

Concerning Self-Love: Analytic Problems in Frankfurt's Account of Love

Alan Soble

Published online: 11 January 2011

© Alan Soble 2011

Abstract

In *The Reasons of Love*, Harry Frankfurt proposes a philosophical account of love according to which there are four necessary conditions for the occurrence of love. We may ask reasonable questions about these four conditions: (1) Is each condition adequately analytically defined? (2) Is each condition plausibly a necessary condition for love, and has Frankfurt defended their necessity with good arguments? (3) Are all four conditions consistent with each other? And (4) if the four conditions are only necessary, and hence tell us only when love is absent, what must be added to Frankfurt's account which would tell us, just as importantly, when love is present? In this essay I address these questions, although some more than others, especially in trying to understand Frankfurt's claims about "self-love." It emerges from this investigation that Frankfurt's central metaethical thesis, which he has been advancing for three decades—that caring about or loving something logically precedes valuing it, and hence that we cannot have value-mentioning reasons for loving something or someone—starts to fall apart.

Introduction

In his 2004 book *The Reasons of Love*, Harry Frankfurt proposes a philosophical account of love according to which there are four necessary conditions for the occurrence of love. We may ask some reasonable questions about these four conditions: (1) Is each condition adequately analytically defined? *Not altogether*, is my answer. (2) Is each condition plausibly a necessary condition for love, and has Frankfurt defended their necessity with good arguments? *No to both*, is my answer. (3) Is the set of four propositions, each of which claims that one of the conditions is necessary for love, satisfiable? *No*, is my answer. And (4) if the four conditions are only necessary, and hence tell us only when love is absent, what must be added to Frankfurt's account which would tell us, just as importantly, when love is present? (After the addition of

any *n*th condition, that expanded set of propositions would have to be tested for satisfiability.) In this essay, I address these questions, although some more than others, but especially those that are important for assessing Frankfurt's dramatic claims about "self-love." It emerges from this investigation that Frankfurt's central thesis, which he has been advancing for three decades—that caring about or loving someone or something logically precedes valuing it, and hence that value-mentioning reasons for loving someone or something are conceptually misguided—starts to fall apart.

1. The Thirty-Year Thesis

To comprehend much of what Frankfurt says about love in *Reasons of Love*, and why he says it, we must first engage his most significant claim about caring about, or loving, someone or something. In opposition to Plato and Aristotle (and plenty of other philosophers, both past and contemporary), Frankfurt believes that caring about or loving someone or something is not grounded in reasons provided by the superb qualities (i.e., the pre-love perceived value) of the object toward which the care or love is directed. Plato thought that a person can love-desire only persons and things that are good and beautiful, and Aristotle (Augustine, too) agreed, even if he (and Augustine) did not equate love and desire and even if he (and Augustine) placed a stricter limit than Plato did on what counts as "goodness" and "beauty."¹ Here is how, in *Reasons of Love*, Frankfurt explains his dissenting position:

It is true that the beloved invariably is, indeed, valuable to the lover. However, perceiving that value is not at all an indispensable *formative* or *grounding* condition of the love. It need not be a perception of value in what he loves that moves the lover to love it. The truly essential relationship between love and the value of the beloved goes in the opposite direction. It is not necessarily as a *result* of recognizing their value and of being captivated by it that we love things [and people]. Rather, what we love necessarily *acquires* value for us *because* we love it. The lover does invariably and necessarily perceive the beloved as valuable, but the value he sees it to possess is a value that derives from and that depends upon his love.²

Suppose that I perceive Loretta as good and beautiful *because* I love her and not because she *is* good and beautiful. If so, why do I love her at all? And why do I love her instead of Kathleen? Answers to these questions are not obviously or easily forthcoming from Frankfurt. Indeed, for Frankfurt, there may be no reasons at all for loving someone, and we can love *anything*.

Frankfurt had asserted this view thirty years ago in "The Importance of What We Care About."³ At that time he wrote, "The person does not care about the object because its

worthiness commands that he do so” but “caring about something makes that thing important to the person who cares about it.”⁴ His answer to the question “why love one thing rather than another; why love Loretta instead of Kathleen?” is striking:

What makes it more suitable . . . for a person to make one object rather than another important to himself? It seems that it must be the fact that it is *possible* for him to care about the one and not about the other, or to care about the one in a way which is more important to him than the way in which it is possible for him to care about the other.⁵

That we are able (logically? psychologically? logistically?) to care about something or someone is not much of a test to employ in deciding and coming to care about something. It leaves the field wide open. Frankfurt is not moved by this consideration. There are, for him, no reasons, good or bad, for loving something or someone. There is just love, which itself provides reasons for valuing things and persons and behaving accordingly toward them.⁶ Frankfurt finishes his metaethical project by finally, in *Reasons*, analyzing what love is.⁷

2. The Four Necessary Conditions of Love

Near the end of *Reasons*, Frankfurt summarizes his account of love: “love for a person has four main conceptually necessary features.”⁸

[I] First, it consists most basically in a disinterested concern for the well-being or flourishing of the person who is loved. It is not driven by any ulterior purpose but seeks the good of the beloved as something that is desired for its own sake.⁹

Let’s call this necessary condition the “disinterested concern” condition. The concern of love is not motivated by “any ulterior purpose”; the lover desires and promotes the beloved’s good “for its own sake.” Although Frankfurt may be right to include disinterested concern, in a sense that is due to or derived from Aristotle or Kant,¹⁰ as a necessary element of love, one of his applications of this conception of disinterested concern (viz., when it is employed to understand “self-love”) turns out to be a major mistake in his account of love.

[II] Second, love is . . . ineluctably personal. The lover cannot coherently consider some other individual to be an adequate substitute for his beloved, regardless of how similar that individual may be to the one he loves. The person who is loved is loved for himself or for herself as such, and not as an instance of a type.

Let's call this the "particularity" condition. Love, on Frankfurt's view, is not *de dicto* but *de re*: a person is loved as a "particular" independently of descriptions that may or may not apply to him or her.¹¹ The beloved is not loved (as she *is* loved, for example, according to Plato in the *Symposium*) for being a describable type of person or as the vehicle of superb properties. Hence the beloved is not replaceable (or substitutable) by another person who has a similar set of admirable properties (or even a different set).¹² The "love logically precedes judgments of value" thesis is not, in *Reasons*, a separate criterion or necessary condition of love. It either underlies or is included in condition [III], in the sense that loving a person *de re* or as a particular implies not having reasons for loving that person that mention his or her valuable attributes. In denying that love is *de dicto*, Frankfurt denies that the lover responds to the beloved *qua* an instantiation of attractive properties. (Whether these properties are unique or instead repeatable, actually or in principle, does not matter.) On this Platonic-Aristotelian-Augustinian view, caring about something, loving it, or making it important in our lives depends on logically prior, independent judgments about its positive value. Further, the selection of a beloved made on the basis of good reasons is better, that is, more rational or moral, than a choice made on the basis of bad reasons (see *ROL*, 38-39). The distinction between the lovable and the unlovable is grounded in and rationally justified by the perception and assessment of the value of potential beloveds—which, for Frankfurt, gets everything backwards.

[III] Third, the lover identifies with his beloved: that is, he takes the interests of his beloved as his own. Consequently, he benefits or suffers depending upon whether those interests are or are not adequately served.

Let's call this the "identification of interests" condition.¹³ Taking the interests of the beloved as my own promotable interests *prima facie* fits uneasily with the "disinterested concern" condition, according to which I desire to promote the interests (the good, well-being, flourishing) of my beloved for her own sake. The "disinterest concern" condition also fits uneasily with Frankfurt's remarks about the significance in our lives of love, which is the ultimate ground of value. On his view there are no serious problems. Earlier in the book, Frankfurt had devoted a section (*ROL*, 42-44) to laying out three of his necessary conditions, those I have labeled [I], [II], and [IV]. The "identification of interests" condition, [III], is treated only a full twenty pages later (*ROL*, 60-62) and seems to be proposed precisely (perhaps entirely) because Frankfurt anticipates problems with "disinterested concern." The move may be logically *ad hoc*, because Frankfurt never defends this condition on any other grounds. At the crucial place where he introduces the "identification of interests" condition as his way around problems with disinterested concern, he writes only that "in the very nature of the case" the lover identifies with the beloved, which seems question-begging. Soon we'll examine the details of the manner in which Frankfurt, by invoking the identity of interests, solves problems with disinterested concern.

[IV] Finally, loving entails constraints upon the will. It is not simply up to us what we love and what we do not love. Love is not a matter of choice but is determined by conditions that are outside our immediate voluntary control.

I am not sure what this “nonvoluntary” condition amounts to. Does the claim that love is “outside our immediate voluntary control” allow that love is *not altogether* outside our control, that “nonimmediate” and not “simple” measures might be chosen to influence what or whom we love or the fashion in which we love?¹⁴ Frankfurt concedes that we can “indirectly” exert control over our loves (*ROL*, 49). If so, his claims about “constraints” and “determined” are overstated. This point is important for his thirty-year thesis, for to the extent that Frankfurt countenances a genuine even if only partial choice of whom to love, this concession energizes the specter of loving someone as a describable type and undermines his thesis that value-based reasons *for* love are beside the point.

None of Frankfurt’s necessary conditions originates with him. His contribution to the philosophy of love consists merely of soldering these four features together as the conceptually necessary features of love.¹⁵ Gabrielle Lear surprisingly and implausibly opines that Frankfurt’s four conditions are “relatively uncontroversial.”¹⁶ (Perhaps in Chicago they are. For abundant evidence that his conditions are contentious, spend some time perusing the vast philosophical literature on love.) Even though I think two of Frankfurt’s conditions are wrong (*viz.*, **II** and **III**), I am more concerned to establish that the propositional set is unsatisfiable.

3. Self-Love, the Purest Love

Immediately after providing this summary of the four necessary conditions, Frankfurt argues that self-love *is* love and that it “is in a certain way *the purest* of all modes of love” (*ROL*, 80; emphasis added).¹⁷ Frankfurt believes that these claims are the book’s most dramatic theses, and he’s right, so his devoting a whole chapter (out of three) to “The Dear Self” is thematically justified. His claims that self-love *is* love and the purest mode of love are counterintuitive. He writes, though, that “the exceptional purity of self-love can *easily* be demonstrated” (*ROL*, 80; emphasis added). That surely is a shock. The general outline of Frankfurt’s argument is that “love of oneself is purer than other sorts of love because it is in cases of self-love that the love is most likely to be unequivocal and unalloyed,” that is, self-love “conform[s] more closely . . . to the criteria that identify what loving essentially is.”¹⁸ Frankfurt proceeds to explain how self-love actually does satisfy his four necessary conditions. I present these explanations in Frankfurt’s order, using my numbering.

[III] To begin with, it will surely be conceded without too much argument that when a person loves himself, the identification of the lover with his beloved is distinctively robust and uncurtailed. For someone who loves himself, needless to say, his own interests and those of his beloved are identical. [ROL, 81]

It is true, needless to say, that the interests of the lover X and the beloved X are the same when X loves X (or, for that matter, when X doesn't love X). But this "idempotence" of interests does not count as X 's self-love for X satisfying the "identification of interests" condition. ("Will surely be conceded" was conceded.) If X loves Y , Frankfurt tells us, X "takes the interests of his beloved as his own" (ROL, 80). The key here is "takes." In loving Y , X does something, and does something unusual: X takes on as his or her own interests the interests of some other person. When X loves X (and even before X loves X or if X never loves X), the interests are identical, but only and exactly because they are already the same interests. There is nothing *done* here by X , and nothing unusual is being done by X . The idea here is that *having* the same interests is not the same thing as *taking on* additional interests so that the interests of X and Y turn out to be the same.¹⁹ In self-love, there is nothing for X to take on. That X 's interests are X 's interests in self-love does not imply any changes in X 's life, while X 's taking on the interests of Y (as X knows) will affect the welfare of X in many ways, both positively and negatively (ROL, 61, 80). Frankfurt's claim that in self-love there is an "identification of interests" is false on his own account of *taking on* interests. If so, self-love on his account cannot *be* love, because it lacks one of love's necessary conditions. To express the point another way: "taking on interests" is a *process* of making interests coincide; what is characteristic of love is not a *state* of identical interests. Earlier in the book, Frankfurt described "identification" as a process, not as a state: "[A] lover *identifies himself* with what he loves. . . . The lover is *invested* in his beloved. . . . To the extent that he invests himself in what he loves, and in that way identifies with it, its interests are identical with his own" (ROL, 61-62). By contrast, in self-love X 's interests are identical with X 's interests, full stop. No task or process of investment and identification occur. As a result, Frankfurt is prohibited, on his own account, from calling self-love "love." Hence, of course, self-love cannot be the purest mode of love. Frankfurt then turns to the "particularity" condition:

[II] It is even more obvious that someone who loves himself is devoted to his beloved as a particular individual rather than as an instance or exemplar of some general type. The self-love of a person cannot coherently be considered transferable to an equivalent substitute. [ROL, 81]

I'm willing to grant *ex hypothesi* this point to Frankfurt (other than "even more obvious"), but it does not get us very far in understanding either other-love or self-love. That the beloved is a particular makes love incomprehensible; as conceded by

Frankfurt, the beloved's particularity is "mysterious" and "impossible to define." This ineffability might well be taken as a defect of Frankfurt's account of love (and of any other account of love that includes particularity). He writes exuberantly, without a hint of distress or doubt, that person *X* loves another person *Y* in virtue of "her whole lovable nature ... that inexplicable quality of which I cannot give an account."²⁰ Contemporary philosophers have struggled mightily with "particularity," "non-substitutability," "irreplaceability," and, the winner in this police lineup (identity parade), "haecceity."²¹ Frankfurt has not learned anything from them. That an account of love rests on the beloved's ineffability, as if that were posited as a primitive of a formalized system, is a strike against it. The view that Frankfurt denies, in which love is based on or caused by the previously acknowledged attractive properties of the beloved, has no such ontologically suspicious baggage. It has, instead, the more tractable task of explaining why *X* values some properties as good or beautiful and as a result tends to love, and shower with disinterested concern, brunettes rather than blondes.²²

Frankfurt next argues that self-love satisfies the "nonvoluntary" requirement:

[IV] In the third place, self-love is not merely outside our immediate voluntary control. We are moved more naturally to love ourselves . . . than we are moved to love other things. Moreover, our inclination toward self-love is less susceptible than are other modes of loving to being effectively inhibited or blocked by indirect influence and management. [ROL, 81]

While describing and defending the "nonvoluntary" nature of other-love, Frankfurt minimized the extent to which "indirect" and "nonimmediate" influences undermined or provided cogent counterexamples to this necessary condition. Now, in trying to explain how self-love is *pure*, he finds that he must convince us that other-love is *more* susceptible to our voluntary decisions and actions than is self-love. Maybe it is true that self-love succumbs less to our efforts to control it than do our loves for other people. This failure of self-control sometimes leads us into stupidly dangerous yet irresistible endeavors: *Death in Venice* at one tragic end and Charles–Camilla Parker Bowles and Bill Clinton–Monica Lewinsky at the other comical end. However, that self-love is more pure in this sense seems to make it less a mode of love than other-love.

4. Disinterested Concern

Frankfurt saves until last the astonishing claim that not only is self-love a mode of love in virtue of including disinterested concern, but also that it is more pure in this way than other-love.

[IV] Finally, the unalloyed purity of self-love is almost never spoiled by the intrusion of any extrinsic or ulterior purpose. . . . In the love that we devote to ourselves, the flourishing of the beloved is sought—to a greater degree than in other types of love—not only for its own sake but for its own sake alone. . . . Indeed, self-love is nearly always entirely disinterested, in the clear and literal sense of being motivated by no interests other than those of the beloved. [*ROL*, 82]

This passage, I submit, is a bit of empty word-play. Here is my understanding of disinterested concern, which is reminiscent of the views of Aristotle and Kant and which seems to be what Frankfurt himself has in mind by “disinterested concern.”²³ If *X* loves *Y*, then *X* wishes that *Y* flourish and *X* acts accordingly to promote *Y*’s good, and *X* wishes the good for *Y* for *Y*’s own sake and not for *X*’s sake (nor for any other sake or “ulterior” purpose). If in this reasonable formula we replace *Y* with *X* in order to define the purported disinterested concern of self-love, the result is a contradiction: If *X* loves *X*, then *X* wishes that *X* flourish and *X* acts accordingly to promote *X*’s good, and *X* wishes the good for *X* for *X*’s own sake and not for *X*’s sake (nor for any other sake or “ulterior” purpose). “*X* wishes the good for *X* for *X*’s own sake and not for *X*’s sake” is the obvious contradiction. We could, with Frankfurt, turn the contradiction into an advantage and argue that in self-love *X* promotes *X*’s good for *X*’s own sake and not for any “ulterior” purpose; here Frankfurt bundles “and not for *X*’s sake” with “ulterior” purposes. But this is to underestimate the point of the crucial phrase “and not” in the Aristotelian-Kantian conception of disinterested concern. Without the contrast between what *X* could do for *Y* for *Y*’s sake *and not* for *X*’s sake and what *X* could do for *Y* for *X*’s sake, the notion of disinterested concern disintegrates. No one in the history of the philosophy of love would have proposed disinterested concern as an element or condition of love unless the contrast implied by “and not” were taken seriously and literally. Frankfurt’s claim that self-love is the purest type of love *because* we can eliminate the point of “and not for *X*’s sake” employs foolish logic to make a mockery of this tradition and to promote a perverted misunderstanding of it.

It is in part because love, according to Frankfurt, is immensely important in our lives (*ROL*, 53-55) that it does not matter what or whom we love, as long as we love something or another. To the extent that loving *per se*, loving anything instead of nothing, is central to our lives, reasons for loving one person or thing instead of some other person or thing are irrelevant (*ROL*, 51-53). But this value for the lover of love *per se* prompts Frankfurt to notice a problem in his account of love: the tension between *X*’s love for *Y* having value for *X* (hence being good for *X*), and *X*’s love for *Y* requiring, through disinterested concern, that *X qua* lover wants the good for *Y* only for *Y*’s sake (*ROL*, 60). Frankfurt tries to solve this problem by invoking another necessary condition of love, the identification of interests.

5. The Identification of Interests

Frankfurt tackles the problem head-on:

The appearance of conflict between pursuing one's own interests [by wanting love in one's life for the value of love itself] and being selflessly devoted to the interests of another is dispelled once we appreciate that what serves the self-interest of the lover is nothing other than his selflessness. . . . Accordingly, the benefit of loving accrues to a person only to the extent that he cares about his beloved disinterestedly. [ROL, 61-62]

There is a bit more, but let's for a minute interrupt Frankfurt's solution to make the point that even if it is granted that love itself has value, it does not follow from the importance of love *per se* that Frankfurt's type of love, in particular, is important in our lives (as opposed to loves that do not conform with all or some of his four necessary conditions). Frankfurt does not bother to mention or rebut the view that a love based on the superb properties of the beloved may well adequately satisfy our wanting to love *simpliciter*. If so, reasons *for* loving a specific person become admissible on Frankfurt's own terms.

Frankfurt finishes his argument that the lover's self-interest in loving is reconciled with the lover's loving his beloved disinterestedly by asserting that

a lover *identifies himself* with what he loves. In virtue of this identification, protecting the interests of his beloved is necessarily among the lover's own interests. The interests of his beloved are not actually *other* than his at all.

Once Frankfurt has committed himself both to the necessity of disinterested concern *and* the thesis that loving *per se* is valuable to the lover, he finds himself in a predicament. He believes he can extricate himself by appealing to the (dubitable and, as I mentioned earlier, not defended) idea that the "identification of interests" is yet another necessary condition of love. He supposes that adding identification of interests to his account of love gets him off a troublesome hook. No, it doesn't. What the addition does is to make his situation worse, for now Frankfurt's account of love becomes incoherent: disinterested concern and the identification of interests cannot both be necessary conditions of love.

I have often heard it said (at banquets, weddings, funerals, or over cocktails) that the identification of interests is exactly that element of love which solves problems surrounding the care and concern of love. (Frankfurt might have found himself at such Princeton gatherings.) If the interests of *X* and *Y* are joined together, so that *X*'s

interests are *Y*'s interests, and vice versa, and as a result their interests are the same, then we have managed, despite the protests of all those separated, divorced, or thrice-married cynics, to exclude selfishness from genuine love. There can be no selfishness in love because, interests being the same, there is nothing to be selfish about. If I try "selfishly" to increase my good, I must also be increasing your good, and no one has grounds for feeling cheated. Perhaps this view is right. But its being right about how selfishness is eliminated from love is not something that allows Frankfurt to gloat. For if the identification of interests rules out the possibility of selfishness, it also similarly rules out the possibility of lovers having disinterested concern for each other.

In disinterested concern, *X* wishes *Y* well for *Y*'s own sake, and not for *X*'s, and *X* acts accordingly to promote specifically *Y*'s own well-being (a separate thing), not necessarily *X*'s own well-being. If the lovers' interests become the same, that fusion destroys the logical space for both selfishness *and* disinterested concern. When the previously independent interests of *X* and *Y* are joined or merged (like the Platonic-Aristophanic welding together again of the two cut halves), *X* can no longer promote *Y*'s good for *Y*'s sake because *Y* has no good of her own that *X* could promote. Similarly, were *X* to (try to) sacrifice *X*'s good for the sake of *Y*, *X* could not be sacrificing *X*'s good for *Y*'s sake, because *X* no longer has any good of *X*'s own that *X* could sacrifice.²⁴ Any account of love (for example, an account that includes both disinterested concern and the identification of interests as necessary conditions) that eliminates the logical possibility of loving, generous self-sacrifice must be wrong. If you consider this to be a conclusion reached by mere empty word-play, ask yourself whether this word-play is, nonetheless, commendably better, more acceptable, than Frankfurt's word-play.²⁵

¹ Plato: *Symposium*. Trans. R. Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 201a, 202d, 203c, 204d, 205e, 209b; Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. T. Irwin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1985), 1167a3-8; Augustine: *Confessions*. Trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin, 1961), 4.13. Plato can be read as asserting either (1) that the goodness and beauty of a person *Y* is the basis, ground, or reason that *X* loves *Y*, or (2) that *X* loves exactly *Y*'s goodness and beauty. The latter interpretation of Plato's *eros* is advanced, famously, by Gregory Vlastos, "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato," in *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 3-34 (reprinted in my *Eros, Agape, and Philia* [St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1989], pp. 96-135) and almost equally famously denied by Martha Nussbaum, "The Speech of Alcibiades," in *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 165-99. For discussion, see my *The Structure of Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 300ff.

² *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 38-39.

³ *Synthese* 53:2 (1982), pp. 257-72. For immediate criticism, see Annette Baier, "Caring about Caring: A Reply to Frankfurt," *Synthese* 53:2 (1982), pp. 273-90. More recent criticism is offered by Susan Wolf in

“The True, the Good, and the Lovable: Frankfurt’s Avoidance of Objectivity,” in S. Buss and L. Overton, eds., *Contours of Agency: Essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), pp. 227-44. Frankfurt’s essay was reprinted in his collection *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 80-94. I quote from the reprint.

⁴ *Importance*, pp. 94, 92.

⁵ *Importance*, p. 94.

⁶ See *Reasons of Love*, pp. 24, 26, 31, 38-39, 55.

⁷ For more about Frankfurt’s metaethical thesis and other matters, see my “Love and Value, Yet Again,” an essay-review of *Reasons of Love*, in *Essays in Philosophy*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, Article 30 (January 2005). Available at <http://commons.pacificu.edu/eip/vol6/iss1/30>.

⁸ *Reasons of Love*, pp. 79-80. The “I,” “II,” “III,” and “IV” which follow are my numerals preceding Frankfurt’s words.

⁹ Frankfurt never raises or answers the question: if these four conditions are only necessary for love, what other condition(s) must be satisfied? Yet throughout the book, his treatment of various cases of love, including, significantly, his thesis that self-love *is* love, go well beyond arguing that the case under discussion is *not* love. That is the only judgment warranted by a list of necessary conditions. Perhaps Frankfurt treats his four necessary conditions as jointly sufficient, without saying so. (In my “Love and Value, Yet Again,” I suggest a fifth condition—affection—that Frankfurt explicitly rejects.) Note that Frankfurt’s analysis, “love for a person has four main conceptually necessary features,” implies that there are or might be some “non-main” necessary features. Further, Frankfurt’s phrase “most basically” in [I] makes no sense; failing to satisfy any one of the four (“main”) necessary conditions means that the phenomenon is not love—logically, all the conditions are equally “basic.” Similarly, Frankfurt writes (*Reasons of Love*, p. 42), “Love is, most centrally, a disinterested concern.” So the other three conditions are “less centrally” necessary?

¹⁰ Aristotle: “[C]omplete friendship is the friendship of good people similar in virtue; for they wish goods in the same way to each other in so far as they are good, and they are good in themselves. [Hence they wish goods to each other for each other’s own sake.—Irwin’s interpolation.] Now those who wish goods to their friend for the friend’s own sake are friends most of all; for they have this attitude because of the friend himself, not coincidentally. . . . Each of them is both good unconditionally and good for his friend, since good people are both unconditionally good and advantageous for each other” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b6-1156b14). Kant: “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.” And: “man . . . exists as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* for arbitrary use by this or that will: he must in all his actions, whether they are directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be viewed *at the same time as an end*” (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. H. J. Paton [New York: Harper, 1964], p. 96 [Ak 429], p. 95 [Ak 428]).

¹¹ See Robert Kraut, “Love *De Re*,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10 (1986), pp. 413-30.

¹² On “replaceable” and “substitutable,” see Neera Badhwar, “Friends as Ends in Themselves,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48:1 (1987), pp. 1-23; Mark Bernstein, “Love, Particularity, and Selfhood,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1986), pp. 287-93; my “Irreplaceability,” in A. Soble, ed., *Sex, Love, and Friendship* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 355-57; and my *Structure of Love*, pp. 293-98.

¹³ Versions of the “identification of interests” condition figure into the accounts of love of many theologians, philosophers, and psychologists, none of whom Frankfurt mentions. For example, see Michel de Montaigne, “Of Friendship,” in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. Trans. D. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), bk. 1, chap. 28; Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*. Trans. P. Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Ak 27:388, pp. 158-59; Robert Nozick, “Love’s Bond,” in *The Examined Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp. 68-86; and J.F.M. Hunter, *Thinking about Sex and Love* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), pp. 75-76. For a thorough discussion of the identification of interests, see my “Union, Autonomy, and Concern,” in Roger Lamb, ed., *Love Analyzed* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 65-92.

¹⁴ Robert Solomon was the major recent proponent of the view that voluntary decisions play an important role in love. See *The Passions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976) and *Love: Emotion, Myth and Metaphor* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1990).

¹⁵ For another list of four necessary conditions, which only partially overlaps Frankfurt’s list, see W. Newton-Smith, “A Conceptual Investigation of Love,” in A. Montefiore, ed., *Philosophy and Personal Relations* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), pp. 113-36 (reprinted in my *Eros, Agape, and Philia*, pp. 199-217). His four conditions, says Newton-Smith, are only “g-necessary” (generally necessary). This maneuver does not improve on Frankfurt’s “most centrally” and “most basically” (see above, note 9).

¹⁶ The claim is made in her review of *Reasons of Love* (*Ethics* 116:1 [2005], pp. 228-34, at p. 231).

¹⁷ Frankfurt also claims (*Reasons of Love*, 43), “Among relationships between humans, the love of parents for their infants or small children is the species of caring that comes closest to offering recognizably *pure instances* of love” (emphasis added). The qualification, “between [two or more] humans,” eliminates the apparent contradiction concerning which mode of love is, on Frankfurt’s view, the purest. Nevertheless, he does think that self-love *is* more pure than parental love (*ibid.*, 82).

¹⁸ It is a *non sequitur* to argue that case C_1 is a purer type of M than is case C_2 on the grounds that C_1 satisfies the necessary conditions for M better than C_2 does, at least because C_2 but not C_1 might satisfy the as yet unknown sufficient condition(s) for M or another necessary condition.

¹⁹ When X loves Y , writes Frankfurt, “his own interests and those of his beloved are identical” (*Reasons of Love*, 81). I think, however, that their interests would be identical only if Y also loved X , i.e., only if their love were reciprocal. Frankfurt doesn’t speak to this important subtlety. See Charles Fried, *An Anatomy of Values* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 79.

²⁰ “On Caring,” in Frankfurt’s collection *Necessity, Volition, and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 155-80, at p. 170. In the late 16th Century, Montaigne had similarly written: “If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I. Beyond all my understanding, beyond what I can say about this in particular, there was I know not what inexplicable and fateful force that was the mediator of this union” (“Of Friendship,” *Complete Essays*, p. 139). Maybe love—like God, infinity, justice, consciousness, non-effective computability, and psoriasis—is inherently and to its benefit inexplicable. Do not, therefore, waste your breath by cautioning us against committing a social science.

²¹ For example, “[W]hat answers in another to my desire may not be his qualities, but his haecceity” (A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989], p. 13).

²² Now we *can* commit the social science, along with Freud.

²³ *Reasons of Love*, pp. 42, 44, 79, 82.

²⁴ For the complete argument, see my “Union, Autonomy, and Concern.”

²⁵ Before I wrote this essay, conversations with my student Alisa Melekhina helped me clarify my ideas. Some of these thoughts arose during class discussion while I was teaching a section of PHIL 255: Philosophy of Sex and Love (Winter term, 2009-2010).