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### **Damaris Masham on Loving Persons**

In *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God*, Damaris Masham responds to the view that love conflicts with virtue, insofar as the latter calls upon us to be impartial, while the former demands partiality. Masham argues that this view threatens to undercut the value of love and virtue equally. Scholars have noted her critique of figures like Astell on these grounds (Hammou 2008; Myers 2013; Broad 2015) but have yet to examine the positive connection between Masham's account of love and her wider moral theory. In this paper, I argue, first, that for Masham, "love" names the pleasure that we feel when perceiving another being as existing separate from ourselves. In this way, the lover never feels conjoined with the beloved; a precondition of love is that one recognizes the other person as a *distinct* being. On this view of love I argue, second, that for Masham, the value of love is derived from the fact that it is closely connected to the attitude of respect and the appreciation of our beloved's autonomy. Without this experience of love, the thought goes, respect and an appreciation of the beloved's autonomy is simply impossible. While Masham seems to be most concerned with familial love in the *Discourse* – romantic love and the love between parents and children – I argue, third, that she means this love to extend to the community at large. In this sense, I claim, love grounds our moral relations to others for Masham.