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To cite this article: Pilar Lopez-Cantero (2022): Non-harmonious love, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, DOI: [10.1080/09672559.2022.2121896](https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2022.2121896)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2022.2121896>




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Published online: 09 Oct 2022.



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ABSTRACT

A common approach in the philosophy of love defines love as caring about one another and promoting one another's interests, aims and values. The view faces several problems and has been re-formulated to avoid them. However, here I argue that a larger re-formulation of the definition of love is needed in order to accommodate three instances of what I call 'non-harmonious' relationships. I identify three types of non-harmonious love (featuring problematic interests, opposing interests and neutral interests the lovers do not care about) and ultimately claim that our definition of love must incorporate conflict and self-interest, and we should then abandon the excessive focus on the sharing of values.

KEYWORDS Emotions; love; caring; practical identity; romantic love; friendship

We care about our friends and romantic partners. It matters to us that they attain their goals, that they have a good life, or that they avoid misfortune. For that reason, when attempting to define what love is, it seems intuitive to say that loving someone is, or at least entails, caring about that person. However, we do not really care about everything the people we love care about. In fact, some people love their partners or friends despite having problematic interests, others love each other despite having opposing values, and there are cases where the lovers do not care that much about each other's main interests. These three types of relationships, which are incredibly common outside of philosophy books and articles, are what I call cases of non-harmonious love.

Non-harmonious love has not been sufficiently addressed in analytical philosophy. In fact, some cemented ideas within philosophy of love are seriously challenged when faced with cases of non-harmonious love. In this paper, I discuss the account of love as intimate identification presented by Helm (2010a, 2010b). Despite his account representing a huge step forward by rejecting the traditional debate between cognitive and conative approaches to love and advocating for a definition of love that does not focus on one single element, Helm's focus on the lovers' values and how

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incorporating these to their respective conception of their lives worth living is, in my view, flawed. I point to these shortcomings by discussing his view in the context of relationships characterized by non-harmonious love.

My aim is to show that the limitations of the identification approach are sufficient to call for a change of focus in conceptual analysis of love. Eventually, I advocate for an alternative approach which incorporates what Helm's view gets right about love, while shifting the focus of analysis from the loved person and/or the lovers as a joint entity to the lover.¹

I begin by presenting Frankfurt's (1988, 2004) view: caring about someone is for their interests to become analogous to your interests. Helm (2010a, 2010b) criticizes Frankfurt's approach and says, instead, that caring about someone is having a specific type of concern about their identity. For Helm, caring entails being rationally committed to a pattern of emotions towards the loved person's identity. In Helm's account, a person's identity is composed by her conception of a life worth living and her values, which are interdependent

I then present my three objections to Helm's view and argue that that it does not accommodate non-harmonious love. Firstly, Helm cannot accommodate cases of 'love in spite of' problematic values (which are values that do not conform to standards of well-being). Secondly, he cannot accommodate cases of love in spite of opposing values (where the lovers hold values which are deeply incompatible). Thirdly, Helm cannot accommodate cases of neutral values where the lover does not care about the loved person's values.

1. The Basics of Caring

Harry Frankfurt has one of the most influential accounts of love as caring. For Frankfurt, love has 'four main conceptually necessary features' (Frankfurt 1988, 79): disinterested concern for the well-being of the loved person, focus on a specific person, identification with the loved person and love not being a product of choice. Here, I focus solely on the necessary feature of the identification of the lover with the loved person. Frankfurt (1988, 83) states that a person who cares about something

identifies himself with what he cares about in the sense that he makes himself vulnerable to losses and susceptible to benefits depending upon whether what he cares about is diminished or enhanced. Thus he concerns himself with what concerns it, giving particular attention to such things and directing his behaviour accordingly.

Then, what a person cares about i) affects a person's well-being (one becomes 'vulnerable to losses and susceptible to benefits'); ii) directs a person's

¹The paper is concerned with intimate personal love that is characteristic of romantic partnerships and friendships, and for that reason I use 'love' and 'being in love' interchangeably.

attention and iii) directs a person's actions. This seems like a plausible route to explain what being in love is, as the following example shows. Manuela is in love with John. With Frankfurt's account in hand, in virtue of being in love with John, Manuela's well-being is affected. Manuela suffers when John suffers (she is vulnerable to his losses) and flourishes when John flourishes (she is susceptible to his benefits). If John loses his job, Manuela not only feels sad for him or worried about how they are going to pay the bills – her own well-being diminishes because John's well-being has diminished. If John gets a promotion, Manuela not only feels happy for him or enthusiastic about the holiday in the Maldives they can finally afford – her own well-being increases because John's well-being has increased. Manuela concerns herself with what concerns John (like, for example, his career), gives particular attention to things related to John (she thinks all night about whether he will get the promotion), and acts accordingly (she supports him through job-seeking; she plans a promotion party). John's career is not just something Manuela pays attention to because it is among John's interests. John's career is, in virtue of loving John, one of her interests:

The lover is invested in his beloved: he profits by its successes, and its failures cause him to suffer. To the extent that he invests himself in what he loves, and in that way identifies with it, its interests are identical with his own. It is hardly surprising, then, that for the lovers selflessness and self-interest coincide (Frankfurt 2004, 61–62).

The idea that the loved person's interests become the lover's interests is the basic foundation for many theories of love. While Frankfurt belongs to the so-called 'robust concern' accounts, where the notion of caring is the most important, the 'union accounts', which define love as a sort of merging of the lovers' identities. The idea of merging has been cashed out with differences of degree, from Solomon's (1988) 'fusion' of the lovers' identities into one to Nozick's (1989) desire to form a 'we' as a new separate identity from the lovers.

Frankfurt's is not a union view: he does not understand the loved person's interests becoming identical to the loved person's interests as a merging of identities. He explicitly says that the lovers' interests 'can never be entirely the same; and it is improbable that they will even be wholly compatible' (Frankfurt 2004, 62). However, although Frankfurt rightly avoids the improbable fusion of the lovers' interests, we may still find this idea of appropriation of the interests of the loved person problematic. This is the case of Bennett Helm.

For Helm, to care about something is for that thing to have import in you, which means to have concern about its well-being (Helm 2010b, 24). This concern implies that the object of caring is 'worthy of attention and action on its behalf' (Helm 2010b, 24). Caring then requires the carer to be concerned

about the well-being of the object of her caring, and to be prepared to act toward the promotion of that well-being. In that sense, Helm's shares Frankfurt's basic notion of identification as grounded in well-being, attention, and action. This is how Helm (2010a, 10) characterizes the robust concern view as follows:

[Y]our concern for the identity of the other is not merely analogous to your concern for your own identity: it is a part of it. In identifying with your beloved, you make her cares and concerns, her interests and values, become a part of your identity, so that you care about her as a part of caring about yourself and thereby tie your own well-being to hers . . . Intimacy, therefore, requires incorporating her well-being into your own.

Helm argues that this view suffers from what he calls a 'tendency toward individualism' (Helm 2010a, 9). Individualism, for Helm, comes in two forms: an 'egocentric conception of intimate concern' and an 'individualist conception of autonomy' (Helm 2010a, 9). I will come back to Helm's claims on the individualist conception of autonomy, but with regards to Frankfurt, it is his claim on egocentrism that is most relevant.

For Helm, the reason traditional views of love – including Frankfurt's – are egocentric is because they require the loved person's identity to become part of the lover's identity. Helm says that concern should not be understood as intimate in virtue of its contribution to one's identity. Instead, Helm (2010a, 18) argues that

we should come to understand what is distinctively intimate about love in terms of a distinctive kind of concern for the identity of another as the particular person he is, a concern that it is the same in kind as the concern you have for your own identity but without presupposing that you thereby make your beloved's interests and identity a part of your own.

This is as much a critique of union views as it is of robust concern views. According to Helm, both fail to account for the intimate character of concern in relationships like romantic love or close friendships. Going back to the example I gave above, it seems like for these views, if it were not because John's identity had become part of Manuela's identity, Manuela's concern would not be intelligible as intimate. In that picture, Manuela's concern is intimate because John's interests are now hers. This happens in union views, where Manuela's and John's identities are incorporated to each other's in one way or another, and in robust concern views, where John's well-being is incorporated into Manuela's—and vice versa.

For Helm, that way of understanding concern fails to account for the intimate character of our caring for persons who are one's lover or friend as intimate. To say that the lover has to be invested in the loved person is egoistic, given that such a claim grounds concern for the loved person in the lover's own interests. The objection is that if the loved person's

interests become the lover's interests, then the lover is merely concerned, attentive and active with respect to *her own* interests. Helm argues that intimate identification requires the lover to be concerned, attentive and active for the loved person's interests, which are not the lover's own. Helm would then consider that Manuela's concern for John is intimate because Manuela cares about John's interests in virtue of being his interests. It is because they are his interests that we can say that Manuela cares for John for his sake.

2. Helm's Intimate Identification

Like Frankfurt, Helm believes that caring about someone is to be concerned, attentive and active about what that person cares about. Unlike Frankfurt, Helm does not believe that the lover incorporates the loved person's interests to her own set of interests. Instead, Helm highlights the idea that caring about a person is having concern for her identity: 'concern for the identity of another as the particular person he is' (Helm 2010a, 18). He calls this type of caring 'intimate identification'.

What is to be concerned about someone's identity? Helm says that the well-being of a person is partly defined by her personal *values*. Here, values are not to be understood in the strict moral sense (i.e. 'she was brought up with good values'). A value can be distinctively moral (for example, eco-activism) but does not need to (for example, football). Values are the things that constitute '[a person's] sense of what contributes to the kind of life worth her living' (Helm 2010a, 42). This sense of a life worth living 'constitutes one's identity as this particular person' (Helm 2010a, 42). In intimate identification 'you come to have a concern for your beloved's identity that is the same in kind as your concern for your own' (Helm 2010a, 43). Hence, to care about a person means to care about her identity understood in that way. Helm draws from the philosophy of emotion to explain how it is possible to care about someone's values without the need to incorporate them to one's own.

Briefly, in his account of emotions Helm distinguishes between the target or intentional object of an emotion (what the emotion is about) and the formal object (the evaluation which constitutes the emotion). He gives the following example. If I am angry that rabbits are eating the tomatoes in my garden, the target of anger are the rabbits, while the formal object is the evaluation of their actions as offensive or enraging. Helm adds a third element, the focus of the emotion: 'the background object whose import to the subject makes intelligible the evaluation of the target in light of the formal object' (Helm 2010b, 25). That is, the thing that the subject cares about: the tomatoes. If I did not care about my tomatoes, I would not find the rabbits offensive, he argues.

Caring about tomatoes entails that I will feel certain emotions regarding the tomatoes: ‘fear that the groundhogs will dig under the fence, worry that the cold, wet spring will rot their roots, excitement at the tomatoes finally start ripening’ (Helm 2010b, 25). Helm says that caring entails a rational commitment to feeling these emotions, since ‘in feeling an emotion one is in effect committing oneself to the import of its focus’ (Helm 2010b, 25). This emotional commitment results, over time, in a pattern of emotions to which we are rationally committed. In this case, caring about tomatoes commits a person to a pattern of emotions focused on the tomatoes – elation when they start growing, anger when the rabbits eat them, worry when frost threatens the harvest, et cetera.

For Helm, intimate identification follows this same structure. However, intimate identification is a ‘deeper’ mode of caring than caring about tomatoes, given that it is caring about a person’s identity (Helm 2010b, 27). While emotions towards objects like tomatoes have one focus (the thing that the person cares about), what Helm calls ‘person-focused’ emotions has two levels of focus (Helm 2010b, 28). The focus of the emotion is the particular person that is the object of import, while the subfocus of the emotion is the particular value of that person’s identity.

Distinguishing between focus and subfocus allows Helm to explain identification without the need for the loved person’s interests to become one’s own. Helm gives the example of his feelings of pride when his wife wins a bagpiping competition (I assume, although he does not say explicitly, that bagpiping is one of his wife’s values). He cares about his wife, and that grounds his own pride at his wife’s winning. His wife is, then, the focus of the emotion, while bagpiping is the subfocus. Bagpiping is the specific value that Helm cares about in virtue of it being held by his wife, about whom he cares and who is the focus of the emotion. Helm does not have bagpiping as one of his own values. Bagpiping is something he cares about because it is a value of a person he cares about. In virtue of loving his wife, Helm is rationally committed to a pattern of emotions (including pride) that have his wife as focus and his wife’s values as subfocus (for example, bagpiping). In that way, Helm offers an alternative to the Frankfurtian approach, where the loved person’s interests become one’s own.

Helm’s critique can be accepted without the need to accept or reject his qualification of Frankfurt’s view as egoistic. Regardless of whether one agrees with Helm’s egoism objection, his view is better suited to define love than Frankfurt’s, for two reasons.

First, Frankfurt does not really elaborate on the kind of interests of the loved person that become interests of the lover. If being in love entails concern about the loved person’s interests, surely it is not required that the lover is concerned for all the loved person’s interests. We may want to say that being in love requires that one cares about one’s wife’s bagpiping prize,

which is partly what makes her life worth living. But surely one does not need to share anger when one's husband is angry about rabbits eating his tomatoes. Frankfurt may explicitly say that loved person's interests may not be identical, but why not? The notion of interests as discussed by Frankfurt is so general that it would require that one's well-being diminishes when one's husband suffers regarding his tomatoes being eaten by rabbits. More importantly, one can care about another person's interests without these having to become one's own interests. Any academic philosopher with a non-academic partner can easily understand this – often partners actually cared very little about philosophy before they met us, and if they ever care about it, it is because we do. Even among academic philosophers, our interests may be quite far apart – I can say this from my own experience, as a philosopher of emotions and moral psychology with a partner who is a metaphysician and philosopher of science.

Secondly, even if the diminishing of the loved person's well-being causes suffering for the lover in such cases, that does not mean that the loved person's values have to become the lover's values. For example, Aby might be a long-time Manchester United fan; being a supporter of the club may well be one of her values – part of the life she considers worth living. In Helm's picture, when Aby is happy because Manchester United wins a match, her partner Adam being happy is not grounded in Manchester United being one of his values. The faring of Manchester United may not have any influence on whether Adam thinks he is living a life worth living. Adam feels happy because the club is one of Aby's values, so in virtue of caring about Aby, he is rationally committed to a pattern of emotions towards Aby with Manchester United as a subfocus.

In the context of Helm's view, being in love would then be a rational commitment to a pattern of emotions which have the loved person as focus, and the loved person's values as subfocus. This pattern, which is bi-directional (Aby has it for Adam and Adam for Aby), results in a change in the lovers' identities, who end up sharing a 'single evaluative perspective' (Helm 2010a, 260) in virtue of both being rationally committed to patterns of emotions towards certain subfoci (their respective values). To explore whether this is a plausible approach to explain what being in love is, I offer more details on Helm's view on identity.

3. Identity, Well-being, and a Life Worth Living

According to Helm, intimate identification is deeper than mere 'caring' because it consists in caring about the loved person's identity, which is analogous to the concern one has towards one's own identity. To care about someone's identity (one's own or others) is to care about their values: what makes their life worth living.

The idea that a person's identity is constituted by the kind of things she considers worth her living has also been famously defended by Christine Korsgaard. Korsgaard claims that a person's identity is defined by her actions. Through our actions, we endorse what she calls 'practical identities': 'descriptions[s] under which you value yourself and find your life worth living and your actions worth undertaking' (Korsgaard 1996, 101). These descriptions of ourselves give us reasons for action. Our actions are then justified by reasons which we source from the type of life we consider worth living. The idea of a life worth living is grounded in importance: 'It may be important to you that you are a human being, a woman . . . someone's lover'. (Korsgaard 2009, 20). For example, I have the practical identity of being a philosopher, and my friend Mercedes has the practical identity of being a mother. Mercedes is also an architect, but that role is not a source for reasons in the same way that being a philosopher is a source of reasons for me. Surely, being an architect gives Mercedes reasons to act in certain ways, like going to work on time, drawing plans and updating her knowledge on Revit. But it is not part of her idea of the type of life she considers worth her living like being a philosopher is for me. The difference is that for me, the role I acquire with my profession is important, while for Mercedes, hers is not. These things we find important conform our practical identities, and that is what our identity – our self – amounts to.

Helm rejects Korsgaard's view. He argues that if a person's identity is constituted by her values, then valuing is conceptually prior to a person's identity (Helm 2010a, 120). Unless values and the conception of a life worth living are interdependent, but separate, Helm thinks that we cannot account for the fact that people's identities are malleable:

In some respects, therefore, a person's identity is like a building that is constantly undergoing remodelling, with parts being demolished, others being added, still others being modified, and all without a fixed, determined blueprint. (Helm 2010a, 132)

Determining that conception is the expression of a person's autonomy:

A person . . . is a creature that has the capacity to have a say in defining its own identity as such and so in determining its well-being as the particular person it is; this is our autonomy, our capacity for self-determination. (Helm 2010a, 131)

I shall not stop here to discuss whether Helm is right or not on whether practical identities are actually isolated from each other in Korsgaard's view. It suffices for my purposes to say that since Helm discusses this interdependence explicitly and Korsgaard does not, I work from Helm's view on identity and adopt his term 'values' instead of 'practical identities'. The reason is that the arguments I will make later rest on the possibility of values

and a conception of a life worth living sometimes coming apart from each other.

In this way, we have a clearer picture of what values and the conception of a life worth living mean for Helm. Helm says that one's well-being is defined by one's conception of a life worth living and one's values, which are interdependent but separate. Helm also says that values need not conform to objective standards:

It should be clear that this notion of valuing is distinctively personal insofar as it is both relative to the individual person and definitive of who she is as a person. Such personal values, as we might more properly call them, are distinct from moral or other universal values. In particular, although I might recognize that certain works of art or nature scenes have value, I need not (though I may) personally value these things by finding somehow to be a part of the kind of life worth living. Moreover, it should be clear that such personal values are a matter of evaluative attitudes a person in fact has, as distinct from what she should value (Helm 2010a, 98).

This is a promising view on personal identity, given that it is true that people value things which are distinct from 'what they should value'. Some people care about art and philosophy, but some others care about being rich or about being members of an organised crime syndicate. For both the philosopher and the mafioso, these are things that make their lives worth living. A theory of love as caring must accommodate caring for disvaluable things. The truth is that we do not only love valuable people, if 'valuable' is to be understood according to moral or universal standards.

To explain what being in love is following Helm's account, we need to start with the loved person's values. Marta is a philosopher, and being a philosopher is one of her values. Being a philosopher constitutes part of her identity in relation to other values she has and her conception of a life worth living ('a life aimed at understanding the world'). Marta's promoting of her own well-being is a promotion of her identity, realised partly as the promotion of her value of philosophy (partly, because she also needs to promote other values she has). For Janis to love Marta, in Helm's view, is for Janis to value Marta. That means that Janis cares about Marta for her sake, i.e. for her identity as the person she is. That also means that Janis has philosophy as a subfocus in virtue of caring about Marta. Marta's identity is the focus of Janis's caring, and her being a philosopher is the subfocus of Janis's caring. Janis's being in love with Marta commits him to a pattern of emotions towards Marta's identity and values in this sense.

Throughout his discussion of values, Helm keeps giving examples which can all, more or less, be accepted as potential components of a life worth living: being a professor (Helm 2010a, 118), being a father (Helm 2010a, 122), and, as seen above, playing the bagpipes. It seems intuitive to say that being in love with a person entails caring for values which constitute their

identity such as being a professor, being a father, being a musician or, like in my example, being a philosopher. But let us remember that, for Helm, personal values are not necessarily in accordance with universal or moral values. All these examples easily conform to universal or moral values. How does Helm's theory of caring fare when the loved person's values do not conform to universal or moral standards?

4. Problematic Identities

English musician Pete Doherty, former front man of the rock band The Libertines, has experienced decades-long drug addiction, widely documented in the media. In an interview, Doherty states the following:

For a long time . . . I didn't use any drugs. On and off over the years I haven't, but it's become such an intrinsic part of my existence. It's like talking about a brother, really. I can't really separate myself from them. They'll always be there. (Tendrell 2019, n.p.)

Doherty's account departs from commonplace first-personal accounts of drug addiction, where drugs are something undesirable that need to be overcome. On the contrary, for Doherty, talking about drugs is like 'talking about a brother'; drugs are an 'intrinsic' part of his existence. Doherty goes on to say that drugs are one of his 'favourite conversations':

I'm fascinated by drugs, always have been. How they are controlled, how they work economically, socially. How they work metabiologically [sic] and metaphysically and intellectually. And I love to be around them, I'm fascinated by the clothes, by the culture. (Tendrell 2019, n.p.)

Now, there are several ways to interpret these attitudes about drugs. One could be that these statements are just a façade, a way to present himself publicly and to discuss his addiction. However, another plausible interpretation is that Doherty cares about drugs.² If we go back to the basic definition of caring, caring is grounded in well-being, attention and action. Doherty's caring about drugs fulfils the last criteria in the same way Marta's caring about philosophy. Doherty is disposed to attend to drug-related themes in the same way Marta is disposed to attend to philosophy-related themes. Doherty acts accordingly, looking for drug-related themes which he enjoys discussing, like Marta enjoys discussing philosophy (and predictably looking to engage with drugs by taking them, like Marta looks to engage with

²By the time of publication of this paper, Pete Doherty has eventually abandoned his drug habit and retracted his former fascination with drugs. In his own words: 'I've managed to get out of the addictive cycle – which I maintained all along I was quite happy in – but I was pretty fucked, and I've never really admitted to that' (Pelley 2022). So it seems that, in fact, Doherty's past statements may have been a façade. Here, I discuss these statements as belonging to a fictional Doherty who does conform to my interpretations of these statements as they were uttered at the time.

philosophy by writing it). *Prima facie*, the difference between Marta and Doherty is that it may be said that drugs are detrimental to well-being objectively, while philosophy is conducive to well-being objectively.

Doherty is a paradigmatic case of what here I call ‘problematic identities’: people whose values that made their life worth living do not conform to moral or universal standards. If we follow Helm’s view, we cannot say that Doherty’s caring about drugs is necessarily damaging to his well-being, even when a universal or a moral standard of well-being would be incompatible with caring about drugs. Recall that, for Helm, promoting one’s well-being is promoting one’s identity understood as one’s values and one’s conception of a life worth living. Doherty’s conception of a life worth living could plausibly be summarised as ‘a life of sex, drugs and rock and roll’. Valuing drugs is in accordance with Doherty’s conception of a life worth living; like being a philosopher is in accordance with Marta’s conception of a life worth living (as ‘a life aimed at understanding the world’). Doherty clearly has drugs as one of his values (an expression of ‘a life of sex, drugs, and rock and roll’).

However, despite having drugs as one of his values and a conception of a life worth living as a life of sex, drugs and rock and roll, Doherty knows that there is something wrong with his identity. In another recent article about Doherty, the writer reports the following exchange:

Would you like to be clean? “Yes, a part of me would. Just so I can feel things. There are so many people in my life who deserve better. It really is a mental deficiency.” Would you be more productive if you were drug-free? “I’d be a force to be reckoned with! I’d have money and self-respect and clean hands.” His fingers are filthy (Hattenstone 2019, n.p.)

Doherty says he lacks self-respect. Helm (2010a, 140) acknowledges that this happens when personal values which are not in accordance with universal or moral standards:

[W]e might understand self-hate to be the sense that your current values, your current sense of the kind of life worth your living, is fundamentally misguided so that, even though you may be living up to these current values, you nonetheless are not living as you ought. In short, understood this way self-hate is the sense that your identity as you now understand it is somehow rotten.

It is, then, possible to have problematic values and a problematic conception of a life worth living that are in conflict with the values and conception and a life worth living that you *ought to* have, and that you may know that you ought to have. Doherty’s idea of the general conception of a life worth living partly differs from the conception that he ought to have. It is important to insist on partly because only ‘a part of him’ wants to be drug-free; he explicitly says that he is fascinated by drugs and loves to be around them. It is only partly that his conception of a life worth living comes apart from his valuing taking drugs. But, all in all, there is a dissonance between values and

identity in Doherty's case which is an example of understanding one's identity as 'somehow rotten'.

It could be argued that Doherty is immoral, ambivalent, or that Doherty's free will is compromised due to his first-order desires. Korsgaard, for example, would plausibly argue that Doherty lacks integrity as an agent, given that he is not acting according to universal reasons (reasons to not engage in self-destructive behaviour). Frankfurt, in fact, has an example which almost exactly mirrors Doherty: the Willing Addict, who 'would not have things any other way' and thus is morally responsible for his desires (Frankfurt 1971, 5–20). But there is no need to get into those discussions, given that, as I show next, problematic identities put Helm's views on caring about oneself and caring about other people in conflict with each other.

As I explained earlier, Helm defines love in terms of intimate identification: a rational commitment to a pattern of emotions which have the loved person as focus (i.e. his wife), and the loved person's values as subfocus (i.e. bagpiping). Specifically, the lover is rationally committed to the same emotions that the loved person has towards her own values:

To feel this pride is to be committed to the import she has as this person and so to the import bagpipes have as a part of her identity as such. Such commitments are, therefore, to feeling other person-focused felt evaluations with the same focus. Indeed, these will be person-focused felt evaluations I ought to share with her: when she is proud, ashamed, anxious, self-assured, and so on, where these are emotions focused on herself, I ought similarly to feel pride, shame, and so on for her sake. (Helm 2010a, 156)

This seems immediately wrong in the case of people with problematic identities. In the example of the bagpiping prize, Helm feels pride which is focused on his wife and subfocused on bagpiping, in virtue of bagpiping being one of his wife's values. It would be slightly bizarre to claim that, equally, someone who loves Doherty is rationally committed to feeling happy when he is happily taking drugs. Let us remember that Helm accepts that people can have problematic values, given that values do not need to conform with moral or universal standards. So, in theory, problematic values – like drugs – should rationally commit a person to the same patterns of emotions as non-problematic values – like bagpiping. It follows that, indeed, Helm's account commits him to the bizarre claim: Doherty's partner seems to be rationally committed to happiness when Doherty happily takes drugs. However, Helm (2010a, 159) anticipates this scenario and refutes the bizarre claim:

I ought not to be proud of him for upholding values I think are generally abhorrent; nor could I more generally share this value with him, even if it is for his sake. For to do so would be for me to be inadequately sensitive to the value these things intelligibly can have (by my lights), and I would thereby fail in my commitment to his well-being.

Helm (2010a, 160) continues with a claim that I believe stands in conflict with the rest of his account:

[I]f my beloved is about to embark on a course of action I find prohibited not just for myself but for anyone, or if he fails to value something I think he must, then, other things being equal, I ought to object out of a concern for his well-being. For in such a case simply to defer to his view would be, according to me, harmful to his well-being and so contrary to my concern for him; indeed, if he continues in this way, then I ought to be ashamed of him for failing to live as he ought in this respect, regardless of his failure to be ashamed of himself.

Here Helm seems to brush aside his previous definition of well-being. Promoting a person's well-being, let us remember, is to promote what they conceive as a life worth living. Helm explicitly rejects the need for values to conform with universal or moral standards. So even for people with problematic values, to promote their own well-being is to promote their conception of a life worth living, which for Doherty is partly to live a life of sex, drugs and rock and roll. However, the phrase 'prohibited not just for myself but for anyone' indisputably means 'universal'. I am not denying that maybe it should be the case: loving someone does not seem compatible with endorsing their doing something self-destructive. There is a difference, however, between doing something self-destructive and having something self-destructive as a value. For Doherty, taking drugs is not merely something that he does: it is one of his values. Can Helm affirm both that the loved person's values are subfoci of caring and that the lover must object to certain values of the loved person?

I do not think he can. Helm's move to a universal standard of well-being in the context of caring about other people is in contradiction with his understanding of well-being in the context of caring about oneself. If anything can be a value for oneself, then any value that a person has needs to be a subfocus of caring about the lover. Helm must abandon either

- i. his conception of well-being as not conforming to moral or universal standards;
- ii. his conception of the lover having to object to the loved person's values when they are not conducive to a universal standard of well-being; or
- iii. his conception of caring about persons as having the loved person's values as subfocus.

I believe that Helm should abandon the latter two, given that his answer on problematic identities stems from his view's failure to capture the role that the loved person's values play in love. This is what Doherty's then partner, Jade, says about him in the second article I quoted earlier:

While Doherty disappears briefly, I ask Jade what the best thing is about him. "His soul, his inner self." And the worst? "Probably his disbelief in himself. I think if he could love himself as much as I do . . ." (Hattenstone 2019, n.p.)

This is what Doherty's manager, who went to school with the musician, says about him:

What was Doherty like as a schoolboy? "Utterly brilliant. He got top grades in everything. He was very similar to today apart from the obvious one that we all wish was different." Drugs? "Yes." (Hattenstone 2019, n.p.)

Doherty's value for drugs is not constitutive of his partner's and his manager's love for him. Jade loves Doherty despite his lack of self-respect; the manager judges him as brilliant except for his drug addiction. Universal standards of well-being matter here. It would be odd to claim that when the people we love value universally damaging things as part of a life worth living, our love is constituted by our valuing these things. Matthes (2016, 246) expresses this worry:

If some aspect of a person's identity is bad for her, how can you regard it as a reason for loving her and still claim to be fully concerned for her well-being? Putting aside matters of identity for the moment, consider the following: would it be fully consistent with concern for a friend's well-being to regard his chronic pain as a reason for loving him? Or his weakness of will? Or any other property that is bad for him? "I love that guy! He's kind, funny, and completely lacking in self-esteem!" Those might be good reasons to love a comedian, but the last is a strange and callous reason to love a friend.

If the values expressive of a person's conception of life worth living are in conflict with that person's objective well-being, loving that person cannot consist in caring about those damaging values. As Matthes (2016, 253) points out, in these cases either we love a person regardless of her values, or we love her in spite of her values:

To love someone in spite of an aspect of her practical identity is . . . to take a property that figures centrally in a description under which she values herself and to reject it as a reason for loving her. It is not just a rejection of what she values, but a rejection of what she values about herself, of the very idea that what she values about herself is worth valuing.

Matthes ultimately argues that although problematic values cannot ground love, we should love people for who they are even if their values are objectively bad for them (as long as they are not morally bad, like being racist) (Matthes 2016, 259). My claim here is not whether we should or not, my claim is that we do sometimes love in spite of people's values, which, as Helm rightly claims, need not be conducive to objective well-being. But we do not love them *because of* those problematic values, and our loving them need not commit us to value those problematic values ourselves. So, either the loved person's problematic values do not count towards one's love, or instances of love in spite of are not genuine cases of love. Hence, either Helm is wrong about the role values play in love (i.e. the lover does not have to have the loved person's values as subfocus of the same emotions the loved

person experiences) or he is denying that people with problematic values can be genuinely loved.

Then again, Helm could say in response that his claim is not that the loved person's values ground love, but that love rationally commits the lover to a pattern of emotions towards the loved person's values, such as shame or pity. He could say that, in virtue of Doherty's having a problematic identity, Jade is rationally committed to being ashamed or pitiful when Doherty takes drugs even if he is not, given that he is not living as he ought. In that case, Helm's claim (i) does not stand. Claims (ii) and (iii) seem to remain unaffected. As I show next, these claims do not stand either.

5. Opposing Identities

Loving in spite of may happen not only when the loved person's values are detrimental to their well-being. It can also happen when the loved person's values are in opposition to the lover's. For example, think of people with different political ideologies. Journalist Lucy Mangan, who is openly pro-Labour and is married to a Tory supporter, describes their relationship as follows:

I would like, for example, to be helped with the recycling without having to listen to a diatribe about environmentalism (or 'a blend of anti-human, self-praising crypto-paganism that's gone too far') or to watch Newsnight without explosions of rage about bias and the 'bloated, Byzantine, bureaucratic nightmare that is the BBC' or have our friends round for dinner without at least half of them being served slaughtered sacred cow as the main course.

I would like to be able to give money to people who beg on the streets without my husband rolling his eyes. That one I would like very much (Mangan 2016: n.p.)

Mangan does see the advantages of loving someone with the opposite ideology (namely, it 'banishes boredom' and it allows her to listen to different opinions to hers). But ultimately, hers is a case of loving in spite of her husband being a Tory supporter, and the other way around. It could equally be said that the husband loves Mangan in spite of her watching the BBC, her vegetarianism and her tendency to give money to homeless people.

Which pattern of emotions could Helm argue that Mangan is rationally committed to towards the Tory party, or her husband towards the Labour party? Being Tory or being Labour cannot count as universally problematic values.³ Here, Helm cannot argue that they should object to their respective

³At least not from an agnostic perspective on whether ideologies and/or political beliefs may be immoral. For obvious reasons of space and theme, I remain agnostic on this issue. If certain ideology were considered immoral in the sense of creating harm to others (not merely to oneself, like people with problematic identities), this does not mean that a person with such ideology may not have close relationships with people who disagree with them. See (Cocking and Kennett 2000; Nehamas 2010; Pakovská 2014; Trujillo 2020) on friendships with immoral people.

values. Taking the idea to the extreme, within Helm's picture it could be argued that, for Mangan, her husband is like Doherty, due to his identity and values not corresponding with the conception of a life worth living he ought to have. Maybe Mangan could judge that her husband's identity impacts his objective well-being negatively. However, Helm is very clear here: judging whether a value impacts the loved person's well-being wholly in virtue of one's own values 'would be inadequately sensitive to his identity as this person and, in particular, to the place his autonomy ought to have in defining his identity as such' (Helm 2010a, 159). Even when taken to the extreme, Mangan cannot judge her husband's well-being in virtue of her own values. In cases of loving in spite of opposing identities, the lovers cannot object to each other's values. Claim (ii) does not hold.

In order for claim (iii) to hold, the only option for Helm here is to say that Mangan is committed to being joyful towards the Tory party as subfocus when her husband is joyous about a Tory victory. This is initially more plausible in opposite identities than in the case of problematic identities. It is a less bizarre claim than claiming that Doherty's partner is rationally committed to being happy when Doherty happily takes drugs. However, this is revealing of Helm's oversight of the lover's individual conception of a life worth living, due to his focus on their joint one (their eventual single evaluative perspective).

In Helm's account, in virtue of loving someone with values that are in conflict with her own, Mangan would be committed to a pattern of emotions which goes against her own conception of a life worth living. Let us remember that, for Helm, caring about oneself is to be rationally committed to a pattern of emotions towards one's own identity. This pattern of emotions plausibly includes sadness, not joy, about Tory victories. Being joyful about a Tory victory is a failure of her caring about her own identity, given that it is in opposition to Mangan's value as pro-Labour. Mangan is already committed to a pattern of emotions towards the Labour party due to her own values, so loving her husband cannot commit her to an opposing pattern of emotions towards the Tory party. That is taking the requirements of love too far and is ultimately threatening to the lover's autonomy. Claim (iii) does not hold either – at least not in the case of opposing identities. As I show next, the claim does not hold either even when they are not problematic or opposing identities involved.

6. Not Caring about Neutral Values

In §1, I argued that Helm's view is better suited than Frankfurt's to explain what being in love is. However, I have shown that love in spite of presents problems for Helm's view. I will show now that neutral values (i.e. non-

problematic and non-opposing) present problems for the caring view in general.

The couples I discussed in §1 and §2 fit well with Helm's concern-based identification. Manchester United is one of Aby's values, and Adam cares about Manchester United in virtue of loving Aby—not because Manchester United is one of his values. Philosophy is one of Marta's values, and Janis cares about philosophy in virtue of loving Marta – not because philosophy is one of his values. However, these couples need not be the paradigm from which we can extract universal claims about what being in love is. These are cases of harmonious love. In harmonious love, both the lover and the loved person have non-problematic identities, promote each other's well-being and care about the other person's interests. But harmonious love is not universalizable.

In his bagpipe example, Helm is extracting a universal claim about love from an example of love that cannot be universalized. Helm feels proud about his wife's bagpiping prize; he then claims that the lover is rationally committed to feeling proud. But would it really be irrational to not feel proud about one's wife bagpiping prize? Think of the husband who is tired of having to go to bagpiping conventions every month and wishes his wife would, at least, swap to a less annoying musical instrument. I mentioned earlier that any philosopher with a non-philosopher partner would know that her partner only cares about philosophy in virtue of it being one of his values. This is probably the case in most non-philosopher partners who do care about philosophy. But what about those who do not care about philosophy at all? Are these people irrational? More importantly, can we still say that these people are in love with their partners? I have already shown that Helm's view does not accommodate cases of problematic and opposing values. Now, I argue that it does not accommodate other instances of love where there are no problematic or opposing values involved. I illustrate this point with two examples where one of the partners has Manchester United as one of their values. Manchester United is, in principle, neither a problematic value nor a value that can be in opposition with someone else's.

In a harmonious relationship like Aby and Adam's, Adam does care about Aby's value of Manchester United. However, this is not the case of Angela and Silvio. Manchester United is one of Angela's values, but Silvio does not care in the slightest about Manchester United. He pays no attention to Manchester United, he is not motivated to act about Manchester United. Not only it is not one of his values that make his life worth living; it is simply not one of his interests.

Then, we have Lydia and Mema. Mema absolutely hates football. It is not against her conception of a life worth living; she just does not like it. Manchester United is one of Lydia's values, and that is a source of

unhappiness for Mema. This case is different from loving in spite of problematic identities. It is not the case, like in Doherty's example, that Lydia's values are not conducive to her well-being. Mema knows that going to matches helps Lydia unleash tension and gives her a sense of belonging: it increases her well-being. It is not a case of loving in spite of opposing identities either. Manchester United is not opposed to any of Mema's values. Unlike Mangan and the Tory party, if Mema were to be happy about Manchester United winning, that would not be in contradiction with any of her values.⁴ It is simply the case that Mema despises football.

Silvio and Mema do not experience their respective partners' emotions towards Manchester United in virtue of caring for their respective partners. Here, Helm has two options. He either has to say that Silvio and Mema do not love their respective partners, or he has to surrender his definition of love as caring for the other person's identity with her values as subfocus. As I argue next, it would be hard for Helm to make the former claim – that Silvio and Mema do not love their partners.

When Angela is happy about a Manchester United victory, Silvio is neither happy nor sad about Manchester United. However, Silvio values highly that Angela is so passionate and committed to something that she cares about. So, when Angela is happy about a Manchester United victory, Silvio is happy. He is happy about Angela, not about Manchester United. There is no need for Manchester United to be the subfocus of Silvio's emotions, but nevertheless, it seems like this being happy for her is a reason to believe Silvio loves Angela.

In the case of Lydia and Mema, I can anticipate Helm saying that even if they are in love, theirs would be a defective type of love. However, I think that would overlook that when we are in a relationship, our values are quite often, a source of conflict. Lydia and Mema must negotiate in order to achieve such equilibrium: they may reach an agreement that Lydia will go on alternate weeks and go hiking with Mema every other Sunday. Lydia does not care about hiking; she would rather go to watch football every week. Mema does not care about Manchester United; she would rather go hiking every week. But, out of their love for each other, they negotiate their conflicts. Doherty's partner and manager, Mangan and her husband have an even harder job at negotiating their loved ones' problematic or opposing identities, but they do it *out of love*.

These are examples of people who are plausibly in love with each other, but the lover is not committed to a pattern of emotions towards the loved person's values. If being in love is possible without a rational commitment to

⁴Of course, for certain kind of enthusiastic supporter of Manchester United, being in a relationship with a supporter of Liverpool or Manchester City may not fall in this category of neutral values, but of opposing values (more akin to the relationship between people of differing ideologies).

a pattern of emotions towards the loved person's values – which I believe it is in light of the examples I have given above – then the rational commitment of emotions towards the loved person's values is not a necessary feature of being in love.

7. Looking Forward

Now that I have offered my criticism to Helm's view, I must make it clear that my intention has not been to do a wholesale rejection of the main ideas of the caring view, but of their focus on the loved person's values. Despite the challenges coming from non-harmonious love, the caring view does get some things right. There must be some degree of promotion of the loved person's interests for a relationship to merit the label of loving. I am not refusing that loving someone entails or maybe even commits one to a pattern of emotions towards certain things in the exact sense described by Helm. It would not be very loving to not feel sadness when one's partner is sad due to the death of a friend. It would not be loving either to be indifferent towards all of one's partners successes, or to not be happy for them. Going back to the very first example, if the only reason Manuela is happy about John's promotion is that *she* will be able to go on holiday to the Maldives, we would be right to doubt whether she really loves him.

Also, when we are in love, we tend to be attentive and active towards the people we love: we notice things related to them (things about them, or things that they value); we act to promote these things. Silvio may not care about Manchester United, but nevertheless will make sure that he does not schedule a family dinner for the night of the Champions League final: he will notice that is an important day for Angela and act in consequence. The notion of love involving attention and action on behalf of the loved person is also a right conclusion of the caring approach.

Instead of rejecting the approach, my aim is to highlight that focusing our definitions of love on the sharing of interests or values comes at the expense of neglecting two very important elements of love: conflict and self-interest. I describe them briefly in this last section, since the role of this paper is to set up the grounds of a view that incorporates these.

Firstly, the importance of the conflict that is highlighted by non-harmonious love has been uniquely recognized by Rorty (2016). Rorty agrees with Frankfurt and Helm in that loving something entails promoting its well-being. However, love comes with a burden. We love our partners, Rorty says, but we also love our careers, our hobbies, our friends. Sometimes, these are in conflict with each other, and love 'involves maintaining the dynamic equilibrium and harmony among the competing demands of multiple loves' (Rorty 2016, 349). This negotiation is 'risky' and 'dangerous', and not an easy task:

It takes a great deal of intelligent insight—and certainly a lot of time and work—to love well. We might reasonably want to avoid being led astray by the love of a fool or a villain who is sincerely and attentively committed to promoting (what they take to be) our well-being. We want—we need—those who love us to support what is genuinely best in us and best for us, *even if it means trying to redirect or even eradicate our floating desires* (Rorty 2016, 343; emphasis added).

My claim here is that any theory of love needs to accommodate negotiation and conflict as features of love, and that this is not possible if our definition of love draws mainly or solely from examples of harmonious love. Ultimately, Helm does not say that the lover needs to have *all* of the loved person's values as subfoci. What matters is that there is a pattern of emotions towards some of them. Helm's view is not incompatible with the inclusion of conflict, but as I have shown, introducing non-harmonious to the discussion presents several challenges to the account. Furthermore, by drawing mostly from harmonious love (or examples of harmony of interests in love) he implicitly endorses a damaging idealization of love, where the best expression of love, the most intimate one, is that love where there is minimal conflict – and thus, the pattern is 'tighter', so to speak. More importantly, the approach fails to acknowledge that people can love each other and still be in profound disagreement with each other, and that it is precisely out of love that they navigate those disagreements.⁵

Secondly, behind the caring approach (as well as union theories) there is a right intuition about how people's identities are formed: in social relationships. I briefly mentioned earlier that one of Helm's criticisms of traditional views of love is that they have an individualist conception of persons, which assumes that to delegate responsibility for one's own identity is inauthentic (Helm 2010a, 11). Helm argues that this conception of persons ignores 'the way particular relationships can significantly enhance our lives, our activity, and our autonomy by dissolving the social barriers that separate people from each other' (Helm 2010a, 14). Helm believes that the lover and the loved person eventually end up sharing a single evaluative perspective. Leaving aside that the claim is probably excessive if only some values are to be shared, this highlights another crucial feature of love that the caring approach gets right: being in love entails a change in the lover. And this is a change that we should want, since love is a good thing.

However, despite the acknowledgment that we all want love, it is often seen as a defect on the part of the lover to ask herself 'what am I getting out of this?'. The notion of caring for the loved person for her sake, and not because of the benefits that a relationship may bring for the lover, is at the roots of the excessive philosophical focus on the loved person's interests and values. This fixation has translated into a generalized acceptance of disinterestedness as a

⁵Velleman (1999, 353) argues that we can dislike deeply someone we love and gives as an example a divorced couple who still love each other.

necessary feature of love, and as an establishment of the loved person (or the lovers as a joint entity) as the main focus in conceptual analysis. But personal and intimate love is not disinterested: we want that love to be reciprocated, so there is already a motive there that has little to do with the loved person's values or identities. The disinterestedness condition has increasingly been put into question. Delaney (1996), Harcourt (2011), or Foster (2008) have all defended that there is at least a degree of self-interest in love. Protasi (2016, 218) explains the need for reciprocity clearly: loved-based relationships require reciprocity to count as such, but the fact that the lover wants reciprocity does not mean that love is conditional on it being reciprocated. The best claims of the caring view can be incorporated into an account of love that takes into account this element of self-interest, once the emphasis in the loved person's interests or values is expanded. Let us not forget: one of the reasons why people put themselves through the often difficult process of navigating conflict and difficulties in love is *because they want*; because being in that relationship is in itself part of their conception of a life worth living (regardless of whether the other person thinks the same; that is why people suffer after unwanted break-ups). Again, the focus on the loved person and her interests or values obscures this very important element of love, and may even entail that it is a lesser motive than caring for the other.

Once conflict and self-interest are incorporated to our discussions of love, we will be able to start getting richer accounts that draw from, explain and justify non-harmonious love. Which, probably, is the only kind of love that exists.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Thomas Smith, Helen Beebee, Edward Harcourt and two anonymous referees for comments on earlier versions. Special thanks to my partner Jack Casey, whom I love in spite of having metaphysics and Manchester United as values, and who sent me the articles with the main examples.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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