What love is (as understood by Frankfurt)

How the notion of a person as a free agent is connected to the idea of love as a source of reasons for action

Maria Elisa Giovanardi

Supervisor: Olav Gjelsvik

Master’s thesis of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring semester 2016
© Maria Elisa Giovanardi

2016

What love is (as understood by Harry Frankfurt)

Maria Elisa Giovanardi

http://www.duo.uio.no/

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo
Abstract

What distinguishes persons from other agents is their capacity to form a volition which means that they have a volitional essence. The Real Self view Frankfurt holds on autonomy has coming as its cornerstone. Persons are autonomous when they act upon motives that are eternal to them. Love provides reasons and drives the activity of reflection that is the proper responding to reasons and brings about meaning in the sense of the internalization of volition of necessities.
Acknowledgements
First of all I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Olav Gjelsvik. I am grateful for your patience, your guidance, your valuable insight, and how you have respected my point of view from the very beginning. The first supervisor session took place in April 2014 and commenced, with some breaks, until June 2016. Secondly, I want to thank Dr. Monica Roland. I appreciate your important comments from the onset and for your aid in developing this thesis. Moreover, I thank you for your time and our conversations. Moreover, I want to thank Kristin Tiili for her patience while proofreading my document. Last, but not least, I want to thank the department of philosophy at the University of Oslo for accepting me into the program and for giving me extra time to finish my project. Though the journey has been challenging, it has been a rewarding journey of self-discovery on many levels.
Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................... IV
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................. V
Introduction .......................................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1 PERSONS ............................................................................................................................ 4
  1.1 Taking Ourselves Seriously ........................................................................................................ 4
  1.2 Hierarchical Will .......................................................................................................................... 8
  1.3 Activity – Passivity ..................................................................................................................... 12
  1.4 Endorsement .............................................................................................................................. 16

Chapter 2 AGENCY ............................................................................................................................. 23
  2.1 Critical Remarks about the Standard Theory ............................................................................ 23
  2.2 Frankfurt's theory of agency ...................................................................................................... 25
  2.3 The role of the agent in the production of action ...................................................................... 27
  2.4 New Questions about the agent- the relation to the real self, and relation to motivation and Reason ............................................................................................................................................................................ 30

Chapter 3 LOVE .................................................................................................................................. 32
  3.1 Caring and the hierarchical model of desires .......................................................................... 32
  3.2 Love and Reason ......................................................................................................................... 34
  3.3 Love and Morality ....................................................................................................................... 43
  3.4 Characterizing Love as a Mode of Care .................................................................................... 49

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 52

Bibliography ......................................................................................................................................... 54
Introduction

A great deal of Frankfurt’s practical philosophy can be interpreted as a theory of practical reason based upon the notion of love as a mode of caring.¹ A love based action theory maintains that our caring provides us with goals and aims to be pursued with enduring and persistent motivation as they reflect our genuine will. When we are moved by the objects we cared about there is the possibility that they lead us to live a genuine and meaningful existence, and, I would say, an authentic existence—an existence which makes itself possible in virtue of the possibility of its being firmly anchored in our capacity for reflexivity and self-reflexivity. The origins of this theory are linked to the epistemological and metaphysical elements constitutive of Frankfurt’s construct of the notion of autonomous subject/self.

In order to look at the relation between Frankfurt’s concept of person and his theory of action based on love as a mode of care, I depart from a simplified version of the real self-view, which maintains that free will/autonomy/free agency is possible if and only if there is a self who acts by being truthful to her genuine will. The ‘real- self-view’ presupposes an understanding of the notion of authenticity that, in its core, bears the notion of autonomy as self-governance—a notion that is directly linked to a person’s capacity for reflexivity, understood as an awareness of herself, in this strict sense which comprises her (active) relation to her will.² Being active, a person is capable of refraining from acting upon her first-order desires. She is, therefore, able to form higher order desires and volitions of higher order to which she commits and realize her autonomy.

The intimate connection between the concept of a person and the notion of care is based upon the premise that says that what we love—as a result of the configuration of our will—determines what we are able to do with ourselves as it shapes our identities. Therefore, it is important to examine the elements that separately constitute the notion of person and the notion of care. Moreover, it is important to look at the interdependency between them. Looking at how these concepts intertwine, and depend on one another, might illuminate the foundations of a theory which links identity as self-governance to love as a mode of care. I will explain how the view of the real self, as claimed by Frankfurt, moves from describing reflexivity (the real self is the

¹Love as caring provides reasons for action and this view pervades all of his philosophy after his early working out the concepts of person and freedom of the will.
²A person is active when she endorses a motivational set of desires by employing reflexivity and also when her actions are founded on her caring. She reflects upon the content of her will because she cares about it.
reflective self) relying solely on the mechanisms inherent to the hierarchical will, to a more comprehensive notion of reflexivity that incorporates in it the element love as a mode of caring. Love as a mode of care is the connecting element between a person and her active nature.\(^3\)

Central to Frankfurt’s view on love is the notion of volitional necessity. A necessity \textit{per se} - as it binds our will and exerts a command upon us. It is volitional necessity defining the limits of a person’s will, giving it a configuration that determines/defines her caring. Volitional necessities, despite being a product of the contingent features of a person, are the elements that determine her final ends.

Wantonness and proper caring are in conflict and caring and personhood is a way of clarifying what constitutes human action. The hierarchical model of the structure of a person’s will is meant to exhibit the mechanisms underlying a person’s most important characteristic: her ability to care about the content of her will, by employing reflexivity. It is by reflecting upon the content of her will, and by revising the importance to her of its constitutive elements, and by committing to desires that are coincident with that which is her genuine will, that a person is able to form higher-order volitions. However, it must be discussed whether the notion of higher order volitions amounts to the generation of autonomous action. Thus, asking the question: what makes higher order volitions more internal/integral to the agents in relation to mere desires? As Gary Watson observes,

\begin{quote}
one job Frankfurt wishes to do with the distinction between lower and higher orders of desires is to give an account of the sense in which some wants may be said to be more truly the agents’ own than others, the sense in which the agent identifies with one desire rather than another and the sense in which an agent may be unfree with respect to his own will.\(^4\)
\end{quote}

Both notions, caring – as contrived by volitional necessities - and the hierarchical will, are constructed as formative instances of the real self-view held by Frankfurt regarding autonomy. In conjunction, they convey a single theory while they solidify the view that reinforces the idea of an autonomy centered on the self and her will. The self is a function of her will as her contours are defined by it. Frankfurt’s theory of practical reasoning, based on love, maintains that (1) love is the fundamental motivational force of free will and (2) combined, these two notions, self and love as a mode of care, bring our understanding of practical reasoning to levels beyond the realms of morality and self-interest.

---


The puzzling conceptual construct of Frankfurt’s theory is the notion of volitional necessity. It is presented as a decisive formative (and ultimately normative element) in the make-up of an agent’s free will, it combines freedom and necessity. Frankfurt claims that volitional necessities bind a person’s will and thereby produce norms that are internal to the subject and represent liberation. For the same reason, they are representative of the commanding power that authentic elements constitutive of an agent’s will have upon her. Moreover, a volitional necessity, despite its internal nature, can be interpreted, in the whole of Frankfurt’s theory on love, as an objective truth, or, part of the reality about the agent/self. Similarly, it provides the agent with categorical norms or imperatives which to obey. The authoritative nature of the commands of our volitional necessities springs from the fact that, in not obeying them, we are betraying our own selves. In betraying her own self, a person is not acting. I will look at how volitional necessities are described as the fundamental elements that produce reasons for action as they are claimed to be that which circumscribe the limits of a person’s will:

Unless a person makes choices within restriction from which he cannot escape by merely choosing to do so, the notion of self-direction, of autonomy, cannot find a grip. Someone free of all restrictions is so vacant of identifiable and stable volitional tendencies and constraints that he cannot deliberate or make decisions in any conscientious way. If he nonetheless does remain in some way capable of choice, the decision he makes will be altogether arbitrary. They cannot possess authentically personal significance or authority, for his will has no determinate character.

In order to limit the scope of this study on love, within a theory of action, the most appropriate approach seems to be the one which illuminates the person, understood not only as an agent, but sometimes, understood as a self that is in the making in a continuous process; and, love, as a mode of caring. The underlying task is to capture the processes by which the agent is in a position to exert its autonomy while motivated by caring.

---

Chapter 1 PERSONS

According to Frankfurt, what distinguishes persons from other agents is self-consciousness, a feature defined by him as our necessity of ‘taking ourselves seriously’: ‘taking ourselves seriously’ means that we are not prepared to accept ourselves just as we come. We want our thoughts, our feelings, our choices, and our behaviour to make sense.”6 The idea of ‘making sense’ and taking herself seriously has to do with the awareness of oneself and with the desirability of the desires that move a person all the way into action. The core of personhood, within Frankfurt’s theory, is that reflexivity should generate an alignment between a person’s responses/attitudes to her desires and/or motives and herself. 7 A person must be aware of her desires at the same time as she is aware of herself, and this alignment promotes actions that are self-governed and autonomous. Thus, self-awareness, encompasses her capacity to look at herself from a distance, objectify herself to herself and this ability is the hallmark of personhood.

1.1 Taking Ourselves Seriously
Frankfurt describes his view on the notion of person as he develops a psychological structural account of the concept: to be a person is not a species specific quality. It is, rather, a result of the working out of an ability that manifests itself as the capacity each person has of reflecting upon herself – an ability of self-reflexivity. Self-reflexivity is understood as an awareness of oneself – self-awareness. 8 Within Frankfurt’s analysis on the meaning of reflexivity as awareness, the notions of consciousness and self-consciousness coincide in their meaning.9

The everyday sense of consciousness entails reflexivity and it ‘necessarily involves a secondary awareness of a primary response’ as the ability a person has of being aware of herself while she is aware of the presence of something else. Moreover, this ability is better understood when a

---

7 Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Wholeheartedness”, The Importance of What We Care About (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.163-164
8 Ibid., p. 162.
9 Ibid., p. 161-4 In order to understand this coincidence in meaning it is helpful to evoke the mental state of reflexivity that is constituted by an awareness of its being conscious about something, that can be translated into self-consciousness. As Frankfurt is not evoking in this characterization that to be self-conscious an agent might appeal to rational faculties. Reflexivity in this characterization is merely consciousness as awareness of itself.
person reflects upon her ‘psychic raw material’. This type of elementary reflexivity is, according to Frankfurt, essential to an agent’s capacity to engage in and to generate purposeful action. Furthermore, self-consciousness, in Frankfurt’s view, coincides with the meaning he ascribes to the notion of ‘immanent reflexivity’, understood as a person’s sensitiveness to her own condition, that enables her to engage in self-awareness every time she becomes aware of something else.

The structural psychological account starts to be construed from the notion of immanent reflexivity. It is a view on the real self that combines elements which can be seen as ‘opposing and complementary’, yet formative of the hierarchical model of autonomy itself. The voluntaristic model meets its limitations in giving an account of an autonomous action par excellence. Because the mechanism of the hierarchy of desires can ‘theoretically’ lead the agent to accede to desires of higher-order ad infinitum – the regress problem. Thus, the self-governed agent and an action par excellence are not well captured by the hierarchy of desires simpliciter. Another limitation, which is called the incompleteness problem, is related to the abovementioned problem, but settles questions related to the origins of the authority of volitions of higher – order. (Aware of the limitations of the hierarchy of desires, Frankfurt introduces the notion of ‘decisive commitment through reflexive identification’ which culminates in the formation of a volition of higher order. It is meant to explain how the agent is able to terminate the infinite series of higher and higher order desires. Frankfurt’s recognition of the problems inherent to his model on the hierarchy of desires leads him to look for an explanation that grounds the formation of volitions on the notion of “decisive commitment” that “resounds”

10 Harry Frankfurt, “Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting it Right”, The Tanner Lectures, (Stanford: Stanford University, April 2014), p.173-4. Frankfurt gives a complete characterization of the meaning he attributes to the notion of psychic raw material with which ‘nature and circumstance provide us.’
11 Ibid., p. 161-2
12 Ibid., p. 162
13 Stephan E. Cuypers, “Autonomy Beyond Voluntarism: In Defense of Hierarchy”. Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Jun., 2000). Cuypers claims that: “Frankfurt’s model can be used to illuminate the opposition between voluntaristic and non-voluntaristic autonomy because there are opposing and complementary elements in the model itself. Towards this end, I draw a heuristic distinction between Frankfurt-1 and Frankfurt-2. In stressing higher-order attitudes and decisions for the constitution of autonomy, Frankfurt-1 is relatively more voluntaristic, whereas in emphasizing caring and volitional necessity, Frankfurt-2 is relatively more non-voluntaristic.” p.226-7
14 Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of The Will and the Concept of a Person”, Necessity, Volition and Love, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Frankfurt argues: There is no theoretical limit to the length of the series of desires of higher and higher orders.”
through the entirety of the motivational system of the agent, but it culminates in caring - which expresses a personal identification with someone or something, and yet, is not under our voluntary control. Thus, his construct of the concept of a person - as the real self - depends on the conflation of his different approaches on the conceptualization of the notion of autonomy - approaches that are anchored on the fundamental corollary which says that, in order to be a person, one must be able to form a volition. Frankfurt’s first attempt to describe agency is centered around the hierarchical will and the relation an agent *par excellence* has to have towards it. A relation that produces agency – and generates reason for action - which springs from the agent’s identification with desires upon reflexivity. Later, Frankfurt enhances his view on the hierarchy of desires as he introduces the element of care, being the source of reasons for action, in virtue of its being the driver of a genuine reflexivity which generates true commitment and founds human action.

Before looking at the hierarchical model in more detail, it is important to look at the considerations Frankfurt has given on consciousness as they aid in illuminating subtleties of this hierarchical view on autonomy. The description Frankfurt gives of consciousness is complementary to, and constitute a precondition for the understanding of the role of reflexivity in the formation of an action.

Frankfurt holds that the meaning of the notion of consciousness is somehow intertwined with the meaning we give to mentality, and that it thus, comprises discriminating between things. However, to account as human capacity *per se*, the scope of its meaning must comprise more than being able to *discriminate* - which consists in “responding differently to the absence or to the presence of certain things in our environment, things that build a certain level of relation [to a person] in the sense that their presence or lack of it affects [her] somehow.” To illustrate how foundational it is to agency the capacity a person has to reflect upon herself in the formation of purposeful behavior, Frankfurt, in order to elucidate a contrast, evokes examples of a piece of metal and of a sunflower suffering alterations under the occurrence of the sunlight.) Frankfurt wants to make a point of the fact that the piece of metal responds passively to the incidence of the heat by becoming warmer (no purposeful behavior); the sunflower alters its position in a

15 Ibid., p. 21: Frankfurt argues: “It is possible, however, to terminate such a series of acts without cutting it off arbitrarily. When a person identifies himself decisively with one of his first-order desires, this commitment “resounds” throughout the potentially endless array of higher orders.”

16 Ibid., p.160
response to the angle of incidence of the sunrays that heat it and that it is able to exhibit an active responsive behavior of a rudimentary sort. The sunflower not only discriminates the heat but responds to it, exhibiting purposeful behavior, albeit in a rudimentary way. A human being will be able to discriminate and to respond to the same occurrence, as, for example, feeling the heat in her skin, being altered in her body temperature, but engaging in the possibility to choose what to do with herself when being subjected to the occurrence. For Frankfurt, being conscious has to do with having appropriate responses to the presence of impulses, desires, feelings, sensations that are constitutive of our psychological makeup. It has to do with the attitude a person forms when subjected to any occurrence.

Frankfurt evokes the example of a man who, “in the course of an animated tough amiable conversation, suddenly loses his temper and “starts to yell and fling dishes and books and crudely abusive at his companion”. Afterwards he regrets this incident and says that the feeling just came over him “out of nowhere”, that he could not help it and that he was not himself when it occurred, illustrating a person’s capacity of dissociating herself from mental states that are not constitutive of her identity (the idea she has of herself). Frankfurt believes that these disclaimers may be genuinely descriptive. Because Frankfurt bases autonomy on volitional attitudes as a kind of ‘volitional reflexivity’, he has to find an anchor on the agent’s capacity for recognition of desires that are her own. He argues that “What the man says may appropriately convey his sense that the rise of passion represented in some way an intrusion upon him, that it violated him, that when he was possessed by the anger he was not in possession of himself.” When they look upon themselves, persons have the capacity of compartmentalizing their minds, and objectifying themselves in order to recognize that which belongs to their will. Desires that are not constitutive of a person’s will indicates their externality. The example of the unwilling addict illustrates that it is not her ‘want’ to surrender to the craving for her drug of choice, as she wants desperately to stop her addiction. Despite the fact that a rejected desire may remain as constitutive of a person’s mental state, it does not mean that it is constitutive of the agent’s real self. When a person is moved by a desire in spite

---

18 Ibid.
19 Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Wholeheartedness”, The Importance of What We Care About, p. 176
20 Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Externality”, p. 63
21 Harry Frankfurt, “Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right”, p. 171
22 Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person, p.17
23 Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and externality”, p. 58-63
of its not being her own – in spite of the fact that she does not want it to move her to action – she is acting against her will and non-autonomously.

Moreover, it is the attitude persons have what distinguishes them from other agents, attitudes which are formed in virtue of the responses they have to elements of the environment that affect them. These attitudes are derivative of reflexivity and are vital to the formation of purposeful activity. This means that when a person is subjected to any event, as for instance, a feeling, she is not only aware of it, but she also can control her responses and can display a reflexive attitude towards them. On the whole, reflexivity is activity in relation to your attitudes. The real self-view Frankfurt holds on autonomy stresses that, as a volitional being, a person’s identification with desires is second-nature to her i.e. she is spontaneously motivated by the commands of her volitional necessities. Still, a person’s attitude toward the immediate content of her will, might sometimes be one of active criticism. For instance, when a person desires to have another piece of cake, she can do two things: resist it or identify with the desire. When she forms a second-order desire with regard to a first-order desire, she desires to have the desire. When she forms a second-order volition, she wants this first-order desire to become effective, that is, moving her all the way to action. Emphasis is put on a notion of identity/person and freedom of the will that is based upon the agent’s reflexive identification with desires, and, for this reason, it can be called a ‘voluntaristic’ view, a view which culminates in identification with a set of desires that are representative of her real self. However, a person’s deliberative identification is not unproblematic and the relation a person has to her will is a source of conflicts that threaten her autonomy.

1.2 Hierarchical Will
The real self-view is anchored on the notion of self-reflexivity. This division of oneself described above enables a person to exert control over her behaviour. And, in Frankfurt’s terms, self-governing attitudes that generate autonomous actions have to do with the relation a person develops to her will. It is precisely this relation that generates her evaluative attitudes towards

24 Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Wholeheartedness”, p. 163
26 Frankfurt gives a comprehensive account on the notions of ambivalence and self-deceit, among other conflicts that concern the relation a person has to her will. “The Faintest Passion”; The Importance of What We Care About. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006) p.98-100
her desires. It is from the result of a person’s relation to her will that certain desires will become effective while others will be repudiated. However, when a person recognizes a volitional necessity she does not need to apply any judgment on what is best to do. This movement has to do with her capacity to identify her ownership of a desire and an attitude of acceptance of a determination from her will.27 Differently from a wanton ‘whom is not concerned with the desirability of his desires themselves’ 28 a person, precisely because she exerts a kind of ‘monitoring oversight’ over her psyche, she is active towards her will. In being active towards her will, she is able to relate to its content and maintain an oversight on it. Frankfurt elaborates on extreme cases of wantonness to illustrate aspects of heteronomy related solely to the relation an agent has to her will. His construct of the notion of a wanton maintains that she is capable of deliberation in order to get what she wants, but she cannot engage in ‘volitional reflexivity’. 29 It is important to keep in mind that the real self-view, which Frankfurt construes, distinguishes a full blooded action from wantonness based upon the agent’s ability to employ reflexivity upon desires she has; this capacity enables her to refrain from acting upon her first order desires, unreflectively:

Now, a person is active with respect to his own desires when he identifies himself with them, and he is active with respect to what he does when what he does is the outcome of his identification of himself with the desire that moves him in doing it. Without such identification the person is a passive bystander to his desires and to what he does, regardless of whether the causes of his desires and of what he does are the work of another agent or of impersonal external forces. 30

One important question regarding this view is that, as Frankfurt anchors agency in the volitional dimension of the person, he might be distancing himself from conceptualizations of reflexivity which maintains the agent in a separate position from the events themselves.31 In fact, it may

---

28 Harry Frankfurt “Freedom of the will and the Concept of a Person”, p. 17
29 Frankfurt maintains that this is an incapacity of forming desires and volitions of higher order” In: “Identification and Wholeheartedness”, p. 176
31 The reason why I raise this question is that, I believe, Velleman maintains a fruitful dialogue with Frankfurt in the exploration of what it means to ascribe the agent its proper role in producing an action. Velleman’s interpretation of Frankfurt’s notion of self-identification might illuminate aspects regarding agent causation and the role of volition and the agent (being formed through self-identification): “Frankfurt has failed to identify a mental item that necessarily implicates the agent in producing his behavior.” (p.472) “When Frankfurt says that an agent participates in an action by identifying with his motives, he does not mean that self-identification is, among mere states and events, the one in virtue of which the agent gets into the act; rather, he is saying that if we want to know which are the mere states and events that constitute the agent’s getting into the act, we should look for the ones that constitute his identifying with his motives. Frankfurt, is
be even impossible to the agent to maintain any distance, due to her alignment with her volition, which is a function of her self-identification with it; Since the agent *par excellence* is constituted, in Frankfurt’s view, by a set of volitional necessities, it seems relevant to investigate the reflective role of the agent, while she is self-identified with her volition, a question which also concerns the hierarchical will.

Velleman, on the other hand, explores this problem and claims that as Frankfurt’s articles “begin with the question of what constitutes a person, the focus quickly narrows to the person as an element in the causal order”. I will explore the role of the agent in the production of an action, as seen by Frankfurt, in chapter four.

Of course, regarding practical reasoning, deliberative processes (derived from the necessities of reason) are concomitant to the volitional processes derived from necessities of the will) and both provide us with fundamental motivational guidance. However, in Frankfurt’s view, the necessities of reason are not as fundamental as the necessities of the will in determining our conduct.

It is our peculiar knack of separating from the immediate content and flow of our own consciousness and introducing a sort of division within our minds. This elementary maneuver establishes an inward-directed, monitoring oversight. It puts in place an elementary reflexive structure, which enables us to focus our attention directly upon ourselves.” This capacity of self-objectification is particularly distinctive of human mentality…has implications of two radically opposed kinds. On the one hand, it generates a profound threat to our well-being. The inner division… impairs our capacity for untroubled spontaneity. On the other hand, this very capacity to divide and to objectify ourselves…accounts for the fact that we possess such a thing as practical reason… and offers us opportunities for practical rationality, for freedom of the will, and for love.

By means of “externalization”, a person - and no other agent- steps back from herself, by operating a division of her psyche and being able to revise her own “raw psychic material”, which is constituted by her feelings, her thoughts and her desires, and things that *happens* to her, among other mental events. It can be argued that her ‘psychic raw material’ is a set of potential motivational elements that, due to a person’s particularly distinctive ability of self-objectification, undergo a process of separation/selection by the agent. The hierarchical model

---

33 Ibid., p. 470. Velleman explores the role of the agent in the production of an action as seen by Frankfurt.
34 Harry Frankfurt, “Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right, p. 171
describes autonomy as reflexivity, characterized as the movements that enable a person to operate a sub-division within her psyche, and, such a division, I would say, enables her to identify what subset of her first order desires is acceptable or endorsable. She internalizes desires with which she identifies, and externalizes others. Within Frankfurt’s hierarchical model of desires, identification is a criterion to define what can be endorsable. However, Frankfurt maintains that, a person identifies with desires of which she does not approve. Thereby, identification does not entail endorsement. She can also identify with desires that she considers quite trivial, such as a desire to have an ice cream – which does not mean that she cares about it. 35

Upon reflection, a person is capable of identifying which desire is her own, because as a person she is in a position to form reflexive or higher-order responses to it. Part of the ability of externalization has to do with operating a separation between motivational forces that represent her and motivational forces that do not represent her.

The capacity to form second-order volitions is tantamount to a commitment to a desire. The volition yields a commitment from the person to herself and it generates to her a norm that leads her to action. This is because, when a person is able to form a volition, she will do this under active self-governance, through decisive self-reflective identification. It is also characterized as self-satisfactory in that it generates a commitment to herself. So if we interpret the commitment in light of the hierarchical model, it can be explained thus: A person undergoes a kind of volitional unity what distinguishes persons from other agents. When a person forms second other volitions it means that she wants her first order desires to be effective, to become a norm for her, that will guide her to action. A person can accede to a desire of first order, for instance, she accepts it as constituent of her real self. If she accedes to a first order desire it means that she has put it under scrutiny and accepted, it as her own.

The hierarchical model faces severe difficulties. The difference between a volition and a desire (following the hierarchical model of autonomy) in the end does not seem to be substantial. There is nothing substantially different between a second order volition and a desire since the second order volition in the end is simply a desire to have a desire. 36 It is also important to note that being in a position to form reflexive and higher-order volitions does not entail that we will

36 Frankfurt claims that “A second order attitude is the first sign of reflexive attitude towards a desire of first order. “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”, p.16
be able to act upon them. It is a task. Caring facilitates this possibility because we identify wholeheartedly ourselves with the motives that love provides us with, and thus, we accede to the desire that is manifested in us when we love. This movement is explained in Frankfurt’s construct of the notion of wholeheartedness.  

When we confront our psychic raw material, what we see may be disturbing or surprising to us in negative ways. Frankfurt argues that as persons, we ‘cannot remain passively indifferent’ to the content of our will. We are expected to respond to it, and to take an active attitude towards ourselves, because to remain “wantonly unreflective is the way of non-human animals and of small children”, whom do not possess any concern or “interest” over the impulses that make them to be whom they are. Our capacity to form higher-order responses are an expression and manifestation of our active nature, which is expressed in our capacity to govern ourselves. Simultaneously, it ascribes us responsibility for our identities; responsibility for changing ourselves and becoming the persons we want to be.

The ability to reflect upon the content of her will and self-reflective activity towards her/his will is described by the hierarchical model. A decision that is made upon reflexive self-identification is materialized in the formation of second-order volitions. According to Frankfurt, essentially to being a person, is the ability to form second-order volitions. A human being has the ability, in contrast to other agents, to see herself from an external point of view and to respond accordingly to the awareness of herself. Even though we can observe that some animals are capable of deliberation, there is no other animal capable of an operation of self-awareness. Animals are determined by their nature and their behavior is determined by a fixity of actions that are fundamentally determined by nature. This ability to distance ourselves from ourselves enables us with freedom to deliberate / to think and to care about our own lives.

1.3 Activity – Passivity

Frankfurt describes the importance of a unified will in these terms: “If ambivalence is a disease of the will, the health of the will is to be unified and in this sense wholehearted. A person is volitionally robust when he is wholehearted in his higher-order attitudes and inclinations, in his preferences and decisions, and in other movements of her will. This unity entails no particular level of excitement or warmth. Wholeheartedness is not a measure of the firmness of a person’s volitional state, or of his enthusiasm. What is at issue is the organization of the will, not its temperature.” “The Faintest Passion”, The Importance of What We Care About (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 100

Harry Frankfurt, “Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right”, p. 172

Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and The Concept of a Person”, p. 16
A person’s preoccupation with the manifestation of herself in the world as an autonomous being and with the authenticity of her actions is part of what constitutes being active/reflexive.40 Frankfurt articulates activity in opposition to passivity as functions of the relation we have to our nature (volitional nature in which only a will with defined limits becomes effective). Activity as reflexivity is articulated and described through the hierarchical model of desires. The hierarchical model, however, is problematic/insufficient in describing the authority of desires of higher order/in articulating a notion which the decisive element that confers to a higher order desire its legitimacy and authority. Hence, it is by caring, which is contrived by volitional necessities - the element that exhibits both necessitating and liberating characteristics - that the active character of a person - understood in opposition to wantonness - is better manifested. A person, through her pursuing of her cared about objects, is (a) self-satisfied, and (b) exerts autonomy.

In Frankfurt’s view, there are some instances of passivity featuring the volitional structure of the agent moved by her caring, especially if love is at the center stage of her motivation.41 While she is ‘devoting herself disinterestedly to what she actually loves’, and is being moved by the activities that are engendered by “the requirements of protecting and supporting her object of love, a person “may discover that she cannot affect how much she cares about it merely by her own decision. The issue is not up to her at all.”42 Perhaps she ceases to employ reflectivity - as an active self-criticism - since her caring drives her reflective activity itself.43 For instance, when love is conditional, its nature is passive, in Frankfurt’s view. At the same time, Frankfurt maintains that in active love, the lover “is motivated by an interest in the loving itself”.44 Her activity derives from the result of her now unified will and ‘are subject to a kind of volitional

40 Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Wholeheartedness”, p. 163-4
43 Harry Frankfurt, “Autonomy, Necessity and Love” p.133: “In many of its instances, love is fundamentally passive. It is passive when the lover is motivated by an expectation that obtaining or continuing to possess the object of his love will be beneficial to him.” (...) But love need not be based upon self-interest. It may be fundamentally active, differing from passive love in the nature of the lover’s motivation and in his concern for whatever it is that he loves.”
44 Ibid.
necessity’. However, “since the necessity is grounded in the person’s own nature, the freedom of a person’s will be not impaired.”

Thus, the voluntarian view described in Frankfurt’s earlier works emphasizes the self-critic feature of the agent who ranks her desires and her wants in decision-making and choices – a feature anchored in the faculty of reflexivity as awareness of itself – and which the structural processes pertaining to the agent’s psychological attitudes towards the set of desires are decisive to the formation of an autonomous will. However, according to Frankfurt, it is through our caring, and especially by responding to the demands of what we love, that a desire becomes effective and moves the us into action. In addition, some instances of passivity are brought about as the agent obeys the commands of her volitional necessities - which brings some paradoxes to Frankfurt’s theory of action based on love.

Thus, the voluntarian view gives priority to the self-governing attitude a person has in relation to her desires, manifested in her capacity to rank them according to their importance to her. There will come about some needs, while she may experience futile desires which she may find easier to externalize. The voluntarian view is a view that suffers from a difficulty to describe a desire’s authority upon the agent – a problem derived from the infinite regress in the formation of higher order desires and volitions. A view of autonomy centered exclusively in the agent’s capacity for forming second-order volitions upon identification, even though this presupposes reflexivity, misses substantial elements. This is because the decisive identification presupposes an autonomous agent, prior to the identification. It is only in his later works that view of autonomy is completed by the introduction of an element that seems to be external to those elements present in the hierarchical model.

---

46 Ibid.
47 The paradoxes I refer to are directly connected with the connotation Frankfurt gives to the notion of volitional necessities.
49 See Stefaan E. Cuypers, In. “Autonomy Beyond Voluntarism: In Defense of the Hierarchy”, p. 241. Cuypers sees Frankfurt’s alternative account of autonomy in terms of care, love and commitment, as the ‘non-voluntaristic view. By using the phrase ‘non voluntaristic’, he is not conveying ‘involuntary autonomy’. He only means to claim that, according to Frankfurt’s alternative account of autonomy in terms of care, “the constitution of autonomy and the self does not depend upon acts of will.” Personally, I find this view elucidative of the notion of care in the formation of the self, as understood by Frankfurt.
These dichotomized instances, which are present in an agent’s capacity for reflexivity and in her obedience to the commands of her volitional necessity complement themselves and, in conjunction, sustain the real self-view of autonomy. Put in other words, autonomy as explained through the formation of a volition of a second order requires further elements that can complement the characterization of the agent as a real self. Caring complements the hierarchical model of autonomy as it puts the lover in contact with her active nature - provides her with reasons for actions that are internal to her - while it circumscribes the limits of her will.

Although the dichotomy activity - passivity is used to clarify the opposition between the concepts of person and wanton in virtue of their relation to their will (the person is active and the wanton simply acts upon her strongest desire) it cannot be said that, in Frankfurt’s view, what determines the opposition between autonomy and heteronomy derives from these instances of passivity and activity, in the sense that every instance of passivity produces in the agent alienation from his will. In being moved by her caring, an agent’s will is limited by a necessity, upon which she has no voluntary control. However, she does not feel as if she is being limited in her freedom. The commands that the limitation of a volitional necessity produces frees her from ambivalence or any other conflict within her will. Moreover, any will without limits throws the agent in a predicament of arbitrariness produced either by the excess of possibilities that lead the agent to paralysis or to akrasia and apathy in cases in which the agent does not care about which desires move her to action. This is because the passivity (through limitation of a person’s will) generated from caring springs from the necessities of a will which is the agent’s own. Thus, the passiveness of passivity is eliminated by the motive’s internality.

In caring, the agent is captive but wholehearted, contrived and constrained, yet feeling at ease with herself. She is necessitated and yet, free. Caring combines both passivity and activity as caring produces wholeheartedness and self-satisfaction putting the agent in a predicament of freedom, where conflict, resistance and ambivalence should cease to exist. In the (original) hierarchical model the structure of autonomy and, concomitantly, the structure of the person depends solely upon her identification with a motive – a movement that implies self-reflexivity. In addition, through decisive identification a volition of second order is formed. In the structure of the hierarchical model, a person exerts autonomy via decisive reflexive-self-identification, which determines, via her own psychological structure, the whole process that constitutes free agency. Caring has in its core the element of passivity that is a given (not attained by an act of will, not by decision, not by choice). The agent cannot decide whether she cares or not about
something. Caring derives its legitimacy and authority from the fact that it is internal to the will of the person and thereby it functions as a reality about the person. It is constitutive of what a person is and determining what she should do; our caring cannot be decided by an act of will. In this respect, caring reveals the agent’s activity as she is wholehearted in pursuing it. Wholeheartedness incorporates some instances of passivity since it is attained/necessitated by the necessities of the will. These two notions can as essentially antagonistic However, the characterization of autonomy that is decisive to secure the real self-view combines these two; passivity and activity. Intriguingly, the concept of care illuminates the two characteristics that are fundamental in Frankfurt’s view to the characterization of autonomy/free agency/authenticity.

To illuminate passivity and its relation to activity it is important to address Frankfurt’s use of the notion of a wanton. Wantonness is the paradigmatic example of action through passivity. A wanton is, by definition, a passive agent - which seems a contradiction in terms - in the sense that she does not care about which desire will move her to action. Logically she is prone to act upon every desire that occurs to her. She incorporates the locale in which events takes place. Is a wanton passive? She does not engage in caring and thereby has no ability to step back and reflect upon what is moving her. Surprisingly, at least within a logical analysis, a person who achieved self-satisfaction resembles a wanton in her passivity towards the necessities of her will and in her spontaneous acceptance of their commands. Does the elimination of all conflict from her psyche entails a commitment that reflects autonomy?

1.4 Endorsement

What I have in mind when I have employed the notion of endorsement is something that makes no claim or judgment whatever, and that is more accurately specified as the altogether neutral attitude of acceptance. A person may be led to accept something about himself in resignation, as well as in approval. (…) the fact that he accepts it entails nothing, in other words, concerning what to think of it.50

The higher-order attitudes that are formed in processes leading to identification involve ‘evaluations’ only in a sense that is strictly value-neutral. In speaking of these matters, I have regrettably made use of terms – such as “endorse” – that naturally suggest a positive evaluation. However, what I have actually intended to convey by referring to “endorsement” is not that the agent approves of what he is said to endorse, or that he considers it to merit his support, but nothing more than that the agent accepts it as his own. The sense in which he accepts it as his own is

50 Harry Frankfurt, “Reply to Gary Watson” p. 160
quite rudimentary. It is free of any suggestion concerning his basis for accepting it and, in particular, it does not imply that he thinks well of it.\textsuperscript{51}

In order to understand what is constitutive of a notion of endorsement, we have to look at the internalization of volitional necessities in relation to the agent’s identity. Frankfurt argues that the agent is not evaluating the desirability of her desires; yet, the agent is engaged in value-neutral reflective evaluations regarding her desires, until she forms a volition, by an act of endorsement.\textsuperscript{52}

The construct of the notion of endorsement in Frankfurt’s theory has the notion of acceptance incorporated in it, and it is understood as an agent’s act of acceptance of a set of essential volitional elements constitutive of her will. Endorsement, as a result of reflection, should, thus, reveal the volitional identity of the person, because it reveals “the characteristics which belong to the will’s essence,”\textsuperscript{53} and which are intrinsically internal to a person’s identity. For “identification involves acceptance, not necessarily approval or rational assessment”. It is the acceptance\textsuperscript{54} of a subset of desires constitutive of the will of the agent that generates the cessation of the employment of critical reflexivity upon her will. As she endorses a desire (or a subset of desires) as legitimate it means that “the desire is one with which the agent identifies.”\textsuperscript{55} She, thus, acts in an attitude of self-governance, when she identifies with something as accepting it, as a constitutive part of herself. To understand the notion of endorsement as acceptance, it is relevant to look at the concept of self-satisfaction, which is introduced as a complementary element to sustain the plausibility of the hierarchical model in describing the making up of the self. However, self-satisfaction becomes even more elucidative when we look at the authority of caring in the production of human action.

Frankfurt evokes the notion of self-satisfactory identification as a resort to the solution of the problem of regress, and the incompleteness problem abovementioned. He tells us that “if identification is constituted neatly by an endorsing higher-order desire with which the person is satisfied,”\textsuperscript{56} then self-satisfactory identification does not require ascension to higher and higher orders of endorsing desires. Thus, the self-satisfaction condition upon identification

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} Ibid. “Reply to Michael Bratman”, In: Buss and Overton, The Contours of Agency: essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt (USA: Massachussets Institute of Technology: 2002) p.87
\item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 86-7
\item \textsuperscript{53} Stephan E. Cuypers, «Autonomy Beyond Voluntarism: In Defense of Hierarchy» p.252
\item \textsuperscript{54} Harry Frankfurt, "Reply to Gary Watson", p. 161
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.88
\item \textsuperscript{56} Harry Frankfurt, “The Faintest Passion” p. 105
\end{itemize}
blocks the regress from the start. However, self-satisfaction cannot generate autonomy, and it does not hold up to the constitution of the self, as volitions and decision-making through higher order desires also do not hold up to a notion of the real self that can be sustained in itself. Because self-satisfaction requires an element that would amount to an *a priori* self in order for the real self to be satisfied.

Even though it has been claimed that the notion of self-satisfaction is weaker than the notion of decisive identification in describing the formation of an autonomous act constituted by endorsement, self-satisfaction is a useful notion for illuminating the dynamics of caring in producing reasons for actions that amount to wholehearted agency (volitional unity), as the agent endorses a subset of her motives.

In order to break down the entanglement between the notions of self-satisfaction and decisive identification which illuminates the internal nature of caring in relation to the agent’s will, I quote Cuypers:

> If self-satisfactory identification is based on identification through caring as restricted by volitional necessity, then self-satisfaction has to be anchored in the deep nature of the will to gain its autonomy. Consequently, identification through an endorsing higher order desire with which the person is satisfied is still more deeply founded upon identification through caring about something. Correspondly, caring about something secures the autonomous foundation upon which self-satisfactory, autonomy-conferring identification can rest.” But it must be explained why caring is inherently autonomous or intrinsically internal if the problem is to be solved at all.

If there is a deep-rooted autonomy/real self in the dynamics of caring as the source of agency, as Frankfurt wants, it might be described in terms of the essence of the volitional necessity. For as she meets a volitional necessity, the agent accepts its commands, and by doing so, all the conflicts within her will, and all self-questioning, and doubting subside. She reaches volitional unity. In Frankfurt’s view, the moment the agent is committed to a desire, generated by her volitional necessity, resembles the moment a mathematician meets the solution for an equation. Alternatively, in Frankfurt’s words; “just as the essence of a triangle consists in what it must be, so the essential nature of a person consists in what he must will.” Thus, if “the boundaries

---

57 Stephan E. Cuypers, p. 238
58 Ibid., p. 239
59 Ibid., p. 250
60 Harry Frankfurt, “The Reasons of Love”, p. 65
of a person’s will define her shape as a person,” it is accurate to infer that, as she meets these boundaries, she might then experience a relaxation of her ‘hesitancies’, that “puts an end to any irresolution” residing within her will and this can be translated into the notion of self-satisfaction. This helps Frankfurt in his enterprise of founding the authority of caring, as decisive to the formation of the real self and her agency. Caring as a source of genuine and continuous motivation – due to the internality of the motives it generates - produces the activities in which the agent engages herself, as she commits to the volitional necessity. These activities are, thus, self-generated, and might reproduce the self-satisfactory experience.

There is an important element, which may also illuminate self-satisfaction, insofar as endorsement is attained: when a person identifies with her volition and experiences self-satisfaction, there is little she can do to reverse the act of endorsement. When she is motivated by her caring, her activity might still be connected to reflexive operations, although not necessarily. She undergoes a process of internalization of her motives, due to the volition, and all activities yielded by it come to her as second nature, most of the time. For a volitional necessity is a reason for actions and it generates itself.

Thus, at the same time that she endorses a volition by caring, she commits to an essential part of herself. When she commits to an essential part of herself, she embraces the active role of being a responsible agent in that commitment and she takes part in every loss or gain that the commitment might engender. Her autonomy and the integrity of herself is maintained as long as the commitment to her caring is sustained in continuity. When a person identifies with a desire, she accepts it as part of herself. It is not that she is the desire, and of course, she is more than her desire, but without it, she would not have the possibility to cast herself into the world. Frankfurt is constructing a notion of personal identity, as a real self, that is intimately linked to a person’s caring; and this link is a function of a person’s voluntary surrendering to the configurations of the authoritative essence of her will.

The notion of endorsement is, thus, an important element for the understanding of the foundational constitutive elements of Frankfurt’s real self, who, again, is based upon the notion

---

62 Ibid.
63 Harry Frankfurt, “The Reasons of Love”, p. 64-65 Frankfurt compares rationality and the capacity to love, a comparison that illuminates the sense of relaxation attained when we are captivated by the necessities of our will, thus arguing: “when we discover that we have no choice but to accede to the irresistible requirements of logic, or to submit to the captivating necessities of love, the feeling with which we do so is by no means one of passivity or confinement.” The explanation is that an encounter either with volitional or with rational necessity eliminates uncertainty. It thereby relaxes the inhibitions and hesitancies of self-doubt.”
64 Harry Frankfurt, “Three Concepts of Free Action”, p. 54
“on the formation of her will”, and whom has her identity contours constrained by her volitional necessities. Why is it that the volitional necessities produce this irresistible command upon the agent? Why does this engender self-satisfaction? Her endorsement, and identification, should only be complete if she manages to make her will what she wants it to be. Frankfurt thinks it is exclusively caring and, especially love as a mode of caring, are the drivers of this type of reflective activity – an activity that is self-driven to the extent that it is imbued with normative necessity and is influenced by the wholehearted attitude of the agent, regardless of her deliberative attitudes/activities. This may explain Frankfurt’s argument that when a person loves she comes to care about some things more than others do.

Gary Watson, who dialogues with Frankfurt’s works especially in which concerns volitional necessities, raises questions on the entanglement between the notions of caring, endorsement and identification in the formation of free agency. He is particularly concerned with the role of volitional necessities, as the defining elements of a person’s identity, in cases in which the person undergoes volitional struggle. The way he addresses the solution of a volitional conflict - in the case of “the unfortunate mother who believes that giving up her child would be best overall. By her unsuccessful attempt to overcome her attachment, she discovers the limits of what she can, in one sense, will.” He seems to point to the annihilation of her real self, since she solves the conflict by acceding to a desire, which seemed irrational (to us) in her case, as if she did not respect the confines of the necessities of her will. I address his remarks as a means to illuminate Frankfurt’s view on these notions. Watson asks: “if the fight to overcome what it turns out to be volitional necessity is an effort to work against the limits of one’s will, one’s position to that necessity exhibit a source of agency that is independent of those confines. On what ground can the struggle be mounted?”

For the sake of simplicity, I will not enter the discussion on the authority of volitional necessity brought upon by Watson. However, it seems necessary, in order to continue delineating the self

---

65 Harry Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care About”, p. 91. In: The Importance of What We Care About. And Gary Watson, “Volitional Necessities”. In: The Contours of Agency, p. 147
67 Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Wholeheartedness” p.176
68 Harry Frankfurt, “Autonomy, Necessity and Love”, p.137-8
70 Ibid., p. 147. Watson argues: “Take Frankfurt’s case of the woman who believes that giving up her child would be best overall. By her unsuccessful attempt to overcome her attachment, she discovers the limits of what she can, in one sense, will.” Ibid. page 147
71 Ibid, page 146
in Frankfurt’s view, to try and grasp a few things concerning the notion of endorsement which relates to an understanding of the notion of volitional necessities. It can be divided in five: (1) a commitment to a desire, as a result of a higher-order volition, does presuppose the employment of reflexive activity – as the hallmark of being a person\textsuperscript{72}. However, (2) the notion of endorsement explored by Frankfurt does not necessarily demand that the agent engages in deliberative reflexivity amounting to the evaluation of the best courses of action. Moreover, (3) reflexivity, in Frankfuritian terms, should be understood in the strict sense that denotes acting in accordance to one’s will, and, (4) in order to meet the demands of her will, a person might encounter difficulties. Such difficulties are, thus, not a result of her incapacity of reflecting upon what is the best course of action, but are more directly connected to the act of encountering and accepting the limits of her will. For, as Frankfurt maintains, “determinations of the will are not regarded as necessarily based on determinations of what is choice-worthy or best to do.”\textsuperscript{73} There are cases in which only the notion of the unthinkable can amount to the discovery of one’s limits, and only the discovery of the unthinkable can facilitate a person’s encounter with the limits of her will.\textsuperscript{74} Thus, it is important, in this context, to grasp the notion of endorsement which is different from endorsement that is a result of evaluative operations, denoting a person’s “capacity to measure the value of her desires or desirability of her impulses” in her psyche. Moreover, (5) reflexivity should be understood as an awareness of oneself.

\textsuperscript{72} Harry Frankfurt, “Reply to Gary Watson”, p.160: I quote Frankfurt’s addendum to the notion of a person’s capacity for reflexivity and its link to volitional necessities and finally, in which ways it amounts to endorsement: “As Watson recognizes, I do not regard determinations of the will as necessarily based on determinations of what is choice-worthy or best to do. On the other hand, he observes that often “Frankfurt links the volitional attitudes essential to human agency to what he calls evaluative capacity.” There is a problem of communication here, for which I fear I am responsible. In various places, I have said such things as that the concept of a person is to be understood in terms of the capacity “for reflective evaluation”, that human beings and other animals are wantons insofar as they are indifferent to the “desirability” of their desires, and that inner freedom is a matter of whether or not a person “endorses” the desires by which he is moved in what he does. (…) My doing so has naturally created a strong impression that an evaluative capacity of some kind figures essentially in understanding of human agency, but this impression is misleading. What is essential to persons is not, in my view, a capacity to measure the value of their desires or to assess the desirability of their impulses. Rather, it is a capacity to identify themselves with (or to refrain from identifying themselves with) their tendencies to be moved in one way or another. These reflective attitudes of identification or of withholding are often based on or grounded in evaluations of desirability. However, they need no to be. A person may identify himself with (or withhold himself from) a certain desire or motivation for reasons that are unrelated to any such assessment, or for no reasons at all. What I have in mind when I have employed the notion of endorsement is something that makes no claim of judgment whatever, and that is more accurately specified as the neutral attitude of acceptance.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, page 160

\textsuperscript{74} Harry Frankfurt, “Rationality and the Unthinkable”, The Importance of What We Care About (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2006) p.176
If we are to grasp Frankfurt’s view on the formation of the agent through the constraints of her volitional necessity, the case of the woman that encounters the limitations on her will, despite her previous resolution, illuminates the fact that an endorsement, despite being a result of reflection, is not based in considerations on what is the best action. A genuine and authentic act of endorsement requires that the agent is aware of herself and that, structurally, she exhibits a will, which is unified towards the resolution. She must be wholehearted, and might experience a feeling of self-satisfaction and in committing to the desire that she wants to have, through her endorsement. These are the necessary conditions for an agent to engage in free action. The historicity of the events leading her to a resolution are not relevant in the formation of free agency, and not essential to her integrity as an agent. Rather, what constitutes an essential element is her capacity to identify with and accept what her authentic will dictates. Thus, sometimes, only the acceptance of the unexpected constitutes the movement that is formative of free agency, a movement, which unites the person to her genuine will. A movement that is possible only in awareness of herself. It is this same awareness that facilitated her possibility to intervene in the historicity of events that were leading her to a resolution, which was not aligned with her true self. It is the awareness that leads her to secure her psychic integrity while she acts connected to her volitional unity formed around the motive of keeping the child. In other words, keeping the child – as a volitional necessity - constitutes an essential element of her own volitional structure. Keeping the child is an example of the non-reason view of autonomy.

In chapter 3, I intend to approach other examples that clarify how Frankfurt conceives the formation of the limits of the agent, looking at the dynamics of love as a mode of care, in producing and motivating human action.

The resistance the agent experiences in this case, from acting upon a motive in the direction of giving away her child for adoption is due to her inner volitional struggle. A futile struggle – in the sense that it is not really up to her to decide or to cut off a volitional necessity, according to Frankfurt. Nonetheless, it is illustrative of the fact that a person, in possession of her capacity of volitional reflexivity, acts upon a desire that is a part of her volitional structure/identity. This, despite the motive of giving her child up for adoption was presented in the example as the desirable course of action in her predicament.

It is important to retain that Frankfurt’s conceptualization of the real self depends upon a view of endorsement that is a function of the volitional configuration of a person. The operations, which are constitutive of the movement of endorsement based on love as a mode of care, are
essentially different from the operations that are constitutive of other types of practical reasoning. This is due to a special connotation Frankfurt attributes to reflexivity. The constitutive elements of reflexivity in Frankfurt’s view are more connected to the agent’s sense of awareness, which enables her contact with a source of spontaneity that facilitates her decision-making. This does not reside within the realm stipulated by reason (understood as deliberation). Moreover, an act of endorsement which results from reflexive self-identification amounts to self-satisfaction and brings meaning to the life of the agent, since motives that provide reasons are inherent to her identity, brings to her volitional unity as wholeheartedness.

Chapter 2 AGENCY

2.1 Critical Remarks about the Standard Theory
Velleman departs from the same standpoint as Frankfurt regarding the standard theory – they make the same claim that the standard theory does not conceive an agent that really participates in the action, although their approach does not agree in the conception of reflexivity; the standard view does not describe the human action par excellence, it describes instead an action from which the distinctive element that characterizes human action – the agent herself – is missing. In different languages, both Velleman and Frankfurt express the same concern towards the standard view. Velleman claims that the standard view is limited to telling the story about what happens when someone acts “halfheartedly, unwittingly or in some equally defective way”75. Velleman is looking for an account that, he admits, is a psychological reduction of the

75 David Velleman, “What Happens When Someone Acts?”, p.462
role of the agent. An account in which the agent should be included/playing an active role in between the reason she has, the intention she forms as a result from the reason, and the bodily movements that result from them. The agent, in Velleman’s view is not these elements, the agent is/should be a psychological reduction that finds her role actuating in between the components of an action and is, thereby, separated from the components of the action. 76 Velleman adds; “reflection on the phenomena of action reveals that being the subject of causally related attitudes and movements does not amount to participation of the sort of the appropriate to a full-blooded agent (“For a person S to cause E, it is not enough for S to be the subject of just any sort of event that causes E” Ginet (1990, pp. 6-7))”77.

Frankfurt has also noted that “an agent’s desires and beliefs can cause a corresponding intention despite him, and hence without his participation. Frankfurt describes the agent as a helpless bystander to the forces that move her in which the participation of the agent is absent even when an agent’s intention causes his body to move towards the action, even in cases when the normal causal sequence from desires to bodily movements, or, from motives to behavior takes place, the action might take place without the full participation of the agent. 78 Thus, causal normality — the element that sustains that standard view — does not suffice in describing an action. 79 The example below casts light on whether the position of the agent as a reflective participant amounts to the production of an action. It has the purpose of locating the reflexive agent in producing an action.

Suppose that I have a long-anticipated meeting with an old friend for the purpose of resolving some minor difference; but that as we talk, his offhand comments provoke me to raise my voice in progressively sharper replies, until we part in anger. Later reflection leads me to realize that accumulated grievances had crystallized in my mind, during the weeks before our meeting, into a resolution to sever our friendship over the matter at hand, and that this resolution is what gave me the hurtful edge to my remarks. 80

76 Ibid., p. 463
77 Ibid. p. 466
78 Harry Frankfurt, “The problem of action” In: The Importance of What We Care About, p.21
79 See David Velleman, “What Happens When Someone Acts?”, p. 464. Velleman claims: “The story is committed only to the claim that the causal sequence from motives to behavior will involve the agent himself when it proceeds in the normal way” (…) “(…) the discussion of ‘deviant’ causal chains has diverted attention from simpler counterexamples, which omit the agent without lapsing into causal deviance; and it has thereby engendered a false sense of confidence in the requirement of causal normality, as sufficient to protect the standard story from counterexamples. In reality, an agent can fail to participate in his behavior even when it results from his motives in the normal way. Consequently, no definition of causal normality will fix what ails the standard story.”
80 Ibid.
Does this agent necessarily think that he was present in making the decision, or that he was present in executing it?

Because if there is no reflexive participation between the steps that are constitutive of the causal nexus that goes from desires to behavior, there is no active role for an agent in an action. Velleman’s and Frankfurt’s approaches maintain that the desire that leads to a behavior and every step of the process must have been subjected to reflection – which entails being subjected to the active role of the agent; again, that the action is executed within my behavior is not enough to constitute an action authentically mine, resultant from a volition formed in me.81 Desires and beliefs, at the example cited above, exerted the causal powers on the agent that triggered his behavior, but he was not present at the production of the action, since he has not formed an intention about it.

The abnormality of such cases is not due to the causal operation of the desires and intention involved in them. In cases where the agent’s motivational underlying desires were such, and if she was not aware of her motives of severing the friendship, this means that she was acted upon by unconscious desires, because the volition was not formed by the employment of reflection. For Velleman, the agent “participate in an action she must be adding something to the normal motivational influence of her desires, beliefs, and intentions”; Both Velleman and Frankfurt see the confusion between events and actions, and claim that the standard theory “is flawed in several respects, the story fails to include an agent, it fails to cast the agent its proper role: “In this story, reasons cause an intention, and an intention causes bodily movements, but nobody, that is no person – does anything. Psychological and physiological events take place inside a person, but the person serves merely as the arena for these events”82. Frankfurt, also searching for the agent role at the standard theory, maintains: “In fact, the state of affairs while the movements are occurring is far more pertinent. What is not mere pertinent, but decisive, indeed, is to consider whether or not the movements as they occur are under the person’s guidance.”83

2.2 Frankfurt’s theory of agency

---

81 Ibid., 465, Both Velleman and Frankfurt resort to examples on the ‘crystallization’ of feelings and resentments, that do not constitute reflexive attitudes, but are, rather, external motives that exert external force upon the agent.
82 Ibid., p. 467
83 Harry Frankfurt, “The Problem of Action”, p.72
Frankfurt’s account of love as a source of reasons for action, can be seen as a vital part of an alternative to the so called standard theory of action. In my opinion, Frankfurt’s account of love proposes an alternative solution to the problem of the absence of the agent’s role in the generation of an action in the standard theory.\(^8^4\) The flaws he sees in the standard theory of action are connected to the role of the agent. In the standard theory of action, the agent is the mere locale where events take place. Frankfurt wants to remedy this, and give the agent a decisive role in the action. Frankfurt claims that the solution to the problem of alienation is to be found in actions motivated by reasons of love. The acknowledgment of reasons of love matters for the constituency of agency. Frankfurt does not offer this piece of theory in a systematic way on this question, his view on love is likely to be envisaging an alternative theory of action that can be summarized in the following terms:

Frankfurt offers an account of action in which our agency is rooted in our capacity to care.\(^8^5\) His conception of action is different from the standard theory of action. Frankfurt’s theory of action (1) is preoccupied in defining an action as the antithesis of an event, and in (2) determining the role of the agent as an active producer in the generation of an action. The role that is ascribed to the agent, due to her ability to intervene in the course of the events that happen within her, in virtue of the constitution of her will (construed as the hierarchical model). Thus, to the agent it is ascribed the role of actualizing her freedom through her intervention in the normal course of events as she forms her volitions and acts upon them. Thus, she is generating an action.

Frankfurt argues that “the problem of action is to explicate the contrast between what an agent does and what merely happens to him, or between the bodily movements that he makes and those that occur without his making them.”\(^8^6\) According to causal theories of the nature of action, which currently represent the most widely followed approach to the understanding of this contrast, which is the contrast between an action and what happens to an agent, the essential difference between events of the two types is to be found in their prior causal histories. Thus, a bodily movement constitutes an action if and only if it results from antecedents of a certain kind. Frankfurt is building a theory of action, which is opposed to the causal approach of action.

---

\(^8^4\) See Patrick Fleming, “A Pluralistic approach to paradigmatic agency” Philosophical Explorations Vol. 13, No. 3, September, 2010, p. 307-318. Fleming argues that Frankfurt offers an account of ‘paradigmatic action’. According to him, “Harry Frankfurt and David Velleman have offered theories as to which capacities allow us to maximally express our agency.” p.307

\(^8^5\) Ibid.

\(^8^6\) Harry Frankfurt, “The Problem of Action”, p.69
According to Frankfurt, volitional necessities do not need to figure causally in the production of an action; and here lies the element of his theory, which indicates that love generates human action of the genuine sort, independent of the causal relations. He argues that the performance of an action involves a complexity of bodily movements perceived as occurring under the agent’s guidance. Action depends upon an agent’s guidance, “even if its occurrence is due to chance, and regardless of what features of his prior causal history account for the fact that it is occurring.”

In this account of action, it is enough to constitute an action that the agent produce it spontaneously. By the term ‘spontaneity’, I am referring to an action that is characterized by the element of surprise, if we take into consideration the sequence of events prior to it and observe that there is a connection that is missing, but that does not impede that the action takes place. As an example of this kind of action which is independent from the ‘history of events prior to it’, Frankfurt presents the case of the mother who engages herself in a series of preparative steps that should culminate in her giving her child for adoption. However, it turns out that the outcome is an unexpected one; she keeps the child despite the historicity of her behavior. Although all prior events were leading her to give the child for adoption, the outcome is not a result from those. Therefore, the example, in Frankfurt’s view - wants to accommodate the idea that, the constraint to produce a certain difference in the chain of occurrences does not depend on deliberations that the agent has undergone. A function of a volitional necessity, the action which is hers, which is self-produced and autonomous, springs from a necessity which resides within her will; it springs from a desire that she identifies with and she takes it to be her own. Moreover, this account shows the difference between wanting to do something and acting moved by caring.

2.3 The role of the agent in the production of action

87 Ibid., p.73
88 Frankfurt’s definition of an action is different from that presented by causal theories. “According to causal theories of the nature of action, (...) the essential difference between events of the two types (the bodily movements made by the agent and those that occur without his participation) is to be found in their prior causal histories: a bodily movement is an action is and only if it results from antecedents of a certain kind. “The Problem of Action”. In: “The Importance of What We Care About” page 69
Velleman⁸⁹ and Frankfurt⁹⁰ are looking for the element that characterizes agent-causation par excellence.⁹¹ Frankfurt develops his own doctrine in which the agent’s autonomy is based upon self-reflexivity, and self-identification with her volitional necessities. On the one hand, his argument on the possibility of exerting autonomy, insofar as autonomy springs from the notion of an ‘unified will’ makes sense in terms of guidance; for, as Frankfurt contends, divided wills are inherently self-defeating, and division of the will is the counterpart in the realm of conduct to self-contradiction in the realm of thought.⁹² Thus, while ascribing to the unified will the role of defining goals that secure agency that is resolute and firm, Frankfurt tries to approach a notion of autonomy, which is facilitated in virtue of having limited goals. On the other hand, this might constitute a problem for it translates into a limiting predicament for a self that is grounded on reflexivity, to establish that the real self realizes herself – governs herself – through an identification with a portion of what could potentially constitute her in her entirety (in virtue of all the other possibilities that she left aside or didn’t have the opportunity to meet). For, the unified will is so, unified, in virtue of its limits being defined around one object. This identified portion could be an ideal, a person, anything that constitutes a final end to her. The question to be asked is “where is the authority of any such element/object?” Why they are more authoritative than mere desires?

The agent acts in ways characterized as a kind of obedience to the demands of the volitional necessity. Since the obedience is self-imposed and it constitutes self-governance, as acting according to her own will, it constitutes autonomy. She is self-constituted in self-realization, by obeying the commands that derive from her volitional necessities. These volitional necessities are constitutive of her real self and therefore their commands are not felt as an alien force. Thereby, volitional necessities are different from mere desires in that the commands they exert upon the agent are self-imposed and internal to her, while the commands derived from first-order desires – or mere desires – exert a force upon the agent that is essentially external to her will. His view argument on the internal nature of volitional necessities brings Frankfurt to explore practical reasoning derived from the motivations of love.

⁹¹ Some commentators refer to paradigmatic agency. Patrick Flemming (2010), A Pluralistic Approach on Agency; Philosophical Explorations, 13:3, 307-318, DOI: 10.1080/13869795.2010.501579 maintains that Frankfurt and Velleman defend paradigmatic accounts on agency. I am borrowing Velleman’s phrase to refer to these fine grained approaches to agency; namely, the phrase “par excellence”
⁹² Harry Frankfurt, The Reasons of Love. p.96
Frankfurt maintains that the agent engenders herself, ‘being fully settled as to what she wants’ as she forms a volition, which reinforces the argument on the unification of the will as founding the agent. Thus, without forming a volition, which is an effective desire formed in ‘wholehearted identification’\(^\text{93}\), she is inexistent, she is dissolved into wantonness, in virtue of her passivity towards her will and her inability to identify herself with things that help her to realize a ‘fundamental kind of freedom’. \(^\text{94}\) Frankfurt introduces love as the catalyst element for the fundamental kind of freedom to obtain, insofar as the agent is free ‘in loving what he loves’, and is not an obstacle for himself:

> Enjoying the inner harmony of an undivided will is tantamount to possessing a fundamental kind of freedom. Insofar as a person loves himself – in other words, to the extent that he is volitionally wholehearted – he does not resist any movements of his own will. he is not at odds with himself; he does not oppose, or seek to impede, the expression in practical reasoning and in conduct of whatever love his self-love entails. He is free in loving, at least in the sense that his love is not obstructed or interfered by himself.\(^\text{95}\)

Thus, without identifying herself with at least one element constitutive of her motivational set, she is passive, alienated, and unable to perform an action and become an agent. Children and old people with severe dementia are believed to fit this category, in Frankfurt’s view.\(^\text{96}\) The capacity of identifying desires that are genuinely her own and of forming volitions upon them, are, in a loved based theory of agency, depending on the agent’s capacity to care about things. Frankfurt stretches this argument to its limits and equates the capacity of identifying things to care about and to love to the capacity of self-love.\(^\text{97}\) Thus, an agent that loves herself lessens her constitutive limitations in realizing her freedom and in performing free agency, getting rid of wantonness, for, by loving herself, she is able to identify elements in her will that are truly hers and, thus, and become the sort of active agent that participates in an action.

Nevertheless, what does a volition have that characterizes it as the element revealing agency and ascribing to the agent its role of cause of an action? Does Frankfurt conflate the notions of agent and event? Velleman criticizes the fusion between the agent and a motive constitutive

\(^{93}\) Ibid. p.97-8 Frankfurt equates wholeheartedness to self-love, and both notions denote volitional unity.
\(^{94}\) Ibid. p.97
\(^{95}\) Ibid.
\(^{96}\) Agnieszka Jaworska, “Caring and Internality” *Philosophy and Phenomenological*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 3, May 2007, p.541-9. Jaworska argues that children as young as 3 years old and old people with severe dementia are able to perform purposeful actions based upon their caring. She shows that caring remains as practical reasoning catalyst, despite the cognitive disorders of dementia patients and despite psychical immaturity of very young children.
\(^{97}\) Harry Frankfurt, “The Reasons of Love”, pp.71-100
from her will for being a reduction conflating the agent and the event. Velleman accepts Watson’s criticism of Frankfurt’s view of agency, regarding the dubious grounds on the authority of volitions, and equates volitional necessities to mere desires. Therefore, a volitional necessity can be seen as a mere transitional event in her psychological structure, as opposed to something that is solid enough to establish firm grounds for agency par excellence. Still, in Frankfurt’s approach to agency, the only way human beings entertain the possibility of exerting some degree of freedom is through obeying the configuration of their will, through identification with a set of desires.

This fusion is problematic to the existence of the self, according to Velleman, who raises some important questions regarding it. He maintains that an agent must interpose herself between the events and occurrences and even mental states that lead to the action, so that the action can be traced back to her. Thus, self-governance, in Velleman’s view, is conceived when the agent is present in all elements leading to an action, via a detached attitude to her desires. Frankfurt maintains that the agent/agency is conceived by the identification with a desire or a set of desires. Self-governance, according to Frankfurt, is linked to the internality of an agent’s motives and it is caring what generates such motives. The element of internality of the desires are essential to the agent’s integrity, to her cross-temporal continuity and permanence in her identity.

In this chapter, I am going to trace a parallel between Frankfurt’s approach on action which anchors action in a person’s capacity to care and Velleman’s approach.

2.4 New Questions about the agent- the relation to the real self, and relation to motivation and Reason

Velleman argues that the thesis of volitional necessities, which sustains the notion of the real self, does not hold. Frankfurt’s real self-view maintains that the agent is constituted by a set of volitional necessities – desires the agent adopted as her own in detriment of others that were externalized – upon which she will act employing reflexivity. In other words, the agent should get rid of desires constitutive of her psyche that drive her to wanton agency, thus, remaining...

---

99 See: Agnieszka Jaworska, “Caring and Internality”, p. 550. Jaworska argues that “cross-temporal continuity is a matter of persistence of a state of mind over time and is assured so long as the agent’s motivational states are preserved.”
100 David Velleman, “What Happens When Someone Acts?”, p. 475-6
free from her inner instances of potential arbitrariness. She keeps her active self, and gets rid of her passive one. There are at least two problems identified in Velleman’s article, in which he criticizes the role Frankfurt ascribes to volitional necessity. Velleman maintains that the identification with a set of desires does not hold because when the agent identifies with her motives she loses her ability to adjudicate, she does not entertain a position, given the state of affairs within her will, which is impartial and neutral, and this fact threatens the autonomy project through reflexivity alone in its entirety, and the real self is simply not there, but somewhere else.

The problem of agent-causation lingers even if the mind-body problem can be made to disappear (…) Just as the mind-problem is that of finding a mind at work amid the workings of the body, so the problem of agency is that of finding an agent at work amid the workings of the mind …. the proper goal for the philosophy of action is to earn the right to make jokes about primitive agent-causation, by explaining how an agent’s causal role supervenes on the causal network of events and states.101

When Frankfurt defines wantonness, he is illuminating cases in which the agency is less than full blooded, instances of passivity, alienation when the agent’s action is not coinciding with her volition. Only through identification with the desire in which it is constituted an – alignment – between the agent’s reasons and his will constitute a full-blooded action, an action that is in Frankfurt terms, autonomous. However, Velleman does not see the role of the agent in it. Frankfurt stresses the element of awareness as being constitutive of an action, which is ‘full-blooded’ and self-governed, which is governed by the agent. It is not only cases of addiction or compulsion the cases in which dissociation between the agent and her will is configured by examples that are familiar to everyone.

Awareness in the sense, which we have already analyzed, is a precondition for an action to be produced by the agent. Without the precondition of awareness, even the most perfect causal connection leading to an action seemingly self-governed does not constitute an action. Until this point, there is agreement between Frankfurt and Velleman. When an agent forms an intention of severing a relationship with a friend and does so when the opportunity comes, under awareness, tells his friend, that things has to end, this constitutes a self-governed action. A person must be aware of his desire, aware of the intention, and aware of the behavior he will perform in order to achieve what he wants. Thus, awareness is a precondition for an action that

101 Ibid. 468-9
is human *par excellence*. He must identify with the desire of severing the friendship. The agent must identify herself with the motives that actuate her, that operate on her.\textsuperscript{102}

---

**Chapter 3 LOVE**

### 3.1 Caring and the hierarchical model of desires

When we try to characterize caring in light of the hierarchical approach on autonomy, there seems to be some immediate objections to its inclusiveness in the hierarchical model that is foundational to Frankfurt’s first attempt to delineate the contours of the real self. Cuypers\textsuperscript{103} proposes an enlargement of the hierarchical model and tries to pinpoint these objections and explicate why they seem to support the argument that caring, as a reason for action, does not seem to depend on the hierarchical model of desires in order to be generated. Caring, according to him, is characterized as a heterogeneous element that does not depend upon the procedures

\textsuperscript{102} David Velleman, *What Happens When Someone Acts*, p. 472

\textsuperscript{103} Stephan E. Cuypers, “*Autonomy Beyond Voluntarism: In Defense of Hierarchy*”, p. 240-250. According to Cuypers, Frankfurt goes ‘beyond voluntarism’ in order to describe autonomy.
of the hierarchical model of autonomy. Caring, in Frankfurt’s view, appears as a reality about the agent, as a given which is not under her voluntary control, a given about herself, which is not up to her to alter. It provides an alignment between her real self and her will.

On the hand, the hierarchical model depends on caring. It is volitional necessity that which can settle an agent’s inner commitment to a desire that will motivate her all the way into action. The cessation of internal conflicts depends on the agent’s volitional unity that is a state of psychic and volitional harmony attained when the agent accepts the commands of her volitional necessity. The nature of volitional necessities is such that it provides the agent with reasons for action that are self-generated, due to the harmony between the person’s desire that yielded in her a volition and the essence of the will of the agent. According to Frankfurt, ‘the state of volitional unity in which freedom of the will consists is purely structural’. That leads to wholeheartedness. Volitional unity engenders self-satisfaction due to the internality of a person’s caring. It is caring that generates this harmony and is the source of authentic/autonomous action. Thus, caring is an element that does not depend on the hierarchical model of desires. However, it is also generated upon reflexivity. Cuypers argues that Frankfurt introduced the element of caring to supplement the hierarchical model of desires. I prefer to look at it as simply a relevant attempt to describe autonomous human action, in which the central element can be characterized as given, as a fact of the matter about the agent. Without caring, the hierarchical model might be abandoned as a sufficient explanation of the contours of the real self. The idea that caring is the foundational element of human agency is criticized for having its grounding on subjective values, being criticized for being based on a solipsist theory of values. The lover or, the agent herself ascribes the value of the things a person cares about.

Watson criticizes the loved based reason theory of Frankfurt. According to Watson, the introduction of an element external to reflexivity seems arbitrary, and does not answer the question whether a person is a wanton when she acts upon a volition of higher order. The thesis that caring is a result of the contingent formative elements of a person’s character in the sense that they are not absolute, and they could be perfectly different from what they are

---

104 Harry Frankfurt, “Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right”, p.179
105 Harry Frankfurt, “The Reasons of Love”, p. 20. Footnote 5. Frankfurt claims that causal independence is not what determines a person’s freedom. For him, “autonomy is essentially a matter of whether we are passive or active in our motives.”
106 Gary Watson, “Free Agency”, p.217
challenges also its authority. Yet, in Frankfurt’s view, it is through caring and only through caring that, the person is connected to a species of truth about herself, and being moved by reasons that are genuinely hers.

3.2 Love and Reason
Frankfurt describes love as a source of reasons for action thus: “Loving someone or something essentially means or, consists in, among other things, taking its interests as reasons for acting to serve those interests. Love is itself, for the lover, a source of reasons. It creates the reasons by which his acts of loving concern and devotion are inspired.”

When Frankfurt denominates love as a source of reasons, he does not articulate love as an emotion, but as a configuration of the will. Love, thus, designates the essence of a person’s identity. Thereby, at core of his theory on love as source of reasons, there is this pivotal idea that reasons for action are intimately linked to a person’s identity. Frankfurt tells us: “Reflexivity and identification have fundamental roles in the constitution of practical reason. Indeed, it is only by virtue of these elementary maneuvers that we have such a thing as practical reason. Without their intervention, we could not regard any fact as giving us a reason for performing any action.” Frankfurt connects the notion of normativity with self-consciousness as the defining feature of human agents.

This view is directly connected to his view on the human will. He argues that a will can only become effective and free if it is constrained and configured by defining limits. Frankfurt’s view on freedom of the will is derivative of a notion of negative freedom, which means that an agent is free if and only if she is constrained by necessary volitional boundaries where her wants and desires are constrained by defining and necessary limits. Therefore, action, which is autonomous and free depends on the limits of a person’s, will. Volitional necessities are the elements that define a person’s will:

It is by the non-voluntary tendencies and responses of our will that love is constituted and that loving moves us. It is by these same configurations of the will, moreover, that our individual identities are most fully expressed and defined. The necessities of a person’s will guide and limit his agency. They determine what he

---

108 Harry Frankfurt, ”The Reasons of Love”, p.37
109 Harry Frankfurt, “Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right” p.175
110 Harry Frankfurt, “Concerning the Freedom and the Limits of the Will”, pp. 71-81

34
may be willing to do, what he cannot help doing, and what he cannot bring himself to do. They determine as well what he be willing to accept as a reason for action, and what he cannot bring himself to count as a reason for acting. In these ways, they set boundaries of his practical life; and thus they fix his shape as an active being.\textsuperscript{111}

Moreover, the commitment to act autonomously upon a motive depends on the formation of volitions. Again, it is important to note that, if an agent is cast in a position in which she entertains multiple and infinite options to satisfy whichever desire she happens to have – this does not amount to freedom of the will, but it amounts to volitional anarchy and consequently undermines her autonomy and her possibility of ‘actually being happy’.\textsuperscript{112} Volitional anarchy ultimately undermines a person’s identity.

A person attains volitional unity when she obeys the particular necessities of her will. The necessities of a person’s will constitute her volitional essence, which is the only essence she has, in Frankfurt’s view. A person’s meeting with her volitional necessities reveals her active nature. A person is, thus, in harmony with herself, when her actions are governed by reasons that are derived from her real self. This is the same as to say that her actions are essentially hers, when she is governed by the claims that are a result from her volitional necessities. Our volitional necessities are the elements that shape who we are and determine what we do. They have, in Frankfurt’s theory on love, their limits circumscribed by things we care about, by what we love and by what is important to us. Thereby, Frankfurt proposes an expansion of ‘the repertoire upon which the theory of practical reason relies’: “The origins of normativity do not lie either in the transient incitements of personal feeling, or in the severely anonymous requirement of reason. They lie in the contingent necessities of love.”\textsuperscript{113}

Frankfurt argues that our caring and what we love is that which unifies our will. In having a unified will, and by not betraying what one loves and cares about, is the closest a person can come to exerting freedom of the will. Thereby, there is so much value being generated by the loving activity in itself. Love is a powerful generator of value because in Frankfurt’s view the evaluative processes start from the bottom up, or in other words, the value a person ascribes to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Harry Frankfurt, “The Reasons of Love”, p.5
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Harry Frankfurt, “On Caring”, \textit{Necessity, Volition, and Love}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p. 156. Frankfurt discusses the philosophy of liberalism and criticizes its defense of “the ideal of a society that maximizes the freedom of its members to do what they want.” He is willing to maintain “that ensuring their freedom facilitates their success in the pursuit of happiness.” However, he argues that the “connection between doing as we please and getting what we want is not very reliable”. Still, even more problematic, he argues, “is the connection between getting what we want and actually being happy.”
  \item \textsuperscript{113} The Reasons of Love, p.48
\end{itemize}
an object is a function of the importance it has for the person, what depends on the fact that she
loves it. He argues, “that the beloved object is invariably valuable to the lover, it is even possible
for a person to come to love something despite recognizing that its inherent nature is actually
and utterly bad.”114 Moreover, Frankfurt argues that the truly essential relationship between
love and value of the beloved resides in that “what we love necessarily acquires value for us
because we love it.”115 “Love is the originating force of terminal value. If we loved nothing,
then nothing would possess for us any definitive or inherent worth.”

As the generator of inherent or terminal value, love is the ultimate ground for personal identity
and for reasons, in Frankfurt’s view. However, Frankfurt maintains, there are things and ideals
that, despite their intrinsic value do not generate reasons for action. We may recognize their
intrinsic value, as for instance, the value of virtuosity and rectitude in our actions. However, if
a person does not care about being correct in conducting her life, the value of rectitude in itself,
they do not generate reasons. Because in loving, as Frankfurt conceives it, that which moves a
person, is what she cares for. This means that what really matters, is the value a person ascribes
to whatever she cares about. In Frankfurt’s view, we would like to give valuable things in
themselves their due appreciation, if only we could. However, since it is not up to us to decide
what we love, we remain unaware of them, as many of us are unaware of the importance of
vitamins to our bodily functions, and do not care about such things. Frankfurt argues: “what
people do not care about may nonetheless be quite important to them, because of its value as a
means to something that they do in fact care about.”116

Frankfurt describes beautifully the importance of being vigilant to our objects of love, and our
vulnerability to that which might constrain our will and define the persons we are. This
vulnerability is a function of the notion of free will in Frankfurt’s view. This passage is
connected to the nature of human will and the importance, in Frankfurt’s view, to its limits:

Loving is not only inherently valuable; it is also risky. Lovers are vulnerable to
profoundly distressing anxieties and sorrows when things do not go well for what
they care about. For an infinite being, secure in its omnipotence, even the most
indiscriminate promiscuity would of course be safe. God runs no risks, and thus
need not forego any opportunity of enjoying the goodness of loving. He may be
guided by an uninhibitedly promiscuous love of being in whatever manifestation or
form, creating for himself a plenitude in which every possible object of love is
included, and hence no opportunity for enjoying the goodness of loving is lost. On

114 Harry Frankfurt, The Reasons of Love, p. 38
115 Ibid., p. 38-9
116 Harry Frankfurt, “Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right”, p. 181
the other hand, creatures like ourselves – anxiously aware of our finitude – generally recognize that we cannot afford to be so heedlessly extravagant. As we permit ourselves from time to time to incur the vulnerabilities that loving entails, we need to exercise a cautious selectivity and a defensive restraint. It is important that we be careful to whom we give our love, and to what ideals we commit ourselves. We are not omnipotent agents, free of all passivity, to whom nothing can happen and who, therefore, have nothing to fear. We cannot afford the unconstrained joy of serenely loving everything. In view of the harms to which our loving exposes us, we must set limits and conditions upon it.

Whether a person’s decision to change the content of her will is to be effective, is a function of the configuration of her will. There must be an alignment between her desire for change and her genuine will in order for it to occur. Any sort of fracture in the alignment between them compromises her capacity to act autonomously. In other words, her performing an act of will does not suffice to make her desire effective. Decisions do not generate commitment unless the will is unified toward a desire that is aimed by the decision. Love promotes effortless decision-making.

Since the objects of our love are particular and do not permit to be easily substituted, everything can count as a reason for action. Love, as a mode of care, drives the activity of reflection that is a person’s proper response to reasons. Moreover, love brings about meaning in the sense of the internalization of volitional necessities. A person exerts her free will while she is moved by her loving, as she is moved by her cared about objects that provide her with stable and endurable volitions. In Frankfurt’s view, when a person acts, she cares about which desire is moving her to action: “When a person acts, the desire by which [he] is moved is either the will he wants or a will he wants to be without. When a wanton acts, it is neither.”\textsuperscript{117} Moreover, “it is only because a person has volitions of the second order that he is capable both of enjoying and of lacking freedom of the will.”\textsuperscript{118}

Frankfurt’s articulation between a person’s capacity for reflection, and her capacity to act upon desires that are more her own, construes a notion of self-governance and free will that has caring as its cornerstone. When a person is committed to serve disinterestedly the interests generated by her caring - as contrived by her volitional necessities - she engages in reflexivity and acts upon motives that are internal to her, as they are aligned with the will she wants to have, by identification. By doing so, she embraces a commitment to herself, as she attains volitional unity and sustains her psychic survival. The agent’s attitude of committing herself to an internal

\textsuperscript{117} Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of The Will and Concept of a Person”, p. 19
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p.19
desire – internal in the sense that it is constitutive of her will’s essence - means that she is acting on the basis of a necessary condition for the permanence of her identity and, consequently, for her freedom, since “there is no I and self before and without caring”.

Imagine a person who wants to want to become a soldier, but finds herself volitionally divided as to whether to become soldier or not. Insofar as she is divided, she finds herself trapped in self-doubting thoughts as to whether to embrace her desire to become a soldier. In Frankfurt’s view, a person, ‘in being ambivalent to a psychic position’ and in not being able to fully embrace her ideal, is deviated from what she wants to want. For, as Frankfurt maintains, “the disunity of an ambivalent person’s will prevents him from effectively pursuing and satisfactorily attaining his goals.”

This seems to explain why she allows herself – either by distraction or for lack of self-confidence - to doubt her own courage and skills, what leads her to delay, I would say, her commitment to herself. A person’s commitment to her volitional necessities entails volitional unity. Conversely, by her inability to solve her inner volitional division, she forges her self-annihilation, acting in self-betrayal and self-defeat, as she does not commit to the desire that unifies her will. However, Frankfurt also contends that one characteristic of persons is that we tend to end our doubts in virtue of a ‘saving fatigue’. Therefore, a person tends to find her way into identification with something.

Reinforcing the argument on the authority of love in shaping who we are and in guiding our conduct, in a fundamental way, and also signaling to the contingency inherent to our objects of love, despite the fundamental and generic importance they have to us, Frankfurt argues that a person should love what is ‘suitable’ for her. Because our predisposition to love the things we love does not rest upon the reliability of arguments of evidence. Rather, “it rests upon confidence in ourselves to be satisfied with loving what we actually love.”

This confidence is a vital part of the task Frankfurt thinks a person has, of being the active agent on her own making up as a real self, by finding things to love – by accepting and responding to the commands of her particular volitional necessities - and serving their interests wholeheartedly. It is by engaging in love as an activity, that a person meets possibilities for her self-realization and self-knowledge. Moreover, the notion of self-love in Frankfurt’s view conflates with his

---

119 Harry Frankfurt, “The importance of What We Care About”, 1988:33
121 Harry Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care about”, p.94
122 Harry Frankfurt, “The reasons of Love”, p. 50
notion that persons have a natural predisposition to love things. Thus, in loving what we love we love ourselves.

Thus, an agent that solves conflicts within her will, by employing the purest kind of love in Frankfurt’s view, which is self-love, maintains an active/reflexive attitude in relation to her will and with respect to her desires. This movement facilitates the formation of volitions, as she becomes more connected to her own sense of self, by being able to identify what desires are genuinely hers. Because our caring, and ‘loving itself’, Frankfurt argues, apart from our particular interest in our objects of love, “is necessarily important to us”. He adds, “Quite apart from our particular interest in the various things we love, we have a more generic and even more fundamental interest in loving as such.” Our caring – that which is important to us – is tied to our own sense of self in a deeper way than other attitudes. Moreover, the objects of a person’s love and what she cares about are fundamentally important because they are the person’s proper responding to reasons. What she cares about should lead her to act in ways that are aligned with her sense of self and her real self, as they are aligned with her genuine will. Therefore, they promote activities in which she will engage wholeheartedly. Because love is a powerful generator of value in Frankfurt’s view, it keeps her active as it brings meaning to her life, saving her from boredom. Moreover, it is an aspect of a healthy psychological state that a person will usually be able to recognize her ownership of certain basic motives - things that she cannot help caring about - and overcome her alienation from her will. Now, how can we tell that a desire is internal to the agent? The agent does not dissociate herself from something that, upon reflection, she has understood that is important to her, in that it integrates her real self. Thus, the same agent that has been volitionally divided about whether to become a soldier can come to realize that is necessary for her psychological health, and her integrity, to find means to solve her inner conflicts concerning her desire to become a soldier. Because, insofar as a desire is internal to a person – in the sense that it harmonizes with the will she wants to have - it defines the confines of her will, and precisely because of the fact that it

123 Ibid., page 51
124 Ibid.
125 Agnieszka Jaworska, “Caring and Internality”, p. 537
126 See Harry Frankfurt, “The Reasons of Love”, p. 54, Boredom, according to Frankfurt is a psychic state that threatens a person’s psychic survival.
127 The Reasons of Love, p. 45 Frankfurt elaborates on the proximity of the notions of necessity of loving life to psychic survival, thus arguing “For instance, under normal conditions people cannot help caring quite a bit about staying alive, about remaining physically intact, about not being radically isolated, about avoiding chronic frustration, and so on. They really have no choice”
128 Agnieszka Jaworska, “Caring and Internality”, p. 537-8
configures her genuine will; it dictates reasons for action at the same time as it generates self-satisfaction. Moreover, a person, insofar as she acts upon a desire that is internal to her, she acts in self-governance. Thus, the self-doubtful soldier, once she attains volitional unity, by loving what is possible for her to love, is actively involved in maintaining the continuity of herself, as she entertains a possibility of becoming self-realized insofar as she obeys the commands of her volitional necessity, by pursuing her genuine desire. She is thus, freed from her volitional conflicts, as long as she is resolute in pursuing her end.

Frankfurt compares the motivational forces of love and of passions. Love motivates us from within our will and, despite the fact that it is not up to us to choose it and to exert voluntary control upon it, we accept it because of its internal nature in relation to our will. When we are necessitated by the limits that our will impose on us, we accept those limits and are not willing to change it. On the contrary, passions are external to a person’s essence in the sense that they not engender identification, and the force they exert upon a person’s will remain, thus, felt as alien. Thereby, it is possible for us to counteract the force they exert upon us, either by actively externalizing them, or by maintaining towards them an attitude of disapproval. Grasping the difference between passions and love is crucial for an understanding of his view of love as a fundamental motivational force in guiding human action. It reinforces the notion that love shapes the real self and guides her conduct, as it limits her choices in a necessary way: “The necessity that is characteristic of love does not constrain the movements of the will through an imperious surge of passion or compulsion by which the will is defeated and subdued. On the contrary, the constraint 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.”

The passage below clarifies how Frankfurt elaborates a conflation between a person’s capacity to respond to reasons generated by the authority of love, by serving its interests, and how this capacity of surrendering to the commands yielded by things that are important for her – her love - is connected to the integrity of her identity or, in other words, to her real self. Frankfurt moves to a conceptualization of the real self in which he argues that a person’s caring constitutes her real self, the only self that is authoritative to her:

However imposing or intense the motivational power that the passions (desires) mobilize may be, the passions have no inherent motivational authority… their

---

129 Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Externality”, p. 65. However, Frankfurt argues that “The fact that a person disapproves of a passion is not, accordingly, a sufficient condition of the passions externality to him. On the other hand, it may be that disapproval is a necessary condition of externality.”

130 The reasons of Love, p.46
effectiveness in moving us is entirely a matter of sheer brute force... Love (to care about something) is different... love is not an elementary psychic datum, which in itself implies no particular evaluative or practical attitude on the part of the lover towards its motivational tendency... The fact that a person loves something does imply ... that he cannot help caring about its interests and that their importance to him is among the considerations by which he cannot help wanting his choices and his conduct to be guided ... It is an element of his established volitional nature, and hence of his identity as person ... 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.  

Still, an agent’s self-confidence in herself – understood as her capacity to accept/embrace/obey what she loves - comes in degrees.132 Because of the built in internality of a person’s volitional necessities she can meet serious difficultness regarding identifying with them. Both in changing her heart concerning one thing she cares about, even in cases in which she understands the change of heart as vital. I borrow Jaworska’s example and quote it fully because helpful in introducing some of the consequences of the conflicts inherent to a person’s will and how this is connected to her sense of self, and how such conflicts might affect the integrity of the real self and identity in Frankfurt’s view. It might also illuminate the problem concerning a persons’ difficultness in becoming wholehearted about a desire – despite her making up of her own mind and even though when the desire concerns their own integrity as persons.

Consider a person fully and explicitly convinced that a particular caring is bad for her. She really does not want to care, and even begins to take steps to bring herself to stop caring – because, let’s say, the individual she cares about systematically harms her. Even in her case, so long as she has not yet succeeded in ceasing to care, she would be making a mistake is she viewed the caring as a mere happening in her psychology, not integral to who she is. This is why the predicament of a woman who wants to leave an abusive husband whom she still loves, is especially tragic. The conflict she experiences runs deep – it is a conflict within her identity. (As a matter of fact, her own identification with the caring is likely to be an important part of why she judges the caring inappropriate or pernicious.) By contrast, the conflict experienced by an unwilling addict intent on overcoming his addiction may be harder to resolve in practice, due to the sheer strength of the desire at issue, but because the addict does not care about the drug, the conflict does not “tear him apart.133

Thus, Frankfurt’s argument that love comes in degrees, I would say, has to do with describing the process of unification of an agent’s will. Yet, it has mostly to do with describing the

---

131 Harry Frankfurt, “Autonomy, Necessity and Love”, p. 137-8
132 Harry Frankfurt, “The Reasons of Love” Frankfurt argues that “the necessity that love imposes on the will is rarely absolute. We may love something and yet be willing to harm it, in order to protect something else for which our love is greater.” p. 46
133 Agnieska Jaworska, “Caring and Internality”, p. 539
difficultness some persons encounter in the process of tying themselves together around one motive that might hold the truth about their own selves, since conflicts of volitional nature are deeply integrated to a person’s identity.¹³⁴ In the case of the woman above, the volitional tension she experiences, despite her resolution concerning the desire of leaving her husband, is illustrative, in Frankfurt’s view, of her ambivalence towards two desires that configure her will, and which are connected to her identity. Her self-love and the love for her husband.¹³⁵ Her resistance in leaving is not a result of irresolution. The difficulty she meets in confronting her own volitional necessities resides in the fact that her love for herself is in the making – but probably because of the abusive nature of the relationship, her self-love has weakened, and it competes in authority with the ‘bad caring’ – the love for her husband. In other words, her love for herself appears in her volitional/psychical make-up as competing with another volition. The inner struggle she undergoes might end when she sees that she has to act upon reasons derived from her most fundamental volitional needs. In addition, thus, finally accepts, upon laborious reflection as awareness and acceptance, to devote herself to the interests of her psychic survival, and the integrity of her identity. The tragic part of this sort of inner struggle resides in the fact that she has to get rid of a constituent part of her identity in order to attain the self-satisfaction she knows she deserves. It is tragic because it puts her own identity at stake. Frankfurt argues that persons possess ‘fundamental necessities of the will’ that are connected to their interest in self-preservation. These necessities, as a source of reasons for acting, ‘are the most commanding, the most protean, and the least questioned of our final ends’. Frankfurt argues that practical reason could hardly get along without reasons of self-preservation. Because “it infuses importance into innumerable objects and activities, and it helps to justify innumerable decisions”.¹³⁶ Thereby, according to Frankfurt, it is open for her a possibility of remaking herself and restructuring the confines of her will acting upon reasons derived from her love of living. Frankfurt argues that, insofar as she is not ‘seriously depressed’, these fundamental volitional needs are enough to give her reasons ‘to go on’.¹³⁷ Her autonomy, I would say, is also intact as long as she is active in relation to her will, whether in forming it, or in reshaping its limits.

¹³⁵ Ibid. Frankfurt argues that “conflicts that pertain to the will arise out of a person’s higher-order, reflective attitudes” (…) and that “ambivalence is constituted by conflictive volitional movements or tendencies, either conscious or unconscious (…) that are unavoidably opposed, they are wholly internal to a person’s will rather than alien to him.”
¹³⁶ Harry Frankfurt, “Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right”, p. 190-1
¹³⁷ Ibid. P. 191
3.3 Love and Morality
According to Frankfurt, norms set forth by caring are resulting from nature itself. From this perspective caring is part of a foundational view of the genealogy of normativity:

There are no necessities of logic or of rationality that dictate what we are to love. What we love is shaped by the universal exigencies of human life, together with those other needs and interests that derive more particularly from the features of individual character and experience… In the end, [the things that we love are determined for us by biological and other conditions, concerning which we have nothing much to say].

Volitional necessities are the key elements to understand love’s authority and to understand why Frankfurt believes morality can constitute grounding for actions only in virtue of being a derivation of them. In other words, morality without care has no authority in the formation of reflexive attitudes. To begin with, the capacity for being a reflexive agent depends on her ability of forming volitions of higher-order, namely, it depends on her ability to care about and scrutinize the elements that appear in her psychic structure. A wanton, precisely because she does not care about nothing, neutralizes the difference in value between reasons that are good and those that are bad. Although care is established by Frankfurt as an element that grounds action in spite of the inherent value of her beloved objects, and ‘indifferent to the moral quality of its objects’, a person, as a reflexive agent, who cares about the content of her will, has the possibility to entertain moral restraints in virtue of her volitional necessities and their counterpart, the unthinkable. A wanton is a being that does not conceive any restraints for her actions, because she forms no volitions and her will is limitless, which is the same as to say that her will is an absent entity for her, as the limits of personhood are also absent, in what he constitutes a non-person. Thus, a wanton can embody pure evil, it simply does not matter to her, as anything guide her actions and anything can constitute reasons for action.

138 The Reasons of Love, page 47-8
139 Frankfurt, 2000, p.272
141 Ibid, 770 “Frankfurt’s point of departure is not morality as a necessary property of human reason: morality is just a fact, among others, attached to our condition, and its normativity owes nothing to the exercise of rationality. But that means that Frankfurt considers seriously, and not beyond all questioning, the issue of the grounding of morality, and thus short-circuits the Kantian claim that there is no motive, moral or non-moral, to be moral. (...)” So why and how can moral principles have upon our actions the authority we usually admit they have? According to Frankfurt, the answer does not lie in their being recognized by the requirements of reason as their own duplicates, but in our loving ‘the condition and style of life that moral principles envisage.
There are individuals who are prepared to do anything, if the circumstances are sufficiently desirable – that is, if the price is right. What they will to do is therefore never determined exclusively by their own nature but is always a function of their circumstances. And to the extent that a person is a volitional entity, such an individual is a person with no essential nature at all.\textsuperscript{142}

He has no inviolable boundaries. Thus he is amorphous, with no fixed identity or shape… he lacks a personal essence, which would comprise the necessary conditions of his identity. For this reason, there is no such thing as for him as genuine integrity… There is nothing that he is essentially. What he is at a given time is no more than what he happens to be, which is merely accidental.\textsuperscript{143}

It is the absence of care or, the fact of caring about nothing, according to Frankfurt, which amounts to being a wanton. Conversely, it is care what constitutes a person. It is by encountering the limits of the unthinkable that a person can be able to violate, for example, a set of moral principles, which is \textit{sui generis}. Only by employing reflexivity upon herself, as the volitional being she is, she might be able to stand against what she cannot bring herself to do. However, Frankfurt reminds us several times that it is care the element that amounts to volitional rationality.

Frankfurt has put aside moral principles as foundational to human action, because in his view morality \textit{per se}, in virtue of its external nature, cannot exert upon the agent a constraint that can compete with the limits stipulated by her caring. Any set of moral principles, in order to attain any substantiality, must be sustained by a person’s caring about it.\textsuperscript{144} This qualitative difference between morality and love is a function of the argument, which maintains that persons are volitional beings, and, in order for a person to exercise rationality she has to look upon her will and be able to distance herself from it in a movement of self-objectification. Morality can be devoid of any substantial content if caring does not appear as the most basic layer in founding human agency.

The necessities of love – as volitional necessities – are alone the elements that can integrate volitional beings which persons are. They are the configurations of the will of the person and the boundaries that they circumscribe will determine what the person is up to do and what she

---

\textsuperscript{142} Harry Frankfurt, “Rationality and the Unthinkable”, p.188. see also Autonomy, Necessity and Love p. 38, see also in: Marlene Jouan, “Harry Frankfurt’s metaphysics of care”, p. 771

\textsuperscript{143} Harry Frankfurt, “On the Necessity of Ideals” p. 114-15; see also: “Harry Frankfurt’s metaphysics of care” p. 771

\textsuperscript{144} Marlene Jouan: “Harry Frankfurt’s metaphysics of care”, p. 784
recognizes as simply unthinkable because she “cannot will to perform it”. They are necessities that exert a decisive command for action that is immediate as they constitute themselves the result of reflexivity. Thus, in Frankfurt’s view, without caring, rationality is to no avail. And there is no need for any intervention of deliberation because volitional necessities are the drivers of reflexivity.

There are important issues in the conduct of a good life that depend on moral evaluation and Frankfurt does not deny this fact. However, Frankfurt explains that “the importance of morality in directing our lives tends to be exaggerated. Morality is less pertinent to the shaping of our preferences and to the guidance of our conduct – it tells us less of what we need to know about what we should value and how we should live – than is commonly presumed.”

We tend to confuse the other-regarding character of love, which is manifested in our devotion to activities that protect the interests of the beloved object – with the essence of being virtuous. We tend to think that in loving we are engaging ourselves in activities that are essentially other-regarding and expressive of an excellent nature. Such confusion also leads us to further confuse morality with virtuosity. From this network of love, virtuosity and morality, it follows that we may sometimes define love as being necessarily related to things that generate the good, or that it is necessarily linked to the pursuing of things that are inherently valuable. In virtue of these misconceptions, we might find it comfortable to associate the notion of the activity of loving to conceptions about what it means being morally right. Nevertheless, Frankfurt’s view on human agency is incisive about the importance of not taking one thing for the other. Because the value he puts in love is not necessarily linked to loving what is inherently valuable. While morality is founded on the principle of the pursuit of goals that are universally valuable, loving, as such, is an activity that is valuable in itself. (In Frankfurt’s view, love drives the activity of reflection that is the proper responding to reasons. Love is, thereby, a generator of normativity because love engenders motivations that, albeit residing in the contingent necessities of love, they are expressive of something that “belongs to the most intimate and fundamental nature” of persons.

---

145 Harry Frankfurt, “Rationality and the Unthinkable”, p. 181
146 Harry Frankfurt, The Reasons of Love page 6
147 Ibid.
148 The Reasons of Love page 48
motivations of mere desires, should not be confused with those.\textsuperscript{149} The authority that springs from the value Frankfurt sees in loving can be compared to the authority of “the universal laws of pure reason.”\textsuperscript{150} Frankfurt wants to make it clear that they exert an absolute and necessary authority on the lover, as they engenders the reasons of living. Reasons that authoritative in the sense that they are fundamentally valuable for her. A lover, when she betrays what she loves, she is betraying herself. In Frankfurt’s view, such an infringement is as grave as a moral one. Therefore, in encountering what she loves, a lover has no choice, if she finds what to love and what to devote herself to.

Moreover, the activity of loving guides the lover in acting autonomously, despite the contingent nature of the volitional necessities. In \textit{On Caring}, Frankfurt tries to break down the entanglement between these notions while constructing the notion of love as a mode of care, as he describes the non-affective character of love as a mode of caring. He tells us, “to care about something differs not only from wanting it and from preferring it but also from judging it to be valuable.” “A person who acknowledges that something has considerable intrinsic value does not thereby commit himself to caring about it.” According to Frankfurt, the fact that I recognize the value of being healthy does not entail that I will give up my love for eating beef. The value of health may start playing an authoritative role for me, and provide me with reasons to act upon it, and guide my conduct, only if I start to care about it more than I care about eating beef.

Things might change in me, in view of the prospect of a painful death resulting from stomach cancer, in case I persist in loving beef. Only under this prospect, I may try to operate in myself a radical change of heart, that leads me to abandon my love for beef and try to be wholehearted about health, which brings to me the hope of not dying of cancer, thus the prospect of living as long as I can, something I see as inherently valuable. Frankfurt’s approach on the value of things from the perspective of love as mode of care sees no “incoherence in appraising something as intrinsically valuable, and pursuing it as a final end that is worth having in itself, and yet not caring about it.”\textsuperscript{151} It is easy to observe the commitment some people display to some institutions due to the intrinsic value these established institutions have in our culture. Nonetheless, many people, although spending their entire lives under the precepts that are dictated by such institutions, do not really care about them; do not devote themselves to promote their flourishing wholeheartedly, despite recognizing their intrinsic value. Marriage is one of

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid. 48
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid. p. 48
\textsuperscript{151} Harry Frankfurt, “On Caring” P. 158-9
such institutions. It is possible that a person cares about something even though she knows that it has no intrinsic value.

Frankfurt puts forward a semi-conclusion on self-love that sees in it a ‘redundancy’: “Given that a devotion to the interests of what is loved constitutes a foundationally necessary element of loving, and, moreover, given also that a person’s interests are determined by what he loves, it follows that the love of a person for himself essentially consists simply in devotion to a set of objects comprising whatever it is that he loves.”

Frankfurt’s view shows that the redundancy is a logical consequence of the value that loving has, i.e. there is no redundancy. His doctrine puts in loving itself, as foundational to human action par excellence self-love seems to collapse into the loving of the things one loves. People cannot avoid loving themselves; it appears, as long as they love anything at all. If a person loves anything, he necessarily loves himself.” Loving anything at all is the most rudimentary type of love, still, necessary element to hold his view on human action. Because in loving nothing at all, there is no agent whatsoever, and there is no agency. Thus, the corollary love what is suitable to you. It is a corollary that sustains Frankfurt view on love. Personhood, wholeheartedness, motivational essence all are elements that depend upon any kind of love, or any object which can yield reasons for action. Self-love is thus a redundancy because as the agent loves herself at all, she is connection with her active nature himself out of this redundancy and self-love, as the purest form of love, will be expressed through wholeheartedness. Frankfurt says that self-love is the purest form of love. Furthermore, self-love is not to be confused with self-indulgence. Self-indulgence and self-love are opposed attitudes.153

Love is often understood as being, most basically, a response to the perceived love of the beloved. We are moved to love something, on this account, by an appreciation of what we take to be its exceptional inherent value. The appeal of that value is what captivates us and turns us into lovers. We begin loving the things that we love because we are struck by their value, and we continue to love them for the sake of their value. If we did not find the beloved valuable, we would not love it.

“However, (…) as I am construing it love is not necessarily an awareness of the inherent value of its object, …perceiving that value is not at all indispensable formative or grounding condition of the love.” “Rather, what we love necessarily acquires value for us because we love it. The

152 Harry Frankfurt, “The Reasons of Love”, p. 86
153 Ibid p. 78
lover does invariably and necessarily perceives the beloved as valuable, but the value he sees it to possess is a value that derives from and depends upon his love.”

A parent loves her child not because she is aware of her child’s beauty and cleverness, her cute smile and the sweetness of mother-child relationship. The love in this genuine manifestation is independent from any condition. Indeed, the child’s value for the loving mother is primordial and prior to any quality at all.

A parent’s love for their children is as powerful as the love one has for oneself. Parents whom have no hindrances in manifesting unconditional love for their children will pay attention to not being indulgent towards their wishes. Their love motivates them to pursue what really matters for their children’s wellbeing. Parents are often caught in situations in which they must arrest their strongest desire in order to protect the wellbeing of their children. For instance, a mother’s desire of seeing her child cease immediately a tantrum at a supermarket, by the thought of giving in to her wish of having a new toy - a mother’s first order desire of being liberated from the embarrassing situation and putting a smile on the face of the child. Nevertheless, due to their loving activity and the continuum of motivations that it engenders, they manage to fight the urge to accede to the first order desire by suppressing it and not giving in to the pressure of the situation. For they identify themselves with that which is most important for them; to promote the best for the child. The volition of this type of paradigmatic love is formed around the desire of being able, as a parent, to putting limits to the child, as they identify this as something of undeniable importance to the formation of her character. Moreover, by promoting the flourishing of their child’s wellbeing, they promote their self-love. For between loving parents and their children, the identification is complete.

Similarly, a person who loves herself will avoid acceding to desires that prevent her from promoting her well-being.

Frankfurt explains the opposition between the notions of self-indulgence and self-love in such terms: “Precisely because they do love their children, they decline to do many things that their children would very much like them to do.” For the same reason, “a person shows that he loves himself (…) by protecting and advancing what he takes to be his own true interests, even when doing so frustrates desires by which he is powerfully moved but that threaten to divert

---

154 The Reasons of Love, pp. 38-9
155 Harry Frankfurt, The Reasons of love, p.83
156 The Reasons of Love, p. 79
him from that goal.”157 There is a powerful account that means that self-love is a craving for
desires to be met. Frankfurt does not support this idea. For him, genuine love for ourselves
requires conscientious attention of a different kind.158

According to Frankfurt, moral motivation guides ultimately our actions when our deepest
interests coincide with the interests pursued by being dutiful. To assume this is to empty
morality of its authoritative/normative content. However, is there such an “inimical relationship
between the requirements of morality and the demands of personal desires?” 159 Frankfurt
quotes Kant: “out of love of humanity, I am willing to admit that most of our actions are in
accordance with duty; but, if we look closer at our thoughts and aspirations, we everywhere
come upon the dear self; which is always salient, and it is this instead of the stern command of
duty (which would often require self-denial) which supports our plans.”160 “It does sometimes
look as though it must be morality that is playing the decisive role. There are occasionally
circumstances in which it seems that we cannot discover anything that could plausibly account
for the fact that a certain action is performed, other than motivating force of certain moral
considerations. Even then, however, we may easily be mistaken about what is really going
on.”161

3. 4 Characterizing Love as a Mode of Care
Frankfurt characterizes love thus:

It is essential to all instances of the type of love with which I am concerned that (a)
the lover is devoted, in some degree non-voluntary, to the flourishing of his beloved;
and (b) he desires the wellbeing of his beloved for its own sake, rather than only for
the sake of ways in which it might support or promote other interest. In other words,
love is disinterest. It is also essentially somewhat constrained: we cannot escape
the impact upon is of its commands by merely deciding to refuse them. With respect
to what we love, there are necessarily things that we feel we must do.162

In virtue of the internality of that which become a person’s object of love, and the reasons for
action it produces, reflexivity and identification are the core elements constitutive of the loving
activity. The reason one finds in the fact that he cannot betray himself. Now, as we have seen,

157 The Reasons of Love, page 79
158 Ibid, page 79
159 The Reasons of Love
160 The Reasons of Love, page 75
161 The Reasons of Love page 75
162 Harry Frankfurt, “Duty and Love”, p. 5
reasons of love derive from the fact that the lover identifies with her object of love and act upon commanding reasons that derive from this identification. If she betrays what she loves, she betrays herself.

To identify an agent’s will is either to identify the desire (or desires) by which he is motivated in some action he performs or to identify the desire (or desires) by which he will or would be motivated when or if he acts. An agent’s will, then, is identical with one or more of his first-order desires. But the notion of the will, as I am employing it, is not coextensive with the notion of first-order desires. It is not the notion of something which merely inclines an agent in some degree to act in a certain way. Rather it is the notion of an effective desire – one that moves (or will or would move) the person all the way to action.163

A person’s loving capacity manifested in her love for the beloved object, or in the love for herself is ‘a robust paradigm’ of identification with interests that are genuinely hers, effective desires, and the love of a beloved object cannot be satisfied by anything except the very object itself.164 Thus it manifests as an unique ‘opportunity’, which offers no substitution, that is given to her to be in contact with her motivational essence and her self-constitution over time, an opportunity that Frankfurt thinks one should cease, without questioning the ulterior value of the beloved. Because loving in itself is fundamental for a person’s integrity, in ways that transcend value judgments. It has to do with attaining meaning in life. In loving, there is an opportunity to form a volition, which will guide her, autonomously, towards activities that, although they might seem insignificant in the eyes of a third person, fill the lover’s life with meaning.165 Without the previous deliberation or prudential calculations, we normally have to operate in order to attain our goals. Love is in this sense an end in itself, an end.166 We have, as persons, to actualize, or be in contact with, our true and most genuine will, and therefore, loving is a capacity that concedes us the degree of freedom which is permissible to us to attain – taken into account that we are finite beings.167 Moreover, while reflexivity, being an element constitutive of the active nature of loving is manifested in an incessant continuous - as long as love lasts.

---

163 Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”, p. 14
164 “The bond between a lover and his beloved is not transferable. A person cannot coherently accept a substitute for his beloved ..."On Caring", page 169
165 The Reasons of Love
166 “On The usefulness of final ends", Frankfurt quotes Aristotle: "What having an end actually accomplishes, however, is more than simply to enhance the likelihood that a state of affairs corresponding to that end will come about. Indeed, Aristotle himself suggests as much: “desire would be empty and vain”, he says, “[unless] there is some end of the things we do which we desire for its own sake.” (1094a18-21). This attributes to final ends a function other than that of affecting outcomes. Having a final end, Aristotle indicates, may also affect the character of desire; it may keep the desire from being empty and vain. But Aristotle’s point here is too weak. If we had no final ends, it is more than desire that would be empty and vain. It is life itself. For living without goals or purposes is living with nothing to do.” p. 84.
167 Duty and Love, Concerning the Freedom and Limits of Will
Because Frankfurt explains that, it is up to the lover to cease loving when he does not identify anymore with his object, which embodies his effective desire. And, although the volitional necessity that drives the lover into the pursuing of his activity is non-voluntary, there is also a voluntariness constitutive of it. Still, due to the volitional nature of the activity of love, it is not really up to the person to elaborate the content of the will. However, the question, which remains unanswered, is as he puts it: “how are we to understand the paradox that a person may be enhanced and liberated through being seized, made captive, and overcome?” 168

It is important to highlight that the object of love is similar in nature to a ‘terminal end’. We will pursue it; devote ourselves to it for its own sake, and not in virtue of a motivation that derives from its objective value. The value of the beloved object is the value that we put in it, by means of our identification, and usually in the context of a relationship. It is a fact that in Frankfurt’s view love does not depend necessarily in a two-way relationship for it to arise.169 In Frankfurt’s view the beloved /object of love has its importance as a function to its relation to the agent. The beloved acquires value in its relation to the lover. Frankfurt explains that no matter the intrinsic value of the beloved – it can be devoid of value in itself – there is a value when he/it becomes a beloved.

168 The Importance of What We care About, page 267
169 Kate Abrahamson and Adam maintain that reasons of love derive only within the context of a relationship. They maintain that reasons of love arise if and only if there is already a context of a relationship between two persons
Conclusion

In Frankfurt’s view, my being a person does not necessarily imply that my actions should be guided by a normativity of moral type. I am still a person and I am still autonomous and regarded as responsible for my actions whether or not I act in ways that my actions can be universalized. In other words, it is not a condition of possibility of being a person to govern my actions in universal moral norms. It is not a condition of possibility of being a person/ an autonomous self to act according to objective truths, or, in other words it is not necessary that my actions be founded.

Moreover, it is not realistic for Frankfurt to assume that an agent will ignore his essence, his desires, his impulses, his beliefs, his dreams that are particular to him and that he will govern his action based on universal moral grounds. An agent might act on moral grounds and put aside many of his desires, but Frankfurt doesn’t want to subscribe to the idea that connects the real self to moral principles alone. The self has a much more fundamental core in Frankfurt’s view, a core which is volitional, and particularly formed. In Frankfurt’s view it configures a normative prejudice to underestimate the role of desires and motivations that are not immediately aligned with moral motivations in the formation of our will, i.e. in the formation of that which leads us to action and ultimately which informs and forms that way we conduct our lives. Frankfurt is inaugurating a normative dimension which lies beyond ethics, or perhaps even prior to ethics.¹⁷⁰

For Frankfurt, there is a normativity which is more basic to us than that of moral, there is the normativity that springs from our cared about objects, and what is important to us. The normativity of this type is encountered at the core of the concept of volitional necessity. The concept of volitional necessity bears the elements that guide and limit our actions.

Based upon these assumptions we can assume that then we have our cared about objects given a position which is primarily in importance to that of morality. Frankfurt introduces the

¹⁷⁰ See Marlene Jouan, “Harry Frankfurt’s metaphysics of care: towards an ethics without reason”.pp. 759-797
importance of particularity be it the particularity of the subject/be it the particularity of the object. An objectivity that has effectiveness in virtue of being founded in the subjectivity/in the particularity of the subject. Even though my actions are not guided by moral motivation I stand still being a person, because my personhood is connected to my ability to reflect upon my will.

The motivational state achieved by the formation of a volition of second order is not constrained by a normativity which is moral in nature. However, a volition of second order may nevertheless be formed when the agent respects the limits of the unthinkable. By encountering the limits of the unthinkable, a person cannot help but respect them.
Bibliography


