

CHAPTER 6 – ON RELATIONSHIPS AND THEIR VALUE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One I explained Augustine’s argument to the conclusion that we should love all people equally. Premise (1) of that argument claims that the degree to which we love something should be proportional to the value it has. In Chapter Five I argued that premise (1) of Augustine’s argument goes wrong when applied to love for people since it assumes that love is properly a response only to the value of a person as such. Drawing on my Chapter Four view of love’s proper grounds—i.e., those features in response to which love properly arises or is sustained—I claimed that love may properly be a response to the value of other features of the beloved, including certain of his qualities or a relationship between lover and beloved. Thus, I claimed that Augustine takes too narrow a view of the kind of value to which love may properly be a response. I suggested that this line of thought illuminates something of the proper relation between love and value, in partial fulfillment of one of the central aims of my dissertation. However, I also noted that it leaves much of that relation opaque—in particular, whether Augustine is right to claim that the degree of one’s love should be *proportional* to value in some

way, even if the kinds of value in view are broadened to include the value of qualities and relationships.

Ultimately, in Chapter Seven, I will argue that while the degree of one's love need not be proportional to the value of qualities possessed by the beloved, love *should* be proportional to the value of certain relationships between lover and beloved. That love should be proportional in this way will form the basis of my account of why we should love some people more than others in Chapter Seven. I will argue there that we should typically love those relationally closer to us more than those relationally distant from us because closer relationships are typically more valuable or important to us than more distant ones.²⁴⁷ To support this point, however, I will need a clearer picture of both the kind of relationships I have in mind and their value. Thus, in this present chapter—Chapter Six—I will offer such a picture. I will describe in some detail what sort of relationships may properly ground love, and I will sketch why, and in what sense, such relationships are valuable. I will conclude the chapter by arguing that close instances of such relationships are typically more valuable both non-finally (e.g., instrumentally) and finally (i.e., as ends) than more distant ones. Arguing these claims will leave me positioned to argue, in Chapter Seven, that we should typically love those to whom we are relationally closer more than those from whom we are relationally more distant.

6.2 GOOD FRIENDSHIPS

In Chapter Four I provisionally accepted Niko Kolodny's account of properly love-grounding relationships. Here I will refine Kolodny's view in various ways—or, at least put different language to it—to arrive at the view of such relationships that I fully endorse. Rather than the cumbersome, 'properly love-grounding relationship,' I will use the simpler terms 'good

²⁴⁷ There will be one important exception which I will begin to explore in Section 6.10.

relationship,’ ‘good friendship,’ ‘good familial relationship,’ etc., to refer generally to the kinds of relationships that may serve as proper grounds of love.

As noted in Chapter Four, according to Kolodny, good relationships of all kinds share three typical characteristics: they are ongoing or persistent over time, they hold between particular people, and they are historical, i.e., they depend on facts about the past, such as one’s history of attitudes and activity with a person, or certain familial facts (e.g., facts about who gave birth to whom, who adopted whom, or who married whom).²⁴⁸

According to Kolodny, at the most general level there are two kinds of good relationships: attitude-dependent and attitude-independent.²⁴⁹ In this and the next two sections I will address these two kinds, beginning here with attitude-dependent relationships. According to Kolodny, good friendships and romantic relationships are paradigm cases of attitude-dependent relationships. As suggested by the label, Kolodny thinks such relationships consist (in part) in certain attitudes one has toward the other person in the relationship and toward the relationship itself. For example, he thinks good friendships and romantic relationships consist in a pattern of concern “for one another, for the relationship, and for the pattern itself.”²⁵⁰

Kolodny also suggests that such attitude-dependent relationships often further consist in certain patterns of mutual activity between relatives, such as leisure, social, or sexual activity.²⁵¹ Of course, this claim is consistent with the idea that the pattern of mutual activity could be marked by long physical separations and breaks in communication. One thinks here of friends that live in different cities or of two lovers separated by war. In such cases there remains a *pattern* of mutual activity—e.g., finally being together again after long separations, exchanging

²⁴⁸ Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 148.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 149.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

letters every few weeks, or talking on the phone when possible. If no such pattern is in place—even if marked by long pauses in activity—it seems there is no genuine friendship or romantic relationship.

To flesh out Kolodny's picture and cast it in terms consistent with my project, it will be helpful to step through an example of good friendship as it develops from inception to maturity. Suppose two people that do not yet know each other happen to be taking the same course at a university. At first, they are not friends. If a good friendship is to develop, from the start each must have a certain basic set of positive attitudes toward the other, which I would characterize as a love of one's fellow human being or a love of one's neighbor, as described in Chapter Two. For example, each must be willing to be around the other and to interact in friendly ways—e.g., perhaps being willing to sit next to each other in class, make small talk, and to learn a bit about the other. Put in the terms of Chapter Two, each must have a tendency of will toward a thin kind of union instantiated by, expressed by, and produced by such activities. Similarly, each must have a general tendency of will toward the good of the other—e.g., perhaps being willing to share notes if the other is absent, or to pick up the other's pencil if it falls on the ground, and certainly to refrain from intentionally harming the other person. If one or both of the two were unwilling to sit next to the other, to talk to the other, or to help the other in such small ways—i.e., if one or both of them lacked love for her neighbor—then it is hard to see how a good friendship could develop between them.

Suppose, then, that each person has this love of neighbor for the other. Given my account of love's proper grounds in Chapter Four, the value of each person's mere humanity would serve as the proper ground of this love. As such, it would be an attitude that each might have for any other person under the same circumstances. However, if a good friendship is to develop, then each person must come to have further proper grounds of love for the other. As I suggested in

Chapter Four, it is quite typical for certain attractive qualities of the other person to play this role.²⁵² You notice that the other person is funny, or smart, or kind and this stirs a new kind of love for him.²⁵³ Typically, among these qualities is the fact that the other person appreciates or likes you. I take it that this discovery of attractive qualities in the other is what accounts for our sense that we “click” with someone; in such moments we come to see potential in the other for a genuine friendship. The new love is more particular than the prior love of neighbor: it is stirred by qualities that not just anyone has, and so it is a kind of love that one would not have for just anyone (though one might have it for others with the same qualities).

If all goes well, over time this new kind of love would draw the two people into a closer and more personal kind of union. Topics of conversation might range more widely and perhaps be more personal at times. Mutual activities might branch out beyond the original context of the course they were both taking and might include social activities that each chooses to do together. Each person might come to know increasingly more about the other. Similarly, aspects of the other’s good to which one might contribute, and the costs one might be willing to bear in doing so, would broaden. Perhaps one would now be willing to help him move into a new apartment on the weekend. With the development of this new kind of love and the union of which it is part, the two would have a genuine good friendship, albeit a relatively new one.

The development of the relationship into a mature good friendship would occur as a yet further proper ground was added to each person’s love for the other, namely, the friendship itself and its extension over time. As the friendship continues, the relationship and its history begin to take on a value and import of their own, distinct from the qualities one appreciates about the other person. A love properly grounded on the friendship and its history in this way would be

²⁵² See Aron et al., “Experiences of Falling in Love,” 251.

²⁵³ This new love might either replace one’s love of neighbor or might simply layer on top of it. For my purposes, it doesn’t much matter which.

even more particular than a love grounded on certain qualities of the other: no one but this person would have the same past and present relationship with you. In such a mature good friendship, the union between the two would continue to be instantiated, expressed, and produced by a pattern of social activity—by which each person was attentive to the other, shared with the other, gained knowledge of the other, expressed love and commitment toward the other, and was aware of these facts—but it would grow more robust over time as each came to know the other more completely. The aspects of the other’s good that one would be willing to pursue, and the costs one might be willing to incur in doing so, might also become more substantial.

Of course, the example I have described here might admit of variations. Perhaps it would be possible to develop a fairly long history of mutual activity with someone without coming to appreciate any particular qualities of the other person, or without that sense of potential for friendship. This might occur with a long-term coworker or a servant in your house. In such cases, perhaps it would be possible to shift from a general love of neighbor to a love properly grounded on one’s history together, without an intervening phase of love properly grounded on qualities. Such a progression might mean that the love one has for the other is of a different kind, according to its different proper grounds. Nevertheless, I take it that this could also be a genuine kind of friendship.

Furthermore, the kind of union instantiated between friends also admits of great variety. As noted in Chapter Two, perhaps there are some friendships in which conversations focus only on certain topics—e.g. collectible stamps or surfing. Perhaps there are other friendships that studiously *avoid* certain topics of conversation—e.g., a religious disagreement or one’s childhood abuse. Similarly, perhaps there are friendships in which the mutual activity pursued by the friends is only of a certain kind—e.g., taking a dance class together or having a beer after work.

In any case, regardless of such variations, the main point to see is that good friendships consist in what I have called union between two people. I take it that this claim captures Kolodny's idea that such relationships consist both in a "pattern of concern" for one another and for the relationship, and in a pattern of mutual activity. A mature good friendship will consist in both the present instantiation of union and a history of union.

Finally, I take it that a good romantic relationship is simply a particular kind of good friendship that instantiates a kind of union that ordinary friendships do not. While I will not endeavor to describe this union in any detail (my aims are served just as well by lumping it crudely with the union of friendship I described above), it seems to me that romantic union is distinguished from the union of ordinary friendship by a past or present sexualized mutual attentiveness and sharing between people, and perhaps also by certain feelings or emotions that typically accompany such activity.²⁵⁴ In other respects, I take it that romantic relationships are like ordinary friendships, as described above.²⁵⁵

6.3 CAN FRIENDSHIPS BE PROPER GROUNDS OF LOVE?

One might worry that my view of good friendships generates a vicious circularity in their role as proper grounds of love. In the previous section and in Chapter Four I claimed (with Kolodny) that good friendships may serve as proper grounds of love for a friend; here, I have claimed that such friendships partially *consist* in love for one's friend or romantic partner, insofar as they consist in union which includes mutual love (and mutual loving commitment) as one of

²⁵⁴ I obviously owe an explanation of what I mean by "sexualized" here, though I cannot give it here. I hope to take up this topic in future work.

²⁵⁵ One might think that sexualized activity is unnecessary for romantic relationships to be such. Perhaps there are certain "celibate romances" with no past, present, or future of sexualized mutual attentiveness, sharing, or associated feelings. While I think relationships of that sort are surely possible, I think calling them "romances" or "romantic relationships" is a misnomer. Absent the features I have gestured at, such relationships seem to me nothing more than ordinary friendships.

its elements. Thus, in these cases it might seem that what properly grounds one's love is one's love, which might suggest that in such cases love in fact has no proper ground at all.

Given this worry, it seems we should refine the claim that good friendships may serve as proper grounds of love. Specifically, it seems best to say that all aspects of such a friendship *except* your present love for (or loving commitment to) the other may serve together as a proper ground of your love for him.²⁵⁶ For example, the following features could, together, properly ground your present love for your friend: your past and present mutual attentiveness, your past and present mutual sharing of thoughts and feelings, your knowledge of each other, your *past* mutual love and commitment, your friend's present love and commitment toward you, and your past and present mutual awareness of these facts. In this case love would not be self-grounding or ungrounded.

Granted, if a good friendship partially consists in my present love for the other (as I have suggested above), the problem raised here would prevent us from saying that such friendship with a person is, strictly speaking, the proper ground of my love for him in mature cases. Nevertheless, in the case just noted—where our friendship *minus my present love* serves as my present love's proper ground—the claim is more-or-less that the relationship is the proper ground of love. And this sort of claim seems adequate to stabilize the idea that attitude-dependent relationships may serve as proper grounds of love.

6.4 FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The second kind of good relationship that Kolodny identifies is what he calls an attitude-*independent* relationship. According to Kolodny, familial relationships are paradigm cases of this kind of relationship. The main thing that distinguishes them from attitude-dependent relationships is that they do not necessarily consist in a pattern of reciprocal attitudes or mutual

²⁵⁶ Kolodny offers a reply of basically this form. See Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 162.

activity. Rather, certain historical facts are sufficient for an attitude-independent relationship to obtain. For example (to repeat from Chapter Four), that Amy is my sister does not depend on whether either of us is concerned about the other's wellbeing, or whether we communicate or spend time together. Rather, it simply depends on "a biological tie, or a fact about our upbringing."²⁵⁷ Of course, attitude-independent relationships often do involve patterns of mutual concern and activity—or union, as I would put it. Kolodny's point is simply that such patterns are not necessary for the relevant relationships to obtain, or for them to serve as proper grounds of love. Since I think Kolodny's term 'attitude-independent relationship' is cumbersome and can be misleading,²⁵⁸ I will use the term 'good familial relationship' instead.

Kolodny is surely correct that we can have familial relationships with people without having any present or past patterns of attitudes or activity with them. For example, if I had a distant sister, it does seem that she would be my sister regardless of the fact that I may never have met her and regardless of any attitudes I may or may not have toward her. That she would be my sister would come simply from the fact that she is the daughter of my mother and father (or at least one of them).

Could such a distant familial relationship serve as a proper ground of love? In other words, could it be a *good* familial relationship? It seems so. Suppose that one day my mother informed me that I was adopted and that my biological mother was still alive. It would be appropriate if, in response to the realization that I had a different biological mother, I became inclined toward some sort of union with her and toward her good. In other words, it would be appropriate if I came to love her to some degree. Indeed, these sorts of inclinations are very

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 149.

²⁵⁸ For example, he means to say not only that such relationships are independent of attitudes but also that they are independent of mutual activity. However, this point is not captured by his term. Moreover, familial relationships are typically not *independent* of attitudes and activities; it's just that the relevant attitudes and activities are not *constitutive* of familial relationships, for Kolodny.

common for adopted children.²⁵⁹ Thus, it seems that Kolodny is correct that a mere biological connection can serve as a proper ground of love.

The same seems true of certain non-biological familial relationships. For example, suppose that someone adopted a child without ever having seen her. In that case it would still seem appropriate that the adoptive parent love his adopted child simply because of the adoptive parent-child relationship that obtained between them. Thus, it seems certain non-biological familial relationships can also serve as proper grounds of love.

Cases of relationships that are familial in virtue of marriage seem less clear to me. For example, suppose two people are married in an arranged marriage in which neither of them has ever met or seen the other. Would it be appropriate for them to love each other simply in virtue their marriage, which presumably makes them members of the same family? Possibly, but the case does not seem clear to me. At the very least it seems likely that this is not how love typically *does* arise in arranged marriages (if it does). Rather, it seems more likely that each would come to see certain things about the other that they appreciate (e.g., good qualities), which would bring about love. Thus, I imagine that the best of such relationships would be more like romantic relationships as described previously—a kind of friendship—despite the prearranged familial connection.²⁶⁰ I am similarly uncertain about whether other relationships that are familial merely in virtue of marriage—e.g., “in-law” relationships—may serve as proper grounds of love. In any case, such uncertainties do not threaten my main claim as stated above that there are *some*

²⁵⁹ According to one article, at least 50% of adopted children search for their birth parents at some point in their lives. See U. Müller and B. Perry, “Adopted Persons’ Search for and Contact With Their Birth Parents I: Who Searches and Why?,” *Adoption Quarterly* 4 (2001): 8. I was made aware of this statistic and article by David Velleman’s paper, J. David Velleman, “Family History,” *Philosophical Papers* 34, no. 3 (2005): note 1.

²⁶⁰ Although I searched for empirical studies of love in arranged marriages that might inform my views here, I did not find any. Thus, my ideas here are pure speculation. In any case, not much hangs on the speculation. If I am incorrect—i.e., if love arises in at least some arranged marriages merely in response to the marital bond—then such cases are simply another example of the kind of cases I discuss above in which people sometimes (appropriately) love in response to a mere biological or adoptive familial relationship.

familial relationships (e.g., merely biological or adoptive ones) that may serve as proper grounds of love without any existing union.

What about bad familial relationships? Suppose a biological family member is a terrible person and treats you badly. Would love for this person still be appropriate in virtue of the mere biological connection? And would failure to love the person be inappropriate for the same reason? To answer these questions, it is important to see that proper grounds of love do not, in general, impose *requirements* to love. Rather, as explained in Chapter Four, in general they are features in virtue of which love is rendered appropriate in cases where it is so. Put another way, if you love someone and if that love is appropriate, the proper grounds of love are the features that make it so. If you do not love someone, even in the face of possible proper grounds of love (e.g., good qualities), then such possible proper grounds do not *necessarily* make your lack of love inappropriate. For example, if you fail to love as a friend someone that you just met, despite his attractive qualities, there seems nothing inappropriate about that fact.

Nevertheless, in the face of certain relationships it seems a failure to love *would* be inappropriate. For example, if you have a friendship with a substantial history of union (which includes a history of mutual love) it does seem that a failure to continue to love that person would be inappropriate because of your history together. Thus, it seems that mature friendships do impose requirements to love. Similarly, in the face of certain familial relationships it seems we have requirements to love. I leave it open, here, whether the requirements are moral or non-moral. The latter seems more plausible to me in most cases, though not in cases of parental relationships. It seems to me that a parent does have a *moral* requirement to love his child in virtue of the enormous developmental importance of the parental relationship he bears to her and the place of his love in it.

However, importantly, these requirements to love imposed both by friendships and familial relationships seem defeasible in most cases. In particular (to return to our questions), if the friend or family member turns out to be a terrible person, or does very bad things toward you, in most cases this fact implies that failure to love the friend or family member would not be inappropriate. For example, if your friend or brother (whom you love) murdered your spouse, then it seems there would be no requirement for you to continue to love him as a friend or brother: it would be appropriate if you failed to love him. In such a case, it might also be inappropriate if you continued loving your murderous friend or brother (as a friend or brother), though this is less clear to me.

A parent's love for a child may be a case in which a failure to love would *always* be inappropriate, even if the child did something terrible. For example, it might still be appropriate for a parent to love his child, and inappropriate if he did not, even if she murdered her sibling (his other child). Of course, we would expect the parent's attitude to be torn in a case like this—perhaps he would both love and hate her. But, it might still be inappropriate if he failed to love her. However, again, this kind of case does not seem entirely clear to me.

Despite the fact that what I will call *mere* familial relationships may serve as proper grounds of love without the instantiation of any particular attitudes or activities—i.e., without the union that constitutes friendship—as noted above, familial relationships often do include what we might call a kind of friendship. Indeed, it seems that mere familial relationships often generate an *expectation* of future friendship. When familial relationships do involve such a friendship, one difference between ordinary friendships and such familial relationships seems to be that the aspects of the family member's good targeted by familial love are often more substantial than those targeted by ordinary friendship. For example, it is more common to provide family members with substantial financial support (e.g., paying for university),

emotional support in very dark times, and care in the process of dying, birthing, or childrearing than it is to do so for mere friends. When issues of such gravity are at stake, family relationships seem typically (though not exclusively) to be the ones we turn to.

6.5 THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS

In what sense are good relationships valuable? And what, exactly, makes them so? In the remainder of the chapter I will try to answer these questions. To begin with, it will help to distinguish the notion of *final* value from the notion of *non-final* value.²⁶¹ Something has non-final value if it is good for the sake of something else good, i.e., if it is good in virtue of some further good or end that it contributes to in some way.²⁶² For example, money has non-final value: it is good for the sake of the good things it can buy us, such as food, clothing, and shelter. In the case of money, we can also say, more specifically, that it has *instrumental* value, or that it is instrumentally good, since money is a means to these further goods. While instrumental goods are the main kind of non-final good I will focus on in this chapter, it is important to note that they are not the only kind of non-final good, and thus they do not represent the proper contrast class for final goods. As Julie Tannenbaum points out, there are other non-final relations, in addition to instrumentality.²⁶³ For example, insofar as we might ski for the sake of a good vacation, it seems

²⁶¹ My discussion of these kinds of value is heavily influenced by Julie Tannenbaum's treatment in Julie Tannenbaum, "Categorizing Goods," in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau, vol. 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁶² We must be careful here with the "for-sake-of" relation. As Peter Geach has pointed out, the locution may be used in at least two ways: "the noun-phrase following it may relate to the benefit...or to the beneficiary." The sense in which I will use it here is that where the noun-phrase relates to the "benefit"—or "good" or "end", as I will prefer to put it. So, something is good for the sake of something else if it is good because it contributes in some way to some further good, end, or "benefit." I will not use the "for-sake-of" relation in Geach's second sense, relating to the "beneficiary." We generally use this second sense when we talk of goods being for the sake of a person. So, we might cut the grass for the sake of our elderly neighbor. Here, it is not the case that cutting the grass contributes to the end that our elderly neighbor is; rather, cutting the grass is done as a service to our neighbor, the beneficiary of the act. See Geach, "Teleological Explanation," 82. Geach attributes his distinction between these two senses of the "for-sake-of" relation to Aristotle.

²⁶³ Tannenbaum, "Categorizing Goods," 265–266.

skiing has non-final value. But, skiing is not a means to a good vacation; rather, it is a possible *part* of a good vacation. Thus, certain non-final goods are such because they are partially constitutive of some further good and not because they are the means to some further good. Thus, the “for-sake-of” relation that obtains between non-final goods and some further good is broader than the instrumental relation.²⁶⁴

Something has final value if it is good for its own sake. For example, hiking in the mountains is a final good. If I went hiking in the mountains and someone later asked me, “To what end?”, I might sensibly reply: “I had no further end.” Thus, final goods are goods that are properly understood as ends. But, of course, hiking in the mountains might also be understood as for the sake of other goods too. Hiking is a form of exercise, so we might understand it as for the sake of health, i.e., as a means to health. Or, we might understand it as for the sake of enjoyment. In that case, it seems best to think of hiking not as a means to enjoyment, but rather as an *instantiation* of a certain kind of enjoyment. This case is different from the case of skiing for the sake of a good vacation. In that case, skiing was not the *instantiation* of the entirety of a good vacation; rather, it was *part* of a good vacation. In the hiking case, hiking might instantiate the entirety of the relevant enjoyment. Thus, insofar as the instantiation relation is not instrumental and is not one of partial constitution, it seems there is a third kind of for-sake-of relation.²⁶⁵ In any case, the main point I wish to make with the hiking example is that there are many goods that are both final and non-final. Indeed, if we allow the for-sake-of relation to be as broad as I have suggested—encompassing at least the instrumental relation, the partial constitution relation,

²⁶⁴ According to Tannenbaum, the instrumental relation is distinguished by temporality and fungibility. For example, the relation between money and the things it buys is temporal: first one has and uses the money, and then one obtains the groceries. Money is also fungible: a ten-dollar bill or two fives will do just as well. Furthermore, one might just as well barter for the groceries as use money. Thus, it is a fungible good.

²⁶⁵ Here again I draw on Tannenbaum’s account. See Tannenbaum, “Categorizing Goods,” 266.

and the instantiation relation—then it seems there will be few goods that are merely final. Rather, most final goods will have both final and non-final value.²⁶⁶

In particular, I take it that good relationships have both final and non-final value. They have final value insofar as they are good for their own sakes. In other words, good friendships and familial relationships are good as ends for us. I take it that this point is related to Aristotle's claim that "a social instinct is implanted in all humans by nature."²⁶⁷ His thought is that it is part of our nature as human beings to engage in social relationships, including the kinds I have been discussing.²⁶⁸ Such relationships are so fundamental to what we are that if we tried to imagine human life without them, we would no longer be imagining *human* life. Rather, we would be imagining the life of some other kind of creature with a different nature.²⁶⁹ Thus, relationships are things to be sought by the human being, i.e., goods that, because of its social nature, the human being does well in going for. Put another way, our social nature at least partly explains

²⁶⁶ It may be obvious to some readers that Plato's tripartite distinction between goods in Book II of the *Republic* (357b-357d) is lurking in the background of my account here. While this is correct, it is worth noting that my account here differs from Plato's insofar as Plato voices the distinction in terms of the *attitudes* we take toward the various goods, and not strictly in terms of the nature of the goods themselves. For example, he suggests that a Type I good is one that "we welcome" for its own sake, that a Type II good is one that "we love for its own sake and also for the sake of its consequences," and that Type III goods are those "we would not choose to have... for their own sake, but for the sake of the wages and other things that are their consequences." (Plato, *Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004).) I prefer to voice the distinction in terms of what is valuable for its own sake or what is valuable for the sake of other goods since I think putting things in terms of our attitudes can lead to counter-intuitive results. For example, a miser welcomes money for its own sake. But, money is the prototypical non-final good. Thus, if we put the distinction in terms of attitudes, it seems we must say that money is a final good for some people and a non-final good for others, which seems odd. Instead, it seems better just to say that money is a non-final good, and to say that the miser has made a mistake in the way she values money. Yet again, I draw on Tannenbaum here, who makes the identical point. See Tannenbaum, "Categorizing Goods," 259–260.

²⁶⁷ *Politics* 1253a30. All English quotations from the *Politics* are adapted from Aristotle, *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson, trans. Benjamin Jowett and Jonathan Barnes, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁶⁸ Despite the fact that Aristotle's famous claim occurs in his *Politics*, it seems clear from his account of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book VIII)—which includes the range of relationships I have been discussing—that Aristotle does not have in mind merely political relationships, such as those between citizens. Recall that the *Nicomachean Ethics* serves as something of a preamble for his *Politics* (see *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I, Section 2).

²⁶⁹ As Aristotle puts it, "But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god." (*Politics* 1253a27-29) We may, of course, grant that the rare hermit or social recluse remains human without jettisoning Aristotle's claim, though in those cases we would likely require some sort of explanation for the atypical behavior.

why it is that good relationships are finally valuable (or good as ends) for us. It is part of our nature to seek them out.

That good relationships are final goods does not mean we are always justified in acting for the sake of such relationships; whether an act is justified is a distinct and more complicated question than whether the end of an action has final value. For example, listening to Beethoven may have final value and so may be good as an end. Nevertheless, if someone needs emergency help that you can easily supply, you will not be justified in listening to Beethoven there and then.²⁷⁰ Similarly, if one is in a committed romantic relationship, one may not be justified in pursuing a further romantic relationship, even though it might have final value. Thus, to say that good relationships have final value is to say that, under the right (justifying) conditions, human beings do well to pursue such relationships for their own sakes, as ends.

Good relationships also have non-final value. In particular, they have instrumental value insofar as they are a means to various further goods. Most obviously, those with whom we have such relationships often help us in various concrete ways.²⁷¹ For example, a good parent feeds, bathes, and clothes the young child he cares for. Similarly, my friend or my uncle might lend me some money. Or, my spouse might pick me up from the airport. Friends, romantic partners, or family members might even give their lives for one another on occasion. Good relationships can also bring us great pleasure. The social pleasures frequently experienced in friendships, romantic relationships, and familial relationships are surely some of the most profound pleasures of human

²⁷⁰ The example is Tannenbaum's. See Tannenbaum, "Categorizing Goods," 288–289.

²⁷¹ The idea that friendships and romantic relationships are ready sources of help fits with an influential psychological model of close relationships called the "self-expansion" model. According to this model, romantic relationships and friendships are opportunities to expand the capabilities of the self. The self-expansion model "holds that people are motivated to enter and maintain close relationships to expand the self by including the resources, perspectives, and characteristics of the other in the self." See Arthur Aron et al., "Close Relationships as Including Other in the Self," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60, no. 2 (1991): 243. Thus, when one is in a close friendship or romantic relationship with someone, her talent, her beauty, her intellect, and her material resources are attributable to the self to some degree, thereby expanding and empowering the self in certain ways. By mentioning it here I do not mean to endorse this model.

life.²⁷² Finally, good relationships have also been shown to modulate the stresses and strains of life.²⁷³ This list is, of course, only a small sampling of the benefits that may accrue to those in good relationships. Insofar as such relationships may benefit us in the ways described, it seems clear that they have non-final value—that, in addition to being good for their own sakes, they are good for the sake of the further benefits they may bring.

As suggested by my response to Augustine’s reply in Chapter Five (Section 5.4), what I have said here about the non-final (instrumental) value of good relationships should not be construed as implying that our motives for action in these relationships are necessarily self-regarding or self-seeking. Granted, in some cases our motives *are* self-regarding. We often enter such relationships with an eye to certain instrumental benefits. We seek a friendship to alleviate our loneliness or insecurity. We seek a romantic relationship for the pleasures it brings. We become parents because we think it will enrich our lives in some way. Moreover, some of our activity in such relationships may be motivated by similar considerations. However, it is not clear that this arrangement is so terrible or how it could be any different. The truth is, a lonely life without the pleasures of such relationships is not a good human life, and so to be motivated to and in such relationships by the prospect of companionship and the pleasures it brings hardly seems objectionable. Insofar as I inevitably have a stake in my relationships—they *necessarily* involve me, as one of the two people in them—it is not clear that this self-regarding aspect of good relationships could be different: caring about such a relationship just is, in part, caring about certain of your own attitudes and activities. And there seems to be nothing wrong with this fact.

²⁷² Though the point that healthy relationships are pleasurable hardly needs defense, there is some interesting discussion of the point from a neurological perspective in the social psychology literature. For example, see Acevedo et al., “Neural Correlates of Long-Term Intense Romantic Love,” 156. Aristotle has plausibly argued that certain kinds of friendships can bring us to take more pleasure in the not-necessarily-social activities of our lives. I rely here, for my interpretation, on John M. Cooper, “Friendship and the Good in Aristotle,” *Philosophical Review* 86, no. 3 (July 1977): 302ff. Cooper is interpreting the *Nicomachean Ethics* 1170a4-11.

²⁷³ Acevedo et al., “Neural Correlates of Long-Term Intense Romantic Love,” 154.

However, while self-regarding motives generally play some role in the formation and continuance of good relationships, there are several reasons for thinking that our motives to and in such relationships are not merely self-regarding. First, recall that I began the discussion of the value of such relationships by emphasizing that they are final goods, i.e., good for their own sakes, or good as ends. Thus, we typically do not go for relationships for *purely* self-regarding instrumental reasons. Indeed, we are frequently drawn into relationships by our *love* for a person, which need not arise via self-regarding considerations. Rather, as I have argued in Chapters Three and Four, love for a friend or romantic partner often arises in response to some quality of a person—his beauty, her wit, his virtue, her talent—and not necessarily some feature we find useful or instrumentally good.²⁷⁴

Second, the activities we pursue in the midst of these relationships are generally not motivated by self-regarding considerations. I bathe my toddler because she has chocolate in her hair. I drive my friend to the airport so he can avoid paying for parking. I ask my spouse about her day because she looks discouraged. I take my mother out to dinner because it is her birthday. I go snowshoeing with my stepfather just to spend time with him. When I do these sorts of things—the stuff of ordinary good relationships—I am not aiming at benefits for myself. On the contrary, I either aim to serve a need of the beloved or I choose the activity as an end. Indeed, it seems quite plausible that if all these activities were motivated by self-regard the relationships would distort and wither (if they continued at all), and the benefits one typically derives from the relationships would diminish or vanish altogether.²⁷⁵ If this point is correct, then insofar as there

²⁷⁴ Of course, love can arise in response to beneficial or useful features too, as Aristotle has pointed out in his account of the kinds of friendship (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII.2). Moreover, one might argue that qualities like beauty, wit, virtue, or talent are features we find instrumentally good because they bring us pleasure, and thus that love in response to such qualities is self-regarding after all. While I do not deny that love may arise in a self-regarding way (as noted above), my point here is that it *need* not arise in this way. Rather, often we simply find someone good in some way and we are drawn to him or her for that reason, quite apart from any self-regarding hunt for benefits or pleasure.

²⁷⁵ Something like the paradox of hedonism might be in play here.

are some relationships that resist distortion and dissolution, it seems that other-regarding motivations play an important role in them.

Finally, my reflections, here, on the value of good relationships should not be misconstrued as a claim that there is nothing bad about such relationships. Indeed, even the best of these relationships bring new stresses, strains, and vulnerabilities that count on the negative side of the ledger. Nevertheless, my claim is that on balance such relationships are typically more good than bad, in the ways I have described.

6.6 CLOSENESS OF RELATIONSHIPS

I will shortly argue that the value of good relationships—i.e., the value of relationships that may serve as proper grounds of love—is generally proportional to their *closeness*. However, to lay the groundwork for that argument, in this section I will explain what it is for such relationships to be close.

Above I argued that most good relationships involve union. I claimed that good friendships (including good romantic relationships) *just are* a kind of union. Moreover, while I claimed that good familial relationships need not include union (they might consist merely in a blood relation, adoptive relation, or marital relation), I also suggested that they typically come with an *expectation* of a kind of familial friendship or union, and that this kind of union is typically part of familial relationships. In short, union constitutes good friendships and is typically present in familial relationships. In light of this fact, when we call a good relationship “close” or “distant,” we generally have in mind the closeness or distance of the *union* it involves. Thus, in this section I will explain what it is for a union to be close, and hence what it is for a relationship to be close.

Recall from Chapter Two that union consists in five elements: (1) a pattern of mutual sharing of aspects of one's mental life, such as thoughts or feelings that matter to oneself; (2) a pattern of mutual attentiveness, i.e., both a persistent perception of the other and an effort to understand her; (3) mutual knowledge of the other, such as knowledge of her values, her likes and dislikes, her aims and goals, aspects of her history, as well as her current state of mind and body; (4) mutual love and (in mature unions) mutual loving commitment—a kind of love in which its two tendencies of will are particularly firm or fixed; and (5) mutual awareness of the other elements of union. I will sometimes refer to each of these elements of union as “dimensions” of union.

Union may be close or more distant along the first four of these dimensions.²⁷⁶ First, in the context of a genuine union between two people—i.e., a union in which the five elements of union are present—the more two people know or understand each other, the closer their union will be. Here, the greater knowledge or understanding of a person that makes a union closer is not just a matter of knowing further facts about a person. Rather, it is more a matter of knowing facts about her that matter to who she is, or that make her who she is. In general, this will include knowledge of the things that the person herself finds important about herself, though perhaps not exclusively (the person may be ignorant of certain important facts about herself). Such mutual knowledge can account for the closeness we sometimes feel to childhood friends, despite long lapses in mutual activity: we know each other well because we spent formative years together. Mutual knowledge can also partly account for the closeness we often feel to certain family members: having similar genes, having the same relatives, having grown up together in the same family and culture, our family members can understand us in ways that few others can.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Mutual awareness of the first four elements of union seems not to bear on whether a union is close or not. Such awareness just needs to be present for there to be a union at all.

Second, in the context of a genuine union between two people, a stronger mutual loving commitment will make their union closer. But, the commitment must be roughly symmetrical: if one person is very committed to the other while the other is not very committed to the one, a yet stronger commitment on the part of the first—making the commitments even more asymmetrical—will not make for a closer relationship. However, if two people have a firm inclination toward each other's good and a firm inclination to be in each other's lives, then this makes them closer than if they did not have such firm inclinations (again, assuming the other elements of union are also in place). Like mutual knowledge, strength of commitment often accounts for closeness between family members. Typically, few people are willing to stand by you in the steady way that your family members do. This commitment between family members often withstands considerable relational adversity, as well as separations of significant time and distance. It is part of what can make good familial relationships close.

Third, in the context of a genuine union between two people, that union will be closer to the extent that the two share thoughts or feelings with each other about the things that are important to them. Unions in which one or both parties avoid sharing aspects of their mental life that matter to them will, to the extent that they do so, be less close. Importantly, closeness or distance along this dimension of union assumes nothing about the particular content of the thoughts or feelings shared by the parties. In one relationship, a shared interest such as Star Trek or dancing might be the thing that the two people care most about in their lives. In that case, sharing thoughts or feelings about the interest might make the two very close. However, in another relationship focusing conversation on Star Trek or dancing might be a way of *avoiding* conversation about the things that matter to each person. In that case, such conversation might be a sign of a distant union. And, of course, people can make mistakes about what is important to them. A person might fail to recognize that he has feelings about a certain subject, or that such

feelings are important to him, and so fail to share them in a relationship. In that case, if the feelings are, in fact, real and important then to the extent that he does not share them the union will be less close than it could be.

Of course, no one is completely transparent in any relationship. There may be perfectly good reasons for avoiding certain topics of conversation in a relationship—perhaps we disagree with each other about a certain topic, and sharing my thoughts and feelings about it would only generate unresolvable conflict that might threaten our union. In that case, the union may be as close as it can be, given who we two people are. Nevertheless, it might still be the case that two other people who were able to share more freely could, for that reason, be closer than our current relationship can ever be.

Fourth, in the context of a genuine union, and up to a certain point, mutual attentiveness that is greater in frequency and duration, and over a longer period of time, also makes for a closer union. For example, imagine two unions that are identical except that in the first for the past two years the two people have talked on the phone twice per year for 15 minutes (on their birthdays, say) and in the second for the past 10 years the two people have had coffee together for 30 minutes every week. In that case (all other things being equal), I take it that the second union would be closer than the first, due to the longer period, durations, and frequency with which they have attended to each other (and perhaps also to the *way* in which they attended to each other, in person rather than by phone). Part of my intuition here may be due to the fact that more frequent mutual attention typically facilitates greater mutual knowledge and sharing in the union, which themselves make the two closer. However, it also seems that merely attending to each other more regularly, and for longer durations over a longer period of time, has an independent salutary effect on closeness.

Of course, there are limits here. Beyond a certain point, longer and more frequent times of mutually attending to each other would become stifling and might actually produce a more distant union, or dissolve the union altogether. Where, exactly, this upper limit on mutual attentiveness lies is hard to pinpoint; it is likely different for every union. Nevertheless, that there is such a limit does not diminish the idea that, below the limit, longer and more frequent periods of mutual attention make for a closer relationship. The frequency, duration, and period over which two people have been mutually attentive to each other seems less important to the closeness of a union than the first three dimensions noted above.

Given the four dimensions of union and closeness described above, a union could be close along certain dimensions and more distant along others. Perhaps you and your sister have a strong mutual commitment to each other and you know each other very well. These two dimensions of your union makes you close. However, it may be that you see each other only infrequently, and that when you do you do not typically share thoughts and feelings with each other in an especially free manner. These two dimensions of your union tend to make you less close than two people could be. However, these last two dimensions that distance you somewhat do not make it inappropriate to call your relationship “close”. Indeed, if union is in place, and if two people are close along any of its dimensions, it seems we would want to say that the relationship is close, though perhaps not that it is as close as any relationship can be.

Moreover, it seems that the four dimensions of closeness cannot necessarily be compared or summed to achieve a total measure of closeness for a relationship. As a result, there may be cases in which there is no fact of the matter which of two relationships is closer. Moreover, the picture is further complicated by the fact that there are different norms of closeness for different kinds of relationships. What makes for a very close adult friendship is different from what makes for a very close relationship with my young child. My child and I might be more attentive to

each other than my friend and I are, and I might be more committed to my child than to my friend. But, my friend and I might understand each other more clearly than my child and I do, and we would likely share with each other more freely the thoughts and feelings that matter to us. In such a case it seems there just may be no fact of the matter about which relationship is closer, given how the different dimensions of closeness stack up, and the different relational norms of closeness in play. Insofar as my account allows for this incommensurability of closeness in certain cases, I take it that such incommensurability counts in favor of the account.

Nevertheless, while comparative judgments about which of two relationships is closer do not seem possible in every case (both in reality and according to my account), such judgments do seem possible in certain obvious cases. For example, if one friendship exhibits greater closeness than another along all four dimensions of closeness, it seems obvious that the one friendship is closer than the other. Thus, the account seems to track well the amount of clarity that we generally think we have about the relative closeness of relationships.

6.7 THE NON-FINAL VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS IS GENERALLY PROPORTIONAL TO THEIR CLOSENESS

In light of the foregoing account of what it is for union (and, thus, relationships) to be close, in the remainder of the chapter I will argue that the value of a good relationship is generally proportional to its closeness: closer instances of such relationships are generally more valuable than more distant ones. More specifically, in this and the following three sections I will argue that closer relationships are generally more *non-finally* valuable than more distant ones. I will conclude the chapter by arguing that the *final* value of close relationships is also generally greater than that of more distant ones.

That the non-final value of good relationships is generally greater in close instances than in more distant ones is evident from the kinds of benefits that typically result from good relationships. For example, the kind of relief from life's stresses and strains available in some good relationships (e.g., friendships and romantic relationships) is greater in closer ones than in more distant ones.²⁷⁸ This relief comes about, it seems to me, in part as a result of being understood and accepted by another person. Our load is lightened when we can share the personal thoughts and feelings that trouble us. However, these kinds of thoughts and feelings are often of the sort that could leave us exposed to further trouble if we shared them with someone that would not keep them in confidence. If everyone knew of our challenges, failings, and disappointments then things could go very badly for us.²⁷⁹ Thus, we are typically inclined to share such thoughts and feelings only with those that we trust—in relationships with those that we know are concerned for our interests and that have a track-record of safeguarding the personal things we share with them. Relationships like this typically come about slowly as each person shares increasingly personal aspects of her thoughts and feelings with the other over time, gradually building the pattern of attention, interaction, knowledge, and commitment that constitutes a robust, close union. The picture here is one in which we are able to share our

²⁷⁸ See, for example, James A. Coan, Hillary S. Schaefer, and Richard J. Davidson, "Lending a Hand: Social Regulation of the Neural Response to Threat," *Psychological Science* 17, no. 12 (December 2006): 1032–39. This study suggests a positive correlation between a common psychological measure of romantic relationship quality (the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, or DAS) and the regulation of stress response as measured using fMRI techniques. The DAS survey includes questions that evaluate the elements of my account of closeness, including strength of commitment, and the frequency and depth of sharing and attentiveness to one another. See Graham B. Spanier, "Measuring Dyadic Adjustment: New Scales for Assessing the Quality of a Marriage and Similar Dyads," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 38, no. 1 (February 1976): 27–28. Thus, Coan et al.'s study may be understood as demonstrating the correlation between closeness and stress relief that I suggest. Another fMRI study has shown that brain systems with "the capacity to modulate anxiety and pain," and that are "central brain targets for the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression" are activated in people experiencing long-term romantic love and not in people newly in love. See Acevedo et al., "Neural Correlates of Long-Term Intense Romantic Love," 156. If we assume that the relationships between those experiencing long-term love are closer than the relationships between those newly in love (a reasonable though not unquestionable assumption), then the study suggests a correlation between the closeness of a romantic relationship and relief from various kinds of stress.

²⁷⁹ Kant makes this point. See Immanuel Kant, "The Metaphysics of Morals," in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:471–472.

troubled thoughts and feelings most freely with those we are closest to—i.e., with those with whom we have a closer union.²⁸⁰ Insofar as the relational benefit of stress relief seems, at least in part, tied to this free sharing of our troubles, the benefit will be more completely available in our close relationships than in our more distant ones, since they are constituted by closer union.

Certain pleasures of good relationships are also richer and more completely available in closer relationships than in more distant ones. A closer union often makes for freer and more wide ranging conversations, since in such cases we typically feel more at ease and less guarded, and since we simply know more about the other person and what matters to her. Thus, social pleasures of conversation seem more completely available in closer good relationships.

Finally, a closer good relationship is typically a more robust source of practical help than a more distant one. If we need a ride to the airport at five in the morning, or if we need to go to the emergency room in the middle of the night, we generally call upon those who are relationally close to us, not those who are relationally more distant. Why? Because such benefits are more readily provided in close relationships than in more distant ones. These sorts of benefits derive from the greater commitment to us (and hence to our good) that those close to us often have, which makes them close to us. Thus, more robust help is a typical benefit of a closer relationship, which contributes to the generally greater non-final value of closer relationships over more distant ones.

6.8 BURDENSOME CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS: COUNTEREXAMPLE?

While most cases of close good relationships are more non-finally valuable than more distant ones, perhaps there are exceptions. For example, certain close relationships might become incredibly burdensome. Perhaps your child is falsely accused of a terrible crime, thereby

²⁸⁰ Of course, sharing and being understood by the other are also part of what *make* the relationship close. Thus, close relationships are self-reinforcing in a certain way. We interact more freely with those we are close to and this free interaction, in turn, makes us closer.

involving you in a financially and emotionally costly battle to prove her innocence.²⁸¹ Or, perhaps your dearly loved spouse of 30 years is severely injured and the expenses for her treatment end up bankrupting you, leading to enormous personal strain. Worse, in these sorts of cases the typical benefits of properly love-grounding relationships that I noted above—stress relief, social pleasures, and practical help—might be swamped by the enormous stress that the relationship brings. Perhaps a close relationship like this would be non-finally worse than a more distant one that came without such tremendous burdens.

While such cases seem challenging, I am not convinced that they disprove the claim that closer good relationships are more non-finally valuable than more distant ones. Why? First, long-term benefits could render close but currently burdensome relationships more non-finally valuable than distant but currently less burdensome relationships. The burdens brought on by circumstances like false accusations or severe injury frequently ease with time, making space once again for the relationship to be non-finally valuable. Indeed, walking through trials with someone you are close to can often bring greater closeness to the relationship,²⁸² making it enormously valuable in non-final ways. Thus, perhaps the prospect of a less burdensome future could still render a currently burdensome close relationship more non-finally valuable than a more distant but currently less burdensome relationship.

But, we can of course imagine burdensome relationships that will never be otherwise. Perhaps one's beloved spouse is not injured but is instead suffering from a degenerative disease that will ultimately result in his death and you are the one charged with caring for him. In this case, the burdens of the relationship could be enormous, the benefits to the caregiver swamped by the burdens, and there could be no end in sight to the situation.

²⁸¹ The recent case of Amanda Knox comes to mind here. I do not mean to imply that I think Knox was innocent.

²⁸² Such ordeals often bring us to attend to the other more intensely than we have before, to come to understand him in deeper ways, and to expand (or at least to fully appreciate) our commitment to his welfare, thereby yielding greater closeness.

However, even here there is a sense in which such a close relationship might be more non-finally valuable than a more distant one without such burdens. We have only been considering the non-final value of the relationship from the perspective of one of its participants, i.e., the caregiver saddled with the burdens. But, from the perspective of the other participant—the accused child or the injured or diseased spouse—the close but burdensome relationship would be extremely valuable. In times of trial, close relationships are frequently crucial sources of comfort and encouragement that help the embattled person to keep going. Given this point, even a close and unremittingly burdensome relationship might turn out to be more non-finally valuable on the whole than a more distant but less burdensome one, if benefits to both parties are considered.

6.9 HIGHLY BENEFICIAL DISTANT RELATIONSHIPS: COUNTEREXAMPLE?

While close but burdensome relationships may not disprove the claim that close relationships are more non-finally valuable than more distant ones, perhaps cases involving highly beneficial but more distant relationships might. For example, suppose you are considering exclusive romantic relationships with two possible partners: one of them is tremendously rich and would surely enrich you if you established a relationship with her; the other has little money. However, you can also plainly see that your relationship with the wealthy person would be much more distant than the one you could establish with the person of modest means. Or, suppose that you could give yourself to a certain relationship that would remain relatively distant but would yield exceptional career prospects. Suppose further that this relationship and the resulting career would leave you no time to establish any close relationships of other kinds. Alternatively, you could choose to form a close relationship of some sort (e.g., a friendship, or a romantic relationship) and forgo the excellent career prospects. Do cases like these show that a certain

distant relationship may be more non-finally valuable than an alternative close relationship, given the benefits that would come with the more distant relationship?

I don't think so. The reason is that tremendous wealth and exceptional career prospects just aren't as important as the benefits tightly connected with close relationships. The social benefits deriving from close relationships—social pleasures, companionship, alleviation of loneliness, and even the particular kinds of stress relief and practical help deriving from such relationships—are fundamental to human well-being. Not only are they enjoyable but they are basic human needs, on a similar level with food, water, and air. This is part of what it means to say that we are by nature social: we need close relationships and the social benefits naturally deriving from them. In contrast, tremendous wealth and exceptional career prospects are just not as important for human beings. Yes they are nice, if they come along, but a life without them is no tragedy. One may surely live a good life, or achieve human well-being, without them. Thus, by my lights it is folly to seek them over the social goods naturally deriving from close relationships if one cannot have both. If I am correct about this, then the more distant relationships described above are not more non-finally valuable than the alternative close relationships, despite their promise of wealth and career prospects.

My reply, here, suggests a yet more difficult case for my view. Perhaps we could concoct an extreme case in which the benefits deriving from a more distant relationship are food, water, or air, while the mutually exclusive alternative closer relationship promises either a substandard portion of such resources or their complete absence. Under these conditions, it seems that the more distant relationship would be non-finally more valuable than the closer relationship, given the import of the needs at stake.

However, I don't think this concession causes real worries for my view. This second case is so extreme that we can safely set it aside as an extraordinary circumstance. Such a case only

seems plausible where the natural and social environment has been so devastated as to make efforts to discern social and ethical norms fruitless. The exercise is something like trying to generate intuitions about the good and right thing to do after a nuclear holocaust has ravaged the earth and left only three people alive. Or like trying to discern the good and right thing to do when the social fabric has been rent by decades of brutal war. It is not that there are no social or ethical norms in such situations. It is just that they may not be indications of the norms according to which a human being should live when circumstances are more ordinary. Put another way, to imagine a choice in which the mutually exclusive alternatives are a distant relationship that provides food, water, and air or a close relationship in the absence of such goods (i.e., a close relationship accompanied shortly by death) is to imagine a context of choice that is entirely inhospitable to living well or flourishing as a human being. As such, while the more distant relationship might well be more non-finally valuable in such a case, I claim that the case implies conditions of choice that render it irrelevant to my aim here. My aim is to discern norms and values applicable to relationships under more ordinary conditions—conditions in which a human being has a reasonable chance at living well or flourishing. My claim, then, is that under such more ordinary conditions close relationships are non-finally better than more distant ones, given the importance of the benefits that naturally derive from them. Therefore, the extreme case imagined here is not a threat to my view.

6.10 PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFANTS

One final case does seem to cause genuine trouble for the general view I am trying to support—that close relationships are more non-finally valuable than more distant ones. The case is that of parental relationships with newborn or infant children.²⁸³ By calling the relationships

²⁸³ By “newborn” or “infant” I mean a child younger than roughly six months. I have chosen this age for reasons that will be explained in a footnote below, though, for me, nothing much hangs on this specific age marker. My main point is to suggest that there is an early period of child development where the relationship between parent

“parental” I mean to indicate a relationship in which the adult in the relationship has primary (though perhaps not sole) responsibility for the care of the infant. Such cases are troubling for my general view since they seem to be quite ordinary cases in which the relationship is highly non-finally valuable, but in which the relationship cannot be close.

I take it that the substantial non-final value of such relationships is fairly obvious. Infant children have tremendous need of a parent’s care. Without it they might die, or at least fail to develop in normal, healthy ways. Insofar as this crucial care for the infant is a benefit of the parent-infant relationship, the relationship is highly non-finally valuable.

However, such relationships cannot be close. Indeed, in the first few months of life an infant does not even seem capable of *union* with her parent, let alone a *close* union. To be sure, a good parent will exhibit all the states and activities constitutive of a close union with the infant: he will share his thoughts and feelings about the baby via physical touch and even words; he will attend to the baby more intensely than he does to perhaps any other person; he will have considerable knowledge of the baby’s (thus far short) life story and current state of being; he will have an extraordinarily strong loving commitment to her; and he will likely be aware of all these states and activities. However, as described in Chapter Two, union requires that these states and activities be *mutual*, and the infant is not capable of reciprocating in a way that rises to the level of genuine union.²⁸⁴

and child is considerably different in kind.

²⁸⁴ Though, certainly a kind of proto-union is possible, in some respects. See C. Trevarthen, “Intrinsic Motives for Companionship in Understanding: Their Origin, Development, and Significance for Infant Mental Health,” *Infant Mental Health Journal* 22, no. 1–2 (2001): esp. 99–100, 102. By calling the infant “incapable of union” I do not mean to say that infants are generally without competence. Indeed, one of the central themes in neonate development research over the past 50 years is that infants are competent and complex in ways that were generally overlooked prior to 1960. While I am very sympathetic to such claims, it still seems to me that the normal infant’s many competencies do not rise to the level allowing for what I have called “union”. For the picture of neonate capabilities that follows I rely on the following seminal works in child development, among others: T. Berry Brazelton and J. Kevin Nugent, *Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale*, 4th Edition, vol. 190, Clinics in Developmental Medicine (London: Mac Keith Press, 2011); D.W. Winnicott, *Mother and Child: A Primer of First Relationships* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1957); Peter H. Wolff, “The Causes, Controls, and Organization of Behavior in the Neonate,” *Psychological Issues* V, no. 1 (Monograph 17) (1966): 1–106.

First, she cannot share her thoughts and feelings with the parent. Indeed, it is doubtful that a newborn even has cognition that rises to the level of a thought. While she might well have feelings (e.g., feelings of comfort or discomfort), she cannot *share* them with the parent, except in a figurative way. For example, when she cries at her discomfort, this is a response to the discomfort but not a mode of intentional communication or sharing. Similarly, while infants are capable of “smiling,” in some sense, these facial expressions are not generally regarded as “social smiles,” i.e., smiles indicative of genuine social interaction between parent and child.²⁸⁵ Second, she cannot be attentive to the parent. While she can look at and listen to the parent in a relatively sustained way when she is calm and the parent is close by (e.g., while nursing), such perceiving is not aimed at understanding the parent, except perhaps in a very indirect way.²⁸⁶ Third, she cannot have knowledge or understanding of the parent in the sense constitutive of union; her cognitive faculties are just not sufficiently developed to allow it. Fourth, she cannot have love or a loving commitment toward the parent. Whatever behavioral tendencies the infant exhibits, they will not be aimed at the good of or union with the parent, and they will not arise in response to an apprehension of the parent as good. Indeed, it is not even clear that the infant has that capacity for action that we call the “will,” in which case tendencies of will are out of the question. Given that she cannot exhibit these four dimensions of union, it is obvious that she also lacks its fifth dimension, which is to be aware of these states and activities. Thus, the infant cannot exhibit the relevant states and activities, and so genuine union with an infant is not possible, let alone a close union. For this reason, parent-infant relationships seem to be

²⁸⁵ See Brazelton and Nugent, *Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale*, 190:67.

²⁸⁶ The development of a normal infant’s capabilities is surely on a trajectory toward the attainment of higher cognitive powers, and her perception of the world around her—including her parent—importantly contributes to that development. Thus, we might say that her perception of the parent is part of what will eventually result in her ability to understand the parent. But, it seems pretty clear that the infant’s perception of the parent is not part of any direct effort to understand him.

exceptions to the claim that closer instances of good relationships are more non-finally valuable than more distant ones.²⁸⁷

While what I have said seems strictly correct to me, perhaps, in the end, a parent can achieve a *kind* of asymmetrical closeness with his infant child insofar as he can exhibit the states and activities constitutive of union and can exhibit them to a degree that would make for a close relationship if they were mutual. In such a case, we might say that the parent is close to the infant, though we might not say that the infant is close to the parent, or that the relationship is a close one in the sense I have described in Section 6.6.²⁸⁸ If we attribute a kind of closeness to the relationship between a good parent and his infant, at the very least the closeness we attribute would have to be quite different from the closeness I have described. But, in that case, I would be equivocating if I were to claim that closer relationships are more valuable, even in the case of parent-infant relationships, since the account of closeness is not the same in that case as in the other cases I have noted. So, even if we want to attribute a kind of closeness to parent-infant relationships, it seems my view has nothing to say about it.

Finally, it is important to note that I am only denying the possibility of union and closeness between a parent and his child for the earliest stages of the child's development, i.e., up to roughly six months. After that, it seems to me that a child *is* capable of union with a parent, and that this union can be extraordinarily close owing to the kinds of mutual attentiveness, sharing, knowledge, and loving commitment that it involves.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, I will argue in

²⁸⁷ One way to save the general view might be to say that the *mere* familial relationship between parent and infant makes them close. However, I don't think we want to say that, since a parent who abandons his child still has that mere familial relationship to her, but is surely not close to her and does not have a close relationship with her. So, although mere familial relationships can be proper grounds of love, they are not part of union and are not sufficient for closeness.

²⁸⁸ I am inspired here by Eleonore Stump's treatment of closeness. See Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, 120.

²⁸⁹ For example, "There is evidence that infants as young as six months are motivated to share cognitive topics, or purposes and interests, directed to the surrounding environment as well as to persons, and not just emotions related to regulation of physiological states or levels of arousal and excitement..." Trevarthen, "Intrinsic Motives for Companionship in Understanding: Their Origin, Development, and Significance for Infant Mental

Chapter Seven that, unlike other relationships, the reason that a parent should love his own children (infant or otherwise) more than many other people has nothing to do with the closeness of the parent-child relationship. Thus, the exceptional nature of the parent-infant relationship illustrated in the discussion here will have implications for my account of why we should love some people more than others.

6.11 THE FINAL VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS IS PROPORTIONAL TO THEIR CLOSENESS

In the previous four sections I argued that, with one important exception, close good relationships are *non-finally* better than more distant ones, at least under the ordinary natural and social conditions that concern me here. In this last section before concluding the chapter, I will further suggest that close good relationships are generally *finally* better than more distant ones. The case of parent-infant relationships may again be an exception here, though I will not explore the case any further; I will simply assume that they are exceptional.

That close good relationships are finally better than more distant ones is difficult to demonstrate. The difficulty seems attributable to the fact that whatever goods one might cite as evidence of their greater value would seem to suggest their greater *non-final* value rather than their greater final value. Nevertheless, perhaps there are still things we can say. To take a page from Mill's book,²⁹⁰ people with experience of both close and more distant relationships tend (*ceteris paribus*) to seek a closer one over a more distant one if they cannot seek both. This is evidenced by the fact that people with experience of both typically want to develop their existing relationships such that they become closer. Moreover, this seems so even if developing the

Health." Thus, six months seems to be the point at which infants can share thoughts and emotions, and can exhibit attentiveness toward others, in the senses required for union.

²⁹⁰ *Utilitarianism*, ch.2, §5-6, to be precise.

relationship would bring no change in the benefits to be gained from the relationship. Indeed, when we pursue greater closeness in a relationship we are typically not just hunting for stress-relief, pleasure, practical help, or other benefits. Rather, if a relationship is good, and if we recognize it as such, we typically want to pursue it and nurture it because of what it is and not just because of what it might get us.

Of course, there are many conditions under which we do *not* want to make our good relationships closer. We have a limited capacity for close relationships since they require considerable time and energy to develop and sustain. If these capacities are already exhausted—either by other existing relationships, or by our pursuit of different goods altogether—this provides a reason not to pursue a closer relationship with someone, regardless of the fact that one might love or value the person enough to do so under other circumstances. Furthermore, one might have relational, moral, or professional reasons to keep a certain relational distance with someone. For example, if one is in an exclusive romantic relationship with person A, this might provide a relational or moral reason not to pursue a romantic relationship with person B. Or, if you supervise someone at work, you might have a professional (and perhaps moral) reason to maintain a certain relational distance and not pursue a closer relationship.

However, if conditions like these hold, the *ceteris paribus* condition on my claim above is not satisfied. Put another way, under such conditions the reason for pursuing a closer relationship provided by its superior final value is not the only consideration bearing on whether to pursue it. My claim is *not* that those with relevant experience typically seek close relationships over more distant ones *under all conditions*. Rather, my claim is that where the relative final value of close and distant relationships is the only (or prevailing) consideration bearing on the question of whether to pursue a closer relationship, those with relevant experience typically choose the closer over the more distant. Thus, the cases I have noted in which people do not

make this choice fail to disprove my claim, since they are cases in which considerations *other* than the relative final value of close and distant relationships prevail. They are cases in which other values compete with the final value of the close relationship.

But, couldn't there be cases in which a person has a good relationship, there are no different values competing with the value of a closer version of that relationship, and yet the person still fails to want to develop the relationship such that it becomes closer? For example, it seems some people might deliberately arrange their lives such that their relationships can never really be close, or at least close beyond a certain limit. Such a person would not fail the *ceteris paribus* condition on my claim, since no practical, relational, moral, or professional values would compete with the value of the closer relationship in settling what to do. Yet she would fail to want to develop her relationships such that they become closer. Perhaps such a case shows that closer relationships are not more finally valuable than more distant ones, contrary to what I have claimed.

In reply, I readily grant that there are such cases. However, I do not think that they threaten my claim. First, such cases do not seem typical, and my claim was about what people typically want. Thus, it still seems true that people with experience of both close and more distant relationships *typically* want to develop their existing relationships such that they become closer.

Second, it seems that the person who prefers not to pursue closer relationships in this way is making a mistake that requires some sort of explanation. One explanation could be that the person has not actually experienced closer relationships. In that case, the person might fail to see the value of close relationships properly, since she has never experienced them. If so, then it would turn out that the case was not even an exception to my claim, since my claim is about those who have experience of both kinds of relationships. Another explanation might be that

someone has been badly mistreated or hurt in a previous relationship and now he fears that making his relationships closer will leave him open to further mistreatment or pain. While we should surely sympathize with a person experiencing such fears, and while we can surely understand why he does so, it still seems that keeping *everyone* at arms length is a pathology for which he should seek help. The reason it is pathological is that by keeping everyone at arms length he is missing out on one of the most important final goods of human life: close relationships. Thus, in the end, such cases threaten *neither* my claim that closer relationships are more finally valuable than more distant ones, *nor* the claim that is supposed to support it—namely, that people with experience of both close and more distant relationships *typically* (or, in non-defective cases) want to develop their existing relationships such that they become closer.

6.12 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have offered a picture of the two main kinds of good relationships—i.e., those relationships that may serve as proper grounds of love. I argued that good friendships (including good romantic relationships) consist in union, which is one of love’s two targets as described in Chapter Two. This union amounts to mutual attentiveness, mutual sharing of aspects of one’s mental life, mutual knowledge or understanding of the other, mutual love (and, in mature cases, mutual loving commitment), and mutual awareness of these attitudes and activities. Good familial relationships typically also consist in union between two family members, though they need not. In some cases, a familial relationship consisting merely in a blood relation or an adoptive relation (a “mere” familial relationship) may serve as a proper ground of love.

I further offered a picture of what it is for such relationships to be close. They are close, I claimed, if the union partially constituting them is close. (Mere familial relationships are not

close insofar as they do not exhibit union.) I further claimed that a union is close when it exhibits one or several of the first four features of union to a significant degree. So, for example, a union might be close in virtue of the fact that both people have substantial knowledge or understanding of each other. Or, it might be close in virtue of a strong loving commitment that the two have to each other.

Finally, I argued that the value of good relationships is generally proportional to their closeness. I claimed that, under ordinary conditions, the non-final value of close good relationships is greater than that of more distant instances of such relationships, since close instances yield greater benefits, such as stress relief, social pleasures, and practical help. I also argued that closer instances of such relationships are more finally valuable—more valuable as ends—than more distant ones. The only exception that I admitted to these claims is the case of parent-infant relationships, which are highly valuable but not close in the sense I described.

In Chapter Seven I will use these conclusions about the relative value of close and distant relationships to argue that we should generally love those we are relationally close to more than those we are more distant from. In doing so I will both fill out what I take to be the correct relation between love and value and offer an account of why we should love some people more than others.