I agree with a great deal of what Harry Frankfurt has said in these lectures. I agree with Frankfurt’s view that the distinguishing feature of human life is a form of self-consciousness – namely, our capacity to take our own mental states and activities as the objects of our attention (I.4-5). Like Frankfurt, I think that this form of self-consciousness is the source of the distinctively human tendency to self-assessment and the resulting capacity for normative self-government. We also agree that this kind of self-consciousness is the source of normativity, or anyway makes normativity possible, and is the source of freedom of the will. Like Frankfurt, I reject the kind of normative realism which holds that (to use Frankfurt’s own phrase), “volitional necessity is a response to an independent normative reality” (II.7). And like Frankfurt, I think that all normativity springs from the will.

But Frankfurt, if I understand him correctly, thinks that it follows from these views that the normativity of morality for any given agent is contingent on whether that agent cares about morality, or about the ideal of human relations that morality embodies (I.3; II.2; II.23). And I don’t agree with that. That is to say, I don’t think that it follows, and I also don’t think that it is true. So in these comments I am going to discuss some ways in which I think a commitment to morality may be implied by what I will call the logic of caring.

Let me start by saying what I mean by that. As I said a moment ago, I believe that Frankfurt thinks that the dependence of normativity on caring simply implies that the normativity of morality for you depends on whether you happen to care about morality. It would imply that if the only kind of dependence that we allowed here was “being the direct object of caring.” But this is not even Frankfurt’s own view, for he thinks that caring about something commit can you to caring about other things. For instance, he says:
When we [do] care about something, we go beyond wanting it. We want to go on wanting it, at least until the goal has been reached. Thus, we feel it as a lapse on our part if we neglect the desire, and we are disposed to take steps to refresh the desire if it should tend to fade. The caring entails, in other words, a commitment to the desire… (I.21)

I say that Frankfurt thinks that caring has a logic because Frankfurt thinks caring essentially implies – or entails as he puts it – certain commitments which go beyond its immediate object. Caring about something entails that you continue to desire it, and this sets a standard that can motivate you to take corrective action should you “lapse” and fail to meet the standard. In that sense caring is like believing or, in Kant’s view, willing, both of which involve normative commitments that go beyond their immediate objects. Believing, familiarly, commits you to the logical implications of whatever you believe. And according to Kant, willing an end commits you to willing the means to that end. This is because willing an end is determining yourself to be the cause of that end. And determining yourself to be the cause of something implies a commitment to using the available causal connections in order to achieve it – or in other words, to taking the means. Kant thinks that a commitment to taking the means to your ends is therefore constitutive of volition or willing. In the same way, Frankfurt thinks a commitment to continuing to desire X is constitutive of caring about X.

If caring in this way has a logic of its own, then the question about whether an agent is committed to morality by caring isn’t settled by asking whether an agent happens to care directly about morality. We must also ask whether the agent’s cares and loves might commit him, by virtue of other features of the logic of caring, to moral values and principles.

Before I talk about that possibility, however, I want to notice certain differences between my own Kantian views and Frankfurt’s that may be relevant to the argument that I am about to make. Frankfurt thinks of reason and the will as separate faculties – he tells us
that “the ultimate source of practical normativity lies not in reason but in the will” (I.3). By contrast, I follow Kant in thinking that, at least in human beings, practical reason is the will, in the sense that the principles of practical reason are constitutive of volition. I have already explained why I think that the hypothetical imperative, which instructs us to take the means to our ends, is constitutive of volition; and in a moment I will explain why I think that a formal version of the categorical imperative, which instructs us to will our maxims as universal laws, is also constitutive of volition. A related difference is that, on the Kantian view, self-consciousness is the direct source of reason, and of itself places us under the normative authority of the principles of reason. When a human being is inclined to act in a certain way for the sake of a certain end, he is conscious of these facts about himself, and this not only enables but requires him to ask himself whether he should act in the way he is inclined to. On Kant’s view, this amounts to asking whether the maxim of performing that act for the sake that end can serve as a normative principle for the will, and that, for reasons I will mention shortly, is in turn a question about whether that maxim can serve as a universal law. If these arguments work, then the very fact of being self-conscious places us directly under the normative authority of the principles of practical reason. 

Frankfurt, by contrast, thinks that the authority of practical reason “is grounded in and derives from the authority of love” (I.3). However, this is not quite as straightforward a disagreement as it seems, because Frankfurt has a different view of practical reason than the Kantian one I just described. On the Kantian view the principles of practical reason are the categorical and hypothetical imperatives, and the categorical imperative is of course supposed to be identical to the moral law. By contrast, in his first lecture, when Frankfurt denies that the normative authority of morality can be grounded in reason, he identifies reason simply with the avoidance of contradictions and fallacies. Despite Frankfurt’s invocation of Thomas Nagel, in his first lecture (I.23-24), Frankfurt does not seem to have a specifically practical form of reason, such as that represented by the Kantian imperatives, in
mind (I.24). Similarly, in his second lecture Frankfurt identifies “formal rationality” with the truths of logic, again apparently, although not explicitly, denying that there are formal principles that are specific to practical reason. Yet Frankfurt evidently thinks that practical reason does include the hypothetical imperative or principle of instrumental reason, for he says that “practical reasoning is, in part, a procedure through which we determine what we have most reason to do in order to achieve our goals” (I.14). It is not clear to me whether he considers this part of formal reason or of what he calls “volitional rationality” (II.5), which is grounded in love. Certainly, there is a sense in which one might argue that the authority of particular instrumental requirements is grounded in love. I have myself argued elsewhere that we can be under a rational obligation to take the means to an end only if the end itself has normative authority. We cannot be under a rational obligation to take the means to an end if the end is merely the object of a desire. Since Frankfurt also thinks that desires are not in and of themselves authoritative (I.12), but are rendered normative by love or caring, perhaps he too thinks that in that sense the authority of instrumental reason depends upon love. Only ends we love or care about can give rise to instrumental reasons. What he says about instrumental reason in his first lecture suggests this view (I. 14-15). But the formal principle of instrumental reason (as opposed to particular instrumental requirements) still seems to me to depend on the way it is constitutive of volition. In any case, when he talks about practical reason Frankfurt is referring to his category of “volitional rationality” (II.5). As far as I can see, it is only this kind of rationality that Frankfurt thinks is grounded in love or caring. So whether we are disagreeing about the ground of the authority of practical reason or about the nature of practical reason is a little unclear.

Despite this possible disagreement, there is an important similarity between Frankfurt’s view of caring and my own view of practical reason, which I want to describe for two reasons. First, because it presents a problem, which I think Frankfurt needs to address in any case; and, second, because on my own view the solution to that problem suggests one
way that a commitment to morality might be entailed by caring (or, as I would prefer to say, by willing). After the passage in which he says that caring about X entails a commitment to continuing to desire X, Frankfurt continues:

Willing freely means that the self is at that time harmoniously integrated.

There is, within it, a synchronic coherence. Caring about something implies a diachronic coherence, which integrates the self across time. … By our caring… We engage ourselves in guiding the course of our desires. If we cared about nothing, we would play no active role in designing the successive configurations of our will. (I.21)

Frankfurt thinks that caring is constitutive of the unity (or at least of the diachronic unity) of the will or the self. I hold a similar view about acts of rational willing as Kant understands them – acts of will that conform to the principles of practical reason. To support the comparison I am about to make, I need first to explain why I think that the unity of the will or the self depends on a formal version of the categorical imperative, the principle that our maxims must be willed as universal laws. So I am going to ask your patience during a slight excursion into Kantian philosophy whose relevance to Frankfurt will only become clear later on. This will also serve to help explain why I think we are under the authority of practical reason, with or without love.

Suppose I decide to go to the dentist on a certain day in order to get a cavity filled. I think I have a reason to do this. As Kant would put it, I think that a certain maxim – roughly, the maxim of going to the dentist in order to get a cavity filled - embodies a reason. When I make this my maxim, my commitment is universal in the following sense: I commit myself to acting as this maxim specifies – going to the dentist on the occasion of my appointment - in all circumstances that are relevantly similar to the ones I expect to obtain at the time of my appointment, by which I mean, going when the time comes, so long as I still have both the cavity and the appointment, and unless there is a good reason why not. The
universality holds over all relevantly similar circumstances in the sense that if there is good reason not to go when the time comes, the circumstances must be relevantly dissimilar to the ones I expected. Now it may turn out through some extraordinary circumstance that in order to get to the dentist on time on the occasion of my appointment I have to risk my life. (Perhaps a terrorist claims to have planted a bomb on the bus I would have to take in order to get there.) Since there is good reason not to risk my life for the sake of a filling, I can give up the project of going to the dentist on the occasion of my appointment without violating the universality of my maxim, since my maxim says to act a certain way unless there is good reason why not. On the other hand, it may be that I am really terrified of the dentist and therefore I am *always* tempted to find some excuse not to go when the day arrives. Now if I am prepared to give up the project of going to the dentist in the face of *any consideration* whatever that tempts me to do so - that is, if I am prepared to count *any* desire or temptation as a good reason not to go (and so any circumstance as “relevantly dissimilar”) then clearly I have not really committed myself to anything. But if I have not really committed myself to anything, then I have not really willed anything. I am just going to do whatever my desire prompts me to do at the moment of action regardless, and my will is not operative. So in order to avoid being what Frankfurt calls a wanton, who follows every desire that comes along, I have to will my maxim as a universal law. That is, I have to will it as a law that has some universal force – a law that is to be acted on in all relevantly similar circumstances, or unless there is some good reason why not. So I must will a maxim that is in some sense universal in order to will anything at all. And that means that if my maxim cannot be universal I cannot will it. Therefore I am under a universalizability requirement.

Now if Kant himself is right, there is a short route from here to a commitment to morality, since Kant apparently thinks that a commitment to this kind of formal universalizability *just is* a commitment to the moral law. But it looks as if it is not going to be quite that easy, since the moral law is not just a formal principle of universalizability, but a
principle that demands that we will a maxim that universalizes over all rational agents. And even if we suppose that we must universalize over all rational agents, a commitment to universalization gets us into moral territory only on the assumption that reasons have what I have elsewhere called a “public” or essentially intersubjective or agent-neutral normative force.

To see why, suppose I ask whether a certain maxim can serve as a universal law. Take it for now that the first problem is solved, so that what I am asking is whether it can be a universal law for all rational agents. For instance, we agree that I cannot will the maxim of “stealing a certain object just because I want it” as a universal law unless I can will that any rational being who wants an object should steal it. What kind of limitation does this impose? If practical reasons are private or agent-relative, it commits me only to acknowledging that if my desire for an object is a good reason for me to steal it, then your desire for an object is a good reason for you to steal it. It does not give me any reason to promote the satisfaction of your desire.

If practical reasons are public, however, it must be possible for us to share them: that is, to share in their normative force. Any reasons that I assign to you must also be ones that I can share with you and can take to have normative force for me. In that case I cannot will to steal an object from you unless I could possibly will that you should in similar circumstances steal the object from me. Assuming that I cannot do that, consistent with my end of possessing the object, I find that I cannot will this maxim as a universal law. And therefore I conclude that my wanting something cannot provide a sufficient reason for stealing it. So if the universal law universalizes over all rational beings and yields public reasons, then it turns out to be something like Kant’s moral law.

But what, if anything, compels us to view reasons as public and universal in this way? In my view, part of the answer lies in the role of universal principles in unifying and therefore constituting the will or the self, the role played in Frankfurt’s view by caring. And
if the self is constituted by volition, it cannot be assumed to exist in advance of volition.

When I will to go to the dentist on the day of my appointment, I cannot be willing a law that my future self should go to the dentist, for whether I have a future self depends on whether that law and others like it are obeyed. If that law and others like it are not obeyed, then my body is, in Frankfurt’s terms, not that of a person but that of a wanton without a self, and no person has disobeyed my law. So I must be willing that an agent characterized in some other way – perhaps as the future conscious subject of my body - should go to the dentist.

Minimally, this shows that any maxim that I will must universalize over some group more inclusive than my present conscious self, and that the normative force of the reason I legislate should be public and shared between me (my present conscious self) and the members of that group. Perhaps it is only all the future conscious subjects of my body, but we need some reason why that and only that should be the relevant group, and some of the possible answers to that question suggest that the group should be more inclusive still. For instance one possible answer is that I must interact cooperatively with the future conscious subjects of my body if I am to carry any of my projects out. But of course it may also be argued that I must interact cooperatively with other rational agents as well, for unless others respect my reasons and I respect theirs, we are apt to get in each other’s way. So it begins to look as if I must will universally and publicly – that is, will reasons I can share, not only with the future conscious subjects of my body, but with all rational beings, or at least all with whom I must interact. In any case, I cannot coherently regard my reasons as applying merely to myself. And there may be the beginnings of a route to morality.

That obviously is not a complete argument – only a tentative sketch for one, and I am not going to try to carry it any further here. I mention it here only because Frankfurt’s view of the role of caring in integrating the self is very much like my view of the role of the principles of practical reason in integrating the self, and so I think his view faces a problem like the one I just described. If continuing to desire the things that you care about is
constitutive of the (diachronic) self, the norm of continuing to desire the things that you care about cannot simply be addressed to the self, since whether you have a (diachronic) self depends on whether that norm is obeyed. So to whom is it addressed? Frankfurt apparently wants to hold both that my carings are normative for me alone and that my will is constituted by my carings. I do not see how to make these views consistent, or rather, I think more needs to be said. If Frankfurt thinks that the norm of continuing to desire the things I care about is addressed to the future conscious subjects of my body, then Frankfurt is at once assuming both that personal identity is constituted by bodily continuity and that personal identity is constituted by acts of caring. He needs to say why and how these things work together. If he grants that the norm of continuing to desire the things that I care about must be public and universal between me and some group of my interactive partners, as I have tentatively suggested, perhaps he too is on the road to morality after all.

I have just been comparing the role that Frankfurt gives to caring in unifying the self with the role that I believe the principles of practical reason play in unifying the self. I have been suggesting that perhaps in both cases the unifying factor—the norm of caring or practical principles—cannot successfully unify the self unless it is interpreted in a way that implies a commitment to morality, or at least to the public normative force of reasons. A commitment to continuing to desire what I care about implies that my future self—another self—should care about the same thing I do. Having made this comparison, I would like to mention some disanalogies between our two views that I believe give rise to further questions. As I have indicated above, I think that we can explain why the principles of practical reason are constitutive of volition and agency. So here is a question for Frankfurt: why is continuing to desire X constitutive of caring about X? Continuing to care may be constitutive of the self that does the caring, but why does that self need to be unified in order to care? In my own view, a person needs to be unified insofar as she is an agent, because it is one of the distinguishing features of action that a movement only counts as an
action if it is caused by the person considered as a whole, rather than by a part of her.\textsuperscript{xiii} The principles of practical reason must secure the unity of the self because they are constitutive of volition and so of agency, and agency must be unified. I am not sure whether this answer is available to Frankfurt or not, in part because I am uncertain how exactly he understands the will. Although Frankfurt describes caring as part of the will, as far as I can see it merely informs volition, and is not really constitutive of it. Caring about something is not the same as acting from that concern, while, I believe, willing a universal maxim is the same as acting on that maxim.\textsuperscript{xiii} Despite his characterization of caring as a feature of the will, Frankfurt sometimes seems to think that the will is just the desire you act on. For instance, he says that we will freely “when the will behind what we do is exactly the will by which we want our action to be moved.” (I.16). On another occasion, however, he claims that if desires we reject “succeed in moving us to act, it will now be only against our will,”(I.8) suggesting a difference between your will and the desire that produces your action. (Perhaps Frankfurt thinks we sometimes act from a will that is not our own, and that is what is behind the careful formulation “the will behind what we do” in the first of those remarks.) Some of these remarks suggest that Frankfurt holds the view that an action is a movement caused by a desire. On this view, a wanton would count as having a will, and as being an agent, even though the wanton would not be a person, and would be neither free nor unfree. I do not think that this is correct. An action is not a movement caused by a desire: the idea of action requires that the agent takes the desire to make the movement appropriate. In the case of adult human agents, this means that the agent takes the desire to provide a reason for the movement. That “taking” represents the agent’s principle, so that action always involves a principle: if I take my desire for E to be a reason for doing A, my principle – or maxim – is one of doing A for the sake of E. Wantonness in Frankfurt’s sense – unprincipled action - is, on my view, excluded by the concept of action. One might have a principle of doing whatever one desires, but that is not wantonness in Frankfurt’s sense. Frankfurt thinks non-
human animals are wantons, but on my view, non-human agents – for, like Frankfurt, I think that non-human animals may be agents - cannot be. Rather, their instincts must be understood as presenting certain situations as appropriate grounds for making certain movements, and therefore as serving as their principles. In any case, I think the will cannot be identified with the desire you act on (or any other desire): the will must be constituted by its principles. And in constituting the will, these principles must give the will the unity that makes agency possible. I believe that for Frankfurt to take the position that caring is constitutive of the self because caring unifies the self, he either needs to make caring constitutive of agency, or he needs some other account of why the self should be unified.

I now want to leave these rather metaphysical (and no doubt obscure) arguments aside and turn to another, simpler, way in which a commitment to morality may be entailed by caring. If something like the view I just sketched is right, it leaves us with a problem, which I am going to call the problem of the personal. If reasons are, as I have suggested, public and universal for all rational beings, then anyone's reasons are reasons for me. What then entitles me to pay special attention to what I will call “my own reasons” – that is, reasons whose first origin lies in my own in my own desires and interests, or in the desires and interests of the people about whom I care most? Utilitarians, familiarly, handle this problem by making claims about how to efficiently maximize utility. They claim that I am obligated to treat everyone’s reasons as equally important, and so to add them all up in a single calculation, and do what promotes the best result overall. But traditionally they also claim that it turns out, happily, that I can best promote the overall total by attending most directly to my own projects and to the interests and concerns of my loved ones. This theory has been criticized for offering us the right conclusion for the wrong reason, both theoretically, and for agents themselves. As Bernard Williams has argued, it is not possible
for agents to favor their own projects or loved ones both from a direct personal commitment and because this is the most efficient way to maximize utility.xxiv

Those of us who do not believe it makes sense to add values across the boundaries between persons do not face the problem in the exact form that utilitarians do. Yet there certainly is a problem here. Why exactly am I permitted to give my own projects and interests and those of my loved ones the preference over other people’s? How can I square this with my commitment to the view that in some sense their projects and interests are just as important as mine? What we seem to want here is a theory that:

(i) allows us to actively devote our lives to promoting our own projects and the concerns of those we care about, and not everyone’s; and, nevertheless,

(ii) requires us to concede that the projects and loved ones of strangers are just as important as our own; and, also,

(iii) requires us to refrain in certain ways from damaging or hindering other people’s interests even those we are not required to promote them; and finally

(iv) also requires us to help others to satisfy certain of their most basic needs even though we are not required to promote their interests as directly and vigorously as our own.

It is surprisingly difficulty to come up with a philosophical theory that manages all of this at once.xxv Frankfurt’s solution is to make a distinction between what is of value and what one cares about or loves. He says:

From the fact that we consider something to be valuable, it does not follow that we need to be concerned with it. There are many objects, activities, and states of affairs that we acknowledge to be valuable but in which we quite reasonably take no interest because they do not fit into our lives. Other things, perhaps even things of lesser value, are more important to us. What we are actually to care about – what we are to regard as really important to us
– cannot be based simply upon judgments concerning what has the most 
value. (II. 1-2)

Frankfurt thinks it is only the things that we care about that give us reasons to act. In 
principle, this goes to a kind of opposite extreme from utilitarianism: in Frankfurt’s view, we 
have no reason to be attentive to the good of others at all, unless we happen to care, either 
about those specific others, or about the general ideal of human relationships embodied in 
morality.

As an aside, I should note that it is a little unclear to me what Frankfurt means when 
he talks about something’s being “valuable,” and also when he talks about something being 
“more valuable.” It is evident from what he says that these are not directly normative 
judgments for Frankfurt. Perhaps he thinks they are simply judgments about real values, but 
it seems a shame to go to all the trouble to deny normative realism about values and then 
espouse a kind of non-normative realism about them after all. Or perhaps what he means 
when he calls something valuable is that someone does love or care about it, or that it is the 
sort of thing that it is somehow appropriate for people to love or care about. xxvi Frankfurt’s 
characterization of certain preferences and loves as “crazy” or “lunatic” or “inhuman” 
suggests that he accepts the existence of such standards. When Frankfurt suggests that I 
might acknowledge that something is “more valuable” than the things I care most about, 
perhaps he means I might acknowledge that they are of deeper and greater concern to other 
people – or maybe large numbers of other people – than the thing I care about is to me.

However that may be, I don’t think Frankfurt’s solution to the problem is right. To 
some extent, I agree with him about the phenomena. I care deeply about finishing my next 
book, and will devote a kind of effort to it that I will not devote to helping to stop the 
spread of AIDS in Africa, even though I agree that the latter is a far more important and 
valuable project. It does not, in Frankfurt’s words, fit into my life in the same way. But this 
kind of example doesn’t make me want to accept Frankfurt’s view, for a couple of reasons.
First, I think that acknowledging the value of other projects puts a check on the kinds of reasons I can derive from my own projects, even where those other projects are not among the things I particularly care about. Suppose that through some bizarre concatenation of circumstances my writing my book would make the African AIDS epidemic worse. Heaven only knows what it would be, but philosophers can always think of something. So: Suppose that I am the carrier of a virus that is harmless to me, but that would seriously sicken people with compromised immune systems. And suppose in order to finish my book I need to go on a research trip to Africa in order to consult a manuscript which St. Augustine left there and which may not be copied or moved. If I insisted on going, knowing that large numbers of people would become deathly ill as a result of exposure to me, it seems to me that this choice would be, to use Frankfurt’s words, “crazy, lunatic, and inhuman.” But this isn’t merely because, as it happens, I am a person who cares about morality. I think there would be something wrong not just with me and my character and my attitude towards the people in Africa, but with my attitude towards writing the book, if I cared about it in this way. Furthermore, I do not think this is just because writing a book is usually comparatively less important than saving lives. Suppose the question concerns what I would do to save the life of my child. No doubt if I had a child I would do things to save the life of that child that I would not do to save the life of other people’s children; not even to save the lives of many other people’s children. But – and here I am borrowing a point from Tim Scanlon - I think that if I were prepared to kill other people’s children to get their organs in order to save the life of my child, that would reveal something amiss, not merely with my general moral character, and my attitude towards the other children, but with my attitude towards my own child. As Scanlon puts it, it would be as if I felt that my child’s right to her own organs derived from my love for her, and that would be the wrong way of caring about her. And this is the second point – that the kind of value we assign to something or someone that we care about naturally generalizes in a certain way.
Elsewhere I have proposed a different model for understanding the relation between universal values and personal projects. I believe instead of thinking of personal projects as arising from specific or personal values, we should think of them as arising from a desire to stand in a special relationship to something that we regard as having intersubjective or universal value. Love, as I understand it, would be an example of this. When I love, say, a person, I regard his humanity – his autonomy and his interests - as something of universal and public value. These are values that I think everyone has reason to respect and perhaps even some reason to promote. But I also desire to stand in a special relation to him and to those values: I want to share in his life and his decisions and if it is possible to be the one who promotes his good. I do not want this, as the utilitarian would have it, merely because it is the way I can most effectively promote the sum total of value, but because it is something of special concern to myself – perhaps something that is essential to my practical identity. Nevertheless any reasons that spring from this desire are essentially limited by the values to which I want to stand in a special relation. So although I would prefer to be the one who makes my beloved happy, I cannot therefore conclude I have a reason to try to prevent someone else from making him happy, or to undercut his autonomy by trying to prevent him from consorting with his other friends. My reasons must be essentially respectful of the kind of value I accord to him, which is the value of his humanity, and requires respect for his autonomy and his good.

Frankfurt’s conception of love, by contrast to the attitude I am trying to describe, seems both too personal and too impersonal. Frankfurt’s description of what the lover wants is too impersonal. He says that love is a concern for the existence and the good of what is loved, that the lover accepts the interests of the beloved as his own, and that “love does not necessarily include a desire for union of any other kind.” (II.17) This just doesn’t ring true to me. My love for my friends and family includes a desire to share my lives with them; my love for philosophy includes a desire to do it and succeed at it. I do not merely
care for its existence and its good. One way to put the point: if my loves are to give my life meaning, as Frankfurt thinks they do, they must give me something to do, not just something to root for. But as I have suggested, the reasons I derive from my desire to stand in a special relation to my beloved must be conditioned by a concern for its existence and its good. Indeed it is one of the recognizable pathologies of love when it is not. The jealous lover who is prepared to kill his beloved rather than let her be with anyone else, the literary plagiarist, or the scientist who fakes his data - all of these people let their desires to stand in a special relation to something that is of value get the better of their desire to serve the value itself. But the reason why these are such recognizable pathologies is because love is not as disinterested as Frankfurt thinks. Even the love of a parent for a child, which I believe is Frankfurt’s model, characteristically involves a desire to be the one who helps and nurtures the child, where that is possible and not against the interests of the child. I do not think that love’s wishes are, or even should be, as impersonal and unselfish as Frankfurt describes them.

But in another way Frankfurt’s conception of love and personal value is too personal. I agree with Frankfurt that love is not, or not necessarily, a response to value, that its object is particular and its causes multifarious. Since there are many things of value, your wanting to stand in a special relationship to one of them is clearly not caused merely by the fact that you see it as of value. Yet I think that in loving something you do accord universal or public value to its object. And I think that someone who loves something with a certain kind of value is committed to that kind of value in general. As the case of stealing the organs shows, if I am to be respectful of the value of humanity in my beloved, then I must be respectful of that value generally. This, I think, is why people are inclined to think that love is – to put it in a slightly old-fashioned way – redemptive, why even though love is not the same thing as morality, it tends to make us better. And that is another way in which moral commitment may be entailed by the logic of caring. 
Let me conclude by summing up the points I have made. First, I have argued that it does not follow from the fact that all normativity arises from caring, if that is a fact, that the normativity of morality depends only on whether one contingently cares about it. Caring has a logic of its own, and it may be that caring about things in general commits one to morality. Second, I have sketched two ways that one might argue for such an implication. First, I have suggested that caring cannot fulfill its role in constituting personal identity unless the reasons to which it gives rise are to some extent regarded as universal and public by the person who has them. Second, I have suggested that caring about something essentially involves according it a kind of universal and public value, even though I agree with Frankfurt that love is not merely a response to that kind of value. Respecting that value as you find it in your beloved commits you to respecting it wherever you find it. In both of these ways, it is possible that the logic of caring commits us to universal shared values, and so to morality.

Or, on Frankfurt’s view, an agent may be committed to caring about morality because he cares about something to which morality is instrumental, or for which it is a necessary condition. The important issue, from my point of view, is whether we might be committed to morality simply by virtue of caring about something – I mean by caring anything at all. Frankfurt denies that – he thinks that a commitment to morality depends upon our particular concerns.

Despite what I say later in the text about self-consciousness placing us directly under the authority of reason, I think there is a sense in which it is true that particular instances of valuing are what commit us to reason and morality. I think that valuing anything whatever (or treating anything as a reason) commits us to morality, but that it is possible, at least in theory, not to value anything or treat anything as a reason. See *The Sources of Normativity*, op. cit., §4.4.1-4.4.2, pp. 160-164.

Frankfurt may be tempted to reply that he does not mean that caring involves a norm that you go on desiring – it is only that it includes a desire that you go on desiring. But I think he is committed to the norm, because I think he is committed to thinking not only that you
should go on desiring if you care, but that you should continue to care. That demand may
derive from a yet higher order desire, in his scheme of things, but no matter – the demand
will resound all the way back, and for Frankfurt that’s what a norm amounts to.

v In discussion, Frankfurt also admitted that one might be committed by caring about some
contingent thing to also caring about one’s wholeheartedness, freedom, and activity. The
general idea is that someone who cares about anything also cares about caring, and so about
the conditions that make caring and its exercise possible.

vi As I think of them, these commitments are grounded in what I call the “constitutive
standards” of believing, or willing, or in Frankfurt’s view caring. The standards are
constitutive of believing, or willing, or caring, because you do not count as believing, or willing,
or caring, unless you at least acknowledge the normative force of the commitments in
question. Yet they are still normative standards, for it is possible to violate them; if it were not,
they could not function normative standards, which guide and correct agents who are
tempted to violate them. Although as I argue in the text, willing the means is constitutive of
willing the end, it still must be possible in some sense for an agent to will an end and fail to
will the means, or Kant’s hypothetical imperative could not function as a normative
principle. (See my “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason,” in Ethics and Practical Reason,
model of a constitutive standard to Frankfurt’s notion of caring, I would say that it is
possible for someone to care about something and yet violate the constitutive standards of
caring, whatever they might be. Frankfurt clearly agrees with this, for in the passage I just
quoted he describes someone as failing to meet the standard that one must continue to
desire what one cares about, and as correcting this “lapse” under the influence of that
standard. Yet the standard of continuing to desire is constitutive of caring, for no one can care about something and at the same time openly reject that standard.

vii I am interested in this kind of argument, because in my own book, The Sources of Normativity, I tried to deploy an argument of this kind. I argued that an agent who values anything whatever is thereby committed to the value of humanity, and that a commitment to the value of humanity in turn implies a commitment to morality, most obviously in the form of Kant’s Formula of Humanity as an End in Itself. In these comments I will suggest some somewhat different arguments for the same conclusion, which I believe come to the same thing in the end, although I won’t try to explain that point here. Another argument with this structure is the famous argument in Metaphysics (IV.4 1006b10-15), in which Aristotle claims that a person is committed to the principle of non-contradiction just by virtue of making an assertion – any assertion whatever - and meaning something in particular by it. This is very like the view I am about to present in the text: that you are committed to universalizability just by virtue of willing something in particular – so to speak, by willing a maxim and meaning something in particular by it.

viii It places us under both the hypothetical and categorical imperatives at once because in order to serve as a law for the will a maxim must describe a procedure that is both efficacious and universalizable. A similar argument, starting from the fact that we are aware of the grounds of our beliefs and can question them, should explain why we are directly under the authority of theoretical reason.

ix Frankfurt does not say whether he thinks something parallel about theoretical reason. I take it as a heuristic principle that we should avoid positing disanalogies between theoretical
and practical reason as far as possible – and if practical reason depended on love for its authority while theoretical reason did not, there would be a very striking disanalogy. I think the question here is whether there is a kind of theoretical reason that corresponds to Frankfurt’s idea of volitional rationality. Here is one possibility: someone who supposes that his senses do not provide him with any evidence of what the world is like is not guilty of any formal contradiction or fallacy. But perhaps he might strike us as being lunatic or inhuman in the same way that someone who loves death or pain does.

Frankfurt argues that morality cannot be grounded in reason because “People who behave immorally incur a distinctive kind of opprobrium, which is quite unlike the normal attitude towards those who reason poorly.” In my view this is a good criticism of dogmatic rationalists like Samuel Clarke, Richard Price, W. D. Ross, and H. A. Prichard, but not of the views of Plato, Aristotle, or Kant. Or for that matter of Nagel, who argues that the practically irrational person suffers from a kind of practical solipsism, not from mere error. In Kant’s view, the role of the principles of reason is to unify a manifold into a certain sort of object. Theoretical reason unifies experience into a representation of the world that we can find our way around in, and practical reason unifies the self or the will. The “opprobrium” we accord to the immoral (or even the weak-of-will) comes from the difficulty of interacting with those who lack integrity – who do not have unified wills. Frankfurt will not accept this answer, or at least will think that it is incomplete, because he thinks that evil people can have integrity, or completely unified wills, but that is another argument. See his *The Reasons of Love*, p. 98.

In “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason,” *op. cit.*
There seem to be two kinds of volitional rationality in Frankfurt’s view. In the passage where he introduces the idea, Frankfurt affirms that a person is volitionally irrational if he cares about something that strikes the rest of us as “crazy, lunatic, or inhuman” to care about, such as the preference of Hume’s exemplar for the destruction of the world over the scratching of his finger (II. 4). But Frankfurt also seems to think that a person is volitionally irrational if he acts against the things he loves, the things he cannot help caring about, whatever those might be. It seems odd to lump these two forms of “irrationality” together, since the judgment that the first person is irrational is completely external to the person himself – he does not resist his own necessities, but rather those acknowledged by the rest of us. The other kind of volitional irrationality, by contrast, involves the violation of one’s own deepest will. It is hard to see why the first kind of condition should be called “irrationality” at all.

Frankfurt thinks the unity of the will has two components: freedom of the will, which gives us synchronic unity, and caring, which provides diachronic unity. Freedom, as he understands it, just consists in the fact that my second-order desires and any further orders of desire I might have support the desire upon which I actually act at this moment. I am synchronically unified because of lack of synchronic conflict. (A wanton is also synchronically unified, I suppose, but only in a trivial sense.) Caring, Frankfurt claims, motivates us to play an active role in keeping our wills unified over time. On the Kantian view, there is no need to appeal to these two separate components, in order to secure either unity or freedom. I have not performed an act of will even at this moment unless I have made the potentially diachronic commitment to willing my maxim as a universal law. My capacity to be unified even now depends on my capacity to unify myself over time; and my
freedom – my autonomy – consists in the fact that my actions are governed by a law I give to myself. So freedom, synchronic unity, and diachronic unity are really all one thing.

xiv Formal universalizability by itself seems to allow one to universalize over “all males” “all white people” “all Americans” or whatever. In the text I argue that what it cannot coherently do is universalize over “all states of me.”

xv Since I am testing a maxim of stealing an object, we may assume that it is my end to possess the object. I am also assuming here that the desire to possess the object which motivates my stealing it is not merely a desire to possess it momentarily – to watch it pass through my hands, so to speak - but rather to have it at my disposal, over some period of time. On the importance of this condition for generating contradictions under the universal law test, see my “Kant’s Formula of Universal Law” in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially pp.98ff.

xvi This question arises because you might be tempted to suppose that the Kantian route to morality that I have sketched above – from the commitment to the formal universality that is essential to the exercise of the will to the kind of universalizability needed for morality - is blocked by the failure of one of these two conditions. You might suppose that in order to constitute myself as something’s cause, I need only universalize over all present and future instances of myself, or that the reasons that result from the formal universalizability requirement are only private reasons. If the inference from formal universalizability to morality fails in the first way, we are left with first-person egoism. If it fails in the second way, we are left with ethical egoism.
Why must the various conscious subjects of my body cooperate at all? On the argument I am now making, one answer that is not open to me is “because they are all me.” For according to my argument, my continuing personal identity depends on whether I establish the unity of my will by willing universally. In his political philosophy, Kant argued that cooperation is morally required among agents who must share a geographical territory and therefore are likely to have conflicts of right about how to use it; although sounds a little startling, it is tempting to regard the sharing of a body in a similar way.

A second and easier question is why it is not enough to suppose cooperation must take place between the conscious subject of my body at the time of making the appointment and the conscious subject of my body at the time of keeping it. The answer is that the intervening conscious subjects of my body must get my body to the dentist on time for the appointment, and more generally must act in a way that makes keeping the appointment possible.

One possible way to argue for this point is to argue that we require the cooperation of all causes – all of nature – in order to realize any one of our ends. Nature works as a system, and my efficacy as an agent in fact depends on the entire system cooperating with me. But I cannot address my law to all of nature, since as far as I know, the non-human part of nature isn’t capable of conforming to a law. So instead I address it to all rational agents, all causes that are, in the eighteenth century phrase “capable of a law.” I believe that our need to secure the cooperation even of the non-human part of nature in order to conceive ourselves as agents - that is, as in control of our effects - is behind Kant’s philosophy of religion, especially as presented in the dialectic of the *Critique of Practical Reason* (trans. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
xiv For another statement of this argument see what is now Lecture Six of my Locke
Lectures, Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity, forthcoming from Oxford University
Press.

xv I think that we can also explain why accepting the logical implications of proposition P is
constitutive of accepting P, if we can explain why the basic principles of logic are
constitutive of believing, which I think is also possible. For one step in such an explanation

xvi See my “Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant,” The Journal of Ethics, 3: 1-29,

xvii For more on this last claim see my “Acting for a Reason” forthcoming in Studies in Practical

xviii See “Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals,” op. cit.

xix In his part of Utilitarianism For and Against, and also in “Persons, Character, and Morality.”
I have also heard Williams, in conversation, criticize it for being based on “empirical studies
that are not forthcoming,” since no one has ever actually tried to prove that the utilities work
out this way.

xx A number of different solutions have been proposed, most notably Thomas Nagel’s
attempt to separate agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons in The View from Nowhere (New

xxvi This is suggested by what Frankfurt says about value in The Reasons of Love, p. 56.

xxvii Scanlon, T.M. What We Owe to Each Other, Harvard 1998, pp. 164-165.

xxviii This is consistent with thinking, as I do, that all values arise originally from acts of valuing by individual agents. I just have to think that another’s right to her organs arises from her own self-concern, which I must acknowledge as a source of reasons, and not from my concern for her. In another kind of case, where the value is not that of a person or animal, it may be because I am inclined to make this my project that I think of it as having universal or intersubjective value. On my view every rational being is, in a way, entitled to create value, through his interests. Philosophy, for instance, is intersubjectively valuable in the first instance because there are some human beings who want to think things through, and choose to do so. Yet once it is established as a valuable thing, my desire to stand in a special relationship to it is still something different.

xxix In “The Reasons We Can Share” in Korsgaard, Creating the Kingdom of Ends (New York: Cambridge, 1996), pp. 275-310; see especially the discussion at pp. 284-291.

xxx Frankfurt thinks that the reason we want the things we love to be of value is that “love commits us to significant requirements and limitations” (II.19). I think there is more to it than that. It is not just that if you love something or someone you are going to take trouble over it or him. It is that love essentially wants a worthy object, even though it is not caused
by the perception of value. I have described one view of why this might be so in “The General Point of View: Love and Moral Approval in Hume’s Ethics” in *Hume Studies*, Volume XXV, Nos. 1 & 2, April/November 1999, pp. 1-39.

Putting together the two arguments in these comments: it cannot make sense for me to care about writing my book so much that I am willing to endanger the health of the Africans in order to write it because the reasons I am deriving from my commitment to the book’s value would be ones the Africans could not possibly share with me.

In terms of the argument of *The Sources of Normativity*, part of what I have in mind here is this: when you come to see that your contingent practical identities are normative for you only insofar as they are endorsable from the point of view of your human identity, you also come to have a new attitude towards the personal projects embodied in those contingent practical identities. You come to see them as various realizations of human possibility and human value, and to see your own life that way. Your life fits into the general human story, and is a part of the general human activity of the creation and pursuit of value. It matters to you both that it is a particular part – your own part – and that it is a part of the larger human story. (This is the attitude that I think Marx may have in mind when he talks about “species being.”) In the third part of *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), Rawls argues that citizenship in a just society fosters an attitude of vicarious participation of the citizens in each others’ activities, so that they see themselves as members of a community with a common culture in which they each do their part. I am suggesting that membership in the Kingdom of Ends makes us regard ourselves as parts of a common humanity in the same way.