

**“The Philosophy of Moving On: The Benefits of Therapeutic Philosophy on Becoming Self
in the Face of Suffering Heartbreak”**

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CONTENTS

contents.....	ii
abstract.....	iii
acknowledgments.....	iv
INRODUCTION	1
I. THERAPY: stoic mourning and moving on	
1.1 introduction: on consolation to the bereaved.....	8
1.2 philosophical therapy.....	11
1.3 you're standing in your own way.....	15
1.4 the present moment.....	19
1.5 the happy life.....	24
1.6 conclusion: the problem of extirpating the passions.....	26
II. ETHICS: practice makes perfect	
2.1 introduction: on moderation.....	31
2.2 on perfection.....	35
2.3 on affection.....	39
2.4 on intuition.....	44
2.5 on relation.....	48
2.6 conclusion: on joy.....	53
III. LOVE: nurturing spiritual growth	
3.1 introduction: there is no healing in isolation.....	56
3.2 on loving.....	60
3.3 the good lover.....	66
3.4 self-love.....	75
3.5 we.....	80
3.6 moving on.....	85
3.7 conclusion: all about love.....	89
CONCLUSION	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY	99

ABSTRACT

This work will consider the therapeutic benefits of philosophy and practical ethics in curing the ills of the soul, and particularly in curing the heartbreak and grief over lost love. I will consider three philosophical models which I take to be medico-therapeutic and candidates for developing a philosophy of moving on: Stoicism, Spinozism, and a contemporary love ethic presented by bell hooks and Erich Fromm. These three models will point to acting in accordance with one's nature as the remedy for suffering, what I will call "becoming oneself," or moving on. While each model has therapeutic methods and tools to contribute to a philosophical therapy of moving on, I will find the love model offers the most ideal methodology, since moving on is encouraged at all times as being a necessary aspect of loving behaviour, or living by a love ethic. In addition, I will find that Stoic therapy, in advising the extirpation of the affections, fails to capitalize on affection's ability to increase our knowledge of ourselves. Conversely, Spinoza and hooks will defend affection in therapeutic philosophy and prove its relevance to self-help.

keywords: Therapeutic Philosophy, Practical Ethics, Love, Desire, Passions, Stoicism, Spinoza, bell hooks, Erich Fromm

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Finally, I write this work in loving memory of bell hooks,

This project would not have existed except for this iconic scholar's commitment to sharing deep and honest perspectives of love with those in need of it (so, everybody). Your words reminded me, in the depths of heartbreak, that my ability to love cannot be taken away, and cannot be taken for granted. Thank you for the love lessons that you taught me, which made the writing of these words possible; here is my new vision of love.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores some of the therapeutic capabilities of philosophy in curing the ills of the soul and focuses specifically on the ill of heartbreak, which often follows the breakup of an intimate relationship and might result in trouble recognizing the self. Relationships have the ability to deeply affect our identities, for better or worse, and at the outset of a relationship it is important that one mindfully reflect on those changes which have taken place and ensure they are freely chosen. Through consideration of what I take to be three practical medico-therapeutic philosophies, Stoicism, Spinozism, and a contemporary love ethic brought forth by bell hooks and Erich Fromm, I will argue that becoming more fully yourself is the best remedy for the pain of heartbreak and that one ought to utilize therapeutic philosophy as “self-help”. In this way I will develop a philosophy of moving on, when moving on is understood as reflecting on your experience of a relationship to understand what aspects of relating to the other empowered you to be yourself and what detracted from your ability to be yourself, and then acting authentically based on those reflections. I will contend that moving on is the healthy response to a breakup because it allows one to turn the pain of loss into the joy of more fully understanding oneself by paying attention to how both the love and the loss affected one’s becoming. Moving on is the action of growing up into self, of becoming more authentic as a result of your relationships, even when they end. As such, breakups, and heartbreak, while they are experiences of suffering, enable one’s continuous growth into oneself and are beneficial to the therapeutic journey. Further, I will suggest that all relations, by bringing one face to face with oneself via recognition of the other, are crucial to the therapeutic journey of moving on and becoming oneself. In this way, moving on is not limited to the end of a relationship, but ought to be practiced both within

and without relationships, since one ought to continuously be becoming oneself even while being intimately involved with or committed to a partner.

Because of the critical role of relationships in developing the self, I will argue that loving is the most effective form of 'self-help' or therapeutic philosophy and that living by a love ethic, like the one championed by bell hooks, is pivotal to healthy moving on. Since loving in this paradigm is an action which insists on continuously nurturing one's own growth and that of the other, it is fundamental to be loving in order to move on and become more fully oneself. If we mindfully remember past relationships, keeping in mind that we ought to remain loving both to ourselves and to the other, we can turn our heartbreak over the loss of the relationship into the joy of understanding ourselves. We ought to ask what about the relationship increased our power to be ourselves, and what diminished it, and hold on to the former while letting go of the latter. Cultivating this ability to let go, which Fromm points out is an essential aspect of motherly love, (the type of loving many perceive as the closest to unconditional) is a requirement of moving on.

Therapies which reject emotions, though they may still rely on relation, fail to capitalize on affection's ability to move us, and to teach us something about who we are and how we feel. It is when one is most affected that one learns who one is, and both love and heartbreak are deeply affective experiences because they insist we recognize and relate to another being. The trick is to acknowledge and act on affection using one's tools of reason and intuition, and in so doing turn the pain of heartbreak to the joy of flourishing. We have to reflect on why the relationship ended, what was good and bad in it, and how we can continue to be loving, in order to heal from the loss. Moving on and become more oneself in the face of grief is critical to mental health, since sadness of spirit is connected to feeling alienated from oneself and acting in ways which do not empower one's becoming but are rather at odds with one's essence. In the

wake of a breakup, when one's identity might come into question because it was involved in a *we* and is now only an *I*, it is more crucial than ever to pay attention to who *I* am, and how authentic *I* want to be.

The first chapter of this work will develop the idea of a medico-therapeutic philosophy by exploring Hellenist ethics and especially Stoicism. In *Therapy of Desire*, Martha Nussbaum points out the medical conception of philosophy by Hellenist thinkers, who view their philosophy as a practical ethic and warn that taking it on requires a commitment to a lifestyle, a way of being and a daily practice. Each of the Hellenist schools prescribe their own methods to attain *ataraxia*, freedom from disturbance in the soul. Nussbaum argues that Stoicism, by empowering the patient to become her own doctor, is the most therapeutic of the three major Hellenist traditions. She will point out that Stoic therapy is primarily focused on shaping the self and thus requires self-reflection and self-control. In this therapeutic philosophical model, the only thing standing between you and the cure is yourself. The Stoic cure for the ills of the soul, including grief and heartbreak, is to become virtuous by living in accordance with nature. That includes living in accordance with your own nature. If we can learn to control our judgements, which lead to our emotions, desires, and actions, and keep them in line with our nature, we will be free, and happy. If we let do not reflect on our judgements, then our emotions will control us, and we will suffer.

Seneca advises us to live mindfully in the present, because it is only our actions and attitudes which we can control, and not that which has already happened or that which will come to be. Focusing needlessly on things we cannot control leads to anxiety and sadness. We are better off focusing on what we can control, that is, our selves. Yet, Seneca will suggest that only the Stoic wiseman, one who has already mastered the self completely, can successfully control

the affections. The rest of us ought to avoid making judgements completely. And yet this seems to cause a problem for becoming virtuous. How can one act in accordance with their nature without any judgements or affections to tell them what that nature is? Seneca himself admits he is not a perfect Stoic, and that lack of feeling is not the same as virtue. Despite the Stoic insistence on self-sufficiency, he points out the importance of relationships, which are healing in their own way, since they allow us to belong to the world, and we are naturally social beings. There is perhaps, even in a philosophy which hails extirpation of the passions and control of the self as the ultimate remedies for suffering, a defense of affection for and relation to others. The Stoic need not isolate herself from the world, but she must be able to let go of her external attachments and when the mourning time comes, return her loved one to the world, and move on. The type of moving on championed by Stoicism in some ways aligns with the loving behaviour I will argue is the ideal form of moving on, because both practices emphasize self-development in the face of grief. Only, it is difficult for me to imagine how the Stoic will achieve the self-control of the wiseman while fearing the effects of forming judgements and creating attachments, when the self is informed by exactly these judgements and attachments.

In the next chapter I will explore Spinozist metaphysics and the argument that ethical behaviour is acting in one's essence (that natural and eternal essence which takes part in perfection by virtue of being born of and belonging to the perfect substance that is God or nature). For Spinoza, the intuitive knowledge of one's essence is increased by moderation of the affections, and we will find him defending the emotions as critical to self-development in a way which sets his therapy apart from the Stoics. Spinoza will argue that joy is the movement towards perfection, and that this movement requires acting increasingly in one's nature. Happiness then, and the remedy to the ills of the soul, lies in practicing ethical behaviour, when

virtue is being yourself and acting in your essence. Spinoza will repeatedly call this a *passage*, in a text which is fundamentally interested in motion. In many ways, Spinozism is similar to Stoicism, only Spinoza suggests that we ought to *moderate* rather than *extirpate* our passions, and in doing so turn them to action. Whereas Seneca suggests only the wiseman is capable of safely moderating the affections, Spinoza thinks we all can and should be moderating our affections, and using them, in conjunction with reason, to develop an intuitive knowledge of who we are and how to act authentically in our essence.

This defense of affection as fundamental in nearing perfection relies on the idea that moderating one's affections is what allows one to transition from passion to *action*. One must act in order to be cured of heartbreak and suffering, since it is being passive to affection rather than using it to bolster one's becoming self which causes suffering in the first place. For Spinoza, human freedom and joy lie only in this: affirming one's mode of substance by acting as one's nature requires. We must become the cause of our own ideas and our own affections. Sadness and suffering are not eradicated in Spinozist therapy, but reflected on until they become *one's own*, and speak to one's nature. For Spinoza, all relations, even ones that involve their fair share of suffering, help us understand ourselves because they involve relating to another modification of substance. Since every mode of substance is a body made up of ever smaller bodies, interaction between bodies creates shifts and changes within while the whole remains intact. Spinoza will argue that relating to others, loving others, gives us the opportunity to deepen our understanding of ourselves by increasing our knowledge of god and nature and expanding into the boundaries of the self. This gives us room to explore the self more deeply. In this way, Spinozist therapy is always concerned with moving on while remaining and becoming oneself. Adopting a Spinozist view of substance as monistic and of ourselves as belonging to perfection

and always being on the journey to achieving it is helpful for constructing a practical philosophy of moving on. Even if relationships end, even if one experiences the suffering of heartbreak, one ought to remember that every relation returns one to oneself in a different way. Spinoza understands any being by both its motion and its rest, and we might understand the process of moving on in much the same way. It is not always a straightforward journey, but every step, and even the rest periods, create more opportunities for becoming.

Following these considerations of Stoicism and Spinoza, I will argue that the best way to move on from a broken heart is to be loving, because loving oneself, others, and the world at large encourages the spiritual growth which is becoming oneself. I will defend the emotions as extremely beneficial to a therapeutic philosophy of moving on, and argue that not only should we not extirpate the passions, but we ought to be constantly loving, and live by an ethical imperative of loving. Living by a contemporary love ethic, like that described by bell hooks and Erich Fromm, is a requirement for healthy moving on, since one cannot experience the joy of becoming oneself without learning the love and acceptance required for self-esteem. For these philosophers, genuine loving is an *activity* and a practice, like the therapy espoused by Stoicism, and never a sad passion which controls rather than frees the lover. Being loving requires one actively recognize, respect, and communicate with oneself and others, while acknowledging that there is a certain degree of unknown between oneself and others, a negative which allows one to reach out with love, to give the other space to unfold into herself while one unfolds into oneself. In the vein of Robert Nozick's "Love's Bond," I will argue that it takes two Is to make a successful we, so striving to become yourself is a necessary aspect of being in a relationship. To move on from the loss of a love relationship, one must double down on loving behaviour. There is no healing from heartbreak without love because love is the motivator for letting go, for

wanting the other to flourish into herself even if it is without you. One must also be able to let go of previous iterations of oneself, to appreciate the opportunity to become more oneself instead of remaining attached to old habits which were out of character. Without love for oneself, there is no spiritual growth. Most of all, there is no healing in isolation, and it is the love we give and receive which will allow us to form a continuous understanding of who we are by way of relating to others. Love, for Spinoza, is joy accompanied by the idea of someone else, and joy is becoming yourself. If we approach the experience of moving on from the loss of an intimate relationship with an attitude of loving, then moving on too will be an experience of joy, something that increases rather than diminishes our perfection.

Healthy moving on cannot be accomplished without love. It is both the loving act of unfolding into oneself, and of letting the other go to unfold into herself. Moving on is choosing to stop suffering passion and turning it into the joyous action of loving, and of being oneself. A contemporary love ethic defends the emotions, claiming that they do not make us suffer but are what will allow us to overcome suffering by allowing us to remain loving even in the face of heartbreak. The best remedy for a broken heart is not extirpating the emotions and avoiding the judgements which lead to external attachment; it is our affections and the desires which stem from them teach us about who we are. It is up to us to turn passion into action by reflecting on our affections to discover who we are. It is up to us to act authentically in our nature and thus move towards perfection. This is the movement I refer to when I discuss the healing power of moving on; the movement towards being loving, the movement towards oneself. One must be loving in order to become oneself. One must be loving to move on, and to let others move on. In this way, practising loving is indeed therapeutic, a cure for the ills of the soul and especially heartbreak. The end of a relationship should never mean the end of love.

I.

THERAPY

stoic mourning and moving on

introduction: on consolation to the bereaved

I begin this work by considering the medical nature of Hellenist ethics to better understand how philosophy can have a practical and therapeutic effect on an individual. The Hellenists used philosophy towards the ultimate goal of curing the soul of pain. Reason, they argued, was the best way to free oneself from pain, to experience *ataraxia*, because reason can help you understand your place in the scheme of nature. Beginning this consideration of philosophical therapies of moving on with Stoicism, it becomes clear how philosophical study, if practically applied, has certain abilities to heal the ill of the soul called heartbreak. While both Epicureanism and Skepticism rely on reason as a therapeutic cure, I will focus on Stoicism because of its explicit orientation towards “self-help”. In what I will call Stoic therapy, the teacher instructs the students how to cure themselves, so that the teacher is no longer needed.¹ Its therapeutic methods, including vigilant self-reflection, are designed to increase the self-control of the Stoic pupil so that she might continuously provide her own cure for the suffering encountered in daily life. Right reason will guide her to act in accordance with virtue, which, in the Stoic view, is the same as acting in accordance with nature.² This means accepting the world for what it is and not working to change things which are out of one’s own control. In the Stoic view, the only thing one can control is oneself, so one is always completely free to act in accordance with nature. The good life for the Stoic is nothing more than this: acting virtuously, in accordance with nature, which means acting in accordance with your own nature. This is why Stoicism might be seen as

¹ Nussbaum, Martha. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, 317.

² Nicholas White, Introduction to *The Handbook by Epictetus*, (New York: Hackett, 1983) 8.

a philosophy of self-development. In Stoicism, as in the other philosophies we will look at in chapters II and III, the good life is a by-product of acting authentically as yourself. This is the cure for the ills of the soul, including the heartbreak which comes from grief over lost love. We will see that philosophical therapies of moving on aim at aiding the individual in becoming more fully herself.

Despite the insistence on external attachments being the cause of grief, Stoicism is not suggesting one rid oneself of these attachments. Seneca espouses the healing affects of friendship, hinting that adopting a loving attitude to others might actually be a powerful way to express a commitment to the interconnectedness of nature. But the objects of attachment must be seen for what they are, bits of nature which do not belong to us. Stoic therapy addresses the issue of moving on from heartbreak head on. We can move on more easily from the grief of loss, Stoic thinkers suggest, if we remember that the objects of our affection are just like us; one of the infinite connections making up the whole of nature. We are all temporal and finite. In confronting the loss of a loved one, Epictetus asks us to think about how we might feel if we broke our favourite jug.³ Disappointed, but we'd quickly move on. Then he reminds us that the jug, like our loved ones, is just another natural thing. It is not in our control, so it is not ours to keep. Later, when we look at a contemporary love ethic as therapeutic, Luce Irigaray will point out that it is indeed loving to remember that the other is just that; other, a you who will never be mine. The letting go which characterizes Stoic mourning will be a key component of the moving on made possible by loving. Understanding that the other acts in accordance with nature just as we do, we must be willing to let them go when it is the will of nature, in order to move on from our grief. While the Stoics do not admonish human beings for feeling grief, they ask us to

³ Epictetus, 12.

consider, is this grief helpful? Is it aiding me in becoming virtuous, in acting in accordance with my essence? “Humour him for a while,” says Seneca of the grieving man. “But those who have assumed an indulgence in grief should be rebuked forthwith, and should learn that there are certain follies even in tears.”⁴ It is foolish to remain steeped in grief over the loss of a loved one, even though it is the greatest loss possible. The loss was inevitable, so it would make more sense to “rejoice because you had possessed him than to mourn because you had lost him.”⁵

Ultimately, though it offers therapeutic methods which might provide ataraxia for the soul, Stoicism encounters a problem in its insistence on extirpation of the passions as a cure. For one to effectively move on in a therapeutic way, in a way which enables one to be more authentically oneself than previously possible, one must be faced with the emotions and desires which follow the impact of a passion. The tools of Stoic therapy are all tools to get to know yourself better so that you might be your best self and act in accordance with your nature. If this is the epitome of virtue for the Stoics, to be your best self, then withholding the opportunity to learn from one’s passions by acknowledging and reflecting on them is counter to Stoic ethics. The Stoic response to challenge is always to let it make you stronger. The same with grief, and the same with heartbreak. While showing emotion does not denote a lack of virtue, allowing those emotions to waylay you on the path to becoming your best self does. The virtuous thing to do in the face of heartbreak and loss is to move on, to be happy you had the relationship, and to focus on the present moment. The daily practice of Stoicism does not allow much time for mourning, because heartbreak is a sign that action is required. If we remain heartbroken, we are doing it to ourselves.

⁴ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic*, translated by Robert Mott Gummere (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2018) letter XCIX, 354.

⁵ Seneca, letter XICX, 354-355.

philosophical therapy

Western philosophy has been conceived of as practical and therapeutic since Plato and continues to be applied therapeutically, as in the contemporary movement of philosophical counselling.⁶ Plato's Socrates compares *the good* to the sun, since what is good and curative for our souls, what allows all parts of ourselves to exist in harmony, is that which *enlightens* us and *regenerates* us.⁷ Like the sun, the good allows us to see a bit clearer. So, while Socrates calls knowledge and truth *goodlike*, the real good "is not only the cause of their becoming known, but the cause that knowledge itself exists and of the state of knowledge."⁸ The good is not only one's being able to see and understand things with clarity, but the arrival to clarity, the opening of one's eyes to the light, and the continued desire for learning. This is why philosophy is particularly useful in pursuing the good life. Philosophy opens our eyes; it clears the lens through which we encounter the world. It is this focus on education which underlies the modern "philosophical counselling" movement, whose first practice was opened in 1981 in Germany by Gerd B. Achenbach.⁹ Achenbach, and other philosophical counsellors, working from the assumption that philosophical knowledge can be therapeutic, apply philosophy practically to resolve emotional and behavioural problems for their patients or "visitors." "There is a strong argument," writes Tim Lebon, "that emotional problems often have a philosophical rather than physiological or psychological root," in which case a philosophical dialogue might be better able to provide a therapeutic effect.¹⁰ Lebon gives the example of a counsellor who helped a grieving

⁶ Lebon, Tim. "Philosophical Counselling" (1999), 1.

⁷ Plato, *Great Dialogues of Plato: The Republic*, (New York: Mentor Books, 1956), 508E-510A "The sun provides not only the power of being seen for things seen but, as I think you will agree, also their generation and growth and nurture."

⁸ Plato, 508E-510A.

⁹ Lebon, 1.

¹⁰ Lebon, 2.

widower by introducing him to Spinoza's wiseman, who focuses on life over death.¹¹ In creating a philosophical dialogue about death a certain peace of mind takes hold, a peace of mind Spinoza attributes to one who practices his brand of practical ethics, which calls for *the knowledge of God leading to intuition* above all else.¹² What Socrates and the practitioners of philosophical counselling have in common is a perception of philosophy and philosophizing as medical and therapeutic. Knowledge, and the seeking of knowledge, leads our soul to *the good*, to harmony, flourishing and joy. Freed from her cave, the prisoner of ignorance stumbles out into the sun, and is dazzled by it. But if she can overcome the fear and pain of realizing her ignorant state, the sun's light will begin to clear things up for her, to strengthen her reason so that she can begin to understand "the cause of all things," to see things as they are.¹³

In *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Martha Nussbaum explores the "analogy between philosophy and medicine" championed in Hellenistic Ethics by Epicureanism, Skepticism, and, she suggests, perhaps best of all by Stoicism.¹⁴ In the following chapters I will present the therapeutic effects of living by a practical ethic by exploring Stoic therapy, Spinozist ethics, and a contemporary ethic of *loving*. Each of these practical philosophies is aimed at ameliorating the pains of the soul and sees philosophy as curative. As such, we can call this type of philosophy medical or *therapeutic*. Nussbaum suggests that the medical conception of philosophy demonstrated by the Hellenists takes from Plato while

¹¹ Lebon, 3. Lebon is referencing Israeli Philosopher, Shlomit Schuster, 1997. See Shlomit Schuster, "In Times of War and Terror: Philosophical counselling as an Alternative to Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" for her 2002 applications of philosophical counselling for army veterans.

¹² Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethics*, translated by Edward Curley (New York: Penguin Books, 1996) II. P49. Cor.

¹³ Plato, 514A-517B.

¹⁴ Nussbaum, 14.

insisting on its own methods, including an intrinsic commitment to action.¹⁵ A medico-ethical philosophy cannot be separated from one's immersion in the world, as Nussbaum writes:

We do not inquire into the human good by standing on the rim of heaven; and if we did, we would not find the right thing. Human ways of life, and the hopes, pleasures, and pains that are a part of these, cannot be left out of the inquiry without making it pointless and incoherent. We do not in fact look 'out there' for ethical truth; it is in and of our human lives.¹⁶

As a result, Hellenist ethics “plunges into the world” and into the deepest beliefs and desires of its patients in order to cure the ills of the soul.¹⁷ For Nussbaum, the medico-therapeutic ethics of the Hellenist thinkers are best thought of as a *therapy of desire*, and include the characteristics of being goal-oriented, since the student should be healthier as a result of the philosophical practice, and responsive to the particular student's situation (and, therefore, that student's particular desires.)¹⁸

Of the three major Hellenistic schools, Nussbaum believes Stoicism is probably the best expression of a medical philosophy. While all three schools are medical in their commitment to healing patients by rational argument, they are distinct in their methods. The Hellenistic goal, *ataraxia* in the soul, or freedom from disturbances and anxieties, can be achieved in various ways. Nussbaum points out that for the Epicureans, therapeutic philosophy is dogmatic; its practices include memorization and confession.¹⁹ Epicureanism seeks to rid one of *false beliefs* (particularly the belief in the value of externals) and in doing so rid one of the worldly attachments which are the cause of pain. The Skeptics, on the other hand, present their therapy as an *ability* or *dunamis*. Skeptic therapy involves learning a particular set of skills rather than a

¹⁵ Nussbaum, 33.

¹⁶ Nussbaum, 22.

¹⁷ Nussbaum, 36.

¹⁸ Nussbaum, 46.

¹⁹ Nussbaum, 129.

particular belief system (since, belief, for the Skeptic, is the disease to be cured in therapy.)²⁰ The diversity of therapeutic methods in Hellenistic ethics points to an important aspect of practical philosophy: it is only practical if it works. It is possible that even with the same goal of health or mental health at the finish line, different philosophical therapeutic methods must be applied for different students, the same way patients of psychotherapy require different forms of treatment or different styles of therapy. Even as she considers Stoic therapy to be the clearest representation of a medical ethic, Nussbaum points out that one might agree with the values of Stoicism and yet feel compelled to reject the notion that happiness and *ataraxia* require rejecting emotional attachment.²¹ Since philosophical therapy is applied to cure a particular person there is a degree of relativism inherent in the therapeutic experience. Logic and reason, as the tools of philosophy, will be required, but beyond that, patient and doctor, student and teacher, ought to be attentive to what methodologies work for the individual.

It is this aspect of Stoicism which makes it, for Nussbaum, the best candidate for a medical philosophy and a therapy of desire: the Stoic student is meant to become her own doctor.²² While the Epicurean student appeals to the wisdom of the elders, and the Skeptic student goes along with the flow of nature, the Stoic develops her reason to the point of being absolutely in control of her thoughts and her self. Indeed, Nussbaum agrees with Michel Foucault in calling Stoicism “a set of techniques for the formation and shaping of the self.”²³ As such, the Stoic method involves vigilant self-reflection. If the Stoic is not living in accordance with her reason, she does herself a disservice. She cannot simply live by her habits; she must seek her truth, and once she finds it, live by it. When we talk about Stoicism, we relate it to

²⁰ Nussbaum, 285.

²¹ Nussbaum, 358.

²² Nussbaum, 317.

²³ Nussbaum, 353.

strength and steadfastness; we find these roots in Stoic therapy, where reason is held up above all else, and praise is given to the person who is fully in control of herself. Happiness, for the Stoic, is virtue, and the cultivation of virtue; “virtue, happiness, and tranquility are not separate or distinct experiences but co-emergent states.”²⁴ Being healed by Stoic therapy requires a daily ethical practice. As we will see, this is true of all the philosophical therapies considered here, which rely on practical ethics as a healing force.

you’re standing in your own way

As Nussbaum points out, one of the major differences between Stoic therapy and the other Hellenistic schools is the insistence that one become capable of doctoring oneself. This is a philosophy which teaches you to fish instead of feeding you one, in the hopes you will become self-sustaining and self-sufficient, with the tools of the good life at your disposal. Like the Skeptic, the Stoic *goes with the flow* of Nature. Unlike the Skeptic, however, who in suspending judgement is relieved of the pressure to choose, Stoicism requires exerting a great deal of control, not over Nature herself (which is obviously outside of one’s control), but over the self, in order to live in accordance with Nature. The Stoic still has to choose, but this is where her very freedom lies, in the choice to affirm or deny nature. But the self-sufficiency which is central to Stoic therapy is a two-sided coin; on the one hand, it means you can cure yourself, that the tools of your health and happiness lie within you, the way the boxer’s tools are always in her own hands.²⁵ On the other hand, when you fail at Stoic therapy you have no one to blame but yourself. Unhappy? You are your own stumbling block. You are standing in your own way.

²⁴ Sharon Lebell, *The Art of Living: The Classical Manual on Virtue, Happiness, and Effectiveness*, (New York: HarperOne, 1995) 82.

²⁵ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, translated by Gregory Hays, (New York: The Modern Library, 2003) book 12.9, 163.

If Stoicism is meant to be a therapeutic and curative philosophy of life, what do the Stoic thinkers take to be the disease? Seneca calls it a “perversion of judgement,” a confusion of desire which makes us overestimate the value of external things.²⁶ Our judgements about things have power, since it is these judgements which inform our emotional responses to things. If I judge something to be good, its loss might harm me. If I judge something to be bad, its presence might offend me. Therefore, in Stoic thought all harm is self-harm, as Epictetus writes in *The Handbook*:

What upsets people is not things themselves but their judgements about the things....so when we are thwarted or upset or distressed, let us never blame someone else but rather ourselves, that is, our own judgements.²⁷

Famously, the Stoics teach us that happiness is won when we know the difference between what we can and cannot control. Basically, one cannot control anything but oneself, that is, one’s judgements about things. But this is a boon to the Stoic who can learn to control her judgements, since it is her judgements which inform her opinions, desires, emotions, and *actions*. As John Sellars puts it in *Lessons in Stoicism*, “the central [Stoic] claim is simply this: our emotions are the product of judgements we make. Consequently, we are in complete control of our emotions and responsible for them.”²⁸ We are accountable, not only for our actions, but for our reactions. Any emotional pain one experiences is self-inflicted, so the cure to this pain is in learning to control our judgements; the one thing we *can* control is really the only thing which matters. Other people’s actions, and even the outcomes of one’s own actions, remain totally outside of one’s control, so it doesn’t really make sense to be upset about them. Unless we make judgements about them, these external events have no power over us. It is simply nature taking

²⁶ Seneca, letter LXXV, 204.

²⁷ Epictetus, V, 13.

²⁸ John Sellars, *Lessons in Stoicism*, (Allen Lane: Penguin, 2019) 23.

its course, and once we learn self-control and self-sufficiency, we can teach ourselves to be happy with all the events of nature, to desire things as they are, not how we want them to be. “If we can do that,” Sellars writes, “if we can become masters of our own judgements-then we’ll be in complete control of our lives,” despite our apparent lack of control over externality.²⁹ Until one gains the skills of self-control and self-mastery which will give her the self-sufficiency for happiness, its best not to form any judgements at all. “It is we who generate judgements-inscribing them on ourselves,” writes Marcus Aurelias in the *Meditations*, “and we don’t even have to. We could leave the page blank-and if a mark falls through, erase it instantly.”³⁰

Since the only thing one can control is oneself, we ought to all strive to be the best we can be-our own best self, and no one else’s. The secret to curing the ills of the soul, Epictetus tells us, is to continuously move forward, to heal yourself by reflecting on the judgements and desires which are causing you turmoil.³¹ The only thing which can move you towards the flourishing life is *you*, he writes. So don’t wait! In her interpretation of Epictetus, Sharon Lebell writes that we ought to “practice self-sufficiency. Don’t remain a dependant, malleable patient. Become you own soul’s doctor.”³² The ability to self-doctor (which Nussbaum takes to be a critical therapeutic insight of Stoicism) relies on the idea that happiness, also called *flourishing* or *eudaimonia*, comes from within, and not from without. “The wise man is self-sufficient,” Seneca tells us.³³ To become this ideal Stoic wiseman, one must perfect one’s reason and learn to make better judgements. When her judgements are sound and based on an understanding of the

²⁹ Sellars, 16.

³⁰ Aurelias, book 11.16, 152.

³¹ Lebell, 83: “When the soul cries out, it is a sign that we have arrived at a necessary, mature stage of self-reflection. The secret is not to get stuck there dithering or wringing your hands, but to move forward by resolving to *heal yourself*. Philosophy asks us to move into courage. Its remedy is the unblinking excavation of the faulty and specious premises on which we base our lives and our personal identity.”

³² Lebell, 107.

³³ Seneca, letter IX, 17.

parts of Nature and also the whole, the Stoic will become self-sufficient for happiness. She will accept what she cannot control, and it will cease to have power over her. She will not be overwhelmed by passions. Freedom is this, Seneca tells us, “possessing supreme power over oneself.”³⁴ This does not mean that one will be void of emotional responses. In fact, Seneca points out, desire is much better when you are its master and not its slave.³⁵ “The Supreme Good calls for no practical aids from outside,” he writes. “It is developed at home, and arises entirely within itself.”³⁶ The Supreme Good in Stoicism is the happiness and flourishing which come from a controlled, reflective, and virtuous life. We cannot seek our happiness from outside, Stoic wisdom teaches us. If we are dependant on others for our happiness, we will never achieve it.

And yet, Seneca places high value on loving friendships, noting in them the same curative ability as philosophy.³⁷ Seneca will point out that self-sufficiency and external attachments or love for others are not mutually exclusive. Like Aristotle, the Stoics believe that people are social animals by nature, and since happiness comes from living in accordance with nature, it is inevitable that people crave friendships, relationships, and love. “If friendship is to be sought for its own sake, he may seek it who is self sufficient,” Seneca writes, and indeed anything which is natural is to be sought for its own sake in Stoic therapy, since being virtuous is living in accordance with nature, and virtue is equal to joy.³⁸ But the line between having friends and being dependant on relationships for happiness is a fine one. Often when one is trying to move on from a love relationship which has ended, we remind them that *you have to be happy on your own before you can be happy with somebody else*. What we mean is that you ought to love

³⁴ Seneca, letter LLXV, 205.

³⁵ Seneca, letter CXVI, 424.

³⁶ Seneca, letter IX, 18.

³⁷ Seneca, letter LXXVII, 217: “Nothing, my excellent Lucilius, refreshes and aids a sick man so much as the affection of his friends.”

³⁸ Seneca, letter IX, 17.

others and enjoy their company, but not depend on them for your happiness, which, at the end of the day, is no one's responsibility but your own. This is the sentiment which seems to underly Seneca's account of friendship, and he clarifies this for his interlocuter and friend, Lucilius, in

The Letters:

'The wise man is self-sufficient.' This phrase, my dear Lucilius, is incorrectly explained by many; for they withdraw the wise man from the world, and force him to dwell within his own skin. But we must mark with care what this sentence signifies and how far it applies; the wise man is sufficient unto himself for a happy existence, but not for mere existence. For he needs many helps towards mere existence; but for a happy existence he needs only a sound and upright soul.³⁹

While the Stoic is self-sufficient for happiness, for a happy existence, *mere existence* does require relationships with others. The everyday, mundanity of life is made better by following our natural inclination to form bonds with other people. Along with therapeutic philosophy, what cured Seneca of his ails was the affection of his friends. In Stoic therapy happiness comes from within, but we are constantly reminded about our belonging to the whole, and about how we ought to relate to others: love them, live with them, and yet be self-sufficient for your own happiness. Being with others cannot harm you when you are in control of yourself.⁴⁰ Heartbreak is a suffering we bring on ourselves; rather than mourning the loss of a beloved friend, be happy to have known them.

the present moment

Because Stoic therapy is concerned with self-control, its techniques and methodologies aim at increasing the mastery of the self and the ability to act as one's nature requires. Reaching the Stoic ideal, then, is a twofold challenge: it requires a knowledge of nature, and the practical

³⁹ Seneca, letter IX, 17.

⁴⁰ Epictetus, XXX, 21: "Another person will do you no harm unless you wish it; you will be harmed at just that time at which you take yourself to be harmed."

application of that knowledge, by *acting in your nature*. Stoicism is a *techne*, an art of living, which requires a combination of reason and action, what Seneca will call *right reason* (the lovechild of reason and virtue). Mastering the Stoic *techne* (like mastering any art) takes practice, “for nature does not bestow virtue; it is an art to become good.”⁴¹ In the previous section we encountered the therapeutic technique of distinguishing between what one can control and what one cannot control. To bolster this ability, Stoic therapy offers mindfulness techniques and tips to remind the student what belongs to them, and what does not. As it turns out, not much belongs to the Stoic, but this: *the present moment*.

In his letters to Lucilius, Seneca often reminds his friend that anxiety arises from focusing on the past and the future, two things which are certainly out of one’s control. If Lucilius wants not to be anxious, he ought to focus on the present. Fear and hope regarding future events, as well as grief over past events, are merely excuses to remain “sick,” Seneca explains: “past and future are both absent; we feel neither of them. But there can be no pain except as a result of what you feel.”⁴² Holding on to the past and anticipating the future are both miscalculations of judgement, and the mindful Stoic lives firmly rooted in the present. She must rid herself both of grief over past suffering and anticipation of future suffering. The past is gone, and the future is not happening yet. Unlike her present actions and attitudes, which are completely within her control (since she is in control of her own judgements), the Stoic has no bearing on what has happened and what will happen.⁴³ It is unreasonable, then, to focus on the future or past, and a good Stoic always acts on reason. Indeed, Seneca writes, “the happy life depends upon this and this alone: our attainment of perfect reason.”⁴⁴ When we focus mindfully

⁴¹ Seneca, letter XC, 298.

⁴² Seneca, letter LXXIV, 202.

⁴³ Seneca, letter LXXVII, 220.

⁴⁴ Seneca, letter XCII, 304.

on the present, we rid ourselves of unwarranted anxiety and give ourselves the space and tranquility we need to perfect our reason, the quietude necessary for productive self-reflection. It is only in this way that we can teach ourselves to make better judgements. When we are not present or focused, it becomes impossible to cultivate the virtue which will lead us to a happy life.

But most of us know that this level of mindful presence is difficult to attain. And certainly, Stoic therapy is not claiming to be easy. It requires constant activity and vigilance, and, Sellars points out, is only effective as therapy when we incorporate it into a daily practice.⁴⁵ There are no days off, since the judgements which cause us pain and anxiety are developed so rapidly, and the desires which arise from them are limitless. “The most important contribution to peace of mind is never to do wrong,” writes Seneca.⁴⁶ But even he knows that this is a big ask, that gaining the wisdom of nature required to be virtuous is not instantaneous but rather a lifelong journey (though there is value to be found along the journey):

No man can live a happy life, or even a supportable life, without the study of wisdom; you know also that a happy life is reached when our wisdom is brought to completion, but that life is at least endurable even when our wisdom is only just begun.⁴⁷

When we misstep on the therapeutic journey, we ought to remember that it is merely a bump in the road, and that we have the power to remove any impediments by reasoning through our judgements. Part of embracing a daily practice of Stoic therapy is deciding to learn from challenges rather than being defeated by them.⁴⁸ Daily self-reflection is required in Stoic therapy because one must learn one’s nature to live in accordance with it, and “living in accordance with

⁴⁵ Sellars, 66.

⁴⁶ Seneca, letter CV, 383.

⁴⁷ Seneca, letter XVI, 35.

⁴⁸ Sellars, 31: “The good person, [Seneca] says, treats all adversity as a training exercise.”

virtue” is the same as “living in accordance with nature.”⁴⁹ We can only become virtuous when we begin to understand nature, so it is the very pursuit of wisdom which makes life enduring; it helps us understand that challenges and errors are only opportunities for increasing knowledge and approaching the good life. Openness to learning is critical to the journey to virtue and the attainment of happiness. An orientation to learning will be important in all the philosophical therapies discussed herein, because the therapeutic journey involved in healthy moving on requires one confront oneself and learn from the confrontation more about who one really is.

Though eventually the Stoic will need to doctor herself (and Seneca reminds us that maxims are futile; it is not the same thing to *remember* as it is to *know*) our Stoic guides do prescribe some therapeutic tools to stay on track. Epictetus suggests we call things by their names, so that we remember what they are, and that they are not ours. “If you are fond of a jug, say ‘I am fond of a jug!’ For then when it is broken you will not be upset.”⁵⁰ He takes this further; if you are fond of your wife or child, call them a human being, and when they die you will not be upset. This type of thinking is what inspires the view of Stoicism as somewhat cold or unfeeling, but at its core is the familiar motif of finding ways to cope with what you cannot control. Nothing but the present moment belongs to you, so it is not helpful to pretend things are yours which are not. When we recognize things for what they are, we are less struck by their loss, since we know it is only a *return* of something which was never ours, but only borrowed.⁵¹ In times of grief we might ask ourselves, *is this feeling helpful?* To assist him in moving on,

⁴⁹ White, 8.

⁵⁰ Epictetus, III, 12.

⁵¹ Epictetus, XI, 14: “Never say about anything, ‘I have lost it,’ but instead, ‘I have given it back.’ Did your child die? It was given back. Did your wife die? She was given back. ‘My land was taken.’ So this too was given back. ‘But the person who took it was bad!’ How does the way the giver asked for it back concern you? As long as he gives it, take care of it as something that is not your own, just as travellers treat an inn.”

Seneca points out to Lucilius: “grief like yours has this among other evils: it is not only useless, but thankless.”⁵²

Because Stoic therapy is designed to lead the pupil closer to the happy life by curing the ills of the soul, it takes care to remind us, gently but firmly, that the external attachments we form in life are transient. The good life is a virtuous life, and since virtue is living in accordance with nature, we make ourselves sad when we put ourselves at odds with nature, denying the realities of duration and mortality. Everything is just leaves, writes Marcus Aurelius, in one of his own meditative reflections.⁵³ We are, all of us, driven by nature, acted on by the seasons. When our time comes, we crumble and perish. But we can be happy when we begin to see nature for what it is: a rational, infinite logos, in which all things are contained. “Enjoyment,” he writes, “means doing as much of what your nature requires as you can.”⁵⁴ This is the practical wisdom of Stoic therapy; discover your nature, and then act in it, so you can live virtuously in accordance with wider nature. Let reason guide you to cease giving power to those things which are not in your power. These are the characteristics of the rational soul: “self perception, self examination, and the power to make of itself whatever it wants.”⁵⁵ As we pursue wisdom, practice daily self-reflection, and begin to see clearer, it becomes easier to act in our nature and to be ourselves, finally, self-sufficient for happiness. This requires we pursue knowledge of both the self and the whole, so even the Stoic cannot find everything she needs inside herself. “Don’t ever forget these things,” Marcus Aurelius reminds himself:

the nature of the world. My nature. How I relate to the world. What proportion of it I make up. That you are a part of nature, and no one can prevent you from speaking and acting in harmony with it, always.⁵⁶

⁵² Seneca, letter XCIX, 355.

⁵³ Aurelius, book 10.34, 141.

⁵⁴ Aurelius, book 10.33, 140.

⁵⁵ Aurelius, book 11.1, 148.

⁵⁶ Aurelius, book 2.9, 19.

Once you discover your nature, the virtuous thing to do is to act upon it. This is how Stoic joy is won.

the happy life

Each of the therapeutic philosophies considered here deals with a practical ethic of being oneself. While the methods differ, they share a foundational commitment to continuous learning as the key to a happy life, which is the principle of philosophical therapy. Whether the educational journey manifests itself as perfecting reason, moderating affections, or learning to be loving, the therapy of desire is fundamentally rooted in getting to know oneself and acting on that knowledge. As long as we fight against ourselves by failing to reflect on and learn from challenging emotional experiences, we are a stumbling block before our own happiness and mental well being. Philosophical therapy can cure the ills of the soul and make way for the happy life by helping us confront our beliefs, judgements, and affections both rationally and holistically. Seneca poses the question: what is the happy life and how does one get there? “By gaining a complete view of truth.”⁵⁷ The closer we get to truth, the closer we get to happiness. Being happy requires we be authentically ourselves because *virtue is being yourself*. The joy of studying philosophy and philosophical therapy is the joy of becoming yourself, of learning to be virtuous and to act in accordance with your own and wider nature. That is what wisdom is for, says Seneca, helping people be in harmony with themselves:

Philosophy teaches us to act, not to speak; it exacts of every man that he should live according to his own standards, that his life should not be out of harmony with his words, and that, further, his inner life should be of one hue and not out of harmony with all his activities. This is, I say, the highest duty and the highest proof of wisdom—that deed and

⁵⁷ Seneca, letter XCII, 304.

word should be in accord, that a man should be equal to himself under all conditions, and always the same.⁵⁸

This explanation for the role of philosophy in one's life comes from a letter Seneca names *On Practicing what you Preach*. The Stoic insight that philosophy must be practical to be curative will echo in Spinoza's *Ethics* and bell hooks' writing on living by a love ethic.

Stoic therapy is a challenging journey. Seneca confronts this major criticism of Stoicism: its promises are great, but it is too hard.⁵⁹ Indeed, he says that only the Stoic wiseman can safely moderate their judgements, and the rest of us are better off not forming any judgements at all to avoid the passion and desire which might become limitless and run out of bounds. But Seneca betrays himself, admitting even he is not a perfect Stoic, that sometimes he must "drop such great-sounding words, although heaven knows, they are true enough."⁶⁰ We are all human, and being a perfect Stoic is as challenging as it is empowering. The journey to virtue is bound to have some twists and turns and setbacks. We don't always see this softer side of Stoicism. But perhaps it is there in the conversational tone of its teachers, reminiscent of pronouncements from the Stoa, reminding us that this is a philosophy for *suffering people*.

Nussbaum suggests that one may come a long way with the Stoics in embracing their therapy without rejecting affection, (and indeed we will encounter many similar themes in the more affective therapies to follow) and then part ways. But even the Stoics admit of affection:

Am I advising you to be hard-hearted, desiring you to keep your own countenance unmoved at the very funeral ceremony, and not allowing your soul even to even feel the pinch of pain? By no means. That would mean lack of feeling rather than virtue.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Seneca, letter XX, 46.

⁵⁹ Seneca, letter CXVI, 425.

⁶⁰ Seneca, letter XIII, 26.

⁶¹ Seneca, letter XCIX, 357.

Feelings are natural, and even the wisest will be affected. Seneca's insistence that only the wiseman can moderate the affections, that only the wiseman ought to be a lover, and the rest of us ought to avoid making judgements altogether for our safety causes some trouble. For how can one become wise without having the opportunity to make mistakes, the opportunity for self-reflection? How can one affectively learn who one is without making judgements (and misjudgements), without loving and falling out of love? The journey to wisdom requires we learn from adversity, rather than repress or ignore it. "Losses, and wrongs," writes Seneca, "have only the same power over virtue that a cloud has over the sun."⁶² Sometimes we experience pain. Sometimes we don't feel like ourselves. But we can always get better.

conclusion: the problem of extirpating the passions

Stoicism offers valuable insight inside how a philosophical system can have direct therapeutic impacts on its practitioner. As Nussbaum points out, Stoicism is a particularly effective medico-therapeutic philosophy because it promotes self-doctoring. If one uses the tools of Stoic therapy (mindfulness in the present, self-reflection, self-control) to solidify a daily practice of bettering one's health by acting more in one's nature each day, then indeed one becomes capable of healing oneself. Even challenges, like heartache and grief, when reflected on and reasoned through, can aide in one's resolve to act virtuously in accordance with nature. Everything which happens is a result of nature being itself. Because things could be no different than they are, it brings a sense of calm to allow the suffering of nature's movements to turn into acceptance. In arguing that the great man gives himself over to nature, Seneca writes:

Winter brings on cold weather; and we must shiver. Summer returns, with its heat; and we must sweat. Unseasonable weather upsets the health; and we must fall ill. In certain places we may meet with wild beasts, or with men who are more destructive than any beasts. Floods, or

⁶² Seneca, letter XCII, 308.

fires, will cause us loss. And we cannot change this order of things; but what we can do is acquire stout hearts, worthy of good men, thereby courageously enduring chance and placing ourselves in harmony with Nature. And Nature moderates this world-kingdom which you see, by her changing seasons: clear weather follows cloudy, after a calm, comes the storm; the winds blow by turns; day succeeds night; some of the heavenly bodies rise, and some set. Eternity consists of opposites.

It is to this law that our souls must adjust themselves, this they should follow, this they should obey. Whatever happens, assume that it was bound to happen, and do not be willing to rail at Nature. That which you cannot reform, it is best to endure, and to attend uncomplainingly upon the God under whose guidance everything progresses; for it is a bad soldier who grumbles when following his commander. For this reason, we should welcome our orders with energy and vigour, nor should we cease to follow the natural course of this most beautiful universe, into which all our future sufferings are woven.⁶³

If we understand nature for what it is, and desire it for what it is rather than wanting it to be different, we can let go of grief and come to see endlessly mourning something we always knew we would lose someday or another, as a simple error of judgement. This is the consolation offered to the bereaved: as soon as you admit that you are only returning something that was never yours, you will cease to suffer pain at the loss. The pain itself is nothing but your mind telling you it is time to self-reflect and then finally move on. It's not wrong to feel, but it is wrong to wallow in unreasonable sadness.

The Stoics think that all passions run the risk of becoming insatiable desires. This is why they suggest that one ought to avoid making judgements until one is fully in control of oneself. This wiseman, who has perfected reason and knows how to act in his nature, could perhaps successfully moderate the passions without allowing them to become limitless and vaulting, thus remaining in control.⁶⁴ For the average person though, Stoic thinkers suggest extirpating the passions is safer than attempting to control them by moderation. To stop oneself from having

⁶³ Seneca, letter CVII, 387.

⁶⁴ Seneca, CXVI, 425. "the wiseman man can safely control himself without becoming over-anxious; he can halt his tears and his pleasures at will; but in our case, because it is not easy to retrace our steps, it is best not to push ahead at all."

passions one must refuse to make judgements, since making a judgement is assenting to a belief, and passions, desires, and actions all follow from belief-formation.

But this advice appears to be at odds with another bit of Stoic wisdom; that idea that sadness of spirit ought to be a signal to us that it is time to let go and move on from that which does not serve you, suffering over the past or anxiety over the future. If we refuse to make judgements and form beliefs in order to avoid being overcome by passion, how can we learn from suffering how to be stronger and more virtuous versions of ourselves? How can we gain insight into how to act in accordance with our nature when we do not question our uncharacteristic behaviours? How can we learn from and conquer our passions if we refuse to open ourselves up to them? If pain in the soul is the motivator for healing oneself we ought to allow that pain in rather than denying it entry. If we erase all the marks of judgement in order to extirpate the passions, we equally deny our ability to act, since it is not only passions which arise from judgement but beliefs and actions. One cannot act in one's nature if one is not acting. Stoic virtue is intertwined with acting, so there is a clear contradiction between the suggestion of extirpating emotions and the practical aspect of Stoicism, which asks the Stoic to always be trying to get better. There is a fallacy in the idea that only the wiseman should be bold enough to moderate the passions rather than eradicate them; for one cannot become wise without exercising one's reason and putting it to the test. The control which passion seems to threaten is won through a daily practice of self-reflection and use of right reason. There is no opportunity to reflect with no judgements, and no opportunity to control one's desires with no passion.

One is not simply wise, one grows wise. Growth requires activity, which is why confronting the passions is more therapeutic than extirpating them: it forces one to face oneself. The Stoics give themselves away in teaching that everyone is part of a whole and that this

interconnectedness means that seeking the good for oneself is inseparable from seeking the good for another. Stoicism requires a fundamental empathy in order to function. Every individual must be treated with the recognition and respect deserved by a rational being. The external attachments of community life are natural extensions of the Stoic commitment to nature. Since man is a naturally social being, it is commendable for us to act on this instinct and create relationships with others. But with no practice of moderating the passions these external attachments could quickly become more harmful than beneficial. Even in Stoicism we see hints of the power of living by a love ethic, of relating to another with loving friendship.

In a practical ethical system like Stoicism action is critical. This is the problem of extirpating the passions in order to be cured of the ills of the soul: it is only actively working through the passions that will allow us to be healed. One cannot reach happiness simply by relieving oneself from the pain of feeling passions. Maybe this might allow one to avoid total passivity, but it is hardly a display of freedom, since it fails to turn passivity into action. One who refuses to make judgements and form new beliefs and actions which allow one to act more authentically in accordance with one's nature acts only on habit and convention. Although this might lead to less suffering and anxiety, it will not allow for the growth which comes with actively seeking health through self-reflection. The therapy of desire can only begin when one has desires she can reflect on, and desire requires, to be born, passion.

It seems possible that the prerequisite of being a wiseman to graduate from extirpation to moderation of the emotions should be taken not to mean 'having perfected reason', but rather 'seeking wisdom through practice of reason'. If the process of becoming virtuous by acting in accordance with nature is a never ending one, because there is always room for betterment by way of philosophy, then there will never be a Stoic wiseman. This seems to miss the point of

Stoic therapy, which tells us over and over again that the only thing you need to start healing is to stop standing in your own way. It is only when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable that we can grow, move forward, *move on*. If we extirpate our passions completely we become invulnerable and have no more reason to grow. This is not the good life promised by Stoicism. The good life can only be reached by attaining the joy which comes from mastering being yourself, even in the face of challenges or sadness. And maybe, like many of us, the Stoics are merely afraid to speak out loud about their desire to be loved for being themselves. They refer to human beings as social animals and discuss openly the need for sympathy and sociability, for friendship and community, while fearing the moment these attachments become something more, something which threatens self-sufficiency. Perhaps just like being social is in our nature, it is in our nature to feel afraid, and to fear feeling. But the Stoics praise courage. It is braver to love and welcome the knowledge that one day you will need to return that love than to refuse to love at all. Despite itself, Stoicism seems to acknowledge the value of passion in the therapeutic journey to the good life. In *Therapy of Desire* Nussbaum asks whether one can “live in reason’s kingdom, understood in the way the Stoics understand it, and still be a creature of wonder, grief, love?”⁶⁵ I believe that one can. In fact, I believe the too hard task of Stoicism might get easier if one were to embrace affections, specifically, love.

⁶⁵ Nussbaum, 358.

II.

ETHICS

practice makes perfect

introduction: on moderation

This chapter will explore Spinoza's *Ethics* and the consequences of his monistic theology, especially the Spinozist argument that ethical behaviour is acting in accordance with one's essence, since we are all modes of substance (or expressions of God) and ought to live up to our divine perfection. As with his Stoic predecessors, Spinoza's remedy for the ills of the soul relies fundamentally on acknowledging that nature is outside of one's control, and happiness is best sought by discovering and then affirming one's *own* nature. In Spinoza's ethical system every individual body is a modification of God, also called nature or substance, born of and existing in God's infinite and perfect nature as a necessary extension of the divine. Individuals are modes of substance expressed as thought and extension, a body and mind, who at their most natural express an aspect of God's eternity and perfection. It is this confidence in belonging to perfection which makes Spinozist ethics a good candidate for philosophical therapy; Spinoza offers a practical ethic which promises to increase joy and diminish sadness by bringing one nearer to perfection, when perfection is acting in accordance with one's eternal, perfect essence. To cure the ills of the soul, the student of Spinozist therapy must learn to turn passivity into activity by moderating the affects. Activity, for Spinoza, means being the *active and adequate cause of one's own ideas* rather than being controlled by unmoderated and vaulting passions.¹ This freedom to act is the only type of freedom available to man. There is no freedom of will,

¹ Spinoza, III. D3. "Therefore, if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the affect an action, otherwise a passion."

Spinoza explains, because everything that follows necessarily from God's perfect nature and could be no other way than it is. Reality and perfection are the same thing.² Everything is pre-determined in its divine, eternal nature, so freedom lies only in affirming one's nature and acting in it. As long as we are active, we are free, and to be active we must learn to moderate the affections to turn passion into action. As we continuously near our perfection by becoming more attuned to our selves, and empower ourselves to act authentically in our nature, we will experience the joy of understanding God, which for Spinoza is the ultimate good, and the end of philosophical therapy. In this way we can cure ourselves of the pain of suffering. All relations with the external world return us to ourselves in a different way, Spinoza explains, since every body produces a particular effect (including ourselves); even if they at times cause us pain, or lead to heartbreak, relations with others show us what increases and what diminishes our power to act, effectively giving us the tools to authentically practice our freedom. Developing our intuitive knowledge in this way, by interacting with the world at large and moderating the affects which come along with being human, we give ourselves the ability to grow, continuously, into our perfect selves. The more singular things we get to know, the more we can know God, so we ought to love life and the things in it, says Spinoza; in moderation, that is.³

While the influence of Hellenism is obvious in Spinoza's therapeutic approach, there is a marked difference in the treatment of the passions by these two philosophical models. Spinoza's therapy relies on affection and defends passion's place in our self-education and self-help journey. The skill of moderating the affections is essential in Spinozist therapy because it is the means of one's getting to know oneself *and* of gaining the power to act in accordance with one's

² Spinoza, II. D6.

³ Spinoza, V. P24.

divine nature. Moderation of the affections here is not reserved for one who has perfected reason, but works together with reason to create a third, better type of knowledge: the intuitive knowledge of the essence of things following from an understanding of (God's) nature.⁴ When one can successfully use one's intuition, one is blessed.⁵ On the flipside, the worst thing a person can do on her therapeutic journey is remain *ignorant* about herself. In an ignorant state, lacking intuition, it is impossible for one to know oneself and therefore impossible to *be oneself*, to freely affirm one's nature and cure sadness by turning it into active joy. Practicing and strengthening one's intuition is the most critical task of Spinozist therapy. This skill makes the process of moderating the affects, turning them from their passionate form into their active form, possible, by allowing us to understand our passions clearly and distinctly. If we know ourselves and act authentically, we will become the adequate causes of our own passions, and they will cease to have any control over us.

The same is true of our relationships with others. The Stoic mistrust of external attachments is combatted in Spinozism with the assertion that when one is self-aware one can sort through the connections which zap one's energy and keep them separate from those which empower one's activity. In this way, one can withstand the hatred, rejection, jealousy, heartbreak, and other negative feelings which sometimes occur as a result of relating to another human being. All these sad passions can be moderated into deeper understanding of one's nature. Loving others is a joy, Spinoza says, and even hatred can be overcome by the activity of love. By encouraging the moderation of the affects and not their extirpation, Spinoza defends the place of affection within a therapeutic philosophy and denies the idea that passions are necessarily limitless and at odds with reason. This position makes it possible for him to expound the value of

⁴ Spinoza, V. P20. S.

⁵ Spinoza, IV. AP.

certain affections in the development of self, particularly *love* and *self-love* (or *self-esteem*). This is particularly helpful for a philosophy of moving on since it allows the heartbroken to *use* their emotions rather than be at war with them. The heartbroken, having loved and now feeling the sadness of lost love, has a multitude of affections available to work through and aid her on the journey to perfection. The student of Spinozist therapy cannot simply ignore her sadness; she must welcome it, take stock of it, and notice how it decreases her power to be herself. Even her sadness, then, will eventually become the joy of nearing perfection, and the virtuous state of being authentically herself.

For Spinoza, joy is simply the passage to perfection, to knowing and acting in accordance with our nature, and being ourselves. Those sad passions which seem to take us out of ourselves will also become joy if we use them to deepen our understanding of ourselves and become more authentic as a result of them. We are not bound by our passions—we are only limited by our own inactivity. As with our Stoic remedies, the cure is in one's own hands. If we develop our intuition and a practice of moderating our affections, we will become capable of nearing our perfection even when faced with suffering and sadness. Moving on, for Spinoza, is always moving towards perfection, moving closer to one's eternal essence, and becoming more oneself. But he reminds us again and again that this journey to perfection is a passage, not something won instantaneously, but an endless road on which we will likely get turned around from time to time. Spinoza's bodies are defined both by their motion and their rest, and everyone is likely to experience these various states of change. This need not scare us away from the therapeutic journey offered by Spinoza, since all movement, and even the stillness which sometimes proceeds it, all change, can eventually return us to our perfect selves.

on perfection

Like his Hellenistic predecessors, Spinoza offers his practical ethics as a cure for the ills of the soul, and a therapeutic journey that, if taken seriously, leads one to joy. “Only joy is worthwhile,” writes Gilles Deleuze about the *Ethics*, which he takes to be primarily an ethics of joy; “joy remains, bringing us near to action, and to the bliss of action.”⁶ The problem of the *Ethics*, then, is how one might maximize joy. The solution, as Deleuze hints here, lies in *the bliss of action*, in utilizing the tools available to us (reason and affect) to better understand the nature of things so that we might act appropriately based on this understanding. Spinozist freedom is a freedom of act, so being free from pain and sadness will always require action. As in Stoic therapy, there is a practical and therapeutic philosophy at work here; if one wants to reap the benefits of Spinoza’s ethics, daily practice will be required, and this practice will bring one nearer to one’s *perfection*, and nearer to joy, since joy “is a transition to a greater perfection.”⁷ So, we might rightfully ask of a “practical philosophy,” what exactly is perfection? And how do I get there?

Perfection for Spinoza is deeply related to many things: power, virtue, action, joy. But the foundational definition of perfection, what makes it the seat of all these various goods, is given in the definitions of part II: “D6: By reality and perfection I understand the same thing.”⁸ Perfection, then, is something which already exists in the world, the reality we are in and which surrounds us. To achieve perfection ourselves requires an understanding of reality and the nature of things, so that we might understand our place. To this end, the therapy of Spinoza begins with the study of substance and a description of Nature. Before one can get a notion of one’s own

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, translated by Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 28.

⁷ Spinoza, III. P21. D.

⁸ Spinoza, II. D6.

“perfection,” one must have a concept of reality, of the plane on which one exists and where one might practice one’s freedom to act. For Spinoza, reality is perfection because Nature is infinite, singular, and perfect; it could not be any other way than it is.⁹ Everything which exists, *reality*, is conceived in and follows from the necessary existence of Nature, what Spinoza calls God, and defines as a single substance “consisting of an infinity of attributes.”¹⁰ Every single thing in existence derives from the perfection, the necessity, of God. Everything expresses an aspect of the divine, is a particular modification of one of God’s infinite attributes. We all then, have access to this perfection, if only we are attentive to the nature of things. We each exist as a piece of the divine, a tiny infinite. To near our own perfection is to lean into reality, to enact the divine essence of oneself, which follows necessarily from the essence of God. To do this one must find a way to understand her own nature as it follows from eternal Nature, also known as God or substance. Once she understands her divine essence, the reality of who she is, her mode or expression of God, she can *act* on it. While she is not free to draw up her own essence, she is free to discover it, and having done so, to affirm or deny it. If she affirms it, she will continuously unfold into herself, and near her perfection. If she denies it, she will move further away from that perfection by putting herself at odds with Nature. To maximize joy, she must near perfection. To near perfection, she must become herself.

While human perfection is a potency which is only realized in human action, God’s perfection is already a reality. By I. P17 “*God acts from the laws of his nature alone, and is compelled by no one.*”¹¹ Nothing incites God to action: all God’s acts simply follow from the perfection of (God’s) Nature. If we understand perfection as acting by the laws of one’s nature,

⁹ Spinoza, I. P33.

¹⁰ Spinoza, I. D6.

¹¹ Spinoza, I. P17. Cor.

we might understand why Spinoza sees the attainment of human perfection as a *passage* or journey. Though God cannot help but act by the laws of God's own perfect nature, people often do act against their natures. Consider all the times you have felt *not yourself*, regretted an action or felt it was at odds with your greater values. While Nature moves by perfection alone, we are caught between perfection and imperfection. Spinoza calls God or substance *Natura Naturans*, that which is conceived through itself. Humans, on the other hand, are of another call, *Natura naturata*, who are not conceived through themselves, but follow, rather, from the necessity of God's nature. It is a symptom of being *Natura naturata*, modes of God's attributes, that we are affected by things, and not fully in control.¹² If I am only a particular mode of substance, then interacting with a different mode of substance is bound to affect me in new ways or introduce me to ideas I did not have on my own. God, containing all modes, cannot be affected in this way, but we cannot help it. The same way a rock is shaped by the daily crash of the sea, a person is affected by external things. In the demonstration of I. P33, Spinoza writes that "all things have necessarily followed from God's given nature, and have been determined from the necessity of God's nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way," so that all things are produced with the "highest perfection."¹³ All existing things are particular expressions of God, and produce particular effects. You are Nature experiencing itself in a particular way, but only if you act authentically by the laws of your nature. When one acts in one's essence, one approaches perfection, which further increases one's power to act. When one moves against one's essence, perfection is diminished, along with the power to act.¹⁴ The more myself I become, the easier

¹² Spinoza, I. P29, Schol.

¹³ Spinoza, I. P33. Dem. Schol.1.

¹⁴ Spinoza, IV. Preface: "For the main thing to note is that when I say that someone passes from a lesser to a greater perfection, and the opposite, I do not understand that he is changed from one essence, or form, to another...rather, we conceive that his power of acting, insofar as it is understood through his nature, is increased or diminished."

and more intuitive it becomes to know my essence and act on it, practicing my freedom; or as Spinoza puts it, by V. P40: “*The more perfection each thing has, the more it acts and the less it is acted on; and conversely, the more it acts, the more perfect it is.*”¹⁵ The more myself I become, the less I am acted upon by externality.

But while nearing one’s perfection brings joy by increasing one’s power to act in one’s essence, it does not fully solve the problem of human suffering. Things which cause us to suffer or experience pain exist from the same perfection as all things. A tornado is a specific modification of God which has an essence of whirlwind and an effect of destruction; its perfection is achieved by its effect, regardless of whether it is perceived as good or bad by us. For Spinoza, perfection is reality, and the reality of Nature is that not all things act in ways which are useful to human beings. There is a degree of unavoidable suffering which comes with being human and existing on the same plane as all things, each with their own perfections. Perfection is not defined by human minds, but follows from the laws of God’s nature, in which all things are conceived, or, by IV. P4:

*It is impossible that a man should not be a part of Nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause...Cor.: From this it follows that man is necessarily always subject to passions, that he follows and obeys the common order of Nature, and accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires.*¹⁶

Our value judgements have no bearing on the nature of things, which can only be measured by the degree in which they achieve their perfection.¹⁷ Because of this, as Deleuze puts

¹⁵ Spinoza, V. P40.

¹⁶ Spinoza, IV. P4. Cor.

¹⁷ Spinoza, I. Appendix (31): “For many are accustomed to arguing in this sway: if all things have followed from the necessity of God’s most perfect nature, why are there so many imperfections in Nature? Why are things corrupt to the point where they stink? So ugly that they produce nausea? Why is there confusion, evil, and sin? As I have just said, those who argue in this way are easily answered. For the perfection of things is to be judged solely from their nature and power; things are not more or less perfect because they please or offend men’s senses, or because they are of use to, or are incompatible with, human nature.”

it, “there is no Good or Evil, but there is good and bad,” with good and bad being personal and relative judgements: this thing is good because it agrees with *my* nature and brings *me* joy, or bad because it does not.¹⁸ People are necessarily affected by passions and emotions the same way we are subject to externality, natural disaster, and duration. But in pursuing joy and perfection we can turn passions to actions, and in doing so, make affection into perfection, and use our affects to become ourselves and enact our divine essence. This is the therapeutic journey offered by Spinoza’s *Ethics*: the journey to perfection. Only, perfection will be different for every individual, since it is the journey to oneself which allows perfection to be realized. Joy, sadness, suffering; it is all part of the passage. “I say a passage. For joy is not perfection itself. If a man were born with the perfection to which he passes, he would possess it without an affect of joy.”¹⁹ The journey to self is as essential to Spinozist therapy as the joy which follows, if not more so. As such, I call Spinoza’s ethics, an *ethics of being yourself* – and find in it a valuable lesson for moving on-even heartbreak is a path along the passage to perfection.

on affection

Because of human being’s subjection to passions, what Spinoza calls *human bondage*, the journey to perfection is often non-linear and difficult. While joy is nearing the perfection of being yourself, sadness is moving away from it. Human experience tells us that sadness is a part of life. We are not always ourselves, or even aware of ourselves, and much of the journey to perfection is confused. We move backwards, we vacillate, we stall out or plateau. Because of the human tendency to be affected, one inevitably experiences various internal changes along the road to self-discovery. These affections and the changes they bring along are not *good* or *bad*,

¹⁸ Deleuze, 22.

¹⁹ Spinoza, III. D3.

like all things, they follow from the necessity of God and are therefore perfect by nature of their reality. It is up to the individual to assess her own affections and in coming to understand them, use them to bolster her perfection. Spinozist therapy calls for *moderation* of the affects where the Stoics called for their *extirpation* for two main reasons: first, the affects follow necessarily from God and are both perfect and unavoidable, and second, because (in conjunction with reason and adequate ideas) they are our best tool for increasing our power to act. “The Stoics thought that they [the affects] depend entirely on our will, and that we can command them absolutely,” Spinoza writes. “But experience cries out against this, and has forced them, in spite of their principles, to confess that much practice and application are required to restrain and moderate them.”²⁰ Both Stoic therapy and Spinozist therapy are deeply rooted in practice, only Spinoza wants us to acknowledge that no amount of practice will rid one of passions completely, and moderating them is a constant, active, effort. Since human freedom is a freedom of act, and not of sheer will, one can only control one’s actions and reactions. We are far better off if we put our effort into moderating our emotions by reflecting on and understanding them than if we attempt to stop them altogether. When we understand our affections, even the negative or unpleasant ones, they tell us about ourselves, and increase our power to act in our essence. In this way, even sadness can become joy, and lead us to perfection. Moderating the affects is how we move from suffering our *passions* to the bliss of *action*.

Affects, for Spinoza, come in two forms. The first, *passions*, diminish our power because they act on us, without our understanding. The second, *actions*, are named as such because they are affects we understand and *act* on, or, by III. D2: “I say that we act when something happens, in or outside of us, of which we are the adequate cause.”²¹ To move from passions to actions, and

²⁰ Spinoza, V. Preface.

²¹ Spinoza, III. D2.

thus increase one's power and perfection, one must become the *adequate cause* of one's affections. This requires one understand one's affects, why one feels a certain way and what that has to do with one's essence. Positive and negative affects alike can be transformed from passions into actions, and ought to be.²² While we might prefer joyful passions over sad passions, to use Deleuze's terms, the best thing we can have are not passions at all, but *active joys*.²³ "If we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the affect an action, otherwise, a passion," writes Spinoza. So, moderating the emotions will require one have *adequate ideas*.²⁴ Reflecting on the affects using reason gives one the control to act on the affects in a way which aligns with one's divine essence. Insofar as one has affects which are passions (affects of which one is not the adequate cause because one does not have any adequate ideas of it), one suffers. Insofar as one has affects which are actions, one is free. Actions, therefore, are always good and virtuous, because they arise from adequate ideas about the nature of things and help us learn about and become ourselves, and "we must, therefore, take special care to know each affect clearly and distinctly."²⁵ If we deny our passions, we will never understand them enough to benefit from them.

Spinoza's first rule in moderating affections is to know an affect's *cause*, or the idea behind it. By V. P3:

An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it. Dem.: An affect which is a passion is a confused idea. Therefore, if we should form a clear and distinct idea of the affect, this idea will be distinguished by reason from the affect itself insofar as it is related only to the mind. Therefore, the affect will cease to be a passion. Cor.: The more an affect is known to us, then, the more it is in our power, and the less the mind is acted on by it.²⁶

²² Spinoza, V. P3: "An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it."

²³ Deleuze, 43.

²⁴ Spinoza, III. D3.

²⁵ Spinoza, V. P4. Schol.

²⁶ Spinoza, V. P3. Dem. Cor.

To control one's affections then, one must first understand their causes. One should note that in the case that a passion is moderated effectively by reason, it does not disappear, but is transformed into an action. If a person is experiencing overwhelming, passionate sadness, and through reason, reflection, and action can come to control that sadness, it is not because the sadness or its source disappeared. Rather, it has been understood as a necessity, as following naturally both from God's nature and one's own. The sadness is not removed but is transformed into a free act once one recognizes it as one's natural (essential) reaction to an external force. The sadness becomes *one's own* sadness, to be felt and enacted as accords with one's essence, and since it is now an action and not a passion, this sadness, in its way, leads to joy. Since pain and pleasure are relative to the individuals in which they arise, one's sadness cannot be defined or delimited by anyone else and can only be moderated by oneself. As one understands an affect more clearly and distinctly, one becomes less passive to it.²⁷ Spinoza demonstrates this with the example of a grief which is lessened when one realizes the loss one is experiencing was inevitable. It is only part of a larger natural order, an infinite connection of causes, with God as their ultimate or efficient cause. Here one might object, not wishing to see God as the cause of all sadness. God *is* the source of all sadness, says Spinoza, since everything is conceived in and by God. But, "insofar as we understand the causes of sadness it ceases to be a passion, that is, to that extent it ceases to be sadness."²⁸

Affection and reason are equally important therapeutic tools for Spinoza. Though he uses a "geometric method" to guide the reader through the *Ethics*, Deleuze points out that Spinoza's inclusion of prefaces, notes, and his sprawling and strangely rhythmic writing might call for a

²⁷ Spinoza, V. P3. Cor: "The more an affect is known to us, then, the more it is in our power and the less we are acted on by it."

²⁸ Spinoza, V.P18. Schol.

“double reading,” the first systematic and the second affective.²⁹ “On the one hand,” Deleuze writes, “a systematic reading in pursuit of the general idea and the unity of the part, but on the other hand and at the same time, the affective reading, without an idea of the whole, where one is carried along or set down, put in motion or at rest, shaken or calmed according to the velocity of this or that part.”³⁰ We might apply this same double reading to ourselves and the nature of things. Reason will help us understand the system, the whole of things and Nature, so that we might better read our affections, the way that our interactions with Nature tease out our own essential natures. Spinoza directly addresses those who reject the affects as contrary to reason:

*To them it will doubtless seem strange that I should undertake to treat men’s vices and absurdities in the geometric style, and that I should wish to demonstrate by certain reasoning things which are contrary to reason, and which they proclaim to be empty, absurd, and horrible. But my reason is this: nothing happens in nature which can be attributed to any defect in it, for nature is always the same. The affects, therefore, of hate, anger, envy, and the like, considered in themselves, follow with the same necessity and force of Nature as the other singular things.*³¹

We cannot disregard the importance of affection for philosophical therapy. Affection is the primary way one gets to know oneself, or by III. P53. Dem.: “A man does not know himself except through affections of his body and their ideas.”³² So, reason and affection will work in tandem to help one become oneself, to act in one’s essence. To near our own perfection, we need knowledge of ourselves. The enemy of joy and perfection is ignorance.

²⁹ Deleuze, 129.

³⁰ Deleuze, 129.

³¹ Spinoza, 3. Preface.

³² Spinoza, III. P53. Dem.

on intuition

While reason is critical to one's ability to moderate the affects, the greatest type of knowledge one can have is *intuitive knowledge*, says Spinoza. Of the three types of knowledge, which he calls *imagination, reason, and intuition*, only the latter two lead one to truth, and intuition best of all.³³ By V. P25: "*The greatest striving of the mind, and its greatest virtue is understanding things by the third kind of knowledge.*"³⁴ So, intuition, the third type of knowledge, is the "greatest virtue of the mind," and developing strong intuition is the best way to arm oneself for the journey to perfection.³⁵ The development of intuitive knowledge relies simultaneously on one's ability to reason and one's attentiveness to the affects. Intuition, for Spinoza, is the adequate knowledge of the essence of things *following from* an adequate knowledge of God.³⁶ The stronger one's intuition, (the more she understands God and Nature) the better her ability to understand her affects and how they pertain to her essence. Intuitive knowledge is the best type of knowledge because it increases our power to act and unfold into ourselves.

Since it derives from knowledge of the perfection and necessity of God, practicing intuition lets one more clearly and distinctly see one's own perfection, and how to enact it. Intuition, "whose foundation is the knowledge of God itself," is also our best tool for moderating the affects.³⁷ The more one develops her intuition, the better she understands herself, and the

³³ Spinoza, II. P41: "*Knowledge of the first kind is the only cause of falsity, whereas knowledge of the second and of the third kind is necessarily true.*"

³⁴ Spinoza, V. P25.

³⁵ Spinoza, V. P25. Dem.

³⁶ Spinoza, II. P40. Schol.2. IV: "There is another, third kind, which we shall call intuitive knowledge. And this kind of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things."

³⁷ Spinoza, V. P20. Dem.

easier it becomes to learn from the affects, which, in turn, further develop her intuition. “These internal, immunal affections,” writes Deleuze, “are the forms by means of which we become conscious of ourselves, of other things, and of God, from within and eternally, essentially (the third type of knowledge, intuition).”³⁸ Intuition, when flexed, builds on itself. Knowledge of God’s essence increases our knowledge of our own essence and the essence of things, which helps us to moderate the affects, which further develops our intuitive knowledge of God. Everyone can develop and strengthen the intuition which lets one become oneself. Entering the positive feedback loop of intuition requires first that one acknowledges one’s position in wider Nature.

To get to intuition, one must move through reason, which allows one to “regard things as necessary,” under a species of eternity.³⁹ Only by practicing reason can one arrive at an understanding of God which kickstarts an understanding of everything. Writing on the relationship between reason and intuition, Deleuze states:

There is no break between the second and third kind, but a passage from one side to the other of the idea of God; we go beyond Reason as a faculty of the common notions or a system of eternal truths concerning existence, and enter into the *intuitive intellect* as a system of essential truths.⁴⁰

Reason and affect are both invaluable tools in Spinozist therapy because they lead to the development of strong intuition, which grows on itself exponentially as long as one continues to act in one’s essence, by V. P26: “*The more the mind is capable of understanding things by the third kind of knowledge, the more it desires to understand them by this type of knowledge.*”⁴¹ Simply put, the more you intuit yourself, the easier it becomes to be yourself. The ignorant

³⁸ Deleuze, 43.

³⁹ Spinoza, II. P44, II. P44. Cor.2.

⁴⁰ Deleuze, 58.

⁴¹ Spinoza, V, P5. Schol.

person, on the other hand, who does not practice reason or moderate the affects, and fails to develop her intuition, cannot become herself, and remains distant from her perfection. It is impossible to attain perfection without an intuitive understanding of God's perfection and the necessity of Nature.

In an ethics of being yourself, intuition is both the means and the end, since it is intuition which allows one to become oneself, and knowledge of oneself which continuously informs intuition. For Spinoza, joy and blessedness consist in knowing God, and virtue consists in *acting* on one's knowledge of God.⁴² Similarly, practicing one's intuition is itself joy, since it is the force which powers the move towards perfection. This joy in understanding, Spinoza calls "the intellectual love of God," and positions as the greatest good:

This doctrine then, in addition to giving us complete peace of mind, also teaches us wherein our greatest happiness, *or* blessedness, consists; namely, in the knowledge of God alone, by which we are led to do only those things which love and morality advise. From this we clearly understand how far they stray from the true valuation of virtue, who expect to be honored by God with the greatest rewards of their virtue and best actions, as for the greatest bondage-as if virtue itself, and the service of God, were not happiness itself, and the greatest freedom. Insofar as it teaches us how we must bear ourselves concerning matters of fortune, or things which are not in our power, that is, concerning things which do not follow from our nature-that we must expect and bear calmly both good fortune and bad. For all things follow from God's eternal decree with the same necessity as from the essence of a triangle it follows that its three angles are equal to two right angles.⁴³

The intellectual love of God reminds us that nothing is contingent, and that perfect things act simply by the laws of their nature, following from the perfection of God. Human virtue and ethical behaviour, then, are accomplished by *action*, the affirmation and enactment of one's own essence. Virtue is happiness itself, because the virtuous person is practicing reason, developing intuition, and moderating her affects in ways which bring her closer to herself, thus closer to joy.

⁴² Spinoza, IV. P28. D1: "the mind's greatest advantage *or* (by D1) good, is knowledge of God. Next, only insofar as the mind understands (by III P1 and P3), does it act, and can it be said absolutely to act from virtue."

⁴³ Spinoza, II. P49. Cor.

She is using her freedom to act. She is nearing her perfection and sharing in divine Nature in the way only her particular mode of Nature can.

Deleuze calls Spinoza's virtue "nothing other than the *conatus*, nothing other than power."⁴⁴ The *conatus* is a thing's striving to exist, to persist in its being, to be itself.⁴⁵ Becoming virtuous is nothing but becoming yourself, or, as follows from IV. D8⁴⁶: "virtue is nothing but acting from the laws of one's own nature."⁴⁷ Ignorance about oneself and the nature of things, which stems from a failure to utilize one's reason and affection to build intuition and strengthen the intellect, means that one will always be acted on, never acting. For how can one ever be joyous when one is not oneself? Intuition requires knowing ourselves body and mind, which, for Spinoza, are only two expressions of the same thing.⁴⁸ Parallelism of the attributes of extension and thought means that an increase in the power of acting in the body is always parallel to an increase of the power of acting in the mind. One cannot be virtuous if one alienates oneself from one's body, refusing to nourish it and increase its power, and vice versa, is paralyzed in body by failing to nourish the mind with understanding. Recognizing one's physical desires and appetites is critical to developing mindful intuition. "The practical significance of parallelism," Deleuze writes, "is manifested on the reversal of the traditional principle on which Morality was founded as an enterprise of domination of the passions by consciousness."⁴⁹ Since my body and my mind are the same thing, namely *me*, expressed in two ways, it makes no sense for me to ignore the

⁴⁴ Deleuze, 103.

⁴⁵ Spinoza, III. P7: "*The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing.*"

⁴⁶ Spinoza, IV, D8.: "By virtue and power I understand the same thing, that is, virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone."

⁴⁷ Spinoza, P18. Schol.

⁴⁸ Spinoza, II. P21. Schol.: "The mind and the body are one and the same individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension."

⁴⁹ Deleuze, 18.

intuitions of one or the other. The mind's ability to reason, while crucial to my development, is not prior to or better than my body's ability to be affected. An enterprise of domination, as Deleuze puts it, of one over the other, traditionally reason over affect, is antithetical to the therapeutic journey to self. Being affected by things is how we become ourselves. Instead of dominating the passions, one must cultivate the intuition needed to moderate them and turn them into actions.

on relation

Though intuitive knowledge is defined by Spinoza as knowledge of God, the *development* of intuition has more to do with getting to know particular things and oneself. Lucky for us, since getting to know the infinite substance of Nature is decidedly more daunting than getting to know a finite thing, say a flower, a painting, or a friend. Even the lifelong journey of self-discovery seems manageable relative to fully understanding the infinite and singular substance which contains all of reality. By V. P24: "*The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God,*" because every singular thing expresses a mode of God and is a modification of God's attributes.⁵⁰ A flower is nothing but God expressed in extension and thought, the stem, the thorn, the petals, the idea of a rose. If I understand the flower, my understanding of God grows, since the flower expresses a particular mode of God. The same is true of coming to understand my own essence, which takes part in eternity. The more singular things I understand, the more I have a sense of the big picture of Nature, that infinite thing by which all things exist and in which all things take part. So too, the more singular things I understand, the more I intuit myself, since my own place in Nature gets clearer the more I know

⁵⁰ Spinoza, V. P24.

God. The best way for me to develop my intuition then, is to encounter other *Natura naturata*. Every relation I have gives me an opportunity to deepen my knowledge of myself, and to freely affirm or deny that knowledge by acting. As my body is affected and its contours change, I can choose whether or not to heed my affections, the ways I have been moved and shaped by others. If I moderate the affections well, I will expand into the new shape, and by exploring my boundaries, unfold deeper into myself.

Spinoza describes the human body as simultaneously fluid, soft, and hard. All complex individual bodies, including the human body, are composites of many other bodies “of different natures,” which are also composites of yet smaller bodies.⁵¹ Each individual body is continuously affected by its interactions with other bodies, the same way the human body is affected by its relationships with other people and its interactions with the world. This process of continuous change in the body (by virtue of its being affected) is how human bodies are “continuously regenerated” and how we grow into ourselves.⁵² The contours of our bodies are redrawn and must be reaffirmed as we are continuously affected, by II. P13. Post. V: “When a fluid part of the human body is determined by an external body so that it frequently thrusts against a soft part, it changes its surface and, as it were, impresses certain traces of the external body striking against it.”⁵³ For Spinoza, bodies are defined by either their motion, or their rest.⁵⁴ When we interact with other bodies, each of the composite bodies within us is affected differently and at different speeds. Deleuze points out that it is not only motion or rest on their own which define the body, but “the relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses

⁵¹ Spinoza, II. P13. Post. I-2.

⁵² Spinoza, II. P13. Post. 4.

⁵³ Spinoza, II. P13. Post. 5.

⁵⁴ Spinoza, II. P13. Axiom 1-2: “A1: All bodies either move or are at rest. A2: Each body moves now more slowly, now more quickly.”

between particles, that define a body in its individuality.”⁵⁵ The bodies within us which move and the ones which are still affect each other by their relation and contribute to the movement of the whole. Because the passage to perfection is the same as the journey to becoming oneself, even moments of stillness, vacillation, and regression can be turned into growth opportunities, since even these imperfect movements speak to our perfect essence.

Whether we are moving or resting has a lot to do with what we take from our interactions with others, since by II. P13. Lemma. 3: “*A body which moves or is at rest must be determined to motion or rest by another body.*”⁵⁶ The particular way an external body affects a person, how she will be moved by it and in which direction, has to do both with her nature and with the nature of the other body; no two bodies will be affected in the exact same way by the same experience.⁵⁷ Every relation returns one to oneself in a different way. All the various changes going on in the body (and so, by virtue of parallelism, the mind), if reflected on and adequately moderated, can lead the body to action, increasing its power and perfection. Rather than being changed into someone different, Spinoza understands that the individual body maintains its nature while the bodies composing it are affected by change.⁵⁸ The boundaries which make up the human body are soft, so that the contours of the body might change without snapping. The “hard” parts of the body, those eternal, essential qualities which are slowly discovered, remain intact, while the fluid parts fill in new spaces, continuing the cycle of intuition. Whether in motion or at rest “the individual so composed retains its nature,” writes Spinoza, “...whether it moves in this or that

⁵⁵ Deleuze, 123.

⁵⁶ Spinoza, II. P13. Lemma. 3.

⁵⁷ Spinoza, II. P13. Axiom 1: “All modes by which a body is affected by another body follows both from the nature of the body affected and at the same time from the nature of the affecting body, so that one and the same body may be moved differently according to differences in the nature of the body moving it. And conversely, different bodies may be moved differently by one and the same body.”

⁵⁸ Spinoza, II. P13. Lemma. 4.

direction, so long as each part retains its motion, and communicates it, as before, to the others.”⁵⁹ All our relations and all our speeds will eventually lead us to ourselves if we can perceive what our affections communicate to us. Our perfect nature remains to be affirmed by us and cannot be taken away or lost. In this way, we are similar to Nature, whose perfection includes an infinite of bodies in constant states of motion and change. Seasons change, people die, duration takes hold, all without impacting the perfection of God, in which all things are conceived, and in which nothing could be other than it is. A body composed of bodies “can be affected in many other ways, without change of its form,” writes Spinoza. “And if we proceed in this way to infinity, we shall easily conceive that the whole of nature is one individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole individual.”⁶⁰ Even when, in my own journey, I trend towards imperfection, I remain a mode of perfect substance, Nature, God. Likewise, my relations, “good” or “bad,” have no bearing on my perfection; my *actions* do. Relations simply help me develop the intuition I need to better act.

If we all had perfect intuition, we would respect each other completely, despite our differences, knowing intuitively from our knowledge of God that each thing has a unique perfection. In the intuitive kingdom of ends, relationships are always authentic. For Spinoza, the most useful thing to a person is another free person, since in *acting* authentically in one’s essence, one helps the other know God, and develop the intuition critical to becoming themselves.⁶¹ When we have authentic relations with others, we learn about God, and we learn about ourselves. Nature, understood by Deleuze as *the plane of immanence*, “is variable and is constantly being altered, composed and recomposed, by individuals and collectives.”⁶² So, to get

⁵⁹ Spinoza, II. P13. Lemma. 6.

⁶⁰ Spinoza, II. P13. Lemma. 7.

⁶¹ Spinoza, IV. P71. Dem.

⁶² Deleuze, 128.

to know Nature and our own natures, we too must be composed and recomposed by our relations along the plane of immanence, where no thing has any more perfection than any other thing, where one strives to persist in one's being.

We cannot be understood without relations. By IV. P39. Dem.: "to be preserved, the human body requires a great many other bodies."⁶³ Every body will relate differently to every other. "What one loves, the other hates," writes Spinoza, and "the same man may now love what before he hated."⁶⁴ Spinoza's love and hatred, like all affects, are derivatives of desire, joy and sadness:

- VI. Love is a joy, accompanied by the idea of an external cause.
- VII. Hate is a sadness, accompanied by the idea of an external cause.⁶⁵

When we relate to something with love, then, we near our perfection, since joy is a transition to perfection. When we hate, on the other hand, our power to act is decreased. Because of this Spinoza says that "hate can never be good."⁶⁶ When we venture out to relate to the world, we need to pay special attention to those things which affect us with love, things which help us become ourselves. Hate, which diminishes our perfection, can only be conquered by love, and the more so the more loving we are. This is exactly what we are doing when we moderate our affections to turn passions into actions; by turning the sadness of suffering passions to the joy of freely acting, we transform our hatred (sadness with the idea of an external thing) into love (joy with the idea of an external thing.) Loving others is a joy, as is loving Nature. Spinoza advises that one ought:

To use things, therefore, and take pleasure in them as far as possible-not of course, to the point where we are disgusted with them, for there is no pleasure in that-this is the part of a wise man. It is the part of a wise man, I say, to refresh and restore himself in

⁶³ Spinoza, IV. P39. Dem.

⁶⁴ Spinoza, III. P51.

⁶⁵ Spinoza, III. Def. of the Affects. 6-7.

⁶⁶ Spinoza, IV. P45.

moderation with pleasant food and drink. With scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theater, and other things of this kind, which anyone can use without injury to another. For the human body is composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that the whole body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature, and hence, so that the mind may also be equally capable of understanding many things at once.⁶⁷

When we nourish ourselves, body and mind, with relations of love, we are more capable of acting. As an affect, *loving* increases our power, thus it increases our ability to become ourselves. Loving relations bring us nearer to perfection.

conclusion: on joy

Spinoza's *Ethics* insists that to be virtuous one must increase one's intellect and intuition, and in coming to understand Nature become capable of acting freely in one's own nature. In this virtuous state our intellectual love of God aids us in becoming more ourselves, and moving ever nearer to our perfection, and thus to joy. Virtue and joy cannot be separated when virtue is acting in accordance with your essence and being yourself. One cannot feel joy when one is not oneself, subordinate to one's own passions, and unconscious to one's own desires. As our composite bodies encounter other bodies and experience the changes which are increases and decreases of one's power of acting as oneself, the virtuous character moderates these changes and uses them to expand more fully into the contours of the body. "We live in continuous change," writes Spinoza, and "as we change for the better or worse, we are called happy or unhappy."⁶⁸ But no amount of unhappiness can remove a person's potential to near perfection since this perfection exists within us as a necessary extension of God's perfect nature. Even those changes which occur in relation to others and the external world which cause the sadness of diminishing one's

⁶⁷ Spinoza, IV. P45. Schol.

⁶⁸ Spinoza, V. P39. D.

power can be moderated and turned into the freedom of action. All the changes in the body do not change the body's eternal essence or form. It is only a matter of using one's reason, affect, and intuition to understand the passions and act on those connections which empower one's being oneself while letting go of those which do not. This is how one might move on from heartbreak by utilizing Spinozist therapeutic philosophy-she must turn the heartbreak, like all passions, into the active expression of her eternal self.

Spinozist therapy acknowledges the inevitability of suffering passions, and claims that for this reason is it foolish to attempt to halt the passions affecting us. It is an aspect of human nature to be affected, and if it is part of our essential nature, as a consequence of God's nature, then suffering passions is natural and perfect in its own way. As with all perfect things, the only measure of their value is whether or not they are acting in accordance with their essence. There are no *Good* or *Evil* passions, as there is no Good or Evil nature. Passions are beyond good and evil; they are real and therefore perfect. The test of our virtue is whether or not we can moderate these perfect passions so that they aid us in nearing our own perfection. We could not rid ourselves of "bad" passions and keep only the "good" one's. Each passion has its purpose and effect, and good and bad are only relative terms for the ways passions teach us about ourselves (this affect is good and helps me be myself, or this affect takes me away from myself because I do not yet understand it). One can always find joy by becoming the cause of one's affections and becoming authentically oneself. Suffering itself can be turned into joy, if we allow the affects of our suffering to translate into deeper understanding of our natures, and act on this understanding by acting authentically.

In this same vein, all relations, even one's which might cause pain, bring us closer to ourselves. Relating to another usually leads to being affected by them in some shape or form, so

there is nothing more helpful to man than another free man, who in being a different mode of substance from us reminds us of our own essence. If we moderate the affections which arise in relationships we can use them to understand ourselves, ideally while the other in the relation does the same. Indeed, the continued advice to leave value judgements behind and only judge things on whether they are enacting their perfection ought to teach us that in pursuing our own perfection we must allow the other to do the same. If the unfolding into self which follows these affective experiences drives the relation apart, the knowledge gained can still increase one's power to be oneself. Relations between bodies come and go, since all the infinite bodies which make up the body of nature move at different speeds and are affected differently by different things. In the same way substance retains its essence while experiencing the internal shifts of growth and change, we retain our identity while experience the ebb and flow of power and perfection that accompanies the affective experience of being human. Joy derives from deciding to notice this identity and unfold more fully, with each relation, into ourselves. It is impossible to fully accept joy without accepting the passions for two reasons: first, because joy is itself a passion made active and second, because it is moderating the passions which allows us the understanding of ourselves which is necessary for virtue and joy. That is why Spinoza insists it is through moderation of the affects that we will become the active causes of ourselves and move on ever nearer to our perfection.

III. LOVE nurturing spiritual growth

introduction: there is no healing in isolation

While Spinoza defends the place of affections in therapeutic philosophy and presents the relationship between love and joy, he does not go so far as hooks or Fromm in extolling the healing value of love as the sole remedy for heartbreak. In the contemporary love ethic put forth by bell hooks in *all about love*, loving is the only way to move on in a healthy way from previous experiences of heartbreak or lovelessness. Loving is the very thing which enables us to let go, both of our lovers and of parts of ourselves we have outgrown, in order to move on freely. hooks will call love a “transformative force” since it is loving action towards ourselves and loving interactions with others that show us who we really are and encourage us to act authentically as ourselves, to return to ourselves more with each relation, positive or negative. As in Stoic therapy and Spinozism, becoming actively yourself is the goal of a therapy of loving, and the good life lies in acting authentically in one’s nature. Becoming yourself through loving will cure the ills of the soul. But a contemporary love ethic does not merely defend the value of affection in therapy, but demands one be affected, be affectionate, in order to heal. Loving therapy insists on communion with others. While hooks will spend time developing the crucial place of self-love in a therapeutic philosophy driven by an ethical imperative of loving, in the end the philosophers considered in this section agree: there is no healing in isolation.

As in our previous two chapters, which focused on the therapeutic capabilities of Stoicism and Spinozism, we will find in a philosophical therapy of loving an emphasis on *action*. In their calls to *live by a love ethic* and *learn the art of loving*, hooks and Fromm bring love to

life, make it a force, a behaviour, an activity. They will refer to it as a *practice of loving* and explain that learning how to love is like learning any technical art, something which takes concentration and effort to master. By discussing love in this way, always as an action and never as a *passion* which overtakes us, we can change our perception of love as a feeling that happens to us and recognize its power as an ethical attitude we take up. We ought to always be taking up our definitions of loving behaviour and making sure they are sound. Fromm will appeal to Spinoza's distinction between the two forms of affect, passion and action, and argue that we ought to make love into an action by being the adequate cause of our love, by being active in how we love and doing it well. We ought to change our language around love as a reminder to treat it as a free action and never a passion: what if we called love *loving*? asks hooks. What if we said, "I love to you," rather than "I love you," as Irigaray suggests.¹ Maybe we would love better or more often. The tools utilized by the lover in pursuing the therapy of genuine love are geared towards action, and especially towards allowing both the lover and her loved one become the active causes of themselves. Recognition, respect, communication, and knowledge (which I will suggest are the key components of practicing a contemporary love ethic), are behaviours which, when practiced well, facilitate the unfolding into self of all members of a loving relationship. This is why loving is taken to be the cure for heartbreak, for the loss of love. Love is what allows us to transform into ourselves, whether we are currently involved in loving intimate relationships or not.

Wherever you are beginning loving therapy, love is the answer, whether you are heartbroken by love's lack or its perceived failures, or securely involved in a romantic relationship. Loving is a continuous force which builds on itself. It is always the right time to

¹ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*. Translated by Alison Martin, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 101.

practice loving. Indeed, for the therapy of loving to work, loving must become one's daily practice. This means it is not enough to reserve loving behaviour for one's romantic partners. One must practice a loving ethic to everyone one encounters, and one must love oneself. The implication here is that one must be loving even if one is alone, or heartbroken. Perhaps even more so, because healing requires connecting with others, and it is only loving self-reflection which will remind the heartbroken who she is, and that relating to others helps her further discover who she is. We have seen in our previous therapeutic methods that pain and sadness come from alienation from oneself, and are signals that one ought to reflect on one's nature and whether one is acting in accordance with it. Similarly, in loving therapy heartbreak appears as a call to *be more loving*, and to *be more oneself*, both privately and with others.

Loving therapy begins with learning the self-love required for self-esteem. Loving is the engine for unfolding into self by recognizing who one is, respecting one's individual essence, and communicating one's nature to oneself (while acknowledging some of itself may be yet unknown and this journey isn't over yet). So, self-love is what allows us to become authentically ourselves and retain our integrity even while having relationships with others. There is no need to fear the passionate side of love and relationships if one has a strong foundation of self-love and self-esteem. Genuinely loving others and being well loved in return only maximises the foundational integrity of self-love, allowing all members of a relationship to maintain their identities, indeed become even more themselves, all while being deeply affected by their lovers or friends. Genuine loving is nurturing both one's own growth and others' growth. As Nozick will suggest in "Love's Bond," it takes two *Is* to make a *We*, and both individuals ought to be developing further into themselves while the *We* functions in a loving relation. The best way I can love to you, my partner in love, is to let you be and become yourself. Since the other is, in

the end, always separate from myself, I ought to respectfully support their unfolding. The simultaneous unfolding of two free Is which occurs in loving relationships is what makes communication so critical. We cannot presume to know the other, a particular mode with a peculiar effect, in a constant state of becoming (as we are!) We can only communicate as best we can what changes are taking place along the journey to ourselves. As we unfold into ourselves we ought to watch and listen as the other unfolds; all communication should be *horizontal*. I speak, you listen. You speak, I listen. Together we become more ourselves than we were before, thanks to the respectful nature of love. This is the power of loving relationships, with romantic partners and friends.

Of course, sometimes relationships don't work out. This might be because they were genuinely loving and the unfolding into self which occurred on all sides made the lovers incompatible. It may be because love was not present-either because one or both partners lack the self-esteem, which is foundational for loving behaviour, and failed to retain their own integrity within the relationship-or because love is not yet understood to be an action. In either case, whether one needs to move on from a genuinely loving relationship or a faulty one, the solution is the loving action of releasing oneself from what one has outgrown. It is at this critical junction that one must choose love, and lovingly take up the ups and downs of the relation and decide to act on the knowledge gained and become more oneself, more loving, as a result. Being in a We affects you, Nozick writes: it changes the contours of the self, but the self remains. If the self is shrouded in nostalgia or heartache, it is up to us to rebuild a strong foundation of self-love and surround ourselves with loving community. We can be changed by our relations, but we must be the active cause of these changes, and let them bolster our becoming self.

This remains true within or without relationships. We must move on and become ourselves. In the case of lost love, we must take care to mindfully remember to practice loving, ourselves and others, so that we can continue becoming ourselves while dealing with the loss of a We relationship. With a combined effort of nurturing one's self-esteem and enacting a daily loving practice to all one interacts with, one can move on from the heartbreak of lost love. The experience of having at one time been involved in a We further develops the I, as she expands into the new contours of her body and lovingly decides what feels in line with her nature, and what habits ought to be outgrown. While self-love is the basis of unfolding into self, *we* relationships are crucial to discovering and expanding our boundaries. To let loving do its therapeutic work, we must love others as well as ourselves. We ought to surround ourselves with loving communities, friends and family members and colleagues, and practice loving daily to everyone we meet. Every loving relation we form assists us in becoming ourselves. To heal from heartbreak, we must go on loving.

on loving

Love is a healing force because, when we practice it right, it returns us to ourselves. This ability of love to help us become ourselves is present both in and outside of relationships with others. Loving relationships, romantic, familial, or platonic, ought to facilitate our becoming ourselves, but it is equally a sign of self-love to leave relationships which do *not* facilitate growth, or worse, encourage one to create a false self. Whether we are currently in love or moving on from it, it is practicing *loving* which will let us unfold into ourselves and heal from the pains we have faced in life and love. Learning how to be loving is a therapeutic journey of self-reflection and requires living by a practical ethic: a love ethic. In some ways, being in a

loving relationship is itself a type of constant moving on, since in loving relationships we are given the room, the understanding, the love it takes to grow and unfold into ourselves, and we offer this same respect to our partners. When we are given this space, we can trust our intuition and continuously move forward, deepening our understanding of ourselves by acting in our essence. Growing entails moving on from past endeavours which do not align with who you truly are, that you which is natural, essential, and divine. Allowing this growth in a lover or friend means being willing and able to let go of our preconceived notions of them and loving them simultaneously as they are right now and for who they will continue to become. I want to grow old with you, one lover says to another. In relationships of genuine love, this growth is possible. The push and pull between loving and moving on runs parallel to the non-linear journey of becoming oneself; we near our perfection and sometimes we fall away from it. We stretch and retract, we do things which are out of character and regret them; we try new things, we love and become heartbroken. We grow.

These are the natural growing pains that accompany the return to oneself, the experiences which allow us to learn who we are. Learning to be loving, though it will heal you and bring tremendous joy, will not relieve you of the human experience of suffering. What it will do is teach you the knack of taking that suffering and letting it guide you closer to perfection, to the virtuous state of being yourself. In this way, the therapeutic process of loving is a lot like Stoic therapy. The difference in these two methods is that the Stoic has everything she needs to practice Stoic therapy within herself, and never needs to leave her house or look outside of herself to be happy and virtuous. The lover, on the other hand, needs others in order to complete the therapeutic work of loving. Her attachments are not a cause of pain, but an opportunity for communion, for catching a glimpse of the whole of nature to which she belongs and

understanding a little better her place in it. Becoming yourself is only the necessary basis for being loving and not its whole. When one is truly loving, one love's oneself, the world, and everyone in it. Loving is an interpersonal and interconnected therapy which lets oneself and the one's one loves grow into themselves and heal. Its methods lie in communicating one's nature authentically, and recognizing and respecting others for who they are so that communion can become reciprocal and honest. In practicing a love ethic, you cannot remain aloof from the people and things around you. When you truly love, you are a part of the whole, and it is a logical fallacy to love some and not all of life, to love yourself and not others, or to love others and not yourself.

In her treatise on love, *all about love*, bell hooks offers a self-help philosophy with loving as its therapeutic method. hooks claims love as a healing force: "this book tells us how to return to love," by presenting us with therapeutic solutions for developing sound definitions of what love is and how to practice it.² Taking her cue from Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*, hooks insists that we ought to rethink love as an action and not a simple passion, that we ought to call it *loving* instead of love. In changing our language around love from passive to active we begin the journey of learning how to be properly loving. Again, and again hooks will remind us that the root of love is action, and that one must actively learn how to love well, to think deeply and often about one's practice of love rather than assuming one's childhood ideas of love are necessarily sound. For hooks, *loving* is an ethical imperative, and it is only by endeavouring to understand for oneself the "metaphysical meaning of love in everyday life" that one may begin to live ethically with others.³ But we are afraid to talk about love.⁴ The children of divorces and

² bell hooks, *all about love: new visions* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), xxix.

³ hooks, xx.

⁴ hooks, xxvi.

unhappy marriages, disillusioned by the apparent failure of love all around us, many young people avoid talking seriously about love as a philosophical or therapeutic option, since “it is especially hard to speak of love when what we have to say calls attention to the fact that lovelessness is more common than love, that many of us are not sure what we mean when we talk of love or how to express love.”⁵

Many people are wounded in the place where we would know love. Having been let down by people we thought loved us, unsure how to deal with the grief and loss, we find it difficult to consider love as a healing force because of the association of love with heartbreak. How could that which hurt us, heal us? But, says hooks, “only love can heal the wounds of the past,” and it is only in letting go of the grief of lost love and past lovelessness and rediscovering for ourselves how to practice loving rightly that we will achieve happiness.⁶ In the wake of heartbreak, we have an opportunity to deepen our understanding of loving practice. We can reflect on what went wrong, and whether love was present or genuine. When we reconsider love as a verb, an action, and a transformative force, when we practice the art of loving in our everyday lives, we move closer to a world which is unafraid, in which wider culture and society is governed by a love ethic. When we take the time to create sound definitions of love and enact these with daily practice, we heal the pains of the past, learning from them how to be better, fuller versions of ourselves. The more individuals begin to speak openly about the place of love in our lives, the closer we will come to a society which shares a strong and active ideal of loving thought and act. “Profound changes in the way we think, and act must take place if we are to

⁵ hooks, xxvii.

⁶ hooks, xxviii.

create a loving culture,” hooks says, and the first of these changes is in the rigorous consideration of what love is, and how to do it.⁷

When we redefine love as *loving*, as a verb, a commitment to being loving requires us to act. Indeed, hooks asks us to consider how different our attitude might be about love if instead of saying “I am in love” we said, “I will love” or “I am loving.”⁸ Activity is central to therapeutic philosophy. Like the other therapies considered here, loving requires work and daily practice to have its desired affect (facilitating the ethical return to self). What exactly does it mean to rethink love as *loving*, as an art or an activity? To explain how love can be seen as an activity and not a passion, Fromm appeals to Spinoza’s formulation of action. For Spinoza, being virtuous requires acting in one’s essence and being the adequate cause of one’s ideas. Activity is central to Spinozist ethics, as it was in Stoic ethics; since we are predetermined, our freedom lies in *freedom of act* and not *freedom of will*. We are free to act in our natures, to be and become ourselves, to near our own perfection. Perfection is pure activity, the active expression of one’s eternal, perfect nature.

For Spinoza, actions and passions are two forms of emotion or *affection*, and emotions are “the modifications of the body by which the power of action in the body is increased or diminished, aided or restrained.”⁹ Affection is neutral; what decides whether an affect will increase or diminish one’s power is whether one is its active cause.¹⁰ When one understands oneself (as a result of one’s adequate ideas about God or nature) one is the active cause of one’s emotions. One’s power increases, perfection is neared, and one continues to unfold into oneself.

⁷ hooks, xxiv.

⁸ hooks, 177.

⁹ Spinoza, III. DIII.

¹⁰ Spinoza, III.PI. Our mind acts certain things and suffers others: namely, in so far as it has adequate ideas, thus far it necessarily acts certain things, and in so far as it has inadequate ideas, thus far it necessarily suffers certain things. Spinoza, 85.

If one does not have adequate ideas about things, neglects to use reason, does not reflect on oneself and therefore cannot know oneself, one will lack intuition, be paralyzed to act, and will suffer one's emotions. Passions confuse and enrage, make one feel shame or regret and diminish one's power, stifling becoming. Actions empower one to be oneself and continue strengthening one's knowledge. Passions are suffering; activity is freedom. "He differentiates among the affects between active and passive affect, 'actions' and 'passions,'" Fromm writes of Spinoza. "In the exercise of an active affect, man is free, he is the master of his affect; in the exercise of a passive affect, man is driven, the object of motivations of which he himself is not aware."¹¹

When we view love as an activity instead of a feeling, we understand that it is not something that happens *to us*. Love is not a passion we suffer, but an action, "the practice of a human power."¹²

To be loving requires we understand ourselves and *act* in our nature. Loving is a continuous act, a daily practice: "Love is an activity, not a passive affect; it is a 'standing in,' not a falling for."¹³

Distinguishing between these two forms of affection clarifies how affection can be beneficial in a therapeutic-philosophical context. Loving, as a therapeutic method, creates space for and requires intersubjectivity in one's healing. On the journey of becoming oneself by learning to be loving, everyone one interacts with deepens one's understanding of oneself and of *deus sive natura*. In a therapeutic model taking a love ethic as central, the extirpation of passions required by Stoicism is not necessary. Emotions which diminish our power are articulated and reflected on so that they become actions. Being vulnerable is not a sign of weakness in a love ethic, but rather a call to action. If we have the clarity to notice which affects we are passive to then we can regain control by actioning these in a way which empower us to act in line with our nature.

¹¹ Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 20.

¹² Fromm, 21.

¹³ Fromm, 21.

Love is and ought to be conceived of as an activity. But what activity is that? hooks defines it as “nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth,” quoting the self-help text *The Road Less Travelled* by psychoanalyst M. Scott Peck and noting its echoing of Fromm.¹⁴ The action of loving helps us - and those we lovingly interact with - grow. A therapeutic model of love requires that we learn the art of loving to foster our own and others’ becomings. In this model, when we love well, we simultaneously enable the becoming of others, and create loving communities which continuously affirm loving behaviour, a loving kingdom of ends. Like in other therapeutic philosophies, learning to be loving requires practice. “*Love is an art*,” writes Fromm, “just as living is an art; if we want to learn how to love we must proceed in the same way we have to proceed if we want to learn any other art, say music, painting, carpentry or the art of medicine.”¹⁵ Getting good at anything takes practice. Like in other therapeutic philosophies, here *practice* has a twofold meaning; loving must be considered a *practical* art with an active affect, and it must be *practiced* daily. When we are loving, we take action to nurture our own and other’s growth, we facilitate our own and the other’s becoming. Loving is a therapeutic force with a practical ethic of being oneself at its centre.

the good lover

The practical methods of loving suggested by hooks and Fromm are not likely to surprise someone who has had some experience with relationships, good and bad. “To truly love, we must learn to mix various ingredients,” writes hooks, listing off “care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication.”¹⁶ If you think about

¹⁴ hooks, 4.

¹⁵ Fromm, 5.

¹⁶ hooks, 5.

the people in your life who you love and who bolster your growth, it is likely that these ingredients are present in your relationships with them. Dishonest, disrespectful, and uncommunicative relationships are not loving relationships, and cannot facilitate one's growth, running as they do counter to well-being and joy. Fromm shares a similar list of tools for the lover, including "care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge," and calls these "a syndrome of attitudes," mutually interdependent qualities which we can find in a mature person, that is, someone *active*, productive, authentically oneself, and free.¹⁷ Because of the overlapping nature of the above lists, we can narrow down the tools of love to those actions which allow these attitudes to unfold in the lover. As such, I call the practical tools of loving *recognition*, *respect*, *knowledge*, and *communication*. These four active qualities of loving are critical to practicing a love ethic, and to facilitating the growth of the loving person and those she interacts with. When one practices loving with these four related tools, the therapeutic benefits of loving follow inevitably, and trust and care develop naturally in one's relations with others. When these four actions are neglected, loving is impossible, and the self is lost in inauthentic relationships.

Recognition is perhaps the most foundational of love's tools, since it is the dialectical engine which allows one to see the other as subject, as an *I* with a rich internal life of desire and individuality, as someone different from oneself. Without recognition, *respect* would be impossible. Respect is the ability to see another person as she is and extend loving care to help her to continue to unfold into herself. This loving attitude is impossible without recognition between two free *Is*, and in fact it is one's recognition of the other as a *self* which allows one to best recognize one's own freedom. In his *Philosophy of Mind*, G.W.F Hegel introduces the idea of mutual recognition between two self consciousnesses, and writes that "in the other as I, I

¹⁷ Fromm, 30.

immediately behold my own self, but I also behold in it an immediately real object, another I absolutely independent in face of myself.”¹⁸ In the process of recognition, both myself and the other become known as selves, as *Is*, as freedoms. Hegel goes on to say that “only in this does *true* freedom come about, for since this consists in the identity of myself with the other, I am only genuinely free when the other is also free and is recognized by me as free.”¹⁹ Until the lover can practice recognition, she cannot properly be herself, since she will not be able to recognize herself or anyone as a self in a project of unfolding. All people are born at least twice, Hegel argues: first as infants, and then again when they are recognized by their parents as independent persons.²⁰ This is why, as Spinoza writes, there is nothing more useful to a person than another free person; the bond of mutual recognition is the “closest bond of friendship.”²¹ In the freedom of the other to be herself, I recognize my own.

In *I Love to You*, the feminist linguist Luce Irigaray suggests that Hegelian recognition is the condition for a “we” relationships to exist.²² Loving requires recognizing the other, and Irigaray suggests we say “I love *to* you,” rather than “I love you,” because the *to* reminds one to constantly practice recognition, which “implies respecting you as other, accepting that I draw myself to a halt before you as something insurmountable, a mystery, a freedom, that will never be mine, a subjectivity that will never be mine, a mine that will never be mine.”²³ When two selves recognize each other, both are faced with their natural limitations; being me means not being you and as such I can never fully know you and can never control you. My only means of

¹⁸ G. W. F Hegel, *The Philosophy of Mind*, translated by Michael Inwood, (London: Oxford University Press, 2007), 157, B. §430.

¹⁹ Hegel, 158, B. §431.

²⁰ Hegel, 230, C. §521.

²¹ Spinoza, IV. P72.

²² Irigaray, 104.

²³ Irigaray 104.

getting close to you, to learning a little bit about your unique perspective of the universe, is to respect this limitation and support your continuous unfolding.

Respect and recognition are intertwined. Until I recognize you as other, as different to me, there is no way for me to respect you for who you are, and if I do not respect you for who you are, how can I help nurture your growth by loving you? Irigaray claims that when I recognize the other as who she already is, I give her the chance to exist as such.²⁴ Similarly, Fromm writes that respect “denotes, in accordance with the root of the word (*respicere*=to look at), the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality. Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is.”²⁵ Crucially, the loving qualities of recognition and respect must be turned both to oneself and to others. One cannot properly recognize the other as a unique and free self without noticing the same in oneself. Having recognized that the other is not me, that we are different and unique, free selves, I can begin to *respect* our differences. In respecting the other, I respect myself as well, since I commit to looking, to seeing things as they are. Respecting the other requires in turn that I respect myself and enact my essence, as a sign of the respect of our different and particular modes or expressions of nature, and for the whole of nature, of which we are both parts. Irigaray calls this respect the “principle of morality and ethics.”²⁶ It is the practice of recognition and respect in loving which facilitates the growth of oneself and others, since in seeing how we are different, noticing the “negative” space between us that I can never traverse, I realize the way to best love you is to let you be and become yourself. “I recognize you signifies that you are different from me, that I cannot identify myself (with) nor master your becoming,” Irigaray writes:

²⁴ Irigaray, 9.

²⁵ Fromm, 27.

²⁶ Irigaray, 52.

I will never be your master. And it is this negative that enables me to go towards you. I recognize you supposes that I cannot see right through you. You will never be entirely visible to me, but thanks to that, I respect you as different from me. What I do not see of you draws me toward you provided you hold your own, and provided your energy allows me to hold my own and rise mine with you...I go towards you...I go towards that which enables me to become while remaining myself.²⁷

For a relation between two selves to be genuinely loving, the two must realize they can never control each other, and in some ways, never fully know each other. Fromm calls this type of relation *fusion with integrity*.²⁸ In loving, the boundaries between people do not collapse when pressed, but they change, stretch, and relax into new places. The contours of the lover change, but she remains fully herself, herself who has been impacted deeply by her relation with the other.

Thus, the loving quality of *knowledge* is partially the knowledge that the other can never be known fully since the other is not and will never be identical to me. When the lover wants to know somebody, she respects that in some ways she cannot know them, cannot broach them, since she recognizes “the other as another, irreducible to me.”²⁹ To bridge the gap between us, we must *communicate*. In fact, it is the negative space between us, the ways in which we cannot fully know each other, which is the ground for all communication. Irigaray points out that even between us and ourselves there is an experience of the negative, a degree in which we will never completely know ourselves. That is because the boundaries which make us up are not rigid, and as we continue on the journey of becoming ourselves, we take different shapes and exist in states of flux. “We know ourselves,” Irigaray writes, “and yet even with all the efforts we may make, we do not know ourselves. We know our fellow man, and yet we do not know him, because we

²⁷ Irigaray, 104.

²⁸ Fromm, 19.

²⁹ Irigaray 56.

are not a thing, and our fellow man is not a thing.”³⁰ When we respect one another as subjects each on our own journey to perfection, we acknowledge that we both are in the process of unfolding into ourselves, and as such will never be ‘complete’ or finished. The human project of becoming self requires letting go of the idea of knowledge as complete. Like loving, knowing is an activity, a constant reaching, reasoning, and reconsidering in the light of new arguments. When we learn, our boundaries stretch and retract, our habits change, our minds expand, and our self is affected, since we become increasingly the adequate cause of our ideas. In loving, the process is much the same. As we get to know people and share experiences with them, we are confronted with different aspects of ourselves. *Knowledge* is a loving quality because reflection and reconsideration follow naturally from it. The more we learn about the world at large, the closer we come to understanding ourselves. Recognizing the limitations of our ability to know even ourselves is what continuously drives us to reach out.

To bridge the inherent gaps in our ability to know, we must *communicate*. Loving communication requires that one be authentic and honest. “I will never reach this other, and for that very reason, he/she forces me to remain in my self in order to be faithful to him/her and us.”³¹ When you cannot understand something about me, we have an opportunity to create a loving dialogue, to communicate with each other something of who we are. The same is true when I cannot understand something about myself. I need to find ways to communicate my nature to myself. Our bodies often communicate to us our needs and desires and it is up to us to listen to these messages, to recognize them as needs of the whole self. Healthy communication always facilitates an unfolding into oneself. For Irigaray, *communication* is the only way one could ever successfully experience oneself as a part of the whole of nature. Men and women are

³⁰ Fromm, 27.

³¹ Irigaray, 105.

equally limited in their experience of nature, since each represents only half (if not less) of human nature. This limitation is not a curse, but “the condition of becoming and of creation,” the condition which allows men and women to reach for the infinite.³² We can access the whole of nature, then, only by honest communication with the other. For Irigaray, this is the sexed other. In practicing a love ethic, I maintain that this level of communication, what Irigaray calls a “dialogic,” “horizontal,” and “intersubjective” model of communication, is required for all others, who each represent a particular mode of or expression of nature.³³ Dialogic communication requires that we speak *to* and not *at* each other, that we speak honestly and express ourselves *as* ourselves, and that we *listen*.

Proper listening requires silence. How are we to reconcile the requirement of listening, of being passive in the relation with the other, with the requirement that the lover maintain constant activity? Affective listening is never passive; when we are silent in listening to our interlocutors, friends, or lovers, we are not passive because no amount of our freedom is being sacrificed. In fact, we create an environment in which freedom to be oneself is valued. Silence in communication is an action of respect and a commitment to learning. When I listen to you, it is my way of acknowledging that I do not know everything about you, that I do not know you better than you know yourself, that I do not know everything, because I, like you, am on a journey of becoming, and am not yet complete. “I am listening to you is to listen to your words as something unique, irreducible, especially to my own, as something new, as yet unknown,” and as I listen, I enable your becoming, “I encourage something unexpected to emerge, some becoming, some growth.”³⁴

³² Irigaray, 41.

³³ Irigaray, 46.

³⁴ Irigaray, 116-117.

This same silence is required for one to communicate with oneself, and it is no accident that the skills Fromm insists that the student of the art of loving learn are *discipline, concentration, and patience*. One ought to meditate, Fromm suggests, first thing in the morning and last thing before bed, at the very least, if one wants to be successful in learning this or any art. Practicing the art of loving requires discipline because it is not a hobby but an ethical stance, an art of living, which requires one be committed to daily practice.³⁵ Loving requires patience, because it is not an art that can be learned overnight; it is a process of continuous learning and perfecting skills so that oneself and others can spiritually develop.³⁶ Finally, learning the art of loving requires concentration, so that even in moments of silent listening, the lover is indeed always active in loving, not distracted, fidgeting, thinking of other things or wanting to be elsewhere. Fromm, writing in 1956, has serious concerns over modern human ability to concentrate on the given moment. How much more so, now, in 2022, is it true that concentration is a rare quality? “This lack of concentration is clearly shown in our difficulty in being alone with ourselves,” Fromm writes, since we cannot even sit still “without talking, smoking, reading, drinking.”³⁷ If we cannot concentrate, if we cannot be alone with ourselves, if we cannot be still for a moment, we will fail in listening, we will fail in communicating, and we will fail in loving. Fromm’s suggestion that the student of love meditates everyday is primarily to cultivate the concentration necessary for being ourselves, since, as in Stoic therapy, “to be concentrated means to live fully in the present” and “avoiding, as far as possible, trivial conversation, that conversation which is not genuine.”³⁸ The tools of the art of loving, Fromm tells us, are only

³⁵ Fromm, 100.

³⁶ Fromm, 101.

³⁷ Fromm, 101.

³⁸ Fromm, 105-106.

accessible to the productive and mature person. When immature, unproductive characters attempt to love, it fails.

For Fromm, immature love is “fusion *without* integrity” (my emphasis), meaning that one or all members of a relationship are not living by an ethic of being authentically themselves.³⁹ This might be because one is not yet “mature” enough to act like oneself, or does not understand oneself well enough yet to know what that would entail. It could also mean that one or all members of a relationship fail to recognize, respect, or communicate with the other, and are not interested in getting to know one another as they really are. As a consequence of this lack of integrity, Fromm calls relationships of this type “symbiotic” and explains that these wannabee lovers attempt to escape “the unbearable feeling of isolation and separateness” but cannot, since they have given up their integrity.⁴⁰ Fromm considers those feelings of isolation and separateness which come with being human the greatest ailment of the soul. He sees loving as the only solution, and by loving he means only fusion *with* integrity and never without, since “in contrast to symbiotic union, mature *love is union under the condition of preserving one’s integrity, one’s individuality.*”⁴¹ When one lacks the integrity and intuition which come with being oneself, relationships of genuine love are impossible. Loving is an activity, and when I am not myself, who is there to do the loving? To be able to handle the tools of love in relation to another person, to be a good lover, I must first be able to practice them towards my self and cultivate a practice of self-love. “My own self must be as much an object of my love as another person,” Fromm writes, and “if an individual is able to love productively, he loves himself too; if he can love *only* others, he cannot love at all.”⁴² To avoid false, immature, and symbiotic “love,” to be able to

³⁹ Fromm, 19.

⁴⁰ Fromm, 17.

⁴¹ Fromm, 19.

⁴² Fromm, 56.

recognize, respect, know, and communicate with another, one must first be able to turn these tools of loving towards oneself.

self-love

Being yourself is a necessary condition of loving because it takes two *Is* to make a *we*. To get to an emotional place where we can be authentically ourselves in all interactions with others (which we must if we are to be loving to all those we meet) one must cultivate a practice of self-love based on appropriate *self-esteem*. “The wounded heart learns self-love by first overcoming low self-esteem,” writes hooks, positioning lack of self-love and self-esteem as the first hurdle to be tackled by a therapy of loving.⁴³ For hooks, self-esteem is intimately related to honesty. We need not create false selves or act inauthentically with others when we have positive self-esteem, when we know ourselves and take action to be the adequate cause of our ideas. Low self-esteem, on the flipside, is increased by dishonesty in relationships or to oneself. Dishonesty pulls one away from oneself, alienating and dissociating one from one’s own nature. When we create false selves to hide ourselves from others, growing becomes impossible, since “it is impossible to nurture one’s own or another’s spiritual growth when the core of one’s being is shrouded in secrecy and lies.”⁴⁴ Low self-esteem and insecurity which lead a person to lie and present an inauthentic version of herself is incompatible with the loving activity described above. “To know love, we have to tell the truth to ourselves and to others,” hooks writes, because if we create false selves, we are likely to forget “who we are and what we feel underneath the pretense.”⁴⁵ One cannot possibly be loving when one is not oneself. To learn self-love, therefore, one must work

⁴³ hooks, 55.

⁴⁴ hooks, 46.

⁴⁵ hooks, 48.

on one's self-esteem. "When we can see ourselves as we truly are and accept ourselves, we build the necessary foundation for self-love."⁴⁶

For Spinoza, there is a fine line between self-esteem and pride, which must be moderated by knowledge of oneself and reflection on one's nature. Since he has called love "joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause," Spinoza designates a new term for *joy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause* (i.e., oneself): self-esteem.⁴⁷ Elsewhere this is translated from the Latin *acquiescentia in seipso* as "self-complacency," meant to designate that one has acquiesced to her nature and understands and thus esteems herself as such. The word complacency derives from the Latin word for *pleasing*, which explains its use here, since one experiences joy at the idea of oneself, is *pleased* by it. However, since we contemporarily use the word complacency to denote a state of self-satisfaction which is likely to inhibit one's ability to move forward, I will be using the Curley translation of "self-esteem," since self-esteem and self-love do not inhibit but rather help one's growth and development. Self-esteem is the middle ground between pride and shame, when pride is an *overestimation* of oneself, and shame is an *underestimation* of oneself.⁴⁸ For proper self-esteem, one must be honest in one's estimation of oneself. Our self-esteem is increased, Spinoza adds, when we are loved well by others.⁴⁹ When we are authentically ourselves (because we have a foundation of self-esteem) we are recognized in our authenticity and individuality by those around us, creating a positive association with being ourselves. Being loving helps us and others cultivate positive self-esteem, and it is extremely important that we practice loving, that we are honest, particularly with children, so

⁴⁶ hooks, 53.

⁴⁷ Spinoza, III. P30, Schol.: In Everyman edition (105) this is translated by A. Boyle as "self-complacency" from the Latin, *acquiescentia in seipso*).

⁴⁸ Spinoza, III. P30, Schol.

⁴⁹ Spinoza, III. P34, Dem.

that they might have the necessary basis to be loving themselves. The ability to love and self-esteem are very closely related, and in the scholia to proposition LIV (*“The mind strives to imagine only those things which posit its power of acting”*), Spinoza links the terms *self-esteem* and *self-love*:

*This sadness, accompanied by the idea of our own weakness is called humility. But joy arising from considering ourselves, is called self-love or self-esteem.*⁵⁰

Self-love and self-esteem are not constant, Spinoza adds, but rather “renewed as often as a man considers his virtues, *or* his power of acting.”⁵¹ Self-love, like all loving, is an activity, an art which requires practice, renewal, and maintenance. Positive self-esteem is not promised to us, and one must be vigilant in protecting it by noticing its dips, its valleys, feelings of shame or pride which do not express one’s nature but diminish one’s power to be oneself. When we nourish our self-esteem, we love ourselves.

If one does not have a foundation of self-love one will always fail in loving, hooks insists, because one can never receive the unconditional love from others which one wants for self-affirmation.⁵² “Whenever we interact with others,” she writes, “the love we give and receive is always necessarily conditional. Although it is not impossible, it is very difficult and rare for us to be able to extend unconditional love to others, largely because we cannot exercise control over the behaviour of someone else.”⁵³ But we are free to control our own actions, and “we can give ourselves the unconditional love that is the grounding for sustained acceptance and affirmation.”⁵⁴ Self-love is the necessary basis for loving because when we love ourselves, we act in accordance with our nature or notice the bad feelings caused by acting uncharacteristically.

⁵⁰ Spinoza, III. P55, Schol.

⁵¹ Spinoza, III. P55, Schol.

⁵² hooks, 67.

⁵³ hooks, 67.

⁵⁴ hooks, 67.

Self-love is the means by which we begin to know ourselves and the way we continuously become ourselves. Since loving requires being a mature, productive character in the process of unfolding into oneself, it follows that loving requires simultaneously a dimension of loving self, since I am in the best position to foster my own unfolding.

hooks shares a familiar anecdote of fantasizing about finding a lover who would love her body and feel attracted to her when she herself did not love her body or perhaps even hated it. “Too fat, too this, or too that,” she describes her feelings towards her body, and admits: “It is silly, isn’t it, that I would dream of someone else offering to me the acceptance and affirmation I was withholding from myself.”⁵⁵ This is an example of the logical issue of hoping to be loved without doing the work of loving oneself. That familiar *maxim*, as hooks describes it, that *you cannot love anyone if you cannot love yourself*, is true for the simple reason that you cannot love anyone when you *are not* yourself. When you are alienated from yourself, from your desires, or your body, who is there to be loved? Who is there to be loving? In hooks’ ideal world, “we would all learn in childhood to love ourselves. We would grow, being secure in our worth and value, spreading love wherever we went, letting our light shine.”⁵⁶ In reality, few if any human beings are free of self-esteem issues, free of self-doubt. We all go through phases, days, weeks, even years where we may not love ourselves as well as we should. If we want to continue to grow and move on productively, becoming ourselves, when perhaps we have stalled out in our adult lives, we must develop a practice of self-love, that is recognizing, respecting, knowing, and communicating with ourselves lovingly, and acting authentically in our essence.

⁵⁵ hooks, 68.

⁵⁶ hooks, 68.

In his discussion of self-love, Fromm aims to dispel the Freudian notion that self-love is *narcissistic* or *selfish*. In “On Narcissism: An Introduction,” Freud writes that “in people whose libidinal development has suffered some disturbance...in their later choice of love-objects they have taken as a model not their mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking themselves as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed ‘narcissistic’.

In this observation we have the strongest of the reasons which have led us to adopt the hypothesis of narcissism.”⁵⁷ For Freud, being the object of your own love is a misplacement of libidinal energy, a selfish narcissism. This thinking leads to the assumption, says Fromm, that the more love I give myself the more limited my ability to love others.⁵⁸ “Narcissism is the earliest stage in human development,” Fromm writes, “and the person who in later life has returned to this narcissistic stage is incapable of love.”⁵⁹ Narcissism is irreconcilable with loving behaviour, since a narcissist sees others only as extensions of herself and is incapable of recognizing them as other, incapable of respecting them as a separate subject. Since self-love is loving directed at oneself, narcissism is therefore equally incompatible with self-love. Not only does Fromm disagree with Freud that self-love is selfishness but suggests that selfishness is *caused by a lack of self-love*.⁶⁰ When one love’s oneself, one acts in one’s essence and begins the process of recognition by recognizing first oneself. Respecting oneself as a unique and particular expression of nature, one reasons that others must be respected in the same way. If one fails to practice self-love, one may devolve into selfishness, not understanding that others, like oneself, exist as individuals apart from oneself. Selfishness inhibits our ability to be loving, while self-love

⁵⁷ Sigmund Freud, “On Narcissism: An Introduction” (London: Karnac, 2018), 88.

⁵⁸ Fromm, 53.

⁵⁹ Fromm, 54.

⁶⁰ Fromm, 54.

enhances it. “Far from being contradictory,” Fromm writes, loving self and loving others “are basically *conjunctive*.”⁶¹ He points out a logical fallacy in the notion that self-love and other love are mutually exclusive: if it is a virtue to love human beings, and I am a human being, it is only logical that I ought to love myself.⁶² Genuine love “is an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one’s own capacity to love.”⁶³ One’s capacity to love oneself then, is what motivates one’s own growth and happiness. If I am capable of loving, I must be capable of loving myself as well as others. The good lover loves herself too.

we

Despite her insistence on the importance of developing a practice of self-love, hooks warns that “self-love cannot flourish in isolation.”⁶⁴ While it is necessary for the therapeutic benefits of loving, being self-loving is not sufficient to be healed. “Much as I enjoy popular new age commentary on love,” writes hooks, “I am often struck by the dangerous narcissism fostered by spiritual rhetoric that pays so much attention to individual self-improvement and so little to the practice of love within the context of community.”⁶⁵ For hooks, developing a community is one of the most essential parts of living by a love ethic. Because loving is a journey of nurturing spiritual growth, hooks emphasizes interconnection and communion with nature and the divine as dimensions of loving. She shares with Spinoza and the Stoics an appeal to oneness and belonging to the whole. For hooks, “a commitment to spiritual life necessarily means we embrace the eternal principle that love is all, everything.”⁶⁶ Belonging to communities is a

⁶¹ Fromm, 55.

⁶² Fromm, 54.

⁶³ Fromm, 55.

⁶⁴ hooks, 54.

⁶⁵ hooks, 76.

⁶⁶ hooks, 77.

testament to this spiritual commitment, since it requires a daily affirmation that being loving means acknowledging the connection between us, loving everyone. “The love we make in community stays with us wherever we go,” hooks tells us.⁶⁷ If we pair a foundation of self-love with the sustaining love available in community bonds and loving friendship, we will begin to flourish into ourselves, nurturing our spiritual growth and having it nurtured in turn by others. hooks nods to the experience which sometimes comes about at the end of a romantic relationship; you emerge and suddenly realize you had let your other bonds fade; you do not have as many close friends as you thought, and you are lonely. It is crucial to maintain loving bonds with friends and community members even when in a romantic partnership. When one lives by a love ethic, love is not held as exclusively for a romantic partner. Everyone one comes across in life ought to be treated with a loving attitude, and relationships can exist at different levels of intimacy without necessitating a hierarchy of value or treatment.

If we take a monistic view of nature for granted and assume everything is *one*, call it God or nature or universe, and individual things or people are only particular expressions or modes of substance, it follows that we ought to love all things. When I love myself, or another, when I love nature or life, I commune with the whole world, I love everything. Loving, as an ethical imperative, is turned outwards, and requires communion. “Rarely, If ever, are any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion,” hooks writes.⁶⁸ How one experiences this healing communion in one’s own life is personal, and hooks tells us that when it comes to developing a spiritual practice which honours interconnectedness, one is going to have to decide what works best for oneself. Her only insistence is that the healing power of love requires intersubjectivity, connecting with, communing with, others.

⁶⁷ hooks, 144.

⁶⁸ hooks, 215.

Irigaray, on the other hand, rejects monism, claiming that “the natural is at least two: male and female.”⁶⁹ With this claim, Irigaray slices through the *one*, halving it. “There is no ‘Nature’ as a singular entity,” she writes, “in this sense, a kind of negative does exist in the natural.”⁷⁰ Unlike Spinoza’s *natura*, infinite and perfect, Irigaray’s nature is limited, cleft in twain. Here too, communion is the key to experiencing love, only the stakes are higher. If one cannot communicate with the other, one cannot access wholeness at all. Without communion, alone, women and men are bereft of spiritual connection to everything, locked in their own perspectives. Unable to access the experience of the other, it is difficult for the individual to get a sense of oneself. There is work to be done in this model if one wants access to the healing capacity of love. Belonging is not certain here since the whole is splintered. One can only access the whole by working with the other. Irigaray calls this “the labour of the negative.”⁷¹ Monism, infinite, these are a dream. Irigaray’s men and women are severely limited by their natures, by the way their “natural completion lies in *two* humans.”⁷² To experience this completion and experience nature as a whole, Irigaray tells us, we need to develop a syntax of communication, to find ways of learning about the other qua other, and ourself qua ourself. “Isn’t it time for us to become communicating subjects?” Irigaray asks. “Have we not exhausted our other possibilities, indeed, our other desires? Isn’t it time for us to become capable not only of speech but also of speaking to *one another*?”⁷³ Good communication, she insists, is *horizontal*. It functions by way of “reciprocal listening.”⁷⁴ The labor of the negative requires one recognize the other as other, notice how this limits one’s own ability to know the world, respect this difference, and

⁶⁹ Irigaray, 35.

⁷⁰ Irigaray, 35.

⁷¹ Irigaray, 41.

⁷² Irigaray, 41.

⁷³ Irigaray, 46.

⁷⁴ Irigaray, 46.

communicate with the other something of our differences, so that our differences might equal something larger. The labor of the negative, then, requires a loving attitude. *Twoness*, as opposed to monistic *oneness*, does not negate the necessity of loving communion with the other. It insists upon it. “We still know nothing about the salvation love brings,” writes Irigaray, “individual and collective salvation.”⁷⁵ But we can.

Irigaray understands spiritual development and growth as the “development of communication between us.”⁷⁶ When communication exists between two *Is*, the individuals with a negative space between them (whether sexed differently or not) can develop a loving relationship: a *we*. Being a *we*, though, does not erase our twoness, “being we means being at least two, autonomous, different.”⁷⁷ This idea is shared in Robert Nozick’s essay on the *we* relationship titled, “Love’s Bond.” “To be part of a *we*,” Nozick writes, “involves having a new identity, an additional one. This does *not* mean that you no longer have any individual identity or that your sole identity is as part of the *we*. However, the individual identity you did have will become altered.”⁷⁸ In love’s bond, two become one, while retaining their individual identities. Additionally, in a romantic relationship of genuine love, the individual identities are inevitably altered by being a part of *we*. Loving relationships help our continuing growth into ourselves, by giving us space and silence to manifest ourselves, and by bringing us face to face with another perspective of things. Every *we* one is a part of in the course of one’s life returns one to oneself in a different way, since “intimate bonds change the contours and boundaries of the self, altering its topology.”⁷⁹ As Spinoza puts it, all bodies are made up of other, smaller bodies, which change

⁷⁵ Irigaray, 29.

⁷⁶ Irigaray, 104.

⁷⁷ Irigaray, 48.

⁷⁸ Robert Nozick, “Love’s Bond,” *The Philosophy of (Erotic) Love*, edited by Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 419.

⁷⁹ Nozick, 421.

while the individual retains its larger nature.⁸⁰ Because of this, every body is completely unique and yet still available for change. The unique composition of two individuals in relation to each other means that every relation with another will affect one differently, based on the other's and one's own composition.⁸¹ Every *we* you are a part of in your life will show you something different about yourself. There is always a value to having relationships, even when they do not work out.

Within this expansion and change, one must remain authentically oneself in order to love and be loved. "To be englowed by someone's love, it must be ourselves who are loved, not a whitewashed version of ourselves, not a portion."⁸² It takes two *Is* (at least) to make a *we*. When one is fully oneself in a romantic relationship and has a syntax of communication available for use between oneself and one's lover, loving is reciprocal and genuine, and fosters the growth of all involved. In this way, it is not only possible but probable for one to be continuously moving on even while involved in romantic relationship. By loving, we can move on from the wounds of previous heartbreaks and lovelessness. We can honestly take up all our experiences, and by having lovers, friends, family, or community members around us to listen to us and embrace our becoming, we can act on those things which empower us. By loving, we can be ourselves, *Is* within *wes*. When we practice love with a practical ethic of being ourselves, loving communion changes us. It opens us up, it brings us closer to ourselves. For the therapeutic method of loving to really work, for one to heal the wounds of her soul and become herself, the freedom behind her own actions, it is not enough to learn to love oneself. She must love others; she must love

⁸⁰ Spinoza, II. P14. L4.

⁸¹ Spinoza, III. P14. A1: "All modes by which a body is affected by another body follow from the nature of the body affected and at the same time from the nature of the affecting body, so that one and the same body may be moved differently according to differences in the nature of the bodies moving it. And conversely, different bodies may be moved differently by one and the same body."

⁸² Nozick, 421.

life. We might consider Diotima's ladder of love here. From love of an individual body, one begins to grasp that all bodies are beautiful, and eventually begins to love beauty itself, as an idea which encompasses every beautiful thing in love.⁸³ Only the ladder of love imposes a hierarchy in loving which does not perfectly align with the need for horizontal, non-hierarchical communication in love, for a love ethic in which all relations are approached with a loving attitude, not only the intimate ones. We might simply flip the ladder sideways, making it a bridge, so that love begins in one's centre and moves outwards. When we love ourselves and others well, we can clearly see that beauty of love all around us. We should practice all these loves simultaneously, moving back and forth on the bridge of love as we interact with the world and grow deeper into ourselves. We need not transcend the bonds of loving relationships to understand and love the beauty of all things. These loves are the same.

moving on

Sometimes loving involves letting go and moving on. Even if one decides to seriously take on the philosophical therapy of loving, to live by a love ethic, it is naïve to think one's relationships will all last forever, or that they will all be painless. Until we arrive at a loving kingdom of ends, it is also true that not everyone will love you, even if you extend a loving attitude to everyone you meet. Rejection, betrayal, loss, death. These all remain a reality in this therapeutic process because a therapy of loving does not involve extirpating emotions or rejecting external attachments. On the contrary, one must use one's emotions and attachments to

⁸³ Plato, *Great Dialogues of Plato: The Symposium*, (New York: Mentor Books, 1956), 105: "For let me tell you, the right way to approach the things of love, or to be led there by another, is this: beginning from these beautiful things, to mount for that beauty's sake ever upwards, as by a flight of steps, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful pursuits and practises, and from practices to beautiful learnings, so that from learnings he may come at last to that perfect learning which is the learning solely of that beauty itself, and may know at last that which is the perfection of beauty. There in life and there alone, my dear Socrates, said the inspired woman, is life worth living for man, while he contemplates Beauty itself."

better understand oneself. One cannot avoid affection by ridding oneself of external ties. Pain then, severe emotional pain, is a real risk for the lover. How then could this be an adequate therapy for the pains of soul?

Experiences of pain and suffering are not incompatible with the good life, with mental health and happiness. It would be a shame if they were, since most people suffer pain at some point in life, and this would disqualify masses from the happy life, from a healthy soul. Good therapy ought to give us ways of coping with or understanding our pain. In the therapy of love, one practices loving behaviours to come to terms with pain in a way which helps deepen one's understanding of oneself and one's ability to be loving to oneself and others. This is the process of moving on.

Moving on is not opposite to loving. It is an aspect of loving, such that being loving requires the ability to move on and moving on requires the ability to be loving. Like loving, moving on is an ability, an art, which is focused on one's continued growth into oneself and requires the tools of recognition, respect, knowledge, and communication. At the outset of love, the end of the relationship, the lover is understandably confused and shaken. For whatever reason, the relationship has come to its conclusion, and whether one is happy or sad at the loss, it is crucial that one attempt to understand how the relationship affected them. This is the initial step in moving on; one must look for oneself, recognize how one has changed, respect oneself for who one is and decide which of these affects increase and which diminish one's power. In the wake of a relationship, if one is to grow from the experience of loss instead of only suffer it, one must intentionally turn inwards and see how well one knows oneself. If it is not very well, it is likely that one will have to spend some time alone recultivating proper esteem of oneself, untangling nostalgia from genuine love, and noticing the changes in the contours of the self. The

pain of heartbreak can be overcome by attention to loving and to devoting oneself to growth. By remembering the relationship from a foundation of loving attitude, one can begin to move on, to grow again into oneself, by recognizing what behaviours learned in the relationship empower them and outgrowing those which do not, so that the self is fuller than it was before.

Relationships with others affect us in various ways. This is one of the reasons why breakups can be so painful. Our identities become entangled with our lover's, and we must disentangle them gently, slowly, if we want to reap the benefits of having related with another person.

The processes of moving on are not exclusive to the end of relationships or even to painful experiences. Within loving relationships, between family members, lovers, or friends, opportunities for movement and growth occur often. Because loving facilitates one's growth into oneself, it is not unusual that a lover might change while being in an intimate relationship. This may be a boon for the relationship, increasing again the love between partners or friends, or it may be an instance in which two drift apart, in which a *we* no longer makes sense. In either case, whether the relationship remains intact or its time to say goodbye, the appropriate response to one's moving on is a letting go. If one loves another well, and the other is nearing their perfection, the appropriate response is always to support their becoming. When we love someone, we want them to become themselves, and we nurture their growth so that they might. This means constantly letting go of them to love them and support their growth. It may be that the change brings about a loss of a quality you enjoyed or which you were attracted to, and possibly the letting go would be a letting go of the relationship altogether, if two lovers no longer shared interests. Even in this case, letting go is an act of love, as moving on is. Fromm, discussing motherly love, describes the importance of this ability to let go:

But the child must grow. It must emerge from mother's womb, from mother's breast; it must eventually become a completely separate human being. The very essence of

motherly love is to care for the child's growth, and that means to want the child's separation from herself. Here lies the basic difference to erotic love. In erotic love, two people who were separate become one. In motherly love, two people who were one become separate. The mother must not only tolerate, she must wish and support the child's separation. It is only at this stage that motherly love becomes such a difficult task, that it requires unselfishness, the ability to give everything and to want nothing but the happiness of the loved one. It is also at this stage that many mothers fail in their task of motherly love...Only the really loving woman, the woman who is happier in giving than in taking, who is firmly rooted in her own existence, can be a loving mother when the child is in the process of separation.⁸⁴

We sometimes think motherly love is the easiest or perhaps most natural type of loving, but actually it is the hardest. It is a constant letting go, pushing away, to help teach the little one the skills of moving on. This is a good example of how deeply related loving, moving on, and nurturing growth really are. The test of motherly love "is the willingness to bear separation-and even after the separation to go on loving."⁸⁵ The test of romantic love is similar; we must love our partners simultaneously for who they are and who they are becoming. This means allowing them to change, not expecting they remain who they were when we began loving them. When we practice the letting go in Fromm's "motherly" love as part of our loving ethic, we foster self-love in others, giving them the opportunity to move on, to grow into and love themselves.

Like other therapeutic methods which prioritize self-reflection, a therapy of love insists we reflect upon the failure of love in order to learn from it, in order to heal. The healing which comes from learning how to be loving and how to move on begins, hooks suggests, with "mindful remembering."⁸⁶ Critically, moving on does not require repression of the changes in identity experienced in the relationship, or a refusal to remember the good and bad which came with it. One must remember, if she is to decide what of the *we* she wants to keep, and what does not serve her in her growth. Like being in a relationship, moving on from one is an experience of

⁸⁴ Fromm, 48.

⁸⁵ Fromm, 49.

⁸⁶ hooks, 209.

growth and change, a loving and a letting go of previous notions of oneself. “Without change, we cannot grow,” writes hooks, telling us that our healing can only begin when we become unafraid of the changes in self which come with embracing loving as a way of life.⁸⁷ Embracing the art of loving is risky. It involves growth, which involves change, which involves loss. But, if as Fromm suggests, “the nature of sanity is to grow out of the womb and into the world,” and mental disease involves regression, desire to go back into the womb, back into the past, then moving on in a loving way is a necessary condition for mental health.⁸⁸ To heal from pain and to near our perfection, the joy which comes from embracing an ethic of being ourselves, we must choose loving. The therapy of love involves learning how to be loving and how to move on, because these are the tools which allow best for personal spiritual growth. When I am loving, I heal, and I become myself. This is why a therapy of love is an effective practical ethic and therapeutic philosophy: it teaches us the skill of moving on.

conclusion: all about love

If becoming more ourselves is the practical cure for heartbreak then a therapy of loving which encourages continuous growth into oneself (while single or committed to a relationship) is a suitable therapeutic philosophy. Being affected is a natural part of human existence, so it is beneficial to learn how to turn an affect which is a passion into an affect which is an action. This requires self-reflection and practice, the ability to moderate an affection so that you are it's free cause. If we reconsider love as an activity, and change the way we speak and think about it, we can make the affection of love into the action of loving, whose daily practice nurtures our spiritual growth and the growth of those we lovingly interact with. If we lose love along the way

⁸⁷ hooks, 205.

⁸⁸ Fromm, 90.

and find ourselves heartbroken, we should treat it as an opportunity to deepen our loving behaviour. While self-love is critical to healing from heartbreak, hooks informs us that the full healing power of love will only be experienced if we surround ourselves with loving friends and community. For loving therapy to be complete the lover requires relations, and not just *for mere existence*, as Seneca would call it, to get through the day.⁸⁹ Relations are needed for *a happy existence*, to experience the joy which Spinoza calls nearing perfection, and the wellness which spring from becoming yourself. Despite the high value Seneca places on friendship, noting its healing capability, it is not a requirement that one commune with others to be well in the Stoic model. For hooks, on the other hand, wellness *requires* loving others and belonging to a loving community. You cannot be healed in isolation. In a contemporary love ethic one cannot move on from heartbreak by giving up on love-they have to let go of past iterations of themselves which were not loving enough, had not yet unfolded fully into self. Moving on requires *more* love, because it is loving communion which will let us unfold more fully into self. Even letting go is an act of loving, and Fromm points out this essential quality of motherly love, because ultimately it is a reflection of our love of the other and of the world to allow them their growth without us. Loving communion, with ourselves, the other, and the world will let us turn the pain of heartbreak into the joy of self-development and strong self esteem. We cannot isolate ourselves in our heartbreak.

A contemporary love ethic defends the place of strong affection within therapeutic philosophy. It is our loving affection which will allow us to unfold into ourselves even in the face of sadness. We discover who we are by being affected. This is how love heals. If we develop a loving practice of recognition, respect, and communication, and act on an ethical

⁸⁹ Seneca, letter IX, 17.

imperative of loving both ourselves and others, we will unfold into ourselves more with every relation we have. In becoming ourselves by mindfully reflecting on the “changes in our topology” brought on by being with others, we will cure ourselves of the sadness which comes from alienation from ourselves. Those sad passions which arise as a result of not being the adequate cause of our own ideas is replaced by the action of loving, of turning passion into action by gaining a clear and distinct idea of what our passions tell us about ourselves, about what we desire and therefore who we are. We can be free and loving at the same time, since loving is the act of nurturing our spiritual growth, of learning who we are and affirming our nature by acting authentically as ourselves. When we are loving, we continuously grow into ourselves. This is why loving communion with others is crucial to loving therapy: love grows on itself, and when I relate to others lovingly I nurture my own growth and also theirs, while they nurture their own and mine. The benefit of loving relations with externality cannot be stressed enough here. Self-love is necessary for the healing of love to take place, but it is not sufficient.

CONCLUSION

The three chapters of this thesis worked to uncover some of the therapeutic properties of practical ethical philosophy in helping the heartbroken move on towards the joy of becoming more fully oneself. Breakups are a critical moment for self-reflection and therapeutic intervention, because as the two bodies involved in the relation separate the changes which had taken place in the contours of each become obvious. The heartbroken might cling to the past relationship, acting by the habits and conventions which the relation had created, or think these habits through, deciding which of the changes brought on by being in a *we* align with one's individual essence and which do not. In the latter action, the heartbroken can overcome the grief of loss by deepening one's understanding of oneself in the light of the experience of having related closely to another. If one is unwilling to reflect on the relationship because it causes too much pain, or because one is unwilling to let go of the other, one will be unable to move on. Our three philosophical models each argued that joy and well-being arise from becoming more yourself, so the ideal therapeutic model is certainly one which aids you most in your becoming. Therapeutic philosophies with moving on at their core, like a therapy of love, are healing because they urge us to always be moving on more into ourselves, to continuously nurture our spiritual growth, whether we are happy or unhappy.

Moving on is becoming more yourself by reflection on the changes brought out by affection and relation to others, and then actioning those affections which are in line with your nature. Moving on, becoming self, is the healthy response to all pain, since it uses suffering to aid in one's becoming by turning passion into action. But we ought to always be moving on, not only when we are suffering. Breakups can help us better become ourselves because we are faced with our affections, but all relations can facilitate the return to self if we are open to our affections and always moderating them into action. We should always be growing, even while

settled in relationships. If we only grow when we are faced with suffering, our growth will be stunted, and our sadness fetishized. Moving on is everyday work, a daily practice. Happy or sad, we ought to continue to work to be the free and active causes of ourselves, to continue to near the joy of perfection. This is how we will live ethically with others-by fostering an environment where people can freely unfold into themselves so that they too may experience the joy of acting in accordance with nature. Loving is an effective form of philosophical therapy because it encourages continuous spiritual growth. Therapies which fail to utilize the affections miss out on countless opportunities for self-reflection and self-development. Being affected tells us who we are. Moderating those affections lets us affirm who we are. Loving helps us continually grow into who we are by allowing us to create communities and friendships based on recognition and respect, where we can all honestly communicate our becoming.

To begin this consideration of philosophical therapies of moving on, Chapter I presented the Stoic cure for the ills of the soul: becoming virtuous by living in accordance with nature. The Stoics propose that we will not be harmed by grief when we admit we have no control over nature, and that everything which we have is merely loaned to us by nature and will eventually be returned to her. We are natural things and live according to nature's laws, of temporality and mortality. Our freedom lies only in acquiescing to nature and acting as our own nature dictates. Stoic therapy requires reflecting on one's nature and striving to be one's best self by living mindfully in the present and remaining in control one's actions and reactions. The Stoic is in control only of her self and is self-sufficient for happiness, since it is her own judgements which cause the turmoil of limitless passion. It is our judgements which inspire our beliefs and actions, and if the Stoic cannot successfully control her judgements she can refuse to judge at all. And yet, while there is a comfort in this appeal to self-sufficiency and control, the Stoic who allows

no judgements to get through is unlikely to reach the full virtuous state of living in accordance with her own nature. No judgements, no beliefs, no actions. That does not seem to equal the virtuous freedom offered by true self-mastery. Refusing judgements in order to extirpate the passions might lead to ignorance of the self, or worse, the alienation from self which leads to the sadness of the soul. The therapeutic desire to become oneself is halted along with the halting of judgements. We must know ourselves to become ourselves.

In Chapter II, Spinoza agrees with the Stoics that virtue lies in emulating one's divine nature, but insists that the affections play a crucial role in self-development and must be *moderated* rather than *extirpated*. Our intuitive knowledge of ourselves and our own essences, which follows from an understanding of God's nature, is enhanced by relating to the external world and having affective experiences. The more singular things we come to know, the more we know God. As we get to know ourselves better, then, we gain a more clear and distinct idea of nature, and are better suited to act in accordance with it. Our intuition, that third and best kind of knowledge, is improved by combining our reason and affect to increase our self-knowledge. If we can moderate our affections, that is, turn our passions into actions by being the adequate cause of our ideas, then we will be better able to act in line with our eternal nature. In a deterministic model like Spinoza's, virtue lies in using one's freedom to act, in affirming one's nature. The more one emulates the divine by practicing an ethics of being and becoming oneself, the more joy one will experience. For Spinoza, joy and virtue are the same. It is ethical to be yourself, and becoming yourself is the joyous journey of nearing perfection. All relations then, and all affections, can bring joy and remedy sadness, if they are moderated and made into actions. As other composite bodies bump into ours within the infinite body of nature, we change

while remaining ourselves. To near perfection, we ought to allow these changes in our bodies to further inform our journey towards our eternal, perfect essence.

Finally, in Chapter III we explored the idea that the ideal way to move on from a broken heart is to be loving, because loving behaviour nurtures the spiritual growth which is necessary for healthy moving on. In this philosophical model we see a fuller defense of affection in philosophical therapy, since love is considered not only a tool to near perfection, but the driving force of all growth into self, including that second birth of children who are loved enough by their parents to be let go, allowed to be independent in their development. Loving is an activity which should be directed both to oneself and to others. It is the bedrock for self-esteem and the foundation for healthy relationships, loving communities or *wes*, where two or more subjects can unfold into themselves while being affected by relating to other free subjects. Despite the negative which arises between us as a result of our lack of knowledge about the other, and our inability to own them or control them, we ought to nurture the other's growth with our love, by watching and listening while they unfold.

As Nozick points out, it takes two Is to make a we, and love's bond is a relation between two individuals, two bodies with unique natures. Although the advice to go on loving is geared towards the heartbroken, everyone should be reminded to continuously reflect on their definitions of love to make sure they are sound. We must go on loving, even when we are in love, even when we are happy, or complacent. We must go on loving because love is an act, an art, and a practice, and when we cease to practice loving we will cease to benefit from its healing power, that spiritual growth which arises as a natural consequence of concentrated effort on recognizing and respecting ourselves and others, of communicating as best as we can our unfolding. Allowing affections into therapeutic remedies does not mean we no longer need the

self-control the Stoics taught us, or the moderation of these affects Spinoza encourages. We need these skills more if we are to ensure we are always the active and adequate cause of our affections, that we continue to stand in love and not fall in it. We cannot let love become a sad passion, something which controls us or binds us to our grief. We must act in love, and let it help us become ourselves. Love is an act, and so it is a choice, a responsibility, and an ethical imperative. It is no easy work to be well, hooks tell us.¹ It requires a conscious desire to be healed, and an opening up the heart which leaves one vulnerable. We must decide anew each day to be loving, and decide that being our best, happiest, most virtuous selves is accomplished best by loving.

Loving is the best therapy for the broken-hearted because it teaches its practitioners the critical skill of moving on. Moving on, as I understand it, is becoming more oneself. It is using our affective experiences, both of happiness and sadness, of love and of grief over lost love, to deepen our understanding of our nature. Moving on is a joy, even when its starting point is sadness, because it is a joy to act freely as oneself, and to affirm one's nature. It is joy to be free, not submissive to our passions, failing to reflect on our affections. If we develop a strong daily therapeutic practice of loving behaviour we can find the joy of moving on into self, of growing nearer to our perfection, with every relation. This joy arises from acting in accordance with our nature, and refusing to let the alienation from self which is sadness of the soul dictate our actions. In the monistic and holistic approach of therapeutic philosophies such as these we must recall that respect for singular beings who express different modes of substance extends into respect for ourselves and our own journey to becoming authentically ourselves. For the Stoics and for Spinoza, this respect grows out of an understanding of nature as pre-determined and

¹ hooks, 213.

outside our control. We are not free to define our own being since we exist as an extension and expression of divine nature. But we are free to affirm it. hooks' emphasis on communion follows in part from the same monistic impulse as Spinoza and the appeal to interconnection in Stoicism. If you love yourself, and you believe we are all connected by belonging in nature, you instinctively love others. You love life because life is the motor of being and of loving. For hooks, spiritual growth is nothing but accepting that "love is all, everything," and that it is loving communion which will heal you, no matter what therapeutic methods you choose.² You must connect with others to be healed.

Philosophy and practical ethics can be helpful in providing medico-therapeutic remedies for the soul since they use reason and argument in conjunction with practical therapeutic methods to assist one in their process of self-development. In the face of sadness, grief, and suffering, one must capitalize on sadness and turn it into the joy of becoming more oneself. Therapy like this does not eradicate suffering, but gives the sufferer the tools to turn that suffering into growth. This is the process of healthy moving on: mindfully remembering and reflecting on one's experiences to decide which connections increase one's power to be oneself and which decrease one's power. When we commit to acting in our nature as the end of virtue, we must be attuned to changes in our body, and ensure we remain the active and free cause of ourselves. Changes in the contours of our body cannot change our essence or form, but it is up to us to explore and expand into these new boundaries, to enhance our understanding of our own nature and act authentically in the face of being affected by externality. Authenticity in our communication with ourselves and in our relationships with others will strengthen our intuition. We can and should become more attuned with ourselves with every relation, even when those

² hooks, 77.

relations dissolve, and even if they cause us heartbreak. Since joy and wellness are earned by freely acting as oneself, one is responsible for embarking on one's own therapeutic journey, and is always capable of beginning the journey of moving on. You could begin right now, by loving.

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