

LOVE AS UNION: A DEFENSE OF THE UNION THEORY OF LOVE

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

I defend the thesis that the union theory of love is the best theory of what intimate love consists in. To do this, I motivate the idea that intimate love has something to do with being moved by the beloved's desires, emotions, beliefs, and/or actions. Then I survey what union theorists have said. Objections to union theory are examined, and said objections help in knowing how not to construct a union theory. Other theories of love are examined; none of them provide an adequate account of intimate love.

Then I present my own union theory. Roughly, stated only in terms of desires, it is as follows. There are several things about Bob which, if Martha were to know of them, she would perceive as factoring into his own lived experience (desires, emotions, beliefs, actions). Let's consider his desires. Some of these desires, perhaps all of them, Martha wouldn't think of as being destructive to who Bob is if he were to get what he wants. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of these non-destructive desires, she would desire that he be fulfilled in said desire. Martha wants to want Bob's fulfillment in said desire. She stands behind this aspect of herself. She in no way reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob's non-destructive desires to her own desire that Bob be fulfilled in his desire. These sorts of things obtain if and only if Martha loves Bob.

This theory provides a way of understanding how it is that we are moved by the beloved's desires. I also examine ways in which it can be applied to emotions, beliefs,

and actions. After presenting and defending my theory, I also comment on how love understood as union is connected to motivation as well as non-intimate versions of love.

DEDICATION

To my parents, who love me and I them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Herein I argue that union theory is the best theory of what intimate love is. Union theory says that love consists in some type of union between lovers. To say anymore than that would be to get ahead of myself. The whole of the dissertation intends, in part, to unpack and defend what exactly it means to say that love consists in union.

Here's a roadmap for how I intend to defend union theory. Chapter 1 makes more explicit my goals and focus. We need to have some idea how intimate love is different than other types of love, and Chapter 1 helps with that, among other things. Chapter 2 looks at what union theorists have said. Chapter 2's main purpose is to provide a context for understanding objections leveled at union theory. Chapter 3 examines objections to union theory and responds. Obviously, if there are objections to union theory which are successful or which haven't been answered, union theory is weaker for that. But, more importantly, objections to union theory help us know how not to construct a union theory. Union theory is vindicated insofar as other theories of love don't tell us what intimate love is as well as union theory does. So, chapter 4 looks at alternative theories of love and finds them wanting. Chapter 5 is my own development of union theory that is clear, exact, and free from the objections and shortcomings examined in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 will make us wonder: if love is union, how does this union come about? Chapter 6 answers this question. Chapter 7 concludes. As I just said, Chapter 1 makes more explicit my goals and focus. I turn now to do exactly that.

A Motivation for Thinking About What Love Is

I want to love well. And it's my opinion that, to love well, among other things, one must have an idea of what love is.¹ So, in what follows, I try to say what love is. Below, I discuss other motivations for thinking about what love is.

Intimacy

I mean all this in the intimate sense of 'love'.² From here on out, unless I indicate otherwise, I'll be talking about intimate love. Intimate love can be romantic or sexual, but it doesn't have to be. Family and friends love in intimate ways.

Here's a way to get a rough handle on what intimate love is (ultimately, I'll argue that union theory tells us exactly what it is).³ Consider Bob and Martha.⁴ You can think of them as romantically involved, or as friends, or as family. It shouldn't matter for my purposes. Martha intends to give Bob his medicine. She intends to do this irrespective of whether he wants it or not. Were Bob to hear of Martha's intentions, he'd cry. And, were Bob to cry, Martha would feel sad. Her intention, though, would remain. "Bob's gonna get his medicine!"

¹ I'm not here saying that to love one must have an idea of what love is. I'm saying that to love *well* one must have an idea of what love is. I'm also not saying that to love well one must have a perfect idea of what love is. I'm saying that to love well one must have *an idea* of what love is, one that is at least somewhat accurate.

² This is Bennett Helm's concern as well in Bennett Helm, "Love, Identification, and the Emotions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 46 (2009): 39-40. Helm has helped me see that intimate love is at least one of the things we're interested in most when it comes to the study of love.

³ My thanks to Ben McMyler for pressing me on what can and can't count as intimate love.

⁴ The use of the names 'Bob' and 'Martha' were inspired by my grandparents-in-law, Bob and Martha. Except for occasional times wherein Martha might declare that "Bob's gonna get his medicine," The use of these names aren't meant to be autobiographical.

Here we see at least two different ways of being moved by Bob. First, Martha might be moved by Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions. We see this in her disposition to feel sad were Bob to cry. Second, Martha might be moved, irrespective of Bob's desires, emotions, or beliefs, by Bob's physical health, psychological health, relational health, how Bob is doing morally, among other things. We see this in her intention to give Bob his medicine. You might think that only the first is intimate in character. This is what I think. Or you might think that both are intimate in character. If you thought this, I would disagree. Though I care about which words are the right words to use, it's not my main concern. My main concern is to say what Martha's love consists in when it's moved by Bob in the first way. I will call it intimate love, both because that's what I think it is and because I need a way of referring to what I'm talking about. I'm happy to use other terms so long as we keep track of what we're talking about: the first way of being moved by Bob, that is, by his desires, emotions, beliefs, actions.

Some might argue that there's no major difference between the two ways of relating to Bob. But I specifically said that the second way of relating to Bob consists in not being moved by Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, etc. whereas the first is moved by exactly those things. They are different. Others might insist that, in being moved by Bob's health and insisting upon the medicine, Martha is loving Bob. I'd agree, actually, though I don't defend that position here. I think that being moved by health or morality, irrespective of desires, emotions, or beliefs, is loving. I just don't think it's intimate.

At this point, it is important to highlight the following. Both my conception of what intimate love is and my intention of focusing on being moved by the beloved's

desires, emotions, beliefs, etc. are pivotal for the rest of my argument. This understanding of intimate love comes up over and over in the pages to come.

And yet it's true that, very often, perhaps always, if you're moved by your beloved's desires, emotions, beliefs, and actions, you'll also be moved by your beloved's health and moral status. I intend to say how this is true in chapter 6. I say more about this below in the sections entitled "Who Cares About What Love is, Anyway?" and "Criteria for a Good Theory of What Love is."

Union Theory

Return to where I began: I want to say what intimate love is. And, herein, I argue that union theory is the best theory of what love is. Union theory (as it were) takes us beyond "being moved by Bob's desires" and tells us what intimate love is exactly, it tells us exactly what it means to say that Martha is moved by Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, and/or actions. Union theory has it that love is union between lovers. But what, exactly, are the things that are unified? And what is it about their relationship that makes it union as opposed to something else, some other way of relating? Soon we'll see the answers union theorists give to these questions. But first, a little context is necessary, context that is necessary for understanding union theory.

Union theory has historical precedent in at least Plato, Montaigne, Kant, and Hegel.⁵ My focus, however, is on its contemporary analytic expression. Union theory

⁵ See Alan Soble, "Union, Autonomy, and Concern," in *Love Analyzed*, ed. Roger Lamb (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 66-67.

was quite popular from the early 1980's to the mid 1990's. Its defenders were many: Robert C. Solomon, Roger Scruton, Robert Nozick, Mark Fisher, Neil Delaney, and more.⁶ Its objectors, however, were few: Alan Soble and, to a lesser extent, Bennett Helm and David Velleman. As we'll see, defenders of union theory weren't clear or, at least, weren't forthright, in stating their views. Often they would speak of two *Is* forming a *we* or of two people becoming "one" without saying much more than that. Any further clarification they might have provided wasn't highlighted or wasn't placed at the forefront. It was easy to miss. Thus, the few objectors that came along tended to read the union theorists either as advocating mystery or as advocating extreme positions which were hard to believe and easy to refute. I hope to remedy this situation to some extent by providing a union theory which is clear and has a good chance of being true. At the very least, I'll make union theory much clearer than it's been so far.⁷

⁶ Robert C. Solomon, *Love: Emotion, Myth, and Metaphor* (New York: Anchor Press, 1981); Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Robert Nozick, "Love's Bond," in *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 68-86; Mark Fisher, *Person Love* (London: Duckworth, 1990); Neil Delaney, "Romantic Love and Loving Commitment: Articulating a Modern Ideal," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1996): 339-356. Kyla Ebels-Duggan, "Against Beneficence: A Normative Account of Love," *Ethics* 119 (2008): 142-170 defends what I'm pretty sure is a normative version of union theory; i.e. if you love someone, then you have an obligation to be in union with them. Benjamin Bagley, "Loving Someone in Particular," *Ethics* 125 (2015): 477-507, though the term "union theory" isn't used, is a defense of union theory (and I will be defending that that's the way to read Bagley below in chapter 2).

⁷ C. S. I. Jenkins, "What Is Love? An Incomplete Map of the Metaphysics," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1 (2015), 354 elaborates on a way of thinking about love which explicitly endorses love's incomprehensibility. Later, she discusses (what she calls) primitivism about love – that "...no (nontrivial) identity theory of [love] is true." *Ibid.*, 357. She also talks about (what she calls) quietism about love – "...that we should not attempt to address metaphysical questions about love." *Ibid.*, 357. I haven't encountered any union theorist who is attempting to be a primitivist or a quietist.

Who Cares About What Love Is, Anyway?

I've already said what my motivation is in writing about what love is: wanting to love well together with my opinion that, to love well, among other things, one must have at least some handle on what love is. I attempt no justification of either of these two things (my desire or my opinion). But I do attempt developing two further motivations for thinking about what love is. I do this to motivate you, the reader. I do it as well because the second motivation reveals a criterion for a good theory of what love is.

“Am I in love?” “How will I know when I'm in love?” “Do I really love my brother?” “Does my mom love me?” We wonder these things. And, in the process, we also end up wondering, “And what is love, anyway? What is this thing I want to be true of me regarding another?” All this to say, we care about love, and, at least some of time, we care about what it is. That's why you should care about thinking about what love is. Because you already care about what love is. Once you get to thinking about what love is, thinking about love is something that's obviously worth doing. That's my second motivation for thinking about what love is.

Here's the third. The third is more substantial. What will motivate? What will provide us with direction in life? What will give us something to do? Or, better, what will allow us to say, “Now I know what I'm supposed to do in life!” and say it with gusto? What is it that gives meaning and purpose? These are questions we certainly want answers to. I now argue that love is intimately connected to the answers to these questions.

Something important to note at this point is that when I talk specifically of meaning and purpose, I don't intend to be talking about *the* meaning of life. I also don't intend not to be talking about it. Whether what I've said and will say is connected to *the* meaning of life and whether what I say is connected to there even being such a thing is for someone else to say.

Here's the argument. If a loved one dies, then certain sources of motivation, direction in life, activity, of what we are supposed to do, of meaning and purpose are taken away. This is one of the things I mean when I say that there's an intimate connection between love and the answers to the questions I listed above. But there's more. If someone you love gets sick or is having relationship troubles or is feeling depressed, you'll be ready to do whatever you can to make those things better. You'll be ready to do whatever you can to make sure that the person gets back to good working order. There's a tight connection, then, between love, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, motivation, direction in life, activity, what we're supposed to do, and meaning and purpose. If we love, and if we're subject to things going wrong (that is, if we're alive), then we have something we're motivated to do, we have direction in life, we have something we're supposed to do, we have meaning and purpose.⁸

⁸ Hichem Naar, "A Dispositional Theory of Love," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 94 (2013): 342-357 argues that love is best thought of as a disposition. Naar thinks this helps with cases where there's a lack of the sort of motivation I'm pointing to but where we still want to say that the person in question loves the beloved. In those sorts of cases, if we adopt a dispositional view of love, then, Naar thinks we can just say that the disposition is still present (thus love is still present), but that love is masked. If Naar is right in his argument, it is very easy to dispositionalize union theory. Also, in chapter 6, I consider ways in which the motivations in question, though they make sense given love, aren't necessary, given love.

So, again: you care about staying motivated, having direction in life, having something you're supposed to do, meaning and purpose. If you figure out what love is, you'll have a better time figuring out how to get and maintain these things. Why? Because you'll have guidance in figuring out what will motivate, provide direction, etc. I.e. "Is this thing that I think will motivate connected with love?" If so, then, likely, it will motivate. If not, then it may motivate. But it may not. I just argued, then, that if you figure out what love is, you'll more likely figure out how to get and maintain motivation, direction, etc. This doesn't mean you'll succeed or even come close. You'll just more likely figure these things out. (Ways love might be connected with motivation will come later in chapter 6.)

Criteria for a Good Theory of What Love Is

But now notice that a criterion has emerged from thinking about why one should care about what love is. What I've just said in the previous section suggests that love is connected to motivation, direction in life, what you're supposed to do in life, etc. I haven't said how they are connected. But saying how they are connected is the sort of thing that a good theory of love ought to provide. A criterion for a good theory of love has emerged: a good theory of love will explain how it is that love is connected to motivation, direction in life, what you're supposed to do in life, etc. I intend to make good on this criterion. I intend to make good on other, more obvious criteria as well. A

good theory of love will answer objections better than its rivals; it will say what love is better than its rivals; it will resonate with people's experiences of love.⁹

Transition to Union Theories

I turn next to what union theorists have actually said. This is necessary to do. It helps us get a better handle on what union theory is. It helps us understand what union theory's objectors had problems with. And both what others have said and the objections themselves will help me better argue that union theory is the best theory of what love is. If I'm successful in this, then I'll be successful in my main concern – saying what intimate love is – and at least further down the road towards loving well.

⁹ Thanks for Robert Garcia for helping me make this paragraph clearer. If there are parts that are still unclear, then that is my own fault.

CHAPTER II

A SURVEY OF UNION THEORIES

Now I want to provide a sense for what union theorists have said. I don't intend to comment at length regarding what they might have meant by certain specific things. Exegesis isn't the goal. The goal, again, is just to get a *sense* for what they've said. After we do, we will allow the objections to union theory in chapter 3 to refine the sense we got from their positions. We will also, in chapter 4, consider other theories of love. All this will lead to a union theory which best accounts for intimate love in chapter 5. A few other comments on union theories in general are in order.

Most union theorists attempt to analyze romantic love specifically and not just love in general. My focus is intimate love, which includes romantic love but extends beyond it. I think that the phenomena that union theorists point to when it comes to romantic love make really good sense of intimate love as well.

Not all union theories are alike. The union theory I end up with in chapter 5 won't be the same as any of the theories we're about to look at. Even still, it will be a union theory, and I will show how that's the case in chapter 5.

Robert Solomon

Robert Solomon, in *Love: Emotion, Myth, and Metaphor*, tells us that love involves or is constituted by a "...shared identity rather than mutual pleasure or mere

utility. Love is more than mere companionship.”¹⁰ In another place, Solomon says, “...the self that is created through love is a *shared* self, a self that is conceived and developed together.”¹¹ And earlier he had said that “...intimacy—and love—consist in *shared identity*, a redefinition of self... [The relationship] can no longer be understood as a mere conjunction of the two but only as a complex one.”¹² In love, “two selves mutually reinforce one another, rather than compete with one another...”¹³ Solomon is less than clear on what exactly he means by a shared self or shared identity. But we can set aside this difficulty for now. Soon we’ll see Solomon respond to this sort of concern. But his response may not satisfy everyone. At the end of this section, I’ll suggest a way to understand these ideas that might help a little, but it will ultimately require more work, work which I do in chapter 5. At this point, it is not necessary to have a complete or comprehensive understanding of Solomon. Nor is it necessary to completely or comprehensively understand any of the other union theorists. All that is necessary is to get a sense for the types of things union theorists characteristically say. This will provide a context for the objections lodged against union theory, and it will provide something to aim at in developing a union theory which is, at the very least, understandable.

Solomon defines love differently in other places; but even these different definitions connect with the idea of a shared self. Here’s an example where he starts off by defining love as a type of emotion: “[Love] is...an emotion through which we create for ourselves a little world—the loveworld, in which we play the roles of lovers and,

¹⁰ Robert C. Solomon, *Love: Emotion, Myth, and Metaphor* (New York: Anchor Press, 1981), 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹² *Ibid.*, xxx.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 144.

quite literally, create our selves as well.”¹⁴ Love, he says, “...involves nothing less than a change of self, and suddenly we find ourselves precariously dependent upon one another...”¹⁵

I mentioned before the worry that union theories are just appeals to mystery. Solomon is aware of something like this objection – instead of mystery, he responds to the charge of mysticism. He insists that his view is not mystical: “This creation of a shared self is sometimes described in an overly mystical manner... But in fact there is nothing mystical about shared selfhood, self-identity conceived through identification with another person, or group, or institution. Being on a team with ‘team spirit,’ for example, is a sharing of one’s self...”¹⁶ The phenomenon under question, Solomon wants to say, is the same type of thing that happens with team spirit. Thus, it is not mysticism and, presumably, not mysterious. Another objection might be that it’s obviously false that lovers lose their identity – “I’m still me,” someone might say, “I haven’t lost my identity.” Solomon wants to clarify at this point. “...in love one may come to identify oneself wholly in terms of the relationship, but it does not follow that individual roles and differences are submerged... [Love] is coming to accept a view of one’s individual self as defined in and through the other person.”¹⁷ Notice, then, that you still exist. It is just that you are defined through another. We see that there exists a tension between what we’re doing in love – sharing an identity – and why we’re doing it – a drive for

¹⁴ Ibid., 146.

¹⁵ Ibid., 149.

¹⁶ Ibid., 151.

¹⁷ Ibid., 152.

self-idealization and “finding oneself.”¹⁸ “The self transformed in love is a shared self, and therefore by its very nature at odds with, even contradictory to, the individual autonomous selves that each of us had before... ..the bonds of love are always, to some extent, ‘unnatural,’ and our shared identity is always, in some way, uncomfortable.”¹⁹ Solomon embraces this tension. “...a philosopher will recognize...a *dialectic*, the constant interplay of words and roles through which two (or more) people define themselves and each other *both* as individuals and as a shared identity.”²⁰

A final comment is in order. It will help to clarify Solomon’s theory, and it will pave the way for my own union theory of love in chapter 5. Solomon insists, as we’ve seen, that this phenomenon of sharing oneself is anything but mystical. It is normal, in fact. He doesn’t do much to show that this is the case, but, at least once, he does do something. “...love is...to take the other’s desires and needs *as one’s own*.”²¹ Solomon, as far as I’ve been able to find, only speaks of desire this one time. He doesn’t connect the language of desire to the language of shared selfhood. It seems, though, that the language of shared selfhood can be made clearer via the language of desire. That is, you might think that sharing yourself with someone (which Solomon thinks of as love) just is to desire what they desire (which Solomon also says is love). To say this is to go a step or two beyond Solomon. It’s also not quite what I’d want to say, and it’s potentially

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 146.

²⁰ Ibid., xxxi.

²¹ Ibid., 150.

vulnerable to objections we'll look at in chapter 3, especially the objections from Helm.²²

Roger Scruton

Roger Scruton's analysis of love is found within his *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic*, which, as its name suggests, is mainly about sexual desire. Scruton never succinctly states what he thinks love is, but the following will help us get a pretty good sense for where he stands. "...I instinctively tend to identify with him, to feel threatened by what threatens him, and consoled by what consoles him. *His* reasoning becomes mine."²³ Even more than that, reciprocity is involved.²⁴ "It becomes friendship only when set within the context of mutuality. I wish not only to make my friend's reasons mine; I want him to make my reasons his."²⁵ Scruton marks off love most obviously when he shows how friendship becomes love:

The friendship of esteem becomes love just so soon as reciprocity becomes community: that is, just so soon as all distinction between my interests and your interests is overcome. Your desires are then reasons for me, in exactly the same way...that my desires are reasons for me. If I oppose your desires, it is in the way that I oppose my own, out of a sense of what is good or right in the long run.

²² One way to see this was suggested to me by Benjamin McMyler – that mere coincidence of desire isn't enough. It must be that the lover has the desire *because* the beloved has the desire. More on this below in chapter 5.

²³ Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 227.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

...such love is *fed* by esteem, which causes me to have confidence that what you want, I shall want also. ...There are degrees in this, of course. I can dissociate myself from some of your desires, and to some extent. But that is only because there are degrees of love. ...My demand for your virtue is the demand that, in identifying with you, I do not enter into conflict with myself. ...Thus he who loves aims at the other's good, in just the way that he aims at his own good.²⁶

A few things to note. First, Scruton's way of putting things when he says "[y]our desires are then reasons for me, in exactly the same way...that my desires are reasons for me" will guide the development of my own union theory in chapter 5. Second, Scruton's comments about opposing the beloved's desires and demanding the beloved's virtue are aspects of Scruton that I will leave behind. I do this because they seem non-intimate in character – being moved not by Bob's desires and emotions but by some notion of virtue. Third, note that Scruton allows for there to be degrees of love. I will do the same. There are ways that love can be more intense, it seems. You love, but you only love a little. Or: you love, and you love a lot. Unpacking exactly what this amounts to will come in Chapter 5.

Robert Nozick

Nozick dedicates a whole chapter to love in *The Examined Life*. In the introduction, Nozick says that he wrote *The Examined Life* as a way to think about living as well as a way to think about what's important in life. He wants to clarify his thinking

²⁶ Ibid., 230.

and also his life. Love, therefore, is a natural topic to address. Eight things are included in Nozick's conception of love. I spend quite a lot of time on Nozick because Alan Soble, union theory's main objector, spends a lot of time objecting to Nozick.

The first of eight conditions on love: “[y]our own well-being is tied up with that of someone...you love. ... When something bad happens to one you love...something bad also happens *to you*. (It need not be exactly the same bad thing...) If a loved one is hurt or disgraced, you are hurt; if something wonderful happens to her, you feel better off.”²⁷ If you love someone, and if their well-being goes up, so does yours. If theirs goes down, so does yours. But Nozick wants to be clear: “[n]ot every gratification of a loved one's preference will make you feel better off... her well-being, not merely a preference of hers, has to be at stake.”²⁸ Nozick doesn't really say what well-being is. But he does have more to say about tied well-beings in a footnote. And this footnote will be important for my own development of union theory – it talks about the emotional component of tied well-beings, and I will focus on unions of emotions in chapter 5. (By “tied well-beings” I just mean to refer, in shorthand, to Nozick's idea that the lover's well-being will go up if the beloved's well-being goes up, and it will go down if the beloved's well-being goes down. In this sense, the lover's well-being is tied to the beloved's well-being.) Here's the footnote:

A somewhat sharper criterion can be formulated of when another's well-being is *directly* part of your own. This occurs when (1) you say and believe your well-

²⁷ Robert Nozick, “Love's Bond,” in *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 68.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

being is affected by significant changes in hers; (2) your well-being is affected in the same *direction* as hers, an improvement in her well-being producing an improvement in your own, a decrease, a decrease; (3) you not only judge yourself worse off, but feel some emotion appropriate to that state; (4) you are affected by the change in *her* well-being directly, merely through knowing about it, and not because it symbolically represents to you something else about yourself...; (5) (and this condition is especially diagnostic) your *mood* changes: you now have different occurrent feelings and changed dispositions to have particular other emotions; and (6) this change in mood is somewhat enduring. Moreover, (7) you have this general tendency or disposition toward a person or object, to be thus affected; you *tend* to be thus affected by changes in that person's well-being.²⁹

As I said, important here is Nozick's focus on emotion. I see the fact that Nozick partly unpacks tied well-beings in terms of emotion as an invitation to think of union theory in terms of emotion. I do this, to some extent, in chapter 5.

All that was Nozick's first condition on love. The second is this. "People who form a *we* pool not only their well-being but also their autonomy. They limit or curtail their own decision-making power and rights; some decisions can no longer be made alone."³⁰ In a footnote Nozick elaborates. "This does not mean a permanent veto; but the other party has a right to have his or her say... After some time, to be sure, one party may insist on [doing what they prefer to do], but what they each have forgone, in love, is the

²⁹ Ibid., 69.

³⁰ Ibid., 71.

right to act unilaterally and swiftly.”³¹ So, if you love someone, then, for at least some decisions, you won’t make said decisions without considering what your beloved would like to do (and, often, decisions will take a little longer to make). Nozick ties this second feature of love to the first, reviewed above. “If your well-being so closely affects and is affected by another’s, it is not surprising that decisions that importantly affect well-being, even in the first instance primarily your own, will no longer be made alone.”³² In other words, the reason you want your beloved to consider your opinion about certain decisions is because your well-being will go up or down depending on how said decision results for your beloved. Similarly, the reason you yourself wait to make certain decisions and first take counsel with your beloved about what you should do is because their well-being will go up or down depending on whether your well-being goes up or down as a result of said decision.

Third, “[Lovers] want to be perceived publicly as a couple, to express and assert their identity as a couple in public.”³³ Nozick doesn’t unpack this aspect of love much more than what is here quoted. I include it for the sake of representing Nozick accurately. It is easy to see how this too might result from Nozick’s first condition on love, the one regarding tied well-beings. In most circumstances, we want to be perceived as we are. If my well-being is tied to another, then I will want to be perceived as such. Nozick doesn’t say this himself, however.

³¹ Ibid., 71.

³² Ibid., 71.

³³ Ibid., 71.

Fourth, “[t]o love someone might be, in part, to devote alertness to their well-being... For example, a person in a *we* often is considerably more worried about the dangers of traveling...when the other is traveling alone... ...it seems plausible that a person in a *we* is alert, in general, to dangers to the other that would necessitate having to go back to a single individual identity...”³⁴ If you love someone, you’ll be alert to their well-being. Again, this makes sense if we grant tied well-beings. If your well-being is tied to another, then you’ll be alert to their well-being. What happens if your well-beings are tied together but you are not alert to the other’s well-being? Nozick never considers this question explicitly. Likely the answer would be that said person would not love the other. (I want to stress that I am only saying what I think Nozick would want to say.)

Fifth, “[o]ther criteria...also might be suggested, such as a certain kind of division of labor. A person in a *we* might find himself coming across something interesting to read yet leaving it for the other person, not because he himself would not be interested in it but because the other would be more interested, and one of them reading it is sufficient for it to be registered by the wider identity now shared, the *we*.”³⁵ If you love someone, then, in certain cases, you will do certain things for them so that they don’t have to, and you will leave certain things undone so that they can do them for you. Your well-being, after all, will go up in either case (this last sentence is my own addition as a way of unifying his various criteria, not Nozick’s).

³⁴ Ibid., 72.

³⁵ Ibid., 72.

Sixth, “[e]ach person in a romantic *we* wants to possess the other completely; yet each also needs the other to be an independent and nonsubservient person.”³⁶ Nozick helpfully adds that, “...perhaps this desire just *is* the desire to form an identity with the other.”³⁷ I think this “perhaps” of Nozick’s is exactly right, though Nozick himself doesn’t pursue it. Possession, in other words, amounts to joint decision-making – if joint decision-making characterizes one’s love, there’s a sense in which you “own” ways that certain decisions are made. We could also say that independence and nonsubservience are plausibly thought of as necessary components of well-being. If your well-beings are tied, and if you are alert to what their well-being involves, and if it involves independence and nonsubservience, then you’ll want your possession to be one that maintains their independence and nonsubservience.

Seventh, “[e]ach person in love delights in the other, and also in giving delight...”³⁸ Recall Nozick’s footnote on tied well-beings: “...(3) you not only judge yourself worse off, but feel some emotion appropriate to that state; (4) you are affected by the change in *her* well-being directly...; (5) (and this condition is especially diagnostic) your *mood* changes: you now have different occurrent feelings and changed dispositions to have particular other emotions...”³⁹ Here Nozick is saying that the lover’s mood changes depending on the change in the beloved’s well-being. It would make sense then that, if the beloved’s well-being goes up, then the change in mood could plausibly be one of delight – delighting in the other, as he says here in this seventh

³⁶ Ibid., 74.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 74.

³⁹ Ibid., 69.

criterion. Though Nozick isn't clear on this connection, it is a way of uniting certain things that Nozick says.

Eighth, "...it must be we ourselves who are loved, not a whitewashed version of ourselves, not just a portion. In the complete intimacy of love, a partner knows us as we are, fully."⁴⁰ This, the eighth and last of Nozick's conditions on love, is captured both by tied well-beings and by delighting in the other and in giving delight. If your well-being is tied to your beloved's well-being as they really are and not to whitewashed versions of who they are (and vice versa), then of course you will want to be known, and you'll want to know them. And if you are truly to delight in your beloved and not some made up version of who they are, then you must know your beloved. Again, Nozick doesn't say this himself.

Mark Fisher

Mark Fisher's theory comes closest to mine. In addition, as we'll see in the next chapter, chapter 3, Alan Soble, an important critic of union theory, forcefully objects to Mark Fisher's union theory. Because of this, I develop Fisher's union theory in some detail.

In *Personal Love*, Fisher begins with "...humble benevolence: the desire that the other person obtain what she desires, not for reasons related to my good but simply because it is what she desires – the reasons are hers, and because they are hers they are

⁴⁰ Ibid., 75.

mine.”⁴¹ I’ll be returning to this idea in my own theory of love – the idea specifically of desiring that the other person be fulfilled in their desire only because they desire it.

Fisher, though, doesn’t think this is the way to think about love. “...there are many important features essential to all or most kinds of love which either cannot be derived from humble benevolence at all – their absence is quite compatible with it – or ‘derive’ from it only in the sense that there is a loose causal tendency for it to encourage them, and this sense is not appropriate when we are trying to define an essence.”⁴²

Keeping humble benevolence close at hand, Fisher looks elsewhere. “Once [love] starts, how does it go? ...your existence is a good for me, and I want things to go well for you.”⁴³ This idea that the beloved’s existence is a good for the lover and the desire that things go well for the beloved: both of these will play a vital role in chapter 6. Somehow (Fisher doesn’t say how), changes are brought about in the lover. I will discuss what the changes are exactly below, but the lover’s way of processing said changes is important to note: “...I will tend to think of these changes as good because brought about by my love for you. In mutual love the same tends to happen to you. ... Neither of us can be sure where it will lead. This can contribute to our sense that we are embarked on an adventure.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Mark Fisher, *Person Love* (London: Duckworth, 1990), 20.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 20-21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25. The idea of not being sure where things are going and the positive way of thinking about this as an adventure both have resonances with Benjamin Bagley’s recent defense of an improvisational view of love as developed in his “Loving Someone in Particular.” As I read Bagley, he’s a union theorist. I comment on this more below.

The changes, and what they consist in, are the essence of love for Fisher. I quote him at length and then comment.

...the lover comes more and more to sympathize with her beloved, to identify with him; less and less to distinguish his desires, projects, conceptions and beliefs from her own. This process, which I refer to as fusion...is easiest to understand and most desirable to experience when, love being mutual, it develops equally in both persons. But it is also the essential process in the development of unrequited love. In the development of a fused self the role of humble benevolence is usually crucial. As a lover I come to absorb your conception of your good: I want for you the things you want for yourself, not because they are for your good as I see it, but because they are for your good as you see it... I will tend to absorb not only your desires but your concepts, beliefs, attitudes, conceptions, emotions, and sentiments. For insofar as your desires are not simply raw, unreasoned, unaccountable urges they will be embedded in these other mental structures which give them sense in your life. In coming to love you I will undergo a process of coming to see everything through your eyes, as it were. This is how humble benevolence tends to bring about fusion.”⁴⁵

My comments are these. First, Fisher admits: “[f]used perception is no doubt quite rare...”⁴⁶ But with other types of fusion, they’re quite common, according to Fisher. “Fused emotion seems to me not unusual in loving couples.”⁴⁷ As I noted above while

⁴⁵ Ibid., 26-27.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 27-28.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 27-28.

reviewing Nozick, I'll have more to say about unions of emotions in chapter 5. Second, for Fisher, "[i]t is crucial to remember that personal fusion can never be complete..."⁴⁸ Third, humble benevolence sometimes leads to fusion but, sometimes, it does not. Fourth, Fisher here envisions love as perceiving things, believing things, feeling things, wanting things in many of the ways one's beloved does, but, again, not in all the ways. That it's not in all the ways is worth underlining, especially in light of objections soon to come in chapter 3:

...the fusion of selves which I have tried to describe is always only partial. So part of the time I see things, and act on and react to things, as my own old self, and part of the time as our new fused self. That is, the fusion is partial and precarious, and it is to be expected that even well-fused couples with a well-established 'we' will sometimes find that 'we' have to think, act, or react without having the wherewithal to do so. There is no common view; we see things utterly differently... at the same time, love impels me to want whatever she wants.⁴⁹

Fusion is limited. Another way Fisher puts it is that "[f]usion is a matter of degree: ...degree of resemblance; ...degree of importance to us of those qualities which we come to share; ...[degree in] the number of ways in which, and the extent to which, we come to perceive, feel and act as a single person... [T]he perception, feeling or act does not exist unless both persons participate in it, and neither can say which of the two has originated it."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 30-31.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 27-28.

They've affected you, and you've affected them. Change has occurred, and you've each taken on certain aspects of the other person's values and beliefs. And, importantly, the changes that have occurred wouldn't have occurred were it not for both parties' willing participation. One person shaped the other, but then, because of the way they've been shaped by the other person, they shape the other person back. This process continues. What aspect of myself – what belief or emotion or desire – began when? Was it ultimately my beloved who started me on this course towards these values, beliefs, emotions, or desires? Or myself? There's a chance the lovers will find the true answer here. But they might not.

Here we come very close to Benjamin Bagley's improvisational theory of love, as I mentioned before. I don't give Bagley a stand-alone section as a union theorist because, even though I do think his theory is a union theory, it isn't pronounced or obvious. Bagley, I think, is more useful as a way of refining the way we think about Fisher's theory. In addition, treating Bagley as a supplement to Fisher will help later in chapter 3. Soble's objections to Fisher won't seem as plausible when we have Bagley in mind.

The basics of Bagley's theory, then, are as follows. Improvisation in general (Bagley focuses on music as he begins to lay out his theory of love) involves pursuing and involving yourself in "...an end whose content depends, epistemically and ontologically, on the actions you actually take over the course of pursuing it, such that, relative to your end, you have reason to do something just to the extent that it admits of

justifying explanation in terms of past and future actions you perform...⁵¹ You play some notes which won't make sense until you're done improvising. If you're playing music with someone else, you play notes and then they play notes in a way that hopefully fits with the notes you've played. All the while, you're both trying to bring the music to a fitting end, an end that will make sense, though you don't know how it's going to make sense yet.

Bagley then connects this to interpersonal relationships, a sort of person-to-person improvisation which he calls "deep improvisation."⁵² "...deep improvisers determine the content of basic values they identify with, values that define the way of life they find fundamentally worth leading. As a deep improviser, you work out who you are by working out your approach to life."⁵³ In other words, when you do something in life, you try to make sense of it, and you do things that make it make sense, just like in the case of music above.⁵⁴ Suppose now that you're doing this sort of thing with another person. "...if you are pursuing an end whose content is not fully accessible to you but are justified in taking some agent to be pursuing it as well, that person becomes a valuable source of practical testimony—someone whose judgments of what counts as appropriate with respect to the end merit prima facie acceptance."⁵⁵ And here is where union starts to come in. "If something seems worth doing to her, he'll see, and feel, this

⁵¹ Benjamin Bagley, "Loving Someone in Particular," *Ethics* 125 (2015), 494.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 496.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 497.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 497.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 497-498.

as a hint about what he himself has reason to do and respond accordingly.”⁵⁶ They’re trying to determine their values in the same way you are, it seems. And so their reasons are yours, and their resultant actions are yours as well.

Though it’s very much a toy example, suppose you’ve both been homeschooled and you’re both trying to figure out whether homeschooling is good or bad (or something in between). The other person does something in pursuit of said goals, so you try it out as well; maybe they join a particular association of homeschoolers, and you do too. It’s working well. Then you add something to the mix (maybe you sign your kids up for certain activities that are run through the public school). The beloved is central to shaping the values you’re in the process of shaping for yourself, and you are central for them. Bagley’s definition of love, in fact, is very similar to Fisher’s conception: “...to be committed to attributing the same significance to particular cases that you do is precisely what it is to love you.”⁵⁷ Here each person has so shaped the other person that the values they hold are not only similar but so uniquely shaped by each other that no one else holds those values in the exact same way that the lovers do. Additionally, neither of them would have arrived where they did had they not improvised together. “...one’s sense of how to live [becomes] so entwined with one’s lover’s as to make one lost without them.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid., 502.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 505.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 506.

Neil Delaney

In “Romantic Love and Loving Commitment: Articulating a Modern Ideal,” Neil Delaney argues for three theses: “...people want to form a distinctive sort of *we* with another person, to be *loved for properties* of certain kinds, and to have this love generate and sustain a *commitment* to them of a certain type.”⁵⁹ Delaney is concerned not with the nature of love but with “...what sorts of attitudes, dispositions and feelings...modern Westerners *regard* as being preconditions for fulfilling romantic relations.”⁶⁰ Even still, his comments on what we want or prize are helpful in determining what love is. The second and third theses he argues for have a lot to do with reasons for love – *why* we love the people we do, the forces that move us to love, the reasons we’d cite if asked why we love. (The forces that move us and the reasons we’d cite could be the same or different.) Delaney’s position regarding reasons for love doesn’t affect, positively or negatively, his position on what he thinks love is. Especially in chapter 4, when examining other theories of love, I sometimes go into issues regarding reasons for love because of its direct bearing on what love is for the philosopher in question. Here, though, with Delaney, I won’t go into his thoughts on reasons for love because it doesn’t have a direct bearing on how we understand his union theory, as I’ve already said.

Delaney talks about love by using the idea of the *we*. The *we* involves “...wanting to identify with another, to take another’s needs and interests to be your own and to wish

⁵⁹ Neil Delaney, “Romantic Love and Loving Commitment: Articulating a Modern Ideal,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1996), 340.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 339.

that she will do the same.”⁶¹ The *we* also involves wanting “...the advancement of your interests and the securing of your needs to both be and be perceived to be *directly connected* to the lover’s well-being...”⁶² The following, though, is not necessary or sufficient for a *we*: if you’re interested in something, then so is your lover.⁶³ Delaney goes on to list some other things the *we* doesn’t involve. It doesn’t involve your lover helping you pursue something merely to keep you happy.⁶⁴ It doesn’t involve your lover making your interests their own “...only to the extent that she takes her personal well-being to be associated with them.”⁶⁵ In wanting to form a *we*, you don’t want your personal attachments to be compromised or underappreciated.⁶⁶ More specifically, you don’t want “...the distinctively personal dimensions to your achievements” to be underappreciated.⁶⁷ Though it is not clear exactly what Delaney means when he talks about “interests” and “well-being” or how they are connected, what he has to say here about the *we* sounds a lot like Scruton above and perhaps somewhat like Nozick.

More could be said, especially concerning Delaney’s treatment of reasons for love. But, because reasons for love aren’t my focus, I leave them to one side.

⁶¹ Ibid., 340.

⁶² Ibid., 340.

⁶³ Ibid., 340.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 340.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 341.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 341.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 342.

What's to Come

Thus ends my survey of union theorists. My goal, as I said, was just to get a sense for what union theorists are driving at. My point wasn't to say exactly what each one is saying and how what each one is saying is different than the other. We've given ourselves a context for the objections philosophers have raised to union theory, and those objections, which we will look at in the next chapter, will help shape how it is we frame union theory in chapter 5.

I think it's apparent, now after reviewing the many ways union theorists frame their union theories, that there's need for a taxonomy of different types of unions. As I develop my own version of union theory in chapter 5, I will have occasion to provide an extensive, though not exhaustive, taxonomy of different types of unions.

CHAPTER III

HOW NOT TO CONSTRUCT A UNION THEORY

Three things to note at the outset. First, as I said before, objections to union theory are few in number. The number of objectors that target union theory by name are three of the four examined here, Velleman, Helm, and Soble. But Velleman's explicit dealing with union theory is more of an afterthought (as we'll see). Soble's treatment is by the far the most detailed and comprehensive. I will spend most time with Soble. Whiting says things which could very well apply to union theory. If they were applicable, they'd be objections just waiting to happen. Because of this, I preempt their potential application to union theory instead of ignoring them.

Second, as I also mentioned in chapter 1 and as you might have gathered in our survey of union theory in chapter 2, union theorists are ambiguous in what they think love is, exactly; they don't answer obvious questions. This has allowed objectors to fill in the details of union theory in a way perhaps unbecoming of union theory – "Union theories say x; that can only mean y; and y is obviously wrong; so, union theory is wrong." Union theorists and their objectors bear some responsibility for these types of objections. For the most part, I will answer the objections by saying, more or less, "Don't worry. I'll make sure that *that* doesn't follow from my version of union theory." Although this chapter could be viewed as your typical "respond to objections" chapter, I prefer to view the objectors as helpfully guiding us in paths not to take. How should a union theory not be constructed? The objectors help us answer this question. And, in

answering it, we'll be on a much better path towards a well developed union theory once chapter 5 comes along. Throughout, therefore, I treat these objections as producing criteria or desiderata (depending on the objection in question) for how not to construct a union theory – criteria or desiderata which will later guide me as I construct my own union theory. And the end of the chapter, I will list all of the criteria and desiderata in one spot.

Third, I deal with the objections in order of, what I perceive to be, least worrisome to most worrisome and not in chronological order. Having noted these three things, we move on to the objections (or potential objections).

Jennifer E. Whiting

In “Impersonal Friends,” Jennifer Whiting argues that “...the virtuous person’s attitude toward herself serves as a normative paradigm for her attitudes towards her friends.”⁶⁸ Another way to put this is that “...self-concern, like concern for one’s friends, is to be justified by appeal to character. ...the character of *whomever*—oneself or another—is the intended object of concern.”⁶⁹ In other words, Whiting thinks that our concern for our friends is justified in the same way that our concern for ourselves is justified; namely, by appealing to the character of our friends or ourselves.

“...the...concern for others is the same in kind as the concern for oneself...”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Jennifer E. Whiting, “Impersonal Friends,” *The Monist* 74 (1991), 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

Whiting next notes “...two general strategies for achieving such parity [between concern for friends and concern for self].”⁷¹ Whiting thinks that the first strategy is the right strategy. Her problem with the second strategy is the very thing that could become an objection to union theory.

For context, let’s start with the first strategy, which Whiting calls the “generic strategy.” It goes like this.

The *generic* strategy is to take some characteristic common...to oneself and others as the ground of concern and...[claims]...that this justifies taking any reasons for self-concern provided by this ground to be the same in kind with any reasons for other-directed concern provided by this ground. One might, for example, argue that we have the same sort of reasons to respect the humanity in ourselves that we have to respect the humanity in others. ... [A] philosopher may have the same sort of reason to cultivate philosophical accomplishment in others capable of achieving it that she has to cultivate philosophical accomplishment in herself.⁷²

Some characteristic is a reason for concern for *whoever* has it. Just as I’m concerned for myself because of said characteristic, in the same way I am concerned for that person over there because they have it too. This is, then, a way that “...the...concern for others is the same in kind as the concern for oneself...”⁷³

⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

⁷² Ibid., 8-9.

⁷³ Ibid., 8.

The second strategy – she calls it “egocentric” – demands “...the relationship to be such that the agent is justified in regarding the good of another as *part* of her own. This allows one to represent concern for others as *extensions* of self-concern.”⁷⁴ Here again we see a way in which “...the...concern for others [could be] the same in kind as the concern for oneself...”⁷⁵

Whiting worries that this egocentric strategy might be a form of “...potentially objectionable colonization.”⁷⁶ She allows that perhaps “...the language of parts is intended only to require that the agent value another’s good *in the same way* that she values her own.”⁷⁷ But she goes on to say that “[i]f I value my own good and the activities in which it consists *as mine*, then valuing the good of another in the same way that I value my own seems to require me to value the good of another and the activities in which *it* consists *as mine*.”⁷⁸ This, again, strikes Whiting as an “...unnecessary and potentially objectionable sort of colonization.”⁷⁹ The rest of Whiting’s article goes on to defend the generic strategy laid out above, which has no bearing on union theory.

Even though Whiting doesn’t say anything about union theory herself, if we applied this sort of objection to union theory, it would go like this. If someone can be part of me such that concern for him is really just an extension of concern for me (or such that valuing the good of another is valuing my own good), then this is an

⁷⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 10.

objectionable form of colonization.⁸⁰ Union theory has it that love involves someone's being a part of me such that concern for him is really just an extension of concern for me; and/or it declares that love involves my valuing the good of another as being my valuing of my own good. Therefore, union theory thinks of love in a colonizing sort of way and, therefore, in a morally objectionable sort of way – union theory entails that love is always morally wrong.⁸¹ But love isn't always morally wrong. Therefore, union theory is wrong.

And, you have to grant, union theorists sometimes do sound like this. Solomon speaks of re-creating the self through the beloved. Scruton speaks of all distinction between my interests and your interests being overcome and your desires being reasons for me in the same way that my desires are reasons for me. Nozick has as his focus tied well-beings, and, as we saw, it's very easy to extend Nozick into thinking of tied well-beings as justifying a concern for another because, after all, what happens to them, happens to me. Fisher talks about sharing many of one's beliefs and desires. Delaney focuses on the *we* and on identifying with the beloved. What do all these things mean? More importantly, do they entail that concern for my beloved is really just an extension of concern for me?

⁸⁰ Concern for him really just being an extension of concern for me or valuing the good of another just being valuing my own good both seem like things that shouldn't be done (or things that shouldn't *be*). This is because there seems to be a sort of selfishness or self-focus going on which isn't good. But even so, is it colonizing? Colonization has something to do with forcing others to take on your own way of doing things. Even if one were to admit that union theory entails selfishness, it might not entail colonization. Even if I'm wrong about this, though, my union theory won't entail selfishness or colonization. My thanks to Robert Garcia for helping me think this through. All remaining mistakes are my own.

⁸¹ Whiting doesn't say that the colonization is objectionable because it is morally wrong, but that's the way I understand her.

My response to all this is that when, in chapter 5, I develop my union theory, I won't talk of people being parts of other people. My development won't entail that concern for another (or valuing the good of another) is concern for oneself (or valuing one's own good). My union theory won't look anything like colonization. We've gained some useful guidance in developing a union theory, criteria!

NO PARTS. A good union theory will not talk of parts in any way.

NO "IN TERMS OF." A good union theory will not talk of concern for others in terms of concern for oneself.

NO COLONIZATION. A good union theory will not entail colonization or any other morally objectionable state or relationship.

Bennett Helm

In chapter 4, we'll look at Bennett Helm's positive theory of love in more detail. For now, I focus my attention just on his arguments against union theory in "Love, Identification, and the Emotions." Helm, unlike Whiting, has union theory specifically in view – he objects specifically to union theory. Let's take a look.

Helm says that

[W]e must be able to distinguish between the interests of the lover and those of the beloved. Yet the union view makes the blurring of this distinction the centerpiece of its account of love; this is, it seems, a matter of the lover's simply *appropriating* the beloved's interests for her own, rather than caring about them

for the beloved's sake... Although intimacy requires a kind of closeness, such closeness should not be construed in a way that undermines the separateness of the two persons. Consequently, it seems, the union view's account of love does not capture the relevant sense of intimacy.⁸²

This could be one objection or it could be two. I'll take it as two just to make sure that I'm responding to as much as might be here. First we have the charge of blurring. If love is union, then love involves the blurring of the lovers (whatever this amounts to – it might amount to appropriation, but I'm treating these as separate arguments); this is wrong, morally or factually; therefore, union theory is wrong. The idea of being factually wrong just means, for example, that love doesn't, in point of fact, involve a blurring of the lovers. Second we have the charge of appropriation. It's claimed that union theory somehow commits its adherents to the idea that love, in every case, involves appropriating the beloved's interests, making them your own, and, further, that love which involves appropriation in this way is bad or that it's false that all cases of love involve appropriation. Just what appropriation is, however, Helm doesn't say. It might even be what Whiting has in mind when she talks about colonization.

Before responding to these arguments, we need to look at one more. Here again he has union theory specifically in view. "...the intimacy of concern is intelligible only in virtue of this connection of the object of your concern to your own identity: your concern for yourself and your own identity is thus that in terms of which we are to

⁸² Bennett Helm, "Love, Identification, and the Emotions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 46 (2009), 40. Something to notice: Helm is concerned, just as I am, to account for intimate versions of love.

understand any intimate or distinctively personal concern for others.”⁸³ Union theorists, Helm thinks, are committed to the idea that intimate concern for others is best understood as being your own concern for yourself. And Helm thinks this is wrong, morally or factually.

These might all sound like just one objection put in three different ways. Whether we have one, two, or three objections, however, this won't affect the effectiveness of my response. Also, these might all sound a lot like Whiting. Indeed, Helm interacts with Whiting and uses her language of egocentricity when discussing union theory.⁸⁴ Any of these objections – union theory demands the blurring of lover and loved, union theory demands appropriation of the beloved's interests, union theory demands that care of other is care of self – could be clarified so as to be the same as Whiting's moral objection involving colonization.⁸⁵ Let me explain. Helm's objections, thought of through the lens of Whiting, would run as follows. “All love is union; all union involves blurring; all blurring of that sort is colonizing; all colonization is morally wrong; but not all love is morally wrong.” Or, in the case of appropriation, “All love is union; all union is appropriation; all appropriation of that sort is colonization.” (The rest of the argument is the same as before.) And finally, “All love is union; all union entails care of the other as being care of self; that sort of care is colonizing.”

I go into all this because, even though Helm might have had this moral objection to union theory in mind, it could also be that Helm has more of a “factual” objection in

⁸³ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 41-42.

⁸⁵ They could also be couched in terms of Soble's argument from robust concern. See Soble's argument below for what I mean by this.

mind. In other words, blurring doesn't have to be colonizing or morally wrong; but one thing's for sure: blurring doesn't always happen when love happens. And: it's not so much that appropriation is always morally wrong; rather, it's just not true that love always involves appropriation. And finally, suppose your care of Ralph is really just care of yourself. That might be wrong or it might be morally neutral or it might be positively good. "It doesn't matter," Helm might be saying. "What's really important to see is that love doesn't always entail love of others as love of self."

My response to Helm is twofold. First, there's no indication that all union theorists conceive of love of others as blurring, appropriation, or as love of self. True enough, as we saw, Fisher talks about having the same beliefs and desires as one's beloved, and he talks about not knowing where said beliefs came from. This might be seen as blurring. It doesn't have to be appropriation. It isn't love of self. Delaney specifically argued against being interested, say, in baseball because your beloved is interested in baseball. Solomon might get close to blurring with the re-created self. But none of the others do. As for love of others being love of self, the closest we get is Nozick. He does indicate that the lover will be concerned for the beloved's well-being because the lover will be affected by whatever happens to the beloved. But just that fact in itself doesn't entail that our concern for ourselves is that in terms of which we're to understand our concern for others. I can be concerned for another because of their tie to me while at the same time being concerned for them just for them. It might be argued that the union theorists never made these issues clear. And I would concede the point.

But that's a different sort of objection to make. And it's one that I hope to answer in chapter 5 when I develop my own version of union theory in a way that's clear.

(Someone might wonder why I didn't make these same points with Whiting. Whiting wasn't targeting union theory specifically. It could be that Whiting, were she presented with union theory, would never raise the objections she did in the case of certain theories of friendship.)

In any case, my second response to Helm is my recurring response: when I start developing union theory, I'll be sure that there's no blurring of lovers (in any reasonable sense). I'll make sure that lovers don't take on their beloved's interests such that, in all cases of Sarah's interests, concerns, and desires, if Sarah is interested in, concerned about, or desires to garden, then I too am interested in, concerned about, or desire to garden. I'm not positive if this is what Helm means by appropriation. Whether he means this or not, it remains the case that this is something I won't do. (Earlier I had said that Solomon's union of sharing yourself with someone else might be thought of as desiring what they desire, and I had said that this way of thinking about union was potentially vulnerable to objections. Here we see what I meant. Later, I'll refine this idea of desiring what your beloved desires so as to be objection-free.) Finally, my union theory will not say or entail that "...your concern for yourself and your own identity is...that in terms of which we are to understand any intimate or distinctively personal concern for others."⁸⁶

As with Whiting, Helm guides us in what not to do. So, it's time for some more criteria.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 41.

NO BLURRING. A good union theory won't insist on the blurring of persons; this might be factually wrong and, furthermore, though Helm doesn't say this, it falls under the category of mysterious/hard to understand. So:

NO MYSTERIES. A good union theory won't be mysterious.

NO SAME INTERESTS. A good union theory won't insist that you have the very same interests and desires of your beloved.

David Velleman

David Velleman's main focus in "Love as a Moral Emotion," as with Whiting, isn't union theory. We will look at two objections raised by Velleman. In the first, he mentions two versions of union theory in two different footnotes. With Velleman's second objection, union theory is nowhere mentioned. But, as with Whiting, his second objection could turn into an objection to union theory. And, as with Helm, we will save Velleman's positive project regarding what love is until chapter 4. It should be said, however, that Velleman's positive theory of love results in what could be considered a third objection to union theory. So, although I will treat Velleman here as if he just has two objections to union theory, in point of fact he has three. I will develop said third argument in chapter 4. And I'll wait until chapter 6 to respond. Waiting until chapter 6 will allow the best response possible.

Velleman, in connection with this, says that most contemporary analytic philosophers "...tend to conceive of [love] as having an aim, in the manner of a Freudian

drive.”⁸⁷ After providing several examples of this from Henry Sidgwick, Laurence Thomas, Harry Frankfurt, Gabriele Taylor, William Lyons, Patricia Greenspan, John Rawls, Alan Soble, and, important for us, Robert Nozick, Velleman concludes that “[t]he common theme of these statements is that love is a particular syndrome of motives— primarily, desires to act upon, or interact with, the beloved.”⁸⁸ Velleman thinks that what most analytic philosophers think about love is all a “fantasy” – love isn’t a drive, says Velleman, love doesn’t have an aim or goal or outcome in view. Why think this?

Velleman first argues against the idea that love involves a desire to be with or interact with the beloved. “[S]urely,” he says, “it is easy enough to love someone whom one cannot stand to be with. Think here of Murdock’s reference to a troublemaking relation. This meddling aunt, cranky grandfather, smothering parent, or overcompetitive sibling is dearly loved, loved freely and with feeling: one just has no desire for his or her company.”⁸⁹ The same goes for divorcing couples who tell their children that they still love each other, says Velleman.⁹⁰ These are all counterexamples, in his mind, against the idea that love must involve a desire to be with the beloved.

Next Velleman confronts the idea that love involves the desire or impulse to promote the beloved’s interests. “Certainly, love for my children leads me to promote their interests almost daily; yet when I think of other people I love—parents, brothers, friends, former teachers and students—I do not think of myself as an agent of their

⁸⁷ J. David Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” *Ethics* 109 (1999), 351.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 352-353.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 353.

interests.”⁹¹ Love doesn’t involve a constant desire to *do* for the beloved. It’s also true, according to Velleman, that love doesn’t demand taking on a conception of oneself as the agent or “advancer” of the interests of the beloved. Velleman would, of course, “...do [his parents or brothers or friends or former teachers or students] a favor if asked, but in the absence of some such occasion for benefiting them, I have no continuing or recurring desire to do so. At the thought of a close friend, my heart doesn’t fill with an urge to do something for him, though it may indeed fill with love.”⁹² Here, it seems, occasional favors (if asked) are fine as something that can happen in and because of love, but a continuing or recurring desire to benefit one’s beloved is not. Suppose I’m thinking of my beloved. I’m not thinking of a promise I’ve made or of something that he or she obviously needs. I’m just thinking of them. As I do so, it’s not as if I have some driving force to do something for the beloved.

Velleman also thinks there’s a moral objection in the neighborhood: “...a love that is inseparable from the urge to benefit is an unhealthy love, bristling with uncalled-for impingements. ...someone whose love was a bundle of these urges to care and share and please and impress—such a love would be an interfering, ingratiating nightmare.”⁹³ If love were to always involve this way of relating, then love would always involve something unhealthy, something nightmarish. But that’s false. Love isn’t always unhealthy or nightmarish.

⁹¹ Ibid., 353.

⁹² Ibid., 353.

⁹³ Ibid., 353.

How might these objections apply to union theory? Velleman gives us some hints: in one footnote he deals specifically with Nozick, and, in another footnote, he mentions Scruton. Velleman says that Nozick "...thinks that love yokes together the welfare interests of lover and beloved, but these interests are also formulable in terms of motives—if not the motives that the parties actually have then the ones that they rationally would or ought to. Nozick goes on to speak about these motives in much the same terms as the other authors [the list of philosophers who supposedly conceive of love as a drive mentioned above]."⁹⁴ And, concerning Scruton, Velleman briefly notes that "Scruton considers and rejects the claim that love approaches its object with no aim."⁹⁵ It's true that Scruton's account of love involves aims and desires, and it's true that Nozick's tied well-beings have motivational implications. Velleman thinks that his objections are applicable to union theory, though I do want to stress that Velleman's focus is not on union theory.

If we put these objections in terms of union theory, how would they go? There are three in number: (1) that love doesn't necessarily involve the desire to be with the beloved, but that union theory necessitates the desire to be with the beloved; (2) that love doesn't necessarily involve conceiving of oneself as the agent of one's beloved's interests, but that union theory demands conceiving of oneself as such; (3) that love doesn't necessarily involve a constant desire to benefit or do something for the beloved, but that union theory demands this anyway.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 353n58.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 354n61.

My first response, whether Velleman meant to say this or not, is that union theory nowhere says any of these things. Nozick says that lovers want to be seen as a couple, but that's not the same thing as always wanting to be with them. Being an agent of the beloved's interests isn't mentioned or implied or entailed. The same goes for constantly having to do something for the beloved – just as Velleman says he's ready to do things for his beloved if asked, that's more or less what the union theorist will want to say as well.

And, once again, my recurring response is that none of these things will show up in chapter 5. In my view, we are guided by Velleman in ways not to develop union theory. Here are some more criteria:

NO DEMAND TO BE WITH. A good union theory won't entail that the lover always or often demands to be with their beloved.

NO AGENT OF INTERESTS. A good union theory won't entail that the lover have a self-conception of being the agent of their beloved's interests.

NO CONSTANT DESIRE TO DO. A good union theory won't entail that the lover has a constant desire to do something for their beloved.

There might be union theories that entail these unhappy outcomes. But hopefully mine will not.

I move on now to Velleman's second objection which could, potentially, be put to union theory (though Velleman does not). I quote Velleman at length, which will help provide context for the objection:

This...comes from Bernard Williams, discussing the case of a man who can save only one of several people in peril and who chooses to save his own wife.

Williams remarks, "It might have been hoped by some (for instance, his wife) that his motivating thought, fully spelled out, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's wife." ... No doubt, the man also has nonmoral, self-regarding reasons for preferring to save his wife. Primary among these reasons may be that he is deeply attached to her and stands in horror at the thought of being separated from her by death. But attachment is not the same as love. Even a husband who long ago stopped loving his wife—stopped really looking or listening—might still be so strongly attached to her as to leap to her rescue without a second thought.⁹⁶

Velleman here argues that you can have attachment without love; so, love and attachment are not the same thing. It's necessary to state briefly Velleman's positive view of what love is. Notice how he talks about "really looking or listening." Roughly, Velleman thinks that love is perceiving the worth of someone such that you become emotionally vulnerable to them – this is what he means by *really* looking or listening.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 340-373. I include Velleman's introducing of Williams at the very beginning of Velleman's paper. That is why the citation begins at 340. I do this for context's sake. Velleman's argument is found on 373.

The issues of whether Velleman's theory of love is correct and how it relates to union theory I postpone until chapter 4.

The worry, put to union theory, might go like this. Solomon says that love "...involves nothing less than a change of self, and suddenly we find ourselves precariously dependent upon one another..."⁹⁷ Scruton speaks of "...instinctively tend[ing] to identify with him, to feel threatened by what threatens him, and consoled by what consoles him..."⁹⁸ Nozick talks of tied well-beings, and Fisher says that "...it may be necessary to assume also that love tends to defend itself, that mutual love involves a fear of anything that may diminish it by reducing the extent of fusion..."⁹⁹ Delaney speaks of the interests of the beloved being directly connected to the well-being of the lover.¹⁰⁰ Any or all of these might seem to entail that attachment is in view. It might seem that love is union and that union is attachment or at least that attachment is sufficient for union. If this is right, then, if Velleman's counterexample to attachment's sufficiency for love is successful, then his is also a counterexample to union's sufficiency for love.

I will respond in two ways. I will first argue that Velleman hasn't succeeded in providing a case where you have attachment but not love (even where love is thought of

⁹⁷ Robert C. Solomon, *Love: Emotion, Myth, and Metaphor* (New York: Anchor Press, 1981), 149.

⁹⁸ Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 227.

⁹⁹ Mark Fisher, *Person Love* (London: Duckworth, 1990), 32.

¹⁰⁰ Neil Delaney, "Romantic Love and Loving Commitment: Articulating a Modern Ideal," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1996), 340.

in Velleman's terms). And then, second, I will argue that Velleman's idea of attachment is not necessary for union.

To understand my first response, we've got to be clear: Velleman never says that, in order for someone to be emotionally vulnerable to someone else, the cause of said vulnerability has to be seeing the worth of that person. Seeing someone's worth is one way emotional vulnerability might be produced. But there are other ways it might be produced or maintained as well. So, in the case of the husband who is attached to his wife, he may or may not be emotionally vulnerable to her as far as Velleman's counterexample goes. What Velleman insists upon is that the husband does not perceive the worth of his wife such that the result of said perception results in emotional vulnerability. Even still, says Velleman, the husband might be attached to his wife. Given all this, exactly what does attachment consist in, according to Velleman?

Velleman gives us two hints. The first is when he talks of the husband standing in horror at the thought of being separated from his wife by her death. The second is the husband's automatic leap to rescue her. With the second, it's not clear that we have a case of attachment. If all we have is automatic bodily movement, this might be due to pathways in the brain or wrote muscle memory, but those things surely aren't attachment.¹⁰¹ With the first, if the husband stands in horror at the thought of separation by death without perceiving her worth, if it's just said feeling of horror with no perception of her value, that too, at least to me, doesn't seem like attachment. A feeling is evoked with respect to

¹⁰¹ A disposition towards certain types of automatic and thoughtless bodily movements might, at one point, have been brought about by attachment. But the attachment might have long since passed, leaving just the automatic responses. My thanks to Robert Garcia for helping me think this through.

something he doesn't see as precious. "She doesn't rank high in value for me. But wow: I sure am feeling horrified at the thought of her death." If that's what's going on, it's not attachment.

I could be wrong, especially with what I say regarding the husband's horror. Because of this, as a way of covering all my bases, I return to the strategy I've been implementing this whole chapter. Stated in general terms, Velleman's indicators of attachment are: (i) feeling some powerful emotion at the thought of things that might be true of your beloved (where said things don't seem to include desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions) and (ii) automatic bodily responses at the thought of things that might be true of your beloved (where said things don't seem to include desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions). Whether these are indicators of attachment or not, my union theory of love as presented in chapter 5 will have it that neither of (i) or (ii) is constitutive of love. This is partially due to the fact that responses to things that might be true of one's beloved which have nothing to do with the beloved's desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions (such as someone's possibly drowning or being separated from someone by death), are ways of being moved by the non-intimate. Of course, normal people who are drowning express desires and emotions. Were the husband moved by those, then we'd have intimacy on our hands. Recall our discussion of intimacy at the beginning of chapter 1, and think of Martha's being moved by Bob's health, moral status, etc. If a way of relating can be a case of attachment wherein the attachment exists irrespective of the other person's desires, emotions, or beliefs, then my theory of love and union won't have anything to do with attachment. But if attachment demands being moved by the person's

desires, emotions, or beliefs, then, more than likely, attachment won't be separable from intimate love.

It is worth mentioning that, just because feeling horror at the thought of your beloved dying isn't intimate (on my view), it doesn't follow that feeling horror at the thought of your beloved dying isn't in some way closely related to intimate love. And it doesn't mean that feeling horror at the thought of your beloved dying isn't love. Of course it is! Chapter 6 concerns itself with these and other matters.

Before we move on, here are some more criteria, inspired by Velleman, for how not to construct a union theory.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE. A good union theory won't require feeling some powerful emotion at the thought of something that might be true of your beloved (where said thing doesn't include desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions).

BODILY RESPONSE. A good union theory won't require automatic bodily responses at the thought of something that might be true of your beloved (where said thing doesn't include desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions).

Alan Soble

Alan Soble dedicates an entire essay to union theory in his "Union, Autonomy, and Concern." He argues against its various versions, focusing especially on Nozick and Fisher. The conclusions of Soble's main arguments are these: union theory entails the loss of autonomy of some sort; without autonomy, there can be no robust concern of

lover for beloved; and attempts on the part of union theorists to maintain robust concern fail. Soble thinks that robust concern is necessary for love. My plan, for the rest of this chapter, is to look carefully at all of Soble's arguments with the same intention as before – with the intention of learning how not to construct a union theory. I first look at Soble's insistence that robust concern is necessary for love, and I argue that robust concern is not necessary for love, at least not when it comes to intimate love. Then I assume, for sake of argument, that robust concern is necessary. I proceed, at that point, to demonstrate that Soble's arguments regarding the loss of autonomy and his arguments that robust concern is impossible without autonomy are not successful. All the while, I continue making, from time to time, the same point I've been making all along – good union theories shouldn't be developed such that they are or entail what Soble is objecting to.

Let's begin with robust concern. We need to know what it is, and then we can take a look at why Soble thinks it is necessary for love. Soble has various ways of putting it. "A quite ordinary (and true) thought is that when x loves y , x wishes the best for y and acts, as far as he or she is able, to pursue the good for y ."¹⁰² This seems easy enough to understand – love demands that we wish the best for our beloved and that we pursue their good, so far as we are able. But later on, he goes into even more detail, specifying that it is not for oneself that one wishes well for one's beloved and that, when it comes to robust concern, one doesn't necessarily act for one's own good: "[i]n robust

¹⁰² Alan Soble, "Union, Autonomy, and Concern," in *Love Analyzed*, ed. Roger Lamb (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 65

concern, x wishes y well for y 's own sake, not for x 's, and x acts accordingly to promote specifically y 's well-being, not necessarily x 's own."¹⁰³ This idea of not necessarily promoting one's own good means that robust concern makes "...logical room for x 's promoting y 's good for y 's own sake, independently of how such acts necessarily affect x 's good."¹⁰⁴

And finally, there's one last bit from Soble that's important for understanding what he thinks robust concern is.

Sometimes x will be at least divided between doing well for y in y 's sense and paternalistically doing well for y in x 's sense of her good, if what y wants is, from x 's view, bad for y It seems perverse that x 's love for y is so easily discredited by x 's sometimes acting on the thought that x knows better than y what is good for y [T]he loves of mere mortals are frequently visited by an emotional tension caused by a conflict between [allowing the beloved to get what they want or endorsing it] and paternalistic benevolence.¹⁰⁵

In other words, because of robust concern, if the lover disagrees with the beloved over the good of the beloved, the lover can deny the beloved what they want, and they can do "...well for [the beloved] in [the lover's] sense of her good..."¹⁰⁶

As we'll see later, Soble thinks that union theory is in tension with robust concern. Soble offers no argument that robust concern is a necessary condition for intimate love. It may be that Soble didn't have intimate love in mind when he objected to

¹⁰³ Ibid., 78.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 89.

union theory. Soble's view of non-intimate love might be entirely true and important (or it may not be). But my question is whether Soble's arguments, regardless of his intentions, offer any reason to think that union theory doesn't have the right analysis of *intimate* love. If robust concern isn't necessary for intimate love, then Soble's arguments offer no reason to think that union theory doesn't have the right analysis of love. In order to see that robust concern isn't necessary for intimate love, think again of Bob and Martha with Martha intending to give Bob his medicine. Remember that she intends to do this irrespective of whether he wants it or not. This is the paternalistic concern which Soble dealt with above. Also, as seems fairly clear from the block quote above, Soble's notions of "wishing y well" and "y's own good" concern things like Bob's health. Soble is concerned with both the willingness to resist Bob's desires, emotions, and beliefs and with being moved instead by Bob's physical health, psychological health, relational health, or how Bob is doing morally. When Martha is moved by Bob's desires, emotions, or beliefs, I argued that there's something about this that is intimate in quality (recall Martha's disposition to feel sad were Bob to cry). I'm interested in the type of love that is moved by Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, and/or actions and not the type of love that is moved by other things irrespective of Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, and/or actions. Robust concern is of the latter sort. Soble's argument might raise problems for union theorists who want to account for robust concern. But I'm not trying to account for robust concern. Soble's arguments won't defeat my own union theory because of what I'm trying to analyze; namely, intimate love.

Of course, even though Soble insists that robust concern sometimes conflicts with the beloved's desires and emotions, one could, if guided by a desire to account for intimate love, just remove that part of what Soble says. They might insist on the necessity of being moved by Bob's desires or emotions or beliefs. In other words, they could say, "What I'm interested in is when x wishes y fulfillment in y 's desires for y 's own sake, not for x 's, and x acts accordingly to promote specifically y 's fulfillment, not necessarily x 's own." In what follows, I argue that Soble's arguments do not establish that union theory conflicts with autonomy. I also argue that even if they were to establish that union theory conflicts with autonomy, they do not establish a conflict with robust concern in the sense I've just now specified.

There is a place for robust concern in Soble's sense. Intimate love and robust concern, in Soble's sense, are very much connected in some important way. I said as much in chapter 1 and just again in connection with Velleman. In chapter 1 I said that, very often and maybe even always, if you're moved by your beloved's desires, emotions, beliefs, and actions, you'll also be moved by your beloved's health and moral status. But, also as I said before, how this is so will have to wait until chapter 6 where I can unpack things more fully. My task for now is a negative one: demonstrating that Soble's arguments are lacking.

As I said above, Soble begins by arguing that union entails the negation of autonomy. His two main targets are Fisher and Nozick. Soble argues that both of these union theorists remove what Soble calls "cognitive autonomy." It's only with Nozick

that autonomy in the sense of freedom to choose is called into question, according to Soble.

Soble's summary of Fisher's position is exactly right, as far as I can tell. It points to the substantial sharing of beliefs and desires.

Fisher claims that one nuclear ingredient of love is the lovers' merging into a single entity: fusion is the ideal state, it is the lovers' goal, and it is at least partially, but substantially, achievable. As love develops, according to Fisher, the lover more and more comes to see the world, everything, through the eyes of the beloved, and so comes to share his or her beliefs and desires.¹⁰⁷

Soble goes on. "The inability to distinguish these desires and beliefs is essential to Fisher's concept of fusion; it gives body to the unified *we* created in love out of two previously distinct individuals."¹⁰⁸ Soble has two objections to this idea. The first is that it is "chimerical."¹⁰⁹ The second is that it "cancels cognitive autonomy."¹¹⁰ In support of its being chimerical, Fisher says that "...even in very close relationships, lovers know quite well to whom to attribute thoughts, beliefs, and desires."¹¹¹ Of course, that's not what Fisher is claiming – on Fisher's view, each knows that the one belief belongs to each party. Fisher instead claims that lovers have many of the same beliefs and that the origins of the beliefs are difficult to trace – was it I or you that really first took a turn in believing as we do? I was riffing off of you, but had you already riffed off of me at that

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 71.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 72.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 71.

point?¹¹² The idea that lovers share beliefs, the idea that their views of the world are affected by each other (back and forth throughout a substantial period of time), the idea that this process of shared and affected beliefs can sometimes be difficult to trace: none of this is chimerical. And even more than that, even though Fisher insists on the difficulty of tracing such beliefs and desires, I will not do so. Here we have perhaps not a criterion but a desideratum:

NO DIFFICULTY OF TRACING. A good union theory won't make the difficulty of tracing the origin of a shared belief or desire a necessary condition for love.

I've also said, directed by Helm above, that shared desires, regardless of their origins, aren't necessary. Because of this desideratum, I won't develop my union theory in exactly the way that either Fisher or Bagley does.

What support does Soble offer that sharing beliefs and desires such that they are difficult to trace cancels cognitive autonomy? As best I can tell, Soble thinks that said sharing *just is* a canceling of cognitive autonomy: "...the important point is that the inability to know whose idea it was to get a pizza, or, better, the lovers' coming to have the same beliefs and desires in Fisherical union, excludes their having an independent perspective on the world; it cancels cognitive autonomy. As a result, as I explain

¹¹² Recall Benjamin Bagley, "Loving Someone in Particular," *Ethics* 125 (2015), 497.

later...robust concern is excluded from love.”¹¹³ I see no reason to call this a cancelling of cognitive autonomy. Fisher seems to think that the lovers approve of their beliefs and desires being shared. And, even if Fisher doesn’t think this, so long as you endorse and “stand behind” being influenced by your beloved in this way, it seems that cognitive autonomy and an independent perspective are still intact. With the help of Harry Frankfurt below in chapter 4, I’ll develop this way of thinking about things in chapter 5.

Soble’s attack on Nozick divides in two, the first being somewhat similar to Soble’s objections to Fisher and the second being entirely different. Soble thinks that Nozick endorses the idea that, when a person loves someone, the lover sees “...his or her self as only an aspect of the *we*, as a part contained within the *we*...”¹¹⁴ Or later Soble puts Nozick’s point differently: “[i]f there really is going to be a Nozickian union, the genuine formation of a *we* that both parties identify with, then both must see their selves as ontologically secondary to the *we*.”¹¹⁵ Soble, then, reads Nozick as endorsing a sort of subjective union theory where union consists entirely in how you experience things and are inclined to describe them. That is, if you see yourself as a part of something that you would call a *we*, or if you identify with a *we*, then that “seeing” or experience results in or is co-extensive with (or just is) love.

I don’t agree with Soble’s interpretation of Nozick. Soble rests too heavily on the phrases just mentioned. But my main point in this chapter, as I said in chapter 2, isn’t exegetical. Instead, my main point is to be guided in ways not to develop a union theory.

¹¹³ Alan Soble, “Union, Autonomy, and Concern,” in *Love Analyzed*, ed. Roger Lamb (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 72.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

I won't talk of identifying with a *we* or any such thing. So, even if this subjective sort of union theory cancels cognitive autonomy, all will be well. The desideratum here is this:

NO SUBJECTIVE UNIONS. A good union theory won't talk about perceiving oneself and the other as being parts of a *we*, and it won't talk about identifying as part of a *we*.

If it turned out that Soble was right in his interpretation of Nozick that this is the main aspect of his theory or that it's the core of what Nozick meant to say (which I deny), then it follows that I won't be developing a Nozick-style union theory at all.

Let's move to Soble's attack on Nozick's treatment of autonomy more generally. "Lovers replace unilateral decisions with joint decisions, which implies, for Nozick himself, a diminution...of autonomy. Nozick says that unilateral decision-making power is not always given up; only *some* decisions 'can no longer be made alone.' This is supposed to leave room for autonomy within union. But which decisions can and cannot be made alone?"¹¹⁶ Soble goes on to suggest an answer for Nozick as to which decisions can and cannot be made alone (since Nozick does not provide one), and then Soble shows why his suggested answer won't work. Speaking up for Nozick, I want to ask Soble back, "Why should it matter which decisions can and cannot be made alone?" What Nozick says is that you weigh the preferences of your beloved. And weighing is compatible with not doing what they want. Autonomy, it seems, is still present on this

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 75-76.

way of making decisions. My final response to Soble is as before. I won't be advocating a condition on union wherein unilateral decision-making privileges are at least partially revoked. So, let's add the following desideratum.

UNILATERAL DECISION-MAKING. A good union theory won't require giving up on unilateral decision-making.

While I do here separate myself from Nozick, it should be noted that said separation is only in the case of the bare minimum of what you need and what's sufficient for love. Love can grow. I'll try to show how that happens on union theory (chapter 5). I think there's a certain way that love can grow such that unilateral decision-making is revoked. Later Soble will have something more to say that will help direct us in how to cash this sort of thing out. I will note this below when we come to it.

We've made it through the first part of Soble's essay where he argues for a tension between union and autonomy. Soble's arguments that union cancels autonomy aren't persuasive. Let's see, though, whether a lack of autonomy, if understood as Fisher or Nozick do, results in a lack of robust concern.

Soble begins his argument that a lack of autonomy results in a lack of robust concern by describing how union theorists sometimes try to deny that a lack of autonomy results in a lack of robust concern:

...if the persons remain separate, then there are two distinct foci of interest or well-being, in which case selfishness is logically possible...but when two lovers

merge into a single entity, selfishness is logically ruled out, since a single entity cannot be selfish toward itself or treat itself selfishly. Hence (we continue the argument) love as union, in ruling out selfishness, must contain genuine concern for the beloved.¹¹⁷

If the two lovers are (somehow) really just one, then neither of them can be selfish towards the other. And, if that's right, then they each have or can have robust concern.

But, says Soble,

[i]f a union of two people into a single entity eliminates the possibility of their being selfish towards each other, it also eliminates the possibility of their having concern for each other. In robust concern, *x* wishes *y* well for *y*'s own sake, not for *x*'s, and *x* acts accordingly to promote specifically *y*'s well-being, not necessarily *x*'s own. ...fusion destroys the logical space for both selfishness and robust concern.¹¹⁸

Soble allows that union isn't guaranteed to result in selfishness, and he even allows that union might rule selfishness out. But he insists that union demands self-interestedness – the union theorist "...should be...trying to convince us that when love is union, it contains more than self-interest."¹¹⁹

Here I think we see how talk of oneness on the part of the union theorist has caused Soble to object in a way that doesn't really apply. True enough: if a union theorist thought that, when two people love each other, they both literally and

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 77.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 77-78.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 79.

metaphysically cease to exist with only one entity remaining, then Soble's objection would apply; robust concern, in that sort of situation, would be impossible. But why think that any union theorist would ever mean anything like that? The claim looks false. (Once again I grant that union theorists are partially responsible for this confusion. My union theory, I hope, will leave no chance for this sort of confusion.)

Take as examples the two union theorists that Soble used to establish the absence of autonomy on union theory, Fisher and Nozick. Fisher's supposed commitment to a lack of cognitive autonomy consisted in each person having many of the same beliefs and desires. But why can't two such lovers still wish each other well for the other person's own sake, not for themselves, and act accordingly to promote specifically the other person's well-being, not necessarily their own? Fisher, remember, allows that exact similarity of beliefs and desires is never had between lovers (for now I remain silent on whether exact similarity of beliefs and desires entails the impossibility of robust concern): "[f]used perception is no doubt quite rare..."¹²⁰ and "[i]t is crucial to remember that personal fusion can never be complete..."¹²¹ and "...the fusion of selves which I have tried to describe is always only partial."¹²² Here there's room for a desire for the good of the beloved not had by the beloved himself or herself. For example, they desire cake but you do not. Even so, you desire that they be fulfilled in their desire.

Or consider Nozick's idea of seeing oneself as being a part of a *we* and his rejection of unilateral decision-making. You can give up on unilateral decision-making

¹²⁰ Mark Fisher, *Person Love* (London: Duckworth, 1990), 27-28.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 30.

(while retaining some decision-making power, as Nozick requires) and still wish the other perceived half of the *we* well for their own sake, not for yourself (the other half), and act accordingly to promote specifically the other half's well-being, not necessarily your own half's well-being.

We can read Soble as attempting to offer further argumentation that a lack of autonomy results in a lack of robust concern here:

Because...y's interests have become x's interests, whenever *x* acts to promote y's interests *x* is *ipso facto* promoting his own. This promotion of their joint interests is not selfishness; yet *x*'s concern for *y* does not reach the level of robust concern. In a love characterized by robust concern, *x* views the good of *y* as having intrinsic value. But in a union love, *x* views the good of *y* as intrinsically valuable only in a truncated sense. Since *x* treats the good of *y* as if it were his own good, *x* will have the same attitude toward *y*'s good as he has toward his own... The good of *y* as *x*'s beloved becomes a solipsistic intrinsic good, protected for the reason and in the manner *x* protects his own good, through natural self-interest.¹²³

The mistake here is the move from "y's interests have become x's interests" to "x treats the good of y as if it were his own good." When Soble says "as if it were his own good," he means "through natural self-interest." But why must we understand the idea of someone else's interests becoming our own in this self-interested way? Granted, if your interests have become my interests, then, if your interests are fulfilled, then so are mine.

¹²³ Alan Soble, "Union, Autonomy, and Concern," in *Love Analyzed*, ed. Roger Lamb (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 80.

But I can promote your interests for your sake without focusing on or having as my underlying motivation the fact that my interests are thereby fulfilled. For example, maybe every time you get to eat pizza, you feel really happy. And every time you get happy because of pizza, I am made content. You tell me, “I want some pizza.” I want you to get some pizza. But the thing that drives me is your desires; not mine. The reason or intention I have consciously in my head is, “I really want you to be happy!”

This anticipates my own union theory. Here’s a preview. Charitably understood, union theorists, when they speak of “y’s interests [becoming] x’s interests,” are speaking of x having an interest in y’s interests being fulfilled. Or, better, my preferred way of putting this will be that the lover desires that the beloved be fulfilled in their desire. On this interpretation, there’s nothing in x’s interest in y’s interests being fulfilled that results automatically in “natural self-interest.” (This is what I meant when I said, in chapter 2, that I’d be refining the idea of desiring what your beloved desires so as to be objection-free. I’ll further develop this idea in chapter 5.)

We’ve now covered Soble’s arguments that union theory entails the loss of autonomy of some sort and his argument arguing that, without autonomy, there can be no robust concern of the lover for beloved. Two arguments are left. In the first, Soble focuses mainly on Nozick’s attempt (as Soble reads him) of deriving robust concern from union. In the second, Soble focuses on Fisher’s attempt (as Soble reads him) of deriving union from robust concern. Soble reasons that if either of these derivations were successful, then it could be shown that something went wrong in his arguments that there is a conflict between union and autonomy as well as autonomy and robust concern.

We've already seen that Soble's main objections to union theory aren't successful. Focusing on the rest of what Soble has to say will provide further criteria for a good union theory.

So, according to Soble, how does Nozick derive robust concern from union? Soble works primarily with Nozick's idea of tied well-beings, which we examined in chapter 2. Though he doesn't say so explicitly, the connection Soble sees, I think, is that if my wellbeing is tied to my beloved's wellbeing, then I'll be concerned for my beloved; my beloved's wellbeing will be something that I want to promote, in other words.¹²⁴ Soble considers whether this might be a way of deriving robust concern from union, and he argues that it is not:

[f]rom the fact that x 's well-being is tied to the well-being of y , or from the fact that as y fares, so fares x , it can be concluded only that x 's concern for y is benevolently self-interested. If x 's and y 's interests are tied so securely together that whenever y 's state of being improves (or deteriorates), x 's own state of being...improves (or deteriorates), then love as union could not include robust concern. The joint...fortunes of x and y do not leave any logical room for x 's promoting y 's good for y 's own sake, independently of how such acts necessarily affect x 's good.¹²⁵

My understanding of Soble here is that if the lovers' well-beings are tied, then, if you act for the good of your beloved, then, really, you are acting for your own good. You can't

¹²⁴ We might also need to add that the lover believes his or her well-being to be so tied. Neither Nozick or Soble talks about beliefs in connection with Nozick's theory.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 82.

promote your beloved's good independently of how things go for you. You are only being benevolently self-interested.

Here again Soble makes the mistake of thinking that, just because the wellbeings are tied, if I intend to act for the good of the beloved's wellbeing, I thereby intend to act self-interestedly. But that is not true. I can do something which results in my wellbeing going up without intending to do it for the reason that my wellbeing is going to go up. I may not have the fact that my well-being is going to go up in mind at all; my focus might be entirely directed towards my beloved. Think again of your loving pizza and my wanting it for you. Even if my well-being goes up as a result of your well-being going up (because of the pizza), I don't have to have that in mind when I act.

But Soble has another argument which utilizes both the idea of tied wellbeings and the idea of sacrifice. "In love, I take it, x at least sometimes gives up some of his own good in order to preserve or enhance y 's good. The well-beings of the lovers *not* being joined together is logically necessary for x to exhibit this sacrificial concern for y ."¹²⁶ Soble has an argument for this last claim. "Suppose x were to decrease his own good in order to increase y 's. Then, because their fortunes are tied together in Nozickian union, and y 's good has been increased, x 's good is also increased, faring as y 's fares. Hence, whenever x decreases his good to increase y 's, x also increases his own good."¹²⁷

But is this really true? For one thing, my wellbeing might be tied to yours without yours being tied to mine. This is unrequited love, Nozick-style. It isn't entirely

¹²⁶ Ibid., 83.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 83.

clear what Nozick means by ‘wellbeing’, as I noted in chapter 2. But what he means isn’t important for answering Soble’s objection. Just as Soble does, let’s suppose that it is possible to quantify well-being. Suppose as well that my wellbeing is at 5/10 and yours is at 5/10. I sacrifice my wellbeing in a way I know will increase your wellbeing by 1. Unfortunately, this sacrifice means that I’m at 1/10. But the sacrifice works: you’re at 6/10. Because you went up by 1, I go up by 1 too, and now I’m at 2/10. At the end of the process, a sacrifice has still been made (me = 2/10; you = 6/10), contrary to Soble’s argument. This way of thinking about things is artificial, but it is the type of thing Soble has in mind. At the very least, this sort of response forces the anti-union theorist to say more of what they have in mind.

Soble, though, is likely thinking in terms of required love. Does Nozick’s theory have a problem only when it comes to required love? Even if it were only problematic when it comes to required love, this is still not good for Nozick’s union theory. We want required love to be capable of sacrifices as well. The problem, then, would be this. Suppose again that I’m at 1/10 because of sacrificing for you. This makes for an increase in your well-being, 6/10. But you’re tied to me, so, since I dropped by 4, you drop by 4, resulting in 2/10. But you’re wellbeing still went up, so mine goes up as well to 2/10. Thus, I made no sacrifice. Or, at least, the sacrifice didn’t last long at all. Sacrifices soon balance out on Nozick’s scheme, according to Soble. And often this isn’t the way we experience the sacrifices we make in love. Is there a response Nozick can make?

I think there is. Again, suppose for sake of illustration that it makes sense to quantify well-being. Why think that the unit of increase or decrease in my wellbeing has

to be the same unit of increase or decrease for you (and vice versa)? There isn't any reason to think this, as far as I can tell. Nothing in the concept of requited love demands that what you receive be the same in amount as what the other gets from you. It is also difficult to imagine how we might experience this equality of units in requited love so as to know that it's happening. This is likely why no union theorist takes it on as something requiring explanation by way of union. Soble, though, implicitly assumes that Nozick means for some unit of increase or decrease in wellbeing in the beloved results in the exact same unit of increase or decrease in the lover. Without this assumption, Soble's argument is not successful. His argument, in a nutshell, is: union makes no room for sacrifice in love; sacrifice is at least sometimes a part of love; therefore, union theory is wrong. We've just called into question the first premise.

Soble's final objection to Nozick is that Nozick's attempt to hold on to autonomy within union leads to paradox or contradiction. "Suppose that x loves y and cares about y 's well-being, and suppose that autonomy is an important good [which Nozick affirms]. Then x will promote y 's autonomy as an important part of y 's well-being. But if x 's concern for y exists in virtue of a union-love, their union itself sets limits on how far x may promote the autonomy of y ."¹²⁸ Soble continues to press the point. "For example, x is prohibited from promoting y 's autonomy if doing so would lead y to make decisions unilaterally... But it seems that *any* promotion of y 's autonomy by x would have the consequence that y would more often make unilateral decisions..."¹²⁹ Soble concludes,

¹²⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 85.

“...if union requires abandoning the autonomy to make unilateral decisions, x cannot be concerned for an important part of y 's good, namely, y 's autonomy.”¹³⁰

One response here is just to say that, even if there were such a prohibition (a prohibition on promoting the beloved's autonomy), Soble only gives us reason for thinking that the prohibition regarding autonomy would be this: you're not allowed to make all your decisions without me, and if, at the end of the day, you see things differently, well then: you can do what you'd like. Not only can the beloved make their own decision at the end of the day, according to Nozick, it is also true that the beloved making most of their decisions without the lover being involved would be fine. In this way, both the union of joint decision-making and the union of one's wellbeing going up when the autonomy of one's lover goes up are preserved.

But there's another response. Soble's argument is instructive because it uncovers a more plausible take on Nozick's requirement concerning unilateral decision-making. It's implausible that, definitive of love, is the lover demanding that the beloved make some of their decisions by first consulting with the lover. But it is much more plausible that love can sometimes involve the lover not always making decisions on their own. The lover has their mind on what the beloved wants. If we think of Nozick's position in this light, then union theory involves no prohibition against promoting the autonomy of your beloved. But what you might be prohibited from doing is promoting your own complete autonomy.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 86.

This might still be worrisome. If it is, we can add that the prohibition on promoting the lover's own complete autonomy has the lover's considered endorsement. This suggestion, by the way, is of a piece with what I had suggested earlier with Fisher – so long as the lover endorses or “stand behinds” being influenced by their beloved such that they share many of the same beliefs and desires, it seems that autonomy is still intact, be it cognitive autonomy, an independent perspective on the world, or autonomy more generally. As I said then, Frankfurt is helpful at this point, and we'll see how that's the case in chapter 4. And, in chapter 5, will discuss these ideas still further.

Remember what we are doing. We are, with Soble, examining ways robust concern might be maintained alongside union. We've just examined Soble's arguments regarding Nozick's attempt of deriving robust concern from union. Now we turn to Soble's arguments regarding Fisher's attempt of deriving union from robust concern.

Soble begins with Fisher's thought on humble benevolence. “When x loves y , on Fisher's view, x wants for y whatever y wants; x desires for y whatever y desires; and x pursues y 's good in y 's own sense of that good. Fisher calls this concern ‘humble benevolence’, because it is the object of love, y the beloved, who determines the specifics or the content of x 's concern, not the lover x himself.”¹³¹ So, this is the concern portion from which, it might be thought, union will be derived. Interestingly, Soble

¹³¹ Ibid., 87. Soble comments further on why Fisher might have called this form of concern humble benevolence, though Fisher doesn't expand on it himself. “We can think of humble benevolence as a respectful sort of concern, for it says to the beloved: I assume you are clear-headed and reflective enough to know what is good for you; whatever you have decided is good for you and hence want, to that I devote myself...” Ibid., 87. Though I will develop my union theory in a way that's similar to Fisher, I do not accept Soble's idea that the reason I want my beloved to be fulfilled in their desires is that I assume they are clear-headed, etc.

admits that “Fisher’s humble benevolence can be robust. The reason that x desires for y whatever y desires is simply that y desires it; x wants the good for y just for y ’s sake, x ’s own good playing no role. ... Further, humble benevolence...respects the beloved’s sense of her own good and thereby acknowledges the beloved’s autonomy.”¹³² (This is the type of robust concern I had pointed to earlier at the very beginning of the section on Soble. It’s the type of robust concern we’d expect to be concinnate with intimate love.)

Soble has very little problem with Fisher up to this point. But problems are soon to come, according to Soble. “For x to desire y ’s good in y ’s sense of that good, x must take on y ’s view of the world, which includes her values. More specifically, in order to view y ’s ends as desirable, x must not merely be able to identify with y ’s perspective, but must actually assimilate his own perspective to y ’s.”¹³³ Soble claims, in other words, that Fisher demands the sharing of beliefs and desires if the lovers in fact do desire each other’s good in the other’s sense of that good. Or, to put it another way, Soble thinks that Fisher thinks that if two individuals are humbly benevolent toward one another, then they will inevitably proceed to love each other in a union type of way.

The problem, though, is that Fisher never says this. Fisher thinks that humble benevolence can sometimes lead to union (in Fisher’s sense of union). But Fisher doesn’t think that this must happen. Here’s Fisher for a reminder: “...there are many important features essential to all or most kinds of love which either cannot be derived from humble benevolence at all – their absence is quite compatible with it – or ‘derive’

¹³² Ibid., 87-88.

¹³³ Ibid., 88

from it only in the sense that there is a loose causal tendency for it to encourage them, and this sense is not appropriate when we are trying to define an essence.”¹³⁴

Unfortunately, this is exactly what Soble’s objection consists in. Soble is saying that “[n]othing in x ’s wanting to promote y ’s good in y ’s sense necessitates that x must believe what y believes simply as a result of loving her and caring about her well-being. I see no prospect of establishing the strong claim that x could not desire for y what y desires unless x had her desires.”¹³⁵ As best I can tell, neither would Fisher.

Summing Up

We’ve come to the end of the objections, and, as promised, I think a good way to sum things up is to list, all in one place, the criteria and desiderata for how not to construct a union theory.

NO PARTS. A good union theory will not talk of parts in any way.

NO “IN TERMS OF.” A good union theory will not talk of concern for others in terms of concern for oneself.

NO COLONIZATION. An adequate union theory will not entail colonization or any other morally objectionable state or relationship.

¹³⁴ Mark Fisher, *Person Love* (London: Duckworth, 1990), 20-21.

¹³⁵ Alan Soble, “Union, Autonomy, and Concern,” in *Love Analyzed*, ed. Roger Lamb (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 89.

NO BLURRING. A good union theory won't insist on the blurring of persons; this might be factually wrong and, furthermore, though Helm doesn't say this, it falls under the category of mysterious/hard to understand. So:

NO MYSTERIES. A good union theory won't be mysterious.

NO SAME INTERESTS. A good union theory won't insist that you have the very same interests and desires of your beloved.

NO DEMAND TO BE WITH. A good union theory won't entail that the lover always or often demands to be with their beloved.

NO AGENT OF INTERESTS. A good union theory won't entail that the lover have a self-conception of being the agent of their beloved's interests.

NO CONSTANT DESIRE TO DO. A good union theory won't entail that the lover has a constant desire to do something for their beloved.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE. A good union theory won't require feeling some powerful emotion at the thought of something that might be true of your beloved (where said thing doesn't include desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions).

BODILY RESPONSE. A good union theory won't require automatic bodily responses at the thought of something that might be true of your beloved (where said thing doesn't include desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions).

NO DIFFICULTY OF TRACING. A good union theory won't make the difficulty of tracing the origin of a shared belief or desire a necessary condition for love.

NO SUBJECTIVE UNIONS. A good union theory won't talk about perceiving yourself and the other as being parts of a *we*, and it won't talk about identifying as being a part of a *we*.

UNILATERAL DECISION-MAKING. A good union theory won't require giving up on unilateral decision-making.

I'll return to all fourteen of these at the end of chapter 5 to ensure that I've followed them all. Here I've only indicated some of the ways in which a good union theory ought to be developed.

Besides these criteria and desiderata, there were two other things that are worth repeating. First, the idea of "standing behind" or endorsing being influenced or shaped by your beloved in certain ways was important. This same idea will come up with Frankfurt in the next chapter, and I will discuss it in my development of union theory in chapter 5. Second, union theorists, when they speak of "y's interests [becoming] x's interests," have made me think that the best way to understand union theory, at least in part, is this: that the lover desires that the beloved be fulfilled in their desire. This will be the centerpiece for my union theory of love.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER THEORIES OF LOVE

Harry Frankfurt, David Velleman, Niko Kolodny, Bennett Helm, and Eleonore Stump – all have theories of love. Herein I examine them, critique them, and learn from them. I chose these theories with certain criteria in mind: that the theory be formidable; that the theory be about what love is (as opposed to reasons for love or the morality of love); that the theory have at least a chance of saying what intimate love is (as opposed to what non-intimate love is).

All are formidable. Or, at least, Frankfurt, Velleman, and Kolodny are widely cited and discussed.¹³⁶ Helm has the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on love, which is a testament to his influence.¹³⁷ All substantially address what love is, which is rare – contemporary analytic philosophy of love tends to focus on the reasons we do or don't have for love. And all have at least some chance of addressing intimate varieties of love – there are hints of union theory in Frankfurt; Velleman and Kolodny

¹³⁶ It would take up too much space to cite all those who cite all of Frankfurt's works on love throughout the many years of his career. *The Reason of Love* alone is cited 548 times, using Google Scholar. For Velleman, just to cite a few, we have: Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 112 (2003): 135-189; Bennett Helm, "Love, Identification, and the Emotions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 46 (2009): 39-59; Hichem Naar, "A Dispositional Theory of Love," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 94 (2013): 342-357; Benjamin Bagley, "Loving Someone in Particular," *Ethics* 125 (2015): 477-507; C. S. I. Jenkins, "What is Love? An Incomplete Map of the Metaphysics," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1 (2015): 349-364. For Kolodny, (again) just to name a few, we have: J David Velleman, "Beyond Price," *Ethics* 118 (2008): 191-212; Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 85-107; Kieran Setiya, "Love and the Value of a Life," *Philosophical Review* 123 (2014): 251-280; Benjamin Bagley, "Loving Someone in Particular," *Ethics* 125 (2015): 477-507.

¹³⁷ Bennett W. Helm, "Love," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1997-, article published 2013, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/love/>.

speak of emotional vulnerability; Helm is the only one who specifically targets intimate love; and Stump has union (though is it union theory?) as a vital component.

None of these theories are union theories in the sense of using the jargon of union theory. They don't use the word *we* as a way of describing lovers. They don't talk about lovers not being two but one. They don't identify with union theory's legacy (Solomon, Scruton, etc.), and some (Velleman and Helm) object outright to union theory. Stump uses the word 'union' and analyzes it in great detail. Whether and how her theory is related to union theory will have to wait until later.

As I said, Helm is the only one who explicitly analyzes intimate varieties of love. The others may have this in mind, especially Velleman and Kolodny (who speak of emotional vulnerability) and Stump (who speaks of union). If it turned out that none were attempting analyses of intimate love except for Helm, there's no sense in which I would seek to object to their theories as such. In other words, their theories might very well be getting at genuine relational phenomena which are very important and rightly called love. The real questions then are, "Do their theories contain the resources to account for intimate love, whether or not they intend their theories to be theories of the intimate? And, if so, are their resources better than union theory?" Sometimes my answer to this question will be disjunctive: the theory in question might be interpreted as a sort of veiled union theory (where, more than likely, the philosopher in question had no intention or awareness of providing any such theory) or it might be interpreted as not being a union theory; if it turned out to be union theoretic, then there's no threat; if the theory isn't union theoretic, then said theory doesn't account for intimate love (or so I

will argue). With these preliminary remarks in mind, we turn to Frankfurt's theory of love.

Harry Frankfurt

Harry Frankfurt's main concern in *The Reasons of Love* is the "[philosophical issue] pertaining to the question of how a person should live... [This issue falls] within the domain of a general theory of practical reasoning."¹³⁸ What should I do? And how should I make decisions? Or: how do I, in fact, make decisions? These are Frankfurt's questions. Morality falls within this domain. "It is unquestionably important for us to understand what the principles of morality require, what they endorse, and what they forbid."¹³⁹ But morality isn't as powerful as we might think. "Morality...tells us less of what we need to know about what we should value...than is commonly presumed. It is also less authoritative. Even when it does have something relevant to say, it does not necessarily have the last word."¹⁴⁰ Frankfurt elaborates. "A person may legitimately be devoted to ideals—for instance, aesthetic, cultural, or religious ideals—whose authority for him is independent of the desiderata with which moral principles are distinctively concerned. ... Morality does not really get down to the bottom of things."¹⁴¹

Other things don't really get to the bottom either, according to Frankfurt himself. First-order desires (even if the desires are strong),¹⁴² things that are intrinsically

¹³⁸ Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 5.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

valuable,¹⁴³ things that are reasonable.¹⁴⁴ None of these, whether by themselves or together, tell us how to live. We need to know more. We need something authoritative.

And that authoritative thing, for Frankfurt, is care. “In designing and managing their lives, people need to confront a number of significant issues. They must make up their minds concerning what they want...[and] what they consider to be intrinsically valuable... In addition, they face a distinct further task. They have to determine what it is that they care about.”¹⁴⁵ Frankfurt is emphatic. “Caring is indispensably foundational as an activity that connects and binds us to ourselves.”¹⁴⁶ According to Frankfurt, caring consists in being willingly committed to a desire. “The desire does not move him either against his will or without his endorsement.”¹⁴⁷ Frankfurt puts this same point in other ways. “He is...prepared to intervene, should that be necessary, in order to ensure that [the desire] continue... ..the person who cares about what he desires wants something else as well: he wants the desire to be sustained. Moreover, this desire for his desire to be sustained is not...transient or adventitious.”¹⁴⁸ Notice then how here we have the idea of endorsement or “standing behind” your own desires. This exact point came up in my response to Soble above. And I will explore this idea more here in this chapter and in chapter 5.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 11-12, 28-29.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 24-26.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 16.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 16.

Frankfurt has many other interesting things to say about how caring relates to, for example, having thematic unity in our lives,¹⁴⁹ human nature,¹⁵⁰ anxiety,¹⁵¹ free will,¹⁵² confidence,¹⁵³ and boredom,¹⁵⁴ just to name a few! I pass over the details here and focus just on what's relevant.

Frankfurt then argues that it is impossible to think about whether we're caring about the right thing. This argument will be important for some of what I want to say in chapter 6. There, in chapter 6, we'll be looking for an explanation of union and of motivation in life (and direction in life, what we're supposed to do in life, meaning, and purpose) and an explanation of the ways in which intimate love is related to non-intimate love. Frankfurt's argument is motivation for one of the types of explanations I point to in chapter 6. I review Frankfurt's argument now so that we can see how it fits into his larger project.

...suppose that somehow [someone] becomes concerned about whether he really should care about the things that, as a matter of fact, he does care about. ...he is asking whether there are reasons good enough to justify him in living that way, and whether there may not be better reason for him to live in some other way instead. ...once we begin asking how people *should* live, we are bound to find ourselves helplessly in a spin. ... Asking the question...is inescapably self-

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 16-17.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 18, 51.

¹⁵² Ibid., 19-20. Frankfurt's famous counterexamples to the principle of alternative possibilities fit in here.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 28-31, 49-51.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 53-55.

referential and leads us into an endless circle. ... In order to carry out a rational evaluation of some way of living, a person must first know what evaluative criteria to employ and how to employ them. He needs to know what considerations count in favor of choosing to live in one way rather than in another... In order for a person to be able even to conceive and to initiate an inquiry into how to live, he must already have settled upon the judgments at which the inquiry aims.¹⁵⁵

If you're wondering if you should care about basketball as much as you do and you set about to search for whether you've got things right about basketball, you show that you already care about what should be the case or whether you've got things right. But trying to figure out whether you should care about what should, in general, be the case can't even get off the ground. That's Frankfurt's argument. Determinative of our lives, of practical reasoning, are our cares, according to Frankfurt. And our cares are given to us by the dictates of genetics and upbringing. Practical reasoning is ultimately determined by the factual, not the normative. Or put it this way: the force of the normative, for each individual, is determined by how our cares relate to it. The normative has no force except what cares give it.

But can this really be right? "How could a purely factual account like that [that is, like Frankfurt's] even diminish, much less definitively allay, our initial disturbing uncertainty about how to conduct our lives? Merely knowing how things are, it would

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 23-24.

seem, does nothing to justify them.”¹⁵⁶ This seems right. Knowing how things are doesn’t tell us whether the way things are are justified. Unfortunately, Frankfurt’s answer consists in just restating his position. “...the ambition to provide an exhaustively rational warrant for the way in which we are to conduct our lives is misconceived. The pan-rationalist fantasy of demonstrating...how we have most reason to live is incoherent and must be abandoned.”¹⁵⁷

Frankfurt’s initial argument is hard to answer. But so is the argument against his view. We’ll have occasion to reconsider these issues in chapter 6. For now, let’s move on to how care relates to love.

Love, for Frankfurt, is “a particular mode of caring.”¹⁵⁸ One thing we can say is that “[t]he object of love is often a concrete individual: for instance, a person or a country. It may also be something more abstract: for instance, a tradition, or some moral or nonmoral ideal.”¹⁵⁹ Love is a type of care that has a particular focus. “Someone who is devoted to helping the sick or the poor for their own sakes may be quite indifferent to the particularity of those whom he seeks to help.”¹⁶⁰ In this case, the person might love the idea of helping the poor for their own sakes. In other words, the idea might be the particular thing the person has in mind, and they might, therefore, love it. But he wouldn’t be loving the poor people themselves. Why? Because the poor people in question are not his focus.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 27-28.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 28-29.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 41, 79-80.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 43.

A second thing to say is that we love something “[w]hen we...care about it not as merely a means, but as an end.”¹⁶¹ This is what Frankfurt means when he says that love is disinterested – “[l]ove is, most centrally, a *disinterested* concern [or care] for the existence of what is loved, and for what is good for it. The lover desires that his beloved flourish and not be harmed; and he does not desire this just for the sake of promoting some other goal. ...the condition of the beloved is important in itself, apart from any bearing that it may have on other matters.”¹⁶²

Later on in this chapter I use both Frankfurt’s idea of particularity and Frankfurt’s idea of disinterestedness and develop them in responding both to Kolodny and to Helm.

Besides being clear on what Frankfurt means by being disinterested, it is important here to notice Frankfurt’s concentration on the existence of what is loved, on what is good for it, on its flourishing, on its not being harmed, and on its “condition.” Are these forms of caring intimate forms of caring, in my sense of the word? It might seem as if they are not. But then there’s Frankfurt’s third condition on love: “[l]oving someone or something essentially *means* or *consists in*, among other things, taking its interests as reasons for acting to serve those interests.”¹⁶³ Frankfurt only mentions this aspect of love twice.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it sounds a lot like union theory.

Frankfurt’s last condition on love is the following. “...it is a necessary feature of love that it is not under our direct and immediate voluntary control. ...the necessity that

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶² Ibid., 42.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 37.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 80.

is characteristic of love does not constrain the movements of the will through an imperious surge of passion or compulsion... On the contrary, the constraint operates from within our own will itself. It is by our own will...that we are constrained.”¹⁶⁵ Later, Frankfurt assures us that “...it may at times be within our power to control [our will] indirectly. We are sometimes capable of bringing about conditions that would cause us to stop loving what we love...”¹⁶⁶ A care that is love has to be a care that is constrained by our own will. We can’t do anything about it, because our will wills it to be so.

In sum, love, for Frankfurt, “...is volitional. Loving something has less to do with what a person believes, or with how he feels, than with a configuration of the will that consist in a practical concern for what is good for the beloved.”¹⁶⁷ Here recall that Frankfurt’s main concern in *The Reasons of Love* is practical reasoning.¹⁶⁸ When we keep in mind that love is a type of volitional care for something which isn’t a means to an end, we can see where Frankfurt is going. “...without final ends we would find nothing truly important either as an end or as a means.”¹⁶⁹ So, it would seem, without love, nothing would be important. And that’s exactly what Frankfurt says: “[i]t is in coming to love certain things...that we become bound to final ends... Love is the originating source of terminal value.”¹⁷⁰ This just is practical reasoning, for Frankfurt.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 46. He also says that love comes in degrees here. Love’s coming in degrees is something I return to in chapter 5.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 43.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 53.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 55.

“Insofar as love is the creator both of inherent or terminal value and of importance, then, it is the ultimate ground of practical rationality.”¹⁷¹

Does Frankfurt’s theory have the resources to understand intimate love? It might. When Frankfurt says, in his third condition on love, that love “*consists in*, among other things, taking [the beloved’s] interests as reasons for acting to serve those interests,”¹⁷² he sounds a lot like Scruton. Scruton, remember, said that “...all distinction between my interests and your interests is overcome. Your desires are then reasons for me, in exactly the same way...that my desires are reasons for me.”¹⁷³ By “interest” does Frankfurt mean what we care about? If so, he would mean a certain type of desire. Frankfurt never says exactly what he means, so we can’t be sure.¹⁷⁴ And then there’s the fact that he also says that love is a care for the “...existence of what is loved, and for what is good for it,” a care “...that his beloved flourish and not be harmed...”¹⁷⁵ This sounds like Bob’s health (broadly construed) or Bob’s moral status.

If Frankfurt is a union theorist, he doesn’t emphasize it. But, if he is a union theorist, then we’re both defending the same side. On the other hand, if interests are thought of in terms of things like Bob’s health, then Frankfurt’s theory doesn’t have a way to account for intimate love.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 56.

¹⁷² Ibid., 37.

¹⁷³ Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 230.

¹⁷⁴ See Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 87-90 for good evidence that interests do mean care. If so, Frankfurt would almost certainly be a union theorist.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 42.

David Velleman

In “Love as a Moral Emotion” David Velleman develops his theory of love. His “Beyond Price” provides helpful additions, which I will examine as well. At the end of this section, I will assess Velleman’s theory for its treatment of intimate love.

Besides being compelling in its own right, and besides its potential for being a theory of intimate love, Velleman’s theory has provided me with much insight when it comes to motivation, direction in life, what we’re supposed to do with ourselves, meaning and purpose and how these things relate to intimate love; it has provided much insight as well when it comes to non-intimate forms of love and how they relate to intimate forms of love. In other words, Velleman’s theory has provided me with much insight when it comes to the concerns of chapter 6. Because of this, I examine his theory in greater detail than union theory’s other competitors. Velleman’s writings are also difficult to understand! Because of this, my first move is to summarize his take on love as quickly as possible. This will help the reader situate themselves. Then I will go back to parts of Velleman’s theory that I skipped over. I will skip over them because they add a layer of complication that isn’t necessary for understanding Velleman’s basic theory of love. I return to them because they bear directly on the question of how love relates to motivation, direction in life, meaning, and purpose as well as non-intimate forms of love – topics I take up in chapter 6.

We begin, then, with a first pass at Velleman, no complications added.

Here is Velleman’s motivation for examining love. “The moral point of view is impartial and favors no particular individual, whereas favoring someone in particular

seems like the very essence of love. Love and morality are therefore thought to place conflicting demands on our attention...”¹⁷⁶ Some philosophers spurn love as the be-all end-all. Others spurn morality as the be-all end-all. Others still, like Velleman, try to find a way where there is no conflict.

Velleman is a Kantian when it comes to morality. To really see the problem confronting Velleman, we have to see the conflict between love and morality with Kantian eyes. “The Kantian moral agent cleaves to his loved ones only on the condition that he can regard cleaving to loved ones as reasonable for anyone, and he thereby seems to entertain ‘one thought too many’...”¹⁷⁷ The phrase “one thought too many” comes from Bernard Williams’ famous way of putting the problem, “discussing the case of a man who can save only one of several people in peril and who chooses to save his own wife. Williams remarks, ‘It might have been hoped by some (for instance, his wife) that his motivating thought, fully spelled out, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one’s wife.’”¹⁷⁸ Velleman makes the problem as difficult as possible before turning to his answer. “If love and morality were even potentially at odds to this extent, then love would have to be, if not an immoral emotion, then at least non-moral.”¹⁷⁹ If morality might ever require you to think about who you should save, then love and morality might, at some point, be in conflict. But Velleman is eager to insist that “...love is a moral emotion... We have made a mistake, I think, as soon as we accept the assumption

¹⁷⁶ J. David Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” *Ethics* 109 (1999), 338.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 340.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 340.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 341.

of a conflict in spirit... The question, then, is not whether two divergent perspectives can be accommodated but rather how these two perspectives converge.”¹⁸⁰

Velleman thinks that “[t]he way to bring love into convergence with morality is not to stop thinking of morality as impartial but to rethink the partiality of love.”¹⁸¹

Morality, by definition, is impartial. But love, though it might be partial, isn’t partial such that it is incompatible with morality. How will Velleman show us that this is the case? The beginning of an answer is this: by rejecting love as involving aims or desires or drives. “The account of love offered by many philosophers sounds to me less like an analysis of the emotion itself than an inventory of the desires and preferences that tend to arise in loving relationships... Once we distinguish love from the likings and longings that usually go with it, I believe, we will give up the assumption that the emotion is partial in a sense that puts it in conflict with...morality.”¹⁸² Here we see the third argument against union theory from Velleman that I hinted at in chapter 3. It goes like this: if Kant’s theory of morality is correct, and if we want morality to get along with love, then we’ve got to give up on love as involving desires and preferences, likings and longings. And without desires and preferences and likings and longings, union theory can’t get off the ground. As I also said in chapter 3, waiting until chapter 6 will put us in the best position to respond to this objection.

Now that we have Velleman’s motivation in view as well as the general contours of his strategy (“get rid of aims/desires!”), let’s look at a more detailed overview of the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 341.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 342.

¹⁸² Ibid., 342.

specifics. I quote Velleman at length here, because it is useful to get the whole picture at once.

I shall argue...that Kantian respect is not an attitude toward rules or principles. It is rather an attitude toward the idealized, rational will, which qualifies as a law because it serves as a norm for the actual, empirical will—thus qualifying, in fact, as that law which the will is to itself. This rational will, in Kant’s view, is also the intelligible essence of a person: Kant calls it a person’s true or proper self. Respect for this law is thus the same attitude as respect for the person; and so it can perhaps be compared with love, after all.¹⁸³

The main moves, then, are these: respect doesn’t have to do with rules; respect is an attitude towards the will; the will is the essence of a person; so, respect – a moral notion – is very close to love, because love too is an attitude towards persons. Questions that remain at this point are: what is this attitude of respect? What is love, and how does love relate to respect? How does respect and/or love help with the partiality/impartiality divide? How does it help with Williams’ “one thought too many” objection?

Let’s begin with the idea that respect doesn’t have to do with rules and is instead an attitude towards the will. “The ideal will is one that acts on lawlike maxims, and this ideal is what commands our respect [or reverence – Velleman uses both words interchangeably]... [The object of reverence] is...that ideal which is held up to us by the Categorical Imperative—namely, the intelligible aspect of our will as a faculty of acting

¹⁸³ Ibid., 344.

on lawlike maxims.”¹⁸⁴ So, the proper object of reverence is the aspect of our will which acts on lawlike maxims, not the maxims themselves. With this, we can make the connection from the will to persons. “Rational will therefore constitutes the person as he is in himself rather than as he appears...”¹⁸⁵ Putting this together, we revere the will, so we revere persons (or the essence of what persons are). (Later, Velleman says that he finds “...it intuitively plausible that we love people for their true and better selves.”¹⁸⁶ When Velleman says “true and better selves,” he means that aspect of the will which acts on lawlike maxims, as best I can tell. Also, in “Beyond Price,” he makes things even simpler: “...to regard someone as a person...is to regard him as having a conscience.”¹⁸⁷)

From this it follows that persons are self-existent ends. To help us see how this really does follow, Velleman elaborates. “Self-existent ends are the objects of motivating attitudes that regard and value them as they already are... Specifically, he is a proper object for reverence, an attitude that stands back in appreciation of the rational creature he is, without inclining toward any particular results to be produced.”¹⁸⁸ So far, we’ve been using the word reverence without saying exactly what it means. Reverence, for Velleman, is a standing-back-in-appreciation. Reverence doesn’t involve trying to bring something about. When you stand back in appreciation, you are treating that thing as an end. That’s what it means to treat something as an end. You do x as a means to y, and

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 347.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 348.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 365.

¹⁸⁷ J David Velleman, “Beyond Price,” *Ethics* 118 (2008), 202.

¹⁸⁸ J. David Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” *Ethics* 109 (1999), 357-358.

you do y as a means to z, and z is your self-existent end; so, when you get to z, you don't do anything with it; you just appreciate or revere. This is what it means to respect it.

We're now ready to return to respect and its connection with love. Beginning with respect, "Kant thinks that respect [or reverence] ...has a negative rather than positive relation to the motives subserving it. ...respect can motivate us...by deterring us from violating it; and the violation from which we are thus deterred can be conceived as...using the object as a mere means to other ends."¹⁸⁹ Respect blocks us from treating someone as a mere means. Someone whose essence is to act on lawlike maxims can't be treated like that! Someone whose essence is to act on lawlike maxims is to be revered, respected. When it comes to persons, we stand back and admire. Another way to put this is that respect "...can be said to check our self-love..."¹⁹⁰ Why can we say that it checks our self-love? Because it "...exerts its negative motivational force by placing a constraint on our use of [some person] as a means to desired ends."¹⁹¹

And here's where love comes in. Just as respect is "...reverence as the awareness of a value that arrests our self-love... [so too] love is...an arresting awareness of that value."¹⁹² Velleman says, in support of this, that it fits phenomenologically. Love feels like "...a state of attentive suspension, similar to wonder or amazement or awe."¹⁹³ Respect arrests our self-love. But what does love arrest? Velleman's answer is that it arrests "...our tendencies toward emotional self-protection from another person... Love

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 359-360.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 359-360.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 359-360.

¹⁹² Ibid., 360.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 360.

disarms our emotional defenses; it makes us vulnerable to the other.”¹⁹⁴ Respect doesn’t affect our emotional defenses against other people. We can respect them or revere them without succumbing emotionally. Love is different. With love, we see them and their personhood in such a way so as to become emotionally vulnerable.

Now we know, according to Velleman, what respect is, what love is, and what they are both responses to. We also know what they are not. They are not aims or desires. Aims and desires are only associated with love, they only sometimes result from love. They are not what love is.

But we haven’t yet heard how Velleman intends to respond to the issues of partiality/impartiality and Williams’ “one thought too many.” So, let’s move on. “...a self-existent end, which is not to be produced by action, is not an alternative to other producibles. Its value doesn’t serve as grounds for comparing it with alternatives; it serves as grounds for revering or respecting the end as it already is.”¹⁹⁵ The perception of love is one that constitutively excludes comparison.¹⁹⁶ “When Kant says that an object with dignity ‘admits of no equivalents,’ he is speaking about how to appreciate such an object, not how to judge it.”¹⁹⁷ In other words, when Kant talks of a person admitting of no equivalent, Kant is talking about how to love said person, according to Velleman. While it’s true that we’re supposed to think of everyone as being equal, thinking is not the same as loving. “Our respect for a person is a response to something that we know about him intellectually but with which we have no immediate acquaintance. ... Love of

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 361.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 364.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 365-6.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 367.

a person is not felt in contemplation of a mere concept or idea. The immediate object of love...is the manifest person, embodied in flesh and blood and accessible to the senses.”¹⁹⁸ So then: “...comparing or equating one person with another is [not] an appropriate way of responding to that value.”¹⁹⁹ Everyone has the same value, but if you perceive people as having the same value, then you’re not truly perceiving the value for what it is. The value in question excludes a comparative perception. “...refusing to compare or replace the person may be the appropriate response to a value that we attribute to her on grounds that apply to others as well.”²⁰⁰ When Velleman here acknowledges that these grounds apply to others as well, he’s not doing so from the perception of love. He’s doing so from the intellectual judgment of respect.

And now we’re in a position to hear Velleman’s answers when it comes to partiality. Remember that love is partial but not in a way that’s in conflict with morality. A lot of love’s partiality resides in our imperfections, says Velleman. “One reason why we love some people rather than others is that we can see into only some of our observable fellow creatures. The human body and human behavior are imperfect expressions of personhood, and we are imperfect interpreters.”²⁰¹ And another imperfection is our exhaustion. “...the value we do manage to see in some fellow creatures arrests our emotional defenses to them, and our resulting vulnerability exhausts the attention that we might have devoted to finding and appreciating the value in others.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 371.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 367.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 368.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 372.

... We thus have many reasons for being selective in love, without having to find differences of worth among possible love objects.”²⁰²

Velleman had promised to produce a theory of love which was partial and yet not in conflict with morality. We’ve seen the ways in which love is partial for Velleman. But how is the impartiality of morality preserved? Well, for one thing, love in no way acts partially towards anyone because love doesn’t act at all. Remember that love is not an aim. It’s a perception of something which produces emotional vulnerability. Second, love can’t perceive someone as being better than nor can it perceive someone as being preferred, because the very essence of the perception in question is that comparison doesn’t even register.

What, then, of Williams’ scenario of the man on a boat stuck between saving his wife and two strangers? Velleman agrees that the husband should save his wife and not the others. Those who would suggest a tension between love and morality would say that the reason the husband should save his wife is that he loves her. But Velleman disagrees. “Of course the man in Williams’ story should save his wife in preference to strangers. But the reasons why he should save her have nothing essentially to do with love. The grounds for preference in this case include...the mutual commitments and dependencies... their partnership or shared history... Invoking her individual value in the eyes of his love would merely remind him that she was no more worthy of survival than the other potential victims...”²⁰³ Why? Because of the invocation of love focuses

²⁰² Ibid., 372.

²⁰³ Ibid., 373.

the husband's mind on an intellectual judgment. Once this happens, it is obvious that everyone has the very same thing the husband is responding to in his wife when he loves her. Love, for Velleman, "...heightens his sensitivity to her predicament. But [Velleman] cannot believe that it would leave him less sensitive to the predicament of others... The sympathy that I feel naturally extends to [the others who are drowning]." ²⁰⁴ Love makes me sensitive to my wife's troubles. But it also makes me sensitive to the others. I judge, intellectually, that they are all the same. This is different than perceiving them to be of similar value. It's worth citing Velleman again on this score. "Our respect for a person is a response to something that we know about him intellectually but with which we have no immediate acquaintance. ... Love of a person is not felt in contemplation of a mere concept or idea. The immediate object of love...is the manifest person, embodied in flesh and blood and accessible to the senses." ²⁰⁵ For Velleman, then, the reason he should save his wife is his commitment or partnership. Are commitment or partnership in tension with morality? In personal correspondence, Velleman said "no" but didn't elaborate. ²⁰⁶ Whether they are or not, the point is that this is the way he gets out of the tension between love and morality specifically. Other things might be in tension with morality (e.g. commitment). Or maybe they aren't. But love certainty is not, as Velleman sees things.

Notice too how Velleman has an argument to think that Williams, and the others who think that love is the reason the husband should save his wife, are wrong. Velleman

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 373.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 371.

²⁰⁶ David, Velleman, "RE: questions," Received by John Graham Forcey, 5 Dec. 2016.

says that “[t]hese cases invite us to imagine situations in which we feel forced to make choices among things that cannot coherently be treated as alternatives, because their values are incomparable. Love does not help to overcome the absurdity in these cases... On the contrary, love is virtually an education in this absurdity. But for that very reason, love is also a moral education.”²⁰⁷ Love cannot drive one to prefer one’s wife. Love has no necessary connection to action, and love doesn’t prefer among alternatives. The idea of preferring of among alternatives is absurd, and this very absurdity teaches us the value of persons, which is the basis of morality. This is because the thing we’re responding to in love is also the thing we’re responding to in respect; the differences are, first of all, that love results in emotional vulnerability while respect does not, and, secondly, that love is a perception that excludes comparison while respect is an intellectual judgment that considers all as equal.

Let’s sum up. Respect is a moral category. Respect is a matter of standing back in appreciation of the end for which all else is done and not trying to do anything, not trying to use for some other purpose. Respect is due to persons because their essence is a will which can respond to the Categorical Imperative. To love is to see this essence such that we become emotionally vulnerable to a person. And this seeing or perception finds it impossible to compare its object with others. Love, therefore, doesn’t aim at doing anything. Love *happens* in ways that are partial – we love only certain people. And yet, because love doesn’t aim to do anything, it doesn’t treat partially. And, because love

²⁰⁷ J. David Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” *Ethics* 109 (1999), 374.

can't compare its object to others, it can't designate its object as special or "more worthy."

All this can be seen as an argument for Velleman's view of love if you grant Kantian morality. But it can also be seen as an argument for both: if both his view of love and his view of Kantian morality can be made to work really well together, then perhaps that's reason to accept them both.

So much for our first pass at Velleman. Time for a second pass to examine a further complication.

This second pass has to do with aims and desires. Love doesn't consist in these things. But they are typically associated with love. So what's the relationship between them? Let's start here:

Perhaps you cannot act for your mother's sake unless there is some outcome that, for her sake, you want to produce. Even so, your desiring the outcomes for her sake entails your having a motive over and above simply desiring the outcome... It entails your having a motive that takes her as its object and that motivates your desire for the outcome... Your wanting the outcome for her sake consists in your wanting it out of this further attitude toward her.²⁰⁸

This is very important: a motive that takes, for example, my mother as its object. Is this motive, for Velleman, the motive we have of revering the person? We give our mom the seat on the bus (Velleman's example) because we want to revere or respect her? I'm not sure what the answers are to these questions. But important to see is what Velleman has

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 359.

allowed. Velleman allows that we cannot act for our beloved's sake unless there is some outcome that, for their sake, we want to produce or bring about. But he also wants to make sure we've understood what he hasn't allowed. "...the various motives that are often identified with love are in fact independent responses that love merely unleashes. ...in suspending our emotional defenses, love exposes our sympathy to the needs of the other, and we are therefore quick to respond when help is needed."²⁰⁹ Velleman goes on to explain this more fully. "The present hypothesis...discourages us from positing necessary connections between love and desires for particular outcomes. ... Only vague generalizations can be drawn about what love can motivate the lover to do."²¹⁰ The vague generalization is his allowance above, I would think: we cannot act for our beloved's sake unless there is some outcome that, for their sake, we want to produce. That there be an outcome is necessary. That the outcome be of a certain specific type is not necessary. Nothing more specific can be said, at least as far as "Love as a Moral Emotion" is concerned.²¹¹

When we move to Velleman's "Beyond Price," things are a bit different.²¹² Here Velleman talks about acting for the good of the beloved. He also talks about responding

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 361.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 361.

²¹¹ Ibid., 361.

²¹² J David Velleman, "Beyond Price," *Ethics* 118 (2008): 191-212. Velleman's main goal is to formulate an argument that suicide, when you're trying to escape life's hardships, is irrational. Velleman spends most of the time, though, further developing his theory of love. The main thrust of his argument about suicide is this. "Seeking an end to unhappiness through suicide therefore tends to thwart the concern out of which anything, including happiness, is worth caring about..." Ibid., 211. In other words, if you want to end yourself (i.e. suicide), then you don't have any cares – you don't value your autonomy or the things it has chosen in the past. That is to say, you don't love yourself. But if that is right – if you don't have any cares – then you don't care about unhappiness. And, if that is right, then you have no reason to commit suicide. But if suicide involves intentional action, then, in point of fact, you do have cares, and

to the beloved's desires. Both of these things will be helpful for what I want to say about intimate love's connection with motivation, having purpose in life, meaning, the thing that I'm supposed to do (see chapter 6).

Let's begin with the beloved's good.

...a person's good is that which is worth caring about, or which makes sense to care about, out of love for that person. And the acknowledgment that love needn't involve a desire for the beloved's good is perfectly compatible with the claim that it provides a natural motive or reason for such a desire. Or...the acknowledgment that what is wanted by a lover need not be good for the beloved is compatible with the claim that what is worth wanting, or makes sense to want, out of love for the person is indeed what is good for him. The question is what love makes it appropriate or rational to care about.²¹³

That I desire my beloved's good, and, presumably, that I seek after it, is "worth caring about out of," "makes sense out of," "is a natural motive out of," "is made appropriate by," and "is made rational by" love. In this connection, Velleman approvingly quotes Connie Rosati as saying, "When we appreciate the value, as it seems to us, of a work of art, we endeavor to preserve it in its valuable condition. Likewise...we seek to preserve the person in her condition as the valuable being she is."²¹⁴ Velleman grants his approval here to seeking the preservation of persons in their condition. Velleman has therefore gone further than he went in "Love as a Moral Emotion." He's now allowing

you do love yourself. Therefore, you have no reason to commit suicide. Suicide is always irrational, according to Velleman. I make no attempt to comment on the success or failure of this argument.

²¹³ Ibid., 196.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 196-197.

more than just there having to be some outcome which, for the sake of our beloved, we want to produce. Now we have specifically the beloved's good. Love makes sense of that. Love doesn't require that. But it makes sense. Also, it makes sense to preserve our beloved in their valuable condition. Again, preserving our beloved in their valuable condition isn't a requirement of love. But love makes sense of it.

And what is their valuable condition? This brings us to Velleman's comments on responding to the beloved's desires.

What it makes sense to care about out of love for a person is the unimpeded realization of his personhood... Care about the self-realization of the beloved is not intrinsic to the emotion of love itself; it is one of the further responses to which love makes us susceptible by disarming our emotional defenses. But it is the further response that most naturally ensues when our defenses have been disarmed...since it is a desire to see that value brought to its fullest realization.²¹⁵

The thing we stand in awe of in love, according to Velleman, is that aspect of the beloved's will which responds to the Categorical Imperative. We're responding to their ideal will. So, when they want something or choose something, we witness the operation of the very thing we value. "...what it makes sense to care about out of love for them is the realization of their autonomy—their exercise of the capacity to which my love is an appreciative response. In loving my sons, I respond to the powers constitutive of their personhood, and it then makes sense for me to care about their exercise of those powers,

²¹⁵ Ibid., 205.

bringing their personhood into fruition.”²¹⁶ In my way of understanding things, and not necessarily Velleman’s, caring about the exercise of said powers isn’t an intimate mode of caring (unless you care about them in response to your son’s caring about them). Nevertheless, everything Velleman says here will show up later in chapter 6. In fact, he unpacks all this by way of example and, in so doing, comes a lot closer to intimacy.

...once my children adopted some directions...I found myself caring about their progress in those directions, no matter how little intrinsic value I might have been inclined to see there in advance. ...I became deeply interested...specifically in the accomplishments of a particular midfielder, Morris dancer, poet, or photographer, because these were the directions that my children had set for themselves.²¹⁷

Our beloved makes a decision. They’ve chosen for themselves. They want to be a photographer. This then inclines our own desires to want that for them, to want them to be fulfilled in that desire. We’re being moved by our beloved’s desires in a particular way. It seems, then, that this is intimacy.

Thus ends my long unpacking of Velleman’s theory of love’s nature. What to say in response? Seeing a person such that I’m emotionally vulnerable to them – is this what intimate love is? Emotional vulnerability sounds intimate enough. And, indeed, it can be, if understood in the right way. But which way does Velleman understand it? This is the first question we must ask. Velleman speaks of responding “...emotionally in a way

²¹⁶ Ibid., 206.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 205-206.

that's indicative of having really seen him."²¹⁸ Other than that, not much more is said. In personal correspondence, I asked Velleman how he understood emotional vulnerability. His response was quick: "I haven't thought about that. It seems self-explanatory to me."²¹⁹ If that's Velleman's position, it makes sense why not much more is said in either "Love as a Moral Emotion" or in "Beyond Price." In any case, responding emotionally in a way that's indicative of having really seen your beloved is a response to a person and their capacity of being guided by the Categorical Imperative. It isn't a response to said person's desires, emotions, beliefs, actions, or even to particular uses of their will. Thus in my sense, it is not an intimate response. As we saw in "Beyond Price," it might give rise to intimate love (in my sense), but, for Velleman, love itself is not intimate. There's a chance Velleman could have meant 'emotionally vulnerable' to mean emotionally responsive to the emotions of the beloved. And his theory could be extended in that direction whether he meant it to be or not. If we extended it in that direction, we'd be going beyond Velleman. And by extending it in that direction, we would have the beginnings of union theory! I conclude that Velleman's theory doesn't provide us with what we're after, though it could be made to do so.

But his theory does provide us with many good things, and we'll return to it in chapter 6 to unpack the connection between intimate love and motivation in life, direction in life, the thing we're meant to do, etc. To be specific, I'll be using his notions of seeing the beloved, seeing the beloved such that you become emotionally vulnerable

²¹⁸ J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109 (1999), 361.

²¹⁹ David, Velleman, "RE: questions," Received by John Graham Forcey, 5 Dec. 2016.

to them as making sense of seeking the good of the beloved, and there being a connection between seeing the person as a thing that wills or desires on the one hand and being moved by said desires on the other. These will all arise in chapter 6. Chapter 6 is where I discuss meaning, motivation in life, purpose, etc.

Niko Kolodny

There's a lot to admire in Niko Kolodny's "Love as Valuing a Relationship." There's also much to discuss; or much that could be discussed. However, I don't need to discuss most of it, because most of it is about our reasons for love and not about love itself. That is, most of it is about *why* we love and not about what *constitutes* love. Nevertheless, Kolodny spends a decent amount of time discussing what love is, and his discussion, let alone his entire paper, is very important when it comes to contemporary analytic treatments of love's nature. Kolodny's main point is to defend the idea that "...one's reasons for loving a person is one's relationship to her: the ongoing history that one shares with her. The reason one has for loving Jane, in any given case, is that she is one's daughter, sister, mother, friend, or wife."²²⁰ It should be said, though, that I disagree with Kolodny on this score. But saying exactly why would take us too far afield. Here I assume Kolodny is right in his claim regarding the reasons for love and proceed to critique his theory from that vantage point.

Kolodny's definition of love is best put in context by his thoughts on various ways we value things.

²²⁰ Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 112 (2003): 135-136.

...love is a kind of valuing. Valuing X, in general, involves (i) being vulnerable to certain emotions regarding X, and (ii) believing that one has reasons both for this vulnerability to X and for actions regarding X. One can value something in different ways. For example, one can value X instrumentally—that is, value X as a way of bringing about or realizing some distinct Y... In this case, one values X “nonfinally”: one values X, but one sees some distinct Y as the source of one’s reasons for valuing X. Notice, however, that nonfinal valuation need not be instrumental. To take a familiar, if morbid, example, consider how we value human remains. We believe that we have reasons to treat them with dignity and respect, and we are apt to feel anguish or rage when they are mistreated. Our valuation is nonfinal insofar as we take the source of our reasons for valuing the remains to be not the remains themselves, but rather the person whose remains they are. Nevertheless, this valuation is not instrumental. We do not view the remains as a way of bringing about the person or some state of affairs involving the person. To value X “finally,” by contrast, is both to value X and to see X as the source of one’s reasons for valuing X. In this case, one both (a) is emotionally vulnerable to X and believes that one has reasons for being emotionally vulnerable to X and for actions regarding X, and (b) believes that the source of these reasons is X itself. Love is both a final valuation of a relationship...and a nonfinal, noninstrumental valuation of one’s ‘relative’...²²¹

²²¹ Ibid., 150.

Important here is the idea of being vulnerable to certain emotions and the idea of acting in some way related to X. Both of these will come up in my critique of Kolodny below. The different valuing come up in Kolodny's definition of love. So, let's review them. Valuing instrumentally involves valuing so as to bring something else about. Valuing nonfinally involves valuing something for reasons other than the thing valued but not necessarily so as to bring something else about. Valuing finally involves valuing something where the thing in question provides the reason for valuing it.

Now we have the context we need for Kolodny's extensive definition of (or conditions on) love. Here it is (or here they are):

...A's loving B consists (at least) in A's:

- (i) believing that A has an instance, r, of a finally valuable type of relationship, R, to person B (in a first-personal way—that is, where A identifies himself as A);
- (ii) being emotionally vulnerable to B (in ways that are appropriate to R), and believing that r is a noninstrumental reason for being so;
- (iii) being emotionally vulnerable to r (in ways that are appropriate to R), and believing that r is a noninstrumental reason for being so;
- (iv) believing that r is a noninstrumental reason for A to act in B's interest (in ways that are appropriate to R), and having, on that basis, a standing intention to do so;

(v) believing that r is a noninstrumental reason for A to act in r's interest (in ways that are appropriate to R), and having, on that basis, a standing intention to do so; and

(vi) believing that any instance, r*, of type R provides (a) anyone who has r* to some B* with similar reasons for emotion and action toward B* and r*, and (b) anyone who is not a participant in r* with different reasons for action (and emotion?) regarding r*. ²²²

Most of the definition can be ignored. Focus on emotional vulnerability and acting in the beloved's interest.

Surprisingly, Kolodny's comments on emotional vulnerability take us away from intimacy rather than towards it. We see this in the examples he provides. "...A may feel content when B is well, elated when B meets with unexpected good luck, anxious when it seems that B may come to harm, grief-stricken when B does."²²³ These seem a lot like Bob's physical, emotional, and relational health. In Kolodny's style of examples, we're not being moved by Bob's desires, emotions, etc. We're emotionally vulnerable to other types of things.

Interestingly, though, when Kolodny tells us what acting in the interest of the beloved consists in, he seems to make room for the intimate. Acting in their interest "...should not be understood as being restricted to promoting B's well-being. It might also include protecting or promoting what matters to B, where this may be something

²²² Ibid., 150-151.

²²³ Ibid., 152.

other than B's well-being."²²⁴ Things mattering to B regardless of whether they correspond to B's well-being. This seems very much related to B's desires, emotions, beliefs, and actions. That means that Kolodny has intimacy in view. The real question, though, is how you process why it is you promote what matters to B (his desires, emotions, beliefs). Is it because it accords with B's well-being? Is it because you have a general policy for doing so as long as it doesn't cause too much trouble? Is it because morality demands it of you? Answering "yes" to any of these rules out intimacy. In these cases, what you're really being moved by doesn't include Bob's desires, emotions, or beliefs. Kolodny touches the surface of intimacy but just barely, and certainly there's no account or theory of what intimate love consists in. This is what I provide with my development of union theory in chapter 5.

Notice how Frankfurt's particularity and disinterestedness are at play here. If you were concerned for B's well-being or for some general policy or for morality, then B wouldn't have been your focus. Frankfurt helpfully noted that "[s]omeone who is devoted to helping the sick or the poor for their own sakes may be quite indifferent to the particularity of those whom he seeks to help."²²⁵ Something else was in view for you, even it was for B's own good. As for disinterestedness, the lover "...does not desire [what he does] just for the sake of promoting some other goal."²²⁶ Even if you desire for

²²⁴ Ibid., 152.

²²⁵ Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 43.

²²⁶ Ibid., 42.

B some goal or state or good thing for their sake, conceptually you still have in mind and are being driven by something that is not B's desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions.

Bennett Helm

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Bennett Helm, in his "Love, Identification, and the Emotions," is the only one to focus specifically on intimate love.

Recently there has been a resurgence of philosophical interest in love, resulting in a wide variety of accounts. Central to most accounts of love is the notion of caring about your beloved for his sake. Yet such a notion needs to be carefully articulated in the context of providing an account of love, for it is clear that the kind of caring involved in love must be carefully distinguished from impersonal modes of concern...such as moral concern or concern grounded in compassion. That is, we might say, the kind of caring that is central to love must be somehow distinctly intimate. The trouble is to cash out these firm intuitions in a satisfactory way.²²⁷

This is Helm's task, then: analyzing intimate love. It is the same as my own task. But Helm explicitly rejects union theory's way of thinking about intimate love. In chapter 3, we looked at Helm's objections to union theory. I won't repeat them in detail here, except to note that Helm thinks union theory commits itself to the blurring of lovers, to an appropriation of the beloved's interests, and to understanding the lover's concern for

²²⁷ Bennett Helm, "Love, Identification, and the Emotions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 46 (2009), 39.

their beloved in terms of the lover's concern for themselves. At the same time, Helm rejects what he calls robust concern accounts of love. These accounts of love, according to Helm, "...understand the notion of concern for another for her sake largely in terms that apply equally well to nonintimate sorts of concern, such as those grounded in compassion."²²⁸ So then the question is: how does Helm characterize intimacy? He admits his initial characterization of intimacy is "...only a gesture in the [right] direction" and "vaguely expressed." In order to be intimate, "...I must take an interest not just in his well-being but also in his identity itself, and the kind of interest I take in his identity must itself be deeply personal. ...[it must be] somehow analogous to my concern for my own identity—or, for that matter, to his concern for his own identity."²²⁹ According to Helm, this isn't the stuff of compassion or moral concern. Rather, it's the stuff of love. Helm wants to make these ideas clearer. Helm wants to stay away from the excesses of union theory (blurring, appropriation, concern for other as concern for self) while also staying away from the non-intimate treatments of robust concern theories.

The rest of Helm's paper consists in him laying out all the parts of his theory as well as their connections. Once this is done, it is Helm's contention that we'll have a good theory of intimate love. I will now summarize Helm's laying out all the parts of his theory.

"Love is a form of caring."²³⁰ Not all caring is love, but all love is caring. So, Helm backs up and tells us what caring is. "What is it to *care* about something? In other

²²⁸ Ibid., 40.

²²⁹ Ibid., 41.

²³⁰ Ibid., 42.

words, what it is for something to have *import* to you?”²³¹ If you care for something, it has import for you. “...part of what it is for something to have import to you is for it to be worthy of your attention and action.”²³² And later Helm says that attention is to be understood in terms of vigilance and that action is to be understood in terms of being prepared to act on behalf of the thing in question. So, you care about something if you are vigilant towards it and prepared to act for it. “The relevant modes of vigilance and preparedness necessary for understanding import are primarily emotional...”²³³

Because of this tie to the emotions, Helm now provides a way of understanding emotions. Emotions have targets – e.g. I’m angry at *you*; they have formal objects – e.g. I’m angry at you because you’re being *offensive*; they have focuses – e.g. I’m angry at you because you’re being offensive in interrupting my speech, and my speech has import for me/I care about my speech.²³⁴ Emotions make sense only by way of their focuses, only by way of what we care about.²³⁵

Next we get a very important notion for Helm, the notion of rational interconnections between emotions.

...we can understand the sense in which objects of import are *worthy* of attention and action in terms of the rational interconnections among these modes. For example, other things being equal, there would be something rationally odd about my getting angry at you for interrupting my talk without my also feeling pleased

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

²³² *Ibid.*, 42.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 43.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

if my talk goes well, fearful or worried if I suspect it might not, etc. That is (other things being equal), I can be accused of a kind of inconsistency for being afraid because I suspect it might go badly but subsequently being pleased when it does go badly or even subsequently failing to be relieved when things turn out all right.”²³⁶

Consistency for just a short period of time isn’t enough, though. Commitment is also needed: “...it is my commitment to the import of my talk, implicit in my anger at you, that rationally calls for a range of other emotions...”²³⁷ And even commitment isn’t enough! “Of course, to exhibit such a commitment to import on a single occasion does not on its own make something have import to you.”²³⁸ But, he says, “...to exhibit a *pattern* of such commitments to the import of a common focus just is to display the kind of vigilance and preparedness to act necessary for something’s having import to you.”²³⁹ Putting all this together in one sentence: to exhibit a pattern of commitments to being vigilant for something and to being prepared to act on that thing’s behalf just is for that thing to have import to you/for you to care about it. And we must add that rationally interconnected emotions center around or have as their focus the thing or things that you care about.²⁴⁰

So, this is what Helm means by the word ‘care’. Now we need to figure out what type of care love is. The first step is this. Take the way we just defined ‘care’, and

²³⁶ Ibid., 43.

²³⁷ Ibid., 43.

²³⁸ Ibid., 43.

²³⁹ Ibid., 43.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 43.

change things up in the following way. To love is to exhibit a pattern of commitments to being vigilant regarding some person and to being prepared to act on that person's behalf; this just is for that person to have import to you/for you to care about said person. Rationally interconnected emotions center around this person, and, when they do, Helm calls them "person-focused emotions."²⁴¹ The obvious next move is to say what a person is.

To be a person is, roughly, to be a creature with a capacity to care not merely about things or ends in the world but also about yourself and the motives for action that are truly your own. ... This is, in effect, to define the kind of life it is worth your living and so your *identity* as this particular person. ... [To be a person] is also to be *autonomous*: to have the capacity to be responsible, both for these evaluations and therefore for your identity...²⁴²

A person is something which can think to themselves, "Hmm, what kind of life is worthy living? What do I want to embrace in life?" Persons, by definition, deliberate, choose, make decisions, and embrace; they say, "This right here (for example, being a philosopher), this is me." Helm thinks that the uniquely personal part of a person's wellbeing is hurt by people not being faithful to the sorts of choices they've made regarding the types of core values and purposes they want to live by. Someone else can

²⁴¹ Ibid., 46-47. Helm has a whole section arguing against "standard accounts of pride and shame." I don't think Helm needs to argue against these standard accounts of pride and shame. He could accept them, go on to say, "Ah, but there's this different type of pride (or shame) – person-focused pride (or shame)" and, if he were to do this, it is my opinion that his argument would be just as good as it is now. So, I don't here go into his arguments against the standard accounts of pride and shame.

²⁴² Ibid., 46.

hurt you in this way by blocking your ability to deliberate and choose and embrace; you yourself can hurt yourself in this way by doing the very same (only to yourself).

So, now we can fill things out even more. To love, for Helm, is to exhibit a pattern of commitments to being vigilant regarding the ability of some person to make and embrace choices as to who they are or who they will be and it's to exhibit a pattern of commitments to being ready to act on behalf of that person's ability to make and embrace choices as to who they are or who they will be. Rationally interconnected person-focused emotions are the sort of emotions that center around the ability of some person to make and embrace choices as to who they are or will be.

Now we can see the connection between love, as Helm understands it, and intimacy, as Helm understands it. Helm's understanding of intimacy, you'll recall, consists in taking "...an interest not just in his well-being but also in his identity itself, and the kind of interest I take in his identity must itself be deeply personal. ...[it must be] somehow analogous to my concern for my own identity—or, for that matter, to his concern for his own identity."²⁴³ To be a person, and therefore to be capable of relating in a deeply personal kind of way, is to be able to form an identity – to deliberate, choose, embrace, etc. When I deliberate, choose, and embrace philosophy as a way of life, I thereby care about it. Your love of me and my identity is therefore analogous to my care for myself and my identity in philosophy.

Is Helm's theory adequate as an account of intimate love? For two reasons, I would answer "no." To understand my first reason, return to Helm's understanding of

²⁴³ Ibid., 41.

caring about something or something's having import. It means "...*vigilance* for what happens or might well happen to it,"²⁴⁴ as well as being prepared to "...[act] on its behalf...so as to maintain it."²⁴⁵ When applied to persons, this means vigilance for what happens or might well happen to the person as a person, to their capacity to identify and to the ways they've enacted their personhood by identifying. It means being prepared to act on behalf of the person's capacity to identify, being prepared to act on behalf of the ways they've enacted their personhood by identifying. The lover is vigilant and ready to act in response to a certain subset of the beloved's actions. Here we have the beginnings of being moved by the beloved's actions. To that extent, it abides by the way I've characterized intimacy so far (being moved by Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions). But now we ask the same question we asked of Kolodny: how does the lover process why it is they are vigilant and ready to act? Is it because it accords with the beloved's well-being as a person? Is it because it is definitive of them as a person and being vigilant and ready to act in response to things that are definitive of them as a person are good? Is it because the lover has a general policy for being vigilant and ready to act as long as it doesn't cause too much trouble? Is it because morality demands it of the lover? Any of these answers rule out intimacy. The lover being moved by the beloved ultimately would consist in things other than Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, or even his actions. So, even though Helm's theory could be turned into something that

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 43.

accounted for intimate love, it hasn't been done yet. Though I won't repeat things again, Frankfurt is at play here in the same way that he was with Kolodny.

The first objection, then, is similar to the one raised against Kolodny. Unique to Helm is the second objection. Newborns and even young babies and children don't have identities. They haven't developed the capacity to make assessments and decisions in that sort of way. They're not persons, in Helm's sense. Thus, according to Helm, we can't love them in an intimate way. Helm says as much. "On this understanding of love, dogs and infants, insofar as they are not (yet) persons in the technical sense described above...are not proper objects of our love."²⁴⁶ This is a cost. And Helm recognizes it as such.

...it does seem appropriate to say that we love our newborn children (if not our dogs), and it might seem that we have reason to reject any account that denies this. However, the distinction between our relationships with such non-persons and our relationships with persons is not merely a matter of degree. It is a distinction in kind: your love for another, by allowing you to take to heart her identity as the person she is, allows for a kind of intimacy in your relationship that is not possible for non-persons, who do not (yet) have such an identity. So as not to blur this distinction in kind, 'love' is here restricted to this technical sense, so that it is more precise to say that we care about our dogs and infants...as

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 52.

agents or even as potential persons... ..this is largely a matter of stipulating a linguistic convention...²⁴⁷

But this is inadequate. Helm stipulates in a way entirely out of sync with the way we use the word ‘love’. If I reflect on the experience of loving (or caring about) a newborn, it doesn’t take the form of “Awww, look at this soon-to-be-person!” And if that’s right, then how do we love/care for them? One way, though not the only way, is by being disinterestedly moved by their desires and emotions. Being disinterestedly moved seems like intimacy to me. And although Helm is right to say that our intimacy with those who can form an identity is different in kind than our intimacy with those who can’t, to say that one is love and the other is not seems like too much of a stipulation. Better to change the theory. If we love anyone intimately, certainly it includes our newborns and young children. If a theory says otherwise, that’s a reason to reject the theory unless there’s nothing better around. In chapter 5, when I lay out my union theory, we’ll see that there’s something better around.

Eleonore Stump

Eleonore Stump’s *Wandering in Darkness* is an important work in the philosophy of religion on the problem of evil. I won’t try to summarize the whole book or how love works into its larger argument. Suffice it to say that, within *Wandering in Darkness*, there are two chapters, one on love and the other on union. In her chapter on love, she develops Aquinas’ theory of love that “...love requires two interconnected desires: (1)

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 52.

the desire for the good of the beloved, and (2) the desire for union with the beloved.”²⁴⁸ Her chapter on union unpacks exactly that: union. I will begin with her chapter on union and then move on to her chapter on love, which is the reverse of Stump’s order. That way, when we turn to examine her two necessary conditions on love, we’ll have a better idea of what the desire for union involves for Stump. As it turns out, the details of Stump’s chapter on love will not be necessary. My argument will be that I can grant Stump all her arguments as well as her conclusions. Even still, the union theory of love that I present in chapter 5 and explain in chapter 6 will be the thing which explains her theory and not the other way around.

Stump, throughout both chapters and because of her main topic (the problem of evil), spends a fair amount of time discussing how her conceptions of love and union relate to our love of God and God’s love of us. I don’t review these parts of Stump. They would take us too far afield.

Begin, then, with her chapter on union. Union consists in both “...personal presence and mutual closeness.”²⁴⁹ Personal presence of the sort which concerns Stump involves three things.²⁵⁰ The first is “...direct and unmediated causal and cognitive contact...”²⁵¹ Stump doesn’t concentrate too much on this condition, primarily because,

²⁴⁸ Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 91.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁵⁰ Stump goes into several different grades of personal presence. Going into them wouldn’t help understand her view (she’s just making distinctions which she doesn’t use later on), and it wouldn’t help in the way I respond to her here and in chapter 6. She also says that closeness can be a genus presence, but that presence can be a genus of closeness. For this to be true, Stump means the same words in different senses. Although it is helpful to be attuned to the fact that we can use these words to mean different things at times, going into the details here would, I think, just complicate things needlessly.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

in her opinion, it tells us very little about personal presence.²⁵² In short, you've got to be able to cause things to happen to your beloved and you've got to know at least some of what's going on with them. (Later, when we look at closeness, much more than this will be required, especially in terms of what one must know about their beloved.)

Second, "...for mentally fully functional adult human beings, full-fledged dyadic joint attention is required for...personal presence."²⁵³ Dyadic joint attention is where "...the object of awareness for Jerome is simultaneously Paula and their mutual awareness."²⁵⁴ Stump also describes it as a matter of "...the infant's and the care-giver's joint focus on the infant, or on some part or aspect of the infant."²⁵⁵ What makes something a case of dyadic joint attention is not merely that one person is focused on another person and that the other person is focused on themselves; it also requires that they are each aware that they are both focused on the other person. Example: Paula and Jerome are each aware that they are both focused on Jerome. If this dyadic joint attention obtains, then Stump's third condition on personal presence also obtains; namely, "[o]ne person Paula has a second-person experience of another person Jerome...[that is]...(1) Paula is aware of Jerome as a person, (2) Paula's personal interaction with Jerome is of a direct and immediate sort, and (3) Jerome is conscious."²⁵⁶ Stump thinks that if Paula and Jerome are each aware that they are both focused on Jerome, then Paula will be

²⁵² Ibid., 111-112.

²⁵³ Ibid., 117.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 116.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 114.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 112.

aware of Jerome as a person, Paula's personal interaction with Jerome will be of a direct and immediate sort, and Jerome will be conscious.²⁵⁷

For Stump, love requires a desire for mutual person presence.²⁵⁸ So, if you love your beloved, then you will desire, in part, to have (i) direct and unmediated causal and cognitive contact with them and they with you, you will desire that (ii) each of you be aware that you are both focused on your beloved and on yourself, and you will desire (iii) an awareness of your beloved as a person, direct and immediate interaction with your beloved, and for your beloved be conscious. And you will desire that they desire these things for you too.

We're about to transition to mutual closeness, and this summary from Stump will help in said transition:

Since shared attention comes in degrees, significant personal presence also comes in degrees. Rich shared attention is necessary for the most significant sort of personal presence. And mutual closeness is necessary for rich shared attention. It is clear, then, that a complicated kind of personal engagement, based ultimately on knowledge of persons and shared attention between persons, is necessary for union. (It may also be sufficient, but I am not making this stronger claim here.) Given this nexus of connections, it is possible to refine the original claim about the union of love this way: the union of love requires mutual closeness and mutual personal presence of the most significant kind.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 116-117.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 119.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 119.

So, the more mutual closeness you have, the more shared attention you have; and the more shared attention you have, the more personal presence you can have. And, of course, all this will increase the level of union or unity you have.

What, then, for Stump, is closeness? If both lovers have it – if both are close to one another – then they’ll have mutual closeness. But until we know what closeness is for Stump, we won’t really know what she means by mutual closeness.

Stump points to many necessary conditions for closeness. “For Paula to be close to Jerome, Jerome has to [actively] share with Paula those thoughts and feelings of his that he cares about and that are revelatory of him. ... In addition, Paula has to receive Jerome’s self-revelation... [willingly and in a way that] she can understand what he is trying to reveal to her.”²⁶⁰ If this were mutual, here we have active sharing of things that are revelatory on the part of each person. And we have a willing reception and understanding of the things that are being shared. These are necessary for the lovers to be mutually close. Furthermore, each has to care what the other thinks of what the other is revealing; they have to care what the other’s reactions will be.²⁶¹ Only in this way will mutual closeness be had.

A further requirement from Stump: “Paula is close to Jerome only in case Jerome [has a great desire for Paula]. If Jerome had no [great desire] for Paula, he would not care whether or not he had Paula in his life; it would be a matter of indifference to him...

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 120. Stump thinks it is the one who is revealed *to* who is close to the revealer. I don’t think that this always fits the way we talk about closeness, but it is not really going to hurt Stump’s case if we grant her that way of talking about things.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 120.

[Jerome having a great desire for Paula] makes Jerome vulnerable to Paula.”²⁶² So, if it’s to be mutual, each lover has to desire the other greatly, they each have to care whether the other is in their life. “Paula [also] has to be willing to have Jerome need her and be vulnerable to her. ...it must include at least Jerome’s desiring in Paula those states of mind that are necessary for her being close to Jerome—namely, her understanding of his self-revelation to her and her willingness to have him need her and reveal his mind to her.”²⁶³

Before turning to Stump’s chapter on love, let’s put all this together. The desire for union is a desire for something mutual. When you desire union, then you will desire two things:

#1. Mutual personal presence. This involves the following: that both of you have (i) direct and unmediated causal and cognitive contact with each other, you will desire that (ii) each of you be aware that you are both focused on each other, and you will desire that (iii) each of you be aware of each other as persons, that each of you have direct and immediate interaction (one to another), and you’ll desire that each of you be conscious.

#2. Mutual closeness. This involves the following: that you will desire (iv) that you each actively and willingly share things that are revelatory of who both of

²⁶² Ibid., 121-122.

²⁶³ Ibid., 121-122.

you are; (v) that you each have a willing reception and understanding of the things that are being shared; (vi) that you both care what the other thinks of what you're each revealing (each person's reactions); (vii) that each person greatly desire the other, caring whether the other person is in their life.

By her own admission, (i) isn't all that important to note.²⁶⁴ You only need to include it so that someone doesn't end up explicitly denying it. And, by her own admission, (iii) is entailed by (ii). (ii) is the centerpiece for mutual personal presence. With mutual closeness, even though the particular words that Stump uses are important to keep in mind (words like 'willingly' and 'actively'), a way to succinctly state things would be: sharing deeply, listening deeply, wanting to know what the other thinks about the deep parts of oneself, and, after hearing about those deep parts, heartily affirming, "I want you, and I want you in my life."

(ii) makes good sense of this way of summarizing closeness. (ii) is all about a deep sort of listening or "taking in." Leaving aside the mutual part of (ii), the idea, again, is that Paula and Jerome both are aware that they are both focused on Paula (or Jerome, as the case may be). If you achieve this dyadic joint attention, you're achieving a deep listening/taking in. In sum, both parties are sharing deeply, listening/taking in deeply (think (ii) here), wanting to know what the other thinks about them now that they've

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 111-112.

shared deeply, and both parties saying, “I want you, and I want you in my life.” That’s one of the things that is desired when you love somebody, according to Stump.²⁶⁵

Now that we have union in view, consider again Stump’s claim that love entails a desire for the good of the beloved and a desire for union with the beloved. As we’ll see in chapter 5 and 6, I can accept this idea. More specifically, I can accept the idea of entailment. What I can’t accept is that intimate love partly consists in a desire for the good of the beloved. So long as Stump’s entailment isn’t due, in her mind, to a desire for the good of the beloved being constitutive of love, I can accept said entailment.

I can also accept half of the other part of Stump’s claim concerning the desire for union. (And, it should be said, if someone were to raise decisive arguments against it, I could also reject all of it with no consequence.) The other part of Stump’s claim, recall, is this. If I love someone, then I desire to share deeply with them, I desire that they share deeply with me, I desire to intently and carefully listen to them, I desire that they intently and carefully listen to me, I desire to know what they think about what I share, I desire them to desire to know what I think about what they share, I desire to assure them that I desire them, and I desire that they assure me that they desire me. But why think that if you love, then you have to desire these sorts of things mutually? Stump’s claim is one of mutuality. But consider the following. I love someone, and I only desire for them to share and for me to listen and for me to tell them my thoughts that I want them. There’s

²⁶⁵ Stump says that there are more necessary conditions that she hasn’t listed. My responses to Stump will not turn on these.

nothing implausible about this. This is possible, it seems.²⁶⁶ Stump says that it is not. My theory will allow that it is.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered several leading theories of love. This has yielded several important upshots concerning what an adequate union theory must look like. We've seen that Frankfurt's notion of disinterestedness is an essential part of intimate love and that Kolodny's and Helm's theories fail because they don't accommodate disinterestedness.

We've considered Velleman's idea of seeing the beloved, his idea of seeing the beloved such that you become emotionally vulnerable to them makes sense of seeking the good of the beloved, and his idea that there exists a connection between seeing the person as a thing that wills or desires on the one hand and being moved by said desires on the other. These will all help in my task of (i) explaining union, (ii) explaining the connection between intimate love and motivation, meaning, purpose, etc., and (iii) explaining the connection between intimate love and non-intimate love.

²⁶⁶ The only thing I can find in Stump that might count as an argument that it's not possible is this: "...when the two desires of love appear to conflict, Aquinas's claim that the ultimate good for human beings is union with God gives a method for harmonizing them. Union with God is shareable, and persons united with God are also united with each other. *Ultimately*, then, the same thing—namely, union with God—constitutes both the final good for each of the persons in a loving relationship and also their deepest union with each other." Ibid., 95. Stump doesn't present this as an argument for specifically *mutual* presence and closeness. But if it were one, then the idea would be that if I don't desire that I get to share deeply with them, etc., then I don't desire for them something that is necessary for our ultimate good; everyone's ultimate good being: everyone united with everyone and everyone united with God. But if I don't desire that good for them, then I don't love. Therefore, I have to desire that I get to share deeply with them, that they listen deeply, etc. Not only is this a stretch as a way of understanding Stump, it also necessitates bringing in considerations of our love for God, which I said I wouldn't do.

Because of Kolodny and Helm, we saw that the way we experience why it is we're moved by, for instance, Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions is very important. Again, Frankfurt helped in this. In the case of intimate love, we can't have as our reasoned interest something beyond the beloved's desires. As we saw from Frankfurt, our love must be particular in its focus. Our love must be interested in the beloved and not in ourselves or our beloved meeting some standard or goal (even if the standard or goal is a great thing to want for ourselves or our beloved!).

And because of Stump, we now need to show how a union theory of love undergirds that <if I love someone, then I desire for them to share and for me to listen and for me to tell them my thoughts that I want them>. I will do this in chapter 6.

Maybe these philosophers intended their theory to capture intimate love or maybe not. Either way, their theories don't have the resources for understanding intimate love. Union theory does.

CHAPTER V

A UNION THEORY OF LOVE

Herein I develop a union theory of love. I proceed in two stages. First, I specify the bare minimum of love. Love can grow. Love can shine forth. But it doesn't have to. When love is faint, what does love consist in? Answering that question is the first stage. I'll concentrate just on one person's love for another without commenting on whether the love is requited or not. I'll speak to requited love later on in this chapter. It's here, during this first stage of saying what love is, that I will have occasion to develop an extensive though not exhaustive taxonomy of unions.

The second stage specifies the ways or dimensions along which love can grow. How can it grow, and what is its fullest expression? (Although it might be surprising to hear, just because love is strong or at its fullest expression doesn't mean that it's good.) This is what I meant when I said we would return to Scruton's idea of love having degrees. After I've said how love can grow, I'll talk about requited love. Then I'll clearly state why I think union theory is the best theory of intimate love (though why I think that might already be obvious by then).

Questions Concerning Union

We've seen that there are different types of union. For instance, Solomon's union of shared selfhood (though perhaps this is a union of desire), Scruton's union of interest or desire, Nozick's union of well-being (having somewhat to do with emotion), Fisher's

union of desire and belief and emotion, and Delaney's union of interests and/or well-being.

But which one or two or three of these is right? Is love only a union of desire? Only a union of emotion? Or maybe love is a union of desire and emotion but not belief. Is this right? Or maybe you can have certain multiple combinations while others are excluded. Or could it be that, if you love, then, of necessity, you're united in all the ways such that, if you were united in all but one, you wouldn't love? Or maybe it's this: if you love, then, if you're functioning properly, you have all unions such that, if you were united in all but one, you wouldn't be loving with full functionality.

Union theorists haven't spent a lot of time commenting on other union theories. (Delaney does, but he doesn't answer the questions we've been asking.)²⁶⁷ Because of this, there aren't any answers to these sorts of questions on offer.

And there are more questions. What about actions? Nozick, as we saw, rejects unilateral decision-making. And the notions of belief and desire, in many philosophers' minds, are closely connected to the will and/or to action. Could there be a union of action? If so, could there be a union of bodily movements thought of as somehow distinct from action? Could there be a union of someone's desires being united to someone's emotions or vice versa? Or could someone's beliefs be united with someone's desires? Remarkably, all this is unexplored territory. And I will explore it.

²⁶⁷ Neil Delaney, "Romantic Love and Loving Commitment: Articulating a Modern Ideal," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1996), 339-344.

A Core Type of Union

I take my cue first from Scruton and Fisher. In what follows, I'm not trying to say exactly what Scruton or Fisher said. I'm using what they say to say what I want to say. Also, for simplicity's sake, I will only focus on desires. Later, I will bring in emotions, beliefs, actions, and bodily movements. I don't intend to pursue a union of well-being at all, unless well-being is thought of as consisting entirely in emotions, beliefs, actions, and/or bodily movements. If that's the way someone was thinking about well-being, then I will be discussing a union of well-being, but I won't be using the term 'well-being'.

Recall what Scruton and Fisher have said. According to Scruton, "Your desires are then reasons for me, in exactly the same way...that my desires are reasons for me."²⁶⁸ Fisher says something similar. "[Humble benevolence is] the desire that the other person obtain what she desires, not for reasons related to my good but simply because it is what she desires – the reasons are hers, and because they are hers they are mine."²⁶⁹ (Notice how Fisher's idea of humble benevolence converges here with Frankfurt's ideas of particularity and disinterestedness. Fisher emphasizes that the desire is not for reasons related to my good but simply because the beloved desires it. This sounds like the focus is on the particular as an ends.) With both Scruton and Fisher, there seems to be some sort of connection between desires. The desires of the beloved affect the desires of the lover. And how does the lover conceive of their being affected by the beloved's desires?

²⁶⁸ Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 130.

²⁶⁹ Mark Fisher, *Person Love* (London: Duckworth, 1990), 20.

Well, the lover is so affected simply because the beloved desires the thing in question. The lover desires the beloved to be fulfilled in the beloved's desires.

We're ready for the core of union theory, expressed only in terms of desire for now. I phrase things specifically in terms of Bob and Martha, but what I say here should be universalizable.

There are several things about Bob which, if Martha were to know of them, she would perceive as factoring into Bob's lived experience (desires, emotions, beliefs, actions). Let's consider his desires. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's desires, but perhaps several or all of them, she would desire that he be fulfilled in those desire or desires. Suppose too that she in no way reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob's desires to her own desire that Bob be fulfilled in his desire(s). You might think that these sorts of things obtain if and only if Martha loves Bob, albeit, perhaps, in a minimal sort of way. (Remember that we're first concerning ourselves just with the bare minimum of love. Later we'll say how it grows.)

That's the core of my union theory. Note that it has to do with any desire of Bob's whatsoever. It might be something Bob really wants and really wants to want. But it might not. It might be a desire central to Bob's own self-conception or it might not. Either way, if Martha's desires are connected to his in the way I've specified, Martha might love Bob. (I comment below on why I say "might" here.) The core of my union theory contains two components. The first is what I will call the *tied component*. If Bob has certain desire or desires, then Martha is going to have a desire that he be fulfilled in that or those desires as well. Where he goes, she goes. This is similar to Nozick but not

in terms of well-being. The second component of the core of my union theory is the *no reasoning component*. Here Martha doesn't reason or process her way from anything outside of Bob's desires to her own desire that Bob be fulfilled in his desire(s). Anything like that is excluded. The lover might be aware of other goods outside of the beloved's desires, but the lover doesn't use them so as to reason their way towards desiring that the beloved be fulfilled. More often than not, the lover just finds themselves with the desire that the beloved be fulfilled after having perceived (perhaps subconsciously) that the beloved wants something. In other cases, the lover might explicitly and consciously reason, "They want it; therefore, I want them to be fulfilled," but reasoning in that way is probably rare. The beloved wanting something doesn't make a lot of sense out of the lover wanting the beloved to be fulfilled in their desire. So, reasoning in that way might sometimes dampen the lover's desire that the beloved be fulfilled. But it might happen, sometimes, that the lover sees what's going on inside of themselves and the way they're connected to the beloved, accepts it as perfectly legitimate or even mandatory in some way, and proceeds to reason in the way I just laid out. So, in those rare cases, reasoning, "They want it; therefore, I want them to be fulfilled," is another way intimate love can manifest itself.

Something else to note here that is my theory is subjunctive. "There are several things about Bob which, if Martha *were* to know of them, she *would* perceive..." and "...*were* Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's desires, but perhaps several or all of them, she *would* desire that he be fulfilled in said desire or desires." And, when I say that "...she in no way reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob's desires to

her own desire that Bob be fulfilled in his desire(s),” this is to be understood subjunctively as well: she *would* in no way reason in that way. The reason I opt for the subjunctive is this. Martha’s desires can be united with Bob’s even if neither of them is currently wanting something or expressing it. So long as Martha’s desires would go as I say they would go in response to Bob’s desires, then that’s enough.

This subjunctive feature of my theory will be true of all the unions I discuss below. Sometimes, when I want to reference someone’s union quickly, I don’t state it subjunctively. But this is just for ease of exposition. I have its subjunctive character in mind.

Finally, why is this sort of relationship that of union vs. some other more general way of relating to someone? Answer: something about the beloved – their desires – “brings” the lover’s desires along in favor of the beloved’s desires. The desires are “brought,” the desires are “tied.” They are unified. It is a relationship of union for that reason in combination with another: the way that the lover is “brought along” isn’t by way of reflecting on some other good not identical with the beloved’s desires (or emotions or beliefs or actions) and how that good might be achieved. Such a process of reasoning would be, for the lover, a way of deciding things for themselves based on other things outside of the beloved – i.e. not very unified.

Someone might then object, “But how is love different than that of a cult leader manipulating their followers to desire the fulfillment of the cult leader’s desires?” The answer here is that the lover is still capable of reflecting on the relationship of love itself, considering whether it is, in itself, a good thing. (Just because they believe it is a good

thing, however, doesn't mean that this is the reason they desire what the beloved desires.) On the other hand, the follower of the cult leader almost by definition has had this ability taken away.

More Conditions on Love?

I've been saying that all this "might" be love for a reason. Some might worry that if Martha is connected like this to desires which, in Martha's opinion, would, if fulfilled, result in damaging who Bob is, then this sort of connection wouldn't count as loving. In other words, what if Bob wants to jump off a cliff, and Martha wants Bob to be fulfilled in that desire? Is that love? Others might worry that if Martha is connected to Bob but at the same time either does not endorse the connection or positively endorses the termination of the connection, then, even if Bob's desires, if fulfilled, would result in the flourishing of who Bob is, this sort of connection wouldn't count as loving. "Every time Bob says he wants to go to the store, I want him to be fulfilled in that. But I don't want to want him to go to the store!" Is this love on Martha's part?

To account for both of these worries, we might expand the core of union theory. (I won't be taking a stand on whether union theorists should expand the core of union theory, and here's why. Either way, it's still union theory. If one is objectionable and the other is not, then, provided that the arguments of this dissertation are successful, union theory is vindicated. The only way it matters is if both versions – the expanded version and the non-expand version – have decisive objections. Thus, I leave it to the reader to pick whatever version seems right to them.) The expansion, I think, would go like this.

There are several things about Bob which, if Martha were to know of them, she would perceive as factoring into his own lived experience (desires, emotions, beliefs, actions). Let's consider his desires. Some of these desires, perhaps all of them, Martha wouldn't think of as being destructive to who Bob is if he were to get what he wants. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of these non-destructive desires, but perhaps several or all of said non-destructive desires, she would desire that he be fulfilled in said desire or desires. Moreover, Martha wants to want Bob's fulfillment in said desire or desires. She stands behind this aspect of herself. She endorses it. Suppose too that she in no way reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob's non-destructive desires to her own desire that Bob be fulfilled in his desire(s). These sorts of things obtain if and only if Martha loves Bob, albeit, perhaps, in a minimal sort of way.

Two more components have been added. The third component I call the *non-destructive component*. The fourth I call the *second-order component*. In chapter 3, I suggested that the second-order component be used in response to Soble in two cases, and we saw that Frankfurt thinks of something like the second-order component as being necessary for care (love being a type of care, for Frankfurt).

A quick note. When I say "Martha wouldn't think of [Bob's getting the thing he desires] as being destructive to who Bob is," I mean this: Martha has a way of thinking about Bob and how he functions; she could be wholly right or wholly wrong or partly right or partly wrong about this. The talk of function here doesn't necessarily make any substantive metaphysical or ethical commitments. It's just the way Bob works, how things go for Bob, the things he needs to survive and do well in life.

Is the non-destructive component necessary for love? Is the second-order component necessary as well? When it comes to the non-destructive component, can't a lover's love so consume them that they desire the beloved to be fulfilled in a desire which the lover thinks will be destructive (if fulfilled)? The lover needn't act on their desire that the beloved be fulfilled. Put it another way. Can't love so attune you to your beloved that you desire their fulfillment even when you know it's not something you should want? Maybe. Here I think of Mickey and Mallory Knox in the movie *Natural Born Killers*. Towards the beginning of the movie, they murder people in a diner. They're partners. These sorts of things satisfy them. Throughout the whole movie, and in this scene in particular, they are presented as loving each other. Mallory screams, "I love you, Mickey!" after their killings. They're presented in the movie as knowing that these sorts of things could hurt each other (by landing them in jail or on death row), and they might even be presented as acknowledging a deeper sort of hurt. I'm not sure we should say they don't love each other. I'm pretty sure, rather, we should say that their love is badly warped.²⁷⁰

With the second-order component, things seem even clearer. Isn't it possible to love while wishing we didn't? After a break-up, doesn't this sometimes happen? You still love them, but you don't want to. Or you're so mad at your mom you wish you didn't love her. But, alas, you do love her. Kelly Willis sings, "Last night you said you'd pick me up at eight / Take me into town, baby, for a date / Well, I'm still waitin' here,

²⁷⁰ *Natural Born Killers*, directed by Oliver Stone (1994; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2000), DVD.

and it's half past two / And I don't want to love you, but I do.”²⁷¹ It’s not that this isn’t love. This is just one of the many ways in which love can express itself.

The tied component and the no reasoning component are necessary and may be sufficient. (Again, we’re only considering desires at this point.) We are free to add the non-destructive component or the second-order component or both if it makes things seem more plausible.

A Taxonomy of Different Types of Union

It’s time to list all the different types of union. I mean this, though, in a qualified sort of way. In many ways, the taxonomy to follow is exhaustive. But not in every way. Certainly it’s extensive. It’s much more thorough than anything any union theorist has provided to date. It’s exhaustive in the sense of covering all types of union for desire, emotion, belief, action, and bodily movement in the stream of formulae inspired by Scruton and Fisher discussed above. If we think of Nozick’s well-being union as different than Scruton’s and Fisher’s union, then Nozick’s well-being union isn’t covered below. Or, if Soble is right and Nozick is advocating a subjective union, this isn’t covered below either. Also, it’s important to say that certain types of unions covered below may, in actuality, not obtain; or maybe they can’t obtain or are rare. I cover every single type of union, even ones that seem implausible, in an effort to be systematic in covering all potential options. If certain types of union don’t obtain or

²⁷¹ “Kelly Willis Lyrics – Don’t Want To Love You (but I Do) Lyrics.” *Metrolyrics*, 1 March 2017, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/dont-want-to-love-you-but-i-do-lyrics-kelly-willis.html>.

can't obtain, union theory is still the best theory of intimate love if even just one type of union can make the best sense out of intimate love.

With each type of union, I include all four components – the tied component, the no reasoning component, the non-destructive component, and the second-order component. I do this just so that all the options are in view. I don't necessarily think that all four components are necessary for love when it comes to each type of union.

In what follows, I comment on most of the listed unions but not all. Of necessity, there's a lot of repetition that happens in this section. Because of this, eventually I trim down the official way of specifying the various types of unions and just state the need-to-know information. It shouldn't be thought, however, that I've conceptually left said specifics to one side. I only state the need-to-know information because, after hearing certain things stated over and over, you'll get the point, and you won't need to keep hearing it.

We've already looked at the type of union wherein at least one of Martha's desires is united to at least one of Bob's desires. Here are the other types of union.

1. *Desire to Emotion*. At least one of Martha's desires is united to at least one of Bob's emotions. Some of Bob's emotions, perhaps all of them, Martha wouldn't think of as being destructive to who Bob is if he were to feel them. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of these non-destructive emotions, but perhaps several or all of said non-destructive emotions, she would desire that he have said emotion(s). Moreover, Martha wants to want this or these emotions for Bob. Suppose too that she in no way

reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob's non-destructive emotions to her own desire that Bob have the non-destructive emotion(s).

Comment#1. The emotion which Martha here desires could be positive or negative in character. Negative emotions are not always destructive. Some might even think that some positive emotions are destructive. If so, in the union here described, Martha wouldn't desire anything with respect to said positive and yet destructive emotions. Or, if she did, it wouldn't be a desire of intimate love.

Comment#2. Were Bob to feel some non-destructive emotion while also non-destructively desiring that he not feel it, Martha may or may not desire that he not feel it. Could there be a hierarchy of unions such that, if there are two ways one might be united to another, a union in one way would result in a lack of love? Here I suspend judgment, as this is an in-house issue for union theorists.

2. *Desire to Belief*. Let 'approvable' when applied to beliefs mean whatever standard is deemed minimally acceptable by Martha for the belief's being held (Martha could be wrong about her standard, of course; and a belief's being approvable may or may not involve the idea of evidence or rationality). At least one of Martha's desires is united to at least one of Bob's beliefs. Some of Bob's beliefs, perhaps all of them, Martha wouldn't think of as being destructive to who Bob is, were he to have them. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of these non-destructive beliefs, but perhaps

several or all of said non-destructive beliefs, she would desire that said belief(s) be approvable. Martha wants to want that this belief be approvable. Suppose too that she in no way reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob's non-destructive beliefs to her own desire that Bob's beliefs be approvable.

Comment#1. I could have phrased this sort of union like this: Martha desires that Bob's belief be true. Though that would be a way of being united with Bob, Martha doesn't need to desire Bob's belief to be true in order for her to desire Bob's belief to be approvable. A belief's being approvable seems more minimal to me, and that's what we're after, currently – the bare minimum of love.

Comment#2. One could imagine phrasing this union in still another way: Martha desires that Bob stick with the belief until he sees fit to give it up. I decided not to phrase things in this way, because this sort of union seems tuned in more to Bob's actions and decisions than to his beliefs. In fact, we're just about to see this sort of union come up: it's called desire to action union.

*Henceforth, for the remaining types of union, I opt for only-need-to-know versions. Please remember that I'm not leaving the specifics aside conceptually.

3. *Desire to Action*. At least one of Martha's desires is united to at least one of Bob's actions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive actions, she would desire that Bob be fulfilled in said action.

Comment#1. Actions are here thought of as somehow typically related to desires, emotions, beliefs, intentions, and bodily movements. There's no need to say exactly how actions are related to these things. The union here is very similar to the union of desire with desire. We're justified in thinking that the union of desire with action is (a bare minimum of) love to the extent that we're justified in thinking that the union of desire with desire is (a bare minimum of) love.

4. *Desire to Bodily Movement*. At least one of Martha's desires is united to at least one of Bob's bodily movements. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive movements, she would desire that said movement exist.

Comment#1. Think of bodily movement like this. Suppose Martha sees Bob moving in some way. She sees him wiggling his finger. But suppose she has no idea why he's doing that. His desires, emotions, beliefs, and intentions are opaque to her. She only knows the movement.

Comment#2. That's the way to think about bodily movement. But is this type of union love? In my opinion, it is. It's probably rare. But there's an intimacy here

that seems loving. If the reader finds this implausible, I have no need to insist that this is love. Remember my comment above that only one type of union is necessary for a successful analysis of love.

*We've reviewed all the ways Martha might be moved in her desires with respect to Bob such that it might be love. We turn now to all the ways Martha might be moved in her emotions with respect to Bob such that it might be love. (We'll do this for Martha's emotions, beliefs, actions, and bodily movements.)

5. *Emotion to Desire*. At least one of Martha's emotions is united to at least one of Bob's desires. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of his non-destructive desires, either she'd feel bad if it didn't seem like Bob was going to get what he wants or she'd feel good if things were looking good for Bob and his desire. (No new comment; from here on out, if there's nothing new for me to say about a particular type of union, I will just move on to the next union.)

6. *Emotion to Emotion*. At least one of Martha's emotions is united to at least one of Bob's emotions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive emotions, Martha would experience emotion as well – positive if Bob's were positive and negative if Bob's were negative.

Comment#1. Something to notice here is that Martha doesn't have to have the same emotion as Bob. For example, if Bob feels joyous, Martha might therefore feel content. Of course, there's nothing restricting Martha's feeling joyous as a result of Bob's feeling joyous. And if Bob is enraged, so long as said rage isn't destructive as best as Martha can tell, if Martha will also feel some negative emotion, like sadness or frustration, then Martha's emotions are united to Bob's in a loving sort of way. The idea here again is that if Martha is connected with Bob like this, even if only occasionally, then this is a faint sort of love.

Comment#2. What if Martha felt some positive emotion as a result of perceiving some negative emotion on Bob's part? If Martha felt like this because she thought, "It's good for Bob to be feeling sad," then this would be loving but not intimately so. In such a case, she'd be reasoning or processing her way from something outside of Bob's non-destructive emotions; namely, the idea that it would be good for Bob to feel sad. But if Martha's response was reasoning-free, and Bob's negative emotion just made her feel good, I'm not sure what to say. Suppose, in point of fact, that it was good for Bob to feel sad. Martha's not thinking about this, but she feels good in response to Bob's sadness. If we add that Martha wants Bob's life to be miserable, emotionally, then it's pretty obvious that Martha doesn't love Bob. But what if it's just an emotional reaction? Someone asks Martha, "Why are you feeling happy that Bob is feeling sad?" She responds, after some reflection, "I'm not sure." In such a case as well,

I would say that Martha's happiness in response to Bob's sadness isn't a union of love.

7. *Emotion to Belief*. At least one of Martha's emotions is united to at least one of Bob's beliefs. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive beliefs, Martha would feel good in response to Bob holding said belief.

Comment#1. Might it be that Martha feels bad with respect to some belief?

Suppose Martha perceives that Bob believes that he has just been robbed. This results in Martha's feeling bad. Is this union? Of course, feeling bad makes sense in light of the fact that Bob probably didn't want to be robbed and feels bad at the thought. But if Martha's feeling bad in this case is a response, not to Bob's belief, but rather to Bob's desire or feeling, then, while either of those would be cases of union, they are not cases of emotion to belief union. Suppose, though, that there's nothing indicating that Bob did or didn't want to be robbed. There's nothing indicating that he feels good or bad at the thought. Even though Martha knows that most people don't want to be robbed, she also knows, let's suppose, that Bob is very strange and sometimes wants to be taken advantage of. He doesn't always want to be taken advantage of, however. Bob's desires and feelings are, therefore, in this example, entirely opaque to Martha. In this sort of case, if Martha felt badly as a result of Bob's belief that he had been robbed, then this wouldn't be union. So, emotion to belief union is perhaps best put like this:

“Sometimes their beliefs make me feel good! What can I say? That’s just the way she and I (or he and I) connect. It’s not because their beliefs are often true or well-researched. They are just their beliefs. And I (sometimes) feel good about them.”

8. *Emotion to Action*. At least one of Martha’s emotions is united to at least one of Bob’s actions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob’s non-destructive actions, Martha would feel really good about Bob acting in said way.

9. *Emotion to Bodily Movement*. At least one of Martha’s emotions is united to at least one of Bob’s bodily movements. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob’s non-destructive bodily movements, Martha would feel really good about Bob moving in said way.

10. *Belief to Desire*. At least one of Martha’s beliefs is united to at least one of Bob’s desires. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob’s non-destructive desires, Martha would believe that said desire is approvable in the sense noted above.

Comment#1. Other variations of similar types of union are worth mentioning as well. These are all ways this type of love might grow. Martha could believe that said desire is desirable; she could also believe that said desire is enjoyable; she could also believe that someone should help Bob if he needs it or wants it. These

variations are just as applicable to any of the other belief unions where the belief in question is Martha's belief.

11. *Belief to Emotion*. At least one of Martha's beliefs is united to at least one of Bob's emotions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive emotions, Martha would believe that said emotion is approvable.

12. *Belief to Belief*. At least one of Martha's beliefs is united to at least one of Bob's beliefs. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive beliefs, Martha would believe that Bob's belief is approvable.

Comment#1. Does this type of union entail that Martha believes what Bob believes? I don't think so. This might entail, for Martha, that there's a chance that the belief is allowable in an evidential sense. But I'm not sure. Maybe Martha thinks that there's no chance that the belief is allowable in an evidential sense, but she also thinks there's no harm in it. Pick whatever option you think is more likely. Either one can be made to work with union theory.

13. *Belief to Action*. At least one of Martha's beliefs is united to at least one of Bob's actions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive actions, Martha would believe that said action is approvable.

14. *Belief to Bodily Movement*. At least one of Martha's beliefs is united to at least one of Bob's bodily movements. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive bodily movements, Martha would believe that said bodily movement is approvable.

15. *Action to Desire*. At least one of Martha's actions is united to at least one of Bob's desires. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive desires, Martha would act such that Bob be fulfilled in said desire.

16. *Action to Emotion*. At least one of Martha's actions is united to at least one of Bob's emotions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive emotions, Martha would act so as to match said emotion.

Comment#1. Here I say that Martha would act so as to match said emotion.

There are various ways for Martha to do this. If the emotion is positive, she could smile, she could do a little dance, or any number of things. If the emotion is negative, she could frown, she could slump her shoulders, should could say, "Oh, I'm so sorry!"

17. *Action to Belief*. At least one of Martha's actions is united to at least one of Bob's beliefs. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive beliefs, Martha would act as if Bob's belief were approvable. Suppose that she in no way

reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob's beliefs to her own action(s).

Comment#1. A stronger union here would be that Martha acts such that Bob's belief be approvable.

Comment#2. The no reasoning component (the last sentence) is important here. From Martha's perspective, she's not acting as if said belief were true because she thinks there's some likelihood that it's true. That would be a way of reasoning her way from something outside of Bob's belief. This type of union might sometimes be dangerous.

18. *Action to Action*. At least one of Martha's actions is united to at least one of Bob's actions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive actions, Martha would act such that Bob be fulfilled in said action.

19. *Action to Bodily Movement*. At least one of Martha's actions is united to at least one of Bob's bodily movements. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive bodily movements, Martha would act such that Bob's bodily movement continue until Bob stops moving in that way.

20. *Bodily Movement to Desire.* At least one of Martha's bodily movements is united to at least one of Bob's desires. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive desires, Martha's body would move so as to fulfill Bob's desire.

Comment#1. This type of union is strange. This will be true for the rest of the unions to follow. They will all be strange. Since we're including (albeit implicitly) the second-order component of union (i.e. Martha wants to want...), we probably have to say that Martha wants to move her body as she's doing. So, what makes this bodily movement to desire union different than action to desire union? The answer is this. Martha wants to move in said way. And she may or may not know that it has something to do with fulfilling Bob's desires. But she doesn't understand how her bodily movements are fulfilling. Her body is doing something. She wants her body to be doing that thing. But it's mysterious to her. This is a powerful way of relating to somebody, if it's possible. It's like intimate love to me.

21. *Bodily Movement to Emotion.* At least one of Martha's bodily movements is united to at least one of Bob's emotions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive emotions, Martha's body would move so as to match Bob's emotion (in the sense mentioned above).

22. *Bodily Movement to Belief.* At least one of Martha's bodily movements is united to at least one of Bob's beliefs. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive beliefs, Martha's body would move as if Bob's belief were approvable.

Comment#1. Just because Martha's body moves as if Bob's belief were approvable doesn't mean she has to understand how it is that her body is accomplishing that. Indeed, not understanding how it is that her body is accomplishing its movements as if Bob's belief were approvable is the exact sort of thing bodily movement, as opposed to action, consists in.

23. *Bodily Movement to Action.* At least one of Martha's bodily movements is united to at least one of Bob's actions. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive actions, Martha's body would move so as to fulfill Bob's action.

24. *Bodily Movement to Bodily Movement.* At least one of Martha's bodily movements is united to at least one of Bob's bodily movements. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of Bob's non-destructive bodily movements, Martha's body would move such that Bob's bodily movement continue until Bob stops moving in that way.

Comment#1. In this last type of union, Martha's own bodily movements are mysterious for Martha, and Bob's bodily movements are mysterious for Martha, and they each move in ways so that Bob's movements may continue.

Which Are Necessary? And How Are They Necessary?

Twenty-five different types of union, by my count.²⁷² Let's return to the questions I raised at the beginning of this chapter.

Is love only a union of desire to desire? Only a union of emotion to emotion? Belief to belief? Both union of desire to desire and union of belief to belief but not union of emotion to emotion? Are all twenty-five required? Perhaps all that's required is this: if you're functioning properly, then you have to be united with your beloved in all twenty-five ways such that, if you were united in all but one, your love wouldn't be fully functional.

Here are the options we can choose from. Love is (a) just one of the unions or (b) any combination of the unions (including just one of them) or (c) various combinations of the unions but not all combinations or (d) all the unions all the time or (e) all the unions all the time if the person is functioning properly. On this last option, if the lover is malfunctioning, then love still exists. It's just wounded or not as complete; desires and emotions and beliefs and actions and bodily movements aren't acting in concert as they should be.

The problem with (a) is that whatever argument is provided for thinking that one type of union is love will also probably count for other types of union being love. Many of the unions seem to account for intimacy. They also fit phenomenologically. If these

²⁷² I had dealt with one other union before I started counting. The unions that are listed and given a number come to twenty-four. If you add the one before all of those, that makes twenty-five.

are the things appealed to in support of one type union being love, then the same argument could be made for a lot of the unions.

The problem with (a) is also the motivation for (b) or (c). Any unions are allowed, because they're all motivated! However, the problem with (b) and (c) is that they define love disjunctively. I.e. love is this union or this other one or another type of union, etc. Maybe this disjunctiveness isn't a bad sort of disjunctiveness. If so, then maybe (b) or (c) would be the way to go. But if you're worried about saying love is desire to desire union or desire to emotion union or...(for all twenty-five), then you'll need to be persuaded some other way. Though I'm not convinced that this is a decisive objection against (b) and (c), I do think there's a better option, which we'll get to shortly.

(d) isn't disjunctive. It's conjunctive. All and only plausible types of union are conjoined. That is, all and only unions seemingly constitutive (or partly constitutive) of love are conjoined. So, maybe the problems with (a)-(c) motivate (d): it looks like we have reason to believe that all the plausible unions are love, so maybe love consists in having all the plausible unions. (d), though, has its difficulties as well. The main problem is that people who love each other aren't always united in every plausible way. I might be united with my mom desire to desire but not emotion to emotion – there's nothing she feels that makes me feel something, positively or negatively, respectively. Someone might respond, "Wow. You want her to be fulfilled in things just because she wants them, but you don't feel good when she feels good as a result of getting what she wants? That's messed up. What's wrong with you?" I'd still want to insist that I love my mom intimately though perhaps not as well as one might hope.

The best option, I think, is (e). It's plausible, I think, that malfunctioning people can love and do love. It's plausible as well that most of us love in ways that aren't quite right or are a bit off – our ways of loving something aren't integrated. It seems as though my emotions should connect more with my desires, using the example of my mom and I above. Such as it is, though, they do not. I still love my mom, even intimately so. Her desires affect mine after all!

(e) has the drawback of still being, in a certain sense, disjunctive. If this was a worry before, it might be a worry now. You might be unified with your friend in all twenty-five ways. Someone else might be unified with their friend in just one way. Both of you intimately love your respective friends. In this sense, love can manifest in various ways. It can be this or that or this other thing, etc. The disjuncts only come by way of malfunction or the undoing of proper function. But perhaps that's not enough to salvage an (e) way of viewing things.

(I do want to note that someone might try a dispositional union theory. The idea here would be that you love Jack iff you have a disposition towards all the unions, regardless of whether you are actually united in every way possible. But I'm not quite sure this is going to work. It seems as though we are all such that, were we placed in the right circumstances, we'd be united with just about anybody. We would just need more time and enculturation with certain people. If that's right, then it looks like, on the dispositional account, everybody loves everybody. At the very least, on this account,

there are many people you love whom you don't know and probably never will. These things look false.)²⁷³

I think (e) is the way to go, the correct answer. I'm not bothered by the disjunctive result. On the other hand, what if I'm wrong? What if many different types of unions really do make sense of intimate love but there's no rhyme or reason all and there's no way to bring them together in some principled fashion? In that case, perhaps the conclusion will have to be that there is no one thing that intimate love is.²⁷⁴ If I were pushed into this corner, I'd be fine with it. Reason being: the unions exist, and we often use the word love to talk about them. Also, the unions are important to us in the way I said "love" is important to us (see above). And, so I will argue in chapter 6, the unions have a lot to do with motivation, direction, the thing I'm supposed to do with myself, meaning, and purpose in life.

Now, I don't think there not being any one thing that love is results in love's non-existence. Instead, I'd want to say that the term 'love' picks out different unative relations, depending on the conversational context. And so, love does exist – i.e. the unative relations exist which we mean by 'love'.²⁷⁵ On the other hand, if someone thought that there being no one thing that love is entails love's non-existence, I'd still

²⁷³ My thanks to Robert Garcia for working through this idea with me. Any remaining errors are my own.

²⁷⁴ This would be to endorse what Jenkins refers to as *pluralism* about love. See C. S. I. Jenkins, "What Is Love? An Incomplete Map of the Metaphysics," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1 (2015), 356. "A pluralist would hold that romantic love comes in more than one form and that different identity theories are true for the different forms of love." Ibid., 356.

²⁷⁵ I'm fairly confident that this is a way of being a pluralist, in Jenkins' sense, though not the only way. This is certainly a way of being a contextualist about the word 'love'.

want to insist that the unative relations exist and that we successfully communicate with each other by using ‘love’, indicating what we mean.²⁷⁶

So, my main position is that of (e). But I have back up positions if I need them.

All twenty-five unative relations are at play, then, in some way, when it comes to love. I’m about to move on to love’s growth, but elaborating on how love can grow for all twenty-five would be tedious, difficult to track, and probably not necessary. Instead I propose to specify and develop just one – the union of desire with desire. For simplicity’s sake, henceforth, let’s think of things like this: Martha loves Bob iff Martha has at least one desire that is united with at least one of Bob’s desires.

How Love Can Grow

I’ve specified the bare minimum of love: for some of Bob’s desires, remember, Martha wouldn’t think of them as being destructive to who Bob is if he were to get what he wants; suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of these non-destructive desires, but perhaps several or all of said non-destructive desires, she would desire that he be fulfilled in said desire or desires; moreover, Martha wants to want Bob’s fulfillment in said desire or desires. Suppose that she in no way reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob’s desires to her own desire that Bob be fulfilled in his desire(s). Martha loves Bob. But if this is only one desire were talking about, her love is small. Only just meeting the bare minimum. How can love grow?

²⁷⁶ This would be to embrace a sort of eliminativism or, perhaps, (what Jenkins calls) simplificatory eliminativism. See *Ibid.*, 356.

The first thing to note is how the non-destructive component of love as well as the second-order component of love interacts with love's growth. Lifting the non-destructive component allows love to grow – there are more ways in which your desires can be united to your beloved's when you don't have to worry about whether they're destructive. The fact that there are more ways for your desires to be united to your beloved's may not be a good thing.

With the second-order component, there are different things to say. Suppose you think that the only things constitutive of love are the tied component and the no reasoning component. That is, the core type of union is necessary and sufficient for love. From this perspective, if at one time you desire that your beloved be fulfilled in some desire, but you don't endorse your love, then, if, at a later time, you do endorse your love, this is a way your love has grown. It's grown stronger. It's been reinforced. On the other hand, if you endorse the cessation of your love, this is a way your love has been comprised. It's weaker than it was before. Suppose, however, you think that the second-order component partly constitutes love. In that case, endorsements matter not. Either you have the second-order desire or you don't, which means that either you have love or you don't.

That said, here are some more ways that love can grow. The first would be that of *number*. You might be united to Jack in this way via just one of Jack's desires or via a few of Jack's desires or via several or nearly all or even all Jack's desires. It might even get to the point where the *only* thing you desire is that Jack be fulfilled in all his non-destructive desires.

Another dimension along which love can grow would be that of (what I'll call) *agreement*: if *all of* Jack's desires are such that you don't think their fulfillment would hurt Jack, then the number of desires by which you could be united with Jack would be even greater. In other words, the more non-destructive desires Jack has, the more your love can grow. It can grow. But it might not.

Another dimension is that of *awareness* – the more you unite with Jack's desires that he's aware of, the more you're united with him. Put it this way. If you're united with many of Jack's desires, but if Jack doesn't recognize himself as having these desires, then there's a sense in which you're less united with Jack than if he had been aware of said desires.

Another dimension still is that of *centrality to sense of self* – the more you unite with desires that are central to Jack's sense of self (or Jack's sense of who he is at his core), the more you unite with Jack. So, notice how you could be united with many desires that Jack is aware of while at the same time not being united to any of his central-to-sense-of-self desires. Notice too how desires that are central to Jack's sense of self might be destructive. But, if all of them are non-destructive, then that's double the potential for growth.

Another dimension is *operationality* – the more you unite with desires that are inciting Jack to action, the more you are united with him. But, while you could be united to desires that are operational for Jack, it could also be that none of these are central to his sense of self. Perhaps he's not aware of his operational desires. Perhaps he's aware of them, but they are not central to his sense of self. On the other hand, you might be united

with desires that are central to Jack's sense of self while not being united to any of his desires that are operational for him.

Finally, the more that you know Jack himself, the more you know about Jack, the more you "get Jack right" when it comes to his desires, then the more this allows for greater precision and depth of union. I call this the *knowledge* dimension of growth in love. (This is reminiscent of Nozick: "...it must be we ourselves who are loved, not a whitewashed version of ourselves, not just a portion. In the complete intimacy of love, a partner knows us as we are, fully."²⁷⁷)

Let's look at the two extremes. On one extreme, to repeat, the bare minimum of your love for Jack is this: were you to perceive one of his non-destructive desires, you would desire that he be fulfilled in them and not because you reasoned or processed your way from anything outside of Jack's desires. In such a case, at least some of your desires are united to Jack's, and, therefore, this is true if and only if you love Jack. (Remember that, once again and for simplicity's sake, we're just focusing on desire to desire union.)

On the other extreme, you know who Jack is and how Jack operates, inside and out. You know all about all of his desires (the knowledge dimension). Everything Jack desires is something you don't think would hurt him were he to get what he wants (the agreement dimension). The *only* thing you desire is that Jack be fulfilled in all his desires (the number dimension). Since the only thing you desire is that Jack be fulfilled in all his desires, this includes all the desires which are central to Jack's self conception

²⁷⁷ Robert Nozick, "Love's Bond," in *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 75.

(the centrality to sense of self dimension) as well as all the desires which Jack is aware of and all the one's he's not aware of (the awareness dimension); it also includes all the desires which are inciting Jack to action (the operability dimension). And remember that, when you think about it, you whole-heartedly endorse your desires being such as they are; you want your desires to be what they are.

In chapter 3, as I was thinking about Nozick's idea of giving up on unilateral decision-making, I suggested that, while it was not plausible to think that all cases of love involve the lover attempting to bring about non-unilateral decision-making on the part of the beloved, it is much more plausible to think that certain cases of love partly consist in the lover not always making decisions on their own. Now that we've seen the ways love can grow, we can make sense of this. Suppose the lover endorses their action to desire connection with the beloved. The lover wants at least some of their decisions to be affected by the desires of their beloved. And the lover acts on this by checking in with the beloved and changing their (the lover's) plans accordingly. That's what they want, after all. Love doesn't have to go this way; i.e. love doesn't have to involve the giving up of unilateral decision-making. But it can if that's the way love grows.

Required Love

Fisher mentions some problems facing union theorists. And now is a good time to raise them. Doing so will bolster union theory. Doing so will elucidate union theory. And doing so will provide an occasion to discuss required love, which I promised to do.

Here's Fisher. "...what if she wants me not to love her? The 'Get lost' problem. Or what if we both get...immobilized by the impossibility of assigning any content to our current desires, since each of us desires precisely whatever it is the other desires?"²⁷⁸ I'll take these each in turn.

The first problem – the "Get lost" problem, as Fisher calls it – is thought to be a problem for union theory because, if my desires are connected with yours and you want me out of your life, then this implies that I should want to leave. But, of course, at least some of the time love compels you to stay. So, it looks like union theory provides the wrong result. In response, I can still love even if it's the bare minimum of love. And, if it's the bare minimum, and if the one desire of yours that I'm connected with is your desire to go the YMCA on Monday, then I can love you (minimally) without love demanding that I desire to stop loving you or that I desire to leave (or that I desire to stay!). Or take a stronger version of love: perhaps I'm connected to your desires that are central to your sense of self. But, as it turns out, your desire that I leave isn't central to your sense of self. Now, in any of these cases, morality might demand that I respect your desire. But if I don't, it doesn't mean that I don't love you.

To really make the "Get lost" problem as much of a problem as it possibly can be, we need to consider things from the vantage point of action to desire union. And we need a powerful sort of love. Suppose that the only thing I want and am prepared to act on is that all your desires be fulfilled. Suppose next that you don't like me, and you want me out of your life. If that's the way I'm united with you, then of course I'll get out of

²⁷⁸ Mark Fisher, *Person Love* (London: Duckworth, 1990), 30.

your life. Once out of your life, and until I stop loving you, I'll either lead an unfulfilled or totally disinterested life. But, it seems to me, love can sometimes express itself in exactly this way. More difficult is when you express your desire that I stop loving you. If my union with you was only desire to desire union, then this wouldn't necessarily be a problem. I'd want to stop loving you because you want me to stop loving you, but I might not stop loving you. With action to desire union, things are different. Again, the correct response here, I think, is this. A lover can love their beloved in certain ways, ways very powerful and perhaps very rare, such that, when they hear of their beloved's desire, promptly set out not to love their beloved. Their actions might fail, but they keep acting in that way nonetheless.

Let's move on to the problem of immobilization. Here is where we discuss requited love. I should say to start off that, if my desires are united with some of yours and your emotions are united with some of mine, this is a type of requited love, in my opinion. But now let's suppose that the only thing I want and am prepared to act on is that all your desires be fulfilled, and the only thing you want and are prepared to act on is that all my desires be fulfilled. "What do you want?" "Whatever you want." "Ah, well, I want what you want." "Well, I want what you want." Would two such lovers find themselves at a standstill, unable to do anything? Relating to someone in this sort of way would be rare. But what if it happened? Does union theory tell us, falsely, that sometimes we love such that we can't do anything? My answer is "no." Once the lovers realized that the one wants what the other wants and vice versa and back and forth, at least one of them would realize, "Okay. I've got to develop some other desires in service

of my current desire or otherwise I won't get what I want." I don't think that someone thinking this and undergoing a process of developing subsidiary desires is implausible. And I think that doing such a thing is very much a loving thing to do.

Requited love, for this particular type of union, demands an alteration in what you want. No longer can you only want what they want. You've got to add something. Once you do, you get what you originally wanted, because now they are getting what they want. They wanted the fulfillment of all your desires. Of course, this is all in the service of what you originally wanted, which only included what they wanted.

Why I Think Union Theory Is the Right Theory of Intimate Love

My argument for union theory, in one sentence, is this: union theory doesn't do anything wrong, and it does everything right. Let me take each of these in turn.

It doesn't do anything wrong. Or, at least, at the end of chapter 3, we assembled a list of a whole lot of things union theories might do wrong, and it doesn't do any of those things. First, my union theory hasn't said anything about the parts of the lover or beloved, and it hasn't talked about someone else's interests being part of the lover's or of each lover being a part of a greater whole. Second, the concern of the lover for the beloved isn't understood in terms of the lover's concern for themselves. In my theory, the lover is concerned that the concerns of the beloved be addressed. The lover wants the beloved to be fulfilled. Third, my union theory hasn't demanded anything at all like colonization, domination, or manipulation. There's no demand for anything that's morally wrong or questionable. The option of the non-destructive component assures us

that that will never happen as an expression of love. Even though, it should be said, without the non-destructive component, there's still nothing demanding that love be immoral. Fourth, my theory in no way blurs the distinction between persons. It clearly makes a distinction between the lover's desires, emotions, beliefs, and actions vs. the beloved's desires, emotions, beliefs, and actions. I also don't talk about two people being one person or substance. Fifth, my theory doesn't say anything which, in itself, is mysterious or mystical or hard to understand. In chapter 6, we'll soon explore how it is that someone becomes united with another. How union comes about might be mysterious. But the claim of what is happening isn't mysterious. Sixth, the union theory I present doesn't say that the lover has the very same beliefs and desires and interests as the beloved. The content of the beloved's desire, let's supposed, is to go to medical school. The content of the lover's desire is that the beloved be fulfilled in going to medical school. The content is different in each case. Seventh, my theory never demanded that the lover always wants to be with one's beloved (spending time with them or being physically proximate). Eighth, even on action to desire union, there's no requirement that, in order to love, the lover has to think of themselves as being the agent of their beloved's desires. In certain ways they might be that. But they don't have to think of themselves in that way, and they don't have to obsess over their beloved's desires. So, ninth, neither do I say that the lover has to have a constant desire to do something for their beloved – love can be minimal, barely registering; and my counterfactual analysis allows for desires (or emotions or beliefs or actions or bodily movements) not to be present at all. Tenth, my theory doesn't require feeling some

powerful emotion at the thought of something that might be true of your beloved, where said thing doesn't include desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions. My theory of love requires that the response be only to desires, emotions, beliefs, etc. Eleventh, my theory similarly doesn't require automatic bodily responses at the thought of something that might be true of your beloved, where said thing doesn't include desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions. Twelfth, my theory doesn't make the difficulty of tracing the origin of a shared belief or desire a necessary condition for love. Nothing was said about the difficulty of tracing at all. Thirteenth, nothing in my theory was said about perceiving yourself and the other as a *we* or anything about identifying as being a part of a *we*. Fourteenth, my theory doesn't require giving up on unilateral decision-making, though it does allow for said expression.

So, union theory doesn't do anything wrong. It also does everything right. Or, at least, as many things I know of that it should do, it does. Let's return to where we began with Bob and Martha. Bob and Martha helped us get a hold on intimate love. Martha intended to give Bob his medicine. She intended to do this irrespective of whether Bob wanted it. But it was also true that if Bob would have heard of Martha intentions, he would have cried. And, if Bob would have cried, then Martha would have felt sad. Notice this last bit: Bob's feeling sad would have had an effect on Martha. Her emotions would have been occasioned by Bob's emotions. Martha would have been moved by Bob's emotions. Bob's emotions, it seems, would have done the moving. Not something else. Martha, in other words, wouldn't have been moved by Bob's emotions because she hates tears and would do anything to make anyone stop crying.

This was my way of gesturing at intimacy. It was useful to keep in mind. It helped with objections to union theory. And it helped with other rival theories of love; and, really, rival theories helped refine the idea we had of intimacy itself.

Whatever's going on with Bob's emotions affecting Martha's, it's to be contrasted with Martha's intention to give Bob his medicine no matter what. Here Martha is moved in a way that overrides Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs. She's moved, rather, by Bob's physical health. This isn't intimate. Remember that I allowed, even embraced, that Martha was loving Bob in her intention to give Bob his medicine "no matter what." Very much so. My focus is not love in general or certain other specific types of love. My focus is intimate love. (I also affirmed a strong tie between intimate love and the love that's in response to Bob's health. This is the subject of chapter 6 along with explaining union as well as intimate love's connection with motivation, meaning, and purpose.)

Union theory does well on this score. Union theory, at its core and stated just in terms of desire, says that love consist in the following. If Bob were to express a desire for something, then Martha would desire the fulfillment of Bob's desire, and she would in no way reason or process her way from anything outside of Bob's desires to her own desire that Bob be fulfilled in his desire(s). This fits the idea of being moved by Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions.

So, that's the main argument for union theory. It's one of the things it does right, and it does so wonderfully. Another thing it does right has to do with our experience of love. The ones we love move us. They feel something, and so do we. They want

something, and we eagerly desire their fulfillment. Sometimes when our loved ones move us, it's because we want something good for them, whether they want it or not. But other times they move us just because they're feeling something. That's what causes it, as far as we can tell – that they are feeling it. Speaking for myself, union theory makes sense of my experience of love. Intimate moments of love are like what union theory says they are. This argument from experience, however, ultimately comes down to the reader: does it make sense of your experience of intimate love?

Conclusion

I might not have convinced you. But let's say that I have. Union theory is vindicated. It's the only thing that makes sense of intimate love, and so we have to take it as a given, as the best we've got. It might still trouble you, though. It might still seem mysterious, not so much in its content, but more in how union comes to be. If this is your concern, it is also mine. I address this concern in the next chapter, chapter 6.

CHAPTER VI

ETIOLOGIES OF UNION, MEANING IN LIFE, AND NON-INTIMATE LOVE

Who cares about love, anyway? Well, I care about it because I want to love well. You and I care about it because we do – we think about it all the time, we wonder whether they really love us, we wonder whether we could ever love that person again. Once we realize that we think about it all the time, it obvious that it's something worth doing. Thinking about love helps to do things we want to do. Or so I claimed in chapter 1.

If you'll recall, there's another reason to think about what love is. We care about things that motivate in life. We want them in our life. We care about having direction in life. We want something to do with ourselves. We want to know the thing in life that we're supposed to do. We want meaning and purpose. (Remember that I'm remaining silent on whether what I'm talking about here is *the* meaning of life. Either way, it shouldn't affect what I'm saying.) Love is intimately connected to these things. If a loved one dies, then sources of motivation, direction in life, activity, of what we are supposed to do with ourselves, sources of meaning and purpose are ripped away. Being robbed of love takes these things away. Also, if someone you love gets sick or is wondering whether to take some job, you're ready to jump in. If they want your help, you're there for them. You're ready to do whatever you can to assure good working order for your beloved. There's a tight connection, then, between love, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, motivation, direction in life, activity, what we're supposed to do,

meaning and purpose. If we love, and if things go wrong for our beloved, even in small ways, then we have something we're motivated to do, we have direction in life, we have something we're supposed to do, we have meaning and purpose.

This is a reason to think about love, because, if you get love right, this will make it more likely that you get motivation, meaning, and purpose right. (For my argument for this claim, see chapter 1.)

But there's more. Besides being a reason to think about love, it's also a criterion for a good theory of love. Criterion: a good theory of love will explain how it is that love is connected to motivation, direction in life, what you're supposed to do in life, etc. If your theory didn't do this – if it wasn't clear what the connection was or if your theory blocked the connection – this would make your theory look less plausible.

This chapter is meant to show that union theory can meet this criterion. This chapter is also meant to show how intimate love and non-intimate love are connected. Fisher with his idea that the beloved's existence is a *good* for the lover and his idea that the lover desires that things *go well* for the beloved; Velleman's idea of feeling horror at *the thought of your beloved dying*; Soble with his idea of *robust concern*; and Stump with her idea of desiring *the good* of the beloved. I've been saying all along that these are somehow connected to intimate love.

But this chapter is meant to do more. Think of the worry at the end of chapter five. How does union come about? Even the bare minimum of love is crazy, if you think about it. You perceive a desire in someone, and the fact of your perceiving said desire, without any reasoning on your part, results in a desire that Jack be fulfilled in his own

desire. That Jack be fulfilled? Why? He wanted it. How does this make sense? This cries out for explanation. This chapter is, therefore, also meant to provide an explanation or etiology of union. This chapter does all three: it shows that union theory can meet the criterion of being connected to motivation, it shows how to explain union, and it shows how intimate love is connected to non-intimate love.

Or, at least, it says how three explanations might go. This chapter assumes that union theory is true. And it assumes that union is in need of explanation. On these assumptions, it explores three different options for explaining union. I list the pluses and minuses of each option. But I don't claim that they are the only explanations. And, at the end of the day, I don't claim that there's a best explanation of the three. I don't claim this because I don't know which is best. But it's worth pursuing because, as per one of our assumptions, there has to be some explanation, and seeing how potential explanations might go will at least help see how a successful explanation might go. Of course, if no explanation were forthcoming, this would count against union theory. I should also say that this chapter will mainly focus on desire to desire union. More work would have to be done for the other types of union. But remember that union theory is successful even if just one of the unions can be made to work. This chapter is an exploration in explanations mainly just for one type of union.

Each of the three explanations will take the following form. There will be an "explainer" in each case. The explainer will be different in each. And the force of the explanation will be different in each – that is, do union and motivation and non-intimate love follow from something by way of necessity or something weaker? Each of the three

accounts will have different answers to this question. Union will remain fixed in all three explanations as something that is always explained, and the same goes for motivation and non-intimate love. Union will in no way explain or affect motivation and non-intimate love, and motivation and non-intimate love will in no way explain or affect union. Neither one will constitute the other. Though, with the first explanation, we'll see that union might be said to entail motivation and non-intimate love.

With that said, let's jump into the first explanation.

First Explanation

Martha sees Bob as valuable and himself the source of his own value. If Bob is seen by Martha as valuable and himself the source of his own value, then, of necessity, this causes Martha to be united with Bob such that, were Bob to express some desire, then Martha would want for him to be fulfilled in said desire, and Martha's desire would in no way be arrived at by thinking, "Well, that'd be a good thing for Bob" or "Bob is valuable and himself the source of his own value; so, of course I want that for him!" At the same time, because Martha sees Bob as valuable and the source of his own value, Martha will, of necessity, be ready to do whatever she can to preserve Bob in existence as well as preserve his proper function. Being ready in this way is motivating. It is also a way of loving him in a non-intimate way.

That's the first explanation. There are a few things to comment on before assessing its pluses and minuses.

First, to see Bob as valuable and himself the source of his own value is supposed to be something that's deeply impressive. It's captivating. Second, to see something as valuable and itself the source of its own value might always be a wrong or false way of seeing something; or it might sometimes be right and sometimes be wrong; or it might always be right. The explanation doesn't comment on this. The only thing it says is that that is the way Martha sees Bob. Third, the "seeing" here is not intellectual or that of assenting to a proposition. Martha is *seeing as*, not *seeing that*. But if the person seeing someone in this way thought about it, they could turn their experience into words. Fourth, why does seeing someone in this way unite the person to them by way of union (that is, by way of love)? Whatever the connection might be between seeing the person as valuable and themselves the source of their own value and desiring that the person be fulfilled in their desire, it's not one that the person needs to be aware of. But it is one that makes sense from a third-person point of view. That is, if I'm told about Martha that she sees Bob as valuable and himself the source of his own value, then of course that's going to produce some sort of connection with his desires. How could it not? A thing with an incredible sort of value – one that emanates from the thing itself – is wanting something. Fifth, is there a contradiction afoot? On the one hand, Martha's desire isn't and cannot be arrived at by thinking, "Well, that'd be a good thing for Bob" or "Bob is valuable and himself the source of his own value; of course I want that for him!" If it were, it wouldn't be intimate. On the other hand, Martha does see Bob as valuable, and this seeing produces union. Are these at odds? No. Just because Martha sees Bob as valuable in this way, doesn't mean she has the proposition explicitly held in mind, believing that

it's true. And even if she had the proposition in mind and assented to its truth, there's nothing requiring her to reason by way of it towards a desire.

I turn now to considerations for and against this explanation of union. First, it has potential to explain union. Second, it also has potential to explain the connection between intimate love and motivation, direction in life, activity, what we're supposed to be doing with ourselves, meaning and purpose. Seeing someone as valuable and themselves the source of their own value results in being ready to do whatever you need to do to preserve them in existence and in proper function. This then makes sense of the fact that, if a loved one dies, sources of motivation, direction in life, and what we are supposed to do with ourselves are ripped away. It also makes sense of the fact that, if someone you love gets sick, then you're ready to give them medicine irrespective of whether they want it or not. Notice, then, how seeing someone as valuable and themselves the source of their own value can produce conflicting drives (e.g. medicine is good for Bob, but he doesn't want it, and Martha is united with Bob's desires). This is just the sort of thing we experience in love, so that counts in favor of this explanation. Third, as already indicated, it can explain non-intimate forms of love. Being ready to do whatever you need to do in order to keep the person alive and in good working order, morality included, is a form of non-intimate love.

Perhaps a downside to this view is its similarity to guise of the good theories of practical reasoning as well as motivational internalism. The theory of the guise of the good has various formulations as does motivational internalism. But useful for our purposes, I think, is Kieran Setiya's distinction. Guise of good can be put like this, he

says. “If A is doing ϕ for reasons, or doing it intentionally, she sees some good in doing it,” and motivational internalism can be put like this: “If A believes that x is good, or perceives it as being good, then she desires it.”²⁷⁹ Consider first how guise of the good relates to the first explanation of union. Suppose Martha is giving Bob his medicine so as to help him get better. Guise of the good says, “Well then, Martha sees some good in this.” This fits very well with the first explanation. Martha is giving Bob his medicine for his own good as a result of seeing him as valuable. With union, it’s harder to say how guise of the good is or isn’t being invoked. What if Martha is action to desire united with Bob? He wanted some pie, so she’s off to get some. Guise of the good would say that she sees some good in getting the pie. But is that what this explanation of union says? She sees Bob as good or valuable on this explanation. And seeing him as such results in an action by way of Bob’s desire. But this isn’t quite guise of the good.

How does motivational internalism relate? According to the first explanation of union theory, again, Martha sees Bob as good, not necessarily some action or potential state of affairs. Might we then say that Martha desires Bob? If we did, would this better explain the desire to desire union she has with him? Perhaps. On its face, though, there’s nothing in this first explanation requiring that we be motivational internalists. But it might help to be one.

This is not the place to settle whether guise of good or motivational internalism are right. If you have objections against one of or both of them, and if you think that this

²⁷⁹ Kieran Setiya, “Sympathy for the Devil,” in *Desire, Practical Reason, and the Good*, ed. Sergio Tenenbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 82.

explanation of union entails one of these views, then you'll have reason to reject this explanation of union. If you were already persuaded that either or both of these views – guise of the good and/or motivational internalism – were correct, then this first explanation of union might seem correct. One final thought: we could see this explanation of union as a reason to believe guise of the good or motivational internalism. The reasoning here would go: union theory is true; this first explanation is the best; the first explanation entails guise of the good or motivational internalism.

Are there any other downsides to this explanation of union? I think so, at least two more. For one thing, you might balk at the idea of seeing something as valuable and itself the source of its own value. You might believe in this type of value, but you might think that there are no perceptions or “seeings as” like this. Or you might not believe in this type of value, and so it seems incredible to you that people are seeing things that don't really exist. Or maybe you think there are some things you love intimately without seeing them as valuable.

Finally, the connection between seeing something as valuable and desiring something that it desires is, admittedly, somewhat mysterious. All I've said is that a thing with an incredible sort of value, where the source of value is itself, is wanting something. Does this really explain union?

Second Explanation

Here is where Velleman comes back into play. I had said that I'd be using his notions of, first, seeing the beloved, second, seeing the beloved such that you become

emotionally vulnerable to them as making sense out of seeking the good of the beloved, and, third, there being a connection between seeing the person as a thing that wills or desires on the one hand and being moved by said desires on the other.

Let's see how all this comes together in the second explanation of union. Martha sees Bob as a person – she sees him under that intelligible aspect of his will as a faculty of acting on lawlike maxims. Not only that; Martha sees him in this way as being beyond compare. This seeing also produces emotional vulnerability to Bob. Emotional vulnerability might mean emotional vulnerability to Bob's being a person. But it might mean emotional vulnerability to Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, or actions. If it was the latter, we'd have an explanation of union.

Martha's seeing Bob such that she's emotionally vulnerable to him will typically result in two things. The first is union. To see how this goes, let's return to Velleman.

What it makes sense to care about out of love for a person is the unimpeded realization of his personhood... Care about the self-realization of the beloved is not intrinsic to the emotion of love itself; it is one of the further responses to which love makes us susceptible by disarming our emotional defenses. But it is the further response that most naturally ensues when our defenses have been disarmed...since it is a desire to see that value brought to its fullest realization.²⁸⁰

Here we see again that the connection is not one of necessity. But we need more information before we can proceed: "...what it makes sense to care about out of love for them is the realization of their autonomy—their exercise of the capacity to which my

²⁸⁰ J David Velleman, "Beyond Price," *Ethics* 118 (2008), 205.

love is an appreciative response. In loving my sons, I respond to the powers constitutive of their personhood, and it then makes sense for me to care about their exercise of those powers, bringing their personhood into fruition.”²⁸¹ He goes on:

...once my children adopted some directions...I found myself caring about their progress in those directions, no matter how little intrinsic value I might have been inclined to see there in advance. ...I became deeply interested...specifically in the accomplishments of a particular midfielder, Morris dancer, poet, or photographer, because these were the directions that my children had set for themselves.²⁸²

Whether Velleman is here thinking about care in terms of desire or not, the second explanation makes things explicit. In seeing the beloved such that we’re emotionally vulnerable, we’re responding to the beloved’s capacity for self-realization and autonomy. Using that capacity, Bob either expresses some desire or acts in some way. Martha, not by necessity but instead in a way that makes sense, desires Bob’s fulfillment in said desire or action. The thing Martha is so affected by within Bob is being used (his capacity for self-realization), and he is seen as incomparable! Of course she’s going to stand behind Bob in said use, at least most of the time. Additionally, if emotional vulnerability is to be thought of in terms of Martha’s emotional connection with Bob’s desires, emotions, beliefs, actions, or bodily movements, then we’d have a further explanation of union. That is, Martha sees Bob such that she feels certain things or has

²⁸¹ Ibid., 206.

²⁸² Ibid., 205-206.

certain emotions in response to Bob's desires, emotions, beliefs, actions, or bodily movements. If we understood things in this way, then Velleman's apparatus can explain union.

And it can also explain motivation and non-intimate love. After all, we've seen that Velleman says that

...a person's good is that which is worth caring about, or which makes sense to care about, out of love for that person. And the acknowledgment that love needn't involve a desire for the beloved's good is perfectly compatible with the claim that it provides a natural motive or reason for such a desire. Or...the acknowledgment that what is wanted by a lover need not be good for the beloved is compatible with the claim that what is worth wanting, or makes sense to want, out of love for the person is indeed what is good for him. The question is what love makes it appropriate or rational to care about.²⁸³

And we've seen that he quotes Rosati favorably when it comes, in her words, to "preserving the object of our love in its valuable condition." Once again, that I desire my beloved's good, and that I seek after it, is "worth caring about out of," "makes sense out of," "is a natural motive out of," "is made appropriate by," and "is made rational by" seeing the beloved such that we're emotionally vulnerable to them. Preserving the object of our love in its valuable condition sounds very much like preserving the object of our love in existence and in proper function. This sort of thing would motivate, and it's a type of non-intimate love.

²⁸³ Ibid., 196.

This is the end of the second explanation. Two comments are in order. First, Velleman thinks that seeing your beloved such that you're emotionally vulnerable to them is to be identified with love. I argued in chapter 4 that it is not to be identified with intimate love. But there's nothing stopping it from being another type of love. The important point is that the phenomenon that Velleman points to can explain the phenomena that I want to explain (union, motivation, and non-intimate love).

Second, there is the possibility, just as with the first explanation, that the seeing of the person as a person is illusory. Both "Love as a Moral Emotion" and "Beyond Price" help us see ways in which this sort of seeing might not be veridical.

I don't want to say that registering [rational nature] is an essential feature of love, since love is felt for many things other than possessors of rational nature. All that is essential to love, in my view, is that it disarms our emotional defenses towards an object in response to its incomparable value as a self-existent end. But when the object of our love is a person, and when we love him *as* a person—rather than as a work of nature, say, or an aesthetic object—then indeed, I want to say, we are responding to the value that he possesses by virtue of being a person or, as Kant would say, an instance of rational nature.²⁸⁴

Here, to make room for love of non-persons, Velleman feels obliged to alter the way he had been talking about love for most of the paper. What's important is that it is seen as a self-existent end, one that's incomparable. If there are things we love in this way that are not, in fact, self-existent ends, then love can sometimes be illusory.

²⁸⁴ J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109 (1999), 365.

Velleman says something similar but different in “Beyond Price.”

Precisely because a dog isn't a person, we can more readily notice when we start to see him as one. ...we come to see him looking back at us with what seems like intelligent self-awareness, which makes his habitual obedience seem more like respect for us, and his instinctual affection more like love. ...we seem to see *someone there*... I am quite sure that my feelings for my late poodle were a response to the experience of seeing someone there in his eyes. In clear-headed moments, I don't believe that there really was someone there, but I am still under the illusion after his death, remembering him as I would a deceased person.²⁸⁵

As far as the second explanation goes, people might see something as being a person and be mistaken because it's a dog or a house you lived in a long time ago or a family heirloom. But they also might be mistaken because there are no persons in the Kantian sense or, if there are, said persons aren't self-existent ends (nothing is). We might perceive things in these ways. But we're wrong in our perception. The second explanation doesn't take a stand in regard to how right our perceptions are.

What are the pros of the second explanation? It has potential to explain union, motivation, and non-intimate love such that they are all tightly connected. That's a plus (or three pluses). Second, if you're at all favorable towards Velleman's view of love or to his unpacking of Kantian morality, this explanation might really resonate. As I said in my review of Velleman in chapter 4, Velleman's view of love might reinforce his version of Kantian morality, and his version of Kantian morality might reinforce his

²⁸⁵ J David Velleman, “Beyond Price,” *Ethics* 118 (2008), 203-204.

view of love. Velleman finds a way to make sense of a certain type of love as well as morality without putting them at odds, you might think. Everything works so well on his theory. All this recommends the second explanation of union. Third, because union and motivation and non-intimate love don't follow necessarily, this might seem to fit our experience better. There's not as much room for counterexamples. That union and motivation and non-intimate love follow is just something that makes sense and usually happens.

But that's a con as well. Why, if seeing the person such that your emotionally vulnerable to them makes sense of union and motivation and non-intimate love, does it sometimes happen and, at other times, not? Velleman is hard pressed to find an answer here, and the best he can do is make the connection seem as conducive as possible without capitulating to necessity. If he were to capitulate to necessity, he wouldn't have a way of harmonizing love and morality. A second con is that if Velleman's view of love doesn't seem right to you or if you're generally ill-disposed towards Kantian morality, this might end up chasing you away. Kantian morality wouldn't have to chase you away, though: if you thought that the phenomenon Velleman points to and calls love really exists, and if you thought that self-existent ends don't have to be thought of in Kantian-like ways, this would still be a way of salvaging this second explanation of union.

Earlier in chapter 3 I had said that Velleman's theory of love would provide a third argument against union theory. Then, in chapter 4, I laid out how that argument might go: if Kant's theory of morality is correct, and if we want morality to get along with love, then we've got to give up on love as involving desires and preferences, likings

and longings. And without desires and preferences and likings and longings, union theory can't get off the ground. Now we're finally in a position to answer said argument. Notice how Velleman's theory, regardless of whether it's a theory of some type of love or not, potentially provides us with an explanation of the phenomenon of union involving desires (among other things). The connection isn't one of necessity, but it's fairly strong, and it's one Velleman has pointed to himself. So, in point of fact, Velleman's theory is an edifice capable of holding union theory up. We don't have to worry about denying Kantian morality or about denying that morality and love can get along. We can just accept the whole package while still affirming our analysis of intimate love.

Third Explanation

Some might be wary of things being valuable and themselves the source of their own value. They might also be wary of self-existent, experientially incomparable ends (especially ones that produce emotional vulnerability when really seen for what they are). These might be hard to believe in or it might just seem apparent that these sorts of perceptions, though existent, aren't really up to producing or explaining union, motivation, and/or non-intimate love. Is it really the case that seeing in these ways might produce such a thing as union? Is it really the case that seeing in these ways might produce motivation and non-intimate love?

These are the sorts of concerns Frankfurt had. Morality, for Frankfurt, isn't quite as powerful as we might think. "Morality...tells us less of what we need to know about

what we should value...than is commonly presumed. It is also less authoritative. Even when it does have something relevant to say, it does not necessarily have the last word.”²⁸⁶ And other things aren’t really that powerful either: it’s important to remember that Frankfurt mentioned things that are intrinsically valuable in this connection.²⁸⁷ Morality and things that are intrinsically valuable: none of these, whether by themselves or together, tell us how to live. We need to know more. We need something authoritative. We need to care about the things in question. Caring consists in being willingly committed to a desire. “The desire does not move him either against his will or without his endorsement.”²⁸⁸

In fact, Frankfurt has an interesting argument that might motivate our third explanation. We are unable to deliberate as to whether we’re caring about the right thing, says Frankfurt. Let’s take a look at this argument one more time.

...suppose that somehow [someone] becomes concerned about whether he really should care about the things that, as a matter of fact, he does care about. ...he is asking whether there are reasons good enough to justify him in living that way, and whether there may not be better reason for him to live in some other way instead. ...once we begin asking how people *should* live, we are bound to find ourselves helplessly in a spin. ... Asking the question...is inescapably self-referential and leads us into an endless circle. ... In order to carry out a rational evaluation of some way of living, a person must first know what evaluative

²⁸⁶ Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 6.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12, 28-29.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

criteria to employ and how to employ them. He needs to know what considerations count in favor of choosing to live in one way rather than in another... In order for a person to be able even to conceive and to initiate an inquiry into how to live, he must already have settled upon the judgments at which the inquiry aims.²⁸⁹

If you're trying to figure out whether your ultimate concerns or cares are really well founded, then your inquiry can't even get off the ground. Frankfurt's vision of practical reasoning is that our cares dictate everything, and that our ultimate cares, that is, our loves, are beyond our control. We're given them by our own will. We're given loves. Sometimes the loves that we're given help us order our lives fluidly. Or we're given loves that make for a life full of havoc.

Frankfurt, you'll remember, considers a way of pushing back against his position: "[h]ow could a purely factual account like that [that is, like Frankfurt's] even diminish, much less definitively allay, our initial disturbing uncertainty about how to conduct our lives? Merely knowing how things are, it would seem, does nothing to justify them."²⁹⁰ And this seems right. Knowing how things are doesn't tell us whether the way things are are justified. Unfortunately, Frankfurt's answer consists in just restating his position, and, in effect giving up on justification or reason as something we can tap into so as to order all our cares, even our loves. "...the ambition to provide an exhaustively rational warrant for the way in which we are to conduct our lives is

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 23-24.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 27-28.

misconceived. The pan-rationalist fantasy of demonstrating...how we have most reason to live is incoherent and must be abandoned.”²⁹¹

I said before that Frankfurt’s argument and the argument against his argument are both hard to answer. Believers in the first explanation might say that the reason we have the loves (i.e. disinterested cares) we do is because we see the thing we love as being valuable and itself the source of its own value. If that’s right, then we can try to discern whether something is valuable and the source of its own value. But Frankfurt isn’t convinced. He doubts that people really are, at bottom, moved by these sorts of considerations. He’ll allow that some people are moved by things being valuable and themselves the source of their own value, but he’ll insist that it’s only because those people love things that are valuable and themselves the source of their own value. People care about those things as an end and not as a mean, and that sort of care is the real determiner. Seeing something as valuable and itself the source of its own value is not the real determiner. And Frankfurt would say the same thing about Velleman’s notion of seeing someone as a person such that you become emotionally vulnerable to them. That sort of seeing results in union and meaning and non-intimate love only because certain people disinterestedly care about those things. Other people don’t care about those things, or they don’t care about them as much. Everyone is driven by loves, according to Frankfurt. Not everyone is driven by seeing the person such that they are emotionally vulnerable.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 28-29.

If we're convinced by Frankfurt's argument, is there any other way to explain union as well as meaning and non-intimate love? Perhaps. Here's an attempt.

Human beings sometimes undergo experiences that are to be described like the following. They experience some thing or things such that all other things are not experienced. Here's an example. Your daughter has just been born, and they put her into your arms, all cuddled up. You take in the color of her skin, her closed eyes, her soft breathing. You hear her as she begins to cry a little. But you're not really noticing much else that's going on around you – the nurses walking to and fro, the smells and noises of the hospital, the way your feet feel as you stand and walk around. This is most powerful when the experience of something rules out your experience of self. You still exist, of course. It's just that you're not perceiving your own existence or body and probably also most of your own mental states. You have no thought that you exist, you have no perception that you exist. These sorts of experiences, according to this third explanation, happen quite often. They can last for a long time or a short time. They come and go quite frequently. It is not as if you're stuck in this sort of experience if you find yourself in it.

Now, suppose you are having this sort of experience with respect to some person. You are only experiencing them, and you are not experiencing yourself, and you are not experiencing hardly anything else. The only other things, besides the person in question, that you're experiencing are the things that are necessary to experience the other person.

Suppose still further that, if you were given the option of deciding not to experience this person in this exclusive way, you wouldn't take said option. It might even be said that you want to want to not take said option. You endorse not taking said

option. Perhaps you'd scorn said option. (Whether you scorn said option or not, it doesn't matter.)

Let us further suppose that if this person were to express some desire, you'd perceive it. In a very real sense, it is the only desire you're aware of. Also, counterfactually, you want to perceive said desire. Perhaps this is enough for you to form a desire that the person be fulfilled in their desire. If it is (and that's a big "if"), then it may or may not result in your not experiencing just that person. Maybe now you're also experiencing your desire and/or yourself and the things you'd need to interact with were you to act on your desire that they be fulfilled in their desire. If so, that wouldn't necessarily hurt this third explanation.

Continuing on with the explanation, perhaps now that you've undergone this deep sort of experience with respect to this person, when you cease experiencing only them (perhaps as a result of forming this desire that they be fulfilled in their desire), you find yourself more attuned to whatever it is that this person needs to stay alive and in good working order. And maybe because you've counterfactually endorsed experiencing only them, you're ready therefore to do whatever it is you need to do to preserve them in existence as well as preserving their good working order.

That's the explanation. My comments are these. First, all this is consonant with Frankfurt. The only thing it adds is the apparatus of experiencing only one thing. This is done so as to make some sort of subjective sense out of what it is we end up intimately loving and being motivated by and non-intimately loving. Besides that, Frankfurt's second-order desires or endorsed desires are present, as is his idea that the beloved's

interests become your own (in its union-theoretic interpretation at least), as well as Frankfurt's idea of caring for the beloved's well-being and flourishing. Second, it is important to keep in mind that these experiences are not meant to be mystical (echoing Solomon insistence here). It resonates with my own experience at least that, several times throughout the day, I experience several things and people and situations without experiencing myself. These experiences come and go. Not all of them receive a counterfactual endorsement, of course. This sort of experience is powerful but not unusual. Third, the endorsement here is only counterfactual. It isn't necessary, in the midst of said experience, to want it to continue. Only necessary is for it to be true of you that, were you given the option of stopping it, you wouldn't. And, if it makes this explanation seem more likely, then it is also necessary that you'd endorse not wanting it to stop.

Pros and cons. A pro is that, if you're convinced by Frankfurt, this third explanation does without things being valuable, and it does without things being self-existent ends. Second, it seems to trace some sort of explanation for union and motivation and non-intimate love.

The main con is that the explanations are not quite complete. Yes, the person is experiencing only the person, they've expressed a desire, and you want to keep experiencing only them and their desire. But why do you now need to desire that they be fulfilled in their desire? It's not clear. You could argue that if a desire is just "sitting there" in your experience, then, by our human nature, we can't just admire it or experience it. We've got to take some sort of stance as to its completion. If it's a non-

destructive desire, and if you want to continue experiencing this person and their desires, then, most often (it might be thought), you'll side with the completion of the desire, with its fulfillment. This is a bit like Velleman. It will make sense for you that the desire to be completed.

Eleonore Stump's Union Revisited

Now I can show how union theory undergirds the proposition we got from Stump that <if I love someone, then I desire that they share deeply and that I listen deeply and that I tell them my thoughts that I want them>.

Can this proposition explain union? If so, then Stump's theory would be the best theory of intimate love. Let's suppose that I desire that you be fulfilled in your desires. And the proposed explanation for this, if Stump's theory is to be more fundamental than my own, is that I want you to share deeply and that I want to listen deeply, and that I want to tell you that I want you in my life. It sounds like the lover is desire to desire united to the beloved so as to gain a deep sort of relationship. This sounds almost manipulative. Because of this, I don't think Stump's theory has much of a prospect for explaining union theory. Even if it is not manipulative, then it's at least directive so as to get what I want (as the lover). That's not the sort of thing we want the love of union theory to be, fundamentally.

But now let's turn things around. Begin with Stump's idea of wanting the person or wanting them to be in your life. Especially the idea of wanting the person might be seen in terms of desiring that they be fulfilled in their desires. If so, union theory might

be in view already as the fundamental way of conceiving of intimacy. Or the idea of wanting the person might be seen as just that: wanting the person with nothing more to say. Why would someone want this? Perhaps because they are seen as valuable and themselves the source of their own value; or perhaps because they're seen as a person, as a non-comparable self-existent end, which results in emotional vulnerability; or perhaps because you're experiencing only them and counterfactually want said experience to continue. Any of these explanations for wanting the other person are also, potentially, explanations for union itself.

But what if we think of this desire for the person in terms of wanting the person to be in your life? This too might be explained by any of the three explanations for union covered in this chapter. Or it might be explained like this: many of my desires are connected to that person, and, without them in my life, my desires are not as likely to be fulfilled; so, I want them in my life. In this case, I endorse my desires being influenced by yours such that I want you to be fulfilled in your desires. This would be the sort of benevolent self-interestedness that Soble was trying to pin on all forms of union theory. But that a way of relating to someone is benevolently self-interested doesn't mean it's not love. My response to Soble was, rather, that not all cases of love are benevolently self-interested, even on union theory. Union theory doesn't demand that all lovers have to reason in the way mentioned above. In any case, if someone were united with someone in a benevolently self-interested way (or even a selfish way), then this could explain wanting the other person in your life. Also, it could be that the beloved wants you to reason in the way mentioned above – the beloved wants you to reason, “Many of

my desires are connected to that person, and, without them in my life, my desires are not as likely to be fulfilled; so, I want them in my life” – and, if so, then your union with them would explain why you want them in your life without being, at bottom, benevolently self-interested.

Whether the person is reasoning in this way for benevolently self-interested reasons or not, we now have an explanation as well for wanting the other person to share deeply – so that you can best desire what it is you want to want; namely, that their desires be fulfilled. And you want to listen deeply for that same reason.

Notice as well that, even though my theory can explain Stump’s, there are many smaller versions of love (bare minimums of love) that Stump’s theory can’t explain. Here I’m thinking of a case where I’m desire connected to only one of your desires. But, because it’s a counterfactual connection, and because I never perceive said desire on your part, I never desire anything with respect to you at all. Or suppose that I do perceive the desire in you and therefore want you to be fulfilled in it, but the desire in question happens to be just the surface level desire of wanting some milk. Small unions such as these are hard for Stump to account for, because, for her, love entails a felt desire that the beloved share with them in a deep sort of way. If a desire isn’t present, or, if it’s present but it’s not deep, then it is not love, for Stump. But this doesn’t allow for the many different depths of love and all the ways it can grow and diminish.

Summing Up

The first two explanations trade in a sort of perceived value thought of as residing in the beloved themselves and not in our perception of them. The third does not. The first explanation says that, of necessity, if the person is perceived as valuable and themselves the source of their own value, then union and motivation and non-intimate love will result. The second and third explanations do not. All three attempt to provide some sort of explanation for union. All three attempt to provide some tight connection between intimate love and motivation and non-intimate love.

Combinations are possible, of course. You can keep the idea of something's being valuable and itself the source of its own value and stipulate that the explanation isn't one of necessity; just one of making sense, like Velleman's. You could add the experience of only the beloved to both the first and second explanations.

At the very least, I hope to have shown that union has a very good chance of being explained, explained in a way that demonstrates the tight connection between union and motivation and non-intimate love.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

It has been my goal to say what intimate love is. I argued that there's something intimately loving about Martha's feeling sad as a result of Bob's crying. Union theory helps us see what exactly this consists in. Intimate love is to be contrasted with Martha's intention to give Bob his medicine irrespective of whether he wants it or not. Though I didn't argue for this claim, I allow that there's something loving about Martha's intention to give Bob his medicine irrespective of whether he wants it or not. What I want to claim, however, is that there's a big difference between that vs. being moved, say, by Bob's crying.

My union theory, stated only in terms of desires, goes like this. There are several things about Bob which, if Martha were to know of them, she would perceive as factoring into his own lived experience (desires, emotions, beliefs, actions). Let's consider his desires. Some of these desires, perhaps all of them, Martha wouldn't think of as being destructive to who Bob is if he were to get what he wants. Suppose that, were Martha to perceive at least one of these non-destructive desires, she would desire that he be fulfilled in said desire. Martha wants to want Bob's fulfillment in said desire or desires. She stands behind this aspect of herself. She endorses it. She in no way reasons or processes her way from anything outside of Bob's non-destructive desires to her own desire that Bob be fulfilled in his desire. These sorts of things obtain if and only if Martha loves Bob, albeit, perhaps, in a minimal sort of way. (Of course, I discussed the

very real possibility that Martha doesn't need to endorse said desire and that, in love, she might desire Bob to be fulfilled in destructive desires.)

This theory provides a way of understanding how it is that we are moved by the beloved's desires. And it explicitly rules out being moved by the beloved's desires because we think to ourselves, "Well, being moved by our beloved's desires is a good thing to do" or "Well, what they want to do is good, so I want what they want." If we thought in those ways, we would, ultimately, be moved by things that aren't our beloved's desires (and it would probably be love!), and this way of being moved by our beloved would not be intimate in character.

Common objections leveled against union theory are as follows. (i) Either it's too mysterious so as to know what it's claiming or it's obviously false. (ii) Union theory entails that love is always selfish or controlling. (iii) A version of Sobel's arguments from robust concern: union theory disallows acting for what the beloved wants. None of these objections are successful when it comes to my union theory. My theory isn't mysterious or obviously false. And I offered up possible explanations for how it comes about. Though love can result in selfishness or manipulation, on my theory it needn't result in those things. In other words, the lover might want what the beloved wants, end of story. The lover needn't witness that sometimes he wants his beloved to be fulfilled in the beloved's desires and therefore reason to himself, "Well, then, I'll manipulate them such that I get what I want" or "Let me just make sure that what they want is always stuff that pleases me." And, finally, on my union theory, love manifests itself exactly as a particular way of desiring or acting for what the beloved wants.

Other theories of love do not account for intimate love (or, if they do, they are veiled and underdeveloped union theories). Frankfurt's theory has undeveloped aspects which probably make it union theoretic, though this is likely unintentional on Frankfurt's part. Velleman's theory says that love is an emotional response to the worth of the beloved, not the beloved's desires or emotions, etc. Kolodny's theory says that love partly consists in acting in favor of what matters to the beloved, but he doesn't rule out acting in favor of what matters to the beloved "because that's the right thing to do" or "because I have a general policy of acting in that way for everyone I meet." A theory of intimate love should rule these ways of reasoning out, and my theory does so. The same objection holds for Helm's theory. With Stump, the desire that your beloved share deeply, the desire that you listen deeply, and the desire to say, "I want you," are all explainable as emanating from the union of union theory itself. Love isn't always as powerful as Stump makes it out to be, but, if it is, then here's one of the ways in which union theory can explain Stump's theory: if you endorse being related to your beloved such that, for many of their deepest desires, if they want something, then you want them to be fulfilled in that thing, then of course you'll want them to share deeply, and you'll want to listen deeply, and you'll want to truthfully affirm: "I want you; I want you to be in my life."

All this, then, is reason to accept my union theory as the best theory of intimate love: it explains intimacy, it isn't susceptible to typical objections to union theory, and other theories of love do not account for intimate varieties of love as well as union theory does. But there are two further reasons to accept my union theory of love. First,

union, as I understand it, is easily connectible to motivation in life, and a good theory of love should make love out to be easily connectible to motivation in life (because that's the way love is: love and motivation are connected). Second, intimate love understood as union is easily connectible to the non-intimate love of desiring and acting for the good or well-being of the beloved understood as extending beyond what the beloved wants or feels.

I provided three possible ways to connect union to motivation in life and non-intimate love. Here is just one, quickly canvassed. The lover sees the beloved as valuable and as themselves the source of their own value. Because of seeing the beloved as valuable and themselves the source of their own value, then, if out of this valuable-source-of-its-own-value comes a desire, then the lover will desire that they be fulfilled in their desire. This isn't a process of reasoning to a certain conclusion. It's simply the way things unfold. But it's also just as much the case that, because the lover sees the beloved as valuable and themselves the source of their own value, the lover will also be ready to preserve the beloved in existence and in proper function. This provides motivation. This is also a way of non-intimately loving someone – non-intimate love can consist in being ready to preserve someone in existence and in proper function. Thus, here we have two more reasons to accept union theory. Love understood as union is connectible to motivation in life and non-intimate love.

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