

## LOVE AS A TWOFOLD TENDENCY OF WILL

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Is love merely something we suffer, or is it related in some way to our agency? Does love merely have an object, or does it also have aims? The answer to these questions depends upon what kind of attitude love is. David Velleman has argued that love has no aims, and thus no systematic connection with what we do. As he puts it, “I venture to suggest that love is essentially an attitude toward the beloved himself but not toward any result at all.” (Velleman 1999, 354) As the title of Velleman’s article suggests, he views love as a kind of “moral emotion” that does not necessarily bear on our action. That love is an emotion is, of course, also a popular view outside the philosophical world. According to that view love is understood primarily as a certain euphoric feeling about the beloved. The paradigm case of this attitude is being or falling “in love” with a romantic partner.

However, the picture of love sketched above is incorrect—both Velleman’s philosophical version and the less refined popular account. While we should affirm that love is something that “happens to us,” and so is indeed something we suffer in some sense, it is also essentially tied to two targets—the good of the beloved and union with him—and so bears on our agency. Or so I shall argue in this paper. I will contend that love consists of a twofold tendency of will to intend or desire the beloved’s good and union with him under relevant circumstances.

On route to this view, I will reject the most plausible alternative views that love is a kind of occurrent desire,<sup>1</sup> intention,<sup>2</sup> or emotion. I reject the views that love is occurrent desire or emotion on identical grounds: both views make love to consist, at least in part, in transient attitudes that are incompatible with our sense that love may persist even when affect and occurrent motivation do not. I also reject the view that love consists of intentions since intentions aim only at ends whereas certain aspects of love's two targets could not be our ends. For example, love might involve a motivating attitude toward a friend's promotion (as part of his good), or toward union with a deceased family member, even though we might be unable to effect such states of affairs. Given that aspects of love's two targets could not be our ends, and given that love persists even while occurrent desires and emotions come and go, it seems better to think of love as a possible *source* of such attitudes, and that such attitudes are typical effects of love.

In addition to this account of the attitudes composing and flowing from love, I will argue that the two tendencies of love—if they are to be love—must be sustained in response to the lover's apprehension of the beloved as good in a particular sense—i.e., as apt or fitting for the lover, given the lover's values and sensibility. This view puts me at odds with those who claim, on the contrary, that the value of the beloved depends upon the attitude of love, and that love in fact generates or *bestows* value on the beloved.<sup>3</sup> I will reject such “bestowal” views, arguing that the intuitions that such views are meant to explain are in fact better explained by my view that love depends upon apprehended value.

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<sup>1</sup> Harry Frankfurt (2004, chap. 2) and Eleonore Stump (2012, chap. 5) hold that love consists of certain desires.

<sup>2</sup> Niko Kolodny (2003, 151) characterizes the motivational aspects of love as “standing intentions.”

<sup>3</sup> Irving Singer (2009a, 3–22) and especially Harry Frankfurt (2004, 38–39) hold such a view.

My overarching aim, then, will be to defend a constitutive account of human love—love by people and for people. Examples of the attitude I have in mind include love for romantic partners, friends, and family members. I will turn first to an account of love’s two targets.

## 2 FIRST TARGET: THE GOOD OF THE BELOVED

One target toward which a lover tends is the good of, or for, the beloved person. This good might include general over-arching outcomes in the beloved’s life—such as his health and happiness—as well as particular specifications of such outcomes, such as proper mental and physical development, sufficient financial resources, quality healthcare, close friendships, success at work, or a preponderance of certain positive emotions, such as joy or contentment.

Eleonore Stump has argued that this first of love’s tendencies (which she thinks are desires) is toward what is *in fact* the good of the beloved and not merely toward what the lover *takes* the beloved’s good to be.<sup>4</sup> According to Stump, then, a lover who tends toward what she *thinks* is a person’s good but that is not *in fact* his good could not really love the person, even if all other conditions of love are met. For example, she writes,

If what a person desires as good for another is not in fact the beloved’s good by [an] objective measure, then, to one degree or another, the lover does not love him, whatever she may believe about herself. A parent who desires to beat her child because she supposes that beating is a good for the child is wrong in that supposition; and her desire to beat her child does not therefore count as a desire of love, whatever the parent may believe of herself. (Stump 2012, 94)

Importantly, Stump qualifies her position by claiming that if a lover makes a mistake about the *means* to a genuine good for a person, then the lover may still count as loving the person. For example, if a mother desires a certain drug for her child on the mistaken belief that it will bring

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<sup>4</sup> Stump’s expression of this view is couched in terms of an account of Thomas Aquinas’s view. However, in context, her aims do not seem strictly historical. Thus, I will assume that she is not only giving an exposition of the view but that she is also defending it.

about his health when in fact it will harm him, according to Stump her desire may still count toward loving her child. What is necessary for genuine love, says Stump, is that the lover tend toward an end that is partly constitutive of the beloved's objective good, such as health. (2012, 94–95)

However, Stump's proposal seems problematic for several reasons. First, the example of the parent that beats her child "because she supposes that beating is a good for the child" seems highly implausible. Stump's idea seems to be that such a parent thinks that being beaten *itself* is a final end that partially constitutes the good of the child. But, such a case seems extremely implausible. To see the implausibility, contrast the case with two others that seem far more plausible: a parent that beats her child because she mistakenly views the beating as a means to some genuinely good end for the child (e.g., discipline), and a parent that beats her child because she enjoys the sense of power that beating the child gives her. In the first of these cases, of course, there is no real difference from the harmful drug case—both are cases of taking a mistaken means to a genuinely good end, and so the relevant tendency in that case could count as love on Stump's view.<sup>5</sup> In the second case, the inclination to beat the child would not count as love, but it would fail to do so not because of a mistake about which ends partially constitute the child's good, but rather because the child's good shows up nowhere in the parent's motivation. Rather, her motive is her own corrupt pleasure. Contrasted with these two more plausible cases—neither of which make Stump's point that a tendency toward things mistakenly viewed as part of a person's good could not count toward love—Stump's beating case seems very strange: who, in their right mind, would ever think that being beaten was a final end partially constitutive of a person's good? Given the implausibility of the case, Stump's view seems unsupported.

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<sup>5</sup> Indeed, she says as much in her footnote 62.

Nevertheless, despite its implausibility, the case raises a further problem for Stump's view: if she is willing to grant that mistakes about the *means* to the beloved's genuine good are compatible with love, why not also think that mistakes about the final ends constituting the beloved's good are, at least in principle, also compatible with love? For example, while it seems almost impossible to imagine, if a parent really did think that a child's being beaten was partially constitutive of his good—not as a means to some further end, but merely as an end—and so beat him for that reason, I see no reason to doubt that the parent might genuinely love her child. Of course, the behavior would still be terrible and something we would want to put a stop to. But, it does seem possible that it could express a mistaken sort of love. Another more plausible example will suggest my point more strongly. Suppose a parent is convinced that a high degree of material comfort is part of his child's good and so he sets about providing such comfort for her. However, suppose further that such comfort is actually corrupting for the child in various ways and is not part of her objective good. In this case, although the parent would be mistaken in his view of the human good, and thus would actually be harming his child, it seems obvious to me that the parent's activity could still count as loving. After all, he is acting toward the child in a way that he thinks accomplishes her genuine good, despite the fact that he is mistaken about the content of that good. Thus, it seems best to think that mistakes even about the final ends constituting the beloved's good are compatible with love.

The upshot of this discussion, then, is that Stump's view seems incorrect. She seems right that love *does* target the beloved's objective good—after all, we go for what is *really* good for the ones we love, not what merely seems good for them. Nevertheless, as the example of the parent that desires great material comfort for his child suggests, it is also clear that genuine love

may be consistent with mistakes about what that objective good consists in, as well as mistakes about the means to that good.

### **3 SECOND TARGET: UNION WITH THE BELOVED**

Love's second tendency is toward what I will call "union" with the beloved. Union has several elements, which I will sketch below.<sup>6</sup> I take it that each of the elements contributes to making two people—lover and beloved—into a kind of "unity" or, as Robert Nozick might put it, a "we" (1989, 70ff), rather than merely two individuals.

First, union includes a pattern of mutual sharing of certain aspects of one's mental life with the other, such as thoughts or feelings that matter to oneself. Thus, the lover seeks to share such aspects of her mental life with the beloved, and she seeks that the beloved reciprocally share with her. By referring to a "pattern" of mutual sharing, I do not mean that two people constantly share the relevant aspects of their mental lives with each other. Rather, the point is that there are moments of such sharing in the ongoing interaction between the people.

Of course, mutual sharing comes in many different kinds. In some unions, lover and beloved might share thoughts about a mutually valued hobby and not much more. In others, they might share thoughts about personal relationships or work activity but they might not express feelings. In still others they might express some of their feelings to one another, but share little about their political or religious views. Moreover, the mode of sharing or expression is not limited to verbal communication. Insofar as physical affection can be a means of communication, it too can be an expression of one's thoughts and feelings—especially those *about the loved one*. For example, when I blow a kiss to someone, it communicates my attitude

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<sup>6</sup> My account is informed by Stump (2012, chap. 6). Her treatment of attentiveness and awareness was particularly helpful to me.

toward her. Depending on the relational context, it might tell her that I loves her (or at least care about her), and that I want to be physically affectionate toward her, despite being separated in some way (e.g., being on the train as it pulls away from the station). In each of these cases, the mutual sharing—and so the union—would be different according to the subject matter, mode of communication, and freedom with which the two were willing to share. Typically, different kinds of sharing are appropriate to different kinds of relationships.

Second, union includes a pattern of mutual attentiveness. Mutual attentiveness is a state in which the lover is attentive to, or focuses attention on, the beloved, and the beloved is likewise attentive to the lover. Such attention involves both a persistent perception of the other and an effort to understand her. When one is attentive to another, one typically looks at him or listens to him, and one tries to grasp how he is in that moment. As for the case of mutual sharing, when I refer to a “pattern” of mutual attentiveness, I mean that there are moments of attentiveness in the ongoing interaction between two people and not that the two are constantly attentive to each other. In some unions, physical touch and affection are modes of attentiveness to the other. Just as being attentive typically involves visual and aural perception of the other, it can also involve perception of the other through touch. Sexual activity is a particularly focused and intense example of mutual attentiveness that typically involves physical touch.

The examples of the previous paragraph suggest that mutual attentiveness, like mutual sharing, comes in different kinds. Love for a young child might incline one to a mutual attentiveness instantiated in snuggling and reading a book together before bed. Love for an adult friend would typically incline one toward mutual attentiveness of a different sort, perhaps having a conversation and offering a hug before parting. Similarly, the mutual attentiveness sought out of love for one’s parent is different from that sought out of love for one’s romantic partner. Like

different modes of mutual sharing, different modes of mutual attentiveness are appropriate to different kinds of relationships. Within the bounds of what is appropriate to various relationships, modes of mutual attentiveness also vary quite appropriately by personality and preference. For example, some people might be more physically affectionate than others, and so their modes of attentiveness to those they love would likely reflect this fact.

Third, the union toward which a lover tends includes a certain mutual knowledge or understanding, i.e., a state in which the lover knows the beloved and the beloved knows the lover. Such knowledge typically includes (among other things) knowledge of a person's values, her likes and dislikes, her aims and goals, aspects of her history, as well as her current state of mind and body. Two people achieve this aspect of union when they "get" each other in such ways. The sort of mutual knowledge toward which a lover tends might also have a physical aspect to it. For example, to have sexual relations with someone can be, in part, to *know* him in a particular way, i.e., to know his body and physicality. This sort of sexual knowledge might be one aspect of the knowledge toward which a lover tends in tending toward union with the beloved, though, again, only in certain kinds of relationships.

Fourth, union includes mutual love. Of course, the lover already loves the beloved—this is what it is to be a lover. So, in practice, what the lover tends toward in tending toward union is that her love be requited. Thus, if union between lover and beloved is achieved, both parties also have a tendency toward the good of the other. Moreover, as a relationship between lover and beloved emerges and matures, and as the lover becomes increasingly committed to the beloved, part of the union that the lover seeks with the beloved includes the beloved's reciprocal commitment to the lover. Elsewhere I argue that the sort of mutual commitment sought by the lover is a kind of mutual love in which love's two tendencies are particularly firm or fixed.



Given that I think such commitment is a kind of love, I do not view reciprocal commitment as an element of union wholly distinct from the reciprocal love toward which the lover tends.

Fifth and finally, the union toward which a lover tends includes a kind of mutual awareness. For example, suppose the lover sits alone in one room while the beloved sits alone in another. Each room has a hidden video camera and microphone focused on the person and a screen that allows each to see and hear the other by video. However, neither person is aware that she, herself, has a camera focused on her, or that the other person can see and hear her. In this case, there could be a kind of mutual attentiveness between lover and beloved—each might perceive the other and try to understand how it is with the other—but it would not amount to the union toward which a lover tends. What is missing, here, is an *awareness* that the beloved is attentive to the lover. In addition to an awareness of their mutual attentiveness, the lover seeks a state in which each party is aware of their pattern of mutual sharing of relevant aspects of their mental lives, in which each party is aware that the each knows the other in relevant ways, and in which each party is aware of the other's love or commitment to her.

#### **4 THE RELATION BETWEEN LOVE'S TARGETS**

That love tends toward two targets—the good of the beloved and union with him—raises the question of the relationship between them. Under many circumstances, union with the beloved is simply part of the beloved's good toward which the lover tends.<sup>7</sup> So, for example, a loving father's union with his child is typically part of the child's good toward which he tends.

However, there are also circumstances in which union with the beloved is not part of the good of the beloved, in which case the two targets conflict. Shakespeare's *Pericles* provides a

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<sup>7</sup> Stump makes this point (2012, 96).

dramatic example. Pericles and his pregnant wife, Thaisa, are sailing for Tyre so that Pericles may inherit the throne of Tyre. However, a storm whips up and the tumult sends Thaisa into labor. Although her daughter, Marina, is delivered safely at sea, Thaisa dies in childbirth. Distraught, Pericles heads for the nearest coastline out of fear that his newborn might not survive the remainder of the trip to Tyre without nursing. Once ashore, Pericles leaves Marina with Cleon, a friend, whom he charges with raising his daughter until he can return for her. Here, Pericles's union with Marina is incompatible with her good: if he seeks union with her she will die. In Pericles's case, the incompatibility of Marina's good and union with her is only temporary: he can eventually return for her. However, it is also easy to imagine other cases in which union is permanently incompatible with the good of the beloved, such as when a lover must give her life for the beloved's sake. Such sacrifices are a common element of tragic drama.

From cases like these in which love's targets conflict it is evident that, in genuine love, the beloved's good has a certain priority over union with him. It seems patently unloving for a person to insist on realizing union with another despite the fact that such union is not part of the beloved's good. For example, it would be unloving for Pericles to insist that Marina remain with him on the ship despite the fact that she would die.

Importantly, the temporary or permanent incompatibility of union and the beloved's good need not imply that the lover ceases to *tend* toward both targets, and thus that the lover ceases to love the beloved. For example, Pericles may still tend toward union with Marina, even though such union is temporarily blocked. Thus, lovers may still love in such cases. It is just that the impossibility of realizing one of love's targets (union) will make them cases of frustrated love, to one degree or another.

Finally, the fact that the lover typically views union as part of the beloved's good does not mean we can collapse love's two tendencies into one tendency toward the good of the beloved. Why not? Because the lover must view union with the beloved not only as part of the beloved's good but also as a distinct target toward which she tends. If this were not the case, i.e., if the lover only viewed union with the beloved as the realization of part of the beloved's good, it seems the lover's tendency toward union with the beloved would be non-final: the lover would tend toward union only as a means to, or part of, the beloved's good. But, this would be odd since it seems essential to love that the lover tend toward union also as a good *for herself*—not just for the beloved—and as good *because of what it is*—not just because of what it might achieve (i.e., the beloved's good).<sup>8</sup> My point, then, is that the two tendencies of love are distinct and essential constituents of love. The targets of these tendencies are both final goods at which the lover aims—goods that she views as good because of what they are and not merely because of some further thing they achieve. That they are so is unchanged by the fact that the lover typically understands union with the beloved as *also* part of the beloved's good.

## **5 LOVE IS NOT OCCURRENT DESIRE**

Thus far, I have explained and tried to defend the idea that love tends toward two targets: the good of the beloved and union with him. In this section I will begin to shift my focus to the nature of the specific tendencies or attitudes that a lover has toward these targets, which attitudes I take to partially constitute love.

A natural suggestion here would be to understand love as two *desires*—one for the good of the beloved, and one for union with the beloved. As noted above, Stump (2012) and Frankfurt

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Adams (1987, 190) makes a similar point.

(2004) take this view. However, it seems quite common to love someone and yet fail to experience persistent desires of this sort. David Velleman raises an objection in this vein, as follows:

Certainly, love for my children leads me to promote their interests almost daily; yet when I think of other people I love—parents, brothers, friends, former teachers and students—I do not think of myself as an agent of their interests. I would of course do them a favor if asked, but in the absence of some such occasion for benefiting them, I have no continuing or recurring desire to do so. (Velleman 1999, 353)

Before interpreting Velleman’s objection, it is worth pausing and reflecting briefly on the notion of “desire,” since it is often used in different ways. First, desires are typically motivational—they are generally understood as precursors and movers to action. Second, the notion “desire” may or may not imply some affect that accompanies its motivational character. For example, I might say that I “want,” one day, to buy a house without implying that I experience some sort of affect or feeling toward that end. Such desires without affect are sometimes called “volitional desires” or “volitions.” However, if I say that I want the piece of chocolate cake in front of me, or that I desire someone sexually, there is typically a certain affect associated with the basic motivational attitude I am referring to. Third, we can distinguish “occurrent” desires from “dispositional” or “standing” desires. Occurrent desires are desires that one *experiences* in some way, i.e., that are in the foreground of one’s mental life. Dispositional or standing desires are desires that are typically latent, but that become occurrent under the right conditions (e.g., an occasion for benefiting someone you love). Thus, we might say that such desires are *dispositions* to desire in an occurrent sense. There may be both occurrent and standing

volitional desires, and occurrent and standing affective desires: the two distinctions are orthogonal to each other.<sup>9</sup>

Now, in the objection above I interpret Velleman as using the word ‘desire’ to refer to an occurrent desire, i.e., a desire that a person *experiences* as motivational. The desire does not seem to be a dispositional or standing desire, since his talk of a “recurring desire” would not make sense if that were his meaning. Whether he has in mind an affective or volitional desire does not seem clear and is likely unimportant to the objection.

Velleman’s target here is an account on which love is (or “entails,” as he puts it) a desire to *benefit* the beloved, which is different from the account I am entertaining, according to which love is, in part, a desire for *the good* of the beloved. Nevertheless, the basic worry remains the same: insofar as there are many cases in which we fail to experience persistent desires of the relevant sort—either to benefit someone, or for her good—and yet in which we persistently love the person, it seems false that love partially consists in such desires. We might raise a parallel objection to the idea that love partially consists in a desire for union with the beloved: there are many cases in which we consistently love someone, and yet do not experience a consistent desire for union with him. Incidentally, Velleman’s objection seems to apply equally well to the view that love is a kind of occurrent emotion: insofar as we often consistently love people without consistently feeling any particular emotion, it seems love could not be a particular occurrent emotion.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The notion of “desire” is very complicated and there is obviously much more that could be said. However, sustained discussion here would take me too far afield, so I set the issue aside.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, this point seems particularly worrying for Velleman since he, himself, holds the view that love is a “moral emotion”. However, it is not clear what he means by “emotion” from the paper, and so it is not clear that this objection would really cause problems for his view.

## 6 LOVE IS NOT STANDING INTENTION

In response to this objection, one might shift to the view that love partially consists in two standing desires, or perhaps two standing intentions, rather than two occurrent desires. I will consider first the idea that love might consist in two standing intentions and return to the idea of love as standing desires in the next section.

By ‘standing intention’ I mean an intention that is something like a policy or plan. On this picture, the objects of the standing intentions—the beloved’s good and union with him—would be understood as the lover’s *ends*. Standing intentions aimed at general ends like these do not issue in action until particular circumstances arise such that the general standing intentions are given particular content. For example, when your partner is out of town we may suppose that you continue to love him, and so that your general standing intention toward union with him would remain in place. However, since circumstances preclude spending time together (or even communicating, let us suppose), the standing intention would not necessarily issue in any particular action; rather, it might simply stand ready to produce action at some other time. When your partner returned and circumstances allowed, your standing intention toward union might well be expressed through a more particular intention to do something together (e.g., to see a movie or to share a meal), followed by the relevant action. We can imagine parallel cases for the standing intention toward the good of the beloved: such a general intention does not issue in action unless circumstances arise in which beneficence is called for. So, unless your partner needs something that you can provide, your standing intention toward her good will simply stand ready to produce action at another time.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Niko Kolodny (2003, 151) holds a view in the neighborhood of this proposal, whereby love partially consists of a standing intention to act in the beloved’s interest, and a standing intention to act in the interests of the relationship between lover and beloved.

This kind of account would avoid Velleman's objection above, since standing intentions are not occurrent in the way that Velleman's notion of "desire" seems to suggest. Thus, the fact that we do not experience a continuing or recurring desire for the good of, and union with, the people we love need not indicate that we lack the standing intentions of love. Of course, such an account would also be consistent with the idea that we *do* sometimes experience occurrent desires for the good of, or union with, the beloved—in general or particular ways. We might, then, speak of occurrent desires as possible but not necessary effects of the two general standing intentions that partially constitute love.

However, the account of love as standing intentions also seems problematic. The main problem centers around the idea that I cannot intend things that seem impossible for me to effect. For example, it might be part of my beloved's good to obtain a promotion at work, and yet there be nothing I could do to bring the promotion about. Nevertheless, my love for her involves some motivational tendency or attitude toward the promotion, since it is part of her good. Or, suppose someone I love is sick and there is nothing I can do to help her recover. Nevertheless, my love for her involves some motivational attitude toward her recovery. In such cases, our attitude could not be a standing intention, since the outcomes partially constituting her good—promotion or recovery—could not be our ends.

There are, of course, parallel cases in which aspects of union with the beloved are impossible to effect. For example, suppose your spouse of many years has severe dementia. Although you can still sit with him and experience his physical presence, he is no longer capable of union with you, since he cannot know you or be attentive to you in the ways constitutive of union. Nevertheless, if you love him you will still have some motivational attitude toward union

with him. In this case, union with the beloved would be impossible for the lover to effect and so it seems love could not consist, in these cases, in a standing intention toward union.

Love for someone who has died is the most extreme case in this vein. Realizing union with a deceased person might seem entirely impossible to the lover, as might furthering his good in any way. Given the view that love tends toward two targets, and given that love for dead people seems possible—even for those who think realizing love’s targets with respect to the deceased is impossible—it seems love cannot consist of standing intentions toward the good of, and union with, the beloved.

## 7 LOVE AS TWOFOLD TENDENCY OF THE WILL

In light of these objections, I claim that love partially consists neither in two occurrent desires nor in two standing intentions, but rather in an orientation or *tendency* of the will toward love’s two targets. I take this tendency to be the source of a range of different attitudes sometimes associated with love, including occurrent desires, intentions, and emotions (the last of which I will discuss in the next section). Thus, love has something of the character of a standing desire insofar as it gives rise to specific occurrent desires. But, it also has something of the character of a standing intention, since it also gives rise to specific intentions. In the end, then, it seems that love is neither standing desire nor standing intention but a more basic orientation or tendency of the will distinct from them both.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This idea might seem frustrating to some readers, since I have not analyzed love in terms of particular attitudes that are part of our standard repertoire of psychological concepts. By calling love a “source” of intentions, desires, and emotions, you might say I’ve only *located* love with respect to these more familiar attitudes. However, this result does not necessarily suggest that my account is problematic. Indeed, I think instead that it suggests that the ordinary English repertoire of psychological concepts is inadequate for my task, and that the wider repertoire available to, e.g., the medievals (or at least to Aquinas, as suggested in the next note) is better suited to the job.



By calling love a “tendency” I mean to appropriate the medieval sense of this notion whereby to claim that something has a tendency is to claim that it performs some characteristic activity unless it is interfered with.<sup>13</sup> So, to say that love is a tendency of the will is to say that love is a condition of the will such that, in the right circumstances, the will desires or intends in particular ways unless it is interfered with.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, the notion of something’s having a tendency is not that it has a mere potentiality. As Peter Geach puts it, “A piece of soft wax in London has the potentiality of assuming any number of shapes, but it has no particular tendency to take, e.g., the shape of a Birmingham man’s thumbprint.” (1961, 104) Tendencies are more active than mere potentialities: they describe what a thing *does* in the absence of interference, not merely something that might *happen* to a thing under certain circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

It will help to describe the two tendencies constitutive of love in more detail, including the conditions under which the relevant activity occurs. Consider first the tendency toward the beloved’s good. It amounts to a conditional tendency as follows: if (1) circumstances arise in which some aspect of the beloved’s good is lacking or threatened, and (2) it seems possible for the lover to remedy the situation, and (3) it seems appropriate for the lover to do so, then the lover will gain a particular intention to do so. If condition (1) holds but condition (2) or, in some cases, condition (3), fails, then the lover will gain a particular desire to do so, but not an

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<sup>13</sup> Here I draw on Peter Geach’s reading of Aquinas’s notion of a “tendency” (1961, 101–109). Insofar as I am therefore, ultimately, trying to follow Aquinas here, it might seem odd to say that love is a “tendency” of will, since, for Aquinas, the will itself just is a tendency (*appetitus*). In other words, it seems I would have love be a tendency of a tendency, which might seem strange. However, this is, in fact, what I mean. Love is a kind of specification of the appetite. The appetite is a tendency toward the good in general while love is a more specific tendency toward certain instantiations of the good. Thus, in Aquinas’s terms, love is a specific orientation, inclination, or tendency of the more general tendency that is the will, or rational appetite.

<sup>14</sup> What might interfere with the loving tendency of the will? Perhaps strong desires alien to the love, such as those associated with drug addiction or a powerful temptation.

<sup>15</sup> This distinction between tendencies (which are active) and mere potentialities (which may be passive) also accounts for my preference for “tendency” over “disposition.” It seems to me that “disposition” is ambiguous between an active sense resembling “tendency” and a passive sense resembling mere “potentiality”. Windows have a disposition to break (or, perhaps more correctly, to *be* broken) under certain conditions, but they do not have an active tendency to do so.

intention. I take conditions (1), (2), and (3) to specify both when the will exhibits relevant activity, and of what kind that activity will be (i.e., intention or desire). This formulation requires further explanation.

First, according to (1), if the lover is to intend or desire some particular aspect of the beloved's good, it must be that the thing is either lacking or threatened. If there is no lack or threat, then the lover's general orientation toward the good of the beloved will simply stand in the background of the lover's mental life, ready to produce particular intentions or desires at another time. Second, according to (2), if the lover is to intend some particular aspect of the beloved's good, the lover must think it possible for her to effect it. If she does *not* think it possible for her to effect it, then her love will not give rise to an intention to do so; rather, it will simply produce a particular desire for the thing.

Finally, if we suppose that conditions (1) and (2) hold, then according to (3), if effecting the relevant aspect of the beloved's good seems all-things-considered appropriate to the lover, then she will intend it. However, if the lover does not deem it all-things-considered appropriate, then she may or may not intend it, depending on whether she suffers from weakness of will. I take the following two examples to be typical illustrations of what I have in mind here. Suppose it is genuinely part of your beloved's good that he obtain a promotion, and that the only way you could effect this promotion would be by blackmailing his boss. If you thought blackmailing his boss was *not*, all-things-considered, appropriate, then it seems likely that you would not intend to bring about the promotion. Rather, you would merely desire your beloved's promotion. Similarly, suppose your friend is at odds with his mother and that it would be a genuine aspect of his good to be reconciled to her. Suppose further that you could step in and smooth things over for them. Nevertheless, it might seem inappropriate for you to step in: you might think your

friend should really patch things up himself.<sup>16</sup> In that case, despite your love for him, and despite the fact that you *could* effect the reconciliation, you likely *would* not intend or do it since you think it is inappropriate. Instead, your love for him would simply give rise to a particular desire for their reconciliation.

However, despite what I take to be the typical character of these examples, it seems quite possible that a lover might nevertheless intend the blackmail or intend the reconciliatory intervention even in the face of her judgments that such acts would be inappropriate. Such might be the case if the lover were weak of will.<sup>17</sup> Thus, condition (3) does not imply that if the relevant act does *not* seem all-things-considered appropriate to the lover that she will thereby fail to intend it, though this seems to me to be the typical case.

Importantly, I take the all-things-considered appropriateness criterion here to be subjective. In other words, I am not claiming that the intentions of love are contingent on the objective (e.g., moral) appropriateness of some act. Indeed, I think love can be at odds with objective norms of appropriateness, such as morality. For example, in some cases love might well drive someone to judge that blackmailing a boss is appropriate. And, it might well be that you find effecting your friend's reconciliation completely appropriate, and that your love motivates you to do it, even if such an act would not, in fact, be appropriate.

Love's tendency toward union with the beloved has a form that is parallel to the tendency toward his good. It amounts to the following conditional tendency: if (1) an opportunity to effect

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<sup>16</sup> You might think this because it would be better for him—i.e., part of his good—if he patched things up himself. In that case, it would not be that some separate norm of appropriateness kept you from intervening, but rather that intervening would just not be part of his good. In that case, condition (2) would rule out your action: you would not really be able to bring about the beloved's good under the circumstances—or, at least, not his complete good. However, it could also be that you think he should patch things up himself because your intervening would be poking your nose too far into your friend's business—whether or not doing so is good for him. In that case, a distinct norm of appropriateness would keep you from intervening, i.e., condition (3) would rule out your action. I am thinking of the case according to the latter construal, rather than according to the former.

<sup>17</sup> I owe this observation to Gavin Lawrence.

or preserve some aspect of union with the beloved arises, and (2) it seems possible for the lover to act in the relevant way, and (3) it seems appropriate for the lover to do so, then the lover will gain a particular intention to do so. If condition (1) holds but condition (2) or, in some cases, condition (3) fails, then the lover will gain a particular desire to do so, but not an intention. If no opportunity arises (i.e., if condition (1) fails) then the general tendency toward union will simply remain in the background.

To complete the explanation of love's two tendencies, consider again the case of love for a person who has died. According to my account, the lover would have a twofold tendency of will: toward union with the beloved and toward the good of the beloved. In this case, the lover *might* think some sort of union with the beloved was still possible, or that his good was still possible to effect in some way. For example, the lover might think putting flowers at the beloved's grave was a way of preserving union with him, or that taking care of his surviving children was a way that she could further his good. In that case, the lover might intend such acts. However, as noted above, if the lover took it to be impossible to effect union or the good of the beloved in any way, then her love would not give rise to any intentions. However, her love might well give rise to certain particular desires from time to time. If the lover was somehow reminded of the deceased, her love for him might produce a particular desire for particular aspects of union with him—to have a conversation with him, to embrace him, etc. Similarly, the general tendency of will toward the deceased beloved's good might sometimes give rise to certain particular desires. For example, if the deceased beloved were a parent, and if his still living child were getting married, one might desire that he could be alive to see the event because it would be part of his good. On this picture, then, particular intentions and desires may arise as a result of love's general tendencies of the will, but such particular intentions and desires do not, themselves,

constitute love. Rather, it is the general orientation or tendency of the will toward the good of and union with the beloved that partially constitutes love.

## 8 LOVE AND EMOTION

As noted above, Velleman's objection to the view that love is a kind of occurrent desire seems to apply also to the view that love is a kind of occurrent emotion: it seems we often consistently love people without persistently experiencing any *particular* feeling or feelings.<sup>18</sup> Thus, I reject the view that love, itself, is a particular emotion, or collection of emotions.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, love does seem importantly associated with emotion. If a lover consistently failed to feel any emotion in connection with her love for someone, we would either want an explanation of the failure or we would question whether she really loved the person. Thus, in my view, in addition to particular intentions and desires, the two tendencies of love also give rise, under certain conditions, to particular emotions we typically associate with love. For example, when my daughter whom I love is very sick, I feel anxious. When my spouse whom I love is sad, I frequently feel sad too. Or when my friend moves away, I might feel lonely. Conversely, when my daughter recovers from her sickness I might feel relieved; when my spouse is happy again, I might feel content; or when my friend comes for a visit, I might feel joy. These emotions are natural deliverances of love in situations where the targets of love's tendencies are either frustrated or realized in some aspect and degree. In light of these cases, it might seem promising

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<sup>18</sup> The philosophy of emotions exhibits one of the most divergent range of views in the discipline of philosophy. For example, I concede that there might well be an account of emotion according to which the account of love I have just given—i.e., love as tendencies of the will—entails that love is an emotion. In any case, in order to make the discussion tractable, here I make the perhaps flat-footed assumption that emotions are affective and felt (or at least experienced) in some way.

<sup>19</sup> This sort of view seems consistent with recent views of love in social psychology. For example, Aron and Aron have suggested that romantic love is not an emotion. Rather, "romantic love is a goal-directed state that leads to varied emotions." (2005, 328)

to suggest that love partially consists in a tendency to the range of emotions I have just indicated. Indeed, Kolodny holds this kind of view.<sup>20</sup>

Such a view seems plausible as far as it goes. However, it seems very difficult to spell out the relevant tendency to emotion in any great detail. For example, must one *always* feel sad or lonely when union with the beloved is thwarted in some way? It seems quite plausible that one might feel sad or lonely for a period if a dear friend moved away. But after a while one adjusts and one's emotions subside, despite the fact that one still loves the friend. In short, it seems relatively easy to imagine exceptions and counter-examples to the sort of tendency to emotion my examples suggest, and difficult to come up with a tendency that fares any better. This result seems attributable, in part, to the fact that the affective make-up of different people varies quite widely—from relatively passionate to relatively stoic—and so it seems the emotions associated with love vary accordingly.

Given the possibility of such variation, I propose the more moderate preliminary view that certain emotions are typical but contingent effects of love under certain circumstances, perhaps those resembling (but not limited to) the circumstances sketched above. Of course, this proposal is far from a complete account of the relation between love and emotion. Nevertheless, it at least locates emotion relative to the account of love I am defending here.

## **9 CASES LACKING ONE OF LOVE'S TENDENCIES?**

I will now turn to an objection to my account of love. Velleman has raised a second objection to a desire-account of love that might seem also to threaten my view that love consists of a twofold tendency of the will. He suggests that “troublemaking relations” are examples of

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<sup>20</sup> Though he uses the language of “disposition” rather than “tendency”. (Kolodny 2003, 151–152)

people you cannot stand to be with, yet whom you might well love. He writes, “This meddlesome aunt, cranky grandfather, smothering parent, or overcompetitive sibling is dearly loved, loved freely and with feeling: one just has no desire for his or her company.” (Velleman 1999, 353) To aim the objection more clearly at my view, suppose an opportunity for union with some such troublemaking relation arises, such as a family holiday gathering. Suppose further that the behavior of this relation is such that it is either impossible or inappropriate for me to attend the gathering. On my view, we could understand why I would not *intend* to be with the relative, despite my love for him: it would be impossible or inappropriate to act in that way. Nevertheless, according to my view, if I loved him I would still have a desire to be with him, and perhaps also a desire that his behavior be different, thereby making it possible or appropriate to attend. (It seems likely I would also have a conflicting desire *not* to attend the gathering.) This, according to Velleman, would be where my view goes wrong: I might love the troublesome relation and yet fail to have any desire whatsoever (even a conflicted one) to attend the gathering. If so, the objection seems to suggest that there are cases of love in which we do not exhibit any tendency of will toward union with the beloved.

Could there be cases of love like this? I don’t think so. Velleman’s case of the troublesome relative does not seem to fit the bill. If I do not even have a conflicted desire to be with the relative under the circumstances described above, it is hard to see what would make this a case of love. Perhaps the idea is that I might still have a tendency of will toward the good of the relative, and that this would be enough for the case to count as love. However, in that case I seem at best more like a distant benefactor of the relative than someone who loves him.

The difficulty of imagining a case of love that lacks any tendency toward union seems exceeded by the difficulty of imagining a case of love that lacks any tendency toward the

beloved's good. Return, for a moment, to the case of Pericles, who must temporarily forego union with his infant daughter Marina for the sake of her survival. Here, Pericles's tendency of will toward Marina's good issued in a particular intention to bring her to shore and to leave her in the company of a friend who could care for her. However, suppose, instead, that Pericles's love for Marina was such that he was only concerned for his union with her, and that he cared nothing for her good, i.e., that he had no tendency of will toward her good. In that case, Pericles might not have made for shore—thereby threatening Marina's life—and if he did make for shore it would have been *solely* because tending to Marina's needs would have been a means to future union with her. But, tending toward the good of the beloved as a merely instrumental target seems contrary to love: genuine lovers tend toward the good of those they love as a *final* good, something worth realizing because of what it is and not merely because of what else it might achieve. Could Pericles genuinely be understood to love Marina in such a case? I don't think so. And I don't think cases in which one lacks any tendency toward a troublesome relative fare any better. Thus, I take it that tendencies of will toward the good of the beloved and union with him are partially constitutive of love.

## **10 THE SOURCE OF LOVE: APPREHENSION AS GOOD**

Thus far I have argued that love partially consists of a twofold tendency of the will. However, the presence of this attitude is, itself, not sufficient for love. For example, if one believed that it was one's duty to seek union with a person and his good (where possible and appropriate), one might gain the two tendencies on that basis. Nevertheless, these tendencies would not amount to love because of their source in, or dependence upon, a sense of duty. This example suggests that the two tendencies of love must have a particular source or dependence if



they are to count as love. In the remainder of the paper I will defend the view that the two tendencies of love—if they are to be love—must depend upon the lover’s apprehension of the beloved as good in a particular sense, i.e., as *apt* or *fitting* for the lover, given the lover’s values and sensibility.

The beloved may be apt or fitting for the lover in several different ways. First, it may be that the lover recognizes in the beloved a valuable feature that she has in common with him—e.g., moral virtue, wit, family origin, or a history of interaction—and thus that she recognizes the beloved as like her, or “one” with her, in this respect. Second, it may be that the lover recognizes in the beloved a valuable feature that she lacks but would like to have. In this case, seeking union with the beloved might be a way for the lover to make the beloved’s valuable features “her own,” in some sense.<sup>21</sup> Third, it may be that the lover apprehends a feature of the beloved that she simply finds pleasing in some way, but that is not necessarily a feature that she has or would like to have. In any of the three cases, if love is to be sustained it seems right to say that there must be a certain fit—a certain “oneness” or “aptness”—between the lover (or what she wants or appreciates) and the beloved. Thus, we might say that love is sustained in response to (or depends upon) a recognized *capacity* for union with the beloved. In response to this recognized capacity for union, the lover’s will orients toward actual union with the beloved.

Given this particular sense in which the lover must apprehend the beloved as good if she is to love him, it is possible to apprehend someone as good in a *different* sense without loving him. For example, if I have little regard for morality, I may apprehend that someone is morally virtuous, and thus good in a moral sense, without loving him. On the view I am suggesting here,

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<sup>21</sup> This idea 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 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.” (Aron et al. 1991, 243) By mentioning this model here I do not mean to endorse it.

my failure to love him would be due to the fact that I do not personally appreciate the respect in which he is good, perhaps because I neither have that quality nor wish to have it. Thus I would not view him as *one* with me, or *apt* for me, in the relevant sense. In the same way one might acknowledge that someone is very attractive in certain respects, and yet one might not actually be attracted to him or stirred to love him since he is not really one's "type." Thus, a lover's love depends upon, or is sustained by, her apprehension of a person as both good and apt with respect to the particular qualities, values, and sensibility of the lover. If the tendencies of love depend on something else—e.g., a sense of duty—then they will not amount to love.

Importantly, this sort of dependence of love on a lover's apprehension of the beloved as good in the relevant sense does not demand that love *arise* in response to the apprehension of the beloved as good. Indeed, the dependence I have described could, conceptually speaking, come about as a result of drinking a potion or taking a pill. So, for example, on my view it is quite possible that Ron might eat some chocolates laced with a powerful love potion and thereby genuinely come to love Romilda. As long as the potion produced in him an apprehension of Romilda as good in the relevant sense (e.g., a belief or perception that she is so), a tendency of will toward her good, a tendency of will toward union with her, and the right sort of dependence of these tendencies upon the apprehension,<sup>22</sup> I would affirm that he loved her. Nevertheless, despite the conceptual possibility of love potions and pills, I take it that the tendencies of love typically arise in response to the apprehension of someone as good in the relevant sense.

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<sup>22</sup> The exact character of this dependence is an interesting further question that I cannot explore here. Elsewhere I speculate that in some cases the dependence might be merely causal while in others it might be rational (i.e., depending on the relevant apprehension as on a reason).

## 11 OBJECTION: LOVE AS BESTOWAL

According to the account I have endorsed, love is a response to an evaluation or an appraisal of a particular sort—i.e., a recognition that a person is good in the sense described above. However, some philosophers have thought that love is not so much a response to an *appraisal* of the beloved's value as it is a *bestowal* of value upon the beloved.<sup>23</sup> On a strict bestowal view, love is not produced and sustained in response to encountered value; rather, love *gives* value to the beloved object. Thus, according to such a view, my account of love gets the relationship between love and value backward. Harry Frankfurt endorses a bestowal view in the following passage:

It is true that the beloved invariably *is*, indeed, valuable to the lover. However, perceiving that value is not at all an indispensable *formative* or *grounding* condition of the love. It need not be a perception of value in what he loves that moves the lover to love it. The truly essential relationship between love and the value of the beloved goes in the opposite direction. It is not necessarily as a *result* of recognizing their value and of being captivated by it that we love things. Rather, what we love necessarily *acquires* value for us *because* we love it. The lover does invariably and necessarily perceive the beloved as valuable, but the value he sees it to possess is a value that derives from and that depends upon his love.<sup>24</sup>

Frankfurt seems willing to grant that love *sometimes* arises in response to the lover's apprehension of the inherent value of the beloved (2004, 38). However, his central point in the passage above is that love *need* not arise or be sustained in this way. Rather, what is essential to love, thinks Frankfurt, is that some perceived value of the beloved *derives from* the lover's love for him.

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<sup>23</sup> (Frankfurt 2004, 38–39). I take the language of “appraisal” and “bestowal” from Irving Singer's canonical statement of the distinction between them (2009a, 3–22).

<sup>24</sup> I take Frankfurt as my primary opponent instead of Irving Singer since Singer holds a kind of bestowal view that is not clearly in conflict with my view. While Singer surely holds that love bestows value on the beloved, and thus that some of the beloved's perceived value is dependent on the lover's love, he also holds that love requires a kind of appraisal. For example, he writes, “In bestowal there will always be a concomitant appraisal... Apart from appraisal, no love would exist—we wouldn't even notice what the other is like.” (Singer 2009b, 52) Thus, it seems Singer would not necessarily contest my idea that love is a response to apprehended value. It is just that he would want to add the idea of bestowal to my account. Frankfurt, on the other hand, seems to me a genuine opponent of my view.

How, according to Frankfurt, does love ever arise in those cases where it does not do so in response to the lover's apprehension of the beloved's value?<sup>25</sup> His basic answer seems to be that in such cases love is brought about by natural causes (2004, 38). He takes parental love for children to be such a case:

I can declare with unequivocal confidence that I do not love my children because I am aware of some value that inheres in them independent of my love for them. The fact is that I loved them even before they were born—before I had any especially relevant information about their personal characteristics or their particular merits and virtue...It is not because I have noticed their value, then, that I love my children as I do...It is really the other way around...As for why it is that human beings do tend generally to love their children, the explanation presumably lies in the evolutionary pressures of natural selection (2004, 39–40).

Frankfurt's idea, here, is that his love for his children could not have arisen in response to his apprehension of a value inherent in them and independent of his love since he loved them before they were born, when he had no information about the particular characteristics or virtues that might make them valuable. Rather, he holds that certain natural, causal pressures—perhaps related to natural selection—produced in him his love for his children, and this love then brought him to see special value in them. Frankfurt takes this case of love for his children to be something of a counterexample to the kind of view that I endorse.

Of course, it seems correct that Frankfurt's love for his children did not arise in response to his prior apprehension of their special beauty, wit, charm, or virtues of character. Thus, he seems right to deny that love for one's own children arises in response to a prior apprehension of the value of such qualities. However, this does not rule out the idea that his love for his children arose in response to a prior apprehension of their special and love-independent value to him. Indeed, it strikes me that my recognition of the importance of my children being *my* children was instrumental in the formation of my love for them. But, this recognition is simply the

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<sup>25</sup> I set potions and pills aside for the moment.

apprehension of the value of my parental relationship to them. Thus, we might say that the parental relationship—a relational property of my children—is a feature that I apprehended the value of, and in response to which I came to love my children. Of course, I never would have articulated my coming to love them in this way, since I never thought these thoughts.

Nevertheless, it seems clear to me that my love was an implicit response to my apprehension of the fact that they are *my* children, i.e., to the fact of the parent-child relation between us, and to the importance of this fact.

But, what of Frankfurt's claim that my love for my children arose out of mere natural causes—perhaps a certain brain chemistry brought about via evolutionary pressures? While some brain chemistry is surely involved in any case of love, if we set aside potions and pills<sup>26</sup> it seems cases of parental love must also involve a prior apprehension of *something* about the child; if not, it seems doubtful that love would arise. After all, if, unbeknownst to me, my sexual partner became pregnant and had a child, it seems highly unlikely that I would love that child. Mere biology or chemistry is not enough here: at a minimum love requires that I know of the child. Moreover, it seems that my apprehension of the parental relationship I have to the child is necessary in producing parental love.<sup>27</sup> This apprehension is what accounts for the fact that I love *that* child with parental love and not any number of other children in the nursery. Finally, it seems equally clear that I must find the parental relationship I have to her to be *important* or *valuable* in some sense, if love is to arise. If I knew that the child was mine but thought that fact made no difference in the way I was to relate to her, or in the attitudes I was to have toward her, then, again, it seems unlikely I would have parental love for her. Of course, for most of us, the

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<sup>26</sup> Which seems legitimate here, since Frankfurt wants to talk about real cases.

<sup>27</sup> I assume this parental relationship could come about in any number of ways, including ordinary biological means (i.e., sexual reproduction) and adoption.

importance of a parental relationship is obvious and something we take for granted, and thus it is not something we even give thought to.<sup>28</sup> However, sadly, this attitude is not universal. Thus, it seems some apprehension of the value or importance of my parental relationship to my child—however implicit or non-self-aware it might be—is necessary if I am to love her with parental love. For this reason, I take Frankfurt’s easy reference to “natural causes” and “evolutionary pressures” to paper over important aspects of the typical psychology of parental love for children. Indeed, I take this psychology to vindicate my view that love is sustained in response to an apprehension of some aspect of the value of the beloved, over against Frankfurt’s bestowal view.

## 12 CONCLUSION

In this paper I have defended an account of human love—love for humans, by humans. I have argued that such love consists of two tendencies of the will—one toward the good of the beloved and one toward union with him. I claimed that the desires, intentions, and emotions often associated with love are best thought of as downstream effects of love. On my account, then, love is a *source* of such attitudes and is distinct from them.

In addition to this view of the attitudes in which love consists, I argued that love, if it is to be such, must have its source in—or it must depend upon—the lover’s apprehension of the beloved as good in a particular sense. The lover must recognize in the beloved some good feature that the lover also has, would like to have, or simply finds pleasing in some respect. Typically, this feature will be that in response to which love arises or is sustained.

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<sup>28</sup> Here might be the *real* influence of evolutionary biology on parental love: most of us seem wired to value our own children in response to our apprehended (valuable) parental relationship to them.

In light of my account of love we can see more clearly the sense in which love is both something passive and something active—something we suffer and something related to our agency. We suffer love insofar as we do not have direct control over the evaluations of goodness that give rise to our love. Rather, when we come to love something we are captivated or struck by its goodness: the beloved acts upon us, in a way, meshing with our values and tastes, and prompting our love. At the same time, love is the origin of great swaths of human action. It is frequently the source of the desires and intentions that move us to the service and presence of those we care about. Indeed, if we include self-love, for some of us love may be at the root of most things we do—our work, our leisure, our social life, and our solitude. Love, then, also plays a crucial role in human agency.

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