

- I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I," which may be taken as asserting the "particularity" of love. Yet Montaigne also writes, "We sought each other before we met because of the reports we heard of each other," which admits that properties played a large role in their love. The translation is Franes' "On Affectionate Relationships," 299.
- 29 For the details, see Mark Bernstein, "Love, Particularity, and Selhhood"  
 30 Does Frankfurt mean that love is *de re*, not *de dicto*? See Robert Kraut, "Love De Re"
- 31 Neera Badhwar, "Friends as Ends in Themselves"; Robert Brown, *Analyzing Love*; Mark Fisher, *Personal Love*; Roger Lamb, "Love and Rationality"; Amélie Rorty, "The Historicity of Psychological Attitudes"; Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire*; A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, 13; Soble, "Irreplaceability"
- 32 For a sophisticated critique of Frankfurt on the relationship between having goals and boredom, see Elijah Millgram, "On Being Bored out of Your Mind"
- 33 See Baier, "Caring about Caring," 277.
- 34 Plato, *Symposium*, 206b, 209a–c; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1172a10.
- 35 Harry Frankfurt, "Reply to Wolf" in *Contours of Agency: Essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt*, eds. Sarah Buss and Lee Overton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).
- 36 Such a claim does not *bother us* if made about Monk and his avoiding cracks. It *does* bother us about Hitler. Frankfurt obliterates this difference.
- 37 The lines quoted in this paragraph are from Frankfurt's "Reply to Wolf" (Buss and Overton, 248, 249, 252n4).
- 38 Only God can love her that way, according to William Butler Yeats, "For Anne Gregory," 293.
- 39 Hegel, "On Love," 306.
- 40 I carried out this task in Soble, "Concerning Self-Love."
- 41 J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 37.
- 42 This essay is a much revised and polished version of my essay review of *The Reasons of Love*, which appeared in *Essays in Philosophy* 6:1 (January, 2005). That paper can be accessed at <http://commons.pacificu.edu/eip/vol6/iss1/30>. The revision is printed here with the permission of the journal's founding editor, Michael Goodman, and the current editor, David Boersama.

## 3

## The Importance of Whom We Care About

Troy Jollimore\*

*We love the things we love for what they are.*

—Robert Frost

## I

"We love the things we love for what they are." Or do we? It sounds like a nice sentiment. Who, after all, would want to be loved for something she was not? But perhaps what we really want is to be loved for no reason, or for reasons having nothing to do with what we are. For what if I am not worthy of love? Or what if I am loved for what I am, and then I cease to be what I am and become something else instead? People change. If it is true, as some say, that what we want is to be loved unconditionally, then we may have to reject the idea that we want to be loved for what we are.

"It is a duty to love the people we see," says Kierkegaard in *Works of Love* (WL, 161). The idea that one ought to love the person one sees might sound close to the idea that one ought to love that person for what he is; for what do I see when I see a person, if not that person's good and bad qualities, the particular characteristics that make her who she is? But Kierkegaard also warns us not to pay attention to those qualities; they can, he says, distract our attention from the person himself, and focusing on the qualities seems to make one's love conditional, and hence unreliable:

The Christian point of view, however, is that to love is to love precisely the person one sees. The emphasis is not on loving the perfections one sees in a person, but the emphasis is on loving the person one sees; whether one sees perfections or imperfections in this person, yes, however distressingly this person has changed, inasmuch as he has not ceased to be the same person. He who loves the perfections he sees in a person does not see the person and therefore ceases to love if the perfections

cease [...] Christian love grants the beloved all his imperfections and weaknesses and in all his changes remains with him, loving the person it sees. (WL, 173)

At least most of the time Kierkegaard seems to see a person's qualities as something separate from the person herself, so that paying attention to the former necessarily distracts us from the latter. Every person, Kierkegaard writes, "is something particular, represents something particular, but essentially he is something else [which] we do not get to see here in life" (WL, 86). This applies not only to one's surface properties—physical attractiveness, manners, health (in its more visible aspects), wealth—but to moral qualities as well. Citing Peter's love for Jesus as an example, he claims that you ought to continue to love your friend even when he disappoints you by betraying or abandoning you:

Therefore if you want to be perfect in love, strive to fulfill this duty, in loving to love the person one sees, to love him just as you see him, with all his imperfections and weaknesses, to love him as you see him when he has changed completely, when he no longer loves you but perhaps turns away indifferent or turns away to love another, to love him as you see him when he betrays and denies you. (WL, 174)

Here we find two related ideas. The first is that you ought to continue to love your beloved no matter what you see when you open your eyes to her. The second is that love should have nothing to do with your beloved's attractive qualities, that it is in no way a response to her "perfections."

When Kierkegaard speaks of seeing the beloved clearly and accurately, then, he does not seem to have in mind the kind of attention to detail and careful, discerning perception that Iris Murdoch connects with love, but rather a kind of vision that allows us to see *past* particular details and to view—well, whatever it is, precisely, that we "essentially" are.<sup>1</sup> Far from being a part of love or a help to love, the kind of clear and robust attention to particular details that Murdoch praises seems to be a kind of hindrance to love, even, perhaps, an insurmountable obstacle to love:

Love is commonly thought of as admiration's wide-open eye that is searching for excellences and perfections. It is then that one complains that the search is futile. We shall not decide to what extent the individual is or is not justified in this, whether what he is seeking, the lovable excellences and perfections, is not to be found, whether he is not confusing seeking with fastidiousness. No, we do not wish to dispute in

this manner, we do not wish to carry on a dispute within this conception of love, because *this whole conception is an error*, since love is rather the closed eye of forbearance and leniency that does not see defects and imperfections.<sup>2</sup>

Consider the sort of "fastidious" person Kierkegaard has in mind here: the person who claims she can find no one to love, because no one is worthy of love. Suppose she makes her complaint out in terms of *qualities*: she simply cannot find anyone whose qualities are good enough to render them worthy of love. One might say that she is simply not looking hard enough, that everyone has some good qualities, though they are sometimes hard to see. But this is not Kierkegaard's complaint. According to him, the fastidious person's error is more fundamental: "this whole conception is a delusion." Either we should not be thinking about people's worthiness to be loved at all, or else we should not think of worthiness in terms of qualities, of "perfections."

It is difficult to determine which of these Kierkegaard means. (It is entirely possible, too, that he simply does not have a consistent position about this.) But we may at least say this with confidence: for Kierkegaard, love is not a response to the beloved's positive qualities, and a common and serious error is to pay too much attention to those qualities, to the question of what the beloved is like. "It is a sad but altogether too common inversion to go on talking continually about how the object of love must be so it can be lovable, instead of talking about how love must be so it can be love" (WL, 159). This passage, like many others in *Works of Love*, suggests that when we (properly) love the people we love, it is not because their good qualities give us reason to do so. Indeed, our reasons for loving people have nothing to do with what they are. Either we love them for no reason at all or, if there is a reason, it is a reason having to do with the nature of love, and not with the nature of what we love.

## II

According to Kierkegaard, when a person judges someone to be unworthy of love, and so refuses to love him, we should not agree with his assessment and take it that he has correctly responded to some flaw in the object. Rather, it is the person who fails to love that is flawed. This may suggest that Kierkegaard is committed to some version of the following:

*The Right Love Account:* Love is not, and should not be, a reflection of or a response to its object's inherent value or worthiness. So love need not

be supported by reasons having to do with the worth of the beloved, and the fact that a given love is directed toward a valueless object does not render it unjustified or inappropriate.

But as I suggested above, the matter is not entirely clear. What we have seen up to this point seems to suggest that for Kierkegaard, judgments of worth have no place in love. But it is also consistent with a different interpretation, that for Kierkegaard the people we love *are* worthy of love, but that they are not rendered worthy by their good qualities; rather, what makes people worthy and appropriate objects of love is some deeper fact about them, something that transcends or lies beneath their surface "perfections" and "imperfections." If what justifies love is some abstract and ineffable thing that all persons, regardless of their particular qualities, possess, then to hold *anyone* unworthy of love would have to be a kind of mistake.

Other philosophers have more decisively closed the door on the notion that what justifies love, when it is justified, is the fact that the beloved is valuable in some way. Among contemporaries we find Harry Frankfurt, who commits himself to a version of the Brute Love Account:

[L]ove does not require a response by the lover to any real or imagined value in what he loves. Parents do not ordinarily love their children so much, for example, because they perceive that their children possess exceptional value. In fact, it is the other way around: the children seem to the parents to be valuable, and they are valuable to the parents, only because the parents love them. Parents have been known to love—quite genuinely—children that they themselves recognize as lacking any particular inherent merit.

As I understand the nature of love, the lover does not depend for this loving upon reasons of any kind. Love is not a conclusion. It is not an outcome of reasoning, or a consequence of reasons. It *creates* reasons. What it means to love is, in part, to take the fact that a certain action would serve the good of the beloved as an especially compelling reason for performing that action. (TOS, 25)

The Brute Love Account, which holds that a person's valuable qualities—the sorts of things that we often tend to cite when asked questions like "what do you love about her?"—in fact do not function as reasons to love her, and indeed that there are no reasons for love at all, occupies one pole of a range of conceptual possibilities. At the other pole we find what I will refer to as the *Reason-Determined Love Account*:

*The Reason-Determined Love Account*: Reasons for loving A are directly proportional to the value of A, and questions of whom I love, how much I love them, and how I should treat them, are determined entirely by my reasoned judgments as to their objective value. (They are thus entirely independent of my preferences or will.) Thus, loving someone a great deal involves judging that that particular person is objectively more valuable than other people, and that I ought to treat her, accordingly, as an object more precious than the things around her.

Both accounts have their attractions. There is something validating and affirming about Reason-Determined Love: on this account, the people who love me have judged me to be worth loving, and in loving me (if they are getting it right) they are appreciating things about me that ought to be appreciated—perhaps, indeed, the things about me that I myself value.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Reason-Determined Love may also inspire anxiety as to whether I really am worthy of such love, whether I will continue to be worthy, and whether an even worthier object of love might come along (in which case, it would seem, my lovers, at least if they are to be rational, would be obligated to transfer their love from me to my competitor). If we think that love should be more stable than this—if we think that a love that was fickle in this way would be flawed, and that we owe those whom we love something better than that—we may be moved to reject the idea of Reason-determined Love. Indeed, this way of thinking about love may seem to some to make love into a grasping, needy, selfish emotion. It is at odds, or so it will be claimed, with the selflessness of love; the idea that true generosity of spirit is shown by the willingness to love whether the object deserves to be loved or not.

It is not surprising, given this way of approaching the issue, that parent-child love, especially love for very young children, should prove to be an especially significant source of the intuitions that support the Brute Love Account. One might love one's friend or romantic partner because he is witty, kind, physically attractive, fun, or for any number of other reasons, but infants possess none of these properties, and such attractive properties as they do possess (cuteness, perhaps) tend to be shared by most infants, so can hardly justify a parent's disproportionate love. Moreover, parents are *expected*, and in the view of many morally obligated, to love their children disproportionately, and to do so without connecting that love to any form of evaluation: love is not, here, an optional response, nor something that may be withdrawn should one's child turn out to be disappointing. Finally, as Frankfurt indicates, parents may claim to love their children even before they are born, at a stage when we might think

they would know nothing whatsoever about the good qualities of the children-to-be, or about their worth in any sense:

I can declare with unequivocal confidence that I do not love my children because I am aware of some value that inheres in them independent of my love for them. The fact is that I loved them even before they were born—before I had any especially relevant information about their personal characteristics or their particular merits and virtues. (RL, 39)

The case of parent-child love, then, is one in which we are especially likely to be persuaded by Kierkegaard's claim that with respect to love, "the task is not to find the lovable object, but the task is to find the once given or chosen object—lovable, and to be able to continue to find him lovable no matter how he is changed" (WL, 159, italics removed).

### III

I take it that the most plausible claim in the first passage from Frankfurt I quoted above is the following:

(A) "Parents do not ordinarily love their children so much ... because they perceive that their children possess exceptional value."

Of course, we are interested not only in how love ordinarily works, but also, and indeed more significantly, in how love should and must work. In addition to (A), then, we should also consider (B) (a claim that Frankfurt would also accept):

(B) Loving someone, even loving him a great deal, need not imply judging him to possess exceptional value; and the fact that it is not accompanied by this judgment does not render it inappropriate.

The idea that a person possessing "exceptional value," in this context, is the idea that she possesses an unusually high degree of value as compared with other persons. It is only this, on the Reason-Determined Love Account, that could justify someone, her parent for example, in loving her more than others. Given this understanding of "exceptional value," I agree with Frankfurt (and, we can assume, Kierkegaard) that (A) and (B) are true, and that they need to be recognized by any adequate account of love. Most parents, after all, are not so deluded as to believe that their children are vastly

more valuable than other parents' children. Some parents may think that their children are *a bit* better than *many* other children, but surely most do not literally believe that they happen to be the parents of children who would be judged by impartial and objective observers to be the very best children in the world. Moreover, as we have noted, parents may say that they love their children from the moment they are born, if not before; yet one could not know, that early on, whether or not one's children were going to have any especially significant value (and they certainly don't possess any such value yet). (A), then, seems to be true. On the assumption that there is nothing incoherent or conceptually wrong about the love these ordinary parents have for their children, (B) must presumably be true as well.

Frankfurt thinks these claims weigh heavily against the view that we love people for reasons, and that my loving someone involves the judgment that she possesses significant inherent value. He moves quickly, then, from the rejection of the Reason-Determined Love Account to a version of the Brute Love Account, one that involves what I will call *Willed Love*:

*The Willed Love Account*: Questions of whom I love, and how much I love them, are entirely determined by commitments of my will. They have nothing to do with my assessments of the beloved's (independent) value.<sup>4</sup>

That *Willed Love* is a type of *Brute Love* is clear: if love is willed in this sense then we cannot and do not need to give reasons for loving the people we love, for it is the configurations of our will, and not our responsiveness to value or reasons, that determine and ought to determine whom we love and how much we love them.

Suppose that we agree, as I think we should, that the Reason-Determined Love Account ought to be rejected. Must our next move then be to adopt some version of the *Brute Love Account*? I do not think so. These two positions, as I have said, occupy two poles of a continuum, and both are too extreme. We would do better, in this case, to look for something in the middle. The *Brute Love Position* commits us to more than we should be willing to commit to.

To see this, let's consider three further claims. All of these claims are associated with the Reason-Determined Love Account, at least to the extent that they are all true if that account is correct; all of them, moreover, are quite explicitly rejected by Frankfurt. But each of them possesses significant independent plausibility—they seem to reflect important facts about our experiences of love—and I will suggest that we can hold on to all of them even if we reject the less plausible elements of the Reason-Determined Love Account:

- (C) Loving someone involves judging her to possess significant inherent value, i.e., value that is independent of my desires or other facts about my conative nature.
- (D) If P loves Q, and P's love for Q is not unjustified, then, as a minimal condition, Q must possess significant inherent value.
- (E) (At least some of) our reasons for action are ultimately grounded in the inherent values of things that are affected by our actions, and that we have such reasons is a matter of objective fact, independent of an agent's motivations, preferences, etc.<sup>5</sup>

Frankfurt, as I have said, rejects all three of these:

(NOT-C): Loving a person, according to Frankfurt, need not involve judging her to possess any degree whatever of inherent value. As we have seen, he holds that "love does not require a response by the lover to any real or imagined value in what he loves. [...] Parents have been known to love—quite genuinely—children that they themselves recognize as lacking any particular inherent merit." (Compare OC, 172–73)

(NOT-D): That one loves a person who does not possess inherent value does not, says Frankfurt, render the love unjustified; such facts are irrelevant to love. Indeed, since love is properly grounded in brute commitments of the will, it is not the sort of thing that needs to be, or even could be, justified. "[I]f I ask myself whether my children are worthy of my love, my quite emphatic inclination is simply to reject the question as inappropriate and misguided. This is not because it goes without saying that they *are* worthy. It is because my love for them is in no way a response to or based upon any evaluation."<sup>6</sup>

(NOT-E): An agent's reasons for action are, on Frankfurt's view, ultimately grounded in an agent's desires, urges, brute commitments, and other configurations of his own will. Frankfurt: "[T]he most basic and essential question for a person to raise concerning the conduct of his life cannot be the *normative* question of how he *should* live. That question can sensibly be asked only on the basis of a prior answer to the *factual* question of what he actually *does* care about." (RL, 25)

The Willed Love Account adheres to Hume's statement in *A Treatise of Human Nature* that reason is nothing but "the slave of the passions." Given the way in which one's will is formed (one's preferences and affinities, etc.), reason's function is to determine, within the limits set by the will, the things one *ought* to care about. Reason can help an agent keep her carings consistent, avoid caring about things that do not cohere with the larger set of things she cares about, and so forth; but there is no question of its being able to address the issue of whether a given person

or thing is, in and of itself, worthy of care. All value is brought about by acts of valuing. Acts of valuing may not be completely random, since they are shaped and constrained both by human nature and by value created by other acts of valuing; still they are, at the fundamental level, arbitrary.

This position will seem appealing to those who, like Frankfurt, are skeptical about the existence of a realm of objective values to which practical reason might be responsive. There isn't nearly enough room here to get into the complex meta-ethical issues that surround this question, beyond simply noting my view that the most frequently cited arguments for skepticism about objective value are not nearly as convincing as many skeptics tend to assume.<sup>7</sup> At any rate, regardless of their metaphysical underpinnings, our experiences of love and the practices that express those experiences outline a context in which practical reason does not seem to work the way the Brute Love Account would have it. We feel as if we love people for reasons, that our love is a response to valuable qualities that would exist and bear value whether we or anyone else were around to respond to their value. We feel, that is to say, that we love the people we love for what they are, and that this is intimately bound up with the question of why these people matter so much to us. The Brute Love Account does not fit well with our actual experiences of love. Still, that account does get some things right; it recommends, correctly, that we reject claims like (A) and (B). The question, then, is whether we can reject (A) and (B) without committing ourselves to the entirety of the Brute Love Account—and if so, how?

#### IV

What we are looking for is a position that supports (C), (D), and (E)—and so avoids collapsing into the Willed Love Account or any other account that sees love as merely Brute—but that can also accommodate (A) and (B). Such a position will capture what is plausible about the Brute Love Account, while avoiding the unattractive view that love is simply a brute and fundamentally arbitrary matter of the will that is in no way a response to the value of the beloved or that of her qualities. Such a position, which I will refer to as the Moderate Position, is readily available:

*The Moderate Position:* Love is a response to the inherent value of the beloved—and in particular, to the beloved's valuable qualities—and is thus largely a matter of reason. (Reason tells us, among other things,

that it is inappropriate to love an inanimate object—one's Porsche 911, let us suppose—in the way that it is appropriate to love one's spouse or child.) Love is unjustified when directed toward an unworthy object. However, there are many persons who might reasonably be loved, depending on one's personal preferences and the circumstances of one's life. Indeed, it is entirely consistent with the Moderate Position to hold that *everyone* is sufficiently inherently valuable to be worthy of love, although different people are worthy of being loved for somewhat different reasons.

The question of which particular persons one comes to love and to form love-relationships with is answered by a combination of many factors: it is partly a matter of circumstance (whom one is related to, whom one gets to know, who finds *you* attractive, etc.), partly a matter of reason (of the various people one gets to know, one can judge that some rate more highly than others in certain respects) and partly a matter of the will and other conative factors (one has certain preferences, finds oneself drawn to some individuals rather than others, and may sometimes, as Frankfurt suggests, find that one has no choice but to love certain individual persons). It is *not*, at any rate, answered simply by our judgments about which persons happen to possess the most valuable qualities, as the Reason-Determined Account would have it.

The Moderate Position, like the Reason-Determined Love Account, asserts or implies (C), (D), and (E). Can it accommodate (A) and (B)? It seems that it can. Frankfurt writes:

I do not believe that the valuable qualities [my children] do happen to possess, strictly in their own rights, would really provide me with a very compelling basis for regarding them as having greater worth than many other possible objects of love that in fact I love much less. It is quite clear to me that I do not love them more than other children because I believe they are better. (RL, 39)

The second sentence in this passage is surely correct. (The first is likely also true, though it depends on just how we interpret such phrases as "strictly in their own rights" and "compelling basis.") This is just another way of expressing the plausibility of (A) and (B):

(A) "Parents do not ordinarily love their children so much ... because they perceive that their children possess exceptional value."

(B) Loving someone, even loving him a great deal, need not imply judging him to possess exceptional value; and the fact that it is not accompanied by this judgment does not render it inappropriate.

But we should be able to see now that (A) and (B) raise no deep problem for the Moderate Position. For that position, as we have seen, allows both reason and the will to play substantial roles in determining whom we love. In particular, unlike the Reason-Determined Love Account, the Moderate Position allows that, while a certain degree of value is necessary to render an object an eligible target of love (i.e., the sort of love we direct toward persons, and which would be inappropriate if directed toward any object that was *not* a person), the degree of the lover's love need not vary directly with the degree of assessed value. Love, in this way, resembles such emotions as anger and resentment, which vary not only with one's assessment of the badness of the action that has provoked the response, but also with other factors, including both one's personal connection with the offender, and also one's particular sensitivities and tendencies to feel hurt or outraged by one type of insult or offense as opposed to another.

This is to say that there is plenty of room, even within a broadly shared framework of value assessments that are taken to be matters of reason and objective judgment, for personal differences and idiosyncrasies to play a role. With respect to potential partners' attractive qualities, for instance, it is not unreasonable to feel either that a well-developed sense of humor is more important in a partner than strong political commitments, or that the reverse is true; it depends on the sort of person you are, what tends to attract, please, and fulfill you, what makes you anxious, what fits with your own plans, preferences, and history, and so forth. There is much room for disagreement, here—and, outside of disagreement, plenty of room for sheer difference, in taste, preference, and attitude—yet this should not be taken to show that our judgments in these areas are not judgments at all, but instead fundamentally arbitrary matters of brute psychology. After all, although it is not unreasonable to prefer a sense of humor to political commitment, or vice versa, there are values and preferences here that would be unreasonable. A person who could not see *any* value in a good sense of humor or in political commitment, for instance, let alone one who somehow thought these things were positively *bad*, would surely be missing something important. A different but no less serious error would be committed by a person who placed a great deal of significance on something that was, in fact, completely trivial—the fact that a person had been born during the month of October, for example.

What is crucial is that a parent need not judge her child to possess "exceptional value" or "any particular inherent merit" (i.e., a level of merit that

raises him above other children) in order to justify her love for him in terms of his value. Any ordinary human child, even a child who is less than average in many respects, is nonetheless a suitable object of love. A child's particular value, in and of itself, does not answer the question, why does her parent love her in particular as opposed to other children? That question is answered by other facts: in this case, facts about the relationship and the shared history. But that question is distinct from the more fundamental question, why is love an appropriate and fitting response to this (or any) child? The fact that the child's value, in and of itself, cannot fully answer the first question does not show that it is completely irrelevant to either. Nor does it commit us to saying that the parent would still love the child, and *should* love the child, even if—whatever precisely this might mean—the child somehow possessed no value at all.

The upshot is that a parent need not judge her child to possess “exceptional value” in order to justify her love for him. Against the general background of things that might be valued—most of which have little inherent value of any sort—*any* child is exceptional, as is any human being. Similarly, the Moderate Position can happily acknowledge Frankfurt's observation that “Parents have been known to love—quite genuinely—children that they themselves recognize as lacking any particular inherent merit,” so long as we understand that a person can lack *particular* inherent merit without possessing no merit whatsoever. Thus, the Moderate Position can happily accommodate (A) and (B); the plausibility of (A) and (B), then, does not in any way obligate us to accept the Willed Love Account, nor any other version of the Brute Love Account.

## V

Much depends, it seems, on how we decide to read the word *particular* in the phrase “particular merits and virtues.” What is necessary is to see that a child can possess *considerable* inherent worth without possessing *particular* worth, if by “particular worth” we mean a level of worth that sets the child apart from, and indeed above, other children. And this means that we can agree with Frankfurt (and Kierkegaard) that a parent can love her children without believing them to be more valuable than other children, without committing ourselves to the implausible idea that a parent can love her children while believing them to possess no value at all, or while not caring whether they possess value or not.

But there is, it will be urged, another relevant meaning of “particular” here, and it is one that the Moderate Position must take seriously: a person's

particular merits are surely those that distinguish him from other people, those that make him the unique individual he is. (As I have said, on the reading of Kierkegaard according to which people are loved because they are worthy, he must still deny this: whatever “worth” is, it is something abstract that has nothing to do with a person's particular characteristics, and so is possessed by all persons equally.) Surely this, it will be said, is what we mean when we say that we love the people we love “for what they are.” But the case of children was thought to create problems for this, for children, at least in the very early stages of their lives, are not yet unique individuals, and have not yet developed the features for which, as adults, they may be appreciated and loved.

The solution, I think, is to acknowledge that we do not love children in precisely the way that we love adults (and after all, we do not love all adults in precisely the same way, either), but that the proper understanding of how we *do* love children does not require us to detach this love from the notion of value, or even from *particular*—that is, highly concrete and specific—values. Consider the following passage from David Velleman, in which he describes the experience of raising his children:

[O]nce my children adopted some directions—and there have been many different directions over the years—I found myself caring about their progress in those directions, no matter how little intrinsic value I might have been inclined to see there in advance. In a quick succession of years I became deeply interested in lacrosse and Morris dancing, poetry slams and photography, and specifically in the accomplishments of a particular midfielder, Morris dancer, poet, or photographer because these were the directions that my children had set for themselves. Of course, I eventually learned to appreciate some of these accomplishments intrinsically: I would realize with amazement that I was cheering as my son wallowed a schoolmate with a metal stick or that I was applauding choreography that previously would have struck me as no more than quaint. But I learned to appreciate these accomplishments, to begin with, because they were the ones that my children had chosen to cultivate. In other words, I learned to appreciate them out of love for my children.<sup>8</sup>

A casual reading of this passage might take it to support either the Brute Account—at least where love for children is concerned—or something close to it. We might think that it shows that Velleman was committed to valuing the activities his children engaged in, *whatever* they turned out to be like, and that this must show that such valuing must therefore take no notice whatever of the activities' particular value. And it would only be natural to assume that

what goes for the children's activities and interests also goes for the children themselves, so that it must either be the case that Velleman's love for his children is in no way a response to their value, or else that the value that matters here cannot be attached to anything particular about these specific children, but must instead be instantiated in something abstract, ineffable, and equally possessed by all. Such love, it seems, is not a *response* to any valuable thing external to itself (whether it be the children or the activities in which they are engaged), but rather a creation of the lover that is then projected onto its objects.

But Velleman does not say that he was simply projecting value onto activities that possess no value in and of themselves. Rather, what he says is only that he was, with respect to many of these activities, unable to see any value *at first*. He went on to *find* (and not *create*) value in them, in large part because he was, as a result of his relationship and love for his children, motivated to make the effort to do so. But the value he found was value that existed in the activities, independently of his perception of it. That value takes some effort to perceive or appreciate does not imply that it is a mere projection, or in any other way unreal. Moreover, even prior to the attempt to discover value in his children's activities—prior, even, to their deciding what those activities would be—he had reason to be quite confident that his attempt would, in the end, be successful. This is so for the simple reason that even in their quite early stages of development human persons, while quite various in their interest and attractions, do not tend to become attracted to and deeply involved in activities that literally possess *no* value whatsoever. They may sometimes engage in activities whose positive values are outweighed by negative values—all of us do at times, we're only human—but while that may pose difficult parenting questions, it poses no difficult philosophical problem for the view I am advancing here. (Still, it is worth saying that it is not the case that Velleman would have been able to see value in *any* interest his children might conceivably have developed. If their only desire had been to count blades of grass, my guess is he would not have found himself happily driving them to the Grass-Counting Regionals; rather, he would have been stymied in his attempt to share their experiences and values. The kind of objectivism about values that fits most naturally with the Moderate Position is happily pluralist about values, but there are still limits: some things just are not, objectively speaking, valuable.)

A parent like Velleman, then, does not have to wait and see what his children are going to become interested in in order to know, with a very high degree of confidence, whether he will be able to find value in those interests; like any parent, he can be reasonably confident, even at the beginning of the process, that *whatever* interests his children will develop, he too will be able

to see value in them—a value that is not created by his interests, but which exists in its own right. (Note that if we undermine the confidence, we also undermine the love. If a prospective parent learned that it was not a fetus she carried inside her, but rather a tumor, she would surely not claim to love it in anything like the way that people claim to love their children-to-be.) And the same goes for persons themselves. A sufficiently open, sympathetic, and committed eye can find something to love, to feel for, to identify with, in pretty much anyone—anyone, at least, who has achieved personhood or is on the road to doing so. And this, as we have noted, is perfectly consistent with the Moderate Position.

This is not to say that particular merits and virtues are entirely irrelevant. In fact they are essential. The point, though, is that at this stage of this sort of relationship a prior and precise knowledge of them is not necessary; it is sufficient to be confident that one's children, as they develop genuine personalities and become full-fledged persons, will acquire characteristics of *some specific sort or other* that will ground and justify one's love.<sup>16</sup> The love of an unborn child or an infant is not yet, for the most part, the appreciation of specific value-bearing properties; it consists, largely, in a commitment to finding and appreciating those properties that will come into existence, when they do. In fact, love always involves this sort of commitment, and is always in part a process of watching the beloved develop and change over time, a process of learning to value and appreciate the new forms she takes as extensions of and elaborations on the previous forms to which one's love was already attached. (That this is a commitment of the will is something the Moderate Position need not deny; but the Moderate Position will remind us that it is no *brute* commitment, but one grounded in reasonable beliefs and expectations about how a human life exists through time—and, in cases other than that of infants, in the value of the particular characteristics the beloved has already developed and exhibited.)

In *this* sense of "particular," then—the sense in which a particular value is one that is specific and concrete, and thus helps to define the identity of the person whose activities or character display it—loving a child, or any other person, does indeed involve appreciating their particular values, and thus believing them to possess such values. The word "involve," admittedly, is usefully loose. In many cases, such as the love of a person for a romantic lover, a friend, or even an adult relative, the relationship is straightforward: loving a person is a way of valuing him that is largely constituted by one's valuing of the particular values he instantiates and displays. In other cases, such as that of love for fetuses or infants who have not yet developed real personhood, such love as one may feel is largely anticipatory, and consists largely of a commitment to find value in that particular individual, and her



interests and activities, once she has developed into a person. But what love aims at, ultimately—and what it is and must be in its complete and most flourishing form—is, precisely, an appreciation of the valuable aspects of the loved person, in all of her individual distinctiveness. We love the people we love for who they are.

## VI

It would be absurd to hold that love had nothing whatever to do with the lover's desires, preferences, and commitments. Indeed, it is surely true, in some sense, that love is largely a matter of the will. But if we focus too much on the will, and on a certain conception of the will, we begin to lose sight of precisely what love itself tries always to keep in sight: the beloved, the person who means so much to the lover. It is true that loving, as an activity, adds value and meaning to our lives. But the lover will not conclude from this that the loving is more important than the person who is loved. And we should not, without a very compelling reason, accept a theory of the value of love and the beloved that would prioritize the former over the latter.

One of the things we want from our lovers is simply that they pay attention to us. Indeed, it is plausible to think that one of the great values and benefits of being in a love-relationship is that it allows one to be seen, and thus prevents one from being invisible; one feels *known*, and so one feels that one *matters*, at least to one other person. Of course there are complications: sometimes too much attention can be paid, or attention can be paid in the wrong way, and one can end up feeling surveilled, objectified, or over-scrutinized. This tends to happen, though, only when the attention is not paid in a loving manner. Truly loving attention, including criticism, is affirming even when it is painful, as when Mr. Knightley chastises Emma for her rude behavior toward Miss Bates in Jane Austen's novel *Emma*. It hurts Emma to hear Mr. Knightley's critique, but it also helps us (and eventually her) know that he loves her, that he has been paying attention, that he cares, and that he thinks well enough of her to hold her to a high moral standard.

Seeing a person, then—even, at times, seeing a person's limitations and imperfections—is both fully compatible with and a requirement for loving that person, and it is part of what we want from our lovers. These observations, though, fit poorly into the framework provided by Frankfurt. If my lover pays attention to me—if she sees me—she is going to notice me, and she is going to notice what I am like, what kind of person I am, what features I have. Indeed, I think part of what I want from love is to be appreciated for

who I am, to have my qualities seen and valued. But on Frankfurt's account none of this can really matter, at least at the fundamental level. It does not matter whether my lover sees me as I am, or whether she projects a false image onto me and then cares for me under the guise of that image. The tightest allowable connection between my qualities and the love my lover feels for me is a causal connection, that the qualities *provoke* the love; and if this is so, then it does not matter whether she is seeing qualities I actually possess or qualities she merely wishes I possessed. Someone who loves me is presumably going to find most of my qualities valuable no matter what they are, or what she thinks them to be, because it is precisely her act of valuing that creates value. It is valuing (in the projective sense) and not appreciating (which is a responsive act) that does the work on Frankfurt's view:

It is not because I have noticed their value that I love my children as I do. It is really the other way around. The reason they are so precious to me is simply that I love them so much. It is as a *consequence* of my love for them that they have acquired, in my eyes, a value that otherwise they would quite certainly not possess.<sup>11</sup>

Such a view entirely neglects the importance of the loved person. Most of us desire that our valuable features be noticed. We want our lovers to see what we take to be good about ourselves, and think it good. We might also want them to see, and perhaps help us to see, good things about ourselves that we might have missed. Moreover, the idea that my value, in my lover's eyes, is a mere consequence of her act of loving seems objectionable. I would be disappointed and probably insulted if she indicated that, in her view, I was only valuable because she saw me as valuable, and would not retain my value if she were to stop loving me. What kind of love is that?

We cannot really come to grips with a person's particularity, her individuality, without talking about the highly specific individual she is. My girlfriend, for instance, has a very particular sense of humor, one that helps identify her as a person; and I don't think that a person who did not notice and appreciate that sense of humor could be said to fully love her, no matter how much he might enjoy being with her or how committed he might be to her well-being, etc. In fact I know many people, particularly in the context of parent-child relationships, who suffer from this: I have friends, that is, whose parents care for them very much and are very devoted to their well-being, but who cannot really *see* their children at all, for one reason or another. As a result, despite the parents' dedication and unwavering concern, the children do not feel seen, and often do not feel well-loved. We might say that they are loved only under the description "my parents' child," and that description is

not sufficiently personal: it could have applied to all sorts of very different individuals, and does not even begin to capture what is distinctive about them.

Wanting to be seen in a love relationship means wanting my lover to see what is special about me; not what makes me better than other people, and not even what necessarily makes me different from other people—again, the type of value here is deeply noncomparative!<sup>2</sup>—but rather what makes me, in and of myself, worthy of attention. That is, we want what we are like to make a difference to those who love us; we want them to be glad that we are one way and not another. In order to avoid feeling like empty placeholders of obligatory valuing, we need to feel that those who love us feel that their lives are as they are largely because of how we are, and that their lives would be different, and importantly different, if we were different. And on the whole, we want our lovers to feel that those are differences, and ways of making a difference, that they can endorse, and perhaps even celebrate.

## VII

To fully grasp Frankfurt's view, it is essential to understand that he holds that the sort of love that parents feel for their children, especially their very young children, is the purest and most authentic species of love, and should be taken as a model for love in general. He states as much in *The Reasons of Love*:

It is important to avoid confusing love [...] with infatuation, lust, obsession, possessiveness, and dependency in their various forms. In particular, relationships that are primarily romantic or sexual do not provide very authentic or illuminating paradigms of love as I am construing it. Relationships of those kinds typically include a number of vividly distracting elements which do not belong to the essential nature of love as a mode of disinterested concern, but that are so confusing that they make it nearly impossible for anyone to be clear about just what is going on. Among relationships between humans, the love of parents for their infants or small children is the species that comes closest to offering recognizably pure instances of love. (RL, 43)

It is not surprising that love for very young children, who have not yet developed into persons, should strike Frankfurt this way, given his view that love is not in any way a response to value, and in particular to the sorts of values that persons tend to possess. This choice of model, though, simply begs the question in favor of a view of love "as a mode of disinterested

concern"—particularly given the apparent assumption that any form of value-responsiveness must represent an "interest" in the relevant sense. Choosing to privilege a certain type of love because it is "recognizably pure" or "less confusing" than others may in fact impede our efforts to arrive at an adequate account of love, for it is not clear that love in its essence must be pure in this sense, or that it cannot be complex and therefore confusing. It should also be said that it is not clear that the "vividly distracting elements" Frankfurt complains about in romantic love are any less present in love for children: many parents become infatuated with their newborn babies, become obsessed with them, and feel possessive toward them; and it is obvious that dependency, in several senses, is inevitably present. Moreover, outside of the constraining context of various relationships, adult human beings are relatively free to love or not to love any particular individual, at least as compared with parents, whose love for their own children is rendered very nearly nonoptional and indeed mandatory both by biological programming and by their cultural training.

I think it is a mistake, then, to assume that parent-child love must constitute a better model for love in general than the love that obtains between friends or lovers. Indeed, as should be clear by now, I suspect that the love parents feel for their infants, and which some claim to feel for their unborn fetuses, is far more complex, and far less "pure," than it might appear to be; and I have my doubts as to whether such love, *qua* love, is justifiable in the relatively straightforward manner in which friends' and lovers' love for one another is justifiable. (Perhaps with respect to *this* sort of love Frankfurt is correct to suggest that the issue of justification simply does not arise. But if this is so, it is not because justification is in general irrelevant to love: it is due, rather, to the special nature of love for children, which has a way of subverting or circumventing human reason.)

I suggested in Section V that a parent, even one who claimed that she loved the fetus she was carrying, would not continue to love that fetus once it had been determined that what she was carrying was not, in fact, a fetus at all, but rather a tumorous growth. (Let's suppose that the tumor poses no greater health risk to her than an ordinary fetus would—*that*, after all, isn't supposed to be what makes her love go away.) The explanation of this, I think, is that where love for a fetus is felt, or seems to be, it attaches to and is grounded in the expectation that that fetus will not forever remain a fetus: the love, or love-like feeling, is an anticipatory feeling, and is dependent on this organism's developing into a person and thus coming to bear some particular values that will render it a distinctive individual. A woman's love for the man before her may presuppose and thus be dependent on the belief that he is her husband and that they share a certain past history; if it turns

out she is massively deceived about who he is, or about the nature of that history, the grounds of her love might be undermined or removed. (This is compatible with the view that love is prior to anything else, a response to the beloved's values, since that view need not claim that relationships are entirely irrelevant; indeed, it is precisely through the lens of a shared history with someone that we come to perceive and appreciate their particular values.) In much the same way, a parent's love for a child may presuppose and thus be dependent on beliefs about the child's *future*: both the belief that the child will come to possess valuable properties of the sort that make persons valuable and attractive, and the belief that the parent and the child will come to share a history in the context of which those values can be meaningfully explored and recognized.

It might be suggested, however, that what the tumor lacks, and what explains why its carrier would not love it in the way she might claim to love a fetus, is not the potential for personhood but rather the status of being human. Let us put aside the tumor case, then, and ask this: what could we reasonably feel about a human fetus, or newborn infant, that had no potential whatsoever for personhood—a fetus that we knew, with complete certainty, would never progress past infancy (let us suppose, indeed, that it will never attain consciousness) and thus has no potential of becoming a person?

My view, which is that the sort of love we feel for persons would be inappropriate in such a situation, will not surprise anyone in light of what I have argued thus far: I am not, to be sure, claiming that no parent in that situation would sincerely claim to love the no-potential fetus. Some parents probably would believe themselves to feel love, and it is not clear that they must be mistaken. But such love, I think—if, at any rate, it is taken to be anything like the love we feel for persons—must be unjustified and unreasonable. In saying this, I am not saying that it would be a reasonable thing, let alone a kind thing, to tell the parents that their love was unreasonable. Presumably they are in a hard enough spot already, and this is the last sort of thing they would need to hear. It is not clear, at any rate, that any damage is being done to anyone by their feeling this unreasonable love. The question is not whether the love is harmful—that must depend on the details of the individual case—but simply whether it is reasonable; and my position is that it is not. Love for persons is grounded in either their valuable individual qualities they possess now or in the future positive qualities they will come to have; and the no-potential fetus has and will have no such qualities.

At what point, it might be asked, do we draw the line—the line, that is, between love's being unjustified and its being a reasonable response—on the continuum that runs between the no-potential fetus and the fully developed person? This is an important question, not least in the context of

our feelings about and obligations toward nonhuman animals, which possess some person-like properties (many animals have a considerable degree of intelligence and can be quite good company, for instance) but cannot be said to have achieved full personhood. The question is important; it is also very difficult and complex, and I have no developed answer to offer. It is clear, I claim, that it is reasonable to love a fully developed person, and that it is unreasonable to love a no-potential fetus; this entails, presumably, that there is some line (perhaps a hard one, perhaps a very fuzzy one) such that those on one side possess either enough qualities or enough potential qualities that it is reasonable to love them, and those on the other side do not. It is not at all clear to me, however, where that line is, and past experience—reading and hearing about people's encounters with sufferers of severe dementia, for instance—has made me somewhat skeptical regarding our pre-reflective intuitions about just what it takes to be related to as a person.

I will not, then, attempt to define a precise dividing line between beings it is reasonable to love and those it is not. I do, though, want to say that it is important that we see that the issue of love for unborn children is complicated in ways we have not yet mentioned, and that the claim to love such a child—a kind of love which, as we have noted, cannot yet attach to any of the child's particular values, virtues, or characteristics—is not at all straightforward.

Suppose that in 2007, Vanessa and Alan have a child, but due to an administrative error at the hospital they are given, and go on to raise, someone else's child. (Let's suppose the parents who raise Vanessa and Alan's biological offspring name him *Tim*, and that Vanessa and Alan name the child they raise *Grant*.) Some years down the road—in 2014, let's say—the mix-up is discovered and revealed to all; but by this point, of course, Vanessa and Alan have already come to love Grant—a love that would surely not simply disappear or be annulled by the discovery that he is not, as they had believed, their biological child.

In 2014, then, Vanessa and Alan love Grant. Before the births of Tim and Grant, let's suppose, they claimed to love their unborn child. How are we to make sense of this, given that Tim was the unborn child in question? Is the love they felt in 2007 for Tim the same love as the love they feel in 2014 for Grant? At what point did the love switch over from one child to the other? Or is the love that Vanessa feels for Grant a new and distinct entity—and if so, did it leave their love for Tim intact, or somehow extinguish it? Did they continue to love Tim during all these years during which they had no contact with him at all, so that they thought they were only loving one child but were in fact loving two? If they had never discovered the switch, would they have continued loving Tim forever, without knowing it, or would it have ended at some point, and if so, when?

I have no idea how to answer these questions. Some of them might perhaps be nonsensical questions, but I am not sure about that, either. The degree of uncertainty here suggests, I think, that we are not really clear on how to describe what goes on *before* the switch, not only in this case but in ordinary cases where there is no switch, and that such matters may not be as amenable to description using the same straightforward love-based vocabulary we apply under other circumstances as we might have assumed. It is, at any rate, evidence for the claim I made above, that the love that parents claim to feel for their children in the very early stages of their lives is highly dependent on beliefs and expectations about what normally happens, and what is likely to happen, in later stages, and it is not clear that attributions of love are straightforwardly appropriate in cases in which those expectations are frustrated by unforeseen events.

### VIII

I have been arguing that we should take seriously the idea that we love the people we love for what they are; that taking this idea seriously means recognizing that individuals' valuable properties play a role of a sort that is ruled out by the views of love we find in Kierkegaard and Frankfurt; and that thinking about parents' love for their very young children, and the way such love must work, does not undermine the claim that such properties play this sort of role. Since, on Frankfurt's view, there are no reasons for love at all, it can hardly be the case that the beloved's valuable qualities give her lover reasons to love her. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, might or might not accept that people are worthy of love, and that this worthiness gives us reason to love them. If we interpret him so that he does, we could even say that in a very rough and abstract sense he accepts that we ought to love people for what they are. But this "what they are" has nothing to do with their particular qualities and virtues as individuals; it is, rather, an ineffable *something* that *all* human persons possess. The young people I mentioned in Section VI, who feel that their parents do not truly love them because they do not really know them, will not be mollified by such love; indeed, this is precisely the sort of love they feel they already have, and find insufficient and unsatisfying.

What about love for things other than persons? I think that the conclusions I have drawn are true of other forms of love as well. Putting aside the case of other human individuals, we might consider for a moment the other great love of our lives: the love of life itself. I will leave Kierkegaard aside here since, at least in *Works of Love*, he is concerned specifically with love for persons.

But Frankfurt considers this case explicitly, and the conclusions he draws resemble those he draws with respect to love for persons:

Many people claim to believe that every human life is intrinsically valuable, regardless of how it is lived. Some individuals profess that what they are doing with their lives, or what they are likely to do with them, gives their lives a special importance. However, even when people have ideas like these about the value or importance of human life, that is ordinarily not the sole or even the primary explanation of why they are determined to go on living. It is not what really accounts for the fact that, in making decisions concerning what to do, they regard preserving their lives as a significant, justifying consideration. Someone who acts in self-defense is universally conceded to have a pertinent reason for doing what he does, regardless of how he or others may evaluate his life. (TOS, 35–36)

Thus, he concludes, "What ordinarily moves us to go on living, and also to accept our desires to continue living as a legitimate reason for acting, is not that we think we have reasons of any kind for wanting to survive" (TOS, 37).

The argument by which Frankfurt reaches this conclusion involves the same reasoning about "special"-ness that we examined earlier, with respect to parent-child love. There we noticed that, in order to justify my loving a person—my child, say—I need not claim that my child is *especially* valuable; I need only claim that she possesses some value that is sufficient to make her an appropriate object of my love. Since any human child that is not prevented from developing into a person will come to be sufficiently valuable in *some* way or other, I need not worry, as a prospective parent, that my progeny will fail in this regard and that I will therefore find myself in the unpleasant position of having to choose either to love my child without justification or to not love her at all.<sup>13</sup>

The same goes for the argument as applied to one's life. I need not think that my life is objectively special *among lives* in order to justify my loving my life. I might regard myself as a perfectly ordinary individual and still regard my life as well worth living, simply because I think that the perfectly ordinary human life is well worth living. Indeed, there is no contradiction in holding that a perfectly ordinary human life is a quite extraordinary thing—considerably more than enough, I would tend to say, to justify its being lived and loved.

I do not think that Frankfurt's argument, then, gives us any reason whatever for thinking that we do not have reasons for wanting our lives to continue. The average person, I believe, has a great many such

reasons—too many, in all likelihood, to comprehensively catalog. In Woody Allen's *Manhattan*, the character Allen plays, Isaac Davis, makes a start:

Well, all right, why is life worth living? That's a very good question. Um. Well, there are certain things, I guess, that make it worthwhile. Uh, like what? Okay. Um. For me ... oh, I would say ... what, Groucho Marx, to name one thing ... and Willie Mays, and, um, the second movement of the Jupiter Symphony, and ... Louie Armstrong's recording of "Potato Head Blues" ... Swedish movies, naturally ... *Sentimental Education* by Flaubert ... Marlon Brando, Frank Sinatra ... um, those incredible apples and pears by Cezanne ... the crabs at Sam Wo's ... Tracy's face ...<sup>14</sup>

In endorsing Isaac Davis's way of answering the question of why (his) life is worth living, we are not implying that this list encompasses every reason that might be given; nor are we in any way suggesting that if these reasons were to fail, Davis would be left without a reason for continuing to live. Suppose that Davis became disenchanted with Sinatra and Swedish movies, every copy of *Sentimental Education* and the Jupiter Symphony were destroyed in an unlikely series of freak accidents, Sam Wo's stopped serving crabs, and some similar misfortune removed every other item on the list above. Would Davis be left without reason to live? The answer is no, not only because there are surely other reasons that Davis does not get around to enumerating in this particular scene, but more importantly because it would still be possible for him to find *other* reasons to live. That a certain set of considerations constitutes the reasons I (currently) have to value my life, and to want to keep living, does not imply or even suggest that if those reasons were to fail, other considerations, under other circumstances, might not do the same job.

Suppose, on the other hand, that every movie worth seeing, every piece of music worth hearing, every restaurant worth patronizing, and every person worth spending time with vanished from the face of the planet. Suppose, indeed, that all sources of pleasure and joy in human life were annihilated. In that circumstance, it is not obvious that we would have reason to value life, or to live. At any rate, I take it—and I hope you will agree—that our set of such reasons would be very seriously diminished. The question of why human life was worth living would no longer admit, under such circumstances, of an obvious answer.

But in the world as we know it there is an obvious answer—or rather, a great many obvious answers—just as there are typically many obvious answers to questions like, "Why do you love her?" (Because she is funny; because she is kind; because she is a talented and insightful philosopher;

because she rubs my feet at the end of a hard day; etc.) Perhaps it is the fact that the answers are so obvious that has led Frankfurt astray. Philosophers sometimes assume that the answer to a profound question must be something difficult to find, something that will take a great deal of effort and cleverness to discern or devise. Having been convinced by Plato and others, that things are sometimes not as they appear, we are all too often inclined to assume that in this world *nothing* is as it appears. We tend to forget, as Iris Murdoch tried to remind us, that philosophy is very often "a matter of finding occasions on which to say the obvious."<sup>15</sup>

I have come to think that love works more or less in just the way it seems to work, and that the answers we should give to love's questions are the obvious answers, the answers ordinary people are generally inclined to give when asked "Why do you love your children?" or "Why do you think your life is worth living?" This is not to say that there aren't a great many details to be worked out. Love, like life, is complicated. But the place to begin, when theorizing about love, is precisely where love itself begins, with the importance and value of the things and people we love, in all their glorious specificity and individual particularity.

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### Notes

- 1 See Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 17 ff.
- 2 WL 162, emphasis added. See also: "And this is the duty, to find actuality in this way with closed eyes (because in love you do indeed close them to weakness and frailty and imperfection), instead of failing to see actually with wide-open eyes (yes, wide-open or starting like a sleep-walker's)" (WL 163). As Ferreira writes, "It is quite natural to wonder, on hearing these comments, whether Kierkegaard's ethic allows us to really see the actual other person. It is also natural to wonder whether this ethic recommends a morally culpable blindness, whether it proposes that we ignore moral failings in the other person" (M. Jamie Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 108). (It should be noted that she goes on to argue that Kierkegaard's position does not have these unattractive implications. I do not find her reading entirely persuasive on this matter, but I will not pursue this issue here.)

- 3 On this see Neil Delaney, "Romantic Love and Loving Commitment,"  
 4 We must include the qualification "independent" since on Frankfurt's  
 view, there is a tie between loving and value: by loving someone I make her  
 valuable.  
 5 This is on the assumption that it is reason that is responsible for our  
 assessments of inherent value. Since I accept this assumption, and I take it  
 that Frankfurt does too, I will not defend this assumption here.  
 6 Harry Frankfurt, "Some Mysteries of Love," University of Kansas: The  
 Lindley Lecture Series, 2001, 4. See also RL, Chapter 2, especially 38–41.  
 7 Fairly persuasive criticisms of these arguments can be found in David  
 Enoch, *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism*, Michael  
 Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, and Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A  
 Defense*.  
 8 David Velleman, "Beyond Price," 205.  
 9 The more difficult question, presumably, is: what should we feel about  
 a human fetus, or newborn infant, that we knew would never progress  
 past infancy, and thus never become a person? I return to this question in  
 Section VII.  
 10 This point—that the properties a person will possess can justify one's love  
 for her in the present—is the concomitant to a point I make in *Love's Vision*,  
 where I argue that properties a person used to possess can justify love in  
 the present, and that this helps answer the common objection that love  
 grounded in a person's value will be unreliable and inconstant. See Troy  
 Jollimore, *Love's Vision*, 139–41.  
 11 Frankfurt, "Some Mysteries of Love," 4.  
 12 After all, there could, in principle, be an exact replica of me somewhere in  
 the universe, though in practice each individual person is unique.  
 13 If, on the other hand, my child is prevented from developing into a person,  
 then I will find myself in that unpleasant position. But this fact simply helps  
 to explain why such situations are deeply tragic.  
 14 *Manhattan*, written by Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman (Rollins and  
 Joffe, 1979).  
 15 Admittedly, the remark may be apocryphal. An internet search turns up a  
 number of pages that quote this line, but I have not been able to locate an  
 authoritative source.

## Frankfurt and Kierkegaard on BS, Wantonness, and Aestheticism: A Phenomenology of Inauthenticity

John Davenport

### I. Introduction: Kierkegaard, Frankfurt, Love, and Authenticity

In this essay, I will consider Frankfurt's conception of love in the context of his wider claims about "caring" in order to show that (a) his conception of love depends on his contrasting account of inauthenticity, and yet (b) he clearly needs the richer account of the authentic/inauthentic distinction offered by Kierkegaard. Several of the connections between Frankfurt and Kierkegaard traced in this volume were first broached in Edward Mooney's insight that Frankfurtian "caring" resembles the process of self-articulation in which an "ethical" self is formed according to Kierkegaard's pseudonym Judge William in *Either/Or* vol. II.<sup>1</sup> Following Mooney, I have referred to Frankfurt's distinction between 1st-order desires and "higher-order volitions" to help explain the Judge's cryptic "choice to choose" in ethical terms,<sup>2</sup> and the related notion of volitional "earnestness" found in several of Kierkegaard's works (both pseudonymous and signed).<sup>3</sup> I have also argued that Frankfurt's distinction between "ambiguity" (or division in the higher-order will) and "wholeheartedness" sheds light on different types of spiritual division and "sinfulness" in *The Concept of Anxiety*, though Kierkegaard's conception of volitional unity is superior to Frankfurt's.<sup>4</sup> The connections I explore below support these prior comparisons by showing that Frankfurt's and Kierkegaard's analyses of inauthenticity are similar in key respects.

#### Frankfurt's Problem and Forms of Love

There are also several important differences between Kierkegaard and Frankfurt, especially concerning the status of values worth caring about, or "ethics" in its widest sense. Frankfurt's mature view is that caring cannot