

Loving One's Enemies: A Philosophical Assessment

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Abstract

The command to love one's enemies (the 'LE Principle' as it shall henceforth be called) is one of the most striking and counter-intuitive precepts that have arisen in the Christian tradition. However, it has received little philosophical scrutiny. This paper aims to fill that gap. I shall first answer two questions behind the two main concepts underlying the principle: a) what would count as an enemy; b) and what does it mean to love someone. Then, after clarifying the relevant concepts, I shall try to examine the whether the LE Principle is consistent with two major ethical traditions in philosophy: utilitarianism and deontology. I shall conclude by affirming that despite the psychological barriers inherent in living by the LE Principle, it will be shown to be livable and morally praiseworthy

Keywords: LE Principle, utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, virtue ethics

1 Introduction

Given that Christianity is a major religious tradition, it is not surprising that the LE Principle is a moral precept that has long occupied the Christian consciousness. However, seen from a purely philosophical perspective, the principle has received little attention. For instance, in the website philpapers.org, which is the largest online database for philosophical papers worldwide, there is virtually no article that studies the LE Principle. This gap needs to be filled and this paper is an initial step towards it. My approach is as follows: I shall first answer two questions behind the two main concepts underlying the principle: what would count as an enemy; and what it means to love someone. After clarifying the relevant concepts, I shall try to examine the validity of the LE Principle according to the two major ethical traditions in philosophy: utilitarianism and Kantian deontology. I shall conclude by affirming that despite the psychological barriers inherent in living by the LE Principle, it will be shown to be a moral command that is philosophically coherent and consequently, something worthy to be practiced.

What counts as an enemy? The Webster Dictionary defines enemy as “someone who cherishes resentment or malicious purpose towards another.” This definition captures a common understanding of an enemy. The presence of resentment or malice towards a person is sufficient to make one an enemy. A political enemy, for instance, is understood to refer to someone who wishes another politician’s downfall, in whatever form it may take. An enemy of the state conjures up an image of a person or a group of people whose primary goal is the state’s ultimate destruction. In ordinary life, an enemy is anyone who resents another person’s presence, or wishes for that person’s downfall. The definition, in fact, describes what may be considered to be Jesus’ own enemies: the Sadducees and Pharisees. Jesus, from whom the LE Principle originated, often clashed with these religious leaders who are often portrayed to be persistently malicious of Jesus. They resented him for his natural authority to command a crowd’s attention, and

his growing fame. By natural authority, Jesus needed no political or religious title (such as the Saducees) in order to command a crowd. The Saducees and Pharisees resented him because he was becoming more authoritative than they were. It is no wonder that such resentment and malice eventually contributed towards Jesus' death.

The definition implies that a person does not need to characterize someone as an enemy for one to count as such. So, even a vague acquaintance or a stranger can be an enemy as long as that person carries resentment or malice towards another person. On the contrary, a person may disagree with you or may oppose your beliefs or convictions but that person may not necessarily be your enemy. Disagreements and oppositions are not necessarily malicious by nature. Couples and friends may disagree with each other. In this case, a person who disagrees with another need not necessarily hold resentment or malice to express his disagreement while, on the other hand, a person may not need to have some explicit disagreements with one's viewpoints in order for that person to be one's enemy. It is sufficient for one to hold resentment or malice towards a person even if those negative feelings are not articulately explained or the causes are not deeply thought about.

What does the LE Principle Mean?

Love is indeed such a very loaded word. In an era of confusing messages and conflicting images of love, love may mean many things. One thing, however, seems clear: there is no question in love when it involves, as its object, the people we care about and to whom we express our deepest concern: our families, friends, and significant others. So, it becomes problematic when applied to certain people who are commonly perceived as not its natural receiver: one's enemies. If there is a non-hateful way to respond to one's enemies, indifference seems more appropriate than love. So, why think that love constitutes a better response? Before we

answer that, it is necessary to clear out one major misconception and clarify what we mean by the term 'love'.

Many individuals associate love with strong, usually positive, emotions. This is likely because 'love' is thought primarily to be romantic love. But should love, romantic or otherwise, always involve such emotions? It does not seem so. Even in the context of romantic love, people are not expected to always have strong passionate emotions towards each other. Just the same, parents are not expected to always feel positive emotions towards their children, just as friends towards each other. Although emotions may play a positive role in the dynamics of love (whatever its kind), it is sufficient for us to claim that emotions need not be a stringent requirement in the act of love. Love need not always involve strong emotions. As Wagoner (1997) said: "The 'trueness' of love cannot be found in its intensity, which may wax or wane, but in its moral nature" (p.69).

While I will mention some notions of love, I shall primarily draw on phenomenology to uncover what it means to love someone. One only needs to look at one's experience of love and identify the reasons for describing such experience as one of love. Such phenomenological approach will take ordinary experience as the ultimate basis in clarifying the concept in question. I will quote scholars to solidify the presuppositions in pre-theoretical experience; but they serve to confirm and not to prove. The advantage of such an approach is that it does not draw on the validity of any major theories on love. We need not even distinguish love among its kinds. We only need to look at our own experiences of love, and see whether the characteristics given faithfully describe these experiences. Since phenomenology is primarily an appeal to common experience, it is up to the reader to decide whether the two characteristics laid out here will encapsulate their experience of love. These two traits of love are so universal that they are likely to strike a common cord in every human being. Correspondingly, these two manifestations are: a) that love involves complete

acceptance of the beloved; and that b) love involves the active pursuit of the beloved's good.

How important is acceptance in the act of loving? Cowburn (2003) describes it as "the distilled essence of love, the one element which is in all forms of love" (p.19). He suggests one interpretation of acceptance: "being in favor of a being who or which is judged to be good" (p. 20). In one sense, this is true. Cowburn's (2003) example is that of parents who, after meeting their son's girlfriend, accepted her to be their son's wife. Their reason is that she is delightful and just right for their son. They accepted her because of the positive qualities that they find in her. However, to describe acceptance only as something solely directed towards the good would be incomplete. Complete acceptance involves the whole person, not only the good parts. In fact, to say that we completely accept someone is to be open to whatever possibility by which that someone may reveal herself.

To love someone always implies the full acceptance of the other for what she/he really is – with all the strengths and weaknesses, the talents as well as the flaws; in other words, the individual's whole humanity. It is not difficult to accept someone's good attributes; in fact, in the case of romantic love, they may be the initial reasons for coming to love the beloved. However, complete acceptance cannot leave out the beloved's baser and less desirable qualities. Everyone has to come to terms with the beloved's humanity. Humans, always make mistakes. Each has character flaws, however hidden, and all the other idiosyncrasies. Without commitment to accept both the good and the bad qualities of the beloved, no long-term commitment to love is possible.

Before misunderstanding ensues, it should be clear at the outset that complete acceptance does not necessarily amount to toleration. It is one thing to say that we accept our loved ones while quite another to say that we always tolerate them. To accept is to be open to the revelation of the other; it is not to resign to it.

This truth is clearest in a marriage rite, where the bride accepts the groom to be her husband (and vice-versa). By saying “yes” to the invitation, the acceptance of both the bride and the groom to each other bears out their lifetime commitment to be open to each other’s character and personality, quirks, and future decisions. However, this does not mean that they may completely tolerate even the unhelpful behaviors or bad choices of their spouse. After all, there is consistency in saying that we accept our beloved and pursue their good as well.

So what does this imply in the case of one’s enemies? To love our enemies is to accept them for what they are – unique individuals and capable of deciding on their own. It may be further argued that to love our enemies in this sense is to respect their individual judgments about us, even if we do not necessarily agree with those judgments. As has been emphasized, it is one thing to accept the humanity of our enemies while quite another to accept their judgments of us as automatically true. We may accept our enemies as individuals who have uniquely human capacities and all-too-human shortcomings but such acceptance does not preclude us from insisting on what is right and true.

Nonetheless, an enemy’s view of us may be enlightening by revealing certain aspects of ourselves which might be hidden from us. A person does not become an enemy by default. An enemy has carried resentment and/or malice for certain reasons, justified or not. If the reason is justified, then clearly it can serve as an opportunity to see ourselves in a new light, and we can change ourselves accordingly. If the reason is unjustified, it is likewise an opportunity for us to show that the particular judgment is distorted. Of course, this is hardly easy in practice, given all the complications that may arise. Whatever may be the case, it is now clear what is meant by completely accepting one’s enemies.

Although acceptance is a necessary condition for love, it is not sufficient. After all, one can accept another while not necessarily

loving her/him. There is indeed more to love than just accepting the wholeness of the beloved. Love, in its highest form, involves the pursuit of the beloved's good. Frankfurt (1999) sums this view by speaking of "love as a disinterested concern for the well-being or flourishing of a beloved object" (p.167). Disinterest is "a concern in which the good of the beloved is desired for its own sake rather than for the sake of promoting any other interests" (p. 165). Thus, to love one's enemies is to actively seek their (enemies) own good for their own sake.

However, is this kind of love humanly possible, especially when applied to one's enemies? It is not difficult in the case of people whom we value dearly, such as our families, friends, and significant others. Frankfurt (1999) observed that there is a kind of love that is aroused as a response to the perceived value of its object. We love them because they are our family, our friends, or our significant others. However, how is it ever possible to love our enemies in the sense of seeking their own good? While the common objects of one's love are those that one finds valuable, there is a sense, as Frankfurt (1999) suggests, that the act of loving is "itself a creator of value" (p. 172). This love is not derivative from the beloved's value or importance. What Frankfurt (1999) wants to point out is that there is inherent value in the act of loving, in the sense that we seek the beloved's good for her/his own sake. He stated:

It [love] does not enhance our lives simply by connecting us to other valuable things, or by fulfilling some presumed responsibility to care about whatever things have value on their own. Loving is valuable in itself, and not only in virtue of the value of its objects. Other things being equal, our lives would be worse without it. (p. 173)

Such view of love seems compatible with the LE Principle. We love our enemies because loving is intrinsically valuable. Love is life-enhancing by virtue of moving the lover and the beloved towards the good. The capacity to love which expands beyond the usual ambit of loving relations enhances the lover. What enhances the beloved is that she/he becomes a recipient of love whose origin goes beyond the typical people who show love to her/him. This is an ideal that when achieved, both parties may win. Again, nobody said that it is going to be easy. Even if one seeks the good of the enemies, they might misinterpret the actions and retaliate, or they might simply be indifferent. Of course, such possibilities do not preclude that the enemies may be genuinely moved by the loving actions; and may come to see that the resentment and malice they keep are misguided.

In our definition of an enemy, it is clear that it is not within one's power if someone becomes an enemy. One may exhibit the qualities of a good person and be a paragon of service to humanity but this does not necessarily immunize one from enemies. Indeed, history has testified that even social reformers and religious saints like Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Theresa of Calcutta have their own share of enemies. Although the enemies may be moved by an attitude of acceptance and concern shown towards them, this is something that is up for them to decide, and not within anyone else's power to control.

Having set the stage, we can now proceed on examining whether the LE Principle, which is originally a uniquely Christian ideal, can be consistent with the two dominant, albeit opposing, ethical traditions in the history of Western philosophy, namely, utilitarianism and deontology. However, note that, this paper does not intend to completely present a discussion of these two traditions. The claims of these ethical traditions have been controversial since their beginnings. I will focus on the text of philosophers who are recognized as each tradition's most authoritative representative: John Stuart Mill on Utilitarianism and Immanuel Kant for Deontological Ethics.

LE Principle and Utilitarianism

In his famous essay entitled “Utilitarianism”, Mill (2003) set out to advance the ethical doctrine of utilitarianism. As the term itself suggests, utilitarianism is a moral doctrine that is based on utility, or what Mill (2003) called the Greatest Happiness Principle: “Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness” (p. 186). In using the term happiness, Mill (2003) meant it as intended pleasure and the absence of pain. Unhappiness is pain and the privation of pleasure. This principle needs to be clarified further, or it might be wrongly associated with Epicurus, who thought that pleasure is the ultimate moral basis for action. Mill (2003) argued that Epicurus’ view is rather crude since there is a higher pleasure that befits human beings. There is no question that human beings possess greater faculties than mere animal appetites. The use of these faculties will produce higher pleasures than the satisfaction of mere animal instincts.

Mental pleasures are thus superior to bodily pleasures. However, the distinction is more nuanced than what the last statement suggests. For instance, imagine basketball or any competitive physical game invented by humans. Playing basketball necessarily utilizes human body for it to be performed. It is a highly physical game. Players might derive various physical pleasures from the game, for instance, being able to exercise or strengthen the muscles. But to see basketball as solely a physical game from which only bodily pleasures can be derived is incorrect. It is a physical and mental game. Playing it and more so, playing it well involves various strategies that can only be devised through, among other things, unique human intelligence. The point is that what counts as mental pleasure is not restricted to what is commonly considered as intellectual and academic endeavor. We cannot dismiss a particular human activity as unproductive of mental pleasures just because it appears to be highly physical.

Another important distinction should be considered and it is “that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent’s own happiness, but that of all concerned” (Mill, 2003, p. 194). Thus, with these distinctions in place, we can summarize what utilitarianism is, thus, the moral act of pursuing the greatest kind of happiness of the greatest number of people.

So, what can utilitarianism say regarding the LE Principle? First of all, we should settle whether loving one’s enemies would produce happiness of any kind. I think that this can be answered by determining whether loving, regardless of the object, elicits happiness. I gather that the answer for this is yes. Human beings are social by nature. Our ancestors have survived years of natural calamities, scarcity of food, and wild predators because they have learned to live in communities. It is impossible to live one’s whole life without the need for others, in whatever way that others can contribute. Even an hermit needs food, tools, and material resources, most of which are likely produced by others. Our modern society might seem to show that individualism and independence are noble values. However, without an atmosphere of acceptance and love, the world would surely be an intolerable place. In the act of loving, both the doer and the recipient benefit. Is there any person who genuinely loves but is generally unhappy?

One might object that loving people who are important and valuable to us is enough to fulfill the happiness that arises in loving. If the rationale is only to love, and we already have our common objects of love, then there is no further reason to love our enemies. Indeed, if the need to love is the only basis to produce (a particular sort of) happiness, it is expected that people will choose the natural objects of their love, not the problematic and unnatural ones – the enemies. But what is important at this point is to see that the LE Principle is compatible with utilitarianism, even if utilitarianism does not morally require it.

So if loving produces happiness, is it the higher or lower kind of happiness? Does love elicit mental or bodily pleasures? It is for the most part of the higher kind. We have characterized love as involving acceptance and the disinterested pursuit of the beloved's good. Accepting someone in the sense that we use it here is a uniquely human practice. Complete acceptance embraces both the desirable and less desirable qualities of the beloved, but this presupposes a cognitive capacity to distinguish between the two. Also, a disinterested pursuit of the beloved's good is one capacity that separates human beings from all the other animals. Nonhuman animals may care for their offspring and some are even known to sacrifice their lives for their kind. They do what appear to be altruistic acts solely for their gene's or species' sake. They are acting out of instinct and not by choice. The seemingly altruistic acts of animals are always instrumental. Only humans are capable of pursuing the beloved's good for her/his own sake.

Post (2005) made a summary and assessment of existing research data on altruism and its relation to mental and physical health. According to Post (2005), based on current research, there is a strong correlation between other-regarding behaviors, such as love, in connection with a person's well-being, happiness, and health. In fact, Post (2005) concluded his meta-analysis by saying that "Life can be difficult, and death should not be denied. Love, however, makes the way easier and healthier both for those who give and for those who receive" (p. 73). Thus, even empirical research provides strong evidence that loving, in general, may produce happiness.

It remains unclear, however, whether loving one's enemies would benefit the greatest number of people. Imagine that everyone resolves to love his or her enemies: will everyone be better off because of living up to the LE Principle? What kind of world would this be? There are good reasons to think that this would be significantly better, where people are significantly happier. The lover is bringing out a great good in the world through spreading

good will, as exemplified in love, even to people who are his or her enemies. On the lover's part, this is likely to create peace of mind than its opposite counterparts. He or she could even see the act of loving one's enemies as a legitimate reason to be happy, precisely because doing so lifts the burden of bitterness towards the enemies. Of course, we cannot dismiss the possibility that enemies might be equally moved away from bitterness and resentment by virtue of experiencing love from someone expected to retaliate or be indifferent. Malice answered by malice is very unlikely to produce positive emotions like love, peace, or fulfillment. Negative emotions like resentment and malice when responded with genuine love are likely to transform the receiver into having a changed perception or behavior towards the lover. Loving the enemies is likely to produce happiness on the part of both the lover and enemies.

In addition, following the LE Principle fosters an atmosphere of openness, acceptance, and cooperation where people are inspired to help each other and cooperate towards common positive ends. People witnessing individuals who love non-preferentially even towards their enemies, are naturally moved by such a display of character, since it seems unnatural but at the same time heroic. It appears unnatural since it goes against common human nature. We tend to feel resentment towards people who have resentment or malice towards us. At the same time, we know that there is something heroic and even valuable to responding to negativity by way of such a noble action as love, that is, by coming to think of the enemies' good or welfare in spite of their negative attitude towards us.

Moreover, such actions cultivate our sympathetic impulses. It inspires us more to become sensitive to the needs not only of our enemies but of people in general, and to ways in which we might be able to help. Because of such disposition, we are more attuned to being able to understand others, and ourselves, and human nature with its unique sense of joys and pains in all their diversity.

If we have cultivated a loving attitude towards our enemies, as emotionally hard as it is to do, then it would be easier to practice a general beneficence to people in general. It is an undeniable fact that society, as composed of various individuals, definitely benefits when people practice beneficence towards individuals that they encounter.

LE Principle and Kant's Ethics

Another dominant ethical theory in contrast to utilitarianism is deontology championed by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. According to Kant (1997), happiness cannot be the ultimate basis for morality, as what Mill claimed. For him, happiness, which is the complete well-being and satisfaction with one's condition, produces boldness and thereby often arrogance (Kant, 1997). What can be considered good without qualification is a good will. A good will is not good because of its results. It is good in itself regardless of the effects it can bring about.

Kant (1997) does not deny that nature endowed human beings with the desire for happiness. Thus, it is natural for human beings to take actions to achieve this end. However, the imperatives that arise out of this are always conditional. That is, if you want to achieve happiness, then you have to perform a corresponding action. The reason for action is based on a further end, which in this case, is happiness. But Kant (1997) said that "the true vocation of reason must be to produce a will that is good, not perhaps as a means to other purposes, but good in itself, for which reason is absolutely necessary" (p. 10, italics his). The idea of the good will becomes then the ultimate basis "for the total worth of our actions and constitutes the condition of all the rest" (p. 10). To have a good will is to do something under the imperative of duty. However, good will is not exercised merely by acting in accordance with duty, but only through doing something out of a sense of duty. In this sense, loving one's enemies would only

count as morally good if it is done out of respect for the moral law, as exemplified in the LE Principle. To follow the LE Principle to achieve a further end, such as to gain a following or to create a positive image, would not count as morally good. One must love one's enemies because of the conviction that it is the right thing to do, not because it is a means to another end.

So what is the moral law on which moral duties are based? It is, according to Kant (1997), the Categorical Imperative. It is the "universal law, which alone is to serve the will as its principle" (p. 14). How does one determine whether loving one's enemies is morally to be encouraged? It is by putting it to the test of the Categorical Imperative. The imperative has three formulations with the first one stated as: "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (p. 31). Although this statement of Kant (1997) has gone to a lot of interpretations, what seems clear is the test of universalizability that the statement implies. In other words, an act is determined as moral if it is universalizable while it is immoral if it is not universalizable. A maxim is universalizable if it is to be applied by any person faced with a certain situation to where the moral principle applies. Pojman and Feiser (2012) symbolized it as: "If one judges that act X is right for a certain person P, then it is right for anyone relevantly similar to P" (p. 7). If loving one's enemies is universalizable, this means that my doing it implies that others should also do it, when faced in a similar situation where I apply the principle. So is the maxim universalizable? Can I will that it should become a universal law without being charged with inconsistency or contradiction?

According to contemporary American philosopher Christine Korsgaard (1985), there are three possible interpretations of what Kant (1997) meant by contradiction. First, Kant (1997) might have meant that the universalization of such a maxim would be a logical contradiction, where the proposed action would simply be inconceivable. In this sense, our maxim does not seem to

commit this. There is no internal contradiction in conceiving a world where people love their enemies. There are people, groups, and communities who practice it, if not all the time, at least some of the time. Thus, if it can be practiced some of the time, then there is no logical contradiction in claiming that it can be practiced all of the time. All people can practice it without the pain of contradicting themselves. Clearly, the principle does not mean that we should love our enemies even though we feel hate for them. This indeed is a contradiction. How can one love and hate the same people at the same time? If there is genuine desire to love one's enemies, then the issue of hate, if present, should be addressed first. Nevertheless, the LE Principle in itself entails no logical contradiction. Commanding one to love one's enemies is not like commanding one to exist and not exist at the same time.

On the second interpretation, Kant (1997) might have meant a teleological contradiction, where the principle could not function as a law within a purposeful and organized system of nature. Take for instance his example of suicide. Someone feels sick of life and because of despair, reflects whether to kill himself. Is it a violation of duty to himself to take his own life? According to Kant (1997), it is. Killing oneself would be a teleological contradiction since if universalized, it would mean that anyone would have to kill himself when faced with despair. This is clearly against a nature "whose destination is to impel toward the furtherance of life" (p. 31). What Kant (1997) implies is that nature has endowed creatures with the desire to further and protect one's life so to go against this natural desire would be contradictory. Thus, suicide as a moral principle commits teleological contradiction.

Whatever the merit of this example, what is important is how it illustrates what is meant by teleological contradiction. When applied to the LE Principle, there seems to be no reason to suppose that it will not function in the system of nature. It would actually seem to contribute positively to the flourishing of human beings. Since nature is endowed to further the survival of a species,

adherence to LE Principle would help improve the quality of human communities by engendering the spirit of acceptance, charity, and trust as components of a healthy society.

The third interpretation is one of practical contradiction, where an action would become ineffective for achieving its purpose if everyone tried to use it for that purpose. Kant's (1997) example is making a promise. Someone finds himself in need of money. He wants to borrow money but he also knows that he will be unable to pay it. Suppose that he proceeds in borrowing. The principle behind his action would be "When I believe myself to be in need of money I shall borrow money and promise to repay it, even though I know that this will never happen" (p. 32). The action commits a practical contradiction. If everyone would promise with the intention of not fulfilling it, then no one would believe a promise anymore and so, any act of promising would become ineffective.

Does the LE Principle commit this contradiction? It is clear that it does not. We have already seen that one major purpose for loving one's enemies is because love is itself a good thing, whoever the object of that love is. In this sense, there seems to be no good reason to think that such purpose would be defeated if everybody follows the principle. For something to be a genuine love, it does not necessarily imply that the beloved loves back. The purpose is not defeated, even if one's enemies do not reciprocate.

Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative runs as follows: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any another, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means" (p. 31). What does this formulation mean? It does not mean that we can never treat other people as means. Teachers are means to their students' education. Employees are means to the business owner's aims and goals. Rather, we should never treat people merely as means. People should not be treated like objects, which are incapable

of valuing and deciding for themselves. Any violation of human rights is thus immoral since it treats human beings as mere means to another's end. By saying that we should treat humanity always as an end is to recognize that human beings are rational and that their humanity, their capacities, preferences, and the like, should always be taken into consideration.

Does the LE Principle fulfill the requirement for this second formulation? Love is a manifestation of identifying people as ends in themselves, as persons of great value. A complete acceptance of the enemy is the recognition of his or her full, albeit imperfect, humanity. Seeking the good and welfare of people shows a recognition that people ought to be loved, no matter who they are or their status in life. Indeed, loving in this sense goes beyond the requirement for Kant's second formulation since what the imperative states is just a command for the respect of people, a recognition that their concerns should be taken into account. However, love is more than just respect; it is to recognize what good will benefit the beloved and work towards it. Thus, the LE Principle is not just compatible with the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative; it even goes beyond its basic requirements.

So far we have seen that loving one's enemies does not have any morally objectionable reasons not to be practiced. Considered under the lens of utilitarianism and Kantian ethics, it is philosophically unobjectionable. However, as is clear in the previous discussion, it is nowhere stated that utilitarianism or Kantian ethics takes the LE Principle as morally obligatory. What we can only say is that both traditions may see the LE Principle as morally permissible, without pain of contradiction. However, moral permissibility is too weak a reason to be a motivating factor for action. For one, I am morally permitted to eat sandwich for dinner but doing it does not make me a moral hero. Nevertheless, we can see the moral value of adhering to the LE Principle from another lens, which is that of supererogation.

The Emotional Hindrance to Loving One's Enemies

Finally, we turn to the biting reality of everyday life. That is, loving one's enemies is an emotionally difficult thing to do or practice. Should the fact that it is naturally hard to practice make us question the over-all viability of it as a guiding principle in one's life? Before we answer this question, it is important to trace the roots of this emotional impediment. Why do people find the principle hard to practice? I think it is because we perceive our acts of love in connection to the people who deserve them. It is hard to love enemies precisely because we feel that enemies are not deserving of love, especially by the people who are the object of their resentment or malice. It does not seem fair that in spite of one's negative disposition towards the other, the other would respond with love, instead of indifference or hate. This goes against the common principle of reciprocity that is important in every society.

Perhaps what is to be addressed is the roots of this emotion and assess whether the cause of this emotion justifies or not the emotion itself. It seems that by now it is clear that there is nothing, even the negative emotions, that would nullify the moral worth of loving the enemies. In light of all that have been said in favour of loving the enemies, it seems that all the potential good that its practice can bring – to the lover, the beloved, and to society in general – far outweighs the emotional disvalue brought about by its practice. Moreover, the practice of loving one's enemies does not preclude that we should have no negative emotions whatsoever. It is expected that certain virtues would go against the dictates of our baser nature as humans. Loving our enemies is best when practiced with a pure spirit and a fully benevolent heart; but it does not mean that without these components, the practice would not be morally praiseworthy. It is important is that we practice it, even if we may not feel like it. It is very likely that with constant practice, the emotional hindrance will be transformed into a disposition to embody love in our character and to manifest

this love to every person we meet; no matter how they relate to us or to everybody else.

Following the LE Principle is mired with difficulty. Nobody claimed that it is going to be easy. Knowing someone who loves, instead of hate, his or her enemies would be morally inspiring in part because we seldom encounter such people. We admire those who love selflessly, and we may be moved to imitate them. In actual practice however, what is usually inspiring and admirable comes out as overwhelmingly difficult. However, just because it is not easy does not mean that it is impossible. It all comes down to each of us whether to rise to the challenge.

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