

# What Matters in Love: Reflections on the Relationship between Love and Persons

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*ABSTRACT:* In *Reasons and Persons*, Derek Parfit takes issue with Bernard Williams' view of the relation between love and identity. Williams thought that, in a world where there were several co-existing replicas of one's beloved, our current conception of love would begin to crumble. Parfit agrees with Williams in the branching case of replication, but thought that, where replication takes a non-branching form, our ordinary view of love would remain intact. I believe Parfit arrives at this conclusion because he has not fully appreciated the degree to which Williams' claim is primarily about a view of love rather than one of identity.

*RÉSUMÉ :* Dans *Reasons and Persons*, Derek Parfit conteste le point de vue de Bernard Williams quant à la relation entre l'amour et l'identité. Williams pensait que dans un monde où plusieurs répliques de son bien-aimé existeraient, notre conception actuelle de l'amour s'avèrerait caduque. Parfit partage l'avis de Williams sur les ramifications de la réplication, mais croit que lorsque la réplication adopte une forme non ramifiée notre vision courante de l'amour demeure intacte. Je pense que Parfit arrive à cette conclusion parce qu'il a mésestimé combien l'affirmation de Williams se rapportait davantage à une vision de l'amour que de l'identité.

**Keywords:** love, personal identity, embodiment, replication, fungibility

In the short section of *Reasons and Persons* called “Am I a Token or a Type?,” Derek Parfit discusses the issue of love. Admittedly, he was not intending to present a theory of love, but his view of love and the relation between it and his

*Dialogue* 58 (2019), 323–340.

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doi:10.1017/S0012217318000409

notion of personal identity raises some important questions. Parfit believed that his view of personal identity is not only compatible with but supports “the best conception of the best kind of love.”<sup>1</sup> Parfit’s interest in the topic of love here arises from a more primary concern, which has to do with the metaphysics of personal identity. His conception of love can reasonably be seen as influenced by his view of identity. Alan Soble has explored the relation between love and personal identity in the opposite direction and more indirectly. Soble is fundamentally concerned with love or more precisely, the structure of love—including love’s object. But his view of love is most compatible with and perhaps even suggests a specific view of personal identity that constitutes love’s object.

The aim of this paper is to explore the relation between love and personal identity. I believe that the relation between these two concepts has been under-explored, a point that Christopher Grau makes in his insightful article titled “Love and History.”<sup>2</sup> Perhaps one of the reasons for this neglect is that the relation between these two notions gives rise to a certain ambiguity regarding love’s object. On the one hand, exploring love’s object in the context of the metaphysics of personal identity as Parfit and (to a great extent) Bernard Williams do, focuses on the nature of some entity in the world independent of any relationship to that entity. We see this clearly in the case of Parfit, where his theory of personal identity has a kind of priority over his view of human relationships, not only when it comes to love but ethics as well.<sup>3</sup> For my purposes, it is important to note that his view of personal identity gives rise to or at least supports a particular kind of conception of love. On the other hand, the idea of love’s object can be seen from the perspective of a view of love as in the case of Soble’s work. Here we are concerned more with the structure and phenomenology of love and perhaps with what we can call love’s ‘intentional focus.’ For instance, when we love someone, is our love aimed at the properties of the beloved or at something else (a self or an immaterial soul, for instance)? These two conceptions of love’s object raise fundamentally different questions and yet, it seems to me, they are importantly related. As Grau says in the aforementioned article, “a conception of love for persons is unlikely to float free of a conception of the nature of persons.”<sup>4</sup>

I want to examine this relation in both directions as exemplified by the work of the above-mentioned philosophers. More specifically, I am interested in

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<sup>1</sup> Parfit, 1986, 295.

<sup>2</sup> Grau, 2010, 265

<sup>3</sup> In her article “Self-Interest and Interest in Selves,” Susan Wolf explores the relation between Parfit’s view of personal identity and his view of ethics. She agrees with Parfit’s reductionism regarding persons but does not think that his proposed ethical view necessarily follows from his metaphysical view. In this paper, I raise a similar question regarding the relation between his account of personal identity and his view of love.

<sup>4</sup> Grau, 2010, 265.

exploring the relation between one's view of love and a phenomenology of love on the one hand, and one's view of personal identity on the other. As suggested above, the projects of Parfit and Soble are quite different in their aims. In one sense, they both are concerned in part at least with identifying the object of love. But what is meant by this expression is not the same for both thinkers. For Parfit, the object of love is to be understood in terms of his view of personal identity and it is his view of personal identity that influences his view of love. For Soble, the object of love is understood more in terms of his theory of love and the accompanying phenomenology of love, which hints at a view of personal identity. Although a theory of love and a phenomenology of love may exist independently of a metaphysical view of personal identity, I am interested in exploring the region where they overlap with the hope of discovering something interesting about their relation.

I will proceed by sketching my own view of the relation between love's object and personal identity before comparing it to the views of Parfit and Soble. I will specifically develop my own view by way of contrast with David Velleman's account of love. My hope here is to show the plausibility of my own view as well as to highlight certain problems in the treatment of this issue by the aforementioned thinkers. I believe that the object of personal love is another embodied human being. It may sound obvious to suggest this but the point is obscured by the approaches of both Parfit and Soble. Parfit identifies the mental life of the beloved as the primary focus of love and his thought experiments separate the mental aspect of the person from the person's body, relegating the latter to a position of lower importance. Soble does not prioritize the mental life but rather describes love's object as the collection of properties—both bodily and mental—that constitute the beloved. This characterization of love's object strikes me as abstract. Soble suggests that in making sense of love we can view love's ground in terms of the value of the beloved's positive properties versus that of her negative qualities. I believe that such a characterization fails to capture the sense in which a person's properties are embodied properties and embodied properties can only be adequately understood by viewing the person as a unified whole.

### **The Embodied Person as the Object of Love**

What is it exactly that we love when we say that we love another person? Is it a self, a soul, a personality? The Platonic-Christian tradition, which has dominated much of Western thinking on this issue, has generally opted for something like a mental or spiritual hidden core in opposition to the visible body. One contemporary philosopher who gives a provocative take on this issue is Velleman. In his essay "Love as a Moral Emotion," he presents us with his Kantian-influenced view of love and love's object. I find Velleman's account to be very interesting and will discuss it with the aim of presenting my own view by way of contrast.

In the aforementioned article, Velleman, like Soble, aims at giving an account of love rather than a discussion of personal identity. Unlike Soble, however, Velleman is not really giving an account of love's object, or at least not directly. But I do think that the latter's view implies a particular notion of the object of personal love. Velleman tells us: "I find it intuitively plausible that we love people for their true and better selves."<sup>5</sup> The "for" here suggests that Velleman is talking about the *basis* or *ground* of love rather than love's *object*. The basis-object distinction is one that Soble makes in *The Structure of Love*. For Soble, the basis of love is that *by virtue of which* one loves the beloved. The object of love, on the other hand, is the *person* whom one loves.<sup>6</sup> Soble employs this distinction in order to address a misunderstanding associated with the question of love's object. It is sometimes thought that when it comes to personal love a transcendental self or soul is required in order to allow one to avoid the conclusion that love has a person's qualities or properties as its object. To think this according to Soble is to confuse the basis of love with love's object. A person's properties are the *basis* of love, whereas the person herself is love's *object*. Keeping this in mind, I return now to the discussion of Velleman.

What does he mean when he says that "we love people for their true and better selves"? His answer appears in the following passage: "But when the object of our love is a person, and when we love him as a person—rather than as a work of nature, say, or an aesthetic object—then indeed, I want to say, we are responding to the value that he possesses by virtue of being a person or, as Kant would say, an instance of a rational nature."<sup>7</sup> Again, to put this in terms of Soble's distinction, this passage is primarily concerned with the basis of love rather than love's object. Instead of love being grounded in properties as in Soble's view, Velleman sees love as based on the value attached to personhood itself in the Kantian sense. Even though his primary concern in this passage has to do with the basis and perhaps even the nature of love, he also indicates that the object of this kind of love is a person. Personhood here is to be understood in terms of being "an instance of a rational nature." Velleman makes it clear that this is not simply to be equated with a person's intellect and therefore he thinks it provides a plausible basis for (and object of) love.

But rational nature is not the intellect, not even the practical intellect; it's a capacity of appreciation or valuation—a capacity to care about things in that reflective way which is distinctive of self-conscious creatures like us. Think of a person's rational nature as his core of reflective concern, and the idea of loving him for it will no longer seem odd.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Velleman, 1999, 365.

<sup>6</sup> Soble, 1990, 300, 306-307.

<sup>7</sup> Velleman, 1999, 365.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 365-366.

So if the basis of love is the value inherent in being an instance of a rational nature and the object of love is one's personhood understood in these same terms, then what role is left for the person's body in Velleman's picture of love? It is here that he makes an intriguing move. Velleman draws a distinction between one's personhood regarded as an instance of a rational nature and one's empirical persona. According to his Kantian view, *everyone* is equally worthy of love (just as everyone is worthy of respect) but not everyone is equally capable of giving a visible expression of this value. One's empirical persona—including one's gestures, tastes, sense of style, sense of humour, etc. (and presumably one's physical appearance in general)—acts as a conduit for expressing one's value as a rational nature. On the one hand, not everyone is capable of expressing this value equally well and, on the other, not everyone is equally adept at interpreting this expression of value in others. This, according to Velleman, is what accounts for the fact that we are able to love certain people rather than others even though all are equally worthy of love.

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 behavior 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 loveable in our eyes. Whether someone is loveable 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.<sup>9</sup>

There is something I find appealing about this picture simply because it connects the body and one's empirical being in general to one's personhood and, implicitly, to one's personality. But ultimately I find it dissatisfying as well as implausible. The main problem has to do with how one's empirical expressions of an *inner* value connect up with that value itself. Which of our expressions constitute an expression of our value as an instance of a rational nature? Why not all of our words and actions? Or, are some of our words and actions "outlaw," as Harry Frankfurt<sup>10</sup> suggests and not really part of the self? If the latter is the case, how are we to determine which 'are' and which 'are not' part of the self? The relation between one's empirical persona in general (or one's body in particular) and one's personhood is unclear as Velleman characterizes it. It is the separation of these two elements of personhood

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 372.

<sup>10</sup> Frankfurt, 1988, 165. Of course, Velleman's Kantian self tends towards universality, unlike Frankfurt's self, which is more particular and is defined by what one cares about. Particularity in Velleman's account seems to be only manifest in one's empirical persona.

that I find problematic when attempting to identify love's object. Let me try to explain what I mean here.

When I say 'I love Mary,' it sounds strange to say that what I mean is that I love some aspect of Mary—her personhood seen as an instance of a rational nature—as opposed to her smile, her intellect, her quick wit, and so on. On Velleman's view, these properties do not appear to be part of the *true* object of love but only love's *immediate* object.

The immediate object of love ... is the manifest person, embodied in flesh and blood and accessible to the senses ... Grasping someone's personhood intellectually may be enough to make us respect him, but unless we actually *see* a person in the human being confronting us, we won't be moved to love; and we can see the person only by seeing him in or through his empirical persona.<sup>11</sup>

What does he mean by "the immediate object of love"? In the context of the relation between one's empirical persona and one's *personhood* as Velleman conceives of it he would seem to mean something like the *apparent* object of love in contrast with love's *real* object. But it is the gap between the two that I find hard to accept. The gap seems to reflect the influence of the Platonic-Christian tradition that sees the body as an unworthy aspect of love's object. Velleman's view is perhaps an improvement on this since he does not degrade the human body in the way that Platonism and Christianity have but he does relegate it to a secondary and instrumental role in love. One's body—or more generally one's empirical persona—becomes something like a *means* for expressing or revealing one's true self.

I propose a different picture of love's object—one that does not create a gap between one's empirical persona or one's body and what we might regard as one's *true self*. The notion of *embodied personhood*<sup>12</sup> suggests that, when the object of love is a person, what Velleman calls one's "empirical persona" is part of that picture in a non-instrumental way. One's true self is not somehow hidden behind one's empirical qualities waiting to be expressed *through* them, but is rather constituted by one's qualities—including both mental and physical.<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that one will love all of her or his beloved's qualities, but

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<sup>11</sup> Velleman, 1999, 371.

<sup>12</sup> For discussions of embodiment, see Sartre, 1956; and Merleau-Ponty, 1962. Additionally, Iris Marion Young extends this discussion of embodiment from a feminist perspective in Young, 2005. In the context of an examination of love and identity, Hugh LaFollette characterizes the self as 'activity' and as embodied in LaFollette, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> My distinguishing between mental and physical qualities is not meant to indicate a substantive difference between the two. I merely make the distinction in order to account for the roles conventionally performed by them.

she will love him or her *in virtue of* certain qualities and *in spite of* certain other qualities. But in saying this I do not mean that it is simply a matter of the beloved's positive qualities outweighing her or his negative qualities. At times Soble speaks this way when discussing the distinction between the beloved's *properties* and the beloved *as the object of love*.<sup>14</sup> I will discuss Soble's account in a later section but for now I will say that this represents a rather abstract way of talking about the beloved's qualities in the context of love. I claim that we love our beloved as a whole and his or her qualities only make sense as part of that embodied whole. We do not love 'blonde hair' or an 'expressive smile' but rather we love *Mary's* blonde hair or *George's* expressive smile. To say that we love a person's blonde hair only sounds wrong once we abstract that property from the person of whom it is a part. I think that this characterization is more true to the phenomenology of love.

The problem appears to arise from the way we speak about persons and their properties—perhaps even from the structure of our grammar. We speak of one's arm, one's hair, or one's smile much like we speak about the relation between oneself and objects that are external to one's body (one's coat, one's car, etc.). We implicitly or explicitly make a distinction between our visible bodily properties and our *inner* conscious lives. The distinction is legitimate to the extent that it indicates two different sides of our experience but becomes problematic once we hypostatize consciousness (reflectively or unreflectively) and turn it into something substantially distinct from the body (a kind of person or self that is distinct from the body).<sup>15</sup> Rather than saying with Velleman that one's empirical persona is that which *expresses* one's true self, I want to say that in an important sense one's persona *is* oneself. One's character and personality, which we often more closely associate with who one is, are important and perhaps defining aspects of our identities. But these are not qualities or sets of qualities that are somehow separate from the body or empirical persona in which they are expressed. One's personality only has reality as it is expressed in one's sense of humour, gestures, sense of style, and so on. The idea of one's character means nothing apart from visible actions and expressions in the world—even if this sometimes takes the form of refusing to act, being silent, or being reserved. Even if one's consciousness or conscious thoughts are not directly accessible to another person, this does not mean that one's true self is somehow likewise concealed.

Who one is, or one's identity, is not something hidden away but something that exists out in the world for others to see and interpret. The perspective that others bring to understanding one's self is in many ways just as important as one's own first-person picture. Other people often see aspects of one to which

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<sup>14</sup> Soble, 1990, 308.

<sup>15</sup> Sartre refers to this hypostatization of consciousness in several places, in Sartre, 1956, beginning as early as page 81.

the person in question is blind. Of course, one may try to hide his or her intentions or desires from other people, but even in this case the deception or concealment is often revealed not by a first-person confession but rather by the recognition of signs of the truth from the other's perspective. If there is such a thing as one's 'true self,' then this will be a self that is revealed in the world—to and for others. There is a sense in which I know my own body or my own self as an embodied being by way of living my body. But other people know me by perceiving my body and interpreting my words and actions. It is not clear that one perspective should have priority over the other when understanding the self. It is in this sense that the self is co-constituted or is a social self.<sup>16</sup>

In the following two sections I will discuss Parfit's view of the relation between love and personal identity and will highlight some of the implications of it. My aim is to show why his account is deficient in light of the view I have just presented. In the penultimate section of the paper, I will examine Soble's view and will attempt to show that, even though it entails a different (but related) kind of problem, the view I present above also serves as a (partial at least) corrective.

### **The Aim of Ordinary Love**

Parfit's discussion of love in the section titled "Am I a Token or a Type?" is a response to Williams' suggestion that what we love when we love a person is best characterized as a body (even if this is not a fully satisfactory characterization according to him). Williams makes this suggestion in his essay "Are Persons Bodies?" in response to the dilemma posed by the hypothetical possibility of duplicating one's beloved. Even though Williams, like Parfit, is primarily focused on the metaphysics of personal identity, what seems to motivate his claim that what we love when we love a person is a particular body is a concern about our ordinary view of love as well as perhaps love's phenomenology. Williams presents his example of Mary Smith who, in true sci-fi fashion, has had several exact copies made of herself. In such a situation, if one were to love one of the copies, Williams suggests that it would be unclear whether what one loves was a token-person or a type-person. If we loved her despite the fact that she was a Mary Smith, we might love her as a token-person. But if we loved her as a Mary Smith, then Williams suggests that we might love her as a type-person. What is important here for my purposes is the reason behind Williams' suggestion that what we love when we love a person is a body (while acknowledging Williams' admission of the imprecision of this claim). He tells us that the dilemma involved in determining whether we love a token-person or type-person threatens our ordinary conception of what it is to love a person.

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Ricoeur gives an in-depth examination of the sense in which the self is constituted through one's interaction with others in Ricoeur, 1992.

“Much of what we call loving a person would begin to crack under this, and reflection on it may encourage us not to undervalue the deeply body-based situation we actually have.”<sup>17</sup> What appears to motivate Williams to make this claim is not primarily his concern with the metaphysics of personal identity but rather a view of what it is to love a person. But this view of what it is to love a person, of course, is deeply connected to our actual body-based situation. I believe that this is the point that Williams was trying to make but I am not sure that Parfit appreciated the extent to which this was a claim about the nature of love rather than the nature of personhood. More about this shortly, but first, let’s look at a widely spread view of love, one that is at play to some extent in both Williams’ and Parfit’s discussions (although Parfit’s view departs from it in one particular respect).

What does such a view of love entail? Our ordinary view of love and its accompanying phenomenology suggests that love is aimed at a particular individual who is numerically one and this individual (qua object of love) is non-fungible or irreplaceable. Soble, following Ronald de Sousa, suggests that “irreplaceability is only part of our ideology of love.”<sup>18</sup> Of course, love is arguably constituted by both ideology and biology, so claiming that it is part of the former should not downplay its significance. But even assuming that non-fungibility is inessential to love, we are still faced with the claim that a particular love is focused on a particular individual and if it is to remain the *same* love, then the beloved cannot be substituted for. But what constitutes substitution? This question might sound strange in normal conversations about love but in the context of philosophical thought experiments, sci-fi examples, and conceptually possible advances in science and technology, a certain ambiguity emerges. I call this situation ‘ambiguous’ because when we normally think of the idea of fungibility in the context of love we are thinking about the possibility of substituting the beloved for another distinct person. Normally this takes the form of having feelings for or falling for a person other than one’s beloved. But when Williams and Parfit talk about substituting the beloved for an exact replica of him or her we are entering different territory. Is an exact replica a substitution for the beloved or is it something quite different? This question appears to be what motivates Williams’ distinction between type-persons and token-persons. Such a distinction could only be applied to individual persons qua individual, if replication were a possibility. The replicas in this case might be thought of as tokens of a type (although applying the notion ‘type’ to a *particular* in this way certainly stretches the meaning of the term as we normally understand it).

Parfit disagrees with Williams’ solution to the problem of duplication, focusing as it does on the token-type distinction and suggesting (in a qualified way)

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<sup>17</sup> Williams, 1973, 81.

<sup>18</sup> Soble, 1990, 290; De Sousa, 1978, 694-695.

that what we love is a body. He thinks that Williams' token-type distinction might be useful in a world where many replicas of a single person co-existed but it would not be of any use in a world "in which people are often replicated, but only in a one-one form."<sup>19</sup> Parfit proposes that what we love is the mental life of our beloved which is, in principle, reproducible. This means that one's love for his beloved should transfer to an exact replica, since in the case of the replica, the 'mental life' or psychological existence of the individual will continue. On Parfit's view, this presumably would not violate the (contested) non-fungibility requirement of love, since the substitution is such that nothing important to the identity of the beloved is lost. The replica is, in terms of qualitative identity, essentially the same person.

Parfit's discussion raises an important issue concerning the relation between love and personal identity. His earlier claim in *Reasons and Persons* regarding what matters in personal identity—i.e., "psychological connectedness and/or continuity" or "Relation R"<sup>20</sup>—gives rise to a further claim about what matters in love. He claims that love—like personal identity—is concerned with the mental life of the beloved and not with the body.

Parfit thinks that his view is compatible with the ordinary view of love. Ordinary love according to him is "concerned with the psychology of the person loved, and with this person's continually changing mental life."<sup>21</sup> In this regard, Parfit's view is not unique but is rather an example of a fairly common characterization of love. Parfit thinks that an identical twin whose body is similar to the beloved will not provide an adequate object for the transference of love. In this case, the non-fungibility requirement of love (assuming it is a requirement) has been violated since the mental life of the twin is different from that of the beloved even if she looks physically the same. A replica of the beloved will, however, be a suitable object for the transference of love since what one loves is the beloved's mental life, which contains her or his thoughts, memories, and so on. Presumably, since identity in the sense that matters transfers to the replica, then the non-fungibility requirement has been kept intact. But I think that Parfit's view of what matters in love, reliant as it is on his view of personal identity, is problematic. In fact, I think that it is his view of personal identity that leads him to mischaracterize the aim of ordinary love.

What matters in identity according to Parfit is "Relation R: psychological connectedness and/or continuity, with the right kind of cause."<sup>22</sup> The right kind of cause it turns out can be "any cause."<sup>23</sup> Since this is what matters for identity or for the survival of such, then Parfit concludes that this is what matters for love.

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<sup>19</sup> Parfit, 1986, 297.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 282-287.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

But whether or not Parfit is correct about the metaphysics of personal identity, I believe that his claim about love's aim is incorrect. The idea that love's object is our mental lives as opposed to our physical bodies is not new. As I suggested earlier, both Platonism and Christianity have held this up as an ideal of love. In Plato's *Symposium*, we see an endorsement of the virtuousness of loving the soul over the body in both the speeches of Pausanias and Socrates.<sup>24</sup> In the previous section, I discussed a Kantian version of this in Velleman's view of love. As we saw there, Velleman's account, like Parfit's, separates love's object from the body—although perhaps in not as extreme a manner as Plato.

The view of love suggested by Williams recognizes, and is partly understood in terms of “the deeply body-based situation we actually have.”<sup>25</sup> It is this body-based situation that informs or shapes our common view of love. The “situation we actually have” is one in which there are no human replicas. This might sound like a trivial truth in the context of a philosophical discussion of personal identity where thought experiments and conceptual possibilities can be informative, but, when considering a view of love, this fact becomes vitally important. I believe that this is why Williams says that our ordinary view of loving a person would start to crumble in a situation where several copies of the same individual co-exist. The body-based situation that we are in is one in which only a single instance of us exists and when that is gone so are we. Again, the purpose of highlighting this is not to deflate the thought experiments involving replication by suggesting that they are unrealistic, but rather to show that whatever they might tell us about personal identity, they don't necessarily show us anything about love (or at least they don't show us the same things about love). Parfit thinks that the concern Williams expresses about love only applies to the imagined alternative to the actual world that entails multiple copies of an individual co-existing, a concern that he also thinks applies to some extent to one's conception of one's own identity.<sup>26</sup> He admits that the branching case of replication may present a practical problem for both personal identity and love. He does not think that this concern should apply to cases where a person has been replicated and her original body has been destroyed. But is this true? Does replication of the non-branching kind pose a problem for our concept of love? I think that it does for some of the same basic reasons that Williams thinks the branching version of replication does.

### Love and Replication

Williams thinks that our ordinary view of love for a person would be threatened by replication of the branching kind. This sort of replication threatens our

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<sup>24</sup> Plato, 1989, 319-365.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, 1973, 81.

<sup>26</sup> Parfit, 1986, 296; 289.

concept of love because that concept is one that sees love as aimed at a particular (and arguably unique) individual. Replicating an individual in a way that results in multiple co-existing instances of him or her threatens that uniqueness. But arguably replication of the non-branching kind does not threaten uniqueness. On Parfit's view, when a person has been replicated and her or his old body has been destroyed, all that matters for personal survival still remains. The new body, which contains all of the memories and experiences of the original, is qualitatively the same as its predecessor. On his account, this simply amounts to an effective way to preserve one's youth or, in other cases, an efficient way to travel to other planets via teletransportation.<sup>27</sup> Qualitative sameness is what matters for personal survival. Since this is so, Parfit thinks that this is also what matters for love. Speaking of the replicated, non-branching Mary Smith, he tells us: "On the best conception of the best kind of love, I ought to love this individual. She is fully psychologically continuous with the Mary Smith I loved, and she has an exactly similar body."<sup>28</sup> But it is here that I see the two concerns—what matters for identity and what matters for love—as coming apart. Even if Parfit's argument for why we should regard this situation as being 'as good as ordinary survival' is convincing, it does not follow that his claim "I ought to love this individual" is so. One claim relies on a metaphysical view of personal identity whereas the other relies on a normative view about the structure (and perhaps even the phenomenology) of love. But what does such a view entail?

Parfit characterizes his own view of love thus: "Such love is concerned with the psychology of the person loved, and with this person's continually changing mental life. And loving someone is a process, not a fixed state. Mutual love involves a shared history."<sup>29</sup> As a view of love, this is not bad, but it is arguably overly focused on the mind—a common trait in many Western accounts of love. While I agree with Parfit that love is a process, involves a shared history, and is concerned with the mental life of the beloved, his thought experiments and sci-fi scenarios cause us to lose sight of the significance of what Williams calls our "deeply body-based" situation. On Williams' account, the significance of this is that it has shaped our current view of love. The object of our love is a person who is confined to a particular body and with whom we also share an *actual* history. This aspect of love is not insignificant. I do not think that Williams' view implies that the problem with replication is simply that it threatens the qualitative uniqueness of the beloved. I suspect that Williams would find even Parfit's altered Mary Smith scenario involving non-branching replication threatening to our ordinary view of love. Both scenarios ignore to some extent "the deeply body-based situation we actually have."<sup>30</sup> The body-based

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 200-201.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Williams, 1973, 81.

situation that we actually have is one that is limited or restrained by aging, mortality, very limited forms of bodily replacements (artificial limbs, hip or knee replacement, dental implants, etc.) and so on. The thought experiments and sci-fi scenarios that Parfit employs in his discussions may be useful in illustrating or highlighting issues relevant to personal identity, but, arguably, they mislead us when we turn to a discussion of what matters in love.

In his article cited earlier, Grau talks about Robert Kraut's discussion of the "intentional focus" of love.<sup>31</sup> Drawing on an analogy with Saul Kripke's notion of "rigid designation," Kraut sees love as attaching to individuals in a way that is similar to how proper names attach to objects. By attaching to individual persons rather than properties or a collection of properties, Kraut presents us with a view of love that Grau takes to be "genuinely historical." That is, it is historical, not in Parfit's sense where shared memories or a continuous psychological life is sufficient, or where Relation R can have "any cause," but rather it requires an *actual* history, which means one that includes the appropriate historical causes.<sup>32</sup> This, it seems to me, is consistent with Williams' concern that our (ordinary) concept of love is importantly dependent on our body-based situation. It is not simply the fact that the existence of multiple copies of an individual threatens our view of love because it threatens uniqueness, but rather any major modification of our body-based situation would alter our view of love by altering love's focus. Arguably, as Grau suggests, that focus aims at a person with whom one shares a real history rather than a collection of properties that perfectly simulate that history.<sup>33</sup> But, of course, the concept of person in the context of personal identity is not what is important to Parfit. In this sense, what is important for Parfit are certain properties (ones that the replica share's with the original) and not the person herself per se. Indeed Parfit thinks that turning our focus away from persons—seen as a life unit of long duration—and focusing on Relation R, frees us from a kind of selfish concern with our own personhood. It frees us to be concerned with or for others who might at present be more closely connected (psychologically speaking) to us than our future selves. This would also apply to the future self of our beloved. Our concern for her or him should be much more present-oriented (or near-future oriented). But does this adequately capture the intentional focus of love? Even if we agree with Parfit in rejecting something like a Cartesian ego as a characterization of personhood, does this mean that we will find his view satisfactory?

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<sup>31</sup> Grau, 2010, 257; Kraut, 1987.

<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Tony Milligan points out that the memories possessed by a replicated human being are not real memories of a real history but are rather "quasi-memories" which are simulacra. See Milligan, 2013, 317.

<sup>33</sup> Grau, 2010, 249.

### Abstracting Properties from Persons

In his book titled *The Structure of Love*, Soble gives a characterization of the relationship between persons and properties that I think raises similar questions to those raised by Parfit's view. To see what I take to be the problem with this view, the 'properties view' as I call it, I want to take a closer look at what Soble says in the chapter titled "The Object of Love." Whereas Parfit claimed that love is directed at the experiences and memories of the beloved, Soble's view of love's object involves more than the beloved's mental life. He sees love as involving the beloved's properties in general, which includes bodily properties. As I mentioned in an earlier section, Soble makes a crucial distinction between the ground of love and its object. The ground of love according to Soble is the person's properties but the object of love is the person herself.<sup>34</sup> But what does he mean by 'person' when he designates this as love's object? "The object of x's love is the collection of properties that y is, yet none of these properties is necessarily also an object of love for x."<sup>35</sup> Although he doesn't say it directly, Soble implies that a person is to be understood as a collection of properties. In this sense, Soble's view resembles Hume's bundle theory or aggregate view of personhood. But is such a view convincing as a characterization of the object of love? I do not think so for reasons that are to follow. Before I give my reasons for questioning Soble's account, I should reiterate the fact that his aim is different than Parfit's. Whereas Parfit was not primarily concerned with a theory of love or its object but rather with an account of personal identity, Soble can be characterized as being concerned with the opposite. He is concerned with a theory of the structure of love and in particular—in the chapter in question—a view regarding love's object. His primary concern is not to present an account of personal identity. While I believe that there is a significant difference between identifying the object of personal love and establishing a set of criteria for personal identity, I think that the two concerns emerge in relation to each other in both the work of Parfit and Soble. As I mentioned earlier, Parfit's view of what matters in love follows from his account of what matters in personal identity. There is a sense in which for Soble a view of personal identity follows from or at least is implied by his account of love's object. But, in both cases, I find their characterization of the object of love problematic. The common problem is the way that they characterize our experience of the beloved's properties.

In his attempt to show that properties ground love and to help us understand the structure of love, Soble tells us that "x can love y in virtue of y's attractive properties that outweigh y's defects."<sup>36</sup> But this view of properties is surely an abstract one. It sounds as if we can assign a value to each property and add up

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<sup>34</sup> Soble, 1990, 307-308.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

the total number of attractive properties (or the total overall value of the attractive properties) while subtracting the negative ones. But it seems to me that our experience of properties of persons is not like this. They do not easily admit of abstract representation because they are integrated into a body. In other words, they are embodied. I never experience the smile of my beloved in someone else, nor do I experience her sense of humour, her intelligence, and so on thus. I would argue that I do not even experience more objective or repeatable properties such as hair colour, height, eye colour, etc. in another person precisely because I experience these qualities in a person primarily as a unity. Even though I may occasionally mistake someone else for my beloved when seen from a distance because her hair looks similar, my ordinary experience of my beloved's hair is as part of her totality. She is not a loose bundle or collection of properties, perceptions, or whatnot, but is rather the embodiment of these properties. I believe that Soble's view fails to appreciate the embodied nature of our properties. It is only by viewing properties in abstraction from the concrete person to whom they belong that one can suggest that since properties *x*, *y*, and *z* are repeatable qualities, the person who possesses these properties is fungible qua object of love.<sup>37</sup>

Even though Parfit's focus is more specifically on the mental properties of the beloved, I believe that he makes a similar error. He sees one's mental life or mental properties (memories, thoughts, etc.) as constitutive of personhood. The various thought experiments and sci-fi scenarios that he presents isolate the mental life of a person from the rest of her being. In other words, Parfit's account abstracts certain properties from the embodied person in a manner similar to Soble.<sup>38</sup> In so doing, I believe that Parfit presents an implausible account of *what matters in love*. I think that Parfit is mistaken in thinking both that the object of love is simply the mental life of the beloved and that these (mental) properties can be viewed in abstraction from the unity of the person (the embodied person). It is in this sense that I believe that his metaphysical view and the accompanying thought experiments that support it have misled him in his view of love and its object. His ontology of the person, focusing as it does on specific kinds of properties (mental properties including memory and psychological experiences) and the accompanying thought experiments and examples which he employs to convince us of his view, obscures the sense in which these properties are part of an embodied being with whom one has a real history and real memories. It is this embodied being with whom we have a real history that constitutes the intentional focus of love.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 52-53, 286-304.

<sup>38</sup> There are differences, of course, between the two philosophers in the form that this abstraction takes. Soble abstracts particular properties from the person and in so doing disembodies or perhaps de-embodies them. Parfit, on the other hand, abstracts the mental life of the person from his or her fundamentally embodied existence.

Parfit's claim that love aims at the mental life of the beloved, we must remember, is a response to Williams and his suggestion that to love a person is in some sense to love a body. Williams own view in "Are Persons Bodies?" was on the right track and I think that the notion of embodiment or embodied properties might have helped him develop his account in a more satisfactory way. Williams admits that saying that we love a body is not quite right but to move from this to claiming that we love a mind or a "mental life" as Parfit does is equally misleading. We do not court, flirt with, date, or fall in love with mental lives or with collections of properties. Both of these are abstractions in the context of identifying love's object. Of course, the expressions of the beloved's mental life is one of the things that attracts us and is an aspect of what we come to love, but it is not something that we love in isolation from the person's smile, sense of humour, sense of style, and so on. There is truth in the claim that we are our bodies, but to describe bodies and mental lives as competing candidates for love's object is surely misleading. We separate these two aspects or functions of our being in order to make sense of them but we must not forget the artificiality of this separation. Recognizing that the body of the beloved is part of what we love is not simply a case of a physical obsession with a body type,<sup>39</sup> but it is rather to recognize that we experience the beloved as a unity. When I say that we experience the beloved as a unity, I am not simply making a claim about the nature of perception, but rather about love's intentional focus. It is only when I take an objectifying attitude that I begin to dissect that unity and analyze the discrete qualities of a person. Such analysis may prove useful in certain contexts and for particular philosophical purposes but these purposes are removed from the attitude and experience of love. In this sense, they are artificial and do not capture the phenomenological experience of loving or the focus of that love. I think that it makes sense to say that one's beloved expresses her intelligence, humour, or creativity not only in words or full-fledged actions, but in a certain sense (perhaps partially) in her mischievous smile, her ironic frown, her playful glance, and so on. So, love's object is neither best described simply as a body nor as a mind, but rather as an embodied person. What matters in love (and perhaps in personal identity as well) is the person experienced as a unity and so described. The idea of embodiment is meant to characterize the person as a unity in this sense. One's mind or mental life is co-extensive with one's body and is not to be thought of in isolation as the true object of love.

### **Conclusion: Love's Focus**

I mentioned early in this paper that there exists an ambiguity concerning what is meant by love's object. Love's object may denote an entity in the world or it may refer to the way we experience the person whom we love. Whereas in

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<sup>39</sup> Parfit, 1986, 297.

Parfit's discussion of love, it is clear that its object refers to some entity in the world, Soble's discussion retains the ambiguity. When the latter talks about the object of love, he refers to how the lover experiences the beloved as well as suggesting a view of the nature of the beloved as an object in the world. The lover loves a person and not properties, on Soble's view. On the one hand, this suggests that he is referring to the intentional focus of love. But what the lover actually loves when we say she or he loves a person is the collection of properties that the beloved is. This would seem to refer to something like a metaphysical characterization of the person. The person whom one loves is a collection of properties.

But, it seems to me that love's intentional focus is concerned with an historical, embodied human being. This means that not only is love not directed at specific properties, but it is also not directed at a collection of properties, even if these properties are the ground (or at least part of the ground) of love. Love is directed at an embodied human being with whom one shares a real history that includes real or normal historical causes. Likewise replicas with whom one shares no actual history are inadequate substitutes for one's beloved. A replica can only be seen as an adequate substitute for one's beloved, it seems to me, if one accepts that the intentional focus of ordinary love is not restricted to our deeply body-based situation where our actual shared histories, memories, and causal histories matter.

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