

### Agency and Varieties of Felt Necessity\*

Everyday discourse is rife with the language of need. A fatigued philosopher might claim to need a cup of coffee. A child might insist that she needs the latest, trendy toy. Or again, a parent might confess that she needs a vacation from her lovable, but demanding children. In these cases, the respective agents might mean only to express that they deeply desire the relevant object. But sometimes, we employ the language of need to capture something else. There are things that we want, and then there are things that we feel that we *must have*.

The phenomenon of felt necessity plays important roles in structuring human agency. On one hand, felt necessity can diminish one's agency. To experience some person or object as a felt need is, after all, to have one's agency constrained in certain ways on account of that need. On the other hand, felt necessity can also bolster one's agency despite, or perhaps even *in virtue of*, the relevant constraints. Philosophical treatments of the relationship between agency and felt necessity have been few and far between, but we can glean some fruitful insights into this relationship by attending to certain segments of the agency literatures on addiction and love. Theorists have employed two varieties of felt necessity to articulate how agency is compromised in the case of addiction and enhanced in the case of love, respectively. In addiction, the relevant felt need is often described in terms of an *appetite*, whereas love is characterized by necessities arising from a particular kind of *caring*.

Extant discussions of appetitive needs and what I will call "caring necessity" suggest an instructive picture of felt necessity and its impact on human agency. As I will argue, however,

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the picture is incomplete. We have much to gain by considering a third, under-explored variety of felt necessity that I will call “attachment necessity.” Attachment necessity has its own distinct parts to play in structuring agency, and like its more familiar relatives, we also find this brand of necessity at work in addiction and love.

The paper will proceed as follows. In §1, I offer a working conception of “felt necessity.” In §2, I consider how theorists have employed the notion of a felt appetitive need in order to explain (various aspects of) compromised agency in addiction. In §3, I discuss how theorists have used “caring necessity” to describe love’s positive impact on human agency. In §4 and §5, I introduce the notion of attachment necessity, and I situate it within the nexus of felt needs discussed above. Finally, in §6 and §7, I articulate the roles that attachment necessity plays in addiction and love, respectively. Viewing attachment necessity through the lenses of addiction and love will not only highlight its import as a distinct variety of felt necessity, but it will also usefully illustrate how this type of felt necessity can impede or improve human agency.

## 1. Felt Necessity

Let’s start by taking a closer look at what it means to need something. On one prominent conception in the philosophical literature, to need something is to be such that one would be harmed without it.<sup>1</sup> This, I think, is a good starting point, and we can further specify that the

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<sup>1</sup> D.W. Stampe writes, “...If A needs N, then it is necessary that if A does not have N, something to the detriment of A will ensue (Dennis W. Stampe, “Need,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1988): 129-60, 130). In characterizing “categorical need,” David Wiggins explains, “I need [categorically] to have *x* if and only if I need [instrumentally] to have *x* if I am to avoid being harmed...” (David Wiggins, “What is the force of the Claim that One needs Something?” in *Necessary Goods*, ed. Gillian Brock [Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 1998], 35). According to Harry Frankfurt, “To assert that a person needs something means just that he will inevitably be harmed in one way or another - he will inevitably suffer some injury or loss - unless he has it” (Harry Frankfurt, “On Caring,” in his *Necessity, Volition, and Love* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 155-80, 163).

harm in question must be non-negligible. My disappointment at having to do without my favorite wine wouldn't suffice to show that I need it.

Those things required for survival fall into the relevant category but do not exhaust it.<sup>2</sup> It is uncontroversial that human beings need water since we would die without it, but we also need things that we can live without. Those who have painful, but non-life-threatening conditions need treatment. And then there are needs of a more individual, or personal, sort. If reading is an important aspect of my life, then I might correctly claim to need books, even while recognizing that I could survive without them. Being deprived of books wouldn't cost me my life, but it would nonetheless come at too great a cost – too great a harm – for *me*.

I will refer to the affective orientation by which we experience some object as a need as “felt necessity.” The experience need not be veridical, but it feels to the agent as though she would suffer some non-negligible harm without the object. As far as I know, there has been no sustained analysis of felt necessity as such, but theorists have described certain familiar relations in terms of “felt needs.” Their descriptions suggest a helpful working conception of felt necessity. Felt necessity involves, for examples, a representation of its object as important, a tendency (or desire) to seek it out or retain it, proneness to fear at the prospect of being without it, and an experiential quality attached to the relevant motivations and emotions that often seems peremptory in nature.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Needs required for survival, health, and well-functioning agency are often thought to have special moral import. On some accounts, people are entitled to basic needs, and we are obligated to promote access to such needs for those who require assistance attaining them. My focus concerns needs that are interesting not in virtue of grounding moral directives for others, but in how they give rise to felt demands for the needy agent herself. For more on the moral import of certain needs, see Harry Frankfurt, “Necessity and Desire,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XLV (1984): 1-13; Soran Reader, *Needs and Moral Necessity* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and Sarah Clark Miller, *The Ethics of Need: Agency, Dignity, and Obligation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Though I talk in terms of felt needs for “persons” and “objects,” felt needs for (participation in) certain projects are relevant here as well. I suspect, for example, that what Bernard Williams identifies as “ground projects” that imbue our lives with meaning typically qualify as objects of both caring necessity and attachment necessity. See Bernard Williams, “Persons, Character, and Morality,” in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1-20.

Felt necessity involves desire, but I think we can helpfully distinguish this orientation from *mere* desire. First, as the above characterization suggests, felt necessity is more complex, consisting in a suite of psychological elements. Second, we often make the relevant distinction in everyday language. Consider the familiar utterance, “I don’t simply *want* it, but I *need* it!” Or again, consider that one might profess to want something very badly – say, a cup of coffee or a vacation – without feeling as though one needs it. We can have strong desires for things that we know (and feel) that we can forgo while remaining unharmed.<sup>4</sup> Finally, its tie to the prospect of harm likely accounts for why felt necessity typically carries a sense of urgency that exceeds that of mere desire.<sup>5</sup> The phenomenological character of “must have,” as opposed to “want greatly to have,” has an imperatival structure that makes acquiring or retaining the relevant object feel, in some sense, non-optional.

Of course, whether and to what extent one will think felt necessity reducible to (a kind of) desire will depend on one’s preferred views of desire and harm, and there is certainly room for disagreement here. The point is that there is a familiar orientation that we have toward those things that we feel that we need, and theorists have recognized that this orientation attaches to interestingly different relations where it engages our agency in interestingly different ways. Thus far, relevant discussions have focused on appetites and caring, but as I will argue, attachment also has an important, though under-recognized, role to play in the story.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This is a controversial claim, but certainly not an uncommon one. For instructive discussion on the topic, see Frankfurt, “Necessity and Desire”; Frankfurt, “On Caring”; and Garrett Thomson, “Fundamental Needs,” in *The Philosophy of Need*, ed. Soran Reader (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 175-186.

<sup>5</sup> I say “typically” because sometimes – such as when the desire is particularly strong, and the harm that the agent anticipates upon going without the needed object is relatively minor – mere desires can be more motivationally efficacious than felt needs.

<sup>6</sup> One might wonder whether the sense of need internal to appetites, caring, and attachments share enough in common to be unified under the same label. For example, appetite is often understood as an occurrent mental event, whereas caring seems to be a standing mental state. I take it that the relevant varieties of felt necessity can be understood as diachronic orientations constituted in part by acutely felt occurrent episodes. This suggests that we can intelligibly speak of a person having an appetitive need for a drug, even when she is not actively craving it. And

## 2. Appetitive Needs and Compromised Agency

Felt needs are typically marked by a kind of motivational priority that makes them potentially dangerous. They tend to exert a demanding influence over our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Our needs can capture and fix our attention, and when they become pressing enough, they often diminish the salience of both other of our important concerns and our options for action. When one needs something that one does not have, or when one is threatened with the loss of a needed object, one is apt to focus solely on acquiring or keeping the relevant object.

Felt needs, of course, are not invariably problematic. Consider appetitive needs. Some of our basic physiological needs can be understood in terms of appetites. Gary Watson describes an appetite as “a felt need, a source of pleasure and pain, that has a periodic motivational force that is independent of one’s capacity for critical judgment.”<sup>7</sup> Some of our appetites are natural and when functioning properly, contribute to good health. Think here of our felt needs for food and water. Of course, if one becomes *desperate* for food, say, due to starvation or illness, one’s agency is likely to become compromised.

While some appetites are natural, others – such as the appetite for a drug – can be acquired. Like their natural counterparts, acquired appetites are also susceptible to disorder and can render one vulnerable to compromised agency. According to Watson, in order to understand

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it also suggests that there are some more circumscribed mental events – e.g., sudden fear when one perceives that a loved one is in danger or a strong, occurrent desire to benefit her – that partly constitute the sense of necessity internal to caring. There are, of course, differences between the relevant varieties of felt necessity. As I will argue, their differences help to illustrate interesting and distinct ways in which felt necessity can engage human agency. Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer from *Ethics* for prompting me to clarify this point.

<sup>7</sup> Gary Watson, “Disordered Appetites: Addiction, Compulsion, and Dependence,” in his *Agency and Answerability: Selective Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59-87, 76. The *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, defines appetite as “any desire, but particularly one for food or one relating to the satisfaction of any physiological need” [*APA Dictionary of Psychology, Second Ed.*, ed. Gary VandenBos [Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2015], 69]. The *Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology* defines ‘appetite’ as “Physiological desire which may be directed toward different targets through learning. Most usually applied to the desire for food, it may also be used with other physiological needs such as for sex or water” (*Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology, Second Ed.*, ed. David Matsumoto [Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 48).

the sense of “compulsion” associated with addiction, it is useful to construe (central varieties of) addictions as disordered acquired appetites.<sup>8</sup> On his view, appetites of addiction – like their natural analogs – can *seduce* an agent, making it difficult to muster wholehearted attempts at resistance. He writes, “The clamor of appetite directs one’s attention to its object as something to be enjoyed. This feature... it seems to me, accounts both for the potential irrationality and the power of desires we experience as compulsive.”<sup>9</sup> In this way, the addict’s felt need for a drug resembles a typical hungry person’s felt need for food. The discomfort associated with hunger, along with the prospect of taking pleasure in the activities that would satisfy it, captivate the agent’s attention and motivate her to seek out food.<sup>10</sup>

Notice that strong appetitive needs – both in cases of addiction and in what are typically viewed as normal, natural appetites – have a similar motivational structure. Both can dominate one’s attention, inducing a kind of tunnel vision that makes it difficult to avoid seeking out the relevant pleasurable object.<sup>11</sup> Since felt appetitive needs arise independently of, and may conflict with, one’s values and critical judgments, they sometimes result in regrettable behavior.

This is not to say that addicted agents and average hungry agents face *identical* burdens. In cases of addiction, the felt need is often experienced as especially strong, and the demand on

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<sup>8</sup> Note that this conception runs counter to the more orthodox understanding of compulsive desires as “irresistible.” For instructive critiques of the view that addictions are compulsive in this sense, see Pickard (2015; 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Watson, “Disordered Appetites,” 72.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 76. Though an appetite may be understood as a strong, temporarily satiable but recurrent, pleasure-oriented desire and so can take any subjectively rewarding substance or activity as its object, theorists often draw close analogies between addictive desires and appetites related to physiological needs in particular, e.g., food and sex. See for examples George Loewenstein, “The Visceral Account of Addiction,” in *Getting Hooked: Rationality and the Addictions*, eds. Jon Elster and Ole-Jorgen Skog (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 235-264; Bennett Foddy and Julian Savulescu, “Addiction is Not an Affliction: Addictive Desires Are Merely Pleasure-Oriented Desires,” *American Journal of Bioethics* 7 (2007): 29-32; Bennett Foddy and Julian Savulescu, “A liberal account of addiction,” *Philosophy, Psychology, and Psychiatry* 17 (2010): 1-22; and Brian Earp et al, “Addicted to Love: What is love addiction and when should it be treated?” *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 24 (2017): 77-92.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the phenomenon of “crowding out” in addiction, see Jon Elster, *Strong Feelings: Emotion, Addiction, and Human Behavior* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999). Dill and Holton offer an interesting picture of how addictive desires can interfere with the formation of evaluative judgments and intentions and with the ability to act on extant intentions (Brendan Dill and Richard Holton, “The Addict in Us All.” *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 5 [2014]: 1-20, 9-10.)

one's attention as especially pressing, sometimes leading to results that are not only regrettable, but tragic. Consider the words of "Joe," a guilt-stricken heroin addict who painfully recounted the following event to his addiction counselor:

The week just before I came into the hospital, I was shooting up with a bunch of other addicts, half of them I didn't even know or even give a damn about. But there was this one guy who had been especially kind to me, warning me about dirty needles and cautioning me to keep an eye on the other addicts who couldn't be trusted. A couple hours later, after we all had shot up, he was standing by the sink in the kitchen, and suddenly he collapsed and crashed to the floor like a sack of potatoes. You know what I did? Nothing! ...I just shrugged and went back to my drugs. I thought, 'Oh good. This means more heroin for me.'<sup>12</sup>

On the view we are considering, Joe's behavior resulted not from some alien, irresistible desire that compelled him to act against his will, but rather from an appetite – albeit an unusually strong one – by which he was tempted to act in ways that he himself found objectionable.<sup>13</sup> Whether or not the appetite in Joe's particular case was *so strong* that he could not have been reasonably expected to resist it remains an open question.

To be sure, an addict often *feels* powerless when in the grips of a felt need for the object of her addiction. Consider, for example, William S. Burroughs on heroin's 'algebra of need': "A dope fiend is a man in total need of dope. Beyond a certain frequency, need knows absolutely no limit or control. In the words of total need: '*Wouldn't you?*' Yes you would. You would lie, cheat, inform on your friends, steal, do *anything* to satisfy total need..."<sup>14</sup> On Watson's account,

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<sup>12</sup> Philip J. Flores, *Addiction as an Attachment Disorder* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 125.

<sup>13</sup> Consider also an excerpt from Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959): "I was only roused to action when the hourglass of junk ran out. If a friend came to visit...I sat there not caring that they had entered my field of vision...and not caring when he walked out of it. If he had died on the spot, I would have sat there looking at my shoe waiting to go through his pockets" (William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* [New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1959], xiii).

<sup>14</sup> Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, xxxvii

strong appetitive needs can diminish one's self-control, but importantly, the agent who succumbs to an appetite is "more like a collaborationist than an unsuccessful freedom fighter."<sup>15</sup> The agent in such a scenario finds her will seduced rather than bypassed or (simply) overpowered. This, though, does not preclude the possibility that the seductive force of a particular appetite might be sufficiently strong that it is unreasonable to expect the agent to abstain.

Philosophical treatments of addiction provide insight into how particularly powerful and/or disordered appetites can compromise agency. Experiencing a felt appetitive need for an object makes salient certain of its pleasurable features, representing the object as "something to be enjoyed." The experience is distracting, drawing one's attention toward (the prospect of taking pleasure in) the needed object and away from competing concerns. Felt appetitive needs arise and motivate independently of critical judgment. They don't simply overpower one's will, but the noise of strong appetites makes it difficult to make full-fledged efforts at resistance.

### 3. Caring Necessity and Enhanced Agency

In the previous section, I began with a discussion of why it might be natural to think of felt necessity as a hindrance to agency. Now, I'd like to take a different tack. The type of felt necessity internal to love seems capable of *enhancing* one's agency. In embracing this claim, one needn't deny that love imposes constraints on one's agency.<sup>16</sup> Harry Frankfurt insightfully suggests that "necessities of love" enhance agency not despite, but (partially) *due to*, the agential constraints that they impose on the lover. Frankfurt's work on love, along with other agency

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<sup>15</sup> Watson, "Disordered Appetites," 65.

<sup>16</sup> As Watson notes, "like addictions," certain loving relationships that we "encourage and honor" also render one "vulnerable to diminished control of certain kinds" (Watson, "Disordered Appetites," 84-85).



literature on caring, provide a useful framework for understanding how felt necessity can play a constructive role in agency.

In “On Caring,” Frankfurt explains that in virtue of loving some person or object, we are typically subject to a kind of constraint that is experienced as felt necessity. We feel as though there are certain things that we *must* do – or again, *must not* do – with respect to what we love. Frankfurt writes, “It is characteristic of our experience of loving that when we love something, there are certain things that we feel we *must* do. Love demands of us that we support and advance the well-being of our beloved, as circumstances make it possible and appropriate for us to do so; and it forbids us to injure our beloved, or to neglect its interests.”<sup>17</sup> On this view, the necessities of love are undergirded not by the dictates of reason, but by the agent’s volition. Further, love’s constraints are not merely endorsed by the agent, but they are partially constituted by desires with which the agent identifies herself. To this extent, the relevant volitional constraints are self-imposed. Consequently, the agent experiences them as an augmentation of her autonomy rather than a detriment to it.<sup>18</sup>

Notably, people do often report feeling, in some sense, (happily) compelled to promote and to protect the interests of their loved ones. For example, we often feel that we simply *have to* help our children thrive and prevent harm from befalling them – and not merely to secure the continuation of our bloodlines or to fulfil our social or legal responsibilities as parents, but out of love. And though for obvious reasons, they tend to take on a more passionate tone, romantic love

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<sup>17</sup> Frankfurt, “On Caring,” 170 (his emphasis).

<sup>18</sup> Frankfurt describes the experience as liberating, writing, “When we discover that we have no choice...but to submit to captivating necessities of love ... we are typically conscious of an invigorating release and expansion of ourselves” (Harry Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004], 64-65). See also Harry Frankfurt, “Autonomy, Necessity, and Love,” in his *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 129-41. Elsewhere, Frankfurt describes what he terms “volitional necessity” in more detail. He writes, “A person who is subject to volitional necessity finds that he *must* act as he does” because he cannot muster the will to do otherwise (Harry Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care About,” in his *The Importance of What We Care About* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 80-94, 86-87).

letters sometimes express similar sentiments. Victor Hugo wrote of his future wife Adèle Foucher, “I am ready for her sake to sacrifice everything with joy... But could I do otherwise? ... If she shows me indifference, if she even hates me, it will be my misfortune — that is all. What matter can it be, since it does not impair her happiness... My duty is... to be her defence against all perils... even to place myself between her and every sorrow, without making any claim for myself.”<sup>19</sup>

On Frankfurt’s view, the need to do (or to refrain from doing) certain things in service of one’s love is tightly connected to the need for one’s beloved to flourish. He explains, “...the well-being of what a person loves is for him an irreplaceable *necessity*. In other words, the fact that a person has come to love something entails that the satisfaction of his concern for the flourishing of that particular thing is something that he has come to *need*.”<sup>20</sup> He describes love as a mode of caring, and in caring about another, an agent becomes “vulnerable to losses and susceptible to benefits depending upon whether what he cares about is diminished or enhanced.”<sup>21</sup> While Frankfurt doesn’t specify the particular type of harm to which we are subject in virtue of caring about our beloveds, subsequent caring theorists have tended to describe the relevant harm in emotional terms.

According to the dominant view in the philosophical literature, caring involves motivations to promote the flourishing of the cared-for object and an emotional vulnerability to how the cared-for object is faring. The carer wants the object of her care to “do well,” and she is disposed to experience emotions such as joy when it is thriving, sadness when it is doing poorly,

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<sup>19</sup> Victor Hugo, “Saturday evening, January 1820, letter to Adèle Foucher,” in *The Love Letters of Victor Hugo*, ed. Paul Meurice (London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1901 [1820]), 1-3.

<sup>20</sup> Frankfurt, “On Caring,” 170 (his emphasis).

<sup>21</sup> Frankfurt, “The Important of What We Care About,” 83.

disappointment at its failure, fear when it is in danger, and so forth.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the carer needs for the object of her care to flourish, and she is subject to (perhaps *inter alia*) emotional pain when that need goes unmet. I will call this particular type of need “caring necessity.”

Caring theorists generally agree that this orientation toward other persons and objects serves to structure one’s agency. How one decides to act is largely determined by what one cares about. For example, according to David Shoemaker, who describes caring as “the great motivator,” “What we typically, upon reflection, are motivated to do, in any given situation, depends ultimately on what we care most about with respect to that situation.”<sup>23</sup> Agnieszka Jaworska explains that caring imbues its object with a kind of importance that “can function to support stable intentions, plans, and policies concerning the object, to keep the agent on track, and thus to weave the web of unified agency.”<sup>24</sup> Notice that while caring necessity, like appetites, can dim the salience of certain reasons for action, we tend to be relatively unbothered by this limitation. Insofar as caring helps to reflect and express the agent’s values, the type of felt necessity internal to it seems to have great value on that account, despite its constraints.

The preceding discussion suggests two routes by which caring necessity can potentially enhance human agency. First, one’s self-imposed need for another to flourish – or again to promote the other’s flourishing – reflects and reinforces one’s volitional power to create necessities for oneself. The relevant necessities are not born of external laws of nature, but the carer herself authors the imperatives that bind her, thereby manifesting a significant feat of

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<sup>22</sup> See David Shoemaker, “Caring, Identification, and Agency,” *Ethics* 114 (2003): 88-118; Agnieszka Jaworska, “Caring and Internality,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74 (2007): 529-568; Bennett Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self: Intimacy, Identification, and the Social Nature of Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Jeffrey Seidman, “Caring and the Boundary-Driven Structure of Practical Deliberation,” *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 3 (2008): 1-36. Frankfurt specifically stresses the *non-emotive* features of caring.

<sup>23</sup> Shoemaker, “Caring, identification, and Agency,” 90-1.

<sup>24</sup> Jaworska, “Caring and Internality,” 561.

human agency. Second, the felt needs for certain special persons and objects in one's life to flourish serve to (partially) constitute the agent's identity.

#### 4. Attachment Necessity

Thus far, we have discussed two varieties of felt necessity that have import for human agency – appetitive needs and necessities of caring. Now, I turn to a third which is far less familiar in the philosophical literature. There is a particular way in which we experience certain persons or objects in our lives as felt needs, such that without them, we are not quite alright, but we feel as though we are in some sense unwell, less together, and unable to navigate the world quite as competently. What I have in mind is the sort of felt necessity that is integral to some forms of attachment. Most often, we feel this way toward a select few persons in our lives, but we can also have this orientation toward objects. This way of experiencing someone or something as a felt need, while familiar in developmental and clinical psychology venues, has received relatively little attention among philosophers.<sup>25</sup> As the type of felt necessity in question is for a security-based attachment object, I will refer to it as “attachment necessity.” Specifically, this felt need is for regular engagement with a non-substitutable particular without which one suffers a reduced sense of security.

To better understand security-based attachment, it will be instructive to consider how developmental psychologists have traditionally conceived of attachment. According to what

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<sup>25</sup> For notable exceptions, see Patricia Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons: An Inquiry into Emotional Justification* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Monique Wonderly, “On Being Attached,” *Philosophical Studies* 173 (2016): 223-242; Monique Wonderly, “Love and Attachment,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 54 (2017): 235-250; Edward Harcourt, “Attachment, Autonomy, and the Evaluative Variety of Love,” in *Love, Reason, and Morality: An Introduction*, eds. E. Kroeker and K. Schaubroeck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 39-56; Monique Wonderly, “Early Relationships, Pathologies of Attachment, and the Capacity to Love,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Love in Philosophy*, ed. Adrienne Martin (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 23-34; Karen Jones, “Trust, Distrust, and Affective Looping,” *Philosophical Studies* 176 (2019): 955-968; and Andrew Kirton, “Matters of Trust as Matters of Attachment Security,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 28 (2020): 583-602.

psychologists refer to as “attachment theory,” between 6 and 24 months of age, infants develop a special bond with their primary caregivers. This bond is characterized in terms of a set of evolutionarily adaptive behaviors that serve to provide the infant with a sense of security. The attached infant attempts to remain in close proximity to her primary caregiver, treats her as a “secure base” from which to safely explore unfamiliar surroundings, seeks her out for protection as a “safe haven” when threatened or hurt, and protests separation from her—e.g., via crying and other displays of distress.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, psychologists have noted that versions of these behaviors are also typically present in long-term adult romantic partnerships. Adults tend to seek proximity to, and protest long-term separation from, their romantic partners. Our romantic partners also function as secure bases and safe havens for us. When they are nearby, we feel more competent to explore new environments and to take on challenges. Also, we tend to turn specifically to our romantic partners for comfort and support during periods of significant stress.<sup>27</sup> This notion of security-based attachment has since been expanded to include attachments to objects and ideas, a broadened sense of security, and an emphasis on the affects and desires that underlie attachment behaviors.<sup>28</sup>

Importantly, the sense of security at issue in attachment necessity is not identical to a mere feeling of safety or comfort – at least insofar as it concerns typical adults. Rather, it should

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<sup>26</sup> See John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Vol. 1: Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

<sup>27</sup> Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver, “Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52 (1987): 511-524; Mario Mikulincer and Phillip Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics, and Change, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Press, 2016); and Nancy Collins et al, “Responding to Need in Intimate Relationships: Normative Processes and Individual Differences,” in *Dynamics of Romantic Love: Attachment, Caregiving, Sex*, eds. M. Mikulincer and G. Goodman (New York: Guilford Press, 2006), 149-189.

<sup>28</sup> See Wonderly, “On Being Attached.” Bowlby characterized attachment in terms of an innate, biologically-based “behavioral system” that, in response to a perceived threat, motivates attached individuals to seek (physical or mental) proximity to an attachment object in order to restore felt security (Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Vol. 1*; and Mikulincer and Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood*). Underlying attachment behaviors is an attachment *bond*, a rich affective connection to the attachment object. My primary concern is the nature of this bond and how it facilitates the motivational orientation that leads to attachment behaviors.

be understood as a kind of confidence in one's well-being and agential competence. Without our particular attachment objects, we tend to feel "out of sorts," off-kilter, "no longer all of a piece" and so forth. These colloquial terms capture something important about the emotional lives of human beings and what holds us together as agents.<sup>29</sup> As these descriptions make plain, a reduced sense of security has an affective element that is directly tied to one's sense of *agency*. We often see this phenomenon in first-personal accounts of those who've been dislocated from their homes. For example, in the foreword to Mindy Fullilove's *Root Shock*, artist and author Carlos Peterson, whose neighborhood was bulldozed as part of an urban renewal project recounts the emotional impact of losing his home as follows, "Belonging to any single place and time seemed an impossible task. Having one foot buried in the past and the other striving toward an unknown future was a dilemma. While I searched incessantly for my identity in both, I had neither."<sup>30</sup>

The person whose felt security is compromised feels more or less disoriented, lost, as though she is unable to get along in the world as well – like a less competent agent. In virtue of this feeling – or perhaps, better, in virtue of what gave rise to it – her agency is actually to some extent impaired. The nature and severity of the insecure agent's impairment will vary according to context, but it is not something that can be captured merely in terms of emotional or physical

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<sup>29</sup> See Wonderly, "On Being Attached"; and Monique Wonderly, "On the Affect of Security," *Philosophical Topics* 47 (2019): 165-181. This conception of security fits well with many views of security on offer in the psychological literature. Abraham Maslow characterized security as a "syndrome of feelings," that includes, *inter alia*, feelings of "emotional stability," "self-acceptance," and "courage" (Abraham Maslow, "The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity," *Journal of Personality* [1942]: 331-344, 334-335). In his "security theory," William Blatz identified security as "the state of mind which accompanies the willingness to accept the consequences of one's acts..." (William Blatz, *Human Security: Some Reflections* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996], 13). In attachment theorist Mary Ainsworth's words, Blatz "seemed to equate feeling secure with feeling competent or effective" (Mary Ainsworth, "On Security," from the *Proceedings of the State University of New York, Stony Brook Conference on Attachment* [[http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/pdf/mda\\_security.pdf](http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/pdf/mda_security.pdf)], 1988, 1). Ainsworth, herself, speaks approvingly of a conception of security that she gleans from John Bowlby's work – i.e., "an 'all is well' kind of appraisal of sensory input," or "an 'Okay, go ahead' feeling" (*ibid*, 1).

<sup>30</sup> Mindy Fullilove, *Root Shock* (New York: New Village Press, 2016), xx.

pain. To see this, consider that an individual might remain quite confident in her own well-being and agential competence even as she feels sadness or fear for another. Not every negative emotion is experienced as a threat to one's own welfare or agency. Similarly, physical pain needn't always diminish felt security. Think here of immunization injections and non-venomous, but painful, insect bites. This, of course, is not to deny that in some instances, severe emotional distress or physical pain can become so overwhelming as to dislodge one's sense of security, correctly registering serious threats to one's well-being and agency.<sup>31</sup>

Psychologists have long suspected that the need to restore and maintain a sense of security typically enjoys a kind of primacy over other human needs; consequently, agents are prone to experience the need for their attachment objects as especially compelling.<sup>32</sup> Not only does extended separation from one's attachment objects cause one to experience a reduced sense of security – and thereby a kind of agential impairment, but such separation also typically motivates the agent to direct her remaining agential resources toward reacquiring that object. In this way, loss of an attachment object can both impair and focus one's agency.

Our attachment needs are compelling not only because they are tied to our senses of security, but also because we tend to regard our attachment objects as non-substitutable. Owing

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<sup>31</sup> The relationship between confidence in one's well-being on the one hand, and comfort and safety on the other, is somewhat complicated. We can think of confidence in one's well-being as a construal of one's well-being as stable or reliable and likely to endure in the future (for more on the forward-looking dimensions of security and confidence, see Jeremy Waldron, "Safety and Security," *Nebraska Law Review* 85 [2006]: 454-507; and Jack Barbalet, "Confidence: Time and Emotion in the Philosophy of Action," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 23 [1993]: 229-247). Feeling insecure is surely uncomfortable, but discomfort doesn't suffice for insecurity. Vaccinations, for example, are typically uncomfortable, but they tend to *increase* confidence in one's well-being. Insofar as we construe even minor pain as a harm, localized, short-lived "harms" of this sort can come apart from the more global, temporally extended self-assessment internal to security.

Owing to different uses of the term, "safety," the distinction between "feeling safe" and "feeling secure" can be hard to distil. On a common usage "feeling safe" indicates a feeling of freedom from immediate, external (usually physical) dangers. For reasons indicated above, one can feel safe in this sense and still insecure on account of feeling anxious about one's agential competence. A person grieving the loss of a loved one, for example, may be reluctant to describe her condition as feeling unsafe, even while she acknowledges feeling lost and disoriented.

<sup>32</sup> Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*; Collins et al, "Responding to Need in Intimate Relationships"; and Mikulincer and Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood*.

to this feature, security-based attachment needs are typically enshrouded with an aura of special import. In attachment psychologist Mary Ainsworth's words, "...an attachment figure is never wholly interchangeable with or replaceable by another, even though there may be others to whom one is also attached."<sup>33</sup> Our particular attachment needs are uniquely important to us and on account of this, often require significant attentional resources and dispose us to experience a strong sense of urgency upon the threat of losing the needed object.

In attachment, then, the felt need is for regular engagement with a non-substitutable particular on pain of a reduced sense of security – where security is understood as a kind of confidence in one's well-being and agential competence. Because of the object's non-substitutability and connection to the agent's sense of security, engagement with attachment objects typically enjoys a kind of motivational priority.

## 5. Situating Attachment Necessity

Attachment necessity, like appetites and caring necessity, can circumscribe our attention, "crowding out" potentially competing motives. However, owing to the particular role played by felt security, attachment necessity differs from both appetitive needs and caring necessity. It will be instructive to highlight these differences.

First, consider how attachment necessity diverges from appetites. Attachment is a socio-affective orientation that ties a non-substitutable object to one's sense of oneself as an agent. Our

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<sup>33</sup> Mary Ainsworth, "Attachment and Other Affectional Bonds Across the Life Cycle," in *Attachment Across the Life Cycle*, eds. Colin Murray Parkes, Joan Stevenson-Hinde, and Peter Marris (New York: Routledge, 1991), 33-51. For more on this point, see Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 308-309; Inge Bretherton, "The Roots and Growing Points of Attachment Theory," in *Attachment Across the Life Cycle*, eds. Colin Murray Parkes, Joan Stevenson-Hinde, and Peter Marris (New York: Routledge, 1991), 9-32, 19; Robert S. Weiss, "The Attachment Bond in Childhood and Adulthood," in *Attachment Across the Life Cycle*, eds. Colin Murray Parkes, Joan Stevenson-Hinde, and Peter Marris (New York: Routledge, 1991), 66-76, 66; Mikulincer & Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood*, 57-58; and Jude Cassidy, "The Nature of the Child's Ties," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 3-22, 12-15.



attachment needs do not typically motivate us by prompting us to seek out physical pleasures (or to avoid physical pain). Rather, they are intimately tied to how we feel about ourselves and how we are able to get along in the world.

While attachment needs are constituted in part by desires, the satisfaction of which, confers a kind of “reward” (increased felt security), the nature of the reward differs from the hedonic gratification associated with satisfying appetites for food, water, and sex. Security is itself emotional in nature insofar as it concerns how one feels about one’s well-being and self-efficacy. Since the relevant brand of security reflects the agent’s emotional equanimity more broadly, it also has a meta-affective regulatory dimension. Unsurprisingly, attachment is thought to play a crucial role in emotion regulation.<sup>34</sup> Those to whom we are attached are typically both the objects of our strong emotions and helpful resources for modulating our affective experiences. Thus, though they are associated with certain neurophysiological events, attachments are not generally experienced as bodily needs but *emotional* needs.<sup>35</sup>

Next, attachment necessity, as opposed to typical appetites, represents a deeper connection between a non-substitutable object and one’s agency. Notice that one who has an appetite for strawberries might have no trouble achieving satisfaction by consuming another sweet fruit. Attachment, however, doesn’t admit of this type of flexibility. Also, while ingesting food or water can enable one, in some respects, to feel as though she can exercise her agency more competently, engaging with an attachment object can help to shape one’s *sense of self* qua agent. When the attachment object is a person, positive feedback from him or her can help to

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<sup>34</sup> For more on how attachment aids emotion regulation, see Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Vol. 1*; Mikulincer and Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood* (esp. ch. 7); Allan N. Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994); and Wonderly, “On the Affect of Security.”

<sup>35</sup> For more on the neuroscience of attachment, see Thomas R. Insel, and Larry J. Young, “The Neurobiology of Attachment.” *Nature Reviews. Neuroscience* 2 (2001): 129–36.

solidify the attached individual's self-conception as an agent who is worthy care of and capable of navigating challenging situations should they arise.<sup>36</sup> Appetitive needs for food or water are not such that ingesting them can help shape these thicker senses of self-worth and self-efficacy.

Finally, attachments typically have a strong social dimension. Interaction with an attachment object not only can impact the agent's self-conception, but it can also help to shape her conception of others and the relation in which she stands to them. When we engage with attachment figures, their responses to our needs form patterns that help us to mentally situate ourselves on the social landscape. We develop what are sometimes called "internal working models" of our relationships that influence our expectations of and orientations toward future relationship partners.<sup>37</sup> In this way, our most fruitful attachment relationships are generally interpersonal, and attachments bonds are typically regarded as social, even while we can be attached to non-persons.<sup>38</sup>

Now consider how attachment necessity differs from caring necessity. Caring necessity involves a need for its object to flourish, a need which in turn gives rise to other felt needs to promote the object's good, or again, to avoid injuring it in some way. Just as felt attachment needs are not in the first instance about seeking pleasure, nor are they centrally concerned with the *flourishing* of another person or object. When one is attached, what one needs is engagement with a particular person or object. In this respect, felt attachment necessity is importantly self-

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<sup>36</sup> See Bowlby *Attachment and Loss, Vol. 1*; Ainsworth, "Attachment and Other Affectional Bonds"; and Mikulincer and Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood*.

<sup>37</sup> For more on how attachment impacts our internal working model of the self, others, and our relationships, see Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Vol. 1*; Ainsworth, "Attachment and Other Affectional Bonds"; Inge Bretherton and Kristine Munholland, "Internal working models in attachment relationships. Elaborating a central construct," in *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, eds. Jude Cassidy & Phillip. R. Shaver (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 102-127; and Mikulincer and Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood*.

<sup>38</sup> Notice that many attachments to non-persons seem parasitic on interpersonal relationships (e.g., attachments to keepsakes that symbolically represent a deceased loved one) or otherwise indirectly fulfill social needs (e.g., attachments to group activities).

regarding in a way that caring necessity is not, though as I will suggest in §7, not always objectionably so.<sup>39</sup>

Also, when our felt attachment needs go unmet, we are subject to a particular type of harm, a reduced sense of security. On most accounts, the central type of harm to which we are subject in caring necessity is emotional pain. We become sad when an object of our care is doing poorly, fearful when it is in danger, etc. As I indicated above, emotional pain does not invariably take the form of reduced security. I can feel bad for another about whom I care without feeling as though my own well-being or agential competence is imperiled.

Frankfurt's own conception of caring necessity is more complicated. For him, caring is essentially volitional (i.e., a matter of one's *will*), rather than emotional. Recall from §3 that on his account, one's felt need for her beloved to flourish gives rise to volitional necessities to promote her beloved's flourishing and to refrain from harming her beloved's interests. Failure to meet these felt needs – say, due to one's love of multiple persons whose interests conflict – can cause turmoil within the depths of one's very self, and *this* type of harm, like that of an unsatisfied attachment need, does seem to be intimately related to one's confidence in one's well-being and agential competence.<sup>40</sup>

Still, a crucial difference between attachment necessity and Frankfurt's volitional necessity remains. In the latter, the ruptured sense of agency arises from a conflict within one's volitional identity. One is, in some sense, at odds with oneself. In the case of attachment

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<sup>39</sup> Because we often use “attachment” and “caring” interchangeably in everyday discourse, one might wonder if attachment is not simply a form of caring. I consider and argue against this view in Wonderly, “On Being Attached.”

<sup>40</sup> Frankfurt writes, “The psychic integrity in which self-confidence consists can be ruptured by the pressure of unresolved discrepancies and conflicts among the various things that we love. Disorders of that sort undermine the unity of the will and put us at odds with ourselves. The opposition within the scope of what we love means that we are subject to requirements that are both unconditional and incompatible. That makes it impossible for us to plot a steady volitional course. If our love of one thing clashes unavoidably with our love of another, we may well find it impossible to accept ourselves as we are” (Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love*, 51).

necessity, one's sense of agency is directly impacted by something external to oneself. When one's attachment object is a person, one's agency is – to some extent – in another's hands, as it were. One is vulnerable, emotionally and qua agent, to separation from and rejection by an attachment figure. These particular vulnerabilities do not seem to have a central role in Frankfurt's necessities of love.

This brings us to one final difference between attachment necessity and caring necessity. When caring takes the form of love, one's felt need for the cared-for object to flourish – and the volitional necessities arising from this care – become bound up with one's identity in particular ways.<sup>41</sup> This phenomenon has been characterized in terms of integrating the object of one's care into one's identity, identifying one's own interests with those of the cared-for object, or a kind of volitional endorsement of one's attitudes toward the object of care. These particular relations need not obtain between our own identities and (the objects of) our attachment needs.<sup>42</sup>

This, though, is not to say that attachment necessity plays no role in one's identity. In persons who have a fully developed sense of self – as opposed to infants, for example – their felt needs for their particular attachment objects often reflect something deep about who they are as agents. The fact that we feel as though we need regular engagement with those specific objects and persons in order to feel as though we are alright and able to get along well in the world suggests that felt attachment necessity can play an important role in shaping one's agential identity.<sup>43</sup> This remains true, regardless of whether or not we feel as though our attachment

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Robert Nozick, "Love's Bond," in his *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 68-86; Frankfurt, "On Caring"; Robert Solomon, *About Love* (Ontario: Madison Books, 2001); and Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*.

<sup>42</sup> Of course, sometimes our attachment objects *are* connected to our identities in these ways, and when this occurs, the relationship is richer and more meaningful in virtue of this connection. Thanks to Ruth Chang for instructive discussion on this topic.

<sup>43</sup> By "agential identity," I do not mean to imply anything mysterious here. The point is the familiar one that the structure and direction of one's agency typically constitutes (an important aspect of) her identity.

objects are a *part* of our identities, we actively identify their interests as our own, or we volitionally endorse our attitudes toward them.

In sum, attachment necessity differs from both felt appetitive needs and necessities of caring. Unlike appetites, attachment necessity typically involves a richer affective experience and a deeper connection to one's sense of agency, allowing it to play more substantive roles in shaping one's agential identity. Unlike caring necessity, felt attachment needs are importantly self-regarding and their impact on one's agential identity is – depending upon the relevant conception of caring – different in kind and/or emanates from difference sources.

## 6. Attachment Necessity and Addiction

Attachment necessity, like appetitive need, plays important roles in some addictions. Attending to these roles will illustrate the import of attachment necessity for understanding addiction and illuminate under-appreciated respects in which addiction impacts human agency. On my view, substance addictions sometimes involve attachment orientations toward their objects.<sup>44</sup> In these cases, whatever else is going on, the addict experiences the object as a security-based felt attachment need. Having argued at length for this view elsewhere, here, I will restrict my aim to showing how an attachment-theoretical framework illuminates certain aspects of addicted agency that remain obscured on the appetitive need model alone.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Note that I mean to imply neither that all addictions involve attachments, nor that all attachments to drugs constitute addictions. Rather, my claim is that attachment is partly constitutive of many addictions. As will become clearer in what follows, in these cases, central aspects of the addiction – including the agent's difficulty in stopping use and various socio-affective elements of the addiction's phenomenology and motivational structure – can be explained, in part, by an attachment orientation toward the addiction object. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer from *Ethics* for prompting me to clarify these points here.

<sup>45</sup> See Monique Wonderly, "Attachment, Addiction, and Vices of Valuing," in *Attachment and Character: Attachment Theory and the Developmental Psychology of Vice and Virtue*, ed. E. Harcourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). For other theorists who characterize some elements of addiction in terms of a type of attachment, see Jim Orford, *Excessive Appetites: A Psychological View of Addiction, Second Edition* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 1985); Flores, *Addiction as an Attachment Disorder*; and Watson, "Disordered Appetites."

Recall that the appetitive need view construes the motivational architecture of addiction primarily in terms of pleasure/pain-oriented desires. The promise of enjoyment – or again, the threat of pain – prompts the agent to compulsively seek out the substance for satiety and relief. While this model may be instructive and accurate insofar as it goes, little reflection shows that for many cases of addiction, it doesn't go far enough.

Consider, for example, that sometimes, addicts characterize their addictions in terms of their *relationship* with the substance. According to neuroscientist Marc Lewis, an addict named Brian reportedly formed an intense “relationship” with methamphetamines.<sup>46</sup> The *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* is rife with examples of individuals referring to alcohol as a friend or companion.<sup>47</sup> On an NPR show, Nathan Fields, a health department outreach worker and former heroin user explained, “Heroin has always been a great companion for people that are dependent...Best friend. It can talk to you. It can reason with you.”<sup>48</sup> These attitudes seem at odds with viewing the object of one's addiction merely as an appetitive need.

Consider also that addicts often use security-laden language to describe their addictions. In “What is it like to be an addict?” philosopher Owen Flanagan described how his drugs of choice (initially) gave him a “safe-haven feeling,” allowing him to escape what he termed a kind of “existential anxiety.”<sup>49</sup> Addicted persons also often recount how they used precisely because

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<sup>46</sup> Marc Lewis, *The Biology of Desire* (New York: The Perseus Books Group, 2015), 74. Lewis explained that for Brian, “quitting meth was like turning his back on a friend or lover” and caused him to “go through heartbreak” in much the same way as the dissolution of a romantic relationship (ibid, 167-168). Consider also that author and self-identified alcoholic Caroline Knapp describes her “relationship” with alcohol as a “love story” (Caroline Knapp, *Drinking: A Love Story* [New York: The Dial Press, 1996]).

<sup>47</sup> Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Big Book, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, 2001), 310, 389, 447.

<sup>48</sup> Audie Cornish and Andrea Hsu, “Can Baltimore Provide Addiction Treatment On Demand?” *NPR*, 2/24/2016 [<http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/02/24/467961911/can-baltimore-provide-addiction-treatment-on-demand>].

<sup>49</sup> Owen Flanagan, “What Is It Like to Be an Addict?” in *Addiction and Responsibility*, eds. Jeffrey Poland and George Graham (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 269-292, 275-6.

the substance allowed them to feel “self-confident,” “courageous,” “masterful,” making one’s “direction clear-cut” and putting one “at ease” in their interactions.<sup>50</sup>

One might worry that the language noted here, rather than reflecting security-based emotional connectedness, merely represents predictable sensory effects of ingesting certain substances. Familiarly, some families of drugs tend to chemically induce feelings of warmth, while others tend to produce feelings of empowerment. My claim here is that while nearly all users might undergo fleeting, emotionally shallow varieties of the experiences described above, for some addicts, the particular substance comes to represent the (often false) promise of a more global confidence in her well-being and agential competence. Lewis’s description of his own addiction helps to illustrate this point. He writes, “The drug (or other substance) *stands for* a cluster of needs: in my case, needs for warmth, safety, freedom, and self-sufficiency.”<sup>51</sup> Consider too that in her recovery memoir, Maia Szalavitz claimed that going without heroin, made her feel “utterly stripped of safety and love,” and further explained “...what tormented me most as I shook through August of 1988 wasn’t the nausea and chills but the recurring fear that I’d never have lasting comfort or joy again.”<sup>52</sup> These sentiments suggest a connection between the addiction object and the addicted person’s felt security that goes beyond the typical “highs” associated with intoxication and “lows” associated with withdrawal. This should come as no surprise, as addicts sometimes continue to seek out their preferred substance even when that substance is no longer capable of producing its associated physiological effects in the user – and even when more potent substitutes are available.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See for example, Knapp, *Drinking*, 5; Lewis, *The Biology of Desire*, 144, 176, 178; Anon, *Big Book of AA*, 502.

<sup>51</sup> Marc Lewis, *Memoirs of an Addicted Brain* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013), 256, his emphasis.

<sup>52</sup> Maia Szalavitz, *Unbroken brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction* (New York, NY: St. Martins, 2016)

<sup>53</sup> Theorists have argued that addicted agents often continue to use drugs that no longer provide them pleasure (Richard Holton and Kent Berridge, “Addiction between compulsion and choice,” in *Addiction and Self-Control*, ed. Neil Levy [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 239–268.). In a recent work, Hanna Pickard argues that the

The foregoing picture suggests that addicted agency is often motivated by a far richer set of affective and social elements than those captured by typical appetites. Addicts are often motivated to pursue the objects of their addictions because they feel as though only *those* substances can provide them with the kind of confidence that they need to get by.<sup>54</sup> Even when, in some deep respect, addicts realize that they are not okay, the need to use is nonetheless often infused with these feelings.<sup>55</sup> The substance represents a means to obtaining emotional fulfillment that is normally served by close relationship partners. Notably, drug addiction often begins in (and is partially sustained by) “communities of users” that facilitate social engagement among those who are lonely, ostracized, or otherwise disadvantaged.<sup>56</sup> Attachment necessity is in a better position to explain this feature of addicted agency than felt appetitive need alone.

Cases in which an addict is attached to the object of her addiction nicely illustrate how (disordered varieties of) attachment necessity can undermine agency. Recall from the previous section that attachment necessity can both impair one’s agency and animate one’s remaining agential resources toward engaging with the attachment object. This tendency is often exacerbated in the case of addiction.

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available scientific evidence does not support the view that “addiction eradicates euphoria” (Hanna Pickard, “Addiction and the self.” *Nous* (2020): 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12328>).

<sup>54</sup> The claim that addicted agents sometimes have attachments to *particular* drugs may seem strange, but I think there is some support for this view. If addicts often continue to prefer a specific substance when it no longer produces the same pleasurable effects and other more potent substitutes are available, this is suggestive of a kind of non-substitutability, and so too are characterizations of a specific drug as a “best friend” or special companion. Still, given the controversial nature of these claims, one might think it more plausible to characterize some addictions in terms of attachments to the practice of drug use, rather than to a specific drug. I suspect that we can make room for both possibilities. Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer from *Ethics* for prompting me to address this worry here.

<sup>55</sup> Francis Seeburger explains, “Whenever addicts are practicing their addictions, then by definition, they feel ‘all right.’ In contrast, whenever addicts are *not* practicing their addictions, it feels to them as if something is wrong...without ever being able to put a name on just what it is that is making them feel that way. In some way that they cannot further specify, things just feel out of joint to them” (Francis Seeburger, *Addiction and Responsibility: An Inquiry into the Addictive Mind* [New York: Crossroads, 1993], 55).

<sup>56</sup> For accounts that stress the important social and emotional elements of addictive motivation, see Flores, *Addiction as an Attachment Disorder*; Flanagan, “What is it like to be an addict?”; Jeanette Kennett and Doug McConnell, “Explaining Addiction: How Far Does the Reward Account of Motivation Take Us?” *Inquiry* 56 (2013): 470-489; Hanna Pickard, “The Puzzle of Addiction.” In H. Pickard and S. Ahmed (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Science of Addiction* (New York: Oxford, 2019), 9-22; and Pickard, “Addiction and the Self.”



Felt attachment necessity in addiction, at least early on, is typically a response to the positive impact that the object has on the agent's sense of security. The substance often serves as a helpful resource for coping with adversity and tending to other things that one cares about. For example, some begin regularly using a particular addictive substance because they find that it staves off crippling feelings of anxiety, or again, because they make one feel like a more competent artist, thinker, socializer etc. Often, though, in the end, addictive substances end up injuring one's sense of security, (often by) causing one to neglect the things that one values most. They tend to, in a sense, blind users to other values, sometimes resulting in a pernicious form of tunnel vision.<sup>57</sup> Though this mechanism may sound familiar from appetitive models of addiction, the role of security in this case – both as a motivating factor and as a reflection of one's *sense of oneself* as an agent – betray crucial differences.

To see, consider Lewis's description of how one addict's "heroin circuits" in the brain were "energized." He writes, "...much of their energy came from anxiety, anxiety about just being okay. By now, heroin was both the cause of that anxiety and its only relief."<sup>58</sup> He later remarks that while addiction typically *begins* as an effective response to an emotional need, "addiction then becomes the unmet need that overshadows all the others, continuing to build its own callused shell."<sup>59</sup> The point is that an agent's attachment to a drug (often) dominates her attention, detracting from her ability to attend to other things that matter to her. Even while it provides relief in some sense, it also undercuts her agency by creating a dependency that is narrow and alienating. As a result, satisfying her security-driven need for an object actually causes her to become increasingly less secure.

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<sup>57</sup> For more on the role of valuing in addiction, see Ainslie 2001; Summers 2015; Holton 2009; and Yaffe 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis, *The Biology of Desire*, 63.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 178.

To sum up, some addictions are fittingly characterized as involving attachment orientations toward their objects and recognizing the role of attachment necessity in these cases helps to explain certain features of addiction that remain unilluminated by felt appetitive need alone. Attachment necessity can help to account for the relationship-oriented phenomenology of some addictions, their rich affective experiences, and the distinctive sense in which the addict's sense of security is implicated. In addiction, felt necessity often takes the form of a vicious cycle in which the agent's injured sense of security causes her to focus on acquiring the relevant object, but the focus on the object ultimately further undermines her sense of security.

## **7. Attachment Necessity and Love**

The psychological research on attachment theory suggests that we often find attachment necessity at work in romantic love. The import of this need in romantic love and its roles in enhancing agency have often been overlooked in the philosophical literature on love. But as I will argue, attachment necessity can inform certain aspects of love that remain obscured when viewed from the perspective of caring necessity alone.

There is good reason to think that one often experiences one's beloved as a felt attachment need (in the sense described in this paper). Recall that theorists working in the field of "adult attachment" have adduced many similarities between attachment behaviors in the infant-primary caregiver bond and those exhibited in adult romantic partnerships. Adults seek regular engagement with their romantic partners, use them as safe-havens and secure bases, and are distressed by prolonged separation from them.

Add to this that grief, the paradigmatic response to the death of a beloved seems to, in important respects, mimic the typical response of the infant's long-term separation from her

primary caregiver. Children and adults alike often become sullen, withdrawn, inexplicably ill, and incapable of even the most basic everyday activities when they are no longer able to engage with their respective attachment figures.<sup>60</sup> In adult agents, though, who have a more complex sense of self, the relationship between grief and felt security is even more apparent. In addition to feelings of sadness and longing for the lost person's return, grievers often report feeling fearful, inadequate, confused or disoriented, anxious, and incapable of action.<sup>61</sup> These affective and agential impairments are intimately connected to one's sense of security.

Even though many of the behaviors and affects associated with security-based attachment often feature prominently in loving relationships (and in the paradigmatic response to the loss of one's beloved), one might still resist characterizing love in terms of attachment necessity. One worry is that describing love's felt need in these terms infantilizes or otherwise debases love by tying it to the self-regarding, security-seeking features involved in attachment necessity.

A closer look at attachment necessity, though, suggests that it is often an integral and valuable aspect of romantic love. While caring necessity is important, on its own, it will not suffice for some cases of love. To see this, consider the case of Alejandro and Denise:

Alejandro claims to love his fiancée Denise. In their interactions, he is concerned exclusively with how best to contribute to her welfare. This morning, Denise learned that she has been offered an opportunity to realize her life's dream of embarking on a six-year space mission.

Unfortunately, during this time, she would be unreachable to all earth dwellers, including her

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<sup>60</sup> See for example René Spitz, "Hospitalism: An Inquiry into the genesis of psychiatric conditions in early childhood," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 1 (1945): 53-74; René Spitz and Katherine Wolf, "Anaclitic depression; an inquiry into the genesis of psychiatric conditions in early childhood, II," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 2 (1946): 313-342; John Bowlby and James Robertson, "A Two-year Old Goes to the Hospital," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 46 (1953): 425-427; John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Vol. 3: Loss, Sadness, and Depression* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); and Colin Murray Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life* (Madison: International Universities Press, 1998).

<sup>61</sup> See Parkes, *Bereavement*; and Jane Littlewood, *Aspects of Grief: Bereavement in Adult Life* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

beloved fiancé. When she relays the news to Alejandro, he is overjoyed and immediately offers to help her pack. When she expresses concern over being apart from him for so long, he cheerfully replies, “This is what’s best for you, and that’s really all that matters to me!”<sup>62</sup>

Alejandro’s supportive and selfless attitude notwithstanding, we could understand if Denise were a bit disappointed at his response. The problem is that though Alejandro experiences a felt need for Denise to flourish, there is an important respect in which he doesn’t seem to need *her*. Often, in romantic love, the prospect of our beloveds selflessly devoting themselves to our welfare without ample regard to how engagement with us impacts them and their lives is an unpleasant one. We want them to fully recognize and embrace the import that we have for them, and it is difficult to see how they could do so while remaining focused on our well-being alone. Thus Alejandro’s love for Denise, while marked by a particularly strong sense of caring necessity, nevertheless seems impoverished in important respects.

But why think that attachment necessity can fill the lacuna in Alejandro’s love? After all, security isn’t particularly romantic. But perhaps one could see romantic value in a lover’s admission that without her beloved, she would feel fractured, adrift – and for a time at least – as though she’d lost her bearings and was unable to get along in the world as well. Recall that this description captures the sense of (lost) security at issue in attachment necessity. Were Alejandro attached to Denise in this way, in addition to caring about her, he wouldn’t necessarily protest her departure. He might think it important that she follow her dream and flourish without him. But we would expect him to experience her departure as a loss that will likely have a negative impact on his own well-being and on his ability to function as well as he normally can.

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<sup>62</sup> This is a version of an example I use in Wonderly, “Love and Attachment.”

To see that we value needing others (and being needed) in this way, consider Dan Moller's remarks on the empirical finding that people are more resilient to being negatively impacted by the deaths of loved ones than typically supposed. According to Moller, "We like to believe that we are *needed* by our husband or wife and that consequently losing us should have a profound and lasting effect on them, just as the sudden injury of a key baseball player should have a disruptive and debilitating effect on the team."<sup>63</sup> On his view, most of us tend to think that our deaths "would make a deep impact on [our beloveds'] ability to continue to lead happy worthwhile lives," and our beloveds' resilience to losing us would be regrettable because it "shows that we don't have the significance that we thought."<sup>64</sup> I think this is exactly right. The point is not that we enjoy the thought of our beloveds suffering or being dramatically impaired without us, but rather that the need for *us* (in the sense associated with attachment necessity) – and not just the need for our flourishing – is often an important element of love.

Of course, even if one grants that we value being needed in the sense associated with attachment, it is not clear that it is all-things-considered good for the attached agent to need her beloved in this way. As we saw in the preceding section, attachments sometimes go horribly wrong, and we have no reason to think that such perils are limited to hyper-attachment orientations to addictive substances. An agent's attachment to her beloved might capture and fix her attention to a dangerous degree, causing her to doggedly pursue engagement with her beloved to the gross neglect of other of her important cares, and leading to utter devastation when she is separated from her beloved even for a very short time. Though there is nothing to rule out this possibility, it is important to note that attachments to persons can positively impact one's agency in ways that attachments to non-persons cannot.

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<sup>63</sup> Dan Moller, "Love and Death," *The Journal of Philosophy* 104 (2007): 301-316, 309.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

Recall that one crucial difference between an attachment to a non-person and an attachment to a beloved person is that in the latter case, one's attachment object can actively respond to one's need. This allows another to play a more direct role in shaping one's agency. Engagement with our attachment figures – in both infancy and adulthood – help to shape our internal models of our selves. Supportive interactions with our attachment partners serve to regulate our emotions, increase our senses of competence and self-worth, and foster greater independence. Of course, rejection or abuse at the hands of our attachment figures can be especially damaging. This makes attachment necessity a risky affair, but these risks also facilitate increased trust and closeness in loving relationships.<sup>65</sup>

Attachment necessity, then, often plays an integral role in love, and where it does, it helpfully illuminates certain aspects of the lover's agency. Often, the lover is not merely motivated to promote her beloved's flourishing, but also to regularly engage with her beloved on pain of reduced security. In terms that are no doubt familiar by now, without regular engagement with one's beloved, one often feels off-kilter, "no longer all of a piece" etc. – in short, like a less competent agent. The agent's experience of her beloved as a felt attachment need, rather than caring necessity alone, better captures these aspects of the lover's agency. Viewing love's need of another through the lens of attachment necessity also positions us to discern certain benefits to one's agency about which caring necessity alone is largely silent. A felt attachment need for a person who is appropriately responsive fuels interactions that typically increase one's confidence and self-reliance, promoting a greater willingness to take on (and an increased ability to overcome) new challenges.

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Nancy Collins and Brooke Feeney, "A Safe Haven: An Attachment Theory Perspective on Support Seeking and Caregiving in Intimate Relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78 (2000): 1053-1073; and Collins et al, "Responding to Need in Intimate Relationships."

We have now arrived at a good place to conclude. Experiencing some person or object as a felt need can both impede and enhance one's agency. In the extant agency literature, theorists have tended to focus on two varieties of felt necessity, appetitive needs and caring necessity. I have argued that we have good reason to consider a third that I have labeled "attachment necessity." Attachment necessity, like its sister orientations, can both impact human agency in distinctively interesting ways and inform important aspects of addiction and love.

Our felt needs for specific persons and objects reflect a deep and pervasive source of human vulnerability. They sometimes represent forms of dependence we'd rather avoid and move us in directions that we ought not to go. But they are also part of the framework by which we understand the world and find our places within it. Felt necessity can serve to partially constitute and strengthen valuable relationships. And particular felt needs can reveal and reflect who we are (and how we function) as agents trying to stay connected while treading unstable ground. There remains much more to be said about the structure and normativity of felt necessity – and attachment necessity in particular. And though I have only scratched the surface here, I hope to have helped lay the ground for further fruitful inquiry on this topic.