

# True and Proper Selves: Velleman on Love\*

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In my view, appreciation for someone's value as a person is not incidental to loving him: it is the evaluative core of love. I do not mean that love is a value judgment to the effect that the beloved has final value as an end in himself. Love is rather an appreciative response to the perception of that value. And I mean "perception" literally: the people we love are the ones whom we succeed in *perceiving* as persons, within some of the human organisms milling about us. Only sometimes in this throng do we vividly see a face or hear a voice or feel a touch as animated by the inner presence of a self-aware, autonomous other—a person who is self to himself, like us.  
(J. David Velleman, "Beyond Price," 199)

## I. INTRODUCTION

What is the valuable condition of a person that love is an exercise in really seeing? In "Love as a Moral Emotion," Velleman suggests it is "the rational self-governing will." This, he says, "is the . . . true and proper self of a person . . . which lies at the heart of personhood."<sup>1</sup> According to Velleman, being autonomous, that is, acting for reasons, is "essential to—perhaps definitive of—being a person."<sup>2</sup> Thus, when we love another *as a person* we are "responding to the value that he possesses by virtue

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1. J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion" (hereafter LME), *Ethics* 109 (1999): 338–74, 347–48.

2. J. David Velleman, "A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics," in *Self to Self: Selected Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16–44, 43.

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of being a person or, as Kant would say, an instance of rational nature”—we are responding to his “capacity to be actuated by reasons” (LME, 365).

“Beyond Price” continues this theme but focuses also upon what we should want for the beloved’s own sake, given an account of love as a response to the value of rational autonomy.<sup>3</sup> What does love make it appropriate or rational to care about? Here Velleman adopts the suggestion that what it makes sense to care about is the preservation of the value or valuable condition to which love is an appreciative response.

I want to suggest that we can agree with Velleman that love is a mode of appreciation of the value of the beloved and agree with Velleman about what we should want for those persons that we love—that is, agree on the value of their good—while disagreeing with his account of the value that they have, their essence as a person to which love is a response. I think that while Velleman provides a powerful and accurate account of the phenomenology of love, his conception of the value of persons is too narrow, and thus his account excludes some central cases of love.

What love recognizes and appreciates, according to Velleman, is the presence of “a self-aware autonomous other—a person who is self to himself, like us” (BP, 199). Now on Velleman’s own account of such matters there are multiple and distinct aspects of the self.<sup>4</sup> Self-awareness and self-image may come apart from autonomy. Moreover, it is clearly possible for selves to be less than fully self-aware. Persons, then, are more than agents, and sometimes less than agents, but Velleman’s account of the value of persons seems to be an account just of the value of agency. I suggest that the arresting awareness of another’s value that disarms our emotional defenses can involve the recognition of both more and less than the rational self-governing will. Other capacities and qualities, which may precede or outlast or sometimes even undermine our rational will, may be part of the true and proper self of a person. They may indeed be a critical part of what makes him a self like us.

Much hangs, of course, on what is meant by “reasons” in Velleman’s account, and so it may be that he would seek to bring putative counter-examples under the umbrella of our constitutive interest in rational self-governance. I think the values I will focus on do resist a full reduction. However, insofar as these are values inhering in persons, and since rational self-governance is surely required for the full flourishing of persons, it does make sense for us to want the realization of the beloved’s autonomy for his own sake. In my view though, autonomy may more often be that which we want for the beloved, rather than the value to which we already respond in the beloved.

3. J. David Velleman, “Beyond Price” (hereafter BP), *Ethics* 118 (2008): 191–212, in this issue.

4. See, for a concise account, Velleman, “Introduction,” in *Self to Self*, 1–15.

## II. VELLEMAN'S ACCOUNT: SOME PUZZLES

Velleman argues that love is not to be identified with feelings of sympathy, empathy, liking, benevolence, or attraction, or with desires to be near or to benefit the beloved. It is clear, he thinks, that we can love relatives or ex-spouses whom we do not like or wish to be near, or those to whom we stand in more formal relations whom we would not presume to try to benefit. Love can make warmer feelings and desires explicable; it can also leave us vulnerable to darker emotions such as anger, resentment, and hate. And although we cannot love people we are not acquainted with, we can love someone without standing to them in any of the close personal relationships commonly described by philosophers seeking to analyze love. We can love “at arm’s length.” What unites all the instances of love of a person in Velleman’s account is the powerful perception of the other’s value as a person “like ourselves.” This perception “arrests our emotional defenses against him, leaving us emotionally vulnerable to him,” and can do so because we see in the other “a potential partner in mutual emotional disarmament.”<sup>5</sup> “The heart,” Velleman says, “responds to another seen as having a heart” (BP, 203). That is why love deserves to be called a moral emotion. It is, in fact, the core moral emotion—the emotion, according to Velleman, by which moral sensibilities are first implanted in children and the emotion by which the moral sensibilities of adults are enlivened and revived.

I want to begin by addressing some apparent tensions in Velleman’s account of love before moving on to my main project of exploring the value or values to which love is a proper response.

### A. *Love at Arm’s Length*

Notice that Velleman’s account of love has two parts and both are indispensable to his claim that love is a moral emotion. First, there is the arresting perception of the other’s true value as a person like oneself. Second, there is the stripping back of emotional defenses that this perception brings about. Without the first, our emotional vulnerability isn’t intrinsically connected to morality. Without the second, I suggest that we lose the distinction between love and respect and include too much

5. I follow Velleman in my subsequent use of these expressions (BP, 196, 199, 201, 202). I understand him to mean that love disposes us to a range of emotions that we would not otherwise be susceptible to. But love itself is not simply a blind disposition to feel a range of emotions. It is an evaluative attitude formed in response to a striking perception of another’s selfhood. It thus has distinctive phenomenal and cognitive content which renders us open to being affected by the other. I think perhaps that Velleman’s idea is also that seeing another’s value vividly in this way confirms our own value, and this calms the anxieties that ordinarily lead us to erect psychic barriers.

under love's umbrella.<sup>6</sup> The descriptions of love at arm's length do not seem to sit entirely comfortably with this two-part account.

The cases of voluntary estrangement from or avoidance of a relative seem to be instances of emotional vulnerability either without the arresting perception of value or without the accompanying sense of the other as a potential partner in emotional disarmament. Emotional vulnerability, after all, need have nothing to do with love. Of course, people may well say and even believe that they love those relatives who irritate them beyond all bearing or from whom they are wholly estranged, but in the more extreme cases it is at least not clear that this is anything more than an acknowledgment of the historical relationship and its continued claims and effects upon them—a psychic hangover rather than a vivid contemporaneous appreciation of their relative's value as a person; an appreciation that, on Velleman's account, disarms.<sup>7</sup> To call this love seems rather to buy into something like the relational account of love, rejected by Velleman, which has reasons for loving as arising from relationships. In the above cases one might mistake the attachment or commitment arising from the relationship for love and so attribute one's emotional vulnerability to love.<sup>8</sup>

In the other cases, one wonders whether the second condition is satisfied. Velleman is surely right that love is not a single emotion or feeling; rather, by arresting our emotional defenses, it leaves us vulnerable to a range of emotions. So is he vulnerable to such a range of emotions with respect to those students he believes he loves? Can he really see his students or those friends and colleagues to whom he would not presume to come too close as potential partners in mutual emotional disarmament? While it might be defensible to distinguish love as a moral emotion from simpler forms of affection or attachment, one should also distinguish it from respect, as well as other forms of moral appreciation—delight, say, at a student's clarity and curiosity, which may be powerful and disarming in some respects but which for the most part

6. Velleman argues that respect and love are the moral minimum and maximum responses to a person's value as a self-existent end.

7. In the cases Velleman names of the smothering parent or the competitive sibling (LME, 353), it is possible, of course, that some distance allows one to appreciate what one cannot see while directly exposed to the grating characteristic. But it still seems a bit odd to say that one loves one's family freely and fully while having no desire to see them. Love is not reducible to such desires (to benefit, to spend time with, to care for and share with), but if someone were to disavow all of them in connection to someone he claimed to love, his claim might rightly be regarded with skepticism.

8. I agree with Velleman that reasons for action where a loved one is concerned often arise from features of the relationships, for example, its mutual commitments and dependencies, rather than from love—and may thus persist when love is gone. See Velleman's discussion of other grounds for partiality (LME, 372–73).

and across most domains leaves our emotional defenses intact.<sup>9</sup> Love takes us hostage to fortune; it binds us to the weal and woe of the beloved in ways we could not have anticipated and cannot reject.<sup>10</sup> What I feel for some of my students may be a kind of love—something stronger than respect, at any rate—but it does not seem to be the fiercer, more interesting response that Velleman wishes us to attend to. When I hear that my student has suffered a broken relationship or a death in the family, what I will feel is sympathetic concern. But that, as Velleman points out, is an attitude distinct from love and distinct, I would argue, from that which love would engender in the circumstances. It would be as inapt to say that I feel sympathy for my children’s serious losses as it would to call my emotional response to, say, the death of my own spouse, sympathetic. (Feeling sorry for oneself, I take it, is not sympathy, either.) Sympathy is a secondhand emotion. Love is not. Velleman argues that love is a guide to the interests of the beloved, and it can so guide us in the absence of desires for intimacy or of the benevolent affection that motivates us to “cuddle or coddle” (BP, 196). But love as a revelation of the other’s value and so as (in part) a guide to what is worth wanting for their sake, divorced from emotional vulnerability, does not seem to deserve the name.

*B. Can Love Make Us Emotionally Vulnerable without Making Us Morally Vulnerable?*

In “Love as a Moral Emotion,” Velleman argues that since love is a response to a value which we all possess, it is not essentially partial, and thus there can be no conflict in spirit between love and morality. I think Velleman is right to warn us against identifying love with a limited range of emotions, feelings, and desires that are commonly associated with it, or with particular partial relations, which may be ideally, but not nec-

9. Velleman says that having one’s eyes opened to who one’s student really is is to see him as one’s student—one who is to be dealt with professionally (LME, 361–62). This does not sound like the perception of a value which is universal. Nor does it sound like a perception which could arrest our emotional defenses. It would be a significant revision of the account of love to selectively restrict the domains across which we can allow ourselves to respond to “another seen as having a heart” (BP, 203). Perhaps it would be truer to Velleman’s account to say that a professional teacher-student relationship is what, in the circumstances, you should rationally want for the student for his own sake.

10. I do not think that in saying this I am bound to the welfarist conception of the other’s good that Velleman is suspicious of in “Beyond Price.” I may, for example, be grieved by some misfortune my child (or my student) experiences without simply wanting him or her to feel better. In such cases I will be concerned in Velleman’s sense with their diachronic welfare. For the distinction between synchronic and diachronic well-being, see J. David Velleman, “Well-Being and Time,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1991): 48–77. His diachronic conception of welfare appears to me to be compatible with a Kantian conception of a person’s good.

essarily, attended by love.<sup>11</sup> To provide a characterization or analysis of partial relationships is not to characterize or analyze love itself. And so, even if these partial relations can lead us morally astray, by providing us with reasons and motives to action which conflict with morality, this does not show that it is love that leads us astray. It is harder, however, to draw a moral line between love and the emotions and motives that it “unleashes” by arresting our emotional defenses to the other (LME, 361). On Velleman’s account, it is an essential part of love that it arrests those defenses; our emotional responses are, he says, indicative of our having really seen the other (LME, 361). If so, it is somewhat misleading to characterize the emotions that follow as “independent responses that love merely unleashes” (LME, 361). Love cannot wash its hands entirely of what it motivates the lover to do.

Love can give rise to hate and anger and resentment, and surely we sometimes act wrongly out of that very hate and anger and resentment. And even the favorable emotions that love gives rise to, including empathy, fascination, and attraction, may motivate us in ways which conflict with moral requirements. Does this mean that there is a conflict in spirit between love and morality? I agree with Velleman that there is not. But neither is there a merely practical conflict.<sup>12</sup> If love is, indeed, the emotion by which human moral sensibilities are implanted and maintained, then our very susceptibility to morality is yoked to our moral vulnerability. They are two sides of the same coin. That is the paradox at the heart of human moral psychology.

### *C. Love and Moral Development*

So what of the claim that love is “the emotion by which moral sensibilities are first implanted in children and by which the moral sensibilities of adults are enlivened or, if necessary, revived”? (BP, 200). It is a highly plausible claim, but I’m not sure that Velleman is entitled to assert the first part of it. For it is unlikely that young children experience love in Velleman’s restricted sense. The empirical literature focuses on sympathy or empathy as critical to developing moral awareness,<sup>13</sup> and these

11. The issue of the impartiality or otherwise of morality is beyond the scope of this article.

12. Velleman is not concerned to address the possibility of a practical conflict (see LME, 338 n. 1).

13. See, e.g., J. G. Smetana and J. L. Braeges, “The Development of Toddlers’ Moral and Conventional Judgments,” *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 36 (2000): 329–46; M. L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Nancy Eisenberg, “Emotion, Regulation, and Moral Development,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 51 (2000): 665–97; R. J. R. Blair, “A Cognitive Developmental Approach to Morality: Investigating the Psychopath,” *Cognition* 57 (1995): 1–29, “Moral Reasoning in the Child with Psychopathic Tendencies,” *Personality and Individual Differences*

are held by Velleman to be distinct from love, as are the reciprocal feelings between parents and their infant children which are likewise fundamental to moral and social development and which do, indeed, go by the name of love but which he diagnoses as attachment and benevolent affection and distinguishes from love as a moral emotion. Love as a moral emotion requires an awareness of the others' value as a self like oneself, and although Velleman distinguishes several different aspects of the self, when talking of love his focus is firmly on the self as agent. That is where one's moral value resides. Young children do not appear to have the value to which Velleman believes love is a proper response, and presumably they cannot perceive it in others. They therefore cannot, on his account, be our partners in mutual emotional disarmament. The emotion that implants moral sensibilities in them, then, is apparently not the emotion that Velleman is concerned with.

### III. LOVE AS A RESPONSE TO VALUE

I shall have more to say about love between parents and children presently, but first let's think about value not in persons but in dogs. In "Beyond Price" Velleman takes the experience of loving his dog to involve an illusion of personhood: "looking into his eyes, we seem to see *someone there*" (BP, 203). We seem, indeed, to see love. But a dog's affection cannot be confused with love because love, according to Velleman, involves an appreciation of a person's true and proper self, and dogs can't see our rational selves. Indeed, he thinks this example strikingly illustrates his thesis: when we notice the illusion, we understand what it is that love properly targets. But is the love of a person for a dog necessarily based on an illusion of value, or does Velleman just think it must be because he has too restricted an account of the value or values to which love is an appreciative response? Perhaps something rather less than intelligent self-awareness may properly elicit love in us when we see it. In the case of dogs, I think that what we see in their eyes is a certain kind of responsiveness to us, a capacity to engage with us, to hold up their end of the interaction, intelligent awareness if not self-awareness. Consider Nathaniel Branden's account of playing with his dog: "From the moment I began to 'box' she responded in a playful manner. . . . Were I to push

22 (1997): 731–39, and "Brief Report: Morality in the Autistic Child," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 26 (1996): 571. The developmental literature also focuses on attentional systems and self-regulatory mechanisms as critical in moral development. See, e.g., Grazyna Kochanska, Katherine C. Coy, and Kathleen T. Murray, "The Development of Self-Regulation in the First Four Years of Life," *Child Development* 72 (2001): 1091–1111; Grazyna Kochanska, T. L. Tjebkes, and D. R. Forman, "Children's Emerging Regulation of Conduct: Restraint, Compliance and Internalization from Infancy to the Second Year," *Child Development* 69 (1998): 1378–89; Grazyna Kochanska and Nazan Aksan, "Conscience in Childhood: Past, Present and Future," *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 50 (1994): 299–310.

or jab at an inanimate object, it would react in a purely mechanical way; it would not be responding to *me*; there would be no possibility of its grasping the meaning of my actions, of apprehending my intentions, and of guiding its behaviour accordingly. . . . The effect of Mutnik's behaviour was to make me feel *seen*, to make me feel *psychologically visible*. Mutnik was responding to me, not as a mechanical object, but as a person."<sup>14</sup>

The capacity to initiate interaction and to respond emotionally and cognitively to another as another is valuable not just for us as recipients but for the creature that possesses it, and love might well be an appreciative response to the recognition of this value. Moreover, it might serve to awaken us to this value in dogs and other animals more generally. While a dog can't experience love as Velleman describes it, it can experience and express simpler forms of emotion, and these too are valuable and can give rise to the perception of the dog as "like me" in those respects and as an important companion in our domestic lives. Add in one's own dog's particular foibles, preferences, and personality, and one has in reality a beloved, irreplaceable presence.

While there need be no illusion in most cases of loving one's dog,<sup>15</sup> we might still fairly hold love of a dog to be qualitatively distinct from love of a person—closer to benevolent affection than it is to the fierceness of love of a person. Love of a dog does not, after all, usually expose us to the range of emotions that love of a person does, and this may be explained by the fact that persons have a value different to and greater than that of dogs. And, as we have seen, for Velleman, that value resides in the rational autonomous aspect of persons.

What then, of our love for our infant children which in my experience is fierce, disarming, and utterly revelatory of the value of all children? The phenomenology of love here, as well as its moral upshot, is just what Velleman describes. But is it based on a wing and a prayer—focused on what will be rather than what is? Is our love for our children

14. Nathaniel Branden, "Love and Psychological Visibility," in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Neera Kaphur Badwhar (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 67. Velleman might reject Branden's account as being too egocentric, a charge he levels at relational accounts. He claims such accounts characterize love as responding not to a value the beloved has in himself but to the value he has for us. I think Branden's focus on psychological visibility is, in fact, perfectly compatible with Velleman's central insight. Just as we do not "see most people for what they are, even if we know what they are" (BP, 199), we ourselves are rarely seen in this sense. To be seen and loved for who you truly are can open your eyes to your own value and in turn to the value of your lover. That is the way that love contributes to our self-understanding. Love has a reflexive element, but it is not thereby egocentric.

15. Of course, some people do invest their pets with personal qualities and capacities which they do not possess, just as some people invest their friends and lovers with qualities they do not possess. Our tendency to do this does not belie the possibility of genuine love for people or for pets.



based on either an illusion of their personhood or a misunderstanding of the true value of persons?

Let's consider again whether the responses displayed by infants in their interactions with their parents deserve to be called love. The capacities and responses which Velleman thinks are critical to love—attention to the other, appreciation of his value as another self, and the resulting emotional disarmament—do not arrive fully formed in adults. We find them present albeit in simpler form in infants. Infants attend actively to their parents, initiating and coordinating interactions between them. Joint attention between parent and child underwrites the child's developing set of self-other representations. Meltzoff suggests that the imitation games of early and later infancy provide the developing child with the experience that here is something "like me." Their capacity to translate between the seen behavior of others and what it is like to perform the same behavior is foundational for developments in intersubjectivity, communication, and social cognition. Shared emotions provide the initial "like me" experience of other minds.<sup>16</sup>

What we see in infants and small children, then, is not merely attachment—which can, indeed, come apart from love—nor is it benevolent affection. Growing awareness and attentiveness to the other as "like me," allied with delight in their presence and sensitivity to their emotions and preferences, which we see in very young children, deserves to be called love, and this love is a form of valuing the other. It does involve perceiving the other as like oneself and treating him or her as a partner in mutual emotional disarmament, even where it does not and cannot involve conceiving of him or her as such.

In infants valuing is cognitively simple; they are not yet moral agents, but the love they experience for their parents is surely at least a proto moral emotion and itself morally valuable.<sup>17</sup> If infants have this value, then it seems to me that the love of parents for their infant children (or that of a son or daughter for a demented parent) can be the moral emotion Velleman is talking about. The two components of

16. See Andrew N. Meltzoff and M. Keith Moore, "Infant Intersubjectivity: Broadening the Dialogue to Include Imitation, Identity and Intention," in *Intersubjective Communication and Emotion in Early Ontogeny*, ed. Stein Braten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 47–62; and "Persons and Representation: Why Infant Imitation Is Important for Theories of Human Development," in *Imitation in Infancy*, ed. Jacqueline Nadel and George Butterworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9–35; Andrew N. Meltzoff and Alison Gopnik, "The Role of Imitation in Understanding Persons and Developing a Theory of Mind," in *Understanding Other Minds*, ed. Simon Baron-Cohen, Helen Tager-Flusberg, and Donald J. Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 335–66.

17. See Agnieszka Jaworska, "Respecting the Margins of Agency: Alzheimer's Patients and the Capacity to Value," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 28 (1999): 105–38, for an account and defense of cognitively simpler forms of valuing in Alzheimer's patients.

Velleman's account, the arresting perception of a value distinctive of persons and the resulting emotional disarmament, can be substantially satisfied in our relations with those whose agency is undeveloped or diminished. The rational capacities that we dearly wish for our children, out of love, and that we may view with wonder and awe as we trace their development, is not the full story of their value as persons here and now or in the future. I do not think we make a mistake or fall under an illusion when we love our children or anyone else in the full recognition that these capacities are lacking in them.

*A. Three Moments of Arresting Awareness*

It's a summer night. My son is two years old. I wake up to footsteps running through the house and then the slam of the back door. I leap out of bed and follow. In the backyard he is dancing and whirling under the stars, arms reaching up to them. He looks at me, ecstatic. "I can see stars. I can see the moon," he cries.

Fast forward. My son is seventeen years old. He is an involuntary patient in a psychiatric ward. It is the culmination of a long dark time or, rather, as it turns out, an interval in it. In the months preceding his admission he has been increasingly irritable, aggressive, and erratic. He has towering rages and grandiose plans. He is furious with me over his admission. But this day when I visit him, the anger is gone. He is euphoric, acutely sensitive to color, light, forms, and sound. He wants to share this with me, to show me the beauty all around. I cry with joy and relief. After such a long time, I can see him again.

Fast forward again. My son is in his midtwenties. The darkness has receded. He is navigating the still-turbulent waters of his life with some success. We have to go to a wedding. It is his oldest friend and son of my dear friend. He does not see this friend often these days. The wedding crowd will be composed of strangers and people who have not seen him since darker times. He is painfully anxious. He warns me that he will need a few beers to get through it and warns me off as well. He doesn't want maternal solicitude. Fair enough. I stay away from him, but I spend the wedding in a state of hyper vigilance. By the end of the night he is fairly drunk, and I worry that he is talking too much and too loudly, that his alertness to social cues is blunted, but his anxiety is not. To use the terms Velleman introduces in "The Genesis of Shame,"<sup>18</sup> my son's slip, qua self-presenting agent, is showing. However, it's unlikely that anyone but me is paying much attention. On the whole, it hasn't gone too badly.

We drive home down the freeway. The freeway lights slide through the blackness toward and over us. The city lights are ahead. He is struck

18. J. David Velleman, "The Genesis of Shame," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30 (2001): 27-52.

by the beauty of it and tries to articulate it, eventually saying simply, “I see these things. I feel these things.” We drive the rest of the way in peace, the tension of the day slipping away with the receding lights. And I am awoken again to a value in him the other guests at the wedding could never see behind his anxious efforts to fit in, as well as to the value of those incompletely successful efforts.

What value did I respond to on all three occasions? What is it precisely that I saw, to which love is a proper response? On Velleman’s account I was forcibly alerted to the presence of an inner life alongside my own, an arresting awareness of personhood. True enough. But was it, at bottom, a vivid awareness of his rational autonomy, contingently made available to me on these occasions not via a crooked smile or a tilt of his head but via his emotional and reverential response to beauty? I don’t believe that the qualities I saw and responded to on these occasions were signs and symbols of his rational will. I wasn’t struck by what was missing or obscured—the flaw in the painting that reveals its value—but by something else that was not. Indeed, in the second instance it was a genuine consolation—a realization that his value as a person did not rest solely in the capacities Velleman focuses upon and which I certainly wished for him but at times feared he would not achieve. What I saw, vividly, in the most general sense, was my son *qua* valuer. Emotional and aesthetic responsiveness is not, I submit, merely emblematic of a person’s value in the way that a crooked smile might be. It is a true aspect of their value, such that they would be diminished without it. This is certainly how my son views the matter and why he rejects medications that dampen and restrict his emotional awareness of the world even though they might bring some aspects of his life better under his control. He doesn’t feel like himself when he takes them. The world becomes monochromatic—drained of value. But the intensity he lives with, the wear and tear and the pain that goes with it, is not a project of his or an end in which he is invested. It is not remotely like his interest in improving his golf, something that could be rationally pursued, a means of giving his life coherence and unity, independent of whether it is intrinsically worth caring about. It is rather his mode of being, the warp and weft of his existence as a person. It has as good a claim to be his true and proper self as does his interest in self-governance. To be sure, recognizing this about himself and valuing himself in this way does require intelligent self-awareness, as does rational self-governance. But this does not mean that the one dissolves into the other.

#### IV. VALUING AND AUTONOMY

I have argued that the value of persons resides in significant part in their very capacity to value. But if the capacity to value is just the capacity to take some considerations as reason giving, then it might be argued

that there is no sharp distinction to be drawn between our status as valuers and our status as autonomous agents. If this is so, then either I was under an illusion in the instances just described or what I saw and responded to was at least the capacity for autonomy, albeit a capacity which was not fully realized.

Why should we think this? We generally recognize a distinction between evaluations and mere desires or perceptual promptings that elicit our responses in an unmediated way. The thought is that there must be some irreducibly normative input into evaluation if it is to count as such. Our initial perceptions present us with only prima facie reasons to value their objects—reasons which might on reflection prove inadequate. According to Mark Johnston's response-dispositional account of value, "the concepts of value and of substantive practical reasoning take in each other's washing."<sup>19</sup> Something is valuable just in case substantive practical reasoning says it is, and something is a substantive reason for or against valuing something: if and only if "we are disposed stably to take it to be so under conditions of increasing information and critical reflection" (162). Similarly, on Thomas Scanlon's buck-passing account of value, "to call something valuable is to say that it has other properties that provide reasons for behaving in certain ways with regard to it."<sup>20</sup>

On this kind of account valuing looks like something only rational, reasons-responsive agents can do and is thus closely tied to autonomy. Since my son's rapturous response to the beauty of the night sky at age 2 lacked such normative input (or output), it could not count as evaluative, and he could not count as a valuer.

We need to separate two issues here. Even if emotional and aesthetic responses, such as those described, do not count as valuing, unless and until the responder reflectively endorses them and can give some account of the practical reasons arising from the properties that evoke them, such immediate responsiveness may nonetheless be valuable in itself. This is a value which is both dissociable from the capacity for autonomy and not shared, so far as we know, by other animals. It is thus a true and independent aspect of the value of a person.

I want to claim at least this. But I would also resist a move to reduce all valuing to an exercise of "self-aware autonomous agency."<sup>21</sup> The inter-

19. Mark Johnston, "Dispositional Theories of Value," *Supplement to the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 63 (1989): 139–74, 162. See also Michael Smith, "Valuing: Desiring or Believing?" in *Reduction, Explanation, and Realism*, ed. David Charles and Kathleen Lennon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 323–59.

20. T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 96.

21. I would also resist any move in the opposite direction to reduce all valuing to desiring. The attitudes I am interested in here are not desires, although they standardly give rise to them as well as to explicit normative judgments. They include awe and pity as well as amusement and aesthetic response.

connections between reasons, valuing, self-awareness, and autonomy are complex, to say the least, and I shall not attempt to unpick them all here. However, it seems to me that at least some of what we rightly recognize as valuing outruns self-awareness and our capacities for reflective control and is embedded in traits we take to be both valuable and specific to persons. Creativity is not ultimately at odds with reflective self-governance, but it is not a product of it. It has its sources elsewhere. It escapes, and must escape it, at moments of inspiration, imagination, and performance. The creative impulse is a valuable aspect of persons, to which love might well be an appreciative response. But more important to my argument at this point is that it itself is surely a form of valuing. When we are engaged in creative activity or performance, we reveal ourselves as valuers even as we lose ourselves in the performance.

Amusement too is plausibly a spontaneous evaluative response, seen even in very young children.<sup>22</sup> But it is precisely not an expression of autonomous agency and all too frequently brings us undone. To be sure we each have reason to value our capacities for humor and for creativity, for imagination, and for emotional and aesthetic awareness, since these enrich our lives immeasurably and reveal reasons which guide choice and action. Nevertheless, it would be a sleight of hand to claim their value as just the value of autonomy. This would suggest, implausibly, that our values go in and out of existence as we find ourselves in a more or less autonomous state even if our appreciation of what we take to be valuable is as vivid as ever.

Though reasons and values are closely connected, we cannot reduce the capacity to value to the capacity for autonomy, nor do I think that Velleman really wishes to do so. This gets things precisely the wrong way round. The capacity to value is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for autonomy.

## V. WHAT LOVE MAKES IT APPROPRIATE TO CARE ABOUT

The claim of the last part of “Beyond Price” is that what we should care about for the beloved’s own sake is the full realization of his rational autonomy. From the discussion of Frankfurt, it appears that Velleman here recognizes that a precondition of autonomy is love. We must already be valuers, we must love some things or persons for their own sake if there is to be any chance of developing the sustained and coherent pursuits through which we realize our autonomy. But as we have

22. This is not to say that we may not on reflection disavow the evaluation, as when we come to see that racist jokes are not funny. I do not mean to suggest that there is not an important role for reflection, especially in moral evaluation. The essential role of reflection in moral evaluation is the reason why small children cannot count as moral agents.

seen, our status as valuers doesn't by itself guarantee that we will be able to secure what we value. The flowering of autonomy is thus what we want and should want for our children out of love for them, for their sake. I think Velleman is exactly right about that, but it doesn't imply that autonomy is the very thing we already recognize and love in them. Rather, it falls out of the Aristotelian view that this is a good state, perhaps the best state, for a person to be in. It is a necessary condition of enjoyment of other important social and moral goods. Rational autonomy then bears the same relation to human flourishing as the virtues do. It is both means to and part constituent of that flourishing. Of course, we value it and want it for those we love.

## VI. CONCLUSION

How might an expanded account of the values that love sees and appreciates bear on Velleman's discussion of self-love and the morality of escapist suicide? Since a life may be distinctively the life of a person, of a self to himself, even where autonomy as well as happiness is lacking, suicide in these cases too will destroy "that whose value is registered in self-love and whose perpetuation self-love naturally leads us to care about" (BP, 211). If I am right about the value of persons and Velleman is right about what love requires, then the range of cases where suicide is morally permissible may be narrower even than Velleman allows. Yet, there are cases where it seems at least not immoral for persons to seek to escape their lives.<sup>23</sup> That they retain their value as persons is what makes such cases tragic rather than simply sad.

I'll close then with two extracts from Anne Deveson's account of life with her son Jonathan, who suffered from severe schizophrenia and died at age 24 from a drug overdose.<sup>24</sup> Deveson tells of the last time she saw her son:

He had a large bundle of white pills, wrapped in polythene, and he went to take two of them.

"Please Jonathan" I begged, "put them away."

"Listen," he said, "they gave my father morphine for the pain in his cancer, and it helped him, right, and no-one's going to tell me not to take stuff for my pain, right?"

Later Deveson found him banging his head and crying:

I took him to the couch and held him in my arms and stroked his head and kissed his head, and all the while his body was heaving

23. In such cases there seems to be a moral asymmetry between what the suffering person may do and what anyone else may do.

24. Anne Deveson, *Tell Me I'm Here* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books Australia, 1998).

with sobs, while he shuddered out disconnected statements like, “I can’t go on . . . the pain in my head . . . terrible, terrible . . . look at me . . . look at what I’ve fucking become . . . oh God!” (Deveson, 255)

Jonathan’s capacity for rational self-government was terribly impaired. He enjoyed few of the agential goods. His life was one of pain, not of flourishing, not the life anyone would wish for his or her child. If rational autonomy were the sole source of our value as persons, if it were at the heart of our very capacity to value, then it is clear Jonathan did not possess the value to which love is an appreciative response. Yet, he, Jonathan, was surely valuable, and his mother made no mistake in loving him. Jonathan was clearly a valuer and a self to himself, like us.

Jonathan talked for a long time and I listened. Then there was silence, even though the music was still frolicking and the crowds chattering. Jonathan’s phrasing may have been eccentric but if you spent time with him, and felt your way into what he was saying, it was almost always possible to understand him. . . . I looked up. Jonathan was grinning, with his head on one side. He looked quite old and wise. “It was a good try wasn’t it? Thank you for listening. That was very brave of you. . . . People have to learn that underlying business, the message of everything is love. Which is why society sticks together. You and I have love.” (Deveson, 234)