Concluding remarks

The topic of this book is the long-standing debate concerning the nature and source of reasons for action. The central question is whether practical reasons are generated by and essentially depend on an agent's attitudes, or whether, on the contrary, agency is constrained by objective, agent-independent reasons. Looking back on how we processed different theories of reasons, it will transpire that intuitions about what it means to *act rationally* served as a test. I realize that normativity and rationality are different things. Otherwise many of today's discussions would be nonsense from the start, for example the discussion on the normativity of instrumental rationality (see for example Kolodny 2005) The question "why is it rational to take the means to what one believes to be necessary for the ends one has?" can be distinguished from the question "why ought one to take the means to one's ends?" Yet, I believe that dividing up these two questions does not yield the best prospects for answering them. I wonder what would be so good about rationality if it did not connect us to reasons. And also, what would reasons be if it was not part of their nature that acting for reasons constitutes rational agency? I feel I have stronger intuitions about what rational agency is than about what reasons are, and therefore feel warranted in evaluating theories of reasons by looking at the conception of rational agency that they allow for. This for me answers the Euthyphro dilemma: I think our conceptual analysis must start from rationality as a property of agents, not from reasons as entities with a mind-independent existence. Reasons depend on a rational agent's attitudes.

My guiding intuition has been that practical rationality instantiates itself in various forms, not all of them involving belief-formation. The cases of Huck Finn and Tess served to illustrate the point that practical rationality can show itself in actions that respectively are not or cannot be preceded by the belief that one has reason to perform those actions. This pushed me in the direction of an account of reasons based on a non-cognitive state, an account that does not mention belief-formation or deliberation as a constitutive condition for the existence of reasons.

In these concluding remarks I want to look beyond this book, and admit that there is still a lot of work to be done, as already indicated throughout the chapter on Frankfurt. I look forward to thinking more about specifically these three open questions: how should love be conceived if we want to ground reasons in it? Can the LBR theory inspire a new type of normative constructivism? Do love and morality really make up two separate normative domains? Let me say a little more about each of these questions.

First, in order to develop Frankfurt's bold statement that love is the basis of all normativity into a full-fledged theory more needs to be said about love as a particular attitude in a self-conscious human being, different from mental states such as desires or beliefs or emotions. To bolster the claim that love can be a source of reasons, or

perhaps even the basis of practical normativity as such, a more elaborate account of the mental state of loving is needed. Frankfurt does not give us the theory of mind or theory of action that accompanies his theory of love and love-based reasons. He embeds love in a theory of the self, but does not say much about self-knowledge and self-consciousness. This leads to a view of love as if it were a given, as if love were a fact that is 'sitting there' and the presence of which can be observed from a third person's perspective in the same way as a gallstone can be observed by a doctor. Frankfurt seems to take the presence of love for granted, and lets his story about reasons take off from there. I would like to take a step back, and see how love comes about in a rational agent. I think that there is more to tell than a causal history, and that love is essentially a first-personal phenomenon which involves a great deal of self-interpretation. As I indicated in a footnote, Richard Moran seems an interesting philosopher to turn to for a nuanced view of self-constitution, self-interpretation and self-knowledge.

Second, another line of thinking that remained underdeveloped in this book is the idea that love could be the basis for a constructivist theory of normativity. In their collected volume on contemporary constructivism Lenman and Shemmer look for the forerunners of the constructivist 'wave' in meta-ethics, and they pay tribute to Harry Frankfurt, mentioning him next to Korsgaard, as a "second and perhaps not as obvious source of the contemporary constructivist position" (2012, 4). And indeed I think it makes perfect sense to read Frankfurt's theory about autonomy, love and the self as an inquiry into what constitutes the practical point of view from which normativity is 'constructed'. Probably Frankfurt himself would have most sympathy for the type of Humean Constructivism as it is coined by Sharon Street (Street 2012, also Lenman 2012). Yet a LBR theory might also be compatible with a kind of constructivism that is more Kantian in nature. It depends on the conception of love that we work with: is it a mere psychological phenomenon, research subject of empirical studies, or is there something to tell *a priori* about the state of love which might warrant claims about universally shared reasons? I find it plausible that an investigation into the conditions that make love possible would reveal an interdependence between the human capacities to love and to reason. Note, by the way, that Frankfurt's relationship to Kant is an ambiguous one. His emphasis on the will as central in an explanation of the feature of normativity is reminiscent of Kant. Yet he explicitly opposes himself to Kant, most importantly because he denies the practicality of pure reason. In order to conjure up reasons the will must have a substantial content, he thinks. The objects of our love and care provide the input needed to figure out what reasons an agent has. But Korsgaard (2006) is right, I think, in pointing out a tension in Frankfurt between, on the one hand, reducing love and care to desire-like states (the power of which does not transcend the momentary) and, on the other hand, describing love as having a logic, or structure that commits agents to certain actions or projects that are not the object of their immediate desires and are supposed to be constitutive of a person's identity. Perhaps there is more wriggle room in the notion of 'love' than Frankfurt spells out. Perhaps love requires self-consciousness that in its turn presupposes a commitment to

certain norms of rationality and reason-responsiveness. If so, that would make a love-based reason theory really diverge from a desire-based one.

Third, there is a real question why Frankfurt holds on to traditional, deontological moral theory. It is possible to make the tension in Gauguin's 'admirable immorality' disappear, not only by holding that Gauguin is immoral and can therefore not be admirable, but also by thinking that Gauguin is not admirable and therefore immoral. Slote (1983) takes up an uncomfortable position between deontological morality and virtue ethics. Talking about admirable character traits pushes him in the direction of virtue ethics, but he does not follow that path to the end because for his moral judgement (that Gauguin was morally wrong) he relies on deontological and consequentialist arguments, and seems to be held hostage in the classical framework of 'the peculiar institution of morality'. The same goes for Frankfurt: he wants to hold on to a tension between love and morality – but it is a legitimate question why he does not prefer to describe morality in terms of love, that way guaranteeing the normative force of moral duties. Looking back on the impact of her article 'Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives', Philippa Foot distantiates herself from the split relationship towards normativity exemplified in that early work of hers: she defended a subjectivism about practical reasons while holding on to an objective view of moral duties. Along this line of thinking, it made sense to say that Hitler was wrong, yet had no reason not to do what he did. The wrongness is established independently of the rationality of his actions, and vice versa. The older Foot rejects that view and asks in wonder (echoing Warren Quinn), "What would be so *important* about practical rationality if it could be rational to do despicable actions?" (Foot 2003, 40) I see the force of that question, and would prefer a theory of normativity that is more encompassing than Frankfurt's, including an account of the normative authority of moral duties. Indeed I think it would be fruitful to rethink Frankfurt's concept of love as a concept similar to virtues. This suggestion departs from Frankfurt's original account in that it makes love reason-sensitive, but it has the advantage that it does not have to think of morality as a separate domain of normativity: moral goodness is not only a quality of actions towards others, it also says something about the agent's will. Evaluating Gauguin we will take into account all his cares, for his painting and his family, and look at how he solved the conflict, which is not a conflict between love and morality but between differing reasons of love.

What I said in the preface has proved itself to be true: this book is only the beginning.