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# BETRAYAL OF LOVE AND VOLITIONAL NECESSITY

by

SHAWN MICHAEL MURPHY

Under the Direction of Dr. Eddy Nahmias and Dr. Eric Wilson

## ABSTRACT

In his early work, Frankfurt conceives of the will as a set of hierarchically organized desires. I argue that the hierarchical model fails to provide an adequate account of free will because it does not render the will *determinate*. In Frankfurt's later work, he contends that love establishes the boundaries of the will by giving rise to a volitional necessity. I take this to suggest that the notion of love is introduced, in part, to eliminate the problematic indeterminacy implied by the hierarchical model. However, I argue that the necessities of love may be understood in two importantly different ways, and on either interpretation of Frankfurt's considered view, love does not provide the resources to account for the phenomenon of betrayal of love. I conclude that the introduction of love does not render the will determinate, and therefore fails to resolve a problem that beset the hierarchical model of the will.

INDEX WORDS: Harry Frankfurt, Love, Care, The will, Volitional necessity, Identification

BETRAYAL OF LOVE AND VOLITIONAL NECESSITY

by

SHAWN MICHAEL MURPHY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

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2012

BETRAYAL OF LOVE AND VOLITIONAL NECESSITY

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

On Harry Frankfurt's view, love is a unique type of volitional configuration, or configuration of the will. While what we desire or care about can be altered by a decision or other act of will, what we love is not up to us. Frankfurt takes this to suggest that love defines a person's absolute volitional limits or boundaries, and thereby imposes a type of necessity on the lover. In a sense to be examined below, love establishes what a person *must* do. Unfortunately, we occasionally fail to do what we must; we betray our love. The purpose of this essay is to argue that Frankfurt's view of love as a volitional necessity cannot account for the phenomenon of betrayal of love, and thus fails to provide an adequate account of the will.

In §2 I sketch Frankfurt's hierarchical model of the will, and the nature of a problem that beset his early work. The so-called regress problem shows that an unlimited capacity for reflexive self-evaluation entails that a person's will is always potentially indeterminate. This indeterminacy, I argue, prevents Frankfurt's view from providing a satisfactory account of various philosophical topics. I conclude that Frankfurt introduces the notion of love as a volitional necessity to render a person's will determinate. In §3 I provide a brief sketch of the phenomenon of betrayal of love. I argue that Frankfurt's view must satisfy two criteria to account for both the possibility and normativity of betrayal of love. I conclude the section by arguing that failure to satisfy both criteria entails a failure to render the will determinate, and therefore a failure to resolve the problematic indeterminacy that beset Frankfurt's hierarchical account of the will. In §4 I focus on the notion of a volitional necessity and argue that Frankfurt must conceive of love as imposing either a type of descriptive or normative necessity, but not both. I produce textual evidence to suggest that in some contexts Frankfurt conceives of love as a type of descriptive necessity, while in other contexts he conceives of love as a type of normative necessity. In §5 I argue that the distinction between descriptive and normative necessity raises a



dilemma for Frankfurt. If Frankfurt conceives of love as imposing a type of descriptive necessity, then betrayal of love is not possible. In effect, betrayal of love implies an identity shift such that a person—the same person—simply could not betray what she loves. On the latter understanding, a person *can* violate her love. However, I argue, Frankfurt's view cannot account for why she *should* not do so. In other words, Frankfurt's view cannot account for the normativity of love. I conclude that the addition of love to Frankfurt's hierarchical conception of the will fails to resolve the problematic indeterminacy that beset Frankfurt's early work on the will.

## 2 THE HIERARCHICAL MODEL, LOVE, AND FREE WILL

### 2.1 *The Hierarchical Model and the Regress Problem*

The will is central to Frankfurt's approach to a set of interrelated philosophical topics including the nature of free will, the self, personal identity, and ultimately practical reason. According to Frankfurt, the will is simply an organism's effective desire. However, Frankfurt develops an account of the *character* of a person's will by introducing a simple structural feature. While non-human animals simply have a set of first-order desires battling for control of the organism, a person has the capacity to form higher-order desires through *reflexive self-evaluation*. The capacity to form higher-order desires allows a person to identify with or dissociate from certain first-order desires. When a person identifies with a desire, she *integrates* it into the structure of her will and thereby into herself. When a person dissociates from a desire, on the other hand, she *extrudes* it from the structure of her will and thereby renders the desire external to herself. These acts of reflexive self-evaluation result in a hierarchically structured will. On Frankfurt's hierarchical model, the character of a person's will sheds light on the aforementioned philosophical topics.

For example, the hierarchical model seems to provide an attractive account of free will. In "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," (1998a), Frankfurt argues that a person has free will

when she has the will, or effective first-order desire, she wants. Conversely, a person lacks free will when she does not have the will she wants. Consider Frankfurt's example of the unwilling addict. Although his will may be to use drugs, he has a conflicting second-order desire. Since he has extruded the desire for drugs from his will through reflection, he renders it external to himself. Thus, the unwilling addict, *as a person*, is overcome by an external force when he uses drugs. In short, when he acts on the desire for drugs, he does not have the will he wants, and therefore lacks free will. The hierarchical model seems to provide an exceptionally parsimonious account of free will, because it accounts for free will by simply spelling out the structural implications of the capacity for reflexive self-evaluation.

But this simple picture is beset by a problem. Frankfurt notes the source of this problem when he writes, "Another complexity is that a person may have...desires and volitions of a higher order than the second. There is no theoretical limit to the length of the series of desires of higher and higher orders" (1998a, p. 21). Watson (1975) critiques Frankfurt's hierarchical model on grounds that higher-order desires lack the requisite *authority* to determine whether or not a person has free will. He argues that termination of the regress is bound to be arbitrary because higher-order desires are still desires. Thus, he argues, a person may dissociate from a higher-order desire in the same way she may dissociate from a first-order desire. What is needed, Watson argues, is a different attitude. On his view, a person has desires and values, and values provide the authority that higher-order desires lack.

I agree with Frankfurt when he claims that Watson's proposal is unsatisfactory (1998c, p. 165 fn.7). The transition from desire to value is less clear than the transition from a first-order desire to what a person identifies with. However, the problem Watson points to goes to the heart of Frankfurt's early work on the will, and helps set the stage for Frankfurt's later work on the importance of love. The problem, as I understand it, does not fundamentally involve the authority of higher-order desires, but *determinacy in the structure of the will*. Since the capacity for reflexive self-evaluation is not limited, it results in a potential regress of tiers in the structure of a person's will. But without limits, there is no fact

of the matter whether a person identifies with or dissociates from an effective first-order desire. Consider, for instance, a person who acts on a first-order desire and has a second-order desire to be moved by that first-order desire. We might be inclined to claim that she has free will because she does not dissociate from her will. It seems as though she has the will she wants. However, although she does not dissociate with her effective first-order desire at the second tier in her will, she may dissociate from it at the third, fourth, or a potentially higher tier. This problem is often referred to as the regress problem.<sup>1</sup> If the hierarchical model is to solve the regress problem, it must establish limits for reflection and thereby stop the potential regress of tiers in the structure of a person's will. Until limits are placed on the capacity for reflection, the structure of the will remains indeterminate.

Throughout his early work, Frankfurt attempts to defend the hierarchical model against the regress problem by identifying the limits of a person's capacity for reflection. He appeals to the notion of decisive identification (1998a), a deliberate decision (1998b), and wholeheartedness (1998c). These notions capture two senses in which the will may lack harmony or coherence. First, there may be a conflict between higher-order desires and first-order desires. Second, there may be a conflict between inconsistent higher-order desires. "When a person identifies himself *decisively* with one of his first-order desires," Frankfurt explains, "this commitment 'resounds' throughout the potentially endless array of higher orders" (1998a, p. 21). Similarly, when a person makes a deliberate decision, she cuts herself off from further reflection and commits to back a particular first-order desire (1998c, p. 170). An act of decisive identification or a deliberate decision establishes where a person stands with respect to a

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<sup>1</sup> I think this name distracts from the real problem at hand. Frankfurt notes that the hierarchy is not essential to his view: "The notion of reflexivity seems to me much more fundamental and indispensable, in dealing with the phenomena at hand, than that of a hierarchy" (1998c, p. 165 fn. 7). Thus, the hierarchy is simply Frankfurt's preferred means of illustrating the effects of reflexive self-evaluation. Unfortunately, even if Frankfurt distances himself from the hierarchy, his view is unsatisfactory, because the capacity for reflexive self-evaluation is not limited, just as the capacity for forming higher-order desires is not limited.

particular first-order desire. In both cases, reflection is limited because further reflection will not yield any discoveries about whether or not she identifies with that desire.

A person with inconsistent higher-order desires is ambivalent. Since she is pulled both towards and away from the object of desire, Frankfurt writes, “there is no unequivocal answer to the question of what the person really wants” (1998c, p. 165). When a person removes conflicts in her higher-order desires, she is, according to Frankfurt, wholehearted. Frankfurt draws an analogy to checking an arithmetic calculation to illustrate his point. A person may, in principle, endlessly check the result obtained, just as a person may endlessly form higher-order desires. However, Frankfurt writes, the sequence of calculation, like the endless reflexive self-evaluation will stop, because “the only reason to continue the sequence would be to cope with an actual conflict or with the possibility that a conflict might occur. Given that the person does not have this reason to continue, it is hardly arbitrary for him to stop” (1998c, p. 169). Wholeheartedness imposes a limit on reflexive self-evaluation, because the lack of conflict in higher-order desires implies that there is no reason to continue reflecting.

If we put these two limits together, then we get the Frankfurt’s considered view of the will. The first limit requires that a person’s higher-order volitions must not conflict with her effective first-order desires. In other words, she must identify with her will. The second limit requires that a person not be ambivalent. Thus, if a person wholeheartedly identifies with a particular first-order desire and decisively identifies with or deliberately decides to act on that desire, then it lies within the bounds of the self and she has free will when she acts on it.<sup>2</sup> This account of the will seems to provide a convincing reply to Watson’s claim that the hierarchical model must appeal to an arbitrary resolution to the regress problem. Frankfurt’s reply involves two forms of coherence within the structure of the will, and thus the hierarchical model seems to provide a non-arbitrary solution to the regress problem.

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<sup>2</sup> Hereafter, I abbreviate this state of maximal coherence by describing the desire a person “identifies with.”

However, this picture is complicated by the fact that we are occasionally *opaque to ourselves*, and thus a person's beliefs about the character of his will may be mistaken. For example, although a person may believe he wholeheartedly identifies with a particular desire, he may *truly, really, or as a matter of fact*, not identify with that desire. I take this to suggest that an epistemic conception of the limits of the will may come apart from a metaphysical conception.

In some places Frankfurt claims his view accounts for a person's "sense of identity and freedom" (1999b, p. 114). Such comments seem to suggest that he simply seeks to provide an epistemic account of what a person identifies with. After all, if a person believes she is free when she acts on a desire, then she must feel free. However, I think this is a mistaken interpretation of Frankfurt's view, because he often uses more metaphysically robust language to describe the structure of the will. In "Wholeheartedness and Identification," which I take to provide his most comprehensive summary of the hierarchical model, he writes,

Wholeheartedness, as I am using the term, does not consist in a feeling of enthusiasm, or of certainty, concerning a commitment. Nor is it likely to be readily apparent whether a decision which a person intends to be wholehearted is actually so. *We do not know our hearts well enough* to be confident whether our intention that nothing should interfere with a decision we make is one we ourselves will want carried out when...we come to understand more completely what carrying it out would require us to do or to sacrifice doing. (1998c, pp. 175-6, my italics)

The italicized portion of this quote shows that Frankfurt accepts that we are occasionally opaque to ourselves. It follows from this that beliefs or feelings about the structure of the will can come apart from the *true* structure of the will.

In addition to being a mistaken reading of Frankfurt, a merely epistemic conception of the will fails to account for the phenomenon of self-discovery. It seems that a person may act on a desire that he believes he identifies with, and yet not feel free when he acts. He may even look back and learn

something from the experience. We might say that he learns something about the true structure of his will. But with only an epistemic conception of the will, the situation could not be described in this way. If Frankfurt does not provide a metaphysical conception of the will, then his view must conclude that the person did not believe he wholeheartedly identified with his will, or he was mistaken about not feeling free when he acted. But, in either case, we could no longer describe the person as discovering something about the true structure of his will when he acted.

These considerations shed light on the real nature of the regress problem. Frankfurt's early solutions to the regress problem—including decisive identification, deliberative decisions, and wholeheartedness—are meant to establish limits for reflection. However, wholehearted identification is an epistemic, rather than metaphysical notion. And Frankfurt's view requires metaphysical limits to reflexive self-evaluation. What is needed, then, is an account of what a person *cannot* dissociate from or, in other words, what a person *must* identify with. In the next section I will argue that love, conceived of as a volitional necessity, is central to Frankfurt's considered view of the will because it serves the function of establishing a person's essential identity, and thus establishes metaphysical limits on the capacity for reflexive self-evaluation.

## 2.2 *Love and the Boundaries of the Will*

"The Importance of What We Care About" (1998d) marks a shift in Frankfurt's focus away from the hierarchical model and toward analyzing what a person cares about. A care is a complex mental state involving a higher-order desire and a desire for that desire to persist. While a desire may flicker in and out of existence, a person's care—to be properly described as a care—must persist for a "more or less extended period of time," and thereby guides the person's conduct (1998d, p. 88). Frankfurt is especially interested in a particular form of caring. A care may be given up through an act of will. For example, I may decide to forgo my daily workout to do various chores around the house. Although I care about both, I decide to set one aside temporarily. The notion of *love*, according to Frankfurt, is a

particularly robust form of caring. A person, he observes, *cannot* set aside concern for what they love. A lover, in other words, *must* identify with the needs of his beloved.

According to Frankfurt, there are three essential features of love. First, love is directed at a *particular* person, object, or abstract ideal (1999a, p. 130; 2004, p. 41). A father, for instance, loves *his* children. A substitute for them is grossly inadequate. Second, love is essentially *disinterested* (1999a, p. 132; 2004, p. 42). A person does not love for the sake of some further end. He identifies with the interests of his beloved, and thereby integrates those interests into the structure of his will. Lastly, and most importantly for my purposes, what we love is essentially “*not up to us*” (1999a, p. 130; 2004, pp. 44, 49). Of course, what a person loves may change over time, but these changes are not within his deliberative control. A person experiences actions which neglect or harm his beloved as unthinkable; he cannot bring himself to betray his love. Moreover, he experiences the decision to stop loving his beloved as unthinkable; he cannot bring himself to modify his will to make betraying his love possible. Thus, Frankfurt concludes, the commands of love are *unconditional* or *categorical* for the lover. He writes, “we *must not* violate what we love” (1999a, p. 130). The “*must*” in this claim suggests that love gives rise to a type of necessity. On Frankfurt's view, the boundaries of the will give rise to contingent volitional necessities, or what he sometimes calls the necessities of love.

Conceiving of love as imposing a volitional necessity on a person may make it seem as though love is a restriction or impediment. However, according to Frankfurt, love is enhancing in two related ways. First, the necessities of love determine a person's *essential identity*, and thus are analogous to definitional or conceptual necessities.

The essential characteristics of triangles are those that no genuine triangle can help having. The essential nature of a person is to be understood similarly, as including the characteristics that define his essential identity. The essential identity of an individual differs, however, from that of a type of thing. The essence of triangularity is an a priori

matter of definitional or conceptual necessity. The essence of a person, on the other hand, is a matter of the contingent volitional necessities by which the will of the person is as a matter of fact constrained. (1999a, p. 138)

Second, the volitional necessities imposed by love provide a person with a sense of identity and freedom. “Love *captivates* us,” Frankfurt writes, “but even while we are its captive we find that it is in some way liberating. Love is *selfless*, but it also enables us in some way to feel most truly ourselves...Only by virtue of the necessity that it imposes upon us does love intensify our sense of identity and of freedom” (1999b, p. 114).

Unlike Frankfurt’s early attempts at resolving the regress problem, the addition of love to the hierarchical model appears to render the will determinate, because the necessities of love establish the inviolable boundaries of the will. On Frankfurt’s considered view it is always possible for a person to generate higher-order desires through reflexive self-evaluation, *except when such activity conflicts with the necessities of love*. No amount of reflexive self-evaluation will allow a lover to successfully dissociate from the interests of her beloved. She may decide, choose, or intend to act on a desire to neglect or harm her beloved, but she will inevitably run into the limits of her will and find that she must act from the love that defines her essential identity. In the next section, I discuss two interpretations of Frankfurt’s view on the matter of love as a volitional necessity.

### **3. TWO TYPES OF NECESSITY AND THE NECESSITIES OF LOVE**

As I argued in the previous section, the necessity imposed by love is the key to understanding how it renders the will determinate. In this section, I draw a distinction between two types of necessity. The difference between descriptive necessity and normative necessity is best illustrated by considering various examples and the inferences we make when the necessity appears to be violated. I conclude that since one can be violated but the other cannot, descriptive and normative necessities are mutually



exclusive. Next, I look to Frankfurt's discussion of volitional necessity to determine which type of necessity Frankfurt believes love imposes on a person. The evidence suggests that Frankfurt equivocates between the two understandings of the necessities of love. In some contexts he understands love as imposing a type of descriptive necessity, but in others, he seems to think that love imposes a type of normative necessity. Fortunately, the main argument of this essay stands on either interpretation—that is, Frankfurt's account of love cannot solve the regress problem regardless of which type of necessity it imposes on us.

### *3.1 Descriptive and Normative Necessity*

A triangle's internal angles *must* add up to 180 degrees. This conceptual necessity is an example of a type of descriptive necessity. If the internal angles of a triangle do not add up to 180 degrees, then the shape is not in fact a triangle. Conceptual necessities constrain the way we can properly *describe* something. The same is true for causal necessity and the laws of nature. Imagine observing an object that does not follow the law of gravity, for instance. We do not conclude that the law of gravity simply did not apply in that case; the law of gravity is cannot be violated. Instead, it follows that we were mistaken about the observation or that the laws of nature are different from what we originally supposed. In both of these examples, the necessity imposed constrains the figure or object itself, and thereby constrain a proper *description* of the shape or object. Descriptive necessity, as I will refer to this general type of necessity, cannot be violated. The internal angles of a triangle *must* add up to 180 degrees, and the laws of nature *must* apply in all cases.

The nature of moral necessity is importantly different from types of descriptive necessity (e.g., definitional, conceptual, and causal necessity.) In some sense, a person *must* do what morality demands. However, despite this necessity, we occasionally fail to do what we must. When a person fails to act as morality demands, we do not assume that we were mistaken about what morality demands. It may remain quite clear that he acted immorally. Since a moral necessity *can* be violated, it is not a type of

descriptive necessity. Although we can fail to do what morality demands, we *should not* do so. Failing to act in accordance with moral necessities constitutes a failure on the part of the agent. While conceptual necessity constrains the way we can describe a particular figure, moral necessities constrain an agent. A figure cannot fail to be a triangle; it simply is or is not one. In contrast, a person *can* fail to do what morality demands. In this way, moral necessities bind a person, and violations constitute a failure or wrong on the part of the person. Hence, morality necessity imposes a type of *normative necessity*.

Before turning to the task of determining which type of necessity Frankfurt believes love imposes, it is important to note that descriptive and normative necessities are mutually exclusive. A descriptive necessity cannot be violated but a normative necessity can be. The necessities of love bind a person's will. If the necessities of love are both a type of descriptive and normative necessity, then it must be both impossible to act against the structure of the will and possible to do so. But, of course, that is nonsense. Perhaps God necessarily has the will he should and thus the descriptive and normative necessities that bind his will are co-extensional. However, since we do not always do what we must, there are important differences between descriptive and normative interpretations of the necessities of love.

### *3.2 Love as Descriptive Necessity*

Frankfurt does not have the distinction between descriptive and normative necessity in mind when discussing love, but he is sensitive to the differences between various types of necessities. In "The Importance of What We Care About," he discusses what have come to be known as the Luther case. When Martin Luther was charged with heresy, he was offered an opportunity to recant by rejecting his heretical writings. As the story goes, he refused to do so, stating "Here I stand; I can do no other." When Luther claims that it is impossible for him to recant, he refers to a type of binding necessity.

It is clear, of course, that that impossibility to which Luther referred was a matter neither of logical nor of causal necessity. After all, he knew well enough that he was in

one sense quite able to do the very thing he said he could not do; that is, he had the capacity to do it. What he was unable to muster was not the *power* to forbear, but the *will*. (book, p. 86)

In short, the configuration of Luther's will prevents him from recanting and thus he is charged with heresy. Luther may not *know* that he is unable to recant. He may even intend to recant in effort to save himself from the charges. However, since Luther's will is subject to a volitional necessity, he will inevitably fail to follow through. On Frankfurt's view, he thereby discovers the boundaries of his fixed and identity-shaping will. Frankfurt's discussion of this case suggests that he believes the volitional necessity that binds Luther is a type of descriptive necessity. Luther does not do something wrong when he tries to recant; he simply runs into the limits of his will.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to violate these limits, and thus the volitional necessity that binds his will cannot be overcome. Luther *must* resist recanting.

Conceiving of the necessities of love as a type of descriptive necessity has an odd consequence when dealing with cases in which a person seems to betray what he loves. If Frankfurt rejects this consequence, then he may not, in fact, believe the necessities of love are descriptive. An apparent case of betrayal of love entails one of two things. On the one hand, the person may discover that she doesn't actually love the person, object, or ideal that she betrayed. On the other hand, she may genuinely love her beloved, and also succeed in betraying that love. This case is analogous to changing a figure such that the internal angles no longer add up to 180 degrees. The figure stops being a triangle the moment the change takes place. Similarly, if we understand love as imposing a type of descriptive necessity, then when a person succeeds in betraying his love his essence as a person changes. She therefore undergoes

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3 Frankfurt reaffirms this position in *The Reasons of Love*. The constraint imposed by love, he writes, "operates from within our own will itself. It is by our own will, and not by any external or alien force, that we are constrained. Someone who is bound by volitional necessity is unable to form a determined and effective intention—regardless of what motives and reasons he may have for doing so—to perform (or to refrain from performing) the action that is at issue. *If he undertakes an attempt to perform it, he discovers that he simply cannot bring himself to carry the attempt all the way through*" (46, my emphasis).

a shift in identity. Temporarily or permanently becoming a new person is the only way to overcome the binding descriptive necessity of love. Frankfurt seems to accept this consequence. In “Autonomy, Necessity, and Love,” he provides an example of an identity shift due to betrayal of love.

Agamemnon at Aulis is destroyed by an inescapable conflict between two equally defining elements of his own nature: his love for his daughter and his love for the army he commands. His ideals for himself include both being a devoted father and being devoted to the welfare of his men. When he is forced to sacrifice one of these, he is thereby forced to betray himself. Rarely, if ever, do tragedies of this sort have sequels. Since the volitional unity of the tragic hero has been irreparably ruptured, there is a sense in which the person he had been no longer exists. Hence, there can be no continuation of *his* story. (1999a, p. 139 fn. 8)

David Velleman (2002) argues that this is not a convincing example of an identity shift. Of course, he argues, Agamemnon continues to exist following his fateful decision to sacrifice his daughter. Frankfurt responds to Velleman by claiming that the word “identity” has more than one meaning. In a sense, some features of Agamemnon (e.g. body, and perhaps most of his beliefs) remain identical following the act. However, Frankfurt argues, this sense of identity is not important to the story. He writes, “There is a sense, on which I relied when speaking of Agamemnon, in which people may be defined by their volitional limits and in which the survival of the self therefore requires a certain motivational constancy or continuity” (2002, p. 126). Agamemnon's identity as a practical agent is at stake, rather than his identity as a mind or body. Since his love for his daughter and army are “equally defining elements of his own nature” and he cannot act for the sake of both, Agamemnon must undergo an identity shift. I take Frankfurt analysis of the Agamemnon case to illustrate that he is committed to the conclusion that betrayal of love implies a shift in identity, at least the relevant sense of identity.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Hereafter I will use “identity” in the sense Frankfurt has in mind, unless noted otherwise.

Accepting this consequence strongly suggests that Frankfurt believes the necessities of love are a type of descriptive necessity.

Frankfurt's analogy in "Autonomy, Necessity, and Love" between the conceptual or definitional necessity that binds a triangle and the volitional necessity that binds a person also suggests that he believes the necessities of love are a type of descriptive necessity. Volitional necessities, he explains, bind a person's "essential identity" in the same way that conceptual or definitional necessities bind the essence of a triangle. The only difference between the two, Frankfurt remarks, is the necessity that binds a triangle is an *a priori* matter, while the necessity that binds a person is a contingent matter involving the limits of an person's will (1999a, p. 138). Just as a triangle *must* have internal angles adding up to 180 degrees, a person *must* act from the love that binds his will.

### *3.3 Love as Normative Necessity*

One may find this interpretation of Frankfurt unconvincing. In "Autonomy, Necessity, and Love," Frankfurt draws an analogy between the necessities of love and the necessities of duty. "In both cases," he writes, "the commands may be disobeyed. We may in matters either of duty or of love negligently or willfully or akratically fail to do what we must do" (1999a, p. 141). Since the descriptive necessity interpretation of love does not allow for failure to do what love demands, it might be argued, Frankfurt must conceive of love as imposing normative necessity. Thus, I turn to Frankfurt conception of normativity, and his view about the authority of love for a lover.

Whereas Frankfurt only hints at the normative implications of love in his early essays, he makes the connection explicit in *The Reasons of Love* when he writes, "The origins of normativity do not lie...either in the transient incitements of personal feeling and desire, or in the severely anonymous requirements of eternal reason. They lie in the contingent necessities of love" (2004, p. 48). The notion of normativity Frankfurt has in mind is not fundamentally a matter of morality. His argument for this

claim is simple. Morality essentially involves duties and obligations to others.<sup>5</sup> But a person can love from afar and therefore does not have a duty or moral obligation to act on behalf of his beloved. Moreover, a person may love an object or abstract ideal. But objects and ideals do not typically impose duties or moral obligations. Betrayal of love in each of these cases involves a failure to do what one must do, but does not entail a *moral* wrong. Therefore, love does not impose a type of moral normativity.<sup>6</sup>

According to Frankfurt, the objective and impartial duties of morality are over-emphasized in contemporary ethics, because it is possible for a person to care about things other than morality. The demands of love are importantly different from the demands of morality in this regard. What we love is necessarily important to us, because the necessities of love define the shape of a person's individual will. "Since the commands of love derive from the essential nature of a person's will," Frankfurt argues, "a person who voluntarily disobeys those commands is thereby acting voluntarily against the requirements of his own will" (1999a, p. 139). Frankfurt makes the same point in "The Importance of What We Care About," when he concludes that the necessities of love "keep us from violating not our duties or our obligations but ourselves" (1998d, p. 91). In the aforementioned examples of love for an object or ideal, or for a person from afar, we want to conclude that failure to act from love constitutes a wrong of some sort. Now we can see that the wrong does not involve violating a duty or moral obligation, but betrayal of oneself.<sup>7</sup>

In his early work, Frankfurt claims that "reason depends on the will" (1998c, p. 176). I take him to mean that when thinking about what we should do, the structure of the will is fundamental. But in §2

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<sup>5</sup> In making this assumption, Frankfurt appears to preclude duties to oneself.

<sup>6</sup> Frankfurt's view does not preclude the existence of moral normativity. Acting morally may be an ideal a person loves. Thus, when she has a moral obligation, she has done something wrong. But the normativity of this case is derived from the person's love of the ideal. If she gave up her love for the ideal of acting morally, she would not do something wrong when she violates a moral obligation.

<sup>7</sup> Frankfurt draws a parallel between his view and Kant's by pointing out that betrayal of love manifests a lack of self-respect, while violating one's duty manifests a lack of respect for the moral law.

I argued that his early account does not render the will determinate. It follows that the hierarchical model does not establish what a person should do or, in other words, the authority of the reasons of love. Just as Frankfurt's hierarchical model requires determinacy to provide an adequate account of free will, his view requires determinacy to provide an adequate account of practical reason.

The addition of love as a type of volitional necessity appears to change this picture. According to Frankfurt, the necessities of love possess authority. He writes, "The authority for the lover of the claims that are made upon him by his love is the authority of his own essential nature as a person. It is, in other words, the authority over him of the essential nature of his own individual will" (1999a, p. 138). And these insights into the authority of love explain Frankfurt's bold conclusion that "[love] is the ultimate ground of practical rationality" (2004, p. 56). According to Frankfurt, a person who betrays his love betrays himself because he violates something that is necessarily important to him. I take this suggestion to imply that since they are central to a person's identity, the reasons of love are *authoritative* reasons. The authority of the reasons of love is not derived from interpersonal agreement, law, or morality. After all, a person may not care about these external sources. The reasons of love have internal authority; they are grounded in a person's identity and therefore bind a person by her own lights (1999a, p. 139).<sup>8</sup>

It is important to emphasize one implication of Frankfurt's view about the normativity grounded by love. The necessities of love do not bind all persons like the necessities of morality; love only binds the lover. The fact that I love my family implies that I betray myself when I fail to act on their behalf, but this fact about my will does not have the same implications for those who do not love my family as I do. This conclusion follows from the fact that the normativity of love is subjective and partial, rather than

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<sup>8</sup> My use of "internal" may make it seem as though a person can arbitrarily decide that a reason is authoritative. However, on Frankfurt's view choice and other acts of will are not the basis of normativity, the will is. As noted above, although our choices may shed light on the structure of our will, we are often opaque to ourselves. The fact that we are opaque to ourselves implies that choice and the true structure of the will come apart.

objective and impartial. As will become clear below, Frankfurt's account of normativity proves to be a weakness of his view. But before turning to my argument for that claim, I will elucidate the phenomenon that I believe brings this weakness to the fore.

#### 4. BETRAYAL OF LOVE AND INDETERMINACY

Just as considering cases of apparent violations of conceptual, causal, and moral necessity shed light on the differences between them, considering cases of apparent violations of the necessities of love sheds light on the nature of Frankfurt's view of love as a type of volition necessity. In various places Frankfurt refers to such violations as cases of betrayal of love. In this section, I will consider examples of betrayal of love and derive two criteria that Frankfurt's view must satisfy in order to properly account for the phenomenon. First, Frankfurt's view must allow for the possibility of betrayal of love. Second, Frankfurt's view must account for the normativity of love. I address each in turn and conclude that failure to satisfy both criteria entails a failure to render the will determinate.

##### *4.1 Betrayal of Love and Two Criteria*

We do not necessarily betray our love when we fail to act in accordance with what we *believe* we love, because we are opaque to ourselves. A person's beliefs are fallible indicators about the true structure of the will. Furthermore, we do not betray our love when we inadvertently and unforeseeably harm or neglect our beloved. We occasionally have mistaken beliefs about the interests of our beloved and what must be done to advance those interests. But love is essentially a state of the will, and thus involves our motivational tendencies, not our beliefs. I do not mean to suggest that beliefs are unimportant in an account of love. Of course, a lover must be motivated to pursue accurate beliefs about her beloved. However, it is possible for a lover to have mistaken beliefs about her beloved and still genuinely love him.



Betrayal of love involves truly loving and yet acting in a way that neglects or harms the object of love.<sup>9</sup> “A person who fails to act in the ways that caring about his beloved requires,” Frankfurt explains, “necessarily fails to live in accordance with his ideal for himself. In betraying the object of his love, he therefore betrays himself as well” (1999a, p. 139). There are two ways in which we may betray our love, corresponding to the two types of coherence discussed in §2. First, we may truly stand behind a first-order desire to act on behalf of our beloved, and yet fail to act on that desire. The unwilling addict overcome by a desire to use drugs, for example, betrays himself and therefore his love when he uses. There is disunity between his higher-order volitions and the first-order desire that moves him to action. Second, we may be ambivalent. Ambivalence “consists in a vacillation or opposition within the self which guarantees that one volitional element will be opposed by another, so that the person cannot avoid acting against himself” (1999a, p. 139 fn. 9). In the case of ambivalence, there is disunity between conflicting higher-order desires. It seems that a person, like Agamemnon, must betray his love, because he loves incompatible individuals (i.e. objects, people, or ideals). Frankfurt has this type of case in mind when he explains that we are naturally disposed to be careful about what or who we extend our love to.

Our lack of immediate voluntary control over our loving is a particular source of danger to us. The fact that we cannot directly and freely determine what we love and what we do not love, simply by making choices and decisions of our own, means that we are often susceptible to being more or less helplessly driven by the necessities that love entails. These necessities may lead us to invest ourselves unwisely. Love may engage us in volitional commitments from which we are unable to withdraw and through which our interests may be severely harmed. (2004, p. 63)

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<sup>9</sup> As explained above, since concern for the beloved is central to a person’s essential identity, betrayal of the object of love implies betrayal of oneself as well.

In most cases, a person who loves incompatible individuals can act without betraying his love for either one. But, by hypothesis, there are certain circumstances in which the demands of his love will conflict. Since he cannot have both; he will be “more or less helplessly driven by the necessities that love entails” to betray his love for one of them. Agamemnon’s case is an example of such a tragic circumstance. Both his love for daughter and army are equally defining elements of his will, and because they are in conflict, he must violate one of them. I take the potential dangers of loving incompatible individual’s to highlight a real phenomenon, and thus the possibility of betrayal of love presents a person with real practical problems. These implications raise the first criterion for a view of love. An account of love must allow for the possibility of betrayal of love. If a view entails that betrayal of love is simply an illusion and does not, in some theoretical sense, exist, then the view fails to account for the possibility of betrayal of love. Given Frankfurt’s warning of the dangers raised by love, I assume he accepts my first criterion for an account of love.

The second criterion involves the normative implications of love. Above I explained that, according to Frankfurt, the reasons of love have authority, so betrayal of love involves doing something wrong. Frankfurt claims that Agamemnon is torn between equally defining elements of his will. He, therefore, has authoritative reasons for both courses of action. No matter what he does, he is bound to do something wrong. Tragic cases, like Agamemnon’s, obscure the normative implications of love. The authority of love becomes clearer when a person fails to act in accordance with love but does not have an opposing love. The unwilling addict who uses drugs, for example, has an authoritative reason to not use drugs. He wholeheartedly dissociates from first-order desires to use, and thus betrays himself or does something wrong when he uses.

An authoritative reason justifies an action.<sup>10</sup> This justification can be understood from two perspectives. When thinking about what to do, we seek an authoritative reason to justify performing a

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<sup>10</sup> I remain neutral about whether or not a person can have non-authoritative reasons for action.

particular action. When thinking about what we have already done, we seek an authoritative reason to justify various self-directed reactive attitudes, like guilt.<sup>11</sup> The unwilling addict should not use drugs, and has reason to feel guilty when he does so. This case obscures the normativity of love, because the structure of the unwilling addict's will has been stipulated. By definition, the unwilling addict does not identify with the desire to use drugs. This identification is a type of metaphysical, not epistemic, identification. The unwilling addict does not simply believe he is unwilling. He is, as a matter of fact, truly unwilling.

Consider a more realistic example of a potential instance of betrayal of love, based on the Luther case discussed above. In my modified version of the case, Martin is in the same situation as Luther. But unlike Luther, Martin recants and publically disavows his earlier writings. Now, two related questions come up regarding his action. Did Martin betray his love for his religious ideals by recanting? And, is Martin justified in feeling guilty for doing so?

Opacity makes answering these questions difficult. Even if Martin believes he betrayed his love and believes he is justified in feeling guilty, he may be mistaken. The truth about the structure of Martin's will is required to answer these questions. On the one hand, if Martin truly loves, then the answer to both questions is "Yes." Martin does *as a matter of fact* betray his love, and is justified in feeling guilty when he does so. On the other hand, if Martin does not truly love but simply believes he loves, then the answer to both questions is "No." Martin does not in fact betray his love, and is not justified in feeling guilty when he does so. Assuming Martin once loved the religious ideals that he disavows, Martin has *a change of heart*.

There are important normative differences between these two cases. If Martin betrays his love, he fails to act on an authoritative reason. He, like the unwilling addict who uses drugs, betrays the

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<sup>11</sup> I was inspired to draw this distinction by Nicholas Southwood's (2010) discussion of the normativity in Hobbesian contractarianism. He argues that the reasons generated by a moral theory must be both prospective and retrospective.

object of his love and in so doing betrays himself. But if Martin simply has a change of heart, he does not necessarily betray his love when he recants. The difference between betrayal of love and a change of heart raises the second criterion for an adequate account of betrayal of love. Frankfurt's view must properly account for the normative implications of betrayal of love, and therefore must capture the differences between betrayal of love and a change of heart.

#### *4.2 Indeterminacy of the Will*

I have argued that Frankfurt's view must account for the possibility and normativity of betrayal of love to sufficiently account for the phenomenon of betrayal of love. In other words, it must account for the fact that a person can fail to act on behalf of his beloved, but that he should not to do so. Before turning back to Frankfurt's view, I will argue that a failure to provide a satisfactory account of betrayal of love constitutes a failure to render the will determinate. In §2 I argued that the hierarchical model is an inadequate account of the will, because it does not impose adequate limits on the capacity for reflexive self-evaluation. Since love—conceived of as a volitional necessity—defines the limits of a person's will, it may serve to render the will determinate and save Frankfurt's account of the will. The indeterminacy in a view that does not account for the phenomenon of betrayal of love can be seen in two ways, corresponding to the two criteria introduced in the previous section.

First, if Frankfurt's view fails to account for the possibility of betrayal of love, then it must account for acts which *appear* to be cases of betrayal of love by introducing excessive and counterintuitive identity shifts. Every betrayal of love implies an identity shift—permanent or temporary—to account for the fact that a person appears to violate his beloved, but strictly speaking does not. For example, since betrayal of love is not possible, Agamemnon must have had a change of heart before killing his daughter. The structure of his will must have shifted to making performing such an act thinkable for him. A shift in the boundaries of the will entails a shift in a person's essential identity, and thus Agamemnon ceases to exist before he kills his daughter. Perhaps this is indeed the

case for Agamemnon because he is confronted with a truly tragic scenario. However, on a view that fails to account for the possibility of betrayal of love, a person undergoes the same type of identity shift to account for every apparent case of betrayal of love. Martin does not betray his love for his religious ideals when he recants and publically declares that he no longer holds them. Similarly, the unwilling addict does not betray himself when he uses drugs. Both Martin and the unwilling addict, like Agamemnon, simply have a change of heart.

The problem with this consequence becomes clear when the implications for free will are spelled out. A person lacks free will, on Frankfurt's view, if she does not have the will she wants. But since apparent cases of betrayal of love are accounted for by introducing shifts in the structure of the will, a person must always have the will she wants. It follows that every act must be performed with free will. If a person performs an action which appears to be in conflict with the structure of her will, then she simply has a change of heart and thus the conflict between a person's higher order desires and her effective first-order desire is merely apparent.

However, it may be objected, I have failed to argue that this problematic consequence is a result of indeterminacy in an account of the will. After all, it seems that it is a result of too much determinacy. But I do not think this line of thought is quite right. The connection between the structure of a person's will and her act is determinate only in a very limited sense, because a person's identity is radically indeterminate. Every action that conflicts with a person's existing identity is accounted for with an identity shift. The unwilling addict does not betray his love when he uses drugs; he was simply not himself. The problem is that there are no limits on these identity shifts. The hierarchical account entails indeterminacy in the structure of the will because it does not establish limits on reflexive self-evaluation. Similarly, a view of the will that does not account for the possibility of betrayal of love entails indeterminacy because it does not establish limits on a person's identity.

Second, if Frankfurt's view does allow for the possibility of betrayal of love but does not account for the authority of the reasons of love, then his view cannot distinguish between betrayal of love and a change of heart. The difference between betrayal of love and a change of heart involves the actual structure of the will. In the Martin case introduced above, it is unclear what the actual structure of his will is when he recants. He may have betrayed his love or he may have had a change of heart. If the former is true, then Martin does not have the will he wants when he recants, and thus he does not have free will. But if the latter is true, then Martin may have the will he wants when he recants and thus may have free will.<sup>12</sup>

This conclusion might not seem problematic, because an account of the will does not need to establish whether or not Martin is free. Instead, it must simply allow for there to be a fact of the matter about whether or not he is free. The hierarchical model is inadequate, because it does not place limits on the capacity for reflexive self-evaluation. Since there is no fact of the matter about what the true structure of a person's will is, the hierarchical model does not render the will determinate. Love appears to place limits on the will, because the necessities of love constrains the will by setting inviolable boundaries. However, these boundaries are not, in fact, inviolable, because a person may have a change of heart, and the capacity to have a change of heart is not limited in any way. As a result, the true structure of a person's will is indeterminate. What is needed, then, are limits on a person's capacity to have a change of heart. Without these limits, the addition of love to the hierarchical model does not solve the problem it was introduced to solve.

I have argued that Frankfurt introduces love to resolve the indeterminacy in this view and thereby provide a satisfactory account of free will. The cases considered above highlight two criteria that must be satisfied to account for betrayal of love. First, Frankfurt's view must account for the

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<sup>12</sup> I say that Martin *may* have free will, because he may lack free will because he violates another object of love other than his religious ideals. For example, he may lack free will because he likes to look like a rebel in public. Thus, when he recants he does not betray his love for the religious ideals but for another ideal he may hold for himself.

possibility of betrayal of love. Second, Frankfurt's view must account for the normative implications of betrayal of love. Failure to satisfy both criteria, I argued, implies a failure to render the will determinate.

## 5. VOLITIONAL NECESSITY AND BETRAYAL OF LOVE

My purpose in this section is to establish that Frankfurt cannot account for betrayal of love. To do so, I must show that Frankfurt does not satisfy both criteria introduced in §4. That is, Frankfurt's view must account for the possibility of betrayal of love and the authority of the reasons of love. As argued in §3, there is evidence to suggest that Frankfurt understands the necessities of love as imposing a type of descriptive necessity in some contexts and as imposing a type of normative necessity in others. However, in §2 I showed that these two conceptions of a necessity are mutually exclusive. Thus, Frankfurt must commit to either a descriptive or normative interpretation of the necessities of love. Below I argue that on either interpretation, Frankfurt fails to satisfy one of the two criteria. Therefore, I argue, Frankfurt fails to render the will determinate by introducing the notion of love and thus it does not solve the problem it was introduced to address. I conclude with some observations about the nature of the problem and recommend a way forward for Frankfurt.

### *5.1 Love as a Type of Descriptive Necessity*

Above I argued that betrayal of love is not possible on the descriptive interpretation of love. Since betrayal of love is a violation of the descriptive necessities that bind a lover's will and descriptive necessities cannot be violated, betrayal of love is strictly impossible. Apparent cases of betrayal of love involve a shift in identity to accommodate the act. It follows, then, that a descriptive interpretation of Frankfurt's view entails a failure to satisfy the first criterion, and therefore a failure to render the will determinate. But perhaps this argument is too hasty. Is it possible to experience a shift in identity and yet still betray one's beloved?

I do not believe so. Reflecting on Frankfurt's Agamemnon and Luther cases helps illustrate why. Frankfurt characterizes Agamemnon's action as an example of betrayal of love. Agamemnon loves his daughter and army. On Frankfurt's view, harming or neglecting one's beloved is strictly unthinkable, and thus harming or neglecting either his daughter or army is unthinkable for Agamemnon. However, Agamemnon finds himself in a scenario in which he must kill his daughter to avoid neglecting the needs of his army. Thus, the act of harming his beloved daughter becomes thinkable. But Frankfurt characterizes Agamemnon as undergoing a shift in identity. Since the act of harming his beloved must be unthinkable, if his identity shifts *before* or at the moment of the act, then Agamemnon does not betray his love; he has a change of heart. He does not love his daughter and thus may kill her for the sake of his beloved army. Of course, Agamemnon may care about his daughter, but since he does not love her, he may set aside concern for her to avoid betraying his love for his army.

It is fair to imagine that Agamemnon recognized that there was a conflict between his army and his daughter, and decided to act on his army's behalf. If this is the case, then betraying his daughter was *not* unthinkable for Agamemnon. The fact that he is able to choose to harm his daughter for the sake of his army implies that Agamemnon's identity shift took place before killing her. Thus, Agamemnon does not betray his love for his daughter; he simply has a change of heart. If Agamemnon loved his daughter, then he would have run into the same binding necessity that Luther ran into if he had attempted to recant. He would have found the act of killing his daughter unthinkable, and thus would have inevitably failed to follow through.

It may be objected that Agamemnon does in fact betray his love for his army, because he is forced to do so by the *stronger* love for his army. Thus, perhaps it might be suggested, betrayal of love is possible, because a person may betray his love for the sake of another love. But this analysis is not available to Frankfurt if he accepts a descriptive interpretation of love. Since love defines the limits of a person's will and the structure of a person's will defines her essential identity, any violation of those



limits entails a shift in identity. This point is best illustrated by returning to Frankfurt's analogy between the necessities that bind a triangle and the necessities that bind a person. Imagine a triangle with two binding necessities and thus two essential characteristics. An equilateral triangle, for example, must have equal internal angles and they must add up to 180 degrees. Now, the thrust of the objection under consideration is that one necessity may be stronger than another. But notice that neither conceptual necessity can be modified without changing the figure's identity. On the one hand, if another line is added but the internal angles remain equal, then the figure is a square. On the other hand, if the angles are tweaked such that they are no longer equal, then the shape remains a triangle but is no longer an equilateral triangle. In either case, modifying one of the essential characteristics of an equilateral triangle entails an identity shift.

The same is true for Agamemnon, because his love for his daughter and army are "equally defining elements of his nature." If love imposes a type of descriptive necessity, conflict between two objects of love cannot be weighed. Therefore, Agamemnon's love for his army cannot be considered stronger or more central to his identity. On the descriptive interpretation, all forms of love are equally essential to a person's identity, and thus a person must experience a shift in identity if the demands of her beloved conflict.

My discussion on this point may make the descriptive interpretation look odd and patently false. I believe this intuition originates from the fact that it seems as though Frankfurt's view, cast in this light, cannot account for the fact that we are motivated to avoid betrayal of love. Agamemnon's decision to kill his daughter was surely difficult. He may have resisted the change of heart in effort to find a way of resolving the tension in his will, and his efforts to resolve this tension may have tormented him. Any account of love that fails to capture the difficulty involved in apparent cases of betrayal of love fails to provide an adequate account of love.

However, Frankfurt has a motivational story to tell about why a person does not desire to undergo the type of identity shift required to account for betrayal of love. Agamemnon's shift in identity, he explains, implies "there can be no continuation of *his* story" (1999, p. 139 fn. 8). In short, identity shifts constitute a sort of death or (perhaps more carefully) discontinued existence. Frankfurt couples this fact to a basic motive. He writes, "There is, I believe, a quite primitive human need to establish and to maintain volitional unity. Any threat to this unity—that is, any threat to the cohesion of the self—tends to alarm a person and to mobilize him for an attempt at 'self-preservation'" (1999, p. 139). So, on the descriptive interpretation of the necessities of love, betrayal of love does not exist, but we are adverse to undergo a change of heart and the corresponding shift in identity due to a basic desire for self-preservation.

I hope to have sketched the most charitable interpretation of Frankfurt's view if he adopts the descriptive interpretation of love. In conclusion, although Frankfurt may have the resources for a convincing motivational story about betrayal of love, conceiving of love as imposing a type of descriptive necessity entails that betrayal of love is strictly impossible. As argued in §4, this consequence is unacceptable, because it shows that Frankfurt's view fails to render the will determinate with the introduction of love as a volitional necessity. Perhaps the normative interpretation fares better.

### *5.2 Love as a Type of Normative Necessity*

Frankfurt claims that we can negligently, willfully, or *akratically* fail to do what we must. He also claims that the commands of love have *authority* over a person. On a normative interpretation of the necessities of love, Frankfurt's view may be able to account for the fact that a person can betray his love, but should not do so. However, in what follows, I argue that if Frankfurt adopts the normative interpretation, his view cannot satisfy both of the criteria established in §4, and therefore fails to render the will determinate. This conclusion is best illustrated by looking more closely at each of the three ways

Frankfurt suggests a lover might fail to do what he must. I discuss each in turn, and show how Frankfurt cannot account for the reasons of love.

Frankfurt says that we may negligently fail to do what love demands. I take it that he has two potential forms of negligence in mind. First, a person may fail to introspect or attend to the structure of his will, and thus may not know what he loves. But this type of negligence does not account for betrayal of love. As Frankfurt describes the Luther case, it is irrelevant what Luther thinks about his volitional configuration. He may decide to recant to avoid the charge of heresy, and believe that he will be successful. However, when the chips are down, he is compelled to resist recanting by the volitional necessity that binds his will. Since we are opaque to ourselves, we may not always know what we love. The necessity a person is subject to when he loves does not depend on beliefs, it depends on the will. Thus, betrayal of love cannot be accounted for by appeal to mistaken beliefs about what one loves.

Second, a person may know what he love but not know important information regarding the needs of his beloved. Examples of this type of negligence are complicated by the fact that we may hold a person responsible for not knowing important facts about the needs of his beloved. We blame a father, for instance, who does not know that letting his child eat lead paint chips can be incredibly harmful.<sup>13</sup> Thus, we might conclude, the father betrays his love because he fails to do what his love commands. But we must be careful to not let the responsibility judgment cloud important details of the case. Love is a state of a person's will, which necessarily motivates the lover to act on behalf of his beloved. If a parent does not seek out basic and easily available information relevant to the health of his child, then he is clearly not motivated to act on behalf of his child. It follows that although we may hold the father

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<sup>13</sup> This example is derived from Frankfurt's discussion of the obstacles presented by ignorance and errors for self-love. He writes, "Consider the fact that parents may fail to understand what is genuinely important to their children. Parents frequently are, indeed, badly mistaken as to what is really in their children's interests. This does not imply that they lack love for their children. We would charge them with lacking love for their children only if we believed that they had no serious desire to know what their children's interests are" (2004, pp. 87-8).

responsible for his lack of motivation in seeking out and meeting the needs of his child; this is not a case of betrayal of love, because he simply does not love his child.

We can imagine a lover who is motivated to act from love, but is incredibly unlucky in his pursuit of information regarding his beloved. The father, for example, may seek out information regarding the health of his child, but may, by some unfortunate set of circumstances, fail to come across pertinent information. This possibility, it may be argued, makes betrayal of love possible. The father loves, and betrays his beloved. But I do not think this is quite right. We do not blame the father in this case because he seeks out information and acts on behalf of his beloved *given the information he has available to him*. The fact that his beloved is harmed, then, is not his doing; it is an unfortunate consequence of the circumstances. Thus, the father may indeed love his child, but he does not betray his love when he allows the child to eat paint chips. On either interpretation of negligence, betrayal of love is not possible.

Frankfurt also claims that we may willfully disobey the commands of love. This suggestion is quite perplexing, because of his characterization of love as a volitional necessity. Love binds the lover's will making betrayal of love unthinkable, and making modifying the will to make betrayal of love possible unthinkable. Thus, love establishes a person's absolute volitional boundaries. It is, therefore, impossible for the person to marshal any resources to disobey the commands of love from outside those boundaries. Willfully disobeying the commands of love, however, would require exactly that. The unwilling addict, for instance, is fundamentally opposed to using drugs. Any effective desire that moves him to do so is necessarily external to him. Thus, he cannot be described as willfully disobeying the commands of love. Frankfurt cannot claim that a person can willfully disobey the commands of love without giving up his commitment to the idea of love as a volitional necessity.

Finally, Frankfurt claims that a person may akratically disobey the commands of love. He does not elaborate on this suggestion, but he may mean that weakness of will prevents a person from doing

what they should do. As I understand it, weakness of will involves willing a particular action but failing to carry out that action. But since Frankfurt defines the will as a person's effective first-order desire, it is impossible for a person's will and the action she pursues to come apart. A person cannot, for instance, will to act on behalf of her beloved but fail to attempt that act, because her will is, by definition, effective in moving her to act. Thus, betrayal of love is not possible due to weakness of will.

However, Frankfurt may mean that betrayal of love is possible due to weakness of *the structure of the will*. By this I mean a weak-willed person does not act on a desire he identifies with. A person may genuinely love, and yet fail to act on that love due to an overwhelming and alienating desire that she does not identify with. Of the three candidates for accounting for betrayal of love, this interpretation of weakness of will is only one that does not clearly conflict with Frankfurt's account of love.<sup>14</sup>

I will argue that although weakness of the structure of the will may allow Frankfurt to account for how a person can betray her love, it cannot account for the fact that a person should not do so. As noted above, it is difficult to see how this is the case when considering the unwilling addict, because the structure of his will has been stipulated. In the modified version of the Luther case I introduced in the previous section, I eliminated a stipulation about the true structure of Martin's will. He publically recants his heretical beliefs, but it is unclear whether he betrayed his love or had a change of heart. Thus, it is unclear whether or not Martin does something wrong when he recants. Cases like Martin's, present a problem for Frankfurt's view, because although it is possible for Martin to betray his love, there is no fact of the matter about whether or not he should recant.

This is a consequence of two related claims that Frankfurt is committed to. First, the true structure of the will is opaque. Second, it is possible for the structure of a person's will to change. Martin's beliefs about recanting do not establish the true structure of his will, because he is opaque to himself, and thus he may be mistaken. Any case that appears to be an example of betrayal of love may

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that thinking about the weak-willed person—like the unwilling addict—brings Frankfurt full circle to the case he first considered when developing the hierarchical model of the will.

in fact be an example of a change of heart. If the true structure of the will establishes whether or not a person has free will and there is no fact of the matter about the true structure of his will, then there is no fact of the matter about whether or not a person has free will. Thus, accepting the normative interpretation of the necessities of love does not solve the problem raised by the hierarchical model. Although a person may appear to have free will, it is always possible that he, as a matter of fact, does not.

Now Frankfurt has two strategies for dealing with the puzzle raised by not being able to distinguish between betrayal of love and a change of heart. On the one hand, he might claim that all cases of an apparent change of heart are simply cases of betrayal of love. On the other hand, he might claim that all cases of apparent betrayal of love are simply cases of having a change of heart. Both strategies seem to allow Frankfurt to render the will determinate. However, neither strategy is acceptable, because Frankfurt's view must make room for both phenomena, and the normative differences between them.

Frankfurt argues that a person may negligently, willfully, or *akratically* fail to do what he must. I argued that appeal to negligent or willful betrayal of love clearly conflicts with his account of love. In both cases, Frankfurt would have to give up a central feature of his view to accommodate these explanations for how a person can fail to do what he must. Weakness of will does allow Frankfurt to account for how a person can fail to do what he must, but his view does not provide an explanation for why a person should not do so. Therefore, conceiving of love as imposing a type of normative necessity does not satisfy both criteria introduced in §4. As argued above, this consequence is unacceptable, because it shows that Frankfurt's view fails to render the will determinate with the introduction of love as a volitional necessity.

### 5.3 Objectivity and Identity

Frankfurt claims that the authority love is not derived from reason, it derives from facts about the structure of a person's will. He writes, "[T]he most basic and essential question for a person to raise concerning the conduct of his life cannot be the normative question of how he should live. That question can sensibly be asked only on the basis of a prior answer to the factual question of what he actually does [love]" (2004, p. 26). On Frankfurt's view, love imposes a type of volitional necessity. I have argued that love imposes either a type of descriptive or normative necessity. Above I established that both interpretations fail to render the will determinate, because they fail to establish appropriate limits on the structure of the will.

Various philosophers have argued that Frankfurt's view lacks objectivity. Barbra Herman (2002), for instance, extends Watson's critique of Frankfurt's early work by claiming that the authority of a reason is derived from its value. However, she argues, there is a gap in Frankfurt's view between what counts as a reason and what is objectively valuable. Susan Wolf (1990, 2002) does not demand objectivity of value but of reasons. Thus, according to the Reason View, as she calls it, it seems that some forms of love are unreasonable, and thus do not generate authoritative reasons. I do not find these solutions completely convincing, because values and reasons may be exogenous to the will, and thus may strike a person as alienating.

As I see it, a solution to Frankfurt's problem demands objectivity in his account of a person's identity. Frankfurt's view does not place limits of the structure of the will, because he gets the relationship between reason and the will backwards. Therefore, his view does not account for how love both defines a person's essential identity and thereby establishes an answer to the normative question. On the view I am suggesting, the limits of a person's will are established by the impartial and objective commands of reason. Or, in other words, the limits of a person's will are established by what he should do. But, on my view, the commands of reason do not possess special authority, like the reasons of

Wolf's Reason View. Instead, the authority of reasons is derived from a person's essential identity. In this way, objectivity is obtained without appeal to external standards for what counts as a reason. For example, if Martin should not recant, then having a change of heart is beyond the limits of his will and thus he cannot change to make recanting possible. If he recants, then his act constitutes a wrong. This fact about his action is made possible, however, because reason is more fundamental to his identity than love.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In §2 I argued that Frankfurt's hierarchical model cannot render a person's identity determinate, and that it is plausible to construe Frankfurt's introduction of love as a volitional necessity as a solution to this indeterminacy problem. In §3 I distinguished between two general types of necessity: descriptive and normative. Love, I argued, must impose either a type of descriptive or normative necessity. In §4 I raised the phenomenon of betrayal of love and derived two criteria that must be met by any satisfactory account of love. Betrayal of love, I argued, presents a person with real practical problems that have normative implications. Thus, an adequate account of love must conclude that a lover can fail to act on behalf of his beloved, but that he should not do so. Failure to satisfy both criteria, I argued, illustrates that Frankfurt's view fails to render the will determinate, and therefore introducing love does not resolve the problematic indeterminacy that beset the hierarchical model.

In §5 I pulled all of these lines of argumentation together to show that Frankfurt's view cannot provide a satisfactory account of betrayal of love. On the descriptive interpretation of the necessities of love, Frankfurt's view entails that betrayal of love is not possible. On the normative interpretation, Frankfurt's view can only account for the possibility of betrayal of love by appealing to weakness of will. However, I argued, Frankfurt's view does not capture the normative implications of weakness of will. Therefore, adding the notion of love to the hierarchical model, does not resolve the problematic



indeterminacy that beset Frankfurt's early work. I concluded by suggesting that Frankfurt's partial and subjective conception of the authority of love prevents his view from providing a sufficiently objective account of personal identity, and doing so requires thinking of reason as more fundamental than the will.

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