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Love

What about Love?

While outlining the essential features of a community of inquiry, Lipman makes the following observation of what unfolds during a P4C session:

Yong children are often found to bond together in intense but inarticulate friendships. Some teachers are inclined to find such classroom friendships a bit threatening to their authority, with the result that they adopt a divide-and-rule strategy. However, classroom communities and friendships should be defined and understood in such a way that no intensification of the one should be perceived as a threat to the other.¹

What is the nature of these “intense” and “threatening” bonds between students? And what about the teacher? Is the teacher left out of the bonds and thus left in the position of outsider? Lipman does not specify further, but we would like to call them love bonds. What is love if not a friendship that is intense yet inarticulate? Perhaps Lipman wanted to shy away from the language of love because it is either (a) too clichéd or (b) it is too easily given over to sexual connotations. Or perhaps it was simply too far afield of education to even be considered as an educational concept—let alone an educational concept germane to P4C. Indeed, love is not the first thing that comes to mind when we think of education (or educational philosophy, for that matter). And yet when we think of our own school days, it is some form of love we are most likely to remember—be it the crush on another student, the admiration for our favorite teacher, the passion we developed for a particular subject, or the memories of intense relationships we have with others when we are involved in shared inquiry (as Lipman points out). Love is also frequently evoked (by students and teachers alike), as the ultimate endorsement/validation (“I love Ms. K.!” “I love Math!” “Mr. P. loves me!” “I just love that kid!”).

Looking back over the broad scope of philosophy of education, love does (or should) play an essential role in education (and pedagogy, in particular).

The idea of love has been proposed by a wide range of thinkers with various noncritical, critical, and post-critical perspectives on education, including Plato, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Peter McLaren, Antonia Darder, and Joris Vlieghe and Piotr Zamojski.² But most importantly for us, it is David Kennedy's analysis of the five kinds of community in P4C where love is defined as one of the essential structural dimensions of a community of inquiry.³ As such, Kennedy enables us to name the intense yet inarticulate relationship between students (and perhaps teachers!) that Lipman gestures to above. For Kennedy, the love of the community of inquiry includes erotic and agapic dimensions. It is odd that he does not include *philia* (brotherly love), which seems to be the kind highlighted by Lipman, but nevertheless, Kennedy is to be commended for at least recognizing the important role of love (in its many forms) in defining P4C. Indeed, Kennedy argues that love is what enables the community to "come together" in a "telos" leading toward "unity on a somatic level."⁴ Love is part of a teleological structure that necessarily directs the community toward a harmonious unity as its destiny. It is this utopian ideal that motivates students to continue to dialogue, work through differences, and strive for mutual recognition. Of course, there are dangers of "false harmony," which for Kennedy, is merely self-love in disguise, but love, in the strong sense, is the force that can overcome this false harmony (as long as the practitioners continue the struggle). The embrace of the whole community is not antithetical to reasonableness. Instead, Kennedy argues that love is indeed reasonable and thus complements the larger telos of P4C: Lipman's notion of a "well-tempered life."⁵

In this chapter, we want to inquire further into the theme of love. But to do so will mean suspending the *functionality* of love as it is discussed in P4C. When love is given an internal telos or necessary destiny of its own (harmony in mutual recognition) it loses what is most lovely about love: the joy of whatever someone is in their difference. It is not an attempt to overcome or sublimate these differences into unity, but rather an appreciation for whatever differences there are. Love, on our reading, has no function, but only use. It has nothing to teach us, there is nothing to learn from love. Instead, through love we are exposed to whatever we are, and thus open up to the use of ourselves by ourselves and others in the form of studious play.

In this sense, our chapter has two major goals. First, we wish to foreground the need to think of love in terms of the educational problematic of potentiality. While many facets of love have been covered by the aforementioned authors, none of them directly address love in relation to what is actual versus what is in potential (within a student, a subject, a practice, a world, and so on). This

will be an ontological interpretation of love rather than an emotive or somatic one. In particular, this means making a distinction between love as *having* (a potential or actual identity as *x* kind of person) and love as *being* whatever. We will discuss love as having and being in relation to the self and to others in the P4I community, illustrating how they are interconnected. Second, we hope to further theorize P4I as a practice by foregrounding the importance and uniqueness that love plays. Whereas P4C focuses on education as a means to an end (the cultivation of specific, predetermined thinking, civic, and ethical skills to lead a particular kind of life), P4I focuses on education as a pure means (without success conditions orienting it this way or that). Because of this, P4I is no longer about cultivating philosophical styles or speaking in the name of a greater harmony or unity to come. Rather, it is about seeing what is philosophical in an existing manner of speaking and loving whatever manner this is as a manifestation of infancy.

But before we turn to our reconstruction of love, we want to clear some ground by suggesting two modes of loving and being loved that are prevalent in educational practices and discourses today: tough love and love actually. These are modes of love that circulate throughout the learning society and, we assume, can be found in any number of pedagogical approaches, including variants of P4C. Again, our goal is not emotive or somatic but rather ontological, pinpointing how different kinds of love imply different models of the relationship between potentiality and actuality, means and ends. The problem with the first two models is that they are ultimately predicated on some form of sacrifice (negation) that transforms an oath into a curse, love into hate. As an alternative, we offer the concept “whatever love,” where one can finally allow one’s self to be whatever one is (in one’s mannerisms) without cursing or blessing one’s identity and accept whatever others are as a manifestation of a singular existence in which infancy constitutes itself. And in this sense, we will provide a new justification for a purely affirmative love in education.⁶

Tough Love: “I Love You for What You Can and Should Become”

Given the current educational climate of high-stakes testing, accountability, and efficiency, we may wonder: Where is the love? But maybe the problem is not so much the lack of love, but that what we encounter in the high-stakes classroom is mainly the “tough love” variety of the teacher pushing students to succeed.

Tough love is of course not a new phenomenon in education. In fact, it could be considered the hallmark of traditional conceptions of education, if by “tough love” we mean making someone do things against their will with the justification that it is for their own good in the long run (“You will thank me later!”). In a traditional educational setting, the justification for the treatment of students consists in the assumption that the teacher (as the representative of the school and the educational establishment more generally) knows what’s good for the students based on some ultimate truth about the world/human nature—whether it is beholding the idea of the good (Plato), realizing the students’ nature as rational beings (Rousseau, Kant), or their self-realization in accordance with the universal spirit (Hegel). What all conceptions of education that operate with a preconceived goal based on some universal truth have in common is that the love of the teacher is not directed at something the student *is*, but at what the student can and ought to be in the future. Students, in this model, who repeat the oath of the teacher, likewise fall in love with their future selves. But, as with all oaths, this also demands a certain curse over the present sense of self as inadequate, lacking, and needing to be developed further.

Even Paulo Freire’s oft-cited view of love fits into this category. Although Freire is clear that the teacher does not lead the students, that the oppressed must liberate themselves, and that knowledge should not be given to the oppressed, nevertheless, there is a sense that Freire advocates a form of tough love that puts him within the philosophical lineage outlined above. For instance, Freire argues that the oppressed suffer from narration sickness precisely because they are “under the sway of magic and myth” that leads them to “imitate” the oppressors.⁷ And imitation culminates in “self-depreciation” and “fatalism.”⁸ Because of this internalization process, the oppressed will have a certain psychological resistance to change and transformation—hence Freire’s insistence on the importance of teacher authority just as much as on student freedom. To underemphasize authority is to overly romanticize Freire’s critical pedagogy and the willingness of the oppressed to spontaneously liberate themselves.⁹ For Freire there is always a “fear of freedom”¹⁰ that has to be overcome. Guiding the authority of the teacher is his or her knowledge of the ontological vocation of the human and a utopian hope “for the quest for human completion.”¹¹ Thus there is a subtle theory of human potentiality at work in Freire’s pedagogy, one that emphasizes the negation of what is so as to actualize what ought to be in the future. And this process is guided by the tough love of the teacher who must help the oppressed overcome their fear of freedom and their resistance to transformation by continually orienting them back to the ontological truth of human existence (as Freire sees it).

On this model, what is loved is the potentiality to become a specific kind of human being (according to an ontological vocation). The role of the teacher or facilitator is to pinpoint this potentiality and then act as its shepherd, keeping potentiality on track so that it can actualize itself sometime in a future state. The smooth transition from potentiality to actuality is what is emphasized. Potentiality must *exhaust* itself in a form of actualization so that the change of state can be assessed accurately. Notice, for instance, Freire's emphasis on human *completion*. Educational success rests upon the movement of what is in potentiality (yet repressed by the fear of freedom) toward actualization. But here is the Agambenian worry: what is sacrificed is precisely one's *impotentiality* or one's ability to not be. Indeed, within tough love, this is precisely what is the internal obstacle to achieving completion of the human. For Freire, impotentiality might be cast in a negative light as fear of freedom, but in more common, everyday educational parlance, we might also think of it in terms of a lack of willpower, attentiveness, urgency, resilience, or an overabundance of procrastination or laziness. These are all ways in which the ability to *not* do or be might be reduced to a negative state that must be overcome through *tough* love that steps in and acts as a willful supplement to the student's perceived lack.

But if the love of the teacher is not directed at what the student *is*, it is not really directed at the student at all, because the student is not (yet)—and may in fact never be—what the teacher wants him or her to become. Rather, loving the student for what the teacher wants her to become means loving the student not for what she is, but rather for her ability to realize something that *the teacher* considers to be valuable, that is, *her* ideal of what it means to be a good, educated, successful (etc.) person (or as Freire would argue, what it means to be a complete human). So, it is the teacher's love of their ideal that makes them "love" the student as someone who can help them realize that ideal. Walter Omar Kohan expresses this point well when he writes that in Plato's conception of education "children represent adults' opportunity to carry out their ideals."¹² In other words, the student is "loved" as an instrument, a means to an end. And to the extent to which the ideal is something that the teacher—presumably—embraces and embodies themselves—it may actually be more accurate to describe this as a form of self-love ("I love you because you will become what I am and what I love, and love about myself"). Hence the danger of tough love: in the name of potentiality, the potentiality (and its co-constituting relationship with impotentiality) is sacrificed.

This becomes even more apparent in the discourse of P4C where the teacher loves the community *in so far* as it approximates the ideal of reasonableness.

The teacher knows in advance where the community ought to head (deliberative democracy as the ultimate good) and relies on this knowledge to assess their improvement over time. The teacher looks for and listens for certain clues to indicate growth, development, and progress toward achieving certain, predefined aims. And by structuring the community as an intentional learning community, potentiality is submitted to a trial. This trial might be necessary for the students to learn how to become democratic citizens or reasonable subjects, but in so doing there is a danger that infancy itself will be lost. Just as the individual must sacrifice their impotentiality in the quest to actualize a certain ideal, so too the community suffers a similar fate.

The same is no less true in the current educational climate of the learning society, except that instead of some lofty ideal, the ultimate goal of education (equally based on a notion of human nature, only a more reductionist and impoverished one) that serves as the justification for tough love now consists in students fulfilling what is seen as their primary potential: to become successful contributors to the economy. And just like in those other models, the teacher expresses her love by helping students realize what she considers to be worth achieving (e.g., the ability to become lifelong learners who are always cursing themselves). This is the case even if she does not believe in the goal/ideal herself and just sees it as her duty to do what is necessary to make the students able to function/survive in the world as it is (however much she may hate that world). However different the motivation for, or even the quality of her love, may be, the way that love is expressed, and the effect on the students remains the same.

The problem with intentional educational communities (of all varieties, including possible communities of inquiry) is that they might be highly successful in achieving certain goals and outcomes, yet such learning reduces potentiality to a mere means to an end that is predetermined in advance by philosopher kings, by critical pedagogues, or by purported experts. The love expressed in these intentional forms is tough because it forces potentiality to express itself in a particular modality that is deemed socially, educationally, or economically viable, thus sacrificing something that remains in excess of any possible teleological fulfillment of a human nature, productivity matrix, and so on. Perhaps even more troubling is the observation that the potentiality at stake in tough love is not even that of the student but rather that of the teacher who assumes that the potentiality of the student is the *same* as their potentiality. When the student “fails to live up to his or her full potential” then love turns into hate of whatever one has become. The teacher’s hope is betrayed, and blessings turn into curses. These curses might be directed at the student for failing, but

even then, the ultimate target is a kind of self-cursing directed at the teacher (and their failure to help actualized the assumed potentiality). Such a gesture effectively undermines the very meaning of potentiality to be otherwise than that which can be predicted, prescribed, or predetermined.

Love Actually: “I Love You Just the Way You Are”

Given that traditional approaches and the current educational regime foster a kind of love that is not directed at what the student is, but at something he or she can and ought to become, we may expect to find a different (and more appealing) kind of love in the progressive, child-centered, constructivist classroom that is all about letting students be, putting their interests, desires, and preferences first. If tough love in the traditional classroom is not about who the students are, but who they ought to become in the future (their potentiality to actualize *x*), love in the progressive classroom—we could call it “love actually”—is all about loving the students for who they are in their immediate actuality.

This approach comes with its own set of problems, though. If we assume that the love of the teacher is directed at who the students are, the question remains how progressive “loving the students for who they are” really is, given that such love might become increasingly oppressive, keeping the student from recognizing that the self is not reducible to a given identity. Can’t we imagine a teacher saying, “Why would you want to change? I love you just the way you are!” In this sense, the student becomes trapped because his or her identity becomes a *necessity* (“*I must be* who I am”). In praising identity, there might be an unintended consequence: the fetishization or reification of said identity in the name of acceptance. Belonging to one’s self as a property of one’s identity ends up commodifying the self, leaving little room for whatever might remain in excess of a given identity. If one changes, then the self becomes unrecognizable to the self and to others. “That is not who you *really* are,” says the teacher when her prized student suddenly starts slacking off or diverts interests away from what is expected. “You need to embrace your authentic self, whoever that is!” warns the teacher who sees a student passionate about biology suddenly take a 180-degree turn by majoring in art.

The worry here is that teacherly love becomes wedded to the actual over and above the potentiality of the student. Likewise, when the student repeats the oath of the teacher, loyalty to whomever one is becomes a curse—one is doomed to the necessity of one’s identity as an end in and for itself. If there is deviation from this

authentic core or necessary essence, one can only hate one's self for the betrayal. Thus, love turns into hate, and we once again find ourselves in a cycle of negation. In the community of inquiry, love actually amounts to nothing more than praising/blessing the group for its works and its deeds. "Good job today!" or "The dialogue was really excellent!" The oath of the teacher holds the community hostage to a judgment that is delivered from outside itself—offering reinforcement through the Voice of the teacher. The problem here is that such reinforcement guides students away from an experience of their own speech as such back toward the Voice of the teacher (and their ability to bless and curse at the students).

To summarize: While tough love has the problem of being about what the students *are not*, but rather about their potentiality to actualize, in the future, whatever it is the teacher believes to be worth actualizing, the love actually variety has the opposite problem. Here the teacher—assuming the students are really the object of his or her love—loves the students *only* for who they are, that is, their pure actuality, their definable identities as this or that kind of person with this or that set of interests, skills, and dispositions. Tough love concerns a future actualization of a present potentiality whereas love actually concerns pure actuality as such, without remainder. The first views students as a means to an end (predetermined by the teacher and their love interests) while the second reduces the child to an end (as exhausted by what the child's interests, behaviors, and competencies are). In other words, in both cases what is sacrificed is whatever the students are as a pure means (undetermined by the teacher). The dialectic of oath and curse sets in, and love becomes an act of policing the self and others in a community.

Whatever Love: "I Love You for Being Whatever"

What we suggest here is that another kind of love in education is possible that transcends the dichotomy of either loving the students only for their potential to actualize an identity the teacher wants them to actualize (tough love), or loving them for whomever they are, in its fullness, completeness, and necessity (love actually). To conceptualize such a truly different kind of love in education, we enlist once again the help of Agamben in order to theorize what we are calling whatever love. And for an example of an educational practice that features this kind of love, we look at the P4I practice.

Briefly summarized, Agamben argues that "[l]ove is never directed toward this or that property of the loved one (being blond, being small, being tender,

being lame), but neither does it neglect the properties in favor of an insipid generality (universal love). The lover wants the loved one *with all of its predicates*, its being such as it is.”¹³ Agamben continues, “Whatever singularity has no identity. It is not determinate with respect to a concept, but neither is it simply indeterminate; rather it is determined only through its relation to ... the totality of its possibilities.”¹⁴ Another way of saying this is that a lover loves whatever a person is. Whatever is a philosophical concept in Agamben’s work intimately linked to the question of potentiality. Whereas the history of philosophy has often submitted potentiality (the ability to) to actuality (what has been done), Agamben wants to think potentiality without sacrifice, without negation. When potentiality is absorbed into actuality without remainder, impotentiality (the ability not to) is sacrificed, or it is experienced only in and through its privation. Yet Agamben argues that there is another possibility opened up by Aristotle’s thinking that forces us to reconceptualize the instrumental relationship between potentiality and actuality. Here Agamben is worth quoting in full:

Of the two modes in which, according to Aristotle, every potentiality is articulated, the decisive one is that which the philosopher calls “the potentiality to not-be” (*dynamis me einai*) or also impotence (*adynamia*). For if it is true that whatever being always has a potentiality character, it is equally certain that it is not capable of only this or that specific act, nor is it therefore simply incapable, lacking in power, nor even less is it indifferently capable of everything, all powerful: The being that is properly whatever is able to not-be; is capable of its own impotence.¹⁵

Being whatever does not mean the being that is capable of anything and everything under the sun. This would be the lie of capitalistic hubris: dream big and you can achieve anything you want! But also, whatever being is not reducible to simply those acts that one can do (“this is who I am and I am not going to change!”) or the identity that one has (“I am the kind of person that has x skill and x interests”). Indeed, whatever is precisely what escapes representation as a predicate of a subject’s “identity” and escapes one’s abilities to “act” (as willful expressions of one’s identity). Whatever is paradoxical: it is so personal that it is impersonal (escaping the boundaries of an identity), and it is so passive that it is active (in that it is an actualization of an impotence).

This last point is particularly difficult to grasp. Whatever being is not simply impotence: I can’t do that! Instead, whatever being is a kind of being that is *capable* of its own impotence, of its impotentiality. But what does this mean? For Agamben, it would mean that the passage from potentiality to actuality would not sacrifice impotentiality but rather manifest it. This is not a simple transition

from potentiality to act. Agamben summarizes, “If every power is equally the power to be and the power to not-be, the passage to action can only come about by transporting (Aristotle says ‘saving’) in the act its own power to not-be.”¹⁶ To be whatever one is means that one displays impotentiality in their acts (thus deactivating these acts in the moment of their actualization). *One cannot not be whatever one is*. “I cannot not be whoever I am” is different from saying either (a) “I am different from who I am (my true potentiality will be realized in a future moment)” or (b) “I have to be who I am (as this is my essence or true identity).” The point (a) sacrifices the sufficiency of the present for a possible future. It is always oriented away from itself in order to find itself. When schools say, “Come here and learn to fulfill your true potentiality” or when critical pedagogues say, “Learn this and you will be emancipated in the future,” or when P4C practitioners say, “You will be prepared to be a democratic citizen through P4C”; they are turning potentiality into a means to an end, and thus sacrificing its relation to the impotentiality of the present. The point (b) is also problematic from the perspective of impotentiality. When teachers say, “You are perfect the way you are” or “Don’t change,” they are exhausting potentiality into an actuality without remainder, again sacrificing impotentiality. Whatever being is a being that is not oriented away from itself toward a future. Nor is it an essence or truth or authentic core that has to be embraced without cursing the self (in the form of a betrayal). If tough love curses the self, then love actually blesses the self as the identity that must actualize it. In both cases, we are in the terrain of oath taking and oath receiving by the teacher. But whatever being is *contingently sufficient and necessary*, meaning one can be whatever one is without destiny and without necessity. This is a mode of being that cannot be blessed or cursed as we are simply abandoned to it.

Indeed, for Agamben, whatever is precisely an “inessential supplement” or what he refers to as a halo that is “added to perfection—something like a vibration of that which is perfect, the glow at its edges.”¹⁷ In other words, whatever as a halo is a displacement of the edges of something, or a supplement that is not a property but also not beyond the properties of a subject. It is a vibration at the edge of properties that lights up these properties while also destabilizing them, somehow adding nothing to perfection while at the same time transforming it completely. In short, whatever we are is only accessed through the identity we have (our predicates) while also not reducible to that identity. Instead, whatever we are is an “event of an outside.”¹⁸ It is not a property as such but a vibration (an event) that happens to properties in their perfection that pushes these properties to their (im)proper dissolve. Stated differently, whatever pushes properties to

the limit of their representability and, in turn, pushes identity beyond itself to its proverbial outside. As an event, whatever is never something we have (as in an identity) but rather something that we experience in the way our being appears to us. The subject becomes *singular* in its being and thus no longer fits nicely within any class or type of person. And what is most peculiar is that whatever we are appears to be the most *insignificant* supplement to this mode of being. It is a kind of frivolous excess above and beyond our “perfection.” It is therefore exposed through our ticks, quirks, idiosyncrasies—those things we don’t claim as our own or cannot identify ourselves with. The event of our whatever being is not claimed as our destiny or as our “truth,” instead it is discounted as an irrelevant and meaningless accident or inconsequential nothing. It is a happening that barely happens.

Another way to concretize this concept is through Agamben’s discussion of manner. In *Profanations*, Agamben discusses style versus manner. Style is a habit that has become necessary and relatively fixed. It is, in a sense, a constitutive dimension of identity, or the elemental building block that enables identity to be represented as a particular kind of having. Manner brings style to life through a vibration (an inessential and insignificant event). One cannot live a style without manner, even if manner escapes the style that it brings into existence. Manner exposes itself in subtle gestures that fall below the radar of conscious oversight or ritualized habituation, and as such is precisely that which is not claimed as part of one’s identity. Manners reveal one’s whatever being in that one cannot-not exhibit them. They are impotential events (or passive events) that an individual can only yield to, or surrender to without reservation. These manners stylize style as a supplement to perfection.

In surrendering to our manners, we accept whatever we are as sufficient. This does not mean that the manner expresses an essence or an authentic self. Instead, they are inessential surpluses that always seem to escape us or embarrass us when someone else points them out (as they are *more* than what can be described or represented as a style, and also somehow *less* than the prescriptions of a style). They are not recognizable traits of a true self in its full actuality or of a skill in its optimal operability but rather vibrations at the farthest edges of identity that destabilize identity by overfilling it or interruptions of operability at the point of its maximal actualization. For Agamben, whatever is a “singularity plus an empty place.”¹⁹ It is, stated differently, the exposure of identity to what is beyond it (beyond any sense of having). Or, we might say that whatever is the indeterminating surplus at the limit of any determination (of something *as* the kind of thing that it is). The resulting shutter or vibration always introduces a

contingency into any necessity, destabilizing what is necessary, even if by only a fraction of a fraction. Indeed, this vibration must, as Agamben clearly states, be *beyond* representation, measure, or capture. In this way, whateverness ensures each individual cannot be transformed into a caricature or stereotype and, as such, opens a space for what is most singular (or what can never be turned into a property) in each person. This impotential, minor, fragile excess (that we cannot not be) does not retreat from actualization or exhaust itself in actualization but rather makes itself felt within any given actualization as a manner.

Manners are inappropriable, meaning they cannot be transformed into a property of self or other. They are not something someone has. They are, as Agamben argues,²⁰ paradoxical in that we are simultaneously consigned to them while not being able to assume them. They are so proper to a singular being that they are improper, meaning that we cannot identify them as representing who we are. Instead, they merely testify *that* we are in our singularity. Summarizing, Agamben writes, style is “disappropriating appropriation (a sublime negligence, a forgetting oneself in the proper)” while manner is “an appropriating disappropriation (a presenting oneself or remembering oneself in the improper).”²¹ Style, in other words, is a loss of the self in a habit that one has (that properly *belongs* to the self) whereas manner finds the self in precisely that which the self does not have (the event of yielding to an outside).

Manner also helps us understand how the demand of existence (ontologically speaking) is experienced by an individual. The demand of being cannot be experienced *in general* but only singularly. Manner is the way the demand to live exposes itself through an “infinite series of modal oscillations.”²² The paradox here is intentional: the necessity of being (demand) is only lived through the contingencies of singular oscillations, or tiny, insignificant events. Agamben summarizes, “[F]orm-of-life is the ‘manner of rising forth,’ not a being that has this or that property or quality but a being that is its mode of being, which is its welling up and is continually generated by its ‘manner’ of being.”²³ Manner generates a form-of-life by vibrating the edges of a habituated style in such a way that it exposes the demand to be (to exist) in a singular mode of rising forth that is irreducible to any preconstituted style/habit. If, as Agamben argues, mannerisms form our form-of-life out of the demand of/for being, then we might add to this and suggest that infantile babble is a form-of-speaking that responds to the demand of language.

The example that Agamben gives of whatever being is the pianist Glenn Gould. First, we might think that Gould is a genius who is defined by the property of having certain perfected skills. But Agamben proposes a really different reading

of Gould. Gould does not will his genius to manifest itself in his playing, instead, he simply allows himself to not not-play. He is radically passive. He yields to playing because it is his passion, meaning his affliction.

Gould was not in control of his manner but rather exposes himself fully through his mannerisms (such as humming, directing with his left hand while playing with his right hand, and so forth). Being asked whether he would change any of these mannerisms if he could, he responded: "No, if I didn't do that there would be an absolute deterioration in my playing. That is an indispensable component."²⁴ He is not in control, rather he has abandoned himself to whatever is beyond his identity on the inside of his identity (his manner). The exposure of the self to the event of its outside (its manner of being whatever it is) gives Gould's music a certain halo, or singularity that cannot be fully represented or easily imitated. Indeed, if Gould's performance could be reduced to nothing more than a talent or a skill, then it would not have its singular halo and could therefore be easily imitated. As Jeremy Siepmann states, "He [Gould] has driven me time and again to go back to the score and learn from it afresh—not in emulation of Gould, whose most extreme mannerisms remain both inimitable and undesirable—but in search of renewed contact with the spirit and the endless fascination of the music itself."²⁵

Manner, as argued above, is how one "exposes" one's self to an outside. Agamben also describes this exposure as the "free use of the self"²⁶ where we are *generated* through our manner of being. These mannerisms constitute a self through how it lives without comparing itself to something transcending its mode of living (such as a norm or law, or notion of salvation, or curse or blessing). The result of free use of the self is not a new creation *ex nihilo* nor a more effective or more authentic self but simply whatever the self is through its use of itself via its faculties. The paradox here should not be underestimated: the act of creating a mode of being is radically passive and seemingly inessential; it is an event of yielding to whatever one cannot not be. A self is radically poor in its having to be, and this poverty is only matched by its impotence (its ability to not not be whatever it is in response to a demand). For this reason, whatever being is perfectly finite rather than infinitely pliable and flexible. Think of Gould: he is whatever he is absolutely through the event of yielding to an impotentiality (an ability to not not-play in the face of the demand of music). His being exposes itself through the insignificant surplus added to the perfection of his skills that stylizes his style.

We might say that Gould *learned* how to play the piano through his willfully directed desire. Perhaps tough love of his teachers pushed him forward toward

the actualization of his essence as a “genius.” But his genius is not found in the skills he has learned. Without reservation, he yields to his mannerism with a certain kind of abandonment, and this is something done over and above any will. Indeed, mannerism is precisely the event of the outside, meaning it is beyond the will to direct it. Instead, it is an eclipse of the will by that which is weakest and most poor: impotentiality to not not-respond to the demand of music.

To love is precisely to love this enigmatic whatever, this inability to not be that exposes itself in our manners and in our infancy. This means that whatever love is without oath taking, and by extension, without curse making. To use Agamben’s terminology, whatever love is “irreparable”²⁷ or a love that separates itself from any ethic of saving (the self or the other). Whatever love is not about salvation. It has no missionary zeal to it. Rather it merely accepts as sufficient that the self is unable not to yield to whatever demand exerts itself on its being. In this sense it is a *profane* kind of love, a love of that which is most improper about a self (love for an inessential, if not obscene or exaggerated surplus). This also means that whatever love is radically *unconditional*. Both tough love and love actually have specific conditions that must be met for their love to express itself. In tough love, potentiality *must* actualize itself in a foreseeable future in a way that can be identified as proper. This is tough because the current identity must be cursed as somehow fallen, distorted, alienated, immature, and irrational. In love actually, an identity that a self has must be preserved through a blessing. In both cases, there are conditions that must be met for love (as an oath) to be given. Yet with whatever love, there are no such conditions. Whatever inessential and contingent supplement that defines the event of being is sufficient for love.

In linguistics, there is a peculiar phrase called a nominal syntagma. Such a phrase is a complete assertion but does not contain a verbal predicate. It is therefore wrong to translate ancient phrases such as “the water best” to “the water is best.” The latter, for Agamben, conceals the uniqueness of the nominal syntagma, which does not utilize a copula (is) to conjoin subject and predicate. Such an issue bears philosophical meaning for Agamben. Whereas “to be” in Western language often refers to either existential meaning (positing the existence of something) or predicative meaning (positing the having of certain essences or features), the nominal syntagma “escapes the distinction, presenting a third type irreducible to the two other types.”²⁸ As an example of the nominal syntagma, Agamben then turns to love. Summarizing, Agamben writes, “Love does not allow for copulative predication, it never has a quality or an essence as

its object.”²⁹ The minute love is reduced to a set of predicates as in “I love him/her because she is x, y, and z” then love ceases to be love. Instead of loving the person, we come to desire only his/her particular set of attributes (a certain identity that the person *must have* as a precondition for love) as conditions justifying love. Hence, when those attributes are missing, then we can stop “loving” the person. But when someone says “I love beautiful so-and-so” what is meant is not simply that so-and-so IS beautiful (they have the quality of beauty as expressed in and through x, y, or z predicates). The individual loves so-and-so’s being whatever that being is as beautiful.

Here we can conclude somewhat schematically with several arguments we have outlined here:

1. Tough love privileges potentiality over actuality.
2. Love actually privileges actuality over potentiality.
3. Whatever love privileges the paradoxical contact between impotentiality and actuality through impotential acts (and thus does not involve sacrifice).
4. Whereas the first two have conditions that justify love, the third is unconditional and thus truly improper and profane.

Lovely Friendship

But whatever love is not simply about the self and its potentiality. Think here of Gould once again. Gould exposes whatever he is when he plays (or when he yields to the demand of music through his mannerisms). Indeed, the very notion of whatever as an event of the outside indicates a point of contact between interior and exterior, self and other, that inherently lends itself to questions of community, or, as the case might be, friends. As Agamben argues, friendship is not about recognizing sameness or achieving holistic unity (as in Kennedy’s model) but rather about mutually exposing whatever, of being radically nude in front of one another. To develop this point further, we need to distinguish between Agamben’s notion of love and friendship. Whereas Agamben’s notion of love refers to the particular relationship of the individual members of the community to each other (and to themselves), his notion of friendship should be understood as a fundamental ontological state or mode of being. Like other key concepts in his work, Agamben derives his idea of friendship from Aristotle. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle writes that recognizing someone as a friend is to not recognize him or her as “something,” and that “friendship is neither a property

nor a quality of a subject.”³⁰ For Agamben, this passage contains “the ontological basis of Aristotle’s theory of friendship.”³¹ By “ontological basis” he means what Aristotle describes as a “sensation of pure being,” (calling it “in itself sweet”), that is, the very sensation of being alive. For Aristotle, this sensation (of pure being, existence, life) can be experienced jointly with another person. “Friendship,” Agamben writes, “is the instance of this ‘con-sentiment’ of the existence of the friend within the sentiment of existence itself.”³² Rather than merely denoting the relationship between two distinct subjects (or becoming one in a holistic unity/erasing all differences between two selves), Agamben points out that, for Aristotle, the friend is a “*heteros autos*” (another self), due to the fact that friends see each other as singularities who are their manners (rather than identities that have characteristic properties). While this is very similar to Agamben’s notion of love, friendship places emphasis on the particular ontological state (i.e., a mode of being) made possible by a “desubjectification,” that is, a becoming other than the self, “at the very heart of the most intimate sensation of the self.”³³ It is in this sense that he writes: “Friends do not share something (birth, law, place, taste): they are shared by the experience of friendship” given that “what has to be shared is the very fact of existence, life itself.”³⁴ Remember, whatever being is an event of the outside within the inside of the self. It turns the self as itself into the self as other. Because of this, friendship is a contact point of two empty spaces on the very edge of identity—the vibrating, indeterminating mannerisms that are not properties of a subject so much as events of desubjectification (im) proper to the subject. Sharing existence between friends is therefore never a way of sharing the constitutive properties of two identities united together. Instead, it is the sharing of the empty space of sharing where identity dissolves through the vibrations of manner in the face of a demand.

Adding to what has been said earlier about love as a particular way of relating to both oneself and another person, and about the role of love in the P4I community, we can now say that the beloved, as friend, is not another I (an identifiable subject) but rather is another self (a *heteros autos*) in the sense that he or she is, like I, in a state of indeterminacy (infancy, impotentiality), making him or her, like me, a living possibility to be a singularity through the manner of their being affected. It is only by communally dwelling on the margin between pure being/voice and speech/language/truth that being (and language) can be sensed: “Language opens the possibility of not-being, but at the same time it also opens a stronger possibility: existence, that something is.”³⁵ In other words, at the level of language, the intentional community allows for the experience of love between the members of the classroom community, while, at an ontological

level, this allows for the experience of friendship as a communal experience of being as a sharing of language.

What makes this possible is that—due to the demand exposed by the teacher—the students do not see each other in relation to something that transcends the community as what determines how they relate to each other. With the absence of the Voice of the teacher (representing authority, truth), the students can meet as friends and love one another's whatever. By silencing the Voice of the teacher, he or she opens up a space and time for love and friendship between and among the students as they share the sharing of a demand of language as what is most basic and common. Rather than being defined by external ends (specific educational outcomes), the community of infancy is defined by the experience of love and friendship, or, in Agamben terms, as neither a means to an end nor an end in itself, but as a means without end.

In P4I, students experience their infancy precisely by their *inability to not speak*. This exposes itself through manners. These manners cannot be organized into evidence of increasing levels of reasonability or somatic harmony/unity. Instead, they continually interrupt such teleological goals with a flourish of excitement and love that overflows the ability to measure or quantify or assess. One cannot not speak in P4I, even if this is through subtle gestures or quiet mannerisms. The community has no power to prevent speaking and therefore is maximally weak and impotent before the demand of language. But by being so weak, it truly *loves* whatever the community ends up being without reserve and without conditions. This is a community of friends—not of individuals who mirror one another, but friends who love through whatever emerges in terms of singular mannerisms (singular forms-of-life) and through the rules the community uses to constitute itself in its differences.

This last point brings up another important distinction between types of educational love. Whatever love is radically *indifferent*. Tough love and love actually are—on our reading—about being deeply involved in the lives of students. Tough love cares so much for students that it is willing to risk losing students by being so tough, and the second cares so much for maintaining the love relationship that it risks a form of intimacy that might prevent the student from ever challenging themselves to push beyond preset boundaries. But whatever love is totally indifferent to whomever the child is (any form of predetermined identity that is assumed according to biases or prejudices) or what the child will become (any form of teleology of human fulfillment or simple economic survival). Whatever love is only interested in loving a student's manners or those moments of desubjectification or yielding to the event of the outside that

nevertheless produce a halo around the student. These manners indicate the singular existence of the child in relation to a demand of existence or a demand of language. They are the way in which identity yields to a form-of-life.

In particular, P4I loves a student's *linguistic* manners, or how the manner of speaking reveals the speakability or communicability of language. This is not a property that anyone has command of. While speakability appears as that which is most intimate to the self (as a speaking being), it is actually what is most improper and external as language only happens to a human being from the outside through learning. And after language is acquired, the speakability of said language remains inappropriable as an excess within yet outside any given utterance. Thus the event of language always remains somehow external to the speaker as an inessential supplement to every act of speaking that can never be owned or claimed by anyone. In this sense, the infancy of language maintains that it is always open to free use through mannerism. In an educational setting, such mannerisms surprise the student's as much as the P4I facilitator. They appear in the event of speaking as the tick or gesture that never belongs within the telos of the community. In this sense, manners are so personal that they become impersonal—shared with others as an empty space that no one can claim as property. Linguistic manners are the speakability of language speaking itself (as an event of an outside) through the inessential vibrations of what is said in its saying. Manners return the members of P4I to the infancy of language's ability to be spoken as that which is improper to anyone and yet shared by all in the community. In P4I whatever love is precisely the circulation of manners through a community that shares with each other what is most inessential, most poor, and most weak in the face of the demand of language.

This brings us to our final point. How does a community of friends who share the act of sharing respond to a member of the community who espouses racist comments, or perhaps is defined by a racist set of beliefs/racist identity? If the community loves whatever and is radically poor and improper, how can it respond to hateful or assaultive speech by its own members? Let's first speculate how the facilitator guided by tough love would respond. Perhaps she would say something like "[y]ou have the potential to be more than your racist ideas, and I am going to push you to change! You are better than this, smarter than this, and I am going to help you recover from racism." This version of love negates what a person is in the name of what they can and ought to become. For the love to be received, the student must trust in the teacher and believe the teacher's prognostication that the potential to change is present and will be verified in the future (as he or she might not be able to perceive this potentiality for him- or

herself). The problem here is that confirmation rests in a future state that only the teacher can foresee. This hope for the future is equally accompanied by a cursing of the present as inadequate. Tough love thus bets on a certain level of trust (between student and teacher that may or may not be there to begin with) as well as hope (that indeed the future—as foreseen by the teacher—promises something that cannot be foreseen in the present). The love actually teacher would respond differently: “I love you just as you are! If you are a racist, I love you as a racist.” This position might be more appalling than the previous as it rejects the possibility of change and resigns the student to his or her racist identity. Sadly, the racist identity would be blessed (accepted as destiny)! The implication is that the teacher herself might be a racist and finds a representation of her racist identity in the identity of the student (as a mirror reflection). But here is where whatever love can offer a third possibility. If a teacher loved whatever a student was, she might say, “I love that part of you that is not reducible to being a racist. I affirm that halo that surrounds you that is more than mere racism or your racist identity.” Whereas the first two kinds of love have conditions—in the first, the condition is that you can and ought to no longer be a racist and the second is that you stay a racist—the third kind of love is radically unconditional in the sense that it affirms whatever one cannot not be (regardless of one’s racist *identity*). It is love for the impotential, inessential supplement that is exposed through a person’s identity, actions, or consciously held beliefs while at the same time escaping them. This is why whatever we are is, in a sense, outside of cursing or blessing—it is the comical (rather than tragic) supplement that is beyond good or evil. Whatever love, in this sense, is indifferent to the racist identity that tough love forces to change or that love actually clings to. And it is this indifference that makes all the difference as the student can no longer rebel against the curses or yearn for blessings. Instead, that which was seen as essential (the identity as this kind of person with these kinds of beliefs) become vestigial and unimportant while the inessential question of whatever one is in excess of the identity becomes essential!

The same holds true for friends in the community of infancy. Whatever love means that others in the community cannot (a) identify with such racist ideology (as something shared) and (b) can and should be critical of such beliefs and actions precisely because they unconditionally love whatever someone is. Being critical in this context does not mean cursing an identity (and thus returning to the authority of the Voice). Instead it means transforming a given identity into a question (and thus undermining any claims to identity as a necessary essence or destiny). This is especially true when it comes to forms of identity that have

hardened into a specific ideology such as whiteness. Indeed, if identity concerns *having* (and therefore concerns the question of property), then whiteness is the epidemic of identity, especially in the United States.³⁶ As a corollary, views of minority students that reduce identity to a deficit or lack ought to be turned into a question, as the very notion of a “deficit” is itself predicated on a notion of the self as having (or in this case *not* having that which approximates whiteness as the only “legitimate” identity).³⁷ Remember, friends share the event of the outside rather than the inside (of identity as a property). As such, friendship *profanes* attempts to build community based on some kind of perceived sense of having (or in opposition to those who do not have). Instead, friends are infantile; they share a weak, impotential supplement that is almost nothing at all: the vibration at the edge of identity that displaces and suspends in yielding to a demand. And in this way, they can truly love one another without having to have.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what traditional and constructivist forms of love share is a sacrifice of whatever, of the potentiality of the student to not not-be, their manner of being. In the traditional model, potentiality is only valued as a means to another end (a future actualization) and in the constructivist classroom, potentiality falls out of the equation, leaving only what is, what has been actualized as an end in itself. What is missing is precisely that which defines whatever it is a student is as a pure means. To sacrifice whatever means that students are subjected to becoming an ideal that is predetermined by the natural order, world spirit, ontological vocations, or simply standardized efficiency protocols. Or students are subjected to the tyranny of what is, to the tyranny of the world as a necessary condition for selfhood to emerge as a form of having. To reclaim potentiality as a pure means (without relation to the question of ends) opens up a space and time where students might stumble upon their own potentiality to love. Hence the adventure of P4I!