

**ROMANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN
WOODY ALLEN'S "MANHATTAN"***

Michael Smith

We ordinarily distinguish between two people who both have a false belief about what they have reason to do, where one has that false belief as a result of their having, but failing to exercise, the capacity to have a true belief, and the other has a false belief as a result of their lacking the capacity to believe the truth in the first place. The second is cut off from reality; the first is not, indeed the truth might even be staring them right in the face. Assuming that both act on their false beliefs, the first meets a condition necessary for blame, whereas the second does not. If what they each believe they have reason to do is something that adversely affects someone, then guilt (if we are the agent), or resentment (if we are the one who is adversely affected), or indignation (if it is a third party who is affected), might be appropriate in the first case, but not in the second.

Similarly, we ordinarily distinguish between two people who both know that they have a reason to act in a certain way, but neither of whom desires to act in that way, where one's lack of desire is the result of their having but failing to exercise a capacity to desire in accordance with their knowledge, and the other's lack of a desire is the result of their incapacity to desire accordingly. Though they both lack self-control, the second has no self-control to exercise, whereas the first does, but just fails to exercise it. Again, assuming that both act on their desires, though the first meets a condition necessary for blame, the second does not. If what they each desire to do is something that adversely affects someone, then guilt or resentment or indignation might be appropriate in the first case, but not in the second.

In "Skepticism about Weakness of Will", Gary Watson argued that this ordinary distinction between having a capacity but failing to exercise it, and lacking a capacity altogether, is a distinction without a difference (Watson 1977). He focused on cases of having, but failing to exercise the capacity to form desires—that is, cases of weakness of will, as that is standardly understood—but his concern readily generalizes to the capacity for belief formation. The problem he sees is that we cannot come up with a plausible folk psychological explanation of the failure to exercise a capacity in the case of someone who has a capacity but fails to exercise it. This is because the typical folk psychological explanations of an agent's failure to exercise a capacity are either his incapacity, or the

* Earlier versions of parts of this paper were delivered at the Monash University Philosophy Department Staff Seminar in 2015; at *Aesthetics, Normativity, and Reasons*, a conference held at the University of Kent, in 2015; and at a symposium on the philosophy of romantic love held at the annual meeting of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association in 2016. Thanks to Maria Alvarez, Linda Barclay, John Bigelow, Berit Brogaard, Elisabeth Schellekens Dammann, Shamik Dasgupta, Kyla Ebels-Duggan, Sophie Grace, Jakob Hohwy, Simon Kirchin, Hans Maes, Philip Pettit, Alexei Procyshyn, Laurie Shrage, Murray Smith, Amia Srinivasan, and John Thrasher. All otherwise unidentified references are to (Allen 1982).

fact that he doesn't believe the exercise is called for. But neither of these explanations is what is supposed to be going on in standard cases of weakness of will.

The best way to respond to Watson's argument, in my view, is to deny that such failures need be given a further folk psychological explanation (Smith 2003, for a different but related response see Mele 2012). When someone does something because of their failure to exercise some capacity, then perhaps their failure can be explained. Perhaps they didn't have the capacity, or perhaps they have it, but didn't think its exercise was called for in the circumstances. But perhaps it can't be explained. Perhaps all there is to say is that though they had the capacity, and though its exercise was called for, and though they knew that that was so, they simply failed to exercise it. They were irrational. Such a response requires us to spell out what we have in mind when we say that the agent has a capacity, but fails to exercise it, but we know how to do this in principle.

Roughly speaking, the agent who has but fails to exercise a capacity is surrounded by nearby possible worlds in which he succeeds, whereas the one who lacks the capacity is not. A little more precisely, if we imagine two people, one of whom has a capacity but fails to exercise it, and the other of whom fails to exercise the capacity because he lacks it, then if we consider the nature of the possible worlds in which they each fail, and the nature of the possible worlds in which they each succeed, and then compare how similar these possible worlds are to each other along a relevant dimension of similarity, the degree of similarity in the case of those who have but fail to exercise the capacity is greater than it is in the case of those who lack the capacity. Facts about the similarities of these possible worlds can in this way be seen to explain the facts about the agents' capacities.

The difficult task is, of course, to spell out what the relevant dimension of similarity is. But assuming that we can spell that out, Watson's charge that there is no difference lapses. Indeed, we might even be able to make a stronger claim. For if we know what it is for an agent to have but fail to exercise a capacity, then it seems that more complex facts about how difficult it is for an agent to exercise a capacity might themselves be constituted by how remote the possible worlds are in which there is success, along some relevant dimension of similarity. An agent's lacking a capacity altogether would then just be the limit case of difficulty. It would be that case in which the agent's exercise of the capacity isn't just hard, but too hard (compare Wallace 1994, Chapter 7). Facts about the difficulty in the exercise of a capacity and indeterminacy in its possession would then amount to much the same thing. Since both constitute a partial excuse, that wouldn't be all that surprising. But since I have explored this line of response elsewhere, I will say no more about it here.

A different but complementary way to respond to Watson's argument is by focusing on real or imaginary cases in which this distinction does some normative work, and then seeing whether the normative work it does presupposes the possibility of a further folk psychological explanation of the failure in the case where someone has, but fails to exercise, a capacity. Do we require a further folk psychological explanation, or does our interest bottom out in the modal claim? This is the line of response on which I wish to focus in what follows. Interactions with those with whom we are romantically involved would seem to be finely tuned to whether their actions are explained by their having but failing to exercise a capacity, or by their lacking a capacity altogether, and Woody

Allen's "Manhattan" is an especially rich source of imaginary examples of romantic involvements in which different characters' actions are explained in each of these ways. My aim in what follows is to spell out the background to the movie and the plot line in sufficient detail to lay bear the grounds for these assessments.

To anticipate, it turns out that our ability to draw the distinction between agents who have, but fail to exercise, a capacity, and those who lack a capacity altogether, does not turn on our being able to find further folk psychological explanations of the failures in the former case. Instead it turns on our having evidence for the truth of the modal claim, which is in turn linked to our having evidence that the characters in question remain trustworthy despite their having done the wrong thing. The contrast with those who lack the capacity is that we have evidence that they are not trustworthy. What reflection on the movie brings out that is that, though it is difficult to say precisely what this evidence amounts to, we are able to recognize it when we see it.

Watson's demand for a further folk psychological explanation of failures to exercise a capacity is thus of a piece with a more general tendency philosophers have to over-intellectualize action explanations, especially when it comes to responsibility assignments. My own view is that this is a tendency we should resist, and would overcome if we attended more often to the action explanations and responsibility assignments we come up with when we interpret movies. In movies, as in real life, a great deal of the evidence for these comes from context: facial expression, gesture, and other visual and audio cues. A subsidiary aim of the paper is to show how much we can learn about action explanations and responsibility assignments by paying close attention to the context in which people do what they do and say what they say.

Unsurprisingly, this paper is best read with a copy of "Manhattan" in a DVD player and a remote in hand so that you can watch and rewatch the crucial scenes as we discuss them. It is in the nature of the case the descriptions given will be no substitute for watching the movie.

1. Background to "Manhattan"

In the late 1970s, New York City was on a downward spiral. Economic hardship and an explosion in the drug culture had caused serious social problems, and the crime associated with drugs had made for additional problems with law and order. Businesses were closing down and middle-class families were moving out to the safe and leafy suburbs of Connecticut. Yet in 1978, just as the city seemed to be in free fall, Woody Allen released a movie that he starred in, directed, and co-wrote with Marshall Brickman, featuring Manhattan as a vibrant, sophisticated, and cosmopolitan place in which to live and work, notwithstanding its dark underside.

Shot in black and white with an aspect ratio of 2.35:1, "Manhattan" has an unashamedly nostalgic look, and the wide screen immediately conveys the sense that something epic is about to unfold. The long beginning sequence is a collage that captures the hustle and bustle and beauty of Manhattan in the 1970s, and while we watch, Allen's character, Isaac, narrates various failed attempts to write the first chapter of a novel about people in Manhattan, a novel that he begins writing at the very end of the movie. The movie is complemented by a lush score made up almost entirely of songs by the Gershwin brothers played as instrumentals, and, with the exception of the long beginning sequence which

ends with "Rhapsody in Blue" being played while fireworks explode over the Manhattan skyline, part of the significance of the scenes in which these Gershwin songs figure is carried by their unheard lyrics, an added bonus for those in the know.

Though amusing, and with its fair share of Allen's one-liners, "Manhattan" turns out to be anything but epic. The characters are mostly flawed and consumed with the everyday, and what unfolds through their interactions is a complex exploration of the nature of love in all its forms—especially romantic love, but also the love of parents for children, friends for friends, consumers and producers of art for works of art, and the rooted for place—and the difficult relationship that love stands in to morality. The conception of love that makes most sense of the movie is the conception that Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett propose in their joint work, and that Alexander Nehamas articulates in his (Cocking and Kennett 2000, Nehamas 2002). As it happens, this also seems to me to be the most plausible conception of love (Smith forthcoming). According to this conception, the basic case of love in terms of which we understand the rest is love between friends and lovers, and what it is for friends and lovers to love each other is for them to have a characteristic way of acquiring and maintaining affection for and desires concerning each other. The striking feature of this conception of love, a feature that Cocking and Kennett and Nehamas emphasize, is that since the desires we acquire and maintain can be quite idiosyncratic, love and morality are always on a potential collision course with each other.

In "Manhattan", the background conception of morality seems to be liberal. We have strong moral reasons to leave people free to do whatever they want to do, on condition that their so acting leaves others similarly free, and to see to it that they have the capacity to form and realize such desires in the first place. We mustn't mislead them, or manipulate them, or lead them quite reasonably to form expectations about how we will behave towards them, expectations around which they form their own desires, and then fail to follow through. And we must also do our fair share to ensure that others, especially those who are yet to grow up, have the wherewithal to form and realize desires of their own. But so long as we do this, we are permitted to realize our own desires, and many of these desires will have their source in the fact that we love someone or something. In other words, in the basic case, their source will lie in a natural human disposition to acquire affection for others, and cares and concerns that dovetail with those of others, who in turn have affection for us and cares and concerns that dovetail with ours, where these cares and concerns are in a dynamic relationship with each other.

In the ideal case, those who love each other thus constantly make and re-make themselves for each other. They each care about the other's life's being successful in the other's own terms, and it follows from this that there is no question but that they will help each other when they are in need of help. There is, however, no guarantee that when lovers make and re-make themselves in these ways, they will be led to have desires to do things that they have strong moral reasons to do. This is why love and morality are always on a potential collision course. There will be many ways in which loving someone can lead us to wrong others, and "Manhattan" puts many of these on display for us to recognize. What is to be at issue is which facts we track when we differentiate between those characters who have the capacity not to wrong others, but failed to exercise it, and

so guilt, resentment, and indignation are appropriate, and others who have no such capacity, and so these reactive attitudes are inappropriate.

2. Synopsis of "Manhattan"

It will be helpful to have a common understanding of the plot. In spelling out this common understanding, it is important to remember that "Manhattan" is a work of fiction. What's needed is thus an account of what is true *according to the movie*. Whether what is true according to the movie is at odds with truths with which we are familiar in real life is an issue to which we will return at various points.

"Manhattan" features eight main characters. There is Yale, a college literature professor and his wife of twelve years Emily; Mary, a journalist who also makes money writing novelizations of movies, and the third woman with whom Yale has had an affair since marrying Emily; Isaac, a forty-two year old, twice-divorced, longtime friend of Yale and Emily's who writes a TV comedy which some think is rubbish and others think is a work of genius, but who longs to write a serious novel; and Tracy, a sophisticated seventeen year old who attends the Dalton School, a highly selective, coeducational prep school on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Tracy has already had three affairs with boys her own age, but she found them boring, and is now dating Isaac. The other three main characters are Jill, Isaac's ex-wife and the mother of his son, Willie, and Jill's partner Connie, for whom she left Isaac. Jill and Connie are raising Willie, who seems to be flourishing. Isaac spends a few hours with him each week.

As the movie begins, we quickly learn about the history of the main characters' relationships with each other. Isaac's ex-wife Jill, who has very little patience where he is concerned, is writing an "honest account" (188, 259) of their marriage and acrimonious breakup. This prospect fills Isaac with dread. Jill was bisexual when he met her, and he thought, mistakenly, that if they were married, their heterosexual relationship would fully satisfy her. It didn't, and after their breakup, she wanted as little to do with him as possible. He fears that her book will reveal his "little idiosyncrasies", his "quirks and mannerisms", and perhaps some of the "few disgusting little moments" he regrets (184). These include his having staked out Jill and Connie's cabin when they began having an affair, and then trying to run Connie over with his car when she emerged—instead he smashed the car into the porch.

Isaac's relationship with Tracy is playful. In their first scene together, he lights a cigarette and begins to smoke in the manner of a 1950s leading man. When Tracy points out that he doesn't smoke, he fixes her gaze and says, "I look so incredibly handsome with a cigarette... You like the way I look?... I'm getting through to you, right?" (183) Tracy detects the irony and gently deflates him with a "Yup" as she walks off to the bathroom. Isaac also seems to have great affection for Tracy, and a desire that she flourishes. He says he wants her to enjoy him with his "wry sense of humor" and his "astonishing sexual technique", but he is also constantly taking her to art galleries and movies, he has bought her a camera to foster her interest in photography, and he has told her "never forget that... you've got your whole life ahead of you." (189) He insists more than once that she should be on the lookout for someone more her own age, and he encourages her when she has the opportunity to study abroad. For her part, Tracy clearly goes from having a crush on Isaac to falling in love with him during the course of the movie.

Yale is more smitten with Mary than he was with the other women with whom he has had affairs. She is highly intelligent, opinionated, and forthright, and she couldn't care less about how others react to her. The first time Isaac meets her with Yale, and learns of their invention of the "Academy of the Overrated" (193-194), a fictitious academy that includes the likes of Gustav Mahler, Isak Dinesen, Carl Jung, Scott Fitzgerald, Lenny Bruce, Norman Mailer, Walt Whitman, and...horror of horrors!...Ingmar Bergman, all heroes of his, he concludes that she is unbearably pretentious. (Immediately before "Manhattan", Allen had released "Interiors", a movie that addresses Bergmanesque themes in Bergman's style.) Isaac can't understand why Yale has affairs with the likes of Mary, especially when he is married to the wonderful Emily: "I'm old-fashioned. I don't believe in extramarital relationships. I think people should mate for life, like pigeons or Catholics." (197) Tracy disagrees. She points out that Yale seems to like Mary, which she thinks is the most important point—remember that the movie assumes that we have strong moral reasons to leave people free to lead lives of their own choosing—and suggests that Isaac's view is old-fashioned and out of touch with reality: "[m]aybe we're meant to have,...a series of relationships of different lengths." (197) Isaac seems to take the point.

Though Yale thinks he conducts his affairs behind Emily's back, it emerges towards the end of the movie that she has known all along that he is unfaithful, but turns a blind eye because that's what's required to make their marriage work. Emily constantly asks Yale whether he would consider their moving to Connecticut and having a baby, and this seems to be an expression of not just her desire to have a family, and live somewhere safe to raise a family, but also a desire to get Yale away from the environment in which he is so distracted. These distractions don't just keep him from focusing on her, but also from writing the biography of Eugene O'Neill he has long been planning. However Yale is having none of it. He comes up with all sorts of excuses to stay in Manhattan, including the fact that he and Emily can't abandon Isaac. In truth his motives are at best mixed, and include his desire to pursue his affair with Mary. Yale seems destined to end up like a character in a Eugene O'Neill play.

Isaac quits his job to write his novel, but is immediately filled with remorse because of the sacrifices he will have to make, given his diminished income. After a chance meeting with Mary at the Museum of Modern Art, they go for a walk, and to Isaac's great delight, they talk about his novel until early in the morning. Ending up under the Queensboro Bridge, they also discover a shared appreciation of the beauty of Manhattan. Immediately afterwards, Isaac rings Yale to see whether he would be stepping on his toes if he were to pursue Mary, but he backs off before telling Yale of his interest when he learns that Yale is still smitten. Isaac and Mary meet up again when she is upset and in need of comfort at how little time Yale spends with her because of his marriage. During this second meeting, their mutual attraction becomes clear. They almost kiss, but don't, and we know that Isaac resists because of his friendship with Yale.

Mary wants more from her relationship with Yale than he is willing to give, so they break up. Yale encourages Isaac to pursue Mary. Isaac thinks this is a good idea because "under my personal vibrations, I could put her life in...some kind of good order." Yale remarks, "that's what you said about Jill...[a]nd under your personal vibrations, she went from bisexuality to homosexuality." (238) Isaac begins seeing Mary, despite her warning him

that she is "not the person to get involved with. I'm trouble." (241) When Isaac tells Tracy that their affair is over, she is heartbroken. He feels sorry for her, but says he doesn't feel guilty because he has always been completely honest that their relationship wouldn't last. Isaac and Mary begin living together, and everything seems to go well at first. Mary even admits that he is "someone I could ...imagine having children with." (248) Isaac seems happy enough, even though privately concerned that Mary harbors feelings for Yale. Unbeknownst to him, it is Yale who still has feelings for Mary. He reaches out to her behind Isaac's back, but Mary rebuffs him.

Jill's book comes out and is everything Isaac feared. She doesn't just go into detail about things that happened, but makes negative comments about him as a person: "He was given to fits of rage, Jewish, liberal paranoia, male chauvinism, self-righteous misanthropy, and nihilistic moods of despair. He had complaints about life but never any solutions...He longed to be an artist but balked at the necessary sacrifices. In his most private moments, he spoke of his fear of death, which he elevated to tragic heights when, in fact, it was mere narcissism." (259) Yale once again makes contact with Mary without Isaac's knowledge and promises to leave Emily for her. She realizes that she still loves him and they rekindle their affair. When Isaac learns about the affair from Mary, he is stunned. Mary feels guilty, and invites Isaac to express his resentment. However Isaac's anger and resentment is reserved for Yale. He goes to the college where Yale teaches and confronts him about his betrayal. Instead of apologizing, Yale responds that Isaac holds himself to a standard of conduct to which it is unreasonable to hold others.

While talking with Emily after Yale leaves her for Mary, Isaac confesses that he made a mistake leaving Tracy. Emily encourages him to tell her so. He is disinclined, as though she has tried to remain friends since their breakup, he hasn't reciprocated for fear of leading her on. However one day, while he is at home trying to come up with ideas for a short story about "people in Manhattan who...are constantly creating these...unnecessary neurotic problems for themselves 'cause it keeps them from dealing with...more unsolvable, terrifying problems about...the universe" (267), he realizes that he really must try to reconcile with her. He sets off but arrives just as she is about to leave to study abroad. There is a poignant moment as her broken heart seems to be mended by his sincere confession of his love for her and the mistake he made in ending their relationship. He asks her not to leave, and she is moved, but tells him that it is too late to change her plans. She also reminds him that he is the one who had encouraged her to study abroad in the first place. If they are meant to be together, they will get together when she returns in six months.

The movie ends with the look on Isaac's face changing from one of concern, to a faint smile. It seems to convey his acknowledgement that Tracy is right. The movie ends. We assume that Tracy goes abroad, and that Isaac returns home and writes a novel about people in Manhattan.

3. Wrongs done by Yale

Yale performs several wrong actions during the course of "Manhattan". There are the affairs he has without securing Emily's consent; the many lies he tells her in the attempt to cover his tracks; and, most importantly, his brazen betrayal of Isaac's trust when he

rekindles his affair with Mary. It is this last wrong that precipitates Isaac to confront him in the movie's pivotal scene.

The confrontation takes place in a biology classroom at the college where Yale teaches, a classroom at the front of which hangs a skeleton of an early hominid.

IKE (*Gesturing, almost hitting the skeleton*) But you - but you're too easy on yourself, don't you see that?! You know, you ... you - that's your problem, that's your whole problem. You - you rationalize everything. You're not honest with yourself. You talk about ... you wanna - you wanna write a book, but - but, in the end, you'd rather buy the Porsche, you know, or you cheat a little bit on Emily, and you play around the truth a little with me, and - and the next thing you know, you're in front of a Senate committee and you're naming names! You're informing on your friends!

YALE (*Reacting*) You are so self-righteous, you know. I mean, we're just people, we're just human beings, you know. You think you're God!

IKE I - I gotta model myself after someone!

YALE Well, you just can't live the way you do, you know. It's all so perfect.

IKE Jesus - well, what are future generations gonna say about us? My God! (*He points to the skeleton, acknowledging it at last*) You know, someday we're gonna - we're gonna be like him! I mean, y-y -y-y-you know - well, he was probably one of the beautiful people. He was probably dancing and playing tennis and everything. And - and - (*Pointing to the skeleton again*) and now - well, this is what happens to us! You know, uh, it's very important to have - to have some kind of personal integrity. Y-you know, I'll - I'll be hanging in a classroom one day. And - and I wanna make sure when I ... thin out that I'm w-w-well thought of. (265-266)

Remember that when Isaac considered beginning a relationship with Mary, he contacted Yale to get a sense of his interest in her, but backed off when he learned that Yale still had an interest in her. What angers him is that Yale didn't show him that same consideration. They are meant to be firm friends, but Yale's pursuit of Mary behind his back is something that a friend would reasonably expect a friend not to do. Isaac wants their friendship to continue, but that requires Yale to make amends. What Isaac is plainly fishing for here is an acknowledgement of wrongdoing, an apology, and a commitment to act differently in the future.

However instead of an apology and a commitment to do better, Yale goes on the offensive. In his view, it isn't realistic to expect honesty of the kind Isaac demands of himself of ordinary people like Yale. It is only realistic to expect that kind of honesty of people with God-like capacities. Yale therefore makes a distinction between ordinary people like himself, people who "can't live the way you do," and extraordinary people like Isaac who, given their God-like powers, can live in a way that is "all so perfect". In so doing he admits that there is a standard of behavior that people like him don't meet, and so in this sense admits his wrongdoing, but then denies that it is legitimate for those like Isaac to blame them for not meeting that standard on the grounds that they *can't* meet it. In terms of our initial distinctions, Yale insists that though he wronged Isaac, Isaac

can't legitimately blame him because he lacked the capacity required to treat Isaac any better.

If Yale lacks the capacity to be honest with Isaac, then you would expect this to have serious consequences for their friendship. These consequences do seem to follow, as we discover a few scenes later when Isaac meets with Emily.

EMILY (*Shaking her head*) Tsch. You know I was a little pissed-off at you.

IKE (*Raising an eyebrow and pointing to himself*) Me?

EMILY (*Nodding her head*) Yeah. I figured if you hadn't introduced Mary to Yale, this might never have happened. *Ike, reacting to Emily's words, nods his head affirmatively.* (267)

As Isaac nods his head, he seems to be suppressing how shocked he is. It wasn't Isaac who introduced Mary to Yale, but Yale who introduced Mary to Isaac. Emily might have assumed otherwise when she first met Mary through Isaac, but when Yale left her for Mary, he should have confessed to the earlier affair. However, rather than have Emily be further "pissed-off" at him for having had that earlier affair, he allowed her, and continues to allow her, to be "pissed-off" at Isaac for introducing them. Yale's willingness to protect his interests through dishonesty is therefore on display yet again.

Much as a good friend would default to doing, Isaac protects Yale by staying silent. But it is clear from the look on his face that things have changed between them. If Yale lacks the capacity required to be truthful whenever his interests would be better served by deception, and if it makes no difference to him whether the negative consequences of his deception are being borne by Isaac, then that just goes to show that Isaac shouldn't be making himself vulnerable to Yale. His trust in Yale is evaporating, and he will be wary in his dealings with him in the future. Their friendship has been damaged, and no amount of apologizing will repair the damage. What is required now isn't an apology, but a demonstration by Yale that he is so much as *capable* of being truthful when being dishonest would better serve his interests.

4. Wrongs done by Isaac

Now let's focus on Isaac's treatment of Tracy. Isaac tells her that she should think of him as "a detour on the highway of life" (189), but his actions convey a very different message.

Remember Cocking and Kennett's and Nehamas's suggestion that love is a disposition to have affection for and desires concerning another person, where the disposition of each stands in a dynamic relationship with that of the other. Each person's acting on the desires that they acquire can therefore lead the other to have quite reasonable expectations about how they will behave towards the other in the future, expectations that it would be wrong to knowingly allow the other to have without meeting them. Assuming that this conception of love is on the right track, it seems to follow that, at least according the movie, Isaac and Tracy do love each other, and that Isaac wrongs Tracy when he breaks up with her to be with Mary.

Here are some examples in support of the claim that Isaac and Tracy love each other, in the Cocking and Kennett and Nehamas sense. Tracy acquires from Isaac a love of

photography and art and old movies (after they break up, she leaves a message with Isaac's answering service telling him that *Grand Illusion* is on TV), and the ability to see things in the quirky and humorous ways in which he sees things (there is a scene in which they are bed watching TV and Tracy matches Isaac's quips about someone's ill-fitting toupé with quips of her own about the toupé man's wife's horrifying face lift). Isaac acquires from Tracy a more realistic sense of how long relationships will last (remember how she corrected his suggestion that people should mate for life); an interest in playing the harmonica (she gave him a harmonica shortly before they broke up); and he even finds himself enjoying whimsical activities like riding around Central Park with her in a horse and carriage, something he antecedently thought "so corny" (227).

Towards the end of the horse and carriage ride, Isaac and Tracy kiss.

TRACY (*Breaking away from the kiss*) Quit fighting it. You know you're crazy about me.

IKE (*Gesturing and pointing to the sky*) I am. You-you-you're ... look, you're-you're God's answer to Job ... you know. You would've ended all-all argument between them. I mean, H-H-He would've pointed to you and said, you know, "I do a lot of terrible things, but I can also make one of these," you know. (*Ike points to Tracy; she chuckles, then buries her head in his shoulder. He kisses her hand*) And then -then, Job would've said, "Eh, okay-well, you win." *The camera pulls back and once again the horse-drawn carriage in its idyllic setting is seen on the screen. The romantic music continues to play...* (227)

So not only do Isaac's actions convey that he loves Tracy, but he admits as much to her. The movie underscores the point, as the romantic music that plays in the background during the horse and carriage ride—remember that part of the significance of the scenes in which Gershwin songs play is carried by their unheard lyrics—is "He loves and she loves" (Gershwin 1927):

He loves and she loves,
And they love,
So why can't you love and I love too?
Birds love and bees love
And whispering trees love,
And that's what we both should do.

Oh I always knew someday you'd come along,
We'll make a twosome that just can't go wrong,
Hear me he loves and she loves
And they love so won't you
Love me as I love you?

The whole point of the scene is that it builds up to the point where Isaac admits to Tracy that he loves her.

Given that Tracy loves Isaac, and Isaac seems to loves Tracy and admits as much, Tracy's reaction when he tells her that about Mary is hardly surprising.

TRACY Well, don't you love me?

IKE (*Sighing*) I ... (*Sighing again*) ... Well, the truth is that I love somebody else.

TRACY You do?

IKE Hey, come on, will you? We-you-we ... This was supposed to be a temporary fling, you know that.

TRACY You met someone?

IKE Don't stare at me with those big eyes. Jesus, you look like one of those barefoot kids from Bolivia who need foster parents.

TRACY Have you been seeing someone?

IKE (*Shaking his head no, then nodding yes*) No... yes, uh, someone older. Yeah, I mean, y-y-you know, y-y-you know, old, not as old as I am ... but in the same general ball park as me. *The camera moves closer to Tracy's face; it stays tight on her features, showing her expressions, throughout most of the remaining scene.*

TRACY (*Reacting, sighing*) Gee, now I don't feel so good.

IKE (*Offscreen*) It's-it's not right. You-you know, y-y-you shouldn't get hung, I mean, you should open up your life. You should see ... you know, you've got to.

TRACY (*Sighing*) You keep stating it like it's to my advantage when it's you that wants to get out of it. *The camera moves briefly to Ike's face.*

IKE Hey, don't be so precocious, okay? I mean, don't be so smart. I-I'm forty-two years old. My hair's falling out. I'm starting to lose some hearing in my right ear. Is that what you want?

TRACY I can't believe that you met somebody that you like better than me.

IKE (*Looking down*) Why should I feel guilty about this? This is ridiculous. I've always encouraged you to-to go out with g-guys more your own age, guys, kids from your class. I mean, mm, mm, Billy and Biff and Scooter and, mm, mm, you know, little Tommy or Terry. *Tracy's face once again fills the screen. She begins to cry. Ike's hand reaches over and touches her shoulder and neck.*

IKE (*Offscreen*) Hey, come on, don't cry. (*Tracy continues to cry*) Don't cry. Come on, don't cry. Tracy ... Tracy, don't-come on, don't cry, Tracy. Tracy.

TRACY (*Sighing*) Just leave me alone. *Ike's hand wipes a tear from Tracy's face.*

TRACY (*Reacting, still crying*) Leave me alone. (245-246)

Of course, Isaac's suggestion that Tracy should "open up her life" reflects his recognition that, given how young she is, there is a strong reason for them not to be in a relationship at all. We don't just have strong moral reasons not interfere with people's freedom to lead lives of their own choosing, but also to do our fair share in ensuring that they have the capacity to make such choices. In the case of young women like Tracy, this includes helping them develop their capacity to choose lovers by learning how to distinguish those who really care for them from those who just want to use them. Older men like Isaac therefore have strong moral reasons not to exploit their more powerful position in the social world to attract younger women who are yet to develop this capacity, use them for

their own benefit, and then discard them when someone more suitable comes along. Yet this is exactly what Isaac seems to have done.

In his own mind, Isaac thinks that he didn't act contrary to this strong moral reason when he began his fling with Tracy because he constantly reminded her that their relationship couldn't last. This is why he says that he sees no reason to feel guilty about ending their relationship. But as the context makes clear, his actions conveyed a very different message. He seemed to fall in love with her, Tracy fell in love with him, and he even declared his love for her. So even if their love for each other was inappropriate, given the moral reasons in the background—and remember the whole point of Cocking and Kennett's and Nehamas's conception of love is that it allows for the possibility that love and morality may come into conflict in this sort of way—Tracy is still right to feel aggrieved at Isaac's having started a relationship with Mary behind her back. The wrong that Isaac does to Tracy is therefore much the same as the wrong that Yale does to Isaac. Neither of them lives up to the standard of honesty demanded by the relationship they have with the person with whom they aren't fully honest.

In the light of this, what should we make of Isaac's decision to tell Tracy that he made a mistake in breaking up with her at the end? If their love for each other really is inappropriate, given the moral reasons in the background, then doesn't he wrong her again when he attempts to rekindle his relationship with her? The movie is equivocal on this point. Very early on, after Yale and Emily meet Tracy for the first time, they have the following exchange back at home.

EMILY Well, I don't think seventeen is too young. Besides that, she's a bright girl.

YALE (*Chuckling*) Well, uh, you - you get no argument from me, I think she's terrific. He - he could do a lot worse. He has done a lot worse. (*Chuckling again*) (186)

According to Emily and Yale, the strong moral reason for those who are Isaac's age not to be in a romantic relationship with those who are young doesn't apply to seventeen year olds, and it most certainly doesn't apply to seventeen year olds who are as bright as Tracy.

This is a crucial detail, because Isaac's decision to tell Tracy of his feelings for her at the end comes after he talks with Emily, so we can assume that Emily has put this point of view to him. The following exchange occurs just before Emily tells him that she is "pissed-off" with him.

IKE ... I was thinking about this just about a week ago. I think, and I know this sounds strange, but I think I really missed a good bet when I let Tracy go. Do you remember Tracy? Yeah.

EMILY (*Overlapping*) Yeah, I always liked her.

IKE Tsch. Yeah. I was-I was just thinking about this at home last week and (*Sighing and looking at his bands*) I think of all the women that I've known over the last years, when I actually am honest with myself... tsch, I think I had the

most relaxed times and the most, you know, the nicest times with her. She was really a terrific kid, but young, right? So ... that's that.

EMILY Why don't you call her?

IKE No, I would never do that. I think I blew that one. You know, I-I really kept her at a distance and I just would never give her a chance. And (*Sighing*) she was so sweet. You know she-she called me ... uh, she left a message with my service about a month ago (*Sighing and looking off into space for a moment*) that I should watch *Grand Illusion* on television ... (*Emily chuckles; Ike shakes his head and gestures*)... you know. And I never returned her call or anything. I-you know... (*Smacking his lips together*) 'cause I-you know, I, uh, didn't wanna lead her on or anything. I-uh ... she really cared about me and I ... *Ike trails off, sighing.* (266-267)

Some time passes in between this scene and the ending where he rushes off to see Tracy. Immediately before rushing off, Isaac has been making notes for a short story about people in Manhattan who create small problems for themselves as a way of avoiding the most fundamental and terrifying problem we face, which is whether life is worth living at all.

IKE (*Into the microphone, sighing*) Um, tsch-it's , uh ... well, it has to be optimistic. Well, all right, why is life worth living? That's a very good question. (*Sighing*) Um. (*Clearing his throat, then sighing again*) Well, there are certain things I-I guess that make it worthwhile. (*Sighing*) Uh, like what? (*Sighing again and scratching his neck*) Okay. Um, for me ... (*Sighing*) oh, I would say . . what, Groucho Marx, to name one thing ... uh, ummmm, and (*Sighing*) Willie Mays, and um, uh, the second movement of the Jupiter Symphony, and ummmm... (*Exhaling*) Louie Armstrong's recording of "Potatohead Blues" ... (*Sighing*) umm, Swedish movies, naturally ... *Sentimental Education* by Flaubert ... uh, Marlon Brando, Frank Sinatra ... (*Sighing*) ummm, those incredible apples and pears by Cezanne . . . (*Sighing*) uh, the crabs at Sam Wo's . . . tsch, uh (*Sighing*) Tracy's face ... *Ike chuckles softly as sad, romantic music plays in the background. He puts down the microphone on his chest and sighs. He leans up on his elbow, thinking for a moment, then sits up. He puts the microphone on the coffee table and stands up. He walks across his living room to a cabinet. He opens a drawer, then another as, finally, he finds what he was looking for-Tracy's harmonica. He takes the harmonica out of its box, tossing the container onto the nearby dining-room table. He walks back to the couch, hesitating for a moment, then sitting down. Still holding the harmonica, he picks up the phone, then quickly puts it' down. He puts down Tracy 's present, then, determinedly, he picks up the phone again and dials a number. It's busy. He puts down the phone and, impulsively, gets up, grabbing his jacket from a chair and running out of his apartment.* (267-268)

On this reading of the movie, Isaac has been won over to Emily's way of thinking. Though a difference in age may bring its own special challenges, there is nothing inappropriate with his being in a relationship with someone like Tracy, so he should try to win her back.

The final scene with Tracy is therefore the mirror image of the skeleton scene with Yale. In that scene, Yale had wronged Isaac, and Isaac was trying to get Yale to acknowledge his wrongdoing, apologize, and commit to doing better in the future. In this scene, Isaac has wronged Tracy, but the big difference is that he will acknowledge his wrongdoing, apologize, and commit to doing better in the future. Despite his flaws, Isaac will do the right thing. Unfortunately for Isaac, that isn't quite how it works out.

IKE (*Sighing*) Hi.

TRACY (*Sighing*) Hi.

IKE Tsch, I ... *He clears his throat.*

TRACY What're you doing here?

IKE Tsch. (*Sighing*) Well, (*Clearing his throat again*) I ran. (*Catching his breath, sniffing*) Tsch, I-I tried to call you on the phone, but, uh ... it was busy, so (*Inhaling*) I know that was two hours' worth of ... (*Tracy chuckles*) So then I couldn't get a taxi cab, so I ran. (*Breathing heavily*) Tsch ... Where you going?

TRACY London.

IKE (*Reacting, looking away for a moment*) You're going to London now? You mean if- What do you-what do you mean? If I-if I got over here two minutes later, you'd be-you'd be-you'd be ... going to London? (*Tracy sighs and nods her head; Ike sighs too*) Well, I-let me get right to the point then. (*Clearing his throat*) I don't think you oughta go. I think I made a big mistake. And I would prefer it if y-you didn't go.

TRACY (*Sighing*) Oh, Isaac.

IKE I-I mean it. I know it looks real bad now (*Chuckling*) but, uh ... you know-it, uh, uh, are you-are you seeing anybody? Are you going with anybody?

TRACY (*Shaking her head*) No.

IKE (*Sighing and shrugging*) So ... well... you st-st-st- Do you still love me or has that worn off or what?

TRACY (*Sighing, reacting*) Jesus, you pop up. You don't call me and then you suddenly appear. I mean ... what happened to that woman you met?

IKE Well-well, I'll tell you that-uh, it's-uh, Jesus, yeah, I don't see her anymore. I mean, you know, we say ... Look, I made a mistake. What do you want me to say? (*Pausing*) I don't think you oughta go to London. *He sighs and takes a deep breath.*

TRACY Well, I have to go. I mean, all the plans have been made, t-the arrangements. I mean, my parents are there now looking for a place for me to live.

IKE (*Sighing*) Tsch. W-well ... uh, ah, do you still love me or-or what?

TRACY Do you love me?

IKE Well, yeah, that's what I-uh ... well, yeah, of course, that's what this is all about : you know.

TRACY Guess what? I turned eighteen the other day.

IKE Did you?

TRACY (*Chuckling and nodding*) I'm legal, but I'm still a kid.

IKE You're not such a kid. Eighteen years old. You know, you can- you can ... they could draft you. You know that in some countries, you'd be ... (*Tracy smiles, then laughs softly. Ike moves a strand of hair away from her face*) Hey ... you look good.

TRACY You really hurt me.

IKE (*Stroking Tracy's cheek*) Uh, it was not on purpose ... you know. I mean, I-I... uh, you know, I was ... yeah, I mean ... you know, it was just-just the way I was looking at things then-

TRACY (*Interrupting*) Well, I'll be back in six months.

IKE (*Raising an eyebrow, reacting*) Six months-are you kidding?! Six months you're gonna go for?

TRACY We've gone this long. Well, I mean, what's six months if we still love each other?

IKE (*Nodding his head*) Hey, don't be so mature, okay? I mean, six months is a long time. Six months. You know, you're gonna be- you're gonna be i-in-in-in the ... working in the theater there. You'll be with actors and directors. You know, you're ... you know, you go to rehearsal and you-you hang out with those people. You have lunch a lot. And, and (*Clearing his throat and frowning*) ... well, you know, attachments form and-and, you know, I mean, you-you don't wanna get into that kind of... I mean, you-you'll change. You know, you'll be-you'll be ... in six months you'll be a completely different person.

TRACY (*Chuckling*) Well, don't you want me to have that experience? I mean, a while ago you made such a convincing case.

IKE Tsch. Yeah, of course I do, but you know, but you could ... you know, you-I mean, I-I just don't want that thing about you that I like to change.

An orchestration of "Rhapsody in Blue" begins in the background, the same music as in the beginning of the film.

TRACY I've gotta make a plane.

IKE Oh, come on, you ... come on. You don't-you don't have to go.

TRACY Why couldn't you have brought this up last week? Look, six months isn't so long. (*Pausing*) Not everybody gets corrupted. (*Ike stares at Tracy, reacting. He pushes back his glasses*) Tsch. Look, you have to have a little faith in people. *Ike continues to stare at Tracy. He has a quizzical look on his face; he breaks into a smile.* (269-271)

How does Isaac explain why he wronged Tracy? What he says is, "Look, I made a mistake. What do you want me to say?" and then later that "...it was not on purpose ... you know. I mean, I-I... uh, you know, I was ... yeah, I mean ... you know, it was just-just the way I was looking at things then." What is conveyed by the bumbling delivery is that he had a belief that he can now see it made no sense for him to have, the belief that he should cease his relationship with Tracy and be with Mary instead; that he has now

realized his mistake and shares her view that what he did was wrong; and that he is remorseful. He was wrong at the time to insist that he shouldn't feel guilty.

In terms of the distinctions we made at the very beginning, Isaac's "mistake" thus seems to be that he failed to exercise a capacity he had to recognize the right thing to do and do it at the time. This is significant because, if he has had the capacity to recognize the right thing to do all along, then given his remorseful acknowledgement of wrongdoing, Tracy can quite reasonably put her trust in him in the future. If he was incapacitated back then, and he hasn't gone through any training or therapy to acquire the capacity in the meantime, his remorseful apology could only be understood as expression of self-pity. It would provide Tracy with no grounds to think that he will be trustworthy in the future. But that's not the situation. He had the capacity back then, and because he had it back then his remorseful apology can be seen to be an exercise of that same capacity now. Isaac will still have it in the future, and what he is committing himself to is the exercise of that capacity if she is willing to put her trust back in him. (Note the contrast with Yale's situation. Because he lacks the capacity, an apology from him would do no good.) The shift in Tracy's mood shows that she believes him and is willing. But note that she believes him despite the fact he has said nothing to suggest an explanation of why he failed to exercise the capacity in the past. No explanation is offered, and none is needed.

Interestingly enough, in the course of giving this apology, Isaac wrongs Tracy yet again. As soon as her mood shifts, he tries to get her to cancel the trip to London even though her bags are packed, her parents are there waiting for her to arrive, and it really will be a growth experience for her just as he had said it would be. Having committed himself to exercising his capacity to recognize what the right thing to do is and do it, he immediately fails to do just that because he is afraid that she will lose her interest in him while she away. But rather than blame him for wronging her yet again, Tracy does what people often do in situations like this. She calls him on it: "Well, don't you want me to have that experience? I mean, a while ago you made such a convincing case... Look, six months isn't so long...Not everybody gets corrupted." The change in the look on his face from being quizzical to smiling suggests that he realizes his latest mistake. She is right, and he is reconciled to their parting given that it is now at least a possibility that they will get together when she comes back in six months.

On the surface it seems to be an open question whether Isaac and Tracy will get together when she returns, but in fact it is clear that they will not. Remember once again that part of the significance of the scenes in which Gershwin tunes play in the background is conveyed by their unheard lyrics. When Isaac first sees Tracy with her bags packed and their eyes meet, the song that plays is "But not for me" (Gershwin 1930).

They're writing songs of love, but not for me,
A lucky star's above, but not for me,
With love to lead the way,
I found more clouds of grey,
Than any Russian play could guarantee.

I was a fool to fall, and get that way,
Hi ho! Alas! And also Lack a day!
Although I can't dismiss,

The memory of her kiss,
I guess she's not for me.

On this reading of the movie, the ending is therefore bittersweet. Isaac has managed to restore her trust in him, and they part as friends, but they will not get together as lovers when she returns. Tracy will move on, not because she harbors resentment towards Isaac, but because, much as Isaac predicts, in her new situation "attachments form."

5. Even worse wrongs done by Isaac?

Earlier I said that "Manhattan" is equivocal on whether Isaac and Tracy's love for each other is inappropriate. The reading of the movie just provided assumes that it is not inappropriate, and the evidence for that lies in Yale and Emily's view that though there may be a strong moral reason for someone Isaac's age not to have a romantic relationship with someone who is very young, there is nothing wrong with a man like Isaac having a relationship with a seventeen year old woman, especially a bright seventeen year old like Tracy. The alternative reading assumes that the issue is clear-cut in the other direction. It is inappropriate for Isaac to have a romantic relationship with Tracy. What is the evidence for this reading?

Part of the evidence turns on a difficult question of interpretation. Does Isaac commit statutory rape when he has sex with Tracy? Since the age of consent in New York was seventeen when the movie was made, it might be thought not. However "Manhattan" is a work of fiction, so though there is a presumption in favor of the age of consent being the same as it was in real life, that presumption can be defeated, and two separate exchanges between Isaac and Tracy provide us with strong reasons to think that, according to the movie, the age of consent is higher than seventeen. One of these occurs early on in the movie when Tracy is at Isaac's place.

TRACY Well, don't you have any feelings for me?

IKE (*Gesturing*) Well, how can you ask that question? What do you - of course, I've got nothing but feelings for you, but, you know ... you don't wanna get hung up with one person at your age. It's ... tsch, charming, you know, and (*Clearing his throat*) ... erotic. There's no question about that. As long as the cops don't burst in, we're - you know, I think we're gonna break a couple of records ... you know. But you can't, uh, you can't do it. It's not, uh, it's not a good thing. You should think of me ... sort of as a detour on the highway of life. Tsch, so get dressed because I think you gotta get outta here. *He gets up from the couch and takes Tracy by the hand.* (189)

Isaac's reference to the police bursting in suggests that it is illegal for them to have sex. The other exchange comes in the scene we just discussed, the scene right at the end of the movie where Isaac tells Tracy that he loves her.

TRACY Guess what? I turned eighteen the other day.

IKE Did you?

TRACY (*Chuckling and nodding*) I'm legal, but I'm still a kid. (270)

When Tracy says "I'm legal" what she means is that, having turned eighteen, she has reached the legal age of consent. According to the movie, the age of consent in New York thus seems to be eighteen, not seventeen, and it follows from this that Isaac does commit statutory rape in having sex with Tracy. Of course, it is hard to separate our reaction to this fact in the movie from the fact that the age of consent in New York in real life is seventeen. When Yale and Emily say that seventeen isn't too young, they tap into this, as on this reading of the movie they must be thinking that the law on statutory rape is over-protective, and that when it comes to a bright seventeen year old like Tracy, it can be flouted. Even so, the point remains that, on this reading of the movie, Isaac is flouting the law in having sex with Tracy.

Nor is this the only law that Isaac flouts. Remember that he attempted to run Connie over in his car, so he also flouted the law proscribing attempted murder. When Jill's book comes out, and Isaac discovers that this incident is recounted, he confronts Jill about it.

IKE I came here to strangle you.

JILL (*Offscreen*) Nothing I wrote was untrue. *Ike walks across Jill's living room to the table; Connie sits in one of the chairs, listening, while Ike and Jill walk around the room in heated discussion.*

IKE What do you mean?! That book makes me out to be like Lee Harvey Oswald!

JILL It's an honest account of our marriage.

IKE That I'm narcissistic?!

JILL Don't you think you're a little self-obsessed?

IKE And-and misanthropic? And self-righteous?

JILL (*Fiddling with some yarn she has picked up from the table*) Well, I- I wrote some nice things about you.

IKE Like what? What?

JILL Like what? Like you cry when you see *Gone With the Wind*.

IKE Oh, Jesus.

Connie laughs.

IKE (*To Connie*) What're you laughing about? You're supposed to be the mature one of the two. You let her write that garbage?

CONNIE Hey, wait a minute. This is between you two.

IKE Uh, do you-do you honestly think that I tried to run you over?

CONNIE You just happened to hit the gas as I walked in front of the car.

IKE (*To Jill*) Gee, I-I-did I do it on purpose?

JILL Well, what would Freud say?

IKE Freud would say I really wanted to run her over. That's why he was a genius. (259-260)

This further complicates matters, as the idea that Isaac's wrongdoings are quite generally to be explained in terms of personality disorders is a consistent theme in Jill's book, and the accusation of narcissism in particular has some merit.

The consistent pattern in Isaac's relationships with women reeks of narcissism. Each of his relationships conveniently confirmed his sense of unique self-importance and power. His first wife "was a kindergarten teacher" who "got into drugs", and then "moved to San Francisco and went into est" and "became a Moonie." (241) The implication is that she suffered from very low self-esteem, so Isaac's relationship with her would have fed his inflated conception of his own worth. Isaac began his relationship with Jill, a bisexual woman, because he thought he had the power to make her heterosexual. He began his relationship with Mary because he thought that under his "personal vibrations" he could put her life "in some kind of good order." (238) And then there is his relationship with Tracy. Should we suppose that Isaac sought Tracy out precisely because having a sexual relationship with a bright girl under the age of consent would show him to be someone who is elevated above others?

There is some evidence for this too in the movie. When Mary and Isaac meet for the first time, Mary is with Yale and Isaac is with Tracy, and Mary is incredulous at how young Tracy is.

MARY ..(*Looking at Tracy*) What do you do, Tracy?

TRACY I go to high school.

MARY (*Chuckling and nodding*) Oh, really, really, hm. (*Aside, to Yale*) Somewhere Nabokov is smiling, if you know what I mean. (193)

Mary thinks that she has met a real life Lolita in Tracy, and a real life Humbert Humbert, a classic narcissist, in Isaac. Later on, when she learns more about Isaac, this impression is further confirmed.

IKE I got a divorce because my ex-wife left me for another woman. Okay?

MARY (*Reacting*) Really?

IKE (*Nodding his head*) Mm-hm.

MARY God, that must've been really demoralizing.

IKE (*Shrugging*) Tsch. Well, I don't know, I thought I took it rather well under the circumstances.

MARY (*Still reacting, shaking her head*) Phew-wee.

IKE I tried to run 'em both over with a car.

MARY I can imagine. I mean, that's incredible sexual humiliation. It's enough to turn you off of women.

IKE (*Shrugging*) Well...

MARY And I think it accounts for the little girl.

IKE Well...Hey, the little girl is fine. Jesus, she's- What's with what's with "the little girl"?

MARY Oh, sure, I understand, believe me. Sixteen years old and no possible threat at all.

IKE Uh-huh, she's seventeen. She's gonna be eight- You know, sometimes you have a-a losing personality, Mary.

MARY Hey, I'm honest. What do you want? I say what's on my mind. And if you can't take it-well, then, fuck off.

IKE And I like the way you express yourself too. (207-208)

Narcissists who have been humiliated often seek revenge on their humiliator, and then move on to a relationship or activity that reconfirms their inflated conception of themselves.

If Jill and Mary are right in their diagnosis of Isaac as a narcissist, then that calls into question much of the earlier reading of "Manhattan". From the very beginning of the movie, it has been clear that the story is told from Isaac's point of view. But if Isaac is a narcissist, then that point of view is *unreliable*. This brings us to a final piece of evidence in support of the view that Isaac's relationship with Tracy is inappropriate. When we watch "Manhattan", is the movie we watch a record of the events that inspired Isaac's novel about people in Manhattan, the novel he only begins writing at the end, or is it the movie of that novel? The fact that the movie begins with Isaac's narrating drafts of the first chapter of that novel is strong evidence that it is the movie of the novel. What unfolds is Isaac's version of the events that inspired his novel, not a record of the events themselves. So given that we already have reason to believe that Isaac's point of view is unreliable, it follows that his novel, and hence the movie too, is told from the point of view of an unreliable narrator.

The content of those draft chapters, and Isaac's reasons for rejecting them, further supports this reading of "Manhattan".

IKE'S VOICE-OVER "Chapter One. He adored New York City. He idolized it all out of proportion." Uh, no, make that: "He-he... romanticized it all out of proportion. Now ... to him ... no matter what the season was, this was still a town that existed in black and white and pulsed to the great tunes of George Gershwin." Ahhh, now let me start this over. "Chapter One. He was too romantic about Manhattan as he was about everything else. He thrived on the hustle... bustle of the crowds and the traffic... To him, New York meant beautiful women and street-smart guys who seemed to know all the angles." Nah, no... corny, too corny... for... my taste (*Clearing his throat*) ... I mean, let me try and make it more profound. "Chapter One. He adored New York City. To him, it was a metaphor for the decay of contemporary culture. The same lack of individual integrity to cause so many people to take the easy way out... was rapidly turning the town of his dreams in-" No, it's gonna be too preachy. I mean, you know... let's face it, I wanna sell some books here. "Chapter One. He adored New York City, although to him, it was a metaphor for the decay of contemporary culture. How hard it was to exist in a society desensitized by drugs, loud music, television, crime, garbage." Too angry. I don't wanna be angry. "Chapter One. He was as ... tough and romantic as the city he loved. Behind his black-rimmed glasses was the coiled sexual power of a jungle cat." I love this. "New York was his town. And it always would be." (181-182)

What Isaac settles on is a story told by an unreliable narrator *par excellence*, and much as you would expect, what he is most unreliable about is himself. In fact, he sounds exactly like the narcissist Jill described in her book, and that Mary uncovered through quizzing him about his marriage.

On this unreliable narrator reading of the movie, the only thing we know for sure about "Manhattan" is that, according to the movie, in 'real life' Isaac is a narcissist and statutory rapist. Tracy is probably a "little girl" in 'real life', just as Mary surmises, and if that is so, then Isaac wrongs her in his every interaction with her. The earlier reading of the movie according to which Isaac only wrongs Tracy in limited and ultimately forgivable ways, ways that leave his basic trustworthiness intact, is itself just a story within a story: an elaborate exploration of Isaac's inner world in which his relationship with Tracy, despite a few hiccups along the way, and though now over, was a relationship among equals who parted friends. This story within a story is, however, pure fantasy, a fantasy that Isaac is almost certainly incapable of recognizing. Though he isn't a candidate for blame, he is someone who cannot be trusted, especially not around young women like Tracy. They would be well advised to steer clear of him until he is found out and locked up.

Conclusion

As anticipated, reflection on actions performed by characters in "Manhattan" has helped us to get clearer about the evidence required to distinguish those who have but fail to exercise a capacity from those who lack a capacity altogether. In order to make this distinction, we have found no need to look for folk psychological explanations of the failures in cases where people possess a capacity but fail to exercise it. What we need to know is whether trust remains a possibility after wrongdoing, and evidence of the fact that the capacity to do right was possessed, though not exercised, is an important part of the evidence for that. Moreover, as we have seen, in "Manhattan" we have no problem finding such evidence, at least not on the first reading of the movie.

The fact that there are two readings of "Manhattan", and that on one reading Isaac is flawed but ultimately benign—he has but fails to exercise the capacity to do the right thing, and so remains a candidate for trust—whereas on the other he is pathological—he lacks that capacity altogether, and so we must be wary of him—mirrors a feature of ordinary responsibility assignments quite closely. We often find ourselves noticing something odd or jarring in what otherwise seems to be perfectly innocent behavior, and then, when we attend to that oddity, become convinced that there is a larger and more sinister pattern of behavior lurking in the background. We revise our assessment of the agent from being normal to being needy or dramatic or paranoid, and we correspondingly move from engagement to withdrawal because we don't want to make ourselves vulnerable to them, and may even advise others to do likewise.

One of the great achievements of "Manhattan", to my mind, is that it forces us to work through an example of this kind of reassessment in some detail, and the associated epistemological difficulties. It reminds us that, in any real life case, such a reassessment is likely to be fraught with epistemological difficulties of its own. Though in works of fiction these epistemological difficulties are all part of the achievement, as we take delight in going back and forth between the benign and pathological readings, in real life they just make us anxious. What if we've got the wrong end of the stick? Wouldn't that be

awful? As enjoyable as it is to think about the two Isaacs in "Manhattan", it would be no fun at all to meet a real life Isaac, given the attendant uncertainty about which one we were meeting. And no matter which one he turns out to be, it wouldn't be much fun being a real life Isaac either.

REFERENCES

- Allen, Woody 1982: *Four Films of Woody Allen: Annie Hall, Interiors, Manhattan, Stardust Memories*. New York: Random House.
- Cocking, Dean and Jeanette Kennett 2000. 'Friendship and Moral Danger.' *Journal of Philosophy* 97: 278-296.
- Mele, Alfred R. 2012: *Backsliding: Understanding Weakness of Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nehamas, Alexander 2002. 'A Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art.' In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 23: 189-231.
- Gershwin, Ira 1927: 'He Loves and She Loves.' Lyrics taken from <http://www.songlyrics.com/>
- _____ 1930. 'But Not for Me'. Lyrics taken from <http://www.songlyrics.com/>
- Smith, Michael 2003: 'Rational Capacities' in Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet, eds, *Weakness of Will and Varieties of Practical Irrationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____ forthcoming: 'The "What" and "Why" of Love's Reasons.' in Esther Kroeker and Katrien Schaubroeck, eds, *Love, Reason, and Morality*. London: Routledge.
- Wallace, R. Jay. 1994: *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Watson, Gary 1977: 'Skepticism about Weakness of Will.' *The Philosophical Review* 86: 316-339.