

Love and Freedom

Derk Pereboom, Cornell University

The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Love, Christopher Grau and Aaron Smuts, eds.,
New York: Oxford University Press.

Penultimate Draft

Must true love be free? If one is manipulated to love another, it's intuitive is that the love is not genuine or deeply valuable. Hence it seems that true love must be freely bestowed. Yet falling in love is often involuntary, and thus the metaphor of Cupid's arrow. Must true love be deserved? If so, the truly beloved must be free, since freedom is required for desert. At the same time desert appears irrelevant to much of our love – we love our children independently of whether they deserve it. Intuitions about the relationship between love and freedom are thus conflicted, and stand in need of philosophical illumination.

These issues are pervasive in philosophy and literature. For instance, consider the following excerpt from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* in which God discusses the fall of Satan:

So will fall

He and his faithless Progeny: whose fault?

Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of me

All he could have; I made him just and right,

Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall...

Not free, what proof could they have given sincere

Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,

Where only what they needs must do, appeared,

Not what they would? what praise could they receive?

What pleasure I from such obedience paid,

When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,
Made passive both, had served necessity,
Not me. They therefore as to right belonged,
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Their maker, or their making, or their Fate;
As if Predestination over-ruled
Their will, disposed by absolute Decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.
So without least impulse or shadow of Fate,
Or aught by me immutably foreseen,
They trespass, Authors to themselves in all
Both what they judge and what they choose; for so
I formed them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves...¹

A key to Milton's vision of the meaning of the universe is that human agents have the opportunity to freely respond to God with love. In this passage he contends that if divine grace were to causally determine love for God, this response would have little or no value; "what praise could they receive? What pleasure I from such obedience paid/When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)/Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled/Made passive both, had

served necessity/Not me.” In Milton’s conception, love, or at least love that has value, must result from free agency. A number of contemporary authors, such as W. S. Anglin² and Robert Kane³ have argued, with Milton, that truly valuable love indeed requires free agency. But one might disagree, as I and others have.⁴ More broadly, the question concerning a freedom requirement on love arises in a number of junctures. My own view is skeptical about such a requirement, and this will color the ensuing discussion. But taking a step back, I believe that the nature of the relationship between love and freedom is an open question, and should so generally be regarded in the philosophical debate.

Freedom in contemporary accounts of love

A promising way to approach this issue is to examine the accounts of love that have been the subject of lively debate over the past several decades in particular, and to test whether they presuppose or require free agency. Most of these accounts contend that love is a response to reasons.⁵ If a view of this kind is correct, freedom may arise as requirement for love because the envisioned kind of response to reasons on the part of the lover must itself be free, or perhaps because the responsiveness to reasons presupposed by the account itself counts as a kind of freedom. Others contend that love is not a response to reasons,⁶ but they might nonetheless require freedom because one must be free in order to qualify as an appropriate lover or recipient of love, or else because the structure of love itself counts as a kind of freedom.

Let us begin with the accounts according to which love is a response to reasons. In Troy Jollimore’s view, which is a reflection of widespread opinion both contemporary and historical, “loving someone is, in large part, a kind of positive, appreciative response to her in virtue of her attractive, desirable, or otherwise valuable properties,” and “love is a matter of reason, insofar as

it is a response to something external that attempts to be adequate to the nature of its object” (Jollimore 2011: 25-26). This position has substantial historical precedent; Augustine (400/2008), for example, famously develops such a position.⁷

To such an account it has been objected that one is not rationally required to love someone who is relevantly qualitatively similar to one’s beloved. To counter the concern, Christopher Grau (2004)⁸ proposes that love requires that the beloved is valued as a particular instantiation of qualities, by contrast with a collection of abstract qualities that is itself abstract, and as Neera Badhwar David Velleman also contend,⁹ love requires that this particular instantiation is valued as an end, rather than instrumentally. Velleman argues that love is a kind of valuation not of qualities of a person that might also be had by others, but of her particular rational nature. Rational nature is, in his conception, a “capacity of appreciation or valuation – a capacity to care about things in that reflective way which is distinctive of self-conscious creatures like us.”¹⁰ Kieran Setiya defends a broader version of this position; he contends that the reason for love is “whatever property gives us the sort of status that commands respect”¹¹ and such a property might be had by non-human creatures. On Niko Kolodny’s proposal, it is relationships in particular that qualify as the reasons for love. The fact that you are my friend or child or spouse – by contrast with rational nature or specific nonrelational qualities you might have – is the right kind of reason for love.¹²

Setiya objects to the kind of account Jollimore proposes on the ground that the reasons for love survive the loss of qualities of the sort that in Jollimore’s view qualify as the reasons for love. Shakespeare’s famous line is pertinent here: “Love is not love which alters as alteration finds.”¹³ He adds that in the case of familial love, that a person is my child counts as reason for me to love her, and is enough reason for my loving her independently of any qualities she may

have.¹⁴ Kolodny objects to Velleman's account on the ground that it yields equal reason to love anyone with rational nature, and that as far as reasons for love take us, recipients of love are interchangeable.¹⁵ Setiya objects to Kolodny by arguing that one can rationally begin to love someone even if one doesn't yet have the sort of relationship with her that qualifies as a reason for love.¹⁶ This is a sketch of a complex debate: the positions defended are nuanced; there are other participants; and there are additional objections. But what I've specified so far is enough for my aim here.

Harry Frankfurt advocates the contrasting position according to which there are no reasons for love. In particular, he finds it implausible that love is a response to the perceived value of the beloved. Furthermore, because a qualitatively identical version of my beloved need not present any reason for me to love her, qualities can't be reasons for love. Instead, the proper focal point of love is the beloved's identity – just her being who she is. Frankfurt says: "The focus of a person's love is not those general and hence repeatable characteristics that make his beloved *describable*. Rather, it is the specific particularity that makes his beloved nameable – something that is more mysterious than describability, and that is in any case manifestly impossible to define."¹⁷ Still, according to Frankfurt, love does have a complex psychological structure. It is a set of first-order desires involving the beloved, together with a set of second-order desires that those first-order desires be effective in moving one to action.¹⁸ For instance, the lover will have a first-order desire to help the beloved in time of need, and a second-order desire that this desire be effective on appropriate occasions. This second-order desire will also serve to sustain the first-order desire.

Does the nature of love constitutively require freedom?

It is widely held that sensitivity or responsiveness to reasons is itself is a kind of freedom. Given this view, on reasons theories of love this kind of freedom is required for love by virtue its very nature, that is, love constitutively requires such freedom. An account of freedom as reasons-responsiveness originates with John Fischer. The core idea is that an act for which an agent is morally responsible is one that she performs as a result of recognizing reasons for it, and is such that if the reasons instead favored other incompatible options, the agent (or the relevant action-producing mechanism) would, at least in some such possible circumstances, have acted on those reasons instead.¹⁹ Fischer, together with Mark Ravizza, casts this as an account of moral responsibility and not of free will. But others, such as Michael McKenna and Carolina Sartorio, think of free will as the control condition on moral responsibility, and accept the fundamentals of Fischer and Ravizza's reasons-responsiveness account.²⁰ Given a reasons view of love and that reasons-responsiveness is a key sort of freedom, love constitutively requires such freedom.

McKenna and Sartorio are compatibilists about free will and causal determinism. Their incompatibilist opponents, however, typically reject the claim that reasons-responsiveness secures the control required for moral responsibility and counts as the key notion of freedom. These incompatibilists often contend that the key sort of freedom is an ability to do otherwise that is not determinism-friendly. They would not agree that love constitutively requires freedom in this sense just by virtue of building in reasons-responsiveness.

More generally, to avoid merely verbal disputes, it's crucial to be clear about the senses in which the terms 'free will' and 'freedom' are used. The contemporary free will debate features the following patterns of usage. On one account, 'free will' refers to the ability to do otherwise, or the capacity to exercise this ability. Some, such as advocates of the Consequence Argument²¹ contend that free will in this sense is incompatible with the agent's causal

determination by factors beyond her control, while others argue that it is compatible.²² On a second understanding, ‘free will’ refers to the strongest sort of control in action required for a core sense of moral responsibility.²³ This sense of moral responsibility at issue in the free will debate is plausibly set apart by the notion of *basic desert*. For an agent to be morally responsible for an action in this sense is for it to be hers in such a way that she would deserve to be blamed if she understood that it was morally wrong, and she would deserve to be praised if she understood that it was morally exemplary. The desert at issue here is basic in the sense that the agent would deserve to be blamed or praised just because she has performed the action, given an understanding of its moral status, and not, for example, merely by virtue of consequentialist or contractualist considerations.²⁴ A belief that an agent is morally responsible in this sense at least typically accompanies expressions of reactive attitudes such as moral resentment and indignation, and it thus closely related to the notion of moral responsibility that P. F. Strawson brings to the fore.²⁵ Many compatibilists argue that reasons-responsiveness secures the control condition for moral responsibility in the basic desert sense, but, as noted, many incompatibilists disagree, and contend that a stronger notion of free will is required. Milton is in this incompatibilist camp. While he believes that love must be freely willed, he would deny that it would be freely willed just by virtue of being reasons-responsive.

On Frankfurt’s account the very nature of love also requires that the lover have freedom in a sense he thinks is required for moral responsibility, and thus for him love also constitutively requires freedom of this sort. The kind of freedom at issue for Frankfurt is *acting freely and of one’s own free will*, which an agent has with respect to an action just in case she wills it and she wants to will it, that is, she has a second-order volition for her desire so to act to be effective.²⁶ Suppose Scarlet kills Mustard, and this is what Scarlet desired to do, and she wanted her desire

to kill Mustard to be effective. According to Frankfurt, Scarlet then satisfies the crucial condition for acting freely in the sense required for moral responsibility. (It's characteristic of Frankfurt's view that moral responsibility does not require the ability to do otherwise, and not even reasons-responsiveness, for that matter.) Love, in his view, presupposes that the lover is disposed to act in such a way that she is free in just this sense. In his conception, helping the beloved when in need is a central sort of loving action. But it is crucial that the lover not only will to help, but also that that this first-order volition is sustained by a second-order volition for her desire to help to be effective. When the lover's helping has this structure, she acts freely and of her own free will. Here we might all concur that an act with this kind of structure is free in one sense. But accepting that love requires freedom in this sense does not amount to agreeing with Milton, since he has a notion of freedom in mind that, by contrast with reasons-responsiveness and higher-level endorsement, is incompatible with causal determination, and he also believes that moral responsibility requires such a stronger sort of freedom. This is the seriously contentious claim: after all, virtually everyone believes that we are free in the reasons-responsive sense, and even in Frankfurt's somewhat more demanding sense.

Must the lover or the beloved be free in a libertarian sense?

Does love, or at least the best kind of love require a sort of freedom that is incompatible with the agent's being causally determined by factors beyond her control, that is, freedom in a libertarian sense? Milton contends that only love that is itself freely willed in this sense required for desert-invoking responsibility is genuinely valuable, and not worth nearly as much if it is not freely willed. W. S. Anglin agrees: "If love is ensured or made necessary, whether by the press of a button or by a natural law or by a possible direct intervention by God, then it is not true love but

mere love-behavior. To have real love between persons, we must have libertarian free will."²⁷

Against this, parents' love for their children -- a paradigmatic sort of love -- is often produced independently of the parents' will. Romantic love is often similar in this respect: we *fall* in love, and the will is not engaged -- hence the image of Cupid's arrow. Robert Kane endorses these claims about love for children and romantic love, but he argues that a certain desirable type of love would be undercut if someone who loved in this way knew that there were factors beyond his control that causally determined it:

There is a *kind* of love we desire from others -- parents, children (when they are old enough), spouses, lovers and friends -- whose significance is diminished... by the thought that they are determined to love us entirely by instinct or circumstances beyond their control or not entirely up to them... To be loved by others in this desired sense requires that the ultimate source of others' love lies in their own wills.²⁸

Setting aside *free* will, in what sorts of cases does the will intuitively play a role in generating love for another at all? When an intimate relationship is faltering, people sometimes make a decision to try to make it succeed, and to attempt to regain the type of relationship they once had. When a student is housed in a dormitory with a roommate she didn't select, she might choose to make the relationship work. When a marriage is arranged by parents, each of the partners may decide take steps to come to love each other. In such situations we might desire that someone make a decision to love. For instance, under the circumstances, we'd rather the roommate decide to make the relationship work than refrain from making this decision. However, one might question whether we have reason to want the decision to be *freely* willed in the sense required for desert-involving moral responsibility. A decision to love on the part of another might significantly enhance one's personal life, but what, exactly, would the decision's being free in this

sense add? In circumstances of these kinds we might desire that someone else make a decision to love, but wouldn't we typically prefer the situation in which the love was not mediated by decision? I've argued that this is so not only for romantic attachments, but also for friendships and for relationships between parents and children.²⁹

One might propose that the will has a key role in *maintaining* love over an extended period. Søren Kierkegaard suggests that a marital relationship ideally involves a commitment that is continuously renewed. Such a commitment involves a decision to devote oneself to the other, and thus, in his view, a marital relationship ideally involves a continuously repeated decision.³⁰ A relationship with this sort of voluntary aspect might in fact be very desirable. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see what might be added by these continuously repeated decisions being freely willed in a libertarian sense, by contrast with simply being a causally determined but voluntary expression of what the agent deeply cares about. Thus although one might at first have the intuition that love that is freely willed in a libertarian sense is particularly valuable, it is unclear exactly how such free will might have a desirable role in producing, maintaining, or enhancing love.

A concern might arise if the proposal to be evaluated is that the love is causally determined by factors beyond one's control, for instance, by an independent agent. For a striking case, one that Milton addresses in the passage we started with, would love for God be valuable if he causally determined us to love him? Milton's God provides a negative answer: "Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love/Where only what they needs must do, appeared/Not what they would? what praise could they receive?/ What pleasure I from such obedience paid/When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)/Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled/Made passive both, had served necessity/Not me." Still, perhaps even then only the specific character of the

causal determination would be objectionable. Suppose Ann causally determines you to love her by manipulating your brain so that you are oblivious to her flaws of character, and by putting a few drops of *Love Potion Number 9* into your coffee. That would be objectionable. But imagine instead that you have a self-destructive proclivity to love people who are harmful to you, and not to love those who would benefit you, partly because you have a tendency overlook people's valuable characteristics, such as kindness and concern for the well-being of others. Suppose Ann slips a drug into your coffee that eliminates this tendency, due to which you are now able to fully appreciate her valuable characteristics, and as a result you are causally determined to love her. How bad would that be? Maybe what is unacceptable is not being causally determined to love by the other party *per se*, but rather how one is causally determined, and that there are varieties of determination that are not objectionable.³¹ A view of this kind might be grounded in an aspect the reasons conception of freedom advocated by Susan Wolf and Dana Nelkin.³² They propose that what is valuable morally is to do the right thing for the right reasons, and whether one is causally determined to act in such a way does not detract from the value of the action. One might extend this idea to love: if one is causally determined to love for the right reasons, causal determination does not detract from its value.

But, as Aaron Smuts contends, one might still question the authenticity of the agent's love: is your appreciation of her valuable characteristics truly yours? Smuts argues that although we do not typically want freely given love, potion scenarios indicate that we want love to come about naturally through the person's own characteristics. As he puts it, "we want love to be the outgrowth of who the person is;" that is, we want love to develop naturally from the person's natural character and dispositions."³³ This is plausible. But as he notes, love's coming about in this way is compatible with causal determination.

Perhaps *the beloved* must be free in a strong sense for the best kind of love. One might argue, for instance, that the best kind of love must be deserved, and thus reasons for such love invoke freely willed actions of the sort that deserve a loving response. Arguably, only libertarian freedom meets this standard. Against this, the advocates of the reason view don't mention the sort of freedom presupposed by a deserved response in their accounts of love. More substantively, we might begin by noting that parents love their children rarely, if ever, because their children have this sort of freedom. Moreover, when adults love each other, it is also seldom, if at all, for this kind of reasons. Explaining love is a complex enterprise. On a quality view, besides moral character and action, factors such as one's relation to the other, her appearance, manner, intelligence, and her affinities with persons or events in one's history all might have a part.

But suppose that moral character and action are especially important for occasioning and maintaining love.³⁴ Even if there is an important aspect of love that is essentially a deserved response to moral character and action, it is unlikely that one's love would be put at risk if one came to believe that these moral qualities do not come about through the sort of free will required for desert. Moral character and action would seem loveable whether or not they deserve credit or praise. Love plausibly involves wishing well for the other, taking on aims and projects of the other as one's own, and often a desire to be with the other. Denying that the beloved has the free will required for desert would not appear to threaten any of this.

Love, free will, and the reactive attitudes

A further route to securing a connection between love and freedom is provided by P. F. Strawson's treatment of the reactive attitudes.³⁵ Strawson maintains that if our actions were

causally determined and this fact did threaten reactive attitudes such as resentment, indignation, guilt, and gratitude, or, more precisely, the legitimacy of having and expressing them, we would face the prospect of an "objectivity of attitude," a stance that in his view rules out the possibility of good personal relationships, those that feature love of the sort that mutually respecting adults might have for one another. In Strawson's view, our commitment to such relationships of mutual respect or regard rules out taking this threat seriously.³⁶ Relationships of this kind *presuppose* that the participants are legitimately susceptible to having and expressing reactive attitudes. But in addition, moral responsibility consists in the legitimate having and expressing of reactive attitudes. Relationships of mutual regard, then, presuppose that the participants are morally responsible, insofar as they are appropriate targets of the reactive attitudes. Given the characterization of free will as the control condition on moral responsibility, relationships of mutual regard will also presuppose that the participants act with free will.

A skeptic about free will might agree that Strawson is right to believe that objectivity of attitude would jeopardize our personal relationships, but that he is mistaken to hold that such a stance would result or be appropriate if the causal determination of our actions by factors beyond our control did undermine the legitimacy of the reactive attitudes.³⁷ On the skeptical view, expressions of resentment or indignation would involve doxastic irrationality when they are accompanied by the belief – as in Honderich's and my view they always are -- that their target deserves in the basic sense to be its recipient.³⁸ But expressions of these reactive attitudes may also be suboptimal as modes of communication in relationships by comparison to other emotional attitudes available to us. Moreover, the attitudes whose expressions we would want to retain either may not be threatened by free will skepticism either because they are not associated with beliefs that conflict with this view, or because there may be similar attitudes not connected

with such beliefs that can fulfil the requisite functions.

Of the emotional attitudes associated with moral responsibility, moral resentment, that is, anger with an agent due to a wrong he has done to oneself, and indignation, anger with an agent because of a wrong he has done to a third party, are most closely connected with it. Expression of resentment and indignation, and gratitude on the positive side, has a significant communicative role in personal and societal relationships, and thus one might object that if we were to strive to modify or eliminate these attitudes, such relationships might well be damaged. Against this, when we are wronged in our relationships there are other emotions available that are not challenged by skepticism about free will, whose expressions can also convey the relevant information. These emotions include feeling hurt or shocked or disappointed about what the offending agent has done, and moral sadness or sorrow and concern for him. When we are recipients of kindness or generosity, there are arguably kinds of gratitude available that do not presuppose desert. One might express joy, or celebrate the beneficial action, without invoking desert.³⁹

If communication of disappointment, hurt, and sadness is to take the place of expressions of resentment and indignation, the former attitudes would need to be fostered and promoted at the expense of the latter. Some types and certain degrees of resentment and indignation are likely to be beyond our power to alter, and hence even supposing that the skeptic is committed to doing what is right and rational, she would nevertheless be unable to eradicate these attitudes. But this might be contested. Shaun Nichols cites the distinction between narrow-profile emotional responses, immediate emotional reactions to situations, and wide-profile responses, which are not immediate and may involve rational control.⁴⁰ Free will skeptics might expect that we will have limited success in altering narrow-profile, immediate resentment when we are seriously

wronged in our most intimate personal relationships. However, in wide-profile circumstances, we may have the ability to diminish, or even eliminate resentment and indignation, or at least disavow it in the sense of rejecting any force it might be thought to have in justifying harmful reactions to the wrong done. Given a skeptical conviction we take such measures for the sake of morality and rationality. Such modification of resentment and indignation and its typical role, assisted by this conviction, might well be beneficial for our relationships.

Defending the Strawsonian connection between love and freedom

According to the skeptical view, love, even of the sort featured in adult relationships of mutual regard, does not require the kind of free will required for moral responsibility in the sense at issue in the traditional debate. Let us consider four objections to this view. First, Nichols argues that sadness, for example, together with moral resolve is an inadequate substitute for resentment and indignation in personal and social relationships.⁴¹ His argument begins with the claim that these angry responses can be shown, by way of empirical studies, to be beneficial to human beings in certain significant respects. He then contends, also on the basis of empirical work, that sadness together with resolve will be much less effective.

In response, it is first of all important to count the cost of resentment and indignation in comparison with the proposed substitutes. In addition, the studies Nichols cites do not provide evidence that adult human beings, with education and determination, would not benefit overall from the substitutions in their personal and social relationships. And a case can be made that these substitutes are indeed preferable. Expression of resentment and indignation does form an important part of human relationships as they are ordinarily conceived. It motivates resistance to

oppression and abuse, and as a result it can make relationships better. But expression of resentment and indignation is also apt to have harmful effects. It often fails to contribute to the well-being of those to whom it is directed. It is often intended to cause physical or emotional pain, and can give rise to destructive resistance instead of reconciliation.

The second objection is due to Martine Nida-Rümelin, who argues that resentment and indignation and their expressions indicate a kind of respect for the agency of another, and that it is valuable in this respect.⁴² In support, treating the criminal as if his crime is a symptom of an illness is to assimilate him to a broken machine: his wrongdoing is like the computer's crashing. Respect for the agency of those prone to acting wrongly instead requires being disposed to being resentful or indignant with them. In reply, expression of resentment and indignation may presuppose that its target possesses capacities that make her worthy of respect, but from this we can't conclude that these reactive attitudes actually show or express respect. Sophisticated manipulation may presuppose that its victim is practically and theoretically rational and has a highly developed capacity for commitment to personal relationships. But while these capacities may make the agent worthy of respect, the manipulation that presupposes them does not show or express it. In the case of resentment and indignation, this kind of presupposition arguably fosters the illusion that the expression of these attitudes itself shows or expresses respect. A more convincing Kantian theme is that we respect the agency of other persons by our treating them as practically reasons-responsive. On Michael McKenna's account, it is the agent's practical rationality that is engaged in the process of blaming. Thus when the other acts badly, one might ask for an explanation with the intent of having him acknowledge a disposition to act this way, and if he has in fact so acted without excuse or justification, we then present him with reasons for taking steps to eliminate the disposition.⁴³ Here one is not treating the immoral actions of the

other on analogy with the malfunctioning of a machine or as symptoms of an illness, but instead as the actions of a rational agent the dispositions to which can be changed by presentation and acceptance of moral reasons. This is the paradigmatic way to express respect for another's agency. Expression of resentment or indignation would not seem to be required in addition for showing respect.

A third objection is developed by Seth Shabo, who proposes that the reactive attitudes are manifestations of the kind of vulnerability that is required for the best sorts of close or intimate personal relationships.⁴⁴ In support, note that we are naturally morally resentful when those with whom we have such relationships wrong us, and if in particular they thereby show disrespect or disregard for us. Avoiding resentment would seem to require making ourselves less vulnerable to the emotions and actions of the other, and that this would be apt to make our relationships less meaningful and valuable. In Shabo's account, it is the essentially personal aspect of a relationship that requires vulnerability to moral resentment, and conditioning ourselves to be immune to these reactive attitudes stands to render our relationships less personal or even impersonal.

The specific meaning of the term 'personal' is crucial to Shabo's version of the objection. In his conception, 'personal' modifies in the first instance a kind of caring:

When we care about someone's attitudes toward us in an essentially personal way, those attitudes matter to us in their own right, quite apart from what they portend for our (and others') interests. Thus, someone who hasn't received an invitation to a social event might wonder at the apparent snub, even if he or she has little desire to attend and realizes that the situation has no bearing on his or her social or professional prospects. Often in such cases, it is important to us to understand why the offending behavior has occurred,

where this is precisely a question about the attitude(s) it exhibits. This type of concern with the “meaning” of others’ behavior is the hallmark of such essentially personal caring.⁴⁵

Caring about attitudes personally is caring about them in their own right, or as reflections of that person’s deeper attitudes. It is to care about her morally significant attitudes toward oneself -- in P. F. Strawson’s terminology, about those that express the quality of her will. You are by nature resentful when an intimate friend expresses a disrespectful or demeaning attitude toward you. Shabo writes: “it is in feelings of resentment that our susceptibility to take disregard or ill will personally is *characteristically* manifested.” When the friend expresses such a disrespectful or demeaning attitude, your resentment cannot reliably be forgone or disavowed while retaining the personal nature of the caring involved in the relationship.⁴⁶

We tend not to forgo or disavow resentment in the contexts that Shabo has in mind. But this does not all by itself show that we cannot take measures that would result in substituting sadness or disappointment for resentment, and in expressing such attitudes instead. Still, Shabo’s concern is whether we can disavow and replace in these ways while retaining personal care for each other’s attitudes.

It may be instructive to consider a type of personal relationship in which it is not unusual for us to respond to expressions of disregard and disrespect with attitudes that are personal but not reactive, even though it is not the kind of relationship on which Shabo and Strawson focus. Adolescents often go through a phase in which they have attitudes of disregard and disrespect for parents, expression of which often occasion hurt feelings. Yet sometimes such expressions of disregard and disrespect do not occasion the parents’ resentment, but rather disappointment and sadness. Although these emotions do not qualify as reactive attitudes, they are nevertheless

manifestations of vulnerability on the part of the parent. They are also personal, since the teenager's attitudes toward his parents matter to them in their own right, apart from the consequences of these attitudes for their interests. Parents in such situations are sometimes resentful, but frequently they are not. So it seems that there are relationships important to us in which our care for the other's attitudes is personal, but in which we are not prone to resentment.

One might object, as does Justin Coates, that this absence of resentment is an artifact of the specific nature of the parental relationship, and that it will not carry over on a significant scale to close relationships among adults on an equal footing.⁴⁷ But first, some such adult relationships are free from resentment and feature disappointment and sadness instead. A change to this sort of emotional profile may be an option for those of us who currently have the resentful reactions. The past several centuries have witnessed very significant changes in attitudes toward criminals, those who suffer from mental illnesses, and children, and thus it cannot plausibly be argued that significant emotional change over time is not possible for us. Second, the feature that stands to rule out the legitimacy of the reactive attitudes in parental relationships is the parents' role in the moral formation of not fully morally mature children. However, adults also stand in need of moral formation, and it's precisely the dispositions to those actions that give rise to resentment and indignation that stand in need of moral reform. When relationships are functioning properly, parents care about the moral formation of their children. Wouldn't relationships of mutual regard, when functioning properly, also involve this kind of care? In the case of children, angry responses are apt to give rise to resistance rather than reform. The same may well be true for relationships of mutual regard.

Let us now consider a fourth objection, due to Coates. In his view, essential to love relationships of mutual regard are the normative (and not merely predictive) expectations that

each participant relate the other in respectful ways. But, he contends, a normative expectation that others respect us is constituted by the reactive emotions. At this point he considers the view that non-reactive emotions such as disappointment and sadness might constitute this normative expectation instead. Against this, he argues that if emotions such as disappointment and sadness constitute these normative expectations, they would also constitute normative expectations when we are sad and disappointed due to hurricanes and cancer diagnoses.⁴⁸ Moreover, it would then be legitimate for us to have normative expectations that harms due to such natural phenomena not occur. But we lack the normative expectations in these kinds of cases, and it would be illegitimate to have them. Thus the non-reactive emotions cannot constitute the normative expectations in question.

To this one might reply that we need not suppose that the normative expectations at issue are wholly constituted by emotions, whether they be reactive or non-reactive. They might instead be grounded partly in non-reactive emotions and partly in responsiveness to reasons. When one is hurt by a loved one's behavior, one may be disappointed and saddened, as in the case of the diagnosis of an illness, but what may make the difference is that he had reasons to act differently than he did, and that he is responsive to such reasons, while there is no analogous fact regarding the illness. Strawsonian sentimentalists about morality may hold that the normativity that pertains to relationships of mutual regard is wholly emotionally constituted, but this is a daring view, to which there are viable alternatives.

Demands, wrongness, and protest

Dana Nelkin asks whether relationships such as friendship are possible supposing that the 'ought' of moral obligation and specific action demand is ruled out.⁴⁹ On a plausible proposal,

what distinguishes loving relationships such as friendships and marriages apart from mere acquaintances is a structure of obligations. For instance, if A and B are friends, and if A is in dire need, then there is a strong prima facie moral obligation for A to help, with an ought of specific agent demand in play. However, if 'ought' implies 'can,' then at least in cases in which the demand is not met, the freedom to do otherwise is required as a condition on the demand that structures the relationship. One option is to deny that 'ought' implies 'can,' but this principle remains intuitive to many.

In response, consider replacing the notions of obligation and demand with those of care and commitment.⁵⁰ Care for beings with moral standing is apt to generate specific commitments in particular contexts. This kind of care would generate a commitment on the part of friends to provide help to the other when in dire need. How might we reconceive the personal moral relationship between friends A and B in a situation in which there is a threat that A will not come to B's help in time of dire need, and thus not to honor her own commitment? It's natural for A to think of himself as morally obligated to help B, and for B to make a demand of moral obligation that A help her. But instead, we might frame B's expectation in terms of the notion of moral wrongness: A can legitimately think that it would be wrong for him not to help B, and B can communicate to A that it would be wrong of him not to help her.

However, this gives rise to a further threat, according to which judgments of normative wrongness are undermined by causal determination. Ishtiyaque Haji contends, plausibly, that because of the tight connection between moral obligation and moral wrongness, the threat posed to judgments of moral obligation carries over to those of moral wrongness.⁵¹ Essential to his argument is the following principle:

S has a moral obligation to perform A if and only if it is morally wrong for S not to perform

A.

If this principle were true, then if judgments of moral obligation are undermined by causal determination, judgments of moral wrongness would be ruled out as well. But although this biconditional principle may be attractive viewed in the abstract, it captures only one aspect of the complex notion of moral wrongness. This can be made credible by considering that the right-to-left half, i.e. “If it is morally wrong for S not to perform A, then S has a moral obligation to perform A” is not clearly secure. There’s probably no situation in which it’s plausible that someone is morally obligated not to perform an action while it is not morally wrong for her to perform it. But there are cases in which intuitive that performing an action would be morally wrong for an agent, while it’s at least not quite so clear that she has a moral obligation not to perform it. Imagine that a psychopath could not have avoided lying due to his psychological disorder. The ‘ought-implies-can’ principle provides an intuitive ground for denying that he is morally obligated not to lie, while it remains open that his act was morally wrong.⁵²

An alternative notion of moral wrongness, one that isn’t biconditionally linked to moral obligation, accommodates this intuition. Alastair Norcross’s proposal for an exclusively axiological ethics involves ranking in order of value of the consequences realized, without obligation to maximize value.⁵³ We might specify that an action is morally wrong when its axiological ranking is sufficiently low. But how low? I propose: when it is low enough to justify moral protest:⁵⁴

An axiological notion of wrongness: An option for acting is morally wrong when its value is low enough in the axiological ranking for it to be morally appropriate for a relevantly positioned interlocutor to issue a moral protest against actions of this sort.

Given the Norcross view, moral protest can function as a strong recommendation against performing an action. What makes such protest morally appropriate would itself consist in its

having a relatively high ranking among salient options. This proposal does not characterize wrongness independently of when it is appropriate to protest, and so it is incapable of grounding the appropriateness of protest in wrongness. Yet it does yield the result that it's appropriate to protest a type of action only when so acting would be morally wrong, and it thus it satisfies an important intuition we have about this relation. Hence in contrast to Nelkin's claim, loving relationships can be characterized independently of the notion of moral obligation, and thus without implying freedom by way of the 'ought' implies 'can' principle. Still, Nelkin's view remains attractive, and will thus stand as a compelling way of linking love to freedom.

Free will, love and the narrative of a life

John Fischer proposes that our lives can have value that transcends the value of momentary episodes of well-being, since "insofar as we act freely, our lives have a narrative dimension of value."⁵⁵ One might imagine that he wouldn't endorse the stronger claim '*only* insofar as we act freely,' but at times he appears to: "acting freely is the ingredient that gives us the distinctively narrative dimension of value."⁵⁶ It's worthwhile to explore, then, the extent to which a narrative dimension of value might be independent of free action.

For many people, intimate and familial relationships lie at the heart of what provides meaning in their lives, and moreover, such relationships often form the core element of narratives by which they are disposed to conceive of their lives. But the emotional attachments that account for much of the value of these relationships typically do not result from our free will and action, and the category of moral responsibility does not evidently apply. One falls romantically in love, and one loves one's children without the will playing any appreciative role. Here is a story that can be told by many: we fell in love, the pregnancy wasn't planned,

terminating it wasn't even a consideration, we love our child, and having her was the best thing that's ever happened to us. Several of the most significant elements of this story are thus independent of free will.⁵⁷

Our interpersonal relationships often form the core of the stories that give our lives meaning, and the emotional bond that provides such relationships with much of their value is typically not a result of free will and action. More generally, one factor that contributes to meaning in one's life is, as Kierkegaard proposed, its unity, and the unity that a coherent narrative reflects is plausibly one sort that confers meaning.⁵⁸ But it seems that it is often the case that the core elements of such a coherent narrative, and of the corresponding meaning-conferring unity, are not dependent on the will, and others, while dependent on the will, do not require that the will be free.

Summary and Conclusion

Does true love require freedom? We've seen that the issue is complex. If freedom is conceived in a compatibilist way, as reasons-responsiveness for a significant case in point, then a view on which love is founded in responsiveness to reasons will require freedom. But here the primary issue is whether a reasons view of love is correct, and freedom would only come along for the ride. The genuinely contentious issues are whether love requires libertarian freedom, and whether loving relationships are predicated on the validity of the reactive attitudes or of demands of moral obligation, whose legitimacy is in doubt precisely because they require freedom. Philosophical opinion on these issues is divided. As a free will skeptic, I've argued that true love does not require libertarian freedom, and that it can do without the reactive attitudes and without the notion of moral obligation. But I'm not an independent observer, since I've staked out and

defended my free will skeptical claims. These issues are far from settled, and are sure to continue to be constructively debated.⁵⁹

Bibliography

Kate Abramson and Adam Leite. "Love as a Reactive Emotion." *Philosophical Quarterly* 245 (2011): 673-699.

W. S. Anglin. *Free Will and the Christian Faith*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Augustine. *Saint Augustine: Confessions*. Translated by Henry J. Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Neera Badhwar. "Friends as Ends in Themselves." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48 (1987): 1-23.

D. Justin Coates. "In Defense of Love Internalism." *The Journal of Ethics* 17 (2013): 233-255.

Fiona Ellis. "The Ethics of Love: A Paradox Dispelled." *Journal of Value Inquiry* 35 (2001): 242-262.

Joel Feinberg. *Doing and Deserving*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970.

John Martin Fischer. "Responsibility and Control," in *Moral Responsibility*, ed. J. M. Fischer, pp. 174-190. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.

John Martin Fischer. *The Metaphysics of Free Will*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza. *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

John Martin Fischer. *Our Stories*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Harry G. Frankfurt. "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person." *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-20.

- Harry G. Frankfurt. *The Reasons of Love*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Carl Ginet. "Might We Have No Choice?" In *Freedom and Determinism*, edited by Keith Lehrer, pp. 87-104. New York: Random House, 1966.
- Christopher Grau. "Irreplaceability and Unique Value." *Philosophical Topics* 32 (2004): 111-129.
- Ishtiyaque Haji. *Moral Appraisability*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Ishtiyaque Haji. *Deontic Morality and Control*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Ted Honderich. "Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, and the Smart Aleck." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 56 (1996): 855-62.
- Troy Jollimore. *Love's Vision*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Robert Kane. *The Significance of Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Søren Kierkegaard. *Either/Or*, v. 2, tr. Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Niko Kolodny. "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 123 (2003): 251-280.
- David Lewis. "Are We Free to Break the Laws?" *Theoria* 47 (1983): 113-121.
- Michael McKenna. "Assessing Reasons-Responsive Compatibilism." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8 (2000), pp. 89-114.
- Michael McKenna. *Conversation and Responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Alfred Mele. *Free Will and Luck*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- John Milton. *Paradise Lost*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005.
- Dana Nelkin. *Making Sense of Moral Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

- Dana Nelkin. Symposium contribution on *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*. In *Science, Religion and Culture* 1 (2014): 209-217.
- Shaun Nichols. "After Compatibilism: A Naturalistic Defense of the Reactive Attitudes." *Philosophical Perspectives* 21 (2007): 405-428.
- Alastair Norcross. "Reasons without Demands: Rethinking Rightness." In *Blackwell Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*, edited by J. Dreier. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- Derk Pereboom. "Determinism al Dente, *Noûs* 29, pp. 21-45.
- Derk Pereboom. *Living without Free Will*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Derk Pereboom. "Free Will, Love, and Anger." *Ideas y Valores* 141 (2009): 5-25.
- Derk Pereboom. *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Derk Pereboom. "Responsibility, Regret, and Protest." In *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, edited by David Shoemaker, pp. 121-140. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Carolina Sartorio. *Causation and Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Kieran Setiya. "Love and the Value of a Life." *Philosophical Review* 112 (2014):135-139.
- Seth Shabo. "Where Love and Resentment Meet: Strawson's Interpersonal Defense of Compatibilism." *The Philosophical Review* 121 (2012): 95-124.
- Aaron Smuts. "Love and Free Will," (ms.)
- Tamler Sommers. "The Objective Attitude." *Philosophical Quarterly* 57 (2007): 321-342.
- Peter F. Strawson. "Freedom and Resentment." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 187-211.
- Peter van Inwagen. *An Essay on Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

David Velleman. "Love as a Moral Emotion." *Ethics* 109 (1999): 338-374.

David Velleman. "Narrative Explanation." *Philosophical Review* 112 (2003): 1-26.

Susan Wolf. *Freedom within Reason*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Notes

-
- ¹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), Book III, 95-125.
- ² W. S. Anglin, *Free Will and the Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- ³ Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 86-90.
- ⁴ Derk Pereboom, "Determinism al Dente, *Noûs* 29 (1995): 21-45; *Living without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 202-204; "Free Will, Love, and Anger." *Ideas y Valores* 141 (2009): 5-25; *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 189-193; Tamler Sommers, "The Objective Attitude," *Philosophical Quarterly* 57 (2007): 321-42; Aaron Smuts, (ms.) "Love and Free Will."
- ⁵ David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109 (1999): 338-74; Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 123 (2003): 251-80; Troy Jollimore, *Love's Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Kieran Setiya, "Love and the Value of a Life," *Philosophical Review* 112 (2014): 135-39.
- ⁶ Harry Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- ⁷ Christopher Grau. "Irreplaceability and Unique Value," *Philosophical Topics* 32 (2004): 111-129.
- ⁸ Grau, "Irreplaceability and Unique Value;" cf. Fiona Ellis. "The Ethics of Love: A Paradox Dispelled." *Journal of Value Inquiry* 35 (2001): 242-262.
- ⁹ Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion;" Neera Badhwar, "Friends as Ends in Themselves,"

- ¹⁰ Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," 365-366.
- ¹¹ Setiya, "Love and the Value of a Life," 262.
- ¹² Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship."
- ¹³ William Shakespeare, Sonnet 116, quoted by Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 140.
- ¹⁴ Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 139.
- ¹⁵ Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 175-176
- ¹⁶ Setiya, "Love and the Value of a Life," 256-260.
- ¹⁷ Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*.
- ¹⁸ Harry G. Frankfurt. "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person." *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-20.
- ¹⁹ John Martin Fischer, "Responsibility and Control," in *Moral Responsibility*, ed. J. M. Fischer, 174-190 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); *The Metaphysics of Free Will* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Fischer and Mark Ravizza. *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- ²⁰ Michael McKenna. "Assessing Reasons-Responsive Compatibilism," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8 (2000), pp. 89-114; Carolina Sartorio. *Causation and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- ²¹ Carl Ginet, "Might We Have No Choice?" In *Freedom and Determinism*, edited by Keith Lehrer, pp. 87-104 (New York: Random House, 1966); Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).
- ²² David Lewis, "Are We Free to Break the Laws?" *Theoria* 47 (1983): 113-121.

-
- ²³ Alfred Mele, *Free Will and Luck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 27n18.
- ²⁴ Joel Feinberg, *Doing and Deserving* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970); Pereboom, *Living without Free Will*, xx; *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, 6, 127-128.
- ²⁵ Peter F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 187-211.
- ²⁶ Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person."
- ²⁷ Anglin, *Free Will and the Christian Faith*.
- ²⁸ Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, 88.
- ²⁹ Pereboom, *Living without Free Will*, 202; "Free Will, Love, and Anger," *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, 190; Aaron Smuts, "Love and Free Will" (ms.)
- ³⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, v. 2, tr. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).
- ³¹ Pereboom, "Free Will, Love, and Anger," *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, 191-192.
- ³² Susan Wolf, *Freedom within Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Dana Nelkin, *Making Sense of Moral Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ³³ Smuts, "Love and Free Will."
- ³⁴ Kate Abramson and Adam Leite, "Love as a Reactive Emotion," *Philosophical Quarterly* 245 (2011): 673-699.
- ³⁵ Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment."
- ³⁶ D. Justin Coates, "In Defense of Love Internalism," *The Journal of Ethics* 17 (2013): 233-255.

-
- ³⁷ Pereboom, *Living without Free Will*, 199-207; *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, 178-193; Sommers, "The Objective Attitude."
- ³⁸ Ted Honderich, "Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, and the Smart Aleck," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 56: 855-62; Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, 128-129.
- ³⁹ Pereboom, *Living without Free Will*, 199-207; *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, 178-193; Sommers, "The Objective Attitude."
- ⁴⁰ Shaun Nichols. "After Compatibilism: A Naturalistic Defense of the Reactive Attitudes." *Philosophical Perspectives* 21 (2007): 405-428.
- ⁴¹ Nichols, "After Compatibilism."
- ⁴² At a colloquium at the University of Fribourg, April 2012.
- ⁴³ Michael McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- ⁴⁴ Seth Shabo, "Where Love and Resentment Meet: Strawson's Interpersonal Defense of Compatibilism." *The Philosophical Review* 121 (2012): 95-124.
- ⁴⁵ Shabo, "Where Love and Resentment Meet," 112.
- ⁴⁶ Shabo, "Where Love and Resentment Meet," 113-114.
- ⁴⁷ Coates, "In Defense of Love Internalism."
- ⁴⁸ Coates, "In Defense of Love Internalism," 248.
- ⁴⁹ Dana Nelkin, Symposium contribution on *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, in *Science, Religion and Culture* 1 (2014): 209-17.
- ⁵⁰ Derk Pereboom, "Responsibility, Regret, and Protest," in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, edited by David Shoemaker, 121-140 (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2017).

⁵¹ Ishtiyaque Haji, *Moral Appraisability* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); *Deontic Morality and Control* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁵² Pereboom, *Living without Free Will*, 141-148; *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, 138-146; "Responsibility, Regret, and Protest."

⁵³ Alastair Norcross, "Reasons without Demands: Rethinking Rightness.," in *Blackwell Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*, edited by J. Dreier (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

⁵⁴ Pereboom, "Responsibility, Regret, and Protest."

⁵⁵ John Martin Fischer, *Our Stories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 167.

⁵⁶ Fischer, *Our Stories*: 151-152.

⁵⁷ Pereboom, "Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life," 199.

⁵⁸ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, v. 2.

⁵⁹ Thanks to Christopher Grau, John Fischer, Michael McKenna, Dana Nelkin, and Aaron Smuts for valuable comments.