The Responsibility of Love in Gratitude and Trust

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In memoriam Țimi (Elena Drăgan)

ABSTRACT • It is hard to accept, but there are people who are not able to love. They do not love others and they do not love themselves, whether they have lost their self, as in the case of advanced-stage Alzheimer's patients, or they have a confused or multiple self, as happens to abandoned children with a long history of institutionalization or those suffering from reactive attachment disorder. The inability to love throws into sharp relief two dimensions of any kind of love: gratitude and trust. Gratitude not only as an act of emotional restitution in respect of a received gift, but also as an act with a dual identity role: that of preserving the identity of those who no longer know who they used to be and who they are, including in their capacity as lovers and loved ones, while also preserving the identity of those who have been taking care of the love journal of which they were a part. And trust, in particular as a response to a child's trust in the adult on whom they depend.

KEYWORDS • love, responsibility, self, identity, gratitude, trust, Alzheimer's, reactive attachment disorder

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How much to love oneself and how much to love the other is one possible question in an accounting ledger, which, although difficult to quantify, can be viewed in terms of how much one gives and how much one receives, an act of accounting that usually arises when taking stock, when an emotional bond risks falling apart. Naturally, how much love we give is not always equal to how much love we expect there to be in the other's love for us, but this inevitable imbalance is usually swallowed up by the unity that love generates, which, as Hegel says, produces an overcoming of the self. We might say, then, that it is not the self that matters in love, but its capacity for transcendence, that is, its capacity not stubbornly to remain a constant referential priority.

This is not the view of Aristotle, who, in Chapter VIII of Book IX of The Nicomachean Ethics, writes that one should prefer the self, that is, love oneself most[2].

Although I do not agree with Aristotle, I must admit that the referencing primarily of the self, even in love, has solid foundations, something I will try to explain in the present text, in which I in effect depart from the theme proposed by Aristotle concerning the preference of love. I leave to one side the question of whether one should love more oneself or the other, and being in agreement with Aristotle on this matter, I concentrate on the way love depends on one's relationship with oneself, for I accept that the origin of our relationship with others resides in our relationship with ourselves.[3]

The importance of self-relation will therefore be neither the prelude to the preference of love nor to the evaluation of the good that love implies, be this accidental good as opposed to persistent good, or the good that serves as the criterion for differentiating between freindly love and concupiscent love, from which arises the – for many people – vexing issue as to whether or not good is dependent on a person's transposable or non-transposable qualities.

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[2] "Everyone is his own best friend, and must therefore love himself most." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. D. P. Chase, 1168 b.

[3] "The friendly feelings we have towards our fellow men... seem to derive from those we have towards ourselves." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166 a.

In a more radical way, I emphasize self-relation as the main condition of possibility for any act of love, in order to link to it the two features of love of interest to me: gratitude and trust. Starting with the extreme cases of the self – that annihilated by illness, and that under construction, as in the case of a small child – I focus on a different way of relating to love, this time not love towards the self, but towards those with a self that is either lost or is in the incipient phase of its discovery, for in these situations the role of love is to construct a narrative as a space of recuperative identification for the person without memory, and as a space for the articulation of a future narrative, as in the situation of the small child. While in the first case the key term in respect of love is gratitude, in the second it is trust.

Gratitude in the love of a person with no memory

An inability to love is usually excluded from the referential framework of love, but it exists nonetheless. One of its dramatic forms manifests itself in the loss of self-recognition, not only as an inability to articulate one's identity narrative, as justification of an existential coherence, but also in the lack of any shred of purpose vis-à-vis the moment to come. The loss of self connects the forgetting of the past, a condition of identity in the philosophy of Locke and Hume, with the inability to project, however minimally, a future, a condition of identity in the tradition of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.

In other words, the erasure of "event maps", which are spoken of today in neuroscience as a pathway of identity formation, annihilates not only the past, but also the future. Neither the road travelled nor the road yet to be travelled has any form or meaning for the person who loses their self, a loss that is difficult for others to accept, especially if this person has experienced projective fulfilment and exercised virtues, as opposed to someone who, through congenital illness, lives in an extremely deficient state.

Someone suffering from advanced-stage Alzheimer's disease no longer remembers their experiences of love and no longer projects any. The forgetting of love and lack of desire to love occur in tandem with the loss of

self in the long state of indifference into which they sink akin to an endless night only interrupted by occasional outbursts of anger and fear. Until we admit that they are no longer able to love (us), we delude ourselves that for them, too, it is merely a matter of the impossibility of being able to approximate what, in general, is anyway difficult to gauge in the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary.[4] As in all cases of interpersonal love, we also want to believe that the response – or lack thereof – is a choice, an expression of freedom,[5] even if we also often like to speak of love as a matter of fate, a predestined decision with a transcendental ineffability, which would make love a participatory exercise that takes place in a register of a different order to the immanent, hence once again the transcendental nature of love about which Hegel speaks. In reality, Alzheimer's sufferers do not choose whether or not to love, just as they do not choose not to know who they were and who they are. Not only is their bureaucratic identity alien to them, so, too, is their identity as lovers or loved.

For them, the diary of their life, including its passages of love, is lost, but those present in its entries also have their own diaries, from which they, the Alzheimer's sufferers, should not be absent, as the loved or loving, hence the gratitude for their participatory role in the identity of others.

When they no longer know how to answer – in the simplest form, not that which becomes twisted in the labyrinth of interpretation – the question of *who am I*, the others not only become the voice that says *who they are*, but, above all, witnesses to *who they have been* in different moments and roles during their life, a narrative process in which the coherence of identity is a

[4] Paul Ricoeur, (Le volontaire et l'involontaire, Seuil, 1950), *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary. trans.* Erazim Kohák, Northwestern University Press, 1966.

[5] In love, as in all sentient inclinations, there is obviously more choice than exists in bodily inclinations, but less than in rational inclinations, whose main work is inextricably linked to the will, as in all knowledge. In this way, the freedom that love presupposes, given that its terms are identifiable, is placed in the order by which any inclination manifests itself as a function of survival and the quality of life that each in turn provides. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I-II, q. 26.

recognition of the other narratives, for, as Ricoeur says, "the history of each person" is found „in the histories of numerous others".[6]

The exercise of not recognizing love is clearly substantially different for someone with memory than it is for someone without memory. For the former, it may be a preliminary step towards non-recognition, as an intersection of pride, denial and a reconsideration of the multiple interplay of intersubjectivities, which Paul Ricoeur discusses at length in his book "From Text to Action".[7] For the latter, the Alzheimer's sufferer, it is a matter of a process of obliteration in which the world is lost piece by piece, also swallowing up the loved ones who, while of course not intentionally targeted, become caught up in the ongoing process of obliteration. If non-recognition and gratitude are as foreign to them as they are to themselves, for those who were once loved or loving, gratitude is the recognition of past love as a part of present love.

Of course, in the borderline case to which I refer, gratitude fills almost the entire space of love, but it is not irrelevant in every love relationship, even if today it has unfortunately become part of a hermeneutics so sophisticated that it risks rendering it obsolete and inadequate, implicitly also in the memory of love, for stylistically speaking we have become grateful to those who have done us wrong, who have caused us suffering, who have provoked in us, irrespective of the means, a reconsideration of our own self. The reference point of the lover, who for Aristotle is the benefactor, is thus restricted only to the pleasure of their generosity, an "affection and love for those they have benefited, even if they are not useful to them at the moment and are unlikely to be useful at a later time".[8] In this way, not only can every benefactor be ignored, but every lover can be suspected of selfishness, all the more so if they were also the loved one. The former lover becomes merely the person

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[6] Paul Ricoeur (*Soi-même comme un autre*, Seuil, 1990) *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 161.

[7] Paul Ricoeur, (*Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique, II*, Seuil, 1986), *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II,* trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Northwestern University Press, 1991.

[8] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167 b.

who, in loving, actually loves himself, hence the lack of any "obligation" characteristic of a contractual relationship "between a creditor and a debtor".[9] Thus, we can undo the condemnation of the failure to recognise affective credit as moral deviation, which philosophers have criticized in harsh terms. "Of all crimes that human creatures are capable of committing, the most horrid and unnatural is ingratitude"[10] says Hume, perhaps quoted in a metaphorical sense, a reading which, in the case I am referring to, becomes much less figurative, for gratitude to the memoryless is a gesture of resistance to the shuttering of the future of the *same* person threatened with non-existence, all the more so if the physical body is on the verge of death or the body is no longer the active basis, the main – for some, the only – criterion of that identity.

An act of survival of an identity that has contributed to the existence of the grateful, the theme that interests me first and foremost, gratitude is more than – but also implicitly – an act of justice. Not only in terms of the economic vocabulary with which Aristotle describes the debtor's debt to the creditor – that is, more like the repayment of a loan than an investment with social and political consequences, as it is viewed by Thomas Hobbes[11] and Adam Smith[12] – but also as an act of justice vis-à-vis love, for by not forgetting it, it transcends the present. I would therefore say that while it may primarily be a matter of the restitution of which Aristotle speaks, the capacity to feel repentance of which Thomas Hobbes speaks, or the appreciation of which Adam Smith speaks, it is also more than this, because no affective gift can be equalled. Its value has, in fact, no returnable price. This is why the inclusion of gratitude in the sphere of justice is appropriate, albeit it may impoverish its meaning because an act of injustice can be prevented, identified and rectified, whereas ingratitude, being a matter of the heart, can neither be regulated nor

[9] *Ibid*.
[10] David Hume, *A treatise of Human Nature* (1738-1740) 3.1.1.
[11] Thomas Hobbes, The *Leviathan (1651)*.
[12] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759)*.

penalised. And this is why, in the words of Samuel Pufendorf, "ingratitude is more despicable, more odious and more detestable than justice".[13]

For its evil is not only towards the other, the creditor, the person to be rewarded or appreciated, but also towards yourself. In other words, what Hume says is to be understood not only as a crime, but also as suicide, a double ending, not only an interpretable fact, if it exists in the realm of good and evil, through the intention of self-defence or the premeditation of an evil whose main source Kant says is ingratitude.

Moreover, if the gratitude is towards those who have lost their merits and have, for example, in the meantime become criminals, then it can even be placed in contradiction with justice,[14] in whose sphere Thomas Aquinas places it,[15] mainly in continuation of Seneca.

From a social and political perspective, gratitude is certainly problematic, though not so much in terms of its adequacy or inadequacy in respect of a person's transformations, but more in terms of its degrees, always an important theme for Thomas and Aristotle, who calls an excess of gratitude servility and a lack of gratitude arrogance.

From a legal perspective, gratitude establishes an equivalence, a proportionality which does not in fact cover the deontic task of gratitude, since "… in gratitude we consider equality of wills. For while on the one hand the benefactor of his own free-will gave something he was not bound to give, so on the other hand the beneficiary repays something over and above what he received".[16]

So, in the sphere of love, gratitude only risks being not enough. For it is never too much to express gratitude for the emotional investment through which you have been built, you have survived.[17] Gratitude, not merely

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[13] Samuel Pufendorf, De Officio Hominis et Civis Juxta Legem Naturalem, 1673.

[14] Plato, *Crito.*

[15] For Thomas Aquinas, the virtues relating to justice – a cardinal virtue alongside prudence, fortitude and temperance – are: respect, honour (dulia), gratitude, truth, kindness, liberality and equity.

[16] Thomas Aquinas, *ST* II-II, q 106, a 6, r 3.

[17] "Wherefore it is not unreasonable if the *obligation* of gratitude has no limit." Thomas Aquinas, *ST,* II-II, q 106 a 6 r2.

registering, but also marks the difference between a simple acknowledgement and what Kant calls a sacred duty. For non-recognition, as an act of volition, towards a loving relationship implies a threat to the self, naturally with a metabolism and consequences not to be neglected in the realm of identity.

At the risk of sounding overly pretentious, it is also through gratitude that the act of love, as an act of emotional connection between two people, has an identifying role for the person with no memory, by surviving in the memory of the person who, by self-identifying, is also called upon to identify; this is, naturally, an extension of the theories for and against the role of memory in establishing identity, implicitly that of the loved and that of the lover.

Trust in the construction of love

If gratitude is more a retrospective implication of love, trust is a more prospective one. Naturally, whether we look backwards or forwards, the present remains an integral part of the manifestation of both gratitude and trust, and neither, regardless of their horizons, is mutually exclusive or strictly part of love. I can show gratitude by honouring the trust that has been bestowed on me, and I can trust as a prelude to possible future gratitude, without this necessarily implying a commitment to love, which, in fact, is frequently the case in the public sphere, where trust is the barometer of a possible future choice and the manifestation of gratitude the measure of past performance.

Whatever the field, trust plays a key role in making or breaking connections, even if the decisions justified by it are not always very clear-cut, just as, in love, ties can break or persist despite betrayals, fractures of trust.

Wherever and whenever, trust is a bridgehead, and certainly not the only one. Its absence is a chasm that some ignore, others, upon seeing it, take the decision to change course, with all the complications that then ensue. It is more or less the same in adulthood, which in principle provides a wider range of choice; however, at young ages trust is so vital that the small child does not question it and, at the beginning of its life, manifests it fully. Through their responses to their absolute trust, they discover the world and discover themselves, a process we rightly call love.

In trusting, the small child entrusts itself entirely to the other. In adulthood, however, trust must also be granted with a reasonable amount of suspicion, for its exercise requires a discernment of choice implicit in the emotional sphere. The bad choice of having relied on the wrong person can justify the disappointment of betrayal.

However, in general love cannot be separated from trust, but trust can be separated from love. Moreover, in the social and political sphere, it must, at least in principle, be distinguished from love, because love would induce an irrational weakness or reflect the toxic manner in which we attach ourselves, by using people, money or power, an attachment George Simmel[18] introduces to sociology via the theme of trust, the purpose of which is precisely its capacity to ensure our autonomy and not to bind us wrongly to something or someone.

This is how things stand for an adult involved in wider and more diverse fields of decision making. Unlike the adult, the child chooses only on an emotional level and does so only after their trust has been betrayed. In this case, it is not trust that is the precursor to choice, but the failure to trust that leads them to choose, usually to their detriment, the diagnosis that they are unlovable. For them, not being able to count on another person[19] is equivalent to a refusal to be loved, a refusal of identity more dramatic than it is for an adult, who has a history and a network of people able to contradict a verdict that can be translated from "don't count on me" to "you mean nothing" or, further, "you are nothing".[20] When the child says "I am nothing", it paradoxically couples the nothing with the Self,[21] which always means something, because when they begin to think of themselves, the small child has no way of realising the impossibility that, as soon as they become a subject, the nothingness, as a state of identity they feel, can no longer be nothing, and they experience the perception of an "empty square", as Ricoeur puts it, of a personal identity waiting, through trust, to be filled with meaning

[18] George Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes*, 1900.
[19] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 165
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Ibid*, p. 166.

in a narrative that is about to take shape and whose episodes will be built on the experiences they will have. It is precisely for this reason that it is the small child who initially loves, in many ways, unconditionally. The only condition of their love is the response to the need to rely on the person on whom they are dependent, the strongest of all possible manifestations of trust, for, as I have already said, it is integral to its first manifestation. It is only by not honouring it, as I have also already said, that they are forced to mistrust, which will infect their capacity to love and to love themselves, a fragility they seek to conceal through dissimulation, an identity strategy more dramatic than that used by adults, who, Kant says, in doing so hide their feelings and intentions, for, in the case of a child, this is done through concentric circles of deception and self-deception,[22] especially if they live in the staged environment of a pretend love, which is unfortunately the case for many children, especially institutionalized children.

At the beginning of their existential narrative, the small child has no expectation of self in the absence of an adult who prepares its becoming and, therefore, their soul is denied to them, they hide it to allow their body to maintain its history by validating time, which remains the same in its abstract units, hence the possibility that they are the supporting character in any narrative, however fanciful. In this way, the body's identification with itself, including the multitude of changes it experiences as a result of the passage of time, ensures it an *idem*, a *sameness,* the only important thing in the bureaucratic identification of an individual, a constant that can be found in the moments and roles of the narrative that is by its nature incapable of entirely evading fiction, but, nevertheless, is obliged to resolve the confrontation between truth and „the imaginative variations to which the narrative submits the identity".[23] For the truth not only constructs it, but, as

[22] Morgan Scott Peck, *People of the Lie. The Hope For Healing Human Evil,* Simon & Schuster, 1983.
[23] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 148

Françoise Dolto[24] says, makes regression impossible if the path on which it began is the wrong one.

The tension between reality and imagination is unavoidable for every human being, only that when fiction completely takes the place of reality, itself immeasurable and unassimilatable in a naked state that is in its entirety inherently impossible, there is a risk of character pathology. For the lack of truth, especially in the expression of the insincere nature of a pretend love, can lead to the claiming of a multitude of identities in which the constancy of the self risks becoming lost in the construction of a multiple self. „In the framework of the dialectic between of *idem* and *ipse*, these unsettling cases of narrativity can be reinterpreted as exposing selfhood by taking away the support of sameness".[25]

The excessive fiction towards which the small child is pushed by the hypocrisy of those around them prevents them from combining their own narrative with the narrative of others, a convergence essential for "a good life".[26] For if life "cannot be grasped as a singular totality", it cannot „never hope it to be successful, complete",[27] a consequence of the impediment of placing "the narrative unity of a life at the summit of the hierarchy of multiple practices".[28]

The narrative fractures, the too distant planes in which a child must act out their roles, force them into a fiction, which, when separated from reality by a gulf too deep and too wide, cancels out the premises of a "correct self-examination in real life".[29] In the gap between what is, what was expected to be, and what is preferable, the "self-affliction through the self" is installed, an act through which to bind is transformed into the state of being bound,[30] a transformation of the free will – which is also responsible for the decisions of

[24] Françoise Dolto, *Tout est langage*, Gallimard, 1994
[25] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 149
[26] *Ibid.* p. 158.
[27] *Ibid.* p. 160.
[28] *Ibid.* p. 159.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] Paul Ricoeur (*Philosophie de la volonté, Finitude et Culpabilité II. La symbolique du mal,* Aubier, 1960). *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan, Harper and Row, 1967.

love into the "serf arbiter"[31] – a solution which most of the time consists in not recognizing the disappointment of deception.[32]

In this state, indifference to what is outside of the self usually turns into narcissistic love, an exclusive self-love, a theme with a rich literature today. In this, self-relation leads to an "alienated" attachment, a form of "slavery", but it is still love, however absurd in its exclusivism, which is not the case for those who lose their "innocence" early and radically – in a refusal to superimpose "radical evil on original goodness"[33] – and end up loving no one, not even themselves.

The person alienated from their self is not given the chance to find their self amid the onslaught of others' refusals to be or the obligation to pretend to be one way or another. Lied to and forced to lie, the self is no longer able to sketch its own outline, let alone paint a portrait of itself capable of undergoing changes in thought, feeling, action[34] perceptible, if possible, with honesty.

In his case, the self, indispensable to any person, becomes a reference point that appears to be missing if it becomes confused and fractured, something which occurs amid the constant barrage of refusals from which they understand that, refusal being the rule, they must also refuse people and refuse themselves. Hence the refusal to love and to love oneself, a pathology diagnosed, admittedly still debatably, as reactive attachment disorder and found in abandoned and institutionalized children.

Our limited imagination must make a great effort to comprehend a child's inability to love and to love itself and is therefore either ignored or described in terms of a practiced vocabulary in which there is no place for the destruction of the capacity to love, and so we resort to current and fragmented interpretations. Accustomed to relying on "the spectrum of variations extending from the pole of selfhood as sameness belonging to the character hypostasis to the pole of the selfhood of self-constancy",[35] we fail to register

[31] Ibid.
[32] John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 1969.
[33] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil,* trans. Emerson Buchanan, Harper and Row, 1967.
[34] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* p. 168.
[35] *Ibid.* p. 165.

their going of the dial, whereby the lack of self-identification makes a minimally coherent identification impossible. We fail to recognise that a person cannot possibly say "I love you" and be conscious of what they are saying, not just be uttering an empty statement, if they do not know who they are. Or they cannot possibly feel that they are loved if they do not recognize themselves.

The disease of not being able to love is specific to children with a long history of distrust, and I believe that, almost without exception, this affects institutionalized children because their prospects of a trusting relationship are limited. They know only a few people, and those they do are incapable of supporting the construction of their selves for long enough, because the self requires sedimentation in order to become self-referential. As Ricoeur says, the question "*who* am I?" can only be asked meaningfully after having fulfilled the precondition of affirming that *I am*, a transition without which no personality can self-examine in terms of what it can and cannot do, a self-examination that is expressed at an age when the "sedimentation" of an identity that has assimilated its own dispositions has already taken place.

Obliged to keep knocking down what it starts to build, the child raised in mistrust ends up in the situation of an archaeological site of the self in which no wall can be discovered because it never got around the building one. This is why the theme of resilience, also in fashion today, is meaningless to them. How can they reconcile themselves to the world and to their own self if they do not know themselves at all, or know themselves only through representations which others force upon them and which, by dint of their falsity, confuse them to such an extent that they deprive them of a stable point of reference from which to start building their self? This gives rise to another issue, also currently in vogue, which does not apply to them because loving oneself, as self-esteem is sometimes translated,[36] clearly presupposes a self. A self which, at the age at which one is supposed to know it, usually the age of discernment, one in fact does not know, either because it is a confused self, or a multiple self, which, in the end, is equivalent to not having a reference

[36] Christophe André, Françoise Lelord, *Estime de soi. S'aimer pour mieux vivre avec les autres,* Odile Jacob, 1999.

point that can be accurately assessed, so as to be neither too low nor too high in relation to the oscillation most people experience and which only becomes a problem – not only in relation to oneself, but also in relation to others, including in love relationships – where its amplitudes vary too much, in the sense of overestimations and underestimations.

The missing self, through confusion or multiplication, I find to be the prerequisite for attachment disorder which, as I have already said, is typical of the category of children who have been most harshly affected by insecurity. Some manage to escape their emptiness and build a self, sometimes clarifying a confused one, other times choosing one from the multiplicity of their selves. They usually do so in response to a lasting offer of trust, i.e. love.

In conclusion

The way one loves another without denying oneself, or loves oneself without instrumentalizing others, is clearly responsible for one of the greatest existential tensions. This is all the greater when the person in the equation of love is someone who can no longer be counted on, or cannot yet be counted on. For them, love is strong and at the same time fragile, like all love relationships that combine, as Hegel says, several different feelings, whose individual identification risks impoverishing the ineffable that in fact characterises it as a whole, but in their case highlights, in borderline terms, the issue of the self as the benchmark of love. Not necessarily in terms of preferential self-love, as Aristotle might understand it, but in terms of the truth that a person who does not love themselves at all – because they have a self which is lost in the abyss of illness or a confused self – cannot love another.

As I said before, I have chosen – starting with these cases, which speak to the issue of the self in a loving relationship – to focus on two important components of love: gratitude and trust. Discussing them has not exhausted their significance, nor did it sufficiently cover their field of operation, today also translated to domains other than the affective. The main aim, which also has not been sufficiently discussed, has been to highlight their role in the

preservation or construction of an identity, a responsibility which, for those with an active and well-defined self, makes possible "the transition from care for the self to availability, from avarice to gift",[37] a definition of love that belongs to Ricoeur and with which I fully agree. Without it, by a secret and obscure process, the persons I have referred to would be condemned to identity death. This is simply because the exercise of affective charity, in the case of those who cannot claim their identity on account of illness or the limits of age, becomes the possibility for them not to be swallowed up by the anonymity of indistinctness, but rather to be recognised as persons, even if the attributes by which we define persons are, in their case, potentialities that have either been expressed, in the case of the Alzheimer's patient, or are about to be expressed, in the case of young children, through the narratives of their personal life histories.

On a broader level than the inability to love – but also including it – gratitude and trust remain two conditions of responsibility that the deontology of love supports through fidelity. Through it, the memory of love does not gamble its affective fortune at the poker table of circumstances, which is proof that the responsibility of any relationship of love is, more than anything else, the very promise of its non-cancellation. For love is certainly not an affective bond you enter into by saying to yourself, "I can hardly wait to consume it and forget it", which, of course, does not mean that in the love journal there can be no factual entries, no confusion, no incomplete or exaggerated, deformed or reformed representations.

And yet the possible forgetting of past love, as experienced by the Alzheimer's patient, should not mean its erasure for those who retain its memory, but rather a reconsideration of its value within the personal dynamics in which the recording of other imprints is akin to a palimpsest in which the superimposed text cancels out the outline of the earlier text, which can in fact be rediscovered at the risk of losing the superimposed text, a recovery

[37] Paul Ricoeur, (*Histoire et Vérité*, Seuil, 1955), *History and Truth, trans.* Charles A. Kelbley, Northwestern University Press, 1965.

procedure that is difficult to imagine compared with modern *deletions*, in which the archaeology of love calls for a more complicated and specialized excavation. Otherwise, the memory of love – and not only, but above all of love – even if it cannot preserve all the imprints of its unmistakable and undoubtedly unique experiences, has a built-in archive that the honest do not want to burn, although they might be tempted to classify it, for, in some or several places, it contains fragments that are painful to accept or completely unacceptable in terms of the image they wish to project to themselves or to others.

The incorporation of love, as an element of the identity relationship within the body-self-mind relationship, would most likely have to solve an imaginary experiment more challenging than Derek Parfit's puzzle, in which an identity can be re-evaluated through the new connection between the same body[38] and another partially or entirely changed brain.[39] How a recomposed person can self-identify is in itself an ingenious question for the "technological age", which is able to invent connections out of many different register, but which, however, I do not believe is also able to solve the issue of self-identification in the entanglements of expressions of love, the vibrations of which reach beyond quantifiable networks, for, as one business ethicist remarked, they are unable to measure the value of a smile, even if they are able to register its presence.

Just as a smile does not know its own value, memory can also not recount itself and love cannot self-identify. This is done by those who love and are loved, with all the gaps between the cobwebs of a past or the enthusiasm of the lavish projections of a future. Either way, no love can be fully describable, but the self certainly incorporates it.

[38] Wittgenstein also asks how much of us remains if we change parts of our bodies.
[39] Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press, 1984.