



The Reasons of Love

Harry G. Frankfurt

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This beautifully written book by one of the world's leading moral philosophers argues that the key to a fulfilled life is to pursue wholeheartedly what one cares about, that love is the most authoritative form of caring, and that the purest form of love is, in a complicated way, self-love.

Harry Frankfurt writes that it is through caring that we infuse the world with meaning. Caring provides us with stable ambitions and concerns; it shapes the framework of aims and interests within which we lead our lives. The most basic and essential question for a person to raise about the conduct of his or her life is not what he or she should care about but what, in fact, he or she cannot help caring about.

The most important form of caring, Frankfurt writes, is love, a nonvoluntary, disinterested concern for the flourishing of what is loved. Love is so important because meaningful practical reasoning must be grounded in ends that we do not seek only to attain other ends, and because it is in loving that we become bound to final ends desired for their own sakes.

Frankfurt argues that the purest form of love is self-love. This sounds perverse, but self-love--as distinct from self-indulgence--is at heart a disinterested concern for whatever it is that the person loves. The most elementary form of self-love is nothing more than the desire of a person to love. Insofar as this is true, self-love is simply a commitment to finding meaning in our lives.

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