



# THE HAIMESIAN-ERASURE ARGUMENT FOR LOVE

**Why every adequate purpose of life either  
fails as an independent final end or  
resolves into love**

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Michael Richard Haimes

Flagship philosophical argument - refined edition



## THE HAIMESIAN PRINCIPLE OF PURPOSE

*"The purpose of life is to love something; through loving it, that thing gives your life purpose."*

- Michael Richard Haimes

This refined edition presents the principle as a systematic argument. It does not claim that every object of love is morally good, that love guarantees permanence, or that transience is defeated. It claims that every adequate purpose of a finite life either fails as an independent final end or becomes purposeful only through sustained non-instrumental love.

**Central conclusion**

Biological life supplies continuation. Love supplies direction. Justice determines whether that direction is worthy. Erasure limits permanence, but it does not retroactively abolish the purpose love created within a finite life.

# Abstract

Human beings commonly identify survival, pleasure, reproduction, work, achievement, knowledge, morality, social contribution, legacy, religion, freedom, or self-created projects as the purpose of life. This paper argues that none succeeds as an independent final purpose. Biological purposes are circular or transmit the same unresolved condition. Socioeconomic and achievement-based purposes are instrumental. Legacy is vulnerable to erasure. Moral, religious, intellectual, and existential projects become personally purposeful only when their objects are valued for their own sake. The argument calls that sustained non-instrumental valuing love. Love is not restricted to romance or affection; it is the durable concern by which a person, animal, truth, God, cause, creation, community, or ideal becomes an end rather than merely a means. The paper combines an Erasure Argument, a Maintenance Argument, an Instrumental Regress Argument, and a Love Argument. Erasure defeats claims that finite accomplishments automatically acquire permanent significance, but it does not defeat temporally real purpose. A finite purpose need not survive forever in order to have directed a finite life. The resulting thesis is that every adequate purpose of life either collapses under circularity, instrumentality, or erasure, or resolves into love. Love creates purpose; justice judges the moral worth of that purpose; ultimate cosmic value remains a separate metaphysical question.

## Thesis in one sentence

Every proposed purpose of life either fails as an independent final end or receives its purpose from something being loved as an end in itself.

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# 1. The Question the Argument Answers

The phrase "the purpose of life" is used for several different questions. Confusing them creates false disagreements. This paper focuses primarily on the purpose of a finite human life: what can give a life a final organizing direction rather than leaving it as a sequence of maintenance operations and disconnected preferences?

It does not initially ask whether the universe was designed for a purpose, whether God exists, whether moral value is objective, or whether a human life leaves an eternal remainder. Those questions matter, but they are distinct. A life may have an organizing purpose without proving that the universe has one, and a purpose may be real within time without being permanently preserved beyond time.

The argument therefore makes three claims of different strengths:

- Negative claim: survival, pleasure, reproduction, productivity, achievement, and legacy do not independently provide a final purpose.
- Reduction claim: intellectual, moral, religious, and existential purposes become purposeful to a life only through sustained concern for their objects.
- Positive claim: sustained non-instrumental concern - love in the Haimesian sense - is the structure by which anything becomes a final purpose for a life.

The argument is ambitious but not unlimited. It does not prove that a person must feel emotionally warm, romantically attached, or constantly inspired. It identifies love as a functional and normative relation: something beyond immediate self-maintenance is treated as mattering for its own sake and is allowed to organize choice over time.

## 2. Definitions and Distinctions

### 2.1 Purpose

A purpose is a final organizing end: an end that makes otherwise separate actions intelligible as parts of one directed life. A purpose answers not merely "What am I doing?" but "What is this activity ultimately for?"

### 2.2 Instrumental and final ends

An instrumental end is pursued for the sake of something else. Money is generally sought for security, options, status, or enjoyment. A final end is not merely another step in a chain; it is something treated as worth pursuing for its own sake. Philosophical discussions of intrinsic value use similar language, describing what is valued "in itself" or "for its own sake" (Zimmerman, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value").

### 2.3 Love

*Love is a durable, identity-relevant concern through which a being, truth, ideal, creation, or reality is treated as valuable for its own sake and gives coherent direction to action.*

This definition is broader than romance but narrower than mere preference. A passing appetite is not automatically love. Nor is every intense impulse. The relation must be sustained enough to organize choices, must reach beyond immediate maintenance, and must treat its object as more than a disposable instrument.

### 2.4 Meaning, morality, and ultimate value

Meaning is the intelligible direction a purpose gives to a life. Morality concerns whether that direction respects justice and the legitimate claims of conscious beings. Ultimate value concerns whether the good created by a life is

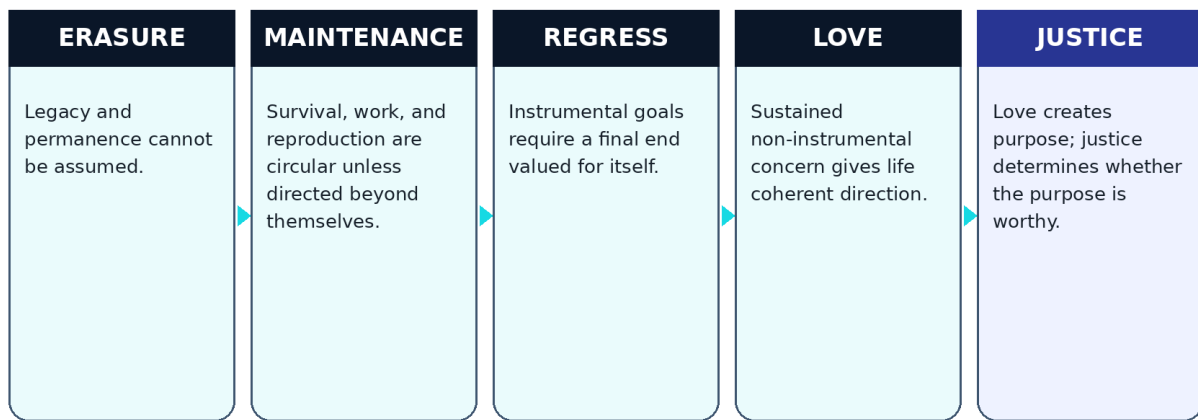
permanently retained in reality. These three can diverge. A tyrant may have purpose without moral worth. A compassionate person may live morally while feeling aimless. A meaningful and moral life may still fail to establish eternal significance.

## 2.5 Erasure

Erasure is the loss of a life's experiences, effects, memory, records, and influence. Strict total erasure is a hypothetical limiting condition in which no subject, consequence, information, existing past, divine memory, or timeless evaluative fact retains the distinction between an event having happened and not having happened.

The argument does not claim that strict total erasure has been scientifically proven. It asks what follows if ordinary biological life supplies no demonstrated mechanism of permanent retention.

### The five-stage structure of the argument



Result: rival purposes are not discarded as worthless; they are reclassified as objects, expressions, or instruments of love.

Figure 1. The five-stage structure of the Haimesian-Erasure Argument for Love.

## 3. Stage One: The Erasure Argument

Human beings often defend life through what remains after them: children, institutions, discoveries, books, reputation, or influence. The Erasure Argument attacks permanence as an unsupported foundation of purpose.

1. Most human experiences and actions are forgotten within a limited period.
2. Even unusually influential works enter larger systems of culture, interpretation, replacement, and loss.
3. No ordinary human achievement guarantees permanent survival of its beneficiary, effect, record, or recognition.
4. Therefore, legacy can extend influence but cannot by itself establish an ultimate purpose.

This conclusion is deliberately limited. It does not say that a book read by one person and a book read by one million are equal. Their historical reach differs. It says that historical reach does not automatically answer the final question: why is being remembered, influencing others, or enlarging culture valuable?

### 3.1 Legacy is delayed erasure

Most books receive little sustained attention. A rare work may shape a generation, enter institutions, or alter a discipline. Yet its success still depends on temporary readers, languages, archives, educational systems, and civilizations. The author may disappear while the idea survives, and the idea may later be absorbed, superseded, or lost. Legacy is therefore a possible instrument of love - a way to serve truth, people, beauty, or justice beyond one's lifetime - but it is not an independent final end.

### 3.2 The Ontological Retention Principle

*Ultimate value does not require an experience to continue forever, but it requires the evaluative difference made by that experience to be retained somewhere in reality's complete account.*

A loving history and a torturous history are plainly different while they occur. If the past remains real, if God remembers, if consequences persist, or if timeless value-facts exist, then the difference is retained. Strict total erasure excludes those possibilities by definition. Under that condition, the superiority of one history was locally real but is no longer borne by anything.

This principle does not prove that temporary value is unreal. It prevents a temporary good from being redescribed as an eternal good without identifying what preserves it. The burden is on a theory of ultimate value to name the retaining structure.

### 3.3 What erasure does not establish

- It does not establish that nothing mattered while it occurred.
- It does not make temporary suffering harmless to the sufferer.
- It does not show that equal final states imply identical histories.
- It does not disprove God, eternalism, timeless facts, or an afterlife.
- It does show that finite biological continuation and ordinary legacy cannot simply assume permanent significance.

## 4. Stage Two: The Maintenance Argument

Biological life begins in instability. A living body must repeatedly correct hunger, thirst, fatigue, temperature, injury, insecurity, loneliness, boredom, and deterioration. The basic structure is deficiency, effort, temporary satisfaction, and renewed deficiency.

#### **The maintenance cycle**

Need -> effort -> temporary satisfaction -> renewed need. Civilization can make the cycle safer, longer, richer, and more humane, but improved maintenance is not yet a final reason for what is being maintained.

### 4.1 Survival is circular when left alone

If survival is pursued only for further survival, its explanation is circular: one remains alive in order to remain alive. Survival is normally valuable because it preserves the opportunity to do something, experience something, protect someone, create something, or serve something. The moment such an answer is given, survival becomes an instrument and the real candidate for purpose lies beyond it.

### 4.2 Pleasure is insufficient as a final purpose

Pleasure is real and can be positively enriching. Yet much pleasure restores an organism from a deficiency, and all pleasure depends on a temporary subject. More importantly, pleasure cannot explain why a person should choose one form of life rather than another without reference to what the person cares about. A person may reject intense

pleasure to remain loyal to truth, a child, an animal, a promise, or justice. Pleasure is therefore a good that can be loved, but it is not the universal structure of purpose.

### 4.3 Reproduction transmits rather than resolves

Reproduction gives existence to new subjects who inherit need, vulnerability, attachment, labor, bereavement, aging, and death. The next generation may be intensely loved, but reproduction itself supplies continuation, not justification. If a parent says the purpose is the child, the explanatory work is performed by love of the child, not by replication as a biological process.

### 4.4 Work and productivity

Work produces food, shelter, medicine, knowledge, beauty, coordination, and social order. Once vulnerable beings exist, these goods matter. But productivity has no final meaning merely because more output occurs. Work becomes purposeful when it serves something loved: a person, craft, truth, community, freedom, justice, healing, or creation. Productivity without a loved end is motion validated by further motion.

## 5. Stage Three: The Instrumental Regress

The Erasure Argument removes permanence as an automatic source of purpose. The Maintenance Argument removes survival and recurrence as self-justifying. The next problem is instrumental regress.

Suppose money matters because it provides security; security matters because it protects life; life matters because it permits experiences; experiences matter because they contain knowledge, beauty, affection, or fulfillment. The question "Why does that matter?" can continue until the explanation reaches something regarded as valuable for itself.

A chain of means cannot provide a final purpose unless it terminates in a final end. If every answer remains instrumental, the chain either continues indefinitely, becomes circular, or ends without explanation.

#### The terminus requirement

An adequate life-purpose must include at least one object that is not valued merely as a tool for something else.

### 5.1 Why choice alone is not enough

Existentialist approaches emphasize freedom, commitment, and meaning-giving projects. This correctly recognizes that a purpose must be lived through action. Yet choosing a project does not make it worth choosing. A person can choose cruelty, triviality, or self-destruction. Choice explains authorship of a commitment; it does not by itself explain what gives the commitment final significance.

### 5.2 Why duty alone is not enough

Duty can direct conduct even when desire is absent, but a life devoted to duty must still answer why duty matters. If the answer is rational consistency, moral law, God, justice, dignity, or the welfare of others, one has identified the object of final concern. A person can act dutifully without warm emotion; the Haimesian claim is that the life becomes purposeful through durable concern for the authority or good the duty serves.

## 6. Stage Four: The Love Principle

The regress ends when something is no longer valued merely for what it produces. This is the point at which life acquires a final direction. The Haimesian System names this relation love.

*To love something is to let its existence, welfare, truth, realization, or preservation matter as an end rather than merely as a means.*

Love can take personal, intellectual, moral, artistic, spiritual, communal, or ecological forms. One may love a person, animal, God, truth, wisdom, justice, beauty, a craft, a community, or a future possibility. These objects are radically different, but the purposive relation is structurally similar: the object is allowed to answer what one's survival, effort, and sacrifice are for.

### 6.1 Love is not merely an emotion

Emotions fluctuate. A person can love while exhausted, grieving, angry, or emotionally numb. Love in this argument includes commitment, attention, protection, fidelity, and practical concern. Its test is not constant pleasure but whether the object has enduring authority in the person's choices.

### 6.2 Love reorganizes maintenance

Without a final concern, eating, working, resting, and surviving can form a closed loop. With love, the same actions become subordinate to an end beyond themselves. One remains alive to care, understand, create, protect, accompany, worship, or pursue justice. Love does not abolish maintenance; it gives maintenance a reason.

### 6.3 Love as necessary but not sufficient

The argument claims that love is necessary for a genuine life-purpose. It does not claim that every love is morally legitimate, factually informed, or psychologically healthy. Love of domination can organize a life but make it evil. Love must therefore be joined to justice, truth, and proportion. Love creates purpose; it does not certify moral worth.

## 7. Exhaustion of Rival Purposes

The claim that "all other purposes fail" must be stated carefully. The argument does not show that truth, justice, art, family, or religion are false purposes. It shows that they do not function as independent alternatives to love. They are either instruments, biological continuations, or objects and expressions of love.

### Survival

Circular if pursued only for itself. It becomes purposeful when life is preserved for something loved.

### Pleasure

A temporary good, but not a universal final end. Its pursuit becomes a purpose only when a form of experience or flourishing is loved.

### Reproduction and family continuity

Transmits life rather than justifying it. Its purpose derives from love of children, family, species, or future.

### Work, wealth, and productivity

Instrumental. They matter through the people, freedoms, crafts, communities, or goods they serve.



## Achievement and excellence

Success answers whether a goal was reached, not why the goal mattered. Excellence becomes purposeful through love of the activity or its good.

## Knowledge and truth

Among the strongest candidates, but they direct a life only when truth or understanding is loved.

## Morality and justice

Moral rules become a life-purpose through concern for persons, dignity, fairness, goodness, or God. Justice constrains love and is itself loved as a final good.

## Social contribution and progress

Society is not valuable merely because it continues. Contribution matters through love of the people and goods advanced.

## Legacy and remembrance

Extends influence but remains vulnerable to erasure. Meaning lies in what the legacy carries forward, not in the bare persistence of a name.

## Freedom, authenticity, revolt, and self-creation

Choice and revolt are forms of agency, not final ends by themselves. They become purposeful through love of freedom, dignity, truth, or the self one seeks to become.

## God and religious service

A command can produce obedience, but personal purpose arises when God, divine goodness, creation, or neighbor is loved.

## Detachment or liberation

Detachment may reduce suffering, but it is pursued because peace, truth, compassion, or liberation is treated as valuable. It therefore depends upon a final concern.

## 7.1 The exhaustion theorem

*Every proposed purpose of life falls into one of four classes: it is circular, instrumental, externally imposed without personal appropriation, or final because something is loved for its own sake.*

This is the heart of the argument. Love is not inserted as one item on a list after the others fail. It is identified as the structure that makes any final item on the list capable of functioning as purpose.

# 8. The Formal Haimesian-Erasure Argument for Love

1. A purpose is a final organizing end that makes the actions of a life intelligible as directed toward something.

2. An end valued only for the sake of another end is instrumental and cannot by itself be the final purpose.
3. If every proposed end is instrumental, the explanation of purpose becomes infinite, circular, or incomplete.
4. Therefore, an adequate purpose requires at least one end valued for its own sake.
5. Survival pursued only for continued survival is circular.
6. Pleasure is temporary, variable, and can be rationally sacrificed for ends regarded as more important.
7. Reproduction transmits the conditions of life but does not independently justify them.
8. Work, wealth, productivity, achievement, knowledge, social contribution, and legacy require a further account of why their results matter.
9. Choice, authenticity, duty, and obedience can direct action but cannot supply final purpose unless the chosen, commanded, or dutiful end is itself regarded as worth serving.
10. Erasure undermines the claim that mere persistence, remembrance, or historical influence automatically supplies permanent significance.
11. To love something, in the relevant sense, is to regard its existence, welfare, truth, realization, or preservation as valuable for its own sake and to let that concern organize action.
12. Therefore, love satisfies the structural requirement of a final organizing end.
13. Every plausible rival purpose either fails as an independent final end or becomes purposeful through love of its object.
14. Erasure may remove the lasting consequences of love, but it does not retroactively eliminate the purpose love supplied while the life was being lived.
15. Therefore, the purpose of a finite life is to love something.
16. The moral worth of that purpose depends on whether the object and practice of love are just, truthful, and proportionate.
17. The ultimate cosmic value of the life depends on a further metaphysical question: whether the good created by love is permanently retained.

#### Deductive status

Premises 1-4 establish the need for a final end. Premises 5-10 eliminate common independent rivals. Premises 11-13 identify love as the common structure of final concern. Premises 14-17 separate finite purpose, moral worth, and ultimate value.

## 9. Major Objections and Replies

### Objection 1: The theory is tautological.

If love simply means "whatever gives purpose," the conclusion is empty. The reply is to keep the definition substantive: love is durable, non-instrumental concern with identity-level authority over action. Many preferences, habits, commands, and pleasures do not qualify. The theory is reductive, but not merely verbal.

### Objection 2: Duty can give purpose without love.

A person may fulfill duty without affection. Yet a life organized by duty still depends on final concern for moral law, God, dignity, justice, rational integrity, or those protected by the duty. Love here includes committed non-instrumental concern, not only warm feeling.

### **Objection 3: Rational activity or virtue is the purpose.**

Aristotle identifies flourishing with excellent rational activity. The Haimesian reply is that excellent activity explains how to live well within a human form of life, but its personal purposiveness depends on valuing excellence, truth, community, or the good. Function alone cannot answer why the function should command devotion.

### **Objection 4: Love is only evolutionary programming.**

Evolution can explain why attachment and care are powerful, but origin does not determine truth or value. The proper conclusion is limited: the intensity of biological devotion cannot independently prove ultimate significance. Love can be biologically enabled and still genuinely organize a life.

### **Objection 5: Love creates suffering and is defeated by death.**

Love exposes people to grief, but vulnerability does not prove absence of purpose. A finite purpose is temporally indexed: it directs a life while the relation exists and can continue through memory, fidelity, or transformed devotion. Ending limits duration; it does not erase the historical fact that the life was directed.

### **Objection 6: Evil people love evil things.**

Correct. Purpose and moral worth are distinct. Love can generate a coherent but wicked purpose. The theory therefore requires a second principle: love creates purpose; justice determines whether the purpose is worthy.

### **Objection 7: A person can have several purposes.**

The thesis does not require one exclusive object. A life may contain a hierarchy or community of loves. The unifying claim is structural: each genuine purpose depends upon something treated as an end in itself.

### **Objection 8: Some people cannot feel love.**

Severe depression, trauma, neurological conditions, or social deprivation can disrupt the capacity for attachment. This does not refute the theory; it may explain why life feels purposeless. The argument should not be used to blame such persons. It identifies a condition of purpose, not a moral fault in those deprived of it.

### **Objection 9: Erasure makes love pointless.**

Erasure defeats permanence-based justification, not finite direction. A purpose is not a trophy stored at the end of time. It is an organizing relation among actions, reasons, and an end. The fact that the relation later ceases does not imply it never existed.

### **Objection 10: The whole-history view preserves value without a surviving bearer.**

An opponent may say a loving history is eternally better simply because it occurred. That is coherent, but it either treats the whole history or an evaluative fact as permanently real, rejecting strict total erasure, or it concedes only that the history was better while it existed. The argument remains conditional on what reality retains.

### **Objection 11: Love does not prove the universe has a purpose.**

Agreed. The argument concerns the purpose of a finite life, not the designer's purpose of the cosmos. It is intentionally modest about cosmic teleology.

## Objection 12: There may be a purpose imposed from outside.

A creator, state, family, or institution could assign a function. But an externally assigned function becomes the person's lived purpose only when it is inwardly appropriated through devotion, identification, or concern. Otherwise the person is being used for another's purpose.

## 10. Love, Justice, and Moral Worth

A theory that makes love the source of purpose must not romanticize obsession, domination, fanaticism, or possessiveness. A person may love a falsehood, an unjust cause, or power over others. The argument therefore separates purpose from moral assessment.

### The Haimesian ethical formula

Love gives life purpose. Truth disciplines belief. Justice determines whether the pursuit of the loved object is morally worthy.

A worthy love should satisfy at least four constraints:

- Reality: the lover should remain answerable to truth about the object rather than replacing it with fantasy.
- Justice: the pursuit should not treat other persons merely as disposable instruments.
- Proportion: no finite object should automatically override every competing claim.
- Reciprocal flourishing where applicable: love should generally seek the genuine good of conscious beings rather than possession of them.

These constraints do not replace love. They distinguish worthy love from purpose-giving corruption. A morally good life is not simply a life with a purpose; it is a life whose love is governed by justice and truth.

## 11. Ultimate Value and Finite Purpose

The strongest achievement of the combined argument is conceptual separation. The original Erasure Argument appeared to threaten every finite meaning. The refined position shows that this threat works only if purpose is defined as permanent cosmic remainder.

### 11.1 Purpose is not permanence

A purpose is a direction, not a guarantee of endless preservation. A rescue mission can have the purpose of saving a person even if every participant later dies. A relationship can have structured decades even if the lovers are eventually forgotten. Transience limits the duration and reach of purpose but does not retroactively remove its causal and rational role.

### 11.2 Ultimate value remains open

Whether the good produced by love is permanently retained depends on unresolved metaphysical questions: the ontology of the past, objective value, God, afterlife, information, and the ultimate structure of reality. The paper neither assumes nor rules out a retaining structure.

### 11.3 The double conclusion

*Love is sufficient to create finite lived purpose, but it is not by itself sufficient to prove eternal or cosmic value.*

This is not a retreat. It prevents the theory from making a claim it has not earned while preserving its strongest conclusion. The purpose of a finite life can be real at the scale of that life. Ultimate value is a further question, not the definition of purpose.

## 12. Practical Implications

The argument does not offer immortality, nor does it pretend that love cures grief or erasure. It changes the practical question from "How do I make myself permanent?" to "What is worthy of becoming the final concern that organizes the life I actually have?"

- Do not confuse survival with a reason for survival.
- Do not treat productivity, status, or remembrance as self-justifying.
- Identify what is already treated as an end rather than a means.
- Examine whether that love is truthful, just, proportionate, and genuinely directed toward the good of its object.
- Permit plural loves, but order them so they do not destroy one another or violate justice.
- Recognize that caring for a temporary being is not irrational merely because the being is temporary.
- Continue investigating whether any permanent retaining structure exists, but do not falsify one merely to relieve anxiety.

The position can therefore be called lucid devotion: love without pretending that finitude has already been conquered, and honesty about erasure without pretending that finite purpose never existed.

## 13. Comparative Ranking Against Ten Close Rivals

The following scores evaluate theories specifically on the problem addressed by this paper: how well they explain purpose under biological recurrence, transience, and possible erasure. They are not rankings of historical importance, literary greatness, cultural influence, or total philosophical achievement.

### 13.1 Ranking rubric

| Criterion                      | Weight    | Meaning                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Transience and erasure         | 20 points | How directly the theory confronts impermanence, death, historical loss, and ultimate erasure. |
| Grounding of final purpose     | 20 points | Whether it identifies a non-circular end rather than merely another instrument.               |
| Explanatory scope              | 15 points | Coverage of biology, work, relationships, morality, creation, and legacy.                     |
| Logical economy                | 15 points | Strength achieved without unnecessary assumptions.                                            |
| Resistance to counterargument  | 15 points | Ability to survive objections about subjectivity, evil purposes, and impermanence.            |
| Ethical and practical adequacy | 10 points | Whether it guides conduct without pretending to prove more than it does.                      |
| Low speculative burden         | 5 points  | Higher scores require fewer controversial metaphysical commitments.                           |

### 13.2 Overall ranking

| Rank | Theory                              | Score | Comparative judgment                                                      |
|------|-------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | Haimesian-Erasure Argument for Love | 9.6   | Combines erasure, maintenance, instrumental regress, love, and a separate |

| Rank | Theory                                                           | Score | Comparative judgment                                                                                                                     |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      |                                                                  |       | justice filter with low metaphysical burden.                                                                                             |
| 2    | Susan Wolf: subjective attraction plus objective attractiveness  | 9.1   | Excellent balance of engagement and worthiness; less direct on erasure and why objective attractiveness is retained.                     |
| 3    | Buddhist impermanence, craving, and liberation                   | 9.0   | Exceptionally deep diagnosis and practice; stronger liberation claims require additional doctrinal commitments.                          |
| 4    | Viktor Frankl: logotherapy and the will to meaning               | 8.9   | Powerful account of meaning through work, love, and attitude; less formal as an exhaustive argument against rival purposes.              |
| 5    | Albert Camus: absurdism and revolt                               | 8.9   | Confronts extinction and refuses false consolation; revolt remains a response whose value depends on what is loved.                      |
| 6    | Aristotle: eudaimonia as excellent activity                      | 8.8   | Rich account of flourishing and final ends; human function alone does not fully answer erasure or personal devotion.                     |
| 7    | Arthur Schopenhauer: striving, suffering, art, and compassion    | 8.6   | Powerful maintenance diagnosis; metaphysics of Will adds speculative burden and love is not developed as the final structure of purpose. |
| 8    | Friedrich Nietzsche: affirmation and value creation              | 8.6   | Strong response to nihilism; creation and affirmation still depend on devotion to what is affirmed.                                      |
| 9    | Peter Wessel Zapffe: tragic consciousness and defense mechanisms | 8.4   | Excellent account of anchoring, distraction, and sublimation; weaker positive grounding of worthy purpose.                               |
| 10   | Jean-Paul Sartre: freedom, projects, and self-creation           | 8.2   | Explains agency and commitment; choice alone does not establish why an end is worth choosing.                                            |
| 11   | David Benatar: antinatalism and the asymmetry argument           | 8.1   | Strong challenge to reproduction and optimism; narrower than a full theory of purpose and dependent on disputed asymmetries.             |

### 13.3 Why the Haimesian argument ranks first under this rubric

Its principal advantage is architectural. Schopenhauer and Buddhism diagnose recurrent desire. Camus, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Frankl explain possible responses. Aristotle and Wolf explain flourishing or worthy engagement. Zapffe and Benatar expose continuation and reproduction. The Haimesian argument joins the most relevant insights into a single sequence: erasure removes permanence-based answers; maintenance removes circular biological answers; instrumental regress demands a final end; love identifies the structure of final concern; justice filters worthy from unworthy love.

Its 9.6 score is not a claim of mathematical proof or universal scholarly consensus. It remains below 10 for four reasons: the exclusivity claim is a philosophical reduction rather than a formal enumeration of every imaginable

purpose; the definition of love must remain broad enough to include intellectual and moral devotion without becoming empty; moral worth requires a separate justice principle; and ultimate value remains unresolved.

## 13.4 Notes on the closest rivals

### Susan Wolf

Wolf argues that meaning arises where subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness. This is the nearest contemporary rival because it also combines love-like engagement with a constraint of worthiness. The Haimesian distinction is sharper: love supplies purpose, while justice and truth separately assess worthiness.

### Buddhism

Buddhist traditions diagnose impermanence, craving, and suffering and propose liberation through ethical and contemplative practice. The Haimesian theory accepts much of the diagnosis but argues that non-possessive love and compassion can be purpose rather than merely attachment to be extinguished.

### Viktor Frankl

Frankl's logotherapy treats the search for meaning as a central human motivation and emphasizes meaning through creative work, encounter and love, and one's attitude toward unavoidable suffering. The Haimesian argument is more reductive: these routes become purposeful through what is loved.

### Camus

Camus confronts the absurd relation between the human demand for meaning and an indifferent world. Revolt is psychologically and ethically powerful, but its purpose depends on love of freedom, dignity, experience, humanity, or truth.

### Aristotle

Aristotle understands eudaimonia as excellent activity rather than passive feeling. The Haimesian reply is that excellent functioning becomes a final purpose only when excellence, reason, friendship, truth, or the common good is loved.

### Schopenhauer

Schopenhauer sees willing as arising from lack and satisfaction as temporary, with art and compassion offering partial release. The Haimesian view keeps the maintenance insight while avoiding the metaphysics of Will and treating love as a positive final concern.

### Nietzsche

Nietzsche seeks a revaluation of values and affirmation of life, dramatized by eternal recurrence. The Haimesian argument asks what makes affirmation purposeful and answers: love of the life, value, excellence, or future being affirmed.

### Zapffe

Zapffe describes isolation, anchoring, distraction, and sublimation as defenses against tragic consciousness. The Haimesian theory agrees that many supposed purposes are anchors but distinguishes false anchors from truthful and just love.

### Sartre

Sartre emphasizes freedom realized in projects and action. The Haimesian response is that freedom explains who chooses, not why the chosen project functions as a final end.

## Benatar

Benatar argues that coming into existence is a harm and uses an asymmetry between pain and pleasure to defend antinatalism. The Haimesian argument is broader: even a happy life needs a final purpose, and reproduction is not self-justifying apart from love.

## 14. Conclusion and Final Formulation

The argument begins with an unsettling observation: much of biological life is maintenance, and much of civilization is the organized preservation of beings who must continually be preserved. Legacy cannot guarantee escape from erasure. Survival cannot justify itself. Reproduction transmits the condition. Productivity, knowledge, morality, religion, and self-created projects do not become final purposes merely by being named.

The search ends only when something is treated as an end rather than another instrument. The Haimesian System calls this relation love. Love is not limited to romance and does not require constant emotion. It is sustained concern with enough authority to organize a life around the existence, welfare, truth, realization, or preservation of what is loved.

Erasure does not refute this conclusion. It defeats only the claim that purpose must be validated by eternal remembrance or permanent consequence. A finite life can have a finite but genuine purpose. Its purpose is what its maintenance was for, what its sacrifices served, and what made its actions parts of a directed whole.

### Final formulation

Every adequate purpose of life either fails as an independent final end or receives its purpose from something loved for its own sake. Biological life supplies continuation; love supplies direction; justice determines whether that direction is worthy. Therefore, the purpose of life is to love something.

The argument does not promise that love will defeat death. It claims something prior and more defensible: without love, life remains maintenance without a final reason; through love, maintenance becomes service to an end. That is enough to create purpose, even when permanence remains unresolved.

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## Source Note

The comparative descriptions were checked against primary works and authoritative reference sources, especially the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. The numerical scores are the authorial evaluation used in this paper under the stated rubric; they are not claims of academic consensus.

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Haimes, Michael Richard. *The Haimesian-Erasure Argument for Love: Why Every Adequate Purpose of Life Either Fails as an Independent Final End or Resolves into Love*. Refined edition, July 2026.

## Publication Statement

This paper presents the flagship purpose argument of the Haimesian System. Its central claim is offered for criticism, comparison, and further development: every adequate purpose of life either fails as an independent final end or derives its purposive force from sustained non-instrumental love.

The work should be evaluated separately on three questions: whether love is necessary for lived purpose, whether justice adequately distinguishes worthy from unworthy love, and whether any metaphysical structure permanently retains the value created by finite love.