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This is the penultimate draft of the paper. For the definitive version, see the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.

**Abstract:** What is the relationship between ambition and love? While discussions of happiness often mention romances, friendships, aspirations, and achievements, the relationship between these features is seldom discussed. This paper aims to fill that gap. It begins with a suggestive remark made by La Rochefoucauld and repeated by Adam Smith: 'Love often leads on to ambition, but seldom does one return from ambition to love.' To explain what accounts for such a pattern, I introduce a distinction between *stage-setting emotions* and *master emotions*, which is useful for illuminating relationships between a number of emotions, including ambition and love. Drawing on things Smith says elsewhere in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I conclude by highlighting one way the pattern might be reversed and ambition might lead to love.

Some projects begin with argument: 'So-and-so asserts *p*. But if *p*, then *q*, which is absurd. Therefore, reject *p*.' Ideally, the author then goes on to offer a better alternative. Other projects start with puzzlement: 'What is going on here?' This project is of the latter sort and begins with a suggestive observation made by François, duc de La Rochefoucauld (1659, maxim 490), in his 17<sup>th</sup> century classic, *Maxims*, and later echoed with approval by Adam Smith (1976, I.iii.2.7)<sup>1</sup> in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: 'Love often leads on to ambition, but seldom does one return from ambition to love.'<sup>2</sup> What might explain the progression from love to ambition that La Rochefoucauld and Smith propose? My aim is to address this question and, more generally, to improve our understanding of the relationship between ambition and love.

Why might one think the relationship between ambition and love is interesting? Two reasons suggest themselves, one theoretical, the other practical. Although increasing attention is being paid to emotions and their relationship to value, the literature tends to focus on discrete, isolated emotions. Much less attention has been directed to the relationships between emotions. Looking at the relationship between love and ambition, then, promises to enrich our theoretical understanding of the connections between what we commonly think of as different emotions (and their associated traits of character) and to provide conceptual resources that are useful for exploring relationships between other emotions, such as anger, delight, fear, hope, sadness, trust, and the like.

The practical reason for investigating the relationship between ambition and love stems from their role in our lives and their impact on our happiness. It is common in both philosophical and therapeutic discussions of well-being for writers to mention romances and friendships as well as aspirations and achievements (e.g., Velleman 2000, Kraut 2007), and for good reason. Love and ambition play an important part in the stories of our lives and typically feature in our best and worst moments. It is surprising, then, how seldomly the

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<sup>1</sup> The convention for citing Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is by reference to part, section, chapter, and paragraph. Thus, 'I.iii.2.7' refers to part I, section iii, chapter 2, paragraph 7; 'III.3.13' refers to part III, chapter 3, paragraph 13 (because part III is not divided into sections); etc.

<sup>2</sup> In a related spirit, the author of the 'Discourse on the Passion of Love' – commonly attributed to Blaise Pascal (2001, paragraphs 2 and 26) – claims that love and ambition may be allies, but they tend to weaken and eventually destroy one another.

relationship between them has been the subject of philosophical scrutiny. If they are significant for our well-being, and if they can shape or influence one another in positive or negative ways, it would be useful to know how.

The opening section looks at two possible explanations of the dynamic La Rochefoucauld and Smith observe and argues that neither of them is adequate. Sections 2 and 3 explore the nature of love and ambition, respectively. Section 4 then turns to the relationship between them. Section 5 considers a final way in which ambition and love might be related and reflects on how they might contribute to happiness.

## I.

Before looking into the nature of love and ambition, let me set aside two simple explanations of La Rochefoucauld's and Smith's remark that might suggest themselves. The first is rooted in our biology: As one ages it is common for one's libido to cool. So one should expect the amorous enthusiasm of youth to fade as the decades pass. Once it fades, other interests and projects can emerge and take on a new importance in one's emotional life. At that point, the door is open for motivations like ambition to become more dominant.

While it is wise to look at how emotional changes might be related to the physical adjustments that accompany aging, as it stands the proposed biological explanation is inadequate. First, love – even romantic love – is not confined to our youth.<sup>3</sup> La Rochefoucauld's own biography illustrates the point well. His final romance blossomed when he was well into his sixth decade. Those interested in more recent examples will not find them in short supply. A glance in the direction of Viagra's profit margins will confirm that romantic love is not the exclusive domain of youth. Second, irrespective of one's age, studies have suggested that the experience of being 'in love' has a natural shelf-life of 'approximately two years' (Tennov 1979, p. 142). This was not news to La Rochefoucauld, who observes, 'The charm of novelty is to love as the bloom is to fruit: it gives a lustre that is easily rubbed off and never comes back' (1959, maxim 274).<sup>4</sup> Thus, the period associated with romantic love is much shorter than the stage of life associated with a heightened sex drive. Even among the young we might expect to see romantic interest wane and ambition wax. While La Rochefoucauld was very attentive to changes that come with age (see maxims 109, 112, 207, 210, 271, 341, 418, 423, and 430), this does not seem to be what explains his observation about the relationship between love and ambition.

An alternative explanation of La Rochefoucauld's and Smith's remark is built around the thought that it highlights not merely a progression but also a competition between ambition and love. One of the more important lessons many of our students learn during their time at university is that there are only so many hours in the day. They discover, having put time into nurturing a new romance, that too few hours remain to write a decent essay or study for exams.

Like the simple biological story, this second explanation highlights a feature of our lives that ought to inform our reflections on the relationship between ambition and love. And to its credit, this alternative gives us competition. But it does not give us a competition between ambition and love, *per se*. We could get the same competition between two different ambition-fueled projects: There aren't enough hours in the day to launch both a lucrative start-up company and a Tony award-winning Broadway career simultaneously. The same goes for pursuing two love interests. This explanation also fails to account for the progression from love to ambition but not back again that interests La Rochefoucauld and Smith. So,

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<sup>3</sup> 'The time of life determines neither the beginning nor the end of these two passions [i.e., ambition and love]; they spring up in the earliest years and subsist very often unto the tomb' (Pascal 2001, par. 3).

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, see his remarks on constancy and inconstancy in love (1959, maxims 75, 175-176).

while the competition for a limited resource is surely part of the story, a full account requires that we delve deeper into the nature of ambition and love.

## II.

It is often observed that ‘love’ refers to a diverse range of conditions. I love feijoas. I love a well-told story. I love watching the Tory party implode. I love New Zealand. I love my family and friends. Given how different these things are, it would be surprising if ‘love’ had the same meaning in each of the preceding sentences. I will not attempt to disambiguate every use of the term, but I do wish to single out a few types of love for further inspection. In particular, I want to focus on a) some of the emotions we call ‘love’ that take a person as their object and b) related traits of character.

La Rochefoucauld (1959) himself does not offer any commentary on maxim 490, and the nature of the aphoristic genre in which he writes makes it difficult to reconstruct a systematic account of what he means by love or ambition, let alone his understanding of the relationship between them. For instance, much of the time he treats ambition and love as passions with respect to which the agent is genuinely passive: They are the result of a person’s physiological condition and she has no more control over them than she does over her digestion (maxims 577 and 638). At other times, however, he leaves room for a person’s imagination to shape – or even initiate – her love or ambition, which hints at the possibility of a more active role for an agent in relation to these emotions (e.g., maxim 136).

Smith (1976) follows La Rochefoucauld in distinguishing between passions that originate in the body and those rooted in the imagination. However, unlike La Rochefoucauld, he thinks love – even romantic love – should be understood as a passion that originates in the imagination. To see why, we need to say more about the contrast Smith draws between these two types of passion. ‘Passions which take their origin from the body,’ he proposes, begin with a sensation or a bodily disposition (I.ii.1.1-8). The paradigm of such a passion is hunger. One consequence of such a passion’s origin is that when we observe them in others ‘we cannot enter into them’ (I.ii.1.1). The spectator’s sympathy does not equip her to feel what the person moved by a bodily passion feels. Seeing that Bryan is hungry might evoke compassion for his plight, but it will not evoke hunger in a sympathetically inclined observer. Similarly, observing signs of Frances’s sexual attraction to Gwen will not characteristically excite a similar lust for Gwen in the sympathetic bystander. Another distinguishing mark of passions that originate in the body is that once they are gratified ‘the object that excited them ceases to be agreeable’ even to the person previously gripped by them (I.ii.1.3). Once Bryan has eaten his fill, he no longer finds food agreeable, and when Frances’s sexual desire has run its course, like hunger, it loosens its grip.

Passions that take their origin from the imagination begin not with a sensation or bodily disposition but with an idea. A key function of the imagination, Smith proposes, is to enable us to form an idea of what a situation looks or feels like from another’s perspective (I.i.1.2). Or, more precisely, we form an idea of what *we* might feel if we were in his situation. Imagination is unlikely to produce physical pain in our hand as the torturer burns our brother’s hand, but we will wince and find ourselves inadvertently withdrawing our hand as we see the glowing poker brought near his. We may even feel a degree of discomfort. But the more pronounced effect will be that we begin to feel a measure of the emotions we imagine he is feeling – or analogous emotions (I.i.1.4). That is to say, we sympathise with him.

How might love begin with an idea of the imagination? The thought appears to be that the lover projects himself into the perspective of the beloved, notices things that might bring her delight or dismay, and comes to share her desire for the former and aversion to the latter. He identifies with the beloved in a way that opens him up to joy when she rejoices and

sadness when she weeps. Love will need to involve more than this, since so far there is nothing in the description to distinguish it from sympathy in any of its other forms. Nevertheless, noting that many of the loves we commonly think of – including romantic love, familial loves, love between friends, and humanitarian loves – involve imaginatively adopting the other’s point of view can help us distinguish them from mere bodily passions (as well as a range of narcissistic attachments).

Smith’s distinction between emotions that have their origin in the body and those originating in the imagination is reinforced by noting what happens when we observe them in others. Instagram and Facebook posts notwithstanding, the tale of someone who lost or found a delicious meal is not well-suited to engage the sympathies of your typical bystander. Losing or finding a romantic partner or a friend, by contrast, is the stuff of which great stories are made, because it is a condition with which almost any observer readily sympathises (I.ii.1.7). Finally, the object of love (namely, the beloved) does not cease to be agreeable to the lover in the way that objects of bodily appetites do.

Within the context of Smith’s wider project, it is easy to see why he draws a distinction between broad classes of passions in the way that he does. Smith, like Hutcheson and Hume before him, appeals to the observations of a sympathetic observer to account for moral judgment (Raphael 2007, ch. 4-5).

The principle by which we naturally either approve or disapprove of our own conduct, seems to be altogether the same with that by which we exercise the like judgments concerning the conduct of other people. We either approve or disapprove of the conduct of another man according as we feel that, when we bring his case home to ourselves, we either can or cannot entirely sympathize with the sentiments and motives which directed it. And, in the same manner, we either approve or disapprove of our own conduct, according as we feel that, when we place ourselves in the situation of another man, and view it, as it were, with his eyes and from his station, we either can or cannot entirely enter into and sympathize with the sentiments and motives which influenced it (III.1.2).

It is unsurprising, then, that the distinction between passions that interests him is the one between those with which an impartial observer can or cannot sympathise. And he clearly thinks a passion’s origin – in the body or the imagination – enables him to zero in on a feature that helps explain which of our feelings observers will be able to sympathise with.

However, while the contrast provided above may be sufficient to help us get our bearings, if one tries to pin down Smith’s criteria, it becomes difficult to draw the lines precisely where he does. One challenge stems from the difficulties involved in spelling out what is meant by the imagination, which is bone of contention in the philosophy of mind.<sup>5</sup> A second arises out of physicalist (or materialist) accounts of the mind that would reduce the imagination to a set of bodily dispositions, which would make it difficult to distinguish between passions whose origin is bodily and those whose origin is imaginative. But let us set these worries aside and assume, for the sake of discussion, that our best theory of mind enables us to offer a clear account of the imagination and draw a meaningful distinction between it and ‘the body’. Even so, it will be hard for us to follow Smith’s lead, for the emotions he classifies as originating from the imagination also take their origin from the body.<sup>6</sup> Take, for example, the love of children for their parents or parents for their children, which Smith treats as originating from the imagination. The primitive beginnings of love can be seen in infants’ early attachments to their caregivers, which predates the activities of

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<sup>5</sup> For a sketch of why it is so difficult to spell out what the imagination is, see Brown (2018) and Kind (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Smith is not entirely blind to this concern. For example, he occasionally appears to speak of passions that originate in the body (like sexual attraction) ‘mixing with’ and serving as the ‘foundation’ of passions that originate in the imagination (like love) (see I.ii.2.2). But he does nothing to allay it.

anything like Smith's imagination, since the latter requires an awareness of other minds. Infants want to be with their caregivers and desire positive attention from them almost as much as they desire food. They are delighted when they receive it, saddened when they do not, and jealous when they see it going to another. This is not to deny that what Smith calls imagination also plays a role in the development of love in small children. As they get older and become capable of imagining other minds, they come to sympathise with their caregivers, feeling sad when they are sad and happy when they are happy. In the process, their attachment begins to resemble what we think of as love, insofar as the welfare of the other takes on a significance of its own, independently of how it affects the child herself. But their love's origins precede this stage in their development. Similarly, we know that the birth of a child triggers changes in the physiology of their caregivers that serve to facilitate bonding. These physical changes get interpreted in light of cultural conceptions of parental love and involve caregivers imagining what the infant might be feeling. So what caregivers experience is not *merely* a bodily change. The imagination is also heavily involved. Nevertheless, the origins of parents' love for their children, just like infants' love for their parents, are at least as much in the body as they are in the imagination. The same can be said about the chemistry that gives birth to many instances of romantic love. Those physiological origins do not just go away or recede into the background once the imagination gets into the game. Obtaining insight into the nature of love that might enable us to better understand its relationship to ambition, then, will require us to go beyond love's origins and think more about its phenomenal character and conceptual content.

Love involves frequently fixing one's thoughts on the beloved and delighting in her, seeing her and qualities associated with her as things to be celebrated.<sup>7</sup> One way to capture this aspect of the lover's experience is to say that love involves 'seeing the beloved as good' (Pettigrove 2012, p. 77).<sup>8</sup> The sense of goodness in question need not be moral. If we are to make room for the love young children have for their caregivers or the love the parent of a death-row inmate might have for her child, the goodness the lover sees in the beloved must be broader than moral goodness. But this is not a problem. The moral occupies only a small corner in the vast house of goodness. Josef Pieper (1997, p. 164) captures the idea well when he suggests that love 'is a way of turning to' the beloved 'and saying, "It's good that you exist; it's good that you are in this world!"'

The lover is more concerned with the beloved's happiness and misery than the average person (Smith 1976, III.3.13 and VI.ii.1.7). This is because, as Troy Jollimore (2017, p. 4) puts it,

To see with love's vision is to see ... the rest of the world, to some degree, through his [i.e., the beloved's] eyes, to allow his values, judgments and emotions to have an effect on your perceptions similar, in important ways, to the effect they have on his. His concerns become, to a significant degree, your concerns; his hopes, your hopes; his fears, insecurities, and anxieties, yours.

There is another way in which the lover is more concerned with the objects of the beloved's attention than most people. Not only does the lover attend to and desire what the beloved does, she desires to have her love reciprocated. She longs to be at the centre of the beloved's vision as an object of his positive attention.

The lover also wants to be with her beloved (Smith 1976, I.ii.2.1). She need not want to be with her all the time, although youthful friendships and new romances often have this

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<sup>7</sup> Pascal (2001, par. 44) makes a similar observation: 'The first effect of love is to inspire a profound respect; we have veneration for what we love ... we see nothing in the world so great as this.' While I think his comparative claim – that the lover takes the beloved to be the most important thing in the world – is exaggerated, the experience of love does characteristically involve valuing the beloved quite highly.

<sup>8</sup> See also Velleman (1999, p. 360), Darwall (2002, p. 8), and Roberts (2003, pp. 286-9).

quality. But even if the desire is not constant, it is characteristic. A lover wants to share experiences with her beloved. She does not just want to admire her from afar; she wants to enjoy her company.

Some emotions, like amusement, are momentary. Something triggers them, they last a few minutes, and absent further stimuli they dissipate. Other emotions, like hope, can last for years. Joel, a 33-year-old civil servant, hopes to meet the love of his life and has been hoping to do so since he was 13. Ghada, a 50-year-old refugee, hopes to return to her family home when the civil war ends and has been hoping to do so for 17 years. Unlike momentary emotions, we would not expect emotions like Ghada's and Joel's to be something they always feel. But even in moments when Ghada and Joel are not *feeling* hopeful – not because they have lost hope but because they are busy thinking about other things – we continue to say each hopes for their preferred outcome. This is because the next time Ghada hears news of negotiations between the parties to the conflict, she will once again feel hopeful that there might be an end to the strife. And that feeling does not seem to her to be a new emotion. Rather, it feels like the surfacing of an emotion that has been there all along. Everyday conceptions of emotions accommodate this feeling of continuity, allowing us to talk about what Joel hopes even when he is not feeling hopeful. To capture this feature of ordinary language, philosophers of emotion have introduced a distinction between occurrent and dispositional emotions (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, p. 80). When Joel is at work and his mind is occupied with writing a new policy memo, we will describe his hope as merely dispositional. The next time he finds himself attracted to someone and notices cues that suggest the interest might be mutual, his dispositional hope will also be occurrent. An emotion like amusement, by contrast, is characteristically only occurrent.

Love is like hope rather than amusement. It can be both occurrent and dispositional. Indeed, if it is only occurrent, it is probably not love. Love is the kind of emotion we expect to last for a considerable length of time. Because love has this dispositional dimension, it is easy to see how it might become more than just an emotion. It might also become a trait of character.

What distinguishes a dispositional emotion from a trait of character has been under-explored. But one would expect considerable overlap between the two. When we speak of character traits we mean to pick out something that has deep dispositional roots. We expect character traits to be stable and not change quickly or easily.<sup>9</sup> A trait is also something that has implications for the person's identity (Pettigrove 2019). The same can be true of dispositional emotions, including love. Were a mother to cease loving her children after years of loving devotion, for example, that would strike us as a profound and surprising change in her character. In important respects, she would be a different person thereafter.

Much more could be said about love, of course, both as an emotion and as a trait of character. However, the aim here is not just to think about love but to examine its relationship to ambition. With that in mind, let us turn our attention to the latter.

### *III.*

Like 'love', 'ambition' and 'ambitious' are used in various ways. Sometimes we use 'ambition' to pick out a goal someone has: 'His ambition is to attend a match in the home stadium of each team in the English Premier League.' At others we use it to refer to a trait of character, such as when Bono sings, 'It's no secret ambition bites the nails of success' (Bono et al., 1991). Similarly, we often use 'ambitious' to note that a task will take some effort to accomplish, as in, 'He decided to cook Christmas dinner for his entire extended family,

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<sup>9</sup> Whether these expectations are correct or not has recently been the subject of heated debate (see Alfano 2013 and Miller 2014).

which was rather ambitious of him.’ On other occasions we use it to mark the fact that a particular choice or activity was aspirational or risky, as in, ‘The All Blacks’ ambitious offensive strategy paid off in their win over Wales.’ More often than not, when Smith speaks of ambition, like La Rochefoucauld, he has in view an emotion concerned with what he calls ‘the advantages of fortune,’ namely, wealth, power, and pre-eminence (1976, I.iii.2.1). He writes, ‘Those great objects of self-interest, of which the loss or acquisition quite changes the rank of the person, are the objects of the passion properly called ambition’ (III.6.7). We shall see in a moment that this remark does not capture Smith’s final view on the matter; nevertheless, it provides a useful place to start.

Unlike the kind of love we have been discussing, which takes an object (a person) that is intrinsically valuable, the value of wealth, power, and preeminence is merely instrumental. As such, they raise the question, ‘What end does their pursuit serve?’ If the end served by pursuing wealth, power, and preeminence was merely our physical security or comfort, then in a stable society where the means required for maintaining our existence can be secured reliably with mundane expenditures of effort, we would expect ambition to play at most a modest role in contributing to our welfare. And we would expect our admiration for the ambitious to be correspondingly minor. However, our admiration for those whose ambition has succeeded is often considerable. And we tend to care quite a bit about ambition’s objects, even in stable societies. Smith contends that the ambitious typically forego more enjoyment of life’s basic pleasures in the pursuit of their ambition than they ever obtain as a result of its success (IV.1.8). This suggests either that our attitudes are a mess or that there is more to ambition than meets the eye.

If we scratch the surface, Smith proposes, we will discover ambition has a more complicated aim: ‘It is not ease or pleasure, but always honour, of one kind or another, though frequently an honour very ill understood, that the ambitious man really pursues’ (I.iii.3.8). The aim of ambition, he insists, is not to be found in the stuff we can acquire or what we can do with it, nor is it about how our possessions and power compare with those of others in our community. What explains the longing to excel is the fact that most of us care deeply about what others think of us. And if we excel, or at least appear to excel, a number of them are more likely to respect and admire us. This longing for acceptance and approval is the birthplace of ambition and remains a characteristic part of it.

Of course, it is possible for honour to be bestowed on someone who merely appears to excel. But if we are awarded honour that we do not think we really deserve, it will be difficult for us to enjoy our success (I.iii.3.2 and 8). Thus, there is a built-in incentive for us not merely to desire to be respected but also to desire to be respectable. We do not just want admiration; we want to be admirable. ‘To deserve, to acquire, and to enjoy the respect and admiration of mankind are the great objects of ambition and emulation’ (I.iii.3.2). This is not to deny that we can lose sight of the end, becoming fixated on the pursuit of wealth or power for their own sake. Nor is it to deny that we are sometimes willing to settle for *appearing* honourable when we find *being* honourable too challenging. The approval of our peers has a strong enough pull on us that we continue to want it even when we do not deserve it. But we would much prefer a secure version of that approval over one always at risk of evaporating in the light of day. Hence, Smith concludes, we not only wish to acquire others’ approval, we also wish to know it is deserved. This desire, he suggests, is deeply rooted in the human psyche. ‘The desire of becoming the proper objects of this respect, of deserving and obtaining this credit and rank among our equals, is, perhaps, the strongest of all our desires’ (VI.i.3).

Given the motivations Smith thinks stand behind ambition, we will need to expand the scope of ambition’s concern beyond just the wealth and power on which La Rochefoucauld tends to dwell. There are innumerable routes people have travelled to pre-eminence among their peers. Almost any long-term, aspirational project could qualify as a possible object of

ambitious concern, including artistic, sporting, and academic achievements, to name but three obvious contenders. More or less any difficult project that others have tried but failed to achieve offers itself as a route ambition might travel. Anything that might change a person's rank in the eyes of her community (or an important subset thereof) has the potential to become an object of ambition.

While Smith introduces ambition as an emotion – or what, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was characteristically called a passion – it can also be used to pick out a trait of character that is associated with this emotion. And this, in fact, is how we tend to use the term. In this respect, our use of the terms 'love' and 'ambition' differ. Whereas we use 'love' to pick out an emotion at least as often as we use it to designate a trait of character, unlike Smith we tend to reserve 'ambition' for the trait, to the exclusion of the emotion. If someone longs to deserve the admiration of their peers and improve their rank, but that longing doesn't translate itself into actions and become a settled part of their character, we will not call them ambitious. However, this linguistic practice should not be mistaken for a substantive difference between Smith's view and ours. It is plausible to assume that the daydreamer experiences some version of the emotion Smith has in view, even if, due to a lack of external opportunity or a deficiency of internal motivation, that longing either does not become a fixed disposition or fails to lead to actions characteristic of such a disposition. I will be following Smith in using 'ambition' to refer both to the emotion that characteristically aims at increasing the honour one deserves through the successful pursuit of a difficult project as well as the trait of character to which that emotion gives rise when it becomes a settled disposition.

#### IV.

What, then, is the relationship between ambition and love? There are nine broad possibilities.

1. They are unrelated.
2. They are the same.
3. One is a subset of the other.
4. They share a structure.
5. They share a key component.
6. One initiates the other.
7. One supports the other.
8. They are mutually supporting.
9. They are oppositional.

The first three options strike me as implausible. As noted earlier, ambition and love can compete with one another, contra 1. They feel different and take different objects, which suggests they are not the same. And neither appears to be a subset of the other. So I shall leave these possibilities to one side. In the remainder of the paper I argue that love and ambition share both a general structure and a substantive feature (4 and 5). That is as much as can be said for love and ambition in general. But a closer look at different types of love and ambition will allow us to see both that some kinds of love can initiate some kinds of ambition (6) and that some kinds of love and ambition can be at odds with one another (9). This observation will allow us to make sense of La Rochefoucauld's and Smith's remark that ambition often follows love but love seldom succeeds ambition. But if we look at other kinds of ambition and love, we can see how they might be mutually supporting (8 and, by implication, 7).

To highlight the structural feature ambition and love share, I need to introduce two concepts, namely, those of a stage-setting emotion and a master emotion. Emotions frequently reorient the space of our concerns. They have the power to make something matter to us that previously did not, or to cause us to lose interest in something we once cared about.

For example, my love for my daughter, opens me up to the possibility of joy when she delivers a performance in the school musical that I know she will be pleased with. It, together with an awareness of the significance of her upcoming exam, can make me anxious about the amount of time she is (or is not) devoting to studying. It leaves me feeling sad when she is sad, angry when she is angry, and both when she is heartbroken. Hope and fear, delight and dismay, pride and shame, are just some of the emotions recruited to love's cause when the loving relationship is going well. When the relationship is strained, love leaves me susceptible to other emotions – such as guilt, anxiety, defensiveness, or resentment – that I would not feel if I did not love her. An emotion that functions in the ways I have just described, opening me up to a range of other emotions I would not otherwise have experienced, is what I will call a '*stage-setting emotion*' and the emotions they recruit I will call 'subordinate emotions'.<sup>10</sup>

More-or-less any emotion can be a stage-setting emotion. When fear is triggered, it configures our emotional stage in a particular way. Certain kinds of emotions, such as confidence or amusement, will be excluded from the stage altogether. Others, like distrust, anger, or despair, are so easily brought on stage that we might think of them as waiting in the wings, listening for their cue.

Master emotions are a subset of stage-setting emotions. To see what makes them distinctive, we need to return to the normative aspects of emotional experience that were introduced briefly in our discussion of love. Emotions don't just present the world to us. They present it as mattering in one way or another. 'They represent their object as having specific evaluative properties' (Tappolet 2016, p. 15). Hope presents its object – the thing one hopes for – as good. Sadness presents its object – the thing one is sad about – as bad. The way emotions present the value of their objects and the kind of value they present them as having differs from one emotion to the next. For instance, the kind of badness presented in dismay is distinguishable from the kind presented by horror or contempt; nevertheless, all three present their objects as bad.

What happens when an emotion sets the emotional stage is that it presents its object as having a certain value and the normative significance of objects with this kind of value is that they call for a range of responses, depending on the circumstances. Resentment, for example, presents its object as guilty and deserving of punishment. If the circumstances make it look as though his punishment is likely to be forthcoming, then resentment calls for hope. If he is currently being punished commensurate with his moral failing, it calls for satisfaction. If he has not acknowledged his guilt and it looks as though he will not be punished for his transgression, it calls for anger. If he is rewarded for his transgression, the normative stage resentment has set calls for outrage. If the incentive structure remains unchanged, and he seems likely to reoffend, the circumstance may call for fear.

Some emotions set a rather small stage. Schadenfreude presents another's suffering as good. If that 'good' is prematurely cut short, the circumstances might call for disappointment. But the implications of the value it presents do not extend much beyond that. There are not many other emotions waiting in the wings. Furthermore, the values it presents sit uneasily alongside other value commitments we commonly have (e.g., that another's suffering calls

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<sup>10</sup> Smith himself speaks of 'secondary passions' (I.ii.2.4). But his intended scope appears to be narrower than what I have in view. He introduces 'secondary passions' to pick out the range of emotions an observer can feel when sympathising with a lover. While the observer does not enter into the lover's enthusiasm for her beloved, he can fear for the beloved's safety, despair when it appears their love is doomed, feel remorse that they did not act more prudently or more honourably, and the like. These secondary passions are emotions that 'arise from the situation of love,' Smith says. I wish to include secondary passions in the class of subordinate emotions, but I also mean to include emotions that may only be accessible to the lover herself, and not to the sympathetic observer.

for sympathy). Delight is another emotion that sets a small stage. Even if the values it presents coordinate well with our wider normative framework, it is transient. We can only be delighted for so long. And because it depends on an object that is both very good and present (or very recently present), as opposed to anticipated or a distant memory, it is not well suited to becoming a trait of character.

*Master emotions*, by contrast, command a large stage. They are motivationally powerful. They present their objects as having significant value. Indeed, they present their objects as having the kind of value one might build one's life around. In consequence, they can command numerous subordinate emotions. And they are suited to becoming fixed traits.

Both love and ambition are custom-made to become master emotions. Love presents its object as good, her interests as worth promoting, her successes as worth appreciating, and the like. Anything that might be a threat to the beloved or the lover's relationship with her is bad and calls for the kinds of actions and emotions suited to bad things.<sup>11</sup> It and its object are temporally extended, so unlike *schadenfreude* or delight, it need not be short-lived. It can continue to be felt and can organise our emotional and normative stage even when the beloved is absent. It is also linked to a number of natural virtues, which helps it fit into a broader normative framework. As Smith observes, 'There is in love a strong mixture of humanity, generosity, kindness, friendship, esteem' (I.ii.2.5). Similarly, ambition presents its object as good. It is a good that it sees as worth pursuing. Threats to that good or its pursuit are bad and call for fitting negative responses. It is extended in time and can persist even when its object is absent, both of which increase the likelihood that it will become a fixed feature of one's character. And it, too, is linked to a number of natural virtues, including prudence, steadfastness, industry, and discipline (I.i.5.1 and VI.i.5).

Other stage-setting emotions can, and often do, become master emotions. Fear, for example, is like love and ambition, not only in setting a large stage and having the power to recruit a number of subordinate emotions, but also in its ability to organise a large portion of what a person values. If one looks at people who have been raised in dangerous environments – subjected to domestic abuse, surrounded by rampant crime, or trapped in a civil war – one sees that fear has the power to dominate a person's entire worldview. However, as master emotions, love and ambition have an advantage over fear. They have greater normative autonomy. Fear presents its object as dangerous. But we only fear a dangerous object if the threat it poses is to something we value. So fear presupposes a value (or an appearance of value) that it does not itself supply. Love and ambition, by contrast, present their objects as good and do not need to borrow that impression of goodness from elsewhere.

Thus far I have been highlighting the structure love and ambition share as prospective master emotions. They also have a shared component, which is built around a concern for how others feel about us. This is obvious in the case of love. We want the person we love to return our affections. And when they do, our joy is complete. As Smith puts it, 'there is a satisfaction in the consciousness of being beloved, which, to a person of delicacy and sensibility, is of more importance to happiness, than all the advantage which he can expect to derive from it' (I.ii.4.1). This component is less obvious with ambition, since so many of those we commonly refer to as ambitious behave in anti-social ways. If all we mean by ambition is the disposition to pursue a difficult goal tenaciously, there is no reason to expect a concern for how others feel about us to be part of the story, since sociopaths and solipsists can have such a disposition. However, the experience of most of those we call 'ambitious' is not like that. They care deeply about what others think of them. They want to impress. As noted above, this is a feature to which Smith is particularly attentive when developing his

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<sup>11</sup> Compare Pascal (2001, par. 50).

account of ambition: ‘[T]o be beloved by our brethren [is] the great object of our ambition’ (VI.ii.1.19).

So much for what love and ambition in their many forms share. Now let us turn to the case La Rochefoucauld and Smith appear to have in mind in which one (love) is suited to initiate the other (ambition). To appreciate how love might lead to ambition, think of Pip’s experience in Charles Dickens’s novel, *Great Expectations*. Pip meets Estella and is smitten. But he is also aware of the difference between his social station and hers. So he sets out to improve his social rank in the hope that he might thereby impress her and win her affections. The story illustrates how the lover’s desire to win the beloved’s heart can push him in the direction of ambitious projects.<sup>12</sup> If love characteristically involves seeing the beloved as good, then it is natural for the unrequited lover to want to distinguish himself as a way of attracting the beloved’s attention and securing her admiration. ‘If I make my excellence salient,’ he might think, ‘then she will be in a better position to fall for me. I’ll prove my worth to her.’ Or the aim might be to prove oneself to the beloved’s family so that they are likelier to approve one’s match. Even if the lover already enjoys the admiration of the beloved or her family, love might still recruit ambition to its cause out of a desire to provide for the beloved. And this desire can be compounded if the lovers have children, since there are now others to love and provide for. It is easy to see how ambition might be born of love.

However, in most cases, succeeding in the pursuit will require buying into the framework set forth by ambition. It will involve seeing and valuing the goods around which the ambitious pursuit is structured. If Zara wants to distinguish herself as an academic, for example, she must come to value the kinds of truths at which her field aims. If she finds herself thinking, ‘Who cares why the Athenian military campaign launched in 415 B.C.E. against Sicily failed?’ she will not excel as an ancient military historian. Further, she must value the methods employed in the pursuit of that truth. If she does not see the point of text-based research that involves translating fragments of Greek texts and trying to piece them together into a meaningful whole, or if she is bored to tears by this process, she is unlikely to make it very far in *any* subfield of Classics. Zara must also place a premium on exploring neglected questions, formulating novel hypotheses, testing those hypotheses, and presenting her findings to others in her field through a medium and in a form that advances the discussion and meets with the approval of other experts. If she does not, she is unlikely to distinguish herself in any research-based discipline. These observations highlight a deeper conflict between love and ambition than the simple competition for time. Ambition introduces competing goods and, thereby, the possibility of a competing loyalty. Although it may begin as a subordinate emotion that appears on a stage set by the master emotion of love, over time ambition has a tendency to become a master emotion in its own right. It begins to set the stage for more and more of the agent’s life, shaping more of her priorities.

In addition to putting forward a competing presentation of what matters and how much, ambition often generates outcomes that reinforce the narrative arc Smith and La Rochefoucauld observe. The beloved may feel jealous of the lover’s devotion to ambition’s end and of the time and energy devoted to its pursuit. He may also feel angry, hurt, or neglected. Loving others well is hard and takes time and attention. It is even harder and requires even more attention when feelings have been hurt. If attention is at a premium, because both ambition and love are demanding it, one of them will end up short-changed. Often that will be love because it has a more flexible deadline: the election is next week (or next month) and the political candidate tells herself she can work on mending the relationship after the polls close. Or love will get short-changed because mending the relationship is more complicated than carrying on with the ambitious pursuit. Another outcome that often

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<sup>12</sup> Compare Pascal (2001, par. 26).

accompanies ambition can pose a deeper and more permanent obstacle to love's continued flourishing. Ambition's road may involve the development of habits that are at odds with ambition. Being too goal-directed can be at odds with the spontaneity, gratuity, and other-responsiveness of love. Similarly, the person pursuing wealth through business success, for example, may find herself habituated to a kind of ruthlessness or disingenuousness that is at odds with the compassion and honesty love demands.<sup>13</sup> These observations explain why, the more control ambition takes of an agent's emotional stage, the more difficult it will be for love (as opposed to mere sexual appetite) to regain the ground it has lost.

Although love sets a stage that can readily recruit ambition as a subordinate emotion, the reverse is not true of the stage ambition sets. A 'love' that serves ambition's ends is unlikely to measure up to love's normative standards. While there is nothing odd about Pip deciding, 'Because I love Estella, I will pursue difficult good X,' thinking, 'Because I am ambitious, I will pursue a romantic relationship with Estella' looks awfully dodgy. Approaching another person merely as a means to some other end is at odds with loving her. Love presents its object as good in a non-instrumental way. A relationship – be it a romance or a 'friendship' – that ambition initiates, by contrast, will attend to the other's instrumental value. This is not to say a relationship that begins for purely instrumental reasons cannot develop into something more loving. We all know that it can. Nor do I wish to deny that one might treat another person as a means without treating her as a mere means. The point is simply that, if ambition is succeeded by love it will be in spite of, rather than because of, the value that ambition presents the other as possessing.

Smith proposes a second reason why ambition is not often succeeded by love. 'That passion [i.e., ambition], when once it has got entire possession of the breast, will admit neither a rival nor a successor. To those who have been accustomed to the possession, or even to the hope of public admiration, all other pleasures sicken and decay' (I.iii.2.7). Whether Smith is right about all other pleasures decaying, the discussion of what ambition and love characteristically desire (in sections 2 and 3) provides insight into one reason why ambition's success might edge out love. Each of them is hungry for appreciation. And more appreciation is more satisfying than less. Other things being equal, having two people appreciate you to degree  $n$  is preferable to having just one person appreciate you to that degree. And while having someone appreciate you to degree  $n+1$  is preferable to having someone appreciate you to degree  $n$ , at some point having many people appreciate you to degree  $n$  may be preferable to having one person appreciate you to degree  $n+1$ . At the end of a performance, we would much rather be greeted by genuine applause from a room full of people than by ecstatic applause from just one. Insofar as ambition plays to a larger audience, and successful ambition secures their applause, it has a motivational advantage over love.

V.

To this point our exploration of the relationship between ambition and love has shown that they share a structure (as prospective master emotions) and a component (a desire to be admired and appreciated by others). It has also helped make sense of the dynamic between them that Smith and La Rochefoucauld observe, whereby love is often succeeded by ambition, but the reverse is seldom true. Whereas the master emotion of love readily recruits ambition to its service, the way in which ambition presents its objects as valuable does not invite love on stage. So I have answered the question raised by Maxim 490. However, that

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<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, Muraven and Baumeister (2000) have argued that self-control is like a muscle that can become fatigued by extended use. If this is right, then it suggests another way in which ambition might create problems for one kind of love. The self-control required for the ambitious pursuit may lead to a lack of self-control in other areas of one's life, such as sexual desires that are at odds with monogamy (choose your favourite disgraced politician by way of illustration).

does not yet exhaust the relationship between ambition and love. In this section I consider a kind of ambition that can prepare the way for at least some kinds of love, and those loves can, in turn, support that ambition.

Smith suggests there are two paths ambition might take toward its aim of deserving, acquiring, and enjoying the respect and admiration of others. The one on which we have focused hitherto is concerned with ‘the acquisition of wealth and greatness’ and other forms of pre-eminence in the competitive pursuit of difficult goods. But there is another route which proceeds via ‘the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue’ (I.iii.3.2). In other words, one might ambitiously strive to become a good person. Like the first form of ambition, anyone who undertakes this path chooses to pursue a difficult good whose achievement would change her rank. However, the approval she will be seeking will not be that of the many, but of the wise. That is not to say that the only admiration she might hope to receive will be from the virtuous. The most reliable route to the good opinion of our neighbours, Smith suggests, will be to cultivate our virtue (I.iii.3.5). And as Greta Thunberg illustrates, someone who sets out on this path might even become a celebrity who is admired by millions for her virtue. But human nature being what it is, the Kylie Jenners of the world are likely to get more Instagram followers and fewer haters.

Why might someone choose to follow ambition’s less travelled path? One reason, of course, is that virtue is intrinsically valuable. That gives it an advantage over wealth and power, whose value is borrowed from elsewhere. But even if we measure it against the end that makes sense of other ambitions, the pursuit of wisdom and virtue come out ahead. If a desire for affection and approval is what characteristically gives birth to ambition, then the pursuit of wisdom and virtue are likelier to satisfy that desire than the pursuit of wealth, power, and pre-eminence. ‘Kindness is the parent of kindness; and if to be beloved by our brethren be the great object of our ambition, the surest way of obtaining it is, by our conduct, to show that we really love them’ (VI.ii.1.19). Furthermore, since the pursuit of virtue is not a zero-sum game, it is possible to pursue such a route without disadvantaging others. So, one is less likely to lose their affection.

Insofar as ambition desires not only to acquire the respect and admiration of others but also to deserve it, once again, the ambitious pursuit of wisdom and virtue outruns its competitor. For if we compare the admiration that one deserves for becoming the CEO of a successful company to the admiration one deserves for becoming just, compassionate, generous, prudent, and wise, the person who exemplifies the latter qualities is by far the more deserving. This is also reflected in the quality of the admiration the virtuous receive. They receive our purest admiration.

The man of the most perfect virtue, the man whom we naturally love and revere the most, is he who joins, to the most perfect command of his own original and selfish feelings, the most exquisite sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of others. The man who, to all the soft, the amiable, and the gentle virtues, joins all the great, the awful, and the respectable, must surely be the natural and proper object of our highest love and admiration (III.3.35).

If Smith is right, then those who successfully pursue virtue will satisfy ambition’s longing more fully than those who pursue other forms of success.

At this point, someone might worry about the analogy used above to explain why ambition was seldom succeeded by love. There it was claimed that the appreciation of a large audience is preferable to that of a small one. Won’t this work against the ambitious pursuit of virtue, at least for those who have a shot at becoming celebrity trendsetters, industrial tycoons, and entrepreneurial billionaires? If the concern is about motivation, then the answer is clearly, yes. Many will find the draw of being celebrated by the masses stronger than that of being celebrated by the wise. However, if the question is about satisfaction, the answer is

likely to go the other way. It is well-attested that actors find greater satisfaction in the approval of their peers than in the approval of the masses. Academics would rather have their work garner the appreciation of a dozen experts in their field than have it admired by thousands who know little about the subject. The reason is simple and fits nicely with what we have already said about ambition. The ambitious wish to deserve admiration. The judgment of the expert assures them they have done so. Its absence suggests they have not. When it comes to the contest between the applause of the many and that of the virtuous, the approval of those we take to be virtuous will characteristically be more satisfying than that of the many.

The ambition for wisdom and virtue is more conducive to happiness in yet another way, insofar as it promises to resolve the tension between ambition and love. Unlike the friendships we form in childhood on the basis of a shared interest in sport or music or film, friendships based on a shared pursuit of virtue are not susceptible to drifting apart as a result of changing interests or life stages. ‘The attachment which is founded upon the love of virtue,’ Smith suggests, ‘as it is certainly, of all attachments, the most virtuous; so it is likewise the happiest, as well as the most permanent and secure’ (VI.ii.1.18). And it works hand-in-glove with the ambition for wisdom and virtue. The virtuous – especially one’s virtuous friends – are those whose approval this form of ambition seeks. The more one progresses in virtue, the more these friends will approve. So, the more one succeeds in one’s ambitious pursuit, the better suited one is to be a virtue-friend. And the more attached one is to virtuous friends, the more motivated one will be to pursue one’s own virtue (VI.ii.1.17).

This is not to deny that the demands of virtuous friendship and virtuous ambition might on occasion be incompatible. After all, love for a person – even a virtuous person – and an eagerness to advance one’s own moral development are distinct emotions with different (albeit overlapping) concerns. There may be occasions where those concerns compete for a person’s limited time. But when they do conflict, it will be merely contingent. At this time, for example, there are not enough hours in the day to devote both to spending time with one’s friend and to engaging in another activity that virtue presents as more pressing. The conflict will not be the result of the two emotions setting incompatible stages.

Furthermore, Smith’s own vision of a flourishing life reduces the likelihood of such conflicts. His ideal form of life is not the Stoic sage who lives independently of others, free of attachment and following her own path.<sup>14</sup> Smith’s account of happiness is social. Life at its best involves living virtuously in community with virtuous friends whom I love and who love me in return (III.1.7, III.5.8). If the virtues are traits of character that are conducive to our flourishing, then contexts in which an ambition to develop wisdom and virtue is at odds with the love of virtuous friends should be rare. If one adds in the fact that love is one of Smith’s five cardinal virtues – alongside courage, temperance, justice, and prudence (McCloskey 2008) – then one would seldom expect the ambitious pursuit of virtue and the love of virtuous friends to conflict.

Finally, the love that such ambition fosters lacks a key shortcoming of many other loves. It does not arbitrarily exclude others. ‘Such friendships need not be confined to a single person, but may safely embrace all the wise and virtuous, with whom we have been long and intimately acquainted’ (VI.ii.1.18). In part because of this, it is a love with which others can more readily sympathise and of which an impartial spectator is more likely to approve. ‘[O]f all attachments to an individual, that which is founded altogether upon the esteem and approbation of his good conduct and behaviour, confirmed by much experience

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<sup>14</sup> This image of the Stoic sage fails to do justice to the Stoic whose influence on Smith was the most pronounced, namely Marcus Aurelius (see Clarke 2000).

and long acquaintance, is, by far, the most respectable' (VI.ii.1.18). In other words, it is likely to be virtuous love.

## VI.

We are wired to care about what others think of us. So, in a social species like ours, we should expect to find emotions and traits like ambition and love that involve a desire for approval. The multiplicity of such emotions raises questions about how they are coordinated. As we have found with ambition and love, they may work together. Then again, they may not. Were we to expand the range of emotions we consider, turning for example to shame or pride and their relationship to love and ambition, other dynamics would emerge than the ones we have explored. The concepts of stage-setting and master emotions introduced above offer useful resources for analysing these dynamics.

Let me close by highlighting one upshot of the preceding discussion. If the argument of section 5 is correct, long acquaintance with virtuous friends is especially important for our happiness. Unfortunately, the adult world is not well laid out to make space for them. Our cultural narratives give pride of place to romantic love stories and competitive ambitions. Our laws privilege familial loves, allowing us to emigrate to another country when key family members do, but not when friends do. Our infrastructures likewise privilege romantic and familial loves and competitive ambitions. Hotels, for example, are designed to offer spaces for romantic getaways, family vacations, and business travel. They are poorly designed for fostering friendship, offering limited spaces in which small groups can gather to enjoy each other's company for any length of time.<sup>15</sup> To change examples, when people retire from work, they commonly need to sell their home to fund their retirement. Too often this means leaving their neighbourhood and its established friendships behind. The list could go on. If we are interested in promoting well-being, we have reason to give greater priority to virtuous ambitions and lasting friendships and to redesign some of our culturally and institutionally embedded incentives, in order to facilitate their development.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> There may be a restaurant or a bar, but there are only so many hours one can eat and drink.

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