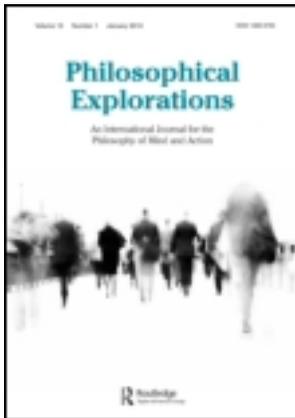


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Reasons of love: an introduction

Esther Kroeker ^a & Katrien Schaubroeck ^b

^a Department of Philosophy , University of Antwerp , Antwerpen , Belgium

^b Department of Philosophy , Utrecht University , Utrecht , The Netherlands

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SYMPOSIUM

Reasons of love: an introduction

Esther Kroeker^{a*} and Katrien Schaubroeck^b

^a*Department of Philosophy, University of Antwerp, Antwerpen, Belgium;* ^b*Department of Philosophy, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands*

The symposium of this issue of *Philosophical Explorations* is dedicated to the topic of love and practical reasons. The attention given to this topic has been growing over the last 10 years, especially since Harry Frankfurt wrote *The Reasons of Love* in 2004. Issues related to how one should live one's life and guide one's actions as well as issues about emotions, motives, and passions are, of course, major philosophical questions which have always drawn attention. And many well-known philosophers in the history of ideas have consecrated a few pages of their works to the topic of love and friendship. The topic of love, on the one hand, and of practical reasons, on the other, are thus far from being novel topics. However, Frankfurt's book stands out in the history of the philosophy of love, in defending an account which holds that answers about how one ought to live and to act arise out of love. Frankfurt calls love the basis of the structuring and ordering of our lives and the source of practical reasons. He has therefore revealed the possibility of an intimate tie between practical reasons and love, a topic which he had already been writing about extensively over the years and which is summarized in his 2004 book. The last few years have now seen a rise of interest in the relation between love and practical reasons – perhaps in reaction to his work – and this symposium offers a sample of articles on this topic.

Our aim in the first part of this introduction is to present some essential aspects of Frankfurt's account. In the second part we will briefly introduce two papers, one by Kolodny (2003) and one by Velleman (1999), which we also consider to be canonical articles on love and reasons and which are responses to Frankfurt as well as novel and influential accounts of love and reasons. Finally, in the third part, we will introduce the papers of this symposium by showing how they espouse or reject some of Frankfurt's views and how they further the discussion in new and interesting directions. Earlier drafts of the first three papers were presented at the conference *Reasons of Love* organized at the University of Leuven in 2011. These papers deal with the duties involved in love and with the complex relation between reasons, love, and the objects of love. The last paper, by David Velleman, is a more recent contribution to the discussion which, we are certain, opens up new areas of discussion related to love and reasons.

I

Let us start by considering some main tenets of Frankfurt's account. Conducting our lives appropriately, it is often thought, requires living according to reasons or requirements of

*Corresponding author. Email: esther.kroeker@ua.ac.be

reason such as prudence, morality, or requirements about other valuable states of affairs. Frankfurt's philosophy offers a new resource to draw upon when answering questions about how we should conduct our lives: love.

In order to help us understand the important practical nature of love, Frankfurt sets out to offer several essential features of love, as he understands it, and as it is part of our constitution as persons. For Frankfurt, love is most basically not a feeling nor a belief, but a configuration of the will. Love consists of an action-guiding and motivating concern for the well-being of the beloved. The concern, moreover, is disinterested in the sense that a lover desires the good or the true interest of his beloved for the sake of the beloved and not in order to further some other aim. Frankfurt's account of love is a typical representation of a *robust concern theory* of love (Helm 2009), but he details his characterization of love by integrating into it the aspect of identification. In Frankfurt's view, a lover has a personal and emotional investment in the well-being of his beloved, in the sense that he feels good when the beloved is doing well and bad when the beloved is harmed. According to Frankfurt, this means that a person who loves identifies with the beloved or with the beloved's true interest (Frankfurt 2004, 61–62 and 79–80). How close this brings him to a *union theory* of love (Helm 2009) is a matter of dispute, since it is unclear how literal the identification is meant to be: do the beloved's interests literally become the lover's interests or is the thought rather that it becomes in the lover's interest that his beloved fulfills her true interests?

Another essential ingredient of love, according to Frankfurt, is that love is personal. By "personal" Frankfurt means that love is rigidly focused; the object of one's love is not replaceable (Frankfurt 2004, 79–80). Moreover, love is a disinterested mode of caring which is not a matter of choice. For Frankfurt, love is outside our immediate control (Frankfurt 2004, 80). Finally, the last feature of love in Frankfurt's theory to which we would like to draw attention is that love is not a response to reasons, but it gives itself rise to reasons. As the love of parents for children reveals, love is not necessarily a response to value (Frankfurt 2004, 38–39). This kind of love, rather, bestows value, meaning and importance on what is loved and on the life of the person who loves. Since it is constitutive of love, according to Frankfurt, that a lover takes his beloved's interests as offering him reasons for action, love is "itself, for the lover, a source of reasons" (Frankfurt 2004, 37). Even more radically, Frankfurt claims that *all* practical reasons are grounded in love since it is only when we love some ideal, object, end, or person that we care about the object's interests, and that we order our lives accordingly.

II

Frankfurt's groundbreaking account fueled much discussion and gave rise to responses such as Kolodny's and Velleman's. Kolodny argues that Frankfurt's account does not show us why certain forms of love are appropriate or not. Moreover, Kolodny argues that unless we can appeal to reasons for the desires that are supposed to constitute love, we cannot distinguish loving desires from other, nonloving desires aimed at helping someone (Kolodny 2003, 143). Kolodny hence argues that there *are* reasons for love; love *is* a response to value. The value to which love responds is the value of the relationship and of the ongoing history of shared concern and activity between individuals. Love is, according to Kolodny, made appropriate by such a relationship and love also partly consists in a recognition that the relationship renders it appropriate and in emotions and motivations that are sustained by that recognition (Kolodny 2003, 146). Kolodny's paper is hence an example of a view that differs from Frankfurt's often called *no-reason* account.

Velleman also offers some criticisms of Frankfurt's account and an alternative understanding of love and reasons. Velleman rejects Frankfurt's no-reason account, arguing that love is a response to the value of the beloved. This value is the dignity of the beloved as a person. Accounts such as Frankfurt's, Velleman argues, express a sentimental fantasy, where love "necessarily entails a desire to 'care and share,' or to 'benefit and be with.'" Surely, Velleman continues, "it is easy enough to love someone whom one cannot stand to be with" (Velleman 1999, 353). Moreover, when we think of the persons we love, we do not think of ourselves as agents of their interests (Velleman 1999, 353). In fact, Velleman thinks, love should not be understood as an attitude of desire or concern at all. For Velleman, love is in essence an attitude of appreciation: it is an arresting awareness of the incomparable value in a person as a rational being, a being who can be actuated by reasons and appreciate ends. This awareness arrests our motives of self-interest and our tendencies toward emotional self-protection, and hence disarms our emotional defenses. In anticipation of the objection that we owe respect to every person (in virtue of their dignity) yet we do not owe love to everyone, Velleman points toward our finite emotional resources and our selective emotional sensitivity to other people's personhood. We love some persons rather than others because their value is revealed to us in their particular empirical persona (in their personal characteristics). Our vulnerability to our beloved then limits the attention we pay to others. Love is selective, says Velleman, but not partial, allowing him to portray love as a moral emotion and as a response to a person's dignity.

III

The author of the first paper in this symposium sides with Frankfurt on the question of love's justification: for Nick Zangwill love is "Gloriously Amoral and Arational". Zangwill criticizes the views of Velleman and Kolodny by pointing out that love does not have the logical form of an evaluation and can therefore not be a response to reasons. The object of an evaluation is a proposition (a value predicate is applied to a thing), whereas love's object is not a proposition but a particular thing or person. Moreover, thinking of love as an evaluation gives rise to the possibility of trading up one's love for another person or relationship which is believed to be valuable to a greater degree. This is contrary to the love that we find valuable in our lives, according to Zangwill. Love is thus not a response to reasons; it is caused by factors such as a shared history, habit, and attraction. Finally, Zangwill argues, although we do not love for reasons, love may nevertheless be *subject to* evaluation by reasons such as prudential reasons, and love *gives rise to* reasons.

In "Love and the Need for Comprehension" Eileen John takes issue with the idea that love implies identification with the beloved (part of Frankfurt's but also many other accounts of love). John does not argue *directly* against this identification requirement, but via a critical analysis of the implied conception of a lover's knowledge of the beloved's interests. She argues that it is impossible to determine the kind and depth of knowledge required independently of the beloved's expectations. In order for love to reach its target and for the beloved to recognize himself in the love, the lover has to address the beloved as someone who asks to be known in a certain way. John invokes examples from literature and from real life to show the variety of expectations that a beloved can have concerning the lover's knowledge in terms of accuracy (knowing what he finds important) and comprehension (grasping the motivating force and normative intelligibility of his commitments). By giving the beloved authority over how she is to be known, John contributes to the growing body of research on the second-personal nature of love (Ebels-Duggan 2008; Helm 2010; Wallace 2012). Robust concern views like Frankfurt's tend to overlook the

active involvement of the beloved in a loving relationship, either modeling love after benevolence directed at a stranger or after paternalistic caring relationships. John concedes the limits of her second-personal account, since some individuals may be either too demanding narcissistic or too self-deceived to be loved successfully (they may never recognize themselves in the love offered). But she is willing to bite this bullet in exchange for a theory that gives both the lover and the beloved a say in determining the terms of the relationship between them.

Like John, Tony Milligan uses a piece of fiction to foster reflection on love. In “The Duplication of Love’s Reasons”, he contrasts Derek Parfit’s thought-experiment of the Scanning Replicator with the narrative of Stanislaw Lem’s *Solaris*. Both scenarios challenge the commonsense belief (shared by Frankfurt) that love is rigidly focused. According to Parfit, if we imagine as lively and accurately as possible the duplication of a beloved’s physiological and neurophysiological traits, we should feel the inclination to love this duplicate as deeply as the original (Parfit 1984, 295). He consequently assumes that the reasons for loving the original are duplicated along with the duplicated physiological and neurophysiological traits. The richer narrative of *Solaris*, however, shows that a lover (Kelvin in the story) may have reasons to love the duplicate of his beloved (Rheya), without these being *the same reasons* he had to love the original. After all, the duplicate does not share the historical and relational properties of the original. The duplicate is not the one he married, the one whose love he earned, the one who loved him all these years through her own agency. According to Milligan, there is a strong causal-psychological as well as a justificatory connection between Kelvin’s love for the original Rheya and his love for the duplicate Rheya. Moreover, his reasons for loving the duplicate may be as genuine as his reasons to love the original. Yet they are not the same. A comprehensive duplication of a set of reasons for loving may still be conceivable, but Milligan’s point is that such a scenario is very hard to imagine. In this way Milligan saves the intuition that love is rigidly focused, while rejecting Frankfurt’s assumption that this entails that there cannot be reasons to love someone. As long as we realize that the reasons for loving someone include relational, historical as well as intrinsic properties, and therefore attach to particular individuals, the claim that a lover loves his beloved for a reason does not entail the claim that he relates to her as to an instance of a type.

We end this symposium with a new paper by David Velleman. As we have pointed out above, Velleman parts ways with Frankfurt by holding that love is not a matter of desires and that it is a response to value. In his 1999 paper, Velleman wrote that love is a response to a person’s dignity and is therefore a moral emotion. In the present paper “Sociality and Solitude”, he frames love in a broader picture of functions characteristic of persons, such as participating in conversation, in joint intentions, and in modes of togetherness and apartness. In valuing these functions, what we actually value, according to Velleman, is the uniquely human capacity to form an objective self-conception. An objective self-conception refers to the amazing capacity of subjects to look objectively at their subjectivity, or in other words, to think of themselves as inhabitants of the world thinking this very thought.

According to Velleman, the regress of self-reference implicit in an objective self-conception is what we marvel at when we look into a lover’s eyes. When I love someone, I really look, and I see his self-awareness, seeing that he is aware of me likewise and thus seeing him seeing me seeing him, and so on ad infinitum. There is a kind of limitlessness involved in one’s self-conception, and love is a recognition and confrontation of the other’s limitlessness. This limitlessness, which is essential to one’s objective self-conception and which is in turn essential to personhood, is what we value and what gives us reason to love.

The papers in this symposium develop in directions that are sometimes in line with Frankfurt and sometimes in strong opposition to Frankfurt's account. The common thread of these papers, however, is tied to the idea that love is strongly linked to issues pertaining to how human beings order their lives in light of what matters to them. We are certain that the topic of love and practical reasons will continue to develop in novel and important ways.

Notes on contributors

Esther Kroeker is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Antwerp. Her current area of study is David Hume and Jonathan Edwards on passions and religion. She has published several papers dealing with the moral philosophy of Thomas Reid. She also examines and writes about issues related to love and practical reasons. Her work on this symposium is funded by the Fund for Scientific Research Flanders (FWO G.0484.09N 2009-2012).

Katrien Schaubroeck is a post-doctoral researcher at Utrecht University. Her current research on the concept of practical self-understanding is funded by the NWO. She is the author of *The Normativity of What We Care About: A Love-based Reason Theory* (Leuven University Press, 2013).

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