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The Ideal of Unconditional Love

by

Crystal Erin Tomusiak 

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2000

University of Alberta

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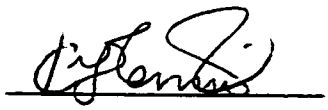
Degree: Master of Arts

Year This Degree Granted: 2000



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September 13, 2000

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Thesis Approval Date: Sept. 12, 2000

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to explicate and defend an ideal of unconditional love for persons as a viable ideal to which a lover may meaningfully commit in his personal relationships. To this end, I consider what kind of conception of the person may form an adequate basis for such an ideal of unconditional love. Having suggested that a conception of the person, suggested by Hegel, as essentially free, when this freedom is understood in a dynamic and not in a static way, is most appropriate to this ideal of love, I proceed to defend this conception of the person and the ideal of unconditional love which is informed by it against the objection that such an ideal is inappropriate for more personal, selective relationships in which the beloved is present as a particular person rather than a merely abstract one.

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Introduction

My aim in this thesis is to present and defend an ideal of unconditional love as unconditional concern for another person for her own sake. To make sense of the commitment to love another person unconditionally, I shall need to determine what might make such a commitment possible in the first place. This task is different from that of correctly observing and defining different kinds of love which happen to exist. For in the latter task, it is important above all to get inside the lover's head, to understand what in fact characterizes his love for his beloved. Even if what we discover there is a mass of illusions and contradictory beliefs, it will still be necessary to give a full account of them, even while we may take the liberty of remarking upon, in praise or criticism, the inherent illogic of such an attitude. Since the aim of this thesis is to execute the first task, to begin from the belief that many people have that it is possible to commit to love according to this ideal, and attempt to determine what might make it possible for someone meaningfully to make such a commitment, it will not involve a detailed or exhaustive account of what in fact tends to happen whenever people fall in love. Unlike those discussions of love which aim to describe and unfold for us the subjective emotion of love and its typical place in the lover's experience (to describe what Robert Solomon calls the "loveworld"), my discussion will focus on love, not as it exists subjectively for the lover, but as it might exist for someone who recognized and successfully guided his choices by a particular *commitment* or *ideal* of love--the ideal of love as *unconditional* concern for another person for that person's own sake[1].

There are two reasons why it is important to undertake such a task: first, because the ideal of unconditional love, whether it is a meaningful one or not, does characterize the aspirations of many actual lovers, even if it does not fully inform their practice, and second, because many philosophers deny that it ought to have this significance within personal relationships, that it is a desirable and viable ideal. The aim of this thesis, then, is to determine whether or not those who feel motivated by this ideal in their personal,

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[1] Much of the discussion of this element of love and the questions that it gives rise to will, in accordance with the criterion that the highest end of love is concern for the other for the other's own sake, be broadly Aristotelian in spirit. Yet my discussion will not involve me in a consideration of Aristotelian metaphysics since my focus is not on this criterion simply by itself but on the ability of *unconditional love* to fulfil, as we intuitively understand it, this criterion originally identified by Aristotle and taken up by so many others after him.

selective, contingent relationships, may meaningfully commit to it without thereby violating other important intuitions about love; for example, that it is possible to love other people for their own sake.

Thus there will be two elements to this thesis: first it will be necessary to determine what makes it possible for someone to (meaningfully) understand himself as being motivated by such an ideal in the first place. To this end, I shall have to consider what conception of the person makes it possible to commit to love one unconditionally. After all, since people's characters typically change over time, or may at least conceivably change over time, we might wonder whether unconditional love for something so subject to contingency is at all possible. If his love is *for* or *about* some other person, and is not merely a subjective emotion for him which may exist or may not but gives rise to a commitment to continue to love that person, then the lover must have some sense of who or what that person is which informs his commitment to continue to love her unconditionally. The lover who makes such a commitment, unlike one who merely observes the subjective emotion of love in himself or in others, will not be able to remain neutral about the conception of the person which informs his love. He must have recourse to some (explicit or implicit) metaphysical conception of the person which enables him to make sense of his commitment to love his beloved even when he knows that empirically she may be continually subject to change. In this thesis, then, I too shall not refrain from committing to a particular conception of the person but shall suggest and defend one that I believe best captures the way we are related to other persons when we love them in this way.

In the first chapter, I shall discuss the meaning of the idea of unconditional love, and the importance of grounding it in some conception of the person which may give meaning to it. Having argued that any attempt to limit our conception of the person to the particular qualitative character that differentiates her from other people makes the love subject to contingency, I shall announce my intention to defend an ideal of unconditional love for persons as persons, with the aim of setting up a consideration in the following two chapters of what conception of humanity might adequately ground such an ideal of unconditional love for the person for her own sake. Then, after arguing that one who aspires to love another person for *her own sake* in her wholeness aims to arrive at a conception of the person in which the beloved could in principle recognize herself and which makes the love commensurate with her own ideal relationship to her

interests, I shall, in the second chapter, turn to a consideration of the possibility of unconditional self-love. Having identified two elements of her selfhood that must be captured by and involved in the individual's unconditional self-love, and having shown how a limitation of one's self-understanding to just one of these elements leads to internal self-conflict, I shall continue the discussion of self-love in Chapter Three along with a consideration of other-directed love in an attempt to determine what conception of humanity accurately captures both the way in which people experience their own selfhood and the way in which people may aim to love other people unconditionally. At that point, I shall present and defend as the most adequate conception of humanity Hegel's conception of human beings as essentially free. In Chapter Four, I shall defend this Hegel-inspired conception of love for persons against the objection that a love for persons merely as such, because it applies equally to all, is not relevant or helpful in making sense of our more particular, selective relationships. Finally, in Chapter Five, I shall briefly consider the role of moral judgments in love and the possibility of the termination of the lovers' relationship.

Chapter One: Unconditional Love for Persons

i-the idea of unconditional love

Before proceeding to determine whether or not there is some conception of unconditional love which makes it a viable ideal to which a lover may meaningfully commit, I shall first make clear what the basic meaning of unconditional love throughout this consideration will be understood to be. First, it is important to note that unconditional love is not conditioned by *nothing*. Like other kinds of love for persons, unconditional love is *about or for another person*. Unconditional love for a person, precisely because it is *for a person*, inherently has reference to, and is therefore conditioned by, *the beloved herself*. This does not mean that the love for that person is inherently conditional; it merely gives some meaning to *what* for the lover is supposed to be unconditional (love *for x*). Love is unconditional, then, not when it is entirely indeterminate, referring to nothing at all, but when it is not subject to external considerations, when it is essentially conditioned by the beloved alone.

Yet this seems to include all sorts of conceptions of love that we intuitively would not regard as unconditional. For given this conception of unconditional love as essentially referring to the beloved in some way without being subject to external, contingent conditions, it seems that any kind of love may be understood to be unconditional as long as it accurately represents its referent (what it loves) to itself and is constant in its love for it. For example, if the lover falls in love with the beloved's beautiful face, and ceases to love her only when she suffers serious burns to her face, he may be said as a matter of fact to have loved unconditionally the object of his love (her beautiful face). Whether or not such love counts as unconditional love *for the person herself* depends on what we regard the essence of the person to be, on what counts as a continuation of her identity. Although few perhaps would identify the person herself with her beautiful face (asserting that when it changes, essentially so does she), many identify the essence of the particular person with her qualitative character. If we identify the person with her particular, qualitative character then, as Neera Kapur Badhwar argues, we need not (and ought not to) commit to love *permanently*, but may cease to love the other if her character changes in some essential way[1]. According to Badhwar, love is essentially conditioned by the

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[1] Although the love is unconditional *only if* the love for what it regards as the beloved's essence *is* permanent, i.e., not subject to external conditions

other person (rather than by external factors) not when it commits to love the person no matter how she might change, but when it is conditioned by and responsive to the unique qualitative character of the beloved. Whether this point is regarded as a criticism of unconditional love (understood as remaining constant throughout changes in the character of the beloved) or as a redefinition of unconditional love that allows (and in fact requires) it to be understood as unconditional even when it is not permanent, it seems at the very least to compel proponents of unconditional love to consider the possibility that such love, as essentially conditioned by the nature of the beloved alone, though it may not be constant, meets all the criteria that the common notion of unconditional love (as enduring) does, perhaps even with superiority if it is more responsive to the very thing that alone is supposed to condition it.

Just how permanent unconditional love must be (if the lover is to live up to his ideal) and which conditions are internal rather than external to it will depend on the conception of the person that underlies and informs it. To make sense of what this ideal calls for, the lover must have access to *some* explicit or implicit conception of the person which allows him to identify the person whom he loves and informs his understanding of what counts as an essential change of her identity or a termination of her existence. Some ways of conceiving of the person loved are narrower than others (i.e., have more specific conditions inherent in their conception of the person)[2] but, to be love specifically *for* another person, all must give some content to what counts as the beloved and what does not. For although we intuitively understand unconditional love to be permanent, enduring despite changes in the particular characteristics of the lover, the beloved and their relationship, we do think that the living relationship (between the lover and the beloved) in which it is expressed appropriately ends when the beloved as a matter of fact is no longer present (although the love itself does not). For example, if, after the beloved's consciousness has long since left her and her body has returned to the ground, the lover continues to cherish *for its own sake* the dirt to which she has returned *just as* he cherished the person who once lived, felt and thought, we will not tend to regard the unaltered character of his love as an appropriate or healthy prolongation of unconditional love. For, assuming that the person's identity is in some way essentially tied to her consciousness, this continued love for what he regards as the continuation of her physical

[2] For example, essentially identifying the person with the indefinite consciousness that accompanies her experiences is less restrictive than essentially identifying the beloved with crucial personality traits.

body is not a love for the person once loved at all. Although it might be fitting for such a lover to cherish as the remnants of the one he so loved her physical remains, and continue to love in memory the beloved who no longer is present, something would be wrong with a love that did not recognize an essential loss in the loss of the beloved's personality and consciousness, with a lover who did not realize that the living, actual relationship with the beloved herself whom he had committed always to love had ended, but instead, as though she had not been lost to him, continued to regard *as her* what remained. Although unconditional love is not subject to conditions in the sense that the love itself never ends, the actual, living relationship might and should end if the beloved ceases to exist. Everything seems to depend, then, on what we believe the foundation of unconditional love to be: how we identify the beloved whom we commit to love.

In a consideration of the ideal of unconditional love, therefore, it is not necessarily appropriate to steer clear of a metaphysics of the person: for in making sense of his ideal the lover himself cannot do without a working conception of who the beloved is. In this thesis, rather than remain neutral about the conception of the person that may inform the ideal of unconditional love, I shall provide and defend the one that I believe best captures our intuitive sense of the ideal of unconditional love as something founded on an enduring rather than a contingent basis, and as love of the *whole person* herself *for her own sake.* These two intuitions--that the love is enduring and that it is love of the whole person for her own sake--are related. For when we aim to love the *whole* person *for her own sake,* with a love that has her interests and not merely our own as its end, we aspire not merely to promote her interests as long as love for her continues to feel good *for us* (i.e., for our sake) but for as long as she exists and has interests to promote. We aim, when inspired by this ideal, to love her not merely for the sake of a part of her which appeals to us (though this may still be a love for her own sake insofar as that part of her belongs to who she is), but for the sake of the beloved as a *whole person* so that it may be said without qualification to be *for her own sake.* It becomes very important to the lover motivated by this ideal, therefore, to ensure that his love endures as long as the other person does. The lover, then, who aims to love in accordance with this rather lofty ideal not only needs to have some understanding of the person, which as a matter of fact forms the basis of his love for her, but also needs (or at least aims) to *get it right* so that his conception of the whole person, for the sake of which he loves her accords with who she in fact essentially is and what her interests, as this whole person, are.

Unconditional love, according to this understanding, inherently involves a commitment since it calls on the lover to transcend his own merely subjective desires and emotions and permanently aim for the good of another not merely for his own sake but also for hers. Although the *feeling* of love may sometimes be unconditional in this sense, when the lover truly desires and feels committed to the good of the beloved for her own sake without qualification by his other interests[3], the feeling alone is not sufficient for the ideal of unconditional love. Unconditional love, although ideally expressed in the feelings of the lover, must also involve a commitment the validity of which is not regarded as dependent on the feeling itself. For as long as the love remains dependent on the feelings of the lover, it will always be subject to contingency.

Descriptions of unconditional love as a *mere* feeling are deficient because love as a mere feeling is subject to contingency, dependent on the lover's emotions and preferences. Although there may in fact be inherent in the *feeling* of love no conditions on the beloved besides the basic requirement that she remain identifiable as who she essentially is, a further condition lies within the lover's preferences and measure of worth as the subjective basis for the feeling. For although, if love is actually about *another person*, the love must be essentially conditioned by the beloved alone (as its essential content and focus), which the feeling of love can accomplish just as well as a commitment to love, the feeling of love is nevertheless *also* inescapably conditioned by the lover himself as the one who feels and assents to it. For the love depends on his continuing to experience it. As long as the condition of love for the beloved is the continued *feeling* of love for the beloved, the love will be inherently conditional in that it will depend not on itself but on the subjective feelings of the lover. Consequently, it will always be subject to contingency, even if as a matter of fact it never happens to alter.

Therefore, the feeling of unconditional love must include a *commitment* to continue to love the person whom the lover has selected, to cease to love only if she changes essentially so that she no longer *is* the person he has committed to love[4]. Yet because unconditional love must involve such a commitment which extends beyond the mere feeling (in that it stands above the feeling as what ought to determine and sustain it rather than being regarded as a mere part of the feeling, which ought to pass away whenever the feeling does), not just any conception of the beloved's identity is appropriate to it. For

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[3] i.e., without subordinating this desire for the beloved's good to his other specific desires for the things that he himself wants.

[4] Again, what counts as such an essential change depends on the conception of the person underlying this love.

the commitment to love unconditionally makes sense only if its validity is independent of the feeling, and *ought to* command and determine it. Any conception of the beloved's worth which makes it dependent on merely subjective emotions, preferences and opinions will be disqualified from informing a viable commitment to love unconditionally. For the beloved's worth to the lover will thus be inherently conditional on the lover's merely subjective feelings, desires and beliefs, and as such will be essentially subject to changes in these.

For even if the lover loves the beloved with a love that presently is subject to no external conditions, and commits to continue to love her in this way, he cannot be certain that he will *continue* to appreciate the qualities that he has picked out, as long as his preference for them depends merely on his taste or opinions about what is worthy. Both taste and opinion are subject to change. If the measure or criterion of the relative worth of something lies *only* subjectively within us and our feelings, then we cannot meaningfully commit to an unconditional love for it, since it is always possible that, even as the basis for our love--that which is loved--remains stable, we may change, preferring something or someone else. Moreover, and this is the crucial point, if the beloved's relative worth for us is in large measure ultimately determined by our feelings and our tastes, then there is no *reason*, besides a desire (also subject to changes in our preferences) to be loyal to what we have selected, to consider the change an objectively bad one if these feelings, tastes and opinions happen to alter. For the beloved herself would have no absolute claim on us (to unconditional love) by virtue of her worth, except insofar as we wish to grant it to her. Though she may of course have objective worth within herself, irrespective of our preferences and feelings, and thus merit some permanent regard, she would not by virtue of her objective worth merit *unconditional* regard *relative to other possible commitments*. Failure to love unconditionally a beloved that has only relative value (relative either to our taste, other possible commitments and objects, or both) would not necessarily be a failure at all, except insofar as it bespeaks a perhaps disturbing lack of constancy and continuity in our values, and thus reveals something troubling about our character.

If the ideal of unconditional love is not anchored in the recognition of the actual unconditioned worth of the beloved, and thus does not refer the lover to an ideal which permanently depends on more than his own subjective valuations or the beloved's variable relations with other particular objects and people, such a conception of unconditional love could serve only to *describe* what does or does not as a matter of fact

happen, what the lover does or does not happen to choose, not to *prescribe an ideal* by which he could feel that he must guide his choices in love even when the feeling of love fades or does not come easily. Although he might be committed to a love for his beloved while feeling the subjective emotion of love, he would have no reason to be disturbed when he as a matter of fact happened to cease to *feel* thus committed, to *feel* love. For he could, without inconsistency or error, regard his earlier commitment as a mistake in judgment, a decision to value unconditionally that which has only relative worth (the qualitative character of his particular beloved).

The possibility of making a meaningful commitment to love unconditionally, then, depends on what we regard as the source of the high worth of the essential character of the beloved for us. If the unconditional worth of the beloved's character for us is relative to our assessment of its place in relation to our other commitments, is *unconditionally valuable* for us only because and as long as we regard it as such, then we cannot meaningfully commit to love it unconditionally. If, however, the basis for our love is something that we regard as in fact having unconditioned worth, then it is indeed possible to commit to and make sense of the aspiration to love it unconditionally.

It is important to note, though, that my point is not that our love must be grounded in something that we *cannot help but recognize* as having unconditioned worth, something that *compels* our subjective approval. That something in fact has unconditioned worth does not guarantee the success of unconditional love. For if it did, the love would arguably not be freely given at all since we would have no other option but to acknowledge its worth as a mere fact which we are powerless to dispute. More significantly, it is evident that at least in this earthly life, there is nothing that so compels our recognition that our stubborn human freedom can't succeed in discounting--at least for a while. What's more, even if we feel rather certain that something has such objective unconditioned worth, we may still (we have this power) refuse to treat it as such, as contradictory and self-defeating as such a stance may be.

Unconditional love, therefore, is best understood as a *commitment* made meaningful by either the strong belief or the knowledge that that which grounds our love, the nature of the beloved herself, actually possesses unconditioned worth not merely for us but in herself. That is to say, provided that we firmly believe or know that the beloved in fact has unconditioned worth, then and only then does our commitment to love her unconditionally make sense. Although there is nothing (except perhaps direct contact with the divine) that so permanently compels our love that we could not at some point

choose to withdraw it, unconditional love may be made sense of as an ideal or commitment that can accompany our recognition of the unconditioned worth of something or someone. Recognizing that the unconditioned worth of the beloved depends not on us, but only on itself, we can meaningfully choose to strive to continue to appreciate it unconditionally, as is appropriate to the nature of its worth. Unconditional love, then, has two necessary elements: the recognition of unconditioned worth in the beloved, and the commitment, engendered by this recognition, to continue to regard it in this light, and treat it accordingly, for as long as it exists.

This shifts the focus of the consideration of the possibility of unconditional love from reflection on its formal character, or structure, to a consideration of the content of that in which such love may be grounded. We are no longer concerned with what it means to love unconditionally but rather are led to wonder what kind of conception of the person or qualities of the beloved could be a fitting foundation for such love among persons. This does not mean that, having found such a conception, we will always succeed in treating it in accordance with its unconditioned worth, but it does make sense of the commitment to do so.

One answer that comes to mind is not surprising or new. That in us which makes us "ends in ourselves" according to Kant and which has "unconditioned worth" according to Hegel is our very personhood as free, rational agents. Moreover, this way of grounding unconditional love seems better to fit our intuitions about its meaning. When we say "I pledge to love you *no matter what*," the implied condition typically is "as long as you remain recognizable as a person, as long as you live a recognizably human life." In the remainder of this thesis, I shall defend and explain a version of unconditional love informed by Hegel's contention that the source of the unconditioned worth of human beings as well as their essence is their freedom[5].

ii-Traditional conceptions of Love: Agape vs. Eros

Before exploring and defending the ideal of unconditional love that I have suggested, I shall first briefly discuss two traditional conceptions of love, agape and eros, along with some common criticisms of them. I shall here focus on Alan Soble's and Neera Kapur

[5] There is, of course, another possible answer. We may perhaps love other people for the sake of their virtues, which we believe deserve the highest regard whether they are acknowledged or not. I shall consider this view in Chapter Three when I discuss Plato's conception of love.

Badhwar's discussions of these two types of love, since each of their discussions leads to a consideration and criticism of the ideal of unconditional love, which seems to belong somewhere between agape and eros, as a love for persons as such, which criticisms I shall have to consider in my defense of such an ideal.

In *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, Alan Soble discusses the traditional division of our conceptions of love, insofar as love's relation to the perceived value of the beloved is concerned, into two kinds: what he calls a-love, or love based on the notion of agape, and what he calls e-love, or love based on eros. In the first, a-love, we love not because the object merits it or has value. Rather we give our love freely without regard to the worth of the object. That is, we attempt to love as God loves--generously, without requiring that the beloved first be worthy of such love. Such love is essentially creative. Instead of being a response to the value of the object, it confers value on the object in loving it. Soble cites Kierkegaard's conception of love as an example of this view. "True Love," Soble quotes him, "is precisely [to find] the unlovable object lovable" (qtd. in *The Philosophy of Sex and Love* 100). The beloved, though initially perhaps worthless, becomes valuable as a result of love, *because it is loved* and is thereby given value.

E-love, on the other hand, occurs when we love someone on account of her good qualities, "in virtue of the beauty and goodness of the beloved" (96). In this type of love, we first perceive the beloved to be valuable in some way, to give us some kind of pleasure, and only then, in response to our recognition of its worth, come to love it. Thus the worth of the object gives rise to our love rather than the other way around, as in agape.

Both conceptions of love have been the target of criticism. Neera Kapur Badhwar in "Friends as Ends in Themselves" considers the first kind of love identified by Soble, agape, and dismisses it as incoherent as an understanding of personal, selective love, and friendship in particular. Such love, she maintains, because it does not require its beloved to have any merit, cannot possibly be the foundation of friendship. Agape is by its very nature meant to be blindly applied to all people equally regardless of their individual worth. She reasons, "It is hard to see how a love which is blind [indifferent to the value of the other] can be the foundation of a relationship which is in principle cognitive, a response to the perceived value of the other" (172) Furthermore, she charges, the inherent unresponsiveness of such love, the complete impotence of the beloved to have any constitutive role in forming the foundation of the love, means that, whether it be love or not, the beloved is not therein loved *for herself*. She argues, "the denial that the worth

or lovability of the individual has anything to do with the love, is precisely a denial that the individual is loved for himself" (172).

Badhwar has already identified "end-love" (as have I) as essential to the ideal form of friendship. By this she means that in the highest friendships, we love the other for her own sake: the other herself serves as the end of the friendship rather than merely a means to other ends. Agape-like love is not end-love (though it is not means-love either), Badhwar contends, because when we love without regard to the worth of the beloved, our love is not actually a response to who the beloved is, and therefore does not treat her as the end of the love, but rather makes who she is for herself irrelevant.

The notion of eros also has its critics. The force of Badhwar's criticism of agape stems from our conviction that love should treat its beloved as special, perhaps even as utterly unique and therefore irreplaceable. Since the notion of love as agape seems to fail to do this, we appear to have a good reason to discard it as a basis for personal, selective relationships. The notion of eros is also criticized for failing to meet this same criterion. Gregory Vlastos, for example, in considering Plato's view of love as stemming from a desire to possess the good, contends that such a view of love according to which we love for the sake of the beloved's good qualities makes the individual nothing more than an instantiation of a type ("Plato: The Individual as an Object of Love"). Since the qualities on account of which we admire and love the beloved are universal types which could conceivably be found in other persons, love of this kind is not actually a response to that unique irreplaceable individual but only to what she typifies. We love these universal types through her, but do not thereby love her for her own sake.

iii—Love for persons as persons

Soble and Badhwar both discuss a modified view of agape that seems similar to the one that I have suggested. This version of agape can also be understood as a more general kind of eros. Soble considers J. Kellenberger's claim that instead of being completely blind to the worth of the person, "agape is a response to 'the inherent worth of persons as persons'" (101), and notes that this notion of agape is in fact a universal kind of e-love, dependent on the recognition of the value of the person. Such a conception of love treats people's personhood as their necessary value, and their particularity as only their accidental value. Since the former does not change when the latter does, the love can remain constant throughout all changes in the accidental features of the other

person's character. Soble doubts that such a view of love is useful in helping us to make sense of the way we actually respond to our friends and loved ones: he writes, "If this [view of love] is right, how are we to understand responding to a person in virtue of his or her valuable properties that define the person's character and constitute his or her identity? These properties are accidental but also necessary since without them the person would lose his or her identity as that person" (101).

Badhwar also criticizes this attempt at a hybrid between eros and agape. Crucial to her account of end-love is an emphasis on the qualitative identity of the individual. Love must be responsive to the actual, empirical self of the beloved. From the perspective of a love for persons simply as persons, all human beings are the same, each as worthy of love as the next. Although love for persons in general does in fact respond to the worth of the person, it does so only insofar as she is a person in general, not insofar as she is the particular person that she is, on the basis of which she might be selected as special to us.

Furthermore, Badhwar insists that we do not have any assurance that all people are in fact inherently worthy simply in virtue of being persons. She observes that there are people who actually seem to be entirely lacking in moral capacities, who lack the potential for goodness that supposedly grounds an unconditional love for persons. Thus the existence of "the criminally insane, the thoroughly wicked, and the psychopathically amoral" belies the claim that all human beings have a capacity for goodness on the basis of which we could extend a love to all simply insofar as they are persons. Since there is no empirical evidence for the claim that all human beings share some property on account of which they may be said to merit such love, the only way to preserve such an assumption is to fall back on a "metaphysics of the person." This she dismisses, as perhaps too uncertain a basis for love (though she does not engage any arguments in favour of such a transcendental ground).

It follows that any goodwill that we extend to persons whom we do not know well enough to determine if they actually possess such worth can be based only on our general conviction that most people have such worth, not on knowledge that this or that particular person does. In any individual case, then, this goodwill may be withdrawn if we discover that the other person is among those few who lack the distinctively human capacities for goodness (or whatever the basis for general human worth is) entirely. Therefore, the goodwill that may be called for is not unconditional after all. Though such goodwill may be relevant to, though not exhaustive of, friendship, unconditional love itself is "neither an element of, nor an ideal for, friendship love," since it at best describes our possible

love for humanity in general (which itself does not necessarily include everyone), while the object of friendship is "the person, the qualitatively and numerically unique individual" (176).

Indeed something does seem strange about the idea that love in personal relationships ought to be rooted in and based on a recognition of the worth of persons as persons. For although this conception of love preserves the possibility of our loving the person without conditions, Badhwar is correct in noting that it does not seem to accord with many of our most important intuitions about what love is. The most glaring problem so far is that the end of love in this conception is not an actual, specific person at all. The general respect for humanity that Kant argues for in the moral sphere does not seem to transfer very well into the more personal sphere because it seems to leave too much out—the particular personalities of the people involved--that which makes them and their relationship to one another special to them. Love, though it may be generalized to include all of humanity, tends to be about individual persons. Even if we respect all of humanity, we reserve something special for those most dear to us: and this is what we tend to believe that we mean when we say that we love someone. One of the most important challenges in this thesis, then, will be to show how we can love unconditionally with a love rooted in the most general respect for the unconditioned worth of human beings while still being able to claim that we love some people specially in a way that reacts and attends to their particularity such that our love for the other is not just love for humanity in general but is also particularly a love for him or her.

iv--Loving someone her own sake, a few words

Before proceeding any further, I shall consider, in response to Badhwar's objections to the ideal of unconditional love in personal relationships, what it means to love someone "for herself" or *for her own sake.* Badhwar's criticism stems from the perceived failure of unconditional love (or love founded on a recognition of the worth of persons as persons) to be sufficiently responsive to the friend as a "unique, irreplaceable individual," (168) one of the criteria for end-love. To be loved as an end, Badhwar insists, the friend should be loved and responded to as she is "for herself." That is to say, who she is should affect the kind of love that we give her. Love should not be unconditional, then, or based on her inherent humanity but should rather be conditioned by the beloved herself as the unique, qualitative individual whom we specially love, and should in this way be

responsive to her as to the end toward which the love is directed and on whom it is bestowed. To love someone "for herself," in Badhwar's view, is therefore to love her because of who she is as this special individual, as differentiated from other possible objects of love.

I maintain that the conception of love as recognition of the inherent worth of persons properly understood better fits the intuition that when we love someone we value her and desire the good for her *for her own sake* since it better accords with her own interest in her fate. For although a person's qualitative identity may to us seem to (and perhaps actually) change essentially such that we can no longer recognize her, it is much less plausible that such changes occur within the person such that she herself can literally no longer find herself in the "new" self. Assuming that we can meaningfully claim to love people *for their own sakes*, it seems strange that we would in attempting to do so restrict our sense of who they are, and what constitutes a continuation of their identity, to conditions to which their own ability to recognize themselves and be concerned about their fate is not limited. Their interest in themselves typically continues despite substantial character changes. If our own interest in them does not, however understandable our withdrawal of our love may be, it seems that we did not in fact ever love them for their own sake but only for that part of them by which our love was conditioned, to which they themselves were never so restricted. If our love for them is bound by something that, though it may essentially characterize them at a given time, does not essentially bind them at any given time, then it cannot honestly represent itself as seeking the other's good for *her own sake* since it is only interested in that part of the person which does not exhaust who she is at any given time, and is therefore inherently asymmetrical. Although we may certainly regard her as an end while restricting our identification of her to certain qualitative boundaries that for us (and perhaps for her) essentially characterize her empirical self, we cannot in this way promote her ends *for her own sake*, since this kind of restricted concern is not commensurate in character with her own concern for her well-being.

If we wish to pursue the ends of another, then, genuinely for that other's own sake, it is not enough that we promote the ends that she identifies for herself in accordance with her present character while limiting our concern for her fate to the qualitative essence of this character. For although the features that make up this essence define her qualitative character for us, and likely for herself as well, she stands in a very different relationship to this qualitative self than we do when we love her wholly for its sake. For, severe brain

injury or mental illness notwithstanding, her subjectivity is necessarily linked with the continuation of her consciousness, at least insofar as she knows that a change in her empirical character will not leave her behind, constituting an entirely new person for her (though she may look back and as an observer be able to say "I was [in a qualitative sense] an entirely different person then"). For the possibility of her continued consciousness depends on the assumption that she will be able to find herself in her future consciousness as it changes, that her sense of self is not strictly limited to her determinate character.

Chapter Two: Unconditional Love for Oneself

i-For her own Sake, Continued

I ended the preceding chapter with a brief reflection on what it might mean to love another person *for her own sake,* suggesting that a love for persons as persons better accords with the beloved's own sense of self than a love which restricts its focus to the person's particular qualitative character. Yet I must now acknowledge the flaw in that claim. For, even though a person's sense of self is not restricted to her present, qualitative character, it does not seem more accurate to suggest that it is captured by her bare indeterminate sense of being *a person in general,* or *this self-consciousness,* without reference to her particular, qualitative character. Neither conception of the person seems adequately to capture a person's own sense of self and, consequently, neither seems to be focussed on the beloved as a whole person, as she might be *for herself.* It therefore seems unlikely that a love based on either conception will be able to aim accurately for the good of the beloved *for her own sake* as a whole, other person.

As I discussed earlier, however, it is imperative to the lover who aims to love his beloved in her wholeness *for her own sake* that he not merely have *some* conception of who she is which informs his love, but that he have *the right one*, that he love her for who she, *in fact*, is. Ideally, then, the lover's unconditional love for the beloved and the beloved's unconditional love for herself would have as their basis the same conception of the person (assuming that they both accurately identify it and successfully love unconditionally). That is, they should be a love of the *same person.* If this is not possible, if his love for the beloved must unavoidably be based on a conception of who she is to which her sense of self is never restricted, then the lover will have to acknowledge a necessary asymmetry between his conception of the beloved, which informs his love for her, and her own sense of self, which informs her self-love and assessment of her interests. Although it will still, of course, be possible for the lover to love the beloved and promote her interests, it will be much less plausible for him to maintain that he does so *for her own sake,* with she herself *as a whole person* as the end of his love.

If the lover is serious about making an effort to love the beloved *for herself,* or *for her own sake,* he must make an effort to see who she is, not merely in his potentially

restricted view of her but also for herself[1]. This would be an impossible task if it meant being able to represent to himself each and every particular interest of hers to himself in just the same way as she represents it to herself. Fortunately what the lover needs to make sense of his ideal is not a detailed inventory of her particular interests (though if he could have this, it would most certainly be helpful to him in trying to actually promote her good) since to be genuinely motivated by the ideal of unconditional love *for her own sake* he need not be perfectly successful in promoting and recognizing each of her particular interests. What he does require is an understanding of the whole person as such, of what makes her a self with particular interests to promote, whom he loves, and *for the sake of whom* he aims for good things. He needs to form a conception of who she is, of what counts as her, which may inform his love, setting its intrinsic boundaries and serving as the basis of his desire to help her promote her particular interests.

ii-Self-love, significance of

To make sense of the possibility of loving someone *for herself*, or *for her own sake*, we might consider how it is possible for a person herself to have unconditional *self-love* (presumably *for her own sake*) despite the possibility of essential qualitative character changes. Such a discussion is useful for two reasons. First, a consideration of the person's own relationship to self and efforts to determine her own essential self, on the basis of which she may love herself unconditionally, will aid us in the search for a conception of the person which may form the foundation for an ideal of unconditional love for persons *for their own sakes*. For, in aiming to love the beloved unconditionally, the lover needs an understanding of the same thing that the beloved herself needs an understanding of in loving herself: what makes her the person that she is, what counts as her essence, on the basis of which she may be loved *for her own sake* by herself or others. A consideration of people's own self-relation, and what might be entailed by their own unconditional self-love, therefore, will help us to arrive at a conception of the person which might form the basis of unconditional love for persons in which the lover may genuinely both love the beloved and aim at her good *for her own sake*. Second, a consideration of the relationship in which we are most inclined to believe unconditional

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[1] Although I do not wish to assume that the beloved necessarily has a privileged view of who she is, I am contending that if the lover's conception of the beloved leaves out and cannot account for some significant element of her own sense of self, it will be inadequate, capturing only part of who she is as a whole person with interests of her own.

love might exist--one's own self-relation--may give us a hint about what the structure of unconditional love might be. Although the difference between relating to oneself and relating to another must not be forgotten and an immediate parallel between the two suggested, this does give us a place to start.

In this chapter, I shall do two things: I shall first consider what *elements* of self are necessarily involved in unconditional self-love. Then, having identified these, I shall consider the internal conflicts which result from the emphasis on one of these aspects of self to the exclusion of the other. This discussion will culminate in Chapter Three in my presentation of a (Hegelian) conception of self which, I shall argue, adequately captures and does justice to both these aspects of self and can form the foundation for a viable ideal of unconditional love for persons.

iii--unconditional self-love, discussion of

Although, as I suggested, a person's sense of self is not restricted to his present empirical self, the sense in which he may have unconditional concern for his own fate[2] is nevertheless very much bound up with his present, empirical, particular character. His concern for his unknown future selves is fully mediated by his present, more or less determinate sense of what a good life is. If he has an unconditional concern for his own fate, his attitude towards his possible future selves will be characterized both by his recognition that he will in some indeterminate way be present in and assent to these selves insofar as they are part of his future identity and by his hope that all of these will live a good life and choose well in accordance with appropriate principles. The sense which he gives to this latter aspect, which alone gives content to his hopes for his future self, is determined by his own more or less specific convictions about the good. Based on his present sense of what a good life is he identifies with the good of his future selves by hoping not that his future selves' wishes are all granted, whatever they may be, but that

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[2] All I mean by this is that he believes that whatever happens to him *matters*, that no matter how much he anticipates a change in himself, he is still very much concerned with the fate of his future self; he wishes good things for himself unconditionally. The purpose of this section, then, is to consider what sort of attitude toward oneself grounds this continuing concern for our own fate, even when we acknowledge that empirically, it is possible that we may have little to nothing in common with the qualitative person (our unknown future self) who succeeds us as the continuation of this self-consciousness.

Whether this kind of self-love is merely given in the self-relation (something we don't need to think about or work at) or dependent on a suitable self-relation is at this point an open question to be considered in the next section.

they remain good in a way that coheres with what he now believes that to be[3]. In contemplating these possibilities, he feels not unconditional acceptance of his future self's possible choices or an unconditional hope that he will get whatever he desires, but unconditional concern based on his present convictions about what is good (and what base or worthless) and on his identification with that future self. For example, if he were to gaze into a crystal ball and see himself ten years hence, he would not experience pleasure simply knowing that his future self's wishes will be satisfied. On the contrary, if he now has a deep conviction that it is essential to a good life (either on account of moral

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[3] I am, for the purposes of this thesis, assuming that most people, at least within their own experience if not in theory, feel that there is some more or less flexible, objective sense of the good. Before proceeding, however, I must make it clear what this assumption does *not* involve. First, that we have some sense of an objective good does not necessarily entail that we think that there is only one good life for everybody, and that everyone should aspire to live exactly as we wish to live (though for some people it may mean just this). We may acknowledge that the kind of good that is best for one depends on that person's character, and circumstances. Yet insofar as these beliefs have an objective character, their truth doesn't seem to depend on us, on our whims. Although the goods they prescribe may not be good for everyone, we do not doubt that they are good for the type of person to whom they may apply. Moreover, our beliefs about the good are not necessarily very specific, prescribing one ideal above all others, but may include a range of possible goods as worthwhile while picking out some things outside this range as unacceptable.

Second, I am not assuming that people have a clearly defined or rigid sense of what that good might be or that there is nothing about which they are ambivalent or uncertain. Nor does it follow from this assumption that their sense of the good need be one that we would regard as especially elevated or moral. It may have nothing to do with higher moral principles, such as "it is bad to harm other people," but may consist of judgments about the good that most of us would regard as completely ill-considered and superficial, such as, "it is bad to be fat and unattractive, even if you're happy."

All I am assuming, then, is that people typically have some sense of the good which guides and limits their hopes for themselves and others, even if it is not clearly defined or defined at all for them, even if it is revealed only in their apparently instinctive abhorrence of some possibilities. Only based on this assumption does it follow that the individual's concern for his own fate is mediated by his sense of the good in the way I am about to suggest.

If someone held no such view, even implicitly, and truly believed the good to be purely subjective, then he could perhaps be concerned with the good of his future selves in a very straightforward way. Given the knowledge that his future selves will be guided by a sense of the good to which they subjectively assent, he will be content to hope that they succeed in their goals, without feeling sadness for their sake if they have lost what he feels to be good. Yet this is not structurally all that different from the previous cases. His hopes for himself still have a content, albeit not a very restrictive one. He may wish simply for contentment, in which case he wouldn't be happy anticipating a future self who sacrifices himself to some higher principle (which he himself now does not recognize and does not want to recognize at the expense of his happiness). Or he may simply wish for autonomy, for the ability to make his own choices whatever they may be, in which case he wouldn't be happy anticipating a future self who, while his needs and inclinations are satisfied, is manipulated by others into uncritically adopting a world-view without ever asking himself what he really wants, while allowing others to create the desires in him which they subsequently satisfy. In any case, his hopes for himself are guided by some standard of the good, albeit a minimally restrictive one, which makes some possibilities unacceptable. A person whose sense of the good was really limited by no (even barely) determinate sense of the good is would be extremely rare (if not pathological).

duty or because it fulfils one's highest interests—or both) that one act as much as possible to improve one's talents and contribute to the improvement of the condition of one's fellow human beings, he will experience distress, not pleasure, upon seeing a thoroughly satisfied, older version of himself living merely for the sake of subsisting in a life of sloth, watching sleazy talk shows, and eating junk food, while collecting social security cheques. Rather than calmly accept the choices of his future self, he will be likely to ask himself what he can do to frustrate the wishes of that future self--to avoid becoming him, to save *both* his present and future selves from that fate insofar as he recognizes them as one and the same subjectivity.

The point I am trying to make is that the unconditional love he may feel for himself (concern with the fate of all his subsequent selves *for their*, and by extension his, *own sake*) is grounded neither in an attitude of unconditional acceptance of whatever he may become nor in a restriction of his concern to the qualitative self with whom he can identify as this empirical character. Both the indeterminacy and the particularity of his sense of self are involved. The bridge that links his concern for his present known self with that for his possible future selves is his sense of the good, and his further sense that, no matter what might become of him, he will still be responsible for it, or present in it such that some measure of the good will be applicable to him.

Instead of a mere acceptance of or an outright withdrawal of concern for that future self, his unconditional love for himself will incline him towards an attitude of intense concern for his future selves: he will hope that this future self will somehow be able to change, to once again approach the good life. Entertaining the possibility of failure, he will experience not a withdrawal of concern but intense sorrow (even if it is accompanied by an intense dislike of the particular qualitative nature into which his future self has been transformed) for that person in whom he recognizes not the continuation of his own qualitative identity (for he can see nothing of himself in the character of this man) but his own subjectivity or personhood, that very same part of him that in itself is and will be capable of either good or evil and which thus makes it possible for him to be conceived of as traversing both extremes in one and the same lifetime.

My suggestion that the sorrow which he feels in contemplating the possible degradation of his future self may be rooted in an unconditional concern for the fate of that part of himself in which he recognizes his own basic humanity or subjectivity may seem questionable. His sorrow upon viewing the degraded condition of his future self may perhaps be more accurately viewed as a lamentation for the loss of his present

qualitative character. Such concern would be based only on his love for his particular, qualitative self and his ardent hope for its continued success, his belief that it is superior to other possible versions of himself and therefore ought to command and determine them, not on a concern for himself which transcends his particular character and can therefore extend its self-love to include possible versions of himself that are entirely qualitatively different from him.

My point, however, is not that his love for himself, insofar as it is unconditional, is based only on his unconditional concern for the indeterminate, unqualified consciousness that will continue into his future *rather than* on a love for his present actual character, as this particular person. I am instead suggesting that it must be grounded in both. He may regard his particular qualitative character as essentially who he is since it is the sense of self to which he presently commits. This lends support to Badhwar's claim that to love our friends for their own sake, we must love them for their essential characteristics—those which make them the particular qualitative essence with which they identify themselves. But limiting our identification of them to this their supposed essence fails to capture the sense in which their identification of themselves as something particular, this qualitative essence, involves a commitment, a self-imposed though not for them indissoluble limit of their identification of their self, not merely an observation about themselves. It is the result of a choice. They know that this apparent essence does not exhaust their possibilities. In committing to it, they do not simply define themselves, picking out that which seems, from a neutral observer's standpoint, most essentially to characterize what they in fact are. Rather than merely limit their understanding of themselves by this definition, they orient their subjectivity toward it. In doing so, they act both for the sake of that to which they commit (as good and most worthy of them) and for the sake of that in them which makes it possible to commit (as capable or worthy of this good). They recognize themselves as free to choose otherwise and this recognition gives their commitment meaning, so that they may divide what they in fact are into essential and accidental features and claim, "This is my essence which defines who I am," not as a mere empirical fact which could just as well be otherwise but as something more significantly their own.

Although they do not regard the choice of their qualitative self-identification as merely arbitrary, they do recognize in themselves the possibility of (wrongly) deviating from it. Thus their commitment to a particular character, though it strongly defines them for themselves, necessarily involves the recognition that their selfhood is not essentially

restricted to or exhausted by this commitment. As long as they love what they recognize as good, as long as they commit to a certain understanding of it (even a rather rudimentary one), they will believe that that sense of the good (or another one which has been developed from it and further determined) should always command the indeterminate subjective freedom possessed by them. Their self-concern is therefore focussed both on the sense of the good to which they have committed, which guides their sense of who they are, and on that subjectivity which makes them free to choose it and which, they believe, ought to choose it not merely for their [i.e., their qualitative empirical selves' with which they identify] own sake but for its own.

They are able to be concerned with the fate of their future self, so contrary to their own character that they can barely understand the particular way of thinking that leads it to live as it does, because of the mediation of their sense of the good as well as that in them which makes it relevant to them--their capacity to will themselves to move toward or away from it. This future self contains the potential for good that they themselves have, not in virtue of its particular character but of that in it which was and is still free to choose otherwise than it has. Beyond this, if they imagine their future self becoming so crazed that it is no longer possible for it to choose the good that they regard as highest (if they become one of the "criminally insane, the thoroughly wicked, and the psychopathically amoral"), they will in considering this fate no longer be able to feel quite so strongly on behalf of this future self[4]. Its potential for good has been severely

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[4] Of course, if their sense of the good is already limited to the satisfaction of desires, this won't be a problem for them. Moreover, even if it is not thus limited, they may still feel some sort of identification with this person as long as they regard the basic self-regarding pleasures as a good of some kind (though an inferior one).

I should also note here that it is, in any case, unclear how a person could lose these capacities for something higher altogether without thereby losing her freedom, and perhaps her basic humanity. For there is a difference between it being extremely difficult or unlikely that one will choose the good, and it being impossible. In the former cases, the freedom of the person could be impeded by mental illness (criminal insanity), uncontrollable impulses, but as long as there is *some* time during which her freedom asserts itself and she is able to think for herself without being ruled by them, it is at least possible that insofar as she has free will she may sometimes choose the good, even if not permanently and with perfect success (but this failure differs from the possible failures of the rest of us only perhaps by degree). Or in the case of the thoroughly wicked, her love of wickedness may in fact be a choice to which she commits with the same fervour as many of us commit to the good. She may love it, and regard it as good. Though it would be perhaps highly unlikely that such a person would change her preference and choose the good, it would not be inconceivable or impossible. As long as people are free to choose otherwise than they do, it is possible that they will choose better than they do, however psychologically unlikely.

I do not mean to deny, however, that there may be people who due to some sort of disorder or inherent deficiency (perhaps in their brain chemistry) lack this freedom entirely, but only to suggest that many, if not most, of the seemingly impossible cases do not really lack the potential for good.; the path to becoming good in these cases is extremely unlikely to be traveled not

limited (to a merely impulsive satisfaction of whatever desires it happens to have), and so accordingly is their ability to regard its fate as linked with their own. They can no longer comprehend the possibility of finding themselves in it since not only their qualitative essence is absent but also that which makes it possible to commit to one, rather than merely have one, their freedom to choose the good. Further, if their projected future self loses the capacity to experience even basic self-regarding, sensuous pleasures (as in a vegetative state), they will lose the ability to identity with and care for it altogether. It will, insofar as they now try to conceive of that future, seem a death to them, not a continuation of their self.

iv--self-love--merely natural or not

The relevance of a consideration of self-love to a discussion of love in general may, however, be called into question, since it might be thought that an unconditional love for oneself is simply given in the self-relation—part of what it means to be a self. Our love for ourselves, then, would be best understood neither as rooted in a recognition of the inherent worth of our subjectivity nor in a commitment to our particular essence but as simply natural. We love our future selves simply because they are ours. An analysis of self-love, therefore, though interesting, would not seem pertinent to a discussion of love for others, in which the givenness of love cannot be relied on. At best perhaps we might wonder how we could extend our merely given love for self to include others, so that a love for them becomes as natural to us as a love for ourselves

Yet, if we consult our experience, we are confronted with a great deal of evidence which suggests that our love of self is not thus given in our very selfhood but is much more complicated and dynamic. Self-loathing and self-doubt are familiar to many of us. Just as we can decide that someone else is unworthy of our love, we can believe that we too are unworthy of our own love[5]. Given that we do commit to a (more or less defined)

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because the potential is lacking but because too many barriers (either freely chosen or thrust upon them by nature) stand in the way of its being fulfilled.

[5] This assertion may seem to conflict with one that I made earlier: that when we restrict our love for someone to their present self-understanding, we do not love them as they love themselves. After all, if it is possible for people to cease loving themselves, then a love for them which is restricted to the conditions by which they restrict their self-love would be very much like their love for themselves. Nevertheless, the point that I am making in this section is not that these people (degenerate cases) first love themselves and then on account of this original self-love subsequently hate themselves for having violated the conditions of that love. On the contrary, these are selves that are always already divided against themselves. The love that they have for

view about what our essential selves and our good are while continuing to identify with that in ourselves which, on account of its freedom, is able to aim for (or turn away from) these, it makes sense that within this self-relation there might be a significant possibility of self-hatred or severe self-doubt. The potential for conflict between our freedom and our particular exercise of that freedom, both of which I have argued are essential components of unconditional love for self, leads to a significant potential for internal discord. For we may focus our sense of self-worth on one or the other in such a way that the two together, rather than being related in a way that makes unconditional concern possible, will be divided in an antagonistic relation.

v: The possibility of self-hatred and self-doubt: possible degenerations of self-love: examples

When people emphasize one of these dimensions of their self--their particular commitments or the freedom that makes it possible for them to make such commitments--over and against the other as the essential core of their identity they are subject to extreme self-doubt and self-hatred. At the core of their subjectivity is their freedom, their bare consciousness of self, which may be thought to ground their basic humanity and make it possible for them to commit to a more specific self-understanding as their own. This is what gives them a continued potential for good, even when they and their experiences are not perfectly so. There is always the possibility of choosing otherwise than they have. Yet in their qualitative nature they go beyond mere potential and actually embody particular determinate ideals. In this sphere they are guided by a more or less concrete sense of what is good and try to make choices that are appropriate to it. This makes it possible for them to regard themselves as actually good or evil and to actually have good and bad experiences. They may succeed or fail in living up to the standards

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that restricted part of themselves with which they commit to identify is not experienced simply as self-love but as a war within themselves. As I argued, they fully know that their self is not restricted to this one aspect. It is this very division *of themselves* (while still recognizing the other aspect of the division as informing their sense of self) to which they commit, which makes self-hatred possible. Their love for self (if it can be called that) is always experienced simultaneously as self-hatred (for that part which refuses to conform to the other). Since their commitment to a particular sense of identity is just that, *a commitment* to something that they regard as most worthy, made possible only by their sense that such a commitment does not exhaust their sense of self, a love for that to which they commit, when divided from a love for that which makes it possible for them to commit, is never experienced as a love *of self* since it in principle compels them to always hate or view as threatening one aspect of their sense of self with which they never cease to identify.

that they set for themselves. Moreover, insofar as they are subject to external influences, they may not have full control over their success or failure to attain happiness and act rightly, and as a result they may sometimes fail despite their best efforts.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, in *Notes From the Underground* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, provides examples of both kinds of internal conflict: that in which one's mere subjectivity or potential for the good is overemphasized and that in which one becomes so caught up in the opposition between one's particular sense of the good and one's actual measure of success in living up to it that one can easily lose all sense of self-worth, as though the good were something merely outside one which could confer on one or deprive one of all worth. In the remainder of this section, I shall discuss the examples provided by Dostoevsky with the aim of showing how too great an emphasis on one aspect of oneself--(1) one's commitment to particular ends and ideals, or (2) one's mere personhood or freedom--results in internal self-conflict since it does not allow one to regard one's whole self as having worth but necessarily makes one hostile to the unemphasized aspect of one's self: one's freedom or one's particularity.

v:a—Dmitri Karamazov

An example of a person who suffers from the first kind of internal conflict is Dmitri Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov*. One of the central themes in the novel is the possibility of becoming alienated from God and the world and, as a result of this alienation, losing one's sense that there may be an objective good outside oneself. Before we can fully understand Dmitri's character relative to this theme, we need to consider this theme as it is played out in the character who best exemplifies, or draws it out: Dmitri's brother Ivan.

Ivan judges God and the world by first considering the history of the world, judging it to be unacceptable, and then asking himself whether any higher meaning could make such a world acceptable, or good. In this way he pits his own reason and conscience against the world which he finds outside himself. In doing so, he is asking himself whether there could be any answer outside himself, a higher harmony or external good above the comprehension of human conscience and human reason, which could compel his assent not by merely overriding his subjectivity, but by seeming adequate even in the face of his strongest challenge to it. His conclusion that there is no possibility of a higher meaning, even if revealed by God Himself, that could make acceptable what seems so

intuitively unacceptable to free human beings, the torture of children, leads to his renunciation of a higher meaning, or objective good, by which one may, if one were to recognize it, guide one's own actions and self-assessment. He argues that as long as he is free, and not compelled by some form of higher reasoning or revelation that is incomprehensible to human reasoning, there can be no objective sense of the good above what human reason reveals to which he could wholly give himself—which could determine and inform his sense of the good--since, try as he might, he cannot (and does not wish to) renounce what his own free reason and conscience tell him. This leads him to suggest that "everything is lawful" since he can conceive of no higher good which could exist that would satisfy human conscience by which he might deferentially guide his choices and since human reason leads only into paradoxes and the refusal to accept the world as it is. He admits, though, that such a recognition has a destructive effect and allows no comfort for one, such as himself, who loves life, since it doesn't allow one to love in a substantial way, because it means that the worth of what's loved (God, the world, another person) can not be grounded in an objective meaning but depends merely on one's subjective evaluation or preference. Someone who arrived at Ivan's conclusion could never experience the object of love as something inherently significant but only as something whose significance alters with his own perspective on it and therefore itself confers no added meaning on his life besides that which he himself gives or permits it.

In contrast to Ivan, who opposes himself to the world in order to serve as its judge, Dmitri does not (until the end of the novel—and then not fully) doubt that there is enough good in the world to serve as an objective measure of one's particular character. He senses that there is a higher good or ideal to which one may commit, which is the source of all worth and does not depend on his subjective assent. Yet he conceives of this ideal in a way that makes its worth utterly independent of him, and in this way makes it possible for him to be stripped of all worth when measured against it. This possibility always exists for people because, as human beings with freedom to move toward or away from the good, people may either be oriented toward the higher ideal, and thereby gain worth by connecting themselves with it, or oriented away from the ideal, and not only be deprived of the worth it confers but also, as they move away from it, be utterly degraded with respect to the ideal they believe they ought to follow. As long as he experiences the pull of the ideal, and defines his sense of right and wrong and good and bad with respect to it, the person can easily experience himself as he actually is as worthless, and despise himself as a result. For on such a view people gain worth only by being in contact with

the ideal; they may become good but only with a worth borrowed from the external, objective good itself. The ideal is good beyond measure and the source of all worth, while the person is not inherently but only contingently good since in herself she has the potential to be otherwise, and is therefore never fully merged with the good but always in danger of moving away from it (since this is always a possibility).

In *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis notes, "The moralities accepted among men may differ—though not, at bottom, so widely as is often claimed—but they all agree in prescribing a morality which their adherents fail to practise. All men alike stand condemned, not by alien codes of ethics, but by their own, and all men are therefore conscious of guilt" (9). This observation is brought to life in Dmitri's character. Rather than being obsessed with the fact of terrible injustice in the world as his brother is, Dmitri is haunted by the image of the degraded man in Schiller's "Hymn to Joy." He declares, "I hardly think of anything but of that degraded man .... I think about that man because I am that man myself" (95). In orienting themselves towards a good that is thought to be independent of them, people may not only define and draw strength from that good, the commitment which helps determine what their essential qualitative character is, but may also act contrary to that ideal, thereby losing all sense of worth that they have relative to it.

Dostoevsky makes the further psychological observation that precisely his love for the higher ideal may be what strongly inclines such a divided self towards its own degradation. For in debasing themselves, people are able to attain to what seems like an even higher appreciation of the good outside themselves. When people are thoroughly unworthy of the good, that good stands out as even more sublime in contrast to them. Dmitri declares to his brother:

> Am I to become a peasant or a shepherd? That's the trouble, for everything in the world is a riddle. And whenever I've happened to sink into the vilest degradation (and it's always been happening) I always read that poem about Ceres [the goddess who in the poem beholds man's degradation] and man. Has it reformed me? Never! For I'm a Karamazov. For when I leap into the abyss, I go headlong with my heels up, and am pleased to be falling in that degrading attitude, and consider it something beautiful. And in the very depths of that degradation, I begin a hymn of praise. Let me be accused. Let me be vile and base, only let me kiss the hem of the veil in which my God is shrouded. Though I may be following the devil, I am thy son, O Lord, and I love Thee, and I feel the joy without which the world cannot stand. 96.

Thus Dostoevsky suggests that our love for the good, insofar as the source of that good is something (like the goddess of ancient mythology to which Schiller's poem refers) that is thought to be independent of us, may result in conflicting desires, both of which seem to

heighten our appreciation of it: a desire to be one with it, to do as it requires, and a desire to do honour to it, to see it in its full glory, by behaving in precisely the opposite way, by degrading ourselves with respect to it so that we may feel even more forcefully touched by its beauty in its remarkable contrast to us. On the view of the good which treats it as something separate from our humanity that serves as a fixed point toward which we may orient our subjectivity and by which we ought to restrict it, our only means of being in contact with it are external contact with it (when we approach but never fully become one with it) or aesthetic appreciation. Because its worth depends entirely on itself and not on us, since it would exist just as it is independently of our contact with it, it is impenetrable to us; we cannot fully merge with it but can be in contact with its goodness only in and through our external recognition and appreciation of it. This appreciation of the external objective good, then, comes not directly through our oneness with it but indirectly through reflection on our representation of it.

This kind of separation of our self from our sense of the good results in a division made within ourselves between the higher and lower elements of our character (that which is oriented toward the good versus that which retains its independence and may resist it) and a firm belief that the former should suppress or take control of the latter. Our higher self, insofar as it is shaped by this ideal, is not synonymous with the highest good itself (since this retains its independence as something which restricts and gives meaning to the rest of our actions) but consists of our *commitment* to orient ourselves towards such an ideal. This gives content to what we view as our essential self which may be separated from that which is merely accidental. In this kind of self-relation, we do not regard that in us which prevents us from attaining the highest good(s) as part of what makes us essentially who we are, in the absence of which we could not identify ourselves, though we usually recognize that such flaws are indeed part of our empirical character, perhaps even a large part. Nor do we regard those good qualities which we just *happen to have* as thus essential to our sense of self (since we know that we could be without them--could be degraded). What is essential to us, insofar as we commit to a sense of an essential self rather than merely have one, is our recognition of the good and our belief that we ought to be oriented towards it.

Yet, as the character of Dmitri suggests, such a division of a higher and lower person within oneself, one of which we regard as essential, the other accidental, results in an internal conflict that generates both tremendous joy and intense despair. Although such a

self-relation has much to offer, it can lead to bouts of self-loathing and self-doubt that can lead one to self-destructive acts. Dmitri attempts to explain:

> Beauty! I can't endure the thought that a man of lofty mind and heart begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What's still more awful is that a man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna, and his heart may be on fire with that ideal, genuinely on fire, just as in the days of his youth and innocence. Yes man is broad, too broad indeed. . . . What to the mind is shameful is beauty and nothing else to the heart. Believe me, that for the immense mass of mankind beauty is found in Sodom 97.

This human yearning for a forceful aesthetic rendering of the supremely good in opposition to the evil or the ugly can lead not only to a deliberate degradation of self but also, as Dmitri attests to in the tale of his past, to an intense appetite for cruelty (which one nevertheless regards as base), especially towards the most virtuous. Moreover, the extremes between which the self in this condition alternates result in an ambivalent attitude toward the object of one's cruelty that intensifies rather than weakens the impulse to meanness. The sensuous cruelty, which Dmitri admits to loving (97) and which is a constant theme in Dostoevsky's work, results from the stirring contrast between the sense of worthlessness of the one inflicting it and the exceptional worth of its target. Dmitri, while telling Alyosha how he humiliated a beautiful, virtuous girl (Katya, who later became his fiancee) who came to him only to save her father, confides: "She's a beauty. But she was beautiful in another way then. At that moment she was beautiful because she was noble, and I was a scoundrel; she in all the grandeur of her generosity and sacrifice for her father, and I—a bug!" (102)

The aesthetic impulse to contrast virtue and vice, to drink in the beauty of the contrast, does not, however, fully characterize such a divided self. For, as I mentioned, such a person is not motivated merely by the desire to degrade himself with respect to his ideal but also by the belief that in feeling such passion for this higher good, in wholly recognizing its immeasurable worth even while he moves away from it, he also gains some minimal sense of worth, however pale in comparison to that of the good itself[6].

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[6] The sense in which a person gains some minimal worth merely by representing a worthy ideal to himself results in a sort of paradoxical, conflicting sense of self-worth when he nevertheless chooses to act contrary to this ideal. On the one hand, he is *completely* degraded in his actions, with respect to the ideal that he recognizes. Consequently, he cannot help but regard himself as *worthless* according to his own standards. On the other hand, he cannot but feel that his ability to recognize such a worthy ideal signifies some sort of presence of the good in him which ought to be recognized, which sets him apart from those who also lead dissolute lives but fail to recognize a higher ideal which leads them to find their actions blameworthy. Even as he must see himself as utterly deprived of worth with respect to the ideal which he moves away from, his sense of the good is nevertheless unshaken, since the ideal continues to be appreciated by him, perhaps more

This leads to an intensification of the cruelty, because the person, in this case Dmitri, knows that in acting so cruelly to someone so virtuous he is displaying only the degraded part of himself—the insect—to someone worthy of judging him. At the same time, though, he feels his ideal burning within him, and feels that, due to his inner devotion to the good, however little it affects his behaviour, he deserves to be seen as more than a *mere* scoundrel. The pride he consequently feels adds spite to his motivations, which alternates with his recognition of the worth of the object of his cruelty. Thus after explaining the source of Katya's beauty to Alyosha, he immediately adds maliciously, "And, bug and scoundrel that I was, she was completely at my mercy, body and soul. She was hemmed in. I tell you frankly, that thought, that venomous thought , so possessed my heart that it almost swooned with suspense. It seemed as if there could be no resisting it; as though I should act like a bug, like a venomous spider without any pity" (102).

v:b—The Underground Man

Yet, lest we be too quick to suggest that we might evade such a sharp division and internal conflict by locating our self not in some particular set of its ends but rather in the bare self-consciousness that lies at the base of these, in our bare freedom and potential for good, Dostoevsky also provides an example which suggest that such a self-relation can be even more destructive. The refusal to identify oneself and one's worth with anything particular that may be viewed as having objective worth outside oneself, the emphasis on one's own mere subjectivity or consciousness, is, in the character of the "underground man," shown to result in a conflicted and antagonistic relation to self. Moreover, far from avoiding the division of self contained in the previously mentioned self-relation, this attitude creates a division that is even more volatile.

In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right,* Hegel considers the power that the free will has to let go of any particular end or content. We are able to recognize ourselves as one and the same subjectivity even as we are differently determined by various limitations, self-imposed or otherwise, because our sense of self is never exhausted by any particular determination. Although we may experience determinateness, although

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so than ever before. Yet, it is important to emphasize that he does not ultimately locate his worth in his subjective potential for good but still only in the good itself. The minimal sense in which he believes he has worth that sets him apart from others who lack the good altogether is simply in that the good is *reflected* in him (in his recognition of it), albeit impotently and imperfectly. The worth he thereby gains is consequently merely derivative.

our sense of self can become qualitatively limited by this or that determination, we always have the power to step back from any of these determinations, to recognize over and above the determinateness itself our self-consciousness which cannot be equated with any of the particular determinations but in its very indeterminacy makes it possible for us to move from one determinate content to the other, as we so will. When we abstract from all the determinations which act on and characterize our sense of self at any given time, we are left with the pure sense of our self, or pure self-consciousness, which in its indeterminacy is not essentially limited by any of the determinations that it adopts. Hegel explains:

> It is inherent in this element of the will that I am able to free myself from everything, to renounce all ends, and to abstract from everything. The human being alone is able to abandon all things, even his own life. The animal cannot do this; it always remains only negative, in a determination which is alien to it and to which it merely grows accustomed. The human being is pure thinking of himself, and only in this thinking is he this power to give himself universality, that is, to extinguish all particularity, all determinacy. 38.

Although the ability to adopt the universal standpoint and let go of any content is an essential element of our freedom, Hegel is quick to point out that it is not, when taken by itself the whole of freedom. For not only must the free will be able to retreat from any limiting content, it must also be able to limit itself, to determine itself; otherwise it is mere indeterminacy, mere emptiness--a will with no content, which as something inert, is no will at all. Identifying our freedom only with this limitlessness of one's subjectivity, taken merely by itself in abstraction from its realization or self-determination, leads to a destructive attitude and an antagonistic relationship both to one's own self and to others.

In *Notes From the Underground*, Dostoevsky traces the psychological implications of a legitimate--but, as Hegel might point out, one-sided--reaction against the possibility of reductionistic determinism. The underground man, addressing imaginary proponents of such a deterministic view, argues that no matter how completely the determinists succeed in explaining and predicting people's choices they will never be fully successful in eliminating the freedom of (self-)consciousness. For no matter what the determinists put forward to explain people's actions, people will always be able to (at least for themselves) and will always be motivated to, escape such limitation. Since people often value their freedom more highly than anything else (as the condition of their recognizing themselves in their choices, of being "a man and not an piano-key") enough of them will choose their freedom above any of the other goals which may otherwise seem essential to their happiness to upset the determinist's explanations and predictions. In their efforts to prove (both to themselves and the scientists) that they are indeed free, people may even

go so far as to deliberately go mad (beating their heads against the wall) to avoid losing their sense of their freedom.

Human beings, the underground man notes, are not fully rational utility-maximizers. They don't always choose what conduces to their good but often do just the opposite. They often do unpredictable, even crazy, destructive things just to affirm their own freedom—even when this is directly contrary to their commitment to their own utility. Moreover, they often engage in irrational struggles with others that do much more harm than good to all involved just to assert the power of their own free subjectivity. This is because their sense of their freedom, their sense that their consciousness is their own and not essentially conditioned by anything else, is more important to them than the mere satisfaction of the particular goals they establish for themselves.

The underground man's argument against the adequacy of reductionistic determinism to explain away people's sense of freedom and provide for their sense of self makes sense and is itself quite compelling. Nevertheless his own motivations and behaviour are continually contradictory, so much so that they make the reader suspect a flaw in his thinking. The narrator both in his past and current situation is prone to fits of self-loathing and self-doubt to which he never fully succumbs but which he cannot escape. One remarkable characteristic of this underground man is his habit of continually contradicting himself. Even more perplexing is the fact that he does not seem to do so merely from laziness or absent-minded inattention to detail but in a deliberate and whole-hearted manner, as though such contradictions flow directly from his character. Though he does not always seem happy with his contradictions—and indeed often seems driven to despair by them—he repeats them with such conviction that we get the sense that it cannot be otherwise for him. He cannot escape his contradictions and perhaps does not really wish to.

For all his emphasis on the importance of freedom, his love of consciousness and his unwillingness to give it up for anything, he nevertheless complains that it excludes him from certain types of happiness which seem alternately enviable and contemptible to him. His biggest complaint is that his consciousness makes it impossible for him to become anything. He declares, "an intelligent man of the nineteenth century must be and is morally obliged to be primarily a characterless being; and a man of character, an active figure—primarily a limited being" (5). This inability to acquire a determinate character is due to that very power that Hegel says is an essential element of our freedom. For the fully conscious, "intelligent man," understands that there is no restriction or content that

his consciousness cannot refuse to admit. Even the laws of nature which human reason is able to discover, which seem so solid as to be impervious to doubt, people nevertheless can doubt, can reject. He writes:

> "For pity's sake," they'll shout at you, "you can't rebel: it's two times two is four! Nature doesn't ask your permission [. . .] And so a wall is indeed a wall . . . etc., etc." My God, but what do I care about the laws of nature and arithmetic if for some reason these laws and two times two is four are not to my liking? To be sure, I won't break through such a wall with my forehead if I really have not got strength enough to do it, but neither will I be reconciled with it simply because I have such
> a stone wall here and have not strength enough. 13.

The underground man's assertion of his freedom is thus not a denial of the objective workings of things. He knows that insofar as he finds himself situated within an external world, as long as he must particularize himself in thought and in action, he will be subject to determination of different sorts. What he is asserting is the absolute right of his subjectivity to withdraw from these determinations, to refuse to admit them, and to never be irreversibly bound by them.

Dostoevsky draws out a psychological consequence of clinging to one's freedom only in this one-sided aspect (simply as a reaction against determinism). Such a man, who emphasizes the right of his subjectivity to be essentially limited by nothing, who feels secure in his freedom only by noting his own power to reject every content, will not have any particular determination or principle that's certain enough (which he can't just as well see beyond, and dissolve in thought) to serve as a fixed point or ideal towards which he may orient himself, and to meaningfully guide his choices such that he might have the hope of actually finding himself in them—not merely as the subjectivity that made the choice of the action possible but also in the objective result, the completed action itself. As a result the very humanity that he wishes to safeguard, the responsibility for his actions, is rendered impotent or irrelevant by his refusal to admit of any determination that could allow him to find himself in some actions or thoughts more than in others. Such an ideal of freedom which emphasizes and relies on only one's pure subjective freedom is, as Hegel notes, empty. It leaves out an important sense in which people's freedom is important to them. Freedom is the condition of being a "man and not a piano-key" not merely because the man, unlike the piano-key, is essentially limited by nothing, but also because the man, as opposed to the piano-key, can find himself in his determinations, is himself a determining power, who can both determine himself and withdraw from these determinations—never fully be bound by them. Yet determining, like being determined, involves limitation (albeit self-limitation). Hegel thus identifies

the second essential aspect of our freedom as "the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to differentiation, determination, and the positing of a determinacy as a content and object" (39). He further explains, "I do not merely will—I will something. A will which [. . .] wills only the abstract universal wills nothing and therefore is not a will at all" (40). For freedom to become actual, Hegel argues, the will must not only recognize its inherent universality as the subjectivity that is present in all its experiences but must also become actual will by limiting/determining itself: by willing some particular content. This self-restriction is neither final nor inescapable but it is an essential element of freedom without which we would have mere emptiness.

Although people are free to abstract from any particular content at any given time, an actual person in the world cannot permanently retreat to this standpoint of pure indeterminate subjectivity (though by locking himself away in a cellar for twenty years he may come as close as possible to being in a position to do this). The actual world in which people live and act is full of restrictions and determinations. As the underground man himself points out, he is not free to obliterate the world in which such determinations exist. He must react to it, even if only to defensively reaffirm his free subjectivity over and against it. His reaction against determinism illustrates the defensive posture which someone who closely safeguards his bare freedom in this way is compelled to take. The protection of the sense of freedom to which he commits is necessarily reactionary. In refuting the possibility of a full deterministic explanation of people's choices, he argues that no matter how far the deterministic explanation is pushed the person can always make a corresponding retreat. Yet this way of conceiving of one's freedom simply as something which is always in contact with but always separate from the world of determinations and restrictions leaves the individual in a precarious, permanently threatened position. Provided that the extreme reaction—going crazy to avoid being denied his humanity—is undesirable, that he does still want to act and be able to call these actions his own, he must aim to find some way to determine his actions and choices that does not make them vulnerable to being explained away by reductive determinism. Yet the underground man can find no such firm ground. In principle, there are always further advances that a deterministic account can make. It can, he notes, perhaps one day account for everything, except that extreme possibility that is never denied humanity: people can refuse to enter the world, can refuse to interact with the world, can simply retreat to an underground cellar and bang their heads against the wall. To make reductionistic determinism impossible, to feel secure in the certainty of his own freedom

understood abstractly as limitless subjectivity, the underground man needs to avoid determinations altogether. Anything that limits his pure subjective freedom, whether his own determinations or the effects of the objective world on him, makes him vulnerable to being explained away, to losing himself in the objectivity of the determinations that affect him and issue from him. His one safe choice, then, is to bang his head against the wall and refuse to admit anything.

If this is not enough to satisfy his desire for life, then he may have one other option—the one to which the underground man himself often resorts. He can act merely out of boredom. In this way, he determines his actions not by any particular, specifiable principle but just from subjective whims. Boredom, or caprice, has a special status as a motivation to act because it is what is left over when one is deprived of every content that one might regard as one's own (either on account of a loss of freedom in reductionistic determinism or as the result of a reactionary clinging to one's freedom like the underground man's). It is boredom that the underground man says will prevent a scientifically arranged paradise of utility maximization, a perfect anticipation and satisfaction of people's desires. For with freedom taken away from them and nothing left to decide for themselves, people will affirm their subjectivity by creating new, unreasonable desires for themselves. They will become capricious. Contemplating the possibility of such a paradise, he writes:

> Of course, there's no guaranteeing (this is me speaking now), that it won't, for example, be terribly boring then (because what is there to do if everything's calculated according to some little table?), but, on the other hand, it will all be extremely reasonable. Of course, what inventions cannot boredom lead to? Golden pins get stuck in [to people] from boredom .... The bad thing is (this is me speaking again) that, for all I know, they will be glad of golden pins then.... 25.

Without the opportunity to make their own choices, if everything is provided for them, one powerful, individual motive will remain: the desire to do as one wills, purely arbitrarily even, simply because one wills it--the need to affirm one's own free choice.

Above I suggested that this view of freedom leaves one without direction. But this is not strictly true. People do in fact act to preserve and promote this freedom, treating it just as if it were an ideal by which they may guide their choices. The affirmation of his freedom for the underground man is anything but directionless; it is directed against everything. The ideal of this pure, empty freedom, Hegel argues and Dostoevsky implies, makes one hostile towards any particularity since, as I discussed, every determination seems to encroach upon and pollute the purity of one's freedom. The ideal of pure subjectivity or freedom without any specifiable content itself serves as an ideal in

contrast to the determinations which we constantly encounter both in the world and in ourselves. As I mentioned above, such a posture, given that a person in reality finds himself in a web of determinations, can be maintained only as a reactionary position, constantly defended against possible encroachments from both the external world and one's own qualitative self (one's own specific determinations, thoughts, desires etc.). The purity of abstract freedom is for the underground man attractive in opposition to the apparently rigid determinism of the objective world, which seems to threaten to deprive people of their humanity.

The ideal of pure freedom cannot actually serve us as something merely indeterminate and infinite but can guide our actions and serve as an ideal for us in a meaningful way precisely because it is finite and differentiated from other possibilities. The following insight of Hegel's makes it clear why this is so: the contentless thought of pure undetermined universality is itself finite and can be thought only in abstraction from more determinate thoughts. In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel considers the thought of pure undifferentiated being and concludes that such a thought, taken by itself, is empty since it has no content by which it may be distinguished from its opposite: pure nothing. In the rest of the *Logic*, he considers what determinations we would need in order to actually be able to think such a thought of pure universal being. He argues that the thought of pure being is possible only as an abstraction from more concrete determinations. Since it cannot be thought by itself, such a thought is not infinite as it might seem but is in fact finite, dependent on other thought determinations. Its very lack of determination constitutes its determinacy. In the practical sphere (though this is not for Hegel strictly separate from the theoretical), our conception of pure freedom, abstracted from its concrete realization, is similarly finite. Because the abstract ideal of freedom stands alongside the objective world, leaving it as it is, and is possible only as a retreat from and reaction to the objective world such a position which clings to the infinity of human freedom is itself finite. Hegel writes, "Since [this moment of freedom] is abstraction from all determinacy, it is not itself without determinacy; and the fact that it is abstract and one-sided constitutes its determinacy, deficiency, and finitude" (40). Since this thought of one's pure freedom is finite, in its opposition to all finite and particular content, we cannot think it except in contrast from the objective world. This leads to a not merely defensive but also hostile attitude toward particularity, since our consciousness of our freedom is not attained independently of the determinate world, but rather depends on the *negation* of all particularity. "Only in destroying something,"

remarks Hegel, "does this negative will have a feeling of its own existence [as the antithesis of all content: as pure emptiness]" (38).

Chapter Three: Relationship Between a Love of the Good and a Love for Persons

i--in self-love

In the previous chapter, I argued that the way in which we can have unconditional love for ourselves depends both on our sense of identity and on our sense of the good, what we regard as the source of our self worth. As a consideration of possible future selves indicates, we tend to be ambivalent about our own identity. On the one hand, our sense of who we are as this particular qualitative being is often regarded by us as our essential self, the sense of self to which we have somehow committed. On the other hand, we nevertheless recognize that this qualitative self[1], as one possibility among others for us (however little those other possibilities appeal to us), does not exhaust our sense of self. We recognize, even when the thought is terrible to us, that we could change in very significant ways, and yet somehow be the same person, the continuation of the same self-consciousness. In my study of Dmitri Karamazov and the underground man, I observed how too strong an emphasis on one or the other of these aspects of self simply by itself, such that the other is in thought or in practice discounted as serving as a source of worth for us, leads to an unhealthy, antagonistic relation to self.

On the one hand, we may, as Dmitri does, regard the particular standards of the good to which we have committed as the source of our self-worth, as conferring worth on us through our contact with an external, objective good that is entirely independent of us rather than intrinsically connected to us. This way of locating our self-worth makes self-loathing not merely possible but also fully appropriate in some cases (and therefore rules out unconditional self-love on principle). Since whatever we regard as the source of all worth is absolutely good independently of us, it is possible for us to become worthless if we use our own freedom/subjectivity to turn away from it. As long as we continue to regard this outside good as the source of all worth, we not only may but also must on principle regard ourselves as worthless when our human weakness leads us in another direction. On this view the good is the source of all worth, while our freedom or basic

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[1] Since this sense of our qualitative self is a commitment not merely an observation, it can identify some aspect of who we in fact are with which we strongly identify or it can pick out an ideal, of who we want to be, as it does in Dmitri's case. In either case, if we regard our worth as bound up entirely with the present particular sense of self, we face the possibility of losing our worth as we move away from it, or fail to live up to it.

humanity has no worth simply by itself and can only be regarded as an imperfection, which makes it possible for us to lose the good.

On the other hand, we may, as the underground man does, locate our self-worth entirely (or at least above all else) in our subjective freedom so that it does not (and cannot be made to) depend on any particular, objective standard. Yet when we insist above all on maintaining our freedom as the highest of goods, on being willing for its sake to throw out all our particular ends, to let go of anything if it means preserving our freedom, we find ourselves in a continually antagonistic self-relation. For, as I pointed out, it is not possible for us to retreat entirely from the objective world in which we are embedded, or to make ourselves entirely empty. A self-relation like the underground man's permits the self very little range for acceptable activity (or inclinations). It may will particular ends out of caprice and boredom but may not commit to them (such that it could not readily give them up to preserve its freedom). This self is consequently always at war with itself. It is necessarily hostile to its particular ends, loathing itself when it cannot help but become too attached to some particular view or feeling, such as love or pity. Even when the person allows himself to particularize himself through caprice, he must—to be reassured that he is indeed acting out of subjective whim rather than a deeper sense of commitment which couldn't readily be discarded—constantly be on guard against the possibility of becoming too attached to that particular content. He is therefore always in a defensive posture. Far from being unlimited in its range of activity, then, such a self is in principle limited to a single determination (the only one that it does not regard as a determination at all): an essential purity or emptiness that is fixed in contrast with the myriad determinateness of the objective world.

What makes our selfhood so remarkable and apparently paradoxical, however, is not that its essence may be understood to be the indeterminate self-consciousness or subjectivity that underlies and remains constant throughout all possible changes in our qualitative nature, or that it may instead be understood to consist of those qualitative determinations that characterize our empirical self at a given time, but that it must always be regarded as somehow accounting for both, even when it commits to exclude one aspect from being regarded as essential. As I argued earlier, this apparent paradox is present in both ways of regarding one's essence. First, when we commit to regard some specific qualities as essential to who we are, we do not simply make observations about what we in fact objectively are. Rather we make choices. Some objective aspects of our self we regard as necessary to our sense of who we are (for instance, that we are good at

tennis, that we love animals, that we would never intentionally hurt someone who has done nothing to deserve it); others we regard as dispensable (perhaps that we are tall, that we like ice cream, and cry when we watch commercials for long distance telephone service). Although the loss of any of the latter qualities may be extremely difficult to imagine, since they are a significant part of our experience, we do not rule out the possibility that we may lose them and still essentially remain the person that we are, since we do not choose to regard them as *essential* to our sense of self, despite their strong presence in our existing character. The ability to *choose* or *commit to* a particular sense of self[2], as I argued earlier, is made possible by our implicit or explicit recognition that our self-consciousness is not bound by our present particular qualitative character, that this self-consciousness could conceivably choose a different set of goods and identify with a different set of characteristics. Although this bare self-consciousness is not regarded as our essential self, it is recognized at least indirectly as an important part of who we are since it makes possible the kind of division of our particular characteristics that allows us to regard some of them as essential and others as inessential. Without this element of choice, we arguably could not coherently regard our sense of self as bound up with our qualitative character since, taken simply as a collection of qualities all of which are indifferently essential to who we are, it is constantly in flux and does not function as something by which we may fix our sense of identity.

Second, when we choose to regard the bare self-consciousness that is present in all our experiences and choices as our essential self, we are able to do so only in contrast with our more determinate experiences of self, our sense of being limited by determinations as the external world acts on us and our own particular thoughts and natural impulses influence us. As Hegel points out, we can think the mere indeterminate presence that characterizes this bare consciousness of self only in contrast with the determinateness of the natural world and our more determinate sense of self. Its meaning can become fixed for us only contrastively as that which is free from, or lacks, all specific content and limitations. The finitude of this sense of freedom, then, indicates not that we are entirely free from the influence of the external world, but only that, however it may affect and determine us, we may *transcend* it--that we always have a sense of self that exceeds the boundaries imposed on us, since our self-consciousness is always left over as something

[2] This choice may not be a fully conscious, carefully considered one. The point is just that we are, based on our sense of which elements of our character are more significant, able to give them different status in this way, regarding some as essential and some as accidental

still indeterminate that is not captured by any specific determinations but can accommodate changes in our qualitative nature without itself essentially altering. For unconditional self-love to be possible, then, both these senses of self must somehow be engaged.

ii--and love for others

When we love someone our sense of the good is always somehow engaged. There are many ways in which this may be so. The *first* concerns our beliefs about the beloved's worth. Whether it be as in eros where our love is a (perhaps egocentric) response to the perceived goodness of the beloved or as in agape where our freely given love creates value in the beloved, love seems necessarily to involve our belief that the beloved is or becomes good for us in some way. The *second* sense, closely tied to the first, in which our love of the good is engaged concerns our hopes for the beloved's fate. When we love someone for her own sake, we want good[3] things to happen to her for her own sake. We want her to have a good life. This implies that we believe that she is in some way worthy of or capable of becoming worthy of the good life (if we conceive of the ability to attain the good life as something that implies worth). The *third* sense concerns the way in which love implicates our own sense of the good in a more determinate way. We regard love for the other as good for us in some way. That is to say, in acting for the sake of such love, in giving it a place among our highest ends, we implicitly acknowledge love for that person as a good for us in some way. Moreover, love for another engages our sense of the good insofar as we are called upon to give some content to our hopes for the beloved. We wish for the beloved an actually good life and, insofar as we try to help her attain it, we are called upon to use our sense of the good to try to figure out what that might be.

iii--love and our belief that the beloved is good

[3] Again, I must emphasize that any time I speak of "the good" in this thesis, I do so in an intentionally vague way. It may have concern morality, beauty, happiness or something else. For the purpose of this thesis is not to determine what the good is, but to give an account of the structure of unconditional love which requires an account of how this relates to our sense of the good, whatever that may be.

When we love, we arguably must regard the beloved as connected with the good in some way. Our love for other people may be straightforwardly equated with our love for the good, as an instance of it. Thus we may assert with Plato[4] that we love other people and things insofar as they participate in the good, insofar as we can recognize the good, which is itself unconditionally worthy of love, in them. Yet the view that the highest good resides outside human subjects and has strictly objective worth independent of subjectivity does not seem to support an ideal of unconditional love for persons, or even an ideal which allows us to love whole persons for their own sake. For if our love for persons is properly understood as a love of their good qualities then the foundation of this love, that for the sake of which we love, would be properly regarded as lying outside the person, as separable from her.

Gregory Vlastos contends in this way that Plato's conception of love, as fundamentally a love of the good and derivatively a love of persons and objects with good qualities, is inadequate if we wish to conceive of ourselves as loving whole persons *for their own sake.* For if we should love people only insofar as they are good, then we love them for the sake of something that is only a part of who they are, perhaps even a detachable part, which could just as well if not better be appreciated outside them. Such a view seems to make unconditional love for specific persons undesirable because it makes our love permanently dependent on the relative worth of the beloved; the beloved is worthy of love only insofar as she actually partakes of the good, and, moreover, those people are most worthy of the good who are in fact superior in goodness to others. Furthermore, Vlastos points out, the highest possible object of love, which alone may be considered unconditionally worthy of love and the source of our love for all other things, including people, would be the pure idea of the good itself, abstracted from all possible defects and impurities that appear in its particular instantiations. The idea, or the ideal, of the good is alone loved for its own sake; people are loved only insofar as they participate in this good. Vlastos recounts Socrates' argument in the *Lysis* which sets up this conclusion, "short of an infinite regress, there must be a 'first [i.e., terminal] object of

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[4] Not being familiar enough with Plato to judge the adequacy of the interpretation of Plato that I shall discuss, I must emphasize that insofar as I discuss this view my aim is *not* to assess Plato's views on love but only to consider the basic structure of the view that people in this field (the philosophy of love) tend to identify with Plato, and consider its implications.

As a result, it is entirely possible that the Plato that I discuss here is not the one that someone who studies Plato's texts carefully would recognize. This is alright for the purpose of this thesis since my aim is not to discredit Plato's views and contrast them with my own, but only to assess the view of love often associated with him.

love, for whose sake, we say, all other objects are loved' (219D), this being the only thing that is 'truly' or 'really' loved--or more precisely that *should be* so loved" (21). That for the sake of which all else may be loved turns out to be the idea of the good itself, which makes it possible to regard other things as good and to love them as a result of this recognition.

To insist that we should love people only for the sake of the good, Vlastos argues, is to preclude our loving them as whole persons, as ends in themselves, since the highest good on this account, which we may love for its own sake, is not human subjectivity but an external, objective idea of the good which they may succeed or fail to participate in, or resemble. Vlastos, therefore, rejects Plato's view of personal love as failing to account for, or failing to regard as genuine, the love that we can have for whole persons, as opposed to the love we can have for their particular qualities understood abstractly. It makes our love for persons only a means to the love of the good, which may (and should) according to Plato's view be comprehended as something independent of the human subjectivity in which it can be realized. He charges that "[Plato's theory] does not provide for love of whole persons, but only for love of that abstract version of persons which consists of the complex of their best qualities" (33). In the next paragraph Vlastos continues: "Since persons in their concreteness are thinking, feeling, wishing, hoping, fearing beings, to think of love for them as love for objectifications of excellence is to fail to make the thought of them as *subjects* central to what is felt for them in love." If we wish to love people as ends in themselves, Vlastos concludes, rather than merely a means to the realization of some higher good, we need to find a view of love which does not make our love of the subject subordinate to our love of particular objective standards of the good but makes their very subjectivity an end in itself for us.

iv-connection between love for good and love for persons

Nevertheless it does seem that our love for persons must have *something* to do with our love for the good since our love for persons presumably involves regarding them as good in some way, at least as worthy of becoming good. Whether we create this good in loving them or respond to it, we must regard it as being connected with them in some way. For it would be a strange kind of love indeed in which the lover regarded the beloved as *thoroughly* worthless, and loved her on account of, or *for the sake of* her thoroughly bad qualities, without the anticipation that they might somehow be

transformed into good or outweighed by some other good in her[5]. Even the kind of love which creates value in the beloved rather than responding to it is based not in the worthlessness of the beloved but in the ability to create good possessed by the lover. God arguably would not love human beings because they are worthless, because there is no good in them, but because in His omnipotence He is able to confer worth on, to make good, the worthless. Understood in this way, the love is generous not in that it is based or focussed on the worth(lessness) of the beloved but in that it has its foundation in the worth of the lover and the lover's ability to impart some of this worth to the beloved. In any case, the beloved is not loved independently of the good but because of it. The lover loves either because he recognizes good in the beloved and wishes to be near it so that he may be closer to the good or because he recognizes in himself the ability to create good by generously conferring worth on the worthless. These two ways of loving differ not because one is intrinsically connected to a love of the good while the other is not but because in the one case the lover gains the good in and through love for the beloved (because he believes the good in her to be an unconditionally worthy addition or companion to his own) while in the other case he provides it (because he believes that it is the most worthwhile gift that can be bestowed and gives it freely). In neither case is the love based on the beloved simply as she is in herself without concerning itself with her worth. The end of both is that the beloved be worthy, whether this worth be given to the beloved by the lover or acquired from the beloved by the lover.

At the very least, then, if we wish to regard the beloved, merely as subject, as unconditionally worthy of love, we must regard subjectivity itself as one of the highest if not the highest good. This would not mean that our love for other people would not be an instance of our love for the good, as Plato thinks it must be, but that these two loves--the love for other people and the love for the good--would converge in that which itself has unconditioned worth, the subject. Yet even if we commit to regarding human beings as such as having unconditioned worth, and therefore as being unconditionally worthy of love, this alone does not seem to exhaust our ways of committing to love the good, for there are many and varied ways for human subjectivity to exist, to particularize itself. And, it seems intuitively obvious, we cannot help but regard some of these particular

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[5] Of course this does not mean that we require the beloved to be or become completely good or even very good overall. In some kinds of love, one feature may stand out for us as so attractive or desirable that it outweighs or makes attractive all her less good, or even positively vicious qualities. However, the point still stands that we do not love her for the sake of her *worthlessness*, but regard as good for us some qualities or capacities in the beloved, even if we do not regard those qualities as morally or objectively good.

instances of human subjectivity as more beautiful and good than others. What's more, it seems that this is not just psychologically unavoidable but often based on very good reasons. Although we may value human beings simply insofar as they are human beings, as free subjectivities, there are some ways of exercising this freedom which seem repugnant or irritating to us (murder, drug addiction, annoying jokes) while others are pleasant and beautiful (generosity, intelligence, a fine sense of humour). It seems to follow, then, that someone who has a strong love for the good and truly values it above all else, though she may indeed recognize the unconditioned worth of human beings as the highest good, will still be likely to prefer the good that is best actualized and exemplified in human behaviour. Though she may recognize the great, indeed unconditional, worth in all human beings and properly extend some kind of unwavering love to them on that basis, her love of the good, it seems, would properly incline her to prefer those in whom this good is less obscured by vice and ugliness, those in whom its full potential is most perfectly realized. The strength of her love for the good would best be displayed in her preference for the good as it is at its best—when it is most fully and most beautifully realized. If our aim in love is to possess and contemplate the good, then we are, it seems, committed to regard as superior those objects of love in which the good is best realized and most beautifully displayed. A continued, preferential love for someone whose full human potential was realized less fully would be inferior to a love that preferred people whose potential for good was more perfectly actualized, that shifts its focus in order to find the best exemplars of realized human potential. For in a love for these latter, we would be able to more perfectly contemplate and possess the good.

Yet much here depends on what we believe a love for the good properly entails. There are two ways in which we might serve our love of the good: we may take an active stance and try to create and promote good wherever we find the potential for good, or we may recognize, acquire, and contemplate the good wherever it is already realized. Of course, these possible components of our love of the good are not exclusive. After all, if our aim is to promote the good, we will likely also have as an end the desire to contemplate it when it has been actualized, and will also be likely to appreciate it wherever it is actually to be found. And, similarly, a desire to contemplate the good will be likely to lead us to want to promote the good wherever possible so that we may then have the joy of contemplating and possessing it. Assuming that our love of the good and our ideal of love for persons are inextricably linked, we must ask whether our ideal of love for other persons most closely resembles our active love for the good, our desire to

promote its realization wherever its potential is to be found, or our more passive love for the good, our desire to contemplate and possess the already realized good, or some combination of these. Since a passive love for the good that leads us simply to want to possess and contemplate the good in its most completed state seems, if taken alone, to rule out unconditional love for persons as persons, I shall turn to a consideration of the kind of love for the good which has as its end is the active promotion of the good.

v-Love of persons mediated by love of the good

When our love for others is primarily active, it may often be generous in nature(i.e., directed at something less good), as God's love for humans might be thought to be. This kind of love for the good, which in God's case may be simply a kind of self-love, properly leads one to want to promote its realization as much as possible wherever the potential for good exists. This would enable us in some sense to love human beings unconditionally, insofar as it is their freedom/autonomy that differentiates them from the natural world and makes it ever possible that they may choose the good. In loving people, then, we would be loving the good through them but not by simply aiming to acquire and contemplate it in its most perfect form. Rather we would express our love for the good actively in our love for that in which there is a continued potential for good. Unlike the love bestowed on humans by God, who actually creates value in the beloveds simply by loving them, this kind of active love of which humans might be capable would be mediated by a love of the good, which would not necessarily be created in and through love[6] but would be regarded as objective or existing independently of both the lover and the beloved. In this view, the person loves *the good* by serving it actively, by seeking out that in which the good might be realized and actively aiming for the fulfilment of the good in it. In this way, he may love the good in and through his love for people, while his love for *the beloved person* is mediated by this love of the good in that it gives content to his hopes for the beloved and this content is regarded as not inherently divided from but as serving the beloved's own interests (since it aims for what is regarded as the highest good). Although he would not regard the beloved as already perfectly good (or even very good), the lover would do her a sort of honour by regarding her as worthy of the good, as capable of it, and since she is in fact a free human being, with a continued

[6] although love *may* be understood to confer worth on the beloved, thereby actually creating worth where perhaps there was none.

potential for good (however distant a possibility), he would not be incorrect in conferring on her this honour, even if she is otherwise wretched and he cannot help but judge her present state to be so.

There is a sense in which such view of love better accords with what we intend when we aim to love another *for her own sake.* For the mediation of our love for the good, which is thought to have worth independently of human subjectivity, both ours and hers, makes it possible for us to desire and aim for her good without reducing it to ours[7] since that which ultimately confers worth on each of our lives is not dependent on either of us. This would not be merely a kind of expanded self-interest, in which we make the beloved's good one set of goods among our other goods, the status of which nevertheless ultimately depends on our continuing to accord it a place among our goods, and thereby depreciate her worth as a subjectivity with a potential for good all her own. For in this kind of love, neither the lover's nor the beloved's actual interests are absolutely good simply as belonging to them (in which case they could include the goods of another in their own good only as an extension of their own interests which have unconditional worth for them simply as their own and could not, therefore, be genuinely limited in relation to another's) but depend on something higher (even if they are not exactly sure what this might be) which governs the worth of everything, including the particular preferences of each. Because their own interests are not absolute for them but are regarded as depending on some higher standard as the source of their objective worth, they already accept the fact that their interests may, and indeed must, be limited with reference to something other than themselves. Since they regard the beloved as just as much related to that standard (as subject to it, and capable of doing as it requires, even if presently far removed from it), they have a way of regarding the beloved's highest interest as equal in worth to their own, since both may participate in the same absolute good, which is independent of both, and absolutely worthy of commanding both.

Nevertheless not only does this make all people indifferently worthy of love (which may or may not be a flaw in personal love), but it is still susceptible in a significant way to Vlastos's objection to Plato's view of love, and to Dmitri's error. For in this view the good is something which exists outside human subjectivity, the worth of which is independent of its connection with human subjectivity. Although our sense that there is a good of this kind (even if we are not exactly sure what it is) may be so powerful as to

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[7] or vice versa as when we sacrifice entirely our desire for our own good and aim only for the beloved's.

lead us to see in human beings merely as such a kind of reflection of its worth insofar as they at least have the potential to attain it, this reflected love is nevertheless only indirectly a love for the person herself, even though aiming for it may be regarded as aiming for the good of the person herself. Thus, although this view may capture one sense in which we aim to love the other *for her own sake*--that we *aim for her good* for her own sake--it does not have as much success accounting for the other sense--that our love for her is a *response* to the person herself, *is* for her sake. For to be loved merely for one's potential for some external good, which one may just as well never realize and forsake for another path, is not to be loved for *oneself*, even if it is to be loved for the sake of one's own good.

If we apply such a conception of love, we not only do honour to the beloved as she might be, but also may degrade her as who she in fact is. This in itself does not necessarily discount this kind of love as being an ideal for would-be lovers since the desire to promote the good of another without requiring that she first be good may nevertheless be thought to be admirable. Yet, it does seem more like charity, or duty, than love. For it does not require or entail that the lover regard the beloved as inherently good or unconditionally worthy, only that she regard her as having a permanent *potential* for worth. Nor does it entail that we take into account the beloved as she actually is when aiming for her good for her own sake. Although it may in fact be true that the good we aim to promote in her is the highest good for her, if it is in fact the highest good, such a good is something alien to her as she is now. Also, there is something perhaps excessively universal about such a conception that does not leave much room for us to care about the beloved's more unique interests. Since our love is never to begin with about the beloved's subjectivity, it does not have an inherent interest in her full realization of her individual subjectivity, except insofar as this may accord with the good which, as encompassing and standing above everything, is abstract and universal in nature, not concerned with the particularities of individual beings.

What we need from an account of unconditional love for it to adequately capture both senses in which we believe that love should be for the beloved's own sake (promotes her good for her own sake, and is a response to who she is, i.e., exists for her sake) is a conception of the unconditioned worth of humanity that treats it not as something ideally static which, as merely an end in itself, must be appreciated and defended simply as we find it, but one which inherently contains reference to its possible realizations and contains its own standards by which we may judge the worth of its particular instances.

That is, we need an account of the inherent worth of humanity that allows us to judge its particular content in its particular existent forms without denying its unconditioned worth, without subordinating it to a standard merely outside it, thereby depriving it of its inherent worth by conceiving of its worth as subordinate to or dependent on some merely external good. With such a conception of the person, we could truly aim to promote the good for the other for her own sake, not merely because it is the highest good only in an objective sense but also because it is in some significant way *her highest good,* intrinsically connected to her own nature as a free, human subject. For this I will look to Hegel's treatment of the free will as that in virtue of which human beings have unconditioned worth[8].

vi--Hegel on the unconditioned worth of the free will

What Hegel adds to a consideration of self-love and love for persons in general is a way of regarding the inherent worth of humanity that does not treat it as something inert or self-contained which we are called upon to appreciate and accept merely as we find it. According to Hegel, the essence of human beings by virtue of which they may be regarded as having unconditioned worth is free will. Yet Hegel does not regard this freedom as something which is found complete in each and every human being, as they happen to exist. It is not a mere property of human beings which can be taken for granted as complete. Although all human beings have free will in the sense that their subjectivity is not essentially bound by any particular determination, that freedom can be more or less fully realized in them. All people are inherently free but not every person knows that she is free and lives in a manner which reflects her essential freedom. No one's self-consciousness is essentially bound by given determinations such that she could not free

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[8] It may seem as though Kant might do just as well for this purpose since his ethics and moral philosophy are set up with the aim of protecting and recognizing the inherent worth of the autonomous, rational will. But, if we believe Hegel's characterization of Kant, Kant's view is still insufficient to give us the critical purchase we need to be able to see the objective standards of the good as intrinsically connected to the free will, or the subjective, since freedom in Kant's philosophy, is defended only in its formal aspect and is "nothing other than this formal self-activity" (49). What this means if it is an accurate characterization is that Kant's conception of the free will as unconditionally worthy makes it something rather empty, for which any objective content is adequate as long as it is consistent with the rest of what the free will wills, i.e., is not self-contradictory. As a result, Hegel claims, Kant's conception of right yields only negative determinations, or limitations, which merely forbid one free or "arbitrary" will from interfering with another. Since, Hegel charges, this amounts to no more than the "principle of formal identity and the law of contradiction," it does not really give us any positive content by which we may judge the particular existence of actual free wills in their interaction with the objective world.

her sense of self from the apparent limitations. Yet despite the fact that all self-consciousnesses are inherently free in this way, it is nevertheless possible for them to fail to recognize themselves as free, to deny and degrade their essence by treating themselves as if they were merely natural, externally determined entities, continuing to regard the natural world as the more powerful and substantial determining force. They may do this by becoming caught up in their own particular natural determinations, believing themselves to be essentially bound by them, or by affirming their freedom only as something inherently fragile, something that would be destroyed if it came into contact with the objective world and its natural particularity.

According to Hegel, human beings (both historically in the collective sense and developmentally as individuals) are not born free, do not begin by recognizing their freedom, but begin as natural beings. The recognition and realization of their free will is a process in which they by degrees come to realize that they are not in a relation of dependence to nature but can be free, developing their own ends and determinations out of their own essential nature (as free rational beings). Hegel presents the process by which human beings realize their freedom by freeing themselves from nature as a kind of self-knowledge which is at the same time a self-making. He writes:

> Spirit has its beginning in nature in general . . . . The extreme toward which it tends is its freedom, its infinity, its being in and for itself. These are the two aspects, but if we ask what spirit is, the immediate answer is that it is this motion, this process of proceeding forth from, of freeing itself from nature; this is the being, the substance of spirit itself. Spirit is usually spoken of as subject, as doing something, and apart from what it does, as this motion, this process, as still particularized, its activity being more or less contingent.; it is of the very nature of spirit to be this absolute liveliness, this process, to proceed forth from naturality, immediacy, to sublate, to quit its naturality, and to come to itself, and to free itself, *it being itself only as that which comes to itself as such a product of itself; its actuality being merely that it has made itself into what it is.* *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (vol I) 7

To understand the nature of this self-making, we must consider the nature of freedom/subjectivity itself. If we think of the concept of freedom and try to define it, we find that it contains apparently contradictory elements. First, it indicates something simple in its independence from all specific determinateness (since determinateness presupposes some other determinateness from which it is distinguished). But, second, it indicates something that is able to determine itself, to posit or create a difference in itself. This implies that, inherent in the original simplicity, there is in fact a latent difference, since it always, according to its very concept, has the potential to be divided in that way (indeed the concept of freedom is incomplete without the reference to this possible self-division or self-determination). Understood simply as something static, then, something

which exists prior to its activity, the free will is contradictory. Yet understood simply as one of its elements, in its simplicity or its difference, it is not free will at all. In the first case, it is merely inert and empty self-identity. In the second, it is merely broken up into different elements, and is not simple or self-same. How something that is simple can create a difference from within its own undifferentiated unity, how finitude can proceed from the infinite (unlimited) relationship that it is supposed to have with itself and still remain what it essentially is remains deeply mysterious if we attempt to fix the essence of freedom as that which precedes and makes such a transition possible. We can understand the concept of freedom, Hegel maintains, only if we understand it as a movement rather than a fixed essence. The free will does not exist prior to the realization of its freedom; it is not a faculty or fixed essence which can be understood apart from its realization, but a negative relation to self, a self-movement, that which divides itself from itself but nevertheless remains essentially what it is within this self-division. Its essence is not something which could be understood to exist prior to its realization, but is the very movement of making itself actual, of giving itself its own existence. Since its very essence or concept is not a thing or a faculty that we could regard as existing prior to its activity but a dynamic self-relation, we cannot grasp the concept or essence of freedom without reference to its movement or self-realization. As negative self-relation, freedom is not complete before it has posited a difference in itself but neither does this alone complete it, for this difference does not remain final or absolute for it. Its freedom becomes actual only when it can find itself in these differences--when it realizes that it is nevertheless not bound or essentially altered by them but remains what it is, or remains "with itself," even in these differences, and recognizes itself in the simplicity of its movement, as "self-referring negativity."

In the case of the human will, which begins as merely natural and does not actually *create* the differences it finds in the natural world (as God would), this means that it can recognize itself even in the differences that it is able to take on, that seem to characterize it at a given time; it is always with itself, is always the same motion of taking on and then freeing itself of natural differences and of always remaining the same simple self-consciousness within this process. Yet more is required for its actuality than this ability to manipulate natural determinations as it wills. For in this way the free will is able to act only on something alien to it, only on material that is given to it. The sense in which it can be understood to determine itself is a limited one, then, since it must always take up an already restricted and contingent content. Though it is not itself essentially restricted

by any of these determinations, it can recognize its freedom only as what stands outside or can always exempt itself from this given material. There would, therefore, always be a disharmony between the self-determining subject and its determinations. Hegel explains:

> Whatever the will has decided to choose, it can likewise relinquish. But with this possibility of proceeding in turn beyond any other content which it may substitute for the previous one and so on *ad infinitum*, it does not escape from finitude, because every such content is different from the form [of the will] and therefore finite; and the opposite of determinacy—namely indeterminacy, indecision, or abstraction--is only the other, equally one-sided moment. *Philosophy of Right* 50

To become actual, Hegel argues, the free will must become its own object: it must will its own actuality. We can see how this process is a kind of self-knowledge or self-making. For the essence of the free will is that it gives its determinations to itself, that it is what it is as a result of its own self-determination. For the human being, who begins immersed in natural determinations that seem merely external to her, her free will is at first able to act only on material that is already given. Her freedom is fully realized only when it recognizes and knows itself not merely beyond but also *within* what it wills. For this to be possible, it must restructure its relationship with the objective world so that it finds within that world not merely given content by which it may limit itself at will but also a reflection of its free relation to all given content and its ability to give itself its own content. This is possible within an objective world that is structured around the recognition and promotion of the free will as its highest principle. Historically speaking, the creation of such an objective world is by no means an easy task. It requires the constitution of appropriate political and ethical structures and institutions. In fact, Hegel believes that a whole history of only partially adequate structures is required before a context that enables the free will to fully realize itself can be created. For the purposes of this thesis, I shall not focus on how Hegel thinks this comes about and or on what he thinks the precise nature of these structures must be. It is sufficient to point out simply that the human being, to be fully free, needs to be situated in the objective world in such a way that she may therein know and be related to her own freedom and that for it to do this, the free will must not be regarded as mere indeterminate self-relation but must be able to give itself its own determinations (which reflect its freedom and allow it to know and experience it in the objective world), and be related to itself within them. Provided that the appropriate structures are in place, the individual in serving and acting within them will not be limiting her freedom but realizing it by relating to her freedom in and through her experience in the objective world.

At the level of the individual who is born into the appropriate political and ethical structures, the process is greatly facilitated by education and by the environment that surrounds her. This does, of course, involve limitation in the sense that she no longer reserves all conceivable possibilities for herself (although she *could*, she is still capable of doing so), but limits herself to those possibilities consistent with and instrumental to the realization of her freedom within the objective world. For although our freedom stands above all particular determinations, it is not compatible with all ways we have of relating to particularity. When we treat the objects we find in the world as ends in themselves, and elevate them in status above the freedom that we may recognize in ourselves and others, when our way of relating to the objective world obscures the recognition of the unconditioned worth of the free will, we denigrate ourselves and others by failing to recognize that in us which makes us unconditionally worthy of relating freely to the natural world.

It is important to emphasize, though, that this requirement that the free will reconstitute its relation with the natural world does not, of course, mean that people cease altogether to be affected by the natural world--bee stings will still hurt, poison will still kill them. What it does mean is that their relationship to the natural world can be restructured so that the merely natural and contingent aspects of their existence are properly made subordinate in their experience to that which has unconditioned worth--the free will that people recognize in themselves and others. When the objective world is structured so that it is genuinely oriented toward the end of recognizing and promoting the free will, genuine freedom can be realized. The fact that the contingent still has a place, that the natural world does not recede entirely from its contact with the subjective becomes irrelevant since for this developed freedom in the structures and institutions that it has created for itself, the contingent and the natural do not pose a threat to its continued recognition and experience of its freedom[9]. The genuinely free human being, in contrast to the underground man, does not need to obliterate the natural world to have a sense of his own freedom. Rather, his sense of his own freedom undermines and reconfigures the

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[9] I don't mean to suggest that contingent circumstances and natural occurrences *could not* sometimes obstruct our recognition of our freedom; only that they are not regarded as inherently threatening. The mere presence of the contingent and the natural does not detract from our sense of our freedom because freedom does not mean *control over every detail* of our lives. Rather, it means that we are independent of these particular details in a more fundamental way: the role that they have in our lives is made subordinate to our promotion and recognition of freedom. The natural world, then, does have a role to play, but never serves as an end which we commit to for its own sake. Rather it serves only as a means to the realization of our freedom, the material which we may use to express and experience our freedom in the objective world.

relationship that he originally has with the natural world: what was originally a relationship of dependence in which the natural world seemed to more or less fully determine him, to characterize him, becomes one of independence in which he recognizes that his essence is not constituted by its relationship with the natural things and circumstances among which he lives, but is free.

The flaw in the underground man's thinking is that he treats the natural world as a threatening presence, as something which could, if he is not vigilant in maintaining his distance from it, reduce him to something merely natural. He regards his freedom as something fragile, which would be destroyed if his desires and actions were somehow accounted for deterministically. His protection of his freedom, then, as a response to reductionistic determinism, treats his freedom as something that is vulnerable to deterministic views, by identifying it with the freedom of the particular purposes he forms and the determinations that he adopts. In his insistence that for each advance of a deterministic explanation he can always make a corresponding retreat by giving up the deterministically accounted for content and taking up another that is much more difficult if not impossible for the determinist, with his scientific, rational framework, to predict and explain, he fails to consider fully that a retreat is always possible not simply because human beings are capable of irrationality or eccentricity--of finding the loophole in the determinist's inherently rational framework--but because they stand above all possible particular determinations, whether these conduce to their happiness or not. Whether or not the determinist can *predict* the outcome of the defiant man's choices is not as important as whether or not he can explain away the power that makes it possible for people to make them, and to switch from one to another when their consciousness of that power in themselves feels threatened. The recognition of the freedom of our self-consciousness does not, as the underground man's reaction to reductionistic determinism suggests, depend on the intrinsic connectedness or relative lack of connectedness in the content of the determinations. We may regard ourselves as free not because we are capable of adopting particular views which are not susceptible to deterministic explanations, but because our selfhood is never exhausted by any of the particular choices that we make and is only truly at home in an objective world that reflects and enables us to experience this freedom. That our actions are predictable does not make them unfree. Insofar as we freely limit ourselves, the particular stances that we adopt, insofar as they *are* limited (though *we* are not), may perhaps often be susceptible to deterministic explanations. The point is that the "I" that accompanies all our thoughts can never be

exhausted by *any* particular content, however perfectly it seems to fit into a deterministic framework, because our sense of self is never exhausted by even the content that we ourselves adopt, the limitations that we impose on ourselves or allow to be imposed on us from without. We do not need to limit our motivations to caprice or boredom just to ensure our sense of freedom. The perfectly rational person whose desires tend towards the fulfilment of his own good and whose choices can on that account perhaps be most easily explained and predicted by the determinist is no less free than the man who instead chooses to bang his head against the wall to preserve his sense of his independence. If each subordinates his recognition of his freedom to his need for a particular determinateness (be it the satisfaction of particular desires or the sense of emptiness to which the underground man clings), then neither has realized his freedom. Indeed the truly free will, which is at home in that system of determinations that most appropriately structure and constitute its relation to the objective world, may well be very predictable in this regard to one who understands what its highest end is but this does not make the content of that will any less its own, since it is perfectly at home in its own determinations as most appropriate to its nature and finds nothing alien or restrictive in them.

It is also important to note that this does *not* mean that every possible determinacy adopted by the particular free will need be, or even should be, accounted for and determined in advance. Far from imposing a rigid set of limitations on each and every one of its particular ends, the free will allows its particular ends a great deal of scope insofar as they concern merely natural determinations. For, Hegel maintains, these particular details are not inherently significant in their specificity. What matters, above all else, is that throughout all the various possible ways of relating to the contingent and natural world, freedom, which alone has unconditioned worth, is recognized as the highest principle and is never made subordinate to or obscured by people's commitments to merely natural determinations. Indeed, Hegel insists that the ability and the right to have a free relationship to the natural world, to be able to choose for oneself even arbitrarily, although not its highest aspect, is itself necessary to the realization of freedom. For our freedom in relation to nature must be affirmed; we do so not by disdaining or avoiding nature and particularity altogether but by freely taking possession of and choosing our own particular ends, insofar as these are not themselves regarded as our most important ends, but are subordinated to our recognition of our freedom and are ultimately themselves means to that higher end.

Nevertheless, even with the appropriate structures in place for the realization of human freedom, the individual must still affirm this freedom for herself, for it is inherent in the individual free will that it always contains the possibility of wilfully degrading itself, of denying its freedom. Even within the fully developed human society, in which human freedom is fully realized and recognized, some individuals may still choose to deny their freedom through their actions and preferences. Consequently, there may still, for example, be crime in such a society. Though such choices are not rational or consistent or fully free, they are always possible for the human individual. In his lecture manuscript on the philosophy of religion, Hegel considers the possibility of the individual human being choosing to ignore the insights of religion, despite the fact that religion, in its proper shape, is rationally necessary for spirit, the culmination of its freedom[10]. He writes:

> [Religion]'s necessity is that it is the destiny and truth of spirit. But it is a different task to raise the individual subject to this height. The caprice, the perversity, the indolence of individuals may interfere with the necessity of their universal spiritual nature; [they may] deviate from it and try to establish a particular standpoint and hold to it. The subject can quite simply be evil for this option too lies within freedom (to slip into the standpoint of opinion, untruth, and laziness, or adopt that standpoint and stick to it knowingly). The planets, plants, and animals cannot deviate from the necessity of their nature, from their truth. They become what they ought to be . . . . But the human being contains free choice within itself and can sever itself from human necessity and laws. Therefore, even if [philosophical] cognition were to perceive the necessity of the religious standpoint clearly, and even if the will were to experience in actuality the nothingness of its separation, this does not hinder the will's ability to persist in its obstinacy (and to stand apart and at a distance from its own necessity and truth.) *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (vol I) 90

An appreciation of human beings, ourselves or others, as essentially free, then, does not permit us to be content with simply contemplating the inherent worth of the beloved, but prescribes a twofold task to us: First we commit to continue to recognize the beloved as free, to appreciate her unconditioned worth as a free essence, to see within her particularity and the particularity acting on her the sense in which she is never fully captured and bound by these limitations but is essentially always free of them; second, (and this follows from our commitment to recognize her in this way) we commit to treat her appropriately. In the case of love for other people, this second task may sometimes easily coincide with the first, as when the beloved herself recognizes herself as free and

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[10] For the purpose of the argument which I am putting forward in this paper, it is not necessary that we fully understand or accept Hegel's views about the way in which freedom is concretely realized (e.g., in the state and in religion). What is important are his arguments about the nature of human freedom, and the point that it is not something static that exists prior to its realization but to be actual must come to realize itself within the objective world.

promotes and realizes rather than degrades and obscures this essence within herself, or it may become significantly more complicated, if the beloved herself does not realize her freedom and treat herself as a free will with unconditioned worth. We will then be forced to consider how far our commitment to treat her as an essentially free being with unconditioned worth allows or even requires us to interfere with or refuse to promote her particular ends, insofar as they reflect and perpetuate her degraded relation to self, her failure to recognize her own unconditioned worth.

Chapter Four: Love for Particular Persons

i--opening remarks

Because an ideal of love for persons as persons is applicable to *all people*, and not inherently selective, it may seem irrelevant to an account of how and why we love particular persons who are special to us. In this chapter I have three aims: first, I shall attempt to show that a sincere love for humanity, far from calling for a detached appreciation of human beings merely in general, cannot be sustained apart from an active love for actual persons in their particularity. To this end, I shall consider Dostoevsky's observation that a love for humanity in general, abstracted from a love for particular people, leads to a hatred of actual people because what it loves when detached from a love for concrete human beings is a mere abstraction which does not characterize humanity at all. To love people only for their inherent humanity, *as opposed to their particularity*, is to fail to love humanity at all, since all human life necessarily undergoes this particularization and never exists apart from it merely as abstract human beings in general. To appreciate humanity, therefore, we cannot merely appreciate humanity in general but must actively aim to recognize and love this humanity in actual existent persons.

Second, I shall consider the applicability of the ideal of unconditional love to our more special, particular loving relationships, arguing that because the ideal of unconditional love prescribes a commitment which calls for lovers to transcend their contingent relationship and attachment to each other, it is not inherently limited to one kind of relationship or origin, and therefore does not need to provide an exhaustive explanation of its contingent origins. The ideal remains neutral about the initial, often contingent, particular origins of the relationship not because it never begins with them or completely obscures them but because it stands above them and transfigures them.

Third, I shall argue that the experience of the ideal of unconditional love in and through a relationship with another particular person, though based in a recognition of the unconditioned worth of her humanity, in fact makes the beloved in her wholeness--including her particularity in its entirety--special to us. For although her unconditioned worth to us does not depend on her particular characteristics, our recognition of it is gained not apart from an encounter with her particularity but within it, so that our

experience of that particularity in its wholeness is made irreversibly special to us as the determinate existence of a human being with unconditioned worth.

ii--Velleman on Love and Respect

In "Love as a Moral Emotion," J. David Velleman, defending a Kantian conception of love for persons, argues that the recognition of the inherent worth of human beings as ends in themselves may manifest itself in two ways: first, minimally, we recognize and appreciate with our intellect that all people, as autonomous, rational agents, are ends in themselves worthy of being treated as such. As a result of this knowledge we treat people accordingly and avoid regarding them as mere means to other ends. Second, we may experience the stronger emotion of love in response to our encounters with some people who break through and suspend our emotional defences. Although love is a stronger emotional response, it is still a response to the very same inherent worth of the person as such. He writes, "The Kantian view is that respect is a mode of valuation that the very capacity for valuation must pay to instances of itself. My view is that love is a mode of valuation that this capacity *may* also pay to instances of itself. I regard respect and love as the required minimum and optional maximum responses to one and the same value" (366).

In an attempt to explain why we might love some people specially, Velleman explains how our recognition of the unconditioned worth of human beings as ends in themselves, although in principle applicable to all human beings, will nevertheless end up varying in intensity, manifesting itself sometimes as intense personal love and other times as mere respect for humanity in general. In defending his Kantian conception of love as a recognition of the inherent worth of the other person, a worth that accrues to her simply by virtue of her status as a rational, moral agent, Velleman maintains that love for specific persons will nevertheless be selective. Although genuine love for people stems from a recognition of their humanity, Velleman points out, this recognition of human worth does not always accompany our encounters with other people, even when we know with our intellect that all people are in fact worthy in this way. It is easier to see the humanity in some people than in others. He writes:

> One reason why we love some people rather than others is that we can see into only some of our observable fellow creatures. The human body and human behaviour are imperfect expressions of personhood and we are imperfect interpreters. Hence the value that makes someone eligible to be loved does not necessarily make him lovable in our eyes. Whether someone is lovable depends on how well his value as a person is expressed or symbolized

> for us by his empirical persona. Someone's persona may not speak very clearly of his value as a person, or may not speak in ways that are clear to us. 372

Velleman thinks that the higher visibility of some people's humanity to us can account for the selectivity of our more intimate love. We love those human beings whose humanity is most visible to us, and reserve a general respect for others who are recognized by our intellect as just as worthy but whose humanity is not concretely accessible to us in their empirical persona. We are able to sense and appreciate the humanity in some better and more forcefully than in others because we see it more clearly in some people than in others.

Velleman adds that this ability to see the humanity in another does not depend only on the beloved's persona but also on our receptivity. There are often psychological barriers which interfere with our ability to see in other people the humanity which our intellect knows is there. We have our own particular defences and biases which determine what we are able to see in others. Some people's humanity will be more visible to us, then, because it is manifested in their persona in a way that we are better equipped psychologically to recognize.

As an explanation for how and why we might come to regard some people as special Velleman's suggestion is very plausible. Yet, the problem is that he thereby makes our ability to recognize the unconditioned worth of the humanity in concrete persons merely optional to an appreciation of that worth, something supplementary which enhances but is not required by our love for humanity in general. He suggests that it is enough that we grasp with our intellect the inherent worth of persons as such, and treat them in accordance with this knowledge afforded to us by our intellect, even when we cannot recognize that humanity within the particular person before us. This is unacceptable given the conception of humanity and the ideal of unconditional love informed by it that I have defended for two reasons[1]: first, it treats the inherent worth of humanity as something that can be understood and appreciated in abstraction from our experience of it in actual persons, by locating the respect for the inherent worth of humanity in the intellect alone apart from our practical engagement with actual persons; second, given that love is merely optional, and that the ability to actively seek and find within concrete persons their unconditioned worth is not necessary to an appreciation of that worth but merely happens to enhance it when thus recognized, it is not clear why we might commit

[1] It is important to note that I am not criticizing Velleman's argument directly on its own terms but only considering its applicability to the ideal of unconditional love that is in this thesis being considered.

to continue to regard as special those whom we have selected as special to us on the basis of this insight. For this account of why we might select some people rather than others to be loved is inadequate as an explanation for our commitment to continue to love the selected person rather than merely respect her. Although this provides a psychological explanation for why we happen to prefer some people more than others, it does not provide a justification, or a reason why we might want to keep it that way. Just as the humanity of some people can be more or less visible to us than that of other people, the humanity of one and the same person can become more or less visible to us with changing circumstances. This may not often present a problem since the original impression may typically be strong enough to endure changing circumstances, but nevertheless slipping in and out of love will not be infrequent as people change significantly over time, either in their persona, their receptivity, or their relation to each other, and the alteration of any of these could always make the once accessible humanity of the beloved much less accessible, muting what was once a relation of love to a relation based simply on respect for persons as persons.

A defender of an ideal of unconditional love for persons as persons must not merely be able to show how it is possible for the lover to be selective, to experience her relationship with some people as more special than her relationship to other people, but also to explain what makes it possible for the lover to commit to continue to regard the beloved as special in this way, to continue to love her selectively rather than merely respect her as a person in general. This is what Velleman's explanation does not do. Although our recognition of some people's humanity is more forceful than that of others, leading to a special relationship with them, there is no reason given for why it should remain so, as long as our appreciation of the person never sinks below the level of respect for her humanity. If this is all that the ideal of love for persons as persons has to offer to an account of personal love, then it is easy to see why people in such special relationships might not be fully satisfied with it. For they regard their love for the other as special not merely on account of the psychologically contingent and changeable circumstance that the other's humanity is more visible to them than that of others; they commit to keep it that way, to strive *always* to see within the other, as long as she is who she is, that in virtue of which she is loved.

In the next section, I shall discuss Dostoevsky's exploration in *The Brothers Karamazov* of his belief that a love for humanity in general, when based on an intellectual appreciation alone in abstraction from an actual recognition of the humanity

of particular people, leads to an intolerance of particular people. It is important to recall throughout this discussion Hegel's point (discussed in the previous chapter) that a merely abstract appreciation of human beings fails not only as a matter of fact, because so few human beings perfectly exemplify this inherent humanity, but because it is a conceptual error: we do not actually grasp the concept of subjectivity when we regard it as something fixed, which can be understood apart from its realization. Consequently, it is not merely psychologically limited to an appreciation of a very select few human beings but is an appreciation of no (actual or possible) human beings at all. One who respects all people in this abstract way will be able to love *none* concretely (for the sake of their essential humanity).

iii--Ivan: Love of Humanity in the Abstract

A central theme in *The Brothers Karamazov* concerns the importance of going beyond the stage of merely loving humanity in general to engage in active love for particular persons with whom one actually has contact. Yet Dostoevsky makes an even stronger point. Not only does the novel continually emphasize the superiority of real, living, dynamic love for actual, familiar persons, it also suggests that a love for humanity in general, abstracted from concrete ties to real, flawed, particular individuals, is not merely inferior but actually destructive to one's ability to engage in genuine love and promote the ends of humanity. In Dostoevsky' notebook for *The Brothers Karamazov*, he writes, "Those who love men in general *hate men in particular*" (33). In the novel itself, he presents us with powerful examples of people who, despite a seemingly strong and sincere love for humanity, cannot seem to tolerate the particular people with whom they are compelled to interact.

The best example of the destructive power of merely general love for humanity can be found in the character of Ivan Karamazov. Ivan genuinely believes that he loves humanity; yet, as he tells his brother Alyosha, he can barely tolerate the people he sees up close. He explains, "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbours. It's just one's neighbours to my mind, that one can't love though one might love those at a distance. . . . For anyone to love a man he must be hidden, for as soon as he shows his face love is gone" (218).

Ivan is suggesting that sincere love for humanity almost always fails when it is confronted with the reality of individual human beings, especially those whose

particularity strikes one as extremely unpleasant. Any attempt to love humanity with a general love that encompasses all human beings will be successful only as long as it is kept distant from actual persons. The reason for this is that the reality of human particularity, especially of those humans who suffer greatly and are most in need of assistance, is often repugnant, depressing, or otherwise unpleasant. Some are ugly, others foul-smelling and ill-mannered, while still others have hideous wounds and diseases that need to be attended to. Ivan gives expression to the depths of his cynicism when he considers the legend of his namesake, "John the Merciful," who warmed a beggar by breathing into his putrid, diseased mouth. After he relates the legend to Alyosha, he tells him, "I am convinced that he did it from the laceration of falsity, for the sake of the love imposed by duty, as a penance laid on him" (218). In this way, Ivan suggests that although people may sometimes be compelled by their sense of duty and their general love of humanity to give assistance even to those who disgust them, they cannot be expected to love them, to bring their inclinations in line with their self-castigating sense of moral duty. Genuine love for their neighbours, Ivan maintains, is too much to ask of the vast majority of people, himself included. He insists, "To my thinking, Christ-like love for men is a miracle impossible on earth. He was God. But we are not gods" (218).

There is a deeper point in Ivan's reasoning than the observation that very often the desire to serve humanity out of a sense of generalized love and duty does not coincide with the inclination to do so in particular instances, with a genuine love for individuals irrespective of their particularity. This deeper point, similar to Velleman's observation about the selectivity of love, concerns the way in which we have access to the humanity of others: how we come to recognize them as human beings with unconditioned worth. According to Ivan a love for humanity in general does not necessarily entail a love for individual human beings precisely because in our intercourse with other people, we do not interact with them merely insofar as they are human beings with unconditioned worth. On the contrary, we see them in their particularity, which can often be far from noble in appearance, even repulsive. As I mentioned above, instead of seeing displayed in the face of each human being the stamp of their human dignity, what we often encounter when we come into contact with other people are ugly faces, noxious odours, irritating noises, and bad manners, or a wretched, depressing condition. Although we love humanity, the inherent nobility of humanity is not necessarily what we see when we look at particular individuals. Rather, this recognition can be occluded by their particularity. If their appearance and manners do not accord with our image of what

human nobility should look like, then we do not recognize them as being as fully human as we ourselves are. Ivan explains:

> . . . . degrading, humiliating suffering such as humbles me—hunger, for instance—my benefactor will perhaps allow me; but when you come to higher suffering—for an idea, for instance—he will very rarely admit that, perhaps because my face strikes him not at all as what he fancies a man should have who suffers for an idea. Beggars, especially genteel beggars, ought never to show themselves, but to ask for charity through the newspapers. . . . If it were as on a stage, in the ballet where beggars come in, they wear silken rags and tattered lace and beg for alms dancing gracefully, then we might like looking at them. But even then, we would not love them. 218

Thus Ivan suggests that one person is not likely to be able to know the extent of another person's suffering because people are naturally inclined not to admit the full humanity of another person unless that person appears in a way which accords with the observer's ideas about what that expression of humanity should look like.

Ivan draws out the implications of Velleman's observation about the imperfection of our ability to perceive the humanity in actual persons. The result will be that some people, and among them many of those who need love most, will not be loved, even when we know that they are human and consequently deserve to be loved. After all, if some people simply fail to give rise to a recognition of their personhood in us because their persona fails to convey their inner humanity forcefully enough to us, then it will certainly be many times more difficult, perhaps nearly impossible for most of us, to see and be strongly enough moved by that very same inner humanity in those who are positively unpleasant, repulsive or even frightening to us—the more so the closer we get to them. Despite people's sincere love and respect for humanity, notes Ivan, people will nevertheless commonly fail to appreciate humanity where it is actually to be found—in real, living human individuals who are present to them.

It is interesting to note that this problem of access to another's humanity may not only exclude particular types of people from being loved in the way that their inherent humanity merits, but, more significantly perhaps, can be a serious problem even within established loving relationships. The difficulty is not limited to our ability to see particular people in the light of their full humanity, but, as Ivan has pointed out, also affects our ability to acknowledge the full humanity of the experiences of other people if the inner nobility of these experiences (e.g. suffering for an idea) does not appear as we think it should: if their way of expressing it does not evoke for us the idea of such distinctively human experiences and perhaps even seems incongruous with it.

Ivan's arguments, as they stand, are not at this point meant to be convincing: he is merely stating his opinion regarding his own difficulty and the difficulty he observes in

others in interacting with people up close. This gives us insight into his character and allows us to reflect on his claims regarding the virtual impossibility for men of Christ-like love, in contrast to Alyosha's firm belief that such love is indeed possible and actually exists among men. The very same Alyosha who is upset by some of Ivan's more compelling arguments remains unshaken on this point, though he admits that the difficulty to which Ivan alludes in fact exists. He makes this simple but firm reply: "[Father Zosima], too, said that the face of a man often hinders many people not practised in love, from loving him. But yet there's a great deal of love in mankind, and almost Christ-like love. I know that myself, Ivan" (218). The reader is invited to consider for herself Ivan's claim. More importantly, she is invited to consider what in the character and beliefs of someone like Ivan inclines him to such a view, which so differs from that of his brother. Through reflections of this kind, it will become clear what Dostoevsky means when he asserts that a general love for humanity is not merely inadequate but actually leads to a hatred for particular individuals.

Ivan is not the only lover of humanity who finds it impossible to tolerate actual persons. Earlier in the novel, in response to Mme. Khokhlakov's worry about the possible insincerity of her own love for humanity, Father Zosima tells of a doctor who suffered from the same complaint:

> 'I love humanity,' he said, 'but I wonder at myself. The more I love humanity in general, the less I love man in particular, that is, separately as single individuals. In my dreams,' he said, 'I have often come to making enthusiastic schemes for the service of humanity, and perhaps I might actually have faced crucifixion if it had suddenly been necessary; and yet I am incapable of living in the same room with anyone for two days together. . . As soon as anyone is near me, his personality disturbs my self-esteem and restricts my freedom. In twenty-four hours, I begin to hate even the best of men: one because he's too long over his dinner; another because he has a cold and keeps blowing his nose. 49

The connection between a love of humanity in general and a hatred of people in particular first becomes visible here. To understand Zosima's doctrine of active love, we must first make sense of Dostoevsky's suggestion that there is a correlation between a general love for humanity and the inability to love particular individuals. In what follows, I shall attempt to explain this connection and show how it works so destructively in Ivan Karamazov, despite his love for humanity in general.

The first point to make concerning this connection between love of humanity and hatred of specific human beings is that the general love for humanity to which Zosima refers, and which Ivan himself displays, is typically far-removed and detached from actual experiences with particular human beings. The doctor of whom Zosima speaks

and Mme Khokhlakov each experience their desire to actively love humanity in the form of dreams and fantasies. Ivan's love for humanity is best displayed in his compassion for the people whose stories he learns in newspapers and magazines and is exemplified, at least partially, not in his own words but in the words of his creation: the fictitious lover of humanity, Grand Inquisitor. He tells Alyosha, "I am fond of collecting certain little facts, and, would you believe, I even copy anecdotes of a certain sort from newspapers and stories, and I've already got a fine collection" (220). The material for his rebellion (his "essence") against the world as well as the catalyst for his compassion comes not from events that he has witnessed in which people who were fully present to him took part but from the medium of print, in second and third-hand accounts.

The general love for humanity that is not also a love for particular human beings, then, is a love for humanity that is abstracted from the experience of actually present persons. Ivan, for example, genuinely loves humanity, but the foundation for and expression of his love is not rooted in a living love for living people. Rather, he loves the abstract idea of abstract people. Even if it is possible to perceive the truth of humanity in this way, to recognize its unconditioned worth and love it above all else for that sake, such love, by holding its object apart from its realization and elevating it simply in its pure, abstract form, promotes the destruction of the very thing it holds most worthy of promotion.

An admiration of humanity in general that does not take place in and is not accompanied by a recognition and appreciation of that very humanity within the particular people near one is destructive in two senses. The abstraction from the concrete circumstances of actual human existence leaves one with an abstract idea of pure freedom and subjectivity. Elevating this essence of humanity that is itself free of any given particularity above all connections with particularity, the lover of humanity may to appreciate and experience its high degree of worth either allow this highly indeterminate, though highly worthy idea to merge with the aesthetic mood and images that seem appropriate to its immeasurable worth, or insist on keeping the idea pure, devoid of particularity (i.e., empty) in his mind (as the underground man did). In the first case, he gives the abstract idea of humanity implicit or explicit aesthetic content so that he may be better able to appreciate its unqualified worth. He represents to himself, as well as he can, the beauty of his idea. The problem that arises, as Ivan hinted, is that this kind of elevation of the idea of humanity in thought endows it with a determinate content, an aesthetic ideal, that makes the actual humanity with which we come into contact seem inadequate to the beautiful representations that we have formed of our idea of humanity.

The abstract idea detached from our everyday experience of persons can easily become associated with specific aesthetic images and moods that seem most worthy of representing it and as a result can in fact cease to resemble an ordinary encounter with all but the most extraordinary human beings and human situations. Since humanity itself is regarded as worthy of the highest esteem, certain romantic ideals can come to represent the ideal of humanity arrayed in all its nobility for us. Those experiences and conditions that we regard as distinctively human, as representing humanity at its noblest, come to be associated with specific aesthetic ideals. We expect what is most elevated and beautiful to appear elevated and beautiful. Consequently, when we subsequently encounter actual human beings that do not resemble this aesthetic representation of humanity, the effect of our exaltation of humanity in general is that the living particular individuals no longer seem quite so human. Having elevated our abstract idea of humanity to a point where it gains a special beauty of its own in our imagination, we no longer think many people worthy of being subsumed under such an ideal since their image does not accord with the beauty of our representation of humanity.

If we avoid the error of mixing our love for humanity in general with specific notions about its beautiful nature, if we do not make the mistake of thinking that those who suffer nobly and most humanly must fit a certain image, we may be prone to another more dangerous error. This occurs when the abstract ideal of humanity is exalted without any admixture of aesthetic representation. At least with the previously mentioned error, some people might come close to fitting the image, and could therefore be seen as genuinely human. But when the idea of abstract humanity, detached from all concrete experience with real living human beings as well as from all idiosyncratic or romanticized imagery, is by itself elevated above all other ends, the result is that any mixture of particularity can be seen only as a distraction from or an obstacle to the appreciation of the humanity within[2]. Any particularity, then, is experienced as an impurity which makes the ideal less perfect. People who are prone to this kind of love for humanity cannot tolerate even the best individual in person. Any particularity is soon regarded as a flaw and an irritant. This way of regarding humanity is especially destructive because it is accompanied by an implicit demand that the individual rid herself of as much particularity as possible, clinging only to that which makes her abstractly human, that which is universal and pure.

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[2] We may note the sense in which this type of error is directly parallel to that of the underground man.

The ideal of humanity, because it is kept pure, free from particularity, is empty and impossible to encounter in particular persons.

The point is that for those who elevate an abstract ideal of humanity above all other things and make a beautiful ideal out of it alone, humanity as it appears—inevitably and inextricably conjoined with particularity—will always seem many times less worthy than humanity as a pure abstraction. If the ideal of pure, abstract humanity is the most worthwhile, then any coming forth of it into particularity, inevitable for real human beings, will necessarily seem an imperfection, while any unpleasant particularity will seem positively repugnant, difficult or impossible to reconcile with our ideal of humanity which we believe is most worthy of love. The result of this view of humanity—and perhaps the cause as well—is the aforementioned intolerance of particular individuals.

There is, however, one class of people that people like Ivan may love even up close. Ivan loves children. He begins his explanation of his rebellion against God's world with his love of children. For him, in his somewhat idealized and naive view, children represent innocence—humanity at its purest before it becomes irretrievably bound up with its own particularity and sin. He explains to Alyosha, "The second reason why I won't speak of grown-up people is that, besides being disgusting and unworthy of love—they have retribution—they've eaten the apple and know good and evil . . . but the children haven't eaten anything and are so far innocent" (218). The difference between adult and child on this view is that children still represent humanity at its purest without any strong commitments to particularity. That is to say, they are still mostly the potentiality of freedom rather than its already realized concrete manifestation. As such, they are closest to the pure abstract, ideal of man—without being tied to any particular content. The main difference, then, between adults and children is that adults can be understood to have made choices, to have realized their freedom in such a way that they can be made responsible for it. Children, on the other hand, especially the young children on whom Ivan focusses, are still not committed to any particular views or any particular character and consequently cannot be said to have genuinely taken responsibility for their own fate, to have chosen their freedom.

Yet it is not difficult to see that even the love that Ivan has for children does them no good. For it is applicable to them only insofar as they remain innocent. Since the great majority of children must at some time grow up to become adults, a love for them which is based only on their pure unrealized humanity is at the same time acknowledged as in principle fleeting. It is a love for a moment in their existence which soon passes, which

is already in the process of passing away even while it is loved. A love for human beings merely in their abstract, pure form that does not also commit to love that same humanity throughout its inevitable process of particularization and limitation is not a love for the person at all, since it loves only that in them which inevitably must be left behind--the purity of their humanity as untouched by any particularity.

iv--comments on the above

In contrast to a love of persons as persons that allows us to be content merely with a love of humanity in the abstract, detached from the recognition of this humanity in particular people, a love for persons which treats the unconditioned worth of human beings as grounded not merely in their pure, unrealized abstract freedom/subjectivity but also in its concrete existence and realization demands that the lover of humanity be able to love specific people in their particularity. An ability to recognize that which makes people unconditionally worthy of love not merely in the abstract but also in particular human beings is essential, not merely optional, to this conception of love for humanity in general.

This does not, of course, mean that we are required, on this view, to love actively *all* people in their particularity, to never be limited to a general respect in our intercourse with other people. For this would obviously be impossible since, in our limited interactions with them, most people simply are not present to us in all their particularity. Rather we often interact with people in a capacity which allows us to actually get to know them only partially, not as whole, particular people. With some, we have only professional dealings, in which we encounter each other only momentarily when one person needs something from the other. A recognition of the unconditioned worth of persons, then, must indeed be institutionalized to ensure that it is respected even when we cannot, due to the limited nature of our encounters with most people, recognize the humanity within the particular individual, when our contact with the other is extremely limited.

What a love for humanity, informed by a Hegelian conception of human beings, *does* mean is that to regard ourselves as sincere lovers of humanity, we must be able to appreciate the humanity in actual people *whenever possible*, whenever our relations with them are *not* so limited. For on this view the unconditioned worth of humanity is not something merely abstract which may be appreciated apart from its realization. Our

sincere love for humanity consequently requires that we make a commitment to see the humanity where it actually exists: in the persons present to us. Although this will by no means always be easy, and may come only with a great deal of difficulty--and even then in a somewhat strained way, love for humanity commits us to actively commit to recognize to the best of our ability the humanity in particular persons. Although we may not always succeed, we must, if we are motivated by a sincere commitment to this ideal of unconditional love, make an effort. Otherwise our love for humanity becomes merely a love of an abstraction, not of actual persons. That we see the humanity in some and not others, then, is not a mere psychological fact with which we remain content and allow to determine the nature of our relations with people. Rather, we commit actively to improve our vision--to aim to recognize and appreciate humanity wherever it is present.

Besides, although our ability to see the humanity in others is certainly an important element of personal love, it is not clear that this visibility is what distinguishes love which involves a special relationship from a general love for humanity that does not. There may be many people whose humanity we feel that we can perceive clearly within their particularity with whom we nevertheless do not pursue a more special relationship (although they do become special to us in a way simply by virtue of the force of this insight). After spending time working side by side with a co-worker, we may come to perceive the humanity within him, perhaps with even greater ease and than we do that of many of our own family members and friends whom we love specially. We see clearly the mark of his dignity as a free human being and we accordingly feel strong compassion for him when his interests as a free will are interfered with, but this does not itself necessarily lead us to give our relationship with him special status in our lives. We do not necessarily for this reason befriend him, inviting him to take a more important place in our lives. We are able to acknowledge his humanity without altering our relationship with him. We can recognize his humanity and still allow that we will probably not have as special a relationship with him as we do with our lover and our friends.

What's more, there are many who are in fact special to us whose humanity we do not have especially easy access to. Indeed many of those special relationships--such as familial relationships--are not initially selected by us at all and are born of contingent circumstances rather than psychological visibility. Moreover, even in the relationships that begin as selective, it may become difficult to continue to see the humanity in the beloved whom we have chosen when either our persona or the other beloved's changes. Nevertheless our love for them seems to be based on more than just the ability to see, but,

as I suggested earlier, seems to be grounded in a *commitment* to see. When our psychological barriers or the beloved's altered circumstances interfere with our ability to discern her humanity, a sincere love for her entails not that we simply allow the relationship to fade into one of mere respect but that we make an active effort to break down the barriers, to find a way to recognize the same humanity that we originally saw in her within the particularity now before us.

v--place of contingency and variety in love; Hegel on subjective and objective origins of love

An explication and defence of the ideal of unconditional love for persons as persons need not--and should not--provide an exhaustive psychological explanation for how, as a matter of fact, some specific persons initially come to be special to us. For it is clear that there may be all sorts of contingent reasons why people in fact end up selecting one person rather than another to form special relationships with. Shared experiences, physical attraction, compassion, a timely fall of one's own psychological barriers, and many other factors may sometimes lead us to regard another person as special and to prefer that particular person to any other. There undoubtedly do exist many different kinds of love, the origins of which may not all be accounted for by any one particular cause. Familial love usually differs in its origins from friendship, which also differs from romantic love. Perhaps we come to feel specially related to our family members because they happen to be an important part of our lives or because we regard them as specially *ours* (as kin), while our friendships might begin from shared interests, or mutual need and admiration, and romantic love be born in us when someone strikes us as especially attractive in some way. That the ideal of unconditional love does not have within itself an explanation or justification for all the varied reasons we may have of coming to love specific persons specially does not mean that it is irrelevant to a discussion of love for particular persons who are specially related to us. For the ideal of unconditional love is not meant to be a description of love as it happens to exist but a *commitment* which lovers can make, an ideal toward which they may strive. Only if they are successful in living up to this ideal, or if they happen to begin with a love that already accords with what such an ideal calls for, will the ideal of unconditional love in fact *describe* their actual relationship. Yet this ideal description of unconditional love need not characterize people's actual loving relationships in all their historical detail but only their love as it

may come to be, telling us what they may *strive for* in loving and how their love may be transformed by this aspiration. Rather than concern itself with the variety of ways in which we may come to love someone, a conception of unconditional love as an ideal must provide an account of how these merely contingent, inherently transitory bases may be transfigured into something lasting to which lovers may commit themselves unconditionally, which makes it possible for them to commit to relate *permanently* to the beloved, in her wholeness, as special to them.

An ideal of unconditional love for persons, then, makes a distinction between our initial reason for selecting the beloved (which is for the most part irrelevant to the ideal itself which encompasses many types of love, though not for that reason unimportant to particular lovers motivated by the ideal) and that which makes possible our commitment to continue to love her. Hegel, in discussing marriage, accordingly distinguishes its subjective origin, that which initially causes one to regard the beloved as special, from its objective origin, that which confers permanence on the relationship and allows the lovers to transcend its merely subjective origin and commit to continue to love the beloved specially. He allows that the subjective origin may vary depending on circumstances but insists that the objective origin must always be the same. This objective origin, Hegel claims, lies in the commitment of the two parties to surrender their (merely) natural and individual personalities to become one person. To see what this means, we need to consider Hegel's discussion of love and marriage.

Marriage, as "rightfully ethical love" (love which has transcended its merely subjective, contingent origins), in Hegel's view, calls on people to limit their merely subjective independence, the absoluteness of their own particular, arbitrary interests for them, in relation to another particular being who, although undeniably other than them, has the same absolute sovereignty over her own particular ends and the same independence from all restricted content. When we love another person for her own sake, therefore, we have as an end not some limited content, as we do in other possible objects of our will which we may manipulate as we desire, but free will itself, which we concretely recognize within the particularity of both an other and ourselves. This highest end, which alone can be thought to have unconditioned worth, and which is the essence of both the beloved's and our own subjectivity, is not limited by any other content, but itself limits the arbitrary will of the person who recognizes it.

What we find and seek in another person, then, when we love her for her own sake as a human being with unconditioned worth is another subject who cannot accurately be

viewed as a mere object for us. Just as we recognize that we are not dependent on the content of what we will, when we love another person as a person we recognize that the beloved cannot be compartmentalized in our understanding of her merely as good for us in this or that particular way, since she, like ourselves, is not essentially bound or captured by any restricted determinations. Love for persons as persons is inherently different from a love for objects. Although it is always possible for us to treat the beloved as a mere object, arbitrarily according her a place among our other objects, and although the beloved too can treat herself as a mere object, making it difficult or impossible for us to recognize her as anything else, once we recognize this freedom in the beloved, we also necessarily recognize that any love which treats her as a mere object will necessarily fail to capture who she is: for even in her particularity she is not essentially restricted by any content with which we may identify her or by which she may limit herself. We limit ourselves in love for another *person*, then, not by sacrificing our own good and sense of self to the other or vice versa but by ceasing to cling to the experience of the good as merely subjective, dependent only on our own personal, arbitrary willing. We do so by actively recognizing within another particular being the very same independence with respect to merely given determinations that we have and by making the free will itself, rather than just the independence it affords us in relation to nature, our end, willingly limiting our arbitrary freedom with respect to it. Thus we have as an end in love not merely a content which depends on our arbitrary willing, in relation to which we may regard ourselves as utterly independent (while the other is regarded as dependent). Rather, in recognizing the unconditioned worth of the beloved, we gain a concrete experience, apart from its merely contingent existence, of our own substantial essence which alone gives us unconditioned worth and is at the same time recognized as the essence of another, different particular individual. For in our relation to the beloved we are concretely related not to some dependent content, incongruous with the independence of our free will, but to another free will like our own. Hegel explains, "Love means in general the consciousness of my unity with another, so that I am not isolated on my own, but gain my self-consciousness only through the renunciation of my independent existence and through knowing myself as the unity of myself with another and of the other with me" (*Philosophy of Right* 199)

It is important to emphasize that the lover and beloved do not by renouncing their (mere) independence thereby become *dependent* on each other or on their relation; rather, the concepts of independence and dependence are not applicable here because there is no

essential inequality between the lover and the beloved insofar as both are free, self-conscious subjects with unconditioned worth. I should also note that this equality or unity nevertheless does not deny the separateness of the lover and the beloved as Alan Soble's interpretation of Hegel's view of love as an undifferentiated unity of the lover and the beloved, "the annulment of all distinction between the lovers" ("Union, Autonomy, and Concern"), suggests. The lovers' subjectivities are not restricted or reduced to their relationship with the other, so that they actually become one and the same undifferentiated subjectivity with the aim of having precisely the same particular experiences and interests. On the contrary, their ability to recognize each other as free human beings presupposes that they also be recognized and encountered as separate individual subjectivities. They are able to love *another* person, as *essentially* the same as themselves, by recognizing in a being *with a particular existence that differs from their own* the same principle which drives their own. The sameness that they recognize is not and does not call for a thoroughgoing similarity in their particularity; rather it is a recognition that, *despite* a difference in particularity, they have the same *essence.* As freedom, the essence of subjectivity is remarkable because its instances do not have to be very much alike in their particular determinateness to be recognizable as having the same essence. Rather, they are recognizable within their particularity not because their specific determinateness defines them but because they are able to relate to their particularity freely. Hegel explains, "love completely destroys objectivity. . . deprives man's opposite of all foreign character, and discovers life itself without any further defect. In love the separate does still remain, but as something united and no longer as something separate; life senses life" ("Love" 305). What makes possible a love for persons is our ability to find even within a particularity apparently alien to us, as originating from another will, an essence like our own. We recognize that even though our particular subjectivity is different from that of another, we may recognize as the essence of that other person the very same free will, or self-determining power, that we have. This makes it possible for us to join with the other in a substantial unity, surrendering our independence and forming "a single person" (*Philosophy of Right* 201), not as a convergence of particular subjectivities whose qualitative distinctiveness is eradicated but as a reorientation of both particular subjectivities so that, through the mediation of the reciprocal recognition of the unconditioned worth of each, they may unite their particular subjectivities by subordinating them to the higher (but not alien) end of recognizing and promoting the very freedom that is the essence of both and the basis for their unconditioned worth.

Otherwise, if our love for the other were conceived of as actually making or positing only one subjectivity where there were initially two, the love of each for the other would be merely a kind of expanded self-love that would not limit the arbitrary will of the lovers, directing their attention away from the contingent content that might be the object of their arbitrary wills to an appreciation of the unconditioned worth of each other as free subjectivities. For an interest in the other's good would, as a recognition or creation of mere sameness, just be another way of relating to one's arbitrary interests. Conceiving of love as an actual or intended coincidence of the lovers' particular desires does not make love unselfish, or radically alter the lover's conception of his own interests, but merely extends them to include those of the beloved, without accounting for how the beloved herself becomes a good for the lover so that he may genuinely regard himself as aiming for her good for her own sake

vi--the focus of unconditional love

I have defended the ideal of unconditional love as something that necessarily involves a commitment. Inspired by Hegel's conception of the person, I have argued that we can commit to love unconditionally when we know, or strongly believe that the beloved has unconditioned worth and is therefore not a mere object for us like other objects whose relative worth depends in some degree on what we will but a subject, with a capacity for good all her own. If we love the person as such, we love her not because she has realized in herself this or that good, but because she is a subject just as we are, with the freedom to realize such a good in the first place. Love, on this account, is not love of the subject for some object of his desire or will which he regards as good but for a subject like himself. As Hegel put it: "[in love] *life* senses *life*." This does not, of course, mean that the lover ceases to judge the beloved's character as good or bad but that his love itself is not based on the good or the bad that the beloved is capable of willing but on the free subjectivity that wills. Thus in unconditional love the lover, in response to his insight that the beloved is a subject like himself with the capacity to become or fail to become actually good commits to value this subjectivity above its particular choices, to recognize as having unconditioned worth not particular good characteristics but the free will which makes them possible.

Because this subjectivity or free will which we may recognize in another is not an object like other objects which simply is what it is, for better or for worse, but contains

within itself an indeterminate set of possibilities for its particularization, a love for it is not, like a love for something stable which remains the same throughout our love for it, static and unchanging in its determinate character. Although according to this ideal our attitude towards the beloved must always be stable in its commitment to recognize the unconditioned worth of the person as such, the very nature of what it loves forbids the love to be uniform in character. For the *object* that it loves is not a mere object at all but something which can take on many shapes and have many objects of its own, which temporarily determine it. As a free will which can determine and limit itself, the beloved *can* become an object for us, fixed in its determinate, qualitative character, and we must be responsive to these ways in which she determines and limits herself. But if our love for her is itself *based on* and *limited by* any of these ways in which her nature can be fixed for us, it is not unconditional but is in principle alterable with changes in either our character or hers[3].

Although our unconditional love for another is not based on this or that set of her characteristics, but on that bare sense of who she is, of the subjectivity that makes it possible for us to regard all of these characteristics, the good, the bad, even the contradictory, as belonging to one person whom we love, it is not for that reason indifferent to particularity. As I discussed in the sections on Hegel and in the examination of Ivan's abortive love for humanity, we cannot properly appreciate free will/subjectivity if we attempt to fix it as something abstract that can be understood without reference to its necessary particularization. A love for human beings that abstracts from all particularity is not a love for any human being at all. This kind of love for humanity is deficient not only because it makes a love for real people extremely difficult, as Dostoevsky shows, since their particularity always appears far less worthy than the pure abstract idea of humanity that we love, but also, as Hegel argues, because it is not really a love for humanity at all, even ideally, since it focusses on only one side of what is involved in being a free human subjectivity (freedom from external determination) and consequently fails to capture the concept of what it believes it loves. An actual love for persons as persons, therefore, is inherently dynamic: its foundation is a recognition of the worth of the human being as such but the focus of its activity is also

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[3] Even if their attachment to each other leads the lover and the beloved to change their determinate character together so that changes in the one are in fact be met with compatible, corresponding changes in the other, the *commitment* to change together already transcends an appreciation of the beloved as fixed in character; it requires a deeper, more permanent connection with the beloved, which makes us *want* to remain compatible with her, even when she is no longer the same qualitative person who originally inspired our love.

the particular person, as the manifestation of this essential subjectivity/ humanity. Its concern is for the *whole* person, including her particularity. A love for the basic humanity that underlies all the beloved's particular determinations *includes* a concern for that person's determinate existence, since a love for the free human subject itself leads us to want its freedom/subjectivity to be as fully realized as possible without obstruction[4].

vii--special relationships, importance of

Yet, even if the ideal of unconditional love allows for and even requires a love of particular persons, it may still seem to preclude loving some particular people *specially*. For although it requires that we love humanity in *particular* people and not merely in the abstract, it seems to require that we attempt to do this (see their humanity even within their particularity) to the same degree with *all* people. Since all are unconditionally worthy for the same reason, we seem to have no basis or justification for discrimination among people.

There is some truth to this charge: the ideal of unconditional love for persons does commit us to try to see the humanity within all people rather than relying on merely abstract ideals of respect for humanity in general. Yet, because the humanity that we aim to recognize is not something merely abstract but something that particularizes itself and enters into objective existence, an appreciation of the unconditioned worth of human beings will not always lead to relationships which *focus* on this humanity. For, as self-determining, people will also necessarily often need to relate to other people in their qualitative determinateness. This means that even though they will recognize or at least strive to recognize the unconditioned worth of *all* human beings, they will not necessarily make this recognition the continued focus of their interaction with all human being as they encounter them. For they will also have to be responsive to people in their particularity and many of their relationships with people may go only so far as that

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[4] The desire to see the beloved's freedom fully realized leads neither to a wish to control each and every element of her particular life so that it might conform to what we think is best nor to a mere acceptance of her every wish. This Hegelian conception of freedom involves elements of both of what we might call positive and negative freedom. On the one hand, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the free will for its realization requires that its determinate existence be structured in a particular way--oriented toward the end of recognizing the unconditioned worth of the free will itself. But, on the other hand, not every aspect of the free will's determinations are thereby determined. For in its relationship to its particular ends, it does and *should* still have room for arbitrary freedom. The lover therefore must acknowledges the importance of both these elements of freedom.

particularity. While the recognition of their unconditioned worth as persons will (or should) always structure the context within which these interactions take place (so that these interactions never involve a denial of the unconditioned worth of the other or an infringement on his rights as a free human being), it will not always be their focus.

Nevertheless, for us genuinely to recognize the unconditioned worth of human beings as the highest end, that recognition must be the focus of *some* of our relationships. We can and ought to have some relationships in which this *is* our focus and engage them with a permanence and unconditional devotion worthy of this recognition. The commitment to love some people specially is not contrary to the nature of general love for humanity but actually furthers its ends since these special relationships allow us to experience that which makes people unconditionally worthy not merely abstractly but also as it is realized in a whole particular, actual person, and to commit to recognize it in a way that reflects its unconditioned worth, and elevates it above all other goods[5]. Thus even Hegel, who believes that relationships originating in contingency are lower instances of the recognition of freedom than the institutionalized recognition of it in the laws and structures of the state, speaks of monogamous marriage not merely as desirable but as an ethical requirement[6] (201).

viii--The Beloved as special/irreplaceable

Given that there is nothing inherent in this ideal which forbids us to love some people specially and that, though it does not describe any one specific kind of loving relationship, it may still apply to any as what confers permanence on it and transforms its initial subjective basis into something enduring, the question remains as to whether its universal basis makes the particular beloved or the particular relationship less special, robbing the beloved of her special significance to us.

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[5] Although this does not necessarily mean that our love for the other person becomes the highest end in our lives such that it outweighs our devotion to society, religion, morality etc. For provided that the recognition of the unconditioned worth of the free will is the highest end, then it will be the end of these spheres too (although in a different way). It is possible then that the best choice will sometimes be to subordinate our devotion to one to our duty to the other if that other more fully serves the end which is the highest end of both. What's more this will not really be a limitation or restriction of the other relationship because it fulfils that very end which is its own.

[6] Though this does not necessarily mean that *everyone* must marry, only that such personal relationships are necessary within the greater system (and the end of the greater system itself is the very same recognition of the unconditioned worth human freedom).

The ideal of love for persons as persons may be rejected as an ideal for personal love and friendship, Badhwar charges, because it is not a response to and continued appreciation of the particularity of the beloved *for the sake of that particularity itself.* Though it may treat the loved one as special, it does so not as a response to her uniqueness but simply because she is a human being worthy of unconditional love just like any other and merely happens to be in a special relationship to the lover. The beloved is not regarded as actually qualitatively irreplaceable since the lover could just as well have selected another person with the same results. We want to be loved as unique irreplaceable individuals but when someone loves us unconditionally on the basis of our humanity we are, it seems, not loved as *this* particular individual but only as something universal--indeed with a love that has the most universal basis possible in a love for persons, a recognition of the unconditioned worth of persons as such.

This criticism is not, however, by itself compelling. For although it accurately identifies a desire that many of us have--to be loved in a way that treats us as ontologically unique and irreplaceable so that it is simply impossible for the beloved to love anyone but us in the way she loves us--it does not justify this desire and give us a reason to believe that those who are loved in this way are better loved than those who are not, that it is more accurately a love of the other person simply because many people desire to be loved in this way. This may, after all, be an unrealistic desire, perhaps even an indication of an unhealthy relation to self.

If this desire to be loved as unique and irreplaceable in our particularity, however, is not understood to imply a demand that our particular character be actually unique and irreplaceable, then an account of unconditional love for persons as persons can satisfy even this desire. For something need not be ontologically unique to be irreplaceable. We regard human beings as irreplaceable when we love unconditionally not because they are qualitatively unique but because they have unconditioned worth. Our beloved is irreplaceable because when we love unconditionally with a love focussed on the beloved's unconditioned worth as a human being, she is more than a mere good for us which could just as well be exchanged for another of equal value, were one to exist[7]. Her actual value as an object the worth of which we can judge is irrelevant (to the question of whether or not we may regard her as replaceable) because she is not an object for us. To regard the inherent worth of humanity as something that could just as well be exchanged with something of equal value (another person with the same unconditioned worth) is to

[7] Velleman makes a similar point (366).

fail to appreciate the sense in which the unconditioned worth of humanity becomes an end for us. Each person is unconditionally worthy of love not because we simply cannot conceive of anyone or anything else that could engage our affections as fully but because she is not a means to this end, because her value does not ultimately depend on our subjective assessment and appreciation of her worth. Were we to replace one beloved with another, we would perhaps gain just as worthy a "good" as what we had lost but we implicitly deny the unconditioned worth of that good by treating it as discardable when we do not see any loss in the exchange of the first person for the second. Consequently it does not follow from the fact that there are many human beings, each with unconditioned worth, that the people whose unconditioned worth we come to appreciate specially may just as well be exchanged with others without any loss to us.

Furthermore, the dynamic way in which we commit to recognize people's humanity not merely in abstraction from but also within their particularity, when we recognize their unconditioned worth and love them on this basis, makes the beloved's particularity special to us in an even stronger way. For we experience her particularity not merely as good or bad, as we might the particularity of objects or people with whom we interact only as means, but as the expression of her subjectivity. Although this does not mean that we will like everything about her, it does mean that we interact with her particularity in a way that makes it permanently important and special to us. For we actually experience and commit to continue to experience her essential humanity not outside but *within* our experience of her particularity. As lovers, then, we have a special perspective on the particularity of the beloved which, as the external existence of one free subjectivity with unconditioned worth, becomes in its totality inherently significant both as it is and as it might be. We regard the beloved's actual particular sphere of existence as special to us *as it is*, however flawed it may be, because our encounter with it is (ideally) inseparable from our appreciation of the unconditioned worth of the subjectivity to whom all the particularities belong. Though we might, for our own sake and/or for the sake of the beloved herself, wish that some of her particular qualities would change, we nevertheless in this kind of love regard the totality of that particularity as special to us as the external existence of a subjectivity that we recognize as having unconditioned worth. The very recognition of the person's universal, essential nature itself leads us to regard the particular person in her wholeness as special. Thus this conception of unconditional love that is grounded in an appreciation of the person's universal and essential nature is able to account not merely for why and how we can love people in their particularity, but

also for how we can regard that particularity as special in its totality, as a whole other person, even when it is not completely or perfectly good.

Chapter Five: Some Final Considerations

i--Love and Moral Judgement

It is important to emphasize that this ideal of unconditional love does not entail unconditional acceptance of the beloved's choices. For this love is not based on an unconditional approval of the beloved's particular character and arbitrary choices, whatever these may happen to be, but on an appreciation of the free subjectivity which makes these choices. Responding to the beloved as to an essentially *free* human being requires that the lover take the beloved's choices seriously and, therefore, that he respond to them in their determinate character. If the beloved behaves immorally, the lover ought not to treat her just the same as if she had done something of which he approves; rather, in respecting the free will of the person making the choice, as the self-determination of a free human being with unconditioned worth, he does not treat all her choices as if they had no significance, actively loving her in exactly the same way throughout (simply giving her what she wants), but reacts to them, engages them. While his love for her does remain the same throughout, permanently based on his recognition of her unconditioned worth, his very appreciation of the freedom which grounds her unconditioned worth may lead him to wish that she would appreciate it more in herself and make her choices in a way that accords with this recognition of its unconditioned worth. Consequently he may not always want her to get what she wishes for if these wishes are merely the product of her caprice and are inconsistent with a recognition of her own freedom and unconditioned worth. He may even sometimes be led for the same reason to act contrary to her avowed interests if he has reason to believe that it might help her to realize her freedom in a more substantial, less contradictory way.

Thus the lover must be prepared not merely to accept every choice of the beloved's but to *respond* to them in their determinate character and not to hold back what he regards as the better part of himself when doing so. Of course, there is always the danger that he may by being overly rigid or caviling approach the other extreme, also a failure, treating the beloved as though her worth to him were ultimately conditioned by the particular details of each and every choice she makes, as though she must be as near to perfect as possible to be loved or to be worthy of love. The most important thing is that the lover should aim, when responding to the beloved, to treat her in a way

consistent with a recognition of her unconditioned worth, which means never treating her as though her worth were permanently fixed by her qualitative nature by either demanding perfect goodness from her all the time or merely accepting her wickedness without ever hoping for anything better from her in a way that informs his response to her.

Yet when the beloved is so thoroughly depraved as to have no respect for either her own or the lover's unconditioned worth, when she unrepentantly violates the most serious moral principles and cannot be reached by the lover's attempts to promote her good, when she even deliberately abuses the lover who wants to help her, it may be necessary even from the standpoint of love itself to end the relationship (though the love is not thereby ended). There are two reasons why this may be so: first, some evil deeds of the beloved may be so serious that an appropriate reaction or response to them would have to be correspondingly serious. Especially if the beloved is unrepentant, this may sometimes mean ending the relationship. Second, since in behaving immorally in a way inconsistent with a recognition of her own and others' unconditioned worth the beloved degrades herself rather than promoting her good, the lover may, motivated by his concern for the beloved's good as well as his own, properly choose to leave the relationship (if no other options are available) so as to avoid implicitly condoning that degradation of that which makes the beloved unconditionally worthy.

ii-termination of the relationship

Because the ideal of love functions as a commitment possible for lovers rather than just a description of a loving relationship, it is possible to terminate the actual temporal relationship between the lover and the beloved in extreme cases without thereby stepping outside the perspective of the love itself. Since we aim unconditionally for the good of the beloved *no matter what* and since it is conceivable that sometimes that good may best be served by a termination of the actual relationship between the lovers, the lover may sometimes be compelled by his unconditional concern for the beloved to withdraw his love (at least insofar as it has tangible consequences for him). This will terminate the special relationship which gave birth to the love and will cease all further loving activity but because it was itself an act of love, grounded in the deepest concern for the other and the continued recognition of her unconditioned worth, it does not indicate that the love itself was conditional. For unconditional love, as genuine concern for and recognition of

the beloved, is complete only if it is not dependent even on the relationship itself. That is to say, its end is not ultimately the need to be in an actual relationship with the other(although typically active love will lead to this desire) but involves the willingness to give up even this for the sake of the beloved's good, to not make the relationship rather than the person the end of the love. Although this possibility (of ending the relationship) will be remote in successful relationships it must never be in principle ruled out.

The difference between this ideal of unconditional love which allows, and can in extreme cases requires, the termination of the relationship and an ideal which has as its condition that both the relationship *and the love* will end under the same conditions may seem trivial. After all, both may have the same result. Yet the difference can be enormous from the standpoint of the lover who has felt in himself the sincere commitment to love the beloved unconditionally and continues to recognize the unconditioned worth of the beloved. Consider the difference this distinction can make in one situation in which it seems intuitively obvious from almost any perspective that the lover should consider ending the relationship: when the beloved is abusive. As long as the lover sees only two options, unconditional acceptance and the introduction of a condition into his love, he will be faced with great suffering either way: he either stays and accepts the unconscionable treatment of him by the beloved to preserve the meaning of his commitment in which he still believes, while perhaps nevertheless suffering self-doubt because of the impulse he has to leave, or he leaves to prevent suffering and feels immense guilt for having terminated the love without having ceased to believe in the commitment.

Those who, for example, insist that a woman leave her abusive husband *because he is so evil as to be unworthy of her love* will do greater harm than good to her if she is motivated in her love for him by an unconditional commitment. For the thought that her love could be subject to a condition, that she could give up on someone who is in principle never beyond hope to her, will feel a threat to her integrity, a degradation of the ideal which informs her sense of self-worth. The only way she will be able to end the relationship or take a stronger stance against him without intense guilt and an inability to trust her commitments to love in the future is if she is convinced that by doing so she does no violence to her ideal of love but in fact acts out of love.

Conclusion

I have defended the ideal of unconditional love for persons for their own sake as a viable ideal to which lovers may commit and by which they may guide their choices in love. In doing so, I have invoked a particular metaphysical conception of the person, and have defended it as the one which best captures and makes sense of the way in which people strive to love when they commit to this ideal. For lovers who already feel the pull of this commitment and strive to make sense of it, the discovery of a conception of the person, a way of valuing the person, which enables them to love in accordance with the ideal to which they already feel committed will be welcome indeed, and they may perhaps accept it without question. Those who remain skeptical about the viability of this ideal may still challenge the Hegelian conception of the person that underlies it. For I have defended it only partially in my efforts to show that it best meets the needs of a lover who has committed to an ideal of unconditional love for persons. Assuming that I have been successful, then, in showing the ideal of unconditional love for persons to be meaningful as an understanding of personal love, given a particular conception of the person, an attempt to determine if this ideal or some other best captures our desire to love people for their own sake, as the end of our love, properly shifts its focus to an assessment of the conception of the person that informs this kind of love. If, however, in their attempts to challenge it, people discover that this conception of the person actually is the most accurate, actually best captures our personhood, then even those who were not previously committed to an ideal of unconditional love may have to conclude that it is the one that most succeeds in loving people for their own sakes.

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