EMMANUEL LEVINAS AND HARRY FRANKFURT: SUBJECTIVITY AND THE REASONS OF LOVE

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For Rupert
who inspires me to live and love impossibly

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY 5

INTRODUCTION 7

CHAPTER 1 14

FRANKFURT'S ACCOUNT OF THE ROLE OF LOVE IN THE FORMATION OF THE SELF 14

1.1 Frankfurt's Concept of a Self/Person *14*

1.2 Frankfurt's Aims *17*

1.3 Explaining the Terms and Unpacking the Connections *18*

1.4 Overview of the Main Concerns Regarding these Aims *23*

1.5 Frankfurt's Position on Love *27*

1.6 Criticisms of Frankfurt's Position *31*

1.6.1 Relying on Luck and Good Humour *35*

CHAPTER 2 39

RECONSTITUTING LEVINAS ON LOVE 39

2.1 The Term 'Love' in Levinas' Writing *39*

2.2 The Face-to-Face *41*

2.3 Needs and Desires *50*

2.4 A Brief description of 'Totality' and 'Infinity' *52*

2.5 Active and Passive Love *54*

2.6 Passivity, Responsibility and Substitution *58*

CHAPTER 3 68

A TWO-PART STRUCTURE OF LOVE 68

3.1 Outline *68*

3.2 Part One: Love as Enjoyment *69*

3.3 Part Two: Love for Humankind *72*

3.4 Addressing Frankfurt's Problems, with the Two Part Structure of Love *78*

BIBLIOGRPHY 88

Summary

In Harry Frankfurt's well-known text *The Reasons of Love*, the philosopher considers what it means for a person to live well, by asking why we do the things we do for the things we love (and, because of what we love). This paper seeks to offer insight into his concept of subjectivity through an assessment of the 'reasons of love' he presents, and by introducing the ideas of the Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas on the origins of ethics and of care. The goal of this combination is to achieve a deeper understanding of both a life well lived and, further, what it means to be a person.

I will begin with a description of Frankfurt's theory of subjectivity. I explore his notion of a subject or person via his theory of volition and explain how it fits into his theory of the reasons of love and his conceptions of a life well lived.

Following this, I explain my main concern with Frankfurt's theory – that what he defines as 'wholeheartedness' (which he claims is sufficient to classify a life as well lived) is not, as it stands, a sufficient condition for a life well lived. It admits too many immoral possibilities to be sufficient.

I then move on to discussing aspects of Levinas' theory of metaphysics. Since Levinas does not explicitly talk about love, one of my tasks is to reconstruct Levinas' ideas by drawing from his thoughts on responsibility and care for the other, which many of us would relate to love.

Next, I map the ideas brought up by both Frankfurt and Levinas on to my own framework, which I refer to in this paper as the ‘Two-Part Structure of Love’. The two parts include a concept of love from enjoyment and a concept of love that is based on what I refer to as a love for humankind. After explaining these concepts, I show how this two part structure of love can circumvent the problem found in Frankfurt’s theory and offer a fuller and stronger account of the reasons of love and how they shape a person.

Introduction

In his book, *The Reasons of Love* (2004), the philosopher Harry Frankfurt considers what it means for a person to live well, above all by asking why we do the things we do for the things we love (and, because of what we love). This paper seeks to offer insight into his concept of subjectivity, which he presents through an assessment of the 'reasons of love', the subject of his treatise. It will then take this understanding further, by introducing the ideas of Emmanuel Levinas on the origins of ethics and of responsibility. The goal of this combination is to achieve a deeper understanding of both a life well lived, and, by extension, what it means to be a person.

Frankfurt makes a host of good arguments to support his theory on the reasons of love. However, there is one main problem. In elucidating the idea of a life well lived, he suggests that 'wholeheartedness' (which for the purposes of this introduction I will define as a unified will) is sufficient to classify a life as 'well lived'. The concern is that his definition of wholeheartedness allows for an evil person, so long as she is wholeheartedly evil, to be considered as living well, and this is certainly problematic.[1] We will consider this further later, but as it stands, Frankfurtian wholeheartedness alone is not a sufficient condition for a life well lived. It admits too many immoral possibilities to be sufficient.

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[1] It is certainly possible to imagine a person who does not live by perfect moral standards, but who is 'wholehearted' and through this can be said to 'live well' (a good-natured rogue sort). It would be rather puritanical to insist that this sort of person cannot be living well. However, the issue here is that there is no moral check in Frankfurt's analysis, and an entirely evil person could still be considered as being wholehearted and consequently 'living well'.

Before progressing further, we should explain further some of our key terms. For example, defining the term subjectivity is not easy, not least because many philosophers have different conceptions about what a subject or self is. However, the core notion that subjectivity refers to the subject or self is fairly uncontroversial (though these terms too require careful definition). For the purpose of introducing this paper, the 'subject' will be understood to refer to the core of thoughts, feelings, perspectives, desires, motivations and beliefs that most of us consider to constitute a conscious human. It is with this core in mind that I begin my exploration of the topic.

In exploring subjectivity, then, we also want to know what makes us think, feel, act, desire and so on, in the ways that we do. It seems to most of us that we cannot help feeling, desiring, thinking and acting. I share and agree with this perception. All these abilities are ones that we have (in differing degrees) by virtue of the fact that we are human beings. Many suggestions have been offered for where these abilities may originate. For example, some people argue that it is all a matter of our biology – we are 'hard-wired' to behave the way we do for reasons of survival. Others argue that our culture and upbringing influence the sort of perspectives and motivations we have and nothing is biologically 'hard-wired'.

One approach that has been used to describe subjectivity is to say that it refers to the reflexive capabilities of a subject or self, such as her feelings, thoughts, values and so on. However, subjectivity could also mean more than just reflexivity, or in fact, something quite different from reflexivity. In chapter two

of this paper, when I discuss Levinas, I attempt to show that this different account can be a less conscious and less intentional account of subjectivity, where someone can be moved by another's distress to act against her own desires.

My starting point in looking at subjectivity, is to see it in relation to 'the Other'. If the subject is the self then the Other is everything that is 'not-self'. It is only in this sort of distinguishing and relating that we form the sense of a subject or self. My thesis finds its foundations in the inter-dependent relationship between self and the Other.

After philosophers including Levinas, I believe that what accounts for the construction of the self is how the self interacts with the Other. Amongst the many aspects that influence this relationship, a significant one is love. My claim is that our sense of self is considerably built upon love – the things or people we love and the reasons for why we love. I think that by understanding these reasons, we can get a helpful account for what the self is.

Why do I think love is integral in shaping the self? For a start, we need to offer a working definition of love. Love is understood in many ways. In our everyday use of the word love, when we say we truly love something or someone (in this paper I will refer to these people or things as the 'beloved') we mean that not only do we enjoy the beloved, but also that we care for the beloved in an unselfish way. When I say 'enjoy' the beloved, I do not mean for the beloved to

be construed as something that is of use value. I simply mean that the beloved brings joy to our lives.

Influenced by Levinas, I also think there is another kind of love; I refer to it as a 'love for humankind'. This idea of love for humankind is in part derived from Levinas' theory of ethics as first philosophy, though it is not something he explicitly writes about. This phrase cannot be easily condensed into a short description but loosely, it means that our responsibilities towards the other are first and foremost and arise even before the conception of the self or any other philosophical thoughts.

Levinas claims that responsibility for the Other has always already been present, even if we are not aware of it. I elaborate on this theory in detail in chapter two. To be clear, Levinas himself does not refer to this idea of love that is prior to self-love as love for humankind, that is my phrase. But it is through Levinas' idea of a self that is predicated on 'Other-love' that I hope to explore this concept of love for humankind.

I think love is integral in any study on the shaping of the self because our loves are closely related to the things we enjoy and therefore value – knowing what we love and why we love it should offer insight into our desires, beliefs and perspectives. How we act on these feelings of enjoyment and how we care should also reflect our desires, motivations, perspectives and so on. In that sense our loves and our reasons of love give us a good idea of what makes up the self.

I have chosen to explore Harry Frankfurt's and Emmanuel Levinas' works on the self, because together, they support the two conceptions of love that I think are accurate. Harry Frankfurt offers reasons of love that refer to the reasons for choosing and acting that arise because of loving someone or something. Emmanuel Levinas offers us a 'story of love' that is prior to reason and that I recommend be incorporated with Frankfurt's thesis and should serve as the starting principle.

It should be said at this point that Levinas' discussion of love and metaphysics is at different 'level' from Frankfurt's. Levinas' theory acts as the very first and most primary foundations for the sort of ideas that Frankfurt articulates. While I am aware that Levinas is not a moral psychologist, and where I have no desire to lump the intricacies of his metaphysics with psychology, I do believe that his metaphysical ideas on love and care can be appropriated to aid a theory like Frankfurt's, which because of its reliance on biology and psychology, ends up facing some criticisms.

Levinas does not explicitly talk about love and reasons of love but I think it is possible to extrapolate fairly from what he has written to suggest what he would say had he been explicit. This is another task I set for myself in chapter two – a reconstruction of Levinas' ideas that have a bearing on what we understand to be love. This in itself is an interesting and useful project because

Levinas accounts for a feeling of responsibility and care for the Other,[2] which many of us would instinctively relate to love. So even though he doesn't explain it as such, Levinas does discuss in detail the sorts of phenomena that we would associate with love. Through exploring these ideas we can get a richer sense of the two ways in which I suggest most of us conceive of love.

Levinas' arguments are notoriously difficult to follow. This can be explained by the fact that Levinas wants to argue for how traditional western philosophy, in the way it explains and uses language and so-called rational argument, has subsumed all alterity or otherness, making the same and Other one. I explain this further in chapter two. But essentially, he wants to avoid even writing in a way that is influenced by this 'totality'. In truth, this leads to great difficulty in making sense of his work. However, diligent reading demonstrates that his work contains resources that are helpful in solving Frankfurt's problem with the sufficiency of wholeheartedness.

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[2] Many commentators such as Adriaan Perperzak, Simon Critchley and Sean Hand agree that Levinas' use of 'Autre', 'autre', 'Autrui' and 'autrui' is not consistent and that following conventions on the usage is problematic because it does not reflect certain nuanced differences. Sean Hand writes in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, "One particular difficulty that any commentator of Levinas has to solve is the rendering of Autre, autre, Autrui and autrui, Levinas' use of which is not always consistent. Among Levinas scholars it has become convention to use "the Other" with a capital for all places where Levinas means the human other […] this convention has many inconveniences […] to avoid such anomalies we have decided to follow Levinas' unsystematized way of capitalizing Autre and autre" (1996:xiv). I have decided to do the same and as such have not followed any system of distinguishing Other and other in this paper. As I am not presenting a piece of scholarship on Levinas but borrowing from, extending and appropriating Levinas for my own purposes, issues of scholarship such as the distinction between other and Other fall outside the domain of my paper and I believe following commentarial authority of key translators and existing scholars who are specialists is sufficient.

What I essentially try to do in this paper is offer a metaphysical foundation to Frankfurt's thesis. In doing so, I take inspiration from Levinas' theories to create what I refer to as a 'Two-Part Structure of Love'. What I hope to be able to do is show how subjectivity or the self is predicated on the relationship with the Other, and that as a development of Frankfurt's conception of the self, the definition that results is more robust and presents a more ethical subject worthy of the term 'a life well lived'.

Chapter 1

Frankfurt's account of the role of Love in the formation of the Self.

1.1 Frankfurt's concept of a Self/Person

Rather than speaking of 'subject' and 'subjectivity', Frankfurt uses the terms 'person' and 'personhood' in his account of the concept of a person. To stay true to that I have retained those two terms in this section. However, it is worth noting here that Frankfurt's description of a person is akin to what I have referred to as the subject or self, and his use of the term personhood is akin to what I have described as subjectivity.

Harry Frankfurt's concept of a person or self is explored through the concept of agency. Agency refers to the capacity of a person to act in a world. He considers personhood from the perspective of desires and motivations and as far as he is concerned, a person is someone who identifies herself with a desire that moves her to action and she reflectively endorses these desires that motivate her. Frankfurt says this is a matter of choosing which of our desires is truly ours, and wanting that desire to be our will.

Part of the apparatus that is used by Frankfurt in this description of personhood or subjectivity are the terms first order desire and second order desire. First order desires take courses of action as their object (1971:7-9). They are desires without reflection: both human beings and animals are capable of having first order desires. Second order desires are the next step up

from first order desires and are unique to human beings. Second order desires concern our desires themselves. Desiring what we desire means choosing which of our desires is really ours (1971: 8-10). We do this by prioritizing our wants based on a hierarchy of what we value.

Frankfurt adds a further category under second order desires and calls it volition. He writes, "Someone has a desire of the second order either when he simply wants to have a certain desire or when he wants a certain desire to be his will" (1971:10). When a person wants a particular desire to be their will, that is, they endorse that desire, Frankfurt says they have something called volition (1971:8-10). It is volition that is essential to being a person.

As a further tool to clarify exactly what he means by 'person', Frankfurt takes to describing something he calls a 'wanton'. The difference between a wanton and a person resides in the fact that a wanton has no concern for her will and simply acts upon desires she has without actively wanting or not wanting them. She simply pursues her strongest inclinations and does not care that she wants to do what she wants to do. She does not concern herself with the "desirability of her desires" (1970:11). A wanton possesses first and second order desires but not second order volition. A person on the other hand is a volitional entity. She is therefore someone who reflectively identifies with the attitudes that motivate her. This is a process often referred to as reflective endorsement, whereby a person gives precedence to one of their desires after a period of reflection. Persons are beings who care about their wills, that is,

which of their desires win over other desires, and reflectively identify with those particular winning desires.[3]

We need to explore Frankfurt's notion of personhood or subjectivity and particularly volition before considering his ideas about love because they are tied in very crucially; in fact, one could say that these subjects are the reason he even wants to talk about love in the first place. He explores love and care as a means to support his claim that personhood is steeped in a volitional structure.

He provides us an account of love that allows for the existence of various contradictory loves and he talks about the worrying effects of an inherent fragmentation that can occur as a result of these contradictions. Contradictory loves could refer to a situation where someone loves something but does not want to love it (2004:91), or loves two or more different things that cause her to be in conflict with herself. This sets the stage for the important job Frankfurt then gives to reflective endorsement and volitional structure as the key to managing this fragmentation, and towards being 'wholehearted'. This reflective endorsement of our loves is what distinguishes a person from what Frankfurt calls a wanton. So we can see how Frankfurt's project in discussing

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[3] An interesting question that arises here is whether Frankfurt means that a person is a being who is simply capable of second order desires or whether a person must always actually have second order desires? It seems Frankfurt would respond by saying that both persons and wantons are capable of second order desires. But a person must definitely always have second order desires in the form of volition, as opposed to just being capable of it, to be considered a person. Additionally he would hold that we need second order desires to get to volition because we would need to want to have a certain desire before we can make that desire our will. In that sense, one would not be able to jump from first order desire to second order volition without first 'passing through' the stage of second order desire.

reasons of love is essentially to defend and further support his theory of self and agency; to support the view that a person or self is a volitional entity.

1.2 Frankfurt's Aims

Harry Frankfurt's thesis on care and love in his book *The Reasons of Love* has two primary aims, which are linked. The first of these aims, which continues the work of his earlier book, *Necessity, Volition and Love*, is to show how something called 'volitional necessity', which exerts constraints on the will, may paradoxically, act as a condition of freedom.[4] He writes, "The grip of volitional necessity may provide, in certain matters, an essential condition of freedom; indeed, it may actually be in itself liberating" (1999: x). Volitional necessity is explained in terms of care in *Necessity, Volition and Love*, and both in terms of care and love (self-love as well as love for something other than the self) in *The Reasons of Love*. Frankfurt argues that these volitional necessities, which are constraints brought upon the will by care and love, make people wholehearted. I describe volitional necessity, as outlined by Frankfurt, in greater detail in the next section.

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[4]The paradoxical condition of freedom that I mentioned at the start of this section does not take center stage but is worth mentioning. It is tied to his earlier work, which attempts to explain the relationship between freedom of the will and the concept of a person. He wants to suggest that freedom can also be construed as being liberated within oneself or possessing a sort of internal freedom that comes from the lack of conflicting desires that plague one with confusion, self-doubt and unease**.** He wants to show that the capacity for such an internal freedom is to be found within the notion of wholeheartedness, which, as mentioned above, is brought about, by the volitional constraints of love and care and particularly, self-love.

The second of these aims is to explore the question "How should we live?" His answer to this question is that we should live wholeheartedly. By wholeheartedly, Frankfurt means that a person needs to have desires that are well integrated within a framework of life that has been consciously adopted via reflection. If we are wholehearted, we will possess "inner harmony" and feel liberated (2004:97). In the following section I explain how this is presented.

1.3 Explaining the terms and unpacking the connections

It is important to take note of the fact that in *The Reasons of Love*, Frankfurt moves us through the connections between the notions of volitional necessity, whole-heartedness, self-love and a life well lived almost as if the connections are self-evident. The fact that *The Reasons of Love* seems to jump from one concept to the other and back again in various chapters makes grasping how they are all linked more difficult. Perhaps this is because he feels he has set an adequate stage for discussing these ideas in his previous books. All the same, these connections are not as apparent to the reader as Frankfurt seems to suggest.

I attempt to unpack these notions in the following section, referring where necessary to his other books, so we can see more evidently the connections that Frankfurt is making. This will also allow me to discuss the aspects of these connections that are problematic.

Volitional Necessity

Frankfurt writes, "From the fact that there is something we cannot do passively or unfreely, it does not follow that it is an action we are always able or free to perform […] Plainly, there may be certain choices that I cannot choose to make" (1999:80). It is these choices that one cannot choose to make and the acts that one cannot bring oneself to perform that indicate that one's will is limited. This limitation to the will is brought on by volitional necessity. Frankfurt describes volitional necessity through the example of Protestant Reformist Martin Luther's famous quote during the Diet of Worms, in which he fervently stood by the philosophies of his reformist writings against emperor Charles the Fifth and an assembly that was insisting he retract his writings. In *Necessity, Volition and Love* he quotes part of Luther's short response to the Diet, "Here I stand; I can do no other" (1999:80). The indication is not that Luther's writings force him to stand there, but that his will to defend what he has stated gives him no choice but to do so. This compulsion that Luther experiences is described by Frankfurt as irresistible and impossible to lead or direct: Luther's considerations do not seem to be in his full control and he cannot help himself. In his earlier book, *The Importance of What We Care About*, this example of Luther first appears and Frankfurt writes, "I shall use the term ''volitional necessity'' to refer to constraint of the kind to which [Luther] declared he was subject" (1988:86).

Wholeheartedness

Frankfurt says wholeheartedness is having an undivided will. He writes, "Being wholehearted means having a will that is undivided. The wholehearted person is fully settled as to what he wants, and what he cares about. With regard to any conflict of dispositions or inclinations within himself, he has no doubts or reservations as to where he stands" (2004:95).

In his earlier book, '*Necessity, Volition and Love'* Frankfurt offers us a much more detailed definition of wholeheartedness:

"Wholeheartedness does not require that a person be altogether untroubled by inner opposition to his will. It just requires that, with respect to any such conflict, he himself be fully resolved. This means that he must be resolutely on the side of one of the forces struggling within him and not on the side of any other" (1999:100)

This means that to be wholehearted, a person must decisively identify with one of his desires. Once he has done this and there is no struggle between

conflicting desires, the lover is satisfied and 'at peace with himself' about his choice, wholeheartedness is achieved.[5]

Self-Love

This section on self-love is meant to elucidate the connection that can be observed in Frankfurt's work, between self-love and wholeheartedness. His detailed thoughts on love are explained in Section 1.5.

Towards the end of *The Reasons of Love*, Frankfurt further defines wholeheartedness by equating it to self-love. He writes, "To be wholehearted is to love oneself. The two are the same" (2004:95). He also adds that, "Insofar as a person loves himself - in other words, to the extent that he is volitionally wholehearted – he does not resist any movements of his own will" (2004:97). Frankfurt interchanges loving oneself with volitional wholeheartedness here, and explains it as a state where someone faces no contest from within themselves about what they will. Frankfurt furthers this point by saying that such a person is not at odds with himself and that he is free in loving what he loves without obstruction or interference (2004:97).

[5] This idea of being satisfied with oneself is also explored in some detail in *Necessity, Volition and Love*. Frankfurt writes, "What satisfaction does entail is an absence of relentlessness or resistance" (1999:103) and "It is a matter of simply having no interest in making changes. What it requires is that psychic elements of certain kinds do not occur [...] the essential non-occurrence is neither deliberately contrived nor wantonly unselfconscious. It develops and prevails as an unmanaged consequence of the person's appreciation of his psychic condition" (1999:105). A self-satisfied person is therefore one who is 'at peace' with her choices and would not want to go about improving them, changing them or adapting them in any way.

He also writes, “Self-love consists, then, in the purity of a wholehearted will” (2004:96). By purity, Frankfurt means that the lover’s will is purely her own, there is no fragmentation of the will or interferences and impositions on one part of the will by another part of the will. He further claims that the purity of an undivided will results in ‘inner harmony’ which is “tantamount to possessing a fundamental kind of freedom” (2004:97). By “kind of freedom” it seems Frankfurt is referring to the freedom one has in loving what one loves, and in expressing that love in practical reasoning without feeling hindered or unsettled by opposing or complicating aspects of a disjointed will (2004:97).

A life well lived

These concepts of self-love and wholeheartedness link back to the idea of a life well lived if we return to the start of *The Reasons of Love* where Frankfurt first discusses the question ‘How should a person live?’. His response there is, “In our attempts to settle questions concerning how to live […] what we are hoping for is the more intimate comfort of feeling at home with ourselves” (2004:5). He also says that the function of love is to make people’s lives meaningful and good for them to live (2004:99).

Frankfurt does not explicitly explain what “feeling at home with ourselves” means. But we can infer from his references to “inner harmony” and his constant ‘calling-for’ a lack of intrusions and interpolations within fragmented parts of the will that “feeling at home with ourselves” comes as result of being wholehearted about what we want and essentially, loving ourselves.

So, to summarize, self-love or wholeheartedness results in feeling at home with ourselves, which is the measure of a life well lived.

1.4 Overview of the main concerns regarding these aims

I do not disagree with Frankfurt. Achieving a state of unity and 'equilibrium' within one's life comes from having desires that do not conflict or compete with one's other desires and the way in which one has chosen to live or pursue one's life. In fact, Levinas would not disagree with this either.

However, a problem can be located in that Frankfurt's theory allows for an evil person to be considered wholehearted. Moreover, the fact that his theory seems not to require any real distinction between a wholeheartedly good person and a wholeheartedly evil one is particularly worrying.

It does not seem right to accept that a person who carelessly uses others for his own benefit, or who harms others on a significant scale, is leading a meaningful and well-lived life just because he does those things wholeheartedly. Frankfurt seems to suggest that such a person's life, though not admirable, is still enviable on account of its wholeheartedness (2004:99). Many people would disagree that such a life is enviable or well-lived. That Frankfurt's account of the reasons of love can be seen to endorse the lives of those who have lived

contrary to our general idea of a meaningful and well-lived life, or what is even acceptable, is a worrying sign.

It is my argument that Frankfurt needs a metaphysical background to the necessities of love, that would offer him a much stronger argument for our reasons of love and for his conception of subjectivity that would avoid this sort of concern.

It is true that Frankfurt's book is called *The Reasons **of** Love* and not the Reasons **for** Love. As such it is clear that Frankfurt does not want to focus on where love comes from and why we love, or to answer questions about why love exists. What he sets out to discuss is how love provides us with reasons for doing things for the beloved. He writes, "Love is itself, for the lover, a source of reasons" (2004:37). Yet, he does give us some sense of what he thinks drives us to care in this particular way for some people or things, and not others. And Frankfurt does offer some speculations about this process too, from a general reference to 'biology' to what he terms the 'exigencies' of life (2004:47-48). This passing mention is not easy to categorise. On the one hand, he is demonstrating awareness of the issue of 'the origins of love'. On the other hand, it is almost as though he cannot avoid mentioning this aspect; as though he sees that these reasons for love are relevant to his discussion, but is choosing not to pay them much attention. If this latter description is in any way close to the truth, it is disadvantageous to Frankfurt's argument overall. An analysis of the reasons for love may have seemed to Frankfurt an inconvenient

add-on to his clarity of argument, but it could, we will go on to see, add a valuable new dimension and robustness to his position.

Critics such as Alan Soble suggest that questions such as "where does love come from?" (2005: 118), that is, reasons for love, are worth carefully responding to as they provide justification for our reasons of love. I discuss this point in greater detail in section 1.6, which further explains my criticisms of Frankfurt's account.

The argument put forward in this paper is that our reasons for love should be considered in our analysis of the reasons of love. Firstly, this is because they can actually strengthen our understanding of how the reasons of love work: for example, an understanding of why we come to love something or someone can increase our confidence in decisions between conflicting loves. This understanding also deepens our awareness of our agency as a wholehearted person[6] (it develops our personhood more fully). As such, it complements Frankfurt's emphasis on the value of personhood.

Secondly, understanding our reasons for love can help to steer our wholeheartedness, by providing a sense of whether what we love (however wholeheartedly) is ethically good or not. This is not a foolproof method to ensure that those who do indeed reflect on their reasons for love will always choose the ethically good loves to endorse; they may know why their desires

[6] By wholehearted here I mean a state of unity and non-conflict. To be clear, I do not ascribe to the idea that wholeheartedness, even when evil, is sufficient for describing a life as well lived.

and loves come to be but still choose to endorse the evil ones. However, knowing our reasons for love and paying attention to them in the process of reflection, choosing, and endorsing can help to avoid wholehearted evilness. It also helps validate the importance of deep reflection for the next time that one has to endorse one particular desire over another.

Before proceeding further, it would be worth considering more closely Frankfurt's claims on the sufficiency of wholeheartedness.

In *The Reasons of Love* Frankfurt says:

"Wholeheartedness is difficult to come by. It is not easy for us to be satisfied with ourselves […] Suppose that we are unable to overcome the doubts and difficulties that stand in the way of our being wholehearted, and that we remain helplessly deprived of self-love […] Let us say that you are simply unable, no matter what you do or how hard you try, to be wholehearted […] if true self-love is for you really out of the question-at least be sure to hang on to your sense of humour" (2004:99-100).

Even Frankfurt admits that luck plays a significant part in wholeheartedness and the ability to attain 'inner' harmony and unity. Suggesting that we hold out for a miracle or hold on to our humour is hardly a satisfactory response to questions about how to deal with conflicting loves and hold fragments of the self together. In his book, *The Metaphysics of Autonomy*, Mark Coeckelbergh agrees with this grievance and writes, "If wholeheartedness and volitional

unity are essential to autonomy, then, if we want to make sense of our ideal of autonomy, we have to get a precise idea of how to achieve this volitional unity" (2004:124).

Frankfurt seems to suggest that we are made to love loving. In a footnote in *The Reasons of Love*, Frankfurt writes, "To the extent that human beings cannot help having this desire [by 'desire' here he means the desire to be able to count on having meaning in our lives], we are constituted to love loving"(2004:90). So what is this constitution? Frankfurt does offer some tentative speculations about this. As mentioned before, he cites biology and exigencies of life but he does not develop them and sees no need to. A metaphysical grounding, particularly the account that Levinas submits, could help to offer a more complete response to this question of constitution.

1.5 Frankfurt's position on love

How do we get an account of subjectivity or self from Frankfurt's reasons of love? To begin with, we must be clear that Frankfurt holds love to be a form of caring. When we care about something, we are "willingly committed to our desire" (2004:16). What this means is that we want our desire to be our will, that we are active in keeping it alive and should the desire diminish, we would want to revive it as a means of sustaining something we identify with and understand as what we truly want (2004:16).

Love, Frankfurt says, is "a particular mode of caring. It is an involuntary, nonutilitarian, rigidly focused and – as is any mode of caring – self-affirming concern for the existence and good of what is loved" (2006:40). The idea that caring is always self-affirming is a controversial one. It is possible to argue that caring can be a concern for the other that has nothing to do with self-affirmation. While this is arguable it is not the point I want to focus on here. I want to show that what Frankfurt means here is that we do not choose what we love; we are 'drawn' to beloveds because of deep but mysterious desires.

Frankfurt does not discuss the origins of love in detail in *The Reasons of Love* because he does not see it as something he needs to discuss. I hold that he needs to examine it in order to avoid the problems that arise from his particular description of wholeheartedness and its sufficiency for a life well lived. Where he does briefly refer to the origins of love as being natural or influenced by exigencies, it is not altogether clear what his account is.

For example, Frankfurt writes, " The commitments [of love] are innate in us. They are not based upon deliberation. They are not responses to any commands of rationality [… they] are grounded […] by a particular mode of caring about things. They are commands of love [that] are biologically embedded in our nature" (2004:29-30). What we can gather from this is that love is an instinctive attitude. He adds that ultimately the requirements for the things we love are determined by "biology and other natural conditions" (2004:48). For instance, in one part of *The Reasons of Love* Frankfurt says that

"in virtue of necessities that are biologically embedded in our nature, we love our children and we love living" (2004:30). However, in another part he writes,

"What we love is shaped by the universal exigencies of human life, together with those other needs and interests that derive more particularly from the features of individual character and experience. Whether something is to be an object of our love cannot be decisively evaluated either by any a priori method or through examination of its inherent properties. It can be measured only against requirements that are imposed upon us by other things that we love. In the end those are determined for us by biological and other natural conditions, concerning which we have nothing much to say" (2004:47-48).

Suggesting that exigencies and experiences play a part as well and that essentially, we cannot say much about how love originates, soon afterwards he states very clearly "what we love is not up to us" (2004:49). He also writes, "these fundamental necessities of the will are not transient features of social prescription or of cultural habit. They are solidly entrenched in our human nature from the start" (2004:38).

Frankfurt does not seem to be especially clear about the reasons for love. A particular problem is that on this account of the reasons for love, someone could love something evil and so long as they do so wholeheartedly, be considered to be living life well.

I do however think that Frankfurt has the right intuitions about there being something *more* than the experience and exigencies that we end up 'going back to' in order to make sense of our loves. In the long quote above he says that ultimately we go back to those loves that are "determined for us by biological and other natural conditions, concerning which we have nothing much to say" (2004:47-48). What I think he might be getting at when he refers to biological and natural conditions is a sense that there is something innate that guides us. I do not think that this innateness is evolutionary biology or purely psychology, or simply a combination of both. In the following section and in chapter two I try to explain how it might be possible for this innateness to be a primordial and latent responsibility we have to others that we become aware of via a very special kind of experience that Levinas refers to as the face-to-face.

Frankfurt also adds that if we 'wholeheartedly' love the beloved then alternatives to that beloved, or ending that love, would not be genuine options (2004:48). Wholeheartedness, as we have seen, refers to a consistent and unified way of caring about one's loves, and loving and pursuing these loves correctly. By 'correctly', he means with confidence and consistency. So essentially Frankfurt is suggesting that experience would not lead us to want to change any of the conditions of love if we were pursuing our loves correctly in the first place. Again, this poses a problem when we come across people who are wholeheartedly evil. It seems odd to sanction such wholeheartedness as sufficient for a life well lived.

1.6 Criticisms of Frankfurt's position

As I pointed out earlier, I do not completely disagree with Frankfurt's thesis. I think there are a few weaknesses in his ideas and that the introduction of Levinas' metaphysics may help to strengthen them.

Frankfurt suggests that living wholeheartedly is a necessary component of a well-lived life. I am happy to accept that living wholeheartedly is a necessary criterion but think it insufficient. Frankfurt's silence on some of the other necessary criteria is a very dangerous one because it runs the risk of producing very deficient moral agents .[7]

I suggested that Frankfurt's conception of wholeheartedness and how it relates to what he deems a meaningful and good life is problematic. To take that point further, I need to first describe Frankfurt's thinking on care, worth and importance. This spans a few of the books he has written. Identifying some of the problems with his thoughts on these concepts and particularly with how he links them together will help to make the point I want to against wholeheartedness being sufficient for a meaningful life.

In his book, *The Importance of What We Care About*, Frankfurt discusses the Euthyphro dilemma. The dilemma is essentially concerned with caring about something and the importance of that thing that is being cared about. In

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[7] Frankfurt's silence on salient issues is also raised by Susan Wolf in her article *The True, the Good and the Lovable: Frankfurt's Avoidance of Objectivity* (2002).

response to the dilemma, Frankfurt writes, "caring about something *makes* that thing important to the person who cares about it" (1988:92). In *The Reasons of Love* he writes, "There are many things that become important to us [...] just by virtue of the fact that we care about them" (2004:21).

He essentially argues that we give things importance by caring about them, rather than, that we care about things that are important (2004:21). In response to the question "what makes the thing we care about take on the quality of importance?" he seems to say that what justifies the importance is the act of caring itself. He writes, "What we love is necessarily important to us, just because we love it" (2004:51).

Alan Soble elaborates further on this same point. He refers to a quote in *The Importance of What We Care About*:

"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 [...] The person does not care about the object because its worthiness commands that he do so. On the other hand, the worthiness of the activity of caring commands that he choose an object which he will be able to care about" (1988:94).

Soble summarizes Frankfurt's argument as being "we should care about whatever it is possible for us to care about, so as to at least engage in caring and reap the benefits of caring as such" (2004:112).[8]

This then suggests that caring about something, whatever it is that we care about, is better than caring about nothing but caring is itself a worthwhile endeavor that infuses life and the world with value (2004: 23). To be clear, Frankfurt does not say we must care about everything that we possibly can. If it so happens that we are predisposed to caring about eliminating world poverty and find that we can see that as a fulfilling and meaningful ambition, then we should nurture that care. But if something in our predisposition makes us care about beating up old ladies and we find it fulfilling and rewarding, then we are better off fostering that then not caring about anything.[9] It seems then that Frankfurt would be committed to saying that an evil person, by caring about harming others, is 'better off' than someone who cares about nothing.

The concern I raised was that the criterion of wholeheartedness, as Frankfurt has described it, is not sufficient as a theory for how we should live because it just does not 'sit well' with most of us that an evil person could be deemed to be living a meaningful life of any kind or be envied for their wholehearted evilness. A person, who we would not ordinarily consider as having lived a life

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[8] Soble also effectively states that although Frankfurt is talking about care, this also applies to love. I agree because Frankfurt raises these same points that he does about care in his discussion on love in *The Reasons of Love*. Soble writes, "In *The Importance of What We Care About*, Frankfurt addresses the *Euthyphro* love dilemma, although here he speaks about caring about something instead of loving it. It makes no difference" (2005:111).

[9] Susan Wolf makes a similar point in her article *The True, the Good and the Lovable: Frankfurt's Avoidance of Objectivity* (2002).

well, could easily be considered under Frankfurt's definition, to be wholehearted and living well. Take the counter example of someone who lives off other people, a 'free rider' of sorts. The 'free-rider' who takes advantage of others and their kindness or generosity, even if she is doing it wholeheartedly, is not the sort of person we would ordinarily say is living her life well, even if we are able to identify that there are no clashes in her desires and her will is unified. However, such a person could be completely wholehearted according to Frankfurt. He writes, "Being wholehearted is quite compatible not only with being morally somewhat imperfect, but even with being dreadfully and irredeemably wicked" (2004:98).

Annette Baier, in her book, *Caring about Caring*, writes that Frankfurt's thesis, and particularly the use of the word 'possible' in talking about caring about what it is possible to care about, renders it impossible to distinguish between caring about Nazism and the natural environment (1982:277).

Frankfurt himself writes:

"Whatever the value and importance of self-love, it does not guarantee even a minimal rectitude. The life of a person who loves himself is enviable on account of its wholeheartedness, but it may not be at all admirable. The function of love is not to make people good. Its function is just to make their lives meaningful, and thus to help make their lives in that way good for them to live" (2004: 98).

1.6.1 Relying on luck and good humour

In his section on self-love, in *The Reasons of Love*, Frankfurt attempts to address this issue by conceding that people are "divided within themselves" (2004:87). He also adds that whether or not we are wholehearted may be based upon "genetic and other modes of luck" and that we simply cannot force ourselves to love ourselves or other things (2004:99). If all else fails and in spite of reflection and best possible efforts one still cannot love oneself and is ridden with doubts and confusions, he concludes, that one should hold on to one's sense of humor (2004:100).

So what happens then if we do not have this sort of genetic predisposition or requisite luck? Frankfurt suggests that a person could be ambivalent about what she loves and have contradicting feelings about it, such that one part of her could love something and another part not want to love that same thing (2004:91). The way to solve this dilemma is to choose, with certainty, which side to stand with. The un-chosen side is then 'pushed out', making it external and separate from the will. Should this excluded desire still strongly influence the person, it is not simply the other desire that it has overtaken, but the very person herself that has been overpowered (2004:92). Frankfurt adds that in cases where people cannot choose between two conflicting desires, we may say that their wills are fractured. He writes, "In such cases, the person is volitionally fragmented" (2004:92).

Here, Frankfurt is foregrounding the second part of his story on love – the part that requires a person or self to reflectively endorse her loves. If you are not so lucky to end up with a unified set of cares and loves that you have no trouble identifying with completely and consistently, then you need to stop, think, choose and be confident about it so that you can bring all your loves and cares in line with each other. This hardly seems easy to do, and indeed, Frankfurt clarifies that this ambivalence is nothing new: human beings have always been thought of as suffering from self-doubt (2004:93). It is wholeheartedness, that is, an undivided will, however, that allows us to love genuinely and completely. Whole-heartedness then is a kind of aspirational ideal rather than a description of the state of affairs as found in the world. Reflective endorsement is the way in which he thinks we can instantiate this ideal of wholeheartedness in real life. Frankfurt says, “His wholehearted self-love consists in, or is exactly constituted by, the wholeheartedness of his unified will” (2004:95).

Frankfurt says that when a person or self is wholehearted his will is not fractured or divided; he is not influenced unwittingly by something external; and everything he desires, considers important, and loves are all in tandem with each other. In this sense “His heart is pure in the sense that his will is purely his own” (2004:96).

One reason we should care to be wholehearted and ‘pure’ is that any confusion and fragmentation in our wills is a potential battle within the self. Self-contradictory beliefs drag us in contradictory directions and can end up defeating their very purposes (2004:96). When we experience a unified will

and do not have to manage impediments and disarray, there is nothing restricting our will and we feel liberated. Frankfurt writes, "Ultimately, what we stand to gain is a ready acceptance and sanction of our volitional identity"(2004:97).

While this is possible, it is certainly a tall order. What if I'm unluckily the sort of person or self who has the sort of volitional structure that 'drags me all over the place'? What if at every turn I am faced with this task of having to make one of two or more strongly conflicting loves my own? Frankfurt says that if you happen to be this unlucky then you have to constantly keep choosing between conflicting loves. If we find that just too difficult or too much to handle, he simply says that we should keep trying to be wholehearted and "hang on to your sense of humor" (2004:100). But how do we try to be wholehearted? If our volitional structures place us in positions of internal conflict, how do we go about choosing between conflicting loves?

I am not suggesting that Frankfurt needs to tell us how to be wholehearted. What I am suggesting is that if he gives us a better understanding of our reasons for love, we might have access to more tools to try and live in the wholehearted way he suggests we do.

Therefore, my criticism here is simply that this kind of response makes an un-'lucky' me want to give up on any chance that I might ever come to love others or myself wholeheartedly. And if this kind of wholeheartedness is meant to represent the extent of my subjectivity (or personhood in Frankfurt's terms) in

relation to my wantonness, I would like to have access to whatever I can to help me get it right at some point. Perhaps if we had a bit more to go on in terms of how our loves come about, we could better identify why we are drawn to the loves we are. Knowing how our loves come to be could give us valuable insight when we are trying to choose and reflectively endorse one of our loves over another conflicting one.

Of course an analysis of the reasons for love does not guarantee an argument in favour of good rather than evil. However, one can hypothesise that a close examination of this impulse is more likely to connect with ideas of compassion and responsibility than self-interest, or, arguably, delusion.

In the next chapter I will extrapolate from Levinas' thoughts and suggest how having a Levinas-inspired understanding of our reasons for love would provide us with the sort of grounding that could be more helpful for endorsing the loves that are ethically good.

Chapter 2

Reconstructing Levinas on Love

2.1 The Term 'Love' in Levinas' Writings

Emmanuel Levinas does not write extensively and exactly about love. However it is possible to extrapolate and paint a picture from his writings on what he might have said about the role of love in self-constitution, had he written about it explicitly. I hope to be able to reconstruct Levinas' conception of love from his writings on ethics because I think it will be useful in offering us ideas that together with some of Frankfurt's existing thoughts will offer a stronger account of love and the role it plays in the constitution of the self.

In the first chapter, I began by discussing Frankfurt's account of love, which included the reasons for and of love. To help with the comparison of the two thinkers in the chapter following this, I shall begin discussion here with what Levinas might say about the origins of love.

To gain as full an understanding as possible of what Levinas has said and might agree with about love, we will need to consider a range of his ideas. Among them, most importantly: the face-to-face encounter (and the responsibility that comes with it); the notion of 'living from'; *jouissance* (enjoyment); and recollection and substitution.

It is important to note that what Levinas is addressing is that which is originary: that experience (the face-to-face) which is the starting point or basis for everything else and is prior to reason. I want to once again point out that although Levinas' discourse is occurring at a metaphysical level and Frankfurt's is occurring at a pragmatic level, Levinas' ideas can be usefully appropriated to offer a metaphysical grounding for Frankfurt's theory.

In the interview 'Philosophy, Justice and Love' found in Levinas' *Entre Nous*, he sums up his view on love by saying,

"Love is originary. I'm not speaking theologically at all. I myself do not use it much, the word love, it is a worn out and ambiguous word. And then too there is something severe in this love; this love is commanded [...] It is inscribed in the Face of the Other, in the encounter with the Other; a double expression of weakness and strict, urgent requirement [...] A word that requires me as the one responsible for the Other; and there is an election there, because that responsibility is inalienable. A responsibility you yield to someone is no longer a responsibility. I substitute myself for every man and no one can substitute for me and in that sense I am chosen [...] election is definitely not a privilege, it is the fundamental characteristic of the human person as morally responsible. Responsibility is an individuation, a principle of individuation." (1998:108)

As Levinas states, he only very rarely uses the word love. However, what is very clear here is the connection between the meaning of that 'worn out and ambiguous' word 'love', and what Levinas means when he speaks of the primal

responsibility born of the face-to-face encounter. As we have seen in our reading of Frankfurt, though, love remains a potent concept for explaining why we act as we do. So, throughout this chapter we will consider Levinas' ideas of responsibility and the face-to-face in relation to the understanding of love we have previously been working towards.[10] This can be achieved without oversimplification of Levinas' highly nuanced writings, by working very specifically to the points raised in our consideration of Frankfurt.

2.2 The Face-to-Face

The notion of the face and the face-to-face encounter in Levinas' philosophy is complex. It is however through this idea that we can explore the Levinasian concept of love, which is presented to us in various 'stages'. I intend to expand on each of these stages, but will summarise them here first. The first contextualization of love comes from a stage of 'self-love' where we enjoy the things we 'live from' and life is about our fulfillment and happy sustenance. Then when this 'first stage' of existence is interrupted by the entry of the Other, we become aware of an original, always existent and ever-present responsibility and moral obligation that we have to the Other. So it is about becoming aware of something we were not aware of before, in spite of it always existing and being present. This obligation contextualizes the second

[10] Levinas may rightly feel that love is to an extent an over-used word. However, a clear disadvantage of his rigorous interrogation of language is that it can create a distance between his work and the grounded human experience to which it so often relates. And indeed, much of what we associate with 'love' correlates with many of the 'pre-rational' themes Levinas frequently describes in his work, if only he did not feel it such an ''ambiguous' word.

stage of love – an ethics of care and responsibility towards other human beings. I use the phrase 'second stage' here but it is important to remember that for Levinas, this 'second stage' is an awareness of the responsibility we have to others and not the formation of it. As I mentioned earlier in this same paragraph, this responsibility has been ever-present.

In *Totality and Infinity* (1969), Levinas describes a self that starts out with forms of self-awareness that are very corporeal and physical. The 'raw', primal sensations are foregrounded here and the self takes pleasure in and nourishes itself with the things it loves. The self at this point is one that enjoys life and fulfils itself with food, clothing, shelter, and so on. It is important to note that these abovementioned items are often conventionally classified as 'needs', but this very category is something that Levinas wants to avoid, because the idea of need follows from the idea that there are certain things we are entitled to and must have in order to survive. If we were to accept that there are such things that are necessary for survival, we risk the possibility of exonerating or condoning actions that are unethical if these actions are in favour of our basic survival, which we have come to see as an entitlement. These are negative impacts, and the danger of holding the belief that survival needs are of the greatest importance and that human beings have survival prerogatives, is that

they have the potential to override anything else.[11]

What Levinas wants is for us to see these 'needs' as the very substance of life and as 'life-framing' rather than as crude requirements for survival. He writes, "To say that we live from contents is therefore not to affirm that we resort to them as conditions for ensuring our life, taken as the bare fact of existing. The bare fact of life is never bare. Life is not the naked will to be, an ontological Sorge for this life. Life's relation with the very conditions of its life becomes the nourishment and content of that life. Life is love of life" (1969:112).[12]

If we were to conceive of these 'needs' as 'loves' then we can begin to see how they might be unique, special and meaningful to each individual. We begin to see people not simply as instantiations of a more generic class of beings but as individuals, who love, enjoy and find special meaning in their existence. The whole notion of enjoyment is contrasted against the category of need. Those things which are conventionally understood as 'needs' are conceptualized as

[11] There are indeed many examples of occasions when people have placed survival needs as secondary to other motivations. Consider the example of hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina who saved more than a thousand Tutsis and Hutus during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. He stayed on at the 'Hôtel des Mille Collines', protecting himself and the refugees from bullets and grenades using mattresses and often starving for days or drinking water from the swimming pool. He did this when all the managers left fearing for their safety. When the Hutu militia finally threatened to enter the hotel, Rusesabagina, who had promised his wife that he would not leave her should such a situation arise, broke that promise by putting his wife and children in an 'escape truck' and staying behind with the refugees who he felt needed him. In interviews, Rusesabagina often said that during that time he genuinely believed he would die, he just never knew whether he would be chopped to bits or tortured slowly to death. Still, when he had the opportunity to escape and survive, he chose to stay behind and protect the refugees. This is an example of someone who did not ignore the cry of help from those vulnerable; he gave priority to helping them rather than to what we may refer to as a survival instinct. He put his own needs and survival, and even that of his own family, at incredible risk to protect the needy human beings he encountered.

[12] 'Sorge', as Levinas is quoted as using here, is a German word that can be loosely translated in this context as 'concern' or 'care'.

the things we love and 'live from' and make us individual and unique. These things are not necessarily consciously chosen by us, but what allows for these loves has always been present or is 'always already'. We may not necessarily choose our loves, yet we derive pleasure and happiness from them. In fact we become who we are through them, even if and when we are denied them. Indeed the denial of fulfillment itself contributes to who we become. He further adds, "To live from bread is therefore neither to represent bread to oneself nor to act on it nor to act by means of it [...]. Rather, to live from my bread is a matter of enjoyment" (1969:111).

This first description or stage of love is what Levinas terms "The Love of Life". Many things, including labor and effort play a part in the appreciation of joyous life and the satisfaction of our 'needs'. He writes, "Life loved is the very enjoyment of life" (1969:145). But Levinas also makes clear that while this independent enjoyment of the things we love is important and valuable, it is in fact what sets the stage for welcoming the Other, acknowledging her joys, and giving to her. This 'hospitality', as Levinas refers to it, towards the other (1969:172), is an equally important, and arguably the essential dimension of love that we should be aiming for. I talk about this more later in this chapter, in the section on 'Passivity, Responsibility and Substitution'.

As we have seen so far, Levinas' account of love starts from the very basics, or origins: he crafts a full 'back-story' for how our loves come to be and grow in such a way that their dimensions swell and account for not only our love of self but also and most fundamentally, our love of the Other. What we begin with

are specific and individual loves (beloved people or things) that are rooted in enjoyment rather than aspects of survival. We labor over and put effort into developing and nourishing our relationships with these beloveds, and we enjoy the benefits, happiness and sustenance that these people or things provide us. Levinas says that the whole process is one that lends to the enjoyment of these things we 'live from'. It is also that which gives us '*jouissance*' and forms the self. In *Discovering Levinas* Michael Morgan describes this process of self-enjoyment, and how it sets the stage for encountering the other and acting with love and care for the other, by saying,

"What I enjoy nourishes me; things become food, consumable. As Levinas sees it, they are nourishment, and enjoyable first and foremost. But that is not all they are; these objects and states also become available for inspection, description, classification and more […] Within enjoyment subject and object exhibit a separation, and this separation then becomes the framework in which language, discourse, description, perception, and so forth take place […] The upshot is that this situation makes responding to the face possible, for that response requires giving, a wholly benevolent giving, and it is only because of enjoyment, possession, labor, and habitation that I have something to give" (2007:106-107).

In this sense, enjoyment is a precondition for ethics. It nurtures the sense of possession and offers the distance required for reflection. Enjoyment enables the act of giving, which is the natural extension of ethics. This in turn paves the way for loving.

So now that we have accounted for how the things we love and 'live from' come about, we look to a further description or stage of love – one that is facilitated by the face-to-face encounter with the Other. What I hope to show in the following paragraphs is how the face-to-face encounter reveals Levinasian ideals on love and genuine care, and essentially how this face-to-face encounter paves the way for an understanding of the role that love plays in defining a subject.

For a start, we must look at what is meant by the 'face' of the Other. The 'face' does not refer literally to a person's face, and the face-to-face encounter does not necessarily refer to one person literally facing another. The face also does not necessarily represent any particular physiological aspect of a person, although it could. Levinas suggests that we cannot pin down any concrete description of the face because "The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed" (1969:194).

However, what we can say of the face is that it acts as a symbol for the uniqueness of another individual. Even in a very literal sense, the actual face of each person is different and is the first point of distinction from other persons. It is also a method of identification – the face is the first apparent sign of our uniqueness. In his essay 'Meaning and Sense' (1964, though this paper uses the 1996 edition) Levinas writes,

“The epiphany of the other involves a signifyingness of its own independence of this meaning received from the world. The other comes to us not only out of context, but also without mediation; he signifies himself. The cultural meaning […] is disturbed and jostled by another presence that is abstract (or more exactly absolute) and not integrated into the world” (1996:53).

What Levinas means here is that the Other is a separate and unique entity, it is not merely a ‘thing’ in the world at large or the world of the self. It throws into question cultural meaning and context, as we know it. The Other resists being subsumed into the world and also into the self’s world: “The face resists possession, resists my powers” (1969:197). Levinas does not deny that the Other can be encountered within a cultural or societal context, thus making her appear within a particular or singular role. However he does not want the Other to be defined solely by that role or within that specific cultural situation. The Other has its own unique meaning that extends beyond culture and situation. That is, the Other sees herself or is seen to be representing more than the roles she plays in the specific situations it is encountered in. The encounter with the face of the Other is what makes us aware that there is a meaning to the other that is separate from the meaning it has within the integrated or contextualized world. Levinas writes that she “disturbs immanence without settling into the horizons of the world” (1987: 102).

The face also acts, through the face-to-face encounter, as that which alerts us to the fact that the other too has needs and vulnerabilities.[13] I further explain this concept of vulnerability in the following two paragraphs. As Morgan states, "it is as if the self's power or capacity to work and appropriate worldly things for its enjoyment and nourishment is now challenged by the sheer fact that another person, who also needs those things for his nourishment and enjoyment presents himself to the I and registers [...] a 'moral summons', the content of which is to share, to be generous, and most fundamentally to acknowledge and accept the other person" (2007:72). This realization is part of what makes up the face-to-face encounter.

In explaining this concept of vulnerability that becomes apparent in the face-to-face encounter, Levinas refers to the command "you shall not commit murder" (1969:199) as the turning point for the self's realization that it has so much power, it could even kill the other. The self realizes it can exercise this power over the Other. It puts the self in a position where the capacity to take another life, to exert its will upon the Other, is something within its control. The self is traumatized by the fact that it could wield its power unjustly if it so chose to do so. This is the call to responsibility, which the self cannot ignore.

Levinas uses terms such as the 'nakedness', 'defenselessness' and 'exposure' of the face to emphasize this idea of vulnerability. He writes,

[13] By vulnerability, Levinas means not only physical or emotional weakness or poverty or illness, but also just the fact that the other is defenseless and 'open' or 'naked' before us.

“Prior to any particular expression and beneath all particular expression, which cover and protect with an immediate adopted face, there is the nakedness and destitution of the expression as such, that is to say extreme exposure, defenselessness, vulnerability itself […] From the beginning there is a face to face steadfast in its exposure to invisible death, to a mysterious forsakenness… But in its expression, in its mortality, the face before me summons me, calls for me, begs for me, as if the invisible death that must be faced by the other […] were my business” (1989: 83).

This ‘invisible death’ of the Other is the ‘business’ of the self because an appeal is being made by the Other for care, protection, to allay fears, to heal, to rectify wrongdoing and so on. Through this, the self becomes aware of its own similarly volatile and arbitrary right to existence.

To further this point, I quote an oft used phrase that Levinas borrowed from Blaise Pascal and has used in his own writing, “My being-in-the-world or my ‘place in the sun’, my being at home, have these not also been the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man whom I have already oppressed or starved, or driven out into a third world; are they not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing?” (1989: 82). Levinas means that everything we take to be ours and take into our possession, whether it is food to fill our stomachs or wood to make our fires, we are indirectly taking from another. This appropriation, even it is for what we commonly refer to as our ‘survival’, is affecting the needs of another and particularly the needs of a more needy other. I am always responsible for these needs of the Other and for the plight of

the Other. I believe that he might also want us to realize that when we acquire and enjoy our 'possessions', when we sit down to a meal or lie in bed, we are satisfying our 'needs', enjoying our comfortable place without facing the fact that the world outside my 'place in the sun' is one where there is killing and stripping and exiling. By enjoying what I am enjoying and by nourishing myself, I am causing the Other suffering, 'taking away' from her. I realize that I am guilty, that my nourishment has consequences for the Other. I realize that not taking this responsibility seriously is what leads to a world suffering the plight of selfish dominance and greed.

What do I then do about this guilt and with this awareness? We see that Levinas presents the Other as needy and helpless, begging for care, and that the self becomes aware of its responsibility to care for the Other and feels guilt from nourishing itself at the expense of the Other. From this, the self realizes she must act with benevolence and love towards the Other, and that this is something that only she can do, and has the responsibility to do for the Other.

2.3 Needs and Desires

Need and desire have unique meanings for Levinas, and he believes that the distinction between needs and desires are often muddled (1969:33). However, the distinction between them is crucial in understanding how we relate to and come to genuinely love and care for the Other.

According to Levinas, needs are experienced as lacks. When we perceive of

things and other people as ways through which we assuage our needs we subsume them into our own world, we do not see them for their unique value and we make them tools that we can use to fulfill our requirements. Levinas writes, “I can ‘feed’ on these realities and to a very great extent satisfy myself, as though I had simply been lacking them. Their alterity is thereby reabsorbed into my own identity as a thinker or a possessor […] it [need] would coincide with the consciousness of what has been lost; it would be essentially a nostalgia, a longing for return. But thus it would not even suspect what the veritably other is” (1969:33).

Desire on the other hand “tends toward something else entirely, toward the absolutely other (1969:33). What it tends towards is something always unreachable, out of one’s grasp and never quite satisfied or completed. It extends into another world, “a land not of our birth, for a land foreign to every nature, which has not been our fatherland and to which we shall never betake ourselves” (1969:34).

In discussing our confusion over needs and desires Levinas says that it is not ‘desire’ if it has achieved any sort of completion or satisfaction. At least, it is not ‘pure’ desire. He also talks of desires as being pure and deep in the knowledge that they cannot be satisfied. He writes, “Love itself is thus taken to be the satisfaction of a sublime hunger. If this language is possible it is because most of our desires and love too are not pure. The metaphysical desire has another intention; it desires beyond everything that can simply complete it […] the Desired does not fulfill it, but deepens it” (1969:34).

Desire, for Levinas, is not an attitude that one can take up volitionally. Desire and being for the other is not something that one can pursue consciously and deliberately. The self is forced and moved to act 'despite oneself" as it were, against inclination at times. We must go forth almost blindly and generously, expecting no fulfillment or gratitude. Levinas writes, "desire is not the possibility of anticipating the desirable, it does not think it beforehand, it goes toward it aimlessly […] Desire is absolute if […] the Desired is invisible […] To die for the invisible – this is metaphysics" (1969:34-35). No one desires to 'die for the invisible' but people nevertheless find themselves doing this, and it is in this sense that one is moved 'despite oneself' at times. Everything encapsulated in this notion of Desire, particularly the notion of infinity, which I explain briefly in the following section, is, for Levinas, the whole of ethics and the very starting point for a reformation of the totalizing effect of traditional ontology.

2.4 A brief description of 'Totality' and 'Infinity'

As the concept of infinity is important in Levinas' work, it is worth elaborating on it a little at this juncture. This is by no means a full account of the term as attempting such an explanation would require far more detail than this paper allows. What I hope to achieve with the description here is a working understanding of the idea that will help to see the greater purpose of Levinas' project.

The term is best understood in relation to 'totality', which Levinas uses as a

description of everyday life and the frameworks of thinking that guide our everyday lives. Levinas' view is that these frameworks are based on traditional western thought or ontology and the way in which its central aim, the desire for knowledge, has led to the prizing of autonomy over heteronomy. By autonomy Levinas means, "the reduction of the other to the same"(1969:33-34). Levinas' argument is that reducing the other to the same is akin to ignoring the uniqueness of individuals and subjecting our understanding of everything and everyone to the concepts, beliefs and attitudes advocated by traditional western philosophy. Michael Morgan writes, "Western philosophy's primary impulse is imperialistic, to reduce the other to the same, to think everything, to subject the world to the dominion of reason" (2007:89).

The 'other' (as opposite of the 'same') is akin to heteronomy. It refers to everything that is external to the self that does not become subsumed by the self's reasons and frameworks. This essentially means that the Other cannot really be fully explained by thoughts or language. It is something vertiginous and enigmatic, unable to be contained, theorized or completely 'pinned down'. It is phenomenologically ungraspable but we can get some sense of its conceptual meaning. Morgan explains that "heteronomy seems involved in a virtually incoherent task to reach beyond the bounds of thought and consciousness to identify and acknowledge something that may seem to be necessary to make sense of the natural order but that is it beyond thought and awareness" (2007:89). This is also what Morgan refers to as an empirical reading of the goals of western philosophy.

There is another understanding of Levinas' conception of heteronomy and autonomy. According to Morgan, this view is called the 'perspectivalist' view (2007:89). In this view, the 'other' is seen not as "new entities" but as representations of the "unnoticed or repressed perspectives, dimensions, or aspects of the world as we already experience and think about it" (2007:89). As Morgan suggests, Levinas shifts between the empirical and perspectival readings and one supports the other in the sense that "if the 'other' were treated as something prior or determinative or fundamental, this would mean that the repressed perspective was meaningful in a basic and especially significant way, in a way that is foundational and that shapes other ways we relate to people and things" (2007:90).

The infinite cannot be embraced or subsumed by the self. Any conceptual sense we can get of the infinite is, for Levinas, through the encounter with the Other; that is, the encounter of the 'face', which through its command and summoning of responsibility, allows the self to understand that moral consciousness is infinitely prior to everything.

2.5 'Active' and 'passive' love

We have seen thus far that the Levinasian subject is complex and made up of needfulness and joy and activity. It can also be observed that it is persecuted, responsible and passive.

To make sense of these new elements in relation to love, I would suggest we

begin by thinking about how we often use the word 'love'. For example, we might say we love the great outdoors, or reading poetry. What we mean here is that we truly enjoy these things, in a sense they define who we are and mark out our unique personalities. These are similar to the things we 'live from', as Levinas would say.

These 'loves' are also the first encounters we have of the people we are getting to know. Often when you want to get to know someone, you ask him or her about the things they enjoy doing. These 'loves' then reveal traits that we come to love in other people. For example when my husband Rupert asks what I love about him, I sometimes say, it is the fact that he loves reading philosophy or loves walking in the hills or doing charity work. These things in turn display certain characteristics that I love – a sense of adventure, a desire to learn and reflect, kindness and so on. In this sense, my love is very intentional and directed and active – it 'seeks out' specific things or attributes I love.

We also love because we enjoy the process of engaging with our beloved, sharing with them and relating to them. In this sense, my love is also 'active'.

Then there is the love we feel for our children. We see them as vulnerable, completely dependent and reliant on us. We want to protect them and nurture them and offer or equip them with the sorts of things that we believe will bring them happiness and comfort and make them good and caring people. Our children can certainly fall into the category of our 'loves' and the things we 'live from'.

This love for our children is characteristic of another aspect of love that is somewhat different from one that is primarily related to enjoyment. This is not to say that there is no longer any enjoyment. At least in the case of our children, enjoyment certainly does not disappear and in fact can be found in abundance at times. However, our sense of responsibility is an equally important aspect of love for our children.

Related to the sort of love we feel for our child is also the empathy we feel for the poor, the sick, orphans, victims of abuse and war and so on – that is people we perceive as vulnerable, unable to fend for themselves and treated unjustly, often without being able to defend themselves. This is the second form of love that I was alluding to in the paragraph above. We feel horrified by the crimes human beings commit against each other and we may even feel pangs of guilt for those crimes. There would have been times we might have thought with a sense of shame, "Is this cruelty something I too may be capable of?" We may sometimes also feel responsibility for not being able to prevent these harms or for not helping these people. It is clear we do not 'enjoy' these feelings. We may not readily refer to these feelings of empathy and sadness for their state as love and we would probably not refer to the feelings of horror and guilt as stemming from a direct responsibility to those persons or from a cruelty that we are responsible for inflicting in any way. But what we could possibly agree on is that we can feel deeply moved and affected when we encounter or become aware of this - particularly when these victims are vulnerable and unjustly subjected to cruelty. Arguably, what this stems from is a deep feeling

of solidarity and human fellowship; a care for human beings in general and what has often been referred to as love for one's fellow man/woman.

This second sense of love is rather different from the first sense of love. In the first sense, our love is born out of active and free enjoyment of things and people – we are clearly subjects in control. The second sense (both the examples of love for our children and others who are vulnerable but in differing degrees) describes feelings associated with a sense of responsibility, duty, burden, guilt and vulnerability - an awareness of the sort of power one human being can have over another. While we feel this acutely and consciously in relation to victims of cruelty, Levinas suggests that all human beings, each and every Other, are vulnerable. And therefore we are responsible for each and every human being – including the ones who victimize the vulnerable.

The point of distinction I wish to make between these two senses of love as we ordinarily experience them is that in the example of victims of cruelty, it seems we are inflicted with these feelings of burden and duty, we feel a sense of responsibility that arises from the suffering and vulnerability of others. This would be the passive aspect as we do not actively seek the Other experience out.

Levinas' philosophy suggests that the self experiences situations and circumstances that it does not choose or have any control over – it is always and has always been passive, even while it is active. Morgan writes, "the self is passive, obligated, and burdened, prior to being free and active – that, in a

sense, the self is object before it is subject" (2007:156). The notion of passivity is very closely tied to responsibility and ultimately to the way we may formulate a story for love that is plausible for Levinas.

2.6 Passivity, Responsibility and Substitution

The language Levinas uses is crucial in conveying this notion of passivity and explaining how passivity allows for substitution. In *Otherwise than Being,* describing the notion of substitution, he writes, "Vulnerability, exposure to outrage, to wounding, passivity more passive than all patience, passivity of the accusative form, trauma of accusation suffered by a hostage to the point of persecution, implicating the identity of the hostage who substitutes himself for the others; all this is the self, a defecting or defeat of the ego's identity" (1998:15). Morgan says, "the self's being persecuted or subjected or accused is primary, first, "an-archic" insofar as it is prior to all beginnings, and so, prior to freedom and agency. This vocabulary, then, aside from the drama and intensity it wants to suggest, is intended to point to a truly radical passivity; as Levinas says, it is a passivity that is prior to the passive-active distinction altogether" (2007:157).

It is Levinas' contention that human beings are not simply rooted in their biology. They do not act purely on instinct to satisfy their needs. Levinas would probably want to say that transcendence is not an active choice by the self but rather the self is forced or 'moved' into transcendence by something the self did not actively choose. In fact, this transcendence itself is prior to anything,

including biology. It has always been and it is simply that we 'awaken' to it later. The self is substituted in the place of fellow human beings, to respond to their needs and to place the Other in a position of greater importance than the self.

Responsibility to the Other and substitution are the purpose of human existence and the very essence of subjectivity. Morgan writes, "he [Levinas] says that subjectivity – what it means for the self to be a subject – is responsibility; it is substitution; it is a hostage" (2007:158).

But what exactly is substitution? Robert Bernasconi writes, "at the heart of subjectivity is not a 'for itself', but what he calls 'the one-for-the-other'. This is his working definition of substitution, and when Levinas explains substitution as 'the one-for-the-other' he not only posits an alterity at the heart of subjectivity, but also gives it an ethical sense. He is not saying that one should sacrifice oneself. He merely wants to account for its possibility" (2002:235). By "alterity at the heart of subjectivity" Bernasconi is alluding to the idea that at the core of subjectivity is a dual sense of self as individual and unique, and, self as a self that is for the Other. Yet, we must be careful about trying to reduce the term 'substitution' to any sort of synonym or textual definition because Levinas is very clear about resisting any 'thematic analysis' (2002:238). Bernasconi also argues that the notion of substitution is meant to challenge the concept of 'being-for–oneself'. The being-for-oneself prioritizes and makes choices with only the survival of and gains for the self in mind. He points out that 'substitution' has been ignored by traditional western philosophy and his

aim, via the elucidation of its meaning is to show that traditional concepts of the self as simply consciousness or as purely relational to traditional conceptions of knowledge are incorrect.

Bernasconi tries to explain the term as faithfully as possible, encompassing all its aspects and facets. He writes,

“ The ‘for’ of ‘one-for-the-other’ of substitution signals a surplus of responsibility that extends even to those who do not know, including people of the past and the future. Substitution is not the psychological event of pity or compassion, but a putting oneself in the place of the other by taking responsibility for their responsibilities or supporting them so they are able to undertake their responsibilities, not hindering their undertaking, or help them become aware of responsibilities they are not seeing. These varieties do not mean we absolve them of these responsibilities or they suddenly become ours. The responsibilities are still theirs but we take them on or help them or encourage them. Because substitution is my responsibility for everyone else, including their responsibility, the relation is asymmetrical: ‘No one can substitute himself for me, who substitutes myself for all’ (OB 136) […] My responsibility for the responsibility of the Other constitutes that one degree of responsibility more’ (BPW 91), ‘a surplus of responsibility’ (OB 100). Against the traditional notion of responsibility Levinas can claim that I am for the other without having chosen or acted: ‘Without ever having done anything, I have always been under accusation: I am persecuted’ (BPW 89)” (2002:239).

To explain this further, when we come face-to-face with the Other we begin by responding to this encounter. As mentioned in this chapter, the self's freedom is called into question and the self becomes aware of its own vulnerability through the vulnerability of the Other. This is when the self becomes aware that it is responsible for itself to the Other. The self is also responsible to the other who is persecuted via its ability to substitute itself in place of the Other and to prevent the Other's suffering. Additionally, the self is responsible for the persecutor because it substitutes itself for the persecutor as well; it is responsible for the actions of the persecutor because it could have prevented those actions. For example, the people who buy 'blood' or conflict diamonds are responsible for the violent abuse inflicted upon diamond miners in Angola by warlords and insurgents even if they live in Singapore, have never been to Angola and are not the ones actually committing the abuse. This is because they can prevent those actions through a variety of means such as not purchasing such diamonds, campaigning against the sale of these diamonds or the governments that turn a blind eye to these problems and so on. This is the nature of substitution and what Levinas means when he says that we have "always been under accusation" and have always been persecuted.

As Bernasconi seems to suggest the terms persecution and obsession are very closely tied to the idea of substitution. Exploring them further will help clarify our understanding of substitution. One might already be aware that Levinas' lexicon is a very unique one. We cannot take many of the common words he uses to mean what they commonly might mean. Therefore, when we speak of obsession in relation to Levinas' philosophy we are not referring to a

psychological disorder. As I mentioned in this chapter, the encounter with the face of the other calls the self's freedom into question, it is a disruptive force and fragments the self in an experience of self-doubt, instability and rupture of sense of identity and power.

The experience of the 'face' is very much a part of the self's world, yet the 'face' still evades any sort of grasp and is in that sense, mysterious and elusive. The Other demands that the self be responsible to the Other. These demands that have thrown the self into a sense of 'identity-chaos', together with the mysterious, un-graspable power of the Other cause the self to become overwhelmed and fixated upon the Other. Obsession, as used by Levinas, describes a passion for the Other, a 'taking-over' by the Other, that is, the Other begins to occupy our thoughts, we are inundated by the Other in that instance where the 'face' both disrupts and awakens the self, as Levinas says, to "the infinite passion of responsibility' (1981:113) that it has always had.

As Bernasconi argues, the words 'obsession' and 'persecution' are carefully chosen and often paired together because "persecution does not amount to consciousness gone mad; it designates the manner in which the Ego is affected and a defection from consciousness (BPW 81)" (2002:240). Levinas wants to make a distinction from traditional ideas that consciousness is freedom and the ego is something that corresponds with itself. He wants to show that the ego is not always within volitional control and his intention is to emphasize the notions of 'passivity' and 'passion' that are highlighted or played up by the connotations of persecution and obsession (2002:241).

As we have seen so far, understanding Levinasian language is crucial as often he uses words in a way that do not mean what they would conventionally mean. A useful way of understanding these terms and how they fit together to paint a full picture might ironically be, to begin understanding them literally. Levinas does not want us to take these terms for their literal meaning, but he has chosen them because they fit what he wants to convey connotatively or they act as foils. It is important that we then move beyond the literal meaning to grasp their full richness.

Obsession refers to an intense and overwhelming fixation or preoccupation with something. The sorts of things that normally spark off an obsession are those that in some way have strongly affected us or triggered something in us; they overwhelm us or unsettle us. They could be things/people we feel a compulsion to know or grasp, things/people that have moved us or disturbed us, but ultimately, the thing or person we are obsessed about is something we feel passionate about. Levinas uses the word to show how the self becomes displaced, agitated and overcome by the Other and its own sudden awareness of its responsibility. Yet, obsession is a passive state, it is an intense state of feeling overwhelmed and sometimes even overwhelmed to the point of paralysis. This is why 'obsession' is a good description for the state of intense passivity that Levinas wants to depict.

Another example is the term 'persecution'. There are two senses in which the term persecution might normally be used. One is in the description of ill

treatment of people of a different race or culture or belief system. The other meaning refers to the sort of persecution that a criminal undergoes for committing a crime. We understand this sort of persecution to be a necessary component of justice and as something that is good for the functioning of society. I think Levinas uses the term more in the second sense. Persecution here is in reference to the self-inflicted punishing anguish that the self undergoes when it realizes its power can or has been be used for dominance and destruction. It is a kind of self-torment that is born out of the realization of its ultimate responsibility for all the crimes against other people. In *Basic Philosophical Writings*, Levinas writes, "Obsessed with responsibilities, which do not result from decisions taken by a 'freely contemplating' subject, consequently accused of what it never willed or decreed, accused of what it did not do, subjectivity is thrown back on itself-in itself-by a persecuting accusation" (1996:88).

Substitution, as we usually define it, is the act of replacing one thing with another, or if used in relation to persons, one person taking the place of another. This is what happens to the self at the moment of obsession, persecution and accusation – we take the place of the Other. In fact, we have always been in the place of the Other and were always already responsible to and for the Other, before we were accused, before we were obsessed, and even before we were called to responsibility. Morgan writes, "At that urgent moment [when we become aware of the suffering of Others], we are human beings for the first time, so to speak, before we have done a thing" (2007:83). And then adds in his footnotes that although he has described the awareness of

suffering as a temporal event, it is not. The ‘face-to-face’ is always there, although it may be hidden or ignored, and is unavoidable (2007: 83 f75).

To elaborate further, the self assumes its identity in relation to the Other. However, this is not to say my identity is subsumed or destroyed by the Other or that I am the same as the Other. In *Of God Who Comes to Mind* (1998), Levinas writes that we need to see the relationship as, “the Other-in-the-same without thinking the Other as an other Same” (1998: 80). This relationship with the Other refers to the pre-reflective and non-cognitive experience with the Other, one that does not require any consciousness in the traditional philosophical sense. When Levinas says that I have always been in the place of the Other even before I was called to responsibility, he is referring to this relationship which he says is an-archic, meaning, before origin or beginning. It is the first and foremost state, before I have done anything else, before any sense that I have of my self and this state is a state of responsibility to the Other and of being there for the Other; Levinas says “I means Here I am” (OB 1981:114). One’s identity is formed in relation to the Other, but it is not the relationship with the Other per se that is important. It is the pre-reflective or non-intentional aspects of the relationship that are significant but neglected traditionally in philosophy.

Temporality is crucial in the discussion of Levinas, particularly in relation to the active and passive, because Levinas’ fundamental point is that ethics is prior to everything and even prior to freedom and agency. This passivity and responsibility to the Other is the root of subjectivity, it is the origin of the self.

How is this possible? Morgan, drawing from John Drabinski and Theodor de Boer suggests that to make sense of subjectivity as passivity, we need to conceive of the self as passivity, where this passivity is “a transcendental condition”(2007:158). The suggestion is that “the responsible, passive self is the transcendental condition for the possibility of everyday experience [...] in so far as it is meaningful social existence” (2007:159). It is only in the call of the Other, in the response to that call and in the validation of it, that our everyday existence with and amongst others is meaningful. Morgan goes on to say, “everyday human life is meaningful and significant as human (and social) only because of the responsible self. The self as responsibility and substitution is the transcendental condition for meaningful human life, for the ordinary and the everyday as the fabric of social, intersubjective, and interactive human experience” (2007:159).

What this means is that when Levinas says that the self should be seen as passivity and responsibility, as opposed to freedom and agency, he does not mean that there is no active and free person or subject in the world to which responsibility can be ascribed. What he means is, the fact that I am responsible is what gives meaning to who I am; my capacity to respond to others and the necessity of that exists in my relationships with every person even if I am not aware of it. This makes me “responsible for and to the other person “before” I am a person” (2007:160). Responsibility is foremost because it underlies all our everyday encounters and is what gives our freedom and choice any context.

In the following chapter, I draw from some of these arguments made by Levinas to recommend a two-part structure of love. I consider the role that this new structure could play in the conception of subjectivity, and how it may circumvent Frankfurt's problem while still retaining some of the admirable ideas that he advocates.

Chapter 3

The Two-Part Structure of Love

3.1 Outline

So far we have established that Frankfurt's theory of wholeheartedness is not a sufficient condition for a life well lived. We have also observed that he needs a stronger grounding story for the reasons of love, and how they affect his conception of a person or self – as a reflective being that identifies with its motivating attitudes. We have also explored what Levinas might say about the 'reasons for love'. For Levinas, the account of love and the role love plays in the formation of the self, as is offered by traditional theoretic models of western philosophy, overlook some of the hidden but crucial aspects that underlie our behaviour – namely, the pre-reflective aspects. Indeed, we can also conclude that for Levinas, love for the Other has always already existed. And it is this love for the Other, that allows for our true and complete sense of self.

In this chapter I will propose a two-part structure of love that supports a sense of self that avoids the problems Frankfurt faces. I believe that both Frankfurt and Levinas' theories complement this two-part structure. Levinas' theories offer a basis and metaphysical grounding for Frankfurt's pragmatic (non-metaphysical) thoughts. This foundational metaphysical grounding also gives an account of our reasons for love, which apart from eradicating the problem of the (in)sufficiency of wholeheartedness, acts as a unifying thrust, and strengthening force, for Frankfurt's account of our reasons of love.

Love is far from easily defined. When we need to describe it, we will often refer to feelings of affection, warmth, solicitude, kinship or joy; even compromise, duty, or sacrifice. An account of love that intends to be in any way comprehensive should incorporate the full range of these responses and compulsions, and the discussion of the two-part structure of love that follows will do so explicitly.

3.2 Part One: Love as Enjoyment

When we say we love someone, some activity or some ideal, we usually mean that on some level these things give us joy, fulfillment, pleasure and satisfaction – we enjoy and appreciate these things for nourishing our lives.[14] The focus in this following section is on our feelings of love and particularly those tied to enjoyment, and also on the more foundational and sensually configured experience of enjoyment or *jouissance* (as was discussed in the last chapter) as it figures in Levinas' works.

There are a number of circumstances in which we can appreciate that we really love an activity or thing.[15] This can be through sheer joy, but also

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[14] As the language here shows, this description of love is very much derived from my earlier reconstruction of Levinas' ideas.

[15] Most of us will sense that there is some qualitative difference between saying, for example, "I love reading", and "I love my sister". Some may argue that it is easy to say one loves an activity like reading, but that it is not possible really to love it. However, I would argue that truly enjoying an activity can indeed count as love. This can legitimately occur if the activity causes a deep fulfillment and genuine appreciation 'in itself' (ie - we do not engage in the activity for any secondary reason apart from the sheer pleasure of it), and that the activity in question is experienced to a sufficiently profound degree.

through the memory of the lack of that joy, the grief over the loss or missing of it, as well as the feeling of fulfillment of that lack. The first process I've described here (as 'sheer joy') describes a direct enjoyment of the beloved that is not based on any ends other than the beloved itself. However, all these processes are connected to feelings of joy and contentment (either experienced directly, or indirectly through the recollection of feelings of joy) that come from truly loving something.

In his discussion of enjoyment, Levinas talks about similar feelings of lack and fulfillment. He writes, "Enjoyment is made of the memory of its thirst; it is a quenching" (2007:113). But instead of classifying these things we enjoy specifically as love, he refers to them as things we 'live from'. To clarify, the things we 'live from' are not simply any and every thing we enjoy: they are the things we truly and deeply enjoy and which could be said to contribute to our uniqueness. I discussed this notion briefly in chapter two, but to revisit this theme here, I quote from *Totality and Infinity*,

"One does not only exist in one's pain or one's joy; one exists from pains and joys. Enjoyment is precisely this way the act nourishes itself with its own activity. To live from bread is therefore neither to represent bread to oneself nor to act on it nor to act by means of it. To be sure it is necessary to earn one's bread, and it is necessary to nourish oneself in order to earn one's bread; thus the bread I eat is also that with which I earn my bread and my life. But if I eat my bread in order to labor and to live, I live from my labor and from my bread " (2007: 111).

An additional feature in Levinas' theory, as seen in the above passage, is that work, enjoyment, our loves and life itself, intertwine. The joys and loves that I have and work hard to acquire then 'feed' my life, in the sense that they give me the passion for living and striving and carrying on. This idea applies not just to food or physical sustenance, but to all the things we truly and deeply love doing. Examples might be found in observing how people will take a break from stressful lives to go for a walk in the wilderness or paint or bake a cake, and how they then say that these are things that give them respite and rejuvenate them so they can carry on with work and chores.

This important feature of love is also recognized by Frankfurt when he talks about the very act of loving as being important to us. He writes that without it, boredom sets in and boredom is a grave matter: it leads to a 'death' of conscious experience and mental life. 'Boredom' as discussed by Frankfurt refers to a lack of interest and passion for the monotonous activities that we pursue as 'means to ends'. He also talks about how final 'ends' are deeply valuable: they are that which gives us a sense of meaning and purpose, and help to preserve continuity and vitality of our selves (2004:55). So for both Frankfurt and Levinas, the process of loving is an important one.

However, what Frankfurt omits to give due weight to, is the way in which the Other plays an important role in the fulfillment and enjoyment of our own loves. It is because of the Other that the things we enjoy, love and 'live from' have meaning, attain a purpose, take the form and function they do, and

become for us the sorts of loves that possess the sorts of meanings they do. Morgan clarifies this point by explaining that for Levinas the things I 'live from' have meaning for me because of "my needs, my labor, my effort, and my possession and use of it. But the fruit is or can also be a gift, a common benefit, and a shared resource. However it will only be these things and can only be described in these ways […] given the presence to me of the face of the other person, and in view of the Other's needs addressed to me and my responsibility to him to confront those needs and satisfy them…" (2007:106).

So we see that the meaning of our loves is derived not just from our enjoyment of them but also the purpose they serve for others. They take on meaning also in relation to intersubjective needs (that is, the needs of self and Other). As Levinas argues, for anything to be completely what it can be and can mean in the human world, we must be answerable to the Other.

It is in line with this that I feel it is important that we acknowledge that the Other is integral to fully experiencing and pursuing the things we love. In light of that it is important to construe of these loves, or ends as Frankfurt calls them, as tied to the needs of others.

3.3 Part Two: Love for Humankind

In this second category of love, I highlight the compulsions of duty and responsibility that are associated with love. These urges of responsibility towards the Other were discussed in the previous chapter and it was suggested

that the right response to these urges or 'commands' of the Other is one of non-indifference or care. Because these urges are a result of encountering the 'face' of the Other, this category refers particularly to other humans.[16]

Often, joyful feelings and sensations (which were the focus in the last section) are combined with urges to act responsibly and with care towards the Other. However, it can be argued that even in instances where there are no joyful feelings, duty and responsibility to the Other can be considered to be a manifestation of love when one responds to these responsibilities with the right regard for the Other. By 'right regard' in this context, we simply mean 'with appropriate care'.

One kind of love that reflects the sort of love and right regard as described above is parental love. If we look at this widely acknowledged example of 'love for humankind', we can observe both how it is constituted and consider how it might have wider implications for how this kind of love can work more generally.

Some people, and Frankfurt is among them, hold that our love for our children is often the most authentic kind of love. His reason for claiming this is that parental love is not based on any sense of worth of the child and that parents love their children as 'ends': that is, they do not see them as instrumental in any way and care for them unselfishly.

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[16] I have avoided discussing human relationships with, and love for, animals because neither Frankfurt nor Levinas addresses animals in the works I have referred to.

I think what comes into play during the experience of most cases of parental love is a combination of feelings and sensations which are related to enjoyment as well as the right responses to compulsions of responsibility, duty, and so on, that stem from the awareness that our children are vulnerable and dependent entirely upon us for their survival.

Most parents enjoy their children, their children bring them delight, and contentment. To be sure, they also bring sorrow and anxiety, but this too is just as integral to the formation of the self as our loves because the cessation of enjoyment that we experience when a love is unfulfilling is also rooted in love and enjoyment. Without love in the first place, these states of sorrow or anxiety would not exist.

We often also feel that parents have no excuse to turn their backs on their children regardless of how much difficulty they need to endure in loving and raising them. It is a responsibility that is inescapable and upon which their children's lives depend. We expect a certain austere and committed sense of responsibility from parents and we do not tolerate parents' indifference to their children even if their children are disrespectful, ungrateful or ill-disciplined. At these difficult times, many parents will attest to having to fulfill their responsibilities as parents in spite of the hurt, disappointment and anger they may feel towards their children. Parenting is a good example, then, because it alerts us to the fact that we are indeed capable of undermining our own selfish needs, desires, comforts and gains for the sole benefit of an Other.

It is just that often, this especially unselfish relationship is reserved for one's children.

However, upon closer examination, we may find that what we identify as love for our children, may not be all that different from the responses we have when we encounter ageing, disabled, starving and sick people as well as those who are under-privileged and the marginalized in other ways.

Just as parents require strength to continue loving their children through difficulties, so the discomfort we feel when we encounter suffering can be emotionally very disruptive. Often responding to vulnerability or weakness can be something that we find ourselves having to do 'despite' our emotions and desires. A love for humankind often arises from not turning away from, or being indifferent to, this 'command'. Levinas expands on this, describing how it is entirely possible for a subject to fulfill the command of the Other, and to fulfill it from a disturbance within her psychic ecology that proceeds from her feeling that she has violated her duty to another[17] and not only from feelings of gratitude, empathy, or joy, for example. Levinas requires that we be non-indifferent to the Other, but non-indifference can be manifested in compulsion, reflection and the decision to act in response to the command, as much as it can in feelings alone.

[17] The feeling of violating 'her duty' is a primarily cognitive motivation in so far as it is rooted in her sense of what is right and what is owed to another.

Of course, there is an intuitive difference between our care for our children and for those in the world who are suffering. The difference with our own children is that our sense of responsibility to protect and nurture them feels more immediate and necessary, inevitably amplified by biological and sociological factors. We see ourselves as having a very clear role and set of duties as parents and these duties we feel are specially ours to fulfill. My purpose at this stage is not to try and explain why these duties feel more important to us as parents than our duties to the sufferers in the world. All I want to account for is that most of us already know what responsibility and duty mean and require in relation to our children and those near and dear to us, and we know we are capable of responding to that vulnerability and dependence with unselfish care.

If we attune ourselves to the idea of a similar understanding of need, vulnerability and responsibility that comes into play when we respond to the sufferers of the world and to others in general, we would not respond with indifference to the ethical command of the Other. When we respond with care to this call and not ignore it, we are not just being wholehearted but also ethical.

It is non-indifference (whether attached to feelings or not) that makes for the foundations of what I refer to as a love for humankind. In the event that people do not feel happiness or enjoyment but carry on with their caretaking roles out of duty, on my account of love for humankind, we can say that the response from duty could still count as love if it is born from a response of care towards

the needs, vulnerability, and dependence of the Other; essentially, the right regard of others that arises from the acceptance and adherence to the ethical command of the Other. If this sense of duty and responsibility is simply a 'mechanical' and indifferent response which is motivated by one's relationship with one's superiors or other authority figures, the economies of regard that operate in such an environment, or prioritizing of personal gain, then it would not be the sort of love for humankind that I intend.

As I have pointed out in chapter two and earlier in this chapter, the Other makes each thing that we 'live from' possible. The Other is what allows for a meaningful existence by providing us the opportunities to give and receive. So underlying our intuitive and commonly understood feelings of love is a less commonly perceived sense of love as responsibility to all of humankind, which has made my existence, identity and self possible.

Ideally, love would combine both the first and second categories that I have described, with the second category, love for humankind, forming the metaphysical foundations for love and playing a primary role in informing the reasons of love. Without this second category, which takes as its anchor our responsibilities to others and the right regard for others, no distinction can be made between wholehearted goodness and evilness, and a life can be considered 'well lived' even if carried out with horrifying evil. Without the first category, one of the best and most pleasurable aspects of love, its ability to bring joy and fun, may be lost. Equally importantly, we have seen in chapter two how enjoyment contributes to the metaphysical grounding of ethics, and is

part of the story that includes the face-to-face encounter and the origins of our sense of responsibility to the Other. In this same way, to some extent, both categories are necessary to prevent Frankfurtian reasons of love from legitimately finding their meaning in wholehearted evil.

3.4 Addressing Frankfurt's problems, with the two-part structure of love

As we have seen, Frankfurt's theory of wholeheartedness is not a sufficient condition for a life well lived. When one fails to achieve wholeheartedness, he suggests one hold on to one's sense of humor. This as a response to issues of extreme weight, such as how we should live our lives and what counts as a self or subject, is unsatisfactory and unacceptable.

I have suggested that this two-part account, drawn largely from Levinasian metaphysics (yet with Frankfurt in mind throughout) can offer Frankfurt a metaphysical grounding for the reasons for love that will help to strengthen his thesis on the reasons of love.

With the categories of 'love as enjoyment' and love as a 'love for humankind', we can offer Frankfurt the grounding that he does not quite have. For a start, we get a clearer sense of our reasons for love, and these clearer (and clearly empathetic) reasons avoid wholehearted evilness being considered a good way to live. We also understand that our experiences in relation to the encounter with the Other have a significant part to play, in light of the fact that those experiences awaken a primordial and latent responsibility for humankind that

we can choose to respond to by acting with (what is to all intents and purposes) love.

Also, Levinas' account of responsibility is stronger than Frankfurt's. He firstly explains why we may have obligations to people we don't have pre-existing ties with, and furthermore 'cashes out' those obligations not simply as forms of caring for people in generic terms but takes into account their particularity and uniqueness. We may conceivably care about and want to help someone we are not familiar; in the case of an orphan in Sudan, say, all we may know is that she is an orphan, starving, destitute, or diseased. An awareness of the ethical responsibility that we have for the Other can offer us a profound sense of understanding that we are obligated and cannot be apathetic to the wellbeing of the Other, even one who has no tangible connection to our lives. This love for humankind also helps explain why we would commonly hold that a person who wholeheartedly pursues this sort of care for disadvantaged strangers, as compared to someone who wholeheartedly freeloads off others or is evil, is living a meaningful life.

While I am happy to accept that living wholeheartedly is a necessary criterion for a meaningful and well-lived life, I do not however think that it is sufficient. As argued earlier, Frankfurt's silence on some of the other necessary criteria is a very dangerous one because it runs the risk of producing very deficient moral selves. In support, Mark Coeckelbergh writes,

"It is perfectly possible to imagine a case which involves a person not mistaken about what he loves but who nevertheless loves something evil. The committed Nazi may know that he loves killing Jews, that this is the deepest care which constrains his will, but this doesn't make his love good. Frankfurt would accept that if the consequences of his love are evil he shouldn't do what he does, but Frankfurt's account provides no way of judging the Nazi's love itself. He simply takes it for granted as a volitional necessity" (2004:128).

Something is amiss if we do not distinguish between the wholeheartedness of an evil person and a good one, or we effectively sanction the pursuit of evil as a reflection of a well-lived life, so long as that pursuit is done wholeheartedly. It seems fair that we expect an account of love to be able to distinguish between good love and evil 'love' and not classify both, regardless, as wholehearted and therefore a mark of life well-lived. A clearer and more complete idea of where our loves come from will make Frankfurt's thesis a stronger explication of our 'reasons of love' so we do not run into these sorts of problems.

The account that I provide suggests that our love for humankind has a significant role in motivating our reasons of love. This then suggests that were we to act in ways that harm others, even if we were doing so wholeheartedly, we would not be considered to be living a meaningful or well-lived life.

Love for humankind is not just a significant element in motivating our reasons for love but it is a necessary condition for us to be fully human. Non-evil

inclinations *together* with wholeheartedness make up the necessary conditions for a meaningful life.

In reference to Levinas' work, Morgan captures this by elucidating that "Living in the world with other persons […] means what it does to us because of our obligations to serve the needs of others. When we respond to these obligations, individually in episodes of kindness and concern and collectively in practices of justice and generosity, we give our personal and collective temporal and historical lives what meaning they have" (2007: 235). The inclusion of our 'collective' temporal and historical lives is interesting because it highlights the inter-subjective dimension of the issue at hand.

According to Levinas, any interactions that we have with others, even before we speak or act in any way, we have always already been responsible for the Other. We have already been, and in fact have always been, faced with the obligation to care and take responsibility. There was no first moment that this responsibility came into existence, it has always already been there and in that sense it is not something I freely chose. We are born into networks of relationships that we do not actively choose and therefore we have responsibilities that we did not willingly enter into either. This is in contrast to the idea that we are only responsible for persons with whom we willingly enter into a relationship or contractual situation with.

This is why Levinas wants to be clear that there is no actual moment 'outside' of our real world lives that we encounter the Other, and that the encounter is

very much part of our every day enjoyment. The very act of enjoyment separates the self from other entities and it is this separation that allows us to perceive, describe and communicate. It is even something we can be said to 'live from'. All these structures, that we take to be primary, only exist in relation to the Other, and in that sense they are not the first and foremost, they are derivative and secondary to the encounter with the Other. They are available only because of the ethical relationship that we have with the Other – the relationship that is born through engagement with the face and its call to responsibility.

Another concern raised in the first chapter was that Frankfurt's suggestion to hold on to our good humour, should we fail in achieving wholeheartedness with regards to conflicting loves, was unsatisfactory.

To address this, I return to Levinas. For Levinas, our responsibilities are not chosen. In that respect, there are no conflicts. With regards to the 'always already' status of this ethic, our responsibilities are given as a metaphysical fact about the kinds of beings we are. The choice that is available to us at this level, as a reflective choice concerning endorsement, is whether we want to accept and live up to our responsibilities – so reflective endorsement is something that can play a role even at this most profound level.

In chapter one, we said that a Frankfurtian self (or, according to Frankfurt, person) must employ the capacity for reflective endorsement in exercising her will. Therefore, reflective endorsement is an integral characteristic of a

Frankfurtian self. Anyone who has a desire to preserve the most basic structure of his philosophy, would need to ensure that a reflectively endorsing self is possible. Here, with Levinas' concept of a self, we see that a reflective self is also given importance, but that in order to qualify as a fully functional self, one would also have to respond with love to the Other when faced with the Other's command. Such a Levinasian self, then, would only be said to be living life well if her reflective endorsement led her to treat others without indifference. In fact, as we saw in chapter two, such a self would only truly be considered a self if she did so.

This doesn't imply that we don't face conflicts about *how* to execute our responsibilities. And indeed, Levinas concedes that our resources for helping and acting responsibly are limited. Morgan writes describing Levinas' thoughts, "First of all, even in the self's encounter with one particular other, while her responsibility is unlimited, her capacity to act out that responsibility is in fact limited" (2007:452). This is because we do not have infinite resources or the physical ability to sustain continuous and relentless helping or giving, or the ability to reach out to people all over the world. Some of these responsibilities may even conflict with each other, making it necessary to give some of them up for the sake of other responsibilities. We can map this back on to what Frankfurt suggests about conflicting loves – namely that we cannot endorse conflicting loves because loving one may make it impossible to love the other(s).

What Levinas suggests we do in such situations is make comparisons based on the circumstances and needs of the Other, our resources and abilities and our relationship to the others concerned. Morgan writes describing Levinas, "In one sense, because my responsibility to each is unlimited, they are incomparable. But in another sense, I must compare them to determine what I should do for each, given my different relationships to each, the differences in their situations and needs, their relations to one another, and my resources and capacities" (2007:453).

To explain this quote, the situation of encountering an Other that limits my abilities to act out my responsibilities changes neither the fact that I am responsible to this Other, nor that the Other makes demands of me. In this sense there is no comparison involved, I am responsible to all. But I do have to decide which Other to act out my responsibilities to, and in so far as I have to make this choice, I must consider a variety of factors that would allow me to make a justified choice.

This does not change the fact that our responsibilities are always there: we are metaphysically responsible for others before we are even aware of it. But whether we choose to accept that responsibility and thus act in a loving way, or reject it upon becoming aware, is our choice. A self that turns away from her responsibilities, according to Levinas, is a defective self because she is a self in denial about what kind of being she is. So it is only after the issue of dealing with responsibility, that conflicting practical options become relevant.

However, it must be conceded that Levinas himself faces some problems of ambiguity when he discusses this notion of conflicting responsibilities. Morgan writes, "Levinas continues to drop clues and give us some hints, but without any sustained analysis" (2007:455). Nevertheless, with Levinas' account we have more resources that allow us to judge between conflicting circumstances, needs, abilities and resources, to help in choosing which of our responsibilities to fulfill.

As mentioned above, Frankfurt's problem with regards to the (in)sufficiency of wholeheartedness for a life well-lived can be avoided if we can identify a fundamental rationale for insisting that good intentions are also a requirement. This additional rationale must also, of course, be compatible with the other aspects of his reasoning.

Essentially, Frankfurt needs to include a dimension of love that he has not – and a metaphysical dimension would seem to fit the bill. I have taken Levinas' arguments that we are always responsible to the Other as inspiration for a metaphysics that will fit into Frankfurt's account, and found them both satisfactory and useful. I have described this metaphysics in my paper as a love for humankind.

This addition of a metaphysical grounding avoids the possibility of a wholeheartedly evil person being considered as one who lives his or her life well and meaningfully, but it does not completely alter Frankfurt's thesis.

I have suggested that Frankfurt can take as prior to this reflective identification with one's motivating attitudes, a pre-primary foundation – that is, that we are responsible to the Other before anything else. *This* responsibility informs the things we love and the way in which we love them. When we love things or people because they bring us joy and pleasure, we love from enjoyment. When we love because we accept our responsibility for caring for the Other, this love can be identified and described as a 'love for all humankind'.

Though distinct, these two forms are also inextricable. We cannot love from enjoyment without loving humankind, because of the way responsibility for humankind allows us to distinguish our selves, without consciousness of which enjoyment would not be possible. And enjoyment is very much part of the whole story about our responsibility and love for humankind: it is only through the energy of *jouissance*, and that which we 'live from', that we are able to become the self we need to be responsible persons. To be clear, both these aspects, together, make up the complete understanding of love. Frankfurt offers us an incomplete picture, which is a likely explanation as to why his reasons of love run into the problems they do.

We can reflectively endorse our loves in so far as they are loves from enjoyment. We have no autonomous control over responsibility for humankind as this is prior to any conception of autonomy itself, but we can also reflectively endorse this by choosing to accept this responsibility and again in choosing how to execute it. Frankfurt's desire for reflective endorsement as an

important component of the self is still retained in my account of love and subjectivity.

Again considering Levinas, Morgan writes,

"the other's need or suffering, present as the face of the other, is a reason for the self to respond and act, prior to the self's capacity to value it as reason. Alternatively, we might say, the other's existence and condition is the ground of the self's responsibility as a compelling reason before it is an autonomous reason…you matter to me first of all, in virtue of your facing me in our social world, and other things then do and indeed I matter to myself, only because of my obligation and responsibility to you" (2007: 443-445).

There is still a reflective self who reflectively endorses her choices in this account, but 'prior' to this reflective self who reflectively endorses her choices is a self who owes its subjectivity or sense of self to the encounter with the Other. What informs the choices this self makes is then not some mysterious factor, but the fact that its entire self is predicated on this experience with the Other and that the motivational attitudes of the self are informed by this way of being. As such there is no escaping this responsibility and obligation we have to the Other. But that is not to say, that there is no reflective endorsement of the choices and loves we have in our every day lives. To identify with our loves in the most wholehearted way that is possible, we need to endorse the loves that complement the self's predicating structure. I choose to call this predicating structure the 'love for humankind'.

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