”² According to attachment theory, at between six and twenty-four months of age,

infants develop a special attachment to their primary caregivers. The attachment consists in an interrelated pattern of behaviors that serve to provide the infant with a sense of security. The relevant behaviors include: proximity maintenance, secure base, safe haven, and separation protest (Bowlby 1969/1982). The infant will attempt to remain in close proximity to her primary caregiver, treat her as a secure base from which to explore unfamiliar surroundings, use her as a safe haven for protection when threatened or hurt, and protest separation from her via various distress responses (e.g., crying).

Bowlby posited that the infant–primary caregiver attachment plays important roles in facilitating the infant’s healthy psychological development and influencing her future relationships. He suggested that the primary caregiver serves to regulate the infant’s affective states and that infants learn to become adept at regulating their own affects in the context of attachment relationships (Bowlby 1969/1982; Schore 1994/2016). On his view, through interactions with her principal attachment figure, the infant develops internal working models of the self and others. Secure attachments facilitate working models of the self as worthy of care and self-reliant and working models of the attachment figure as accessible, caring, and responsive (Bowlby 1973; Ainsworth et al. 1978; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016). These models are thought to shape the development of the child’s self-conception and various modes of viewing and interacting with others. Infant attachment security has been “linked with later self-esteem, social competence, prosocial behavior, ego resiliency, and overall adjustment” (Sroufe et al. 2000: 82). Insecure attachments often lead to working models that contribute to psychopathology and dysfunctional attachment patterns later in life (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016: ch. 13).

While Bowlby and Ainsworth focused on infant attachment, they suggested that attachments occur in adulthood as well, particularly in the case of romantic pair bonds. In the late 1980s, the field of adult attachment emerged, and since then, a great deal of research has been devoted to investigating attachment bonds between romantic partners (Hazan and Shaver 1987).³

Adult attachment theorists have recognized strong similarities between infant–primary caregiver engagement and romantic adult interaction. In communicating with one another, romantic partners often “coo, sing, talk baby talk” and “use soft maternal tones” (Shaver et al. 1988: 75). Mikulincer and Shaver note, “Love in both infancy and adulthood includes eye contact, holding, touching, caressing, smiling, crying, clinging” (2016: 18). Romantic partners also often display the interrelated pattern of attachment behaviors that typify infant–primary caregiver relationships. Familiarly, adults seek proximity to their romantic partners and protest extended separation from them. According to adult attachment theorists, our romantic partners also serve as secure bases and safe havens for us. When our romantic partners are nearby, we experience greater confidence (and competence) in navigating new environments and taking on challenges. And when distressed or threatened, we tend to turn specifically to our romantic partners for comfort and support (Collins et al. 2006; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016).

Infant–primary caregiver bonds and romantic partnerships share other commonalities as well. Interactions with our romantic partners often help regulate our emotions and continue to shape our internal working models of the self in relation to others. Studies suggest that the mere presence of one’s romantic partner can increase positive affect and assuage distress, as indicated by the attached party’s reduced blood pressure, heart rate, and galvanic skin responses in stressful situations (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016: 58–59). Our adult attachment figures offer external support via soothing contact, empathy, and other comforting behaviors, and they also enhance our abilities to *self-soothe* (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016; Sroufe et al. 2000). Healthy interactions with adult attachment figures impact our abilities to self-soothe, in part, by facilitating positive internal working models that represent the self as worthy, competent, and lovable and others as

caring and dependable. Activating mental representations of supportive romantic attachments can also help one cope with threats (Mikulincer and Shaver 2012: 12, 36).

In sum, the parallels between the infant–primary caregiver bond and long-term romantic attachments are striking, and it is perhaps unsurprising that many have identified both relations as “love.” Both involve similar patterns of communication, behavior, and attitudes toward one’s attachment figure, where positive interactions with the relevant person help to regulate our emotions, shape our conceptions of ourselves and others, and imbue us with an overall increased sense of security. Despite these parallels, however, philosophical accounts of love generally suggest against construing infant attachments as genuine love—a topic to which I now turn.

Attachment and Love: Important Differences

While there exist many similarities between infant attachment and romantic love, there are also many significant differences. A chief difference is that romantic love—and indeed, love of all kinds—is commonly thought to involve caring about or valuing one’s beloved in a way that is not possible for infants.⁴ Also, while romantic partnerships share some common features with infant–primary caregiver attachments, those features are not obviously central to love.

Let’s begin with a few obvious differences between the attachment orientations of infants toward their primary caregivers and those of adults toward their romantic partners. First, while we seek proximity to our romantic partners and protest extended separation from them, mature adults are typically more tolerant of longer separations and less likely to demand attention by crying, throwing tantrums, etc. Also, unlike the infant’s interaction with her primary caregiver, attachment behaviors in adult romantic partnerships are usually reciprocated. In other words, each partner is typically both attached *to* the other and serves as an attachment figure *for* the other.

Psychologists acknowledge that romantic love, in addition to attachment, also involves sex and caregiving (Mikulincer 2006). Philosophers of love have attended to both of these features in their accounts. Union views of love, on which love involves a merger of selves or identities (or at least a desire for merger), are well equipped to capture the sexual element that typifies romantic love (Nozick 1989; Solomon 2001). And while philosophers tend to emphasize the *attitudes* that underlie caregiving behaviors toward one’s beloved, as opposed to the behaviors themselves, they generally attribute caring or valuing a central role in love.

Philosophers generally agree that love involves valuing and/or caring about one’s beloved for the beloved’s own sake. For example, Harry Frankfurt characterizes love as a “mode of caring” that is marked by, among other things, disinterested concern for one’s beloved (1999a, 2004). J. David Velleman suggests that love is a kind of “awe” that emerges upon the recognition of a value inhering in the object (1999: 360–361). Richard White claims that love “involves a very deep appreciation for the absolute value of the other person” (2001: 5). According to Niko Kolodny, love consists in non-instrumentally valuing one’s relationship with the beloved (and the beloved herself) (2003: 150). On Bennett Helm’s view, love is a particular kind of caring that involves an identificatory commitment to the object in which the lover shares the beloved’s values for her sake (2009: 52, 2010: ch. 5). These theorists represent only a sample of those who posit that to love is, among other things, to care about or value the beloved object.⁵

Some theorists regard caring and valuing as the same phenomenon.⁶ On most accounts, caring involves certain desires to promote the cared-for object’s flourishing and an emotional vulnerability to how that object is faring (Shoemaker 2003; Jaworska 2007a/b; Seidman 2009). If an agent cares about an object, she typically wants that object to flourish. She will also, for example, tend to feel joy when it is thriving, sadness when it is faltering, fear when it is in

danger, and so forth. These features, along with others, have also been identified as central elements of valuing.⁷ Theorists typically posit that caring requires cognitive capacities that infants lack. Examples include the capacities to grasp the concept of importance, to form higher-order desires, and to see others as reasons for action and emotion.⁸

The preceding discussion suggests that while infants may be attached to their primary caregivers, they cannot care about, or value, them in the sense that love requires. Love, it is commonly supposed, is a complex orientation toward its object that requires cognitively rich ways of seeing, understanding, and engaging with its object. Infant attachment, then, appears to be missing key ingredients for genuine love.

Not only is the infant incapable of love, but it is not immediately clear how attachment in adults contributes to love. One might concede that most adults are attached to their long-term romantic partners, while denying that attachment plays an integral role in romantic love. Consider, for example, Frankfurt's claim that "lovers often enjoy the company of their beloveds, cherish various types of intimate connection with them, and yearn for reciprocity. These enthusiasms are not essential to it" (2004: 42). Similarly, there may be reason to suspect that attachment, while perhaps a natural concomitant of romantic love, is in no way central to it.

One might deny attachment a central role in love because the felt need internal to it is undergirded by the attachment figure's impact on the attached person's *sense of security*. Such a feature might strike some as ill-suited to contribute to love in any significant sense. First, the relevant need seems to be focused on the lover's own comfort and safety, while love is typically thought to be other-regarding, and on some accounts, selfless.⁹ Second, it may be difficult to see how needing another for comfort and safety is a good thing, let alone one that makes a positive contribution to love. Well-functioning, mature, and autonomous agents, one might think, should not have security-based needs for their beloveds, and where they do, such orientations are not obviously related to love. Love, after all, is distinctive for its rich value and depth, and the primitive need for safety seems peripheral to these essential features.

In sum, while infant–primary caregiver bonds and romantic loving relationships tend to feature somewhat similar attachment orientations, the relevant attachments do not suffice for love. Infants lack the cognitive capacities to care about or value others in the way that love requires, so their attachments cannot constitute love. Furthermore, for all that has been said so far, while romantic partners who love each other are typically also attached to one another, the latter relation may well be orthogonal to the couple's love. Thus, we are left with the question: Can the infant–primary caregiver attachment tell us anything interesting about love? In the remaining two sections, I offer an affirmative answer to this question.

Security and Agency: A Role for Attachment in Love

While infants do not (strictly speaking) love others, the attachment relations in which they stand to their primary caregivers can inform philosophical conceptions of love. Contra the view discussed in the previous section, here I will argue that the type of felt need internal to attachment partly constitutes and enhances some kinds of love. Examining the relevant need can inform extant views of how love impacts our identities and contributes value to our lives.

Let's begin by revisiting the type of need internal to attachment. In the preceding section, I suggested that security's role in undergirding attachment relationships might engender doubt that attachment could be an important aspect of love. I will now endeavor to assuage such doubts by articulating an expanded conception of security that can illuminate defining features of love, revealing how a security-based need can contribute to love's value.

While Bowlby and Ainsworth sometimes associate “security” with “feeling safe,” they also sometimes gesture at a richer notion of the concept. For example, Ainsworth, drawing on Bowlby’s work, offers a conception of security as “an ‘all is well’ kind of appraisal of sensory input,” or “an ‘Okay, go ahead’ feeling” (1988: 1). In other work, I have described the type of security at issue in attachment as a kind of confidence in one’s well-being and agential competence. In colloquial terms, without our attachment objects, we tend to feel off-kilter, out of sorts, no longer “all of a piece,” and so forth. Conversely, engaging with our attachment objects helps us to feel empowered, better equipped to take on challenges, etc. (Wonderly 2016: 231).¹⁰

Our attachment figures don’t merely help us feel safe; they can also help hold us together during difficult times and improve us more generally. Experiencing another as a felt need in this sense suggests that the other plays a very meaningful role in how one views oneself and is able to get along in the world. To be sure, needing another in this way seems to focus on one’s own welfare as opposed to that of the beloved, and it does not *suffice* for love. One must care about, or value, the other in her own right in order to truly love her. But in some cases, the type of need internal to attachment might—like concern for the other’s welfare—play an important, and indeed *constitutive*, role in love.¹¹

To see this, imagine that an individual has the opportunity to do something that will be to her overall benefit but will necessitate being separated from, and unreachable by, her (long-term) romantic partner for many years. Imagine further that upon receiving the news, her partner—being selflessly invested in her welfare—responds only with joy, celebrating her good fortune and excitedly offering to help her pack. The departing partner might well be disappointed at such a response, preferring that her beloved not only be motivated by the desire for her flourishing but also by a deeply felt need for her.¹² I suspect that this is not merely an unimportant preference, but that some kinds of love would be impoverished absent some felt need of this kind.

Of course, one might accept that a felt need of another can be partly constitutive of love, while objecting to the relevant need being tied to the lover’s security. Experiencing another as a security-based felt need might strike some as puerile or selfish. Doubtless, few have ever been smitten by a lover who imparted, “Baby, you make me feel so *secure*.” Imagine, though, that the lover instead imparts: “Without you, my life would be less meaningful, less fulfilled. I would not be able to get by as well as I normally can, but for a time at least, I would feel adrift and no longer all of a piece.” These sentiments capture the sense of security at issue here, and rather than being childish or unduly self-centered, they seem to reflect a way of relating to another that can be a worthy (and deeply important) aspect of one’s love.

The expanded notion of security that I describe above can also help to illuminate the relationship between attachment and love’s contributions to one’s agency and identity. Philosophical treatments of love often emphasize various ways in which love improves our lives. Love (typically) is a source of joy and imbues life with meaning and purpose (Frankfurt 1999b; Badhwar 2003; White 2001). But attachment affords us an under-explored, yet instructive framework for understanding how love can improve us.

Frequent engagement with an attachment figure tends to increase confidence in one’s well-being and one’s ability to competently navigate the world. In infancy, this feature manifests in the infant’s ability to venture increasingly farther away from her primary caregiver without worry and to interact more comfortably with new environments. In adulthood, positive interactions with our attachment figures often imbue us with a confidence that serves to inspire us, to raise the bar for complacency, and to attenuate our tendencies toward risk aversion (Feeney 2008; Collins et al. 2006; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016). Consequently, our attachments can

increase our capabilities and help us to achieve in ways that we would otherwise be unable to do. They not only lift us when we are low, but in providing a secure and supportive ground, they can enable us to soar.

We often recognize such qualities in love. Consider, for example, how love's benefits are often portrayed in popular music. "My love, whenever I was insecure, you built me up and made me sure."¹³ "You gave me wings, you made me fly."¹⁴ "My loving arms around you, I can stand up and face the world. Your love keeps lifting me higher and higher."¹⁵ These lyrics support a picture of love on which one's romantic partner is not only a source of joy and purpose, but also a source of *empowerment*. Where attachment exists in loving relationships, it may provide an important vehicle through which love can enhance our agency in these ways.

Relatedly, attending to attachment can also aid our understanding of how love can impact one's identity. On many accounts, love is marked by a kind of depth that is thought to tie the attitude to the agent's identity. How and what (or whom) we love seems to be intimately connected to who we are. Theorists have framed this relation in terms of integrating the beloved into one's identity, identifying one's own interests with those of one's beloved, or a kind of volitional endorsement of one's attitudes toward one's beloved.¹⁶ Attachment offers us still another lens through which to view love's impact on one's identity.

Our interactions with our attachment figures can play an important role in shaping one's agential identity.¹⁷ Recall from the first section that in both infancy and adulthood, interactions with our attachment figures continue to influence our "internal working models" of the self. They play crucial roles in how we understand ourselves and our abilities to act competently within the world. Since our specific attachment figures are uniquely positioned to impact our felt security in the ways that they do, they can have especially powerful effects on our self-conceptions, how we relate to others, and how we function more generally as agents.

Of course, infant attachment, which serves as the context for the attached individual's development into a full-fledged agent, seems to be the best illustration of how attachment bonds can help to shape one's agential identity. Via engagement with her attachment figure, the infant learns to navigate the realm of affects and cognitions that will enable the formation of identity-constituting values and perspectives. The infant's understanding of herself and others grows out of the internal working models that she develops through such interactions, serving as the ground for how she will tend to view and to function within future relationships. In this way, though infant attachment is not synonymous with love, it does shape the infant's future capacity to love. This point is worth exploring in greater detail, as it can tell us something interesting about how attachment, in both infancy and adulthood, can help us learn to love well.

Attachment and the Capacity to Love

Research suggests that early attachment experiences tend to exert considerable influence over how one loves in adulthood. Much of this research concerns certain "pathologies of attachment."¹⁸ Bowlby, for example, suggested a causal relationship between early attachment disruption and "affectionless psychopathy" in later years (Bowlby 1973). More recent research has indicated that severe disruption in early attachment can, but does not always, contribute to the development of psychopathic characteristics, depression, social phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder, addiction, anxiety disorders, and a host of personality disorders (Karen 1998; Flores 2004; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016).¹⁹ Yet, what is most relevant for the present discussion is not merely *that* early attachment disruption has been associated with later psychological disorder, but rather *how* such disruption is thought to hinder various capacities necessary for valuing.

Recall that (as I have argued) while attachment plays an important role in some kinds of love, it does not suffice for love. This is because one can be attached without valuing, or caring about, one's attachment object in the way that love requires. Importantly, though, attachment is not silent on the matter of valuing. Attachment relationships (typically) serve to develop and hone one's ability to value, thereby helping to shape one's capacity to love. Research on attachment and psychopathology provides a useful lens through which to view this phenomenon.

Neuroscientists have suggested that early disruption or dysfunction in attachment can interfere with the development of brain structures that facilitate empathy, socio-emotional learning, and affect regulation. Theorists have proposed that the proper development and function of such structures is "experience-dependent," and in particular, dependent upon healthy attachment interactions between the infant and her primary caregiver (Schore 1994/2016). Early attachment difficulties can leave the infant with impaired abilities to adequately attend to her own emotions and to the emotions and interests of others, rendering her vulnerable to mental disorder and future relationship dysfunction (Schore 1994/2016; Sroufe et al. 2000).

To see more clearly how attachment can impact one's capacity to love, it will be useful to briefly explore two particular attachment-related forms of psychopathology: psychopathy and addiction. Not only have early attachment problems been suggested as causal contributors to psychopathic personalities and addiction, but these pathologies are also marked by occurrent attachment difficulties.²⁰ Psychopaths have impaired capacities for forming attachments to other persons (Cleckley 1988; Hare 1993; Blair et al. 2005). And some addictions can be viewed as, among other things, disordered attachment orientations toward their objects (Flores 2004). More importantly for our purposes, both psychopaths and addicted agents appear to have difficulties caring about, or valuing, others in the way that loving—or at least loving *well*—requires.

Let's start with psychopaths. Psychopathy is a personality disorder that involves a tendency toward antisocial behaviors (e.g., threatening behavior such as verbal abuse or violence, repeated criminal conduct) and certain emotional-interpersonal deficits (e.g., shallow affect, lack of empathy, inability to feel guilt).²¹ Typically, philosophers have been interested in the psychopath's *moral* deficits, which, some have argued, might exempt her from moral responsibility.²² Psychopaths seem to lack the abilities to become emotionally invested in others and to recognize their interests as intrinsically reason-giving (Jaworska 2007a; Watson 2011). These capacities, of course, are relevant not only to moral agency, but also to love.

Recall that love, as a mode of valuing or caring, involves an emotional vulnerability to how one's beloved is faring and certain desires to promote the beloved's flourishing.²³ The psychological literature on attachment has the resources to explain how early attachment difficulties can contribute to psychopathic personality traits. The child first learns how to recognize and engage with the interests of others through attachment with her primary caregiver. If the infant's attachment figure is unresponsive or abusive, the infant may grow to feel uncomfortable with her vulnerability and reliance on others. Consequently, she may resist allowing herself to be vulnerable enough to care about others in the future.²⁴ In addition, her poor internal working models of others, combined with her lack of learned facility with emotions, may preclude any desire for—or competence with—promoting another's flourishing.

Theorists have suggested that some addictions represent "attachments" to their objects, albeit disordered ones.²⁵ Philosophers have been concerned to investigate the impact of addiction on human agency. The addicted agent's strongly felt need for the object tends to consume her attention, "crowding out" other potential interests, values, and cares, and narrowing (what she sees as) her field of available actions (Elster 1999: 69; Watson 1999). Focused on the addiction object, she may lack the attentional resources to engage non-instrumentally with her beloved's

interests. An addicted agent, then, may lack the ability to adequately recognize and respond to her beloved's concerns in a way necessary for properly valuing her and thus loving her well.

Attachment research can serve to illuminate this phenomenon. Disruptions or dysfunction in early attachment can engender painful working models of the self and others, along with lasting inability to properly self-regulate one's affects. As a result, the agent turns to the addiction object for help coping with distress (Flores 2004; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016). Insofar as the addiction object helps to restore—however temporarily or superficially—the agent's sense of security, she will feel especially compelled to partake of it. Psychologists have long held that felt security has a kind of priority over other motives. Unless one feels sufficiently secure, one will typically be unable to competently engage in other-directed activities like caregiving, affiliative pursuits, and sex (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016: 15). Since the addicted agent may be rigidly focused on her *own* security-based attachment needs, she may be unable to adequately recognize or respond to the interests of her beloved.²⁶

Healthy early attachments, then, help shape our capacities to love in multiple ways. First, early attachments initiate the formation of our abilities to self-regulate our affects and to empathically recognize and attend to the emotional needs of others. In addition, healthy attachments facilitate conceptions of the self and others that conduce to comfort with one's own vulnerability and positive dispositions toward the interests of others. Our early attachment experiences serve as our first opportunities to engage with our own vulnerability and to observe models of caring provided by our attachment figures. In well-functioning attachments, one can comfortably inhabit one's own vulnerability because others will be there if needed. Experiencing one's own vulnerability in this way, combined with one's empathic abilities and positive conception of others, disposes us to recognize and respond compassionately toward vulnerabilities in others. Finally, by grounding a general sense of security, healthy early attachments afford us the emotional resources to appropriately recognize others' value and to promote their interests.

What's more, these qualities are present not only in infant attachment, but in adult attachment as well. Our deeply felt needs of our attachment figures make us keenly aware of our own vulnerability, underscoring their import for us and facilitating our empathic recognition of their vulnerability (and that of others). As our adult attachment figures continue both to aid the regulation of our affects and to support positive internal working models of ourselves and others, they equip us with greater resources and motivation to properly value and care for others. Thus, early attachment helps us to *develop* our capacities to love, and attachments later in life continue to enhance our abilities to love well.

Infant attachment, then, while not synonymous with love, can nonetheless inform philosophical conceptions of romantic love. In romantic love, the adult analog of infant security plays an important role in explaining how love can empower us to achieve in ways that we otherwise would be unable to do. Similarly, the beloved's ability to impact one's sense of security offers an under-explored insight into how love can affect our identities. One's beloved plays an important role in one's self-conception and her ability to competently navigate the world, features that are central to one's agential identity. Finally, examining certain pathologies of attachment brings to the fore crucial respects in which attachment, in both infancy and adulthood, shapes our capacity to love by enhancing our abilities to value and care for others.

Notes

- 1 Many thanks to Adrienne Martin, Agnieszka Jaworska, and Coleen Macnamara for helpful discussion of the ideas presented here.

- 2 For more on the development of attachment theory, see Ainsworth et al. (1978) and Bowlby (1969/1982, 1973, 1980).
- 3 For more on adult attachment, see Shaver et al. (1988); Rholes and Simpson (2004); Hazan, Campa, and Gur-Yaish (2006); Mikulincer and Goodman (2006), Feeney (2008), and Mikulincer and Shaver (2016).
- 4 While I suspect that attachment can inform other varieties of love as well, for the sake of simplicity, I focus here on romantic love.
- 5 See also Brown (1987: 24); Badhwar (2003: 56); Jollimore (2011: 26); and Brentlinger (1989: 139).
- 6 See for example Seidman (2009).
- 7 Jaworska emphasizes that valuing involves the valuer thinking herself “correct in wanting what she wants” (1999: 155). Bratman (2000) describes valuing as a special type of self-governing policy. Finally, theorists such as Scanlon (1998), Kolodny (2003), Seidman (2009), and Scheffler (2011) emphasize the relationship between valuing and reasons for action and/or emotion.
- 8 Frankfurt makes volition rather than emotion central to his view of caring, affording higher-order desires a crucial role in the attitude. In particular, he describes caring about an object in terms of having and identifying with a higher-order desire that her first-order desire for the object “not be extinguished or abandoned” (Frankfurt 1999a: 161). Jaworska posits that one must have “the concept of importance” in order to care (2007b: 561). Seidman suggests that one must be able to see the object of care as a source of reasons (2009: 12). On Helm’s view, the particular sort of caring involved in love necessitates the capacity to experience certain cognitively sophisticated, “person-focused” emotions such as pride and guilt (2010: 227).
- 9 See, for example, Frankfurt (1999a) and (1999b). See also Helm’s discussion of robust concern views of love (2010: 16–18).
- 10 For other views that support this notion of felt security, consider the following: Abraham Maslow characterized security as a “syndrome of feelings,” that includes, *inter alia*, feelings of “being at home in the world,” “emotional stability,” “self-esteem,” “self-acceptance,” and “courage” (1942: 334–335). William Blatz, in developing his “security theory,” identified security as “the state of mind which accompanies the willingness to accept the consequences of one’s acts” (1966: 13). According to Ainsworth, Blatz, who had been her dissertation advisor, “seemed to equate feeling secure with feeling competent or effective” (1988: 1).
- 11 Note that I am not arguing for the stronger claim that attachment is essential for all love.
- 12 I discuss such a case at greater length in Wonderly (2017).
- 13 These lyrics are from “You Make Me Feel Brand New,” by The Stylistics (1974).
- 14 These lyrics are from Celine Dion’s 1996 single, “Because You Loved Me.”
- 15 The lyrics are from Jackie Wilson’s 1967 single, “(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher.”
- 16 Nozick (1989), Frankfurt (1999a, 1999b, 2004), Solomon (2001), White (2001), and Helm (2010) are among the many theorists who have posited a relationship between identity and love.
- 17 By “agential identity,” I do not mean to imply anything mysterious here. I take it that how a person views herself and experiences her agency constitutes an important aspect of her identity as the particular agent she is.
- 18 The term “pathologies of attachment” can refer either to mental disorders for which attachment difficulties are presumed to play a significant causal role and/or psychologically disordered forms of attachment formation or maintenance. Note that the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* does not list attachment disorders as its own category. Reactive attachment disorder, the central feature of which is “absent or grossly underdeveloped attachment between the child and putative caregiving adults,” is characterized as a “Trauma/Stressor Disorder” (APA 2013: 266). There are, however, several disorders that explicitly include attachment difficulties, including (but not limited to): Separation Anxiety Disorder, Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- 19 Psychologists have also linked disruption or dysfunction in early attachment relationships to “insecure attachment styles” that tend to follow infants through their later years and contribute to mental disorder. The system by which insecure attachment styles are classified grew largely out of Ainsworth et al.’s empirical study of infant–primary caregiver interaction (1978). Ainsworth et al. identified two patterns of insecure infant attachment: avoidant and anxious. In infants, these patterns track certain atypical infant responses to separation and reunion with their primary caregivers. Securely attached infants tend to show some distress upon separation from their primary caregivers, but recover quickly upon reunion, exhibiting joy and a desire to return to exploration and play. Avoidant infants tend to show little distress upon separation from their primary caregivers and to avoid them when they return. Anxious infants are

- highly distressed during separation from their primary givers and display conflicting behaviors upon the caregiver's return—e.g., alternating patterns of clinging and pulling away (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016: 23–24). In adulthood, an avoidant attachment style indicates “discomfort with closeness and dependence” and a strong “preference for emotional distance and self-reliance” (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016: 25). An anxious attachment style indicates a very strong desire for closeness and intense worries about being abandoned or under-valued by one's partner (ibid.). Though insecure attachment styles themselves are not psychological disorders, they are sometimes labeled “pathogenic,” as they can, when combined with other risk factors, lead to psychopathology (Mikulincer and Shaver 2012; Karen 1998; Sroufe et al. 2000). For more on attachment styles, see Berit Brogaard's entry in this volume.
- 20 To be sure, not all cases of psychopathic personalities and addiction can be traced to earlier attachment problems. It is also worth noting that some reserve the term “psychopathy” for a pre-existing brain disorder, and use “sociopathy” where similar traits arise as a result of environmental factors (see, for example, Hare 1993: 23–24). The *DSM-V* has no entry dedicated to psychopathy, but references it, along with sociopathy, in the entry on antisocial personality disorder (2013: 659).
 - 21 See for example Cleckley (1998: 338–339); Hare (1993: 34); and Blair et al. (2005: 7).
 - 22 See for example Darwall (2006); Shoemaker (2007); and Watson (2011).
 - 23 For a discussion of how love differs from mere caring, see Jaworska and Wonderly (forthcoming).
 - 24 For more on how one's experience of, and attitude toward, one's own vulnerability can impact one's abilities to engage in caring and prosocial behaviors, see Miller (2012) and Gilson (2014).
 - 25 See for example Flores (2004: 4–10).
 - 26 Note that this picture is meant to supplement and deepen, rather than replace, typical “disordered neural reward signal” models of addiction that pervade much of the scientific and philosophical literature on addiction.

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3

“MAMA, DO YOU LOVE ME?”

A Defense of Unloving Parents

Sara Protasi

Mama, Do You Love Me? is the title of a poignant children’s book, in which an Inuit mother reassures her daughter that she will always love her (Joosse 1991). Mother and child are portrayed in increasingly more challenging and surreal circumstances: the child drops eggs, or goes to live with a pack of wolves, or transmutes into a bear that chases the mother. But her mother, even if angry, sad, or scared, keeps loving her and tells the daughter that she will love her “forever and for always”. The comforting moral for young readers is that no matter how naughtily they behave, or how hard they push the boundaries, their mommy will always love them. The book is charming for various aesthetic reasons: gorgeous illustrations, poetic language, magical plot, not to mention the fascinating depiction of Inuit customs (although I worry about cultural appropriation). It also teaches children that their mother’s negative emotional responses should not be confused with lack of love. But when I read the book the first time I reacted with anguish and anxiety. For I was not sure that I could become such a mother, and I resented not having felt like such a daughter.

The book is exemplary of a fundamental, maybe even foundational, contemporary Western ideal: unconditional maternal love. Entire libraries could be filled with the stories, songs and lullabies that instill this ideal into our minds.

Like with any cultural narrative, there are counternarratives or complications: for every fairy tale’s ending of happy children reuniting with their angelic (birth)mother, there is a dark fable’s beginning of miserable children abused by their evil (step)mother; for every Dr. Sears promoting the joys of motherhood, there is a Dr. Freud inquiring into the troubles and pains hiding underneath. For every Cornelia, a Medea. And yet, the predominant portrait of parental love in analytic philosophy often seems oblivious of these complexities, and does not challenge the notion of a parental, especially maternal, love as absolute, unconditional, self-effacing, and eternal: “forever and for always”.

Not only can parental love sometimes be partial, conditional, or selfish; sometimes it fails to arise at all. This chapter is an embryonic exploration of how and why parents fail to meet the ideal illustrated in *Mama, Do You Love Me?* While what I say applies to parents of all genders, I will focus on mothers, since my aim is not only to defend a philosophical thesis, but also provide support for a change in the psychology and sociology of motherhood.

In the first section, I draw some preliminary distinctions and clarify the scope and limitations of my inquiry. In the second section, I argue that unloving mothers exist, and are not psychologically

abnormal. In the third section, I go further and suggest that lack of maternal love can be fitting and even morally permissible. In the fourth section, I sketch some implications that lack of maternal love and unrequited filial love have for the debate on reasons for love. I conclude with avenues for future research.

The Many Faces of Love

That love comes in different forms is something we experience on an everyday basis. We talk about loving our partners, children, parents, siblings, friends, co-workers, fellow human beings, animals, God(s), and objects—both concrete (this painting) and abstract (art). Some languages, like ancient Greek, have different terms to refer to these wildly different forms of “love”. English is one of the languages with fewer such distinctions. Therefore, philosophers of love writing in English sometimes use Greek terms such as *eros* (passionate love); *philia* (companionate, friendly, and familial love); *agape* (love for humanity).¹

There are two forms of love that are experienced in the parent–child relationship—filial and parental—and they are analogous in many ways: they stem from the same relation and each is a response to the other; the beloved is not a peer, unlike most other forms of personal love; they are directed toward an unchosen object of love,² unlike friendship and (in most contemporary cultures) romantic love; they are generally sustained over a lifetime and are central to self-identity and flourishing.

There are, however, significant differences between parental and filial love. One such difference is the obvious disparity of autonomy and power between parents and children, which is bound to affect the way they love each other. Such a difference steadily decreases as the children grow older, and for most of the children’s life this difference is absent or tenuous. Another difference originates from social expectations and duties: for instance, one could say that parental love is more unconditional and altruistic, and requires a self-abnegation that is not paralleled in filial love. Such a characterization, however, is culturally dependent: in some traditions, as for instance in the Confucian one, it is filial piety that is expected to be unconditional and self-abnegating.³ Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between the social duties that come with the parent–child bond, and love itself.⁴ The two can and do come apart: parents can fulfill their duties toward their children, but not love them, and vice versa.⁵ This difference is not just fairly commonsensical, but ratified by the law: parents, even loving ones, who neglect their duties are charged with abuse, but unloving parents who do not neglect their duties are not.

But there is a crucial and persisting difference between parental and filial love, one which is not culturally relative: if and how parents love their children has a central role in the healthy development of the children. It has been shown conclusively that children need to be loved by their caregivers in order to thrive not only psychologically, but also physically.⁶ Additionally, how much and how well a child is loved by their parent has a large impact on how much and how well a child will love their parents, and any other person later in life. This is another respect in which filial love and parental love are cross-culturally asymmetrical. It is a feature of the normal development of many animals that their attachment to their parents is strongly dependent on how the parents interact with them.

Such preeminence of parental love may in part explain why we have the cultural ideal that I described in the introduction: we realize how crucial it is, for our development as functional human beings, to be loved and nurtured by our parents, and therefore uphold the belief that anything short of unconditional parental love is psychologically abnormal and morally impermissible.