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## The Priority of the Good Over Right in Love: Challenging Velleman's Kantian View

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In *Love as a Moral Emotion* David Velleman rejects the conative analysis of love arguing instead for a conception which is modelled after Kantian respect. The general problem associated with conative views of love according to Velleman is that they cut love loose from morality, sometimes characterizing its aims as in conflict with morality.

In this paper, I argue that Velleman, although perhaps identifying an important corrective to views such as Freud's where overvaluation distorts the love relation, goes too far in being "more rather than less high-minded on the subject." In ignoring the historical dimension of love, Velleman also severs the connection between love and the Good. Love, I want to argue, is best understood as a form of desire informed by the Good. Orienting love towards the Good allows a central place for caring and beneficence—two aspects of love which Velleman sees as frequently accompanying love—but not being part of its essential nature. I believe that his view conflicts with the intuitions of not only many who have written about love, but also many who have loved.

### I. Introduction

In his essay *Love as a Moral Emotion* David Velleman rejects the conative analysis of love, arguing instead for a conception of love which is modelled after Kantian respect. He sees instances of the former conceptions as mistakenly conceiving of love in terms of an aim. On his view, love is "an attitude toward the beloved" rather than toward an aim or result. The general problem associated with the conative views of love, according to Velleman, is that they cut love loose from morality, sometimes even characterizing its aims as in conflict with morality. He calls into question the common assumption that love is partial, saying that this view arises from confusing love with the "likings and longings that usually go with it."<sup>1</sup> Velleman views love's

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1 J. D. Velleman, *Love as a Moral Emotion*, 'Ethics' 1999, Vol. 109, No. 2, p. 342.

object as a person understood in Kantian terms as an instance of a rational nature. It is this rational nature which is ultimately to be loved, although it lies hidden behind one's empirical persona.

As much as I am sympathetic to Velleman's central concern regarding the moral aspect of love, I think that his analysis is problematic. It does not accord with either of the two predominant conceptions or traditions of love in the history of Western thought, and whatever else love is, it is certainly a historical concept. In giving a historical account of love, Irving Singer, in the first volume of his trilogy titled *The Nature of Love*, characterizes love in terms of bestowal and appraisal. The notion of bestowal emerges as the central characteristic of Christian Agape and is that characteristic or quality of love which endows the beloved with a special value in the eyes of the lover. Appraisal on the other hand is at the heart of Platonic Eros and is that by which the lover finds valuable qualities existing in the beloved. Neither of these concepts are part of Velleman's conception of love which in the Kantian spirit of respect is indifferent to the unique characteristics of the beloved.

In this paper, I argue that Velleman, although perhaps identifying an important corrective to views such as Freud's where overvaluation distorts the love relation, goes too far in being "more rather than less high-minded on the subject."<sup>2</sup> In ignoring the historical dimension of love, Velleman also severs the connection between love and the Good, preferring instead to orient it in terms of the notion of Right, which is at the foundation of Kant's morality. Love, I want to argue, is best understood as a historically defined emotion, whose Platonic roots suggest that it is a form of desire aimed toward the Good. As our conception of love has developed in the West, it has also been influenced by Christian Agape which has added the element of bestowal and Romanticism, which has focused love on the individual. Romantic love in particular exhibits aspects of both bestowal and appraisal as the lover both finds valuable qualities in the beloved and through loving finds her or him to be especially valuable. Velleman recognizes love as focused on the individual, but his conception of the individual is so formalized that it is hard to recognize the emotion which he speaks of as love.

## II. Love and Respect

For Velleman, it is not the fact that Freud saw love as an aim-inhibited *sexual* drive that renders it "morally dubious," but rather the fact that love is conceived of in terms of a drive at all. What makes this problematic as a characterization of love is the fact

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 342.

that rather than being a response to love's object, love is understood in terms of an aim for which its object is merely a means. Velleman briefly examines the views of love of a number of analytic philosophers and finds the same basic problem with their analyses. Even though they de-emphasize the sexual aspect which Freud made prominent, the philosophers in question still tend to see love as having an aim rather than as being a response to the beloved as a person. The aim may be union with another person, the desire to care for them, benefit them, or what have you. It is not any particular aim which Velleman sees as problematic in these views, but the very idea that love can be analyzed in terms of an aim or in terms of some kind of result. Such a view treats the beloved instrumentally as a means towards the result in question. On his view, "love is essentially an attitude toward the beloved himself but not toward any result at all."<sup>3</sup>

In response to what he sees as the deficiencies of an instrumentally-based view of love implied in the conative accounts, Velleman presents us with a Kantian take on the topic. On this Kantian view, the structure of love is such that it reflects a certain attitude towards the beloved which Velleman equates with Kantian respect. This attitude does not concern itself with benefitting the beloved, caring for him, or helping him flourish even if these are sometimes the effects of love. The attitude in question treats the beloved as an object of respect, and it does so by viewing him in Kantian terms as an "instance of a rational nature." This rational nature is not to be equated with the intellect but rather with one's capacity for valuation.<sup>4</sup> The attitude of love is one which sees beyond the empirical manifestations of the beloved and comprehends his true nature or self. Velleman employs Iris Murdoch's notion of really *looking* or *attending* to the other person to characterize this seeing. She uses the metaphors of looking and seeing in giving her own account of love.<sup>5</sup> One's empirical persona, as Velleman terms it, acts as a conduit for expressing one's true nature. Some empirical personae serve to better express the person's true self, thus explaining why we choose to love some people over others. But, on Velleman's view, the beloved has no more right than anyone else to be loved by the lover. The permissibility of particular love is simply a result of our limited capacity to love. Otherwise, love operates much like Kantian respect whose scope encompasses all of humankind (or at least all instances of a rational nature). Love does differ from respect according to Velleman in the following sense. Respect, on Kant's account, arrests our self-love. "Love [on the other hand] disarms our emotional

3 Ibidem, p. 354.

4 Ibidem, p. 365.

5 Ibidem, p. 342 and 361; I. Murdoch, *The Sublime and the Good*, [in:] *Existentialists and Mystics*, ed. Peter Conradi. New York, Allen Lane The Penguin Press 1998, p. 216; I. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, London and New York, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1970, pp. 64–65.

defenses; it makes us vulnerable to the other.”<sup>6</sup> This disarming of our emotional defenses is what awakens our desire to benefit, care for, or have sympathy with the other, but these desires are not an essential part of love. Velleman thinks that, phenomenologically speaking, this view is superior to the conative view, but his reasons for this are unclear. One’s phenomenological experience is notoriously influenced by what one believes to be the case, so his particular phenomenological claim should not be surprising. Indeed, it runs the risk of being quite circular. The reason why love is a moral emotion, on Velleman’s Kantian view, is because his view is a highly moralized one. He defines love as implying the kind of universality attached to Kant’s notion of respect. He eliminates the alleged tension between love and morality by way of definition.<sup>7</sup> But this view of love is inconsistent with the history of the concept, and I would suggest is quite at odds with the experience of many people who have loved.

In order to show that love does not depend on a relationship of beneficence or care, Velleman gives the example of a relative that one cannot stand to be around. “This meddling aunt, cranky grandfather, smothering parent, or overcompetitive sibling is dearly loved, loved freely and with feeling: one just has no desire for his or her company.”<sup>8</sup> But is this true? It seems to me that a fundamental change has taken place in modern times precisely in our conception of the love requirement for abusive or destructive relationships. We have learned that it is O.K., if not necessary, to withdraw our love in such cases. I do not want to suggest that love is not present in any relationship where we do not care to spend time with a relative, but I do think that Velleman implausibly suggests that love *should* be present in all cases. Even *if* we were to concede that we should love relatives for some moral or historical reason, Velleman’s example here gives us no reason to extend this love to all instances of a rational nature.

### III. Love, Right, and the Good

The title of my paper, of course, contains a reference to the political theory of John Rawls. For Rawls, the priority of right over ideas of the good was meant to characterize a political conception of a just society. Ideas of the good in a liberal society are to be subordinated to the principle of right so that one group cannot impose their conception of good on another.<sup>9</sup> In the more specific realm of morality, W.D. Ross

6 J. D. Velleman, *Love as a Moral Emotion*, op. cit., p. 361.

7 N. Brewer-Davis, *Loving Relationships and Conflicts with Morality*, ‘Dialogue’ 2013, Vol. 52, Issue 02, p. 371.

8 J. D. Velleman, *Love as a Moral Emotion*, op. cit., p. 353.

9 J. Rawls, *The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good*, [in:] John Rawls: Collected Papers, ed. Samuel Freeman, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1999, pp. 449–472.

had already given priority to the right over the good in a work which would greatly influence Rawls.<sup>10</sup> When it comes to love, Velleman prioritizes a notion of right as well. As was the case with Rawls, Velleman's view is influenced by Kant. But of course they differ greatly in their aims. Velleman is defending a moral view of love rather than a political view of justice. But I think that Velleman's Kantian account, with its emphasis on respect, implies something like an orientation toward the right in opposition to a notion of love which is oriented toward or understood in terms of the idea of the Good.

As mentioned above, Velleman appeals to Iris Murdoch and the metaphors of *looking* and *seeing* in his own characterization of love. On his view, what love helps us to see is the reality of another person as an instance of a rational nature. Love then, like respect, operates in the realm of the right for Velleman since what it helps us see is something which is universal and for which one instance deserves no more love than another. But Murdoch's own use of seeing, as well as her own conception of love, does not seem to fit so easily into this Kantian picture. True, she does characterize this seeing as something which moves us beyond self-interest or self-centeredness, but it is not the Kantian notion of right or respect which motivates this but rather the more Platonic notion of the Good. In fact, in her essay titled *On "God" and "Good,"* she tells us: "It is significant that the idea of goodness (and of virtue) has been largely superseded in Western moral philosophy by the idea of rightness, supported perhaps by some conception of sincerity."<sup>11</sup> The sincerity in question refers to the Existentialist notion of authenticity, but she later notes that this aspect of Existentialism has been influenced by Kant.<sup>12</sup> In the context in which she says this, one can conclude that she did not approve of this prioritizing of right over good. Indeed, in *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts* while not identifying love strictly with Good, she shows clearly that love is dependent on such a notion. For instance, she tells us "when we try perfectly to love what is imperfect our love goes to its object *via* the Good" and "Love is ... the force that joins us to Good and joins us to the world through Good."<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to escape the impression that Velleman's employment of Murdoch's view to defend an identification of love with Kantian respect is stretching her view of love beyond recognition.

10 W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2002.

11 I. Murdoch, *On "God" and "Good,"* [in:] *The Sovereignty of Good*, London and New York, Routledge 1970, p. 52.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 52.

13 *Ibidem*, p. 100.

Murdoch will later say of Kant: “When he speaks of love he tells us to distinguish between practical love, which is a matter of rational actions, and pathological love, which is a mere matter of feeling. He wants to segregate the messy warm empirical psyche from the clean operations of reason.”<sup>14</sup> I see in Velleman’s distinction between one’s self as an instance of a rational nature and one’s empirical persona a similar segregation. Velleman tells us that the empirical persona is a conduit for expressing our true self or our true nature but he does not make it clear how this works. In what way does one’s smile, sense of humour, sense of taste, etc. express this universal value? He suggests that some people are better at expressing this value and some are better at seeing or interpreting this value, but it is not clear what a good expression or a good interpretation of such value would consist of.<sup>15</sup> If one’s rational nature is not an empirical element of a person, then how is it expressed empirically? How does one’s smile or sense of taste express this? I have suggested elsewhere that the connection between one’s empirical properties and one’s rational nature may not contain the gap that Velleman implies and that those empirical properties may be every bit as appropriate as objects of love as one’s capacity for valuation.

Elijah Millgram also takes issue with Velleman’s use of Murdoch’s notion of seeing to support his view. He thinks that Velleman has developed his account of love by bringing elements of Kant and Murdoch together. But in doing so, Millgram argues that Velleman has abandoned both Murdoch’s understanding of love and of vision. Millgram characterizes Velleman’s Kantian notion of a rational self as an *ideal*.<sup>16</sup> It is this ideal that that one sees through the eyes of love. But this is contrary to Murdoch’s own view for which seeing means seeing the particularity or the differences of other people. As she says in *The Sublime and the Good*, “others are, to an extent we never cease discovering, different from ourselves.”<sup>17</sup> It is these differences rather than what we share which makes us the objects of love. These differences are to be found in what Velleman calls one’s empirical persona, that phenomenon which for him is not the true or ultimate object of love. Murdoch’s own account, which Millgram distinguishes

14 Ibidem, p. 79.

15 As Kate Abramson and Adam Leite point out, “just about anything could qualify as an ‘expression or symbol or reminder’ of a person’s capacity for rational agency (as Velleman allows), including someone’s malicious, sadistic tendencies”; K. Abramson and A. Leite, *Love as a Reactive Emotion*, ‘The Philosophical Quarterly’ 2011, Vol. 61, No. 245, p. 697. Niko Kolodny thinks Velleman’s view gives rise to the worrying question: “What are we to say about a parent who just happens—it is a contingent matter, after all—to see an expression of rational nature in his child’s classmates, but not in his own child?” N. Kolodny, *Love as Valuing a Relationship*, ‘The Philosophical Review’ 2003, Vol. 112, No. 2, p.177.

16 E. Millgram, *Kantian Crystallization*, ‘Ethics’ 2004, Vol. 114, No. 3, p. 512.

17 I. Murdoch, *The Sublime and the Good*, op. cit., p. 216.

from Velleman's, provides us with a view of love which is more adequate, phenomenologically speaking. In really seeing another person, we are not seeing an ideal of rationality or virtue but rather an individual whose properties or characteristics are part of an empirical persona that is quite particular. This empirical persona, it seems to me, is not something that can be abstracted from one's personhood.

#### IV. Bestowal vs. Overvaluation

Although Velleman's account of the main problem inherent in conative views of love has to do with the fact that such views characterize love in terms of an aim rather than an attitude towards the beloved, he makes reference to other related and more specific problems. One such problem is the misperception of love's object, which Freud attributes to overvaluation and transference. It is this overvaluation and transference that leads Velleman to exclude romantic love from consideration in his account of moral love and to focus on "the love between close adult friends and relations—including spouses and other life-partners."<sup>18</sup> Presumably, it is only (or mostly) in these kinds of relationships that the Kantian version of love as respect operates. Based on Velleman's list, this would seem to exclude the love of parents for their children, as well as the aforementioned romantic love. Romantic love is excluded due to its overvaluation and desire-oriented structure, and presumably parental love is excluded since children do not yet fully qualify as persons in the relevant Kantian sense. Likewise, the love of children for their parents is excluded since we might assume that children are not yet capable of such love.<sup>19</sup> But is love best seen as a form of perception of its object? Or perhaps better put, does love *only* involve a perception of the beloved?

I believe that love involves not merely a perception or rational judgment, which may take the form of what Irving Singer terms *appraisal*, but also implies a positive affirmation of the beloved or the object of love in the form of *bestowal*. This positive affirmation of love does not leave its object unchanged but rather creates value in the beloved.<sup>20</sup> For Velleman, love is a response to the value of the beloved, but the value of the beloved is neither determined by an appraisal of the beloved's properties understood in terms of her empirical persona, nor by a bestowal of value. On Velleman's

<sup>18</sup> J. D. Velleman, *Love as a Moral Emotion*, op. cit., p. 351.

<sup>19</sup> Both Jeanette Kennett and Edward Harcourt identify problems or gaps in Velleman's account of the moral development of children particularly as he characterizes this in J. D. Velleman, *Beyond Price*, 'Ethics' 2008, Vol. 118, No. 2. See J. Kennett, *True and Proper Selves*, 'Ethics' 2008, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 218–219 and E. Harcourt, *Velleman on Love and Ideals of Rational Humanity*, 'The Philosophical Quarterly' 2009, Vol. 59, No. 235, pp. 352–355.

<sup>20</sup> I. Singer, *The Nature of Love, Volume 1: Plato to Luther* (2nd Edition). Chicago, The University of Chicago Press 1984, p. 5.

account, love is a *recognition* of the worth of the beloved seen as an instance of a rational nature. It is the recognition of the value inherent in being a *valuer*. But this is where Velleman's equation of love and Kantian respect seems to break down. The recognition of one's value *qua* valuer seems to reasonably give rise to respect, but this does not appear to be the appropriate object of the positive affirmation involved in love which is not a purely cognitive phenomenon. This positive affirmation or bestowal has both a cognitive and affective dimension, which I believe is a response to the whole person that includes what Velleman characterizes as one's empirical persona. I do not believe that this type of bestowal need be reduced to or equated with the overvaluation characterized by Freud. It is a characteristic not only of romantic love but of other forms as well. Historically speaking, bestowal is the property that characterizes agapic love. According to Christianity, God bestows his love freely on humanity without regard for any antecedent value they possess. We see a modern, non-religious form of agapic love in the account put forward by Harry Frankfurt in his book titled *The Reasons of Love*. According to Frankfurt, the value that the beloved or the beloved object possesses "derives from and depends upon" the love of the lover.<sup>21</sup> Frankfurt's view is not based on a conception of the divine. He suggests rather that "the explanation [of this kind of love] presumably lies in the evolutionary pressures of natural selection."<sup>22</sup> Appraisal, on the other hand, is a key characteristic of Platonic Eros. Under this conception, love is a positive response to a property or properties of the beloved (*Beauty*, in Plato's case). One not only bestows special value on one's romantic beloved, but one typically does so with one's children or friends. Even though we may know that our children or our friends are no more valuable in some objective moral sense than anyone else, the *affective* dimension of our relation to them makes them more valuable in our eyes. I do not think that such a bestowal is inimical to love or ultimately to morality. While it may be reasonable to afford Kantian respect to all of humanity, the special relationship constituted by love plays a quite different role in human life. The beneficence or caring involved in love need not be meddlesome as Velleman claims. Close friends and lovers, through time and experience, come to learn (more or less) when it is appropriate or helpful to benefit or show concern for the beloved. The fact that this *can* constitute an unwelcomed form of interference does not imply that it is fundamentally so. The caring and bestowal of value implied by love plays an important role in our own emotional development and our psychological need for feelings of security. Although autonomy is an important human concern, many feminist thinkers,

21 H. G. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press 2004, p. 40.

22 *Ibidem*, p. 40.



for instance, have rejected the solitary, austere form of autonomy pictured by Kant in favour of a relational conception.<sup>23</sup>

Irving Singer, as mentioned earlier, argues that both bestowal and appraisal play a key role in our understanding of love. Singer recognizes the importance of reasons for love. Reasons for love and the properties of the beloved which give rise to love are products of appraisal. In order for love to be discriminate, there must be something about the beloved that elicits a response from the lover towards this particular person. But according to Singer, love cannot only be appraisal or we would not be able to distinguish it from other forms of desire.<sup>24</sup> One need not love in order to appraise. Appraisal is somewhat passive in nature in the sense that it is a response to valuable qualities in the object. It is active, I suppose, to the extent that appraising is an activity, but the activity of appraising is not the same as the initiative implied in bestowing love or creating value in the beloved. Singer aimed to reconcile appraisal and bestowal in a concept of love and pointed to historical attempts at doing so, such as the medieval concept of *caritas*.<sup>25</sup>

Velleman's view of love lacks both bestowal and appraisal. Although he does not discuss bestowal directly, he does discuss an unhealthy form of it when addressing Freud's notion of overvaluation. This highlights a problem in Velleman's view which has to do with the way that he distinguishes different forms of love. He associates romantic love with Freud's notion of overvaluation while not acknowledging that other forms of love involve the type of valuation known as bestowal (bestowal can, but need not be, an overvaluation in the negative sense). Velleman's ignoring of the bestowal aspect of love is not merely an oversight. It arises from his own conception of love in contrast with what he calls the conative analysis of love. Likewise, Velleman's view ignores, or at least seems to ignore, appraisal.<sup>26</sup> Appraisal, on his view, would presumably result from treating a person as having a price rather than a dignity (to put it in Kantian terms). But is this true? Does appraisal put us in the mode of treating people as mere means rather than as ends in themselves? Appraisal, one could argue,

23 For instance see *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, eds. MacKenzie and Stoljar, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2000.

24 I. Singer, *The Nature of Love, Vol. I: Plato to Luther*, op. cit., p. 10.

25 Ibidem, pp. 312–342.

26 It has been suggested that Velleman's view does employ a kind of appraisal (Edward Harcourt made this suggestion during the Q & A session of the conference "Love and the Good" held in Pardubice, Czech Republic, September 24th to 26th, 2015). I am not quite sure how to make sense of this except to view his idea that love involves a recognition of personhood understood in terms of *an instance of a rational nature* as form of appraising. But this recognition, although it does possess in common with appraisal an aspect of discrimination (judging persons from non-persons), still lacks the ability to make distinctions between persons or objects of love in the way that appraisal, at least as characterized by Singer, does.

is how we discriminate between potential beloveds or potential friends. We may not have any choice in who our parents are or, in a different sense, who our children are, but we tend to love them both because of the relationship. Velleman addresses the issue of discrimination in love by distinguishing between a person's empirical persona and their rational nature. The empirical personae of some people attract us, while those of others do not. Velleman interprets this as a case of the empirical persona acting as a conduit for revealing one's rational nature to others. But is this the most reasonable way to characterize our tendency to love a particular person? It seems to me that a much more straightforward or common sense interpretation of what is going on is that we are attracted to a particular person, period. The person's empirical properties are not a mere means for bringing us to love them but, as embodied beings, they are part of the person's self.<sup>27</sup> Why on Velleman's view do one person's empirical properties attract us and not those of another? Calling this an appraisal need not lower the moral status of one's love, unless of course we are thinking of appraisal only in economic terms. To appraise is a broad form of valuation. When I choose a person as a friend or a lover, I think that it is implausibly high-minded to think that some form of appraising has not taken place. Of course, this appraisal will be different from what Singer calls an objective appraisal—the type that professional appraisers apply to houses, for instance. It will be more like what he calls an individual appraisal, where the object of appraisal is valued for particular qualities which are relevant to the lover's needs, interests, disposition, and so on. This need not be seen merely as a selfish or egoistic kind of love but rather a mature recognition that a relationship requires mutual interests and some degree of fitting together. I think that we do love people for reasons or for things which can be properly formulated in terms of reasons, and in this sense I believe that an appraisal takes place. In fact, one might argue that a love that is not discriminating and does not involve some sort of appraisal (in the broad sense of the term) might itself be morally questionable. To experience oneself as the object of love for someone who loves everyone, is to experience oneself as the object of a love which is blind in a different sense than which romantic love is purported to be. I think the idea that we can be loved (at least in the case of adult loves) independently of our qualities including our character, talents, interests, and so on, is unreasonable. In these relationships, I think that it is plausible to claim that love seeks that which is *good* in the other person and this *good* cannot be reduced to or equated with that

27 I discuss the notion of the embodied self as the object of love in more detail elsewhere (*The Person as the Object of Love: Distinguishing Between Persons and Properties*; a work in progress). Daniel Callcut makes a similar argument in his paper "Tough Love" (D. Callcut, *Tough Love*, 'Florida Philosophical Review,' Volume V, Issue 1, 2005, p. 39).

which is the object of respect. Thus, appraisal in the case of ordinary love follows the structure of Platonic Eros in judging that which is good or beautiful. It is indeed a type of seeing, but one that is oriented more towards the Good than the Right.

## Conclusion

I have argued that Velleman's attempt to equate love with Kantian respect fails partly for general historical reasons associated with the very notion of love and partly for specific reasons associated with his appropriation of ideas and imagery employed by Iris Murdoch. Historically speaking, the idea of love has been associated with the Good, either in terms of Plato's notion of Good or the Christian notion of God. The primary characteristics of these two notions of love as discussed by Irving Singer are appraisal and bestowal, neither of which are employed or discussed by Velleman (although he does discuss a problematic form of bestowal in the Freudian notion of overvaluation, and his recognition of one's personhood as an instance of a rational nature might constitute a kind of appraisal). Furthermore, his enlistment of Iris Murdoch's conception of love in articulating his own Kantian view seems problematic since Murdoch orients love in relation to the Good, whereas the Kantian notion of respect with which Velleman identifies the spirit of love is oriented towards the idea of the Right.

## Abstrakt

### **W miłości dobro ma priorytet nad słusznością. Rzucając wyzwanie Kantowskiemu pogładowi Velleman'a**

W artykule *Miłość jako emocja moralna* David Velleman odrzuca konatywą analizę miłości by w zamian argumentować na rzecz takiej koncepcji, która bierze sobie za model Kantowski szacunek. Velleman twierdzi, że konatywne wizje miłości są problematyczne ponieważ odcinają miłość od moralności, czasem wręcz prezentując cele miłości jako stojące w konflikcie z moralnością.

W niniejszym artykule twierdzą, że choć Velleman zdaje się wskazywać na ważną poprawkę do poglądów takich jak poglądy Freud'a, w których nadwartościowanie zniekształca relację miłości, to jednak posuwa się on za daleko w byciu „bardziej raczej niż mniej pryncypialnym w tej kwestii”. Ignorując historyczny wymiar miłości, Velleman przecina także połączenie pomiędzy miłością a Dobrem. Miłość, jak staram się wykazać, najlepiej rozumieć jako formę pożądania, które skłania się ku Dobru. Zorientowanie miłości na Dobro pozwala na umieszczenie na centralnej pozycji zarówno troski jak i chęci czynienia dobra, czyli dwóch aspektów miłości, które Velleman postrzega jako często towarzyszące miłości, choć nie będące częścią jej esencjonalnej natury. Twierdzą, że pogląd Velleman'a stoi w konflikcie z intuicją nie tylko wielu z tych, którzy pisali na temat miłości, ale też wielu, którzy miłości doświadczali.

