

## LOVE

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"[L]ove is not merely a contributor - one among others - to meaningful life. In its own way it may underlie all other forms of meaning....by its very nature love is the principal means by which creatures like us seek affective relations to persons, things, or ideals that have value and importance for us (Singer 1994: 2).

### I. The Look of Love

From Michaelangelo's *Madonna con Bambino* to Jamini Roy's *Mother and Child*, from Lucien Levy-Dhurmer's *Salome* to Picasso's and Chagall's *The Lovers* and many of the erotic sculptures of Khajuraho, we see the same look of love on the faces of the lovers. Stated thus, the claim seems surprising, for it is commonplace to think of the emotions of erotic and maternal love as discontinuous. Yet the fact that we perceive as love the emotion depicted on all these faces suggests an implicit awareness of a primordial emotion of love that is common to both types of love. And on reflection this is just as it should be, since for most of us the first look of love, forming an indelible image of love, is the look of delight and tenderness on the mother's face. If this look is the primordial experience of being loved and the first lesson in learning to love, then one would expect delight or tenderness to be present as a strand in different sorts of loving relationships. It may have been his recognition of this commonality in all love that led Aristotle to describe as philia - variously translated as love or friendship (Vlastos 1981: 3) - the love that exists between parent and child, wife and husband, siblings, as well as "just friends" (Nicomachean Ethics (NE): Bk. VIII). And, indeed, cross-cultural studies of the facial expressions of men and women in situations where they might be expected to feel philia for

each other bear this out.

When men and women are experiencing companionate love their faces...take on the expression mothers often display when they are happily, tenderly gazing at their young infants. They gaze downward... Their faces soften, and a slight, tender smile plays about their lips (Hatfield & Rapson 1993: 109).

No wonder, then, that God's love (agape) for his creation, and most of all human beings, is often depicted as a joyous contemplation of this creation, and the human love of God as a delighted apprehension of God. Indeed, Augustine calls the love of God frui-love (enjoyment love) as contrasted with uti-love (utility love). Similarly, Irving Singer sees delighting in a person as a central feature of personal love (1994: 2), and C.S. Lewis makes pleasure in a thing essential to all loves and likes, whether it is the need-pleasure of need-love, such as the child's love for the parent, or the appreciative pleasure of appreciative love, which sees the loved object as lovable because of its inherent goodness (Lewis 1988: 25-30). Beloved pets and inanimate or abstract objects of love - a story, a song, a joke, an ideal, a smart new computer program, a mathematical proof - can evoke the same feeling of pleasure or delight. It would seem, then, that some form of pleasure in (the thought of) the loved object's existence, whether the pleasure take the intense form of joy or delight or the quieter form of gladness, and pain in (the thought of) its non-existence, is central to the most general and basic expression of the emotion of love. In love of persons or animals, this basic emotion of love also includes pleasure in the well-being, and pain in the ill-being, of the loved object.

There is more to be discerned from the look of love in the art works mentioned. The look is a perceptive look, a look that seems to really see the loved object, not a falsifying look of projection and fantasy, or a self-centered look of appropriation. And in seeing the loved object as it is, the look of love seems to affirm the object's value in its own right.

Reflection on the look of love, then, serves as a good entry point into various

philosophical issues surrounding love of persons: how to define love, the question whether love is a response to the loved object's value or a bestowal of value, the epistemic significance of love, the metaphysics of love, and the importance of romantic love. For reasons of space, I confine myself to these issues in the sections that follow, even though it means neglecting some worthy contributions in the abundant contemporary philosophical literature on love. And unless otherwise stated, the love I address is love of particular individuals, rather than love of God or of human beings qua human beings (agape).

## II. Defining Love

When we think of the value of love in our lives, it is loving relationships that we have in mind rather than the dispositional or occurrent emotions of love. However, what makes a relationship one of love is the presence in it of the disposition of love, a disposition that leads to recurring emotions of love for the loved individual. Like other adult emotions, the emotion of love is not simply a feeling, but a complex, structured pattern of attention, perception, evaluation, and feeling (de Sousa 1987), which may or may not be (fully) conscious (Greenspan 1988: ch. 2). What, then, is the emotion of love?

I proposed above that pleasure in (the thought of) the existence and well-being of the loved individual, whether the pleasure take the intense form of joy or delight or the quieter form of gladness, and pain in (the thought of) his non-existence or ill-being, are central to the emotion of love. Of course these claims are unqualifiedly true only in the paradigmatic cases of love; for instance, the pain-ridden existence of the loved individual may well lead one, as it leads him, to take no pleasure in his existence. Hence, depending on the facts of the case, the disposition to such pleasure or pain towards the loved individual is central (though, of course, not sufficient) to a loving relationship. Conversely, pleasure in (the thought of) his ill-being or non-existence, and pain in (the thought of) his existence or well-being is central to the emotion of hate. It is true, of course, that even in a loving relationship people can sometimes feel hatred for each other, but to

the extent that they do, their emotions are contrary to their overall dispositions of love. I also remarked in Section I that the look of love seems to be a look that really sees the loved individual and affirms her as valuable in her own right. It seems to say that the loved individual's life is a blessing on one's existence - indeed, on all of existence. As Ortega y Gasset puts it, love is an ongoing affirmation of the loved object as worthy of existence, whereas hate is irritation at the mere existence of the hated object (1957:19). More precisely, this sort of affirmation is of the essence of loving someone for her own sake - i.e., noninstrumentally or as an end in herself. In such "end love" one responds to the other primarily as a subject - a (potential) or actual center of valuation and agency whose interests and perspectives on the world have weight in one's scheme of values. The heightened awareness of the loved individual as valuable in her own right and the delighted affirmation of this value in dispositional love imply an empathy, imagination, and understanding of the other that are part of the virtues of end love. By contrast, in instrumental or means love one sees the other primarily in relation to one's own purposes rather than as valuable in her own right. Accordingly, in such love one's empathy for, and understanding of, the other is partial, restricted to those features that are relevant to one's purposes. Hence, the virtues of instrumental love are also limited.

The idea that love is, at least in part, a response to value is fairly widely accepted (see Section III). But with the notable exceptions of Lewis and Singer, the idea that love centrally involves pleasure in the valued individual's existence and well-being is conspicuous by its absence from modern and contemporary discussions of the topic. This stands in such sharp contrast to ancient discussions, that it calls for an investigation.

#### 1. Love as Concern for the Loved Person's Well-being

In his "Autonomy, Necessity, and Love" (1994/1999a) and "On Caring" (1999b) Harry Frankfurt proposes that love of a person for his own sake - rather than as means to our own - is a matter of being captivated by him and by one's disinterested devotion to his well-being. To be

captivated is to have one's will "rigorously constrained" by the beloved and by one's devotion to him, to regard the imperatives of love as having authority (1999a: 135). Contrary to Kant, it is not only the commands of reason that are categorical, but also "the commands of selfless love" (135-6). Understood thus, love is "an element of ... [the] established volitional nature" of a person, "and hence of his identity as a person" (137). Since a person determines his identity through voluntary acts of endorsement of his motivations, passions, and other psychic elements, a person whose will is constrained by his love is, nevertheless, free rather than enslaved (137). This is the difference between being captivated by love and being enslaved by passion. Frankfurt states that whereas love "ordinarily" involves "strong feelings and beliefs that express, reveal, and support it," the "heart of love .... is neither affective nor cognitive .... but volitional" (129).

But is such categorical, volitional devotion to a person's well-being sufficient to distinguish love from obligation or admiration? I think not. My devotion to my child's interests - the central case of love in Frankfurt's analysis - may well be part of my identity, but it may be motivated by a sense of duty rather than love, a duty that is experienced as an unpleasant burden, no matter how kindly I perform it (doing it kindly being part of the burden of duty). I may even love the self-sacrifice that my mothering involves without loving my child. Again, I may be devoted to someone's welfare out of admiration for his moral character or talents rather than out of love. And not only is admiration in itself different from love (mothers don't usually admire the infants they love), it is consistent with a fundamental, pervasive resentment, even antipathy, towards an individual. No doubt, love can coexist with some feelings of resentment towards an individual, or antipathy towards some of his qualities. But it cannot coexist with a fundamental resentment or antipathy towards him, no matter how devoted one may be to his well-being. One's overall emotional orientation towards a person - the complex of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings mentioned above - is all-important in determining whether or not one loves him.

This analysis bears out Stocker's well-known argument against purely teleological theories of friendship (and, more generally, of ethics), i.e., theories that seek to understand friendship entirely in terms of desires and goals (1981). Using an example of an act of friendship - visiting a friend in the hospital - Stocker shows that although the act *involves* acting for the sake of the friend's well-being, it cannot be *reduced* to it. Indeed, it cannot be reduced to acting *for the sake of* anything, including even for the sake of acting out of friendship. As he points out, for an act to be an act of friendship, it must come out of a certain "character structure," and this involves "forms of directed attention and sensitivity" that cannot be captured by an analysis in terms of desires and goals alone. This point can be applied to all forms of love.

Yet teleological analyses of love, in particular analyses in terms of desire or concern for the loved individual's well-being, are prominent in the philosophical and popular literature. Thus we read that "if x loves y, then x wants to benefit and be with y, etc., and he has these wants .... because he believes y has some determinate characteristics x in virtue of which he thinks it worthwhile to benefit and be with y" (Taylor 1976: 157). Or again, that love is "a particularized altruism" as contrasted with "general benevolence towards humanity" (Martin 1996: 39) or that "love is the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth" (Peck 1978: 81).

One reason for the prevalence of such analyses may lie in a failure to distinguish between love as an emotional disposition and love as a relationship. Undeniably, concern for the loved individual's well-being is essential to a loving relationship, i.e., to the totality of attitudes, actions, and interactions that join people together in love over time. But it doesn't follow that it is an essential part of the emotion of love. Rather, given the contingencies of life, it is a common consequence of love. Hence, a loving relationship cannot be analyzed entirely in terms of concern or desire for the loved individual's well-being.

That such a desire is not of the essence of love is readily seen when we consider that we

can continue to love someone long after death has taken him beyond harm or benefit. What remains in such a case is pleasure in the thought that the loved individual existed and (as the case may be) flourished. There is another reason why love, as such, does not entail the desire for the loved individual's well-being, a reason that has to do with the nature of desire. The object of desire is something we lack, or have but could lose. But, as Aristotle famously pointed out, life is not an endless series of lacks and strivings to satisfy lacks (NE Book I). Life offers resting points of fulfillment, moments of pure happiness when we experience our lives as complete and lacking in nothing, and all desire and concern are stilled. If love implied desire or concern, then love, too, would be stilled at such moments. But this is clearly absurd. Indeed, in our own case, it is precisely at such moments that we feel most strongly that love of existence that may be present at other times as only a positive undertone in our lives. Likewise, love of another can also be simply a joyous contemplation of her existence, a delighted awareness of her life as complete and lacking in nothing. Love of persons, then, can be - as love of God must be - devoid of any concern for their well-being. Love for a person typically gives rise to such concern, as it does other desires, such as the desire for reciprocity, but it does not entail it. Love is essentially an emotional attitude or orientation towards an individual, not a desire or set of desires.

## 2. Love as an Arresting Awareness of Value

David Velleman also sees love as "essentially an attitude toward the beloved himself but not toward any result at all," arguing that any conative - aim-oriented - definition is fundamentally mistaken (Velleman 1999: 354). Love, he says, is "a state of attentive suspension, similar to wonder or amazement or awe," an appreciative apprehension of a self-existent end (360). Concern for the loved individual's well-being, desire for his company, and feelings of attraction, sympathy, empathy, or fascination, do usually accompany love, but they are "independent responses that love merely unleashes." Hence, one can love cranky grandfathers and

meddlesome aunts without enjoying their company or having any concern for their well-being except when occasion demands (353). The essence of love is "an arresting awareness of .... the value inhering in its object .... [that] disarms our emotional defenses .... [and] makes us vulnerable to the other" (360-1). Just as reverence, according to Kant, is the awareness of a person's value that arrests our self-love and prevents us from using him as a mere means to our ends, so love, on Velleman's analysis, is an awareness that "arrests our tendencies toward emotional self-protection from another person" and prevents us from closing ourselves off "from being affected by him" (361).

The idea that love is "an arresting awareness" of a person's inherent value that "disarms our emotional defenses" and "makes us vulnerable to the other" strikingly and illuminatingly captures something fundamental to love. Although the claim that love is a response to a person's inherent value, rather than a bestowal of value, requires qualification (see below), undoubtedly one experiences love as, in part, such a response. And the claim that love makes us vulnerable to the other is obviously true: a "love" that left us unaffected by the loved individual's actions, emotions, and thoughts, by her joys and sorrows, would not be love. Such vulnerability characterizes not only adult love but also children's love for their caretakers and companions, within the limits of their cognitive and emotional capacities. However, does Velleman's definition suffice to distinguish love from awe or fear? An arresting awareness of value that strikes down our emotional defenses and makes us responsive to another's subjectivity can be an awesome or fearful rather than loving awareness. Indeed, this is often the case when one partner is severely lacking in self-esteem. The self-sacrificing, deferential wife, quick to perceive and respond to the needs, feelings, and thoughts of the husband she values, might all the same regard him with a pervasive resentment and fear mixed with her admiration and respect. Whatever love might be, it is surely not this.

Could we save Velleman's account by adding that the vulnerability of love includes not

only an openness to the loved individual, but also an openness of ourselves - our needs and thoughts - to the loved individual? Such openness certainly serves to distinguish love from awe and fear, both of which tend to close us up. But it is hard to imagine this kind of two-way openness to an individual one values without pleasure in his existence and well-being. And even if one could, this characterization would still not give us the essence of love, because it would leave out all loves - such as that of parents for their young children, or teachers for students - from which such openness is absent.

So far as I can see, then, Velleman can distinguish love from awe, fear, or admiration only by making pleasure in the loved person's well-being or existence, or pain in her ill-being or non-existence, part of the essence of love. In other words, it seems that an "arresting awareness" of the inherent value of another person that "disarms our emotional defenses" can be constitutive of love only with the addition that the awareness is pleasurable. An examination of some other attempts to define love without reference to pleasure should serve to strengthen this point.

### 3. Love and Love-Comprising Relations

John Brentlinger casts his net wider, seeking to characterize all love, and not only love of persons, as a positive emotional response to the intrinsic value of the object (1970/89: 137-8). The loved object may be general, such as mankind, animals, and kinds of activities, or it may be individual, such as a person, animal, or thing. What distinguishes love of individual objects from that of general objects is that in the former the positive emotion is some form of attachment. However, like Velleman's definition of love, Brentlinger's definition is also too broad, since reverence or admiration for an individual also satisfies his definition of love as a positive emotional attachment to an individual seen as inherently valuable. If, on the other hand, we adopt Brentlinger's suggestion that the emotional attachment in love is affection (137), then his definition becomes circular, since "affection" is simply a form of love.

A similar problem may be found in W.H. Newton-Smith's analysis of personal love in terms of certain relations - LCRs or love-comprising relations - including knowledge of the loved individual, concern for his welfare, affection, commitment, respect, liking, and attraction (1989: 199-217). The most important of these LCRs, Newton-Smith states, the only ones entailed by the concept of love, are knowledge and "possibly" affection. The others are only generally necessary; hence, they may be absent, or present only to a minimal extent, without defeating the claim that the relationship is one of love (204).

Can love be defined satisfactorily in terms of knowledge of, and affection for, the loved individual? I believe not. In making knowledge necessary to love, Newton-Smith obviously intends to define genuine love, as opposed to infatuation or blind love. But knowledge is also necessary to genuine hate. So what must do all the work of distinguishing genuine love from genuine hate in Newton-Smith's definition is affection. But as we have seen, we cannot define love in terms of affection without circularity. Nor can we define love as knowledge plus the other LCRs - commitment, respect, liking, attraction, and concern for welfare - unless we construe "liking" and "attraction" as affection, which brings us back to the problem of circularity.

Once again, then, it seems that an adequate definition of love requires reference to pleasure. And since love is a form of valuation, to love someone for her own sake implies valuing her for her own sake, for who she is. An obvious interpretation of this idea is that love affirms the inherent value of the individual. We certainly experience love as responding to and affirming the inherent value of the individual. But, as the next section shows, this is neither the only possible interpretation of loving someone for her own sake, nor all of the experience of love.

### III. Love and Value

#### 1. Love as Affirmation of Value

The claim that love is a response to value has been rejected by a long line of Christian thinkers. Starting with Luther, these thinkers have argued that a love that responds to the

beloved's value (whatever the ground or nature of this value) is acquisitive or egoistic and, hence, devoid of moral worth. For a love that is conditional on the beloved's value is tainted with the expectation of, and desire for, gain.

Contrary to Augustine's view, then, it follows that even agape, God's love for us and our love of neighbor, cannot be directed at the inherent goodness of human beings. How, then, should we understand agape - or any love - if it is to have moral worth? Following Luther, Anders Nygren summarizes its main features thus. Agape is 'spontaneous' and "'unmotivated'," given not as a response to the value of the loved object, but rather, out of its own creative force (1953: 75-80). Agape is a love that bestows value on the object by loving. Agape stands "in contrast to all activity with a eudaemonistic motive" and "in contrast to all legalism" (726-7). Agape gives with no thought of gain. Christian love is "a lost love," "the direct opposite of rational calculation" (732). In Kierkegaard's words, "love to one's neighbor makes a man blind in the deepest and noblest and holiest sense, so that he blindly loves every man" (1962: 80).

The interest of this ideal of love is more than historical. The idea that the "highest" love is unconditional and selfless is widespread both in philosophy and in everyday thought. Whereas Nygren directs his criticism of eros to Plato's theory of love in the Lysis and the Symposium, Gregory Vlastos (1973) and George Nakhnikian (1978) explicitly extend it to Aristotle's friendship as well. To understand the criticism, a brief summary of Aristotle's theory would be helpful.

According to Aristotle, adult friendships involve a mutually recognized goodwill based on each other's virtue, pleasantness, or usefulness (NE III, 3). Perfect or complete friendship is one that is based on the virtue of both parties (III, 3-4). It is in such friendships, and only in such friendships, that friends take pleasure in each other for what they truly are, i.e., their virtuous characters. And it is only in such friendships that friends wish each other "to be and to live" (IX, 4) - to flourish - for their friends' sake, not their own. They are also useful to each other in various ways, both through their incidental qualities - wealth, talent, position - and through their good

character. As Aristotle puts it, "good people are both unconditionally good and advantageous for each other. They are pleasant in the same ways too, since good people are pleasant both unconditionally and for each other" (1156b 12-15). By contrast, in utility and pleasure friendships, friends care for each other only or primarily for their incidental qualities, the qualities that make them useful or pleasurable. And so they love their friends for their own sakes, not their friends', and they care about each other's good or bad character only insofar as it profits or pleases them, and not for itself.

Thus, Aristotle's utility and pleasure friendships are forms of what I earlier called instrumental love, and his perfect friendship is a form of noninstrumental or end love. In all forms of end love - friendship, agape, eros, or filial love - one loves the other for his own sake. What distinguishes these loves from each other is the specific intentional object of love, i.e., the description under which the other is loved. Thus, in an intimate relationship of friends and lovers, the object of love is the individual as defined by her central character and personality traits, traits that make her, in a significant sense, "another self." In Aristotle's view, the object of love in perfect friendship is the virtuous individual who is "another self," a "mirror of the soul" (NE 1169b28-1170a4, 1170b1-14; Magna Moralia 1213a10-26; Cooper 1980: 317-34).

Vlastos and Nakhnikian argue that love of another because of his virtues falls short of true love of another for his own sake, because, as Aristotle says, "in loving their friend they love what is good for themselves" (NE 1158a 33-35). Such love, according to Nakhnikian, is no less "transactional" or instrumental than love of another "because of his usefulness," for both are "supposed to rebound [sic] to the satisfaction or benefit of the one who loves" (1978: 287). In loving people for their goodness or lovability, what we seek, ultimately, is our own happiness. We love a person noninstrumentally, for his own sake, according to Nakhnikian and Vlastos, only when we love him or her for whatever he is, that is, unconditionally. Further, only such a love, according to Vlastos, takes as its object the "whole" person, the individual "in the

uniqueness and integrity of his or her individuality" (1973: 31). In such "undemanding love," as Nakhnikian calls it, there can be "no thought of expected returns and no requirement that the person loved be a good [or lovable] human being" (1978: 294). Both Vlastos and Nakhnikian give as an example of such love Aristotle's own example of the mother who loves and wishes well to the child she will never see again, the sort of love that they regard as regrettably absent from his conception of adult friendships.

It would be easy to point out that even for the mother, this is not the ideal situation - the ideal is to love and be loved. It would also be easy to show, citing Aristotle's example of giving up one's life so that one's friend may live and flourish, that the sort of love the mother shows is not only compatible with Aristotle's perfect friendship, but also necessary to it. Last but not least, although the object of parental love is "my child," with all the bonds of nurture and responsibilities that implies, rather than "a virtuous other self," one could question the easy assumption that a parental love that remains entirely unaffected by the child's virtue or vice is the best kind of love - if it is love at all. (Here it is instructive to consider that loving parents who have lost their children tend to remember them as good - good children, or good human beings.) But I will leave these issues aside to focus on the claim that loving someone for his goodness makes the love instrumental because such love is sought as a good to oneself, a source of satisfaction or happiness.

This disapproving view seems both unappealing and implausible. But it cannot be met by the common argument that getting happiness from loving someone for his goodness does not make the love instrumental because the happiness results from the love, it does not motivate it. This counterargument fails on three counts. For one, even if it is true that happiness is entirely the result of love, surely the belief that it has this result is central to the motivation for seeking love in the first place, despite the well-advertised burdens and hazards of love. And it is central to the motivation for maintaining love. After all, we're not astounded to find ourselves feeling

happy when we find someone to love, or when we see our loved ones flourishing - we knew this all along (even though the joy we feel when we actually find love is, in Dante's words, "a new and gentle miracle").<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the argument that love is not instrumental because happiness is a result, not a motivation, of love, implicitly concedes the unwarranted premise that if happiness were any part of the motivation for seeking or keeping love, love would be instrumental. Thirdly, the argument wrongly concedes the even more crucial premise that happiness is entirely the result of loving another. If I am right that loving someone implies taking pleasure in her existence and well-being, and pleasure is an element of happiness, then loving is not only a source of happiness but itself one of the emotions and activities constitutive of happiness. Hence, even if agape is unconditional, to count as love at all it must be inherently pleasurable and happiness-making. And, indeed, this is close to Nakhnikian's own view. The "mental states and dispositions" of those who love undemandingly, he says, are "suffused with instinsically good feelings," and "[t]he degree to which a human being is undemandingly loving is the degree to which he is joyful and unhysterically energetic" (314). Presumably, Nakhnikian would not say that those who are motivated by their awareness of the intrinsic benefits of unconditional love to seek to remain or become (more) unconditionally loving [comma deleted] thereby turn their love into instrumental love. But if they can be absolved of the charge of instrumentality, then so can must the Aristotelian friend.

How, then, can Nakhnikian consistently disparage Aristotle's virtue friendship on the grounds of its alleged instrumentality? He might say that what makes Aristotle's virtue friendship - as, indeed, all non-agapaic loves - instrumental, is that they are conditional on the loved individual's value. Since agape is independent of the loved individual's value, the happiness derived from agapaic love is also independent of the individual's value. In other words, since this crucial benefit of love is self-generated, the loved person cannot be seen as an instrument to the benefit.

But is there any such thing as unconditional love? Can even God love unconditionally? We can agree with Yeats that God loves us for ourselves alone and not our yellow hair (Yeats 1933) - if loving people for themselves alone means loving them for who they truly are, and who they truly are makes them worth loving. Indeed, contrary to Yeats, even we humans can love others for themselves alone and not their pretty hair. But it seems impossible for even God to love us completely unconditionally, independently of any worth in us. For if God's love is not motivated by our goodness or lovability, it becomes mysterious why it is selectively directed at us (Badhwar 1987, Kosman 1976).<sup>2</sup> If, as Luther puts it, agape is "an overflowing love .... which says: I love thee, not because thou art good, for I draw my love not from thy goodness (Frommigkeit) as from an alien spring; but from mine own well-spring," then why should God single out us humans for his love? Why should He not love all his creation equally? But let us say that He does love everything equally. Does this solve the problem? Not quite. For surely we are not supposed to love all things equally, from rocks to roaches to Rolling Stones. So the mystery remains how our preferential love for human beings over rocks and roaches can be completely unconditional. To dispel the mystery, the defenders of unconditional love must at least concede that agape - understood now as love of humans qua humans - takes as its object the good or God - the humanity - in each individual. On this older, Augustinian interpretation, agape is no longer completely unconditional, and we can explain why God loves us selectively (if He does): He loves us selectively because humanity as such is worth loving.

We may conclude, then, that agape can be unconditional only in the sense of being unmotivated by the worth that distinguishes one human being from another, but not in the sense of being unmotivated by his human nature and worth, of the worth that distinguishes him from nonhumans. So, once again, either agape is also instrumental, or conditional love can be non-instrumental, and the identification of the conditional with the instrumental is mistaken. Both instrumental love and non-instrumental love are conditional on features that make the other

worth loving to the lover, whatever these features might be, and both are a good to those who love. As discussed in Section I above, what makes love of someone end love is that the individual is valued for her own sake, i.e., as a subject, a center of valuation and agency. And in friendship the intentional object is the individual as defined by her character and personality traits.

So far I have argued that love is necessarily a good to the lover because it is an inherently pleasurable affirmation of value. But this is only one aspect of the benefit of love. Love is also a good to the lover because to love someone is necessarily to experience the loved object as good for oneself; something experienced as bad for oneself (or neither good nor bad) is an object of aversion (or indifference). Finally, love is a good to oneself because it involves self-expression and self-creation. As Aristotle puts it, "loving is like production" because in loving we actualize ourselves and, thus, live our lives more vividly and enjoyably than as mere receivers of love (NE 1168a 5-20). All creation or production of value - material, intellectual, artistic, spiritual, or biological - in activities we love expresses and shapes our identities. Indeed, love seems to be a necessary condition of a strong identity and appropriate self-love (Brown 1987: 22, Lear: 1990, Frankfurt 1999a: 24-5). Nothing calls for the investment of self in valued objects and activities as love does, an investment that shapes the contours of our identities and creates a self worth loving. In short, love is the fuel that feeds our lives, and the primary source of identity and meaning and, thus, of happiness. A particular love may not be a net good, of course, since it may bring grief - even devastating grief and loss of identity - in its wake. But as the primary affective bond "to persons, things, or ideals that have value and importance for us" (Singer 1994: 2), love is an indispensable part of a meaningful life. And if this is the fundamental reason that we are motivated to seek and maintain love, as both common sense and philosophy suggest, then, once again, our desire for love is fundamentally self-interested. In short, contrary to the advocates of unconditional love, love is selfless neither in its motivation nor in its

psychological structure. We desire love for our own good, and in loving another for her own sake, we also love her as a good to ourselves. Yet what is called into question by this analysis may be not the moral status of love, but the moral status of the ideal of selflessness, and the cogency of the conception of the moral self that lurks behind this ideal.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Love as Bestowal of Value

The idea that love is a response to the value inherent in the individual has been rejected not only by the Lutheran interpreters of agape, but also by romantic writers like Stendhal and Proust. According to these writers, love creates or bestows value on the loved object. But how exactly does loving someone make her valuable? One might understand how in the case of God, if we see him and his acts and attitudes as the bearers of all value (although it is then hard to see why the act of creating human beings did not invest them with value). On this picture, God's love for humans makes them worth loving the way a gifted musician's love of performing makes an otherwise nondescript composition worth performing. In a sense, then, in loving us, what God loves is the effects of his own love. Likewise, if we are mere conduits for God's love, so that our love for other human beings is, at bottom, the love of God flowing through us, as Luther and Nygren hold, then in loving others what we love are the effects of God's love. Unfortunately, this does not help in a secular understanding of human love. A human being who thought of his love as investing inherently value-less human beings with value through his love would be a megalomaniac - not exactly the ideal lover.

How, then, does Stendhal understand the idea of the lover bestowing value on his beloved? As crystallization, the process of attributing greater and greater perfections to the beloved on the basis of his own desires - while believing that he is actually discovering these perfections in the beloved. The lover's passion endows the beloved with perfections the way the salt mines of Salzburg encrust the barren bough with shining crystals. On Stendhal's view, then, love is a form of projection rather than perception, and the object of love is a fantasy, a creature

of one's own imagination, rather than the actual individual.

Such blindness is no doubt true of some people's loves, especially in the first stages of love - in the process of "falling in love" that Ortega y Gasset describes as an impoverishment of consciousness (1957: 48-54). But in identifying all love with blind, unrealistic love, Stendhal implies either that we are incapable of loving people for their inherent worth, the worth they possess independently of our projections - or else, that no one has any such worth. But why we should believe either proposition he doesn't say. Nor does there seem to be any good reason to believe it.

Is there anything to be said for bestowal if Stendhal's view is false - if, in fact, genuine love is not blind? I think there is. Reflection reveals a rich array of creative possibilities in an intimate relationship of friends or lovers, possibilities that are not only compatible with clear-sightedness but that require it. In such a relationship, love creates value in the loved individual by helping to actualize a potential that may be hidden even from her. Such a creation rests on a discovery of the potential for value - a gift that rests on an acknowledgement. This idea is powerfully expressed in the Symposium, where love is seen as "the power by which, recognizing the beauty in another, we bring forth that beauty by eliciting it" (Kosman: 159). To love is not only to respond to value but also, thereafter, to seek value and to expect to find it. This optimistic, value-seeking spirit makes love imaginative and discerning, thereby enabling the lover to perceive potentials that even the beloved cannot see. This is the "formative attentive regard" that Leila Tov-Ruach sees as central to love, the "intensely focused attention" on the individual's [potentially] constitutive traits that helps to form and maintain those traits (Tov-Ruach 1980: 468). The value-seeking spirit also makes love generous and trusting, enabling the lover to "take a bet" on the actualization of her beloved's potential and act in the expectation of its actualization. If the beloved also acts in the spirit of love - love of his beloved and love of his own self - he will respond by fulfilling this expectation. The value that emerges, then, is a joint creation, a joint

bestowal, by the lover and the beloved.

This is one of the ways in which deep, ongoing love can help create not only one's own identity, but also the identity of the other. As Robert Solomon puts it, "A theory of love is .... primarily a theory of the .... shared self, a self mutually defined and possessed by two people" (1988: 24). But love could not play this creative role if it were not perceptive and honest in its evaluation of the beloved's potential; a bestowal based on wishful thinking creates a fantasy, not a shared self.

There is a second sense in which love can bestow value, namely, by endowing the beloved's desires and ideals with value not because they are objectively lovable, but just because they are hers. This is what Singer means by bestowal when he states that human love is both a response to value (or, as he puts it, an "appraisal") and a bestowal of value (1989: passim, 1994: passim). This kind of bestowal encapsulates the grain of truth in Stendhal's view of love as projection. However, the projection is realistic and benign so long as the lover realizes that it is grounded in his love, and his love is grounded in features that give him good reason to love his beloved. This is one of the ways in which love can be non-rational without being irrational or inexplicable. It would become an irrational projection only if the lover thought that, for example, his beloved's absent-mindedness and untidiness were lovable independently of his love for her, so that those who failed to find them lovable were simply obtuse.

What I have said about the first kind of bestowal - the bestowal that consists in bringing out the best in the other - is also true, mutatis mutandis, of agapaic love of humans qua humans, and love of associates, students, or teachers. And both kinds of bestowal are also to be found in familial love, especially parental love. Loving parents are creative the way an artist is creative with her material: they endeavor to form the child in the light of their values, but within the limits set by the child's temperament and, later, by her own interests and values. Indeed, in the case of parental love the question often asked is not how it can bestow value, but how it can be a

response to inherent value. Frankfurt thinks it obvious that our children are valuable to us only because we love them, that our love is not a response to their inherent value (1999a). This would be true if "inherent value" was identical with moral value, i.e., the value of good character. However, the value or lovability of an individual is not limited to her moral value, or even her capacity for moral value. The inherent value parents respond to when they "fall in love" with their newborns is the wonder of an independent life unfolding according to the laws of its own nature - a value we respond to in other forms of life as well. But their love (like the love of friends or lovers) is also a response to a relational value, the value of this wonderful life being theirs to nurture and guide. And for biological parents there is the additional relational value of being the "first cause" of this marvelous life - the value of being a creator.

To summarize the discussion so far: love as an emotion is both a delighted, affirming, response to an individual's inherent and relational value, and a realistic and benign projection of value, whereby formerly aversive or indifferent features become lovable simply because they belong to the beloved. In an ongoing loving relationship there is also another kind of bestowal: bestowal through an actualization of the other's potential. Ongoing love, we may say, is a response to both actual and potential value. Finally, loving someone as an end is not the same as loving him unconditionally. The end-instrumental distinction is a different distinction from the conditional-unconditional distinction. The conditions or reasons for instrumental or non-instrumental love vary, but all love, including agape, is conditional. There is no such thing as "love full-stop" - a love without reasons (Hamlyn 1989).

This is not to deny the powerful role of non-rational factors in erotic love, or even in friendship. Insofar as our early loves play an important role in our lives, some of the incidental qualities of those early love objects - a familiar gesture, a tone of voice, a fragrance, a smile - can serve to first attract us to an individual and, if the attraction turns to love, can continue to act as powerful attractors and add to the phenomenological richness of love. The same

observations apply to the role of chemical factors, especially (but not only) in romantic love (Crenshaw 1996). But when these incidental qualities attract us to someone we can neither love, nor even like, for her central qualities, the qualities that define her self, and we fail to understand (or care about) the nature of our attraction, we may be led to the kind of projection that makes for blind love, and turns love's bonds to bondage. Blind love, a love based on illusion, whether self-induced or innocent, is like a conversation with a make-believe interlocutor - love for a make-believe beloved. For the description under which we love the other fails to capture the real person. Genuine love of another is love of a real other - a love that succeeds in hitting its target by seeing the beloved veridically. In what follows, then, I will talk only about such love.

#### IV. The Epistemic Significance of Love

##### 1. Love as Offering Reliable Testimony

The look of love does more than see the loved individual veridically: it also shows the loved individual what it sees. The psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott talks about the loving mother reflecting the baby's facial expressions and mental states on her own face, thereby giving the baby a concrete image of its own psychological states (1989: 111-18). The mother's look of love, then, is the first avenue to self-awareness and self-understanding. But all love is such an avenue, and especially the love of friends - both those who are "just friends," and those who are also lovers. For friends serve, in Aristotle's metaphor, as mirrors of each other's souls. No doubt strangers, even enemies, can also see veridically and offer self-understanding - to know is not to love even if to love is to know. But strangers and enemies may distort as often as they reflect. Friends, on the other hand, must bear reliable testimony about each other (Friedman 1993: 197-200).

To say that friends "must" bear reliable testimony is to make both a conceptual and a moral point. In Adrienne Rich's words, "[a]n honorable human relationship - that is, one in which two people have the right to use the word 'love' - is a process....of refining the truths they can tell

each other" (1979). To the extent that a relationship is dishonest, it is lacking both in love and in honor, for it is lacking in trustworthiness. "We take so much of the universe on trust" - and especially the trust of those we love. We allow our "universe to change in minute, significant ways" on the basis of what we are told by those we love. When we find the ground cut out from under our trust, we are forced to "reexamine the universe, to question the whole instinct and concept of trust." This is especially so when the other's dishonesty is about her very self, about who she is - or when it is about who she thinks we are and why she loves us. For such dishonesty strikes at the very heart of the relationship - the shared and mutually discovered and created self. Aristotle declares that those who pretend to be friends for our character, but in fact are friends for other reasons, are worse than "debasers of currency, to the extent that .... [their] evildoing debases something more precious" (NE 1165b 10ff). Genuine friends, then, offer reliable testimony - about each other, about themselves, and about the world. Enemies need not, and often do not.

The epistemic role of friendship in our lives is often recognized as one of its chief values (LaFollette 1996: 133-35). For seeing ourselves and the world veridically - being in touch with our values, desires, and traits, and the world around us - is necessary for living authentically and acting rightly.<sup>4</sup>

But why is friendship - whether between lovers or between "just friends" - thought to play a privileged role in self-understanding? Surely parental or agapeic love can also give us insight into ourselves. Thus, an agapeic act from a stranger may show a person her fundamental strength as a human being in a way that changes her perspective on her abilities, and parental love may reveal her history to her in a way that illuminates her present. However, friendship has features that make it a privileged source of self-understanding and even, perhaps, necessary for adequate self-understanding.

One feature is simply that friendships are based on deeply shared values that make the

friend "another self." It is by virtue of this fact that the friend serves as a "mirror of the soul" and makes the other "psychologically visible" to himself, i.e., aware of himself "as an objective existent" (Branden 1980: 72-77). We do, of course, gain a sense of ourselves "out there" in the world when we express our values and ideas in word and deed. But, as Branden explains, it is only when we see ourselves mirrored in another consciousness that we achieve something akin to a perceptual self-awareness, to seeing our faces reflected in a mirror. In the words of a Biblical writer, as "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17)). When we meet someone who responds to the world as we do, and responds to us in consonance with our self-concept, we perceive ourselves reflected in that person, and achieve a more vivid sense of our selves (Branden 1980: 97-105). We can also better understand our own traits and actions by observing them in a friend, where we are free of the biases and self-doubts that can mask them from ourselves (Sherman 1989: 142-43). To be a mirror of a friend's soul, one need not share all of the friend's traits or values - in the context of a fundamental harmony of deep values, complementary traits and values can be just as revealing. The obstacle to mutual understanding and self-understanding is not differences as such, but differences that create dissonance, so that what one finds repugnant the other finds admirable.

That such value dissonance is not a barrier to agape or parental love simply shows the crucial difference between friendship and these loves. Agape and parental love are independent of the loved individual's fundamental characteristics as the particular person she is; neither love is focused on the joys, griefs, needs, and achievements of the individual as defined by her central character and personality traits. Agape as such is based on, and responds to, the other's humanity, not on individuating traits. Witness the priest's act of loving kindness to Jean Valjean in Les Miserables. Again, parents' love for their children is for individuals they have nurtured and played a primary role in forming, individuals for whose well-being and actions they consequently bear - or feel they bear - a special responsibility, regardless of their values. Insofar as this

perspective informs their love for their adult children, their love is parental love. And insofar as our love for our parents is love for those who have nurtured us, our love for them is the love of children.

Literature is more akin to friendship in many ways than agape or parental love. Books provide us with whole worlds of people, events, and thoughts to explore and, sometimes, to identify with. "We read to know that we are not alone," says Lewis in the biographical movie, Shadowlands, repeating a line told him by a student, adding, "We love [another] to know we are not alone." Through identification with a friend, we learn to look at things from another point of view, to understand and feel in new ways and, thus, to realize the vast potentiality for different forms of experience (Telfer 240-41). Literature, too, enables us "to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts....[to] become these other selves" (Lewis 1961: 137, 139). Wayne Booth explicitly likens the reader's relationship to fiction to a friendship, even classifying this relationship along the lines of Aristotle's pleasure, utility, and character friendships (Booth 1988). Like human friends, the books we read and reflect upon, both fiction and non-fiction, can also encourage us to lead the examined life. Francine Hughes's story of liberation from a sadistic husband is a particularly dramatic example of this (McNulty 1980).

But friendship has a feature that neither books nor other loves - nor, again, psychoanalysis - have: the intimate, mutual self-disclosure that Laurence Thomas calls "privileged self-disclosure" (Thomas 1989: 104-8). Books disclose themselves to us, but cannot hear us - therapists hear us but do not disclose themselves to us. Unlike analysts or books, friends neither analyse us nor serve as objects for our contemplation or analysis. They are other selves who interact with us, responding to us and requiring that we respond to them in appropriate ways. This is why, as Martha Nussbaum puts it in her discussion of Plato's theory of love, "only personal love draws a person into the exchange of choices and thoughts that will

suffice to reveal, over time, the nature of .... values" like justice or wisdom, in oneself and in the world (Nussbaum 1990: 328). And the personal love best suited to such an exchange is that of equals, i.e., the love of friends and lovers. The inequality of parent-child love, stemming from the difference in perspectives and responsibilities, prevents such privileged self-disclosure.

Friendship and romantic love, by contrast, are based on shared perspectives and responsibilities, relating independent and interdependent adults, equally giving and receiving. And so it makes possible the sharing of lives and privileged self-disclosure that enable deep mutual understanding, self-understanding, and understanding of the world.

Being seen as we are is also a source of deep pleasure (NE IX, 9). Paradoxically, however, we can satisfy the need for psychological visibility and take pleasure in being seen only if we are already largely visible to ourselves - and like what we see. Those who do not like themselves can take pleasure neither in being seen, nor in seeing themselves, as they are. Nor does it help if they self-deceptively construct a more likable self and succeed in passing it off for the genuine article. For then they cut themselves off from true friendship. For reasons we have already seen, to the extent that others are deceived about us, we fail to be the actual objects of their love. The same is true of self-love: to the extent that we are self-deceived, our self-love fails to hit its target.

## 2. Love As a Flattering Mirror

However, the claim that true friends and lovers see each other veridically and bear reliable testimony is open to challenge even if we reject the love-as-projection thesis of writers like Stendhal. On some views, the daily wear and tear of life make sustaining a relationship of friendship or romantic love a matter of selective focus, a judicious mixture of remembering and forgettings, of perceptiveness and blindness. Thus, William Hazlitt describes true friendship as "a flattering mirror" in which we see "our virtues magnified and our errors softened" (Hazlitt 1991). Hence, even if it is false that "love is blind," it may still be true that love often "closes its

eyes".<sup>5</sup> If this is the nature of love, it follows that those who see us with steadily open eyes cannot love us. (By the same logic it follows that we can love ourselves only if we often close our eyes to ourselves.) On this view, then, the fabric of a close friendship or romantic relationship is shot through with self-deception and mutual deception.

What can be said for this view? It is true that there are such relationships: "mutual admiration societies" in which the parties are blissfully oblivious to each other's faults and to the views and needs of "outsiders" (Lewis 1988: 112-16). It is also true that friends and lovers who hold up "flattering mirrors" to each other are more truly loving than those who, in a spirit of jealousy and competitiveness, hold up unflattering mirrors to each other. But these are not the only alternatives. There are relationships that avoid both pitfalls, combining perceptiveness and honesty with a strength of spirit that rejoices in the admirable more than it laments the unadmirable. A love that needs neither self-deception nor deception to survive is surely stronger than a love that does. And it is only such relationships that have the honesty and mutual trust necessary for true intimacy (LaFollette 1996: 129-31, Martin 1996: 120-7). Further, the view that a truly loving relationship requires exaggeration of each other's virtues and blindness to each other's faults seems incoherent. For it suggests both that we can love someone only if we think of him as perfectly virtuous - and that we require him to have the vices of deception and self-deception. There is, to be sure, a desperate way out of this incoherence, namely, to adopt the view that such deception is not a vice but a virtue in a close relationship. But the implausibility of this view is a measure of the implausibility of the view that love is a flattering mirror. An internally consistent and plausible view of love implies that it is in the nature of love to discourage mutual deception and self-deception, and that to the extent that it does not, it is deficient as love. In short, genuine love both presupposes self-understanding and understanding of the other, and leads to greater understanding of oneself and of the other.

But what is this self that is made visible, understood, and recreated in love? What is the

ultimate object of love?

## V. Love and Metaphysics

### 1. Persons, Properties, and Bare Particulars

I said earlier that the basis and object of end love in friendship and eros is the individual as constituted by her central features, the properties that make her the distinct person she is.<sup>6</sup> But this seems to imply that if someone with essentially the same central properties came along, the newcomer could replace the old love. Like two equally valuable pieces of gold, two equally lovable loves should be interchangeable. But this conclusion contradicts the widespread intuition that love of someone as an end is non-fungible and irreplaceable.

Robert Nozick's strategy for preserving irreplaceability is simply to deny that love of individuals is love of their characteristics.

An adult may come to love another because of the other's characteristics; but it is the other person, and not the characteristics, that is loved.... One loves the particular person one actually encountered .... [L]ove is historical, attaching to persons .... and not to characteristics (1974: 168).

There is much to be said for Nozick's point that love is historical and cannot just be transferred "to someone else with the same characteristics, even to one who 'scores' higher for these characteristics." But how well-taken is his distinction between persons and their properties? Are persons bare particulars, Metaphysically Changeless and Simple Essences? Again, how does his conception of love as historical account for the demise of love? Nozick's dichotomy between the role of properties in love's origin and of history in love's continuation leaves no room for the fact that a shared history itself gives rise to new properties, properties that partly explain both the continuation and the demise of love. Last but not least, his explanation of the continuation of love runs afoul of the fact that a friendship or romantic relationship that attaches itself to a person just because that was the person initially

encountered, regardless of who he has become, is simply irrational. Indeed, it cannot be understood as love at all rather than addiction (Peele 1977).

## 2. Persons as Rational Natures

Velleman also seeks to preserve irreplaceability by developing a Kantian account of love of persons: he denies that loving persons as ends requires seeing them as unique. According to Velleman, love of a person is love of his rational nature, and this is, at bottom, "a capacity of appreciation or valuation - a capacity to care about things in that reflective way which is distinctive of self-conscious creatures like us" (1999: 365). A person's rational nature is "his core of reflective concern" and the ground of his special value: dignity (366-7). Love and respect are different responses to the same value.

Velleman's analysis of loving a person as an end in terms of loving his rational nature, and of his rational nature in terms of his "core of reflective concern" and dignity, captures in striking language the fact that love is, in whole or in part, an attitude towards the irreplaceable value of a person, and that this value has to do with his inner self, his integrity as a subject. However, a person's dignity is something that is shared by all rational persons; it is not something that distinguishes one from another. How, then, can love of one individual fail to be replaceable by love of another? Following Kant, Velleman answers that both love and respect are modes of "appreciation, in which we respond to .... [a person's] value with an unwillingness to replace her or to size her up against potential replacements" (368). This, he says, is the only proper response to the special value of persons: their dignity.

I agree with Velleman that seeing a person as an irreplaceable center of reflective concern is the only proper response to his value, and that this response does not require uniqueness of value; numerical uniqueness suffices. To respond to a person's dignity is to see her as a numerically distinct center of reflective valuation, with (I would add) a distinct capacity for creating value and a distinct perspective on the world. It is this response that lies at the heart

of both respect and agape, in which we value all persons as ends in themselves on account of a certain capacity. But how does Velleman's analysis account for the selectivity of other forms of love? On the view I have defended so far, what distinguishes friendship and eros from agape is that in these loves, the object of love is not simply the individual as a center of reflective concern, but rather, the embodied individual with certain character and personality traits that, in part, express her reflective concern. For Velleman, these individuating properties are only the "empirical persona" through which we see the inner person (371), and love is selective only because "the human body and human behavior are imperfect expressions of personhood, and we are imperfect interpreters" (372). My finding you lovable depends upon how well your empirical persona expresses your inner value to me; your empirical persona has no essential connection to your value as a person and, hence, cannot be (any part of) the ultimate object of my love.

On this Kantian analysis, both character and personality, the set of dispositions to think, feel, and act that individuate us, are swept into the category of the empirical persona and contrasted with the purely rational self. But the adequacy of this metaphysics of the person and of Velleman's explanation of the selectivity of love are called into question when we consider their implications. His explanation implies that, ceteris paribus, the better we are at interpreting personhood, the less discriminating we must be as friends and lovers. Hence, for example, those who are put off by scoundrels are those who are simply unable to see and value the rational self within. Barring the constraints of time and energy, the most insightful of us must be the most inclusive lovers. Just as Plato's lover in the Symposium progresses from love of one beautiful body to love of all beautiful bodies, so Velleman's lover, given enough time and energy, must progress from love of one person's value to love of all persons' value.

There is yet another problem with Velleman's conception of the self, a problem that brings us back to the issue of irreplaceability. As already noted, Velleman's account is invaluable

in showing that irreplaceability in end love does not imply uniqueness of value. It helps us to see that it is only in instrumental love that having the same value implies replaceability: one gold coin is as good as another. But his rational-empirical dichotomy implies that all the rich phenomenological differences between, say, two friendships, are connected to the friends' non-essential features, and have no connection to that which he regards as the sole ground of their value: their rational natures. In other words, Velleman's account implies that the experience of the non-fungibility of love is not connected to what he regards as the deep facts about persons or our love for persons. But this sits ill with the experience of love in friendship and other non-agapaic loves. For while it is true that we love our friends as numerically irreplaceable persons with the same rational natures, it also seems true that we love them not just as rational natures (in Velleman's Kantian sense) but also as individuals with distinct character and personality traits. It is this that explains why we typically see individuals as qualitatively irreplaceable and experience our (non-agapaic) love for them as phenomenologically non-fungible. For example, my love for Alpha seems to be not completely replaceable by my love for Zeta because they are essentially different persons. The patterns of attention, perception, evaluation, and feeling that constitute my love for Alpha and Zeta seem to have qualitatively distinct and irreplaceable value because their selves have qualitatively (and not just numerically) distinct, irreplaceable value.<sup>7</sup> If I lose Alpha, I will mourn his loss as a distinct loss that cannot be completely made up by my love for Zeta; if I gain a new love, I will celebrate it as a distinct gain, and not simply as a replacement for Alpha.

### 3. The Irreplaceable You

But is such qualitative uniqueness possible? The fundamental character and personality traits that define a self make up a finite list; how can two honest, optimistic, fair-minded, bright, generous friends be different in any essential respect? One might like tennis, the other swimming, one might like Chinese cabbage, the other brussels sprouts, one might be neurotic

about flying, the other about elevators. But this does not make them unique as persons.

My suggestion is that the route to qualitative uniqueness as persons lies through a "thicker" conception of the person, the conception we use in making everyday distinctions when, for example, we say of two siblings that they are both wonderful "in their own ways," or that Jo March, Elizabeth Bennett, and Jane Eyre are all spunky characters, but no one could mistake one for another. On this conception of the self or person, the fundamental properties that define a person include both the abstractly described central properties, and the concrete style of their expression. Of course, the distinction between abstractly described properties and style, like the distinction between matter and form, is only a relative one: the style in which one expresses certain properties can itself be described as a set of properties, and the properties expressed can be described as a style of facing life. The important point is that abstractly described properties do not give the essence of a person as the object of (non-agapaic) love.

This way of individuating persons seems right when we consider that an individual's properties are the result of his encounters with the world, colored by and expressed in his particular, historical, existence. Thus, for example, Cyrano de Bergerac would not be the person he is without his poetic wit and physical daring. His wit and daring are an expression of his independence of mind, his courage and loyalty, his passion for the "white plume of freedom". What makes these properties uniquely his is the style of their expression, what makes his poetic wit and physical daring uniquely his is the properties they express. Only those who understand this about Cyrano love him for what he essentially is.

This thick description of the object of love makes love of persons as ends irreplaceable for all practical purposes. However, it does not block the logical possibility of replaceability in someone's affections, because it does not block the logical possibility of spiritual twins. As studies of identical twins suggest, two people with essentially the same genetic endowment, living in essentially the same circumstances, will likely make essentially the same choices and

become essentially the same persons. So we cannot deny the possibility, as Nozick does in a later work, that the totality of a person's fundamental properties can be duplicated (Nozick 1989: 81). Even the fact that over time two people in a love relationship can change each other in essential ways does not show that duplicability is logically impossible. For had I encountered Beta instead of his spiritual twin, Alpha, Beta would have acquired the same properties as Alpha. And so my love of Alpha would have been replaceable by my love of Beta. The fact that it is not is due to purely contingent - though deeply grounded - reasons.

However, such deeply grounded contingent phenomenological irreplaceability seems to give us all we want: when people wonder if they are replaceable in their loved ones' lives, they are not asking the philosopher's question whether it is logically possible that they are replaceable. Hence it is hasty to conclude that the intuition that "the beloved is irreplaceable is just a bit of popular ideology, an illusion " (Soble 1997a: 357).

## VI. Romantic Love

### 1. Friends and Lovers

We have seen how love, and especially friendship and romantic love, both creates the self and illuminates it. Is there a significant difference between friendship and romantic love in these or other respects? Certainly this is the commonsense view of the matter, one that philosophers tend to share. On this view, it is most of all in romantic love that two autonomous individuals with well-defined selves both discover their separate selves, and redefine themselves in terms of each other. As many writers have noted, love "involves a transition .... from I and he to I and thou" (Scruton 1986: 231), a "desire to form and constitute a new entity in the world, what might be called a we" (Nozick 1989: 70). At the same time, "[I]ove is ultimately a matter of personal identity, and falling in love, including love at first sight, is a kind of ....reaching or (in Plato's terms) `grasping' for one's future and better self" (Solomon 1988: 146). Lewis notes that, unlike friends, lovers are intensely absorbed in each other and in their love: "[I]overs are normally

face to face, absorbed in each other; Friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest" (1988: 91).

Have Lewis and the others captured an essential difference between friendship and eros? Or have they merely expressed the male view of friendship? Male friends, says Louise Bernikow, "are shoulder to shoulder. Female friends are more often eye to eye" (1981: 119). Bernikow has a point, although some male friendships are also "eye to eye": witness Montaigne's love for his friend, Etienne de La Boetie (1580/1991: 187-99). But Lewis and the other writers cited here also have a point: there are important differences between friendship and eros. The absorption of lovers in each other contains a passion and yearning for union missing from friendships such, a yearning to merge with one another that is hypostasized in Aristophanes' myth of love as the desire to unite with one's "other half" (Plato Symposium: 189a-193d). Again, in contrast to friendship, imagination and fantasy play a large role in eros, creating for the lovers "a world of their own" (Solomon 1988: 162). Except in childhood and youth, the desire for identification with a friend falls short of the desire for union, and the world that adult friends create together is more the work of shared values than fantasy.

## 2. The Desire for Union

But what is it about eros that explains the desire for union, the importance of fantasy, and the intensity of feeling and experience? The obvious answer is "sex": eros is sexual or genital love. Eros is "sexual in origin and motivation," says Solomon, "it depends upon sex, thrives upon sex, utilizes sex as its medium, its language and often its primary content" (43). But sex is "a spiritual impulse as well as a physical one" (Solomon 43-4), and the visibility and the pleasures it affords are unique in their "integration of .... perceptions, emotions, values, and thought" (Branden 85, 87). Erotic love involves and celebrates the self more completely and thoroughly than other loves, because it involves and celebrates the individual as a bodily, spiritual, and aesthetic being. The desire for "carnal knowledge," for knowledge of the beloved through sexual

union, is a desire for his intimate presence, for a total experience of him and of oneself (Pieper 1904: 70). For all these reasons, erotic love is "the most vivid reminder that we exist as centers of value here and now, in the condition of mortality" (Scruton 251).

All these writers eloquently express the fundamental importance of sexual desire and satisfaction to erotic love, and of erotic love so understood to our sense of who we are, as human beings and as individuals. More precisely, they eloquently express the fundamental importance of sexual (genital) satisfaction in erotic love to most of us. There is no reason to rule out the possibility that those who lack sexual desire are still capable of the desire that is central to erotic love, the desire for psychological and physical union with another. Nor should we reject the possibility that they can achieve a full experience and expression of themselves as embodied beings through non-sexual (non-genital) bodily involvement. Both experience, and the diversity of human biology and psychology, support these propositions. We can imagine forms of ritualized physical touching between lovers that express and satisfy the same intense desire for physical and psychological union and provide the same "reciprocated physical delight" (Delaney 1996:347) through the same "integration of ... perceptions, emotions, values, and thought" (Branden) that sexual union provides. Hence, unless and until this possibility is ruled out by psychological evidence, it seems hasty to make the desire for sexual union essential to erotic love, much less "fundamental to a full understanding of what it is for persons to be `ends in themselves'" (Scruton 251).

On the other hand, the thought that sexual union is not essential to the full experience of erotic union does not imply that the experience can be understood entirely in psychological terms, as some writers seem to believe (e.g., Soble 1997b: 385-401). For this view, as Soble himself notes, leaves the yearnings for union in erotic love indistinguishable from the yearnings for union in the love of God (401). If there is a difference between the yearning for union in the two loves, it must lie in the desire for physical union in erotic love, through genital sex or some

other form of physical interaction.

It might be thought that my equation of sexual union with genital union is naive. On this view, any kind of physical interaction between two people that enables them to experience a sense of physical union counts as sexual. Perhaps it is this wider sense of sexuality that explains Solomon's statement that erotic love is sexual even if the sexual component is "inhibited, chaste or sublimated" (43). I have no stake in rejecting this wider understanding of sexuality, much less in inviting the charge of naivety; the point I want to stress is simply that the desire for physical and spiritual union with the beloved is of the essence of erotic love, and that this desire may be satisfiable in ways often (if naively) called non-sexual.

#### VII. Loving under the Influence (of Philosophy)

The love we want and give in our lives is inevitably colored by our understanding of love, just as our understanding of love is inevitably colored by our experience of love - or its simulacra. A philosophical examination of love, then, can amend both our understanding and our experience of love. Thus, if genuine love requires veridical perception of the other, and this requires empathy, imagination, and honesty with oneself, then one cannot love another without cultivating these qualities; in their absence, "love" is mere sentiment. Nor can we get any satisfaction from being loved blindly, from a love that fails to hit its target. For lack of space, I have not discussed the virtues of friendship and romantic relationships. But if it is true, as is often argued, that the virtues of benevolence (sympathy, compassion, kindness, and generosity) (Blum 1980), as well as the virtues of justice (Badhwar 1985, Friedman 1993, LaFollette 1996, Martin 1996), are partly constitutive of such relationships, then we know that friendship and romantic love are moral achievements and cannot be had just for the asking. Hence, we should neither ask for unconditional love nor blame ourselves for being unable to grant it.

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#### Notes

1. "... si e novo miracolo e gentile," Dante, *Vita Nuova*, sec. 21.
2. Many of the ideas in this and the following paragraph are taken, with changes, from my "Friends As Ends In Themselves" (1987/89).
3. These issues are too vast to go into here, but I have addressed them elsewhere (1993: 90-117).
4. Many of the themes in this section are discussed in my "Introduction: The Nature and Significance of Friendship" (1993: 1-36).
5. "L'amour est aveugle; l'amitie ferme les yeux" (Anonymous).
6. Some of what follows is a revised version of my discussion in 'Friends as Ends in Themselves' (1987/89).
7. Needless to say, not everything I value in Alpha and Zeta need have objective value. Hence, not everything I find lovable need be objectively lovable or even admirable, and some may be objectively *unlovable* or *unadmirable*.

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