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Love and Morality: Toward an Ethic of Universal Love

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Philosophy

by

Michael Paul Goerger

June 2011

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Committee Chairperson

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandmother Eileen Goerger

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I will meet you there.
        -Rumi

I have seen the light break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great prize, the one field that had
the treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush. To a brightness
that seems as transitory as your youth,
but is the eternity that awaits you.
        -R. S. Thomas, "The Bright Field"

In this world, hatred has never been defeated by hatred.
Only love can overcome hatred.
This is an ancient and eternal law.
        - The Dhammapadda

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Love and Morality: Toward an Ethic of Universal Love

by

Michael Paul Goerger

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Philosophy
University of California, Riverside, June 2011
Dr. David K. Glidden, Chairperson

In this dissertation, I examine the normative force of the claim that one should love others.

In the first part of the dissertation I provide an account of loving. In chapter 1, I argue that love necessarily involves activity aimed at benefitting the loved-one for her own sake. In Chapter 2, I develop this definition and argue that loving-activity is activity which aims to contribute to the *well-being* of the loved-one. I advance this view against the influential view of loving-activity given by Harry Frankfurt, who claims that loving-activity is aimed at the interests of the loved-one. In Chapter 3, I show how theories of listening can help us to understand how those who love can disagree with a loved-one while continuing to act lovingly toward the loved-one. I argue that by listening to the loved-one, one-who-loves allows the loved-one to exercise her ability to direct her own life thereby treating her as an individual and contributing to her well-being.

In the second portion of the dissertation I account for the normative force of the claim that one should love others. While several philosophers have claimed that

cultivating love is impossible, I argue in chapter 4 that love can be cultivated. I explore

two methods of cultivating love: Stoic *oikeiōsis* and Buddhist *metta* meditation. I argue

that these methods do in fact cultivate love. In chapter 5, I argue that given the influential

account of right and wrong developed by T. M. Scanlon, there can be no moral obligation

to love. Finally, I argue in chapter 6 that the imperative to love others expresses a

normative ideal, which supports various values including philanthropy, charity,

forgiveness, and loving-community. In so far as one embraces the ideal of love, one

should recognize the goodness of these values.

  As love is a topic that has been neglected by most moral philosophers, the aim of

this dissertation is to raise as well as resolve questions about the role of love in moral life.

The framework developed in the final chapter is meant to start a conversation about how

philosophers could begin to integrate the importance of loving into our normative

frameworks.

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INTRODUCTION

Toward an Ethic of Universal Love

§1. The claim that one should love more finds voice in many major world

religions and plays a important role in the lived ethical systems of billions of people. It is

expressed in the ancient Hebrew scriptures, which read, "Do not seek revenge or bear a

grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself."[1] Jesus of

Nazareth combines this piece of scripture with that which requires one to love God with

all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength and claims that no other commandment is greater

than these.[2] At another point in the gospels, Jesus redefines the term 'neighbor' to include

anyone whom one treats as a neighbor.[3] Thus, the ancient commandment is no longer

limited to those in one's community but can include anyone whom one meets. Several

hundred years later, St. Augustine succinctly sums up the imperative to love in a "short

precept" saying "Love, and do what you will."[4]

The imperative to love more, even to love all others is also found outside of

Western religions.[5] It is expressed by the ancient Chinese philosopher Mozi, who argues

that, "universal love is the way of sage kings."[6] Though Confucianism gradually eclipsed

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[1]   Leviticus 19:18.

[2]   Matt. 22:36-40

[3]   Luke 10:25-37.

[4]   Augustine (1888). *Seventh Homily on the First Epistle of St. John*, Section 8.

[5]   This is not to say that individuals are necessarily utilizing the philosophical idea of an 'imperative.'
       Rather, I mean that the claim that one should love is often expressed grammatically as an imperative.

[6]   Mozi (2010). Bk. 4, Section 12.

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Mohism in importance, Mozi's teachings had an important influence on both Confucian and Taoist writings. The imperative is again expressed by the Buddha, who argues that one should cultivate a limitless heart.[7] His teachings continue to attract followers and, in the past several decades, have begun to play an important role in Western spiritual life.

I have named only a few of the most famous thinkers who have claimed that one should love more. Their reach and influence has been immense. Equally immense has been the scholarship and theology devoted to understanding the claims they make, for they raise many questions. Does God require one to love all of one's neighbors and if so how much does one have to love them? Will one be punished if one fails to love? When the Buddha says that one's heart should be limitless, does he really mean that the Dalai Lama should love the soldiers who forced him into exile? Theologians and scholars have spilled a great deal of ink trying to answer these questions and will undoubtably spill a great deal more in the years to come.

Considerably less ink has been devoted to love by contemporary philosophers. I find this odd for two reasons. First, the purpose of moral philosophy is to understand how one *should* live.[8] Given that several billion people believe that love plays a central role in answering this question, it seems that love is a natural place to begin an inquiry into ethical conduct and moral relationships. Second, thinkers like the Buddha and Jesus make distinctly moral claims that are not easy to integrate into contemporary philosophical

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[7]   *Kiraniya Metta Sutta (Snp. 1.8)* (2004), lines 26-29.

[8]   I make no distinction in this dissertation between morality and ethics. I take both words to signify those principles, actions, and judgments that concern how one should live a life. Any usage patterns are coincidental.

understandings of morality. Understanding how an ethic of love works and how it might interact with and challenge the popular philosophical understanding of morality seems to me to be a worthwhile task.

§2. Philosophy is not theology, and thus an understanding of the imperative to love cannot aim at understanding the words of a particular religious thinker or ground the imperative to love in a particular religious understanding of the world. The project must be more abstract. Rather than asking what Jesus meant when he commanded his followers to love their neighbors as themselves or what the Buddha meant when he instructed his disciples to cultivate a limitless heart, I will ask a more general question. Independent of any theological context, what does it mean to claim that one should make love central to one's moral life? Of course, the ancient sages who made this claim have something to say in answer to this more general question, but what they have to say, if it is to be germane to our inquiry, must be valid independently of the religious ideas they represent.

A thorough philosophical investigation of the claim that one should love others will necessarily answer three interrelated questions:

First, what does it mean to love another? Love is found in many different relationships and the particular way in which one loves another varies according to the nature of the relationship. The love which one has for one's friends is not the same as the love one has for one's parents, nor is it the same as the love which one has for a romantic partner. If these kinds of love are categorically different, then one must explain which

kind of love is being utilized in the imperative to love others. One must then give an account of that kind of love. Is love an emotional infatuation for the other, a profound devotion to the other, respect for the rights of the other, or something else entirely? If sense is to be made of the claim that one should love more people or even all people, then a philosophical account of love must be provided.

Second, what does one mean when one says that one *should* love more? A philosophical examination of the claim that one should love must provide an account of the normativity of this claim. The imperative makes a claim about the way that one *should* live. Philosophers have devoted a great deal of time to understanding the meaning of the term 'should' and the nature of normativity. Insofar as the claim that one should love others makes a practical claim about the way in which one should live, the force of that claim - its ability to evaluate the reasons one has for acting - must be explained.

Finally, why *should* one love more or even all persons? This is different from the second question in that the second question asks about the normativity of the claim while this question asks why, given that normativity, the claim should be followed. Some answers to the second question will implicitly involve an answer to this question. It is generally believed that obligations are self-motivating, and thus if the imperative expresses a moral obligation, then the imperative should be followed just because it expresses an obligation. If instead the imperative to love others makes a perfectionist claim about the kind of life it is best to live, then it is reasonable to ask why one should aim to live in that way.

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My goal in this project is to provide answers to the first two questions without providing an answer to the third. I take this approach because I feel that a full understanding of the first two questions will provide us with the necessary framework to answer the third question. That is, how one will answer this third question depends on the answers that are provided to the first two questions. Thus, my task is limited. I am not trying to persuade the reader to make love a more central part of his or her life. Rather, I aim to show how the claim that one should love more makes a normative claim about how one should live. Providing an argument for why one should do so - selling the claim, so to speak - is not a part of this project.

§3. In this project, I take seriously the idea of universal love as a moral ideal, though this does not mean that I assume that universal love is a valid or correct basis for morality. By 'take seriously' I mean that I recognize that love is a *possible* ground for some aspects of moral life. This possibility raises important questions and has been advocated by important figures. Thus, it must be examined thoroughly before being dismissed or accepted.

If this project is to succeed, an account of loving must be developed that satisfies two criteria. First, the account of loving must be secular. Some Christians believe that love for other human beings and God is only possible through God's grace or through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This is a fine belief if you are a Christian, but I want to make a broader claim - mainly that love for all others can be understood and spoken about without entering into these theological debates. Doing so is important not only

because it allows us to speak more generally about human relationships, but also because our era is one that is marked by increasing secularity. Certainly the power of love is not limited to those who adopt a particular system of belief. Thus, while I use various world religions as a source of the imperative to love others, a source that has moved many individuals over thousands of years, I do not intend to provide an account of what any one of these figures meant when they delivered their message. I approach these thinkers as one who is interested in the history of ideas, and I see them as participants in a conversation that transcends particular systems of belief.

It may thus be that the account of loving provided will not satisfy adherents to the various religions that profess a commandment to love, and the secular account I offer may fall short of the religious project in a few ways. However, in the present context I speak as an ethicist and not as an authority on any particular religion. The uniqueness of my project, as I see it, is that I am attempting to philosophically understand ideas that have largely been discussed by theologians in a religious context.[9]

The second criterion is that the account of loving must be a *robust* one which remains faithful to the actual experience of loving. It is easy to provide an account of loving that describes loving in terms of respect for the rights of others or in terms of the dignity of every human being.[10] These are both noble goals, and interesting accounts of

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[9] The project is not entirely unique. Some Continental figures attempted similar projects. Hegel, for instance, recognized the importance of developing an account of morality to which love was central. This is especially apparent in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1988).

[10] Consider this line from Kant (1996), *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:451. "Now the benevolence present in love for all human beings is indeed the greatest in its extent, but the smallest in degree; and when I say I take an interest in this human's well-being only out of my love for all human beings, the interest I take is as slight as an interest can be."

universal concern have been provided on the basis of such accounts.[11] However, such accounts fail to capture the radical nature of the claim that one should make one's love universal. Merely respecting the rights of my sister is not equivalent to loving her, and it seems odd to say that the case is different when one is dealing with strangers. The force and radicalness of the imperative to love others stems from the claim that there is something key to my relationship with my family members and myself that should be a part of my relationships with strangers. If the account of loving is weakened, then the kind of love which one has for family members and friends will be wholly different from the kind of love which one has for all others.

§4. My strategy is as follows: I begin by examining the way in which individuals relate to and interact with those whom they already love. By beginning with and being guided by the love which one already has, we avoid the problem of developing a weakened and underwhelming account of loving. My hope is that the account that I offer will approximate the reader's experience of loving, and that there will be some agreement, though certainly not universal agreement, that the developed account approximates the lived experience of loving another. Thus, I take the love that one has for (most of) one's family members as the paradigmatic example of the love that might be extended to others. I develop that account fully, remaining faithful to the actual experience of loving.

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[11] See Nygren (1969).

In the final three chapters, I examine the normativity of the claim that one should love others. What moral claim is being made when one claims that one should love others? I begin by asking if the account of love developed in the first part of the dissertation can be expanded to other individuals. Is it, in fact, possible to cultivate love for individuals toward whom one does not have a natural predisposition to love? Many philosophers have argued that this is not possible, but I argue that there are strong reasons to think that one can cultivate love for others.

I then ask whether the imperative to love others can be understood as expressing a moral obligation. I argue that it cannot because moral obligations are actions that can be demanded of one. Because the imperative to love others is extremely demanding, it is not reasonable to demand that one love other people. Instead, I argue that the imperative to love others expresses a normative ideal. Normative ideals capture the goodness of a certain form of life and illustrate why that way of life is best. When one claims that one should love others, one is claiming that a life of love for others is the best life for a human being.

§5. This project is subtitled "Toward an Ethic of Universal Love" because I do not think that the reflections and arguments offered here provide us with an ethical theory rooted in love. The merit of the project is that it begins to identify the problems that such an ethical theory will have to face and overcome. It identifies the areas in which significant conceptual work will have to be done if an ethic of love is to be integrated into our philosophical understanding of morality. Showing that one should love, as a

requirement of living an ethically good life, would take the project significantly off course and would require the development of a comprehensive theory of morality. I hope someday to accomplish this task. However, as the project currently stands, there is too much work to be done before this much longer journey can begin. What it means to be loving must be understood and articulated in a clear way, and the possibility of a theory of ethical living rooted in love must be established. The current project seeks to accomplish both of these preliminary tasks.

Despite the clear importance of whom one loves to moral life and the injunctions and commandments of religious and spiritual leaders, contemporary philosophers have devoted surprisingly little energy to the ethics of love and caring.[12] This is not the place to criticize those thinkers, particularly those ethicists, who have neglected this domain of moral life. While the project at hand does not provide a fully articulated account of a loving moral life, it does provide, in Chapter 6, a prolegomena to such a theory.

My hope is that a sustained discussion of loving, loving relationships, and moral life will make clear the need for more philosophical discussion about loving. Ultimately, we must ask what love is, whether it can be deserved, how it shapes the way we act toward others, how it shapes the way we act toward those whom we do not love, the forms it takes with regard to loved-ones whether they be people, ideals, or objects and the relationship between these forms, how it is developed and when it fails, how it relates to motivation, and so on.

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[12] Some have devoted time and energy to these topics, notably Noddings (1984), Held (2006), and Gilligan (1982). As a proportion of all philosophers working in the area of ethics, however, those working on care and love were, until recently, a very small group.

There is much to be said, and only some of these questions will be answered here. What will be shown is that philosophers can usefully and clearly talk about these questions in a secular context.

CHAPTER ONE

Love as Activity

Abstract: In this chapter I argue that love necessarily involves activity aimed at benefitting the loved-one for her own sake. I begin with an historical overview of several accounts of love that require acting on behalf of the loved-one. I then explore a volition-based account of love in order to explain how love connects to action. I conclude that love is not merely an emotion, but must include acting for the benefit of the loved-one.

§1. It might seem to go without saying that "love is an emotion, nothing else."[1] According to a common story, love is primarily something one feels rather than something one does. Thus if a person says that he loves another, one takes him to mean that he *feels* love for the loved-one rather than to mean that he is *doing* something to or for the loved-one. The assumption that love is an emotion is rarely challenged, and some have argued that it would be foolish or desperate to contend the claim.[2]

In this chapter I challenge this common analysis of love.[3] I argue that while loving another may involve an emotional component, loving also requires acting in ways that will benefit the loved-one. Being in a given emotional state is not sufficient to love another. One must also engage in activity that benefits the loved-one. While the view that love involves activity is not often discussed in the contemporary literature, it plays a large role in the history of ideas about love, many ordinary intuitions about loving, and our common use of the word 'love' as an active verb.

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[1] Solomon (1981), p. 34.

[2] Hamlyn (1978), p. 5.

[3] The view that love is primarily an emotion is the most commonly held view in the contemporary philosophical debate (c.f. Berenson (1991), Solomon (1981), and Velleman (1999)). For an example of an account that explicitly rejects this view see Frankfurt (2006), p. 42.

My argument relies upon key cases in which it intuitively seems that one cannot love another because the way in which one is treating another is inconsistent with love. If the reader accepts these cases and agrees that one's treatment of another plays a role in the evaluation of whether or not one loves another, then ordinary ideas about loving must involve norms and restrictions concerning the way one-who-loves acts toward the loved-one. If this were not the case, if one's ordinary ideas about loving did not require that the one-who-loves act in certain ways, then one would not view some actions as inconsistent with love. I conclude that loving another necessarily involves activity aimed at the well-being of the loved-one.

§2. There are many forms of love and any work on the subject will neglect some forms in favor of others. To name a few such forms, there is the love of God, the love of ice cream, the love of nature, the love one feels for a boyfriend, a fiance, a new spouse, and a very old spouse, the love of a good friend, the love of an enemy, and the love of one's child. The goal of this project is to provide a philosophical articulation of the imperative that one *should* love all others, and this goal circumscribes the topic considerably.[4] While most contemporary discussions of love have favored forms of romantic and erotic love, this is clearly not the way in which one should love all others. My focus will be on the kinds of love that exist between close adult friends, parents and children, and often between spouses and partners. This is not passionate love, full of

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[4]   See my Introduction, Section 1.

erotic desire and need, but love that enjoys the companionship of the loved-one and acts for her well-being.

Passionate love is *eros*, love born of desire.[5] An individual fueled by passionate love longs to be with the object of his love. This is the love of Romeo and Juliet who desire the presence of each other at any cost. If their love cannot be fulfilled and results in both of their deaths, that is a consequence which they are willing to accept. Romeo and Juliet's love is notably different from that of Saint-Preux and Julie in the early portions of Rousseau's novel, *Julie: La Nouvelle Héloïse*.[6] Julie's father disapproves of her relationship with Saint-Preux, and Saint-Preux, desperately in love with Julie, agrees never to see her again in order to spare her the pain of being alienated from her family. When Julie asks his permission to marry another man, Saint-Preux quickly gives it. He makes this immense sacrifice so that Julie can be happy though this leaves him no hope of happiness for himself.

It may seem that the word 'friendship' better captures this form of love. Indeed, many have written poetically about the deep love that exists between friends. Consider this passage in which Montaigne describes his friendship with Etienne de la Boétie:

> In the friendship which I am talking about, souls are mingled and confounded in so universal a blending that they efface the seam which joins them together so that it cannot be found. If you press me to say why I

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[5] Plato viewed *eros* as acquisitive and grasping. To love something, Socrates argues in the *Symposium*, is to desire to possess that thing. Nygren (1969) argues that *eros* is essentially acquisitive. In contrast to *agapē*, *eros* is a motivated response to the value of an object created by a desire to possess the object. Nygren, p. 54, finds it difficult to understand the distinction between *eros* and *agapē* in any practical way, a view seconded by Benedict XVI (2005) in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (Section 7.). For all intents and purposes, I have avoided relying upon the distinction between *eros* and *agapē*.

[6] Rousseau (1997).

love him, I feel that it cannot be expressed except by replying: 'Because it was him, because it was me.' Mediating this union there was, beyond all my reasoning, beyond all I can say specifically about it, some inexplicable force of destiny.[7]

This is a powerful statement about the kind of love that can ground a friendship, but few today would use this vocabulary to describe anything other than an intensely romantic, sexual relationship. The imagery that Montaigne employs of two souls mingling and blending into a union captures the modern notion of romantic love, but not that of friendship.

The problem is that our use of the word 'love' has contracted. This likely stems from viewing love as a particular emotional experience. If love is a particular experience *and* that particular experience is whatever one feels for one's romantic partners, then it makes sense that many have abandoned talk of loving friends. As one does not often feel about one's friends the way one feels about one's romantic partner, one might think that love cannot occur with friends. This is a narrow-minded way of thinking, and it can lead to laughable results. For example, in a recent book, widely panned by critical historians, C.A. Tripp claims that Abraham Lincoln was a homosexual on the basis of letters Lincoln wrote to a male friend.[8] Lincoln, of course, wrote about his friendship using a vocabulary of love that is no longer used, and Tripp read these words as meaning then what they do today. He concludes not as he should, that Lincoln loved his male friends, but that Lincoln was 'in love' with his male friends. Tripp would have done well to read C.S.

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[7]   Montaigne (1993), p. 211-2.

[8]   Tripp (2005).

Lewis' essay on friendship. Lewis warns against making this error, saying, "It has actually become necessary in our time to rebut the theory that every firm and serious friendship is really homosexual."[9]

My point is linguistic rather than ontological. I do not mean to say that deep, affectionate love between friends, particularly male friends, no longer exists, just that it is difficult to find the words to describe this kind of relationship. The word 'friendship,' which is now too weak in English, has come to encompass any number of relationships that involve various levels of affection and interaction.[10] Many people talk of 'friends' on social networking sites such as Facebook whom they have never met and to whom they may never have spoken. 'Love' proves to be just as unhelpful because it has been so thoroughly sexualized. The contraction of our terms presents significant difficulties for a project that examines the claim that one should love all others because the vocabulary used will always be somewhat artificial. If one speaks of lovers and beloveds, one conjures up ideas of a sexual relationship, but if one speaks of friends, one conjures up ideas of coworkers and acquaintances. In the midst of all of this, we must also make sense of the love of strangers who are rarely romantic partners and, by definition, not friends. There is a need to reclaim some of the vocabulary of love, to desexualize at least one form of love without reducing it to the kind of relationship that one has with coworkers and acquaintances.

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9   Lewis (1960), p. 60.

10   In the cited passage from Montaigne's 28th essay, the French title is '*De l'amitie',* which means literally 'On Friendship.' Screech renders it 'On Affectionate Relationships' because, he claims, the Renaissance notion of friendship is far too robust as to be captured by the contemporary English word 'friendship.'

My interest in love is driven by my interest in morality, and passionate love is not the kind of love in which one can ground some aspects of moral thought. It is certainly not the kind of love that Jesus of Nazareth was talking about when, as the Gospels record, he said that one must love one's neighbors, nor is it the kind of love that the Buddha is advising when he claims that one should have a limitless heart. Thus, I will be speaking of the kind of love that Montaigne had for la Boétie, and that parents, children, and friends still have today.

§3. The question, "What is love?" is very mysterious and abstract. Perhaps Hans Castorp is right when he suggests in *The Magic Mountain* that the meaning of love is something best left unresolved, that "it would betray a dreary lack of subtlety to worry about it."[11] However, we can avoid engaging with this mysterious and abstract concept by changing the question.

There are at least two ways that one can speak of love. First, one can use the word 'love' as an abstract noun, saying, for example, "Love is smoke raised with the fume of sighs,"[12] or "Were it not for love the world would be frozen."[13] If a philosopher of love asks "What is love?" and attempts to provide an analysis of the abstract noun captured by these poets, I do not believe that she will be very successful. The problem with the question "What is love?" as opposed to "What is water?" is that the question "What is love?" is *so* abstract that it is hard to understand what one is supposed to study. There is

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[11]   Mann (1995), p. 590.

[12]   Shakespeare (1975), p. 1013. *Romeo and Juliet* (1597)*,* Act 1, Scene 1.

[13]   Rumi (2006), p. 129. Excerpted from "Amor Agitat Molem."

not a concept called 'love' floating out there in space that can be poked and prodded in order to discover what love is. Unlike a chemist, one cannot bring love into the laboratory for careful analysis.

The word 'love' is also frequently used as a verb, as when Yeats writes, "But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you / and loved the sorrows of your changing face,"[14] or when one says, "I love you." The usage of love as a verb is common, and it points toward my conclusion that love can be thought of as an activity. Focusing on this usage also expands the sorts of philosophical inquiry into love that can be conducted. In addition to asking what love is, one can also ask what *loving* is. The questions "What does it mean to be loving?" or "What actions are loving?" are comparably less abstract and much easier to answer. In contrast to the mystery of what love itself is, most have some experience of loving and being loved, and by turning away from abstractions and toward the experience of loving and being loved, a greater understanding of love can be developed. The move from an abstract noun to a verb may seem insignificant, but it shifts the way in which one thinks about the idea being discussed. It reminds one that the subject matter is neither mysterious nor abstract but is very much a part of our active lives.

Though "Love is . . ." is a convenient locution that I will employ throughout this project, my goal in the first three chapters is to articulate an account of *loving*.[15] It is not my intention to say all that can be said of love or to speak about every instance of love. Love is too complex to admit of this approach. Irving Singer, a philosopher and historian

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[14]   Yeats (1956), p. 41. Excerpted from "When You Are Old."

[15]   My discussion will focus, for the most part, on providing an account of *loving*.

of love, argues that all philosophers who approach love, from Plato to Freud, idealize the concept in one way or another. Thinkers latch on to those aspects of love that most appeal to them and then create an account of love that is deeply dependent upon those features.[16] Undoubtably, my analysis does this as well, but I am fully aware that this idealization and act of creation is taking place. My task is one of both creation and analysis, and I hope that my creation is in most ways true to the lived experience of loving.

§4. The view that love involves activity is a very old one and plays a prominent role in the history of thought about love. When Plato and Aristotle speak of one form of love, captured by derivatives of the Greek verb *philein*, they are speaking of a form of love that requires acting for the advantage of the loved-one. Thomas Aquinas also wrote a great deal about love and similarly insists that loving necessarily involves acting in ways that benefit the loved-one. Finally, the Stoics speak of loving another, which is especially interesting given their general reluctance to approve of emotional states.[17] In the following three sections, I will examine these theories in order to reinforce the idea that acting on behalf of the loved-one is central to loving.

Plato's discussions of *philia* very clearly assume that those who *philein* another act for the perceived advantage of the loved-one. In the *Lysis*, Lysis quickly assents to Socrates' claim that "If your mother and father *philei* (love) you, and desire to see you happy, it is perfectly plain that they are anxious to secure your happiness."[18] Lysis'

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[16] Singer (1984a), p. 39-44.

[17] See Section 6 of this chapter.

[18] *Lysis,* 207e.

parents work to secure his well-being, and that is part and parcel of their *philia* for their

son. As the dialogue continues, it becomes clear that, on Socrates' understanding of

philein, one loves another in order to secure some advantage for oneself.[19] Socrates is

wrestling with one of the central puzzles of love. Because love involves working on

behalf of another, it seems right that there should be some pay-off for the one-who-loves.

That is, the one-who-loves should secure some good for himself by loving, otherwise

why would he love? Socrates articulates this pay-off in terms of the loved-one being

useful to the one-who-loves. On this account, one loves another instrumentally rather

than disinterestedly.

Plato's assumption that love is active is also found in the *Republic*. In a short

argument about selecting the best guardians Socrates argues first that the guardians must

care for the state, and second that one cares most for that which one loves (*philein*).[20]

Because the guardians must "eagerly pursue what is advantageous to the city and be

wholly unwilling to do the opposite," those selected to be guardians must love the city.[21]

Furthermore, Socrates states that great care must be taken to ensure that this conviction

(*dogma*) is not removed from the guardians whether by compulsion or sorcery. The

argument is simple; those who love the city will care for the city and therefore pursue

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[19]   Ibid., 210c.

[20]   The entire argument is found at 412c-e. The words translated as 'care' are all derivatives of *kēdein*.
      They imply taking charge or guardianship over something, especially a woman through marriage. The
      idea seems to be that in caring for the city the guardians will become trustees of its well-being.

[21]   *Republic,* 412d.

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what is advantageous for the city. Thus, one should select as guardians those who love the city.

In neither the *Lysis* nor the *Republic* is there an argument that one-who-loves will act for the benefit of the loved-one. In both texts this is simply assumed to be the case. The thought that one could love something, a city for example, and not work to benefit it never crosses Plato's mind.

Aristotle similarly assumes that *philein* requires that the one-who-loves act in ways that benefit the loved-one. In the *Rhetoric* he defines love as deliberately "willing (*boulesthai)* for anyone the things which we believe to be good for his sake but not our own, and procuring them for him as far as lies in our power."[22] He states this again in his complex discussion of friendship in the *Nichomachean Ethics.* He writes, "a *philon* (lover) is taken to be someone who wishes and does goods or apparent goods for another for his sake . . . this is how mothers feel toward their children."[23] Goodwill, mere wishing good for the other but not going to any trouble to secure those goods, is not *philia* but inactive *philia* (*argēn philian*).[24] It is only when one goes to some trouble to benefit the other that one begins to be a *philos* toward the other.

Passages such as these make it quite clear that activity on behalf of the loved-one was central to the ancient philosophical understanding of what love for another involved.

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[22] *Rhet.* 1380B35 - 1381A1

[23]   *N.E.* 1166A2 - 5. These passages are traditionally regarded as being about friendship. But consider Vlastos' (1973) comment on translating *philia* as friendship, p. 3: "this blunts the force of Aristotle's Greek, as should be clear from one of his illustrations: maternal affection is one of his star examples of *philein* and *philia* . . ."

[24] *N.E.* 1166b30 - 1167a20.

Indeed, Plato seems not to have felt that it was necessary to establish this point; Lysis simply accepts it in his eponymous dialogue. For Aristotle, there is some elaboration on the point, but no detailed argument is given in its defense.

Many centuries later, St. Thomas Aquinas does argue, by means of an analogy, for the claim that activity is central to love. In *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life* Aquinas is trying to understand whether perfect love (*caritas*) toward all others is possible or required. In pursuing this question, he argues that love for others requires activity, saying "when a man truly loves another as himself, he will show his love not only by good wishes, but by practical benefits."[25] Self-love, Aquinas argues, clearly involves working toward practical benefits for oneself. By analogy then, other oriented love will also involve working toward practical benefits for the loved-one. This way of arguing is suggested to Aquinas by the scriptural claim that one must love one's neighbor *as* one love's oneself.[26] Self-love and other-love, on his understanding, are both instances of love and so they should both involve the same degree of practical concern.

These sources show that the claim that love is simply an emotion is not obviously true. Many influential philosophers have held that activity is necessary to loving. Prior to reinforcing these claims with my own argument, I will turn toward the accounts of love provided by the Stoics and by Harry Frankfurt. These accounts not only claim that love involves action, but explicitly deny the claim that love need be an emotional phenomenon.

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[25] Aquinas (1952), *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, p. 72.

[26] Luke 10:27; "Ἀγαπήσεις...τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν."

§5. As the name of the school still suggests, the Stoics believed that the sage, or fully cultivated person, would be free from any emotional disturbance (*apathos*). The reasons they had for rejecting the emotions are complex but center around the claim that most emotions are the product of assenting to a false belief about a given state of affairs.[27] For example, if one has been injured by another, then one might wish to lash out violently at the person who has harmed one. This emotion, according to Seneca, has three parts.[28] First, there is an involuntary physiological reaction. In this case, one's heart pumps faster and one *feels* angry. Second, is the voluntary assent to the belief that taking revenge against the one who harmed you would be a good thing. One decides that getting revenge is a good thing to do. Finally, one wishes to take revenge, "not if it is right to do so, but whether or no."[29] One has been overcome by the emotion of anger and is no longer reasoning well about the situation. Seneca argues that if one uses reason to calm oneself before assenting to the first movement, then one has not experienced anger. One has only experienced a 'prompting,' which is not a full fledged emotion. Only "that which overleaps reason and sweeps it away" is anger proper.[30]

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[27] Chrysippus argued that all emotions contain value judgments. For example, the fear of death results from the belief that death is bad. The Stoics believed that only one's choices could be good or bad and thus disputed the value judgments that ground most emotions (c.f. Epictetus' *Disc.* 1.24, 1.27, 2.13, 2.16, 3.10). See Sorabji (2000) for an in-depth discussion of Stoicism and the emotions.

[28] Seneca (1995), *De Ira* 2.3.5.

[29] Ibid., 2.4.1.

[30] Seneca (1995), *De Ira* 2.3.5. A second common example is the anxiety that one feels when a boat is being tossed about in a storm. The initial discomfort - sweaty palms and a rising heartbeat - is not an emotion. An emotion only occurs when one assents to belief that one will soon experience something bad, mainly one's death. One then loses control and becomes inconsolable.

In order to control the emotions and to make sure that one, for instance, only takes revenge when appropriate, the Stoics argued that one should target the second stage of the emotion - the assent to a false belief. In the given example, one removes the belief that it would be good to respond to the current situation with violence because one has been harmed. The removal of this belief was effected through intense spiritual exercise and forms of philosophical training that are similar to modern cognitive therapy.[31] If the bad belief is removed, one will respond as morality and reason demand rather than respond out of anger.

The Stoic therapeutic exercises, which continue to be practiced today in the form of cognitive-behavioral therapy, are quite effective at treating fears and phobias among other psychological problems.[32] The basis of these therapies is the Stoic assertion that the way one thinks about a given situation can have a profound impact on the way one feels about the situation. Thus, by changing the way one thinks about a situation or future situation, one is able to change the way one feels about that situation. Because some negative emotions, for example a fear of public places, can be distressing and debilitating, the Stoic exercises have provided a great deal of relief to both ancient and modern people.

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[31] Modern cognitive-behavioral therapy was developed in the 1950s by Albert Ellis, a self-proclaimed neo-Stoic. See Robertson (2010), *The Philosophy of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.* Recently, a number of books have been published trying to reclaim and adapt Stoicism for modern readers. See for example, Pies (2008), *Everything has Two Handles,* and Brennan (2007), *The Stoic Life.*

[32] See Butler et. al. (2006).

The Stoics extended their analysis beyond negative emotions like fear and anxiety to positive emotions as well. Forms of loving that involve attachment and clinging were seen as inappropriate because they create emotional vulnerabilities. Attachment of the one-who-loves to the loved-one arises because the one-who-loves believes that a good or fulfilling life requires the presence of the loved-one. She believes that if the loved-one were lost that would be a very bad thing. One thus desires that the loved-one will be in one's life for ever, and this desire creates the attachment that the Stoics found so disturbing.[33] Attachment is disturbing because one desires something that cannot be obtained, which is "slavish and foolish: it is the behavior of a stranger in the world."[34] Human beings, even those whom one loves, are mortal and will eventually die. When one believes that a good life requires that another always be present, one does not only desire something false but something that is impossible to secure. One sets oneself up for both heart-break and failure.

Stoic students are advised not to love in ways which involve a desire that the loved object or person continues to be present.[35] Says Epictetus, "When you become attached to something, let it not be as something that cannot be taken away, but rather as

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[33] Bennet Helm (2010), p. 200-205, has claimed that a long-term decrease in well-being after the loss of a loved one is required by love. However, Moller (2007) has shown that individuals rarely suffer a long-term decrease in well-being after the loss of a loved one. He argues that this research shows that making distress after loss a necessary component of an account of love leads us to the bizarre conclusion that most people do not actually love those around them.

[34] Epictetus, *Disc*. 3.24.22.

[35] Martha Nussbaum has a sustained discussion of the detachment of the Stoic sage. Her argument focuses on the ways in which attachment to an object or person makes the conditions of happiness external to one. I have focused on the belief that underlies the externalization of the conditions of happiness. That is one believes that one will only be happy if the loved-one remains with one, which is not a condition that one can control. See Nussbaum (1994), Chapter 10, pp. 359 - 401.

though it were something like an earthenware pot or crystal goblet, so that if it happens to be broken, you may remember what kind of thing it was and not be distressed."[36] One should remind oneself that those whom one loves are not permanent features of one's life, and consistently fight the desire that the loved-one be always present to one. This involves viewing each moment with that person or object as possibly the last. Thus, Epictetus recommends that when one is putting one's children to sleep, one should say, "Tomorrow you will die;' and likewise to your friend, 'Tomorrow either you or I will go away, and we shall see each other no more."[37]

I do not believe that this way of thinking will be appreciated by most readers, but it is a common type of spiritual teaching. For example, the view that attachment leads to suffering is central to Buddhist teachings.[38] There too, the practitioner is encouraged to love and relate to others and oneself in ways that do not rely on the desire for the continuing presence of that person. In both cases, by removing attachments one increases one's emotional stability and obtains a kind of freedom. The result is a love that is free completely of attachment and desire. Love is no longer dependent on the loved-one being useful and advantageous to one, as it was for Plato.[39] Instead, by removing attachment

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[36] Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.24.84.

[37] Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.24.88.

[38] Clinging / attachment (*upadana*) is often discussed in the Pali canon and is identified as the cause of suffering. The Buddha (cited under Bullitt (2010)) is recorded as saying "When he does not cling, he is not agitated. When he is not agitated, he personally attains Nibbana (MN11: The Shorter Discourse on the Lion's Roar, 17)." Gil Fronsdal, a contemporary dharma teacher, teaches that clinging is central to the arising of suffering. See his talk "Four Types of Clinging" available at www.audiodharma.org.

[39] c.f. *Lysis*, 210c.

from love, a form of love that is entirely giving and demands nothing in return is made possible. It is this form of love, made possible by abandoning desire and attachment, that Christians would later elevate and which is central to some forms of Buddhism.

§6. One might think that the Stoic approach to the emotions disallowed love entirely, but this does not appear to be the case. Epictetus thinks that one can still be affectionate and asks, "What restrains you from affectionately loving (*philostorgia*) a person as one who is mortal, as one who may be obliged to leave you?"[40] Despite their general distrust of emotions, the Stoics did see some emotions as acceptable and rational (*eupatheia*), and some ancient writers include love (*agapēsis)* on their lists of these acceptable emotional states.[41] I have already shown that the Stoics will not embrace any form of love that involves attachment to the loved-one. The question that interests me here is how the Stoics, who revel in emotional detachment and whose name continues to be nearly synonymous with cold-heartedness, could nonetheless have argued that a sage would be loving.

It is tempting to dismiss lists of good emotions that include love as spurious fragments rather than actual statements of the school's doctrine, but they should not be dismissed lightly. Many Stoic authors make paradoxical statements regarding one's treatment of others. Epictetus claims that one consoling a distraught person should not be

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[40]   Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.24.58.

[41]   c.f. Ps. Andronicus, *On Emotions* 6 (Arnim (1964), *SVF* 3:432) for a list that includes love as a good emotion. Stoicism developed over several centuries and little can be said of any hard and fast Stoic doctrine. The lists of good emotions (*eupatheia*) vary between sources. For a good discussion see Sorabji (2000), chapter 2. See Stephens (1996) for a further discussion of Stoic love in Epictetus.

cold and "unmoved like a statue," and Seneca shows deep concern for the suffering of his mother while in exile.[42] These statements suggest that an understanding of the Stoic school which sees apathy and egoism as the central values of its doctrine is inconsistent with the words of those who lived their lives as Stoics. The Stoics do seem capable of caring for others in deep and loving ways, and I know of no place where loving activity is denigrated. The target of Stoic criticism is always the emotional state that accompanies such action.

Consider one example of love given by Epictetus and analyzed by Anthony Long.[43] When one sees a beggar, one's natural reaction, Epictetus thinks, is to pity the man. However, Epictetus chides anyone who pities the beggar. The pitier has not only made a bad judgment (a lack of material wealth, according to Stoic doctrine, is not a bad thing but rather a non-preferable state of affairs), but is now suffering because of it. Short passages such as this one are likely to be misunderstood if they are examined independently of their greater context. Long admits that Epictetus' statement against pity seems to be "thoroughly repellent," but goes on to find some virtue in the account when it is located in Epictetus' larger moral outlook. He says that Epictetus is "not saying that we should not help beggars," but instead that, "what matters about the beggar, so far as we should be concerned, is how his hunger affects our responsibility to treat another person philanthropically. Instead of saying to him or to ourselves 'poor you' and merely indulging our heartstrings" we should consider, "whether his situation offers us an

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[42] Op. cit., *Disc.* 3.2; Seneca (1932), *Ad Marciam de Consolatione.*

[43] *Disc.* 3.3. See Long (2002), Chapter 9, "Appropriate Actions and Feelings."

opportunity and obligation to do the best we can *to act* kindly and generously."[44] On Long's reading, Epictetus is not arguing that one should heartlessly walk by the beggar, but is instead arguing that one should act philanthropically toward the beggar instead of feeling pity for him.

One should act in ways that benefit the beggar, but the Stoics do not think that one should do so because one pities the beggar. One should do so because the beggar is a fellow human being who is in need.[45] While it might be said that it is more noble to feel pity for the beggar *and* to help him, I think that this claim is false. One who helps the beggar despite a lack of pity, or better, one who helps the beggar though one is repulsed by him, shows greater love than one whose philanthropy is dependent on pity. Like St. Francis of Assisi who kissed the hand of a leper though he was repulsed, those who act despite disgust and cold-heartedness show a degree of virtue that few possess.[46] When one loves, one provides support even when one is repulsed or emotionally unengaged with the loved-one.

It must be admitted that the Stoics acknowledge the value of something which they called love. At the same time we need to remember that Stoic love is not in all ways similar to our contemporary understanding of love. According to Long's reading of Epictetus, the proper response to one who is suffering is not to feel a certain way about or

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[44] Long (2002), p. 247-8. Emphasis in the original.

[45] The Stoics argue that all human beings are bound to every other in mutual community. Thus, it was one's duty to engage in actions that benefited other human beings and contributed to the common good. See, for example, Cicero (2001), *De Finibus,* 3.63. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, Section 4.

[46] See the hagiography of Thomas of Celano (2004), *The First Life of St. Francis of Assisi.*

for them, but *to act* for their benefit. Suffering is not a call to pity, but an opportunity and challenge to engage in philanthropy. An appropriate response to the beggar involves helping him. This point is still made today. During the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine a television commercial ran that showed the effects of the famine and delivered the message, "Tears are not enough."[47] This is of course true. All of the empathetic emotions one might muster up do not actually help anyone unless they are acted upon.

§7. The emotionalized sense of love is certainly not the notion of love that the Stoics embraced, for they would have rejected any emotional involvement that was dependent upon false beliefs about what is good. The only clue that we are given as to the kind of love the Stoics embraced is that Pseudo-Andronicus, who gives us a list of good emotions that includes love, classifies love as a "species of will" (*bouleseos eide*).[48] This is similar to Harry Frankfurt's claim that love is a volitional state.

Like the Stoics, Frankfurt is not at all concerned with discussing love as an emotional state, saying, "It is not essential to love that it be accompanied by any particular feelings or thoughts."[49] In one sense his entire discussion of love is aimed at showing why this is true. He focuses on how the loved-one shapes and determines the way in which one-who-loves acts,[50] and his discussion is driven by the idea that who and what one loves must (normatively speaking) and will (psychologically speaking) move

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[47] This was also the name of a best-selling single recorded by Canadian 'supergroup' Northern Lights.

[48] Arnim (1964), Op. cit.

[49] Ibid., p. 42.

[50] Frankfurt (2006), p. 42. Ebels-Duggan (2008), p. 144, agrees, claiming that Frankfurt "holds that love is practical in Kant's sense: it conceptually involves counting certain considerations as reasons to act."

one to act in ways that benefit that person or object.[51] Frankfurt argues that what

constitutes one's love for another is the *importance* of the loved-one in the one-who-

love's deliberations about how to act. When one is deliberating about what to do, the

loved-one is a source of reasons to act in ways that will benefit him or her.[52]

Frankfurt views the importance of the loved-one in the one-who-love's

deliberations as a sign that the loved-one has acquired value for one. The value of the

loved-one then moves one to act in ways that benefit the loved-one. Frankfurt's project,

as I understand it, seeks to get a grip on what this bestowal of value is, how it works, and

why it sometimes does not work.

In taking this approach, Frankfurt is arguing against a long-standing view that

claims that love is a response to the perceived value of the loved person or object. Irving

Singer has labeled this view of love the "Appraisal View,"[53] and it is held by ancient

figures like Plato as well as modern thinkers like David Velleman.[54] The appraisal view

claims that one loves, and should only love, that which is antecedently and objectively

valuable. On this view the object that is loved becomes a source of reasons for one

because of the instrumental or intrinsic value it had prior to being loved. Frankfurt

explicitly rejects this view and reverses the causal chain, claiming that, "the lover does

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[51]   Frankfurt (2004), p. 37.

[52]   Frankfurt (2004), Chapter 2.

[53]   Singer (1984a), p. 3.

[54]   See Velleman (1999). Plato's view is spread throughout his philosophy of love, but is particularly
      evident in the *Symposium* and the *Republic*. Notice that in the *Republic* that the bonds of fraternal love
      (*philia*) that bind the guardian class together dissolve when a guardian loses his value (usefulness). This
      issue is discussed well by Vlastos (1973).

invariably and necessarily perceive the beloved as valuable, but the value he sees it to possess is a value that derives and depends upon his love."[55] Love for an individual, whether he be a friend or stranger, is not a response to a value that exists in that person. Rather, the loved-one acquires value because one loves him.

For the project at hand, very little turns on settling the debate between the appraisal and bestowal accounts of the source of the value of loved-ones.[56] Both seem true in certain cases. For instance, paper money has very little intrinsic value, but money-lovers bestow immense value on it. They then dedicate their lives to accumulating and hoarding more money than could ever be spent. Such individuals no longer value what money enables them to obtain, but value money itself. In other cases, such as a general love toward human beings, it does seem sensible to say that human beings have value independently of any individual loving them. Philanthropy, in the sense of a general love for humanity, is a response to this value.[57]

Frankfurt's explanation of love in terms of the bestowal of value helps him better to explain the connection between love and motivation to act. He argues that to love another is to restructure one's will. He often makes this point by saying that the things

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[55] Frankfurt (2004), p. 39.

[56] Helm (2010) argues that the disagreement between those who hold the appraisal view and those who hold the bestowal view stems from a problematic understanding of the mind and the emotions. He defends the view that love is simultaneously appraisal and bestowal.

[57] God's love for human beings is a notable exception. According to most Christian theologians, God is unmotivated in His love for human beings, and His love is thus entirely an act of bestowal. See Nygren (1969), Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 3. See my Chapter 6, Section 7 for a discussion of philanthropy.

and people whom one loves become important to one.[58] In short, when one loves a person, that person becomes important to one, and desires that previously would not have moved one become more likely to move one. When deliberating about how to act, one-who-loves another has reasons that support benefiting the loved-one. Thus, loving a person or thing is a source of reasons for the one-who-loves to act on behalf of the loved-one. In this way, loving another motivates one to act in ways that benefit the loved-one.

On Frankfurt's account, loving another restructures one's will such that one will be motivated to act in ways that benefit the loved-one. He writes, "Love is itself, for the lover, a source of reasons. It creates the reasons by which his acts of loving concern and devotion are inspired."[59] This way of understanding love is similar to the Stoic claim that love is a species of the will and Aristotle's claim that love involves willing. Frankfurt has, through his discussion of the ways in which loving another makes that individual important to one, connected willing with acting on behalf of the loved one. This is a significant contribution to our conversation about love.

Frankfurt's account, along with that of the Stoics, advances a philosophical understanding of love without relying on the claim that love is an emotion. While we need not adopt either picture, I explored these accounts to show that there are viable accounts of love that reject the claim that love is a powerful emotion and nothing else. A significant strength of these accounts is that they are able to explain the connection

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[58]   Frankfurt (2004), pp. 23ff.

[59]   Ibid., p. 37.

between love and activity taken on behalf of the loved one. A loving state, volitionally speaking, will generally lead to loving activity.

§8. Several theorists, ancient and modern, have embraced an understanding of love that incorporates the importance of action. This lends credence to the view, but does not necessarily support embracing the view. My aim in this section is to argue for the claim that loving another necessarily involves acting in certain ways toward the other. Absent those actions, one's attitude toward the other fails to be loving.

Consider the following example of a fictional individual who does not actively support those whom one supposes she would love. In Charles Dickens' novel *Bleak House*, Mrs. Jellyby, a wealthy aristocrat, is generous when it comes to the poor coffee cultivators in Borrioboola-Gha and blind when it comes to the welfare of her own children.[60] She works day and night trying to solicit funds to aid the coffee cultivators, but when the wards in Jarndyce go to visit Mrs. Jellyby, they watch as the Jellyby children fall down the stairs, are bitten by lice, and are otherwise neglected. Later in the novel the Jellybys are forced to declare bankruptcy and it is implied that Mrs. Jellyby, who is wholly unconcerned with the prospect of bankruptcy, has caused their financial ruin by means of her philanthropy. Dickens describes Mrs. Jellyby as a "telescopic philanthropist," whose eyes looked as though "they could see nothing nearer than Africa."[61] She is engaging in the love of some – the coffee growers – but neglecting to act

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[60] Dickens (1971). Jellyby's story is told over many chapters. It is the focus of chapters 4, "Telescopic Philanthropy," 14, "Deportment," and 15, "Bell-Yard."

in ways to benefit her own children. The question that interests me here asks if Jellyby *loves* her children.[62]

It is clear in this case that Mrs. Jellyby's conduct is not loving. If she were acting in a loving way toward her children, she would show her concern for their welfare by cleaning her house and making sure they were watched over and cared for. As it is, she allows her children to live in poverty and be bitten by fleas, while she focuses all of her energies on Borrioboola-Gha. When her child, Peepy, arrives in the kitchen bruised and dirty from a tumble down the stairs, Jellyby exclaimed, "'Go along, you naughty Peepy!' and fixed her eyes on Africa again."[63] There can be little disagreement regarding the lovingness of her conduct. But does her conduct indicate that she does not love her children? Or should we instead say that though she loves her children, she does not act like it?

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[61] Dickens (1971). p. 85. *Bleak House* explores and criticizes many different kinds of philanthropy. John Jarndyce, whom Nabokov (1980), p. 90, calls "the best and kindest human being ever described in a novel," routinely helps others with no expectation of payment in return, while Mrs. Jellyby provides for others inappropriately, because she neglects her own children in favor of the coffee cultivators in Borrioboola-Gha. Mrs. Pardiggle, in contrast to both, makes a great show of her philanthropy toward the brick makers but does not appear to be helping them, and Mr. Skimpole, who could earn a living for himself, leaches off of others, especially Boythorn, throughout the novel.

[62] Mrs. Jellyby's case raises many philosophical questions. In particular why is her neglect of her own children in favor of other human beings morally wrong while it is not wrong for her to neglect other human beings in favor of her own children? What makes it morally appropriate and even required to favor some individuals in our moral deliberations? I do not answer this question directly in my work, but some possible answers have been provided. Adams (1993) and Baron (1991) offer good perspectives on why it is permissible to show partiality to those we love. Less has been written about why it is wrong to neglect those whom one should love as Mrs. Jellyby does but see Kanazawa (2001) for the perspective of a sociologist.

[63] Dickens (1971). p. 84-85.

Consider a second example. Imagine that an old friend claims to have great love for you but is not particularly disposed to acting in any good way toward you. When you call your friend during a difficult time, she cannot find the time to talk with you, leaving you feeling rejected and abandoned. Suppose you confront your friend to tell her how you feel and she is genuinely remorseful. She recognizes that she should have made time for you. Perhaps she even says, "I'm such a bad friend" or "My bad!" Now imagine that this continues to happen over and over again, through various crisis big and small. At some point one is likely to think, "She's not a *bad* friend, she's not a friend at all." Your friend may have a genuine emotional concern for you, even genuine remorse toward abandoning you, but does she love you?

Finally, consider the professions of love delivered by a remorseful but abusive spouse. The batterer claims that he has great love for his battered partner, and he might seem to be emotionally disposed toward her in an important way. Indeed, between bouts of drinking and depression he is the very model of a loving husband. He is caring, responsive to his wife's needs, and apologetic about past abuse. However, these moments are fleeting, and he continues lash out at her violently.[64] Can he claim to love his spouse even if he continues to beat her?

The thought experiment is this: grant the abusive spouse any emotional state you like and then ask yourself if one should call that state 'love' even though he continues to hit her. It is clear to me that he is not acting in a loving way. Can we say that, despite this,

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[64] This is generally the pattern which domestic violence takes. See Del Martin's (1981) classic *Battered Wives* and Pamela Joyces' (2000) honest work, *Ditch That Jerk.*

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he still loves her? No, we cannot. If he did love her he would not abuse her, because abuse is a kind of action that is incompatible with love. In addition, if his wife came to one and claimed that despite the abuse, "he really loves her," would not a reasonable person dispute this claim and tell her to get out of the relationship as quickly as possible? Any amount of emotion of any type will not make this relationship a loving one if he continues to hit her. If his relationship with his wife is to be a loving relationship, he must change the way he is *acting*.

If one thinks that being an abusive spouse is incompatible with loving one's spouse, *no matter what*, then one has placed a non-emotional limitation on what can qualify as a loving relationship. There is something, in addition to an emotion, that must be present if we are to say that he loves her. This case takes advantage of an all too common and tragic set of circumstances. In this case, there is a breakdown between an individual's emotional state and the way in which he is treating one whom he claims to love. His failure of action is indicative of an overall failure to love. He exhibits a pattern of activity that shows a continuous disregard for the well-being of his wife, and this is not compatible with loving her.

It is not enough to be emotionally disposed to another in a particular way and it is not enough to simply wish another well, as the absentee friend does. One must act in ways that benefit the loved-one. As Aquinas claims, when one speaks of self-love one is talking not only about wishing oneself well but acting in ways that benefit oneself. It

seems reasonable to think that the same claim can be made about the love of others. If one loves another, then one will act in ways that will benefit the other.

§9.1. This is a bit too fast. There persists in each of these cases the intuition that an individual loves another despite the fact that one fails to act lovingly toward the loved-one. In the case of the absentee friend, for example, there is a dogged intuition that the friend still loves one. Accounting for this intuition is important, as failures to love are common and not necessarily indicative of a complete lack of love. In the sections that follow, I will show that distinguishing individual acts of love from loving relationships can explain this intuition.

Perhaps the best way to account for the intuition in these difficult cases is to reject a unified account and bifurcate our understanding of love. Thus, one could say that love has two senses. There is an emotional state called love, which one can be in regardless of how one treats the loved-one, and a volitional state, which primarily involves acting in a loving way toward the loved-one. Moving in this direction would account for those theories which treat love as an emotion as well as the intuitions captured by non-emotional accounts.

Those who theorize about love have moved in this direction before. In *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm contrasts 'being in love' with 'love'. The emotional state of 'being in love', Fromm argues, is altogether different from love. He describes 'being in love' as "the explosive experience of falling in love, the sudden collapse of barriers which existed

until that moment between two strangers."[65] This is the intense desire and emotional bliss

that one feels when one first falls in love and perhaps it is the state that new parents find

themselves in. Fromm believes that many Americans (at least in 1953) came to confuse

this form of love with love itself, leading to the disintegration of love rampant in

contemporary Western society. As relationships mature, the erotic and 'explosive'

experience of being in love fades, and many individuals view this as a failure of their

love and end their relationship. Fromm argues that most would do well to note that the

feeling of 'being in love' may fade. This is remarkably similar to remarks made by

Rousseau. Near the end of *Emile* Jean-Jacques warns Emile's new wife Sophie that the

passion in her new marriage will fade away. She is advised to take comfort in the fact that

it will be replaced by friendship and gentle companionship.[66] Both Fromm and Rousseau

insist that there are two kinds of love. First, the intense and often sexualized emotional

state that can exist between two persons, and, second, companionship with and devotion

to the loved-one.

Plato famously believed that erotic love is a form of madness,[67] and Fromm seems

to agree, but one could settle for a less contentious claim. When one claims that one is 'in

love', one is making a statement about an emotional state. Colloquially speaking, one is

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[65]   Fromm (1956), p. 53.

[66]   Rousseau, J. (1911), p. 437ff.

[67]   *Phaedrus*, 249-250; "All my discourse so far has been about the fourth kind of madness, which causes
       him to be regarded as mad, who, when he sees the beauty on earth, remembering the true beauty, feels
       his wings growing and longs to stretch them for an upward flight, but cannot do so, and, like a bird,
       gazes upward and neglects the things below. My discourse has shown that this is, of all inspirations, the
       best and of the highest origin to him who has it or who shares in it, and that he who loves the beautiful,
       partaking in this madness, is called a lover." This passage is about *eros*.

saying something about how one feels. Whether or not the individual who is in this emotional state treats the loved-one in a loving way is a separate question. The question, "Does she love him?" on such an understanding of love asks two things: whether she is in the proper emotional state *and* whether she is acting in a loving way.

This view is not without costs. On such an account it is possible to say that the abusive husband both loves and does not love his wife. That is to say that his actions are inconsistent with love while his emotional state is, possibly, consistent with love. Thus, one could say that he is not loving her though he loves her, and this seems unintuitive to me. We need to understand why the abusive husband does not love his wife in any sense, while the absentee friend can love one despite occasionally failing to do so.

§9.2. In an effort to connect these two senses of love, one might argue that a loving emotional state necessarily leads to loving activity. That is, an individual who is in a loving emotional state will necessarily act in a way that is loving. This argument accepts my claim that love requires loving activity, but would reject the claim that their status as such is unconnected to an emotional state.

Again, this thesis does not come without costs. In the above example one cannot claim that the abusive husband could possibly be in a loving emotional state, for, if he were, he would treat his wife in a loving way. Similarly, there is no sense in which it is reasonable to say that Jellyby loves her children, for, if she did, she would act in a loving way toward them. The thesis cannot claim that there is an occasional relationship between loving-emotion and loving-action, because that would take us back to our

starting point by giving an account of love rooted in the emotions with an occasional but not-necessary connection to action. For the view to be illuminating, it must claim that *all* loving emotional states lead to loving activity.

If the strong claim that all loving emotional states *necessarily* issue in loving activity were true, it would be the case that an individual who loved another (emotionally) would never fail to act in a loving way toward the loved-one. Conversely, any failure to act in a loving way would indicate that one was no longer in a loving emotional state. Who and what one loves, if the relationship of necessity is posited between action and emotion, would be incredibly variable. A friend who is too busy to help one on Sunday but supportive and friendly on Tuesday would not love one on Sunday and love one on Tuesday. This is problematic because many think of loving relationships as being more rather than less stable than other kinds of relationship. It seems wrong to say of a partner who forgets one's birthday, but then buys one flowers later in the day, that he did not love one that morning but did love one later in the day. His forgetfulness is not indicative of a lack of love.

§9.3. It cannot be claimed that emotional love and loving activity are entirely separate, nor can it be claimed that they are necessarily connected. This problem can be resolved, if we contrast volitional love with 'relational' rather than emotional love. Thus far I have focused on individual acts of love, but one can also understand these acts of love as they occur within a relationship. This contrast is brought out be considering failures to love. It seems that one-who-loves another (in the relational sense) can

occasionally fail to love that person (in the active sense). A forgetful moment or occasional snub is one failure within a general pattern of loving activity. This is very different from those cases in which one fails to love another (in the volitional sense) with whom one does not have a preexisting relationship. Everyday one passes by scores of people toward whom one could act lovingly. Not acting lovingly toward these individuals is usually not taken to be a failure to love.

When the word 'love' is used to describe a kind of relationship, it implies the kind of relationship wherein one or more individuals treat oneself or another lovingly. If one does not treat the other lovingly, then one has failed. If one does not treat the other lovingly often enough, then one's relationship is not a loving one. Central to the relational sense of love is a pre-existing relationship between the one-who-loves and the loved-one. Thus, of the friend who fails to support one on one occasion, we can say that the loving-relationship between the two individuals remains intact though the friend has failed to love the other on this occasion. Only those relationships that involve a pattern of loving activity are loving. Absent this activity, the relationship is something else entirely. The victim of spousal abuse should leave her husband because, despite his pleas to the contrary, he does not love her. This is not true because he lacks a certain emotional disposition, but because he is failing to treat her lovingly. Their relationship, whatever it once was, is now marred by abuse and is thus unloving.

Loving activity forms the basis for loving relationships. If one does not act lovingly then a loving relationship is unlikely to develop. If one stops acting lovingly,

then the relationship is likely to dissolve. The extent to which emotions are central to an understanding of loving-relationships is not of interest to me here. Providing a full account of the role of emotions in loving relationships will require an analysis of the many different forms of relationships, and it is likely that each form of relationship will involve different emotions. However, what makes these relationships all *loving* relationships, is their connection with loving activity. A relationship is loving insofar as it involves a pattern of activity aimed at benefitting the loved one. If this pattern of activity is not present, then the relationship is not loving no matter the emotional state of the individuals.

§10. Many think that a virtue of a loving relationship is that it is stable. The one-who-love's love for the loved-one is steadfast and enduring. St. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians that love is patient, persevering, and never fails.[68] Yet, how one feels about others is notoriously capricious. Unless one embraces the active component of love, it is hard to reconcile the capriciousness of emotion with the steadfastness of love. Though emotions vary, one should remain loving. If love is hitched to the individual's emotional state, love would no longer be patient, but mercurial.

There are many times when one is angry at or disappointed with those whom one loves. Perhaps one's child has broken a treasured heirloom from one's childhood - an item that carries with it many good memories of people who are no longer alive. Or perhaps one's partner drank too much at a family gathering and angered one's parents.

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[68] 1 Cor. 13

There is nothing chilling or out of the ordinary about these examples. Any number of accidents, small slights, or moments of inconsiderateness can cause anger to arise, momentarily eclipsing warm feelings of love. Moreover, think of the ways in which hostility and resentment can build up in a parent dealing with an adult child with autism who is often physically abusive and disruptive. One-who-loves continues to love through these emotional ups and downs. Through the vicissitudes of one's emotional life, love does not wane, but remains a stable force.

One can, despite an occasional or even enduring negative predisposition toward another, act lovingly toward him or her. Disgusted by the putrefying flesh of the leper before him, St. Francis gets off his horse and kisses the leper's hand. Angry at, hurt, and completely defeated by the behavior of a two-hundred and fifty pound son with autism, a parent who feels that "the past 24 hours have been grueling, but it's the past dozen years that are really hitting me,"[69] can continue to love and make informed decisions about his child. Love *is* patient and enduring because, despite emotional ups and downs, one continues to love.

§11. The key idea of this discussion is that many individuals, philosophically minded or not, rather unreflectively adopt the view that love is a powerful emotional state. The above discussion forced one to reflect critically upon that view. I am making no claims against the powerful emotional state that many feel nor am I claiming that that state has no importance in moral life. Rather, I am attempting to show that the

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[69] I take this example from David Royko's piece on raising a son with autism to adulthood and the eventual decision to place him in a residential treatment center. See Royko (2007).

phenomenon of love is broader and more complex than what the account of love as merely an emotional state would lead one to believe. Loving requires that one act and while emotion may sometimes goad one to action, it does not necessarily do so.

Love has been over-emotionalized and in the process completely mystified.[70] While a less emotional account of love moves against the contemporary cultural understanding of love, this is only a problem if the contemporary understanding of love is an accurate one. I have shown that this understanding of love is problematic. It values some forms of love, particularly reciprocal romantic relationships, at the expense of others. For this reason, it should be discarded.

I have argued that loving another cannot be thought of merely as a way which one feels, but must also include an active component. This view is emphasized throughout the history of thought about love and has some support in the contemporary account developed by Harry Frankfurt. By considering key cases in which the emotional state of the one-who-loves and his or her treatment of the loved-one come apart, it becomes clear that there is more to love than emotion. There are normative constraints on the way in which the one-who-loves can treat the loved-one. My conclusion is that love requires that one engage in a pattern of activity that aims to benefit one's loved-one. Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to better understanding this claim.

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[70]   Solomon (1981) makes a similar claim, but still argues that love is an emotion and nothing else.

CHAPTER TWO

Love and Well-being

Abstract: I argue that loving-activity is activity which aims to contribute to the well-being of the loved-one for her own sake. I begin by examining Harry Frankfurt's claim that one-who-loves is concerned with the interests of the loved-one. I explore several problems for an interest-based account of loving-activity and argue that an account of loving-activity rooted in well-being can avoid many of these problems. I then examine the notion of well-being, arguing that those who love are concerned with the well-being of the loved-one, as understood from the subjective perspective.

§1. Those who love work to benefit those that are loved, but how one benefits a loved-one is quite variable. The parent of an adult child might provide the child with money or housing in order to help her meet her basic needs. Friends do not often provide this kind of support. Instead, friends typically love one another by providing emotional and social support that varies from a shoulder to cry on to enjoying a movie together. Small children are usually unable to benefit their parents in these ways, but do try to cheer their parents up, engage in play with parents, and attempt to make their parents proud. These are all examples of loving-activity, but it is not immediately clear what they have in common.

Moreover, not all beneficial activity is loving. An employee is often in a relationship with her coworkers that involves cooperatively completing projects that will benefit both herself and her coworkers. She works with them toward the completion of the project, but not necessarily because she is concerned with their well-being. So too, a doctor concerned with rising malpractice insurance premiums may work extra hard to avoid mistakes. Taking great care in the practice of medicine benefits the patient, but it is

not an example of loving-activity. Thus, the claim that loving-activity occurs when one person benefits another cannot alone differentiate loving-activity from other beneficial activity.

I will argue in this chapter that loving-activity is that activity which aims to contribute to the *well-being* of the loved-one as subjectively understood. In order to arrive at my conclusion, I will examine the influential account of love provided by Harry Frankfurt. Frankfurt argues that loving-activity entails caring about the *interests* of the loved-one. A careful investigation of the relationship between an individual's interests and the actions of those who love him will reveal that interests play a subordinate role in loving-activity. Instead, the one-who-loves aims to contribute to the well-being of the loved-one (§2-5). In the latter sections of this chapter I will explore and articulate the notion of well-being, arguing that those who love are concerned with the well-being of the loved-one as understood from the *subjective* perspective (§6-9).

§2. Harry Frankfurt's work focuses almost exclusively on the moral psychology of love. Thus, his work stands in contrast to the project of this dissertation which examines loving-activity rather than the psychological state underlying that activity. However, Frankfurt has long thought that love and caring provide a way to understand the necessary link between an action and the will of the actor.[1] He thinks that by understanding the ways in which love changes what one desires and what motivates one, we can understand why one is naturally motivated to act in ways that benefit the loved-

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[1]   See for example the essays collected in Frankfurt (1988).

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one. Still, the passages I will focus on here form only a small portion of his view, and my criticisms do no invalidate the whole of his theory.

"Love is," Frankfurt claims, "most centrally, a disinterested concern for the existence of what is loved, for what is good for it."[2] Frankfurt is not concerned only with the love of human beings, and his claim is meant to be applied to most of those things that one loves. Using his definition, one can parse out the statement "Joe loves his dog." as follows: (1) Joe is concerned with his dog's existence. I take this to mean that Joe will feed his dog, vaccinate it, and work to protect it from harms. (2) Joe is concerned with what is good for his dog. He does not simply desire that his dog exist, but that it have a good life. He plays with it not only to exercise the dog, but because the dog enjoys playing. Frankfurt's understanding of love is meant to include cases such as this one, and his brief definition does seem to adequately capture the general sense of the term 'love'.

Like much of Frankfurt's work, his discussion of love raises more questions than it resolves, and there are problems with his short definition. For example, it is questionable whether love requires that one hope for the existence of the loved-one. Might not one desire the end of the loved-one's existence? At the end of his philosophical memoir about his pet wolf Brenin, Mark Rowlands describes making the decision to have Brenin euthanized. He had decided that, "He wouldn't keep him alive just for the sake of it, because I wouldn't want to be kept alive just for the sake of it."[3] Thus, "when the painkillers stopped working and his pain - in my honest, agonized but deeply fallible

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[2]   Frankfurt (2004), p. 42.

[3]   Rowlands (2008), p. 178

judgement - became too great, I drove him into Beziers to be killed."[4] This is a common scenario for dog-lovers, but is not confined to our love of dogs. One might reasonably hope that an elderly relative die rather than recover to a chronically painful state, or that a friend dying of cancer die quickly rather than after a lengthy and difficult hospital stay. Some even argue that an individual should have a right to euthanasia in such cases.[5] At the end of life, one does not always desire the existence of the loved-one, and one may think that what is good for the loved-one is that he die as painlessly as possible.

Though it does seem true that one-who-loves has a disinterested concern for what is good for the loved-one, it is not immediately clear how we should understand the phrase 'good for'. Frankfurt initially suggests that what is 'good for' the loved-one is whatever causes the loved-one to flourish or contributes to the loved-one's well-being, and this is a theme which he comes back to late in the work.[6] However, much of his discussion of loving claims that those who love aim at serving, contributing to, or fulfilling the loved-one's interests. He says, "Loving someone or something essentially means or consists in, among other things, taking its interests as reasons for acting to serve those interests."[7] Later he claims that "Just as a means is subordinated to its end, the

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[4] Ibid., p. 185

[5] See Dworkin, Frey, and Bok (1998). Dworkin and Frey argue in favor of euthanasia, while Bok argues against.

[6] Frankfurt (2004), p. 79.

[7] Frankfurt (2004), p. 37.

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activity of the lover is subordinated to the interests of his beloved,"[8] and "protecting the interests of his beloved is necessarily among the lover's own interests."[9]

Interests, for Frankfurt, are not simply indicative of what will contribute to the loved one's well-being. That is, it is not the case that one's interests delineate what is good for one. Interests are "governed and defined by what he loves," not by his well-being.[10] Given that one can love things that will harm one,[11] fulfillment of one's 'true interests' need not contribute to one's well-being.[12] It appears that Frankfurt thinks of the loved-one's interests as her projects and goals as defined by what she loves. When one loves another, one devotes oneself to protecting and serving these projects and goals.[13] He says, "Given that a devotion to the interests of what is loved constitutes a foundationally necessary element of loving, and given also that a person's interests are determined by what he loves, it follows that the love of a person for himself essentially consists simply in devotion to a set of *objects* comprising whatever it is that he loves."[14] Here Frankfurt's account of loving-activity is stated quite clearly, and well-being plays no role in that account.

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8   Ibid., p. 59. This is a view which I reject outright. The activity of one-who-loves is subordinate to the well-being of the loved one, not her interests.

9   Ibid., p. 61.

10   Ibid., p. 85.

11   Ibid., pp. 62-3.

12   Frankfurt begins to speak of true interests in the third chapter of *The Reasons of Love.* He does not explain what makes these interests true, but I take him to mean that they are, in fact, linked to something which one loves.

13   Ibid., p. 79.

14   Ibid. p. 86, emphasis mine.

The most charitable way of interpreting Frankfurt unifies the claims that he makes about well-being with the claims he makes about interests: he believes that what is 'good for' the loved-one is that she fulfill her true interests as defined by what she loves. The one-who-loves, seeking to do what is good for her, attempts to enable her to obtain these goals. Thus, on the proposed reading, the account of well-being that Frankfurt is operating with is a conative one - in practice, he identifies well-being with the fulfillment of some desires and interests.[15] While Frankfurt never explicitly endorses a conative understanding of well-being, he never explicitly disavows it, and it seems to be assumed in his quick move from doing what is 'good for' another to his almost exclusive discussion of doing what is in the loved-one's interests. In any case, the conative account of well-being is not an uncommon view, and many prominent contemporary philosophers hold it.[16]

At its heart, the conative account of well-being identifies an individual's well-being with the attainment of those things which an individual wants or desires. Thus, if an individual desires to be an astronaut, then becoming an astronaut will contribute to his or her well-being. This contemporary understanding of well-being was popularized by

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[15] The question is one of order of explanation. Do interests determine what will contribute to one's well-being or does what will contribute to one's well-being determine one's interests. My reading of Frankfurt suggests that he takes the former view.

[16] For example, see Rawls (1999), pp. 358-372 and Scanlon (1998), p. 124. The notions of well-being developed in both of these works is specific to the project which the theorist engages in. This is especially true with Scanlon, who is concerned with the role of well-being in the practices of moral justification and deliberation (p. 108-9). Sumner (1996) calls the conative approach the 'desire theory' of well-being and writes, "Versions of the desire theory now define the orthodox view of the nature of welfare, at least in the Anglo-American philosophical world. In the theory of rational choice the equation of well-being with utility (preference satisfaction) has achieved the status of an unquestioned axiom (p. 122)."

John Stuart Mill, who argues that progressing toward goals contributes to an individual's overall well-being. Mill used this claim to argue that being allowed to develop and progress toward goals is valuable not just as a means to a better society, but as an end in itself.[17] He claims that the ability to pursue and achieve the goals that one has set for oneself, what he termed 'individuality', is *one* of the elements of well-being, but theorists like Frankfurt seem wholly to identify individual interest fulfillment with well-being.

It is not clear if Frankfurt intends to define well-being in terms of interest fulfillment or how he constitutes the relationship between interests and well-being. He is relatively mute on the topic. What is clear is that as Frankfurt moves toward talking about the love of particular human beings, he focuses almost entirely on the interests of the loved-one without going into depth about what interest are or how they connect to well-being. In the following section I will raise a series of problems for an interest-based account of loving-activity before advancing a positive view. Most of the problems I raise are problematic for any account of well-being that identifies well-being with interest fulfillment, and my hope is that by investigating these problems we will see that a non-conative account of well-being can solve most of them.[18] Well-being can then serve as an independent criterion to appeal to when interests conflict. Thus, an account of loving-activity in terms of well-being is better able to handle some of the problems that the

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[17]   Mill (2006). *Chapter 3: Of Individuality as One of Elements of Well-being.*

[18]   Kraut (2007) presents many problems with the conative approach to well-being and possible solutions to them in great detail. See pp. 66-130.

interests based account of loving-activity encounters. Loving-activity is not aimed at the *interests* of the loved-one, but at her *well-being*.

§3.1. There are two kinds of problems that one-who-loves might encounter when acting lovingly toward a loved-one. The first are problems that arise from the practical activity of loving. For instance, how can one love another when furthering the loved-one's interests directly conflicts with one's own interests? Does such love necessarily involve abandoning one's own interests? If not resolved, these problems are not only vicious to a theoretical account of loving, but render the account useless in practice. Those who love find themselves in such practical conflicts frequently, and an account of loving-activity should reveal how they are resolved. Second is a group of problems that are also practical, but which concern how one can know what will contribute to the well-being of the loved-one. The former group of problems will be addressed here while the latter will be addressed in the chapter that follows.

The problems that I address here, while not unheard of in the actual practice of loving, seem to arise far too often for conative accounts of well-being than ordinary experience would suggest. Accounts such as Frankfurt's generate a large number of false negatives, predicting conflict and error where conflict and error only occasionally exist. My goal here is not to argue against these accounts, as much as to work through the problems such accounts encounter in order to better understand where they go wrong. This will prove instrumental to the construction of my own account of loving-activity.

I am separating the discussion of the two groups of problems for strategic reasons. First, an account of loving-activity in terms of well-being is better able to confront the first set of problems than the second. Allowing well-being to play a more prominent role in our thinking about loving-activity will dissolve some of the problems that I will explore in what follows. Second, the first group of problems seem to be more closely connected to the conative account of well-being and the resultant emphasis on interest fulfillment to which it leads.

§3.2. Prior to discussing particular problems that arise when we conceptualize well-being in terms of interests, we must consider two ambiguities in the way in which one can talk about another person's 'interests'. First, while the distinction is not always made in common speech, we can distinguish what is in a person's interests from what a person is interested in.[19] Consider for example the extreme sport called B.A.S.E. jumping. Those who enjoy this sport attempt to parachute from a **B**uilding, an **A**ntenna, a **S**pan, and **E**arth (a cliff). The activity kills at least 1% of those who attempt a jump, and as the goal is to complete a jump in each category many attempt multiple jumps.[20] Of a person who enjoys the high-risk thrill of B.A.S.E. jumping one might say both that he is interested in B.A.S.E. jumping and that it is in his interest to avoid the activity. The implication being that what is in a person's interests need not be tied to his being interested in a particular activity. While there are some things that are worth dying for,

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[19]   Frankfurt does not appear to make such a distinction.

[20]   B.A.S.E. jumping is one of the most dangerous recreational activities in which one can engage. See Westman, Rosén, Berggren, & Björnstig (2008).

this is not one of those things, and it is thus not in one's interests to engage in this activity. So too, one can say of a suicidal person that though she is interested in taking her own life, it is in her interest to continue living.

It is more natural to say that B.A.S.E. jumping or committing suicide is not in an individual's *best* interests.[21] This suggests that B.A.S.E. jumping is among the man's interests, but not among the set of interests which are best and should be pursued. When one tells him that he should not engage in this activity, one is saying that, though he is interested in B.A.S.E. jumping, this is not his *best* interest at the given time. This distinction is important for our conversation because one-who-loves might not care so much about what the loved-one is interested in, especially if those interests clearly conflict with his best interests. A mother probably will not care that her heroin-addicted son is not interested in a rehab program and only interested in his next score. She will ignore what he is interested in and do what is in his best interests. As will be explored in what follows, an interest based account of well-being must provide a way of determining which interests are best.

A second ambiguity in our use of the word 'interest' is that the word can refer to both trivial and substantial pursuits in one's life. Trivial interests are not all that important to one. If they cannot be pursued or if another interests interferes with them, no great sense of loss is experienced. The same is not true of all interests. One might be interested in maintaining one's lawn and one's spiritual development. If one's spiritual path causes

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[21]   Frankfurt does not appear to make such a distinction, though he does occasionally speak of *true* interests. C.f. Frankfurt (2004), p. 85.

one to neglect one's lawn, one might not care at all. After all, lawn care is not *that* important to one. The point is not that lawn care is objectively unimportant, but that for most people lawn care does not play a central and defining role in one's life. Not all interests are created equal, but how is one to distinguish the important interests from the trivial ones?

The distinction is germane to an account of loving. If one *really* cares about one's lawn and does not at all care about one's spiritual life, then it is probably important that those who love one do not interfere with one's passion for lawn care. So too, if gardening and lawn care are central to one's spiritual life, then those who love one should respect one's interest in maintaining the garden.[22] If we simply say that those who love seek to promote the loved-one's interests, we are not able to make these fine distinctions. My spiritual development may be among my best interests, but it is also an important interest of mine. It is, to use Bernard William's locution, one of my 'ground projects', a project "closely related to [my] existence," and "which to a significant degree give[s] meaning to [my] life."[23] An account of loving-activity should be able to distinguish between trivial and substantial interests because the support of substantial interests is more important to how one loves another. If my sister is indifferent to lawn care I will be relatively

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[22] For an example of a person who views gardening as central to his spirituality see Vigen Guroian's (1999) book, *Inheriting Paradise: Meditations on Gardening*.

[23] Williams (1981), pp. 12-14. Williams is not making a normative claim. Ground projects are not, in themselves, worthy of pursuit. They are, however, deeply important to those who pursue them regardless of whether they are worthwhile.

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unbothered, while her indifference to my spiritual life might cause significant difficulties for our relationship.

§3.3. I will now consider four everyday, practical problems that arise for an account of loving-activity rooted in the interests of the loved-one. These are problems which the theory suggests that one-who-loves will regularly encounter. If those who love were solely concerned with interests, then one should expect to encounter such problems constantly. While most of these puzzles could be accommodated by an interests based account, these are problems that one rarely has to accommodate when loving another. They sometimes do arise, but they are resolved or avoided most of the time. Thus, we should seek an account on which they arise less frequently, not an account that can accommodate such difficulties.

(a) Note that a given individual has multiple interests, trivial and important, and that those interests often conflict. It is possible, for instance, for there to be a conflict among my own interests on any given Sunday in the autumn. The earliest NFL game airs at ten o'clock in the morning which is, coincidentally, the same time as the service at my church. Both my interest in football and my interest in attending church are important to me and most of the time they do not conflict. Occasionally, however, my team plays the early game, and I am faced with two interests that *cannot* both be fulfilled. This is not a unique situation. At almost any moment there are other things that one could be doing that would fulfill some other interest that one has.

It is not clear that this conflict can be resolved without arbitrarily abandoning one of my interests. My interest in the Minnesota Vikings is deeply embedded in my love of competitive sport, the place where I was raised, and the social life that accompanies this interest. Football appeals to my sense of frivolity, relaxation, arbitrariness, and fun. While attending church services occasionally interests me along these lines, my interests in a religious life are grounded in a desire to experience solemnity and the sacred in my life and to find a greater sense of purpose. Save for some overtime field-goals and the occasional 'Hail Mary' pass, football rarely engages these interests.[24] The two interests, then, appear to operate along different dimensions and any resolution between the two will involve arbitrarily giving up one or the other.

The question for an account of loving-activity rooted in interests is, of course, which interest one-who-loves me should try to support. If the one-who-loves me identifies with my interests, as Frankfurt claims, will he inherit this conflict? One way to answer this question is to abandon an account of loving-activity rooted in interests and say that one should support the interest that is most likely to contribute to my well-being. If both will contribute to my well-being, then the one-who-loves me does not inherit my conflict. He can, without hesitation, support whichever interest I choose. This move is not open to an account of loving-activity that has already identified what will contribute to

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[24] Dreyfus and Kelly (2011) pp. 192-197 argue persuasively that competitive sports can engage one in similar, though less robust, ways. They write (pp. 192-3), "Sports may be the place in contemporary life where Americans find sacred community most easily . . . Whether or not it is true as a matter of historical and sociological fact that sport now plays this kind of religious role in America, a related phenomenological claim seems harder to dispute." The phenomenological claim is that the collective activity of a congregation and a crowd yields a similar feeling. This is true, but the way in which these feelings engage one and contribute to one's well-being are very different. For example, the deeper metaphysical questions that are often answered by religion are not answered by sports.

my well-being with the attainment of my interests. Well-being cannot resolve such conflicts between interests because well-being *just is* the result of fulfilling one's interests.

(b) A second case of conflict arises when the interests of the one-who-loves conflict with the interests of the loved-one. For instance, religious interests can conflict in a deep and meaningful way. Suppose that the one-who-loves me thinks that organized religion, especially Christianity, is a sham. He believes that those who participate in such things are deluded and he wants nothing to do with it. I embrace an organized religious life. If loving-activity necessarily involves furthering my interests, then the one-who-loves me will be required to further an interest which he opposes. As he understands things, engaging in actions that will reinforce or strengthen organized religion is a mistake. Can he love me while maintaining his integrity and his own lack of interest in religion or must we say that love between us is entirely impossible?

A loving relationship between two such persons is not impossible. Individuals with widely divergent religious and political views form loving relationships all the time. Again, an answer must be provided - one that captures the irreconcilable nature of the conflict as well as the relative rarity of any real problem. Many who write about love set issues such as this one aside. Anticipating such problems for his own account of love, Frankfurt remarks that "Loving is risky," and that there is "ordinarily a strong possibility that disruptive conflict may arise . . ."[25] While differences in religion can disrupt

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[25]   Frankfurt (2004), p. 62.

relationships, they need not. Individuals can love one another even when they refuse to support each other in their particular religious lives. However, if the one-who-loves cannot support the interests of the loved-one without undermining his own integrity, then on an account of love which emphasizes the support of interests, love between two individuals both deeply devoted to divergent understandings of religion is impossible.

(c) Consider also controversial cases where what interests a loved-one is harmful or detrimental to their overall development as a person. An alcoholic is interested in drinking. She views alcohol as a means to some end - often mistaken for pleasure - and drinks to obtain that end. If one tries to take away her drink, he is resented because he is interfering with this end. Prior to that time in which the drinker is forced to confront the real consequences of her addiction, she views her use of alcohol either as something that benefits her or as something which she can control.[26] In her mind, the one-who-loves her simply does not understand this. In most cases, the one-who-loves her sees past this rationalization. Thus, he attempts to convince her that she should discontinue her use of alcohol. However, if the drinker really is interested in drinking, then it is hard to see why the one-who-loves her, if loving-activity is support of interests, would not encourage her to continue drinking.

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[26]   If the alcoholic did understand how destructive and out of control her drinking was, then she would, presumably, not drink or she would become an *unwilling* addict. Contrary to popular belief, the first step is not "admitting you have a problem," but admitting you have a problem that you cannot control ("We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable"). An alcoholic who continues to believe that there will be situations where drinking is appropriate, has yet to accept the devastating effects that alcohol has in her life. She has failed, in the therapeutic parlance, to "surrender."

There is a temptation to appeal to an objective standard and to claim that the

drinker is 'really' or 'truly' interested in *not drinking* as a way of resolving this issue.

Some theorists who move in this direction emphasize that what is in a person's interests

is not the particular interest he is having at any given time, but the interests he would

adopt if more reflective or more rational.[27] This move, however, raises questions about

what makes something a 'real' interest and why one-who-loves should support real

interests rather than those interests which the loved-one actually has.

An account that emphasizes 'real' interests begins to journey down a difficult road

because it calls into question the common belief that what makes something an interest of

mine is that I am interested in it. *My* beliefs, desires, wants, and needs are supposed to

play some role in the formation of *my* interests. It may be that a more rational version of

myself, not given to the errors in reasoning and emotional vulnerabilities that hamper my

ability to reason, would be interested in different things and make different choices. The

problem is that *I* am not *that* person. If one-loving tries to force me to adopt those

interests, without acknowledging that they are not in fact my interests, I am likely to

resent this imposition.[28] From my standpoint, my interests are being dictated to me by

others, whether they be therapists, doctors, or those who love me.

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[27]   Bernard Williams (1985), p. 41-3, goes this route, arguing that an agent's 'real' interests are those
      formed by an agent without any "general incapacity." He admits that it is difficult, if not impossible, to
      give an account of what these incapacities are. Other influential figures adopting a real interests view
      are Sidgwick (1907) pp. 111-112 and Rawls (1999) pp. 365-372.

[28]   How one-who-loves comes to understand the subjective components of the loved-one's well-being is
      the subject of Chapter 3.

Claiming that what is in a person's interests is what would be done by a different entity threatens, though perhaps this consequence can be avoided, to divorce the agent from his own interests. More importantly, this move threatens to divorce loving-activity from the loved-one. What is loved is no longer the loved-one but an ideally rational agent. As we begin to separate the interests of this individual from the interests of an individual like him but slightly better, it is hard to understand how love for this particular person would entail supporting ideal interests.

(d) Let us consider one more puzzle raised by the interests based approach to loving-activity before turning to a positive view that can avoid most of these problems. One might be unaware of what one is or would be interested in. Suppose that there is a collection of tasks that Bob enjoys: using his hands, engaging in work with a tangible product, and tasks that require a high degree of technical skill. Another person, seeing and understanding Bob's interest in such tasks, might suggest that Bob take up woodworking as a hobby. Others can know one's likely interests better than one knows them oneself. Those who love not only support interests, but engage themselves in the task of trying to create better interests for those they love.

This is most obvious when one considers a young child who has few interests at all. Those who love a child do not only identify with the few interests that the child has - going to the playground, eating, trucks with big wheels, and so on. The loving person also encourages the child to develop new and more complex interests, like an interest in music, an art form, sports, or reading. Loving-activity in such a case is not directed at

those interests which the child already has, but toward the development of new interests which will, the hope is, better serve the child in the future. What one desires for the child is that he has substantial and worthwhile interests in the future, but why? Of course, a child can have future directed interests, such as a desire to become an astronaut, but he is not interested in the long-term development of his interests. Parents, in contrast, are concerned with developing complex, long-term, abilities and skills that will serve a child over the course of his or her life. I do not believe that the average toddler is capable of understanding and being interested in his life in this way.

Frankfurt argues that loving parents want their children to develop a robust set of interests. One-who-loves a child encourages him to develop his interests so that his life will have meaning and structure. Thus, Frankfurt says of parents that, "Their concern for the well-being of their children naturally extends, insofar as this may be necessary, both to helping their children become capable of loving and to assisting them in finding things to love."[29] In this passage Frankfurt appeals to well-being as a way of resolving conflicts between childish interests and fully-developed interests, and it is not clear to me that he can make this move. If what contributes to an individual's well-being just is the fulfillment of her interests, then how can an appeal to well-being resolve this conflict? Absent an account of well-being that is independent of interest fulfillment, such an appeal does not resolve the problem.

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[29]   Frankfurt (2004), p. 89.

It is quite natural to move in the direction that Frankfurt has moved and to say that parents are concerned with the well-being of the child. However, on his account, well-being appears to be defined in terms of the fulfillment of desires and interests. Thus, conflicts between interests, whether they be two present interests, a present interest and a future interest, or a bad interest and a best interest, cannot be resolved by an appeal to well-being. If well-being is appealed to as an independent criterion by which conflicts can be resolved, the account is viciously circular.

Interest fulfillment is indicative of the aim which drives those who love. If it were not, it would not be so natural to talk about loving-activity in terms of the fulfillment of interests. It is often the case that interests do coincide with the end toward which loving-activity aims, and thus interests often provide an adequate means for those who love to deliver support to loved-ones. The four conflicts discussed above show that this is not always the case. This indicates that loving-activity is not directed at interests themselves, but at interests as a means to obtaining some other end.

§4. The best solution to these puzzles is to divorce the concept of well-being from the fulfillment of interests and desires and to make well-being sovereign over the activity of those who love. It is only insofar as the loved-one's interests are connected to her well-being that one supports them. In the case of a child who has only trivial interests the parent desires that the child be well now and in the future. This requires that the child have some interests of some sort in the future to provide him with enjoyment and a sense of fulfillment. It is well-being, not interests, that drives the activity of those who love.

Defining loving-activity as a commitment to advance the interests of the loved-one is a mistake because it confuses the means for the end. While interest fulfillment is often a means to the well-being of the loved-one, this is not always so. The problems I discussed above all trade on a breakdown in the connection between well-being and interests. When we consider the difference between fundamental and trivial interests we see that what makes the former more important to an individual is the connection between *that* interest and *that* individual's well-being. In cases in which we were tempted to posit 'best' or 'real' interests, we now see that what makes some interests better than others is their expected contribution to the well-being of the individual.

If well-being is divorced from interest fulfillment, then well-being provides an independent criterion by which intuitive differences between types of interests can be explained. Some interests are better because of their connection to the well-being of a given individual. We can thus unproblematically say that an alcoholic really is interested in alcohol. She values it for what it does for her and the role it plays in her life. Though she might deny that this is true, her interest is problematic because her use of alcohol is not contributing to her well-being. The one-who-loves is devoted to the well-being of the loved-one and must thwart and undermine the interests of the loved-one if she is alcoholic. She need not tell the drinker about some interests that she now has, a *real* interest of which she is unaware, but must instead show her that her current interest in drinking is not contributing to her well-being. It is in this way, heavy-handed though it might be, that she acts lovingly. It is only when the loved-one realizes that her interest in

drinking is diminishing rather than contributing to her well-being that she will be able to cease drinking.[30]

One might say that the alcoholic, B.A.S.E. jumper, or potential suicide is deceived or mistaken about what is in her best interests, but this is to put the cart before the horse. Such individuals are not mistaken about what is in their interest, they are mistaken about what will contribute to their well-being. They then use this mistaken understanding of what will contribute to their well-being to form their interests. The alcoholic who believes that her life would get worse were she to quit drinking is caught up in just such a mistake. This explanation avoids divorcing the agent from her interests and explains why there is a strong temptation to do so. The interests are there and they are real, though if pursued, they will fail to benefit the agent.[31]

This account of loving-activity establishes both the role of interests in loving-activity and shows why it is not an uncommon mistake to accord to interests more importance than they are due. If we are to give an account of loving-activity we will not find much help in the study of interests. Instead, we must look toward the notion of well-being.

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[30] That is to say that she must hit 'rock bottom.' One-who-loves might try to help those they love to reach rock bottom by staging an intervention in which they promise to withdraw support from the loved-one if she does not discontinue her use of alcohol.

[31] The model I embrace is deeply Platonic. Socrates famously, and some think paradoxically, says that no man desires what is harmful to himself (c.f. *Apology, 25d)*. He argues that every action performed by a particular agent is performed because the agent believes she will secure a good for herself by performing it. Socrates uses this claim, which he takes to be a matter of common sense, to defend himself at trial. He claims that since corrupting the youth makes them bad citizens and since a bad citizenry (in a democracy) would be harmful to Socrates, Socrates could not knowingly corrupt the youth.

§5. Let us begin the discussion of well-being by considering a more common case of wellness. What does it mean to say of someone who was once ill that he is now well? Initially, it seems that we mean that he has been restored to a state of health, but it is not clear what it means to be in a healthy state. Is one saying that he is free from pain or that his vital signs have returned to a normal state? Or is one trying to say something more robust, that he has returned to a state of optimal functioning? The same questions can be asked, and indeed have been asked with more vigor and confusion, about mental health. In the philosophical literature, the issue is taken up by Foucault and his followers. Of central concern is the question of how one can determine which mental states are healthy ones. The best contemporary example of the real consequences of changing understandings of what constitutes mental health is the demedicalization of homosexuality and the subsequent gay rights movement.[32] Among the more liberally minded at least, what was once classified as a mental disorder is now viewed as a normal variation within the population. Similarly, one can ask why a schizophrenic individual is unhealthy? Is it simply the case that 'his ways are not our ways,' or is some deeper claim about the natural functioning of the brain being made? Both well-being and health are normative concepts that can be understood in a variety of ways.

First, one can identify a state of wellness with the *statistically normal state*. A person is well, in this sense, when he has returned to a state of being that is within the statistically normal parameters for a human being. His temperature is down to 98.6, he is

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[32]   C.f. Foucault (1973). See Martin Duberman's (2002) memoir *Cures* for a first personal account of treatments for homosexuality popular in the 1950s and 60s.

now capable of keeping food down, he is no longer hallucinating, and his blood pressure

has returned to 100/70. Even states of discomfort can be included in our evaluations of

wellness from this perspective. A person who walks a long distance will probably feel

discomfort in his feet, but this is normal and is not indicative of a lack of wellness.

Feeling some discomfort after a long walk is, if anything, a sign that one's body is

functioning well.

The measurement of wellness in terms of statistical normalcy is not without

problems. Suppose that the statistically normal blood pressure in a given community is

150/90. Certainly it is not the case that a person who lives in that community with that

blood pressure is doing well even if he falls within the statistically normal parameters.

Poor eyesight presents a similar problem. Degradation of vision is statistically normal,

but it is intuitive to say that a person with poor and uncorrected vision is not doing well.

So too, an individual with extremely high scores on batteries that test general intelligence

falls, by definition, well beyond what is statistically normal. Must we say that he or she is

not well?

These problems can be addressed by understanding well-being from an *objective*

perspective. From this perspective we can say that high blood pressure is very likely to

lead to significant health risks and poor vision is likely to decrease the quality of one's

life regardless of whether they are the statistically normal state. The objective perspective

measures well-being against a standard of *optimal functioning*. To rehearse a very ancient

argument, the natural function of the human body is to support life for a certain period of

time. Some bodily states, though they may be statistically normal, reduce the ability of the body to perform this function and should thus be avoided. The form of a thing, as Plato says, dictates the function of that thing, and a thing does well when it performs its function.[33] Because the function of the eye is to see, we consider individuals with poor vision to be doing better when their vision is corrected. In such a case, our judgment of wellness is not driven by statistical normalcy, but by a sense of ideal functioning.

Richard Kraut presents a contemporary account, inspired by Plato, of well-being that develops this second perspective in his recent work *What is Good and Why?* Kraut equates well-being with what is good for a person.[34] He then argues that what is good for a thing is what contributes to the flourishing of that thing. Finally, he argues that what it means for a thing to flourish is for it to develop and function as it would under favorable conditions.[35] On Kraut's account, individual differences are unimportant. Human beings are things of a certain kind. Thus, a human being flourishes when her eyes develop as eyes normally develop under favorable conditions for a human being, her cognitive skills develop as they would under favorable conditions for a human being, and so on. The developmental aspect of his theory is meant to be an improvement over Plato's argument. On his account what is good for a thing is not just what allows it to perform its function -

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[33]   *Rep*. 352b ff.

[34]   Kraut (2007), pp. 1-4.

[35]   Ibid., p. 131.

what Plato called the object's 'virtue,' - but also those conditions which allow the thing to develop such that it can perform its function.[36]

Two objections to this kind of account must be raised. Kraut argues that the means and resources necessary for favorable development are good for a thing, but how are we to understand which conditions are favorable? For example, depending on the kind of education a child receives she may be illiterate, functionally literate, or capable of reading books, newspapers, and even poetry or philosophy. The third kind of education clearly provides the best and most favorable conditions for the child, but how do we explain that these conditions are better than the others? The most natural way to make such a judgment is to appeal to the state of well-being that these conditions allow one to achieve. That is to say that the third form of education is best because it contributes most to the child's well-being. However, on the given account of well-being, well-being is determined in part by the conditions under which it is achieved, and so one cannot claim that what makes certain conditions favorable is their relationship with well-being. On Kraut's account, well-being is the *result* of development under favorable circumstances. As such, an appeal to well-being cannot explain which circumstances are favorable. Thus, a theorist like Kraut must explain what makes a favorable circumstance favorable without appealing to an objective standard of well-being.

One could counter this objection by appealing to a robust understanding of the kind of thing an object is. For example, a car runs well when sugar is not mixed with the

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[36]   Ibid., p. 144.

gasoline, because that is the kind of thing a car is. Similarly, one could argue that human

beings have a natural form that dictates their development and function, and thus the

conditions under which they flourish. Perhaps Kraut can develop a non-theological

understanding of natural kinds that stands up to philosophical scrutiny. If so, he could

provide an account of the circumstances under which a thing develops as it should.[37]

A second objection can be raised against those who adopt the view that well-being

can be understood objectively by understanding what kind of thing something is. Kraut

admits that as a person ages she flourish less.[38] This *seems* to be true. Certainly there is a

sense in which an elderly woman suffering from macular degeneration flourishes less

than she once did. But cannot one say of an elderly person that he or she is doing well?

To take another case, Kraut believes that a blind person flourishes less than he might

because he lacks the use of his eyes. But cannot one say of a blind person that he is doing

well? The circumstances in which an individual finds herself plays a role in our

understanding of well-being in addition to an understanding of what kind of thing she is.

It is tempting here to say, as Aristotle said, that decrepit old age, blindness, and

other forms of disability detract from one's overall well-being.[39] If this claim is adopted

and each of these limitations is said to detract from well-being, then human well-being is

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[37]   I am skeptical that such an argument will be successful. 'Natural,' like 'normal' is a normative word. It does not seem likely that an understanding of our natural kind which is *also* helpful to moral theory can be provided without sneaking in normative content in judgments about what kinds of people are 'natural'. These problems have been discussed extensively in Queer Theory, but have not played a big role in philosophy. See Warner (1999), *The Trouble with Normal*.

[38]   Kraut (2007), p. 138.

[39]   c.f. *N.E.* 1099b1-5. Aristotle also includes being 'ill-born' and being ugly as hinderances to *eudaimonia*.

placed outside of the reach of ordinary human beings. All are limited in various ways. To be normally-abled is not to be able to do all things. It is to have a set of (dis)abilities that fall within statistically normal parameters. My high-functioning autistic cousin has an admirable understanding of the way that engines work and is, as such, one of the best tractor mechanics in central Minnesota. For him this extreme ability is coupled with debilitating limitations in other areas, but certainly my life would be just a little better if I possessed his mechanical acumen and could repair cars. It is easy to say that disabilities detract from well-being until one reflects on the fact that human beings are, in general, disabled. We need to explain how I can be well though I lack the ability to repair cars and many other abilities that would make my life better.

Consider then a third perspective that can be taken on well-being; the *subjective perspective*. A blind person can be said to be well because he is doing as well as he can given certain limitations in his life. Again, this is true not only of people with disabilities. My doctor can say truthfully that I am doing well even though I cannot run a four minute mile. To contrast, if an athlete who is typically able to run this fast were to suddenly lose his ability, his doctor might suspect that he is not doing well. Whether or not one is doing well, then, is not only derived from an understanding of the kind of thing an object or person is, but the individual limitations and abilities of that person as well. From one perspective we can say that a blind person would do better and more fully flourish *if* he had use of his eyes, but from another perspective we accept that a blind man *does not*

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have use of his eyes and understand his well-being in terms of the abilities that he does have.

It is important that this aspect of well-being is taken into account. I imagine that being a major league ball player brings a great number of pleasures and accomplishments that most will never experience. A young child may dream of someday playing in the major leagues, but let us suppose that as he develops it becomes clear that he does not have the rare, high level of ability that is required. Over time, the child gives up on his dream. While he may, even as an adult, occasionally fantasize about playing in the big leagues, he should accept that he just does not have 'the gift'. We can say two competing things about this person. First, he would have achieved a greater level of well-being if he had not lacked certain abilities and had been able to play in the major leagues. Second, given the abilities he has, it was good for him to accept his limitations and pursue other avenues of excellence.

Intuitively, it seems right to say that a given individual's life would be better if he did not have the limitations that he has. Thus, we can say along with Kraut that a blind person would be better off if he had use of his eyes. Our judgment changes as we begin to take a different and competing perspective. From the subjective perspective we think that a blind person is capable of doing well and living a fully flourishing, happy human life even though he lacks the use of his eyes. *In this case*, the two perspectives can come apart.

Establishing that the two perspectives can come apart is not merely philosophically interesting. It seems to me that this was an important part of the political push for governmental programs such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. By arguing that well-being is achievable despite certain objective limitations on well-being, these individuals were able to compel governments to implement programs that will allow them to achieve subjective well-being. Prior to this, such individuals were dismissed as having, sadly perhaps, lives that did not allow for them to be happy. The move to enable individuals with physical disabilities to enter public parks and movie theaters and those with cognitive disabilities to be educated and participate in the work force, was the direct result of the recognition that a happy, flourishing life is possible for such individuals. The contemporary push toward terms like 'differently-abled' and 'normally-abled' is an attempt to remind the rest of us that we are, though it be in different ways, significantly disabled.

The question which we must turn to asks which perspective on well-being the one-who-loves, who is concerned with promoting the overall well-being of the loved-one, till take. Does loving-activity aim at well-being as seen from the subjective perspective, the objective perspective, or the statistically normal perspective? Should the mother of a would-be ballplayer gently encourage him to pursue activities in which he can be successful, push him toward an unobtainable goal, or think that he is doing well because his abilities are in line with those of everybody else?

§6. Iris Murdoch suggests that love is the perception of *individuals*.[40] She adopts this idea from Simon Weil who claims that "Real love wants to have a real object, and to know the truth of it, and to love it in its truth as it really is."[41] Rather than approaching other people as tokens of the type human-being, when one loves another one comes to perceive the other as a real individual. What matters to the one-who-loves is not the well-being of human-beings as such, but the well-being of this particular person. While understanding what is good for one as an individual will involve understanding what is good for a human being, the former will always be sovereign over the latter. Murdoch believes that this focus on particular people rather than natural kinds is central to loving, and she argues that love's concern with particularity is the reason why both Kant and Plato shy away from love as a possible basis of morality, Kant because he is concerned with the universality of moral requirements and Plato because of his emphasis on natural kinds.[42]

Broader questions about these theorists aside, if it is true that our love of others is directed at the other as a particular person, then one-who-loves must direct her concern at those considerations that stem from the subjective perspective on well-being, because the subjective perspective more fully incorporates the particularity and individuality of the loved-one into the understanding of well-being. Imagine how destructive a mother would

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[40]   Murdoch (1951), p. 52.

[41]   Quoted in Miles (ed.) (1986), p. 93.

[42]   Murdoch (1951), p. 50. Both Kant and Plato embrace an objective perspective on well-being. The objective perspective is a valid perspective on well-being, and their focus on it does not invalidate their views.

be if, instead of accepting her son's limitations, she pushed him down a path upon which he could find no success - if she aimed not at the well-being of her child as he is, but at the well-being of a counterfactual, non-existent son. It would have been better for the child to have been born with a rocket for an arm, but he was not. In so far as one loves people who *exist* rather than imaginary idealizations of those people one must be concerned with the individual as he is. This is not always easy in practice, as our love for another can distort our understanding of what is best for him, but one should work to take this perspective into account. It is toward *this* person that one directs one's love, and so it must be the well-being of this person with which one is concerned. One seeks to help him live a happy, flourishing life, despite his limitations.

Lest it seem that the objective perspective is unimportant, a second reason for focusing on the subjective perspective is that from it one can view concerns arising from the objective perspective in a way that does not detach the loved-one from his own well-being. A father of a child born without sight will acknowledge that his child has been born with significant limitations that will affect the kind of life she will have. He will immediately try to learn how to raise his child in an environment that will give her the most opportunities and to teach her how to navigate her environment with the least amount of difficulty possible. He sees her blindness not as an obstacle to her well-being, but as an important challenge that must be accepted. It is important that the father recognize both the objective challenges to the well-being of his daughter and the subjective opportunities that remain.

Loving-activity is tailored to the needs, desires, limitations, and other special circumstances of the loved-one. It is the unique connection to the well-being of that individual that moves one to support the interests of the loved-one, not the worthiness of her ends as such. Each of us has hobbies and pursuits which contribute to our well-being but cannot be defended intersubjectively. Joe may devote a great deal of time, money, and energy to keeping a mangy dog which many would agree might as well be put down. We philosophers might try to tell a just-so-story about why Joe's dog is valuable or why meaningless hobbies in general are valuable, but these stories will always just be stories. They will never capture the sense in which devotion to an old dog may be valuable for Joe though not valuable for people generally. One-who-loves him supports Joe in his care for the dog, because caring for the dog contributes to Joe's well-being.

This problem only occurs if we believe that all aspects of well-being must be defended objectively - a claim which I have denied. Given that an individual's well-being is dependent on unique features of the loved-one, one can say that the dog is important to Joe because owning it and loving it contributes to his well-being. One-who-loves supports the hobbies and pursuits of those he loves even when he does not understand how such a hobby or pursuit would contribute to the well-being of human beings. He does not do this because strange hobbies or pursuits are good for a person to have, but because the loved-one derives a greater sense of well-being from engaging in them. Why *this* hobby promotes *this* person's well-being and whether or not it will promote the well-being of all persons are both interesting questions, but neither question needs to be

answered to understand why one-who-loves supports those hobbies when a loved-one engages in them. He supports them because they contribute to the well-being of the loved-one.

Love is *personal* because love is concerned with the well-being of the loved-one as understood subjectively. The well-being of a given individual is subject dependent. It is tied in a direct way to the individual himself. Because people are all different, what will contribute to the well-being of one person may not contribute to the well-being of another. This fact, I believe, contributes to the frequency and ease with which philosophers define well-being in terms of what is in a person's interests. The connection between the two concepts is generally quite tight, but the examples given in Section 3 show that well-being and interests are not the same.

§7. It is often thought that those who love do so *disinterestedly.* One-who-loves loves the loved-one even when doing so involves significant costs and sacrifices. I have articulated the notion of loving-activity in terms of activity aimed at contributing to the well-being of the loved-one. One-who-loves another tries to enrich the life of the loved-one along the multiple dimensions of well-being. Furthermore, this activity is engaged in not for the direct benefit of the individual who loves, but for the benefit of the one who is loved. Does this account of love successfully capture the intuition that love is disinterested?

It is helpful to consider two ways in which one can fail to love. In some cases, activities which one hopes will benefit the loved-one fail to do so. One might try to cheer

up a friend with a warm-hearted joke which only makes things worse. The joke is not insensitive or in poor-taste, it simply was not the right remedy to the friend's distress. Such mistakes happen often, and they are not failures of love. One is unable to control all the contingencies of life and lacks the perfect knowledge required to understand what will, in fact, contribute to the well-being of the loved-one. In such a case it is possible that the loved-one will be angered by one's actions, but so long as one was not negligent when the mistake was made, this anger is misplaced.

Failures of this sort are loving because though one was mistaken about what will contribute to the well-being of the loved-one, one did aim at the well-being of the loved one. The failure did not stem from improper motives, but from a mistake about the content of her well-being.

True failures of love are of a different sort. If one decides not to support a loved-one in her career because her advancement will challenge one's own sense of success, then one is failing to love her. In this case, one is devoted to something other than the well-being of the loved-one, mainly one's own well-being. So too with someone who befriends a new coworker in order to use the friendship to increase contact with a superior one is hoping to impress. Relationships of this sort are instrumental, and they need not be morally problematic. The support and benefit that might accompany such a relationship, however, is not loving-activity. Loving-activity is motivated by the well-being of the loved-one. In most cases, when one puts one's own desires in front of those of the loved-one, one is failing to love her.

There are circumstances when one is committed to incompatible paths of action. One cannot both give one's unqualified son an academic position and fairly appropriate the job, but the son should recognize that his well-being does not include being handed a job which he does not deserve. When one-who-loves pursues a course of action that fails to benefit the loved-one, the loved-one *should* recognize that there are things in this world that are more important than his own well-being. When one chooses to fairly appropriate a job one is expressing that one values fairness. If the loved-one does not recognize that fairness is important, even when it detracts from one's own well-being, then the loved-one is making a mistake. The failure is his own and not a failure of love.

When one places one's own interests above those of the loved-one the above argument no longer works. When one lies about a friend in order to save face, then one is failing to love, for the one-loved cannot be expected to understand why, in this particular case, one's own well-being had priority over the loved-one's well-being. That is, one cannot reasonably expect that others recognize that some things are more important than one's own well-being while maintaining that one's own well-being is more important than that of everyone else.[43]

Thus, self-interest presents a different sort of problem for love than cases in which those who love pursue other values or the love of other individuals. When pursuing other values, the loved-one can be expected to recognize that these other values are more important than his own well-being. When one chooses to volunteer one night a week at a

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43   C.f. Nagel (1987), pp. 65-67.

homeless shelter instead of playing bridge, one's friends can be expected to recognize

that they are not the most important thing in the world. However, when one values

oneself, the same cannot be said. Unless one is truly monomaniacal, as some are, one

does not expect that everyone else should think that one is more important than all others.

In many cases, if self-love is pursued over other love, the loved-one will resent this

activity.

Though providing loving-activity is extremely beneficial to those who love, this

by itself does not threaten the disinterestedness of love. The disinterestedness of love is

only threatened when, absent these benefits, one would no longer interact with the loved-

one. Friendships, especially long-term, intense friendships, undergo periods of time when

instead of being relationships in which benefits and burdens are equally shared, the

burdens fall almost entirely on one partner. Aging parents can present similar challenges

as loving them becomes increasingly demanding. If one abandons one's friend or parent

during those times when the loved-one cannot benefit one but instead needs one's

support, then one's love for the other is failing. The best test of disinterestedness is to

imagine that all of the benefits of loving are taken away. Would one's love persist? If so,

then one's love is likely disinterested.

The willingness of those who love to ride out demanding circumstances gives

love its characteristic stability and steadfastness. Friendships and familial relationships

are remarkably resistant to the ups and downs of everyday life. While one's love does not

require that one always succeed in providing support, it does require that one stay by the side of the loved-one and provide a stable and supportive relationship.

Because one cannot serve two masters and because loving another entails being committed to the loved-one's well-being it excludes being *wholly* committed to one's own well-being. Many of the greatest joys available in human life stem from loving relationships. In most cases one does not love in order to receive these benefits, and if one does love in order to receive these benefits one quickly finds that the benefits are unimportant when compared to the importance of the well-being of the loved-one. Love is disinterested because what guides one in one's interactions with the loved-one, what causes one to act in this way rather than another, is one's concern for the well-being of the loved-one rather than concern for one's own well-being.[44]

§8. I began this chapter with a discussion of loving-activity. I analyzed Frankfurt's remarks on loving-activity and found his interest based account of well-being to be lacking. This analysis led to a more helpful and better developed understanding of well-being. I emphasized both that one-who-loves is concerned with well-being as viewed from the subjective perspective. Many brief and contentious claims about the nature of well-being have been made, but a full treatment of the subject of well-being does not have a place in this project.

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[44] It would be foolish to claim that lovers do not benefit from loving. A mutually respectful friendship is one of the greatest joys in human life. One forms such friendships in order to bring the great benefit of such a friendship into one's life. This is not, however, the reason why one treats another as a friend or why the relationship continues. One supports a friend because one loves one's friend.

A question remains: The understanding of well-being put forward is complex. Loving another requires that one understand the loved-one as an individual and tailor her support to the needs of that individual. Given this complexity how can one come to understand what will contribute to the well-being of the individual? It is not enough to simply consider the needs of an individual as a token of the type human being, instead, one must get to know the individual and learn from the individual. This question, and the problems that it raises, cut to the core of the account of loving and the practical task of loving another. They deserve a full treatment to which we will now turn.

CHAPTER THREE

Listening as an Act of Love

Abstract: Those who love will not always agree with a loved-one about what will contribute to the loved-one's well-being. In this chapter, I show how theories of listening can help us to understand how those who love can disagree with a loved-one while continuing to act lovingly toward the loved-one. I argue that by listening to the loved-one, one who loves allows the loved-one to exercise her ability to direct her own life thereby treating her as an individual and contributing to her well-being.

§1. In her discussion of caring Nel Noddings argues that it is important for the one who is being cared for to "apprehend" that another is caring for him. She states, "When this attitude is missed, the one who is the object of caretaking feels like an object. He is being treated, handled by formula."[1] Later she writes, "To be treated as "types" instead of individuals, to have strategies exercised on us, objectifies us. We become "cases" instead of persons."[2] In the previous chapter, I explained the distinction between loving another as an individual and as an object in terms of subjective and objective well-being. Because subjective well-being is rooted in the individuality of the loved-one, those who love direct their support toward subjective rather than objective well-being. By doing so, they avoid treating the loved-one as an object.

In Chapter 2 the concept of well-being was utilized mainly as a place holder. I claimed that those who love aim at contributing to well-being, but said little about the actual content of the concept. For those who love, discovering and understanding what

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[1]   Noddings (1984), p. 65. See also Noddings (2010) pp. 46-48.

[2]   Noddings (1984), p. 66.

will contribute to the well-being of the loved-one is of utmost importance. Because well-being is subjectively determined, those who love must work to learn what will best contribute to the well-being of the loved-one.

Moreover, there will be times when the one-who-loves and the loved-one disagree about what will best contribute to the loved-one's subjective well-being. In this chapter, I ask how one can continue to love another even when it is unclear what will best contribute to the well-being of that individual. An answer to this question will necessarily meet two criteria. First, one-who-loves must remain committed to the well-being of the loved-one throughout such disagreements. If one pursues one's own well-being instead of the well-being of the loved-one, one is failing to love (2.9). Second, one-who-loves must continue to treat the loved-one as an individual and not as an object. If one objectifies the loved-one and treats her as a token of a type, then one is failing to love her as an individual.

I argue in this chapter that both of these criteria can be met if one-who-loves is committed to listening to the loved-one during disagreements. I will explore non-combative listening as a way of discovering and contributing to the well-being of a loved-one. Listening is traditionally discussed as a method of resolving conflict and working toward reconciliation. For my purposes, the ability of non-combative listening to resolve conflict is a welcome consequence of the process, but I will not focus extensively on this feature of listening. Instead, I focus on the way in which listening to the loved-one makes her a participant in decisions that will be made with respect to her well-being. I argue that

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participating in the structuring and directing of one's own life makes a significant contribution to one's well-being. Thus, because non-combative listening invites participation, it contributes to the well-being of the loved-one.

§2. Consider a case in which those who love disagree with a loved-one about what is best for him. Imagine that Bill is an alcoholic. He is a heavy, continuous drinker, and because of this he has lost his job, his friends, and his financial security. As his disease progresses his health is also threatened, and his drinking has resulted in several hospital visits. As a last ditch effort the few people who still love Bill stage an intervention and present him with an ultimatum: if he does not check himself into a rehabilitation facility immediately, they will have no further contact with him. Perhaps they even threaten to kick him out of a shared residence, to remove his children from his custody, or to file for divorce. In essence, they tell him that if he does not stop drinking, his life will get significantly worse. Interventions like the one described are paternalistic, coercive, and extremely confrontational.[3]

Bill, presumably, is not in a position to judge what is best for himself. If it was left up to him, he would most likely continue drinking until his death. His friends and family recognize this and interfere quite forcefully in his life. Interventions are extreme examples of how love often requires individuals to take painful and undesirable actions in order to benefit those they love. Though these cases involve paternalism and coercion, they also exemplify loving-support. Bill's friends and family stage the intervention for his

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[3]   See Jay (2008) for a detailed discussion of how interventions are conducted and why they work.

sake, not because it is the easy thing for them to do. Their action expresses both paternalism and a devotion to Bill's well-being. Their intervention shows that Bill is not capable of governing his own life and that his life must therefore be governed by them. At the same time, the intervention expresses the disinterestedness and devotion central to loving-support. His need drives the intervention, and the only reason they interfere is because they believe that being rehabilitated will save Bill's life. The family can honestly say "I'm doing this for you,"or "I'm only doing this because I love you," because their disinterested concern for Bill's well-being motivates the intervention. If Bill were not loved, the intervention would not take place. He would be left to fend for himself, a task at which he will likely be unsuccessful.

While Bill and his family disagree about what will contribute to Bill's well-being, this case is not very interesting. There is widespread agreement that interference in the lives of alcoholics and drug addicts by those who love them is appropriate. This agreement exists because a life controlled by drugs and alcohol is widely agreed to involve a diminishment of overall well-being. Insofar as addiction interferes so completely with the well-being of the addicted person, it is very easy to claim that Bill is wrong and those who stage the intervention are right. If there were any question as to whether or not the life of an alcoholic involved significant impairments in his ability to live a good life, then the case might be more interesting, but as it stands the actions of Bill's family and friends are uncontroversially loving.

Let us consider a more difficult case. Mark was raised in a successful middle class family and his parents have saved for him a college fund sufficient to pay his way through college.[4] Access to this money comes with certain restrictions. It has long been desired and has been made clear to Mark since he was young, that he become a physician. However, as he completes his first year of college, Mark, to his parents' chagrin, wants to change his major to elementary education. Having taken a handful of biology and chemistry classes, he believes that he has neither the drive nor conviction necessary to complete medical school and that he has a talent for teaching small children. He has tried to discuss this with his parents, but his protests have fallen on deaf ears. His parents insist that he has the native ability required for medical school (and he does) and have told him that they will not pay for his education if he chooses a different career.[5] Mark could take out loans for his education, but this will saddle him with large loan payments and impact his ability to pursue an underpaid career in elementary education.

It is questionable whether Mark's parents are acting in a loving way. Their actions seem in some ways contrary to the account of loving-activity I set out in Chapter 2. They

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[4] I present in this chapter two cases in which a young person and his or her parents are at odds over what will contribute to the young person's well-being. Each of these cases was related to me by an undergraduate student. The stories are thus one-sided, though both students show insight into the thought processes of their parents. Fictionalizing these stories would make them easier to deal with, but such details are added at a cost. Such conflicts are, in fact, quite difficult to work through. If they are simplified so as to yield easy solutions, then the value of whatever solutions are arrived at is diminished. Our solutions would not be solutions to real problems but simplified versions of real problems. Their stories are used with permission.

[5] This kind of case is fairly common at UCR. I know of another student, a business major, who was given such an ultimatum when he tried to change his major to philosophy. Many parents seem to view such majors as a waste of money given that they do not easily translate into lucrative employment opportunities.

do not appear to care that much about the sort of life Mark wants to live or the way in which different careers will affect his overall well-being. The fact that he is already unhappy with his biology and chemistry classes is unimportant to them. This leads Mark to believe that they are indifferent to his well-being. From his perspective, his subjective well-being is not driving their concerns about how he should live his life.

The point of this chapter is neither to make a claim about who is right nor to make a claim about what the right answer in such disagreements is. My focus is the disagreement itself. Given that such disagreements will exist we must ask how they can exist within loving relationships without destroying the relationship. What I seek is not a decision making procedure that will resolve the disagreement, but a way to prevent the disagreement from dissolving the loving relationship that exists between Mark and his parents.

There is a temptation to account for the problematic nature of the threat made by Mark's parents by claiming that Mark's parents are being paternalistic. They are using coercion and threats to alter the course of his life. This way of analyzing the case would need to claim that paternalism of this sort is morally problematic, and that people, whether they be strangers or loved-ones, should avoid treating others in paternalistic ways. Were the actions of Mark's parents to occur outside of a loving-relationship, this argument would explain the problematic nature of what they are doing. But why should those who love avoid being paternalistic? Notice that in Bill's case, the intervention was extremely coercive and paternalistic. Bill was given no opportunity to defend himself and

no opportunity to negotiate with those who love him. Instead, he was simply presented with a list of demands.

Mark's parents are behaving in a way that is suspect and Bill's family is behaving in a way that is loving. It is necessary to account for the difference between the two cases. Given that both cases involve paternalism, some other feature must account for this difference.

§3. Let us consider the ways in which Mark's case is similar to and differs from Bill's case. Mark would like to major in elementary education, but his parents insist that he continue along a pre-medical track. His parents do not support his decision to change majors and are threatening to take away his college tuition if he changes his major. Though Mark's parents cannot force him to pursue a career in medicine, they can make it difficult for him to do anything else. What would have been a comfortable four years with a debt-free degree, would now include the struggle of holding a part-time job while going to school as well as at least ten years of loan payments. Further, his parents are using coercion and heavy-handedness to try to get him to pursue the end which they have laid out for him. As Mark tells it, they give no credence to the way he feels and insist that they know what is good for him.

My purpose in this chapter is to show how individuals can lovingly disagree, and we need not vilify Mark's parents in order to draw the conclusions of this chapter. Suppose Mark's parents are well-intentioned. They truly believe that his life will be better if he becomes a doctor. They think that if Mark changes majors he will come to regret it.

If this is the case, then they are similar to Bill's friends and family who think that Bill's life will be better if he quits drinking. Both cases involve going against the desires and interests of the loved-one and ignoring the loved-one's claims about his own well-being. In neither case is the loved-one allowed to present an argument in favor of a different course of events, and in both cases extreme and possibly life altering courses of action are being forced on the loved-one. Yet, while the actions of Bill's friends and family are clearly aimed at Bill's well-being, the actions of Mark's parents are less obviously so.

There are two important features of the second case that are not present in the first. First, in contrast to the widespread agreement that alcoholism is bad for the alcoholic, there is not widespread agreement about whether a medical career is better than a career in education for Mark. What is more, while the fact that one career is desired by an individual and another is not *may* change the likelihood of either career contributing to the individual's well-being, whether or not a given career will a*s a matter of fact* contribute to the individual's well-being is not wholly determined by whether or not one chooses it. There is no objective way to measure one career against another for a given individual because there is no objective standard of well-being against which to compare them. Each career path captures certain goods that are not captured by others. Thus, it is not easy to say that either Mark or his parents are necessarily wrong or right about what will contribute to Mark's overall well-being.

Second, the two cases differ in the degree to which it is clear that those interfering are driven by the loved-one's well-being. Bill's friends and family desire for

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him to get better. If not, they would cancel the intervention and avoid a considerable amount of work and stress. The same cannot be so easily said about Mark's parents. Their concern for his future might not be directed at his well-being, but might instead be bundled up with familial honor and parental pride. I do not doubt that Mark's parents love their son, but Mark is beginning to doubt it. This is a very bad thing for the future of the relationship between the parent and their adult child. If they are concerned with his well-being, they are not articulating that to him. As he begins to doubt that those who love him are concerned with his well-being, Mark is beginning to feel like a case that must be resolved rather than a person who is loved. This leads to resentment and hostility.

These reflections demonstrate that the problem in the relationship between Mark and his parent's does not lie in the actions they are taking, but rather in the way that they are acting. They are making an important decision for him and are ignoring his role in the decision making process. Yet, why would this feature make their actions unloving and, as it seems present in Bill's case, why does it not cast doubt on the lovingness of the actions of Bill's friends and family?

§4. Consider a possible answer to these questions. One could say that the types of scenarios I have been describing are problematic when they interfere with the *autonomy* of the loved-one. Bill, who has lost his ability to govern his own actions, lacks autonomy. Therefore those who love him can unproblematically interfere in his life. Mark possesses some degree of self-governance and this must be respected by those who love him. The important difference between the two cases, this explanation claims, lies in the way in

which the autonomy of the loved-one is being ignored. Bill's claims as to what will best

suit him are ignored because an alcoholic is in a poor position to make such claims. He

lacks the ability to direct and govern his life, and he does not know what is best for

himself. In Mark's case it does seem that he knows something about what will make him

happy, and he should thus be allowed a say in decisions that affect his well-being. Mark's

parents are failing to treat him as an autonomous individual by refusing to allow him a

say in a matter to which he must be allowed to speak. This, one might claim, is what

makes the actions of Mark's parents problematic.

This explanation is, I think, on the right track, but it does not tell the whole story

because it fails to explain why autonomy must be respected by those who love. Suppose

that a loved-one, in full possession of all of his capabilities of self-governance, decides to

make a stupid decision. Consider an example: I used to work in a book-keeping office for

a casino where we would count and bundle hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash each

day. On holiday weekends when the banks were closed, the cash on hand was often in

excess of a million dollars. In the evenings, as we accounted for the day's takings, one of

my coworkers and I would frequently cook up schemes for stealing the money and

making a getaway. We knew the locations of all the security cameras, the combinations

for the safes, and when it would be noticed that the funds were gone. It actually seemed

like it would be fairly easy to steal the money. Though we never did steal the cash, I think

it possible that we could have autonomously come to the conclusion that we should. But

would one-who-loves me respect my autonomy and allow me to go through with such a plan?

I think not. There are some cases in which one respects the autonomy of the loved-one and other times when one does not. These cases can be separated when we realize that those who love respect autonomy because it often contributes to overall well-being. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, those who love are devoted to the well-being of the loved-one. Therefore, they respect autonomy when the exercise of autonomy contributes to one's well-being and cease to respect autonomy when the autonomous decisions of the loved-one clearly detract from overall well-being. There is, of course, space between these extremes, and I will explore that space beginning in Section 6 of this chapter.

§5. Few philosophers have defended the value of autonomous decision making more passionately than John Stuart Mill. While many before him understood the philosophical value of autonomy, Mill argued that autonomous decision making is of value to individual human beings. Mill believed that the ability to structure and direct one's own life contributes to the overall well-being of the individual. As a Utilitarian, he used this conclusion to argue that societies should be structured such that individuals are given the freedom to exercise this ability. While one can criticize the Utilitarian conclusions that Mill draws, the connection between well-being and autonomy that he describes cannot be denied.

Mill argues that, "Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model . . . but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides according to the tendency of

the inward forces which makes it a living thing."[6] Mill's metaphorical comparison of human beings to individual trees is a favorite of his. He uses the metaphor to lampoon Thomas Carlyle's claim that 'Negroes' lacked the ability to create productive lives for themselves and were better off enslaved than free.[7] His view is akin to the distinction between subjective and objective well-being I developed in Chapter 2. Mill believes that there is no single form of life that is best for human beings. Rather, each individual plays an important role in creating a life that is best for himself. He writes:

> Human beings are not like sheep . . . A man cannot get a coat or boots to fit him unless they are either made to his measure or he has a whole warehouse full to choose from; and is it easier to fit him with a life than with a coat, or are human beings more like one another in their whole physical and spiritual conformation than in the shape of their feet? . . . The same things which are helps to one person towards the cultivation of his higher nature are hindrances to another. The same mode of life is a healthy excitement to one, keeping all his faculties of action and enjoyment in their best order, while to another it is a distracting burden, which suspends or crushes all internal life. Such are the differences among human beings in their sources of pleasure, their susceptibilities of pain, and the operation in them of different physical and moral agencies . .[8]

Mill ends the passage with an important conclusion about human happiness. "Unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, [individuals] neither obtain their full share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral, and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable."[9]

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[6] Mill (2006), p. 114.

[7] See Mill's 1850 essay, "The Negro Question."

[8] Mill (2006), p. 122.

[9] Ibid.

An individual will only be happy if he is able to structure his life according to his unique character. This is one reason why Mill argues that a society should be structured around broad liberties which allow people to pursue different forms of life.[10] Of course, societies can restrict liberty when doing so will prevent one individual from harming another.[11] However, even if a society could keep an individual from harm and provide for him a good path, such an individual is being treated not as an individual, but as an object. Whether it is appropriate for our government to treat us this way is a question that we need not pursue here, but it is clear from the argument of Chapter 2 that those who love cannot treat their loved-ones as tokens of the type 'human being'. Those who love must respect the faculties for which Mill argues, because doing so allows the individual to obtain "their full share of happiness."

Most important is Mill's understanding of why liberty leads to well-being. He argues that the exercise of our faculties gives our life meaning and value. In another passage worth quoting at length, he says,

> He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision. And these qualities he requires and exercises exactly in proportion as the part of his conduct which he determines according to his own judgment and feelings is a large one. It is possible that he might be guided in some good

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[10] Mill gives two other reasons why society should respect individuality. First, doing so will lead to more creative and inventive social goods (p. 113). Second, doing so opens a society up to new modes of human advancement (p. 123).

[11] The famous 'Harm Principle'. See Mill (2006), pp. 40-48.

path, and kept out of harm's way, without any of these things. But what will be his comparative worth as a human being? It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it.[12]

Autonomous decision making, which I will henceforth refer to as 'self-direction' gives one's life meaning and value. Mill was well-aware that giving individuals broad freedoms would result in their frequently making mistakes, but believed that even with those mistakes, the lives of individuals were better when allowed to make mistakes than when managed by an outside authority. The same is true of love. In so far as those who love desire that their loved-ones live fulfilling and meaningful lives, they respect these abilities and allow one to make certain mistakes.

The idea that the faculties of self-direction contribute to a meaningful life is beautifully expressed in Carl Dennis' poem, "The God Who Loves You."[13] Dennis imagines that, "It must be troubling for the god who loves you / To ponder how much happier you'd be today / Had you been able to glimpse your many futures (1-3)." This god knows that you would have been happier and discovered a life-long passion for art if you had gone to your second choice for college. It would be "a life thirty points above the life you're living / On any scale of satisfaction (12-13)." He knows that your wife would have been happier if she had passed you over and married the next man to come along. This knowledge will haunt the god who loves you because he wants what is best for you. He will not be able to help but to imagine the choices that could have been, the opportunities missed, and the roads never taken.

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[12] Ibid., p. 114.

[13] Dennis, (2001), p. 72-3.

Yet, Dennis suggests a way to ease the pain of the god who loves you. That god will be troubled

> Unless you come to the rescue by imagining him
> No wiser than you are, no god at all, only a friend
> No closer than the actual friend you made at college,
> The one you haven't written in months. Sit down tonight
> And write to him about the life you can talk about
> With a claim to authority, the life you've witnessed,
> Which for all you know is the life you have chosen (35-41).

But why should this ease the pain of the god who loves you? Why should he be set at ease by hearing about your life, the life you believe you have chosen, from you?

The god who loves you will be set at ease because self-direction is a *component* of your well-being. This is the thesis for which Mill so powerfully argues. This life may not be the best life that could have been, but it is *your* life. That you feel that you have created it, blemishes and all, contributes to your sense of happiness and fulfillment. The god who loves you can see that your life would be better if it was directed by that god, just as the society that cares about your well-being could have been structured such that far fewer harms would come to you. The trouble is that the more a form of life is forced onto one, the less meaningful that life becomes for the one who lives it. The value of self-direction is derived not from the consequences of directing your own life, but from the value one places on tailoring one's life to fit one's own perceived needs.[14]

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[14] The importance of autonomous decision making to well-being and human flourishing also plays a primary role in theodicies which emphasize free-will as a defense against the problem of evil. The thought being that though free-will can lead to many evils, the great value of free-will outweighs the evils added.

Thus, those who love need to perform a careful balancing act. On the one hand, the faculties of self-direction should be respected because of the contribution which they make to one's well-being. On the other hand, the well-being of the individual is sovereign over loving-activity. If the faculties of self-direction are leading the loved-one down a path that will hinder rather than support his overall well-being, then one-who-loves should, bearing in mind the ways in which self-direction contributes to well-being, consider interfering.

As shown in the previous chapter (2.3), many philosophers advance accounts which hold that conation, that is the ability to set and progress toward goals and desires, is necessary to, even identical to, well-being. While I argued against this view (2.4-5), I did not argue against the claim that conation is a component of well-being. The ability to govern one's life in accordance with one's particular needs, desires, and values is central to an understanding of well-being. Thus, those who love respect self-direction because it is related to the well-being of the loved-one. The ability to make decisions regarding one's own well-being is a *contributing factor* to one's overall well-being. When these abilities are lost or taken away, one's life can lose much of its meaning. Loving-activity, which aims at contributing to the well-being of the loved-one, attempts to foster and develop these abilities rather than thwart them. An individual who runs roughshod over these abilities in a loved-one by denying the loved-one the chance to contribute to a decision that is being made about his well-being, does not show a concern for the well-being of the loved-one. In so far as being free to choose one's own path constitutes a

dimension of well-being, one who loves should respect and foster these abilities in the loved-one.

Understanding the connection between well-being and the exercise of the faculties of self-direction allows one to understand the difference between the two cases presented above. In the case of alcoholism and drug addiction, the common intuition is that the intervention is loving. On the account that I am articulating, one judges this to be the case because one believes that the addict is incapable of exercising his faculties of self-direction. One of the goals of an intervention is to return the individual to a state of sobriety so that he will be able to exercise these faculties and begin the process of recovery. His "life has become unmanageable" and he is no longer able to participate in decisions that affect his own well-being. Those who interfere do so in a heavy-handed and paternalistic way, but their concern for the well-being of the addict remains intact.

The same cannot be said of Mark's parents. They also interfere in a loved-one's life in a heavy-handed and paternalistic way, and they also do not welcome the loved-one's input in the decision that they are making. But, Mark, unlike the addict, is capable of making informed decisions regarding what is likely to contribute to his well-being. His parents are ignoring this component of his well-being. Mark's desire to become an educator is an expression of what he values and what he hopes to make of his life. It expresses not just his preference but a judgment as to what will best contribute to his longterm well-being. By ignoring his arguments and reasons for changing majors, Mark's parents are denying him the opportunity to put his faculties of self-direction to use. They

may believe that his thinking is misguided, but if they are loving, they will give him a chance to express himself.

The above argument should not be taken to imply that one who loves must always yield to the decisions of the loved-one. Often, those whom one loves are misguided about what pursuits will lead to their own well-being. Thus, the claim is not that one must always allow the loved-one to make his own choices without interference whenever he is capable of doing so. Rather, my claim is that a loved-one who is capable of participating in a decision about the direction of his own life should be given the opportunity to participate in that decision. He should not only be heard, but his input should have some potential bearing on what course of action is pursued.

§6. My argument in this chapter is complex, so let me review the course we have taken so far. I gave two examples of cases in which those who love interfere in the lives of the loved-one because they believe that doing so will contribute to the well-being of the loved-one. I argued that while this interference was clearly loving in the first case (Bill) it was not obviously so in the second (Mark). I then argued that this difference could be understood by considering the contribution of self-direction to overall well-being. Because Bill lacks the faculties of self-direction, those who love him can interfere paternalistically. Because Mark possesses such faculties, those who love him must *take into account* the contribution that the exercise of those faculties will make to Mark's overall well-being.

These two cases sit on two ends of a spectrum. Mark has clearly developed his faculties to such a degree that he must be heard, while Bill is clearly not in control of his faculties. Cases are rarely so clear. Whether or not a given individual is capable of making decisions regarding his or her own life is not always obvious and easily decided. An eighteen year-old presumably has some sense of what is good for himself, but what about a fifteen year-old or a very immature twenty-year old?

I will not attempt to deduce or construct a principle that will allow one to easily decide whether or not a given case of interference should be pursued or avoided. Given the complexities of individual lives, no such principle can be given. Whether or not Mark will be happier as a doctor than as a teacher is something that we cannot know. Mark's parents, who are concerned with his long-term well-being, should take an active role with respect to this decision. What I will show in the following sections is that they can take on this role even though they lack a complete understanding of what will in fact be best for Mark. Moreover, they can do so in a way that reaffirms Mark's ability to direct his own life and contributes to his well-being.

Let us consider a much more difficult case that also comes from a UCR undergraduate: Shivanti is a twenty year-old university student. She grew up in a typical, middle class, suburban family that occasionally attended services on Christian holidays at a mainline Protestant church. When she came to the university, Shivanti was attracted to and joined an evangelical Christian movement. She admits that her personality has changed in the time since. Not only does she now forgo activities which she once found

highly enjoyable, she has become critical of the lifestyles of those around her. Over the past year, her parents have begun to worry that Shivanti has been radicalized and that her religious pursuits are not good for her. They believe this in part because they read an article about a campus initiative connected to her church which describes the campus initiative as "cult-like" and "a church that hurts." As communication between Shivanti and her parents has broken down, her parents have come to see the campus ministry as little more than a cult, and they are willing to go to great lengths to remove her from its sphere of influence. They worry that she is not in her right mind - that she has been brainwashed - and that her faculties of self-direction have been hijacked by the group. The relationship between daughter and parents, once very strong, has become outwardly hostile.

This case is significantly more difficult than those explored above because it is unclear whether or not Shivanti's involvement is a result of the exercise of her faculties of self-direction or if she is being unduly influenced by others in the movement. It is true that religious movements, both good and bad, influence the minds of their followers. It is also true that individuals involved with religious movements can be brainwashed. However, Shivanti believes that she is making good decisions based on her new understandings of scripture, the purpose of her life, and the nature of humanity. She is willing to stand by her position and to argue that holding it contributes to her well-being. After all, if Shivanti's understanding of God's love and justice is correct, then she will fare better for having followed God's law. Her parents, to contrast, feel that her mind has

been warped. The radical change in her personality, they argue, shows this. As it is, there is no objective way to determine who is right.

The relationship between Shivanti and her parents is deteriorating. She admits to pulling away from them, and she feels that they have given up on her. What is needed is a way for her parents to disagree with her while retaining their love for her. They need to stop being her adversary and reaffirm their desire to contribute to her well-being. Shivanti does, at times, understand her parents' concern, but she believes that they are merely offended by her religion and not concerned with her well-being. If their relationship is to survive, her parents must make it clear that though they disagree with her, they love her.

§7. In the following sections I will show how one can disagree with a loved-one about the best course of action for the loved-one and yet still respect the faculties of self-direction of the loved-one. I begin by discussing the development and use of non-combative listening in conflict situations. I will then connect non-combative listening to well-being in order to show that non-combative listening is a way of loving the one with whom one disagrees.

Non-combative listening has been advocated by many who advance the causes of peace, justice, and love. Outside of academic philosophy Buddhists (especially Tibetan schools)[15] and Christians (especially Quakers)[16] have played a large role in the development of accounts of 'deep', 'compassionate', or 'non-combative' listening.

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[15]   The Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of Tibetans, has been a key player in the push for dialogue during conflict. See *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths* (2010) and *The Art of Happiness in a Troubled World* (2009) especially Part 2: "Violence vs. Dialogue." Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk whose teachings combine the Theravadan and Zen traditions, has also done work in this area. See his *Being Peace* (2005) and *True Love* (2006).

Within academia, philosophers who emphasize love and care such as Nel Noddings and

Jodi Halperin have explored listening as a way of retaining respect for those who are

loved and cared for. Jodi Halpern, working within the context of medical ethics, argues

that doctors must 'listen' and 'be attuned to' their patients if they are to properly care for

them. A doctor must not simply view the patient as a body to be healed but must be

'genuinely curious' about the impact of the patient's condition on her well-being.[17] In her

ethics of care, Nel Noddings has been influenced by the reciprocal and receptive I-Thou

relationship explored by Martin Buber. For Buber, the I-Thou relationship involves a

union between two individuals in which both individuals are subjects and neither merely

the object of the other's love, study, or devotion.[18] Noddings develops this approach and

argues that one who cares must be *engrossed* in the one cared for, which involves an

immediate receptivity to the needs of the one cared for.[19]

In spiritual contexts non-combative listening developed as a means of working

through, though not necessarily resolving, political conflict. Quaker thinker Gene

Knudson Hoffman's work on the topic, which will be explored in more depth shortly,

developed as she worked for reconciliation between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union

during and after the Cold War. The Dalai Lama's perspective was shaped by the invasion

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[16]   Among Quakers, Gene Knudson Hoffman, a student of Thich Nhat Hanh, is a key figure. See Hoffman et al. (2008). See also Latini (2009) for a mainline Protestant perspective on non-violent communication.

[17]   Halpern, (2001), p. 130.

[18]   Buber, (1970).

[19]   Noddings, (1984), p. 30-33.

of his country by China and five decades spent in exile. While it may seem strange to consider theories developed in such extreme situations in relation to the kinds of problems I have been considering in this chapter, those who love one another can live in a state of genuine conflict. While Shivanti and her parents are not lobbing bombs over barricades, their relationship is not a peaceful one. Describing conflict in the marriage relationship Buddhist thinker Thich Nhat Hanh writes, "For appearances you behave so that others will think you two are still living together and that you still find joy in living together, but in reality there is no more joy, there is no more happiness, there isn't even communication anymore. You have lost the capacity to listen and speak."[20] This is exactly the space in which Shivanti and her parents find one another. There is no joy between them, and they argue rather than communicate.

Hoffman began to recognize the importance of listening to others when she was in England and noticed a sign announcing a meeting for torturers and the tortured.[21] Hoffman did not understand why it would be important to listen to and accept torturers. Surely one should meet with the tortured, but why should the torturers be extended this welcome? In answer to this question Hoffman writes, "I soon realized that without listening to the enemy, I could not make informed decisions. If I was an advocate for one side, I would never know the causes of the oppositions' anger and violence, and I

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[20]   Hanh, (2006), p. 34.

[21]   I focus on Hoffman's work on non-combative listening because of the relatively secular understanding of listening she provides. Other thinkers in Christianity and Buddhism have explored non-combative listening in greater detail and depth, but their views are often connected to comprehensive religious and/ or spiritual understandings of the human community. Hoffman's work is important to a philosophical understanding of non-combative listening because it avoids these important, but distracting, metaphysical and meta-ethical questions.

couldn't possible know the suffering they had endured. My choices would be half ignorant ones."[22] By excluding the torturers from the conversation, Hoffman would be effectively excluding half of the information necessary to make an informed judgment. Her initial work, then, focused on one of the more pragmatic features of listening deeply to others: by listening one gains more information and is better able to resolve entrenched conflicts.

Hoffman believed that by listening to the torturers in a "non-judgmental, non-adversarial" way, she would come to better understand their motivations and perspectives toward torturing. In her work, as in the work of most who advocate non-combative listening, this form of listening is defined negatively. Often when one listens to another, one is not trying to understand what the other is saying but is evaluating and judging the other's claims. This turns the conversation into an argument rather than an exchange of information. As arguing is a form of conflict, it is clear why those who advocate non-combative listening want to move away from adversarial forms of listening.

Adversarial listening usually resembles an interrogation rather than a constructive conversation. It is different from deep-listening not because of the questions asked but because of the attitude and motivations of the asker. Consider the question 'Why are you doing this?' This question can be a heartfelt plea for information. It can also be a way of accusing another of not having sufficient or justifying reasons for a given course of action. A question like this one is sometimes asked because the asker believes that it

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22   Hoffman, et. al. (2008), p. 2-3.

cannot be answered. To return to an earlier example, when Shivanti's parents ask her why she is attracted to the theology of this particular group, their question can be understood in an adversarial or a cooperative way. If the question is experienced as combative and accusatory, Shivanti will withdraw from her parents. If instead it is experienced as searching for a better understanding, then Shivanti is far more likely to speak with her parents. The attitude and the general tone of the conversation up to that point will determine how Shivanti experiences the question. The same can be said of the questions which Shivanti will ask her parents.

There are at least three ways in which conversations commonly become combative. First, one might carefully listen to another in order to argue against his or her view. Shivanti's parents may try to figure out which passages of scripture her theology is dependent upon in order to undermine or reinterpret those passages. That is, they are only interested in the theology she embraces, because learning more about it will give them an opportunity to combat her religious understanding. Second, one might engage another in conversation in order to expose an individual's inability to consistently argue for her view. The motive in such a conversation is to force the other to recognize her lack of knowledge about her own situation. Shivanti might quiz her parents about their own religious life in order to expose an incomplete or foolish understanding of the role which religion can or should play in one's life. Finally, one might engage another in conversation solely for the purpose of venting anger. Shivanti's parents are angry with her and she is angry with them. Their collective anger finds a natural outlet in arguments

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about her religious life. Thus, even discussions that begin benignly turn explosive and are unproductive.

Conversations like these do not have as their goal cooperative understanding. The goal is to win. *Neither* party is interested in gaining a better understanding of the situation, for each comes to the conversation with an answer to the problem at hand. Shivanti's parents have made up their mind as has Shivanti. Rather than cooperatively working to understand why each holds the position that they do, they are combatively trying to force their own solution on the other. There may be a time for such an argument, but both should work toward understanding first. It may be that if Shivanti understood what her parents were afraid of, she would be less hostile and less resentful. If her parents understood the joy she takes in her faith and the soul-searching she is doing to ensure that she has not been brainwashed, then perhaps they would give her a little more latitude. As it is, they yell at each other.

Discussion and dialectic is not by its very nature productive. 'Talking things out' need not result in the restoration of a relationship or a new understanding of a conflict. It is only when individuals engage one another in a cooperative and discerning way that gains are to be had. For Plato, the highest from of discussion occurs when the philosopher kings cooperatively search for the truth. He contrasts this with the young philosophers and sophists who use arguments to tear at each other like puppies. The young, he argues,

have no concern with truth, they are only trying to defeat each other in a game.[23] For

Shivanti and her parents it may be necessary to bring in a third party, a therapist, social

worker, or independent religious figure, in order to force themselves to engage in

structured, non-combative listening.

Despite the fact that listening may not resolve conflict, it is valuable because

listening 'validates' the experiences of the one to whom one is listening. Hoffman writes,

"Listeners do not defend themselves, but accept what others say as their perceptions. By

listening, they validate the others' right to their perceptions."[24] Let us return briefly to Nel

Noddings argument that one who is being cared for must 'apprehend' that she is being

cared for. Noddings argues that if one does not apprehend that the other is caring, she will

feel that she is being treated as an object rather than a human being.[25] Hoffman makes a

similar insight. During times of conflict, both sides are treated by the other as a problem

to be solved. Dialogue begins not with the hope of constructively working toward a

solution, but with the goal of convincing the other side that they are wrong. Thus, neither

side feels that they are being treated as individuals who engaged in their actions for

reasons. Hoffman's insight is that one can listen to another's reasons without judging or

accepting those reasons. After one has been listened to one will feel that one's right to

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[23] This appears to be a genuine development in Plato's corpus. In the early Socratic dialogues, Socrates is often portrayed as engaging in combative forms of listening. In the *Republic*, to contrast, the philosophers kings engage in dialectic "in order to look for the truth" rather than to play a competitive game (539c). This feature separates the elder philosophers from the youth, who, "imitate those who've refuted them by refuting others themselves, and, like puppies, enjoy dragging and tearing around them with their arguments (539b)."

[24] Hoffman et al. (2008), p. 4.

[25] Noddings, (1984), p. 66.

one's own experience and understanding of the situation has been validated rather than judged.

The same insights have been made in the therapeutic context where clinical psychologists have studied what they call *active listening.*[26] In active listening listeners focus on what another is saying, rather than thinking about how he or she will respond to the speaker, evaluating what the speaker has said, or considering how to give advice. The best and most influential example of active listening is the theory of humanistic psychotherapy, now called 'talk-therapy' developed by Carl Rogers. This form of therapy involves a therapist who exhibits "unconditional positive regard" and "emphatic understanding" rather than judging the client or providing advice.[27] Rogers called this "person-centered" therapy, because the individual, rather than a psychological theory or form of treatment, is the most important part of the process. By listening to individuals without judging them, the therapist validates their experience and thus allows them to begin a process of self-improvement.[28] The methods developed by psychologists are quite similar to those developed by spiritual thinkers for working through political conflict. Individuals are instructed to listen rather than judge, to understand rather than evaluate, and to cooperate rather than oppose.

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[26] Marshall Rosenburg calls his theory of active listening "Non-Violent Communication." See Rosenburg (2003).

[27] Experted from Rogers' work "A Client-Centered / Person-Centered Approach to Therapy" in Kirschenbaum & Henderson, (1989), p. 136.

[28] Rogers argues that "the individual has within himself vast resources for self-understanding, for altering his or her self-concept, attitudes, and self-directed behavior (Ibid., p. 135)." The purpose of his therapeutic technique is to create an environment in which these resources can be tapped.

In addition to its spiritual and psychological applications, there is evidence for the success of non-combative listening in the political arena. Following the negotiated end to apartheid in South Africa a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' was formed.[29] Individuals who had been victimized during the Apartheid era, whether they be Black individuals harmed by the apartheid regime or White individuals harmed by those who opposed Apartheid, were invited to speak publicly about the crimes that were perpetrated against them. Many of the crimes of apartheid were committed in secret and there was rarely enough evidence to bring criminal charges. Without the TRC the experiences of many victims would never have been officially recognized or acknowledged. The TRC created a forum in which individuals could have their experiences under Apartheid heard and acknowledged even though there was no hope of prosecuting those who had committed the crimes. The victims participated not because they wanted to punish those who had harmed them, for the ability to punish was not under the purview of the TRC. Rather, they participated in order to be heard. Because victims' stories were validated, their experiences acknowledged and recorded, the need for political or armed revenge has largely been avoided.

Central to Desmond Tutu's argument in favor of the TRC is his belief that Nuremberg-style trials or complete amnesty would fail to recognize the victims of Apartheid and would fail to validate their right to speak about what had happened to

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[29] I follow Desmond Tutu's (1999) discussion of the TRC. Tutu was an important advocate of the commission and served for several years on the TRC.

them.[30] Individual victims would be swept under the rug of collective judgment and apology. The TRC was meant to expose the wound of Apartheid rather than bandaging it up, with the hope that it would heal better if exposed to light and fresh air. Though there is debate about the extent to which South Africa has freed itself from the long shadow of Apartheid, the dissolution of the Apartheid era government took place without armed conflict. With very little bloodshed, South Africa has begun the long process of moving away from Apartheid and toward equality and justice.

§8. Those who love are benefitted by listening because the information gleaned aids them in delivering loving support to those whom they love. Thus, there is a purely pragmatic reason to listen to the loved-one - it better enables one to contribute to the well-being of the loved-one. Setting these pragmatic benefits aside, deep-listening is by itself an act of love. This is true for two reasons.

First, listening to the loved-one can help her to formulate a conception of her own well-being. In his work on inner wholeness, Parker Palmer discusses the Quaker process of discernment through the use of a clearness committee.[31] In a clearness committee, an individual who is trying to make a difficult or life changing decision, about whether to get married for example, works with a committee made up of members of her spiritual community in order to gain *clarity* (not resolution) about the decision she must make. The committee asks the individual questions designed to help her explore her own

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[30]   Ibid., Chapter 2: "Nuremburg or National Amnesia? A Third Way."

[31]   Palmer, (2004), pp. 130 - 149. For more information about the workings of a Quaker clearness committee see Loring (1992) and Hoffman (1996).

thoughts about the decision at hand. They are not allowed to respond to her answers or to give her advice. The purpose of the committee is to create an environment in which the participant can listen to herself. The end result is a clearer and more complete understanding of why one is engaging in a particular activity or leaning toward a certain outcome. One comes out of the process with a well-developed sense of how the given options contribute or fail to contribute to one's well-being.[32]

The Quaker clearness committee is a form of non-combative listening because only certain kinds of questions can be asked. The questions cannot be leading, and the entire process must be driven by a desire to support the inner journey of the one who has called the committee.[33] Questions that attempt to lead one to a certain conclusion or questions that incorporate judgments are not allowed. For example, one could not ask, "Don't you think it is strange to react in that way?" because the question incorporates a subtle judgment of the participant. By limiting the kinds of interaction allowed, the committee makes it difficult to engage in combative forms of listening.

The Quaker clearness committee is a form of non-combative listening, and though it may sound like something cooked up at a new-age retreat, it has been used by Quakers for several hundred years. The fact that these committees are still in use is indicative of the great benefit they provide for those who call a committee. The sole purpose is to bring

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[32]   Palmer (2004) argues that the clearness committee helps a person draw out his or her 'true self.' The individual becomes more aware of what she values and cares about. She is then able to act on this knowledge. In the theoretical framework I have developed, this is analogous to coming to better understand one's subjective well-being.

[33]   Ibid., pp. 137-8.

feelings and thoughts to the forefront that might have otherwise been ignored by the one making the decision. This enables one to better develop one's understanding of one's own well-being.

Thus, one reason why listening is an act of love is because by listening, one enables the loved-one to gain a better understanding of her own well-being and what will contribute to it. That is, listening to the loved-one, regardless of whether a conflict is resolved and regardless of whether the one who loves gains further information about the loved-one, is an activity that contributes to the well-being of the loved-one. By listening those who love enable the loved-one to better understand herself.

Listening is connected to love in a second and more important way. By listening to the loved-one, one involves her in the decisions that are being made. She is able to express her views and to make statements about her own well-being. Thus, the loved-one is invited to participate in decisions that will affect her future well-being and her ability to speak to such issues is validated. Because the exercise of one's faculties of self-direction is a substantial contributer to one's well-being, this validation itself contributes to her overall well-being (3.4). The purpose of the earlier discussion of autonomy was to emphasize the fact that self-direction is valuable to those who love because of the way in which self-direction contributes to the well-being of the loved-one. By including the loved-one in the decision making process, by allowing her to speak to her own situation and future, one not only helps her to understand her future well-being, but also contributes to her well-being at the time when the decision is being made.

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Deep-listening benefits the loved-one independently of any benefits that one who loves will secure for her. By listening to the loved-one, one allows her to exercise her faculties of self-direction. I argued earlier that when a loved-one's faculties are being bypassed, one is excluding the loved-one from a process that contributes to her well-being. It follows that including the loved-one in such a process will contribute to her well-being. What deep-listening 'validates' is the loved-one's ability to direct her own life and to speak to what will and will not benefit her. Because the exercise of the faculties which enable one to govern herself are so closely linked to well-being, listening is itself an act of love.

Those who love cannot run roughshod over the loved-one's well-being by treating her paternalistically or otherwise preventing her from being involved in the process of governing her own life. Listening is a way of preventing oneself from doing so. If one is truly concerned with the well-being of the loved-one, then one will take advantage of the opportunity to contribute to the loved-one's well-being by actively listening to her. When misunderstandings occur or conflicts are beginning to develop, it may be possible for individuals to step back and non-combatively listen to one another. If a conflict has become entrenched, a more formal process with an independent arbitrator (a therapist, religious leader, or even a friend) may be necessary.

§9. Let us review three important features of non-combative listening whether it occurs in a formal or informal setting:

First, non-combative listening recognizes that the loved-one is an authority on his or her well-being. Those who love are concerned with supporting the well-being of the loved-one as understood from the subjective perspective, and in many cases the loved-one is the person who has the greatest ability to speak about her well-being. It is only when her ability to direct her own life is deficient or non-existent that one should interfere without first seeking to understand the perspective of the loved-one. While her own views are *not* the final authority on the matter, they must be considered.

Second, non-combative listening retains the involvement of the loved-one in decisions that will have an effect on her overall well-being. Recognizing that the loved-one is an authority on the matter at hand, one includes her in the decision making process. One resents paternalism even if the decisions that are made for one are decisions that one would have made independently of any interference because one feels cut out and uninvolved in an important decision. As Noddings notes, one feels that one is being 'treated' as an object rather than loved as an individual.[34] By listening, one is able to demonstrate that the most important factor in making a decision is the well-being of the loved-one.

Finally, non-combative listening is a form of loving-support and not a decision making procedure. While listening can contribute to the resolution of a conflict, I am not advocating listening as an easy way to solve complex problems. Having the opportunity to direct one's own life and contribute to decisions that will affect one's well-being in

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[34] Noddings, (1984), p. 66.

itself contributes to one's well-being. Creating an environment where this can be done is a form of loving-support. Whether or not this form of support will resolve the conflict is beside the point. One who loves does not listen to the loved-one in order to reach an agreement. She listens because she is concerned with the well-being of the loved one and listening to the loved-one will contribute to her well-being. Listening, does, I believe, lessen the sense of conflict that so often goes with disagreements about well-being, but it need not result in agreement to be an important way of loving.

§10. I began this discussion with a puzzle. I argued that those who intervened forcefully and paternalistically in Bill's life where engaged in loving him, while Mark's parents, who are using their control over his finances to force him into a career he does not desire, are not *clearly* engaged in an act of love. The question I posed asked how we can distinguish the two cases. Solutions invoking paternalism are not helpful because they are present in both cases. Thus, I turned to a discussion of autonomy. I argued that Mark's parents are not allowing him to exercise his faculties of self-direction and that this raises questions about the lovingness of their actions *because* the exercise of these faculties contributes to Mark's well-being.

Consider how non-combative listening can change this situation. Mark has the reasonable belief that a medical career is not the right fit for him and will not contribute to his well-being. He believes instead that he will do best if he pursues a career in education. Mark also believes that his parents love him and that they are concerned with his well-being. From his perspective, his parents, who refuse to listen to his claims, are

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showing a disregard for his well-being. As he sees it, they are not trying to contribute to his well-being, but are ignoring *his* well-being while attempting to advance *their own conception* of his well-being. Mark feels ignored and does not understand why they will not listen to him. The outcome of the conflict is not just anger, but disappointment. He thinks his parents do not care about what is best for him.

While listening may not resolve the disagreement between Mark and his parents, it does negate one of the premises in the reasoning that led Mark to believe that his parents are not acting lovingly toward him. Mark's parents can no longer be accused of being unconcerned with Mark's understanding of his well-being. By listening, they demonstrate that they are in fact concerned with Mark's well-being, subjectively understood, and that they understand that he should be allowed to speak to matters that affect his well-being. Even though an agreement may not be reached as to whether Mark should pursue a career in medicine or education, the conflict has been transformed. Mark's parents are demonstrating an interest in what he hopes to do with his life, which validates his ability to play a role in the formation and direction of his own life. The result is that Mark will 'apprehend' their love for him because they will be treating him as an individual rather than an object.

§11. Love requires that one interfere in the lives of those one loves. This is a crucial way in which loving-support is provided. No reputable theory of loving can hold that Bill's family should not stage an intervention or that Mark and Shivanti's parents should not be concerned with their well-being. Unfortunately it is in this area that those

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who love are most likely to do serious damage to their relationships and the lives of those they love. Much of this damage can be avoided if those who love remember that involvement in the life of the loved-one can be conducted in a way that is either loving or unloving. One's actions are loving insofar as they aim at the well-being of the loved-one, and unloving insofar as they are indifferent to that well-being. The form of listening described above enables one to involve oneself in a way that retains one's love for the other.

In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes presents a memorable and influential myth about erotic love.[35] Human beings, he tells us, were once joined together in pairs. Each individual had two heads, four arms and legs, and two sets of genitals. Possessing great strength, they climbed to heaven in order to attack the gods. As punishment for their hubris, Zeus cut them down the middle, dividing each single individual into two human bodies. Ever since, human beings have sought out their other half in order to reunite and recreate their original nature. This yearning for one's other half and the intense desire to merge with him when he is found, Aristophanes claims, is love.[36]

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[35] *Sym.* 189d5-193d5. Accounts of love which emphasize the merger or union of two individuals into one have their origins in this myth. Such accounts have been influential throughout history and many contemporary figures continue to embrace the Platonic vision of merging. Frankfurt (2004) argues that lovers identify with the interests of the loved-one and that the loved-one's interests become the interests of the one-who loves. On his account, there is a merger of interests. Helm (2010) takes Frankfurt's argument to its most natural conclusion and argues that individuals who love one another form a plural agent which is, in many ways, an entirely new individual. Furthermore, outside of philosophical discussion it is common for one to speak of searching for one's 'other half' or trying to find 'the one.' Thus, Plato's imagery continues to dominate our thinking about love.

[36] *Sym.* 193a.

Near the end of his myth, Aristophanes tells us that if Hephaestus, god of the forge, were to offer to join two lovers into one, into "the closest union," they would gladly consent to the procedure.[37] The two desire to literally become a single entity. Perhaps the problem for those who love is that Hephaestus does not exist, and the two will always be separated. As Longfellow writes,

> Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,
> Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;
> So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another,
> Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence.[38]

Because the well-being of each individual is subjectively determined, it is impossible to know with certainty what will contribute to another's well-being. As relationships grow and intimacy develops the gap will be lessened, but the two individuals will never be one. The next best hope is to bridge the gap between individuals, and listening can create such a bridge. Of course, the gap will not be eliminated and no fusion will take place. Bridges, by definition, cross divides that cannot otherwise be filled or eliminated. Thus, at times there will be breakdowns of communication between those who love and those who are loved, and mistakes will be made. Involvement and understanding through listening to the loved-one is a best attempt to strengthen the bridge and avoid these failures.

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[37]   Ibid., 192b.

[38]   Longfellow (1894), p. 303. *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, Part III, The Theologian's Tale, Elizabeth, *iv*.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cultivating a Limitless Heart

Abstract: If the call to love others is to be understood as a moral imperative, then it must be the case that one can voluntarily come to love those whom one does not already love. While, several philosophers have claimed that cultivating love is impossible, I argue that love can be cultivated. I explore two methods of cultivating love: Stoic *oikeiōsis* and Buddhist *metta* meditation. I argue that these methods do in fact cultivate love. Thus, the claim that one should love more individuals does not recommend an impossible action.

§1. Many have claimed that one should try to love more.[1] This is to say that the way of relating that I have described in the last three chapters, normally reserved for only a select few, should be the way that one relates to many persons. This is a distinctly moral claim as it concerns the basic attitude or relationship one should have with other human beings. The aim of the following three chapters is to philosophically articulate the claim, often expressed as an imperative[2], that one *should* love others. This claim has been explored extensively in the theological traditions surrounding the teachings of individual supporters of universal love, but my task here is to understand the normative force of this claim - its ability to make a claim about the way one *should* live - in a secular context.

Let us take a moment to review the account of love that was provided: (1) In the first chapter I argued that love must involve activity aimed at benefitting the loved-one.

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[1] See Introduction, Section 1. This idea has been put forward in many cultures throughout several millennia. For example, in Sufism the poets Rumi, Sa'di, and Ibh al-Abrami; Mozi in China; Jesus Christ in Christendom; Sakyamuni Buddha in Buddhism; and more recently by Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi.

[2] This is not to say that these individuals are necessarily utilizing the philosophical idea of an 'imperative.' Rather, the claim that one should love universally is often expressed grammatically as an imperative.

When one loves another there are constraints on the way in which one-who-loves can treat the loved-one. An individual who professes great love for another but fails to act in ways that benefit the loved-one is failing to love that person. (2) I then explored the ways in which one-who-loves benefits a loved-one. I argued against Harry Frankfurt's claim that one-who-loves is concerned with the *interests* of the loved-one by raising several conceptual problems for an interest-based approach. I argued that those who love aim to contribute to the *well-being* of the loved-one, which often but not always coincides with furthering the interests of the loved-one. (3) This account of well-being raised concerns about the ways in which those who love involve themselves in the lives of loved-ones. If one-who-loves interferes without affirming the individuality of the loved-one, she risks treating the loved-one as an object. I argued that those who love must *listen* to the loved-one. By listening one makes it clear that one's concern is focused on the loved-one's subjective well-being. Though listening may not resolve disagreements regarding the well-being of the loved-one, it enables one to act lovingly when disagreements arise.

The account of love I have developed is an idealization, and only one who loves perfectly could love one in such a way. It is my hope, however, that one can recognize in one's own life an imperfect version of this account. As relationships develop and one's love becomes stronger and more disinterested, it will closely resemble the description of loving that I have offered.

In the following chapters I will provide an explanation of the normative force of the claim that one should love others. Prior to taking on this task, it is necessary to ask

whether it is possible to expand the attitude that one currently has for friends and family members to strangers and acquaintances. Given that most are not naturally possessed of a universally loving attitude, if it is not possible to expand one's love, then it is not possible to love more individuals. Further, if one cannot expand love, then it is not appropriate to say that one *should* expand love. By showing that love can be expanded, I will show that loving relationships are an appropriate target of moral inquiry and development. Loving is under one's control, and those who claim that one should expand one's love are not asking one to do the impossible.

§2. Most all have love for some but few have love for all. Tsongkhapa, a famous Tibetan Buddhist teacher, writes, "At present you find it unbearable that your friends suffer, but you are pleased that your enemies suffer, and you are indifferent to the suffering of neutral persons."[3] Though natural, this attitude leads to clear differences in the treatment of others. When interacting with one's child, one will undergo hardship and pain in order to secure her well-being, while a homeless person whom one does not love can suffer under far worse circumstances without drawing one's concern. Even if one has concern for the homeless person, the immediacy and strength of one's concern will rarely match that concern which one has for one's child. One need not claim that there is something wrong with this state of affairs in order to make the factual claim that one does not love all persons and as a result does not treat all persons in the same way.

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[3]   From *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path,* quoted in Dalai Lama (2005) p. 29.

Many have claimed that love cannot willfully be expanded. Harry Frankfurt, for example, appears to think that that love cannot willfully be expanded when he claims that love is not voluntary. He says, "it is a necessary feature of love that it is not under our direct and immediate voluntary control,"[4] and later, "what we love and what we fail to love is not up to us."[5] At this point in his essay, Frankfurt is arguing that one cannot use reason to come to love or not love a person or object. For example, he claims that most people care about being alive and that "they really have no choice" in whether or not to care about this.[6] No argument can be given that will change this fact. Frankfurt is probably right about this, but he fails to consider that there may be other ways to exert control over what one loves and does not love. He seems to believe that love is either controlled by reason or completely involuntary, but we need not think this way. The exercises I will consider utilize visualization, mantras, and the projection of emotions in order to cultivate love. Perhaps this is simply a possibility that Frankfurt never considered. He later admits that "it may at times be within our power to control them [our loves] indirectly. We are sometimes capable of bringing about conditions that would cause us to stop loving what we love, or to love other things."[7] Perhaps he would view exercises that cultivate love as an indirect means of expanding love.

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[4]   Frankfurt (2004), p. 44.

[5]   Ibid., p. 46.

[6]   Ibid., p. 45

[7]   Ibid., p. 49.

Nel Noddings also claims that love cannot be expanded. On her account, caring about another requires that one be *engrossed* in the other. *Engrossment* is a form of attention that makes the one who cares spontaneously and immediately receptive to the needs of the one cared for. When engrossment is present, there is a natural impulse to care for the other. If a loved one is in serious trouble, one does not think about or consider whether one should help him, but acts immediately and almost without thought. Noddings believes that if engrossment is not present, one will not possess a natural impulse to act in beneficial ways, though she admits that one can "fetch [the impulse to care] out of recalcitrant slumber when it fails to awaken spontaneously."[8] It is unclear if she intends to say that this impulse can be created or if she means that the impulse pre-exists in one and must be recalled from the depths of one's psyche. In the end, the impulse to care is critical to caring on Noddings' account, and she seems to believe that in most cases, one does not have control of that impulse.

It is easy to understand how Noddings arrives at this view. Noddings' paradigmatic caring relationship is that which exists between a mother and her infant child.This emphasis is more explicit in her recent work, titled *The Maternal Factor.*[9] Many of the claims she makes about love and caring stem from her reflections on this case. As love in this case is sudden and uncontrollable, it is understandable that she arrives at her conclusion that caring cannot be controlled or must be 'awoken.' The immediacy of the relationship between mother and new born child, is so spontaneous as

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8   Ibid., p. 84.

9   Noddings (2010).

to appear sudden and magical. However, most loving relationships are not like this, and it seems misguided to make general claims on the basis of the mother-infant relationship.

It is odd that philosophers of love and care do not believe that love can be expanded voluntarily, or can only be expanded in rare circumstances, because most philosophers believe that altruism can be expanded voluntarily. Lawrence Blum outlines three commonly advanced views regarding how one can summon altruistic emotions.[10] First, one can place oneself in situations that are usually correlated with altruistic feelings and thereby become a more altruistic person. The thought here is that altruistic feelings that arise in a local context can have a global effect on one's personality. Thus, if one finds that one feels altruistic when volunteering at a homeless shelter, one should do so frequently. Those who advocate the first view believe that doing so will result in an overall expansion of altruistic feeling. Second, one can summon up altruistic feelings by focusing on certain features of the situation rather than others. For example, when one encounters a homeless person with a substance abuse problem, one can focus on the fact that this person is suffering rather than the role which this person may have played in bringing about his suffering. Doing so, it is argued, will elicit feelings of empathy rather than feelings of blame. Finally, one can dispute and deny belief states that block altruistic feelings. The belief that all homeless people are on drugs, for instance, lessens one's ability to feel empathy. One can actively dispute this belief and thus become more altruistic. Blum does not argue that any of these strategies necessarily work. He is simply

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[10]   Blum (1980), pp. 195-204.

pointing out that these are the types of arguments commonly provided when it is claimed that altruism can be expanded.

Why, then, think that love cannot be expanded? I believe that this claim is only credible when one accepts the view that love is a 'passion' wholly unconnected to and uncontrolled by the rest of one's psyche: a rogue invader which slips in and takes control of one's life. This view of love has dominated Western art and literature for several hundred years. In Bizet's *Carmen* for example, Carmen's love for Don José is frequently referred to as a spell and Carmen as a demon or sorceress.[11] Carmen herself warns that those who are the target of her love should be on guard against it. When Carmen sets her sights on another, the matador Escamillo, Don José goes mad with jealousy. In the final act, Don José is told that his mother is dying and wishes to see him one last time, but he refuses to leave Carmen, saying that he is powerless against his love for her. When Carmen finally tells him that she will never love him again, he stabs her to death. The work is a tragedy but not because of Carmen's death. Rather, the tragedy is found in love's corruption of Don José. His reason has been conquered by his passion. Once the spell was cast, he was powerless to prevent his own destruction. This way of thinking about love, as a passion that corrupts, was popular also in Shakespeare, a favorite poet of Romantics like Bizet, and it continues to dominate unreflective thinking about love today.

The plain fact that one's loves develop and change over time would seem to give one reason to think that love is not something to which one is entirely passive. Though

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[11] Carmen was first performed in Paris in 1875. See Bizet (1982) for a complete translation of the libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy.

there are some cases in which a new love is truly overwhelming and magical, such as the

arrival of a new baby and other cases of love at first sight,[12] this is not the case with most

loving-relationships. With some of my friends, my love for them developed over many

years as our relationship deepened and took on different dimensions. Often, this was the

result of a concerted effort to spend more time with the person and deepen our friendship.

I would be overreaching were I to say that these are cases of a *voluntary* expansion of

love, but they are clearly cases in which love is cultivated willfully over time. Someone

whom I did not love slowly became someone whom I do love. If we reject the idea that

love is instantaneously magical, something that simply *happens* to one, then it must be

the case that individuals play some role in bringing love about.

There are many cases in which one makes a decision and then an effort to deepen

one's relationship with another or to "take things to the next level." One chooses to act in

new ways in order to bring about a new form of relationship. There are various reasons

why one chooses to develop one's relationship, but these reasons are not our concern

here. Rather, our interest is in the fact that love can be expanded. Though these new

relationships do not always occur as a result of a concerted effort to expand love, it may

be possible to put the natural ability to expand love to use in an artificial setting.

§3. In the following sections I will examine two exercises which cultivate concern

for others. Both are grounded in the belief that there are forms of relationship that are

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[12] Aristotle (2000) thought that such love is different in kind from others. See *N.E. 1158b20.* New mothers
and fathers have elevated levels of oxytocin, a hormone that facilitates bonding. A causal link has been
posited between maternal oxytocin levels and the strength of the mother child bond that develops. See
Feldman et. al. (2010).

under one's own control. Those who recommend these exercises contend that if one

practices and works hard, one can purposively change the way in which one relates to

another, even if the other is a stranger or an enemy. The first exercise I will explore is a

slightly modified form of Stoic *oikeiōsis*. Second is an account of Buddhist *metta*

meditation.

In addition to their well-known theories about the emotions, the Stoics are

remembered for advocating cosmopolitanism. Seneca writes

> There are two commonwealths - the one, a vast and truly common state,
> which embraces alike gods and men, in which we look neither to this
> corner of the earth nor to that, but measure the bounds of our citizenship
> by the path of the sun; the other, the one to which we have been assigned
> by the accident of birth.[13]

Seneca argues that one should serve both communities. The Stoic is bound not only to

those who belong to the same city or region as he, but all those who fall under the 'path

of the sun.' An individual should spend his or her life benefiting humanity, serving the

greatest community when possible and serving those nearest to one when serving the

greater community is not possible.[14] While the Stoics are aware of the need to act locally

as well as globally, Seneca argues against the view that one is allowed to favor his local

community at the expense of the global community. All human beings are meant to live

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[13] Seneca (1932), *De Otio,* 4.1 translated by John W. Bassore. Anthony Appiah (2006) and especially
      Martha Nussbaum (2007) have both been influenced by Stoic thinking about cosmopolitanism.

[14] Seneca (1932), 3.5

in a community ruled by kindness and concord, and an individual's purpose on Earth is to help bring this about.[15]

The problem is that embracing the fellowship of all human beings intellectually may not lead to acting as though one is actually bound in concord with all others. It is easy to claim that all human beings are equally important, but not so easy to treat all human beings equally. This has been a problem particularly in the West, which for the last three hundred years has explicitly avowed a form of cosmopolitanism while excluding large groups of people from equal treatment. The American 'founding fathers' had no problem claiming that all men were created equal while many men and all women were not treated equally. The Stoics, Seneca among them, seemed to have no problem arguing for universal citizenship while continuing to own slaves.[16] The Stoics, in contrast to many modern advocates of cosmopolitan equality, were particularly aware of this problem. Indeed, much of their subsequent ethical thinking was a direct response to it.

Oikeiōsis is a practice by which one moves toward the cosmopolitan ideal. The term is notoriously difficult to translate. The root word, *oikos*, means 'household' and includes those persons who are a part of one's household. As a verb, the word was frequently used to suggest that one had appropriated an object or person into one's

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[15] c.f. Seneca, (1995), *De Ira,* 1.5.3. Also see Seneca's 90th letter, in which he describes the first community of human beings. He claims that they existed in natural concord with one another until they invented the notion of property. Then avarice and greed destroyed the community.

[16] Seneca discusses slavery in Letter 47, saying, "'They are slaves,' people declare. Nay, rather they are men. 'Slaves!' No, comrades. 'Slaves!' No, they are unpretentious friends. 'Slaves!' No, they are our fellow-slaves, if one reflects that Fortune has equal rights over slaves and free men alike." (*Ep. Mor.* 47.1). Seneca recognizes that slaves are human beings, and he sees them as participants in the moral life of human beings. However, at no point does he consider that, perhaps, the best way to treat his slaves as 'comrades' would be to free them.

household or that one had created a relationship with another through marriage.[17] The

idea central to the process of *oikeiōsis* is that one should attempt to expand one's

metaphorical household (*oikos*) to include those who are normally excluded from it. At

the center of this household is one's self, and for this reason self-love is one of the

strongest motivations that one has. *Oikeiōsis* involves coming to include others in one's

household, thus recognizing that one's own well-being is tied to the well-being of others.

The theoretical justification of *oikeiōsis* is explored in Book III of Cicero's *De*

Finibus. The view is presented in the dialogue by Marcus Cato. He begins,

> Every animal, as soon as it is born (this is where one should start), is
> concerned with itself, and takes care to preserve itself. It favors its
> constitution and whatever preserves its constitution, whereas it recoils
> from its destruction and whatever appears to promote its destruction.[18]

Natural concern for self-preservation develops as the individual grows older. Over time,

she begins to understand that she is a rational person. Thus, what is good for her is to act

as a rational person would act. Reason instructs one to pursue virtue, and thus one

engages in virtuous action because it is good for oneself.[19] At this point in the

developmental story the individual is still acting only for her own good.

As an individual continues to develop morally, he realizes that, "the very fact of

being human requires that no human being be a stranger to others."[20] In order to make

this point, Cato utilizes a popular metaphor. He says,

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[17]   Pembroke (1971).

[18]   Cicero (2001), *De Finibus*, 3.16.

[19]   Ibid., 3.21.

[20]   Ibid., 3.63.

> Some of our body parts - for example our eyes and ears - are as it were created just for themselves. Others - for example legs and hands - also enhance the utility of the other parts . . . Yet the ties between human beings are far closer. Hence we are fitted by nature to form associations, assemblies, and states.[21]

Nature has created human beings such that we come together to work for common aims. This is true of "associations, assemblies, and states," as well as the entire human community. Working against one another is not productive, because it essentially involves working against oneself. Thus, each of us should work for the "common advantage and welfare of all."[22]

Working for the common good is natural, according to Cicero's Cato. He says, "Nature has given bulls the instinct to defend their calves against lions with immense passion and force. In the same way, those with great talent and the capacity for achievement, as is said of Hercules and Liber, have a natural inclination to help the human race."[23] In claiming that one should serve all others, the Stoics are not proposing that one do something that goes against one's natural inclinations, but rather that one return oneself to a natural state. Just as a mother naturally loves the child she bears, human beings are drawn together by bonds of sympathy and mutual regard.[24] According

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[21] Ibid., 3.63.

[22] Ibid., 3.65.

[23] Ibid., 3.66.

[24] Cicero (2001), *De Finibus*, 3.62. Seneca (1917) *Ep*. 90 makes a similar claim. He argues that human beings lived in concord until they invented private property. Then greed and avarice set them against one another.

to the Stoics, our most natural state is one in which we exist in communities of concord and fellowship.

Such is the rationale for the process that leads the sage, or wise person, to live a life devoted to the common good rather than only her own personal good. She realizes that all human beings are part of the divine plan for the universe and so she comes to regard them all as part of herself. She no longer sees herself as an individual working exclusively for her own ends, but as a part of the human community. Thus, she acts on behalf of the needs of the human community rather than her own needs.

The Stoics skillfully incorporate the fact that individuals are often willing to set aside exclusive self-interest when a group to which they belong is in need of assistance into their theory of moral development. How many human beings have died for King and Country, religious ideals, or their families? The Stoics capitalize on this natural tendency and shift one's identification away from the local community and toward the cosmic community. Our *patria* - our fatherland - is now the whole human race and our common enemies are those things which ail all human beings. If one can effect this change in identification, the petty wars and conflicts that take one away from serving human kind are avoided.

The theoretical justification of *oikeiōsis* is based on the common identification of one with all. The Stoics make this point by claiming that each is a part of a larger whole. The challenge is bringing about this change in identification. Thus far, the Stoics have argued only for an intellectual commitment. They recognize that this is problematic

because they embrace the idea that philosophy is a way of life. If doing philosophy does not lead to action and results, then the whole enterprise is in vain.[25] Thus, the Stoics developed exercises which are designed to enable one to come to understand oneself as part of the larger human community.

The 2nd century Stoic philosopher Hierocles describes the following meditative process in a fragment collected by Stobaeus. He imagines that individuals exist in concentric circles extending outward from one, who sits in the center of the circle.[26] One's family and friends occupy the circles nearest to one, while countrymen, strangers, and barbarians occupy the circles that sit farther out. One is expected to notice that as one moves away from the center of this circle, the level of concern which one has for an individual is lessened. Hierocles instructs the would-be cosmopolitan to "draw the circles somehow towards the center, making all human beings more like our fellow city dwellers, and so forth."[27] Many contemporary philosophers have found this way of conceptualizing the cosmopolitan project useful. Philosophers as disparate as Martha Nussbaum and Peter Singer have utilized Hierocles' image in their work. [28]

Hierocles does not explain how one is supposed to 'draw the circles inward.' At no point are we told what exercises can be performed in order to achieve this end. However, the Stoics frequently emphasize the use of spiritual and meditative exercises to

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[25] C.f. Epictetus (1925), *Disc*. 1.4; Seneca (1917), *Ep. Mor*. 23.

[26] Collected in Stobaeus, Florilegium, 4.671 ff.

[27] Ibid.

[28] The image plays a big role in Nussbaum's essay on patriotism in Nussbaum (2002), *For Love of Country*. Peter Singer (2011) utilizes the image in his recently revised work, *The Expanding Circle*.

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help one achieve the ends for which they argue. Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius all recommend practices to cultivate the Stoic life.[29] Thus, one imagines that they would utilize some form of meditative practice. One could begin by meditating on key facts about other individuals. They too are created by god to fulfill god's purpose. They too suffer because they do not always act in accordance with god's will. These are the features that Marcus Aurelius would have us remember each morning. In a famous passage he says,

> Say to thyself at daybreak: I shall come across the busy-body, the
> thankless, the overbearing, the treacherous, the envious, the unneighborly.
> All this has befallen them because they know not good from evil. But I . . .
> can neither be injured by them - for no one can involve me in what is
> debasing - nor can I be angry with my kinsman and hate him. For we have
> come into being for co-operation, as have the feet, the hands, the eyelids,
> the rows of upper and lower teeth. To thwart one another is against nature;
> and we do thwart one another by showing resentment and aversion.[30]

Perhaps he is recommending something like *oikeiōsis*. Constantly reaffirming such truths cannot but change the way in which one relates to others.

Human beings have the ability to expand relations and memberships, and the concern that goes with them, to individuals who would not otherwise be given that level of concern. One does this, for example, when one says that a close friend is "like a brother" to one. One who makes such a claim is not merely assigning an honorific title. He means that his relationship is such that the level of concern and trust that would normally be reserved only for his brothers is being accorded to this individual. One can

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[29]   These exercises, as well as those outside of Stoicism, are the topic of Pierre Hadot's (1995) work,
        Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault.

[30]   Marcus Aurelius (1916), *Meditations,* II.1.

also say, "You're dead to me." which indicates that one no longer has any concern for the person who is now thought of as dead. In both cases, love and concern is shown to be fluid and changeable. The Stoics capitalized on this fluidity in the process of *oikeiōsis*. Rather than reserving moral concern for a few choice individuals, they claim that this attitude should be extended to all. Thus creating a growing web of moral concern.

Consider a similar teaching that occurs outside of Stoicism. In the well-known 'Parable of the Good Samaritan' a lawyer who has just correctly answered that God's law requires that one 'Love one's neighbor as oneself' asks Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?"[31] Jesus tells the story of a man who was robbed, beaten, and left to die on the roadside. First a priest and then a Levite came upon the man and passed him by. Finally, a Samaritan came upon the man and felt compassion for him. He picked the man up, bandaged his wounds, and took him to an inn to heal. Jesus asks, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The lawyer says, "The one who showed mercy on him." Jesus replies, "Go and do likewise." Notice that Jesus has dodged the question, for he has not told the lawyer who his neighbor is. The point seems to be that by helping the man the Samaritan became the man's neighbor. Jesus' command, then, is to make oneself the neighbor of those who are suffering. The lawyer wanted 'neighbor' to be defined as a category, but is instead told that his neighbors are those whom he treats as neighbors. The Stoics make a similar move, asking

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[31] Luke 10 :27-37.

that one admit more individuals into one's sphere of concern and treat them as one treats family members and friends.

By drawing the circles inward, one comes to show the barbarian the same kind of concern one shows a fellow Greek. The coworker, in a more modern scenario, is shown the same level of concern that one might show a friend. As one includes others in one's metaphorical household, one comes to have a new kind of concern for that person. For the Stoic cosmopolitan, the goal is to expand one's self - the *oikos* - to include all of human kind. She comes to see herself as merely one part of the rational whole of the universe. In this way, she is no more important and no more valuable than any other person. As she begins to identify with the whole rather than viewing herself as independent of that whole, she begins to have concern for all those who are a part of the whole.

Whether the process of *oikeiōsis* is best thought of as an expansion of love is a matter of some debate. Mary Whitlock Blundell speaks of *oikeiōsis* as expanding filial relationships - that is, expanding *philia* for others. It is unclear from her argument if she believes that all or only some *oikeiōsis* involves an expansion of love.[32] *Oikeiōsis* is meant to be a process by which one can expand moral concern and loving-relationships are such that moral concern is naturally present. However, the Stoics never identified the expansion of love as the goal of *oikeiōsis*.

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[32]   Blundell (1990), p. 229.

Stoic *oikeiōsis* purports to enable one to develop a greater concern toward others and thus moves one toward the cosmopolitan ideal. The surviving Stoic sources are not clear on how the process was effected nor do they say if it was effective. My concern for now is just to show that the Stoics believed that an expansion of concern was possible. Having explored the idea of *oikeiōsis*, I'd like to briefly consider a criticism before moving on to a practice that is used by millions of Buddhists today.

§4. One might object to the process of *oikeiōsis* because it is strongly steeped in the notion that moral concern is expanded by expanding one's conception of the self. Perhaps the best way to formulate this objection is to say that one should have concern for others for their own sake and not because one sees them as extensions of oneself. Accounts which emphasize expanding the self, the objection goes, miss this crucial aspect of moral thought.

Oikeiōsis begins with the self. The Stoics thought that all individuals had concern for their own well-being – though someone today might disagree with this key assumption.[33] Self-concern is used as a reason to expand one's moral concern to all those in the universe. Simply, what is best for oneself is the good of all human beings. This should not be interpreted as a Hobbsian claim that morality is really just a matter of enlightened self-interest. Hobbes' goal was to reinterpret which actions and policies are in one's best interest, and the morality that results is a morality that Hobbes believes serves oneself as well as others.[34] The Stoics, to contrast, reinterpret the self. Hobbes tells one

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[33] Some advocates of *metta* meditation, to be explored in Section 6 of this chapter, will dispute this claim.

[34] Hobbes, (2009). See also Tuck (2002).

what is in one's interest, while the Stoics tell one who one is. One is a rational creature and as such one is a part of the rational community. The problem is not that people do not know what is in their best interest, as Hobbes would have us believe, but that people do not know what they are. Stoicism is meant to teach one what one is - a part of a greater whole - and this should, or so they claim, lead one to embrace universal citizenship.[35]

The objection is worrisome, but it confuses the notion of a self with the notion of an ego. When one speaks of selfishness, or when Thomas Hobbes speaks of self-interest, one is speaking of the ego. This is the form of the self that arises when one views oneself as distinct from and independent of all others - as an island separate from and unconnected to all other land. But one need not think of the self in this way. Consider a few famous lines from John Donne's seventeenth meditation:

> No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.[36]

Donne's words are a rejection of the ego based self. Everyday examples of non-ego based self reference are common as well. If I ask you what you did this past weekend, and it happens that you went to the beach with your family, it would not be strange for you to answer, "*We* went to the beach." I have asked you a question that addresses you in the singular, and you have replied in the plural voice. Examples such as this show that one

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[35]   The Stoics were fans of Diogenes storied response to the question, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "I am a citizen of the world." See Epictetus (1925), *Disc.* 3.24.66.

[36]   Donne (1926), p. 108-9.

can think of oneself as bound up with other individuals. While one is, of course, capable of thinking of oneself as an ego, one is also capable of thinking of oneself as inseparable from other people. Hence the easy shift from the singular to the plural in my example.

Stoic *oikeiōsis* confronts the ego based understanding of the self, the sense crucial to the objection, head on. The Stoic recognizes that relational distance is a barrier to one's moral concern. He does not run from this fact nor does he ignore or deny it. Instead he embraces it as a fact of human psychology. Individuals are *self-oriented*, and this inclination must thus be overcome. While the Stoic exercises may begin in a morally corrupt place – a place of ego based self-concern – they do not embrace this attitude. Morality, for the Stoics, is not possible unless the ego based self is overcome. Thus, while the process can *seem* self-oriented, this is only the initial state. *Oikeiōsis* uses self-concern as a means of eroding and eventually expelling the primacy of the self as ego, replacing it with a form of the self that incorporates the entire rational community.

The claim that Stoic *oikeiōsis* treats individuals as mere extensions of the self is true but misleading. The Stoic does not treat others as extensions of his ego-based self, mere instruments to be used in the pursuit of his rational self-interest. Rather, he comes to see others as parts of that which he himself is a part. Others are an extension of himself, just as he is an extension of others. Together, all make up the rational community. Thus, they are not treated as mere extensions of the self, but as equal participants in the rational whole of the universe.

The Stoics recognize that the ego-based self is a barrier to moral life, but they confront this barrier in a way that is unique among western thinkers. Rather than incorporating the 'dear self' into their moral theory, as Hobbes does, or advocating a wholesale denial of the self, as Kant and many others do, the Stoics suggest that one recognize the true nature of the self and expand the self until there is no practical difference between self and other.[37] Ego based self-love is bad, but they argue that one can remove it by recognizing that the ego based self is not a true expression of who one is. One who sets out only to pursue his own self-interest makes a mistake, for he fails to know who he is and thus fails to act in the most rational way.[38]

§5. I want now to turn to another practice intended to generate moral concern. This procedure comes from the Buddhist tradition. In a discourse traditionally attributed to him, the Buddha claims that one should have a limitless heart and love all living beings.[39] *Metta* meditation, which is quite similar to *oikeiōsis*, developed in the years following the death of the Buddha as a way to accomplish this goal. Like *oikeiōsis, metta* meditation requires concerted effort and practice, and cannot be accomplished by simply embracing a thesis. Unlike Stoic *oikeiōsis*, *metta* meditation is a practice that is still widely used today.

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[37] Because of the emphasis they place on reason, the Stoics did not believe that moral concern should be extended to animals or human beings who lacked rationality.

[38] c.f. Epictetus, *Disc.* III.23, "First know who you are, then do accordingly what you are doing."

[39] c.f. *Kiraniya Metta Sutta (Snp 1.8)* (2004).

Metta is a Pail word traditionally translated as 'loving-kindness.' The word is also often translated as 'friendliness', 'benevolence', or 'love'. Central to the sense of the word is a love that is entirely altruistic and not self-seeking.[40] In the *Metta Sutta,* his "Hymn of Universal Love," the Buddha instructs his followers to cultivate *metta* for all creatures of the earth. After describing the all-encompassing nature of this task, which will not exclude,

> weak or strong without exception,
> long, large,
> middling, short,
> subtle, blatant,
> seen & unseen,
> near & far,
> born & seeking birth[41]

the Buddha claims that,

> As a mother would risk her life
> to protect her child, her only child,
> so should one cultivate a limitless heart
> with regard to all beings.[42]

The wise person "who wants to break through to the state of peace,"[43] and achieve "sublime abiding"[44] must take on the task of cultivating love for all living beings.

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[40] Salzberg (1995). I use throughout this project Pali rather than Sanskrit vocabulary because Pali is the language of the Theravadan scriptures from which I quote. *Metta* expresses the same concept as the Sanskrit *maitri*.

[41] *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (2004), lines 14 - 20.

[42] Ibid., lines 26 - 29.

[43] Ibid., line 2.

[44] Ibid., line 38.

As did the Stoics, those following the Buddha quickly realized that cultivating a limitless heart would require practice rather than a simple intellectual commitment. *Metta* meditation is the practice that was developed to achieve this goal. The process was codified around 430 CE by Buddhaghosa, an important commentator on the scriptures collected in the Pali canon, in the *Visuddhimagga,* frequently translated as *The Path to Purification.*[45] The existence of this text stands in marked contrast to the Stoic tradition, which does not in any text detail the actual exercises used to practice *oikeiōsis.*

Contemporary Buddhist teachers[46] describe the practice as follows: After achieving a state of meditative awareness the practitioner imagines someone whom she already loves. This is most often the practitioner herself. She then repeats a mantra bestowing *metta* upon herself such as "May I be happy. May I be safe from internal and external dangers." She visualizes herself and "Repeat[s] these phrases over and over again, letting the feelings permeate [her] body and mind."[47] This meditation is practiced daily for several weeks. When the practitioner feels that her bestowal is genuine and that she really does wish happiness and safety unto herself, she begins the exercise again with a 'benefactor,' some other person toward whom she already has feelings of love and kindness. Traditionally, the benefactor is the practitioner's dharma teacher. Again, she

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[45] See Buddhaghosa (1975), III.122f.

[46] Metta mediation is a popular topic among contemporary Buddhist teachers. For the sake of clarity, my discussion here will focus mainly on the meditations described in Kornfield (2002), pp. 117-120. Other sources include the Dalai Lama's (2005) text, *How to Expand Love: Widening the Circle of Loving Relationships.* Salzberg's (1995) text, *Loving-kindness: the Revolutionary Art of Happiness* provides a more extensive overview of *metta* and it's role within the Theravadan Buddhist tradition.

[47] Kornfield (2002), p. 119. I have altered the quotation to fit the third person.

repeats the mantra and again continues to do so for several weeks until the feeling is genuine. Slowly, one person at a time, the process is continued. Next comes *metta* toward friends, then community members, and then strangers. Finally, one extends *metta* toward one's enemies. Throughout the meditation, the practitioner must work hard to genuinely extend a compassionate wish to the person on whom she is focusing. This may require her to analyze and consider the barriers to love that must be broken through if love is to be cultivated. The purpose of the meditation is not to merely repeat words, but to focus the mind on the task of developing compassion for the subject.

In *How to Expand Love* His Holiness the Dalai Lama takes this meditation a step further. Recognizing that "the beings who are the objects of these feelings are still suffering,"[48] he instructs practitioners to begin to develop a strong intention to actually help those beings who are suffering. He believes that this intention must be formed through meditation and that doing so will prepare one for when one encounters suffering individuals. He recommends that one continue the *metta* meditation described above with the mantra "I will do whatever I can to cause her to be imbued with happiness and all the causes of happiness."[49] Again the process progresses through friends, benefactors, neutral persons, and enemies. The Dalai Lama argues that, over a long period of time, the intention to help those individuals will become active in one's life.

There are many forms of *metta* meditation, but each employs the general techniques of visualizing an individual and then wishing that person happiness, health,

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[48]   Dalai Lama (2005), p. 127.

[49]   Ibid., p. 128.

safety and well-being. The aim, only rarely achieved after a lifetime of practice, is to to possess the same positive disposition toward all others that a mother possesses toward her child. In fact, one common strategy for wishing *metta* on people toward whom one is negatively disposed is to imagine that person as a child or as a parent.[50] This removes the focal person from the context in which one normally encounters him and forces the practitioner to see him as a complex human being.

By focusing on another individual for a sustained period of time, the hope is that one will come to see him as a complex individual who also has hopes and desires, who also suffers and makes mistakes. It is common to make allowances for the natural failings of one whom one loves while refusing to extend that courtesy to others. A friend who forgets an appointment is understandably busy while a student who forgets an appointment is lazy and disrespectful. The action is the same but the reaction to the action is different. The cause of this change, which is one's reluctance to consider the student's needs and busy schedule, is exposed during the meditative process. The practice encourages one to take a more realistic view of those who are the targets of one's meditation. They are human beings and sufferers just as is oneself. They make similar mistakes which similarly deserve a compassionate response.

Metta meditation need not begin with the self. This is a marked contrast to Stoic *oikeiōsis*. Dharma talks are replete with stories of practitioners who find that meditating

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[50]   This is central to the Dalai Lama's technique, which is grounded in the belief that in the infinite cycle of birth and rebirth all person have been one's child and one's parent. See Dalai Lama (2005), p. 51-65.

on self-love is difficult because they do not already possess love for themselves.[51] Such a

person is encouraged to begin her efforts with someone or something, sometimes the

family dog, for whom she does have unconditional positive regard. As the meditation

continues, the practitioner can begin to direct *metta* toward herself when she feels she has

reached the proper stage in the meditation. Even if one is an enemy to oneself, perhaps

because of character flaws or past mistakes, one is encouraged to try to achieve a loving

state. Pre-existing love is not necessary in order to conduct the meditation. It is merely

used as a way of coming to understand the kind of love and compassion one can have for

others. By understanding and feeling the love one has for oneself during the meditation,

one has an experience against which one can judge the love one cultivates toward others.

A second key difference between the practice of *metta* meditation and the practice

of *oikeiōsis* is that the Stoic practice emphasizes recognizing another as a part of one's

community of moral concern while *metta* meditation focuses on generating a loving wish

for the other. The practitioner does not simply work to treat the other as a member of

one's household, but attempts to actually generate feelings of love and compassion

toward the other. This positive concern can be generated regardless of whether one views

the individual as a member of one's community. The advantage to such a practice is that

it can be engaged in without embracing the complex metaphysical and meta-ethic picture

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[51] Gil Fronsdal gives such advice in his dharma talks on loving-kindness (4/7/08-4/26/08) available at
audiodharma.org.

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that the Stoics embrace. One need not believe that all people are part of a greater whole in order to engage in the practice.[52]

There is a difference between inclusion and love. The Stoics, who always emphasize activity over emotion, argue that what is important is that one include others in one's sphere of moral concern. If one does this, then one will actively work to benefit others. From the Stoic's perspective it makes no sense to claim that one is a citizen of the world unless one acts like a citizen of the world. The Buddhist procedure, to contrast, seems to emphasize an affective state over an active one. While the *Metta Sutta* does emphasize right conduct, instructing one to be "gentle in speech, meek, and not proud,"[53] the practice does not emphasize positive activity on behalf of the target of *metta* meditation. If *metta* meditation is to count as the cultivation of love, as love is understood within the confines of this project, then it is important that it include an active component. Whether or not this is the case will be discussed in Section 8.

§6. Stoic *oikeiōsis* and *metta* meditation have four features in common. The practices draw their power from these features, and I believe that any practice which aims at the expansion of love will share them.

First, both practices rely on the belief that reflecting on shared features of humanity changes the way in which one relates to others. These features need not be

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[52] The Buddha does seem to endorse such a picture. In the Pali canon he frequently refers to readers as "O Nobly Born (*kulaputta*)." Appealing to a common kinship among those in the sangha - the community of practitioners - through mutual suffering. However, to see all as suffers is not to embrace a radical metaphysical doctrine. Rather, it is the factual claim, quite true when one understands Buddhist suffering (dukha), that all human beings suffer.

[53] *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (2004), line 4.

metaphysically robust, but must emphasize the fact that there are commonalities between individuals which aid in understanding the motivations and mindset of others. Other individuals face problems and suffer just as oneself does, and it is common for one to ignore or discount these facts when interacting with others. By reflecting on the fact that another's motivations for acting are as complex as one's own, one will begin to empathize with and have compassion for another. Thus, Buddhists emphasize forms of listening similar to those discussed in Chapter 3.

This process is beautifully illustrated at the end of the *Iliad* when Achilles and Priam grieve together. Priam begs Achilles to remember his own father and to take pity on Priam, who is an old man wearied by warfare. The men are mortal enemies, but

> Now in Achilles,
> the evocation of his father stirred
> new longing, and an ache of grief. He lifted
> the old man's hand and gently put him by.
> Then both were overborne as they remembered:
> the old king, huddled at Achilles feet
> wept, and wept for Hector, killer of men,
> while great Achilles wept for his own father
> as for Patroklos once again; and sobbing
> filled the room.[54]

The invocation of his father's memory brings Achilles to tears and thus he welcomes into his camp the father of the man who killed his best friend. A similar story is told by Bud Welch, whose daughter was killed in the Oklahoma City bombing. During a meeting with Timothy McVeigh's father, Welch saw McVeigh's high school graduation photo on the

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[54] Homer (1974), translated by Robert Fitzgerald, Chapter 24, lines 609-617. This passage has been analyzed by many studying the history of forgiveness. For example, see Konstan (2010), Chapter 3 and Griswold (2007), Chapter 2, Section 5. My use here is meant to show that barriers to pity and compassion can be overcome by reflecting on commonality.

mantel. He suddenly realized that Bill McVeigh, whose child would soon be executed, was also a grieving father and that Timothy McVeigh was not evil, but a very misguided young person.[55] While contemplation of the common plight of humanity may not lead to forgiveness, redemption, or reconciliation, it commonly elicits empathy and compassion.

Second, both *oikeiōsis* and *metta* meditation utilize one's pre-existing love as a model, and in the Stoic case as the basis, of how one should love others. Critical to these practices is the view that pre-existing love can serve as an exemplar by which one can cultivate new love for others. The Dalai Lama makes this explicit. When describing the ease with which one generates concern for a friend in the first stages of *metta* meditation, he says, "Though this will be easy to do with such a good friend, take your time and notice your feelings: they will be a model to extend to others."[56] The love that one already has serves as a standard against which the feelings which one cultivates later in the meditative exercise can be judged. Neither the Stoic or Buddhist process expects one to cultivate a state that is in some way foreign to one or a state that one has never experienced. In both cases pre-existing love is used to support the development of new love.

Third, both argue that expanding one's concern for others must be done with concerted effort through directed practice. This is a marked contrast to solely rationalistic approaches. It might be claimed that all human beings are worthy of one's love because

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[55] Welch has given many interviews and appeared in many documentaries. His story can be read at The Forgiveness Project (theforgivenessproject.com). He is also one of the focal stories in Jacque Lofaro's (2010) documentary, *70 x 7: The Forgiveness Equation.*

[56] Dalai Lama (2005), p. 123.

of some feature which they all share. This could be rational agency or, as in the Stoic case, a shared participation in the cosmic community. But bringing one's assent to the intellectual claim that all are worthy of equal treatment into line with one's active life is another matter. The Stoics deny that accepting the truth of universal citizenship will automatically get one to the goal of universal concern.[57] Instead, if the intellectual acknowledgment of the need to have moral concern for others is to fall in line with the practical need to act in ways that demonstrate that concern, then one must cultivate practical concern for others.

Fourth, both practices acknowledge that there are genuine barriers that must be overcome if love is to take root.[58] Prior to going to Achilles, Priam's wife asks him where his much celebrated wisdom has gone saying,

> Where is the wisdom that made you
> famous in the old days, near and far? . . .
> If he sees you, takes you,
> savage and wayward as the man is,
> he'll have no mercy and no shame.[59]

Priam, with some help from the gods, overcomes his fear. Certainly Bud Welch recognized that he would be ridiculed and criticized for fighting against the execution of the murderer of his daughter. The moral exercises help one to confront and overcome

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[57] c.f. Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.4. Epictetus separates the functionality of the teachings from their truth. "For what is tragedy but the dramatized sufferings of men, bewildered by their admiration for things external? If we have to be taught by fictions that things beyond our will are nothing to us, I should rejoice in such a fiction that would teach me to live tranquil and serene . . . Of what good, then, is Chrysippus to us? To teach you that those things are not false on which quality and peace depend."

[58] Salzberg (2005) provides a detailed examination of the barriers to love and proposes several exercises to overcome them.

[59] Homer (1973), Chapter 24, lines 241-249.

these barriers. The Stoic practice encourages one to stop thinking of the barbarian as a barbarian and to instead think of him as a countryman, thus eliminating the barriers created by a lack of political identification. Similarly, by reflecting on the humanness of the other and wishing the other safety and well-being no matter the barriers that exist, the Buddhist is able to see past these barriers. Barriers to love do exist and if universal love is to be possible - if one is to cultivate a limitless heart - these barriers must be acknowledged.

In both practices we see a sensitivity to the reality of our moral situation and an honest view of our moral capabilities and handicaps. Because these schools advocate moral philosophy as a way of life, which is rarely the case in academic philosophy, there is a need to make their teachings practicable. As the later Stoics frequently claim, philosophy is not merely an intellectual exercise, and philosophy that does not improve one's life is not philosophy at all.[60] Neither the Buddhists nor the later Stoics were particularly interested in the grounding of moral life in and of itself. They pursued and developed that grounding in order that they could instruct individuals as to how they should live their life. With this goal in mind, it was necessary that they acknowledge and work around the practical difficulties to doing good in everyday life.

§7. An important and difficult criticism can be leveled at both of these practices. Neither theory proposes that one develop love for its own sake. Both are aimed instead at the liberation or serenity of the individual. This is most obviously the case with *metta*

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[60]   See footnote 25.

meditation. Most practitioners of *metta*, especially in the West, practice in order to gain the calm and relaxed state that accompanies meditation. More serious practitioners may have a better developed understanding of their goals, but this still includes the serene abiding of which the Buddha speaks. My concern is not that there is something wrong with pursuing this kind of good, but that the practitioner may purchase her serenity at the cost of no longer being involved with the world's ills. One way to find tranquility and serenity is to withdraw from ordinary life to form a planned community as the Epicureans once did. But love necessarily involves activity, and it is important that these spiritual exercises lead to activity on behalf of those toward whom one is cultivating concern.

Consider the common stereotype of a monk sitting on a hill or praying in a monastery deep in the woods. He prays, meditates, sings the psalms, recites the Holy Offices, eats in silence, then prays and meditates some more. At no point, let us assume, does this person actively try to help others, nor does he engage in some activity that tends to benefit others (such as the scholarly work of Benedictines). Instead, he is focused on and completely dedicated to his own salvation or enlightenment. This is, of course, a stereotype and most devotees are not like this, but some undoubtedly are. For those individuals, contemplation, meditation, and prayer for God's children can serve as a means of avoiding ever actually doing something for those people. To echo the words of the Epistle of James, if one prays that the poor and destitute 'be warmed and filled' but does nothing, what good has one done?[61]

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[61] James 2:16.

During the Vietnam war, Thich Nhat Hanh gained recognition for advocating a politically engaged form of Buddhism. At the time, many Buddhist monks were uninvolved in their communities and unconcerned with the various social ills that affected their countries. In his early work *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire,* Hanh advocates a form of Buddhism that incorporates active and mindful engagement with the world.[62] He himself contributed to this aim by founding the School of Youth for Social Services in Saigon to rebuild villages, schools, and clinics, that were destroyed during the war. Thich Naht Hanh's advocacy was subversive and revolutionary. He was exiled from Vietnam and nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize by Martin Luther King Jr. Had there not been some truth to the claim that many monks were wishing others well without doing anything to improve the lives of those persons, Hanh's teachings would not have had such an impact. If the practices I described are to lead to love, the final step must be a call out of the cloisters and into action. Our positive feelings for others must not become the excuse we give after we ignore the cries of those in need.

Both Buddhism and Stoicism, and one could include Christianity and a host of other Hellenistic schools in this category, have as their stated end the perfection of the human being. They each formulate a picture of what the perfected individual will be like, the Buddha, the Stoic sage, your "Father in heaven,"[63] and then attempt to provide a path

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[62] Hanh (1967). Engaged Buddhism is also the subject of his *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism* (1987).

[63] Christianity contains many perfectionist elements. Consider the claim that one should, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect." (Matt 5.20)

toward that state.[64] Whether the goal directedness of these theories undermines their moral worth is a question that lies too far afield of my project to resolve here. Buddhism and Stoicism are both complex systems of belief and a full discussion would require a deep exploration of both. My worry in both cases is that the goal of cultivating compassion in order to obtain tranquility might obscure or overshadow the need to act on the love one is cultivating. The exercises that we are examining do not always have action as their expressed goal. Moreover, even in those cases where action is the expressed goal, as it is with the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, it is unclear whether the recommended practices will lead to action.

§8. I argued in Chapter 1 that loving another requires activity. No matter one's emotional state, if that state does not issue in action that aims at the well-being of the loved-one, then that person is not loving the other. To apply this definition to the Stoic and Buddhist practices, if one practices *metta* meditation or *oikeiōsis* and does not act in ways that demonstrate a concern for the well-being of others, then despite one's possibly having a compassionate mental state, one is not loving others. In order to show that love can be expanded, it must be shown that there is reason to believe that the exercises I am exploring lead to an expansion of love.

Numerous empirical studies have demonstrated the ability to expand love to varying degrees. I will focus on three bodies of research in order to show that there are

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[64] Thomas Hurka (1996) provides a clear overview of the goals and methods of a perfectionist system of ethics.

good reasons to believe that exercises such as those I am describing can lead to an expansion of love.

That meditation enables practitioners to achieve greater states of relaxation and a reduction in anxiety is well-established.[65] However, very little research has been conducted to analyze whether meditations that focus on compassion enable practitioners to achieve the stated goals of that meditation.[66] There are some exceptions. For example, one study has found that women with long-term eating disorders who were instructed to practice *metta* meditation showed a significant reduction in disordered eating.[67] However, in studies such as this one it is difficult to discern whether the behavior was changed by an increase in mindfulness and awareness or was a direct result of the *metta* meditation. Jeanne Tsai, a psychologist at Stanford, is currently trying to eliminate this possibility by maintaining a control group that practices mindfulness meditation but does not attempt to cultivate love. In her study, participants engage either in *metta* meditation, mindfulness meditation, or take a dance class. The number of positive and negative events each participant experiences in a day and overall changes in altruistic behavior will then be measured. Tsai's study will prove important in establishing or disproving the link between meditation and loving-activity. At the time of writing, Tsai's data has not been fully analyzed but the results look promising. Thus, while there are strong reasons to

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[65]   See the work of neurologist Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005), *Coming to Our Senses.*

[66]   C.f. Kristeller & Johnson (2005).

[67]   Kristeller & Hallet (1999).

think that there is a connection between *metta* meditation and loving-activity, no definitive link has been shown.

A second group of helpful results comes from Robert Enright, a psychologist who investigates forgiveness. In one study, Enright had victims of childhood sexual abuse by a relative (incest survivors) participate in a 'forgiveness intervention'.[68] The intervention included components that mimic the Buddhist and Stoic exercises. The participants were encouraged to reflect on their shared humanity, especially the fact that it was very likely that the person who abused them was him or herself abused as a child. They were also encouraged to direct positive wishes toward the offender and imagine him or her as a child – both components of *metta* meditation. The stated goal of the forgiveness intervention was to enable the victim to forgive the offender. Compared to a control group that attended standard talk-therapy sessions, those who participated in the forgiveness intervention had significantly less negative feeling toward the abuser following the intervention and six months later. More important for my purposes, in the six month follow up interview, many expressed that they had since tried to contact the abuser in some way in order to express their forgiveness and begin a new relationship. All reported more hope about the future and many positive life changes.[69] Enright's studies confirm that meditative practices can lead to emotional changes that issue in psychological health as well as positive activity.

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[68] Enright's work on the subject is vast. See his 2001 book, *Forgiveness is a Choice.* See also Reed & Enright (2006) for his work with survivors of spousal abuse. The study involving incest survivors is Freedman & Enright (1996).

[69] Freedman & Enright (1996), p. 989.

Finally, a large amount of research is currently underway to investigate the brain hormone oxytocin. Oxytocin, the so-called 'love hormone,' is a hormone in the brain that leads to feelings of love and fellow-feeling when injected or naturally released. It occurs naturally during social interactions, orgasm, hugging and affectionate behavior, child birth, and nursing. The brains of new mothers, long the paradigm example of those who love, are flooded with oxytocin. Scientists have shown that individuals are more empathetic and trusting after they have been administered a dose of oxytocin via a nasal spray, and have demonstrated a clear connection between oxytocin levels and altruistic behavior.[70] Individuals who have engaged in *metta* meditation have greatly elevated levels of oxytocin. Further, levels remain elevated after the meditation has ended.[71] The inference is clear. If oxytocin leads to empathetic and trusting behavior, and *metta* meditation leads to oxytocin, then it is reasonable to think that *metta* meditation will issue in action.

The serious scientific study of the effects of meditation practice is in its infancy. The general consensus among psychologists and neurologists is that meditation exercises like the ones I have described can lead to changes in the activity of the practitioner. Current studies focus on what those changes are and how they take place. It is reasonable to conclude that *metta* meditation can help one to expand one's love. While this claim has not been definitively proven, a growing body of evidence suggests that certain forms of meditative practice lead to loving activity. It is not my belief that meditative practices

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[70]   Kosfield et al. (2005).

[71]   Fredrickson et. al. (2008).

will necessarily lead one to a more loving life. Other factors, such as a desire to be more loving, probably play a role as well. What can be claimed with confidence is that the practices described do contribute to the creation of a life that is more loving. This is in line with the growing body of evidence that shows, empirically for the first time, that the ancient practices, particularly those developed in Buddhism, lead to the changes they intend to bring about.

One of my guiding intuitions in this chapter is that one can come to love someone whom one did not antecedently love. This intuition seems to me to be confirmed by actual experience with living and loving. While the contemporary philosophical literature on the subject is fairly uniform in its rejection of this claim, the empirical evidence is stacking up against philosophical 'common sense.' Through practices such as those described - *metta* meditation, *oikeiōsis*, or Enright's forgiveness intervention - an individual for whom one had no affection can become the target of loving-activity. In daily life one makes friends and extends love quite naturally, and one can accelerate the process through artificial means. Neither of the exercises I laid out is meant to be an instantaneous or easy way to develop love for others, but both offer insight into how one might begin to do so.

§9. If the moral imperative to love more individuals is to make any sense, then it must be the case that one can come to love those whom one does not already love. In this chapter, I explored two practices developed by ancient schools which aim at creating moral concern where none already exists. Stoic *oikeiōsis* does so by admitting the other

into preexisting communities of moral concern. Buddhist *metta* meditation does so through visualization and the repetition of mantras which are meant to humanize the other and cultivate compassion. Both practices purport to generate moral concern, but it is an empirical question as to whether or not they do so. I briefly explored three areas of current psychological research that indicate that practices like those discussed are capable of generating moral concern for others. Interest in the empirical study of meditation is growing as is interest in love and compassion. As more studies are completed it is likely that they will show an even stronger link between meditation practice and loving-activity.

It is reasonable then to say that when individuals advocate that individuals love more, they are not advocating something senseless. One can come to love more. The exercises outlined by the Buddhist and Stoic thinkers show that this is the case. One need not view oneself as entirely passive to whom one loves and whom one does not love. Love can be cultivated by those who wish to do so.

CHAPTER FIVE

Can Love Be Demanded?

Abstract: I argue that love cannot reasonably be demanded of one by another. Thus, there is no moral obligation to love others. I begin by exploring two ways in which it can be claimed that one should perform a given action. I then turn to the influential account of moral obligation provided by T. M. Scanlon. I argue that, given his requirements, there can be no moral obligation to love.

§1. The majority of moral philosophers work within a system that emphasizes moral obligations that allows only three categories of action: those that are required, those that are permissible, and those that are forbidden. J. O. Urmson has called this "the trichotomy of duties, indifferent actions, and wrong-doing."[1] Theories that emphasize moral obligation and thus delineate moral action in this way are not without critics. Looking at the state of moral philosophy in an early work, Bernard Williams suggests that what moral philosophers are missing is so important to moral thinking that many philosophers have ceased to talk about morality at all.[2] Iris Murdoch and Alastair MacIntyre have also been influential in leading the charge against the tendency to emphasize obligation in moral philosophy. Throughout her work, Murdoch often argues that this emphasis fails to capture the yearning for what is good.[3] In his influential book

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[1] Urmson (1958), p. 215.

[2] Williams (1972), p. 9

[3] Murdoch, (1992), pp. 508-9 **.** Murdoch and MacIntyre share several key features, and it could be argued that Murdoch arrived at MacIntyre's thesis, in a less articulate form, before he did. For example, in an early paper she argues extensively that the secularization of modern society has made it difficult if not impossible to articulate many ethical concepts including goodness, contemplation, and humility. See "On God and Good" collected in Murdoch (2001).

After Virtue MacIntyre argues that the antediluvian notion of a moral obligation is irrelevant in our increasingly secular age.[4]

Those who work within systems that emphasize obligation have begun to see the limitations of this way of thinking,[5] and others have turned away from the approach in favor of Aristotelian-inspired virtue ethics.[6] Still, the view that obligations are the most central and important part of moral theory remains ascendant.

My goal in this chapter is to show that an understanding of morality that relies exclusively on the concept of a moral obligation is unable to provide an understanding of the claim that one *should* love others. My target is not the concept of moral obligation itself, but rather that concept's inability to explain certain aspects of moral thought. Though this may seem to be a minor conclusion, it has a large implication for the task of moral philosophy. The claim that one should love others grounds the lived ethical systems of several billion people.[7] Insofar as moral philosophers purport to describe that system which structures the moral lives of human beings, this way of thinking cannot be ignored.

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[4] MacIntyre (1981), pp. 239-241.

[5] The growing interest in describing and accounting for supererogatory action is indicative of this change. As supererogatory action is not required but is recommended, it is difficult to fit into the trichotomy created by a focus on obligation. Williams (1985) anticipated this problem in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy,* asking, "How does the morality system deal with the considerations that seemingly do not yield obligations?" p. 179. He believes that such considerations present an insurmountable problem for systems grounded in obligation.

[6] This path is suggested by Anscombe (1958). Her work has lead many to reject the notion of a moral obligation altogether and to turn instead to notions of virtue and excellence. See for example Foot (2001) and Hursthouse (1999).

[7] See my Introduction, Section 1.

If the claim that one *should* love others is to be understood, then we must understand the normative force of the word 'should' in this context. In particular, I argue in this chapter that the imperative to love others cannot be understood as expressing a moral obligation. My reasons for rejecting this understanding are nuanced and turn on the structure of theories which ground the normative force of moral obligations. I argue in the central sections of this chapter that the structure which grounds moral obligations cannot account for some normative claims. I conclude that the 'should' in the statement, 'One should love others,' does not derive its normative force from the structure that grounds the normative force of moral obligations.

§2. There is a sizable literature devoted to understanding the nature of moral obligation and what it means to claim that one is obligated to perform a given action. A full analysis of this literature is not possible here. In this section, I aim to put forth a straightforward understanding of what an obligation is with the hope that most who utilize the concept will agree with the general definition if not all the particulars. A full analysis of the concept as understood by T. M. Scanlon will be provided in section 4.

Moral obligations have four characteristics that are uncontroversial and intuitive. First, obligations express moral requirements. If one is obligated to perform a given action, then one *must* perform that action regardless of how one feels about performing that action or of most personal losses that might be incurred by performing that action.[8] Moral obligations are not expressed using conditional statements which tie the obligation

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[8]   Thus C. D. Broad (1930) labeled these theories deontological, from the Greek word *dei* meaning something that is necessary or must be done.

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to desires, needs, or particular circumstances. Rather, moral obligations make a categorical claim, which binds an individual regardless of antecedent desires, needs, or particular circumstances. For example, if John promises Eric that he will help Eric move this weekend, John is morally bound by his promise even if he desires to break it. If the opportunity to participate in a more exciting or enjoyable activity arises, John is required to keep his promise even though he would rather pursue another course of action. John is morally required to keep his promise to Eric, independently of any immediate desire he might have. Though there are situations in which promises can be broken, the immediate desires of the promise-maker do not provide him with an opportunity to opt out of the promise.

Second, principles that express obligations delineate actions which others can legitimately demand that one perform or refrain from performing. To return to the example of John making a promise to Eric, if John suggests to Eric that he is considering not keeping his promise, it is legitimate for Eric to demand that John show up on Saturday. The legitimacy of this demand is implicit in the act of promising, and Eric is likely to appeal to the promise when demanding that John show up, saying something like, "But you promised." In so far as John understands promising, he should understand that Eric can legitimately demand that he keep his promise. Why one *should* accept these demands is a matter of debate, but that one should is relatively uncontested.[9]

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[9] Some moral skeptics have argued that individuals should not accept moral demands. On one reading, Nietzsche argues something like this in the *Genealogy*. A better example is the character Thrasymachus in the *Republic*. He is clear in his rejection of moral demands, which he views as rules constructed by the powerful to contribute to their own good. A virtuous person, Thrasymachus insists, is one who breaks the rules when he can in order to gain an advantage for himself.

Third, central to the notion of an obligation is the claim that it is permissible for another to blame one if one fails to meet legitimate demands. Morality requires that one respect the demands that others make if those demands are connected to an obligation. If one fails to do so, obligations can be enforced within the boundaries set by the system of morality that defines them. Because it is legitimate for others to make demands of one, others can blame or sanction one if one fails to meet the demand. If John does renege on his promise to Eric, Eric can blame him for doing so. The exact nature of his blame, the form it can take, and the conditions that must be met if blame is to be permissible is a matter of much debate. However, it is generally agreed that blame is a permissible even if it is not a required response to a broken promise and that some sanctions are legitimate. Holding others responsible, blaming them for failing to meet demands, and sanctioning them when they fail to meet obligations plays a central role in most systems of moral obligation. Bernard Williams argued extensively that this feature is the central preoccupation of any theory of obligation.[10]

Finally, moral obligations are derived from principles that apply universally. Though the conditions under which moral obligations are valid may apply only to individuals in certain circumstances - John is only obligated to help Eric because he made a promise - any individual in those circumstances is obligated to perform the given action. For example, with the exception of a few extraordinary circumstances, one is obligated not to steal from another regardless of who one is or from whom one is

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[10]   Williams (1985), p. 177. He calls theories of moral obligation the 'morality system'.

stealing. Moreover, if there are circumstances under which it is permissible to steal, then any individual who finds herself in those circumstances will be free of the obligation. This feature is connected to the first feature discussed. As one is obligated to perform an action regardless of one's particular desires, needs, or circumstances moral obligations apply to all persons. Again, there is significant disagreement about how to interpret the universality of moral obligations, but central to the notion of a moral obligation is the idea that individuals are equally obligated to comply with moral principles.[11]

Morality requires that one perform those actions which others can legitimately demand of one. One must perform these actions regardless of one's desires, values, or needs. If one fails to perform these actions without a reasonable excuse, then others are permitted to blame or sanction one in those ways set out by the system which grounds the obligations. Individual theories of obligation disagree about the specific ways in which each of these features is defined, but insofar as a theory purports to capture our ordinary understanding of a moral obligation, it will include each of these features in some way.

Obligations are an important part of philosophical and common-sense moral thinking. At their best obligations create and ground broad prescriptions on conduct that apply to all persons equally. Moreover, obligations do this in a way that requires neither theological commitments nor a shared comprehensive conception of what is good in human life as theories of ancient and theistic ethics do. Insofar as we live in increasingly pluralistic societies, formulating rules of conduct that do not require the members of that

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[11] For example Gerwith (1988) argues that universality can incorporate particularity, while Winch (1965) wonders if such a claim can be made while retaining truly universal moral judgments.

society to recognize a comprehensive notion of what is good, earthly or otherwise, is very important. Though the system has been criticized for numerous reasons, the creation of such systems, which ground obligations in human reason and relationship, was an extremely important development in moral thought.

At no point in this project do I argue that moral obligations should be abandoned or discarded. The view of morality that I will advocate in Chapter 6 cannot capture these four features in the way that a system of obligations can. Thus, my purpose in this chapter and the next is not to overturn this system, but to show that it is limited insofar as it cannot understand the claim that one should love others. Ideally, theories of moral obligation would be supplemented, not replaced, by additional ways of understanding morality and normative life.[12]

§3. I recently spoke with a woman who signed up to be screened as a kidney donor because a member of her church had a son who was in end stage renal failure. She was relatively new to the church and had never met the woman who brought the issue before the congregation or her son. She admits that she only signed up to be screened because there was a great deal of pressure to do so. Nearly everyone else in the congregation had signed up, so she wrote her name down. After several rounds of screening, it was determined that she was the only suitable donor in the congregation. Prior to this she would never have volunteered to donate the kidney, but she now feels that it is something that she *should* do. In fact, she now claims that even if the final cross-

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[12] This is, I think, a fairly rare approach. I advocate in my Epilogue an understanding of moral life that incorporates multiple sources of normativity that overlap and at times conflict. Though I agree that such a theory is not desirable, such a theory seems to me to be much more likely to be true.

matching shows that she is not a suitable donor, she will give her kidney to whomever needs it.[13] She takes herself to have good reasons to go through with the surgery, and I agree. I think she *should* donate her kidney to save this young man's life.

My aim in this chapter is to show that there are important normative claims that cannot be accounted for by a system of normativity limited to moral obligations. The claim that this woman should donate her kidney is just such a claim. First, the claim says something about what the woman should do. All things considered, donating the kidney is the course of action which she should take. Second, the claim is clearly not expressing a moral obligation. Moral obligations make a claim about what one *must* do which applies universally. It is highly unintuitive to think that kidney donation is something that all must do and that those who need a new kidney can legitimately demand that others give a kidney to them. Thus, I take it that the *should* in this case is not the should of moral obligation.

Those who work within systems that emphasize moral obligations, that is, emphasize moral imperatives that meet the requirements set out in the previous section, rightly claim that actions such as kidney donation are *supererogatory*. Such actions are recommended or praiseworthy, but one is not morally required to perform them. One cannot be blamed for failing to donate a kidney or even for failing to donate blood. It

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[13] This is not an uncommon sentiment and many living anonymous donors were originally screened to aid someone they knew. Consider another first person account, "When I did hear back from [the hospital], I was told that [the acquaintance] got a kidney and was doing fine. [The transplant coordinator] thanked me. I really thought that it was all over and I was through with organ donation. Then she asked me if I had ever given any thought to donating to someone else. Someone I didn't know. The thought had never crossed my mind and I told her that I would think about it. Within 5 minutes I called her back and told her to find someone who needed my kidney." From personal corespondent with Harold E.

would not be reasonable to sanction this women who is preparing to have her kidney removed if she had, early on in the screening process, decided that she would not go through with the surgery.[14] Those who label such actions *supererogatory* claim that the actions are laudatory though they are not required.[15] I have no objection to this way of classifying these actions.

However, one can make normative claims about supererogatory actions, namely the claim that one *should* engage in them, and the normative force of these claims must be explained. For example, I can claim that one *should* donate a substantial portion of one's time and money to benefit those who live in poverty. Must this entail that I believe that one is *morally required* to do so or that if one fails to do so she can be blamed for her failure? No, it need not. I can recognize that one cannot be compelled to be charitable and that one cannot be blamed for failing to be charitable, but still claim that one should be charitable. There is no contradiction in such a statement.

Understanding these claims should be a priority for those who study morality, for they play a large role in moral life. Consider the women interviewed in Carol Gilligan's classic book on abortion, *In a Different Voice.*[16] Each of the women interviewed by Gilligan is deciding whether to have an abortion. All recognize that abortion is legal and

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[14] Of course, had she promised to donate her kidney and encouraged an expectation that she would do so, her decision not to donate may be immoral. But let us suppose that she backed out before all of that occurred.

[15] Urmson's (1958) discussion of supererogatory action is one of the first of its kind in secular moral philosophy. Christian theology, to contrast, has sustained a very nuanced discussion of supererogatory actions. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, considers the question at *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. cviii.

[16] Gilligan (1984).

most think that it is morally permissible. If questions of permissibility were all that mattered, then these women would have had their abortions and gotten on with their lives. Yet, they still wonder if having an abortion is something that they *should* do, and their question is not merely pragmatic. They are not asking if having another child is something that they desire, most have decided that another child is not something that they want. Instead, they are asking a question about the morality of abortion: aware that carrying the baby to term will require a great sacrifice, they wonder if it is a sacrifice they should make.

We can thus distinguish two uses of the word should.[17] First, there is the 'obligation' sense of the word. Wherein saying that someone should do an action, say keep a promise, expresses that the action is required of one. However, often when one asks whether or not one *should* do something, one is asking both whether it is permitted and whether it is an action that is worthwhile and good. Let us call this second sense the 'moral-advice' sense of the word should. Both senses of the word 'should' touch on moral life, and thus both must be accounted for by a comprehensive moral theory.

§4. I will now examine a theory that provides an understanding of moral obligations in order to show that such a theory cannot account for the 'extra' reasons discussed above. Because it minimizes a dependence on shared conceptions of what is good, the contractualist approach to explaining how moral obligations are derived is the most plausible way of formulating obligations. As presented by Thomas Scanlon in his

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[17] I have read that this topic was of particular concern among 17th century natural law theorists. See Schneewind (2001), p. 129.

book *What We Owe to Each Other,* the approach incorporates, at the most basic level, the idea that persons value living in a community of mutual recognition. Moral obligations result when being like us, things capable of acting on and understanding reasons for action, value a certain way of life. Given the widespread interest that this approach has garnered, it seems that it is a promising approach to understanding moral obligation.

Scanlon admits that his theory covers only a small domain of morality, saying "while it is an important part of morality, as generally understood, it is only a part, not the whole."[18] He is concerned with accounting for claims about what individuals, as rational beings, owe to one another or what he often calls, "the morality of right and wrong."[19] His project attempts to explain, "our duties to other people, including such things as requirements to aide them, and prohibitions against harming, killing, coercion, and deception."[20] The project does not, for example, necessarily account for claims about how one should treat the environment, whether going to religious services is necessary to live a good life, or whether premarital sex is bad. These are also normative concerns, but they are not dealt with by Scanlon's theory of what each individual owes to others. While it is not clear whether Scanlon would agree with me that the claim that one should love others falls outside of his theory, he is clearly aware that his theory does not explain all normative claims.

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[18] Scanlon (1998), p. 6.

[19] Ibid., p. 7.

[20] Ibid., p. 6.

My purpose in investigating his theory is to show *why* it cannot account for these other normative claims. It is not simply the case that Scanlon chooses not to account for these claims. Rather, his theory cannot account for them.

Scanlon argues that statements about right and wrong are properly understood as statements about what one has reason to do or not do.[21] That is, moral imperatives do not express empirical judgments but *practical* judgments.[22] On Scanlon's interpretation, when one makes a moral claim like, "It is wrong to steal," one is claiming that one generally does not have reasons to steal or that those reasons are outweighed by countervailing reasons against stealing.

Scanlon's observation is born out in everyday conversations about action. If one is driving through town and stops at a red light, it is unlikely that a passenger in the car will ask why one has done this. The driver's reason is clear; the light is red and red lights must be stopped at. Of course, one could ask why the driver has stopped, but doing so demonstrates a lack of familiarity with what red lights signal. To know what a red light is just is to know why one has stopped. For those who understand the system, the driver's reason for stopping is clear - the light is red. To contrast, if one slams on the accelerator and speeds through the light, the passenger might ask him why he did that. In this case, the reasons for his action are not immediately intelligible even to one who understands

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21 I am admittedly skeptical about talking about morality in terms of reasons for action. For my purposes in this chapter and the chapter that follows 'reasons talk' provides a helpful way of modeling moral discourse. While I remain unconvinced that actual moral discourse, deliberation, and action should be *described* as involving the giving and weighing of reasons, reasons talk does help one to gain understanding of normative life. That is, 'reasons talk' is a helpful way of *modeling* morality even if it fails to be germane to being moral.

22 Ibid., p. 2.

the traffic system. In most cases whatever reasons one might have to run a red light (being late for work, for example) are outweighed by reasons not to run the red light (stemming from a complex understanding of the purpose of and need for traffic laws in order to ensure public safety). Given that this person *did* run the red light, one assumes that he must have some reason for doing so outside of the normal reasons we all have to do so which are quickly outweighed or eclipsed by reasons not to do so. The same can be said of keeping a promise. One does not ask why a person has kept a promise, but rather why one has broken a promise. Making a promise itself gives one reasons to keep the promise unless certain conditions obtain.

The morality of right and wrong, Scanlon argues, requires that one act only in those ways permitted by principles which are justifiable to others who are motivated to agree on principles for the regulation of behavior. Thus he defines wrongness as follows: "An act is wrong if and only if any principle that permitted it would be one that could reasonably be rejected by people moved to find principles for the general regulation of behavior that others, similarly motivated, could not reasonably reject."[23] An act is permissible if the principle allowing it cannot be reasonably rejected by people similarly motivated. Rightness and wrongness is determined by whether or not the principle on which one is acting is justifiable to others. To say that it is wrong to run a red light, or to steal or murder, is to say that the reasons one has for performing these actions can be reasonably rejected by others.

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[23] Ibid., p. 4. This formulation is discussed in much more depth, though not stated as succinctly in Chapter 4 of *What We Owe to Each Other*.

When one runs a red light because one is running late or on some other whim, one is acting on a principle that allows one to run red lights whenever one desires to do so. This is a principle that other reasonable people can reject, because principles that allow people to violate traffic laws put others at great risk. Notice that Scanlon's formulation makes the theory fairly flexible. If one is running a red light because of a medical emergency, the principle has changed. One is now acting on a principle that cannot be reasonably rejected, (Something like, "It is permissible to ignore minor traffic laws with care when doing so will save a life."). Scanlon thinks that he can explain the practical nature of moral imperatives, their ability to tell us what right and what is wrong, by understanding the way they reject and endorse certain reasons for action.

Why one obeys these strictures and allows them to structure one's thinking about how to act is a different and important question. Scanlon argues that human beings recognize "the positive value of a way of living with others,"[24] which involves living with one another in a "relation of mutual recognition."[25] This way of living has "value and appeal" to individuals.[26] Scanlon believes that individuals value living in communities of mutual recognition for their own sake. He compares such communities to friendships, which he also believes are valued for their own sake.[27] One values friendship and this form of moral community not because these forms of relating allow one to obtain other goods. Indeed, at times friendships prevent one from achieving one's goals. Instead, one

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[24] Ibid., p. 162

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

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values these relationships intrinsically and any benefits derived from them are incidental to the value of being in that relationship.

The value of mutual recognition requires that individuals acknowledge the value of other human beings. According to Scanlon, this means that one must view one's fellow human beings as individuals who act and evaluate actions on the basis of the reasons they have for those actions. By only acting on reasons that can be justified to others, one acts in ways that others recognize as legitimate ways to act. It is in this way that individuals value the rational agency of others. Because valuing others is connected with the value of mutual recognition and respect, which Scanlon believes to be a way of life that individuals do in fact value, one has good reasons to act according to principles that others cannot reject. When one acts in ways that can be reasonably rejected, one fails to value others as rational agents by failing to act in ways that can be justified to them.

Scanlon speaks in a very abstract way, but again, I believe that everyday life bears out his observations. Individuals want to live in ways that respect, in the very basic way laid out here, those with whom they live. Scanlon's formulation of the morality or right and wrong, provides an account of at least one way in which one respects others. By acting only in ways which one can justify to others, one gives others a 'right of first refusal' over one's actions. If I am about to act in a way that will harm you *and* I respect

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[27] As it is a community of strangers, the moral community is a watered down form of friendship. Notice that Scanlon is rejecting a community based in love or friendship, such as that advocated by Martin Luther King, Jr. who says, for example, "The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, so that when the battle is over, a new relationship comes into being between the oppressed and the oppressor." From King's 1959 "Palm Sunday Sermon" See King (2001), p. 151.

you, then when you reject the way I am about to act, I should abandon the course of action.

One's right to reject the action of any other agent is not without limits. The rejection must be "reasonable." Scanlon admits that there is no algorithm for determining what is reasonable, but thinks that most have a grasp on the notion of reasonableness.[28] I agree and do not think it a defect of his theory that he lacks a theory of reasonableness.[29] In a community which is operating according to Scanlon's theory, it will occasionally be the case that arguments will break out over whether the rejection of a given principle is reasonable. Such disagreements do tend to occur in our own communities, and this counts in favor of a project that is attempting to understand the reason giving force of claims about rightness and wrongness as they are made in our society.

The morality of right and wrong that Scanlon's theory explains is, according to his own words, insufficient to explain all of the normative sphere. I take this to mean that there are practical claims that can be made the significance of which is not accounted for by the contractualist account of wrongness. For example, one can tell others that they should go to church on Sundays to save their immortal soul. Here one is not appealing to a principle that cannot be reasonably rejected, but is making a practical claim about what

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[28] Scanlon (1998), p. 206.

[29] I tend to evaluate ethical theories on the basis of their explanatory force and how they shed light on actual disagreements about morality within my culture. I think Scanlon's theory does this very well. That is, I think that we could use this theory to gain a better understanding of what is contentious and at stake in an actual, current debate, such as that over gay-marriage. Many philosophers do not evaluate theories in this way, preferring instead theories which provide a decision making procedure. Thus, many philosophers disagree with my assessment that a lack of a definition of reasonableness is not a problem for his theory. See McGinn (1999), Blackburn (1999), and Pettit (1999).

another should do on the basis of an end that one thinks the other should have. That is to say, insofar as one cares about one's immortal soul, one has reason to act in ways that will protect one's immortal soul. One has made a claim about the sorts of reasons that another has for acting, but has not in doing so appealed to the contractualist ideas discussed by Scanlon.

Though I do not embrace all of the details of Scanlon's theory, I believe that he provides an insightful way of understanding why individuals accept the strictures of moral obligations. Individuals want to get on together because they value living in communities of mutual recognition. Given this basic value, they are strongly motivated to accept certain limitations on their conduct. Scanlon formulates these limitations in terms of principles that one can reasonably reject. The contractualist procedure he discusses thus explains the normative force of moral obligations.

§5. I noted above that the women considering having an abortion interviewed by Carol Gilligan are ill served by a theory that views the morality of an action only in terms of what is permitted, forbidden, and required. Having come to the conclusion that having an abortion is permitted, these women still wonder if they *should* have an abortion or if they should make certain sacrifices in order to carry the baby to term. In this section, I will argue that theories like the one provided by Scanlon cannot answer this further question. I will reinterpret a famous argument given by Judith Jarvis Thomson using Scanlon's theoretical apparatus in order to show that the theory is significantly limited in this area.

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In the classic article "A Defense of Abortion" Judith Jarvis Thomson argues that abortion is permissible because requiring that a woman carry her child to term demands more of her than can be legitimately demanded of an individual.[30] A contractualist reading of Thomson's argument can explain both why she is correct and why her argument has not shown that the claim, "One should not have an abortion." is illegitimate. More importantly, considering her argument from a contractualist standpoint will enable us to see why the normativity of the claim that one should love others cannot be accounted for by the contractualist.

Key to Thomson's argument is a bizarre but illuminating example. She asks the reader to imagine that

> You wake up in the morning and find yourself back to back in bed with an unconscious violinist. A famous unconscious violinist. He has been found to have a fatal kidney ailment, and the Society of Music Lovers has canvassed all the available medical records and found that you alone have the right blood type to help. They have therefore kidnapped you, and last night the violinist's circulatory system was plugged into yours, so that your kidneys can be used to extract poisons from his blood as well as your own.[31]

Thomson argues that the violinist has no right to continue to use your body. Should you like, you are free to demand that he be disconnected at once. Nobody, she argues, can be morally *required* to sustain the life of another in this way.

Thomson's argument does not rely entirely on intuitions about this case. Arguing for her conclusion, she says, "We have in fact to distinguish between two kinds of

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[30] Thomson (1971).

[31] Ibid, pp. 48-9.

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Samaritans: the Good Samaritan and what we might call the Minimally Decent Samaritan."[32] Recall that the good Samaritan went out of his way to help the man who lay beaten on the side of the road. After binding his wounds, he took the beaten man to an inn where he gave the innkeeper money to continue to care for him.[33] Thompson believes that a minimally-decent person is required to provide some assistance to the man, but cannot be required to go as far as the good Samaritan does to aid the injured man. The difference between the good Samaritan and the minimally-decent Samaritan is that the latter does only what is morally required of him while the former does more than what can legitimately be demanded of him. Individuals are required to provide assistance, whether to a beaten man or to the unconscious violinist, but one is not required to make significant and life altering sacrifices in order to support another.

Thomson compares the story of the good Samaritan to case of Kitty Genovese, who was raped and murdered while dozens of bystanders listened to the crime take place from their apartments.[34] None of those people, Thomson argues, were morally required to risk their life to assist Genovese, but they were required to call 911, which many failed to do. Had someone gone out of their way to assist Geneovese their action would have been heroic - truly the actions of a 'good' person. Those who merely dialed 911, and reports

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[32] Ibid., p. 62.

[33] Luke 10: 27-37. See the Discussion in Chapter 4, Section 4.

[34] Gansberg, M. (1964), "Thirty-eight who saw murder didn't call the police." This New York Times piece claimed that there were thirty-eight 'eyewitnesses,' while future interviews showed that many individuals only heard the murder. The Genovese case has become something of a legend with some arguing that there is enough truth in the story to make it relevant, while others have claimed that it is little more than a parable. See for example, Manning et al. (2007), "The Kitty Genovese murder and the social psychology of helping: The parable of the 38 witnesses."

show that a few residents did, fulfilled their obligations. Nothing more can legitimately be demanded of them by another because morality requires one to be minimally-decent not good. That is, the kinds of actions that can be legitimately demanded of one do not include risking one's life to save another.

To return to Thomson's thought experiment, a good person would allow the violinist to continue to use their body for nine months or even years if necessary. A real life example of people who are good in this way are the good people who donate their extra kidney to those who are dying of kidney disease. Certainly this kind of sacrifice and risk cannot legitimately be demanded of all persons, but it is a good thing to do.

Scanlon's theoretical understanding of morality can account for the difference which Thomson develops in a more robust way. The principle that requires one to make significant, possibly life-changing or life-ending sacrifices to assist a person who is in trouble can be reasonably rejected by a rational person devoted to a way of life based on mutual recognition and respect. I can, for example, reject the principle that requires me to undergo invasive, though relatively minor, laproscopic surgery to donate a kidney to another who is in need. One cannot legitimately demand this of me because a reasonable person can reject the principle on which the action is based. Dialing 911, a minor action that may require me to get involved in a criminal case but probably will not have a significant impact on my life, can be demanded of me because it is not reasonable for me to reject principles which require me to take minimal and risk-free actions to assist a person in need. Thus, we can explain the difference between minimally-decent and good

Samaritans in terms of the principles on which they act. The minimally-decent person makes only those sacrifices which are required by principles which he cannot reasonably reject and no others. The good person, to contrast, goes 'beyond the call of duty' and makes sacrifices that cannot reasonably be demanded of her.

When one wants to parse out a statement such as murder is wrong on Scanlon's approach, the procedure is quite clear. Murder is based on a principle that can be reasonably rejected and so, whatever reasons one has for murdering, one should not commit murder. Similarly, the claim, "One should dial 911 during an emergency," gains its normative force from the fact that the principle which requires dialing 911 cannot be reasonably rejected. However, claims like "You should donate a significant amount of money to charity," or "You should go downstairs to help the woman who has been raped and stabbed." do not have this form. These actions stem from principles that can be reasonably rejected. Their normative force, then, does not stem from considerations of what reasons that can be justified to others and which principles others cannot reasonably reject.

Contractualist systems such as Scanlon's delineate which actions are required, forbidden, or permissible. These prohibitions and requirements derive their normative force from the structure under which they are formulated. Actions that are prohibited are not based on principles that would be acted upon by reasonable people. Actions that are required are based on principles which reasonable people should always act. Some claims, then, have normative force because we are, or so the story goes, reasonable

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people. Supererogatory actions cannot be demanded of others and principles that require supererogatory action can reasonably be rejected. Thus, the reason-giving force of a claim that one should perform a supererogatory action is not derived from the considerations outlined by the contractualist. Thus, it is not simply that Scanlon does not want to account for the reason-giving force of these statements, it is also the case that his theory cannot do so. As such actions cannot be demanded, they cannot be fully understood by a contractualist theory of morality.

§6. Does the account of love I have offered demand more than can be legitimately asked of others? That is, is loving others supererogatory? If so, then the claim that one should love others does not express a moral obligation.

Consider first the story that motivates Judith Jarvis Thomson: the gospel parable of the Good Samaritan. A lawyer has been told to "love his neighbor as he loves himself" and asks Jesus who his neighbor is. The story of the good Samaritan follows. In this story, a Samaritan comes across a man who lay beaten by the side of the road and not only gives him aid, but takes him to an inn and provides money for his recovery. The Samaritan is the one who was a neighbor to the injured man and loved him. Thomson has argued that the behavior of the Samaritan goes beyond what can legitimately be demanded of one. I agree. Loving a homeless person, for instance, requires more than simply giving him or a service organization money. If one truly loves the man, one would, quite like the Samaritan, do whatever is possible to ameliorate the man's

suffering. This would be a very good thing to do, but I do not think it is reasonable to demand that another do it.[35]

One does much more for those whom one loves than can be legitimately demanded of one by strangers. Suppose that Carlos has an elderly neighbor who has recently lost his wife. The man has no children near by, and so Carlos stops by the house every few days to perform odd jobs, check in, keep his neighbor company, and so on. On the account I have given, Carlos is, quite literally, loving his neighbor. I think it reasonable to say both that Carlos is doing something good and that more people should love their neighbors as he does. However, I do not think it reasonable to say that Carlos is morally required, in the secular sense, to love his neighbor in this way, or that his neighbor could legitimately demand that Carlos devote so much time to his welfare.[36] Those who are, unlike Carlos, friendly to their neighbors without going to great lengths to contribute to the neighbor's welfare are not doing anything *wrong* because they are not failing to meet any legitimate demands.

The account of love I have offered is too demanding to be a morally obligatory way of relating to others. This is because a principle requiring that one love another can reasonably be rejected by people who value living in a community of mutual recognition.

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[35] I am *using* the parable of the Good Samaritan to make a point about morality and not a point about theology. The categories I am utilizing in this chapter become more complex when they are employed within the Christian moral / theological framework. This is because Christianity combines demands that cannot be met (Jesus admits this when he claims that God alone has the power to save a person (Mark 10:26)) with a merciful and forgiving God. God's unlimited forgiveness makes it the case that unreasonable demands can be made.

[36] Carlos cannot be indifferent to this man's welfare, and he cannot refuse to help in certain ways when asked. His current level of aid, however, goes beyond what is required of him.

While we could weaken the account of love in order to make it morally obligatory, it is important to avoid this move. Many philosophers have gone this route. Gene Outka weakens love to a form of respect for others and then argues that love can ground human rights.[37] The imperative to love others, on his account, does not express a demand to contribute to the well-being of the loved-one or to bestow practical benefits on him, but demands that one respect the loved-one. Reducing love to a form of respect is not a new move. Kant appears to move in this direction when he rejects affective love as a possible basis for morality, but then argues that the demands of the categorical imperative can be understood as a form of *practical* love.[38]

In his extensive work on *Eros and Agape,* Anders Nygren warns against such a move because he claims that it bars understanding of the topic. If the account of love is reduced or modified in order to meet the demands of *our* morality, we are no longer able to understand the ways in which the claim that one should love others challenges that system.[39] Properly understood the imperative calls for a reorientation and revaluation of one's values and goals in life. In so far as we weaken the account so that it fits our conventional understanding of morality, we move away from the challenge as it is presented.

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[37] Outka (1972).

[38] Consider this line from Kant (1996), *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:451. "Now the benevolence present in love for all human beings is indeed the greatest in its extent, but the smallest in degree; and when I say I take an interest in this human's well-being only out of my love for all human beings, the interest I take is as slight as an interest can be."

[39] Nygren (1969) p. 61.

The challenge we encounter in this chapter is part and parcel of the imperative to love others. Consider the Buddha's claim that one have a limitless heart. The imperative to love universally as presented in the *Metta Sutta* is a robust, radical claim, and the text makes two things clear. First, having a limitless heart means loving every living thing without exception. Second, the kind of love that one is to cultivate is the kind of love a mother has for her child. He is recorded as saying, "As a mother would risk her life to protect her child, her only child, even so should one cultivate a limitless heart with regard to all beings."[40] In these two ways the scripture anticipates a tendency to weaken the claim and removes the option. Properly actualized in one's life, this teaching would require an individual to completely change and reorient her priorities.

Finally, an account of love which reduces love to respect, fails to capture our ordinary understanding of the term. When Harry Harlow began his groundbreaking research on love, he was often told that he should use the term 'proximity' relationship instead of 'loving' relationship. Once, while being lectured to about his word usage at a conference, Harlow lost his temper and yelled out, "Perhaps all you've known in life is proximity. I thank God I've known more."[41] When one loves one's child one does not merely respect the child. One's emotions, volitions, and active powers all join together to completely reorient one's life toward the loved-one. As Kierkegaard's Seducer says, if you love, "you have lost your freedom; you cannot send for your traveling boots

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[40] *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (2004), lines 26 - 29.

[41] Quoted in Blum, D. (2002), p. 2.

whenever you wish, you cannot move aimlessly about in the world."[42] If there is a family at home whom one loves and wants to support, the possibilities available to one are significantly restricted even if one can pursue other options without disrespecting those whom one loves.

Though one could weaken the account of love and say that love is mere respect for the rights of others, such a move encounters a serious and insurmountable problem. A theory of love that claims that love is merely respect for rights does not bear a close resemblance to the lived experience of loving. There are people who have great love for others and those people do great things. Our moral theory should be able to understand the way in which they live and the moral worth demonstrated in their actions and ideals. If, whenever we are faced with a normative claim that challenges the system of morality we have built, we weaken that claim, then our morality becomes unambitious, dishonest, and inaccurate. When faced with a theory that reduces love to respect, I am forced to echo the words of Harry Harlow. Perhaps all you've know is respect, but I thank God I've known more.

§7. We seek a philosophical understanding of the claim that one should love others. The account of love that we have arrived at seems to be too robust to be something which others can legitimately demand of one. However, the radicalness of the original claim must be retained, and the pull toward weakening the account must be resisted. If the account of love is weakened, we risk making the great love demonstrated

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[42] Scanlon (1998), p. 292.

by many into mere sentiment. While one could simply abandon the ancient imperatives as senseless, this is a desperate move to make. Doing so invalidates the teachings and actions of figures who are central to several world religions and lived philosophies. Thus, we must find another way to understand the account that explains the normative force of the imperative while avoiding an explanation that makes love of others morally obligatory.

To review the argument of the last three sections. Moral obligations tell us what we are required to do or forbidden from doing. This way of thinking maps on nicely to what Judith Jarvis Thomson has called "Minimally Decent Samaritanism." Moral obligations can only demand of us that which a minimally-decent person would do. I interpreted minimal-decency using T. M. Scanlon's contractualist theory of the morality of right and wrong. Minimally-decent Samaritanism involves performing and refraining from performing actions that are grounded in principles accepted or rejected by a community of reasonable individuals devoted to living in a community of mutual recognition.

While contractualism accounts for the plausible intuition that some actions, though good, cannot be demanded of one, it cannot account for the equally plausible intuition that one should perform those actions. Many individuals act in ways that go far beyond minimal decency. Such individuals believe that they *should* be a good person. Moreover, many believe that others should be good persons while at the same time agreeing that good actions cannot be demanded of another. I have advanced something

like this view when I claimed that I think more people should donate kidneys, give money to charity, and provide companionship and assistance to elderly neighbors, but that one cannot legitimately demand that others perform these actions. It is possible to think that though an action cannot be demanded of another, the other should still perform that action.

If it were the case that normative claims could only be made with regard to one being a participant in a community of mutual recognition and respect, then the contractualist understanding of this small part of the normative sphere would be sufficient to understand morality. But moral claims can be made in at least two other ways which are not, to Scanlon's own admission, covered by contractualism.

First, in so far as one is a member of a different form of community, one devoted to something other than mutual recognition, the principles that can be reasonably rejected will differ. This has been extensively discussed in the theological literature on supererogation.[43] For example, if one is a member of a religious community that embraces a vow of poverty, then a principle which requires that all monies earned be given away is not a principle that one can reasonably reject. Outside of the monastic community, however, the principle can be reasonably rejected. Less well-defined communities also exhibit this characteristic. A group of friends or a family, for example, might embrace certain standards of how one should relate to another that could be rejected by the moral community at large but which are reasonable within the group. As

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[43]   See for example Outka (1972), p. 306.

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Scanlon notes, principles are reasonable relative to a body of information and a specified range of reasons.[44] Claims about reasonableness that incorporate a wider scope than the simple shared desire to find principles that others cannot reasonably reject, though similar in form to the type that Scanlon discusses, are not extensively discussed in his work.

A second type of normative claim is directly related to supererogatory action and thus to the imperative to love others. I can say to another, "You should donate more money to charity." Such a claim makes a statement about the reasons you have for performing a given action, in this case giving away money. Your reasons for holding on to your money in this example are being evaluated and judged as insufficient for keeping an excess of money for yourself. The normative force in such a case is not derived by comparing the principles that you are acting on against the principles that can be reasonably rejected by a community of persons who value mutual recognition. When one says, "You cannot make me give money to charity," one is judging one's own reasons against the kind of standard that Scanlon outlines. Against such a standard, one's reasons for not donating money are good ones. When I say, "Nevertheless, you should give money." I am judging your reasons against a different standard. Understanding this standard is the subject of Chapter 6.

§8. I began this discussion of contractualism because of a need to understand whether or not the claim that one should love others can properly be understood as expressing an obligation. The imperative is clearly expressing a normative claim, that is

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[44]   Scanlon (1998), p. 32.

to say that it is making a claim about what one has reason to do, but is this claim arguing that one *must* love others - that love is required of one?

Clearly no such claim is being made. The argument of this chapter has identified why this is true. The contractualist system is capable of evaluating reasons for actions in so far as they can be reasonably rejected by a community of individuals devoted to a way of living that includes treating one another with mutual respect and recognition. Thus, principles that demand too much of an individual will be rejected. Furthermore, this system is only capable of explaining actions in terms of whether they are required, permitted, or forbidden. The imperative to love others does not make a claim that fits easily into any of these slots. Thus it is unlikely that the claim that one should love others derives its normative force from this procedure. The imperative does express a judgment about the kinds of reasons one has, but it is not expressing this kind of judgment.

The contractualist system developed by Scanlon leaves open the possibility that other spheres of morality exist, and he argues that his system of morality will need to take into account these other dimensions when making claims about whether or not a principle is reasonable.[45] We seem to be in agreement, then, that there are significant areas of moral philosophy that are being neglected. My aim in the following chapter is to show how the imperative to love others makes a normative claim on one by evaluating one's reasons for acting.

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[45] Ibid., p. 174.

CHAPTER SIX

Prolegomena to an Ethic of Love

Abstract: I argue in this chapter that the imperative to love others expresses a normative ideal. I argue that normative ideals capture facets of what is good in certain areas of life. I then argue that the normative ideal expressed by the imperative to love others supports various values including *philanthropy, charity, forgiveness* and *loving-community*. In so far as one embraces the ideal of love, one should recognize the goodness of these values.

§1. My aim in this project has been to provide a philosophical understanding of the practical claim that one should love others. This imperative, in various forms, finds voice in many lived ethical systems and draws the attention of those who are interested in living a morally good life. I have argued that the imperative to love others cannot be understood as expressing a moral obligation. That is, loving others is not something which one *must* do. How then are we to understand the normative force of the claim that one *should* love others?

In this chapter, I will explore the reason giving force of normative ideals. These ideals, I argue, make a normative claim through their connection to the goodness of a particular state of affairs or way of being. In so far as one recognizes that a state of affairs or way of being is good, one has reason to value the activities, practices, and character traits captured by that ideal. This is true even if others cannot demand that one pursue a given course of action. I argue that by understanding the way in which normative ideals shape and guide ethical thought, we can come to understand how the imperative to love others can make a claim about how one should live one's life.

I do not provide in this dissertation an argument for the claim that one should love all others. As it stands, all I have done is provide a philosophical understanding of that claim. While this may seem to be a significant limitation of the project, the account provided makes clear how the argument that one should love others *could* be made. Thus, many of the claims made in this chapter are starting points for further discussion rather than statements of a well-worked out theory. My aim is to provide a framework upon which a future account of an ethic rooted in love can be made. One who does argue that one should love others will need to address the questions that I raise here, and if she is dissatisfied with the answers I suggest, she will need to provide her own.

§2. Some imperatives make a claim about what one is morally obligated to do. The command, "Do not commit murder," expresses a moral obligation because it commands one not to murder *no matter what*. As interpreted in Chapter Five, the "morality of right and wrong" is made up of moral obligations. Following T. M. Scanlon's contractualist theory of morality, I argued that the normative force of moral imperatives that express obligations is derived from the fact that such moral imperatives are based on principles which cannot be reasonably rejected by individuals who value living in a community of mutual recognition and respect (5.4).[1]

Imperatives can also be used to make a claim about how one should act, but do so conditionally. These imperatives appeal, implicitly or explicitly, to a desire, need, or value which the individual being commanded is presumed to have. For example, if I tell a

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[1] As I have utilized T. M. Scanlon's work to interpret this dimension of moral thought and he does not call these commands 'categorical', I choose not to use that description of these imperatives here.

student, "You should edit your paper prior to handing it in," I am making a claim about what the student should do given that he values doing well in the course. I expect that he has such a value, that he recognizes his doing well in the course as something that is good, and thus I expect that he will be moved by my command. If he does not value doing well in the course, but desires instead to fail, then my imperative has not given him reason to edit his paper. Hypothetical imperatives do not tell one what one *must* do, but what one *should* do given certain antecedent values, needs, and desires.[2]

Hypothetical imperatives need not be connected to trivial desires or issue only in trivial demands. Consider the claim, "You should stop smoking." Such a claim is implicitly tied to the value of living a long and healthy life. Supposing that one does not value a long life or supposing that one believes that the claim that smoking detracts from health is false, then one will not be moved by the imperative. In most circumstances, one assumes that an individual *does* value a long life free of cancers and emphysema, and so one assumes that the command will move her to act. While hypothetical imperatives do not and should not be used to account for moral obligations, they are a common way of making claims on others. Much of our 'should-ing' comes in the form of hypothetical imperatives, and they are of equal importance when considering the ways in which one individual tells another what she should do.

Hypothetical imperatives make practical claims by evaluating the reasons that a given individual has to act and judging those reasons against the standard of the values,

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[2] I speak of hypothetical imperatives to delineate those imperatives that are contingent on some antecedent state. I do not mean to capture or replicate the analysis given by Kant.

needs, and desires which it is presumed that the individual has. Some actions or ways of living, as a matter of fact, lead to better health and a longer life than others. One who wants to live a longer life and have better immediate health has reason to engage in those actions that will enable her to do so. It is generally assumed, in our everyday conversations with one another, that one values a long and healthy life. Thus, there is rarely any need to investigate whether an individual embraces this particular value when making claims about what he should do.

One way to reject a hypothetical imperative is to reject the connection between a given action and the desire or value to which it is connected. Smokers do this when they tell a story about their grandfather who began smoking when he was twelve, smoked his entire life, and died of natural causes when he was ninety-seven. These stories are often true. The point of telling such a story is to break the connection between smoking and bad health by showing that smoking need not necessarily detract from a healthy life.[3] Of course, there are many stories that do not end so well which are not being told. However, the smoker tells such a story so that she can maintain the claim that the value of a long life is not incompatible with smoking. If it is the case that her values and her actions are not incompatible, then the imperative does not give her reason to act in a different way.

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[3] Another common method, also used by alcoholics, is to admit that smoking is detracting from long term health, but to claim that some other more important value is served by continuing to smoke or drink. One might say, for example, that "alcohol is the only positive thing left in my life . . . I have to drink to survive, let alone to have any comfort (Anonymous 2001, p. 365)." This person thinks that all opportunities for a good life have been exhausted. Alcohol is not the cause of one's problems, but the only thing that gives one any comfort. Such rationalizations and mischaracterizations allow the addiction to continue despite the acknowledgment that the addiction is harmful.

At times hypothetical imperatives make an evaluative claim about the values, needs, and desires that one *should* have. When I tell my students that they should proofread their essays, I am not simply saying, "If you desire a good grade, proofread your essay." My statement also contains an implicit evaluation of their values and desires. I think that if they do not value making good grades, they *should* value making good grades. What grounds this further evaluation is the subject of much debate.[4] In this case, a teacher may believe that writing well and being rewarded with a good grade is directly connected with something which students do value and desire, mainly a successful career. Thus, the teacher's evaluation of the desires which students should have is simply a rational inference from the desires that they already do have. Those who desire to be successful should also desire to make good grades. This is a common way of explaining to someone why they should perform a given action.

I noted in my introduction that a complete understanding of the imperative to love others would answer three questions. (1) What does it mean to love another? (2) How does the claim derive normative force? and (3) Why should one love others? I said there that I would only attempt to answer the first two questions. Thus, I will leave aside the question of why one should adopt certain values. A complete answer to the third question would need to explain why one should adopt the end of love, but this lies outside of the scope of this project.

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[4]   The work of Philipa Foot (1978; 2001) has been influential in fostering this debate and her own evolving understanding of morality illustrates the many ways in which this question can be answered.

§3. The imperative to love others is a hypothetical imperative. This is explicit in many texts that issue the imperative. For example, the ancient Chinese philosopher Mozi ends each of his three arguments for universal love with a different reason to love universally. The first argument ends with a utilitarian claim; communities will be safer and more stable if those in them love one another.[5] The second ends with a political claim; the emperor who practices universal love will create a flourishing empire.[6] The final argument ends with a claim about individuals. Mozi is recorded as saying,

> Therefore, universal love is really the way of the sage-kings. It is what gives peace to the rulers and sustenance to the people. The gentleman would do well to understand and practice universal love; then he would be gracious as a ruler, loyal as a minister, affectionate as a father, filial as a son, courteous as an elder brother, and respectful as a younger brother. *So, if the gentleman desires to be a gracious ruler, a loyal minister, an affectionate father, a filial son, a courteous elder brother, and a respectful younger brother, then universal love must be practiced.*[7]

One who practices universal love will obtain, Mozi claims, those virtues laid out in this paragraph and become a certain kind of person. He will be a loving son, an affectionate father, and so on. In this case, the imperative to love universally is explicitly expressed as a hypothetical imperative. One who does not desire the virtues listed by Mozi has no reason to love universally.

The imperative to love universally is also expressed by the Buddha, and there too the claim is made in a way that clearly connects it to benefits which will come to the one

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5   Mozi, (2010). Part 2, Book 14, *Jian Ai, Shang.*

6   Ibid., Part 2, Book 15, *Jian Ai, Zhong.*

7   Ibid., Part 2, Book 16, *Jian Ai, Xia,* p. 165. Emphasis added

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who loves. The Buddha promises a life that is free of suffering (*dukkha*), and he says that loving all others, "as a mother does her only son" is instrumental to achieving freedom from suffering.[8] In the *Metta Sutta* we are told that love will enable one to "break through to this state of peace," and achieve a state of "sublime abiding."[9] Here again, the imperative clearly has hypothetical form. If you want to be at peace, to live a life free of suffering, then you should love others.

That these imperatives are issued as hypothetical imperatives is not an accident. Buddhism and Mohism are *perfectionist* systems of ethics. Each articulates an ideal state and then suggests the path that will lead one to that state. In Buddhism, this path is explicit. The Buddha is recorded as laying out eight steps that must be followed if freedom from suffering is to be achieved.[10] In Mohism, the ideal state is that of a gentleman and sage-king, and Mozi's reflections on universal love are meant to lead one to that state. This mode of ethical reasoning is not unique to Eastern thinkers. Many ancient Western theories of ethics are perfectionist and all contain perfectionist elements. The Stoics utilized the sage (*sophos*), Aristotle the *phronimos,* and Christians are instructed to "be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect."[11]

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[8]   *Karaniya Metta Sutta,* Snp 1.8, (2004).

[9]   *Karaniya Metta Sutta,* Snp 1.8, (2004). Such claims appear elsewhere in the Pali canon. See for example the *Daruka-khandha Sutta,* SN 35.200, "The Log Sutta," (2004) and the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, SN 56.11, (1993).

[10]   These are right understanding, right intention, right speech, right livelihood, right action, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. C.f. The *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, (1993), SN 56.11, *"Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion."*

[11]   Matt. 5:48. See also Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 50 and Aristotle, *N.E.* 1141a26-28.

Central to all systems of perfectionist ethics is the thesis that human beings are not as good as they can be in their present state.[12] The Buddha sees suffering all around him and believes that this suffering can be overcome. The only way to overcome suffering is to walk along a path that will purify and perfect one's mind. The Buddha's insights, not so much religious teachings as observations that are meant to be verified experientially by the practitioner, are now called the "Four Noble Truths."[13] The Stoic also sees the rational nature of the human being as undeveloped and under-appreciated. Seneca argues that the task which should busy one each day is "improving yourself, laying aside some error, and coming to understand the faults that you attribute to circumstances in yourself."[14] The doctrines laid out by the Stoics, appreciated today for their logical consistency and the depth of their conceptual analysis, where developed in order to enable the student of Stoicism to live the best life possible.

The task for one who wishes to argue for a perfectionist ethical system is twofold. First, the perfectionist must defend his or her claim that a certain state is a good state for a human being. That is, she must provide a philosophical defense of the goodness of the perfected state. It is not enough simply to say that one should aspire to be the sage. One

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[12] C.f. Hurka (1993), p. 3. On Hurka's reading, perfectionism, "tells us to develop some capacities and also defines an ideal of excellence (p. 4)." For Hurka, essential to an understanding of perfectionism is an understanding of human nature. I disagree and think that an understanding of what is good is sufficient. We need not go into detail about what human beings 'naturally' are.

[13] See *The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (1993). The four noble truths are that suffering exists, that it arises from attachment, that suffering ceases when attachment ceases, and that the eightfold path will lead to freedom from suffering. In the cited *sutta*, the Buddha is recorded as saying that the Four Noble Truths are to be "comprehended."

[14] Seneca, (1932). *Ep. Mor.* 50.1.

must defend and explain this claim fully. Second, she must lay out a path to the perfected

state and defend the connection between the path and the perfect state. The defense of the

path may be made by pointing to examples of individuals who have followed the path

and achieved the perfected state. This way of defending the truth of the teaching is

frequently used in the Buddhist canon. When the Buddha is explaining to his disciples the

eightfold path in the *Log Sutta,* a cowherd tending his cattle overhears the teachings and

embraces them. The sutta ends with Nanda the cowherd accepting the teachings and

obtaining enlightenment:

> "And not long after his acceptance — dwelling alone, secluded, heedful,
> ardent, and resolute — he in no long time reached and remained in the
> supreme goal of the holy life . . . He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life
> fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world."
> And thus Venerable Nanda became another one of the arahants
> [enlightened ones]."[15]

It is only when both the goodness of the perfect form of life and the path toward that state

have been defended that a perfectionist system is complete.

A full defense of the imperative to love universally would require that one provide

these two defenses. One must show that living a life of love allows one to obtain a life

that is good. This need not be self-perfection, but may instead be the perfection of the

community or of one's relationships. Key to the notion of perfection is not moral purity,

but the idea of completion or fulfillment of one's nature. One must also show how loving

leads to actions that will bring one closer to the life that is good. The defender of

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[15]   Daruka-khandha Sutta SN 35.200, "The Log Sutta," (2004).

perfectionism must show through argument and example that loving will lead to the state of goodness recommended.

My task in the following sections to provide a framework and example of how such an argument could be made. I do not give a complete argument. That is, I do not think that the reader is provided with sufficient reasons to adopt my view. Rather, I hope to show that such an argument is philosophically viable and that there is no need for philosophers to shy away from perfectionist moral thinking.

§4. In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Iris Murdoch would return philosophical ethics to the study and quest for an understanding of the Good.[16] Her claim is not academic. She does not argue that philosophers should write more about what is good or that the theoretical study of moral philosophy should focus more on goodness. Rather, she believes that philosophers should return to the ancient practice of searching for what is good and trying to articulate where they have experienced goodness. The discipline of philosophy would continue, but philosophers would now, like scientists and explorers, be reporting what they had found. Such a project would be beneficial because of the central role which the concept of goodness plays in the lives of most people. By returning to goodness, Murdoch thinks, philosophy would once again yield conclusions relevant to practical life.

Her argument is rooted in her belief that most individuals are trying to transcend their mundane lives and be good.[17] Outside of the philosophical journals, which often

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[16] Murdoch (1992), pp. 378 & 399-400. See also Murdoch (2001), p. 51.

[17] Murdoch (1992), p. 56.

focus on tragic dilemmas and strange cases, "the struggle against evil, the love of what is good, the inspired enjoyment of beauty, the discovery and perception of holiness, continues all the time in the privacy of human souls."[18] If moral philosophy has lost something it is a responsiveness to the normal human yearning to live a good life.[19] She sees this yearning in individuals' attraction to figures such as Christ and the Buddha. Such characters personify goodness and lead to an intense desire (*eros*) for goodness. She writes, "We yearn for the transcendent, for God, for something divine and good and pure, but in picturing the transcendent we transform it into idols which we then realize to be contingent particulars, just things among others here below."[20] God, Murdoch seems to think, is a metaphor for goodness, and our yearning toward goodness can be misdirected when we focus on particular idols or persons. Her claims can be retained even if we reject this theological assertion. Being good is important to individuals, and, as shown in Chapter 5, it is difficult for those pictures which currently dominate philosophical morality to account for the role of goodness.

Murdoch is an important critic because she advances not just arguments against a certain way of doing things, but also a positive view that can replace and supplement a theory that focuses on obligations. Philosophy has lost its focus on goodness which has, in essence, robbed it of its soul. Life-changing and inspiring work has been replaced by a

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[18]   Ibid., p. 458.

[19]   Murdoch (2001), p. 49, claims that moral philosophy is "unambitious" and "lacks optimism." It must return to questions like, "Can we make ourselves better?" and "What is a good man like?" (p. 51).

[20]   Murdoch (1992), p. 56.

philosophy that leaves the human spirit wanting. Morality, once an inspiring call to

nobility, goodness, and wisdom, has become a chain that binds one to a mooring post.

But we need not continue in this way. Murdoch has faith that the excitement and power

of moral philosophy and moral narrative could be rekindled if it returned to an ethical

understanding that appreciates the role of goodness in human morality. Morality should

not be understood as an external force - a law - that enslaves or is obeyed, but rather as a

natural, essential part of our human nature. "Morality must engage the whole man."[21]

This means asking not just "What is wrong?" but also "Who should I be?"[22] When we cut

out the yearning for goodness, dismissing it as mere supererogatory action or a 'soft'

topic to be pursued by a few *virtue* ethicists, we lose the ability to understand human

beings at their most humane.[23]

Murdoch is a faithful Platonist, and perhaps she has overstated the case that

individuals yearn for the Good. Her devotion to the Good is religious in nature and will

thus alienate many moral philosophers who seek to take moral philosophy away from

mystical ideas.[24] But leaving behind these ideas comes at a cost, because it does seem to

be the case that many individuals struggle to do what is good and hope to craft a life that

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[21] Ibid., p. 457.

[22] Murdoch (2001), p. 49

[23] A perfectionist theme. See also Jean Vanier's (1998) work, *Becoming Human.*

[24] *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* is often read as a commentary on moral philosophy and a work in the history of ideas, but Murdoch herself suggests that the work be read as advancing a philosophical morality. Late in the work she writes, "My whole argument can be read as moral philosophy. In any case, moral philosophy must include this dimension whether we call it religion or not (p. 481)." Her endorsement of Plato's *Eros* and the quest for the good is to be seen as advancing an argument about morality.

is good.[25] I recently ran into a young woman who spent her entire spring break volunteering, putting in over sixty hours of service in seven days. I asked her why she was giving up her spring break to volunteer, and she told me that she wants her life "to be about something other than herself." She certainly yearns for goodness and freely accepts those sacrifices which goodness requires. Standards of goodness guide her life choices, and, according to the argument of Chapter 5, more than obligation is needed to capture the morality that she embraces.

I endorsed in Chapter 5 the idea that acting on principles which one can reasonably reject is an important part of morality, but I opposed the idea that morality can be entirely formulated as such. For many individuals what *matters* is not acting on principles that others cannot reasonably reject, but being good. The extent to which principles are good determines the importance which they are assigned. In situations in which principles lead one to do something that is quite clearly not good, the principle will be abandoned. The beauty of her philosophy and her stories stems from the plain and unpretentious way in which Murdoch saw the struggle to be and do good in the lives of the often pretentious characters she studied. Her novels are replete with characters who struggle against the often petty challenges in their lives to do good things and be good people.[26]

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[25] One might deny this claim. A focus on actual narrative rather than academic theory proves this denial wrong. See for example, Robert Bellah's (1996) *Habits of the Heart,* Parker Palmer's (1983) *The Company of Strangers,* and Father Greg Boyle's, S.J. (2010) recent book about his work with gang members in Los Angeles County, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion.*

The trouble, of course, comes when we try to understand what is good and why it is so. What does it mean to claim that one life is *better* than another or that more *good* is done when one spends spring break volunteering rather than drinking on the beaches? Of course, most have an intuitive grasp on the usage of such terms, but providing an account of them is quite difficult. We sneer at the life of the idle rich and cheer for the undergraduate who makes a positive contribution to her community, but what account of goodness underlies these claims?

I think that it would be a mistake to try to provide a philosophical analysis, at the most basic level, of goodness. When confronted with the task of defining goodness in the Republic, a dialogue in which Plato seems willing to put forward theories and doctrines, Socrates backs down.[27] Asked to speak about what goodness itself is, Socrates compares himself to a blind man and asks, "Do you want to look at shameful, blind, and crooked things, then, when you might hear illuminating and fine ones from other people?"[28] Instead of defining goodness, Socrates goes on to speak in metaphor and allegory. Confronted with a similar challenge, G. E. Moore famously claimed that goodness is a simple, non-natural property, which cannot be defined but can only be known. He writes, "If I am asked 'What is good?' my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked, 'How is good to be defined?' my answer is that it cannot be

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[26] Such characters are ubiquitous in her books. *The Bell* concerns characters who are struggling to be good and pious in a planned religious community. *The Red and The Green* pits two cousins, one a British serviceman and the other a member of the Irish Republicans, against each other as they struggle to be good people in the days leading up to the Easter Rebellion.

[27] *Rep.* 506b.

[28] *Rep.* 506c.

defined . . ."[29] Moore is worried about conceptual analysis, but he is on the cusp of an important motivational question. If I ask why I should defend justice, one could reply, "Justice is good." But this leaves open the question "Why is justice good?" If it is answered that justice is good because fairness is good, the question why fairness is good is left open. At some point, when the philosopher has been backed into the corner, there is little more that can be said than "It just *is* good."[30]

In his letter on the "supreme good" of Stoicism, Seneca argues that one cannot describe the good. Instead, one can only point it out with one's forefinger.[31] While it seems obvious to me that some lives are better than others, it is not clear to me why this is so. I can, like Moore and Seneca, only point at such lives and say, "Look at this person. Can't you *see* that his life is good? Isn't it *obvious*?" And often it is obvious. Good people surround us, and they are often the subjects of admiration and praise. One is drawn into their lives in the same way that one is drawn into the beauty of a painting. However, I do not think that a careful study of these individual lives will yield a series of necessary and sufficient conditions as to what the good life involves. Thus, I think it the case that a philosophical account of goodness cannot be provided. If one does not understand why what Mother Theresa did is good, there is little that can be said to teach one. This is not a desirable solution to the problem of defining goodness, and it is not the sort of thing that

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[29] Moore (1903), Chapter 1, Section 6.

[30] I find Moore's question most interesting when it is read as a motivational question. This is in line with the view advanced in Darwall, Gibbard, and Railton (1992) who argue that the motivational component of the open question argument accounts for its continued interest among philosophers.

[31] Seneca (1917), *Ep. Mor.* 71.

one is supposed to admit in a work of philosophy, but it seems to me to be true. When all the cards are on the table and only goodness remains to be defined, we will find ourselves at a loss.

§5. Yet all is not lost. In this section and that which follows I will cobble together an account of an ethic rooted in goodness, using values that are, generally speaking, already embraced. Once the interrelationship between and hierarchy of these values is understood it can be seen how an ethic rooted in goodness can be constructed. The resulting structure also yields insight into the role that different values play in moral life and allows us to understand whether novel values are good.

It may be the case that it is impossible to give an account of goodness *itself*. But it is less difficult to give an account of goodness for a particular thing. Asked, "What is a good society?" one is not powerless. One can respond that good societies are *just* ones or one's in which there are broad *freedoms,* or where there is *equality* between people. If now asked what justice, equality, or freedom is, there are any number of conceptual resources that can be drawn on. The same is the case with a good friend. Asked why a person is a good friend, one can claim that the friend is *loyal* or *caring*. Again, these characteristics can be philosophically analyzed. Some progress can be made, though goodness remains undefined. Faced with less abstract questions one is able to answer by citing values that make a particular thing - a friend or a community - good. These *values* express judgments of what is good.

Asked why equality is good, one is likely to appeal to - to tell a story about - the way in which equality contributes to justice. The same can be said of other valued things like fairness, democracy, and freedom. These values are valued because of their relationship with justice *and* the belief that living in a just society is good. Thus, justice is higher in a hierarchy of values. By understanding justice, one comes to understand many of the values that are subordinate to it. None of these values are the same as justice, but each contributes to justice in its own way.

Let us consider another case with which the reader is hopefully familiar. The ancient Greek and Roman ethicists, the Aristotelians, Stoics, Epicureans, and Platonists, saw moral life as consisting primarily of the practice of virtue. A good person was one who was courageous, magnanimous, temperate and so on. These are, in my vocabulary, values. Each of these values was pursued and practiced because it contributed to and constituted what is good for a human being; flourishing or *eudaimonia*. Thus, eudaimonia sits above the other values in a hierarchy. Asked why temperance is good, the ancient ethicists can tell us about its connection to eudaimonia, and so on with the rest of the virtues. At no point are we told why we should pursue eudaimonia, it is assumed that we recognize that it is good and thus to be pursued.

For my purposes, I will call these master values - eudaimonia, justice, and others - *ideals*. Ideals define and illustrate what is good about a particular state of affairs or way of being. John Dewey writes that an "ideal is not a goal to be attained. It is a significance

to be felt, appreciated."[32] For example, the value of justice illustrates what a just society looks like and provides an understanding of what is significant in and important about a just society. By defining and illustrating a just society, the ideal of justice gives us an evaluative standard against which to compare and evaluate our own society. If I claim that the drug laws in America, which disproportionately disadvantage Black youth, are unjust, I am comparing American drug laws against my standard of a just drug law. Thus, ideals provide illustrations of goodness that can be used to evaluate ways of acting and being. In this way they are *evaluative.* The ideals that one holds enable one to evaluate certain ways of being and states of affairs as either good or bad.

Ideals capture the visual and imaginative nature of moral life. This is an aspect of morality that Murdoch believed to be quite important. She writes, "In thinking about abstract matters one instinctively produces images . . ."[33] and later, "Philosophers are artists, and metaphysical ideas are aesthetic; they are intended to clarify and connect . . ."[34] Our ideals, which are imaginative pictures (figurative rather than literal pictures) of a good community, good friend, or good person, show us what is significant in moral life and clarify difficult distinctions. Moral philosophy cannot rely on such pictures alone, but there is a role for them to play.

Once in place, a hierarchy of ideals and values can be used to exclude or cast doubt on novel cases. In modern political theory, there are certain values that are, so to

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[32] Dewey, (2002), p. 159.

[33] Murdoch (1992), p. 36.

[34] Ibid., p. 37.

speak, off the table. I know of no reputable American political philosopher that defends a non-democratic political philosophy. Possible forms of government such as tyranny or monarchy have been taken off the table, because such governments conflict with almost all those things we value. This gives us reason to doubt them. These forms of government also undermine our ideal of a just society, and thus we find it difficult to think that a tyrannical society *could* be good. In so far as our notion of a good society is precisely that society which incorporates the values subordinate to justice (equality, freedom, political participation) it is very difficult to understand how these other societies *could* be good.

The ideal of justice also shows us that our society is lacking in many ways. When I read Plato's *Republic*, at times literally a representation of the ideal of justice, I think of a society in which individuals are valued on the basis of the contribution which they make to that society. This is, I think, a crucial part of living in a just society, and when I then turn to a recent article[35] about the 23,000 teachers that were laid off in California in 2011, Plato's ideal helps me to understand why these mass layoffs are wrong. Ours could be more like the society in which each is valued according to her contribution. Plato's theory presents a helpful example because he makes explicit the good society which the ideal of justice illustrates by crafting an example of a just city. His idealism calls one out of one's private idiosyncrasies, the world as one creates and experiences it, and shows one what reality could be. Plato's work, and one could add Rawls, Locke, Jefferson, and King here, gives one a sense of why our society is lessened for lacking this feature.

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[35] Straight (2011).

The reader may have noticed that I have returned to *mystical* language. I have said that ideals 'illustrate' what is good rather than 'define' what is good. When it comes to showing why our liberal Western conception of justice leads to a society that is good, the job belongs as much to novelists, playwrights, artists, and poets as it does to philosophers. Philosophers have, better than any others, shown what our conception of justice entails, what it excludes, and how it can be formulated. These are the tasks at which philosophy excels. When asked to show why our conception of justice is good, some philosophers have done a fine job. Rawls' utopian society is inspiring in many ways. However, it would be wrong to exclude Whitman, Emerson, and King from the company of those who show why just societies are good societies. Indeed, these artists and dreamers often seem much better at it than philosophers.

Thus, as I understand it, a modern, perfectionist, ethic of goodness would consist of identifying those values which we embrace, understanding how those values are supported by one another, identifying the ideals that support many other values, and then giving philosophical accounts of these values and ideals. The ethic is rooted in goodness because its individual ideals capture dimensions of goodness. No account of goodness must be given in order to get this far, and this would be very far, for it would be an ethic that is internally consistent and can guide action.

What I have offered here is meant only as a sketch. It belongs, as P. F. Strawson said of his work on perception, in the category of "loosely ruminative," rather than "to

the species of *strictly-argumentative* or *systematic-analytical*."[36] However, I do think that this structure bears itself out in both common sense moral thinking and philosophical ethics. That is, if one examines the questions that are asked in ethics, how those questions are answered, why some questions never get answered, and why some questions are never asked, one will find the structure of ideals and values illuminating. While I do not expect the reader to be entirely convinced, I do hope that the general framework I propose is clear.

§6. By articulating the ways in which things can be made better, ideals teach us what is significant and important in normative life. That is, an ideal illustrates what is good. Ideals do not necessarily provide goals that should be met, but are sources of strength, value, and challenge. Love provides such an ideal. By illustrating a life in which others are treated with the high level of devotion and concern for their well-being characteristic of love, it shows us a kind of life that is good. Against this standard, one's own life can be evaluated. Thus, the question, how can I be good, is in part answered by the ideal of love.

'Love' functions much like 'justice.' While love is a value that motivates individuals to act in certain ways and create certain kinds of relationships, it is also an ideal that illustrates what kind of life is good. We can look to the lives of persons who captivate our attention, whose lives seem to capture goodness in so many dimensions, and explain the goodness of that person by saying that he or she is living a life that is

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[36] Strawson (2008), p. 51.

loving. For those who yearn for goodness, as Murdoch believes many people do, considering the ways in which the ideal of love captures goodness is a good place to start.

For example, most do not live in communities in which individuals love strangers as they love those close to them. The constant devotion and active concern for the well-being of the loved-one does not characterize our relationships with strangers or the global community. But we can imagine what such a community might look like. Thus, like Martin Luther King Jr., one can 'dream' of a society in which people of all races and creeds "sit down together at the table of brotherhood." In this community there are no minorities, underrepresented groups, or disadvantaged persons, for love has evened out all inequalities. "The rough ground has become level and the rugged places a plain."[37] King dreams of Isaiah's peaceable kingdom,[38] and against this vision he evaluates the society in which we live. In doing so, he does not make a claim about how our society is wrong or what it must do to improve itself, but a claim about what our society could be and how we could get there. If his vision captivates us, as it captivated America for some time, we will recognize that our society is better if it values those activities and ways of being supported by the ideal of love.

§7. Ideals support other values. By showing what ways of acting or states of being are good, they show what should be valued in life. Thus, if love plays the role of an ideal - or master value - it should support other values. In this section, I will consider four values supported by love. In so far as one hopes to live a good life, one should embrace

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[37]   From King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Available at www.americanrhetoric.com.

[38]   Isaiah 40: 4-5.

these values. A *good* life will recognize the value of philanthropy, charity, loving-community, and forgiveness. One will be willing to make sacrifices to further these values and will be motivated to act in those ways likely to bring them about.

(1) Consider first philanthropy. It must be admitted that it is impossible to love all others as individuals in the sense described in Chapters 1-3. I argued there that love of another is the love of an individual. This standard was retained even though it makes the love of all individuals impossible. There are simply too many people on earth for one to love each person as an individual. However, there are ways in which individuals can actively participate in love for all others *as an aggregate*. That is, one can love *humanity*.

One loves humanity by working in ways that contribute to the well-being of other people as understood objectively. Recall from Chapter 2 that objective well-being is that understanding of well-being which contributes to the individual as a token of the type human being. This understanding of well-being does not incorporate the unique situation and characteristics of the individual. The love of humanity recognizes the particularity of humanity, but the particularity of the individual is lost. The object of love in the latter case is different from the object of love in the former case, and the two forms of love should not be confused.[39] When one loves individuals the individual is the object of love. *Her* well-being defines and drives loving action. When one loves humanity, humanity, as

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[39] It is for this reason that Kantian inspired accounts of love, such as David Velleman's (1999), have a hard time accounting for the love of the individual. By claiming that one's humanity or practical identity is the object of love, they have directed love toward something connected to but ultimately independent of, individuality.

an abstraction, is the object of love. In this case, the well-being of human beings defines and drives loving action.

When individuals are understood as tokens of the type human being, they are objectified. This need not be a bad thing, for as tokens of the type human beings they have identifiable needs which will contribute to their well-being. For example, Martha Nussbaum has identified ten basic capabilities which should be secured for every individual. She argues that these capabilities are necessary if an individual is to live a life worthy of human dignity. Her list is not trivial and includes things like being capable to form loving relationships and to live without fear and anxiety.[40] Insofar as Nussbaum's capabilities are common to all people, they provide insight into the objective well-being of any given individual. When objective well-being is increased that individual's life is bettered. By working to provide these needs and secure these capabilities, one demonstrates a love for *humanity.*

(2) Philanthropy differs from *charity*. Philanthropy seeks to support and contribute to humanity understood abstractly. The goal of philanthropy is the long-term development of humanity. Martha Nussbaum's list of capabilities, for example, provides insight into the ways in which one could make societies better for human beings. Charity, to contrast, focuses on the immediate need to alleviate the suffering of others by contributing food, money, and time.

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[40]   Nussbaum (2011), p. 33-4.

When one is charitable, the object of one's love is still humanity, but the concern is now the humanity of a particular person. No longer does one aim at humanity as an abstract concept, but instead one aims at humanity as it exists in individuals. Human beings have objective needs, such as food, shelter, and water. If these needs are not met, the individual will suffer greatly. When one engages in acts of charity, one loves those individuals who are suffering in this way. One is not interested in furthering the greater causes of humanity, which are often pursued at the institutional level, but at alleviating the suffering of individuals.

Charity and philanthropy often overlap. When one pays to dig a well in a remote African village, one engages in both charity and philanthropy. The act is charitable because it will reduce the immediate suffering of many individuals and philanthropic because it demonstrates a concern for human well-being as such. In cases where one is contributing to foreign aid, it is generally best to pursue those projects that are both charitable and philanthropic. Doing so captures both the value of loving humanity and the value of loving human beings. Of course, there will be times, such as after natural disasters and war, when immediate charitable donations are most needed.

(3) The ideal of love also supports the value of a *loving-community,* which emphasizes the creation of loving relationships with more individuals within one's local community. By loving more individuals, one works to create a community of individuals who possess loving concern for one another rather than a community of strangers brought together out of economic need and loneliness.

Recall the words of Tsongkhapa, who writes, "At present you find it unbearable that your friends suffer, but you are pleased that your enemies suffer, and you are indifferent to the suffering of neutral persons."[41] Most of us interact with many individuals on a daily basis whom we do not love and are not even positively disposed toward. This might include one's neighbors, students, coworkers, people whom one regularly encounters on the street while walking to campus, and so forth. There are also shopkeepers, baristas, and the retailers from whom one purchases products. Many would be hard pressed to remember the names of even a handful of these individuals, let alone a few details of their lives. One *could* love these individuals. Doing so would take time and may require sacrifice, but the ideal of love recognizes that a community in which individuals love one another is a good community which should be valued. In so far as one embraces the ideal of love, one should work to build a loving community.

One can expand one's love to many of the individuals who occupy one's daily life. Beginning with *metta* meditation, one could cultivate loving-kindness and then act in ways that demonstrate a concern for the well-being of some of these people. For example, one could work to love those individuals who are regularly a part of one's workday. One might begin by having a conversation with the custodian who begins her workday as one ends one's own, or the postal carrier who visits one's house every day. One need not devote one's life to these individuals. It is enough simply to acknowledge their work and express one's appreciation to them. Simply working to treat these individuals better is a

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[41] From *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path,* quoted in Dalai Lama (2005) p. 29.

huge step toward being a more loving person and creating a community in which everyone is not only respected but loved.

It is easy to think that these small interactions are unimportant, but they are incremental steps toward the creation of a loving community. While small loving communities do not go a long way toward changing the world, they create a network of friends in which one's life takes on a meaning and purpose not found in a life closed off to the love of others. One need not be a great philanthropist, an Andrew Carnegie or a Bill Gates, to create a loving community at one's work place or in one's neighborhood.

There is a tendency to think that acts of love are trivial - that the contribution which they make is insignificant. Consider however a story that Kurt Kauter tells:

> "Tell me the weight of a snowflake," a coal-mouse asked a wild dove.
> "Nothing more than nothing," was the answer.
> "In that case I must tell you a marvelous story," the coal-mouse said. "I sat on a branch of fir, close to its trunk, when it began to snow, not heavily, not in a giant blizzard, no, just like in a dream, without any violence. Since I didn't have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the next snowflake dropped on the branch - nothing more than nothing, as you say - the branch broke off."
> Having said that the coal-mouse flew away. The dove, since Noah's time and authority on change thought about the story for a while and finally said to herself, "Perhaps there is only one person's voice lacking for peace to come about in the world.[42]

Individual acts of love contribute only the smallest amount of good to the world. Nothing more than nothing, as the dove says. Together these acts of love build a loving community that is greater than any great act which one person could perform. They create

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[42]   Quoted in Kornfield, (2002). p. 180.

a fertile landscape in which new loves and a stronger community can be cultivated and grow.

(4) Finally, the ideal of love supports the value of forgiveness. Forgiveness restores relationship and reduces anger and resentment toward others. Thus, if the values of loving-community and loving-relationships are to be obtained, forgiveness must be valued as well.

Leaving aside many real but extreme cases, forgiveness is an integral part of maintaining loving relationships. Human beings are not perfect. In any relationship involving more than one person, small slights, annoyances, miscommunications, and unthoughtful actions will offend and hurt those involved in the relationship. If individuals do not forgive, then these relationships will be impossible. Human begins have a need to come together in relationship, but loving relationships require forgiveness. Thus insofar as we value loving, we must value forgiveness.

This argument is comically captured by David Rakoff in his poem, "Speak Now or Forever Hold Your Peace."[43] The poem consists of a fictional speech made by David at the wedding of "Josh, his best pal once. And Patty, his ex." Josh convinced David not to propose to Patty before beginning a relationship with Patty himself. David's speech at the wedding tells the parable of the tortoise and the scorpion. In this parable a scorpion convinces a reluctant tortoise to take him to the other side of a stream on his back. The tortoise is worried that the scorpion will poison him, but the scorpion convinces him that

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[43]   This poem has not been published. It was read on *This American Life* (#389) on September 11, 2009.

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doing so would kill them both. The scorpion would not gain from killing the tortoise, and so the tortoise agrees to give the scorpion a ride. And yet, halfway across the river, the scorpion stabs the tortoise and both drown. The speech ends:

> So what can we learn from their watery ends?
> Is there some lesson on how to be friends?
> I think what it means is that central to living
> A life that is good, is a life that's forgiving.
> We're creatures of contact, regardless of whether
> We kiss or we wound, still, we must come together.
> Though it may spell destruction, we still ask for more
> Since it beats staying dry but so lonely on shore.

Forgiveness is necessary if we are to love. If we desire a life that is good - one filled with friends and family - we must be willing to forgive those individuals when they make mistakes.

There are other values that will be supported by the ideal of love, values like generosity, humility, patience, and kindness. Each of these values contributes to the goodness of a life in it's own particular way. What unites these values is that each can be explained in terms of the ideal of love. Love sits sovereign over them all.

§8. Many will not adopt the ideal of love for others and so they will not accept the values I have outlined above or others supported by love. They will reject the claim that these things are good. As the imperative to love others does not express a moral obligation but rather a path toward goodness, embracing the ideal of love is not something that can be demanded of others. Those who reject the ideal of love, reject also the value of *philanthropy, charity, forgiveness, loving-community,* and all other values

supported by love. I think it a bad thing when people reject these values, but what can be said of a person who does not care about the ideal of love and the values it supports?

An individual who does not embrace the imperative to love others appears to one who does embrace the imperative to have bad ends. Insofar as certain ends are more worthwhile than other ends, this individual's ends are not worthwhile. One who only concerns himself with making money and furthering his career, is pursuing a life that is not good. I mean this not in a moralistic way, that he should be blamed or punished for this, but rather that his life lacks the qualities of a good life. His are bad ends that do not cohere with commonly accepted standards of goodness. He is not aiming for the best form of life available.

An individual who fails to value philanthropy or loving-community has embraced ends that are not worthwhile. The reason that those ends lack worth is because they lack a connection to goodness: the ends that such a person is pursuing are not good ones. This judgment is made, I believe, in two ways. First, each individual has a strong sense of what is good and bad in his or her own life. One recognizes that goodness and badness varies from individual to individual. Another person can adopt different ends insofar as there is a way of understanding how his unique circumstances might make a different end good. Values that are translatable into values that one recognizes can be recognized as good values. If such a translation cannot be made, then the end is viewed as worthless. Second, values cohere. They are recognizably a part of the same thing. Insofar as a value does not cohere with the rest of our values, then it will be viewed as worthless.

Still, it is not reasonable to blame such a person. The best that one can say about him is that he has his priorities wrong, and what must be prepared to demonstrate through argument and illustration that this is so. Those who embrace the ideal of love think that being concerned with and acting in ways that will contribute to the well-being of others is what is good in life. While it cannot be said with *certainty* which ideal is better without putting forward a comprehensive theory of goodness, those who embrace the ideal of love are likely to think that this man is making a mistake. He is valuing things that ought not to be valued and this is a problem that he should resolve.[44]

A comprehensive theory of goodness, value, and ideals would provide a more complete answer to the issue of blaming and holding others accountable for adopting bad ends. That goal sits beyond the scope of this project. The ideas explored here are reflections rather than statements of a well-worked out philosophy. Questions of blame and worthiness can only be thoroughly answered when the relevant philosophical ideas have been fully accounted for.

§9. The argument of this chapter is a quick sketch of what could become a well-worked out ethical philosophy. What I hope to have shown is that positive ethical concepts, in particular love, provide a challenge for a moral system limited to the trichotomy of duties, indifferent actions, and wrong-doing. Were it the case that the full force of several generations of philosophers had been devoted to these questions, as it has been devoted to questions of obligation and duty, a more sophisticated analysis would be

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[44] An ethic of love is complementary to an ethic of justice, and thus I am not arguing that we do away with blame. Blame plays an important role in ethics of justice, but the role of blame in an ethic of love is less clear. See my Epilogue for a further discussion of the kind of moral philosophy I envision.

possible. What I offer here is a prolegomena to an ethic of love that can be used to supplement the ethic of justice explored in chapter 5. The two theories together can provide a robust account of what is good in human life and how one should live.

An ethic of love will recognize (a) that love is a normative ideal which provides a standard against which the goodness of individual forms of life can be evaluated, (b) that individual acts of love and the value of love itself cannot be demanded of another individual but must be freely embraced by that individual, and (c) that the ideal of love supports many values and illustrates why the values such as *philanthropy, charity, loving-community,* and *forgiveness* are good. Within these three criteria there is significant room for philosophical growth and development.

§10. The argument of this dissertation is as follows: In pursuit of a philosophical understanding of the claim that one should love others, I began by articulating an account of loving. In doing so I had two desiderata. First, the account of loving had to be secular. This limitation was placed on the account in order that a universal ethical claim could be achieved. Second, the account of love had to be robust. I aimed to best capture our intuitions about loving while avoiding the temptation to weaken the account in order to make it easier to provide a philosophical account of loving. With these criteria in hand, I set out to construct an account of loving in chapters 1-3.

I argued that loving necessarily involves activity aimed at contributing to the well-being of the loved-one as understood from the subjective perspective. In Chapter 1, I argued for the claim that love necessarily involves activity, showing that emotion without

activity falls short of love. In Chapter 2, I argued first that those who love work to contribute to the well-being of the loved-one rather than to fulfill the loved one's interests. Second, I argued that one-who-loves another aims to contribute to the well-being of the loved-one as understood from the subjective perspective. In Chapter 3, I discussed non-combative listening as a way to continue to love the loved-one even when there is a disagreement over what course of action will best contribute to the loved-one's well-being. I argued that non-combative listening is essential if unloving paternalism is to be avoided.

In Chapters 4-6 I developed a normative understanding of the claim that one should love others. The central aim of this section was to show that the claim cannot be understood as expressing a duty or obligation, but should instead be understood as expressing a normative ideal.

Having argued in Chapter 4 that love for others can be cultivated, I asked in Chapter 5 if there is a moral obligation to love others. I argued that obligations derive their moral force from a system whereby other individuals can make legitimate demands on one. As it is the case that others cannot demand that one love them, it must be the case that the *should* in the claim that one should love others does not derive its normative force from that procedure. Thus, the claim that one should love others does not express a moral obligation. I concluded in Chapter 6 that the claim should be interpreted as expressing a normative ideal within a broadly perfectionist framework. The ideal of love illustrates and makes claims about what is good. The understanding of goodness which it

provides supports and makes possible many values, including the values of loving-community, charity, forgiveness, and philanthropy.

If I am correct that the ideal of love supports the values of philanthropy, charity, forgiveness, and loving-community, - if these values can only be understood by understanding love - then it should be clear that a complete understanding of moral life is not possible without a complete understanding of love.

EPILOGUE

Love and Morality: A Look Forward

§1. Incorporating an ethic of love into our general philosophical frameworks will require altering much of those frameworks. These changes will be for the better, in that they will make our philosophical understanding of morality more capable of addressing and describing moral life as it is lived and ethics as it is practiced. Whatever theoretical power is lost, gains will be made in descriptive power. While a moral philosophy that has incorporated love may not provide a clean and simple decision making procedure by which moral judgments can be made, such a procedure will come at the cost of an incomplete analysis of moral life.

The central value of most contemporary systems of morality is justice. Justice includes the basic concerns of equality and fairness that preoccupy much or our attention as we move through life. Many will object to my claim that justice is a central value in most systems of morality. Justice, it will be claimed, is a political rather than moral concept. However, most contemporary theories of morality are essentially political in nature. This is explicit in a thinker like Kant. Kant's morality is steeped in the political vocabulary of legislation and law making. The tendency to think of morality as politics is also demonstrated in the common use of the notion of a 'moral community'. I do not think that this way of understanding some dimensions of morality is misguided. Insofar as morality attempts to understand how a community of strangers with few or no shared values can regulate conduct amongst themselves, the modern form of *political morality*

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has been quite successful. Morality, understood from the perspective of justice, is by and large a way of creating rules of conduct (laws) within a community of agents (the state) that can be enforced by the members of that community (legitimacy of authority). Thus, in a loose but clear way, the central concerns of moral theory, formulating rules, agency, and blame, are similar to those in political theory.

The morality of love, to contrast, is rooted mainly in our relationship not with one another, but with goodness. This dimension of morality asks not what I can demand of others and what others can demand of me, but rather what I can demand of myself given the values that I embrace. One's understanding of what is good for others and what is good for one's community shapes one's actions and draws one toward a life of love for others. The difference between a morality of love and a morality of justice, then, is not simply a difference in emphasis but a difference in both structure and explanatory power.

The creation of a complete ethic, one that captures both the morality of justice and the morality of love, will need to consider the ways in which the two conflict and interact. The morality of justice seems to demand blame - the laws must be enforced - while the morality of love calls for forgiveness. When forgiveness or mercy should be favored over blame is an important, and ancient, question.[1] Insight comes not only from studying cases where the two moralities conflict. In other places they overlap and yield powerful, multifaceted arguments about why certain states of being or ways of acting are morally problematic. Consider the vast inequalities in wealth that currently exist across the globe.

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[1] Seneca, for example, is interested in a similar question in *De Clementia*. He does not understand how a wise person can be both merciful and just. This was problematic because the virtues were believed to be unified.

The morality of justice shows that these inequalities are the result of unjust systems which create entrenched global economic inequities.[2] Thus, the morality of justice gives us reason to take seriously the global income problem. At the same time, the morality of love calls for these systems to be changed because they are detrimental to well-being. From this perspective, the fact that they are unfair is not nearly as important as the fact that they detract from human well-being. Together, a complete ethic can recognize both the injustice of the system as well as the badness of the situation as it currently exists. This is not simply to say that the wrongness of this particular situation is over-determined, but that it is wrong for multiple reasons and in multiple ways.

My own belief is that a broader and more complete way of thinking about ethical theory would yield much stronger views if fully developed. The morality of justice is very bad at explaining certain features of moral life. I focused on supererogatory action in this work to show one such limitation, but there are others. This is not a reason to abandon it in favor of a morality of love, because the latter is significantly limited in other ways. The morality of love cannot explain to us way it is legitimate for others to make demands on me to, for example, keep promises and behave civilly in a community of strangers. By ceding the proper territory to the proper theory we create an overarching theory that, though it may not be unified, is complete and accurate. Each theory can do its own work better when it is not perverted in order to accomplish the work of the other.

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[2]   C.f. Pogge (2002).

§2. Bernard Williams famously called morality a "peculiar institution."[3] His

veiled reference to American slavery is over dramatic, but it is the product of his struggle

to reconcile the moralities of philosophers with the powerful moral and ethical ideals that

drive the lives of individuals. His criticisms of Kantianism and Utilitarianism are laced

with claims that these systems turn agents into machines, conduits, and instruments.[4] As

philosophers conceive of it morality makes use of people rather than people making use

of morality. While Williams is often now portrayed as a "moral skeptic" this is an

inaccurate label, for he is skeptical not of morality but of the ways in which philosophers

articulate morality. They oversimplify the complexities of moral life and ignore the actual

experience of being and trying to be moral. He says,

> Its [moral philosophy's] prevailing fault, in all its styles, is to impose on
> ethical life some immensely simple model, whether it be of the concepts
> that we actually use or the moral rules by which we should be guided. One
> remedy to this persistent deformation might indeed have been to attend to
> the great diversity of things that people say about how they and other
> people live their lives.[5]

I do not agree with everything that Williams says, but I cannot help but agree that

the moral systems which dominate moral philosophy fall disappointingly flat. This is not

to claim that these theories are wrong, but that they fail to capture the ambitiousness of

human morality, its ability to draw us out of mundane, selfish lives, and the dignity and

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[3] Williams (1985), p. 174.

[4] These criticisms are spread throughout Williams' moral philosophy. They are especially pronounced in
Chapter 10 of Williams (1985), "Morality, the Peculiar Institution"; his critique of Kantianism in
Williams (1981); and his critique of Utilitarianism in Williams and Smart (1973). His disappointment of
the way in which moral philosophy relates to moral life is already apparent in his first (1972) book.

[5] Williams, (1985), p. 127.

value it can give our lives. Insofar as theories of morality fail to capture this aspect of ethical life, they fail to be complete moral theories.

In the course of this project I have talked to many good people, people far better than I will likely ever be. These are people who have undergone operations to save the life of a stranger, devoted their entire lives to charity work, and given up lucrative careers to pursue careers in service professions. The thoughts of these individuals permeate these pages. They all seem to possess a kind of yearning to do good, so much so that they pass by easier courses of life when a more challenging but morally better course comes by. Theirs is not a morality of chains, orders, and discipline. Strange as the ideas which guide their lives are, they do not participate in a "peculiar institution."

Bernard Williams would have us engage in a phenomenology of moral life.[6] This phenomenology must not be rooted in our thoughts about how morality should be experienced or our philosophical idolatry of a theory of morality. Our conversations must not be limited to those who are part of our insulated academic circle. Rather, everyone must be included in the conversation. If the moral lives of individuals instead of agents were investigated, the theories created would be quite different. We would find that most people do not feel weighed down by the chains of morality and few ask why they should be moral. Instead, people willingly participate in moral life, for in doing so they are able to act on their values and stand for what they believe. Morality, we would find, is not

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[6]   Williams (1985), p. 93.

something that controls them, but something that defines them. By standing for one's

values, one creates a moral identity for oneself.

§3. In the 1950s the one hundred thousand year-old skeleton of a severely

disabled Neanderthal was found in Iraq. Shanidar I man, or 'Nandy' as he was called,

suffered traumatic injuries while he was young which resulted in skull fractures, lost

limbs, limited mobility, and blindness in one eye. Yet Nandy lived into his forties - a ripe

old age for a prehistoric man. Ralph Solecki, who discovered the fossil writes, "Although

he was born into a savage and brutal environment, Shanidar I man provides proof that his

people were not lacking in compassion . . . He could barely forage and fend for himself,

and we must assume that he was accepted and supported by his people up until the day he

died."[7] The primitive community in which Nandy was born supported him despite his

weakness and burdensome disabilities. Other fossil finds have yielded similar findings,

showing that Neanderthals, "fed and looked after severely handicapped members of their

communities who were too disabled to contribute to the food quest."[8] These findings are

all the more remarkable when one remembers that it is only in the last fifty years or so

that our own society has begun to support people with physical and cognitive

disabilities.[9]

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[7]   Solecki (1971), p. 196.

[8]   Renfrew (2009). I owe my knowledge of this case to Xavier le Pichon's powerful essay, "Ecce Homo," available online at http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/2009/fragility/.

I imagine that Nandy's friends and relatives carried him around for twenty years because they loved him.[10] Leaving him behind would have resulted in his death and was thus something they could not do. And so they carried him, not because they were required to or because they had an understanding of the demands of morality, but because they could not bear to leave him behind.

In contemporary discourse, philosophical and common, there is a tendency to think of morality and ethical living as a system that restricts the way in which one lives, as a series of rules that constrain one's decisions. Thus, many philosophers tend to believe that the task of moral philosophy is to understand what our duties toward others are and how we must act in order to discharge those duties. This is an unfortunate and misleading way of understanding moral life, and I admit that I was first tempted and then discouraged by such a picture for some time. However, properly understood, morality does not restrict decisions but shapes and informs them, and ethical living is not about restraint but about possibility. It is, in the words of Jean Vanier, the project of creating a "union with the good within."[11]

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[9] Deinstitutionalization began in the United States after John F. Kennedy, the brother of a severely handicapped person, organized the Presidential Panel on Mental Retardation in 1960. Forced sterilization of the cognitively disabled was common for much of the twentieth century and was performed without the consent or knowledge of the patient (As Holmes wrote in *Buck v. Bell* (1927), "Three generations of imbeciles is enough."). The practice ended only in 1980. Stephen Jay Gould's (1996) epilogue in *The Mismeasure of Man* offers a poignant discussion of the effects of forced sterilization. The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed only in 1990.

[10] The Shanindar burial grounds give no evidence that Nandy was an important or royal figure.

[11] Vanier (2001), p. 11.

Far from being an easy solution or a weak, new-aged approach to morality, an ethic of love is an active, demanding approach to ethical living. Pope John Paul II preached during his first visit to the United States that, "Faced with problems and disappointments, many people will try to escape from their responsibility: escape in selfishness, escape in sexual pleasure, escape in drugs, escape in violence, escape in indifference and cynical attitudes. But today, I propose to you the option of love, which is the opposite of escape."[12] An ethic of love demands that one confront and recognize the native goodness and the possibility for developing that goodness which is present in one's own life. Rather than allowing one to run from this possibility, it charges one with the task of embracing it. An ethic of love refuses to let one rest on one's laurels and casts out all possibility of mediocrity.

The beatified Pope also wrote that, "all men and women are entrusted with the task of crafting their own life: in a certain sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a masterpiece."[13] Each time one chooses love over hate, forgiveness over blame, generosity over selfishness, or friendship over animosity one comes closer to making one's life into the masterpiece that it is meant to be. It is by making these *choices*, which are informed by reflection on love, goodness, and ethical life, that one begins to live a richer and more meaningful life in beloved community with all human beings.

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[12]   John Paul II (1979), §5.

[13]   John Paul II (1999), §2.

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