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TRUE LOVE

THE NORMATIVITY OF A PASSION

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Introduction

Love, quoting Graham Greene, is the heart of the matter. Not only of this work, but also of my life. And probably of yours as well.

This is not to say that love is the only thing that matters in life, of course. But it is hard to imagine a satisfying and fulfilling life without any kind of love. For the Christian, God is love, and this religious truth could well be transformed into one that concerns everyone, believer or not. Love gives meaning to our lives, because it connects our egotistic self with the external world, and renders us capable of listening, giving, trusting, and struggling. Unfortunately, there are some downsides too: love can well be a source of evils, a way of justifying the worst sins and human selfishness, a god in the name of which everything seems to be acceptable. This holds especially in our post-Romantic times, since it is in the nature of *Eros*, the main character of this work, to be exemplarily twofold and ambiguous--[1] and not incidentally, but necessarily. Let me borrow C. S. Lewis' words: "The love which leads to cruel and perjured unions, even to suicide pacts and murder, is not likely to be wandering lust or idle sentiment. It may well be Eros in all his splendour; heart-breakingly sincere; ready for every sacrifice except renunciation."[2]

For sure, *eros* has had a central, sometimes intrusive, role in my life. I would be a much different person if I had had different loves than those that now divide my biography into epochs: like the history of a country, mine was governed by different sovereigns, and with no less jubilant coronations, battles against external enemies, unexpected rebellions. A history of victories, and, often, defeats.

The idea of this work was born one day I was sitting in Peter Railton's class. I suddenly realized that I have been hanging around it for a while. For one year I had been franticly trying to find a topic for the dissertation, thinking about some vague connection between interpersonal values, morality, and aesthetics. Today it's so clear to me that I was just looking for philosophical answers to private, existential questions: Why did I fall in love with him? What was the meaning of that relationship? Did I truly love him?

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[1] Even *agape*, that is, love for God and our neighbor, can become a source of evils: think of the religious wars and of all the leaders who wanted to pursue a better world and ended up being bloody dictators.
[2] Lewis (1991, 108).

I do not think philosophy gives much consolation, as Boetius among others might have thought. When your heart feels irrevocably broken, writing a philosophy paper does not heal it. And yet. And yet it does help. And it helps in many ways: not just by distracting you and forcing you to think about something else. (Actually, writing a philosophical work *about* love just has the opposite effect.) And not only providing the illusion of being in control, to find the answer, to find some equity in the realm of unfairness, to look for light where there is just obscurity.

Philosophy helps also the heart-broken (or previously heart-broken) philosopher to understand. Pretty trivial, isn't it: the task of philosophy and of philosophers is understanding. Analyzing. Clarifying. What is going on here? This is what I attempt to do in this work: as a previously heart-broken woman and as an aspiring philosopher, I am trying to understand what goes on in love.

The biographical motivation of this work partially explains its tendency to ignore much of the historical thought about love. The most evident lacuna is Plato. I do not refer to his important ideas on love, or to his beautiful and crucial dialogues dedicated to *eros*. I also neglected other important philosophical conceptions, such as Aristotelian *philia* or Augustinian *agape*. Not that I ignored an incredibly large collection of ideas: all the nineteenth century's books of philosophy of love begin by emphasizing the scarcity of philosophical works about it, and I won't repeat their complaints. But I purposively ignored Plato and Aristotle, notwithstanding the depth and richness of their thoughts about love, as about everything else. This is due to the enormous respect and admiration I feel for their work, and the awareness that discussing them without "using" them can be hard. Many contemporary thinkers have a tendency to quote brief excerpts from them, and to use these selective quotations to make them say what *they* themselves want to say. I don't desire to fall into this temptation. I let the competent historian to tell us what Plato and Aristotle thought about love, with the appropriate length and time.

My approach will thus be more profane. It is based on my own intuitions and experiences, and those of others. I will refer to some contemporary philosophers, but I will not consider myself obligated to quote every philosopher who wrote about love.

The first Chapter offers a preliminary characterization of love in the context of the philosophy of emotions. I review the principal theories of emotions, from Jamesian feeling theories to intentionality accounts, giving pride of place to the pros and cons of the cognitivist approach to emotional phenomena. I do not commit to a particular theory of the nature of emotions, even if I declare my sympathy for a moderate cognitivism. I then move to the normative dimension of the theory of emotions, paying particular attention to two approaches: the anti-moralistic account of emotional fittingness by Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, and the complex account of emotional intentionality given by Amélie Rorty. This discussion leads to the conclusion that love is not an emotion. However, love is importantly analogous to emotions, because it is an intentional state, and because it possesses emotional manifestations. It is in virtue of this partial analogies that some normative conclusions on emotions- but not all- will apply to love as well.

The second Chapter discusses the contemporary discussion on love in analytic philosophy. I begin with explaining the current terminology and the main theoretical categories, and present the distinction among the four main forms of personal love. I clarify that this work will be focused almost exclusively on *eros*. The principal theories of love that are presented and discussed are those owed to Robert Nozick, David Velleman, Harry Frankfurt, and Martha Nussbaum. By reviewing and criticizing these theories I point out that the philosophical discussion about love is currently concentrated on questions like the following: What is the nature of love? Do we love in virtue of the beloved's properties? Does the evaluation of the beloved give grounds for love? Is love a moral emotion? In connection to this set of questions, I end up giving my definition of love and claiming that: love has a volitional nature; it can be metaphorically defined as the desire to match with a person; it involves necessarily sexual desire; we love in virtue of the relational and historical properties of the beloved.

In the third Chapter I raise the question that is to be central to the work: What is true love? The question is first asked from the standpoint of common sense: People speak of true love, but what do they mean with it? My answer is that they just mean real, authentic love, that is, love *tout court*. From this ordinary conception of love, I derive my broadly realist framework of discussion: there is such a thing as a mental state that deserves to be called love but only at certain conditions, which have a degree of

objectivity. We may be wrong about love, we may legitimately wonder whether we are in love or not, and this possibility of error and of legitimate doubt is an expression of the objectivity, of the reality of love. There are facts of love: we may love or not we may be in that mental state or not. But given that love is real, the question arises of how to understand (and possibly recognize) its reality. This work is an attempt to make some progress in giving answers to this question. I begin by distinguishing the concept of true love from those of reciprocated, successful, or happy love. I then defend my general approach from Ronald De Sousa's criticisms against every project that aims to find a paradigm of love. In the last part of the Chapter, I discuss the role of the phenomenology of love in any enquiry about love, and especially for realist approaches. I end up suggesting that in order to be truly in love we likely need to be in the correct phenomenological state.

In the fourth Chapter I analyze the role of the object of love, that is, the Beloved, in the determination of the conditions for true or authentic love. I hold that the standpoint of the subject, of the Lover in this case, is privileged in the analysis of a mental state. Nevertheless, the object too seems to be crucially relevant in love, on the basis of the idea (which has roots in intuitive convictions but can also be defended on general philosophical grounds) that love is more similar to seeing than to dreaming: if love is true, there must be some sort of correct relationship with the external reality, with the physical object that is the target of love. I reject the view that true love is an appropriate response to any property of the Beloved. Love is quite unlike emotions under this respect, and the issue of its fittingness to the object does not really seem to arise. I also examine, and reject, the wider view that love's truth is connected to any sort of values, of a moral or of another normative kind. The object has not to be appropriate in any important sense. But I point out that there are epistemic constraints on the reality of love. The Beloved must be directly known by the Lover, since the properties that really matter for love are historical and relational; and depend on and are shaped by the relationship between Lover and Beloved, which involves acquaintance of a personal kind. As a consequence, true love cannot be directed to fictional characters. The fact that the Lover must have an appropriate epistemic relationship with the Beloved does not imply the awareness of the

appropriateness of this relationship. I conclude the chapter enquiring whether the knowledge of the Beloved can be plausibly analyzed in terms of true justified beliefs.

In the fifth Chapter I focus again on the role of the Lover, and argue that from the volitional nature of love it is possible to derive a view according to which true love represents some sort of coherence among the life projects of the Lover. This view, although seemingly capturing some ordinary intuitions, is shown unable to respond appropriately to objections based on the revolutionary power of love, the capacity true love is supposed to have in changing the Lover. To prevent an excessively prudent and conservative view of true love, I then present a condition for true love based on a wider (and weaker) conception of harmony in the Lover's volitions. Finally, I present the most important condition of true love: the Lover must be vulnerable and open to the possibility of being hurt, either by the Beloved's behavior or by facts regarding the Beloved or the relationship the Lover has with it. Ultimately, every form of love is defined by being defenseless toward the object of love.

Chapter 1. Love and Emotional Appropriateness

1. Approaches to Emotions

Explaining emotions has been notoriously difficult. This seems to be due to at least two reasons. First of all, under the label "emotions" many different mental states could be *prima facie* included. Feelings, moods, character traits, and motives are not so clearly distinct from emotions. There have been attempts to bring into a reflective equilibrium the pre-philosophical and the philosophical taxonomy of these different states, in order to make clear the distinctions, but still no unique account of these various mental states has been presented even at the simple level of a catalogue of what once were simply called "passions". There is also an internal taxonomical problem: the attempt of labeling emotions in different categories has not produced a shared model. They can be distinguished in active and passive, voluntary and involuntary, primarily physical or psychological, rational or irrational, object-directed or without any specific object, and so on, but there is no agreement on how to fill these fields. In both enquiries (on the nature and on the varieties of emotions) the implicit risk is to multiply and complicate the phenomena without it being useful or correct.[3]

Secondly, and partially connected with the taxonomical difficulty, there is an internal explanatory problem about the nature of emotions. Many classical philosophers, beginning with Plato, proposed theories of emotions, "conceived as responses to certain sorts of events of concern to a subject, triggering bodily changes and typically motivating characteristic behavior".[4] From this apparently straightforward definition, it is possible to

[3] I widely referred to Rorty (1980). I do not think necessary to acknowledge every single passage since it is a matter of common ground. I will discuss the peculiarities of her work later in the chapter.

[4] De Sousa (2003, p.1). In this introduction, I mainly follow his taxonomy of the theories on emotions, even if I disagree on some details. There is one significant difference, though, since I do not ascribe to all cognitivist views the claim that emotions are propositional attitudes. Nussbaum's theory, as it will emerge, is a judgmental, but not propositional view of emotions, and nonetheless it is certainly among the most important cognitivist approaches to emotions. It is important to clarify this, because it permits to Nussbaum to avoid the most powerful objections to the cognitivist theories. Also, this is not a detail, since she insists from the very beginning on notions such as salience, and "seeing x as y", which are very faraway from a

move to any sort of disagreement and debate: what kind of response is an emotion? What are the sorts of events involved? How is the concern articulated? Are the bodily changes triggered by the emotion, or are they the first cause of it? Is the emotion anything else than the registration of these changes? What elements in the emotion are responsible for motivating the subject? How do these behaviors differ in different cultures? Are the bodily changes universal and therefore primary in the explanation? How do the changes and the behavior interact? Is the behavior the consequence of the bodily changes? How did evolution influence the emotions? What role do emotions play in it?

These are only a few of the questions it is possible to ask about a neutral definition of emotion. Citing evolution permits to introduce a third related difficulty, which can be considered at the same time an advantage: the philosophical debate on emotions has been involving more and more the contribution of different disciplines, among which psychology, neurology, and evolutionary biology.

A fourth difficulty, with which I will not be here concerned, is the relationship of theories of emotion with the models of mind. In De Sousa's words: "to date cognitive science does not seem to have provided any crucial tests to decide between competing models of the mind. An eclectic approach therefore seems warranted. What does seem well established in the light of cross-cultural research is that a number of emotions have inter-translatable names and universally recognizable expressions".[5]

On the number of these basic emotions, though, scholars disagree. They are at least four: happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. The expressions of surprise and disgust are also universal, but some authors do not consider them as emotions (I tend to agree with this last position, even though I am not committing to it here). Paul Ekman is famous for his work on facial expressions, but Charles Darwin, whom Ekman refers to, was of course already aware of their importance in identifying emotions.[6]

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proposition, and quite closer to perception. I suspect De Sousa, as an advocate of a perceptual model, is not very fair in presenting the cognitivist theories in the most extreme version.

[5] De Sousa (2003, p.2).

[6] See among other works Ekman (1980). Darwin's first work on this topic is Darwin (1873). For an interesting usage of this material, see Frank (1988).

The role of physical expressions, and in general of the physical changes, is underlined in the so-called non-cognitivist theories of emotion, of which feeling theories represent the most extreme version.

Love is often considered an emotion. I think this is a mistake. But this mistake is due to an effective closeness between love and emotions. At the end of the chapter I will say why love is not an emotion, but it is important to underline that the similarity is based on the fact that love is an intentional state typically associated with emotions, and feelings. Since I explain the similarity of love to emotions on the ground of intentionality, my position would be reinforced by a commitment to a theory of emotions that emphasizes the intentional character of emotions. It will emerge that as a matter of fact my sympathies go to that kind of approach. Nevertheless, I am not going to commit to it, and I will hopefully be neutral in the presentation of the different positions in this debate.

1.1 Feeling theories

William James's theory is the most cited example of the quite commonsensical conception of emotions as a class of feelings. Emotions are therefore considered similar to sensations. According to James, their peculiarity consists in being caused by changes in physiological conditions. They are the registration of those changes, and therefore being in an emotional state is just feeling certain physical sensations. "What kind of emotion of fear would be left, if the feelings neither of quickened heart-beats nor of shallow breathing, neither of trembling lips nor of weakened limbs, neither of goose-flesh nor of visceral stirrings, were present, it is quite impossible to think. Can one fancy the state of rage and picture no ebullition of it in the chest, no flushing of the face, no dilation of the nostrils, no clenching of the teeth, no impulse to vigorous action, but in their stead limp muscles, calm breathing, and a placid face?"[7]

James assumes that the answer is "no". And above all, not content with the necessity of the phenomenology he describes, he believes that the whole emotional experience is reducible to it. Emotions are *meaningless*, that is, lacking of intentionality and of evaluative content.

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[7] James (1884, pp. 193-4).

This claim, though, clashes with our experience and intuitions on emotions. One doesn't need to be a hard-core cognitivist to recognize the evaluative content of the object of anger or fear. I am afraid *of* something, and I see it as fearful. I am angry *with* you, and I consider you deserving my anger. The emotions that are objectless are typically labeled as different states, such as moods.

From this general unsatisfactory aspect of the theory derive different specific objections. It is worthwhile to sketch at least two of them. The first one is that the theory is unable to account for the fact that different emotions can share very similar feelings. This objection is first due to James Cannon,[8] and it is considered demonstrated by the Schacter-Singer experiment.[9] Subjects in that study were injected with epinephrine, a stimulant of the sympathetic system, and they tended to interpret the experienced arousal in totally opposite ways, depending on the situation they were put in (an actor pretending to be angry or euphoric). Subsequent research has shown that only a limited number of emotions have significantly different bodily profiles, whereas a taxonomy of emotions needs to be more sophisticated than this. Physiology and common sense phenomenology are inadequate to account for the many emotional tones. And this inadequacy holds not only for the difference between shame, guilt, and embarrassment, which is a common example of distinctively different emotions sharing the same feelings, but also for analogous emotions that differ in a way that is not so explicit in the intentional content. The Jamesian theory cannot explain why we can distinguish, for instance, euphoria from happiness. Think of a person who is in a state of euphoria caused by gas intoxication. The feeling is similar to being happy and amused by something, because the brain is sending that kind of inputs to the body. The gas, though, is misleading the brain. We are capable of distinguishing this state of the mind and the body from the emotion of happiness, in virtue of the absence of a potential object of happiness. Euphoria can be a phenomenological expression of happiness, but it is not reducible to it. The "feeling" of happiness, which admittedly can be composed also by other sensations and feelings than the euphoric ones, cannot be all what happiness consists in. Happiness is not just the perception of some bodily changes. It is the intentional content of the emotion that

[8] Cannon (1929).
[9] Schacter and Singer (1962).

permits to the subject to identify the emotion she is experiencing. If I feel anxious, and I cannot understand why, and then I realize that I have tachycardia because I had a coffee too much, I simply stop feeling anxious. I feel that my heart is beating, but since I cannot attach to this feeling any plausible intentional content, I do not experience any emotion, just a mere feeling.[10]

The second objection addressed to the feeling theory is that it does not account for the possibility of emotions to be rationalized and even justified. This point is crucial for our purposes, since I will claim that emotions can be rationalized and justified, whereas love is not, and this is an important difference between emotions and love.[11] The Jamesian approach to emotions, if inadequate to explain emotions, seems above all inadequate to account for their possibility of being appropriate, if not in a limited sense, such as their "normality" or "regularity" according to the standards of the individual. I will come back to this topic later in the chapter.

1.1.1 Neo-Jamesian Theories: Antonio Damasio

The defects just expounded of the traditional feeling theories *à la* James are mitigated in the more sophisticated theory elaborated by Antonio Damasio, a self-avowed neo-Jamesian. He defines "the *essence* of emotion as the collection of changes in body state that are induced in myriad organs by nerve cell terminals, under the control of a dedicated brain system, which is responding to the content of thoughts relative to a particular entity or event"[12]. This is the definition of *primary* emotions, the basic mechanisms of the emotional life. But they do not describe the full range of emotional behaviors. Later in the development of the individual come the *secondary* emotions, "which occur once we begin experiencing feelings and forming *systematic connections between categories of objects and situations, on the one hand, and primary emotions, on the other*".[13] Their explanation is parasitical to the explanation of basic emotions. They are then only

[10] Notice that this analysis holds for occurrent emotions, which are easier for the feeling theories to account for, than the dispositional or standing ones, such as love is considered (by those who consider love an emotion).
[11] It is thanks to the standards of fittingness that apply to emotions that we can rationalize and justify them. Love shares with emotions only a broader normative dimension, concerning authenticity. We will see, though, how complicated this dimension is in love.
[12] Damasio (1994, 1995 p.139).
[13] Damasio (1994, 1995 p. 134), italics in the text.

"projected emotions", off-line reproductions of basic emotions. For instance, the fear I experience because of a horror movie is secondary, based on the same mechanism that would be triggered by a real danger. The feelings that are typical of the primary emotion are typical also of its secondary version, but Damasio doesn't seem to attribute a major role to intentionality, as one would expect when the emotional experience gets more abstract.

But the conclusive definition of emotions actually seems to point in this direction and it shows the lack of reductionism of Damasio's theory: "emotion is the combination of a *mental evaluative process*, simple or complex, with *dispositional responses to that process*, mostly *toward the body proper*, resulting in an emotional body state, but also *toward the body itself* (neurotransmitter nuclei in brain stem), resulting in additional mental changes"[14].

The key word here is "dispositional". Every mental evaluative process (that therefore is not denied or reduced to a bodily state) tends to provoke standard responses that are bodily processes. So the evaluation is not equivalent to the response, as it is in cognitive theories, but it *is the external cause* of the bodily response.

The evaluation can be very primitive and unconscious[15], and therefore even the most basic emotions are thought to be informative conditions, in a perceptual way. I will not consider here Damasio's theory in its complexity. I think that he is right to point out that "mind derives from the entire organism as an ensemble" and this seems to undermine the validity of cognitivist approaches such as Nussbaum's, which tend to underestimate the role of the physiology. We will also see how a compromising approach, such as Rorty's, seems to be the best way to deal with this issue. Her theory is wary of the "physicalist" suggestions, but still she succeeds in accounting for the intentional nature of emotion in a way that is not available to Damasio. This seems to be due more to the fact that he has a different explicative aim, rather than to a failure of the theory: Damasio, as every other neuro-scientist, has to stop, where the philosopher begins.

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[14] Damasio (1995, 1995 p.139).
[15] See the "gambling experiments", Damasio (1994, 1995 p.212-217).

1.2 Intentionality Accounts

Accounting for emotions' intentionality is, at the same time, the main task and the greatest virtue of a wide class of approaches. They focalize on the evaluative content of the object: being fearful means seeing the object of fear under the subjective perspective, which evaluates that object as fearful, scary.

Identifying the very object of an emotion is not easy. One problem concerns the difference between the object and the cause: they can coincide, but they are not the same thing, and it is important to keep them distinct. Different emotions will have different structures of their object relations. Some emotions involve necessarily a target (like love),[16] at which they are directed, whereas others do not (like sadness). Some emotions have just a focus, and some have a very articulated propositional content (like regret). If an emotion lacks every kind of object, is generally declassed to "mood".

Full-fledged emotions, whatever the kind of object they possess, all have a *formal object*, which is essential to the definition of that particular emotion: it is a property ascribed by the emotion to its target, focus, or propositional object.

A wide group of theories can be said to be characterized by the attention to the evaluative feature of emotions, among which the psychological "appraisal theories", the evolutionary approaches, the cognitivist theories, and the perceptual theories. I will not say anything on the first group, I will briefly consider the second one, and then pay more attention to the last two kinds.

1.2.1 Evolutionary Approaches

Evolutionary approaches answer to the question why we should have emotions: they are considered to be adaptations whose purpose is to solve some basic problems the organisms are facing. We already mentioned Paul Ekman's work on emotional expressions, which has been inspired by the original interest Darwin had for them. Darwin thought that they originally served particular functions, and then remained associated to particular emotions for communicative aims. So if once baring teeth in

[16] This is true also if it is denied that love is an emotion, as I will do at the end of the chapter. Love is an intentional state, and its object can be considered propositional or not. I agree with Robert Kraut and Amélie Rorty that it is not. See Kraut (1986), and Rorty (1986). Roger Lamb seems to presuppose that it is propositional, even if he does not explicitly commit to such a position. See Lamb (1997).

anger prepared to attack the enemy, now it communicates the state of anger. As we said, some emotional expressions seem to be universal and universally recognizable, and this is the ground for considering the associated emotions as "basic". They are sadness, happiness, disgust, surprise, fear, and anger. It is also likely that they have some innate basis (even if they get reinforced culturally). Ekman takes emotional expressions to be part of "affect programs", that is, universal complex responses, which are controlled by unconscious mechanisms.

Evolutionary approaches, though, tend to pay less attention to the sophisticated cognitive processes involved in some "higher" emotions, even if evolutionary psychology is going in the direction of filling this *lacuna*.

1.2.2 Cognitivist Theories

The emphasis on cognition in emotions is of course the core business of cognitive theories. They do not only underline the intentional and evaluative character of emotions (as more generically intentionality theories do), but also claim that emotions involve propositional claims.

There are several types of cognitivist theories: some authors identify emotions with judgments, such as Robert Solomon and Martha Nussbaum;[17] some others are less parsimonious and add beliefs, desires, and feelings into the composition of emotions.

Cognitive theories have faced many different criticisms. Since this is not a work on emotions, I will mention only the two that seem more relevant. The first common objection is that this kind of account excludes animals and infants from the realm of emotional beings, which seems very implausible. Nussbaum replies to this by claiming that animals and infants are capable of intentionality, selective attention, and appraisal. She therefore broadens the conception of "evaluative cognition", in order to include beings that lack language but are able to judge in a non-propositional way. The vocabulary that she uses to refer to the kind of ability that a subject needs in order to feel emotions is actually very close to a perceptual one, even if she insists on the judgmental nature of emotions. I share with Nussbaum this general idea that cognitive evaluation need not be propositional, and I believe this is particularly true in love.

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[17] See Solomon (1980), and Nussbaum (2001).

Secondly, there is the "fear of flying" objection: judgments are neither necessary nor sufficient for the existence of an emotion, since I might believe that flying is a safe way of traveling, and yet be very scared by it.[18] There is a direct reply to this objection, which claims that this example just shows that the propositional content of the emotion is different from the propositional content of the belief.

An indirect reply admits that there is a contradiction, but denies that it is a problem, since the subjects can be incoherent or suffer of *emotional inertia*, but this proves only that they are not perfect feelers, so to speak, as much as they can be imperfect epistemic subjects. We will see later how Amélie Rorty, who is broadly speaking a cognitivist, deals with the problem of emotional inertia.

1.2.3 Perceptual Theories

A crucial aspect of interest of the cognitivist theories is that of rebutting the merely private nature of emotions. But it is possible to do the same also by appealing to another kind of cognitive states than judgments: perceptions. Perceptual states satisfy an important criterion for objectivity, which is the world-to-mind direction of fit. Since De Sousa is the most important advocate of this view, I will quote his words. Here is the definition of the major advantage of his theory: "a view ascribing to emotions a true mind-to-world direction of fit, inspired by the model of perception, would involve a criterion of success that depended on correctness with respect to some objective property".[19] A perceptual theory, that is, would give an objectivist answer to a question that we are going to ask often later in the work: do we love x because it possesses some objectively lovable features, or do we declare x lovable because we love it?

"Emotions are sometimes said to be subjective in this sense: that they merely reflect something that belongs exclusively and contingently to the mind of the subject of the experience, and therefore do not co-vary with any property that could be independently identified. This charge presupposes a sense of 'objective' that contrasts with 'projective', in something like the psychoanalytical sense. In terms of the analogy of perception, to say that emotions are universally subjective in this sense would be to claim

[18] Stocker (1992).
[19] De Sousa (2003, p.6)

that they resemble hallucinations more than veridical perceptions."[20] Vive versa, if we consider them as capable of being similar to veridical perceptions, we can account for our temptation of seriously ascribing reasonableness, fittingness, and appropriateness (or their opposite) to emotions. The authors who are in favor of this option tend to be cognitivists, and consider emotions as cognitive instruments to view the world correctly and correctly act in it. But it is hard to identify independently from the subject the alleged objective properties identified by emotions, and this gives an advantage to a sophisticated theory as Damasio's, who can account for the capacity of emotions to guide us in the world, without appealing to any objective property of it. In Damasio's account emotions have only an indirect role, and need not be analogous to any cognitive state. Subjects in his studies showed a diminished capacity to experience emotions, because of injuries sustained to the prefrontal and somatosensory cortices of the brain, which in turn caused the incapacity to make intelligent practical decisions. Passions are shown to be indispensable to preserve the rationality of an individual. His theory proves what cognitivists suggest- that emotions are fundamental for our survival- without being one of them. So what should be a point in favor of cognitivism actually turns out to be shared also by the opposite view. Cognitivists, however, can reply that Damasio explains the functioning of the emotional apparatus only up to a certain point: only in virtue of their intentionality can emotions play the role that Damasio recognizes to them.

It doesn't seem, anyway, that perceptual theories are clearly superior on this ground. But maybe they score better than others on another issue: the passivity of emotions. Again, in De Sousa's words: "in one vein, impressed by the bad reputation of the "passions" as taking over our consciousness against our will, philosophers have been tempted to take the passivity of emotions as evidence of their subjectivity. In another vein, however, it has been noted that the passivity of emotions is sometimes precisely analogous to the passivity of perception. How the world is, is not in our power. So it is only to be expected that our emotions, if they actually represent something genuinely and objectively in the world, should not be in our power either".[21]

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[20] De Sousa (2003, p.6)
[21] De Sousa (2003, p.6).

This, though, doesn't seem an argument, but only a suggestion. And I think that it could be suggested that the experience of passivity is only, indeed, a subjective experience. The phenomenology of emotions is typically characterized by passivity. But this is true also in the case of emotional phenomena that are clearly not grounded on anything objective, such as feeling possessed by a ghost (or by the Devil for those who do not believe in His existence). Furthermore, even excluding all the hallucinatory experiences, also perception is not necessarily explained in terms of a contact with an objective reality, as in the debated case of the secondary qualities.

Finally, De Sousa proposes his particular version of the theory,[22] according to which "emotions are not so much perceptions as they are ways of seeing-- species of determinate patterns of salience among objects of attention, lines of inquiry, and inferential strategies."[23] The advantage on the cognitivist theories is that, according to a perceptual explanatory model, emotions are not identified with judgments or desires, but simply set the agenda for them. De Sousa acknowledges that emotions can be called judgments, because "they are what we see the world 'in terms of'. But they need not consist in articulated propositions". But this last one is a position that no many contemporary philosophers take, and Nussbaum is for sure not among them. It is unclear to me, then, what are the relevant differences left between perceptual and cognitivist theories, after that Nussbaum and De Sousa have come so close to each other.

1.3 Where I Stand

As I said already, I do not intend to commit here to any specific approach to emotions, even if I find more convincing the (broadly speaking) cognitivist approach. But a hard-core cognitivism risks to underestimate the phenomenological and even physical dimension of emotions, and particularly Nussbaum and Solomon run this risk. As in many other cases, *in medio stat virtus*. Amélie Rorty shows how to compromise between extreme positions in a nontrivial way. I will examine her theory in the fourth part of this chapter.

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[22] See De Sousa (1987). He claims that Rorty (1980) proposes the same account.
[23] D Sousa (2003, p.7).

2. Normative Issues About Emotions

Since this is not an enquiry on the nature of emotions, but of love, and at the end of this chapter I will claim that love is not an emotion, I will set aside any other ontological question. For the same reason, I am not going to commit to a very specific account of emotions, even if I have not hidden my general cognitivist orientation. Nevertheless, since love is undoubtedly an intentional state and presents similarities to the way emotions affect our life (for instance, it has motivational powers), I think it is relevant to face the question of appropriateness of emotions, before getting to love, so that later we will be able to judge whether the normative dimension of love is similar to that of emotions (the answer will be "no"). Another reason for considering the appropriateness of emotions is that love is associated with them, and it develops also trough them: we will wonder later if the normativity of love is influenced by the appropriateness of its emotional manifestations (the answer will be "yes, partially").

2.1 Rationality and Emotions

The direct connection between rationality and emotions in its more pervasive way has been already presented when speaking of Damasio's studies. His body of neurological evidence suggests that emotions are indispensable to the conduct of a rational life. More specifically, it has been showed[24] that emotions constrain and direct our attention, and allow us to frame our decisions, defining the parameters that have to be taken into account in any particular deliberation, and making salient, in the deliberation itself, only a tiny part of the available alternatives and relevant facts. Emotions constitute therefore one of the principal solutions to the "Frame Problem", that is, to the necessity of a drastic restriction of the range of possible actions, and strategies, which are virtually infinite and potentially paralyzing.

But what about the rationality of the emotions themselves? After all, Damasio's Neo-Jamesian theory does not cancel the prejudice that passions are irrational, even if

[24] Matthews and Wells (1994).

they play a crucial role for rationality. Hume would agree: passions are fundamental for human beings, *in virtue of* their radical differentiation from reason.

The normative consequence of the cognitivist ontology is of considering emotions more "rational", that is, subject to the constraints of rationality. Actually, its main argument is based on the observation that we commonly blame people for the wrong, or inappropriate emotions. This is possible, the cognitivists argue, only because we think that emotions can be subject to rational and normative constraints, and this in turn depends on the cognitive role they play in human life. Depending on the specific characterization of the nature of emotions, there will be also a different characterization of their rationality. But, as a general rule, all cognitivists will consider an emotion appropriate or reasonable if it reflects a correct evaluation of its object, or of the reality it refers to.

2.2 The Paradox of Self-Knowledge in Emotions

Almost all accounts of the appropriateness of emotions, especially when they are of a cognitivist kind, assume an epistemic notion of rationality. Appropriate emotions, as we will see with regard to D'Arms and Jacobson's view, succeed in achieving some sort of representational adequacy. But some accounts highlight the similarity that emotions bear with actions: consequently, emotions are assessable in terms of strategic, practical rationality. This implies that it is possible to control voluntarily emotions, at least partially. Even if I do not commit to any specific theory of emotions, I think that an active dimension of emotions is undeniable. This is also shown by the fact that we can be hold responsible for them in some occasions. Rage is not controllable, but we can act on many circumstances that give rise to it. The possibility of a partial control of emotions opens the possibility to self-deception: we can deceive ourselves on what we feel. This kind of error has not to be confused with the possibility of a mere mistake based on the incapacity of understanding and recognizing our emotional states. When I speak of self-deception I intend an active process of deceiving oneself, rather than the state of being deceived about oneself.

If we highlight the passive nature of emotions, we will see that they are informative, either of what happens inside or outside us: if we are non-cognitivists, we will believe that they tell us something about the internal state of our body and mind; if we are cognitivists, we will think that they are evaluations of the external reality; there is also a possibility in between: that they tell us how we see things outside according to our personal standards. In any case, the notion of rationality is epistemic, and the appropriateness of our emotions is in terms of representational adequacy. If our emotions are inappropriate, it means that we are making a mistake, either on recognizing (in a very implicit and spontaneous sense) what is going on inside us, or in judging an external reality.

But if we see emotions as actions, the relevant notion of rationality is practical: when our emotions are appropriate we are *doing* something right. This implies a control on our emotions, and something similar to a will of "wrong doing" when we do wrong. Nevertheless, emotions will present themselves as passive anyway, since it is a basic aspect of their phenomenology.

However, the possibility of self-deception can be accounted also by the theories that consider emotions as "reports" of some kind. The Jamesian view, for instance, can account for self-deception. Think about the following case: I may like the idea of being a very fragile person. So whenever my heart beats faster, I identify my tachycardia with fragility. Even if that day I had three coffees. Beginning from my feelings, I identify them as an emotion, because I desire to feel it.

Notice the importance of desire in self-deception. We will come back to the interconnections between volitions and emotions in the last chapter.

An intentional approach, instead, will highlight that the role of emotions in determining salience suggests a way of controlling my emotions: purposively driving my attention away or toward a particular object or pattern of attention. Redirecting attention, although possible, is risky: I can end up being not aware of my own act of control (because it is unconscious). In that case, I will consider a certain emotion as a genuine report on my internal states, as a reliable tool of self-knowledge, but it is not directly so: it would be, if I was aware of the process that leaded me there.

I will come back to the topic of self-deception in the last chapter, where it will emerge how people can deceive themselves actively, and believe to be in love without really being in love.

3. The Moralistic Fallacy: D'Arms and Jacobson

In recent years, the work of Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson on emotions has been very influential. In a recent paper[25] they charged the mainstream of the enquiry on the appropriateness of emotions to be biased by what they called "moralistic fallacy". In their own words: "the most blatant way to commit the moralistic fallacy is simply to infer, from the claim that it would be morally objectionable to feel F toward X, that therefore F is not a fitting response to X. This inference is fallacious […] Such inferences can be understood as versions of a more general mistake: the thought that moral assessments of an emotion are relevant, *qua moral assessments*, to its fittingness."[26]

This fallacy has not to be meant necessarily as a logical fallacy, that is, a proper fallacy, insofar as "any argument can be made valid by adding premises: validity is cheap".[27] Still, any kind of argument or explanation that goes from moral considerations straightforwardly to fittingness considerations is considered mistaken.

The authors consider different basic emotions, such as envy, sadness, and anger, and also amusement (which is generally not labeled as an emotion, but it is exemplary for the point they want to make), and a moral emotion such as outrage.

I will discuss only partially their observations on the relationship between emotions and morality. I am not here concerned with the role emotions play in the moral life, but I am interested in the role morality plays in the analysis of emotions.

A last preliminary observation on the position that D'arms and Jacobson take in the debate on the nature of emotions: they endorse a broadly conceived cognitive conception of emotions. They do not consider emotions as judgments, but they do accept that emotions involve evaluative presentations. They get rid of the vexed question of

[25] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000).
[26] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, pp. 75-76).
[27] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, p. 76).

having an emotion without making the associated judgment as a possible, but atypical and unstable situation. We will see the different, and more complex, solution given by Amélie Rorty in the next section.

3.1 Appropriateness as Fittingness to the Object

As I already said, I am interested in some of D'Arms & Jacobson's considerations on basic emotions, even if love, were it an emotion, would not count as one of them (but as a complex one). I think their approach is useful for rejecting some possible normative observations on love, such as moralistic ones.

The importance of their argument, besides the implications for the history of moral philosophy, lies not only in the insistence on the possibility of judging emotions on independent and idiosyncratic grounds,[28] but above all in the characterization of the appropriateness of emotions in terms of *fittingness*. Emotions have been traditionally considered, in virtue of their affective nature, as analogous to desires and other conative attitudes, that is, attitudes that do not have to fit the world in order to be appropriate.

D'Arms and Jacobson claim that the evaluative content of emotion is what permits them to be appropriate or not. The object individuated by the evaluative content is said to possess a certain property. Amusement implies the ascription, to a certain object, of the property of being amusing. If the object actually possesses this property, the emotional response is appropriate, because it fits the object. It is a theoretical consideration, and not the practical or normative one of whether amusement is the emotion to feel, all things considered. On the opposite side, questions of fittingness must also be distinct by a straightforwardly descriptive claim, according to which an object is amusing because it *can* raise amusement. The authors themselves make a clearer example: "'Enviable' here does not mean "able to be envied" but "fit to be envied", in just the elusive sense we are pursuing".[29]

On one hand, then, emotions' fittingness is a factual question: it concerns some aspects of the world, which are objective (or at least inter-subjective) and do not depend

[28] Pitcher (1965) had already insisted on this.
[29] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, p. 71).

on the individual who has the emotional response. In order to decide if anger is appropriate, we have to look at the object of the anger, and see if it possesses the relevant properties. On the other hand, though, not everything which can give rise to anger is fit to give rise to an angry reaction, and anger can be inappropriate, because it does not fit its object. This unfitness can be measured along two dimensions (at least): *size* and *shape*.

An emotion is unfit in shape if the object lacks the features that are presented in the emotional evaluation. My anger toward my brother being unfair to me is unfitting if my brother has not been unfair at all.[30] They analyze the case of envy: "if the thing I envy isn't really possessed by my rival, or if it isn't really good. Indeed better than mine",[31] then my envy is unfitting in shape.

An emotion is unfit in size, if it is an overreaction. This criticism implies that the emotion is right in shape, but it is exaggerated, for instance if what one is envious of is almost as good as her own. The authors do not mention the opposite case, of an underestimation, but of course that is also a question of shape: if you are only bothered by your husband's rude and psychologically abusive manners, I can charge your emotional response of inappropriateness, because you should be rather angry or furious.

I am not going to consider now the objections that the authors present (and reply to) with regard to the two dimensions of criticism. I am not interested in analyzing the rest of the article either. The authors address some positions in moral philosophy in order to show how the mainstream moralizes the judgments of warrant or fittingness of emotions.

I'd like rather to summarize the points that I take to be relevant for the topic at issue. First, to consider emotions' appropriateness as a kind of practical justification or warrant is either logically fallacious or simply mistaken, since "it introduces ethical considerations at the wrong place in ethical deliberation".[32] Second, emotional appropriateness has to be instead specified in terms of fittingness to the object, that is, in terms of correctness of the ascription of the relevant properties to the object.

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[30] My example can be considered either unconvincing or vague. I think it is not a coincidence that the authors used envy as an example. Envy is one of the emotions more precisely characterized in the evaluative features it attributes to its object. Anger and even fear are much more complicated cases. I will come back to this problem of D'arms and Jacobson account.

[31] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, p.73).

[32] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, p.86).

It will appear later in the discussion if and how much these considerations apply to love's authenticity as well.

3.2 Problems and Objections

I will now face some problems concerning D'Arms and Jacobson's conception of fittingness.

First of all, a general objection: D'Arms and Jacobson claim that their account of fittingness is and must be morally neutral. Now if we think at a very comprehensive conception of ethics, this can result impossible. For instance, for the Stoics anger is always inappropriate, since men are ultimately not responsible for what they do. Stoic ethical domain is so wide that it is actually not possible for any account of correctness to go further the boundaries of it. This is different from saying that anger is inappropriate because it is morally wrong to feel it. Anger is inappropriate *tout court*, and it is morally inappropriate at the same time, they are covariant and co-extensional. It is a similar case to the one of moral emotions considered by D'Arms and Jacobson, about which they accept that moral considerations are reasons for its inappropriateness. Only, all emotions are moral emotions for the Stoics.

The Stoics remind us of the contemporary virtue ethics, which seem to be the field of a potential opponent of D'Arms and Jacobson's conception. But there are two different kinds of virtue ethics. Some authors, such as Bernard Williams[33] and Susan Wolf,[34] consider ethics in the Greek sense as a domain that cannot be reduced to "doing the right thing": duty and obligations are a small, grim part of our lives, and there is a much wider domain. The noble person is not necessarily virtuous in a strict moral sense. Morality has not to occupy all the other practical spheres of life. To say it roughly, the concept of *arête* is distinguished from that of the Christian *virtus*. Call this the "radical virtue ethics", because they take seriously the difference of the Greek concept and the Christian (maybe already Jewish) concept of virtue.

[33] Williams (1985).
[34] Wolf (1982).

Other authors, such as Martha Nussbaum, and Michael Stocker[35], tend instead to use the Greek ideal in order to broaden the conception of morality: Greeks are interpreted as having a richer conception of ethics than many modern ones. Moral virtue comes to embed any other sorts of normative considerations, such as aesthetical and emotional. Pluralism of values is encouraged, but under the sign of the uniqueness of virtue. Call this the "moderate virtue ethics", because they make a compromise between the Classic and the Modern perspective.

Notice that the distinction is subtle, because apparently both kinds of theories affirm the same necessity of detaching from a deontological conception and propose an ethics of character. But even if in practice the authors (for instance Williams) can be in between them, the two moves are just the opposite: widening morality vs. limiting it; reducing all values to a moral, enlightened schema vs. reducing moral values to be just one kind of values among others; considering "the good and the beautiful" as the ultimate ideal of the moral agent or of the perfect human being. For the radicals, the reasons of the relational values, like those created by love, are distinct and can conflict with the moral ones. For the moderates, the conflict is only apparent, or one of the two kinds of reasons is not valid.

It is the "moderate" kind of virtue ethics who can object to D'Arms and Jacobson that the virtuous person is the standard of fittingness itself, and this holds for the funny as much as for the beautiful as for the fearful.

D'Arms and Jacobson face this kind of objection, recognizing that "virtue theory […] might appear to offer the most compelling version of moralism".[36]

A very good point they make is the distinction between the ideal observer and the virtuous person, which in the formula "ideal man" (conceived by the virtue ethics as the standard of fittingness) coincide. The ideal man could be such because he his responses are always fitting, but he's not admirable. But for the virtue ethicist (in this case they address Richard Brandt) it is not contingent or casual that these two figures coincide: the virtuous person is also consequently the ideal feeler, because the ideals of virtue explicate the feeling of fittingness. "On this view, substantive ideals about what kind of person to

[35] Stocker (1976).
[36] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, p. 84).

be provide ethical standards for what to feel, which then determine or explain the fittingness of those feelings. If an ideal of virtue (as opposed to an ideal observer) supplied a plausible standard of fittingness, this would indeed be a victory for moralism."[37] But of course, it is not possible to supply these standards, according to them. In some situations, the gap between fit and virtue cannot just be filled, such as when a brave warrior faces a situation in which he has to win at any cost: "he focuses on the task at hand, ignoring the fearful odds. But then standards of virtue will call for avoiding an emotion that is granted to fit."[38] The virtue theorist could say that the warrior feels the fitting emotion without giving an expression of it, but fear denatured by any behavioral outlet is quite bizarre.

Actually, I do not think this would be the reply of the virtue theorist, since virtue is an active state, as Aristotle clearly states, and action implies behavioral manifestation. The best strategy available to the virtue theorist is just to deny the distinction between the standards of fit and of virtue, reducing the first thing to the second one. It could be considered a question-begging move, of course, assuming what it should prove, that virtue embeds all sorts of normative considerations.

I think this defect of the "moderate" virtue ethics appears especially in some cases, such as that of humor and the funny. The funny is a delicate issue, and it is not that far from the topic that will be faced later in the work. After all, love is *also* funny. Love can be immoral, and shameful, as well as the funny: I agree with D'Arms and Jacobson that a joke can be immoral, or morally dubious, and still be truly, authentically, funny, and therefore fitting. This is why Jewish jokes are funny even if told by Gentiles, but it is less appropriate for them to make them. And some jokes, for instance on *Shoà*, are maybe always inappropriate, even if coming from a survivor's mouth. But the appropriateness is a question of moral philosophy, whereas the humor is judged according to other criteria. Of course, the moral inappropriateness can make us stop laughing, or totally overcome the amusement. This happens, though, also when we hear a really good joke at a dear friend's funeral. The analogy is only partial, but it suffices to show that the onus of the proof is on the opponents of black humor, so to speak: they have to demonstrate that a

[37] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, p. 84).
[38] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, p. 85).

politically incorrect joke is not funny, and not simply we are ashamed to be amused. The possibility of grading the degree of humor of equally nasty jokes is the proof that there is an independent dimension to be valued.

This debate is complicated and does not concern our analysis. But I sketched it, since it is relevant to exclude that my enquiry takes place in a framework that renders moralism compelling. I will therefore assume that my discussion takes place outside of any comprehensive account of virtue.

A second problem in D'Arms and Jacobson view in that article is that they do not pay attention to the complex structure of the evaluative content of the emotion. Actually, they do not even mention it, even if at the beginning of the paper they implicitly refer to it by saying that emotions involve evaluative representations of the object. Then they only concentrate on the fittingness of the emotion to the formal object, which actually implies that the real object in some ways is coherent (if not totally correspondent) with the representation given in the intentional representation. But not making this passage explicit permits them to avoid a main difficulty: any representation involves interpretation. And deciding of the fittingness of the object becomes less straightforward than it seems in the very simple examples chosen by the authors. Judging that my envy is inappropriate because it does not fit the object is not only a matter of looking at the formal object, but also of looking at *my* envy, that is, how I react to the formal object, reaction that is depicted on the intentional characterization of it.

This weakness in the positive part of their account is recognized by the same authors, even if they do not mention this specific point, but say only that the two dimensions of size and shape are insufficient for a complete account of fittingness. But not focusing on intentionality could weaken their own critical point. Think of a fervent Christian. She gets unjustly slapped on the face by an angry friend. She feels happy, because she has the opportunity of forgiving her neighbor. According to D'Arms and Jacobson's standards her happiness is totally inappropriate, for a question of shape. It would be appropriate for her to feel resentment, and only in a second time her moral views should intervene and remind her to be moral. But if we look at that gesture from the perspective of the subject, we will see a chance of virtue, rather than an offense, form the very beginning. There are no formal objects *in practice*. In the real life, there is just

the object seen in an evaluative light, and we have to take it into account. I believe that this feature represents, if not a counter-objection, at least a delicate point for their thesis.

4. Appropriateness and Intentionality: Amélie Rorty

Twenty years earlier than D'Arms and Jacobson's article, Amélie Rorty had given a non-moralistic account of emotional appropriateness, in the case that is considered to be the hardest challenge for every cognitivist account: *emotional inertia*. Emotional inertia is a phenomenon that bears some resemblance with *akrasia* (even if I do not see the complete similarity that motivates some authors to treat them as the same phenomenon in different areas): they share the fact that a part of our mind is resisting to another. Explanations of *akrasia* may vary, but a neutral definition would be that deliberation does not naturally end up in action. Also in the case of emotional inertia, the explanation of the phenomenon varies according to the theory of the emotions that is chosen.

Non-cognitivists consider it the proof of their arguments: emotions are not like judgments or even evaluations. This is why we can retain an emotional reaction even when we evaluate that that emotion is unreasonable or ungrounded or unjustified.

I will first present Rorty's theory, and then concentrate on how she instead considers the emotional inertia a proof of the complex structure of their intentionality.

4.1 An Intentionality Theory of Emotions

Rorty's theory is a very convincing cognitivist approach to emotions. She presents a very complex account. We will see later how this complexity could actually provide some grounds for a criticism of her theory in terms of excessive complicatedness.

She presents emotions as our focusing "on the ways we are affected by our appraisals, evaluative perceptions, or descriptions".[39] Such a view shares with the Jamesian conception the idea that emotions are the registrations of something that happens inside us, but diverges totally on the content of these reports.

[39] Rorty (1980, p. 105).

Nevertheless, she acknowledges the role of physiological explanations. In her own words: "This [the fact that sometimes the best explanation of an emotion is primarily physiological] suggests that, for at least some sort of cases, the physicalist and the intentionalist accounts of anomalous emotions are perfectly compatible and perhaps even complementary […]. They appear to be at odds only when both theories get reductionally ambitious: when, denying overdetermination, each tries to explain all phenomena at all levels".[40]

But what are the *anomalous* emotions that she considers? They are what we could call "apparently irrational" or simply "resistant" emotions. They give rise to emotional inertia. We will analyze this point in the next paragraph.

Rorty thinks that several factors intervene in the causal history of an emotion, and they are psychological, social, cultural, and genetic. She focuses on the first ones, since they are responsible for the development of the intentional components in the formation of the emotional dispositions of each person. She is therefore interested in the patterns of focusing and salience, habits of thought and response that are caused by some formative events in the psychological past of a person.

She recalls the Humean distinction between the cause and the object of an emotion. The significant cause of an emotion is the entire set of events that explains the efficacy of the immediate cause. The significant cause is often an event or set of events that formed a set of dispositions, which are only triggered by the immediate cause. The formation of our dispositions and habits of thought and response affects what she calls "magnetizing dispositions", which are "dispositions to gravitate toward and to create conditions that spring other dispositions"[41]. They explain attitudinal reactions or actions not necessarily directly, but by characterizing the type of beliefs, perceptions, and desires.

4.2 Explaining Inertia

The solution of the problem of inertia should begin to appear: when an emotion persists and remains intractable, the reasons must be looked for in the habits of attention

[40] Rorty (1980, p. 118).
[41] Rorty (1980, pp. 106-107).

and interpretation that must have been activated by the significant causes of a magnetized disposition.

The point is not that there is a hidden target of the emotion, but something more similar to a hidden cause. This explains why the acknowledgment that the emotion is not grounded does not suffice to make it disappear. If it is true that I am angry with my boss in virtue of the causal history of my dispositions to focalize on certain features of situations and react correspondingly, it is evident why I cannot directly intervene on that anger at a mere judgmental level. Actually, this is the definite advantage of a cognitive theory, which concentrates on intentionality more than on the judgmental character of emotions. Nussbaum, for example, who has a judgmental conception of emotions, replies to the problem of inertia simply appealing to the analogy of the incoherence of beliefs: as we can be contradictory in our thoughts, so we are contradictory in our emotions. This reply is not a bad one, but Rorty's proposal is way more convincing, and it goes further: it explains *why* there is this sort of contradiction.

Rorty's theory also explains why it is the more complicated cases that make the problem arise. When our anger's causal history is simple, it is less likely for inertia to appear: if I'm angry with the unknown pickpocket who stole my wallet, I'll likely end up laughing with relief when I find it in my desk's drawer, where I forgot it. I will immediately stop being angry.

If instead my anger has as significant cause my disposition to get angry with poor people, and I have seen some gypsies around, even when I find my wallet I will remain angry with the potential thieves.[42]

4.3 Problems and Objections

I have presented Rorty's theory only in a sketchy and brief version, but it should be sufficient to show the complicatedness of it. Her explanatory strategy is: "When in doubt about the rationale of an emotion, look for the intentional component of the significant

[42] Rorty analyzes only anger, which is a good and common case. It is interesting that, as far as I know, no one ever mentions the possibility of inertia for positive emotions.

cause of the dispositional set that forms the intentional component of an emotion".[43] Quite a complicated strategy to follow, and it is unavoidable to ask: isn't there a simpler explanation of anomalous cases, such as denying that they have a rationale after all?

But a similar objection can come even from a cognitivist perspective, as Rorty herself acknowledges: "But our objector persists, claiming that in tracing the etiology of an emotion, intentional sets and quasi-intentions are unnecessarily complex ways of talking about beliefs or evaluative judgments. If we judge emotions for their rationality, they argue, then some belief must be either presupposed by, or embedded in, the emotion. The correction of emotions generally involves the correction of the mistaken beliefs". [44] She admits that many cases follow such a pattern. But "the issue is whether the intentional component of an emotion is always a belief, and whether there are emotions that are more properly evaluated as inappropriate or harmful than as irrational".[45] If the intentional component of an emotion is always a belief, then in the case of emotional inertia we would have a conflict between beliefs, and so a case of irrationality (according to a cognitivist perspective, that is). But often it is the persistence of the emotional state the only evidence of this retained belief. And the subject may well declare that she abandoned the belief and still feel the emotion. So, Rorty continues, it becomes necessary to charge the person of a massive, and successful, self-deception. It can happen, of course, that the person is hiding a conflict between beliefs, or is just not aware of them, but "it seems implausible to assimilate all cases of conservation of emotions to cases that involve a self-deceptive denial of such conflicts".[46] Furthermore, self-deception involves behavioral traits, such as signs of facial malaise and systematic failures in action, that are not so often present in the cases of emotional conservation.

I believe that Rorty's defense is substantially efficacious, because she restricts complicated explanations to complicated cases, and allows for simpler cognitivist-oriented explanations, and even for physiological explanations for particular cases: sometimes the best explanation is simply that the person suffers glandular malfunction: a hormonal imbalance can cause emotional states that are not linked to the intentional

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[43] Rorty (1980, p. 110).
[44] Rorty (1980, pp. 114-115).
[45] Rorty (1980, p. 115).
[46] Rorty (1980, p. 115).

component of a significant cause. But, under standard conditions, the explanation of emotions has to appeal to beliefs or intentional states, and can be as complicated as we have seen.

But how is it possible to choose among the possible explanations the best one? Saying that many different explanations are possible could be charged of being a way out from objections, which does not give solid answers when necessary. But Rorty appeals to the differences among emotions, as a clue to what kind of explanation is more likely to be the most convincing: "The physiological and intentional aspects of our emotions do not enter into all emotions in the same way. The difference between a distaste for malicious gossip in departmental politics and the terror of waking after a nightmare whose drama one has already forgotten, […] are differences *in kind*. Some emotions are primarily associated with physical states largely affected by metabolic imbalance. […] Other, quite different sorts of emotional disorders are associated with some sorts of brain damage rather than endocrinological malfunction. Still other sorts of emotions- such culturally variable ones as nostalgia or Sunday melancholy- seem difficult to associate with any particular physical condition. While the introduction of intentional apparatus seem forced in some cases, the introduction of physiological determinants is forced in others".[47]

Rorty's approach seems to be among the most equilibrate ones among the available theories on emotions. It remains to see if her observations help us in dealing with love, since love is not an emotion, as I am going to declare in the next section.

5. Love Is Not an Emotion

Even if I analyzed how we can deal with some normative concerns about emotions, I do not think love is properly an emotion. Many authors do not care about committing to a particular definition of the nature of love, and just present its characterizing features. Among these, many implicitly deny that love is an emotion, because they define it in terms of desire, like Robert Nozick, or more generically as an attitude, like Roger Lamb. Harry Frankfurt is explicit in affirming the conative character of love and rejecting an

[47] Rorty (1980, p. 118).

emotional conception. Some others explicitly define it as an emotion, and therefore they need to commit to a particular account of emotions. Among these authors there are Martha Nussbaum, Robert Solomon, and Amélie Rorty, who all focalize on the cognitive, or at least intentional, dimension of love. Although David Velleman declares love to be an emotion as well, he also claims that emotions constitute an ontological category apart from desires and beliefs. So love is not a cognitive, nor a conative state, but an emotional state that has intrinsically moral features. He underlines the unique nature of emotions in opposition to authors such as O. H. Greene, who is considered by Velleman to be "an especially clear case" of a philosophical bias: that of being "impressed by the power of belief-desire explanation, and the associated instrumental reasoning". [48]

I will analyze Velleman's conception of love in the section devoted to him (chapter 2, section 4.1). I would like instead to analyze briefly Greene, since he is one of the few authors that explicitly defend their choice of a particular ontological conception. His position is particularly interesting to me since he has a conative theory of love, like mine.

After the analysis of Greene, I will present my two arguments in favor of the claim that love is not an emotion. The first one is a direct argument, which aims to show that love has not the same nature than the emotions'. The second argument is more indirect: if love were an emotion, it would be possible to judge its normative features as we do with emotions. As it will be clear in the second part of this work, it is not so. The third chapter can be considered a long demonstration of the normative differences between emotion and love. Love, I will claim, is best described in terms of volitions (that is, not only as a conative attitude, but of a particular kind—not only desires, but second-order desires too), and I will articulate this position at the end of the second chapter.

[48] Velleman (1999, p. 354, footnote 59).

5.1 O. H. Greene: Why Love Is Not An Emotion

Greene denies that love is an emotion on the ground of the following argument: 1) emotions have belief-based intentionality and rationality 2) love, at least often, does not 3) love is not an emotion.[49]

I will not discuss the first premise of this argument, since it requires going back into the debate on the intentionality and rationality of emotions. I agree on his claim that love is often not based on beliefs about the attractions of the beloved, and I will say why in the second chapter, where this topic will be faced extensively. Actually, I will claim that love, in itself, is *never* based on beliefs about the attractiveness of the beloved.[50] But I do not find his main argument for this claim very convincing, since he makes the example of the girl of a song who loves her Bill just because he's her Bill. An easy objection from authors such as Alan Soble (whom is directly considered an opponent by Greene) would be that the girl is simply not able to articulate her beliefs on Bill, or she is not aware of her reasons to love Bill. Of course, reasons and beliefs are not the same thing. And we still have not said anything about the relationship of both to love. But we can already see how a person need not know the underlying mechanism of her love, and still be in love in virtue of that mechanism.

Love's intentionality may well include beliefs, and they need not be about the attractiveness of the beloved. Greene claims that the intentionality of love depends on its constitutive desires for association, benefit, and reciprocity. But that love is a conative state does not imply its intentionality to be "based on desires". If I love x, x is certainly the object of my desire. But he is also the object of my beliefs, and of my emotions toward it (so I agree that emotions are not simply a sum of beliefs and desires, as Velleman reminds- and even if they were, they would have an intentional structure of their own).

To sum up: I am in love with x. This means that I have certain desires, of which x is the object. But I cannot but have beliefs on x, including beliefs on the desirability of x. And the emotions that I happen to feel for x, before or after I fall in love with her, also

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[49] For a detailed discussion of the cited authors, see the second chapter, part fourth. See also Lamb (1997), and Green (1997).

[50] Notice that this allows for beliefs on the attractiveness of the beloved to play a role-- in the phenomenology of love, not in its constitutive grounds.

contribute to build up x as "my beloved". "The intentionality of love" cannot be reduced to the intentionality derived by the constitutive desires.

Therefore I do not think that this is a good argument in asserting the difference love and emotions. I will not consider another argument that Greene proposes, since it assumes that love admits of rational assessment. I do not want to face a discussion on rationality, emotions, and love here.

A better argument in favor of the non-emotional nature of love proposed by Greene is grounded on the analogy between love and friendship: these two states are closely allied, and friendship is considered an attitude that develops essentially in a relationship, not an emotion. This is important: even if love can be not reciprocated, it aims to reciprocation, and it is intrinsically a relational attitude. Emotions are essentially personal, even if they are about something or someone. Greene then presents his account of love, based on the Aristotelian conception of *philia*, adapted to romantic love.

I agree, more or less, with Greene's definition of love: "love is identical with a set of desires: desires are constitutive of love, not just caused by love; and desires are essential to, not just typical of love. And, of course, though related, to love, love is not an emotion."[51]

These desires are specified in the following way:

"A loves B if and only if:

1. A desires to share an association with B which typically includes a sexual dimension;
2. A desires B fare well for his or her own sake; and
3. A desires B reciprocate the desire for association and welfare"[52]

In the last part of second chapter, I will present a very similar definition of love, in which the main difference is that I add a hierarchy among the constitutive desires, on the model of Harry Frankfurt's structure of the will, and I omit any reference to the second desire. Although I agree that it is a common desire, and that it is desirable for the relationship and the morality of the lover and the beloved, I deny that it is necessary for erotic love to desire the beloved's welfare *for its own sake*. A lover can be interested in the beloved's

[51] Greene (1997, p. 216).
[52] Greene (1997, p. 216).

welfare for selfish reasons: he is not a moral person, but, I will claim, he might be (truly) in love anyway. Greene, however, comes close to this idea, précising that love is not a matter of abstract benevolence, and that desiring the other's welfare for its own sake does not prevent love to be advantageous for the lover, and mutual benefit to be fundamental in love.

Notice that Greene considers sufficient to add a sexual dimension to the Aristotelian account of *philia* to make it a complete account of *eros*. I think Aristotle would not agree: if he thought so, he would have probably talked of *eros* as well. However, this is not that important. I think that the sexual dimension is a necessary addition, but not a sufficient one. C.S. Lewis gives a more correct picture of the differences between these two states, as we will see in the second chapter (par. 1.1).

5.2 The Direct Argument

Love has a different nature than that one of emotions. Its phenomenological experience, as we will see in the fifth part of the third chapter, is a very complex one, and it is composed, among other elements, by many different emotions. This would not be possible, were love an emotion among others.

Love is associated with or expressed by different emotions. Since association and expression are two different concepts, let us analyze first the idea that love is simply associated with different emotions. This would not constitute a counter-example to the thesis that love is not an emotion, since proper emotions can be experienced in association with others: I can experience an angry fear, or an amused anger, a joyful surprise, or a regretful happiness, and so on. Examples are infinite, and far from being just hypothetical: actually in real life "pure" emotions are more rare than the mixed cases. But we might think that in these mixtures there is always a hierarchy, that is, a predominant emotion. After all, the grammar expresses this intuition: generally, I leave to the main emotion the place of the noun, and to the secondary emotion the adjectival place. A sad anger is primarily anger, which is also secondarily sad. An interesting and opposite way to consider this hierarchy is suggested by Rorty when she comments in a

footnote[53] that there can be second-order emotions: I can enjoy being angry, or I can regret being angry. In this case, the adjective plays a more important role, because it expresses the second-order emotion, which is supposed to be a deeper, and more primary attitude (if we refer, as Rorty does, to Harry Frankfurt's model of second-order volitions).

Probably these are not two competing interpretations of the same phenomenon, but two different experiences, that the language does not necessarily distinguishes: so if I say "I am sadly angry", I may mean either that I am sad to be angry, and sadness is the most relevant part of my experience, or that I am angry in a sad way, and anger is the most predominant emotion. Notice that the more intentionally structured is an emotion, like regret, the more likely is that they express a second-order attitude. It's not likely to be "regretfully anger", but very plausibly I can feel regret for my anger.

So, what does this imply for love? Of course, love can be joyful or sad, fearful or even angry, and so on. But if it is an association, I do not have any proof or disproof of its non-emotional nature. If other emotions are second-order attitude about it, there is no direct implication on what love is (like I am angry to be in love with you- or I'm afraid that I love you). It does not prove that it is an emotion or that it is not.

But even if there is a situation of mere association, in which one emotion is predominant on the other, I have no information about the nature of love. Let's reflect on the linguistic expressions we would use in this last case. I am lovingly angry with you. Does this adverb "lovingly" express a real emotion, or something lighter, like "in an affectionate way"? It seems that the latter interpretation is more appropriate. But what in the case in which love occupies the predominant position? "My angry love for you damages our relationship". "It's so sad to be in love with you". In this last case, the primacy of love is expressed logically, if not by a noun +adjective structure. But the idea is the same: there is love, and then an emotion supposedly associated with it. Is this really just an association, as in the case of a fearful anger? I am not so sure. In the second case ("it's sad to love you") the sufferance could be also a consequence of love (this love makes me sad). But assume it is a genuine association: my love for you is sad, in itself. Or angry. We still have no conclusive proof that love is not an emotion.

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[53] Rorty (1989, p. 126, footnote 29).

But what if we take these ways of saying as a description of what *it is like to be* in love with you? Of the phenomenology of my experience of love toward a particular person? It is not a contingent association, but an intrinsic characteristic of my loving you: my loving you is a sad fact. Of course, it can happen contingently, that I'm sad when I love you, but this is not what we generally mean. When we say "I'm so happily in love" we mean it as a permanent or semi-permanent state, something that is connected deeply to my love for that person. Loving is a peculiar experience, dependent on the particularity of the person we love. Think above all of friends and partners, more than of basic forms of affection, like our instinctual affection for our young children (which can have anyway many different associated emotions). If we think of the actual experience of loving an individual, we will see that all the emotions that come to mind are more expressions and manifestations of how it feels to be in love with that person, rather than episodic associations. I can be angry with my brother who broke up my favorite toy and fearful that my mom will find out that we had a fight. So my anger is fearful, and I whisper instead of screaming, so my mom won't hear me. I am primarily angry, and my fear just colors my anger of a different emotional tone, for reasons that are only indirectly connected to the object of the anger.

But when we speak of emotions with respect to love we do it in a different ways, as fundamental characters of it. Emotions manifest and express love, and love without emotions would be a totally different experience. There is a hierarchy also here: love seems composed, among other things, by emotions. The qualitative experience of love, as we will see in the third chapter, is also an emotional experience.

But love remains love even if the emotions that express it are totally different, and even contradictory. I can be a melancholic lover, or a lively and joyful one. I can be a scared lover, or an audacious one.[54] Love can be expressed by many different emotions, and still be recognizable as such. This is possible in virtue of the fact that the nature of love is not emotional in itself, but, as we will see in the next chapter, volitional. It consists in having a set of volitions and desires that concern a particular object.

[54] It is unavoidable that proper emotions get mixed with character traits in these examples. It's not easy to distinguish between a lover feeling anger and an irascible lover, and I will not try to do it here.

As I said, there is maybe an exception: the baby's affection for parents, and the spontaneous attachment of mothers (and some fathers)[55] to babies. But I believe that sentiment is better described as an instinct or a drive, and anyway it is very different from the other forms of love, which develop in time and have a complex intentional structure.

Concluding, love has a different qualitative experience and nature from that one of emotions. This is why we can be in love all our life with a person, and feel different emotions toward her. I am angrily in love with the girl I like because she does not correspond me. Then I am joyfully in love with her when she finally decides to date me. I am anxiously in love when I am going to marry her, and I am desperately in love with her when she breaks up with me. I love her gratefully when she comes back, and I end up loving her sadly when she passes away. Emotions associated to love may vary, but my commitment to the desire of being with her does not.

Notice that this phenomenological difference between love and the emotions seems to be due to their different functions in human being's existence. Emotions work as signals of features of reality: this is their main cognitive function. This is also why they are more appropriately characterized as episodes, rather than dispositions. When they are dispositions, they become character's traits. Not surprisingly, this holds especially for basic emotions, the most primitive of all. As Damasio has shown, their cognitive role is fundamental for deliberation and, ultimately, for survival.

Love's task is creating connections among individuals. Some emotions support this task, in rendering its experience pleasant, for instance. Love certainly contributes to survival in a crucial way. It reinforces the bond created by sexual attraction, and permits the formation of a family. Love, then, shapes the practical life of a human agent, but not as emotions do. Emotions influence particular choices, bringing attention and consideration over some particular outcomes. They support deliberation. Love seems to be a leader of it, because it provides the end of a possibly life-long deliberative strategy,

[55] I do not mean to say that fathers are incapable of loving their babies, but just that for some of them is not an immediate affection, but a mediate state that fully deserves the name of love. A mother develops a more direct relationship, and tends to feel that kind of affection toward every being that comes out of her, even if it weren't genetically connected to her, as in the possible case of a "rental mother" (even if the genetic connection in normal situation is exactly what makes the affection so vivid). A father needs to know that the baby is his, because has no direct contact: it is a relationship developed because of a genetic bond, but not in virtue of it.

and this might explain why love is essentially non-episodic and dispositional.[56] We will further analyze the relationship between love and deliberation in the second chapter.

5.3 The Indirect Argument: Love Can't Be Inappropriate

If love were an emotion, its normative dimensions should be dimensions of fittingness and appropriateness. We should say that love is appropriate, or authentic, when it fits the object. This view will be rejected in the third chapter. If my refutation is correct, love cannot be an emotion, unless we consider it as a mere feeling (assuming that feelings and emotions coincide). But I will reject the reduction of loving to feeling in love in the very same chapter.

This point will be developed throughout the discussion. But we can already see how love cannot be said to be appropriate or inappropriate, in the same way that an emotion like jealousy can. If I'm jealous of a woman because she is an ex-girlfriend of my boyfriend, I should stop being jealous of her once I break up with him. If I am still hostile and jealous, my emotions are inappropriate, but probably they are authentic in any sensible use of the word. Instead we will see how love seems to be resistant to judgments of appropriateness in the way emotions are, whereas we use to talk of the authenticity of love. Authenticity, and not appropriateness, is the key word for the normativity of love. If I feel in love with my ex-boyfriend, we can enquiry whether this love is authentic or not. But we would not say that it is appropriate, as in the case of jealousy, unless we mean it prudentially.

However, I will argue in more detail for this claim later. For now, just think of this as an argument against the idea that love is a proper emotion.

[56] I am in debt with Tito Magri for an enlightening discussion on this point.

6. Summing Up

In this chapter I presented the main approaches to emotions in the contemporary philosophy, declaring my sympathy for a broadly conceived cognitivist approach, but without defending it with any personal arguments.

I proposed, though, two theories that I believe important for the understanding of emotions, and for the following discussion. We have seen how Amélie Rorty focuses on the intentional character of emotions and considers it as crucial to understand how emotions work. She also reflects on how the patterns of focus and attention influence the agent's behavior. This is interesting for our discourse, insofar as love is an intentional state that has a strong motivational power. Her work does not give any specific criterion of appropriateness, though she helps us to understand the concept of appropriateness in a better way.

D'Arms and Jacobson instead give very rough criteria of appropriateness, but are less helpful for what concerns the authenticity of more complex states such as love. However, their admonition against moralism is very important when it comes to love.

Conclusively, I have anticipated an important feature of my conception of love: that it is not an emotion, but a conative attitude. I presented two arguments for this claim, and I also discussed two arguments by O. H. Greene. Greene stresses out the difference between the intentionality of emotions and that of love. I believe that love is very similar to emotions under this respect, given that we have a sufficiently complex conception of intentionality. I agree with Greene that the fact that love is commonly allied to friendship signals a difference in kind with emotions.

Chapter 2. The Philosophy of Love: Authors and Problems

1. The Heart of the Matter: Categories and Terminology

Loving is a very familiar and natural experience. We love our mom and dad since we are very young children, and we generally love them throughout our life, even if things get more complicated as we grow older, and love gets mixed and influenced by feelings and emotions of a different kind.

If we become parents, we have the symmetrical and opposite experience of loving our children, in a very immediate and spontaneous way, especially if we are the mothers. Also in this case the sentiment evolves as children develop their own personality and independence as distinct individuals.

In the recent philosophical literature the case of parental love has been privileged, because it manifests some peculiar and interesting factors. Harry Frankfurt, as we will see later in the chapter, considers it the purest form of love for others. Not much attention is paid to the love that children feel for their parents. Babies do not get much consideration by philosophers, unless they are cognitive scientists. I think, though, that we should consider more the love that at least older children feel. This is not going to be very relevant for this work, since I will be focused almost exclusively on erotic love, but some of the considerations of the last chapter apply to lovers of all age and kind.

We also love our siblings, and grandparents, and grandchildren, and, with decreasing intensity, our relatives at various levels. The "natural" bonds are weakened or reinforced by other factors, but generally there is a similarity in all of them, since they are all initially generated by a genetic connection. The looser the connection, the less intense the affective reaction will probably be, or if intense it will based on reasons independent from the fact of belonging to the same family. Especially in the case of relatives of the same age (as for instance in the case of cousins), the consanguinity counts less than the mere liking each other. What is born under the sign of what we could call "family love", which is given and generated by kinship, can transform in *philia*.

Translating *philia* with friendship is notoriously imprecise. The Greek concept of friendship is quite different from ours. Since my aim here is not a reconstruction of love in the history of ideas, I will not say much on the philological conception, but only some considerations on the contemporary common one. In my opinion, friendship is primarily a non-sexual affection for people that we choose to have a relationship with, grounded on different factors such as common environment, shared biographical context, similar interests and values, and so on. Of course, friendship can well involve also sexual attraction, or it can be addressed to relatives, and even to parents or lovers. But it is conceptually definable in terms of a non-sexual relationship between two people who choose each other in virtue of a shared interest or ideal: friendship is mainly an experience of commonality. Whereas family love is primarily originated by a situation that is given, friendship is born and developed in a context of choices. Whereas erotic love is triggered and influenced by sexual attraction and actualized also through sexuality, friendship does not aim to a sexualized interaction, and it is often disturbed by sexual aims.

We have already mentioned the main character of our enquiry: erotic love. The next paragraph will be dedicated to it. For now, just notice how these three forms, parental, friendly, and erotic love, share a very important feature: they are all directed to a particular individual. They are *personal* loves. Personal loves, even if they do not necessarily imply a severe exclusivity (something similar to what Amelie Rorty describes as "a strict economy of love, such that its expansion to others automatically constitutes a diminution or loss elsewhere"[57]), are always directed to one particular person at a time, and not just to any individual whatsoever. I love *my* mom. I love Julian, who has been my friend since elementary school and likes hiking. I love Laura, whose unique charming green eyes enchanted me since the first time I met her.

There is a form of love, though, which is considered personal, but it is not directed toward any particular individual: *agape*. Also *agape*, whose Latin name is *Caritas*, has a complicated cultural history. Without entering into many details, it was born in the Christian tradition, and indicates originally the love that God has for human beings, and conversely the love we have for God. By extension, it indicates also the love

[57] Rorty (1986, p. 400).

that we have, or should have, for humanity as such, the love for our neighbor the Jesus recommended. *Agape* in all its manifestations -God's love for us, our love for God, and brotherly love- is paradoxical. Consider first brotherly love: it is addressed to particular individuals as a fact, but the object of brotherly love must be just "a person". Particular individuals are loved only *qua* equally important instances of a same kind. I love my neighbor because he is a human being, not because she lives next to me or I like laughing at her jokes. Also human love for God is paradoxical: it is formally directed toward a particular individual, but certainly God is not a person. Eventually, the love that God has for us could be considered similar: doesn't God love each one of us as instances of humanity? Although I do not want to enter into any theological discussion, I believe that God's love is instead at the same time particular and universal. God loves each of us as a particular person: He loves me as Sara. But He doesn't love me *in virtue of* any particular characteristics I have. [58]

This distinction is very important, because it introduces us to the distinction between reason-dependent and non reason-dependent kinds of love. A loving attitude can be interpreted as grounded on a reason or not, and some authors consider *agape* as non-rational.

Alan Soble[59] introduced this criterion to draw a sharp contrast between *agape* and *eros*: this last one is reason-dependent because it is a response to the merits of the beloved.

But there are two different concepts, which are often conflated in the discussion on this difference.[60] The dependence on reasons is not the same concept as the dependence on values. *Agape*, or every other love, can depend on reasons, without being a response to values. Parental love is reason-dependent (I love my son, because he is my son, and not someone else's- notice that the reason and the cause coincide here), but not value-dependent (I don't love him because he's a brilliant child). Therefore *agape* could be considered reason-dependent, if the reason were not related to any particular feature of

[58] Love for animals is another mixed case: even if animals are not persons strictly speaking, it shares many features of personal love.
[59] Soble (1990).
[60] Bennet Helm, whose essay on love is a very clear and helpful review of the recent philosophical debate on love, is confused on this point. See Helm (2005), p. 2.

the object. This outcome would simply depend on the interpretation of *agape* or of every other kind of love. Of course, it is also possible to deny that love has any kind of reasons whatsoever.

The question of values and love will be examined throughout the work. In this chapter we will see how contemporary authors deal with it. It has been a central issue in the philosophical discourse on love since Plato. It is generally agreed, however, that *agape*, rather then responding to value, creates it in its object. I will claim that this in some sense happens in every love, even if in *agape* this creation is more evident, and it is not associated with a judgment on the values of the beloved, that in other forms of love is instead present.

All the forms of love can be combined in various ways in actual social relationship. I have considered them in abstract, in their conceptual articulations, but they manifest more confusedly in real situations. There may or may not be a match between the conceptual and the social dimension. For instance, marriage can be based on friendship, rather than erotic love. An incestuous relationship may be based only on *eros*, and not at all on parental love. A friend could be in love with his best friend, and a priest could be in love with her faithful (with or without being aware of it). Almost any combination of these forms is possible, although these combinations can produce very different experiences. Personal love takes so different shapes that it can be hard to discern what there is in common. Loving my three days old baby seems very different from loving the middle-age man I'm having an affair with. Loving my younger sister is totally diverse from loving the followers of the religious community I'm guiding. Loving my college friends is not at all similar to loving the grandfather whom I have been growing with.

It can be highlighting to see what an unconventional thinker has said about these differences.

1.1 *The Four Loves*: C. S. Lewis

Clive Staples Lewis has dedicated to the four kinds of love a short, but insightful essay,[61] in which he calls them affection, friendship, eros, and charity. This last one is of course *agape*. Affection is a form of love that has been less considered by the contemporary literature, which has focused only on parental love. Lewis mentions that in ancient Greek this love was named *storge*. I will sometimes use this name. I wonder why this term hasn't had more luck, since it nicely completes the other three Greek terms that are generally used, and it is also wider than "parental love". Lewis also distinguishes the sexual part of erotic love and calls it "venus".

Since he was a fervent Christian, his little treatise is guided by a religious approach, but not at all a bigot one. Quite the contrary, his perspective on *eros* preserves the multidimensional character of it: its spirituality and its carnality, its closeness to heaven and its demoniac temptations, its dramatic features along with the most playful sides.

He sees the four loves as stemming from each other, and above all from God's love, which is the final end and origin of the other three. He correctly remarks throughout the essay how the four loves are all mixed among them, and with other states, such as hatred. Still, he is very clear in articulating their distinctive features. He begins with the analysis of affection, the most humble of all loves. The contemporary debate, as I said, is concentrated only on parental love for young children, and it is focused on the dramatic altruism that is said to characterize this form of love. Vice versa, Lewis considers affection in its unexciting, trivial dimension: it is a love that comes out from the usual, from home. It is primitive, and non-based on values. The jealousy that derives from it is unexpectedly the most ferocious. It is a love in slippers, but nonetheless very powerful, and above all resistant. Affection, as every other love, contains also the seeds of hatred: the line "Odi et amo" could refer also to affection, reminds us Lewis, making the example of an obsessively caring mother, who sacrifices her entire life for her children, making them deeply unhappy. I think this is a much wiser and less rhetoric view than

[61] Lewis (1991). The first date of publication is 1960.

many contemporary eulogies on parental love, which is seen only in the most sentimental aspects.

Secondly, he considers friendship, which he thinks it is underestimated in the contemporary world, notwithstanding the great favor it enjoyed in more ancient times. Friendship is the less natural, biological, and indispensable of all human loves, according to Lewis, considering it a virtue: it is the light, rational world of freely chosen relationships, based on shared common interests and ideals. He acknowledges that also friendship is likely to be derived by some instinct, but it walked a long way toward "civilization". Also friendship, though, as its drawback: its spirituality does not preserve it from evil. As affection can turn into a prison, friendship can motivate to isolate from the rest of the world, to consider as inferior everyone who is not our friend. Worse, friends can get more convinced of wicked ideals in virtue of their common vices, defending themselves by the external criticisms and reinforcing their illusion to be right: perverts and criminals react to the others' intrusion exactly as a circle of poets would do.

Then Lewis arrives to erotic love, which he distinguishes from "venus" that it is the sexuality as we have it in common with animals. There is an erotic dimension that is exclusively human, and that characterizes *eros*, but is not reducible to it. Although Lewis is deeply religious, his analysis of erotic love and sex is totally non conventional for his time. He clarifies that sexuality is not pure or impure, legitimate or illegitimate, because of the presence of *eros*. *Venus* is more animal, but not more immoral, or most degrading than *eros*. It is possible to approach sex guided by Venus in a "pure" way, which for Lewis equates to behaving as a good Christian, and vice versa it is possible to lose the soul because of Eros' temptations. He is skeptical of the "evolutionary" theory according to which *eros* is a further development of a primitive biological instinct of reproduction. Given that it is true, for what concerns the particular cases, he believes that only rarely *eros* develops from sexual attraction. Sexuality is only reorganized by *eros*, as every other part of the self. This is shown by the fact that what matters to the lover is having sex with that particular person, whereas sexual attraction in itself does not care much about particularity.

I will not even try to summarize the analysis Lewis makes of sexuality in love, and how "modern" scientific theories waste the fun, mystery and magic in it, since it is

worth the reading of the entire essay. But I will mention the important remarks on the capacity of *eros* to be immoral, since this will be an important point in this work. Lewis warns us not to consider the purity of erotic love in moral terms: love that induces to sin is not necessarily qualitatively inferior (that is, more superficial or animal) than the one that is developed in a Christian marriage. *Eros* is a powerful force, but not always a good one. Plato has proposed that it is the acknowledgment on earth of the union between two souls, but this, according to Lewis, even if it were true, would not be a good reason to listen to its advice in every case. *Eros* can lead people to be ruined or damned. And I consider this remark important not only from the perspective of an author, who aims to remind us of the importance of the divine love for God and for the human kind. It is important not only as a moral requirement for the agent- keep distinct the reasons of love and the moral reasons, in respect of both-, but also as a theoretical admonition for the philosopher.

The analysis of *agape* or *caritas* is as compelling and fascinating as the other ones. He rejects Augustine's view according to which one should love God and let go human affections because these latter are a source of pain and sufferance in virtue of their transient nature. Lewis reminds that the act of loving is impossible if based on this kind of reasonable caution: loving something because it is more secure for one's own well-being is intrinsically impossible. Loving means being vulnerable. This is a claim I totally agree with, and consider central for understanding the nature of love. Not many contemporary thinkers are so aware of its importance. Lewis instead puts love for God on the same ground of human loves under this respect: loving God is a bet. It is the opposite of Pascal's wage. Loving God is saying yes to something impossible to know directly, and this is why it is the hardest form of love.

He does not say much about God's love for us, if not with regard to the way it contributes to human loves. For instance, he reminds that it is the model for brotherly love to our fellow human beings. It is a model of unconditional giving, without any dependence on the particular characteristics of the beloved, as it is in *philia* and *eros*. But it is different from *storge* because it is not driven by the need of being loved, as affection typically is. It is only in virtue of God's love inside us that we are able to be charitable in our other forms of love, that is, able to love voluntarily features that are not lovable in

themselves. Under this respect, God's means are unpredictable: even venus can be chosen by God to transmit charity.

1.2 The Many Names of *Eros*

The translation of *eros* is difficult. It is not too problematic in this work, since I will just use "love" to indicate the particular form of love I want to talk about. But it is worthwhile to face the question in order to make clear what I mean by *eros* in the present context. Notice that I do not aim to any philological translation: the Greek concept that is expressed by *eros* in the Classic culture is not considered here. Also Lewis's purpose was not philological, but philosophical, and my discourse is in the same spirit.

The most common expression of what I want to talk in the philosophical literature is "romantic love". The problem of this name is that too many scholars tend to be misled by the adjective and interpret it in its historical and cultural connotation. But I don't want to refer to any historiographic category or concept. My aim is accounting of a mental state as it is experienced by contemporary Westerns, even if I hope to end up referring to a more universal phenomenon. But I don't commit to this last claim: it will remain an implicit hope.

Another common name is "sexual love". Although *eros* is certainly sexual, mentioning it explicitly as in this expression risks giving too much emphasis on this feature. We will see in a moment what is the role of sexuality in *eros*. Lewis's usage of a separate term for sexuality (venus) is very appropriate.

Finally I think we can reject more cautious names such as "personal love" (too vague, since we have seen other loves are personal) or "couple love" (just ugly, and also imprecise, since not every *eros* ends up in a couple).

The best name is "erotic love", which is the closer translation of *eros*. For the same reason, it doesn't add or explain much. Nevertheless, I do not think I need to be much more specific than this, in order to clarify the topic of this work. Partially because what I have in mind as "erotic love" will emerge thoroughly the work. Partially because the starting point of our discussion is in everyone's mind: we all know what it means to love erotically (or romantically, for what matters) someone. This is why the authors who

face love as a philosophical question very rarely introduce the problem with a description of what love is. At most, they describe its phenomenology, as Robert Nozick does. I will use his words later, when I will face the role of phenomenology in chapter three. In the next section I will instead focus on his definition of love's nature as the creation of a shared identity with the beloved.

2. Love's Bond: Robert Nozick

Nozick begins his recognition of love by claiming that what is common to every form of love is that "your own well-being is tied up with that of someone (or something) you love". It is similar, but not equal, to Lewis' (and my) conception of love as being vulnerable. In the last chapter I will say that vulnerability is a criterion for true love. This implies that Nozick's definition is in my view too narrow. I would say that loving (in general, not erotic love in particular) *implies* tying up your well-being with the beloved itself, not with its well-being. Furthermore, I would not *define* love as tiding up your well-being with that of someone else. Actually, also Nozick does not claim it is a definition of love, but he gives the following definition: "romantic love is *wanting* to form a *we* with that particular person, feeling, or perhaps wanting, that particular person to be the right one for you to form a *we* with, and also wanting the other to feel the same way about you".[62]

Even if I do not agree on other details of Nozick's conception of love, I take his definition to be the best one among many other philosophers. It does not imply any moral concept, as we will see it is in many other definitions of love. And it correctly takes love to be a volitional attitude or state of a person toward another one, and not a relationship, as it is in some accounts,[63] even if I will show that he is not always so faithful to his initial claim, and switches often to descriptions of a partnership. My definition of love will be a version of his, and I will present it as the conclusion of this chapter.

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[62] Nozick (1991, p. 418). Italics in the original.
[63] Scruton (1986), Fisher (1990). They both have a conception of love as unity and concern for the beloved, which is partially sustained by Nozick too.

Nozick is particularly interested in the extension of the boundaries of the self that love provokes, whereas I think that is a consequence of other more important features of love, which are volitional. Desire is the fundamental component of love. I will claim that there is an intimate and intrinsic conception with the self, as Nozick believes, but this connection is not much in terms of expansion, but of expression. Love expresses the self. In some cases it changes it. But the extension of the boundaries of the self that Nozick talks about is more a practical consequence of an actual partnership, than an intrinsic feature of love. Even if he claims that love does not require forming an actual match, he often talks as if it were so. It will appear that my definition of love (and the following account of true love) tries to be hesitant on all the successful loves, and more comprehensive of the unsuccessful ones. It is revealing that he quickly switches from considering the lover to considering the lover*s* after a couple of paragraphs from the definition.

However, he describes the *we*, the new entity that is created by love as the result of a joint pool not only of the well-being of lovers, but also of their autonomy. Then not only the lover's well-being is tied up with that one of the beloved, in bad and good luck, but also they act in a way that it is so: there is not only the brute fact of suddenly being connected to someone's else in a way that affects one's own identity, but also that you act in a way that limits your autonomy, and makes you even more vulnerable and tied up. Alan Soble, who's one of the main critics of Nozick, criticizes only incidentally, but sharply enough, this point: "Nozick's idea of 'pooling' autonomy is silly. What my wife and I 'pool', beyond our material resources, are our talents, our skill or expertise in different domains. And regarding decisions made in these domains, we each retains the unilateral power we had before 'pooling'".[64]

2.1 The *We*-Identity

Nozick correctly notices that the lovers want the "pooling" to be *public*: they care of being perceived as a couple. But he goes even further: the new entity, the couple, has also a new identity, additional to the individual ones. I do not share Nozick's idea of a shared

[64] Soble (1997, p. 76).

autonomy, or even less of a shared identity, since I share Soble's criticisms that will be presented in the next section. I do agree that love alters the individual identity, but in a different way than he claims: he believes that "each becomes psychologically part of the other's identity".[65] I think instead that what happens is that I, the lover, becomes "I-loving you". I will face this kind of connection between the self and love when presenting Frankfurt, and also in other parts of this work.

Actually, Nozick too is ambivalent on this point: "The individual self can be related to the *we* it identifies with in two different ways. It can see the *we* as a very important *aspect* of itself or it can see itself as a part of the *we*, as contained within it. It may be that men more often take the former view, women the latter".[66] I agree on the psychological notation, but that is not the point I am interested in. The point is Nozick's ambiguity. The underlined expression is vague: it could mean a factual relationship between the self and the common identity (as I would interpret it), or, given the "see" that follows, the psychological attitude, the personal perspective of the lover about what is going on. if the first interpretation is the correct one, that is, if Nozick is claiming that there are two different possible factual connections between the self and the we-identity, then his account is less prone to some criticisms, like that of postulating an awkward metaphysical entity. In fact, the masculine way of relating to love seems not particularly awkward: they just see themselves as having a part of them involved in a relationship. This does not need to assume that there is a new identity, but just a change in the individual one. The new identity is required by the feminine way of loving. So in half of the cases, Nozick's position would be more defensible. Of course, it does not seem plausible that he believes that men and women love in a such a radical different way, also because the practical consequences in terms of lack of understanding and harmony would be even more dramatic than they already are. Besides, in case he thought there is this difference, he would specify these two gender-influenced different connections.

So we have to reject the factual interpretation of "can be related", given all his other claims. We have to take more seriously that "see": men and women see, that is, subjectively perceive and conceive, in an opposite way, the very same connection

[65] Nozick (1991, p. 419).
[66] Nozick (1991, p. 421). The underline is mine.

between their singular identities and the shared identity. And this connection is between a singular identity and a new one, that does not substitute the old one, but does affect and modify it.

Nozick goes on observing an interesting paradox of love: the lover wants to possess the other completely, but she needs also the other to be independent. He explains this paradox thanks to the idea of the joint identity: "only someone who continues to possess a non subservient autonomy can be an apt partner in a joint identity that enlarges and enhances the individual one".[67] But my impression is that many other explanations, both psychological and practical, are available. He himself provides one: "the other's well-being- something you care about- requires that nonsubservient autonomy too".[68]

I will not analyze the following of Nozick's article in detail. He is often insightful, and always focusing on important features of love. But he is also confused and ambiguous on the distinction between wanting to form a *we*, or a *we*-identity, and actually forming it. He is not clear on the level at which this identity gets formed, and on the details of this formation. It is clearly not metaphorical, but then it is prone to the criticisms we are going to analyze soon. And some crucial questions are never addressed: presumably, when the relationship breaks up the we-identity somehow disappears, but Nozick does not consider the end of love. Still, it seems a relevant issue: getting over a broken heart is already sufficiently complicated. But throwing away an entire, solid identity is almost impossible.

2.2 The Unity View Criticized: Alan Soble

Alan Soble has criticized not only Nozick, but many other authors that present what he defines the "unity view" of love, according to which "the core component of love is a physical, psychological, or spiritual union between the lovers in which they form a new entity, the *we*."[69] Aristophanes' romantic story in the *Symposium*, about the two halves wanting to be welded together into the whole they had once been, can be considered the first tragicomic version of this view.

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[67] Nozick (1991, p. 421).
[68] Nozick (1991, p. 421).
[69] Soble (1997, p. 66).

Soble's criticism is mainly based on the incompatibility of this view with his own thesis on love: that "robust concern [for the well-being of the beloved] is, if not a conceptual requirement of love, a common feature of personal love, or, more weakly, at least *possible* within love".[70]

I will not be concerned here with Soble's theory, since I will attack a very similar conception in the section dedicated to Frankfurt. The reasons for which I criticize Frankfurt's conception apply to Soble as well. Notice that he generally commits to something more than the weak formulation above. And after all that formulation it too weak to be a definition, and it is not worthwhile to object to it: that altruistic concern is at least possible in *eros* is not denied by anyone, as far as I know.

But I want to present Soble's criticisms of the unity view. Since he defends a theory that "emphasizes the role in love of the lover's benevolent care or concern for the well-being of the beloved"[71], he believes that the unity view fails to account for genuine concern in love relationships, because being concerned for the beloved equates to being concerned for oneself.

Opponents of his view could reply that this is a false problem. What is relevant is the *intention* of being concerned with the other's welfare; it does not matter if the practical consequence is a concern for both. Even in case of altruism acted for benevolence we could object that benevolent people act on selfish motivations (because their happiness depends psychologically on their being altruistic), but this is not a good objection to benevolence as such (unless one is Kantian, and of a very orthodox fashion).

We will see that Frankfurt is among those who claim that the lover identifies himself with what he loves and therefore with the interests of the beloved. He does not consider this incompatible at all with the authenticity and the wholeheartedness of the concern. But Frankfurt's account of the connection between identity and love is not exactly as in the unity view according to Nozick, and so he is not a direct opponent of Soble. In Frankfurt's conception there is no need of reciprocation, and so no "*we*-identity" is built up: the lover identifies with the beloved, but it is an expression of what she cares about, or at most a modification of her original self.

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[70] Soble (1997, p. 68). Italics in the original.
[71] Soble (1997, p. 68).

Soble's discussion presupposes that everyone involved in it considers the concern of the beloved an essential feature of love. My claim in the third chapter will be that this position leads to a moralistic conception of *eros*. But in order to understand the debate between Soble and authors like Nozick we need to assume this conception to be correct. And however I do not deny that is possible, and even likely, that concern be an essential feature of many loves.

The opponents and advocates of the unity view, then, agree that love is characterized by the concern for the beloved welfare, but disagree on how this concern is obtained. According to Nozick, it is in virtue of the shared identity that the lovers are concerned for the other's well-being as it were theirs. According to Soble, this cannot be a robust concern. I think he is right if we analyze the case of self-sacrifice in love: the defenders of the unity view are in trouble in cases in which the concern for the beloved's happiness implies *prima facie* the lover's disadvantage. Consider a case in which I am in love with a journalist. He needs to go in a war zone in order to promote his career and be more satisfied. His greatest ambition is writing an excellent book on Iraqi wars. He needs to go to Iraq, even at his life's risk. He does not care to die, but I do very much. Anyway, in virtue of my love for him, I condescend to his departure to Iraq.

The unity view advocates explain this, appealing to the fact that his happiness is my happiness. But in doing this, they miss the point of self-sacrifice for love. One of the miracles of (moral) love is sacrificing one's interests for the sake of the beloved's realization *and* in being "happy" *as a consequence*. The confusion lies here: a lover sacrifices oneself happily for the sake of the beloved's welfare. The unity view advocates take this happiness as the cause of their action and explain it with the unity theory. Insofar as the lovers' interests coincide, promoting the beloved's happiness leads to the lover's happiness. But this misses one of the most important features of love[72].

Besides moral considerations, understanding the beloved as *other* from our selves is a necessary condition of forging an actual link with them. After all, Nozick

[72] After all, this does not happen also in moral loves: the capacity of sacrificing for the beloved can be found in over all immoral people. Maybe this is not because they are not totally evil, but it is a moral act driven by the amoral features of love. As Lewis correctly remarks, *eros* is a very powerful force, but not a moral one. Sacrifices of one's life are not necessarily an outcome of altruism, but also of egoism. Of course, one could think that an act cannot be moral if the intention is not so.

acknowledges this, when talking of the paradox of desiring a total possession and desiring the beloved to be independent. The shared perspective of the lovers that characterizes love intrinsically, according to the authors involved in this debate, seems to me to obtain more plausibly through a junction, a perfect dovetail, rather than a fusion between two liquids. As Soble notes, a total fusion is psychologically implausible: human beings are complex organisms, with thousands of different features, which constitute their unique personalities. A total amalgamation, above all, is not desirable to obtain.

So I agree with Soble that a shared identity, if it is not a metaphor (and according to Nozick it is not), is, first, implausible, and secondly undesirable, for practical and moral reasons. This issue is not important only in the debate on concern, about which, as I said, I differ from both Nozick and Soble. But it is also relevant for the understanding of the relationship between the lover and the beloved in love. There must be a clear distinction between them in order to explain not only how concern obtains, but also how it fails to obtain. Love's practical failures in general, included the greatest of all- lack of reciprocation- cannot be accurately described if we keep focusing first on reciprocated loves that give rise to partnerships, and second to the altruistic, moral, good features of a successful love story. Also, if being in love implied a shared identity, it would be very rare to have doubts about it: how can you be skeptical about something that it is present at you as much as your self? How can I doubt of loving you, if I have an identity labeled "we"? Of course, radical skepticism is always possible, but not very widespread outside of the philosophical community, whereas the question "Do I truly love her?" is a very common one among normal people.

3. The Property Theory

Among the many issues that Nozick considers in his paper, there is one that is even more popular in the current debate than the possibility of concern in *eros*. As the unity view, and almost as any other philosophical issue, it is possible to track its origins in Plato's work. I will face the Platonic version of the problem when talking about the thought of David Velleman. Here, I want to present the contemporary, and commonsensical

perspective on it. The question that is posed by Nozick basically is the following: *why* do I love *you*? People at the same time ask to be loved for "themselves" and for their identifying characteristics. I want to be loved because I'm clever, not because I tall. But I also want to be loved if I become ugly. But how can someone love *me*, in particular, if he does not love me in virtue of any identifying features of mine? We are facing the debate on the properties of the beloved.

The "property theory" claims that we love a particular object *in virtue of* its properties. It is opposed to the idea that we love people for themselves. It is commonsense-friendly: after all, we use to say to our beloveds how much we love them in virtue of their intelligence, or beauty. Notice that this seem to hold also in different cultural contexts: the Indian habit of marrying thanks to a parental-guided match, grounded on the similarities and affinities of the two persons, is property-based. Love, Indians say, will arise and grow, if the match is wise. It is considered a reliable way to generate love, and not just a stable marriage.

Nevertheless, the property theory needs to face several objections: if it is true that we love a person in virtue of her characteristics, how is it possible to explain the fact the we continue to love her even in case she loses many of her properties, or when we meet someone that has the same set of properties plus one? I doubt that these are real counter-objections. It is hard to refer to real life in this way, since people can love in ways that are not so easy to face with such a rough interpretational formula. I will say something about the interpretation of these examples in the fourth part of the third chapter.

As a matter of fact, some people actually stop loving their partners when they meet younger, more brilliant and lively companions. It seems unfair to deny to them at least the fact that they did love their partners. On the other side, a person can still love her disabled partner for many reasons, and not necessarily out of erotic love. I do not think these are valid objections to the property theory, even if they help it to develop the necessary specifications, such as the historicity and the relational character of the properties, that is underlined by many authors.[73] Simon Keller, among them, presents a sophisticated version of the property theory, in which the properties are necessarily

[73] Rorty (1986) is a brilliant example of this strategy.

embodied in the beloved, and conversely the beloved's *identity* is nothing else than her properties. [74]

The latter claim aims to reject the very possibility of loving someone *per se* in a romantic way[75]. It is possible to love a person just as an instance of human kind, that is, in virtue of her belonging to the human species, but this cannot be a case of romantic attachment. Loving romantically implies that there is only one person who is the object of my feeling, and that the person's identity cannot be described without referring to her peculiar properties, physical or not.

The first claim helps to see why the theory does not imply the risks of interchangeability and easy substitution. In fact, if properties are embodied, they depend on the personal history of persons and are shaped by the relationship with other people. Therefore, even if I love you in virtue of your beauty, among other properties, it is not likely that I'll leave you just because I see another guy more good looking. This happens not because I love you *per se*, but because *your* beauty is especially attractive *to me*, it means more because of our history and relationship.

There is an obvious risk in this strategy of defense of the property theory: losing any explanatory power. Or, in other words, of begging the question. If we refine too much the concept of property, than we tend to comprehend everything and to obtain the concept of "whatever constitutes a person", which is too similar to a person *per se*. If we do not refine enough, we have a theory that does not explain too many cases.

In what follows, I will analyze the economic version of the property theory, then some suggestions from evolutionary psychology. I will briefly consider also how a disadvantage can turn to its opposite. Eventually, I will expound my main worry in respect to the problem of properties and propose a solution.

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[74] Keller (2000).

[75] It is plausible, at least for Keller, to conceive some forms of non-romantic love, which have the intrinsic value of someone as a person as their object. I agree with him in this differentiation of *eros* from *agape*, as I made clear in the second chapter.

3.1 The Exchange Model

Some economists have claimed that love is understandable from the point of view of the market.[76] Personal relationships are not an exception to the general rule according to which people exchange goods, whether they are physical or not. People can be ranked on the basis of a scale that is inter-subjectively reliable, according to commonsensical criteria, such as the level of physical attractiveness, intelligence, wealth, moral qualities, and so on (it is plausible to assume some subsets of properties considered relevant, depending on the different cultures). So a person, who can be judged as a "9", will never consider a "3" as a potential partner. Problems arise because of self-judgment bias. Very roughly, on one hand, some people out of insecurity underestimate their value and so will have partners who dissatisfy them, but will not be in trouble in looking for a partner who accepts them. On the other hand, others out of arrogance will overestimate their attractiveness and therefore will not find easily a partner that they judge acceptable, whereas people of the lower level, who chase them, will bother them.

Said in these rough terms, it is not only unpleasantly unromantic, but wrong. Lots of people are deeply and madly in love without any plausible explanation according to the exchange model. What is interesting, though, is the underlying idea, which is the exchange between properties. If we consider the idea without the rigid implication of a strict, almost monetary market, we can see a less bleak scenario: people provided with different capacities, needs, ambitions, desires, and projects relate to each other accordingly, in a relationship of reciprocation, mutual aid and satisfaction.

The exchange model assumes not only that the property theory is correct, but also claims to explain *how* the properties actually play a role in love: in determining the worth of the beloved and in permitting a comparison. A normative conclusion could be, in this perspective, that authentic love is possible only among people "at the same level" (but the model aims to predict only whether the relationship will be socially successful and lasting or not). Actually, this does not seem a plausible interpretation of what authentic love is.

The exchange model is correct, though, in attributing importance to the public character of love, in making clear that love, like other human phenomena, can be judged

[76] The most important and influential example is Becker (1973). For an example of a different approach, which denies that self-interest grounds personal relationships, see Frank (2004).

by an external and impartial spectator. Not only there are properties, which render love dependent on the nature of the object, but also these properties are specifiable and observable.

What it ignores, though, is the qualitative, and not quantitative, nature of those properties, the fact that they are appreciated in the relationship and that they can be compared (when they are) only subjectively, and not in terms of an objective measure of value.

3.2 Empirical Support to the Property Theory

The main advantage of the property theory is of being more easily verifiable than other, more fine-grained, accounts. Some findings in evolutionary psychology do not constitute a definitive argument in favor of the property theory, but they provide some empirical support.[77] As authoritative studies suggest, sexual preferences of all animals are evolved according to very recognizable and understandable criteria. Moreover, criteria of attraction among human beings are related to simple variables, which are the same in all cultures. Typically, the main criterion of physical attractiveness in men is "fluctuating asymmetry" (FA), a reliable clue for genetic health, if corrected by the effect of testosterone, and in women is the waist-hip ratio (WHR), which is a good predictor of health and fertility.

Some studies have shown that there is a significant, positive correlation between feminine orgasm and the partner's symmetry. Others found the strongest support to the thesis that the WHR, preferred by men throughout the world and the past century, is 0,7, independently of the trend toward a greater slimness over the years.

Besides the sexual attraction, other factors of attraction have been analyzed by several studies, regarding short-term and long-term mates. The findings are also in this case independent on cultural differences. Males and females agree in attributing very much importance to qualities as intelligence, kindness, understanding, adaptability, and

[77] One possible defense of the property theory, combined with some sort of biological reductionism, could pursue the thesis that the scientific development of empirical enquiries will lead to the finding of all the properties, which provoke love. I believe that philosophy should always be aware of these enquiries, but I am strongly skeptical about their capacity to explain love. I do think they can say much about attraction and other components of love.

good health. But whereas women rank higher personality, and, in case of long-term relationships, earning capacity and other characteristics indirectly related to wealth, such as industriousness and ambitiousness, men consider fundamental physical attractiveness and a younger age than theirs. [78]

These findings do not constitute a definite evidence because, even if it is possible to claim that two people are in love because, say, they share the same level of physical attractiveness, grounded on their respective FA and WHR, the same level of intelligence and good health, and they satisfy other criteria such as age and wealth levels, the opponents of the property theory can easily argue that these are at most necessary but not sufficient conditions. Many people have these characteristics, but we do not fall in love with all of these. Also the experiments on pheromones, besides any possible epistemological objection, do not say much about love: they just show that our chemical apparatus, which regulates feminine ovulation and sperm production, is strongly influenced by pheromones. But sexual attraction is not all we have to consider on love. We can be sexually attracted by many people, but love many less.

On the other side, the property theorist can reply that empirical findings are just the most evident aspect of a general truth: we are made of properties. It is not possible to love anything else. We are the sum of physical, intellectual and "spiritual"[79] traits. When this peculiar whole is modified (by life's events) in a relevant part, when some traits are not functional anymore, when external necessities become others, often love ends. It is a romantic illusion to deny this reality and to say that there was not love if it happens.

This is valid also in case of properties, which are important in long-term relationships, such as the capacity of commitment and fidelity. It can be the case that when I find out that my husband has been cheating on me, I suddenly stop loving him. Clearly, this is not a necessary outcome; in other cases love is as strong as before and sometimes even stronger. But, especially in cases in which love is based on

[78] See Palmer and Palmer (2002, pp. 106-139). See also Barrett, Dunbar, and Lycett (2002, pp. 94-136).
[79] I intentionally use a vague term. It comprehends moral traits and other characteristics not strictly intellectual, and it allows the existence of spirituality, for those who believe in it.

trustworthiness, the disillusion about my husband's character can be so striking, that I cannot love him anymore.[80]

3.3 The Sophisticated Property Theory

I believe that the property theory is challenged, more than by the foreseen objections, by all the cases in which love arises because of the peculiar circumstances.[81] I fell in love with the person who saved my (or someone else's) life: who rescued me when I was drowning, who prevented me from suicide. I am a bit skeptical about the plausibility of actually falling in love out of gratitude (whereas it is plausible to *marry* someone for that reason, as in *Casablanca*). But the rescuer's appeal is undeniable, and anyway there are other plausible situations in which love arises in virtue of an event. We can fall in love out of admiration for a certain act, for instance.

The property theorist could claim that we fall in love in virtue of some people's courage, which is a property of the individual. But that person could be a coward, instead, and we fell in love because a coward unexpectedly did something brave. The property theorist cannot reasonably claim that we fall in love with people who have the property of "being coward unless when they are brave".

Love is very sensitive to the circumstances in which people find themselves and the crucial role of the context is showed by many examples. Consider this case: people who fell in love after a long acquaintance. They have not changed in respect to the relevant properties. They have been friends throughout years and involved in other relationships, and *because of their relationships* they have not even considered the other as a potential partner. Then, some external circumstances have changed and they have found themselves attracted to each other. It is a plausible scene, in which the crucial role is played by the circumstances, not by the properties.

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[80] The issue is not cheating in itself, but whether it is considered as an evidence of change in the relevant properties. The same outcome can obtain in occasion of other forms of deceit or betrayal.

[81] The opponents would claim that love always arises in peculiar circumstances. I do not think so. Still, some cases are sufficient to show a failure in the property theory. Notice that my claims on circumstances here is not that they are determinant as criterion of true love, which is what I denied previously. I think they play a role in the reality: it is maybe trivial, but not inconsistent with what I already said.

My proposal is that of a sophisticated property theory that claims that we love people in virtue of the properties as they are manifested, expressed, and actualized in those people, and in relation to the other people and to the context they live in. Our beloveds are not mere instantiations of properties: they are persons. Still, their properties make them the persons they are. Every other theory is either referring to mysterious entities or to other levels of discourse. There are certainly spheres of life that cannot be explained in terms of properties or in physical terms, and this holds also for the magic of *eros* and the fact that we love a normal individual as she was the most special and worthwhile entity in the world. This reflection, though, is not rendered any less important by the fact that we can have also a more prosaic insight on life and love.

3.4 Appendix: the Advantages of Substitution

People are often replaced. And this need not be necessarily a source of unhappiness or a symptom of a failure: replacement can also be seen as an advantage, when facing the loss of a previous beloved. After a break-up, we use to cheer up our friends with encouraging words like: "You'll find someone better" or "He's not the only nice guy in the world!" Sometimes we are sincere, thinking that *really* it has not been a great loss: that John has always seemed a bit slimy...

Sometimes we are sorrowed as well and we think it is really a disaster (for instance, in case the love story ended for external reasons, as death). In any case, even when we, as impartial observers, think that that particular partner is unique, he is not. In fact, people *are* replaced, and we will see Martha Nussbaum's attempt of accounting for this fact, while preserving the notion of uniqueness of the beloved. This is one of the puzzling features of love, which sometimes seems unfair and makes us feeling guilty in respect to our past loves, to our past feelings: every time we fall in love, we substitute the previous one. Even if we *know* that our love was authentic and sincere, that the beloved was really special, we think now, that our actual love is *more* authentic, that it is deeper, that our present beloved is even more special than the past one. Unfortunately, *and* thanks

God, we survived to what seemed to be the greatest loss of our life, and we are ready for the new adventure.[82]

4. Values, Morality, and Love

The topic of properties intersects two central issues in the philosophy of love: that of values and that of reasons. The latter topic will be faced in this work non-systematically, because reasons and rationality are complicated concepts, and their connection to love would deserve an analysis on its own. The topic of values instead cannot be ignored in this context. Already Plato presented an axiological view of love, according to which love is aspiration to the Good and the Beautiful. This view has been variously interpreted, and I won't even try to refer to Plato in particular. After all, it is a simple thought: when we love, we aspire to positive values that we lack, or need. Loving is being attracted to something, and why should we be attracted to some negative value? Under this perspective, love is thought to be a response to a valuable object. If combined to the idea that values are expressed by some particular properties of the individual, we obtain the property theory: love is a response to valuable properties of the beloved.

Another connection to values, though, is possible. If we deny that love is a response, a passive reaction, but consider it an active volitional attitude, we can conceive it as an attribution of values: it's not that there is a valuable object out there that triggers my loving reaction, but my loving attitude that give values to an object out there. It is a less intuitive view, but it possesses some intuitive appeal. After all, we have seen the difficulties concerning the property theory. And when in love we do attribute value to the beloved, her interests, and the relationship we have with her, and so on. An intermediate position is also possible: love gives us the capacity of discovering new values, which we were not able to see beforehand.

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[82] Being capable of moving on to a next love story, furthermore, is a better evolutionary strategy than being inconsolably trapped in the memories of the past. Conversely, it is important also to be able of commitment to a relationship, without switching from one story to another (especially for women, who carry the main responsibility of the reproduction).

A related topic is that of morality and love. Morality can connect to love in many different ways. It enters into the discourse on values, if we speak of moral values. But it regards also the very nature of love, if we think at love as robust concern as Soble does. Or it plays a fundamental role in the normative dimension of it: love is true or authentic only if it possesses some moral characteristics, or if some moral norms are respected. Finally, love can be thought as a moral state in itself. I will analyze some of these possibilities in this and in the following chapter.

4.1 Love as a Moral Emotion: David Velleman

According to D'Arms and Jacobson, "an emotion has a moral shape to the extent that its evaluative presentation concerns the fundamental moral concepts. Were moral considerations sufficient to determine whether a given emotion fits, then it would have a wholly moral shape and could properly be called a moral emotion".[83]

David Velleman's conception of love as a moral emotion does not contradict this definition. But I doubt that his description of love fits our experience and intuitions on it. Actually, I will deny that it does, even if I will acknowledge to him the merit of drawing a very important distinction, that one between evaluation and judgment in love.

But why is Velleman's account overall unsatisfying to me? Because he claims: a. that love is an emotion; b. that it is intrinsically moral. My account is exactly the opposite, since I claim that love is not an emotion, and it is far from being moral not only intrinsically but also contingently.

Of course, Velleman is wary that love and morality are generally thought o be incompatible, especially within a certain ethical framework. In the domain of virtue ethics it is not that unusual to consider love as a component of a good life. But since he is not a virtue theorist, but a Kantian scholar, his position could seem surprising. Isn't Kantian ethics all focused on impartiality and duty? And isn't love essentially partial? How can love and some kinds of morality be compatible? [84]

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[83] D'Arms and Jacobson (2000, p. 88).
[84] An interesting Kantian approach is that of Gowans (1986).

4.1.1 The Impartiality of Love

A first answer to these questions from a would-be Kantian lover is that ethics need not be invasive of the other practical spheres of agency: "Although Kant's impartial morality can never fully removes itself from the deliberative process […] it can make itself sufficiently inconspicuous to allow for intimate personal relations. Conscience can stand by in the role of chaperone, and love need not feel inhibited by such unobtrusive supervision".[85] This solution has been advocated by several Kantian moralists. But chaperones are notoriously bothering for lovers, even when they just stand silently, and in fact Velleman is not satisfied. Love and morality are not even potentially at odds. He thinks that love is not simply non-moral, but it is a moral emotion, and so no needs no chaperone to be guarded by. "The question, then, is not whether two divergent perspectives can be accommodated but rather how these two perspectives converge.

There are two ways of obtaining this convergence: either rejecting the impartiality of morality (as in different ways virtue theories do), or rethinking love's partiality. Velleman opts for this second way. Love is not partial in a sense that it puts it in conflict with morality. In order to do this, he appeals to Iris Murdoch's conception of love,[86] in which the particularity that is typical of love does not entail any partiality. Quite the opposite, her vocabulary is based on detachment, realism, and justice. Loving is a matter of really looking, for Murdoch, an exercise of "attention", that can be translated in German as *Achtung*, the term used by Kant to designate the mode of valuation that is peculiar of moral motivation. Even if the two meanings of *Achtung* (vision and evaluation) are distinct, they are connected.

In light of this authoritative antecedent, Velleman's proposal is "to juxtapose love and Kantian respect in a way that is illuminating for both. On the one hand, I hope to show that we can resolve some problems in our understanding of love by applying the theory of value and valuation that Kant developed fro respect. On the other hand, I hope that this application of Kant's theory will show that its stern and forbidding tone is just

[85] Velleman (1999, p. 341).
[86] Murdoch (1970).

that- a tone which Kant stated the theory rather than an essential characteristic of the theory itself".[87]

In order to make love and respect closer, Velleman claims that a correct interpretation of Kantian respect is not in terms of an attitude toward rules or principles, but in terms of an attitude toward an idealized, rational will, which constitutes the intelligible essence of a person, the true self of a person.

4.1.2 Love and Respect

Velleman needs to confront his view with other accounts, and he begins with facing Freud's conception of love, noticing that it does not conceive love as a response to an object, but as a drive: "a preexisting need, individuated by its aim, to which the object is an adventitious and replaceable means".[88] Consequently, Freudian love is not an exercise in perceiving the beloved, but a rather a misperception of it. Love is certainly not a clear vision and attention as in Murdoch, but its opposite, and it is characterized by overvaluation and transference.

It is worthwhile noticing that these images of love are both very popular. While claiming something similar to Murdoch's views in the next chapter, and so affirming the necessity of a real and correct perception of the beloved in a love that aims to be true, I believe we have to concede that there is a grain of truth in Freud's conception, and it lies in the phenomenology of love, which is often characterized by feeling passive, and blurred in front of an ineluctable drive.[89]

Velleman himself recognizes that *eros* has a typical blindness that has nothing to do with morality. But in defining love as a moral emotion he is in fact thinking of *different* kind of love: "the love between close adult friends and relations- including spouses and other life-partners, insofar as their love has outgrown the effects of overvaluation and transference".[90]

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[87] Velleman (1999, p. 344).
[88] Velleman (1999, p. 350).
[89] Velleman later denies that the phenomenological experience of love is a feeling of inclination toward anything, but the only argument for this denial is his own phenomenology. Actually it is not a topic that can be argued in a strict sense, but it seems to me that at least both phenomenologies (love as inclination or urge, and love as arrest and suspension) are widely experiences, even in the same subject.
[90] Velleman (1999, p. 351).

Quite a disappointing revelation: Velleman's enterprise seems suddenly much less exciting! It may be a good point against Freud, since I agree that Freud's overly sexualized interpretation of every love is not very efficient in describing the "aim-inhibited" manifestations like parental love. But it is less interesting, for our perspective, an account that considers *that* love a moral emotion!

However, after rejecting Freud's thought on love, Velleman moves to the analysis of the analytic philosophers' conceptions. He rejects the majority of his colleagues' definitions of love (included those of Frankfurt, Soble, and Nozick), because they see love as "particular syndrome of motives- primarily, desires to act upon, or interact with, the beloved".[91] These conceptions express a "sentimental fantasy- an idealized vision of living happily ever after".[92]

Love is more ambivalent and realist, claims Velleman. And I cannot but agree with him. But so, in what sense is love a moral emotion? And why is this sentimentalism due to a conative conception of love?

Velleman's answer is that these theories have only desexualized Freud's theory, and substitute sex with charity and affection. But they still mistakenly claim that love as an aim, and the beloved is instrumentally involved to satisfy this aim. But he believes that "love is essentially an attitude toward the beloved himself but not toward any result at all".[93]

Love has an object, but no aim. The same happens in Kantian respect, claims Velleman: respect orients the will toward ends consisting of persons rather then results to be achieved. For a person being an aim and being an end is not the same: an end is something for the sake of which an action is done, whereas an end is something that is achieved through an action. Not every end is an aim. In Kant this distinction is important because a will actuated with a view to results cannot be unconditionally good, since the value of a result is conditional to its obtaining.

Respect exerts its motivational force in a negative way, that is, placing a constraint on the use of a person as a means to desired ends. It represents therefore a

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[91] Velleman (1999, pp. 352-353).
[92] Velleman (1999, p. 353).
[93] Velleman (1999, p. 354).

restriction to self-love. Analogously, according to Velleman, love is a similar kind of "arrest". It is an arresting awareness of the value inhering to its object. This equates to arresting "our tendencies toward emotional self-protection from another person, tendencies to draw ourselves in and close ourselves off from being affected by him. Love disarms our emotional defenses; it makes us vulnerable to the other".

While, as I said already, I agree that love's nature is of making us vulnerable, I do not think that Velleman's explanation of this phenomenon is convincing. It is very beautiful, but untrue. Love makes us vulnerable because of its conative, and not emotional nature. Besides the analogy with respect, which seems too juxtaposed to be convincing, there is no argument that connects the emotional features of love with vulnerability. Vulnerability is expressed through emotions. But it is caused by the desire to match with the beloved, by the necessity of being with him, and so on. Given that love consists in the awareness of the inherent value of the beloved, I do not see why this implies that the lover is vulnerable in front of it, unless there is the need, or want, or desire to possess that value, or protect it. Awareness in itself is insufficient to cause vulnerability. It could be objected that if the value is great enough, its awareness makes you feel vulnerable and inadequate.[94] I agree it can make you feel inadequate, but inadequateness is different from vulnerability. I can feel inadequate to many tasks and situations, but I do not necessarily feel vulnerable as well: the two feelings can be associated, and often are in insecure persons, but a very secure person may well feel totally adequate with respect to the beloved, but still be vulnerable. I do not see why being aware of a great value should make me feel vulnerable rather than enriched, unless there is the possibility of loss, and the desire not to lose that value.

If I have a desire toward an object, I am in a much more vulnerable position, since the object can fail to satisfy my desire. Remember that love is out of control, even if it is a committed desire: I cannot choose what to love. Of course, I have some indirect control on it, but ultimately I have no choice but facing the possibility of loss, humiliation, or defeat.

This desire of the beloved object need not be shallow, or "instrumental" in the worst sense. My desire of painting a picture does not render the result less (or more)

[94] I owe this objection to Tito Magri.

beautiful. My desire to match with a person does not make my love (that is, the match itself) more impure. I see no reason to claim this, even from a moral point of view. Maybe this is true from a Kantian moral perspective, but Velleman is more ambitious than this: he wants to claim something on love in general.

Velleman goes on in claiming that various responses commonly identified with love are independent responses, which love just permits. Sympathy, attraction, empathy, and fascination are felt by the lover once the emotional defenses toward the object of love are disarmed. But this is phenomenologically implausible: people first feel attracted, and fascinated (and these are proper emotions), then somehow *decide* to give up their defenses, and fall in love.

4.1.3 Price and Dignity, Aims and Ends

Notwithstanding his initial intentions of rendering the Kantian framework less gelid, Velleman's conception of love depicts a detached ideal of romantic love, even if we rule out its most passionate stages. Maybe aware of this risk, he tries to account for the fact that we love some people but not others. How can love a particular person if not because we are attracted by some valuable qualities, but we are only arrested by the awareness of her value as a person?

He recalls the paradox of a child who is told, by his parents who want her to feel loved, that she is special and irreplaceable, but also that everyone is such: "If everyone is special, what's so special about anyone?".[95] The confusion only increases when the child is told that she is special because she is qualitatively unique. But also this can hold for everyone: how valuable is uniqueness, if everyone else is unique? And if she is loved for some more specific qualities, notoriously the situation gets much worse, because properties are accident of our real self: we want to be loved for ourselves alone. But of course we cannot be loved in virtue of such a mysterious entity, as we have seen previously.

Velleman's answer is based on a crucial distinction, provided by Kant's theory of value: the difference between price and dignity. Without entering into the many details of the theory, the conclusion is that when we love a person *as a person*, rather than as an

[95] Velleman (1999, p. 363).

aesthetic object, we *respond* to the values she possesses in virtue of being a person, that is, as an instance of rational nature. So love is a response, but of a very particular kind, a kind that solves all the paradoxes that the child was puzzled by. First, being values as a person is compatible with being valued as special, because this value is a dignity and not a price. And secondly, it is compatible with being judged for our particular qualities, which also explains why people pick up different objects of love.

There is another important distinction, which is crucial also within a non-Kantian conception of love; that one between evaluation and judgment. Velleman claims that we love in virtue of the intrinsic value of a person as such- that is to say that love is a response to that value- which equates to say that the basis of love is the values of a person as such. All these are equivalent formulas. But, he adds, we choose a person in particular, as the object (not the basis) of our love, because we judge her particular qualities. The sophisticated property theory claims that we love a person in virtue of her properties, as they get modified by circumstances, history, and context. This is true, but we can interpret that "in virtue of", not as indicating the grounds of love, but simply the way the object is perceived by the lover. It is not that I love you because of your qualities (embedded, relational, and historical, as they are). But that I love *you*, in particular, because of your particular qualities. But my love is not grounded on the judgment I have of you, but on the evaluation, which is based on your intrinsic value as a person.

This use of Velleman's distinction, applied to the discourse on properties, is very important, because it will come useful in the next chapter, when I try to solve an apparent paradox: that authentic love is not a response to objective values of the beloved, but it is a response to some independent reality outside of the lover.

Enough with Velleman's article, which would deserve an even longer analysis for its complexity. What can we conclude about his thought?

My main objection to Velleman is just one: that it does not describe *eros* at all. And that even if he is cautious about this, and says he does not aim to describe (what he calls) romantic love in particular, he often seems to refer to that kind of experience, as when he talks of the phenomenology of being in love. His account is internally very coherent: but it fails to say something about the world outside it. *Eros* is not an emotion,

and it is not (necessarily) moral. Actually, I believe this applies to every kind of love, but it appears more clearly if we think about romantic love.

However, we can opt for taking seriously his caveat: he is interested in talking of some sort of love, which has nothing to do with the subject matter of our enquiry. In this case, we have to look somewhere else.

4.2 Love and the Will: Harry Frankfurt

Harry Frankfurt has devoted many articles, and a recent, suggestive booklet,[96] which collects some public lectures, to love and its reasons. His central thesis on love is that it is the most fundamental way that human beings have of attributing value and meaning to life. Love provides aims, ambitions, and interests. Frankfurt, then, gives to love an enormously important role: being the core of practical deliberation. Loving equates then to being able to act, and is therefore desirable for its own sake.

This last book is entirely devoted to a topic that he has begun much earlier, and it is coherent with a wider conception of the human deliberation, whose first structure was outlined more than thirty years ago by his famous article "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person".[97]

Notice that the "reasons of love" that are mentioned in the book's title may refer to two different kinds of reasons: the reasons that love provides, and those that love possesses. Corresponding to them, two different normative dimensions: in the first case, the moral, or anyway, practical deliberation's domain, where love is said to play an essential and irreplaceable role; in the second case, the proper normative dimension of love, where the question that might be asked is "does love have reasons?". Velleman, we have seen, was interested in both sides of the problem. Frankfurt is not very interested in the latter question, even if he faces indirectly when mentioning the debate on the properties.

[96] Frankfurt (2004).
[97] Frankfurt (1971).

4.2.1 How Should We Live and What Should We Care About

So, what is love for Frankfurt? Love is "an especially notable variant of caring".[98] Caring about something is different from merely wanting it, or even wanting it more than other available things. It is also different from considering that thing as intrinsically valuable. In this last case, we judge something as worthwhile of being desired for its own sake, according to Frankfurt, without caring about it or evaluating it as *important for us*. Think of considering intrinsically valuable the survival of every single species on earth, without even knowing what they are. It is also possible that there be intrinsically valuable things, and no one to care about them. This may seem an extreme case, but actually it need not, if the valuable object possesses a small amount of value.

Then attributing importance to an object is not caused by the objective value possessed by the object, but rather by the will's configuration to it. Notice that this does not amount to saying that the will has a preference for that object, not even in the case of a persisting preference, since some preferences or desires are resistant to out attempt to get rid of them. Caring, or attributing subjective value, to an object means a willing commitment to desire it. The person is not passively stuck with a desire, or indifferent to it. The desire moves her, and she wants to be moved by that desire. She wants to want that particular object. This desire, Frankfurt argues, is not transient, but rather stable, because the person identifies herself with it. Caring about something is then the way of expressing what the person really wants.

Notice that this need not be a process based on reflection. And if there is any refection in it, it does not govern it, but it reveals it: under reflection, I can realize that I really care about something, but I'm not brought by reflection to care about something, that is, to desire to desire something.

As I said, Frankfurt is employing his own famous distinction between first and second order volitions articulated in the article on the concept of a person and the structure of the will. I will take the content of that article for granted, because it gave rise to a considerable amount of detailed criticisms and comments, whose analysis would take us too faraway.

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[98] Frankfurt (2004, p. 11).

Frankfurt is convinced that caring about things provides a volitional continuity, without which we would be incapable of any agency, and of any reflective capacity on our own thoughts and desires. And only thanks to this we can decide how to behave, and what to aim to: "The totality of the various things that a person cares about- together with his ordering of how important to him they are- effectively specifies his answer to the question of how to live."[99]

4.2.2 The Reasons of Love

"Loving someone or something essentially *means* or *consists in*, among other things, taking its interests as reasons for acting to serve those interests. Love is itself, for the lover, a source of reasons. It creates the reasons by which his acts of loving concern and devotion are inspired."[100]

This is Frankfurt's answer to the question "what is the relationship between reasons and caring?": the reasons of love are those provides by love to the lover. But, being aware of the other debate, that is focused on the reasons that love should possess, for instance in terms of being a response to values or properties, specifies his position: "Love is often understood as being, most basically, a response to the perceived worth of the beloved. […] This may well fit certain cases of what would commonly be identified as love. However the sort of phenomenon I have in mind when referring here to love is essentially something else. […] Love may be brought about- in ways that are poorly understood- by a disparate variety of natural causes."[101]

Now, Frankfurt's position is slightly ambiguous, not just here, but in the following pages as well. He often speaks of the love he has "in mind", and it is unclear if he refers only to a particular form of love, identified traditionally as parental love, or of a form that is not possible to label in the usual ways, and that can be found in every traditional form of love. He does say that parental love is the purest form of love toward others, but it is unclear if that is the only love he wants to talk about, since his ambition seems to explain love *tout court*. And here he says that he is speaking of a love that differs *essentially* from love as a response, whose existence nonetheless he seems to

[99] Frankfurt (2004, p. 23).
[100] Frankfurt (2004, p. 37).
[101] Frankfurt (2004, p. 38).

acknowledge. But an essential difference between different loves seems to endanger their belonging to the same kind, which is a possible, but maybe undesirable effect of his position.

Furthermore, it is unclear if he really refers to the debate on values and properties, since he speaks of a variety of possible *causes* of love. But the advocates of a view of love as a response to value do not necessarily mean values as causes, but, indeed, as reasons. The "natural" cause of a love may well be pheromones or hormones, but then the (internal) reason of my love to you is that I perceive your value as a person. Frankfurt's claim fits more the property theory, than the value theory of love. But even in the case of properties, we could think that we are not caused to love people by their properties, but consider their properties as reasons to love them.

Nevertheless, I agree with Frankfurt when he claims that "It is entirely possible for a person to be caused to love something without noticing its value […] It is even possible for a person to come to love something despite recognizing that its inherent nature is actually and utterly bad. That sort of love is doubtless a misfortune. Still, such things happen".[102] This fact will ground many of the considerations in the third and the fourth chapter.

Frankfurt goes on recognizing that the beloved is valuable to the lover, but this is not grounded on the perception of the inherent value of the beloved, because the relationship between love and the value of the beloved is exactly the opposite: the beloved acquires value because we love it. This characterizes not only parental love, specifies Frankfurt (so confirming our uncertainty about the love he has in mind), but "quite generally",[103] with the exception, maybe, of loving an ideal.

Love is a generator of value, and this is why it's the core of practical deliberation: it provides the agent with the motives for his intrinsic ends.[104]

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[102] Of course, Velleman would disagree on this point, since he would claim that every person as such is objectively valuable.
[103] Frankfurt (2004, p. 40).
[104] Frankfurt does not seem to distinguish between aims and ends.

4.2.3 The Defining Features of Love

But if this love's role, what is its nature? Frankfurt offers a list of the defining features of the love he has in mind. They are five:

1) Love is a disinterested concern for the existence and the well-being of what we love.
2) The heart of love is neither affective nor cognitive, but rather volitional.
3) Love must be distinguished carefully from infatuation, lust, obsession, possessiveness, and dependency, all phenomena that affect above all romantic or sexual relationships, and that render those relationships non-illuminating paradigms of the love he is describing.
4) The importance and significance of the beloved is particular, and not generic.
5) Love is not under our direct and immediate control.

Frankfurt's ambition is limited: he does not claim that these features characterize every form of personal love, or that if a love does not possess this feature cannot be called love. But he does claim that if love has these features then it is purer than others. He never clarifies what he exactly means by "pure", but it seems to me that, although he criticizes moralistic approaches that reduce the domain of practical deliberation to the moral one,[105] his conception of purity cannot be but moral. At least, he employs a fundamental moral concept as "disinterested concern" for the most important defining feature of love.

I think that this is the first point of disagreement between Frankfurt and me. Of course, it is only a virtual disagreement, since it is unclear to me if *eros* can ever be considered by him to have these features, or if by definition it is an impure form of love. He probably does not want to commit to either of the two claims. In any case, if the first feature has to define *eros*, I think it is inappropriate. *Eros* is not essentially a disinterested concern for the beloved, even if it often involves it. I think that disinterested, and impartial concern can be a positive moral feature of *eros*, and that it is desirable and good that it is present. But its absence does not determine anything in particular about the nature of *eros*. This holds, of course, if we speak of essential or defining features and

[105] Frankfurt (2004, pp. 5-9).

"purity" in non-moral terms, exactly as D'Arms and Jacobson do when they judge about emotional appropriateness.

Consequently, I do not agree with Frankfurt on the third feature as well. Better, I do not agree with him on the reasons of his distinction, not on the distinction itself. I agree that love, or even *eros*, is not infatuation, or lust, or obsession, or possessiveness, or dependency. It is not only that they have different names: they are clearly different states. Why, and how they differ, though, cannot be judged only in moral terms, as Frankfurt implicitly does. There are also other criteria, and the rest of this work is an attempt to outline them. Obsession and infatuation are probably the closest ones to love, and I will treat them in the third and the fifth chapter. The other ones (lust, possessiveness, and dependency) are not even close to love, but can be its companions.

I completely agree, instead, on the other defining features. Love is a volitional, but not voluntary, state, whose object's significance is grounded on particular aspects of it.

The non-voluntary nature of love is a delicate point, especially for a volitional account. For a an emotional conception of love, either in affective or cognitive terms, the explanation of the impossibility of loving at will is relatively straightforward: love is an emotional response that we cannot control directly. But what about a volitional account? In what sense it is not up to us what to care about?

The necessity that constrains love is not logical, since love is not a cognitive attitude. Even if Frankfurt does not say, it is not even a practical necessity, as it would be in the case of an affective reaction. It is a limitation of the will: "the constraint operates from within our own will".[106]

This has an important consequence: that the attempt of philosophers of showing that adopting some final end unconditionally is a requirement of reason is doomed to fail. "There are no necessities of logic or rationality that dictate what we are to love. What we love is shaped by the universal exigencies of human life, together with those other ends and interests that derive more particularly from the features of individual character of

[106] Frankfurt (2004, p. 46).

experience. Whether something is to be an object of our love […] can be measured only against requirements that are imposed on us by other things that we love".[107]

That there is some kind of normative requirement imposed by the whole of our objects of love (and so ultimately by our identity) will be claimed and discussed in the last chapter.

Even if what we love, and love itself, is not under our control, we can sometimes operate indirectly, on the conditions that favor or disfavor love. but in the end what we love is determined for us by biological or other natural conditions. We could maybe think that in some occasions it would be desirable to love other things. This does not change the fact that when someone's love is wholehearted, even available alternatives are not an option.

4.2.4 Identity in Love

We have seen already that love is the core of practical deliberation, according to Frankfurt, because it provides the motives to act, since it is "the originating source of terminal value".[108] Notice that his view does not see the object of love as instrumental in the sense that Velleman warned us against, since there is no result that must be obtained. Love provides motives to pursue an end, true. But this is not an aim, because what really matter is having an end, rather than obtaining a state of affairs. The *activity* of loving is in itself valuable.

But does this imply that the lover cannot be disinterested in his concern for the beloved? If loving is intrinsically valuable to him, isn't he using the beloved as a means? This potential objection that Frankfurt himself considers will remind you of Soble's objection to the unity view. Frankfurt's reply is interesting: the identification of the lover in the beloved is what allows him to be non-interested. It is not the same as in the unity view, though: there is no new, additional common identity (which implies as a matter of fact an actual partnership). The lover identifies himself with what he loves, and this happens not only with a person, but also with an object, so reciprocation does not play any role in this process. Thus, selflessness and self-interest in the lover coincide.

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[107] Frankfurt (2004, pp. 46-47).
[108] Frankfurt (2004, p. 55).

Frankfurt's position seems pretty valid: a concern for another person is not less genuine if it is at the same time a concern for oneself. I am not interested in continuing the analysis of what is a feature of love I do not agree on. I leave the task of replying to Frankfurt to someone else.

But it is important to say a couple of other words on this identification process that characterizes love. I think that Frankfurt exaggerates the role of love, both in out practical deliberation and in constructing or expressing our identity. There is at least another powerful source of human motivation: hatred. Hatred is a volitional attitude, roughly characterized by the desire of destroying its object. I do not want to commit to a specific conception of hatred here, but it seems plausible to consider it the opposite of love, and not reducible to a negative of it. Love and hatred are not contradictory, and above all hatred is not the lack of love. This topic would deserve an essay on its own, so I just appeal to our intuitions. Hatred is a positive force, and makes the world go 'round, as Frankfurt says of love, as much as its contrary.[109]

This assumption also avoids an inconsistency to a volitional conception of love: if the lover identifies himself with what he loves (in virtue of the commitment that grounds the concern for the beloved), then how can he ever be in conflict with what he loves? By necessity, he will be always wholehearted, and somehow the question of control does not even arise.

But if the identity of the beloved is constituted by different sort of motivations, among which love and hatred, it remains true that the lover *can* identify in particular with what he loves, but also with other things, like what he hates.

To sum up: I agree on Frankfurt that love is a volitional, but involuntary state, consisting in second-order volitions about a particular object, which is provided with intrinsic value by the very act of loving it.

I disagree that the content of the first-order desire is of a disinterested concern for the object's well-being (but I agree that there is an interested concern for its existence). I also disagree that love is the core of practical deliberation, and that our volitional identity is ultimately constituted by what we care about in a positive way.

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[109] An interesting essay on hatred is Hazlitt (2005).

These objections can be summarized in a general one: Frankfurt seems to be guilty of the very same flaw that he criticizes in others: that of giving to morality a much wider space than it is appropriate.

4.3 Love as Aspiration: Martha Nussbaum

The conception of love that is described in Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought*[110] is in some ways similar to that one of Velleman. She claims that "love is a particular kind of awareness of an object, as tremendously wonderful and salient, and as deeply needed by the self".[111] The similarity lies in the emotional nature of love (remember that for Nussbaum emotions are a particular sort of judgment, as we have seen in the first chapter), and in the idea of being aware of an incredible worth. The difference with Velleman is not only in the different philosophical framework, but also in the attention paid by Nussbaum to the particularity and uniqueness of the object of love, which Velleman cannot plausibly defend notwithstanding his distinction between judgment and evaluation.

I disagree with Nussbaum's conception of love as emotion, for the reasons already outlined. Furthermore, the last part of her definition are suspiciously close to introducing a conative element in her account: what is being aware of an object "as deeply needed by the self"? If I am aware that I deeply need an object, it means that I deeply need it. So why shouldn't I label as love that desire instead of a judgment on it? Nussbaum's theory of emotions is always at risk to be considered intellectually biased, and this holds for erotic love more than ever. Her description of love seems to fit more a reflection on love, than love itself.

However, her main interest in *Upheavals of Thought* is analyzing the contribution of emotions to the ethical theory. Her interest in erotic love is similarly aimed to see whether and how it can be, after all, a moral emotion, or at least contribute to an ethical life.

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[110] Nussbaum (2001).
[111] Nussbaum (2001, p. 477).

Much more useful to the present work is the beautifully written article called "Love and the Individual: Romantic Rightness and Platonic Aspiration".[112]

4.3.1 Some Normative Considerations on Values and Properties

Explaining the narrative structure of this paper would end up being quite clumsy, whereas the original is smooth and elegant. It is not easy also to expound the philosophical thoughts contained in it, since they get impoverished if abstracted from the context. The philosophical claims risk to be empty, without the richness of the lively details that express them. And the story of a woman in love (better, of two women in one) would be trivial, if the philosopher was not there to tell it.

The question that Nussbaum asks, however, is the following: how can we survive to the death of love? And not only survive, but also love again, another individual? How can we be the very same person? Is it logically possible, or even morally best? Does love admit of replacements? When we love, we *see* and *know* that the beloved is unique, and irreplaceable. Is that an illusion?

If we believe that the particularity of our beloved lies not in her values as a person, but as an individual, the only way to explain the fact that she is irreplaceable is to appeal to the relational and historical character of her properties.

But a side effect of this appeal is that, once that particular love ends, for whatever reason, the lover is left with an irretrievable loss. This is what is found out by the philosopher in Nussbaum's story: the practical drawback of a theory of love. This makes the following remarks normative claims, more than descriptive ones: Nussbaum is looking for the best kind of love, a love that is as passionate as any other love, but ethically and prudentially more convenient.

Then, if loving a person in virtue of her relational and historical properties makes us so vulnerable, what if the properties in virtue of which we love were axiological? Assuming we are "good people" (and it is clearly a not so innocuous assumption), we can love others for themselves, that is, in virtue of their inherent value. But this value is not interpreted *à la* Velleman in a Kantian perspective, but rather in a Platonic (and also Aristotelian) way. According to Plato, the best kind of passion is based on a view of

[112] Nussbaum (1997).

individuals as essentially constituted by values and aspirations. So there is no particular mystery in loving a person for herself (*kath' hauto*): it simply means loving her for her character and value commitments, rather than for accidental features. "The essential individuality of each is to be found in the fineness of soul, the character and commitments that make each the follower of a certain god."[113] These patterns are repeatable, and this is why there might have been more than one appropriate person for being loved by us, and why a single life might contain a plurality of similar loves. Of course, this is not to say that people are easily or completely replaceable: finding a person that has some values, and also an attractiveness that is compelling and overwhelming is not easy. And history does play a role: "the deepening of the relationship over time is clearly one of the sources of its value as a source of knowledge, self-knowledge, and motivation."[114] Nevertheless, if love was based on things that endure such as values, there is room for personal survival and replacement.

4.3.2 The Platonic Vs. The Romantic Conception of Love

But this Platonic and reassuring conception of love still clashes with some romantic intuitions. The Platonic conception allows for a list of lovable properties in terms of commitments and aspirations, rather than qualities such as beauty and intelligence. But these are valuable properties of an individual, and essential for defining the person who has them. Furthermore, the Platonic list concentrates only on high-minded moral and intellectual properties, but some of the repeatable features that will be pertinent to love are morally irrelevant properties, or even negative ones.

Nussbaum, on behalf of Plato, replies that a normative account need not comprehend any possible description of actual loves. People who tend to be attracted to superficial features are immature, whereas people attracted by evil ones are ill.[115] Since I am not interested in this kind of normative enquiry (what is the better way of loving, from an ethical and prudential point of view), I will mot further analyze the debate between the Romantic and the Platonic.

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[113] Nussbaum (1997, p. 13).
[114] Nussbaum (1997, p. 13).
[115] I wonder what Nussbaum means here, if she means psychological illness like masochism, or moral illness like wickedness.

The conclusion she arrives at is a compromise between the two positions: it is of consolation for the bereaved person, but a source of uneasiness for the advocate of replaceability. The best kind of love is a love of character and values, but the lover will see in the beloved also a set of nonrepeatable characteristics, which will be loved as essential of the person. So the repeatable and nonrepeatable properties will be intrinsic to that love. "This construction permits a real mourning; for there has been a real loss of an intrinsic value that will never come again. But it also entail that not everything is lost when a particular love is lost."[116]

Nussbaum's thesis, as I said, is impoverished by the operation of abstraction that I must do here. Still, it is the only way it can be analyzed in this context, and therefore it is unavoidable to move an objection to this conclusion: the two positions are only juxtaposed, more than really integrated, especially when we try to derive an understanding of how love works, rather than of how it should work.

However, Nussbaum's position has the merit of highlighting the complexity and ambiguity of the phenomenon of love, once we look at them without the simplifying lens of the philosophical theory.

5. An Explorative Definition of Love

To conclude, I would like to propose my own conception of *eros* (and *eros* only).[117] This is meant to be a working hypothesis, rather than a definitive position, and it will be further articulated and verified in the following pages.

Erotic love's defining features are, in my view, the following ones:

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[116] Nussbaum (1997, p. 20).

[117] I have found many similarities between my ideas and those of Gowans (1996) and Delaney (1996) too late to dedicate them the space they would deserve. The first one connects the Kantian idea of the incomparable value of a person with the role that intimacy has in rendering persons unique. In some sense, his attempt is a Kantian version of the sophisticated property theory. He also emphasizes the role of deliberation, choice, and action in love. The second one proposes a conception of love similar to that one of Nozick, in terms of a desire to form a we, but in which an important role is played by a "loving commitment", which is said to "countenance the implications regarding the selfishness of would-be lovers" in case we accept that love is based on relational and historical properties. See Delaney (1996, p. 346).

1) it is a volitional state, consisting in the desire to "match"[118] with an individual, and in the commitment to having such desire;
2) it involves sexual desire, at least potentially (that is, sexual desire can be inhibited and/or unconscious);
3) it attributes non-instrumental value to its object;
4) it is dependent (but not caused, or justified) on the relational and historical properties of its object.

Conversely, I deny that it is an emotion, or a moral attitude, or that it intrinsically involves moral features such as disinterested concern, or that it is a response to the inherent values of the beloved.

[118] Steve Darwall suggested me this metaphoric term.

Chapter 3. The Question of True Love

1. Introduction

We should be now familiar with the contemporary discussion on emotional appropriateness, examined in the first chapter, and on erotic or romantic love, analyzed in the second chapter.

I have claimed that love is not an emotion, but that it shares with emotions the fact of being an intentional mental state. Love, as emotions, presents its object under an evaluative light. Reference to emotions is also appropriate in virtue of the fact that love has an emotional manifestation: its phenomenology, that is, the way love appears and is experienced by the subject, is partially constituted by emotions (and consequently by feelings, that are in turn a component of emotions).

However, that love is not an emotion, but a more complex state will suggest that the question of its authenticity must be faced in different terms than those of the emotional appropriateness.

The evaluative character of love, which will be further analyzed in the fourth chapter, has been already discussed while dealing with the relationship between evaluation, judgment, and love in authors such as Nozick, Velleman, Frankfurt, and Nussbaum. The presentation of their theories has been introductive to some important issues of the philosophical literature of love, such as the way properties intervene in love, and the role that love plays in the practical domain.

Now that we have the background knowledge, we can begin to deal with the main topic of this work: true love. My discussion here will be essentially critical: I will present some preliminary points, and face an objection to the possibility of outlining an account of true love. I will also reject some commonsensical approaches to true love, based on the possibility of considering the circumstances, and the endurance of love as a test for true love. I will discuss the role of phenomenology, claiming that true love cannot be reduced to having an appropriate qualitative experience of love. Lastly, I will deny that it is

plausible to conceive of true love as the reliable outcome of an appropriate causal process.

2. The Drama

Everyone has asked or has been asked the question "do you truly love me?" It is a common, and apparently simple, request: tell me if you truly love me. It comes after a similar one "do you love me (at all)?" Adding an adverb might seem redundant, but it is generally considered a relevant addition. But why? And how could this question be reformulated? Does it mean the same as "Aren't you lying when you say you're in love with me, are you?", expressing a suspicion about the sincerity of our beloved's declarations of love? Or, more interestingly, does it concern the authenticity underlying any honest and wholehearted declaration?

If the problem is one of deception as opposed to sincerity, it is a disappointing one, since questioning other people's honesty is natural, legitimate, and crucial in relationships, but it is philosophically boring and existentially trivial. Much more intriguing is the thought that we are unable to discern our emotion, that we might be mistaken about our own emotions and sentiments. The issue is not one of self-deception. When I ask myself whether I am truly in love, I am not only wondering whether I am lying to myself.

The problem seems one of authenticity. In this case, the meaning of "do you truly love me?" is very close to "do you love me (at all)?" Actually, they could be the same question. Think at a similar situation. Asking if a ring is truly made of gold is the same as asking if it is made of gold. The two questions differ only if I think that the jeweler is deceiving me. The two questions have therefore a different purpose: one is merely informative (what is this metal?), the other one aims to convey a suspicion about the honesty of the jeweler.

But in the case of love there is a further possibility, which does not involve any suspicion about deception, and at the same time requires that crucial adverb. You can imagine the following conversation: "Do you love me?" "Of course I do". "No, I mean, do you *truly* love me?". It's understandable. Not puzzling as this one: "Do you love me?"

"Of course I do" "No, I mean, do you love me?" Unless we add some emphasis, for instance on "me" (do you love *me*? -- and not the idea of me, nor my job, nor my money), the two conversations differ. In the first case, the person is asking additional information. In the second case, it is unclear why she is asking the question. Unless she is simply implying that adverb, again.

A sensible way to account for meaningfulness of the first conversation also in the absence of a deceptive intention would be that there are different ways of loving, of which one is true, whereas another one is not, *and* that you can be unaware of loving in an untrue way. This would allow the possibility of being an honest and "false" lover at the same time. This is the view that is going to be pursued here: there is true love, and we may not know if we truly love, or if someone else truly loves us.

But what do we mean by true love?

2.1 True Love as Real Love

Understanding what we mean by "true love" is part of the answer to our question-- what are the conditions for true love? We cannot understand what we really mean by true love until we have found it.

As I just said, there is at issue much more than sincerity. The truth we are looking for is not one *according to the lover*, whose good faith I assume from now on. This implies that, if there is any form of deception, it must lie beyond consciousness: it must be self-deception, an illusion of which the lover is not aware. Ultimately, it would be the same as an objective mistake of the lover.

When we ask whether love is true, we allow for an unfitness of some sort to the world. Obviously, love cannot be true as a proposition can. Rather, not being truly in love seems to be connected with the idea of *authenticity* or *genuineness*. Love can be false without being faked. My boyfriend can be totally sincere in his claim of love, and still be doubtful whether he is.

But, again, to say that true means genuine or authentic seems to imply that true love be love *tout court*. We are looking for love, *the real thing*, as opposed to some states that just appear as such. Then the adjective has a function: that of enquiring about the

appearance, of putting pressure on the naïve claim "I love you", and push it further: yes, but truly? Yes, but really?

We can easily substitute "truly" and "really" if the question is asked in an ordinary context: "Do you truly love me? Equates to "Do you really love me?" The equivalence is less straightforward when we move from lovers to philosophers: "what is true love?" is different from "what is real love?" Philosophers are rightly suspicious about simple equivalences, and I have considered some conceptions of love that distinguish between love *tout court* and "true love", as the Platonic one. Nevertheless, I am on the side of common sense here. In this chapter and in the following one, I will analyze the view according to which true love is one that satisfies some moral constraints. Under this perspective, true means morally better, or justified, or as deserved. But I will find those conceptions unsatisfying, since they are in conflict with our deepest intuitions on what love is, and also clash with out lively experiences of what being in love is.

I believe that an enquiry on true love is primarily a quest for the conditions that allow the lover to be *correct* about her own state of love. Therefore, it is a *normative* enquiry, but in the theoretical domain. It aims to tell when we are wrong about our attributions of love. But the normative conditions that have to be satisfied for love to be true are reality conditions: they are norms about a fact in the world (I love x), not norms concerning simply the correctness of my use of the word and the concept of love.

The underlying assumption of this work is then realist. Our love statements refer to a real mental state, that obtains when certain conditions are satisfied. My position is not of an expressivist or quasi-realist kind. I believe only a realist approach can account for interesting normative distinctions in the theoretical domain, and can explain why it is so crucial for a lover to be able to answer to the question "Is it love what I am feeling?" She is asking if she is in a certain mental state, which determines that she really cares about a person, she really wants to match that person, and her entire practical life is influenced by a wholehearted state of the will.

Notice that if I had a non-volitional conception of love, the question of true love would have the same realist import. In the case of an emotional conception, the question would be: Do I really feel this emotion? Does this emotion shape my emotional profile

right now? In the case of a cognitive account, it would be: Do I really judge this person to be lovable? But in this last case there would be also the possibility of asking: is this person really lovable?

I will consider these, and other interpretations of the question of true love. That they are unconvincing has the side effect of showing the advantages of a volitional conception of love. However, I hope that at least some conclusions that I reach apply for every conception of love whatsoever.

2.2 Quasi-love

If love can be false, but appears as true, some *prima facie* loves will be rejected because they are not real instances of love. I could rather deem them to be "different" forms of love- say, "quasi-love".[119] But I'll not. Infatuation, obsession, illusion, and all the other states that resemble love, have after all different names, as if they were different states. I claim that some states that are called "love" are instead cases of illusion, or obsession, or infatuation. Simply, they are in disguise. My attempt is of defining the criteria for uncovering them.

Notice that this has not to be confused with the possibility of *degrees* of love. That love has a defined nature does not prevent there being degrees of love.[120] I will consider this second issue in the following section.

I do not think that forms of obsessions, illusions, and all the unsuccessful candidates to true love are reprehensible, despicable, or regrettable. An illusion can be noble, and an obsession can be wonderful. On the other hand, I will claim that true love can be painful, shameful, pathetic, or even immoral. So my enquiry need not be derogative of the value that other states, similar but not equal to love, can have in our lives. What my enquiry aims to, is giving the conditions that need to be satisfied for love to be authentic. This amounts to giving criteria for distinguishing true love from all the other different states, which have the same appearance but differ in nature. In the last chapter I will be particularly concerned with these defective loves, with the states that

[119] Both David Braddon-Mitchell and Ken Walton suggested me this possibility.
[120] I owe to Steve Darwall a useful discussion of this point.

have the appearance of love but fail to be love. It must not be a moral failure, of course, but it is a failure: a romantic illusion fails to be what it claims to be. This is the reason I will not call these failed loves "quasi-loves". They are different in kind, and not in degree, from love. They are not "almost" loves. There I also a second, more technical, reason: the use of "quasi" in philosophy is meant to address the concepts and terms that play the same role of others, to which they resemble, but differ in nature. But when we ask "do you truly love me?" the answer is crucial to us in a way that cannot be accounted by the "quasi" terminology. I bet that a reply such as ""I quasi-love you" would not be very welcome.

2.3 Degrees of love

As I said, the issue of "quasi-love" has not to be confused with degrees of love. But there seem to be different kinds of gradual structures as well.[121] What I said up until now implies a conception of degrees with regard to the *state* of love: either I am in love or I am not. As a state, love is like knowledge or truth. This metaphysical conception of degrees is different if we think at love as a *process*. In order to arrive at love as a final and actual state, we go through a process, which admits of degrees. So if from the point of view of the state, there is a difference in kind between, for instance, infatuation and love, there is only a difference in degree if we think at them as stages of a process.

Since I am interested in understanding the state of love in the first place, I will not be concerned with stages. Notice, though, that even a crush is not necessarily a first stage of true love, since it can come to an end before getting to the final actual state.

Notice also that are at least two other ways, in which degrees can intervene. Love can be seen not just as a process that happens to us as passive bystanders, but also as an *activity*. Therefore we can be more or less good at it. I will come back to this point at the end of the fifth chapter.

Eventually, love might seem susceptible of degrees in a mere quantitative way, what D'Arms and Jacobson call the size of an emotion: love can be variable in intensity. I am less interested in this feature, though, because it seems a more superficial one,

[121] I am in debt with Tito Magri for a clarification on this issue.

something that people talk about, but that is probably due to a sum of different factors. "I love you so much" could be just a way of saying: "I love you and you're very important to me". Not surprisingly, since love is not an emotion, we do not even have different names for loves of different sizes. We generally just add adverbs, without resorting to different terms, as it is possible to do with anger (bother, resentment, anger, rage) or fear (apprehension, alarm, fear, panic, terror).

2.4 Some stipulations

I would like now to clarify the meaning of some terms I use, and the corresponding conceptual implications.

2.4.1 Number and Sex of the Lovers

For simplicity reasons, in my discussion love is always synchronically exclusive: one lover and one beloved. I do not think that is necessarily impossible to love more than one person at a time. However, even in the case of multiple contemporary beloveds, the object of love is singular. Preferences can have plural objects (I like blondes), not love. I may love Jim and Jules at the same time and with equal intensity. But this is more plausible to be intended as "I love Jim" and "I love (also) Jules". Of course, it is possible that I love "Jim and Jules" as a single entity. But this is a pretty rare case, and I will not be concerned with it.[122]

Secondly, I will not distinguish homosexual from heterosexual love. I just assume (even if not only out of simplicity, but also for what I know about homosexual love) that these forms of loves are not relevantly different at the level I am enquiring. It is a very basic level of analysis, and I do not think that the sexual preferences influence it.

In order to convey this idea, I will use masculine and feminine pronouns indifferently when making examples: "she loves her", or "she loves him", and so on. But since this is can be confusing, because it does not permit to distinguish the lover from the beloved only by pronouns, I will sometimes recur to the more traditional schema. Notice

[122] This is likely to be peculiar of *eros*. I can probably love my children or humanity. Maybe even *philia* can have an appropriate plural object, like my dance mates.

also that I do not adopt the standard usage of the feminine pronoun when the sex of the subject is not specified: I will use the feminine and the masculine pronouns more or less interchangeably.

2.4.2 Partnership and Relationship

An implicit feature of my analysis is the following: I consider love a mental state of the subject, who may or *may not* be involved in a romantic *partnership* with the beloved. Although love need not be reciprocated, in order to be declared and felt, I will investigate whether true love can be unrequited: can you *really* love someone who does not love you? My answer will be yes. The default assumption is therefore that, when I use the word "relationship", the reference is not to a partnership, and, *a fortiori*, to a social commitment (such as marriage, engagement, or simple dating), but to the mere relation between the lover and the object of her mental state, with whom the lover has an emotional and cognitive contact. Reference to the relationship of interaction and exchange between two persons, and not to the possible partnership, will be the second choice.

2.4.3 Concepts, Reality, and Normativity

My enquiry will begin with the analysis of the intuitions on love normal people have, and of how they use the concept "true love". It will be therefore a conceptual analysis, paying special attention to the common sense's pre-theoretical view of true love. The reference to common sense, of course, will be constant throughout the work, since an enquiry on such a topic cannot but be faithful to our deepest intuitions, and most lively experiences. The examples aim to make more vivid and convincing the features highlighted.

Since we hold inconsistent beliefs, intuitions will be compared, refined, verified and tested within the theoretical space of reasons and principles, according to a well-established philosophical tradition.

But this is not the only purpose of my enquiry. I do not think that people have totally misleading concepts of true love, that they are systematically wrong about it. Hence, my conceptual analysis of true love aims at being also an account of what true love is, not only of what people mean by true love. I'll be satisfied if I can partially fulfill

my purpose, giving a convincing account of our intuitions and showing what makes us experience an authentic experience of loving.

My project is not normative in a narrow sense and it does not prescribe what love experience would be desirable or correct to have. My project is normative because it looks for the conditions according to which we can *correctly* declare to be in love. It aims to set the criteria that have to be satisfied in order for a love statement to reflect the way things really are. It is not a practical, but a theoretical normativity, even if the subject matter is intrinsically practical. However, at the end of the work I will suggest what direction a further normative development could take.

3. True or Undigitized Love?

In his challenging article *Love Undigitized*[123], Ronald De Sousa claims that a "heavy normative burden"[124] weighs on many philosophical conceptions of love, and he calls this burden "digitality". He tracks the origins of this tendency back to Plato's theory of forms. The process labels "regions on a continuum according to their fit with a limited number of discrete paradigms"[125], avoiding copies degrade from the original, but with the drawback that paradigms (that is, the original) are required in order to have representations. Adding paradigms can be expensive. Furthermore, since copying admits of degrees, it is easy to come to believe that "better *copies* are *better*, without qualification".[126] De Sousa thinks that when we label our emotions we actually apply a process of digitization. This process risks to oppress individual desires, that may or may not fit into the social norms that are implicit in erotic, sexual, or emotional categories. Pedophiles, gays, sadomasochists, and incestuous lovers, for instance, are equally unfitting the social and cultural norms that regulate love and sexuality, but differ in their success at constituting themselves as members of some specific oppressed group (pedophilia and incest are still taboos). In a case such as homosexuality, in which the

[123] De Sousa (1997).
[124] De Sousa (1997, p. 194).
[125] De Sousa (1997, p.190).
[126] De Sousa (1997, p.191, original italics).

social battle has been won, the category does not become simply neutral, but somehow glorified. So it is a success for the specific category, rather than for the right of the individual to resist categorization in terms of paradigms.[127]

My project is doomed by the same *hubris*, according to De Sousa,[128] since I try to define love. I defend myself in the next section, showing how some of De Sousa's considerations are wrong or confused. Before, I'll state De Sousa's idea in more detail.

De Sousa's opposition to any attempt at defining love faces this alternative: "Are we to treat our loves as aesthetical or as functional? In the first case, their meanings is predominantly private, in the second, predominantly public. Are they to be *individual* realities or *social* realities?"[129] He seems to concede that we might say that love is individual in matter, but social in form, and this leads to the historicity of love, which determines the degree of tolerance of individuality depending on time and space. But his final claim is that: "particular loves link particular persons. There is no essence of love."[130] Influenced by the "essence anxiety", according to De Sousa, we hopelessly try to fix the paradoxes and contradictions generated by our paradigms. We should just give up the quest of the essence of love.

Here are the paradoxes and paradigms that emerge from a digitized love, which disappears as soon as we abandon the quest for the essence of love, as it is shown in the "solutions" that come right after.

3.1 Paradoxes and… Solutions?

1) Paradox of jealousy: jealousy is at the same time a mark of true love and a source of harm to the beloved.

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[127] A similar discourse is proposed for feminism and gender roles: only a few feminist approaches, remarks De Sousa quoting Cheshire Calhoun, eliminated the very same category "woman", instead of reconstructing it. Cf. De Sousa (1997, p. 201).

[128] It is not only an assumption of mine, since I am referring to a private correspondence with him. Of course, this is only the rough version of his comments to part of my work. What follows will be exclusively based on what he wrote in *Love Undigitized*, that he himself suggested to me as a criticism of my work here.

[129] De Sousa (1997, p.204, original italics).

[130] De Sousa (1997, p.204).

1a) Solution: people want different things in love, but none of them are paradoxical criteria, if one stops looking for criteria for a "single emotion called "true love"".[131]

2) Priority of pain: pain is considered to be a most reliable test of love than pleasure, which is contradictory with the idea that erotic love is concerned with pleasure.
2a) Solution: this stops being a worry if we realize that the idea of a test of engagement cannot rely on the idea that pain is less deceptive than pleasure. This idea is false. And, De Sousa repeats, the question of "true love" is disconnected by this issue.

3) Paradox of sex and love: "making love" is considered an expression of love, but since there is a difference between expressing and being motivated by, there is another paradox: "in sex any motive but desire is erotically irrelevant—love included. So if you make love to me out of love, then I can never really be sure that you desire me".[132]
3a) Solution: "sex is only slightly more likely to be pure than love",[133] but of course caring about purity is again committing to the "myth of essence".

4) Freedom and rules: love requires rules for the freedom of its expression to flourish, which makes us feel that love binds and liberates at the same.
4a) Solution: "if being free is following one's will, then again there is no paradox. For love that does not engage the will is indeed a contradiction in terms. But it wouldn't occur to anyone to wonder about this, unless they started with a list of conditions that true love has to meet".[134]

5) The Paradox of recognition is presented in Plato's words in the *Meno*: "How can you tell if it's real love? You'll know when you feel it. But how, Meno, could you recognize it, if you don't already know it?" This paradox leads to the search for criteria of real love, which is a way to relieve essence anxiety. Also Robert Solomon, according to De Sousa,

[131] De Sousa (1997, p. 205).
[132] De Sousa (1997, p. 192).
[133] De Sousa (1997, p. 206).
[134] De Sousa (1997, p. 206).

in his *About Love*[135] is incoherently defending first a "conception of love as unpredictable, essentially dynamic, involving indefinable individuals who together forge a new self", with warnings against some misconceptions of love as feeling or essentially bound up with beauty, and then providing conditions for calling anything love. So Solomon is charged of making the mistake he himself warns us against.

5a) Solution: this view is again explicitly opposed concluding that the really interesting issues concerning love are "where it is going, what are its sources of happiness and misery, what is it about my loved one that excites, disappoints, stimulates, or bores me. But to worry about nomenclatures is doubly irrational: first, insofar as names are merely names; second, because the purposes behind nomenclature may be irrelevant or antithetical to the interest of individual love."[136]

3.2 Essence Hungry? Reply to Ronald De Sousa

In this section I will state some general considerations against De Sousa, and then in the next one I will analyze the singular points he focuses on.

De Sousa is not rigorous. What "true" or "real" love mean is complicated. De Sousa does not acknowledge the possibility of multiple interpretations, and does not distinguish between essence, ideal, definition, and nature. Referring to Plato, and talking of the essence of love in analogy with the theory of forms, seems to be a metaphorical device, since Plato's is a metaphysical theory, and De Sousa's is not. If it so, his claims get weakened.

A theory may aim to describe some peculiarities of love without assuming there to be an essence of it. Or it may look for the essence of love without committing to any normative quest for that ideal. For what my work is concerned, I would stress that I am not pursuing any ideal definition of love, even if I will end suggesting a further development in the direction of an ideal love. There is nothing *philosophically* wrong in presenting a normative issue *as such*: it is fallacious to present it as a description, or as a state of affairs. But my final suggestions will be *explicitly* normative.

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[135] Solomon (1994).
[136] De Sousa (1997, p. 206).

De Sousa not only does not care to tell apart concept, essence, and ideal of love, but also uses derogatory expressions like "the myth of essence", without showing what the myth consists in, and what is wrong with it. Even if not so clearly stated, his thesis is pretty much the old worry of not letting the normative cast an illegitimate shade on the descriptive

I will now present my specific comments to the paradoxes that, according to De Sousa, are caused by the quest for the essence.

3.3 A Quick Look to De Sousa's Paradoxes

The first paradox. Jealousy is an emotion, which can or cannot accompany love. I do not think that anybody seriously considers it a test for love. Jealousy frequently characterizes love's experience, but if it is appropriate or not, it is a question of fittingness or morality.

The second paradox. Love is a complex attitude, which implies both pain and pleasure, and other positive and negative emotions too. This defines love, and without any further argument does not show to imply any paradox.

The third paradox. De Sousa complains about "essence anxiety", which he rebuts, claiming that "sex is only slightly more likely to be pure than love". Again it is not clear why purity is a problem, and we are not given any argument for it.

The fourth paradox. As De Sousa himself remarks, it is not a paradox that love binds and liberates the will at the same time. But he adds that "it wouldn't occur to anyone to wonder about this, unless they started with a list of conditions that true love has to meet. To look at such a list is necessarily to wonder at how rarely the will could possibly converge on all of them at once. Without such a list, however, there is no problem to wonder about".[137] At least three problems need to be highlighted: first, it seems that a lot depends on the length of this list De Sousa is talking about. But since it is imaginary, and it could be infinite, it is hard to follow the whole argument. Second, he does not say anything conclusive against the possibility of a list whatsoever. Third, if we had the list, most likely we would not be required to converge at once on all the conditions. Besides, the conditions I am looking for are not prescriptive rules, but

[137] De Sousa (1997, p. 206).

requirements that a certain state has to satisfy in order to be called love. The will of the lover has nothing to do with it.

The fifth paradox, essence of love as its Platonic form, is not faced by De Sousa, who just dismisses it as the wrong question to ask. Although "names are merely names", philosophers question names and categories in order to understand better what they are talking about: nomenclatures' problems are rarely just about names. The Platonic paradox, I believe, is one only from the phenomenological perspective, whereas the answer to the question "how can I recognize to be in love" does not appeal to the feeling, or better the feeling in love is only part of being in love. Furthermore, the lover herself may well not know to be in love, even if she is. Under this respect, the paradox remains untouched: I might not know to be in love, even if I am.

Yet, I acknowledge the need to be very careful in defining love refraining from moralism and collapsing the descriptive and the normative. I agree that lovers can be "natural outlaws, natural anarchists",[138] even if I doubt they always are, or need to be. But as you can define anarchy, and discuss whether a state of affairs qualifies as anarchic, so I try to define love.

4. Circumstances and Luck

I will now examine some intuitions about true love that constitute some primitive commonsensical conceptions of true love. They seem plausible, but I will deny that they are correct.

Occasionally, people say: "That's true love!" when some particular situation seems to eliminate every doubt on the authenticity of love. Think of a person who does not abandon a companion in an adverse circumstance, for instance having been partially handicapped by an accident.[139]

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[138] De Sousa (1997, p. 207).

[139] This example could be also taken to show a different point, which involves relational or personal values of the beloved. The connection between love and value, though, will be considered in the fourth chapter, so for now ignore this feature.

Notwithstanding its popularity, this kind of examples does not show anything explaining or warranting the authenticity of love. An external description of the loving attitude does not account for what happens "inside" the lover: she can keep loving for any reason, some having to do with authenticity, some others not. For instance, I can love a different person than the one I fell in love with, since I fell in love with "X- the athlete", and now I love "X- the father of my children" (in this case, the object of love has changed). Or I can love x non-romantically, out of respect, duty or friendship (in this case, love is not of an erotic kind anymore). Or I can love x because I enjoy controlling the beloved, or because I like to play the role of the sacrificing victim (in this case, it is relevant the kind of person the lover is, rather than the kind of love).

But someone could object that, although *real* circumstances are confused, the idea of considering an *ideal* set of situations as a test for true love is a good one. According to this view, love is real when it is not overcome by the unpleasantness of the situation (a feature that recalls De Sousa's second paradox). But the test of unpleasantness is neither appropriate nor reliable, and anyway too demanding. It is inappropriate because there is no reason to favor pain on pleasure; it is not reliable because we can favor pain on pleasure for reasons that have nothing to do with love; and it is too demanding since it is unfair to ask to lovers to keep loving their beloveds also in very difficult circumstances. It may be a legitimate moral request, but not one of *eros*. They are requested not to abandon them, but do they *have* to properly love them? My answer is no: we have no reason to think that authenticity is connected to eternal endurance.

But we have the intuition that time is a relevant factor for true love. Certainly, even without engaging in any kind of normative enquiry, time is intuitively relevant *prima facie* in order to distinguish love from a simple infatuation. But is lasting a feature of true love? We cannot love for a minute, or even for a couple of days, although we can speak metaphorically "for a second, I loved him!" Love is not like emotions: we can feel a certain emotion for a second, and it will be a proper emotional experience. Of course, in some sense, love too can be experienced for a second: if I love a person, I can fractionate into seconds the period of life in which I am in love, and say "I loved you every second of that year". It is unlikely, though, that this means that I felt in love for every second of that year, as it would be in the emotional case ("I was angry at you all day" actually

means a continuous phenomenological experience of anger- this is a further proof that love is not an emotion).

So what do we mean when we say "I loved him for a year", and why would it be inappropriate or at least implausible to say "I truly loved him for an hour"? If love is a desire of matching to a person, but also the commitment to it, it is clear why we need some time before declaring our love: a desire can well be complete and last for a second. A commitment instead needs time before we can consider it reliable. A loving commitment implies that my life is actively shaped and deeply influenced by my desire of matching to you. So the commitment is reliable and wholehearted only after some time, in which I act and behave in a corresponding way. "Falling in love" could be interpreted as the moment in which I commit to a preference. Loving is the process that gets developed from that moment on. As I said, for simplicity reasons I consider only the final stage in which I am in the state of love, period. I doubt that there is actually a final, that is, a last stage, at which the process is complete. More likely, true love is a never-ending process.

There is a grain of truth, so, in the idea that true love is related to endurance. Not because it cannot end, but rather because it needs time to develop. Specifying how long we must be in a certain mental state for it to count as true love, however, seems impossible. This is due to a characteristic of time in human lives. How time is experienced depends on circumstances. It may well be that younger people, for instance, love for a shorter time, or fall in love more quickly. This reminds us of the suspect that adolescents cannot truly love. Be as it may, this point does not concern time, but human being's development.

Perhaps, then, it is not love's span, but how it begins and how it ends that give us indications about true love.

But the way a love begins does not seem a candidate for revealing something about authenticity either. The fact that love is at first sight, for instance, or that it takes a long time to blow, can both be deemed equally invalid (*prima facie*) arguments. One could in fact think that true love is marked by a sudden and explosive beginning. And someone else could instead claim that true love takes time to develop. I am in favor of this second option, but as a consequence of other considerations rather than for itself.

This does not imply that I think that true love cannot begin suddenly, at first sight:[140] I just do not think it can be a criterion to decide about it. People can be more or less prone to fall in love quickly. I will say more about individual differences in the way of loving in the fifth chapter.

The end gives more promising clues than the beginning, because it is the result of what happened when in love, and also the outcome of the partnership, if there was one. The end of love can tell much not only on, and to, the lover. It can also reveal what was going on, what was not working, what was missing. Or it can tell why it is a real tragedy that the love ended, since it was the way it had to be, that is, it was authentic. If true love ends, it is not just unpleasant, as it can happen also in the case of a pleasant illusion, but it is the end of an experience that was genuine, and put as in contact with truth and reality. Also this point will be developed in chapter 4, in the part dedicated to knowledge.

What matters, now, is that love can be genuine, but finish. The *fact* that it ends is not a sign it was not genuine, whereas the *way* it ends can be informative about that, even if not conclusively. I doubt, though, that this is a good way to look at true love, since there are too many factors to consider. If the end of love is due to some internal failure, we better look directly at those. If it is connected to external circumstances (like the lovers being separated), it says nothing on love itself.

Some would say that when a partnership ends, it means that it was not true love: "he dumped you? He wasn't the one". Certainly, if a partnership fails, something did not work properly. But love is not the fundamental ingredient of a partnership: it is neither a sufficient, not a necessary component of its success. Hence, the social success of a love relationship, that is, its lasting and being satisfying, does not give any indication for what matters to.

Isn't rather happiness necessarily related to the success of the relationship? No, even if they go often together. A relationship can be a total failure socially, but still a source of happiness.

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[140] It is not contradictory to the idea of commitment the experience of an immediate desire of matching to a person. A reinforcing commitment will come with time. At the end, we will say that it is true love, and that it was such since the very first moment. We can say it *now*, in virtue of other factors, but we could have not said it *then* only on the basis of that sudden desire.

Does a happy relationship tell us anything about the authenticity of love? Also in this case, the answer seems to be no. A happy love is not necessarily authentic. Also the contrary holds: an unrequited love is the most frequent source of unhappiness for the lover. But loving someone who does not reciprocate us is often considered a reliable test for the authenticity of that love. How could we judge Romeo and Juliet's story if not as the most eloquent testimony of a true, unhappy love? Furthermore, authentic love and unhappiness are not only compatible, but risk to be considered, by the most dramatic and romantic lovers, necessarily connected. As I said, I do not take pain to be a reliable indication, but it is implausible that love cannot be true unless it is happy. It is the reality of an unhappy love that makes it so painful.

To sum up: considerations about happiness, social success, beginning and end are just separate from those concerning the truth and reality of love, and seem even to be misleading about them. Its endurance is instead too vague a criterion.

5. The Role of Phenomenology

The enquiry I am pursuing is based on the commonsensical fact that some states are declared as real states of love. How can they be claimed to be true? And how can there be false claims in this regard?

Well, a sensible view is that the inauthentic states of love just *appear* to be love. The phenomenology of love is in place, but something else is missing or wrong. I feel in love, and still I am in doubt. Or I am not in doubt myself, but someone else is skeptical.

An objection to my way of describing the problem could be: why shouldn't this be just a mistake in recognizing the phenomenology? Why should there be something *more* under the surface? Why can't "being in love" be just "feeling in love"?[141]

The view I am going to reject claims that being truly in love equates to "feeling love" *and* being correct in it. That is, that feeling in love is simply acknowledging (correctly) a state of affairs that concerns us. My claim is instead that feeling in love is being in a qualitative state that constitutes only partially the fact of being in love.

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[141] Consider "being in love" as synonym of "loving" or "being in the state of love".

But what does "feeling in love" exactly mean? The phenomenology of love seems to be more complicated than the phenomenology of emotions, which is constituted only by what we properly call "feelings", that is, non-cognitive awareness of physical states. This holds at least for the basic emotions. The qualitative experience of love seems richer than, for instance, the fear of a lion. Feeling in love involves also thoughts about the beloved, and some characteristic perceptual experiences: seeing the beloved as beautiful, for instance.[142] Even more fundamental is the role played by volitions and desires, and the corresponding behaviors and dispositions to act: the desire to spend all the time with the beloved, or being disposed to do whatever the beloved proposes; the desire to touch, kiss, and make love to the beloved; the volitions that constitute a plan of common life. The desires and volitions that are present in love's phenomenology seem to be missing in the phenomenological experience of the emotions, and this is not surprising, since love's nature is primarily volitional, rather than emotional.

For what concerns the beliefs, it is unclear whether they can constitute the phenomenology of emotions as well. Much depends on the theory of emotions that is privileged. However, I doubt that *feeling* scared by a lion necessarily embeds the thought that the lion is scary, even if fear of the lion can be thought to implicitly embed such a thought. Feeling in love instead necessarily implies beliefs on the beloved. What we mean by "feeling in love", then, cannot be reduced only to feelings in the proper sense.

Nevertheless, since mere feelings do play a role in the phenomenology of love, and make the experience of it very recognizable, I begin considering only a traditional conception of "feeling in love", constituted by typical feelings and basic emotions. These basic emotions have a very simple intentional structure, and therefore imply thought only in a minimal sense. I momentarily limit my discourse to the feelings, because it is the kind of phenomenology that immediately comes to mind, maybe because it constitutes the phenomenology of emotions as well. These typical feelings are what strikes more our imagination, our memories, and our way of describing love in arts and literature.

Think of the following items: blushing in front of the beloved, feeling warmth and sexual arousal, being elated, feeling light and suspended from earth, and so on. Think

[142] Notice that a more complex phenomenology seems to pertain also to more complex and cognitively sophisticated emotions such as envy.

also of the negative counterparts, such as having belly ache when beloved is with someone else (I refer here to poets like Sappho for better descriptions—see later on).

5.1 Individual Differences in Feeling

Let us begin with the possibility of being mistaken in the attribution of the label "love" to a certain set of feelings. Is it possible to be mistaken in classifying our feelings? Yes, of course. I do not think, however, that this is the most interesting case. Furthermore, it is a rare one. A person is generally trained to recognize her feelings in a pretty reliable way. However, if a lover cannot recognize her feelings of love for a person, someone else can. Let us imagine a male adolescent, whose emotional capacity is not developed enough to let him recognize that he is feeling in love for a classmate. He's thirteen, and teases her because he feels attracted to her. It is a quite common situation at that age. His mom will tell him one day, apparently in a casual way, "I think you like her a bit". Or maybe, if she is subtler, "I think she likes you a bit. What do you think?" His feelings are hidden under a cover that in turn is labeled and recognized by the members of his community. The fact that he blushes when his mom tells this, and walks away saying angrily "What are you talking about?" is also recognized in a codified way. The codification is made by social sciences, and pretty reliably. I think there is an intellectual fascination in this kind of cases, but they are psychologically fascinating, and not philosophically so.

So I will just assume the subject to be competent at his feelings. When he feels to be in love, he is correct by definition: he is actually feeling the set of feelings that the community labels as "of love".

I could be objected that this assumption does not allow for the phenomenologies to be different. For instance, someone could feel in love when he feels having butterflies in his stomach. Someone else could feel in love when he feels dying because his beloved leaves the room.[143]

[143] I thank Aaron Bronfman and Shen-yi Liao for this example, and Matthew Pugsley too for a crucial discussion on the role of phenomenology in discerning true love.

But the phenomenology of love is a *set* of feelings, sensations, images, and so on. It is a (possibly open) disjunction of features that, however various and diverse, are shared by the community: "butterflies in the stomach", and "a sense of death" is well understood by everyone who has been in love. Reading Sappho's words should remind us what I am talking about:

> That man seems to me peer of gods, who sits in thy presence,
> and hears close to him thy sweet speech and lovely laughter;
> that indeed makes my heart flutter in my bosom. For when I see
> thee but a little, I have no utterance left, my tongue is broken
> down, and straightway a subtle fire has run under my skin, with
> my eyes I have no sight, my ears ring, sweat pours down, and a
> trembling seizes all my body; I am paler than grass, and seem
> in my madness little better than one dead.[144]

If we have ever loved, we know what she is talking about. Maybe we didn't experience each item of the list. Maybe we experienced these feelings in a slightly different way that it's hard to describe (and in some important sense impossible to share). But we perfectly understand what Sappho is talking about, and this is what makes the poem a classic, after thousands of years. Sappho was a lesbian lover[145] living in a peculiar community, in a cultural context that is very different from the many ones of her readers through centuries. Still, she was understood by all of them.

5.2 Phenomenology and Authenticity

Let us assume, then, the lover to be a competent feeler, and that her phenomenology be sufficiently similar to that one of every other competent subject who declares to be in love.

Notice that any judgment of authenticity of love is *public*. And the lover need not know to be in love: otherwise the question "Am I truly in love?" would never arise. This,

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[144] Sappho, *Ode to Anactoria*, Fragment 2, (Bergk), translated by H.T. Wharton.
[145] Also her way of being "lesbian" was of course not the same as the one the word refers to, even if the word originates from her being from Lesbos.

anyway, does not imply an "externalist" approach to the problem, since I will be always looking at the internal perspective of the lover as much as to the external observation of a third, neutral spectator. At the end I hope this to become clearer: some conditions of true love are internal, and pertain to the subject, whereas some are external to it.

Given these assumptions, why can't true love be a matter of correct feelings? For correctness of a feeling I mean that a feeling must satisfy certain parameters in order to qualify as a feeling of love. Consider the following hypothetical view: a true lover feels desperate when her beloved laughs at her, and isn't relieved when he leaves the room.

This view, though, needs too fine a phenomenological description of true love, since we would need to specify how the true lover reacts and feels in every possible situation, and this is undoubtedly too demanding. More importantly, this view is simply implausible: when we talk about our own love experiences we often realize how we differ from other people. The core feelings are generally the same, but we can have different times, and different shades, that make those feelings unique. For instance, we both feel elated when we see our beloved. And that elation, among other feelings, makes both of us feeling in love. But I am not an insecure person, and when my beloved doesn't call me I think he's just busy. You're a jealous and insecure person, and when your beloved doesn't call, you're certain he's cheating on you (assume the other conditions are equal). So when I am alone and think about him I feel a sense of peace, whereas when you are alone and think about him you feel a painful sensation derived by jealousy, like a stone in your stomach. Both feelings are typical of love, and it would seem incorrect to choose one of the two as evidence of the correct state of loving. Furthermore, the situation could be just the opposite a few months later: I had an illness that rendered me more fragile and (I suppose) less attractive, so I have become very jealous of my beloved. You went to a counselor, and have become much more aware of your inner strength, and stopped feeling lost or betrayed without him.

Another possible view would be quantitative, rather than qualitative: when you have a relevant *amount* of what an ideal feeler would call "love feelings" you are truly in love. Unfortunately, our feelings are often not straightforwardly present to us. Some, if not most of the times we are in a confused state, and we have "mixed feelings" or we do not feel much at all. So the reasons why I don't feel so much in love with you might be

various: I'm afraid of finding myself in love with you; I just lost my mother and I cannot feel but pain; I am a very cold person, and don't let myself experiencing strong feelings.

Nevertheless, the phenomenological advocate could insist, we also experience the feeling of loving at its best: what can we say about that? Isn't that feeling that makes us declaring "I'm in love!" the only thing we need? We could say that love is authentic when the phenomenology is crystalline, besides any question of quantity and quality: we truly love if and only if we clearly feel it. Feeling in love equates to feeling love: appearing to be in a state is the same as being in it.

A thought experiment shows why this does not work either. Think of a love potion that a sorcerer prepared for a desperate lover X who is not reciprocated by his beloved Y. The potion has the affect of reproducing artificially all the love feelings in Y, and they are triggered by the presence and the image of X. But once X faces his beloved, who claims his love for him, he realizes that his dream is not fully realized: after all, y is not truly in love with him.

Our skepticism is due to the fact that love is a complex phenomenon, involving different levels of our experience, and that a great role is played by our thoughts, expectations, ideas, and reflections. We are thoughtful beings, even, and maybe above all, when we love. If the potion's effect is limited to the mimesis of the feelings, the lover will not have the complete experience of love: she will lack all the beliefs, and thoughts, on the beloved and on herself being in love with that person. Furthermore, she lacks all the volitions and consequent behaviors: if love is deprived by them, it is even more impoverished than by the lack of beliefs and thoughts. How can love be what it is without its typical desires? Love without thoughts is maybe thinkable, but without desires is unconceivable. Notice that I am not thinking of the characterizing volitions I have presented in chapter 2, since it is unclear to me whether those constitute the phenomenology of love (which is, as I said, very complicated to define), but just of the everyday first-order desires, such as caressing you, and wanting you to kiss me.

5.3 Adding Ingredients to the Love Potion

So the phenomenology of love involves thoughts, desires and perceptions. What would it happen if a potion recreated this whole qualitative experience?

A problem could be constituted by the means this phenomenology is obtained: the potion. I will face the role of causal processes triggering love in the final part of the chapter, so now just assume that a potion is as fine as other causes.[146] Think that the person, at the end of whatever causal process, feels to be in love. And she is correct in using the phenomenological categories.

The problem with this case is that she could be feeling love toward an inexistent object. Think about a lonely, thirteen-years old comics fan, Matt, who is too shy to go out and meet people, too afraid of the possibility of being rejected. He falls in love with Storm, the glacial, beautiful super-heroine from the comics' series X-Men. He has the relevant phenomenology, at its more sophisticated possible level: he's sexually aroused by her, he fantasizes about a life together, he can't wait for a new comic episode, he's even jealous of Forge, the x-man she is love with. Is he truly in love with Storm? I claim he is not.

This is shown by the fact that if the existent version of the same super-heroine showed up, he would stop loving the fictional Storm for the real one. If he didn't, we would doubt of his love, and I think we would be right. That something is existent can be scary, for some prudential disadvantages, but it is intuitively a plus for love as such, not a minus.

Think also at a different situation: Wendy, the cute girl who lives next door begins to show some interest in him. He has always fancied her, but never had the guts to speak to her. She has every virtue he could desire in a woman: she is less perfect than Storm, but even more attractive to him for this reason. Either he stops loving Storm, and falls in love with Wendy, or just the opposite. In this second case, we would think that there is something wrong in his love for Storm: we would not just say "Oh well, he's got a love already". Typically, if a boy prefers a fictional beloved to a real one, we charge the person of some pathological defect. I do not think this is due to the fact that he shows a

[146] Another problem of the potion example is related to the role of choice in love. See the paragraph on obsession in the fifth chapter.

failure of rationality. We do not have to think that he is somehow crazy. After all, loving a fictional character can be very clever from a prudential perspective: not many chances to be dumped.[147] We are puzzled because we believe that love, in order to be true, implies the contact with an external reality. And a person that prefers an imaginary love story seems to be lacking the very capacity of loving, she seems incapable of love in its real dimensions of exchange (not to be meant in altruistic or anyway moral terms), of being in contact with someone other than oneself. If true love is real love, there must be something more than the mere projection of one's own feelings of love on an object that cannot have any interaction with the lover. If someone claims to be in love in virtue of this projection we are rightly suspicious not only that he is in love, but also that he could ever be.

Notice that I am here introducing the *practical* dimension of true love. One thing is to love a fictional character without knowing that she is fictional. The lover is simply mistaken in his beliefs. One other thing is to actively and willingly address love to a fictional character, knowing she is such: in this case, the mistake is practical. Love can be seen as an activity, in which this lover fails.

That love is an activity, and that the lover can be involved in a practical mistake is meant to be only a suggestion now. At the end of the work I will present some sketchy considerations on this point. In what follows I will make no commitment in regard of the kind of error that a lover involved in an inauthentic love experience makes. I will just concentrate on the conditions that need to be satisfied for the lover to be in the state of mind that we correctly define as "love".

[147] Ian Proops suggested me a clever example showing that also a fictional character can hurt you. For instance a book could be written in a way that the reader falls in love with the character, and then the same character addresses the reader despising him, or mocking him, in such a convincing way to actually hurt the reader's feelings. This move, though, seems to me a bit too *ad hoc*. However, even given that fictional characters can hurt you, it is not shown that you can really love them.

5.4 The Phenomenological Condition

The right phenomenology is then *insufficient* to true love. We can feel in love, and not be in love: we got back to the original setting. But is the phenomenology *necessary* for true love?

What if my beloved declared his love for me, without showing any symptom of love, not wanting to spend time with me, remaining indifferent when I am desperate, showing relief when I leave, lacking any sexual arousal, and so on? I would certainly have well grounded doubts concerning his love. Love can be calm or passionate, of course, but it must include a qualitative experience that is recognizable from a public standpoint. If the more evident feelings (in the proper sense) are missing, there must be at least the relevant set of beliefs, desires, and perceptions: in this case love will have a cold appearance, but still a warm heart. Loving is an experience, whose qualitative part is essential. I do not have any proof for this, if not the appeal to the very concept of love. The phenomenology of love, all the individual differences included, is necessary to talk of love. I will call this the phenomenological condition.

As promised, I'd like to use the words of Robert Nozick to give a vivid picture of the typical phenomenology of erotic love:

> Being "in love", infatuation, is an intense state that displays familiar features: almost always thinking of the person; wanting constantly to touch and be together; excitement in the other's presence; losing sleep; expressing ones' feelings through poetry, gifts, or still other ways to delight the beloved; gazing deeply into each other's eyes; candlelit dinners; feeling that short separations are long; smiling foolishly when remembering action and remarks of the other; feeling that the other's minor foibles are delightful; experiencing joy at having found the other and at being found by the other; […] Familiar, too, is what happens when love is not equally reciprocated: melancholy, obsessive rumination on what went wrong, fantasies about its being set right, lingering in places to catch a glimpse of the person, making telephone calls to hear the other's voice, finding that all other activities seem flat, occasionally having suicidal thoughts."[148]

[148] Nozick (1991, pp. 417-418).

The phenomenology of love, then, comprehends: physical states, feelings, desires, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Of course, there may be individual differences, but I am sure that everyone has experienced the majority of the above-mentioned situations.

5.5 The Possibility of Unconscious Love

But if the phenomenology is necessary, how can we account for unconscious love? Feelings, also in the wider sense I have proposed, are by definition felt, that is, present to the subject. But think about the case of the adolescent who mocks his beloved: he does not show the relevant phenomenology, but his mother correctly attributes love to him. Is that love untrue?

This example is maybe inappropriate, though, since it could be objected that teasing the object of love is part of the experience of love in young male adolescents, rather than only an observational criterion for the bystander. He cannot recognize it as such, because he is not a competent feeler, but he is feeling in love. Even if he is not "feeling love", that is, he is not aware of his state, he actually is in that state. This case is not really problematic for my condition.

The real objection to the phenomenological condition is constituted by a love, whose qualitative experience is totally absent, as in the following example: James is very hostile to his sister-in-law Dora, and everyone believes he is jealous of her since he's very close to his younger brother. Instead he is not aware that his hostility is due to his sexual attraction to her, and suddenly he realizes that he loves her. He sees her in a totally different way, now, and feels in love with her.

Assume that James's hostility began at time T1. At T2 he claims to love Dora. There are two versions of this case. In the first hypothesis, he declares that he has *just* fallen in love with her. This case it is not problematic, though, since he has just suddenly changed his mind, and he likely declares his love on the basis of a new, totally different phenomenology he is experiencing.

In the second hypothesis, instead, at T2 he declares that he has been in love with Dora since T1. This is the problematic case. We could try to deal with it as in the case of the young adolescent. But transforming whatever kind of qualitative experience in one of

love one seems an *ad hoc* move. James claims that he has been unconsciously in love with Dora, even if he did not feel in love. Was that true love?

A possibility is that the phenomenology was there, coexisting with other emotions, such as the guilt for a forbidden passion, which repressed or covered it. The phenomenology was not missing, but he was simply unaware of it. The phenomenology was in principle accessible to the subject, if he did not felt any shame. Once that for some reason the shame becomes weaker, the phenomenology pops out. In this case, James truly loved Dora since T1, and his love was "unconscious" but true.

This explanation may seem weak, but notice that it is relevant that *now* James possesses the right phenomenology. Actually, being in a different phenomenological state determined his discovery. If James did not feel in love, he would not even consider the possibility of loving Dora. This is a fundamental fact: we cannot think of love, in the absence of phenomenological clues, and neither can an external observer. In the following chapters I will present the other necessary conditions for true love: none of them is a qualitative condition, even if they may have, in turn, a phenomenological correspondent. For instance, if loving necessarily entails being vulnerable, then I will also feel vulnerable. But the condition in itself just claims that I *am* vulnerable. The epistemic condition claims (roughly) that I must know the beloved well enough. This may entail that I feel sure about her characteristics, but of course an epistemic requirement is not in itself qualitative. The volitional condition claims that I must be in a harmonic state of the will: again there can be a qualitative correspondent, that is, feeling coherent, or at least not feeling schizophrenic. But the condition does not mention the feeling.[149]

None of the conditions that I will present would allow a bystander to attribute *eros* to the subject. Even the vulnerability, which is the most connected to its phenomenological correspondent, is not enough, since it characterizes every form of love, not just *eros*: how can I distinguish *eros* from *philia*, if not through sexual desire, or the desire to touch the beloved? Even if every condition of mine is incorrect, it is hard to imagine erotic love, without its typical phenomenology. If by "unconscious love" we mean a love without its qualitative experience, not even silenced by inhibitive factors,

[149] I am using "feeling" here in the wide sense of experiencing in a qualitative way.

then there can't be love at all. We can omit the adjective "true", since there is not even the hypothesis of love.

But when people speak in terms of unconscious, they generally appeal to inhibitive factors as well, so my suggestion should not appear as an *ad hoc* move. Some factor did not allow the subject to be aware of his love, and therefore not even of the corresponding phenomenology. Unconscious love, strictly speaking, does not exist.

6. Against "Erotic Reliabilism"

Let us reflect again on the example of the love potion: it seems to indicate one important factor in our attribution of authenticity to love: the causal process involved. Love takes place in a causal world, so it must be caused. But not every cause seems to be appropriate. So maybe we have a suggestion here: love is true if it is caused in a correct way, and love potions do not count as a correct way.

On a second thought, though, we understand that the cause is not the relevant point, because there are not appropriate causes for true love. Better, there are no processes that reliably cause true love. We can imagine the very same causal process, and different judgments of authenticity. Think at the same example of the love potion. In a slightly different version, X asks to the sorcerer a more complicated magic: the entire world will be modified so that y will have been in love with x since the beginning of time. x could still feel uneasy about the way he obtained his purpose, but it is hard to deny that in that new world, in which y has always loved x, y does not truly love y *because of the causal process*. It can still be true, of course, that y does not truly love x for some other, still unknown, reason.

In a simpler and more plausible example, we can imagine the very same causal history for two lovers, whatever it may be. And conceive that in one case x truly loves y. And in another case, she doesn't.[150] We will see how we can fill the gaps in this example. For instance, x does not know who y really is. Think at Romeo and Juliet meeting at the ball. They are attracted to each other by mere sight. Then Romeo falls in love with Juliet.

[150] There will be some differences at some level, of course. I am not denying supervenience here.

In the Shakespeare version Juliet truly reciprocates Romeo. In another one, she does not. The process followed the same pattern, but then something changed. Notice that I am focusing only on the *immediate* cause of love, that is, on the process that triggered it, and not on every possible causal process implied in a love story.

There is an important difference between love and emotions here. Authentic fear, for instance, can be reliably caused in a way that love cannot. If I grow up with a paranoid mother who teaches me to fear white sheets, because she believes that at night secret agents try to smother her, my fear is inappropriate, irrational, and unreasonable, but authentic. I am really very scared by sheets, because fear can be causally conditioned. Love is different. Think about a young princess, who grows up knowing the name and the face of the young heir of the neighbor kingdom. They are destined to marry since they were children. The young prince is beautiful and kind, brave and intelligent. The princess has been taught to think about him and appreciate all his qualities. She actually feels the symptoms of love, because her parents read the *Emile* by Rousseau and succeeded to provoke in her all the feelings she should have. Now, she might or might not be in love. But if we found out she is truly in love, we would not think at her case as at the case of the provoked fear. We would not be content to say "well, of course she is love, she was taught so". We would discard the possibility that she is truly in love if we had regard only to the process I just described. But it would still be an open question whether her love is true, maybe for reasons of appropriateness (i.e. because the prince is lovable). Her love is understandable, maybe even rational. These possible definitions of authenticity (in terms of appropriateness, and rationality) will be analyzed later. What is relevant here is that they have nothing to do with causes.

Causal processes do matter in love, but not in the way we were taking them. Amélie Rorty is the author, who best deals with causality, as we have seen in the first chapter. She claims that "the causal history of our emotions, the significant events that form our habits of response, affect our conceptions of their objects. There are three closely interwoven strands in that causal history: 1) the formative events in a person's psychological past, the development of patterns of intentional focusing and salience, habits of thought and response; 2) the socially and culturally determined range of emotions and their characteristic behavioral and linguistic expressions; and 3) a person's

constitutional inheritance, a set of genetically fixed threshold sensitivities and patterns of response." [151]

This is a very well defined role for the causal processes, but it does not play a role as a factor determining true love: once we have determined that a love is true, we can understand better the way it is structured at the intentional level, and in that case, maybe discern some causally relevant differences with a case of untrue love. Causal processes, that is, matter only in *a posteriori* analysis.

7. Summing Up

In this chapter, which has been mainly critical, I began to present the problem of what true love is, claiming that what people mean by "true love" is "real love".

1) The main assumption of my work is then a realist one: enquiring on true love is not only a conceptual analysis, but also the attempt of defining the nature of the mental state we call love.

2) I briefly rejected some views coming from common sense, which confuse the question of authenticity with others concerning circumstances, time, and luck. In particular, I denied that true love equates to successful, or happy love.

3) Then I considered the role of phenomenology, and denied that true love can be discriminated in terms of appropriate or inappropriate feelings. I also denied that feeling in love is sufficient for being truly in love, although I affirmed that feeling in love is necessary for being truly in love.

4) Conclusively, I rejected a view that we could call "erotic reliabilism", according to which love is true only if it is caused by appropriate causes. Some causes may well be more appropriate, but for reasons that lie elsewhere.

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[151] Rorty (1980, pp. 104-105).

Chapter 4. The Role of the Object

1. Introduction

In the third chapter I began the sketch the characteristics of that mental state that properly deserves the name of erotic love. I rejected some possible views on it, and presented the first necessary condition that needs to be satisfied: the lover has to be in the correct phenomenological state. This means that the lover has to be in a qualitative state that is distinctively recognized by a competent feeler as the phenomenology of love.

In the last two chapters I will make some progress in the direction of an account of true love, by presenting other three conditions that seem to me necessary for a state of a subject to be one of (true) love. My account will be far from complete, but my aim is not only to present some essential features of love (and discard some others), but also to defend the very idea of essential features of love.

Love seems to be a state of a person that has another as object. Both the lover and the beloved are relevant for our discourse. Think of the following. Love is "in the eye of the beholder", meaning that it is first of all a mental state of a subject. This is why we have the intuition that it need not be reciprocated in order to be true or real. The role of the lover is central in order to understand true love: the subject's standpoint must be privileged, since she is the one that is in the state we are analyzing. Love cannot be understood from an external perspective, but not because it is a private state. Of course, part of the experience of love is private and ineffable, but that is not relevant for discerning the conditions of true love, since I claimed that these conditions, if they exist, must be public, and sharable. Love needs an internal perspective because it involves primarily the will of the subject, her desires, her needs, her preferences, her projects. We need to know what she is like, in order to understand her love. Love involves essentially the identity of a person. And, as we have seen already, it is essentially constituted by her phenomenological experiences, which are intrinsically subjective.

However, the object of love comes first under an existential, ontological perspective: without that particular beloved to be loved, we would not have any love.

Furthermore, we have the strong intuition that loving is not like dreaming. It puts us in contact with a reality, besides being a reality in itself. Both regards, the lover and the beloved, are important for the authenticity and the normativity of love.

As we have seen, it is possible to be wrong about our own or someone else's love. We can make mistakes in attributing love. This chapter considers the possibility that this error is due to the fact that we are wrong about something that is not internal to us: that we could be wrong about the reality we are relating to, that is, the object of our love. A different, stronger, view is that not only we need not be wrong about the object, but also that the object itself must be somehow right. This view requires that the object have certain particular characteristics that render love toward it true.[152]

I will reject this last view, but discuss it at length, because it connects with some issues I have already presented in the second chapter. I defended a refined version of the property theory, which could be considered the ground for a normative assessment. Once could think that from my considerations on properties I should derive that love is true when the historical and relational properties of the object are the appropriate ones, that is, when they render that object lovable by the subject. But I will reject such a possible view of true love, since I will deny that true love is dependent on any particular properties of the object.

This rejection could seem contradictory with my previous claims on the importance of the object's properties in love, so I need to clarify the role that properties play in love, when it is true. What I will claim, in short, is that the properties of an object make it lovable only in the sense that, as a matter of fact, they render the beloved what she is. They are lovable only because they are loved (as they are embedded in the object). But they are not lovable in the sense that they are particularly apt to provoke love.

I will also discuss the view of love as aspiration, and in general the connection between true love and values. Also in this case, I will reject that love is true when the object possesses some particular values, which render it lovable.

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[152] Another related, but different conception of true love would be that it is the appropriate response to a lovable object. A version of this conception would be Velleman's theory, except that he does not talk of "true" love.

In the second part of the chapter, I will instead focalize on the epistemic relationship that the lover has with the beloved. My hypothesis is that part of the reality of love comes from the kind of knowledge that the lover has of the beloved: my claim will be that, for love to be true, direct knowledge of the beloved is required.

2. The Appropriateness of the Object. Properties and Fittingness

We could think that love is true if it is appropriate, and that, more precisely, the appropriateness of love depends on the appropriateness of its object. In D'Arms and Jacobson's theory, an emotion is appropriate if it fits its object. The object, then, has to meet some conditions: I cannot be envious of someone else's car if his car is worse than mine. That car is an inappropriate object of envy for me.

As I said in the first chapter, love is sufficiently similar to the emotions, insofar as it involves evaluative presentations of the object. In love the beloved is presented as lovable. We have seen that the most plausible articulation of this evaluation is in terms of properties. Therefore, the point at issue here is whether the object of true love is somehow objectively lovable, that is, whether there are some properties, to which love is the appropriate reaction. By "objectively" I do not mean universally, since the appropriateness is of an object for a subject. But there must be objective, or at least inter-subjective, criteria that justify a normative judgment. Think at the case of envy: there is no car, that is "objectively" in the strong sense, an appropriate object of envy, since tastes differ, for instance. But for a certain subject a competent judge can say if that particular car is an appropriate object of envy. I am considering the same case for love: if I take subject x, can I judge that a certain object y is an appropriate beloved, and this is (at least in part) why that love is true?

Another (different, but related) way to put it: is true love the appropriate response to a lovable object?[153] Notice that this view needs not, in principle, commit to the property theory: if we adopted Velleman's conception of love, we could say that love is the correct response not to some specific properties of the object, but rather it is the

[153] I will test a general conception of appropriateness of the object, and not only in terms of fittingness.

correct response to the fact that every human being is valuable as a person, and love is the recognition of her intrinsic value. The problem with this version, though, is that it does not allow the fine discrimination that I am looking for. If Velleman were right, the authenticity of love could not be discriminated in terms that have regard to the object, since every human being is by definition lovable. The only meaningful effect would be of excluding animals and material objects from the domain of the appropriate objects of love. I do not think that this is a trivial conclusion, but it is not the most interesting one, and I believe it can be confirmed also by some other considerations.[154]

Therefore, the alternative hypothesis, spelled out in terms of lovable features of the object, seems to be more interesting. Love is true when the object possesses some lovable properties.[155]

Now, this claim could appear bizarre and quite far from being commonsensical: people do not judge that love is true in virtue of the beloved's characteristics. They appeal to characteristics in order to explain someone's love for them: "She is so sexy and fun, how can you not love her?" We do think that some people are "lovely", just made up for being loved. But is this enough to say that love is true only in case people are lovable? Clearly, it is not. It cannot be a sufficient condition: not only for what we already said about the phenomenological condition, but also because the meaning of a comment such as "She is so lovable" seems to work more in the direction of an *explanation* (I love her, because she is lovable: sexy and sweet), rather than in the direction of a *warrant* of any kind (my love cannot be but true, since she is so lovable).

This view becomes more promising if we consider the opposite situation: people often tend to judge love to be *in*authentic, because of some characteristics of the beloved, compared to those of the lover. In that case, it seems necessary that the object meet some basic, minimal requirements for love to be true. A typical example would be that of a young, beautiful girl apparently in love with a rich, old, unattractive man. Insofar as richness is not generally considered an appropriate reason for love (which of course is a symptom of confusion between moral and other kinds of normative considerations, but

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[154] As I said, there are also good, independent reasons to reject Velleman's conception of *eros*.
[155] I will not repeat from now on the proviso "relational and historical, and influenced by the context". Just assume that whenever I say "properties" I refer to the sophisticated version of the property theory.

this is not our present concern) the man lacks every relevant plausible property that could provoke a genuine sentiment. This kind of situation often evokes a suspicion of fraud: people will say that she is just interested in his money, and deceiving the man. But also when the girl is judged sincere and honest, people will be inclined to doubt about the authenticity of her love. Her brother, for instance, will believe to her sincerity, but cannot explain how his little, beautiful sister be possibly in love with such an inappropriate object. She surely feels in love, but that love is inappropriate, because of the characteristics of the object.

Unfortunately, even if it is possible to assess some lovable qualities in the individual that reliably cause attraction, and often end up causing love, this does not seem to be the ground for any normative distinction. According to this view, we should claim that a brilliant, beautiful, young astrophysics researcher cannot truly love a mean, stupid, old unemployed lazy guy.

This conclusion seems absurd: we would judge this situation unlikely, weird, or not convenient, not fair even, but we would deny that the girl's love must be untrue only because her beloved seems to lack any desirable and positive quality. I take this to be a primitive intuition, which reminds us a negative fact on true love: that it is not "deserved". Put in other terms: that it is not normative in the sense of being a correct response to the appropriateness of the reality outside. What does this tell us on the positive side?

2.1 True Love Is Not a Correct Response to Specific Properties

Love involves a relation to an object and it depends on its object in a different way than that of other mental states, such as basic emotions. Fear requires determinate features of the object it takes, in order to be appropriate. Fear is then a response to scary features, which can be determined independently of its occurrence and that form its standards of appropriateness. True love, by contrast, seem to need an object of a certain kind be there, and some form of correct apprehension of it, in order to rule out that we are mistaken about it and that it is inauthentic. But it does not require any distinctive, independently given, feature of the object. I will come to this point in the section

dedicated to the knowledge of the object. Love is true when it reacts appropriately to an object, but not to a set of given, purportedly lovable properties of the object.

Properties do play a role in love: they trigger it, and determine the subject to be in love with a particular person, rather than another one. Properties prepare the ground for love, so to speak: they determine whom I like or dislike. We fall in love with people that we like,[156] and we like them in virtue of qualities that are *consequently* considered by the community as "lovable". We tend to appreciate, in the people we choose as companions, beauty, intelligence, kindness, sense of humor, and many other features, which can be listed statistically and grouped by sociologists. Evolutionary psychology has clarified how the evolution has made more advantageous and successful certain traits over others. Nevertheless, it's far from being conceptually binding that an unattractive man, a total failure under evolution's standards, cannot be truly loved. Quite the contrary, love is notoriously told to be blind, and deaf. Besides the rare case of loving a person we don't like, there is the more common case of liking a person who has characteristics that are plain or not liked by others. These cases can be due to the fact that people, after all, have different tastes: I consider beautiful what you consider ugly. It is also due to the different needs that people have: I need a harsh person, you want a gentle one. It an also be due to the different ways in which people love: each person learns to love in virtue of her love experience, since early childhood. Therefore, people develop a different profile of the ideal beloved. This determines cases of love that seem to others totally unfair or demeaning, but of which the lover is totally satisfied, or without which he could not live. One needs not be a masochist in the clinical sense to be in love with a person who makes her suffer.

It does not seem that true love has to be deserved by the beloved: the fact that my beloved does not deserve my love does not imply that my love is not authentic. Even if we look for some characteristics in the beloved, we may end up loving someone who is just the opposite. This is unlucky, but it has nothing to do with the authenticity of love.

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[156] At least, that we like in part, even if we do not like them completely, or we are not attracted to them in a plain, straightforward way: we can feel an ambiguous mixture of hatred-love, attraction and repulsion at the same time. But there must be *something* that attracts us.

At this point we can, like De Sousa, be puzzled by a paradox: the match "hot astrophysics researcher- lazy ugly guy" may produce opposite intuitions. The "it cannot be true love" reaction vs. the "love is really blind" one. I think that the first one is likely to arise when there are factors of ambiguity, such as the economic interest possibility. Or, since I believe money can be considered a genuine lovable property by many, think at these other circumstances: the lazy guy coincidentally and involuntarily saved the life of the researcher, and so people are prone to believe she is just grateful, and confuses gratitude with love. But once we present the situation without any possible confusion, people will probably just be amazed by the "mysteries of love". Even more, this love will be considered true, since no other explanation of the match is possible. This last intuition is naïve, though, since people's motivations are infinite, and I do not consider a test for true love the fact that no other explanation seems possible. Anyway, we are now left with no serious clash of intuitions. The concept and the experience of love seem to be compatible with the absence of lovable properties in the beloved.

Particular versions of the view I am rejecting are a moralistic conception of true love, which we will see in section 3.1, and what we could define a "scientist" conception, according to which social sciences can tell us what parameters true love should follow. A more general version is the one I consider next: the view that true love is a response to values embedded in the beloved.

3. Appropriateness and Values

I am therefore going to rule out an authoritative conception of love, whose most famous exponent is Plato, as we have seen when speaking of Nussbaum's theory in chapter two. This view claims that love is true only if it is a response to something valuable (not specified in terms of lovable properties).

For Plato, love is something that is justified from an objective and neutral point of view, that of the Forms. It is the appropriate response to Beauty. Our modern, commonsensical perspective is quite different: "we love what we love". Even more than in the arts, in love it is not possible to dispute on the object in terms of value, because

tastes vary. Certainly, people can be puzzled by some choices. But then, apart from particular situations such as when interest is a source of ambiguity, people will tend to shrug their shoulders. Where poets and philosophers see the Beauty, common people will see *a* beauty *according* to the lover.

I agree with them that the conception of love as aspiration is wrong, although it is an aesthetically compelling view, and maybe also morally right. But, whereas we love in virtue of some valuable properties for us, here and now, love cannot be considered true only in the case we find those values objective and real. As Velleman claims, the attribution of value is not dependent on properties, in the sense of being a response to it. Under this respect, there is an important and undeniable analogy between *eros* and *storge* (parental love, and other forms of non-chosen affection): values intervene when love is already in place. Better, they intervene at the same time. Loving *is* valuing, in an intrinsically subjective and idiosyncratic way. Properties of the person make it possible: they make it a love *of* a particular person. They mould the judgment we have of that person. They trigger and motivate love (in the case of *eros*), but not *qua* objectively valuable properties.

Someone could object that even this cautious position gives too much space to values. The objection would appeal to the cases in which love constitutes a conscious or unconscious degradation. Some lovers love what they despise, or fear. Other lovers look for the humiliation of themselves, which can hardly be considered even a subjective value (it could, but I discuss this point later).

I agree that this is a possible case, but it is only a minority of lovers who experience love in this way. Most people value their beloved, and consider valuable what is brought about by that love. They feel regenerated, and enriched by love. This is the not-so-small grain of truth that is possessed by the Platonic view: in loving their beloveds, lovers discover a beauty, of which they were not aware at the beginning. And when love becomes more mature, they learn to accept the failures and flaws as well, and still consider their beloveds as valuable. It's this the most common experience of love.

However, do I reject as cases of true love all the few cases in which this does not happen? We need some distinctions here. First of all, exclude the pathological scenario, in which the lover is clinically sick, and in which the degradation that is looked for can be

described as a proper perversion. Leaving aside sexual sadomasochism and other sexual practices, often called "perversions" in a technical sense, that do not necessarily imply a scenario of degradation, think at whatever attitude, sexual or non-sexual, physically or psychologically violent, in which the lover obsessively looks for humiliation. I exclude this kind of cases from the beginning, since they pertain to the domain of psychological pathology.

Now consider instead the simpler case of someone who claims to be in love with a person that she despises, or not values at all. I think this case sounds awkward because it does not fit with the phenomenology of love. Lovers may well say "oh, she's not that beautiful" meaning that she is not objectively beautiful, or recognize flaws in their beloveds in front of other people: "she's unbearable when she reacts that way". But if they feel in love, they will generally add "but I like her anyway". If they don't, the case is one in which the correct phenomenology is lacking: so love is actually not true, for the reason that the lover is not experiencing love. Notice that the case is not one of a lover who believes her lover to be objectively valueless: it is rare, but I can happen in the case of a very cold-blooded lover, who lucidly claims to be in love with a person who has no value. The phenomenological condition can be respected even in this borderline case, but there must be at least the perception of subjective value, of importance-to-me. The cold-blooded lover has to say, at least, something like "she is despicable, she is a nasty person, she is even boring, but she is valuable to me". Think of a person who has no moral values: likely her partner will lack moral values as well, so he won't care about that failure. But he will need to say, at least, that she is valuable to him.

This case could be charged of conflating two sense of "value", though: a person may possess moral values *qua* object and *qua* subject. In the first sense, I am morally worthwhile (for instance, of consideration): I have moral value. In the second sense, I am a moral agent, and so I have moral value*s*. In this example I'm substituting the former with the latter sense. But what seems to be relevant here is instead the case in which the object has no value embedded in itself. The problem with the example of moral values, though, is that people seem to have moral values as object in a very universal and undistinguished way: everyone has a moral value as a person. It is hard to think of a moral value embedded in a particular person, that no one else has. And it is easier to

consider the case of a beloved who lacks objective moral values *as an agent*. But this is not what the Platonic advocate has in mind.

So here is another example: a person who despises her beloved because she lacks any aesthetic value (and not because she has bad taste). She is just very ugly, and in unpleasant, ungraceful way. The partner can be aware of it, and not care, but he will say at least that he values her anyway.

If a lover declared: I love my beloved so much, even if I don't value her under any respect" we would not think he is feeling in love in the sense highlighted in the third chapter.

But what about those lovers who, without being psychotic or neurotic, apparently fall in love with people who humiliate them? Isn't this a real paradox, that love creates value also where there is the opposite of aspiration? That the lover can see as valuable the source of her humiliation? We can call it a paradox, or just an unfair truth: attributing a value to something that takes values away is possible, if the personal standards of valuation permit it. I will come back to the issue of idiosyncrasy in love in the last chapter.

To conclude: true love does not seem to be the appropriate response to the beloved's values. But true love is connected to values, if we look at the lover, because true love is a source of value. The connection of true love to values is active, not passive, and derives from the volitional nature of love that I proposed in the second chapter. I will come back to this *practical* essence of love at the end of the work, where I analyze the role of the subject.

3.1 Moral Values of the Lover and True Love

I would now like to focus again on the special case of moral values. That moral values are particularly unsuitable to deal with erotic love is not a platitude, especially given the role morality assumes in the contemporary theories of love, as we have seen in the second chapter with regard to Frankfurt and Velleman. Other authors, such as Soble, have put even more emphasis on some moral values involved in love.

But they involve morality in a way that has nothing to do with the aspiration view I already rejected. As I said, a Platonic conception of love is not much interested in the moral values of the object. This is due to the non moralistic character of Greek ethics, which is hard to distinguish from aesthetics: love is aspiration to Beauty, which means also Goodness. This does not mean that the beloved is one that "behaves well".

Also contemporary accounts do not ignore the fact that our beloveds often do not behave well, and not just toward us. But they seem to require lovers, instead, to behave too well. In order to understand what I mean, we need to shift momentarily our attention from the characteristics of the object to those of the subject. In many theories, love is essentially characterized by some moral traits of the lover, such as the disinterested concern for the beloved's flourishing. As I said, it is prudentially desirable and morally right that love have several moral characters, but it is not necessary for true love to possess them. Not only literature, but also our own experience of love reminds us of selfish lovers, who prefer their interest to the beloved's one, but who nevertheless would be desperate if the beloved would disappear from their lives. These lovers could sacrifice their life to prevent damage to their beloveds, but these acts are only apparently altruistic denials of self-interest: we can sacrifice our life because it would be senseless without love. And this kind of actions is not even a good test for true love, since people are imperfect, weak, and often behave immorally, and we cannot require a conception of love that does not take this into account. Can't a coward be truly in love and still be incapable of overcoming his fear of water? If he doesn't jump in the ocean to save his beloved who can't swim, can we charge him of inauthentic love? Our answer to this question will depend on the amount of despair he shows, rather than on his omission.

Harry Frankfurt bases on moral values the distinction between love and illusions, obsessions, and other forms of mental states that we do not want to consider true love. He acknowledges the fact that erotic love is often less altruistic than other forms of love, and therefore he tends to consider it an "impure" sort of love. As we have already seen in the second chapter, I think this move is illegitimate, unless we want to give an explicit moral characterization of purity. In a morally neutral sense, I am looking for pure erotic love, that is, the essential features of it.

I do not think then that the distinction between love and, for instance, obsession, lies in the amount of morality present in them. I could save my beloved's life just because I can't live without her and not for her own sake. This does not count as a case of moral behavior. But it can count as a case of true love.

4. Knowledge and Interaction with the Object: the Epistemic Condition

To sum up: true love is not a correct response to the some specific properties or values of the object. But there is still an important, constitutive role, of the object: in order to be true, love must not be illusory. We often use the idea of illusion and projection, when we say that that love is not true. Love is partially dependent on its object for its authenticity, in the basic sense that there is a relation with a real object out there. It is not up to us how that object is, even if love's nature is volitional. Love is constituted by volitions that have a person as their object. But love is also under a constitutive constraint of truthfulness (as we will see), of the presentation of its object being in certain respects truthful. For love to be true, the object must exist.

Why is this necessary? Why can't I love Anna Karenina or (today) Alexander the Great? Because love is a historical and contextual relationship. As seen in the second chapter, the beloved's properties constitute the object of my love in a particular way. If I love Katherine Hepburn, I love an American actress, a talented and charming woman. My love for her is not grounded on the values that her properties bring about, but it is love-for-Katherine in virtue of her properties and the way those interact with mine, and evolve in the time we know each other. The authenticity, that is, the reality of love, comes from here: from where you and I can meet and express the persons we are. But since our identity in love is shaped by the interaction with others, "Katherine" will be "Katherine-for-Spencer", and Spencer will love her in virtue of the properties she manifests with him, for him, during the history of their relationship.

Consequently, the knowledge of the beloved cannot be only or essentially propositional (even though it can involve propositional contents and can be expressed in

large part in propositional terms). It is not a knowing-that, and not even a knowing-how. It is a "knowing-with": my beloved is beautiful to me and for me, her kindness is manifested in the interaction with me, and her smartness is valueless if it is confined to a book she wrote. Knowing-with is a sort of knowledge of a relationship: not necessarily a love relationship, but the knowledge of two poles involved in an interaction. Love is not like admiration, I want to say: I can admire Alexander the Great, and my admiration can be appropriate, but if I feel in love with him, I'm not truly in love. I can also appropriately admire Anna Karenina. But if I feel in love with her, it is a romantic illusion, which can be a very enjoyable state of mind, but it is not true love.

So the fact that I can truly love only a physically existent person is a consequence of the particular kind of knowledge required by love. It is not propositional, and not even practical, if by practical we mean "knowing how to do things", but relational and direct: it is generated by the interaction with a person. Maybe the word "acquaintance" is the most suitable, since at the same time indicates contact without deepness. As we will see, I do not claim that a deep knowledge of the beloved is necessary to true love.

I will call this the epistemic condition: love is true only if the lover is in the correct epistemic position. The whole section is dedicated to specify the details of the condition.

Before explaining with an example what I mean by "direct, but not deep knowledge", I want to consider one other aspect of what is the beloved's knowledge, which concerns not the way the knowledge develops, but the very question of the role of knowledge in love.

4.1 Loving a Different Person: Epistemic Illusion in Love

Let us consider the following example, which borrows its characters from the ballet *Swan Lake*. The story tells about a prince, Sigfried, meeting a suave girl, who happens to be the victim of a magic spell. This dooms her to be a swan during the day and human only at night. Of course, being truly loved by a noble soul would solve all her problems, breaking the spell. Unfortunately, Von Rothbart, the evil sorcerer who is responsible of her fate, doesn't look forward to this solution, and deceives the prince with

a trick. He imprisons Odette, and gives Odile, his evil daughter, Odette's appearance. In the ballet, the same dancer plays both roles, wearing a white tutu when being Odette, and a black one when being Odile- interpreting the double character is what makes the role special.

Siegfried then believes to be in love with Odile, and in some sense he is. He likes this black version of Odette, more self-assured, sexier. At the same time, he believes to be in love with the sweet girl he met in the forest. If you ask him her name, he will reply: Odette. But does he truly love Odette? I would reply that he could be truly in love with Odette *through* Odile: he is authentically in love, even if there is an epistemological problem somewhere else. He loves Odette, even if she appears through the physical, more aggressive outfit of Odile. If he had met Odile first, he would not fall in love with her, since what he liked form the very beginning was Odette's sweetness, which he believes Odile has, under the surface of different manners. So it is not that the two are interchangeable, but that he loves Odette, and is deceived by Rothbart. This is why the viewer does never think that Siegfried is dishonest to Odette: he is clearly wrong on an epistemic fact, but his true love to Odette is unquestionable. Unfortunately, magic spells are more sensitive to facts, than to intentions, and so Odette needs her prince to promise to marry her, and not someone he believes to be her.

But let's imagine a modified version of the *Swan Lake*, in which Sigfried has never met Odette, and he has always loved Odile, but without being aware of her perfidious nature and believing that she is the purest girl. He systematically interpreters every move of her as sinuous and charming, instead of perverse as it really is. Of course, I am purposively oversimplifying the nature of the relevant identifying traits of a person. In such a case, we are "onto" something, which is really relevant for our aims. Assume that his epistemic state is basically correct. The lover is not deceived in the formal identity of her beloved: it's Odile we are talking about. He is not a perfect epistemic subject, though, and he holds some false beliefs, which concern an essential, that is, identifying, feature of her beloved: she is an evil being. Furthermore, he loves her *in*

virtue of her sweetness. But she does not possess this sweetness that he attributes to her: how can he truly love a person about whom he is so radically ignorant?[157]

Notice that the emphasis here is on truly loving *that* person. We are not objecting anything directly to the quality of its state. We are claiming that the prince loves someone else. Why he is so radically mistaken is another question: we could make the hypothesis that he would like Odile to be sweet, and that he "projects" onto her what he would like her beloved to be. He does not consider her real identity, and this is why he is not a good epistemic subject: he does not care about reality and truth.

This is a delicate boundary: we are in between the purely epistemic problems that the subject has in his set of beliefs, and the effect that this epistemic failure produces on the quality of his mental state. It seems at least a necessary condition for authentic love to be based on a generally correct epistemic state, with regard to the characteristics of the beloved.[158] Remember that we are talking of relational, historical, and contextual properties; this fact is not manifest in the over-simplified examples presented above do not appear. So in a real-life case, the identifying traits and properties would be less easily traceable, and above all influenced by the expectations of the lover, the way the beloved reacts to him, and so on. Odile's sweetness, then, could be not merely attributed by Sigfried out of his need of sweetness, but a trait that no one else has ever looked for in Odile, and that is generated by their relationship. But even if we concede this possibility, a person's identity is not totally molded by the relationship she has with others. Actually, there are two opposite forces in play: on the one side, the individual traits and properties that are essential to a person will tend to develop the same behavioral dynamics over and over, with any new lover; on the other side, the interaction with a new person will create every time a different relationship, a different way of proposing the same old dynamics, from both the persons involved in it. A relationship, not only a love relationship, is a mixture of yours and mine, of old and new. But there is a core of what is mine, which

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[157] We could also reformulate the example in order to avoid a commitment on the topic of properties. Let us just say that Sigfried loves Odile for her intrinsic value as a person, but when asked about Odile's essential characteristic he replies: sweetness and goodness. Now, Odile is the nastiest girl on the earth. Could we accept that Sigfried is truly in love with her? The fact that he is wrong about what Odile really is, seems to be relevant also for his act of loving her. Still, with this reformulation, the point is weaker.

[158] Also, the lover must be epistemically correct about other things, such as the real relationship they have, and other details. But whether the lover is correct or not about the beloved's identity seems the most important element of his epistemic state.

cannot be suppressed or even modified by anyone and anything. This core is what I am alluding to, when I speak of essential or identifying features of the beloved. Adolf Hitler might well have been a very good person to his beloved. Still, if she was in love with the "good Adolf", without having any idea of his bloody hands, she certainly did not know him well. I cannot believe that a person, unless he is a schizophrenic (as maybe Hitler actually was), can never show a hint, a trace of his ferocious soul. If Eva Braun ignored that her *lieber* Adolf was, among other things, a murderer, she did not know him very well. And I claim that she could not truly love him.[159] But what if Hitler was really insane, and never showed to be anything different from a great statesman, and a sweet companion. Assume he was sweet (we know he was often harsh to her) and he was a great statesman (somehow, he was), and that she didn't have any news on his acts. Was Eva Braun truly in love with him? The Adolf she could know was actually how she believed. I would say that, in case the other conditions were satisfied, she was truly in love with him. But at one further, counterfactual condition: if she came to know who Adolf really was (or at least who was the "other" Adolf), she would be so upset not to be able to love him anymore.

There seem to be at least two objections to this idea of an epistemic constraint on the lover: on the one hand it is too strong a requirement, and on the other hand, it is far from being sufficient. Whereas I agree with the second objection, I disagree with the first one.

First objection: why is this condition too strong? Because we happen to be wrong about our beloved's features all the time. We need to limit the range of features, on which we must be correct, to the really essential ones. And this move of course risks to lead to even more difficult problems, related to what is an essential feature of a person, and how an essential feature gets modified in the relationship, and so on. I acknowledge that defining a person's identifying properties is problematic, but this does not imply that these properties do not exist, or that a person cannot be identified by some properties. As a matter of fact, we do it all the time: it is easier in practice, than in the theory.

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[159] Consequently, if she knew that Adolf was a kind, but brutal murderer, she could truly love him. Many brutal men have been truly loved, even if they didn't deserve it (morally).

For what concerns the second objection, the requirement of a substantially correct knowledge of the beloved is still insufficient. It is insufficient it is still a vague condition, and in the next section I will say something more about it. But the requirement of knowledge, with all due specifications, will result itself insufficient for a complete account of true love.

4.2 How Much Must We Know Our Beloveds?

So far, we have considered the correctness, that is, the quality, of the knowledge of the object involved in true love. But we should briefly consider also the "quantity" of knowledge required for a love to be true. It is not possible to know a person completely. But this is not a problem, since *absolute* knowledge is not necessary in love. Quite the opposite, a romantic view of love will claim that total knowledge is dangerous for love, which needs mystery until the very end. Even the opposite, cynical point of view will defend the importance of not knowing everything of the beloved, since we could be scared or disgusted or appalled by the darker side of the beloved.

My claim is weaker than these: not even much knowledge is required to the lover in order to truly love her beloved. Knowing a person deeply, in all her aspects, takes a whole life. I do not believe that such a level of intimacy is necessary, even if it could be desirable.

What I take to be necessary is, as I said, the acquaintance or direct knowledge[160] between the lover and the beloved, and an overall correctness on what I called the identifying features of the beloved. For acquaintance I do not mean only direct knowledge acquired through a visual contact. Of course, that is likely to happen. But the Internet is now a source of virtual meetings and dates that not necessarily are followed quickly by an actual meeting. It is unlikely, but not impossible, to fall in love and truly love someone whom we have never physically met. An old-style written correspondence or an on-line communication can be very intimate, and can involve people in a very deep way. However, I am thinking at more common way of knowing each other, that is, physical interaction.

[160] I will use these terms as synonyms.

An example will illustrate the kind of knowledge I have in mind, and at the same time will show why it is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for true love. I'll present a case of unrequited love, in which also the level of knowledge is not equal.

Consider a famous actress, like Audrey Hepburn. She is admired by a multitude of fans, and some of them may claim to be in love with her. Some of them are probably using the word "love" in a metaphorical or emphasizing way, but some others may well show the "symptoms" of what we generally consider love. They think at her all the time, they are sexually excited when looking at her picture, they dream of her, they would like to marry her, and so on. Nevertheless, I would not attribute authentic love to them. What they feel is infatuation, at most, and deep admiration. But it is not love. The reason is that they do not know her, and knowledge, as I said, is necessary for erotic love.[161]

Notoriously fans know "everything" about their stars. But it is a theoretical knowledge, a list of characteristic, habits, hobbies, and biographical details that cannot count as direct knowledge of the person. Even if the fan knew virtually everything of Audrey Hepburn, he could not experience how Audrey Hepburn is *with him*.

Consider then the case of Audrey Hepburn's *chauffeur*. He knows her by acquaintance, even if she does not pay much attention to him if not as her trustworthy driver. She is kind with him, but very reserved. She does not consider him a potential object of love at all. Given this, the man knows that she is beautiful and delicate, kind with subordinates and authoritative with her peers, clever and full of humor, fragile and easy to hurt. He has seen her interacting with many different people, and he has talked to her many times, even if always within this asymmetrical relationship. Still, he feels love for her, and, as far as we know, he may truly love her.

One last point that follows from the idea that the lover needs to know the beloved is that its spatial collocation is relevant. True love resists badly to distance: how much, depends on different factors (time, space, psychological set of the lover, and so on), but certainly love cannot authentically flourish in the *perpetual* absence of the beloved.

This actually leads us to a particular case: love for the dead. This is not a counterexample to my point. A widow that claims that she still love her deceased husband is in a very different situation from an Italian girl born in the 80's who claims to

[161] This does not imply that this knowledge has to be spelled out or acknowledged by the lover.

be in love with Barak Obama, John Kennedy or Philip Marlowe. Raymond Chandler's famous detective is a fictional character, with whom any actual interaction is necessarily impossible. John Kennedy died before the girl came to the world, so any actual interaction is contingently impossible. Finally, Obama could be directly known by her, and therefore possibly loved, but she has never left her home town, Caprauna, small village in the north of Italy, where Mandela is unlikely to be seen. A deceased husband is a person who existed, who was actually known in a direct way, who had the possibility to interact with the lover. But notice that even if the explanation of love for the dead is easily explained as a parasitical case, erotic love for the dead (of course I am not referring to necrophilia) is not very common. After a period in which lovers talk of their dead beloveds almost as they were alive,[162] they tend to stop using the present tense even in the case of their feelings. "I loved him very much", we tend to say and hear from others. Saying "I will always love him" is also common, but it seems to me more an engagement, a sort of respectful commitment, rather than an assertion on an actual state. Even in the case of a claim such "I still love my deceased husband", we can legitimately say that it is a different state that the one in which the widow was, when the husband was alive or just dead.

However, if these considerations are unconvincing, I will stick to my previous point. Romantic love for the dead is a particular case: it is a love that derives from the love for the person alive.

4.3 Finer Distinctions on Knowledge

In the discussion about the knowledge of the object we have considered the situation of the lover from an external point of view, that is, an objective one: how and how much does the lover know her beloved? In the same way we considered the question of appropriateness. In this last case, though, we also gave a look through the eyes of the lover, and said that the object's values are relevant for the truth of love only from a relational and historical perspective, that makes an object valuable in an idiosyncratic

[162] The length of this period is variable and it depends on the individual patterns of grieving and mourning.

way. The perspective of the lover, and what is valuable to her, will be developed in the next chapter. Now let's make a similar move, and see if we can say something about the knowledge of the object from the subject's perspective, analyzing some situations in more detail.

4.3.1 Second-order Knowledge

First, let us consider the second-order knowledge. I said that the object has to be such that the subject can know it by acquaintance. This does not only imply actual existence, but also, say, the "availability" to be known, whatever it could be in different contexts.

Does the subject have to *know* that the object of her love has to be like he is?[163] Do we require that the lover possess this second-order knowledge? Notice that we can interpret the question in two ways. The first one is easier to discard: does the subject have to know that the object must possess certain characteristics in order to be truly loved? That is, does he have to possess a criterion for discriminating true love?

No. It does not seem necessary for love to be true that the lover is epistemically so sophisticated. The second interpretation instead is more plausible: does the subject have to know that the object possesses the characteristics that render love for him potentially true? That is, does the subject have to know that the object is existent, and so forth?[164]

I think that also in this case we can deny that it is actually necessary that the subject have this knowledge. Maybe we could think that there must be a counterfactual condition such as the following: had the subject the capacity of discerning these characteristics, would he know these characteristics?[165] I am not sure of the necessity of this counterfactual condition. It requires these characteristics to be knowable in principle by the subject. In this way, the lover is not epistemically very sophisticated, but he is competent enough to distinguish reality from fantasy, and real interaction from any other sort of passive contact, like distant admiration. Still, we are maybe asking too much to the lover.

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[163] The lover might know that she could not love anyone else, but her beloved. But this is first-order knowledge, and not what I have in mind.
[164] Existence is not an identifying property of the beloved, since it is not a property, so it does not belong to the sum of knowledge that the lover must have.
[165] I owe this suggestion to David Braddon-Mitchell.

4.3.2 The Importance of Truth

We said that the lover has to know the essential characteristics of the beloved, and assumed that it is possible to define the essential, that is, peculiar, characteristics of a person.

But isn't this condition too demanding? For the purpose of loving a person, in virtue of her historical and relational properties, having only justified beliefs on them could be enough, no matter if they are also true. Deception could be undesirable from other perspectives, but totally appropriate for living a true love experience. Isn't mystery, after all, a form of deception? Why does love need such a realist and unromantic framework?

When we find out that the beliefs on the beloved are false, we can have two reactions. Disappointment if we considered those beliefs positive: if the beliefs were about some virtuous traits of character, for instance, or about the high income of our fiancé. Relief if the beliefs were negative: if they regarded the lack of humor, or of sexual ability. Assume these are all essential characteristics of a person, even if disappointment and relief can concern every property of the beloved.

The fact that we have a strong reaction when we find out that our beliefs on the beloved do not correspond to reality means that we care about truth in love. This is not enough, though, since the truth of love could be independent of what we care about in love. We can imagine that the lover finds out some relevant things about the beloved, and has no reaction at all: she loves her beloved in exactly the same way.

This case, though, seems implausible, if love is love *of* a person: erotic love is undoubtedly particular. Even *agape* after all is dependent on one essential characteristic of the beloved: that of belonging to humanity. If I find out that this person in front of me is a robot, my love to him will be likely to disappear. And if, after I opened it and saw the chips, I'd still love her *as a person*, it would be incoherent. In the case of personal love, furthermore, it is much more evident. If I loved Lady Macbeth for her ambition and callousness, and found out that she is pure like Snowhite, I would be shocked and I would not love her anymore. If I love Clark Kent for his braveness and honesty, I would be very disappointed by finding out that I am so wrong in my beliefs that he is instead a coward charlatan.

Love is heavily influenced by truth, even if we do not necessarily want to know the truth in love, and even if we could think it is unromantic or shallow to care about truth. Justification is way less important. Under a certain perspective, the conception of true love I am outlining is actually very romantic. Love is not connected with truth only in the minimal sense that it can be true or false, that is, that it is true or false that people are in a certain state. What is emerging in this enquiry is that love brings truth about. When love is real, the point is not that the lover is reasonable, or has justified beliefs, or loves an appropriate object. When love is real, the lover is in touch with truth.

5. Summing Up

In this chapter we have seen the role played by the object in determining true love. I have denied that the analogy between emotions and love hold in the normative domain.

1) The normativity of emotions is in terms of appropriateness, and can be convincingly defined according to standards of fittingness to the object. An emotion will be appropriate if it is the correct response to some properties of the object. Love does not seem to work in the same way. Its normativity is not in terms of appropriateness, but of authenticity. In particular, it is not a correct response to some specific properties of the beloved. Symmetrically, it is not possible to individuate some objects, which are lovable, that is, more appropriate to be loved. There are not lovable properties that somehow make love justified, or appropriate, or deserved.

2) I also denied that love is true when it embeds an aspiration to the beloved's values, moral or of any other kind. Values, though, play an important role in true love. Love's nature is volitional, therefore practical, and one feature of this practicality is that it creates values. Loving implies attributing values to the object. A necessary condition for true love seems then to be that it is a source of personal values. But this aspect concerns the role of the subject, and it will then be analyzed in the last chapter.

3) Although true love is creative, it must not be projective, that is, illusionary. True love seems to be closer to seeing than to dreaming: it connects us with a real object out there. This object is loved in virtue of its relational and historical properties, which

must be known by the lover. One corollary of this condition is that the beloved has to really exist in the actual world.

4) Furthermore, the object has to be known directly, or by acquaintance, because of the nature of the properties that have to be known. If we use the standard theory of knowledge for a finer analysis, we can see that it is knowledge, and not the possession of justified beliefs, which is needed by true love. My claim is that true love is not only a state that can be true or false, that is, occur or not, but it seems to put the lover in touch with reality. Besides these constraints, the knowledge required to the lover has not to be deep, or complete. Finally, the lover has not to have second-order knowledge, that is, knowledge of the relevant issues, such as the kind of knowledge she has of the beloved, or any other information on her love.

Chapter 5. The role of the subject

1. Introduction

What are the conclusions we have reached so far? First of all, there is the meaning of the common sense idea, and expression, "true love", according to which true love is primarily real love. Being truly in love is being really in a certain mental state, whose characteristics I have begun in part to outline. It is a state one could think to be in, and be mistaken. Some preliminary considerations have been that true love need not be successful, reciprocated, or happy. It is not even an aim to pursue, or that ought to be pursued. If this is a normative enquiry, it is normative in the sense of showing that certain normative conditions, regarding the appropriateness of a certain phenomenological syndrome and the appropriateness of a certain epistemic relation, are constitutive of love. But it is not normative in the sense that certain features of objects deserve love.

In the third chapter we have seen that the phenomenology of love, although not sufficient for asserting true love, cannot be discarded as mere appearance. Feeling in love is necessarily part of being in love. In the fourth chapter we have analyzed the role of the object of love, the beloved. We have seen that love differs from emotions in being insensitive to arguments of fittingness or of appropriateness based on the evaluation of specific properties of the beloved. True love is not to be conceived as a correct response to an object that possesses lovable qualities. However, the object has an important role in love: that of being a real, independent reality for the subject to be in contact with. Love for a person, especially if erotic, requires the subject to experience the properties of the object within the relationship of knowledge, and during the historical time it lasts. The lover has therefore to know the beloved in a direct way. Besides its relational and direct character, the knowledge of the beloved needs not be complete or deep or reciprocal. The lover has to be in a correct epistemic state about the beloved, in order to love really that particular person, but he needs not know anything about his own states of knowledge and of love.

The discussion of the fourth chapter has lead us to consider two important issues, if only incidentally. First of all, the role of the subject, which becomes predominant, when we consider the correctness of the epistemic state. Secondly, the role of truth. At the beginning of the third chapter I appealed to a very minimal conception of true love. At the end of the fourth chapter we gained the insight that something more is at stake: truth seems to be relevant for love in a more substantial sense. When truly loving, the subject has to be in contact with certain truths, such as those regarding the identity of the beloved. An important source of non-authenticity is in this way ruled out: the projection of an illegitimate conception of the beloved's identity. But do we really care so much about truth in love?

I will further articulate my discussion in this last chapter. I will not deny the importance of truth in love. But I will say something more about the kind of truth we are looking for.

The second part of the chapter will be devoted to the complex dialectic that true love seems to require between its creative power and the impermeability of the reality in which love's creation takes place.

2. Coherence in True Love

We have analyzed Frankfurt's volitional conception of love in the second chapter, where I explained why I disagree on his view on *eros*: his reduction of the core of practical deliberation to what we care about does not work, since there is at least hatred as an alternative and powerful source of motivation. But even if I criticized many of his claims, I approved the idea that a volitional lexicon best characterizes the nature of love. Love is essentially constituted by the desire, and the consequent plans, to match with the beloved, and by a commitment to that desire.

What does follow from such a conception of love?

2.1 Love and Being

According to a Frankfurt's approach when we love we express something related to our identity. In loving, then, we also understand who we are. A proof of this view could be that when a partnership gets to an end, we feel that our self[166] is deprived of something, suffers some loss, because love's bond is such that when it breaks down one knows no more what belonged to herself and what to the beloved. Sometimes the lover does not even remember who she was beforehand. This fact, though, might seem to be a mere consequence of the common life lead during the partnership, that is, of getting used to what some authors have called the "we-identity". I think, instead, that this feeling has also a different, and more constitutive, explanation.

Two different connections between love and identity seem to be overlapping here. The first one concerns what happens in reciprocated love. Once that the subject is in love, that love influences her identity: she is the lover of x (and also the girlfriend or wife of x). This is why she feels someone else, if the love ends, either because she stops to love x, or the partnership fails. The second connection concerns the fact that the lover intrinsically commits to the beloved as part of herself, through the desire of matching with him. This is a deeper involvement of identity in love, which takes place also when there is no reciprocation and no life together, as in unrequited love. This deeper connection explains why after a break-up, when it is not possible to maintain a "we-identity", I still have part of the beloved in me. The lover's identity will be different, in the sense of influenced by having loved x, even if she hates x now. This cannot be just a consequence of the "habit" of loving x, even if human beings are habit loving. It is a consequence of the love itself, which occurs also outside of a partnership: if I loved x, I developed plans to match with her, I paid attention to new things thanks to her, I did some things for her that I'd never thought I could do, in short I became a slightly different person: Y-in-love-with-x. Even if now I really hate x, I cannot completely erase what happened to me. History cannot be reversed. If you build a house, then you pull it down, the ground will be flat again, but in a different way: some wreckage, at least small fragments will remain. Signs of the

[166] I will use "identity" and "the self" as synonyms.

foundation, like those archeologists dig out. People, besides objective changes in their identity, have also the memory of what they have been.

The connection between identity and love is also at the origin of the unity view, which we have examined in the second chapter. I think that the view is wrong in drawing this unity in terms of concern and dual identity, but I do think that there is something relevant, that is, the fact that the identity of the lover is deeply shaped and changed by his love. The identity of the lover does not need to collapse in one unique common identity: what happens is that the lover's identity embeds the fact of "being in love with x", and possibly also some features of x itself.

2.2 The Structure of the Will in the Lover

What we call in a simple way the "desire to match" is complex, made by volitions of different orders, but we do not need a too complicated hierarchy of volitions to account for love's volitional structure. First-order desires characterize our love experience throughout, whereas higher-orders volitions set the commitments to this experience. I do not only want to hang out with the person I love, and have sex with her, and share my life with her. I also want to want all these things, and I want to want these things as a result of a free choice. Our aversion to a love that arises as a consequence of a potion is partially due to this last intuition: that, although we do not deliberate to fall in love, we have to be free in loving as in acting, and to think ourselves as free. Under this respect, loving is *not* like seeing: the normativity of seeing is not sensitive to freedom. Interestingly enough, also the normativity of emotions seems indifferent to freedom. My anger is not less authentic if I am not free. This is true whatever account of the nature of emotions is preferred: roughly speaking, if emotion were a feeling, as the Feeling Theory claims, why should it matter that it is not possible to feel otherwise? And if it an evaluation, given it is appropriate, why should it matter it could not be different? This holds *a fortiori* for a theoretical state like belief: a true belief is true also if it the result of brainwashing. Of course, in that case the belief would not be justified, which is relevant for knowledge and for our normative interests in it. But we can imagine a situation in which the belief is true and justified, and not free. It is necessarily true that 2 plus 2

equates 4, and I am justified in believing it, since every reliable source I have says so. I could believe differently, but only at the cost of being highly irrational. And I could probably be justified, but only at the cost of imagining some very unlikely example. So, knowledge is probably influenced by the issue of freedom, but not as importantly as love.

Love is a volitional state, and that the will be free is a necessary requirement. But this requirement, so formulated, is not so hard to satisfy, and it rules out only the unlikely case of someone "forced" to love in some way. When we began to wonder about true love, we thought at a lover who: i. feels in love, ii. is sincere in his claims, and iii. still doubts of his love. This problem does not seem to be connected with any potential lack of freedom of the will.

However, we could think that true love has something to do with the lover's will *tour court*. We could ask, for instance: how are the volitions that constitute love? Is there anything wrong with them? Is there any component of self-deception, illusion, misunderstanding of one's own desires? If love is a volitional state, which involves necessarily the will and the identity of the lover, the lover has not to be confused, uncertain, contradictory in her volitions. I am talking of a first-order confusion, that is manifested at the phenomenological level: like when one feels ambivalent toward a person, and has mixed desires, like staying close and faraway from the same person. In this situation, the question of true love does not even arise. The second-order confusion is instead what provoked the original question: the doubt about one's own state of love. So let's ignore phenomena of confusion and uncertainty: they do not seem apt for any discriminating true love.

But what if the first order volitions are in conflict with the second-order ones? What if I do not want to want that person? I am going to analyze the view that love is not authentic when it is not constituted by the appropriate second-order volitions. This view is promising, but it will show many problems, so at the end I will commit to a weaker thesis. That volitions are inappropriate means that they conflict with other volitions. I think at something similar to coherentism in justification. When a volition is inconsistent with all the others, that volition (or set of volitions) does not constitute love, which is inauthentic. The person has all the first-order desires that characterize love: she wants to be with her beloved, she likes him, she is happy when with him, and so on. But she is

wrong about herself. She is correct only at the first stage, but there is something wrong at the second one.

2.3 Authenticity as Coherence: the Coherentist View

Love is idiosyncratic. As it should be clear already, I aim to preserve our "democratic" and non-moralistic intuitions on the rich and worthwhile variety of loves: true love can be pathetic, wicked, ridiculous, or funny. What makes love paradoxical and outrageous is exactly that we can truly love someone who does not deserve it, and that also evil people can truly be in love. Still, we have the intuition that there is something to take into account about the different ways people are in love. A lover who, out of jealousy, kills his beloved seems to be *very* different from another one who sacrifices his life for his beloved. Is this just a difference in moral traits of the lover? Under a certain perspective it is: if the definition of love rules out any moral concept, there cannot be a difference between the two lovers. They both truly love their beloved, other things equal. But since moral traits pertain to the identity of the lover, and we have seen that love is intrinsically connected to identity, then there is a difference between the two: their loves are of a different kind.

One could object that this is not a question of different loves, but of different roles of love in life. Certainly, love can have a different role in my life and in yours. But if A loves B and treats her as she were his property, or if C loves D and respects her as another human being, assumed that in both cases it's true love, I see first of all a moral difference, and secondly, but nonetheless importantly, a different in the way people love. It's not that A's love is irrelevant in his life: he could become a murderer in its name. It is just a different way he has to love: the way of a potential murderer.

A volitional conception of love is more apt than other theories to account for the connection between love and what we are, because it focuses on the lover's particular will, on what it is important to her, and on how the things she cares about are central in her deliberation. But it deals with some difficulties when we consider its normative consequences, as we will see.

If (erotic) love has many names and forms, it gets hard, as De Sousa reminds us, to set any standard for it. Even the volitional condition I will attempt to outline in this section aims to be very minimal, in order to respect this intuition that true love has not to be limited by rigid boundaries, or moralistic prescriptions.

Consider the following example. Cathy believes to be in love with Jake. Her friends are confused and skeptical, since Cathy is an idealistic girl, volunteering in the homeless' shelter, firmly believing in social equity and fair opportunities. Jake is an unscrupulous broker, who is proud of his libertarian beliefs and denies any efficacy of welfare systems. She is sort of surprised to be in love with such a person, but she feels that way, and claims to know what it is about: it's love, no doubt.

In an analogous situation, Don Vito is a mafia boss who is in love with a very pious and benevolent widow, whom he met at the mass one day. His "guys" are disappointed and surprised that their boss has fallen for such a plaintive and unattractive lady. He has always been seen with much more beautiful and arrogant young women.

These situations could be explained by at least two different volitional structures of lovers. In one case the volitions that ground the first-order loving volitions are consistent with the lover's identity. Let's say that there is a "revolution" going on under the surface. The person is willingly committing to totally different ideals, and his love is a manifestation of this change. The Mafioso is somehow converting to a different way of loving, and if love is true this will probably provoke a change in his lifestyle. Love is powerful, almost a miracle, many people think, so there's nothing to be puzzled by. Cathy truly loves Jack, and Don Vito truly loves Donna Assunta.

But these cases are more common in fiction than in reality. Psychologists generally agree that adults hardly change, once the main features of their personality have developed. This fact has strong implications for the ideals and values that are part of our identity and determine our attitudes.

This datum brings us to the second possibility: the lovers are somehow using their putative love for other purposes. People often want love to be a cause for something else, for instance a change in their life. In this case love is not an outcome of a revolution, but a tool of it. Even if it is hard to deny that true love has any instrumental feature at all, it is plausible to require that any eventual instrumental feature is not essential.

Love is a state of the will. And we have already seen that this is not tantamount to being voluntary. We cannot control that we like or love one thing rather than another one, if not indirectly: if I like eating meat but I consider it wrong, I will force myself to watch documentaries on factory farms. This particular strategy can be more or less effective, but however I have to look for a strategy that influences my desires indirectly: I can't just stop liking meat simply by desiring it.

Love, we have seen, is something more than a liking. Among other features, it is characterized by the presence of second-order volitions, which commit to the desire of matching to the beloved. They give love the stability we refer to, when we distinguish love from falling in love: the first stage of the process of loving shares some things with loving. Certainly it satisfies the phenomenological condition. Actually, the most significant and characterizing elements of the phenomenology of love pertain to the process of falling in love, more than to the actual state, that is, to its final outcome. The stage of falling in love is also sensitive to the epistemic requirements we have analyzed in the fourth chapter. But it cannot be the same thing as love, and then it cannot candidate to be true, because it is unstable: it lacks the long-term commitment that is peculiar to love. Falling in love means that I am considering the possibility of being with you. I like you a lot, I feel in love, I know you enough to say that I really like you, and not someone else, and I like how you're with me. I want to match with you. But not definitely. I could still choose someone else, after all. If someone cute is around I could decide to check how he is, if I like him as well, if he makes me feel the way you make me feel. When I am in love, instead, the commitment to my desire has been reinforced. And even if I can't control it, I can control other things to favor it. For instance, if there is someone cute around, I will notice that she is cute, but I will not pay too much attention to my attraction (I am here considering the case of a lover who does not accept sexual promiscuity). Or it is the context that preserves the commitment, for instance when the love relationship gave birth to a family. The commitment need not be explicit or conscious, though: when I love you, many factors concur to provide an implicit approbation of my desire to match

with you. My beliefs and judgments on you will lead me to evaluate you as lovable,[167] my feelings and emotions will provide the qualitative experience of my love, and I will be ready to love you. The practical sphere of the lover's life is devoted to matching with the beloved: his deliberative processes are affected in a crucial way. No important decision is taken without taking the beloved into account. I would not say that there is the creation of a common identity, but more than the perspective of the lover also comprehends the beloved: it is like looking at a landscape, and seeing always, more or less central, an object that is part of it, wherever you look at. When we fall in love the beloved is the direction of the path we are on: there can be many different paths, and we follow one in particular, we give a chance to that one. In case of attraction the desired object is rather a simple target, and it affects the decision process only in a strategic way. It does not involve our life in other ways.

There is commitment in love and in falling in love, but of a different "weight". In love the commitment is more resistant, and has been knitted with the many other plans and commitments that form a life project, or at least the project of a period of life. For instance, a family with children, or a job in a certain city, can be commitments derived at least partly from loving a person, and they reinforce the loving commitment. When I fall in love I dispose myself to develop this web of commitments. Of course, some lovers will experience love in a different way: they won't be interested in having a family, they would never change their job for being closer to the beloved, or they are unfaithful to their beloveds. But, for their state to deserve the name of love, there must be some sort of commitment in their lives as well. Standards may differ: what is an incredible commitment for one (declaring to others that he is his partner) will be just an obvious convention for someone else. Whatever may count as commitment in an individual, there will be a difference when she falls in love or when she is in love.

[167] It is a virtuous circle: I am attracted to you in particular over other people in virtue of your qualities, so I fall in love with you. My love makes me look at you in an even more favorable light, so I see your qualities as lovable. And my beliefs on your lovability reinforce my love toward you.

2.4 Varieties of Inauthentic Love

This fixed object, however, can be also bothering. The description I just gave fits also cases, in which we would doubt that it is true love. So far, when speaking of inauthentic love I often used the visual metaphor of the illusion: it seems true love, but it is not. I have just proposed to consider illusionary the cases where the lover's second-order volitions do not support the first-order ones. But we could be more specific than this, and see if there are different sorts of illusion. Seeing the ways love can be inauthentic according to the Coherentist view should clarify better the view itself. These different sorts of inauthentic love can be divided in two, opposite groups: projections and obsessions. They are opposite in the phenomenological features, which reflect a different volitional structure. In the latter case, the lover experiences a feeling of passivity, she feels like she is subdued to the love experience. What happens in her will it is some sort of internal conflict, but she does not want to acknowledge her role in it. In the former case, there is no feeling of passivity. This is because what actually happens is a very active process of self-deception.

In both projection and obsession the lover seems to manifest some form of inconsistency between the particular project that love is, and her wider project of life, but it is experienced differently and they are likely to have different causes, and different cognitive counterparts. For instance, projection is reinforced by beliefs about the desirability of the beloved, whereas obsession will be sustained by beliefs concerning the lack of responsibility of the lover.

2.4.1 Projections

On one side, there are the cases of *projection*. We saw that love is volitional, but not voluntary. And it cannot control the object that provokes it: neither the fact it exists or not, nor its characteristics. I do not decide what to care about, even if I can give an approbation of what I care afterwards. Notice that this "approbation" does not imply anything like happiness or joy. Wanting to want something doesn't mean that it's good for you in any way. Love produces values, but out of a reality that is independent from the lover: it works with what is available. In the case of projection, instead, there is an urge of control, an attempt to create from one's own desires and needs.

In what I call projection, in a semi-technical way, the project of loving is determined by the very same desire of loving: the desire or need to love is so strong that it comes before the ineluctability of loving *that* person. To put it in a simpler way: the second-order volitions are present before the first-order ones. But this equates to making love voluntary, even if the lover may be unaware of it. In love the second-order volitions simply represent a commitment to a desire for matching to a person, which is not voluntary.

The reasons why this process happens vary in individual cases, but the will is, so to speak, internally manipulated: the lover wants to love the beloved, careless of what her hearth, that is, her deep self, is attracted to. The lack of coherence with the lover's identity is provoked by the will itself, with an act of unconscious, and nevertheless active, self-deception. This deception, whose consciousness is unavailable to the subject (if the phenomenology is in place), is what her friends would call "love for love". The deception is acted by third-order volitions: she wants to want to want her beloved.

The metaphor of projecting aims to suggest that the lover is not letting the reality of that relationship to come out, whatever it be. We saw how the authenticity of love is emerging as the outcome of a dialectical process between the role of the lover and that of the beloved, between the practical and internal dimension of the first one, and the objective, external dimension of the second one. In the case of projection the role of the subject is too predominant.

Why is this a case of incoherence? The presence of incoherence works here as a clue. It signals the projection. When the lover is in love with an object that is in conflict with his identity, but the second-order volitions are in play, the neutral observer can charge him of "manipulating" them. It is considered a manipulation, that is, a wrong use, only because there is a conflict with the true self of the lover. When instead there is no conflict, the harmony between the first, the second, and even the third-order volitions is what one would expect. In that case, love for a person, and love for loving that person coincide.

Notice that this volitional projection can come together with the epistemic illusion we already talked about in the third chapter: the epistemic illusion can support the volitional projection, and be paired: if I want to love that person, I will likely project

some desirable characteristics on him. But they pertain to different domains: one is an epistemic error, the other one is a practical failure, or wrong-doing.

2.4.2 Obsessions

On the opposite side, there are the cases of *obsession*. In one of his magic classes, Harry Potter is admonished by professor Slughorn that love potions are the most dangerous of all, because they do not create real love (which is impossible to imitate and manufacture), but a powerful obsession.[168]

In the case of obsession, passivity intrinsically characterizes the emotional experience. There are studies, such as James Averill's on emotions and anxiety,[169] which show how some emotional states seem to be necessary to the individual but potentially condemned by society, and therefore the individual needs to deny her responsibility in taking a course of actions in response to that feeling. In very different cultures we can observe analogous phenomena, for instance the experience of being "possessed" by a ghost, or bitten by an insect, such as a spider.

What is relevant in the present context is the idea of passivity as a result of a refutation of responsibility. I believe that romantic obsession is like some sort of *possession*: the subject lives the emotional experience as totally out of her control, even if it is not so. There are two kinds of obsessions: the lover does not want to acknowledge her commitment to the love, *or* does not even want to commit to it. For the first kind of cases, think at the situation of someone who really likes a person, and also desires to like that person, but does not want to admit it to herself, for instance because it is shameful, or painful. So her love is potentially authentic (assume the phenomenological and the epistemic constraints are satisfied), but still there is a resistance of the will: it is a "schizophrenic" love, and the only solution for the lover to avoid schizophrenia is rejecting any responsibility for it. "It's not that I'm in love. I'm obsessed". It's someone else's fault. The lover seems to be in a no man's land. I am uncertain about authenticity here. Maybe we can just call it schizophrenic love, and declare it a borderline case.

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[168] On the other hand, as Albus Dumbledore has taught Harry, true love is the most powerful magic.
[169] Averill (1980).

But there is also a second kind of obsession, when the lover simply does not want to commit to her desire. In this case, love is untrue, since there is only the desire to match with that person, but the identity of the lover remains untouched. This case can have various phenomenological diversifications.

It can be like a simple preference, in which case the technical term "obsession" is inappropriately dramatic: think at a lover whose phenomenology is sufficiently vivid to give rise to a declaration of love, but who actually does not commit to that love. Loving a person for this lover is like ice-cream tastes. I like you as I like vanilla, but I would be the person I am also if I didn't like you or I liked macadamia nuts and caramel. It need not be a superficial person. And the comparison with tastes is not meant to be derogative or to enlighten the phenomenology: people can be very passionate about ice cream or anything else.[170]

But obsessions can be very unpleasant. Think at cases in which we would actually use the term. A person loves his beloved and is totally unhappy about it, but he can't help it. Like when you can't help but singing a song you don't like. Of course, in the case of love it's quite a bother, especially since the reason you don't want to want something in love is because there is something in the object that makes the whole thing an unpleasant experience: the beloved doesn't reciprocate you, most of the time. Or it is socially disgraceful to want it, or practically impossible, and so on.

Finally, obsessions can be very vivid, but not unpleasant. Quite the contrary, if the phenomenology is in place, it can be a powerful and beautiful experience. Think at the case of what we would call a romance passion: the heroine doesn't want to be attracted by the evil seducer, but still she can't resist to his charming manners, even if she knows they are only instrumental, and he will ruin her reputation. These cases are easier to imagine in the case of sexual attraction, but need not. An obsession can be spiritual, and true love can be very "material".

[170] Of course, one can commit to her ice cream tastes, and so they become parts of their identity, but this is another question.

2.5 Objections to the Coherentist View

The Coherentist view proposes a precise condition for true love: love is true when the lover is not incoherent, that is, when there is harmony between the first and second-order volitions.

The view is undoubtedly problematic. Although it captures some intuitions on love, it seems to endanger too many others. I am going to analyze some objections, and provide possible counter-objections.

2.5.1 Obsessions and Projections Are Informative of the Self

It seems doubtless that love makes us more sensitive to hidden or unconscious parts of our self. In loving, we find out better who we are. We suddenly realize, for instance, that we are attracted and in love with a person that we never thought we could love, in virtue of certain features he, or the love relationship itself, possesses. This holds also for inauthentic love: obsessions and projections typically inform us about our fears, "ghosts", needs, and so forth, that is, they are informative on our self too.[171] But isn't this an argument against the possibility of deriving true love from the analysis of the lover's self?

The intricate intimacy between the self and love is not in itself harmful to the thesis. But it could ground an objection against the coherentist thesis, if I shared Frankfurt's conception of the relationship between identity and love. According to Frankfurt, loving equates to caring, and what we care about ultimately shapes and determines who we are, or at least who we are *as agents*. In the second chapter I denied that this is correct, arguing that there is at least another pole in the practical deliberation, which is hatred. My criticism to Frankfurt becomes fundamental now. If he were right, I could not use his account for any normative purpose, since I could be charged of circularity. The coherentist view claims that love must have some coherence with the life project, which refers to the whole identity of the subject. But of course if the identity of the subject is constituted only by what he loves, it is not possible to determine any gap between love and the self, or any incoherence. But the lover's identity is constituted at least by what he considers important in a negative way. The two poles of love and hatred,

[171] I thank Daniele Santoro, who made me reflect on this issue.

which are likely to be supplemented by other sources of motivation, get combined in the practical identity of the lover.

2.5.2 Love Changes the Self

Although many other things than our objects of love constitute our practical self, we can often observe a dynamic process of reciprocal influence between our identity and the things we love.

This leads us to the second objection: one of the most powerful features of love is that love *changes* you. Not always for the best, nor for the worst, sometimes it helps to mature and evolve, some others it condemns the lover to regression and even irreversible emotional catastrophes. Depending (mainly) on its capacity to bring happiness or sufferance, fulfillment or frustration, love affects deeply our selves. So, how can we judge the authenticity of love in terms of how it fits our identity, or, even in the weaker formulation, our life plan? Our life and our identity are irrevocably changed by true love: one essential aspect of true love, and not of any other of its possible appearances, would be exactly that it modifies you.

A possible answer to this objection is that it is valid only in the earlier stages of development. As children, we experience love mainly in a non-romantic way. Children's self is shaped, among other things, by parental love, and by a non-sexualized affection toward their peers. Freud's remarks on the childish sexuality, besides consideration on their validity, are not relevant here: prototypical sexual impulses, that are at most what is experienced by children, are far from constituting romantic love. Romantic love is the greatest of the discoveries of adolescence, and it is what makes us step into the adult world.[172]

But can adolescents truly love? Adolescence is full of passions, dreams, and other states which resemble very much love, but I take not to be quite the same, if, as I think, love is not only the desire to match, but also the commitment to that desire. Adolescents are not like children, and their agency is complete in many aspects, but the emotional development and the capacity for commitments are far from being complete. This is only

[172] I am not committing, of course, to a particularly accurate psychological or sociological claim on the matter.

a tendency: I am not claiming that no adolescent can be truly in love. At this stage, however, it seems true that love affects the self deeply.

Growing up, the self gets more and more stable and this allows love to be informative of what we are. Revolutionary changes get rare, and the identity of the person crystallizes in a shape that it is hard to modify, even out of the greatest love.

The coherentist view, then, seems to apply better to adults, but this is compatible with the intuition that people love in different ways in different periods of their love: when they're young, they're more passionate, and unpredictable, and their loves play a formative role in their lives.

2.5.3 Love Is a Choice of the Self, Not a Consequence

A related point to these issues is even more effective in criticizing this view.[173] Not only love changes you, but actually can go *against* yourself, goes the objection. What is vivid passion if not the denial of every reasonable consideration? What is true love if not an upsetting, irresistible force, an exciting source of new and never imagined experiences? Isn't the very essence of love its power of defeating all your resistance, of almost forcing you to feel in a new way? The objection is the most radical one among those we have seen, since it claims that true love is the opposite of what the coherentist view claims. Not only love can be revolutionary, but it must be so. Not only true love is not grounded on second-order volitions, but it is exactly the opposite.

One possible answer is that the revolutionary character is most of the time only superficial. As we have seen, love can make us understand better who we are. We can find out things we didn't know about ourselves. If this intuition is sound, it gives us a good argument to reply with: if love is informative on whom we are, if it reveals something, then something had to be already in place.

Another answer is that there are also cases of genuine revolution, cases similar to conversion, for instance. In this case my account has a problem, because it is hard to see how to distinguish this case from cases of inauthentic love, in which for instance we have some form of illusion, or self-deception. Still, we could think that a solution lies in analyzing more attentively the complex interrelations between cognitive, emotional, and

[173] I owe this objection to Tito Magri.

volitional attitudes. In a revolutionary, but genuine case of love, it is likely to find some beliefs concerning the awareness of a big change (or it would not be such a great revolution- in this case, the subject cannot be opaque to herself) and beliefs concerning the desirability of this change; emotions, which express attachment and involvement; some desires of matching the beloved and some volitions that commit to those desires. This is very sketchy, but it gives the idea of the whole of the person being devoted to this love and its consequences. The identity of the person is changing, but the change does not happen against her will. It is a "seconded" revolution, in which the dethroned king is in some way supporting the new sovereign.

2.5.4 The Right to Incoherence

But the most compelling objection to the coherentist view is that it seems to require too much. Lovers *qua* agents can be irrational, and incoherent. We are often incoherent even inside the range of the things we like: I really like chocolate, but I hate it when it's of a certain brand. I like every Picasso's work, besides *Guernica*, which is so sad. Is it irrational? Who cares! And *eros* is such a complicated set of desires, it seems really impossible just to understand how it stands in relation with the lover's self. Besides, what about an incoherent self? You need not arrive to schizophrenics to find incoherent agents. Here the concern about what is essential to an agent becomes unavoidable. Maybe Cathy, the idealistic girl in love with the broker, is essentially a fragile person who wants an authoritative husband. In this case, her love would be authentic. But how can you tell what are her identifying traits? We could reply that the coherentist view proposes a condition that it is hard to verify, but nonetheless sound.

However, the real problem is that even if Cathy were just incoherent, she would love Jack. Her friends can think she is deceiving herself. They might be right, of course, but they could also be wrong: she would be an incoherent lover, maybe also ashamed of her love, but authentically in love. Again, we are facing an unlucky, imperfect situation, but everyone can tell an unlucky, imperfect, painfully true love story.

2.6 The Volitional Condition

We are facing two different groups of intuitions, equally powerful. On one hand, we see that people are naturally lead to love persons who are similar to them, that is, that people look for harmony in the domain of love. If we like hiking, we will like also things related to it, included hikers. Furthermore, we should be skeptical of miraculous conversions out of love, since it is a fact that people hardly change, especially in their adulthood. On the other hand, people are simply incoherent. More than other romantic objections, it is effective to realistically point out at the chaos that dominates our practical life: we cannot require to lovers more than we require to any other agent. Once they are free, and know what they are doing, and feel to be in love, they are in love.

A way to preserve both groups of intuitions is weakening the coherentist view. Since it is crucial for the definition of love that there is a commitment to the desires that express love, we only should require that commitment to be present in the correct way, that is, in a way that avoids cases of serious "schizophrenia". To put in other words, we need a condition that avoids a stable incoherence, a constant conflict between the first and second-order volitions. This allows that the lover loves other things that are totally contradictory with the object of his *eros*, if he's able to manage the internal conflict somehow. He commits to that love, and keeps it separate from other spheres of his life, for instance, like Don Vito could do: one thing is his family affairs, another his business. In other cases, instead, there is a real revolution going on: too bad for her friends, but Cathy is really changing. Tired of disillusions and disappointments, she's becoming more practical, and thinking at her future: being with Jack will permit her to have emotional and economic stability.

The volitional condition claims that love is true when the there is no *irresolvable conflict* between the first and second-order volitions. There can be a temporary inconsistency or even incoherence between them, but it must be solved. If it lasts, love is inauthentic, and it becomes an obsession.

Notice that projections cannot be captured by this condition. It is a problem of this weaker version that I do not see how to solve. The advantages, though, seem more than the disadvantages.

3. Summing Up (Before Concluding)

This does not seem enough, though. The necessity of a basic and stable harmony in one's own commitments has lead us to focus again on the subject, after our short analysis of the phenomenology in the third chapter.

But these last considerations leave the gap between the object and the subject that has been emerging, which we have to fill eventually: there is a more objective idea of authenticity, which has been insofar suggested but not articulated. We need to explain why love is authentic in itself, in its quality, and not only with respect to that individual or to that object, but for the relationship between these two poles altogether.

In enquiring about authentic love we can put emphasis in three different places:

a) Authentic love of x *for y*
b) Authentic love *of x* for y
c) Authentic *love* (qua love) of x for y

We have answered to a): love of x to y is authentic if x is in the right epistemic state, meaning that she knows the relational and historical properties of y thanks to a direct knowledge; this condition implies that y is really existent.

We have answered to b): love of x to y is authentic if:

1) x is in the correct phenomenological state, meaning that she possesses the relevant feelings, emotions, desires, and beliefs that the community generally labels collectively as "feeling in love"
2) x is in the correct volitional state, meaning that her second-order volitions support in a stable and non-conflicting way the relevant first-order volitions.

We need to answer to c), which now seems to be the most relevant point. What is authentic love, after all, qua love? We want to enquire the normative dimension of the state of love as such, in general, besides any other specification, even besides its erotic character. If there is anything in common between the different forms of love, there must be also a common normativity. Some feature that renders love the thing it is. What is the core of loving?

4. Love Is Being Vulnerable

The answer to this question is very intuitive: if we are truly in love, we are vulnerable.[174] We have seen already in the second chapter that this is Lewis' thesis, and I share it completely. But it is relevant not only the bare fact of being vulnerable, which is not peculiar of being in love, but that of not running away form such a fact, and rather being available to it. In loving someone or something we open ourselves to the possibility of being hurt. In love we can be hurt by many different things: by the lack of reciprocation, by the loss of the beloved, by being offended, disappointed, deceived, subdued, deluded, betrayed. Not only when we love we are vulnerable, but we spontaneously become available to the worst luck. We give our most fragile parts to someone else, renouncing to control and defense. Being vulnerable is expressed by an attitude of openness toward the beloved. Loving is opening our arms, and surrender. Accepting that we could be defeated, and not being afraid of it, or however considering it as a worthwhile risk.

Of course, being totally defenseless toward another person is maybe impossible, and not desirable nor required. Also, some forms of openness and vulnerability characterize other experiences than love, from polite interactions between strangers to social relationships, such as employer-employee or teacher-student interactions.

But the vulnerability necessary to true love is of a different kind. It is not kindness, or being harmless, it is not a matter of ethics or etiquette or conventions. Vulnerability in love means a voluntary lack of control. It is that peculiar kind of exposure to luck and uncertainty that Martha Nussbaum has considered as the inheritance of the classic tragedy in Aristotle's ethics.[175]

It happens in every kind of love, *philia*, *agape*, *eros*, and even *storge*. It is maybe the only common feature of these very different forms of love. Parental love for young children, which is most of the times characterized by its moral features, is best represented by the grief for the loss of the children, and the lack of defense against it. I deny that the altruistic concern for the offspring is what defines *storge*. We can disinterestedly promote someone else's welfare for many reasons. It may be an instinctual drive. Or we may be moral saints, in which case we do it without any

[174] I am in debt with Martha Nussbaum, who suggested me to investigate this aspect of love.
[175] Nussbaum (1986).

particular affection. In general, we can find a moral concern in many forms and instances of love, but it depends on the morality of the lover, rather than on the authenticity of the love itself. Actually, in parental love an *interested* concern for the children is not rare as well. But we would not say that those parents do not love their children.

Vulnerability can be observed even in *agape*, the "coldest" of all: if I love God, and I believe that He abandoned me, I feel worse than dead. If I love humanity, and a fellow human being disappoints me, I feel betrayed.

But vulnerability means not only that I'm fragile with respect to what the beloved can do, but also to what others can do the beloved. If my beloved gets hurt, I am hurt as well. If the beloved dies, a part of myself dies with it. As I said, a concern for the beloved welfare need not be disinterested, but certainly some form of this concern is present in every love. The we-identity that we have seen in the second chapter explains why we are vulnerable under this respect: whatever happens to our beloved, happens to us. If I care about humanity, I will fear nuclear disasters. Actually, the more we get close to mere preferences, the more disinterested the concern becomes, and the more vulnerability is a matter of dependence on what happens to the loved object. If I love animals (in general, not a particular one), I will be desperate if a species extinguishes, even I have never had or will ever have a contact with it. *Eros* is different: the sources of vulnerability are various. I will be desperate if my beloved suffers for a painful illness, but I will be ready to make him suffer if he betrays me, because *my* pain will be unbearable.[176]

Anyway, caring implies suffering. Notice that this holds also for hatred. It is a good reason not to define love exclusively in terms of vulnerability, because otherwise we would not be able to distinguish the two states if not phenomenologically. Loving is not just caring, and being vulnerable, but being voluntarily vulnerable, committing to such a fragile condition, accepting to be defenseless.

[176] One could object that if I want to get revenge on my beloved and make him suffer, it means that my love has turned into hatred. This might well be true, but it is revealing that *eros* can become hatred so easily.

4.1 Back to Emotions

Love in terms of openness and vulnerability brings back on the scene the emotional features of love. Love can be expressed by many different emotional states. Among the most important and peculiar, there are elation and despair, which typically alternate in love. Poets, philosophers, writers, have all highlighted the great amount of sufferance that love can produce, in direct proportion with the joy and happiness that render love such an attractive experience. We already clarified how authentic love does not equate to a successful, in the sense of gratifying or pleasant, emotional experience. Of course, also the contrary is false: true love need not be intrinsically painful. But often it is, even if reciprocated.

True love permits us to be in contact with reality. The problem is that the reality we are connected to is made of another human being. Which implies that it is an unstable and ephemeral connection. This instability is due to the fact that the object evolves through the relationship itself, and this happens to the subject as well. The historicity and the relational character of the properties of the beloved render love authentic, but also out of control.

Think of the most common source of pain in love: my beloved does not reciprocate me anymore. This rejection cannot destroy my love: I can still love my beloved in an authentic way, even if the object, that is, the reality I am in contact with, has changed. This possibility is what makes love at the same time a successful connection to an object and an infinite source of practical failures.

But in order for love to be successful in its intrinsic nature, that is, authentic, apart from any prudential and moral, or anyway consequential considerations, the lover must be prepared and predisposed to all this. The English expression “fall in love” is particularly apt to communicate the risk implicit in every love: falling can be very dangerous, and you can easily get hurt. In love you willingly decide to fall, and you can’t fall in love if you are afraid of falling. One hopes that you will fall on a soft ground: the other’s love. Unfortunately, we all know that that ground possesses many characteristics, but it is rarely soft. It is full of holes, and of thorns, but also of surprises and adventures. This is why is so thrilling to fall in love: you don’t know where you’re going to land.

But human beings tend to care about their own welfare, both physical and emotional. An exciting love story is sometimes less preferable than a good book, or a soccer match. One consequence of this worry for survival is that we elaborate some defense strategies. Many different strategies are available, but not all are equally in favor of the authenticity of love. In particular, an effective, even if impoverishing, tactic of defending oneself against the possibility of being psychologically hurt, is that of being emotionally detached from what happens around. Since this is not a psychology essay, I will not develop this issue in detail.

We could think that a lover needs to possess the disposition to fall in love. However, it is the *occurrent* capacity of being open that matters for judging the authenticity, since we are interested in the particular case of x loving y here and now, not that x is the ideal lover. Furthermore, we should not be more severe with the lover about his emotional capacities than we have been with his epistemic abilities: we should require the minimum, not the maximum. I will say something more about this in the conclusion.

Notice that the characterization of vulnerability in terms of an emotional capacity is an additional step. I could limit to the fact of being vulnerable in the sense of being subject to pain. But the sufferance involved in love, even though, it can involve physical pain, cannot be described if by an emotional vocabulary. The articulation of the state of being vulnerable requires us to refer to emotions again. Also the peculiar pleasures that come from this fact are of an emotional kind: the happiness that give love comes not only from sharing interests, making love, and doing things together. It is so fulfilling because it satisfies a deep emotional need: that of being loved in an unconditional way, as (we think) that our parents did. The need of being loved is undoubtedly primitive and instinctual and irrational. When we choose a particular person to match with her, we run the risk of being frustrated in our request. The act of loving comes from the volitional sphere, but the need of being loved seems to be at the core of our emotional repertoire.[177]

To sum up: love is authentic, then, when it belongs to a subject, who is open to the possibility of being hurt in that particular situation. What adjective should we use for this condition? What feature of love is involved here? It concerns both the will and the

[177] This is meant to be only a suggestion, though, and it concerns a psychological domain that I do not want to enter here.

emotion. But it possesses phenomenological features (feeling vulnerable), and maybe it needs also cognition to work out.

4.2 The Complex Structure of Love

Being open and defenseless seems to be primarily volitional and therefore practical. It is some sort of a plan, even if not an aware and rational one (not even irrational though), and it is expressed by singular decisions and acts. But the emotional and cognitive components are fundamental as well: the character of a person is constituted by patterns of attention and focus, ways of thinking and reacting emotionally to things. The way a person feels and thinks influences what she wants, and vice versa, and it is hard to distinguish all the sources of a character. As a matter of fact, people are more or less fragile, vulnerable, and open. But the volitional, cognitive, and emotional dimensions are not interrelated only in the character of the lover, but also in her love.

We can be wrong about love only because we can be right. And we can be right in virtue of the creative, but not projective or illusory nature of love. Love comes from a subject, as children come from their mother: they are independent entities, once they are out of the maternal body. The mother has wanted them, but it is not entirely up to her to have them. The mother can raise them, but their growth will be influenced by many factors that are external to the mother's education.

When we love we attribute a role to the beloved: that of being the bearer of values that are irreplaceable, and that no one else can bear. But even if it's up to us to choose to do so, we are not in control of this attribution. The beloved represents a reality that has a shape, which is modified by the match with me, but nonetheless is resistant to radical changes. Love is not grounded in a particular property of the beloved, but certainly that property is there, even if relational and historical.

Notice that in order to capture this reality, to understand and respect it, I must want to do so. Again, every other feature of the love experience depends on my will, but not because I can control it. In order for being truly in love, I must be disposed to a set of conditions, whose satisfaction is only indirectly controllable. As with every other volitional state, the subject can exercise an indirect management: guiding the emotional

development of oneself, and the emotional growth of love; motivating to knowledge of oneself and of the beloved, and to the understanding of the feelings that constitute the phenomenology; finally, preserving stability and harmony in one's deliberative processes, avoiding schizophrenia.

4.3 Love, Truth, and Imagination

A final word on truth in love, as promised. I have adopted throughout this work a perspective that could be deemed of lacking romance. From the enterprise itself, looking for true love, to the single elements of the enquiry: being concerned about what one really feels, about knowledge of the beloved, and about lack of contradictions in love. One could ask me: is this love you're talking about *really* love? Love is a liar. Love is a mess. Love is fantasy.

I do not think that love lies. I think that authentic love is revealing of what we are. I do no think I can argue for this idea more convincingly than what I already did in chapter two, and in this chapter.

Love of course is messy. But that we are confused about and in it does not imply that there are no truths concerning it. Or that it does not show truths about us. Or that we do not look for truth in it.

So the most important objection regarding this apparently obsessive emphasis of truth in love might be that it does not account for the role played by imagination in *eros*.[178] I agree that imagination is important, in love, as in many other human experiences.

Imagination is a powerful tool, and, as every tool, it can be used well or badly. The observations on the importance of a correct epistemic state constitute a warning against a bad use of imagination: hiding the true reality of the object and creating an illusion. But there is a good use of imagination: the creative capacity of providing ideals to look at. In love, this is important. Loving is difficult, and not just because we can suffer. It is difficult in itself. In a moment I will suggest that love is difficult because we have to be capable. Better, that the difficulties of love need us to be able to face them.

[178] Martha Nussbaum suggested me to pay attention to this aspect.

Love is difficult exactly because it is confused and confusing, and yet it concerns one of the most important spheres of our life, about which we would not like to be confused. Love is difficult because it does require us to be moral, if we are moral agents: *eros* is not moral in itself, but if lived in a moral context is morally very demanding. Love is difficult because it uncovers our bare selves, and it asks us to be sincere and honest. Love is difficult, finally, because of the reasons just outlined: that it renders us vulnerable, and it requires us to get willingly into this vulnerability.

For all these reasons, we do not need just truth, but also imagination, to provide an ideal, a goal. And of course, we need it in a simpler way; just as fantasy and romance, to render the experience on the one side less crude, and on the other one less spiritual, than it sometimes appeared to be here.

5. Summing Up (seriously)

The tentative nature of the work does not allow me to consider it complete or satisfying, but at least I can declare its conclusion. I have outlined the last and maybe most important condition for true love: willing vulnerability. In order to truly love, we must be open to the possibility of getting hurt. This condition, that it could be called the basic condition, comes after the volitional condition, which aims to a lover who is not deeply in conflict with herself. I already underlined that I consider this condition the one that mostly need revision and further thought. However, further work and reflection is suggested also for the articulation of what I called the epistemic and the phenomenological condition. The former aims to set the epistemic state in which a lover has to be, in order to be truly in contact with the reality of her love, and her beloved. The latter requires that the lover feel in love, if we can ever talk of love at all

Conclusion: True love as a capacity?

We cannot control love. We cannot control when to love, whom to love, why to love. What I am going to suggest here is that we might be able to control and regulate *how* to love.

The fact that love is not voluntary and it is uncontrollable in many relevant senses is important. Part of its worth, as Nussbaum reminds us, comes from this feature. We care so much about what she calls the "external goods" (among which, the most important ones are our beloveds), in virtue of their transient nature, their fragile constitution. And also part of its normativity lies in it: the fact that we can be right or wrong about it partially depends on our lack of control on it.

Nevertheless, the attempt of exercising control in love is very common. Human beings tend to be conservative and protective of their psychical and physical survival, and this conflicts with their capacity to interact with the others, who unavoidably represent a potential source of harm. The fact that love is importantly and necessarily connected with loss and suffering does not prevent them from trying to avoid these downsides as much as possible.

True love has often been interpreted in a minimal sense, as authentic love, the real thing. But I'd like to suggest now the possibility that true love is a normative concept in a narrower sense, something like a "better quality" love. With no need of a moral interpretation, again, of that "better",[179] we could think that true love, in a further sense, means being capable of loving in the best way, developing our cognitive, emotional, and volitional capacities. True love could mean also "loving well" or "being capable of loving". Another difference of love with emotions is that love can be seen as an *activity*, which can be performed better or worse. We have seen that love is not a simple response. Its reality depends on factors that are both internal and external to the lover. Now I am proposing that the internal factors be not just passive states, but that they are also active. This suggestion is already present in what we have seen, and I am going to elaborate it very briefly in what follows.

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[179] But of course morality and love can fruitfully interact in a moral agent, and therefore "loving well" could also involve a moral way of loving.

If loving truly means being vulnerable, and willingly opening arms when falling in love, loving well could imply, not only the will, but also the ability of renouncing to control. So a good lover would have not only to want to be open and non-controlling of the relationship and of the beloved, but also educate herself, modify her behaviors, try to shape her character in this direction.

If loving truly means being willingly committed to the way we are, loving well could imply the capacity of understanding who we are, what we want, being aware of the meaning that love has in our lives. Love, then could be the motivating factor to self-knowledge, and self-reflection, which seems to be a valuable aim to pursue in one's life.

If loving truly means being in touch with a reality outside of us, loving well could imply exercising our epistemic capacities and reflection toward other human beings. Again, as in the case of self-knowledge, learning to be in contact with the changing reality of other people seems to be an aim valuable in itself.[180]

Lastly, if loving truly means experiencing certain feelings rather than others, loving well could imply the capacity of recognizing them, and not confusing them with the feelings typical of infatuation, or lust. This seems to be the less interesting suggestion, and it is not surprising, since the phenomenology of love is the most passive feature of it, and what renders love similar to emotions. Feeling in love is after all one's own response to being in love.

But isn't this proposal in tension with my intention of not confusing true love with successful love?

On one side, it is important to clarify that I am here approaching a different idea of normativity. Now I am really interested in a normative dimension in a proper sense, closer to the ethical one. On the other side, I am not saying that loving well implies loving happily or successfully. One might love well, and still be not reciprocated, or face the loss of the beloved. Of course I believe that loving well could favor success and happiness in love. Not only directly, showing how to behave in a love relationship or with the beloved, but also indirectly, determining on the long-term wiser choices and

[180] I think that these are intrinsic values only in the sense that the source of the value is in themselves. But I do not mean to say that they are valuable for everyone.

behaviors, like avoiding to get involved in relationships that will certainly lead to tragedy. But, as I said, it would not be love, if luck didn't play such a fundamental role.

Falling in love is always risky. We can only take a deep breath, and jump.

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