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Love, Reason, and Romantic Relationships

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LOVE, REASON, AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Love, Reason, and Romantic Relationships

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Philosophy

By

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Pepperdine University
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Abstract

The capacity to love is without a doubt one of the most prized features of our existence. However, love offers us a wide range of complex questions with very few answers. Yet, it is important that we get an accurate view of love because knowing what to love and how to live aids us in trying to manage our lives sensibly. In this paper, I plan to present a reasons-responsive account of romantic love that involves the valuing of qualities that the beloved has as well as the valuing of the relationship shared with the beloved. I will also show how my account of romantic love accommodates our desire for stability—that is, constancy and exclusivity—in romantic relationships.

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I would like to use this space to acknowledge vital contributors to my thinking about this project.

Special thanks are due to the faculty in the Philosophy Department at the University of Arkansas. In particular, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Eric Funkhouser for agreeing to advise this project. I realize that this project would be nothing like the version before you without your guidance and insight. Several drafts and a little bit over a year later, we were able to get it done. Thank you.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their thoughtful insights that have influenced my thinking about romantic love and, indeed, love more generally. Kathryn Zawisza and Seth Daves have been particularly influential because of the insight they have provided through numerous conversations about this topic. Thanks.

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Last, and most importantly, I would like to thank my family. Your unending and undeserved support for me has been remarkable. I have spent many nights alone with this project with my head glued to my desk. On nights like those, I often found that your love was my only motivation for continuation. For that, I thank you.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to Josiah Makai Clardy, Daddy loves you. I hope that this gives you something to believe in.

For my family, with you may this be well received.

“Love is Beautiful and terrible—and vital.”

-Elinor Glyn

The Philosophy of Love

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Chapter 1:

Introduction: A Brief History and Framework for Romantic Love

The capacity to love is without a doubt one of the most prized features of our existence. However, love offers us a wide range of complex questions with very few answers. Yet, it is important that we get an accurate view of love because knowing what to love and how to live aids us in trying to manage our lives sensibly.¹ It has also been suggested that in order to ask normative questions most perspicuously, one could use a maximal theory of what love is.² Too often, the necessity of theorizing about love is easily overlooked. It seems to get lost in the philosophical shuffle because of some perceived lack of importance. However, theorizing about love *is* rewarding because the study of love is practical, it has close ties with questions about purpose and living rationally. Love contributes largely to the establishing of final ends in our lives.

Inevitably, we are creatures that cannot avoid being active. As such, it is important to have ends and aims because they give our otherwise meaningless activity purpose. Loving helps make our activity useful. It serves as a worthwhile goal and a final end. Harry Frankfurt says, “living without goals or purposes is living with nothing to do.”³ This is indeed a concern. For, surely, such an existence for active creatures like us will ultimately lead to an unavoidable decline of psychological activity—lest, we will literally bore ourselves to death! So, it is our

¹ Frankfurt (2004).

² Sircello (1989), p. 167.

³ Frankfurt (1988), p. 84.

responsibility to avoid such boredom. If we do not consider the mystery of love and try to get clear on it, we may be denied an essential element in personal growth. Since rationality and the capacity to love are quite possibly the most emblematic and highly prized features of human nature, it makes sense that human reason should be employed to help map out the depths of love. But what are we doing when we theorize about love? What we are concerned with when we theorize about love is conceptualizing the phenomenon already enjoyed so that the resultant concepts reflect light back on the dark mystery itself.

With these considerations in mind, the importance of theorizing about love becomes clear. We realize that we are not taking up some aimless metaphysical pursuit. Instead, we are recognizing an often bypassed necessity. There is some urgency here and it is important that we get clear on what the nature of love consists.

In this paper, I plan to present a reasons-responsive account of romantic love that involves the valuing of qualities that the beloved has as well as the valuing of the relationship shared with the beloved. I will also show how my account of romantic love accommodates our desire for stability—that is, constancy and exclusivity—in romantic relationships.

Two Types of Love

There is an important question that takes hold of philosophers who theorize about love—namely, is there a single set of ideas that can accurately depict everything that we have come to call love? I doubt that there is a set capable of accomplishing this task. Love is properly broken down into at least two types—*Agapic* and *Eros*. The notion of agapic love comes from the Greek word *Agape* (ἀγάπη) which, in a general sense, means the love that one has for human kind. The ancient Greeks believed that this type of love was the unselfish love of one person for another

person without sexual implications. *Eros* (ἔρωτας), also derived from the Greek, is generally construed as a physical love having to do with, in most cases, some element of sexual desire. The Greeks also identified this term with their mythological god of love. The Romans later identified the term *eros* with the naked, infant boy with wings known as Cupid. It is a variation of this type of love that contemporary love scholars have come to call “*romantic*” love.

Agapic Love

In *Love and Beauty*, Guy Sircello acknowledges the distinction between the types of love. In doing so, he introduces the idea of *tribal love*. Tribal love pertains to the love between family members or a love between all persons. Sircello says that this type of love may in part be constituted by the love for the qualities of the beloved, but nevertheless there is a nucleus to the love where the love of their qualities is irrelevant.⁴ Sircello’s notion of tribal love carefully unpacks what we mean when we talk about agapic love. Agapic love, much like Sircello’s tribal love, is independent not only of whether the beloved has lovable qualities but also of whether the beloved returns the love.

This love appears to consist in acting in accordance with certain obligations. Such an obligation, we might say, would be of a mother to provide care, concern, or even the material support for a child as well as the obligation of the child to behave respectfully and gratefully towards their parent. That is, this is the love that is obligatory or that is felt by people as obligatory.⁵

⁴ Sircello (1989), p.167.

⁵ Ibid.

In regard to things like familial love, we have intuitions that suggest that our love perhaps leads us to act in accordance with some obligations that we might have. Also, in this regard, we have intuitions that suggest that our love is not based on the qualities possessed by the beloved. Surely, we typically think something is wrong with people who place conditions on loving their children or those who think that their children are not worthy or deserving of their love. They often seem nefarious in some way. But we do not think this is the case with romantic love.

There is an obvious sense of importance that agapic love brings with it. In this notion lie some deep implications for the society in which we are all a part. The respect and love that we put forth for each of the members in our societal community helps us maintain the hope that such ideals like peace or harmony might be achieved. It is the underlying force driving our pursuits of such things. These things have *intrinsic* value and are thereby worthy of our pursuits. The unselfish love of one person for another person brings to mind the perfect love of God for human kind, such that by our partaking in loving agapically, we become better people for it.

Romantic Love

I doubt that one system of ideas can define everything in literature or culture that has been referred to as romantic. This is, I take it, because the notion of “romanticism” or that which is romantic, has been diluted through its use in a wide variety of media whether it be popular culture, philosophical texts, or other literary works. The word “romantic” was introduced by German poets and philosophers in the 19th century to capture and signify the world view that they were in the act of creating. Around this same time, the idea of the romantic reawakened the idea of *true love* being an ideal relationship that appeared in the empirical world. The thing that distinguished romanticism from earlier forms of idealism was its emphasis on feeling rather than

reason. We come to understand the severity of this shift when we consider the fact that throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, world views were dominated by reason due to the burgeoning of scientific discovery throughout the scientific revolution. Romantics do not believe that feeling is *all* but rather that feeling is *primary*, both in morals and in the acquisition of knowledge about the world.⁶ In fact, most romantics thought that love enabled us to know and appropriate the universe by means of endless yearning for oneness with another person or with humanity or with the cosmos as a whole.⁷

For our considerations here, the concept of romantic is closely tied to the ancient Greek notion of eros. Our focus will be on the type of love that occurs between nonrelated persons usually with an element of sexual desire present. This is the love most often associated with romantic relationships and marriages under the contemporary paradigm. This love brings with it questions that are both important and difficult. These questions include: Is romantic love valuable? Is it important that we love romantically? What is the nature of romantic love? What or whom is right to love? Under what conditions? Which loves are better or worse? What role, if any, does loving play in how we live? These questions, along with various others, contribute to the viscous haze surrounding romantic love. However, I reassure you that the efforts put forth in this project will not be in vain. Our inquiry here shall constitute a step toward removing some of that haziness so that we might be better able to understand ourselves and the world around us.

From its introduction in the 19th century, the notion of the romantic has represented a divorce from reason which preceded it in the 16th and 17th centuries. As we have moved through time, the gap between love and reason has expanded and has become so augmented that we have

⁶ Singer (1984), p. 286.

⁷ Ibid.

been deluded to thinking that the two have nothing to do with one another. Love is unreasonable, we say. I suggest that they are more intricately tied together than we think. So, it is one primary goal of this project to illuminate that very relationship; that is, to salvage the relationship between love and reason.

Of the going views on romantic love, I am sympathetic to the view that that posits romantic love as reason-responsive to an appraisal of value. The view primarily holds that love involves the valuation and appreciation of a person's loveable qualities. Additionally, I believe that the nature of romantic love involves the valuation and appreciation of the relationship itself. It has been said that this view has at least two unfavorable consequences: (1) The unreasonable consequence that we should end our romantic relationships when the qualities of the beloved or the relationship with the beloved changes, and (2) the unreasonable consequence that if another particular person is a better fit with the qualities that we esteem than is our beloved, then we should trade up or exchange our beloved for that person. Primarily, these concerns are for the stability in our romantic relationships. These concerns are the most pressing, so it will be these concerns that we shall consider for our laboring here.

In the next chapter, we will examine the account of romantic love that I am sympathetic to. We will unpack, in detail, what I take to be involved in romantic love. This includes the valuation and the appreciation of a person's qualities. We then move to the appreciation of relationships. After doing this we will see what I best take to be the nature of romantic love. It will be important to establish a solid foundation on what this view involves so that the rest of our theorizing will be less precarious.

In chapter three, we consider the stability of our romantic relationships. We will also explore the constituent parts of stability—constancy and exclusivity. In doing so, we will

examine the concerns regarding stability for the reason-responsive account of love. We will consider unreasonable consequences that the reason-responsive account is said to imply.

Love: The Framework

There are some widespread assumptions that will help guide our inquiry. These assumptions are, in my estimation, uncontroversial and should thus be employed here to aid us in our deliberative process of trying to conceptually analyze romantic love.

The first of these is that romantic love is monogamous. That is, the types of relationships that we typically regard as loving ones involve two people. I realize that there are some cultures that practice polygamy. However, relative to the western cultural practices we have come to accept, more times than not, that romantic relationships involves two people. This notion of monogamy is contrary to the nature of man since the “fundamental instincts of man suggest to him self-preservation, and in its larger sense, this means species preservation.”⁸ What Elinor Glyn is suggesting here is that the instincts of man suggest to him to preserve his species by whatever means. It is implied that the most effective way of doing so might be to mate and reproduce as many times or with as many people as one sees fit. We fight these natural urges, however, so that the conditions of love might be met and that we enjoy the fruits that it produces.

Next, romantic love involves some level of commitment that is expected to persist through time. Under the framework we are constructing here, one that, again, corresponds to western cultural practices, romantic love usually involves the assumption that the participants

⁸ Glyn (1923), p. 21-22.

have the intention of being in a long-term committed relationship, with marriage as the contemporary paradigm, between two people for the extent of their lives.

Last, it is often assumed that love is egalitarian. All people possess the ability to love and to be loved romantically. Finally, it should be mentioned that the account of love that I submit here is a secular one. Although people sometimes have religious or spiritual elements in their romantic relationships, this account does not depend on either of these things. I presume that the account to be offered holds for individuals in a free society for which there is a cultural ideal for romantic relationships.

Chapter 2:

The Nature of Romantic Love

In recent years, philosophers have not had much nice to say about reason-responsiveness accounts of love. For whatever reason, they do not appreciate the tremendous explanatory power possessed by these accounts. Of course explanatory power is no definitive reason to accept an account of love. But I also take these accounts to actually depict the nature of romantic love. In this chapter, I wish to first consider Harry Frankfurt's discussion on final ends and the role of love in our lives. Shortly thereafter, I will present the reason-responsiveness account of romantic love that I am sympathetic to. This account involves the valuation of a person's qualities. Additionally, my account conjoins a traditional quality account of love and another reason-responsiveness account of romantic love that deals with relational properties presented by Niko Kolodny.

My quality account shares striking similarities with Kolodny's relationship account. One element that I want to maintain, however, is the element that involves the actual valuation of qualities had by the beloved. Kolodny jettisons this idea. However, I think that it helps create a more reasonable picture of how it is that we come to enter in to our romantic relationships.

Frankfurt on the Necessity of Ideals and Final Ends

Philosophers have long exhausted the discussion of the distinction between means and ends. This is with good reason. The distinction between means and ends helps us organize our thoughts concerning what we do. For Harry Frankfurt, the notion of an arrangement of ends and means "focuses quite naturally on the ways in which our goals are linked to the process of

reasoning by which we attempt to determine how to achieve them.”⁹ But what, exactly, is the distinction between means and ends? I submit, with Frankfurt, that these concepts are best understood through conceptualizing the relation they have to one another. Means, we may say, possess value of a certain kind. Means possess *instrumental* value. That is to say that means receive their value through the relation in which they stand to some end external to themselves. When considering what ends are, we should consider the desirability something has apart from its usefulness as means to other things.¹⁰ An object that is an end, then, is desirable *for its own sake*. But, it does us no good to have conceptualized these things without examining how they are integrated into the routines of our lives. Plainly put, what is the point of having final ends?

Inevitably, we are creatures that cannot avoid being active. As such, it is important to have ends or aims because they give our otherwise meaningless activities purpose. Frankfurt holds that activity without aims is purposeless. He says that “the most obvious reason for having goals [is] the fact that it is important to us that certain possible states of affairs come about and that others be avoided...[thus], it is undesirable to behave at random [and without purpose].”¹¹

Frankfurt offers another reason for having ends—namely, that having final ends increases the likelihood that we will do something that we want.¹² This is because if we are not equipped with an aim or goal for which our activity seeks, it is not clear that we want anything at all. When we aim at something it makes it important to us that we obtain it. When we do not hit our aims, we often feel disappointed or saddened. When we have goals for which our activity aims,

⁹ Frankfurt (1999), p. 82.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 84.

¹² Ibid.

our activity becomes filled with meaning and thus, filled with purpose. So, having ends is a necessary condition for engaging in useful activity. Frankfurt says, “Without ends, there are no means. And if no activity serves as means, then no activity is useful. Thus having a final end is a condition of engaging in useful activity.”¹³ So, when our activities are infused with purpose, they provide our lives with meaning and thus give us a sense of importance. It is this importance, I believe, that is central.

A person who cares about something regards that thing as important to him. Frankfurt insists that to care about anything, or to regard it as important to oneself, means being motivated by concern for it. The concern may be positive or negative: hatred or love, a desire to possess or a desire to avoid, an interest in sustaining the object or destroying it.¹⁴ So we are motivated by things that we regard as important. By having final ends that are purpose providing, we are motivated to act in such a way as to attain and further that end.

What are we to make of those to whom nothing is important? This question is indeed troublesome. I am not sure that a person could find nothing important. But let us suppose, with Frankfurt, that there is someone to whom nothing is important. This person has no basis by which to decide that something is important to him. If it is really true that he cares about nothing, then it is not possible for him to make any reasoned decision to care about anything.¹⁵ Finding things important is an indispensable condition if we are to conduct our lives meaningfully.

Now that we have arrived at the reason for having final ends, it makes sense to ask what we should decide on as final ends. When deciding on final ends we need to determine the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 93.

¹⁵ Ibid.

importance of the proposed final end.¹⁶ It is imperative that what we decide on as final ends make a non-trivial difference. Frankfurt calls these non-trivial difference-making things “ideals.” He says that ideals are an appropriate candidate for final ends because they constrain us in a certain way. “A person’s ideals,” he says, “are concerns that he cannot bring himself to betray.”¹⁷ This sort of constraint is a good one. The sort of constraints ideals place on us are supposed to aid us in the pursuit of that ideal; acting in order to attain and further that ideal. Now, the ideals that define the essential nature of a person need not be moral ideals, in the sense in which morality is especially a matter of how a person relates himself to the interests of others. This leaves open what characteristics an ideal must possess to serve the function of limiting a person and specifying his identity.¹⁸

Two of the most compelling ideals in our culture are romantic love itself and *stability* in our romantic relationships. That is, we often find the pursuit of these ideals worthwhile. We let the pursuit of these ideals constrain us in a certain way because they provide us with aims and thus give us purpose and helps make our lives, our romantic relationships important and more meaningful. Indeed it is not just romantic love in the abstract that is a final end for us, but our lovers themselves are final ends for us as well. We understand that it is not just relationships that are of importance to us but the particular people who we find ourselves in relationships with are just as important as the relationship itself.

The Nature of Romantic Love

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 92.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 114.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 115.

When it comes to romantic love, we often look for some justification behind the love that our lovers say that they have for us. That is, romantic love is not merely selective, a matter of choosing to love one person rather than another, but it is rather a matter of selecting for better or worse reasons. To be clear, the questions about justifying love are not questions about whether or not love is a good thing or a bad thing; it is rather about *particular* loves for *particular* persons.

The questions “Why do you love me?” or “What is it that you love about me?” allude to the fact that romantic love does not resist, but it actually invites explanation; and the selection by the lover of a beloved not only allows but requires justification—given the large number of potential beloveds having valuable properties.¹⁹ When we typically use the word “love” we imply an act of prizing or desiring or caring about. All of these represent a mode of valuation. So, we shall now consider the nature of romantic love. On the account I will present, we value someone’s qualities. Additionally, as we begin and continue relationships we also, appropriately, come to value the relationships themselves.

It is uncontroversial that there exist emotions that admit to the following characteristics:

- 1) If a person x experiences this emotion, then it is possible for x to articulate, even if in only a vague sense, what the emotion is about. What the emotion is about, or the *object* of the emotion, is indicated in sentences of the form, ‘ x Φ s y ’, or ‘ x is Φ about/with/of y ’.
- 2) If x feels Φ , and y is the object of that emotion, then x will believe y to have a certain set of properties or a particular property. Depending on what emotion is felt, x will believe that y is harmful, that y has done him a favor, or a detriment, etc.

¹⁹ Soble (1990), p. 110.

- 3) So, x will believe and in most cases be able to articulate that y has the determinate qualities Ψ and he will believe further that it has the determinable quality²⁰ Φ because it has the determinate quality Ψ . That is to say if x feels the emotion toward some object y then x believes y to have some determinate quality that he would normally be able to specify.

In regard to 3), there are some constraints as to which determinate qualities count in favor of particular emotions. What these constraints are, exactly, will be dictated by the relevant determinable quality. For instance, if x fears y , then the determinate qualities picked out by x must be such that they explain why x takes y to be dangerous.²¹ With this in place, we might want to formulate what has been said as follows: if x believes that y is dangerous, then he must believe that y is dangerous because it has the relevant determinate qualities, even if on some occasions x is unable to articulate these determinate qualities. The point is that what we posit as Φ in 1) will set the restricting conditions on what Ψ could be in 3).

Prima facie, a good reason for questioning whether there are reasons for our romantic love is that it is obscure as to what these reasons might be.²² Presumably, these conditions provide us some grounds as to decide whether an experience of a particular emotion is justified. We might not, for example, be justified in having the belief that the object of our emotions is/has

²⁰ A determinable quality is one that cannot tell us much about how y appears to x because it is the type of quality that is supposed to belong to any object of, say, anger or gratitude. (i.e. in the case of the experience of the emotion of fear, such a quality might be ‘dangerous’ or ‘fear-able’)

²¹ Taylor (1976), p. 148.

²² Kolodny (2003), p. 158.

Ψ . If our beliefs about our objects are irrational then we cannot be justified in having an emotion based on those beliefs.

If x loves y , then it can be said that x believes y has a determinable quality of loveable. Simply put, if x loves y , then x holds the belief that y is loveable. However, as Gabriele Taylor points out, this might be unsatisfactory. She says:

There are, after all, criteria for settling, at least in the paradigm cases, whether or not a person is loveable, just as there are criteria for settling by and large what sorts of situations are dangerous... If this is so and if no more suitable candidate can be found than 'loveable' can be found, then we have no determinable quality to serve as a guide as to what sort of determinate qualities we are to look for in the object of love and so what substance to give the love-beliefs.²³

So if love belongs to the class of emotions described, then it will have a Φ quality that ' y is Ψ ' relates to and Ψ will be relevantly related to love. This is especially so since it appears to me to be the case that very often when we love the objects of our love, we do so in virtue of certain qualities that we think the object of our love has. But what might these be?

Although the choice and variety of loveable qualities may be great, not just any description of such belief will do if x is to love y . Additional constraints can be found when we consider that when we experience emotions, in addition to the beliefs we have about the object of emotion, we also will have wants as well. These wants and beliefs are interrelated in the sense that a person will have certain wants because that person has certain beliefs. In this case, why a person has a particular want will be explicable in reference to his beliefs. For example, if I experience the emotion of fear toward a dog, I also experience the want to, say, leave the area where the dog is. If we can specify a set of wants that are usually involved cases where x loves y , then this will put a constraint on the beliefs concerning particular qualities in virtue of which x

²³ Taylor (1976), p. 152.

can love *y*. This will allow us to dismiss those which cannot in any way be seen as explanatory of the wants in question. But it hardly seems that just any wants will do. So, we need to consider the type of want relevant for love.

Fortunately enough, in his critique of Harry Frankfurt's hierarchical model of the will, Gary Watson makes an important distinction between merely wanting (or desiring) and valuing. Watson espouses a view based on a platonic understanding of the distinction between valuing and desiring that depends on there being different sources of motivations.²⁴ Like Plato, Watson thinks that to value something is to associate that thing with being good. Additionally, he thinks that to think a thing good is at the same time to desire it or at least to desire the promotion of it. We find the distinction between valuing and desiring, Watson says, in the *source* of the want or why one wants what he does.

When a person values something, he wants it because he takes it to be worthwhile to pursue it even if it is not the most worthwhile thing to have amongst the alternatives. This is because it appears valuable in its own right. It is important to note that, since Watson thinks that reason determines the value of things, this notion of regarding as worthwhile involves some evaluation of the thing that is wanted. Conversely, wants that amount to merely desires are such that they might involve no evaluation of the object. When we merely desire, we might think that the thing we want has no value, or we might think that the thing we want is in some sense worthwhile but only as a means to satisfying another desire. It is the first of these types of wants that is relevant to love. This distinction is a non-trivial one for our present discussion. This distinction gives us a principled way to evaluate whether a want is the requisite kind of want for love or not. From this we are able to distinguish between cases of love and cases of mere

²⁴ Watson (1975), p. 206-7.

infatuation even if the content of a particular want happens to be the same. The primary difference is that the type of want ascribed to love demonstrates that the lover *values* the beloved. Whereas in cases of mere infatuation the person merely wants their partners.

So far on this account, the justification of love is straightforward. Since love is a response to an appraisal of value, its justification must be a matter of whether the beloved actually has or intelligibly seems to have the value properties relevant to the lover's appraisal or preferences. To add to the point, we must come to terms with the fact that the value of the people and things will always be a function of human interest. Irving Singer maintains that:

In all communities people have individual value for one another. We are means to each other's satisfactions and we constantly evaluate one another on the basis of our individual interest. However subtly, we are always setting prices on other people and ourselves.²⁵

So to value (and indeed be evaluated) is a feature of human existence. This allows us to look at the valuation in love, in spite of many philosophers regarding this sort of process in a negative light, as a neutral thing. That is, it is not a good or bad thing; rather it is just what we do.

So, I have said that when x loves y , this can be explained as the result of y 's having, or x 's perceiving that y has, a set Ψ of loveable qualities or characteristics and thus x loves y because y has (or x perceives that y has) Ψ .

There are some positive corollaries for this account. The first is that love, though susceptible to various kinds of irrationality, is not inherently irrational.²⁶ So, if x loves y in virtue of x 's believing or perceiving that y has Ψ , then love is vulnerable to cognitive mistakes. He may, for example, be deluded in his thinking that y has Ψ ; x may still love y in this case, though the

²⁵ Singer (1987), p. 6.

²⁶ Soble (1990), p. 5.

foundation of that love would be admittedly suspicious. But since romantic love is, in principle, explainable in terms of y 's having (or x 's perceiving that y has) Ψ , the love is not irrational at its core. It is not “unpatterned, unprincipled, or unpredictable.”²⁷

The second corollary is that the object possessing unattractive or undesirable qualities must play some role in helping determine the duration and intensity of romantic love. So if y 's quality set Ψ changes (made up of qualities that x finds unattractive, undesirable, or unadmirable) this *might* be able to serve as a justificatory force for ending the romantic relationship or for a less intense love within that romantic relationship.

Unfortunately, the quality account is only able to partially depict the nature of romantic love. We additionally value our relationships themselves. So instead of suggesting that it is *only* these determinate qualities that ground romantic love, instead we value our romantic relationships *and* the determinate qualities that a person has. In what comes next, I will present the relationship account of love. I will also explain, as best I can, the relationship between the relationship theory and the quality theory for which I have so far advocated.

Kolodny and the Relationship Account

In “Love as Valuing a Relationship”, Niko Kolodny presents an account of love in which the love is grounded in the value one has for her relationships. Although the scope of Kolodny's paper reaches questions that pertain to familial and other forms of agapic love, I wish to discuss his account only in the context of romantic love. Kolodny starts by briefly pointing to the alleged limitations of quality theories. Although he might agree that a person's qualities may serve as reasons for wanting and seeking to cultivate a romantic relationship with them, he says that they

²⁷ Ibid.

are “not reason for the attitudes of...romantic love that sustain the relationship once it is cultivated.”²⁸ Kolodny continues, “If Jane’s qualities are what justify my loving her, then that justification lapses as she loses those qualities. Insofar as my love is responsive to its reasons, therefore, it too ought to lapse as soon as she loses those qualities. Such a fickle attitude hardly seems like love.”²⁹ Another limitation of the quality theory, Kolodny thinks, is that if a person’s qualities are my reasons for loving her, then they are equally reasons for my loving someone else with the same qualities.

In light of these concerns, many philosophers reject the claim that there are reasons for love. Instead, Kolodny’s claim is that the reason for continuing to love our beloveds is our relationship to them. Love, moreover, partly consists in the belief that some relationship renders it appropriate; the special concern for a person is not love at all when there is no belief that a relationship renders it appropriate.³⁰ So instances of inappropriate love exist whenever there is such a belief, but the belief is false or when a person is misled by someone just using him. Consider a stalker, for example. They often believe that they have relationships to the objects of their obsession when they really do not. The absence of love is inappropriate when there is a relationship that calls for it. I agree with Kolodny’s claims here. But what are relationships under my account?

Relationships are ongoing, with particular people, historical, and reciprocal. Kolodny says that relationships persist over time. For, if *x* is in a romantic relationship with *y*, we realize that the romantic relationship is not the momentary obtaining of some relation, but something

²⁸ Kolodny (2003), p.140.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 146.

that has persisted and may continue to persist over time.³¹ Further, relationships hold between particular people through time. That is, relationships are individuated by the identities of their participants.³² Lastly, he says whether or not I stand in a relationship to someone at a given time depends on some fact about our pasts. The claim is that y is x 's girlfriend only if there has been a historical pattern of attitudes and actions between us.³³ This much appears to me to be correct.

I would add that our romantic relationships also involve *romantic contracts*. These contracts are important. They are what the participants use to gauge the expectations for the relationship and for one another on. What I mean by a romantic contract is the mutual understanding of the desires and expectations of each lover by one another. The demands of the participants entering into a romantic relationship are often shaped by their culture, prior experiences, or even frame of mind.³⁴ That is, what we desire and expect for our romantic relationships might be shaped by our perception of our parent's relationship or romantic

³¹ Ibid, p. 148.

³² Ibid. Kolodny has us consider having a relationship to *some* dentist. He says that the ongoing relation would be constituted by a collection of relations to particular people at contiguous periods of time, but would not itself be a relation to a particular person over time.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See Epstude, K., & Förster, J. (2011). These psychologists tested whether or not the level of concreteness involved in how a person thinks might have a link to the expectations one has for romantic situations. They found that individuals who think more abstractly tended to have expectations of love and long-term relationship success. On the other hand, individuals who thought more concretely tend to expectations of sex and other physicalistic elements of intimacy.

relationships that we have had in the past. I believe these contracts point to the importance of *courting*.

Courting provides us with the opportunity to understand just what the demands are. Although our contemporary society typically refers to the period before formalizing a romantic relationship (whether through marriage or some formal recognition between the participants) as *dating*, I find the term to be ambiguous as it may refer to mere ‘outings’ with no intention or desire for a romantic relationship. I take ‘courting’ to refer, more specifically, to the period of activities prior to the formalization of a romantic relationship where there is the intention to develop a romantic relationship. Romantic contracts are why we take time before establishing a formal romantic relationship to gather as much information about each other as well as the desires and expectations we have for one another and for romantic relationships. Formalizing a romantic relationship prematurely—before a sufficient amount of information is gathered in order to form a mutually understood contract—often leads to disaster. Further, contemporary psychological research suggests that it is only after some time has passed that we are able to make reasonable evaluations while courting and thus gauge our expectations sensibly.³⁵ A sensible arrangement of expectations is desired because it decreases the chance that we expect things from our partners that they might simply be unable or unwilling to give. When we do expect such things, it often gives rise to animosity and resentment. Take, for example, the tension usually present in situations when one participant is attention hungry and desires excessive time and the other participant is extremely career driven and not so willing to yield their time.

³⁵ See Eastwick, P. W., Finkel, E. J., & Eagly, A. H. (2011).

Problems for our romantic relationships might arise from two things regarding the romantic contract: (1) the lack of a mutual understanding of the contract or (2) the intentional disregard of the romantic contract. In the case of (1), for instance, if x does not understand that y desires exclusivity he might believe, falsely, that his relationship allows certain courses of action when it indeed does not. This is a problem for y because if x acts against the courses of actions that y believes the relationship dictates to both parties, this causes hostility. The anger and animosity y might have for x under these circumstances might be inappropriate if they are founded on the belief that x intentionally disregarded the romantic contract to conduct a certain course of action. This would not be appropriate because in order for x to form such an intention, he would have to know the course of action he took himself to be intentionally defying. Since x was unclear on the courses of action dictated to him by his relationship, it is not clear that he could form such an intention. As the result of such a misunderstood contract usually awaits a disgruntled x , upset with y for what he takes to be inappropriate responses for his course of action and a disgruntled y , upset with x for what she takes to be intentional inappropriate conduct. But problems for our romantic relationships might also stem from mutually understood romantic contracts such as (2) the intentional disregard for our romantic contract. In this case, both x and y understand the desires and expectations of each other and their relationship. If x were to adopt a course of action that disregarded the romantic contract when it is mutually understood, y 's animosity is more appropriate because the belief that the animosity is grounded in is true. Also, romantic contracts are why, for instance, if neither x nor y desire sexual exclusivity, promiscuity, which is often seen as a detriment to the desire for exclusivity, might be possible without the integrity of the romantic love between x and y being compromised.

The word relationship might be used in two ways. The first way the word “relationship” is used in regard to attitude-dependent relationships is that it “refers to the pattern of concern that participants have to one another, for the relationship, and for the pattern of concern itself.”³⁶ The other way “relationship” is used refers to the activities characteristic of that relationship. In the case of romantic relationships some of these activities might include cohabitation, sharing confidences, and having sex with our partners. Kolodny remarks that when people speak of ending relationships, they usually mean deciding to stop engaging in those activities: that is, deciding to move out or no longer see one another socially.³⁷ So when used in this sense the relation to the relationship, understood as the pattern of concern and characteristic activities, is complex. While one can engage in these activities without the pattern of concern, extended voluntary engagement in these activities typically gives rise to it. This seems correct as well. We inhabit a “hook-up” culture where promiscuity is not aggressively shunned. When we perpetuate the act of “hooking up” voluntarily and continually, feelings and emotions do seem to emerge. Kolodny and I agree on the further point that the pattern of concern can also persist without the characteristic engagement. He says:

Most people have ‘old friends’ about whom they care deeply, but with whom they rarely have the opportunity to socialize. Nevertheless, the relationship would not be a relationship of the relevant type if it was not marked at some point in its history by engagement in those activities. And in many cases, ceasing to engage in the activities changes the nature of relationship. To the extent that a relationship that was once romantic is no longer structured around the expression of sexual drives, for example, it may make more sense to view it simply as a friendship.³⁸

³⁶ Kolodny (2003), p. 149.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

This too appears to be correct. When the types of activities that we used to engage in with a particular person stops, the relationship with that person may not stop but both participants often realize that something about the relationship is “different.” Consider a couple who regularly displays affection in public by holding hands. If one of the two individuals were to abruptly stop engaging in that activity, the other individual is often taken aback and concerned that there is something wrong with their significant other.

On the relationship theory, there are reasons for love and these reasons are interpersonal relationships. More directly put, love is a kind of valuing. Valuing x in general involves (i) being vulnerable to certain emotions regarding x , and (ii) believing that one has reasons both for this vulnerability to x and for actions regarding x .³⁹ So valuing is also a matter of being *disposed to have* certain emotional responses. As Kolodny points out in a footnote, valuing consists not only in a susceptibility to certain emotional responses, but also in certain beliefs: first, the belief that something provides reasons for this susceptibility and, second, the belief that something provides one with reasons for action.⁴⁰ When we value something instrumentally we value x as a way of bringing about or realizing some distinct Γ or some state of affairs involving Γ (by causing Γ , partly constituting Γ , or being partly constituted by Γ).⁴¹ This is not valuing x *finally* because we see some distinct Γ as the source of our reasons for valuing x . To value something finally is to value it for its own sake. To value x *finally* is both to value x and to see x as the source of one’s

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See footnote 20 in Kolodny (2003).

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 150.

reasons for valuing. In this case, one both (a) is emotionally vulnerable to x and for actions regarding x and (b) believes that the source of the reasons is x itself.⁴²

Tying things together

So on the account that I am sympathetic to romantic love, then, involves the valuation of the qualities that a person has as well as “a final valuation of a relationship, from the perspective of a participant in that relationship, and a nonfinal, noninstrumental⁴³ value of one’s [beloved].”⁴⁴ I believe that the first type of valuation (the nonfinal valuation of the qualities that a person has) is a necessary additional valuation if what we have to say is to apply exclusively to romantic love. Our preferences for qualities are what warrant our desires for a relationship which Kolodny thinks warrants our love. Romantic love, in other words, is a response that consists, in part, in seeking out and appreciating the qualities that the beloved has to offer. The appreciation of these qualities puts us in a position to want to give rise to the activities characteristic of the particular patterns of concern associated with romantic relationships. Additionally, I believe, with Kolodny, that once these relationships are created and cultivated they give us *insistent* reasons for present concern in our relationships. That is, ceasing to have the relevant kind of concern within the context of an established and valuable romantic relationship is inappropriate. The presence of either an insistent or a noninsistent reason renders the presence of some characteristic response appropriate or reasonable. If the only reason for a response is a

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Such that it is not the case that A’s reasons for being emotionally vulnerable to B is that doing so would bring about an instance of r , where r is a relationship.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

noninsistent reason, then while it is reasonable to have the response, it is not unreasonable to fail to have it. Insistent reasons require a response, whereas noninsistent reasons leave it optional.

Kolodny provides a couple instances of this. One can fall out of love in response to a belief that one's partner does not or never did have concern for them. A person's attitudes can change in response to the belief that their lover has failed to act on the reasons that the relationship provides, even if the lover still has the concern that constitutes the relationship like in the case of cheating. Also, as I shall suggest in the coming chapter, as Kolodny alludes to, "there is the psychologically real, but metaphysically vexed phenomenon of no longer identifying the person now before [you] with the person with whom once had a relationship."⁴⁵ A person might also find that they are no longer attracted to the beloved. Participating in the characteristic activities no longer engages one. Perhaps this is due to changes in one's self, in what attracts one, or changes in one's beloved in regard to the features to which one was once attracted. To the extent that the relationship is marked by attraction, loss of attraction may mean a change in the relationship. It may mean, for example, the end of a specifically romantic relationship.⁴⁶

From what has been offered, it appears that romantic love is rather one sided. But romantic relationships are reciprocal. Pursuing and sustaining romantic relationships is not like grocery shopping or car shopping. When we are considering our relationships, we also consider how appropriate we are for our partners. When we believe that the love in our romantic relationships is reciprocated, we believe that the lover finds us appropriate and that we fit their evaluations. The fact that we fit our lover's evaluations also gives us a reason to appreciate them.

⁴⁵ Kolodny (2003), p.165.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.166.

Further, in showing appreciation for our relationship, we try to see to it that we live up to our lover's expectations. Since relationships are ongoing, the pattern of concern that we have for the expectations of the lover and the concern that we have to remain appropriate for our lovers are also ongoing. So in valuing our beloved and our relationships we reciprocate romantic love.

The claim that the appreciation of qualities can be involved in reciprocity is not uncommon. Further, the fact that these determinate qualities are nonessential to the object might mean that they are not indispensable, however, that does not mean that they are unimportant to us. On the contrary, our qualities are important to us. Sometimes we struggle with them. People undergo cosmetic surgery if they do not like some physical feature about themselves. For the unsatisfied that cannot afford cosmetic surgery, the level of dissatisfaction with a particular quality could potentially lead to several internal struggles sometimes to the point of depression. To a lesser extreme, some people seek powerful toothpastes to make their teeth brighter. When we find that we have the quality of being a liar it disturbs us and we try to effectively bring it about that we lose that quality as best we can. We do not always succeed. But this struggle itself, whether it prevails or not, suggests that the quality in question matters to us. There are other qualities that we might not possess but that we desire to have and take effective steps to bring it about that we have that quality. These qualities, too, seem important to us insofar as we are willing to make the effective steps to bring it about. We undergo personal pilgrimages sometimes in order to become better truth tellers. We buy dye and spend hours applying it to change our hair color. Would it be strange, then, to want to be appreciated, on some level, for our possession of these qualities? I do not think so.

In large part, we want to be appreciated for these qualities because in most cases we do work to attain them. Often when we compliment others on a particular quality, they are thrilled.

Employees are delighted when their bosses make references to their having the quality of being a hard worker. So I do not think that it is ridiculous that sometimes we want to be appreciated for these qualities because they are qualities that are important to us; qualities that we might find valuable in ourselves. When our partners do in fact appreciate the qualities that we have, we see the love that they have for us and we understand that it is not whimsical or arbitrary. So although it may appear that the valuation of qualities is rather one-sided, the appreciation that we show for these qualities also serves as means for the reciprocity of love in our relationships.

In the coming chapter I will discuss this account and its corollaries an end that we desire for our romantic relationships—stability—which, I take to involve constancy and exclusivity. In this discussion I have laid out, as best I could, the nature of romantic love under this account. Ultimately, romantic relationships are ongoing patterns of concern partially grounded in the appreciation of the qualities of the beloved, and love is a psychological state for which there are reasons. One might be reluctant to accept my proposal because there is a concern that this account does not meet our starry-eyed expectations. This account of the nature of love, they say, is unforgivably shallow. I submit here that this concern is not because the view itself is faulty, but rather there may be something awry with our expectations. I reiterate that the worry here is not that we are setting the bar too low, but instead we may have set it too high—so high in fact, that it has become unrealistic.

Chapter 3:

Stability and Romantic Relationships

Stability

Stability as an ideal for our romantic relationships is widespread in western cultural practices. However, the nature of stability in romantic love can be a bit elusive. Since this ideal is important to us, we do well to get clear on what this notion involves. So what, then, do we mean when we say that stability is a thing that we aim for in our romantic relationships? I submit that the type of stability involved in our romantic relationships essentially has two aims or conditions: constancy and exclusivity.

We desire to be loved over time in our romantic relationships. Despite the intuitions of some, that loves lasts forever, we can make some sense of this desire. We value security. If love lasts over time, we are able to alleviate potential anxieties that might arise from thoughts concerning whether our partners will love us next week, next month, or next year. These anxieties, when present, often contribute to a sense of insecurity with our relationships, or worse, insecurities with ourselves!

Although many of his accounts in psychology have been left behind, most contemporary psychologists do not deny the heavy influence of Sigmund Freud's developmental psychology, more specifically, his idea of object constancy. Freud's general idea points to our understanding that out-of-sight does not mean gone. In an important way, our sense of object constancy propels the narratives we have about our lovers when they are away from us.

When we lack a strong sense of object constancy we usually question our relationship to that object in its absence. A weak sense of object constancy is what drives our insecurity in

romantic relationships and often can give rise to things like jealousy or excessive attachment. A weak sense of object constancy is the reason for our anxiety when we are away from our lovers after an argument. It is the unrest we experience when our lovers are being uncharacteristically mute and we think they are angry with us. The emotions that are provoked in individuals with a weak sense of object constancy resemble an undesirable grief cycle.⁴⁷ We desire constancy in our romantic relationships because a failed sense of object constancy means we do not have a sense of object permanence. This means that in the absence of our lovers we will often experience the emotions that make up a grief state.

We desire to be loved exclusively for a number of reasons. One such reason is that we inhabit a culture where exclusivity and monogamy are held highly and indeed revered. The praise attributed to the value of exclusivity by our families, friends, colleagues, and even the media creates in us in some cases, and encourages in other cases, the desire for a relationship that is exclusively involved. That is, when we receive information about romantic relationships from these resources, exclusive relationships are often, although not always, painted in a favorable light. Naturally, we hold these relationships fixed in mind as ends for our own personal romantic pursuits.

Another reason we desire exclusivity is that even though we might find all human beings to be in themselves valuable, in our romantic relationships we like to feel as if our value is increased over the value of all other humans with respect to being loved by our partners, even if as it turns out that the value that all humans share is equal. We like to feel special. When we feel we are being loved exclusively, this contributes to a great feeling of satisfaction and we often

⁴⁷ See, Kübler-Ross (1969).

find comfort in this. Over the course of the Olympic games, champions are awarded golden medals. We recognize that the medal is especially valuable because it is an exclusive award for a particular event. Our desire for being loved exclusively is like this. When we find that we are our partner's "gold medal" we indeed have a feeling of specialty.

Our desire for exclusivity surfaces also when we realize that the desire we experience for wanting to be prized especially in the face of others is derived from this larger desire for exclusivity. That it is true that we have the desire to be loved in the face of others has become and continues to become evident in the engagement of the culture and its social media venues. We are encouraged to place our partners on a pedestal on Valentine's day. Through the availability of marital status options and their display settings on the applications to a vast number of social networking sites such as Facebook, we are actually encouraged to proclaim to people in our networks—social, professional or otherwise—the love that we have for our one and only beloved.

There is at least one more reason that it appears that we desire to be loved exclusively in our romantic relationships and that is because of the limited time and other resources that the lover has to give. We can tell from a third person perspective that when these already limited time and resources are distributed in more than one romantic relationship, the love present in either relationship is substantially less robust; whereas if these resources were concentrated on one relationship, it would foster a more rich love in the relationship.

Sometimes these resources are tangible, such as monetary resources. Sometimes the resources are a little less tangible, such as time and energy. Instead of being able to focus all of his energy toward solving some problem with the beloved y , x 's energy might be directed toward some problem with the beloved z . Usually this satisfies none of the involved parties. I am not

suggesting that in the case of concentrated time and energy for either y or z that this guarantees x 's being able to solve the problem in that relationship. However, we are more likely to empathize with x given his maximal efforts. In other words, his not being able to solve the problem in this circumstance would not be for a lack of trying.

The persistence of love contributes to the alleviation of these desires. It contributes as well to a better sense of security with our relationships and ourselves. So, much should be said about constancy and exclusivity.

Constancy

While the appraisal account of love discussed in Chapter 2 paints a particular picture of how we come to love, it is said that on this account, we are faced with the unreasonable consequence that the love or the relationship should end when the qualities of the beloved change. Niko Kolodny presents the problem as follows “*Constancy*: If Jane’s qualities are what justify my loving her [or my relationship with her], then that justification lapses as soon as she loses those qualities. Insofar as my love [or my relationship] is responsive to its reasons, therefore, it too ought to lapse as soon as she loses those qualities. Such a fickle attitude hardly seems like love.”⁴⁸ This concern is problematic because what it illustrates appears damaging to some intuition we might have. But whether this is a problem or not for the appraisal view depends on what we are looking for in regards to *constancy*. In what follows, I will consider two worries about constancy. The first has to do with rejecting the notion that in order for x 's emotion to count as love, it should never end. The second is the idea that the reason-responsive account of love might recommend short-term loves. I will now consider the first of these.

⁴⁸ Kolodny (2003), p.140.

Shakespeare famously suggested in his Sonnet 116 that “love is not which alters when alteration it finds.” There is an implicit belief at play here. Shakespeare implicitly believes that the constancy condition in love calls for the love lasting forever. However, the role that constancy plays in romantic love, *prima facie*, is a bit vague and unclear. In his book, *The Structure of Love*, Alan Soble says “regarding constancy, the choice is between a restrictive notion (x [ought to] always love y) and a fuzzy notion that leaves open the length of time x ’s emotion should last in order to be love.”⁴⁹ It is the first notion that is relevant for our concerns here since many share this Shakespearean intuition. This notion of constancy, however, is overwhelmingly strict. It requires that love should *literally* last forever. For on this kind of constancy, if x begins to love y at a time t_1 , then x ought to love y at all times after t_1 ; if x ’s love ends, it had never been love.⁵⁰ We will call this the *Strict Constancy Principle*. But if the ideal of stability is such that it demands exclusivity from us, as I think that it does, this strict notion of constancy seems to undermine it.

Suppose that x loves y . At some point x stops loving y and loves z . But herein lies the problem. If the conditions for this strict notion of constancy hold, he now loves two people romantically. Remember, if at any time the love for y ceases—even after the dissipation of their romantic relationship—he *never loved* that person. Thus, intuitively, the exclusivity of x ’s love for z should be called into question.

The reasoning above might be said to be a ploy to salvage some theoretical consistency which ultimately leads us to making a normative claim like, we should not think about constancy in this sense because it theoretically conflicts with our desire for exclusivity. One might say that,

⁴⁹ Soble (1990), p. 206.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

descriptively, love *does* last forever. But the belief that love lasts forever in the strict sense is not plausible even when evaluating it on the descriptive terms I might be said to be ignoring. While it may be nice to think that love lasts forever in this way, when we look around at romantic love and relationships, it is clear that some come to a halt. That is, there are some relationships that end. There are some cases where love—in the romantic sense—ceases. When these things happen this strict sense of constancy implies that the merit of whether love ever was present is called into question. But what is wrong with saying of x that he once loved y romantically but he does not love her romantically any longer? There is no difficulty in saying that x was in love with y while he was still in a romantic relationship with y .

Recall the conditions for the class of emotions love belongs to. Whether or not the experience of an emotion is appropriate, in regard to the degree that emotion is experienced, depends on the determinate qualities the object has or is perceived to have. So if x fears y , then x takes y to have frightening qualities. This means that it is possible for x to fear some z more than y . In articulating a more strongly felt emotion toward z , the qualities about the object that x is responding to are more frightening in z than in y . However, from this, we should hardly doubt that the emotion experienced about y and about z was in fact fear. Some loves are stronger or weaker than other loves, indeed. However, the thought that the weak experience of the emotion should not count as an experience of the emotion at all seems misguided. Further, since we take it to be the case that the experience of an emotion may occur in varying degrees, this gives us a reason to appreciate the stronger experiences of love when they occur and in fact hold on to them. So it appears this does a better job at accommodating our natural way of speaking about such matters.

But perhaps there is something here. Love, as we have said, is broken down into two distinct types—*eros* and *agape*. Because of this, the modes of love differ depending upon the type of love. What we might mean when we advocate for this strict sense of constancy is that once love commences, love *simpliciter* should last forever in this strict sense, lest the love itself be called in to question. That is, they might have in mind the distinction that we often make reference to in our regular ways of speaking—between (1) loving a person x and (2) being in love with a person x . If my interpretation of this principle (strict sense constancy) is correct, they will say that once love begins, in either sense (1) or (2), all that the strict sense of constancy says is that (1) ought to remain satisfied. So after the love for x begins in sense (1), even if over the course of the relationship with x love in sense (2) is acquired, love in sense (1) should remain constant. However, this is not problematic for the appraisal view to which I am sympathetic. It is no problem for romantic love if the type of love that should be held constant is the love mentioned by type (1), this type of love corresponds more to *agapic* love. Our concern about exclusivity is motivated by the thought that there are limited resources with respect to the particular mode love is in.

For it is not typically problematic for y that if x loves her romantically, that he also loves his son, his parents, his sister, or his friend John agapically. This is a different mode. This difference of mode is apparent in the type of activities characteristic of the relationships in which we find ourselves in relation to the beloved.⁵¹ Depending on what mode love is in, it is going to demand different things from us in regard to our loving relationships. Since we typically do not have the desire to be loved exclusively in our agapic relationships, similar worries do not arise. What is to be understood here is that different types of love call for different types of

⁵¹ Kolodny (2003), p.149.

activities characteristic of the relationship. This is why we often have different sets of expectations for our beloveds depending on whether we are loving them romantically or agapically. We don't expect people we love agapically, such as our family members, to satisfy us sexually. That type of love does not call for that. Further, I am not sure that we expect people that we love romantically to love us unconditionally. It is not implausible to think that romantic love does not call for this. If we bring harm to our beloved, we can rationally expect them to love us less or even in some cases that they love us no longer! Our beloveds do not always stop loving us or love us any less when we bring harm to them, but we would understand if they did because we understand that there are conditions on which that love depends.

Our naive understanding of the constancy principle tends to be:

Naïve Constancy: If x begins to love y *romantically* at a time t_1 , then x ought to love y *romantically* at all times after t_1 ; if x 's *romantic* love ends, it had never been love.

But is it plausible that we desire this about constancy in our romantic relationships? If this is what we have in mind when we are talking about constancy in our romantic relationships, it seems that it will conflict with our desire for exclusivity in the way mentioned earlier. An implication of this naïve constancy is that, if Bob ever loved Sally romantically, he should always love her romantically even in the circumstances their relationship comes to a halt. How might Susan feel when she finds that her beloved Bob was once in love with Sally? This would alarm a logically savvy Susan. Susan will be more alarmed if she asks question with a "Are you in love with me?" An affirmative response here would go against our intuitions about exclusivity. That we desire constancy in this sense is more unreasonable than the consequences that might follow from the appraisal view! It leads to a conflict in our desire for stability. But is

there a way that we can understand constancy that is consistent with our desires for both exclusivity and constancy? I think that there is.

I submit that we have in mind an even more refined notion of strict constancy that I will call the *Principle of Constancy*. I will formulate it as follows:

The Principle of Constancy: A person x ought to romantically love a person y for as long as he values the relationship with y or the loveable qualities found valuable by x are still had by y (or perceived by x to still be had by y).

This does not require x to continue to love y if y has undergone significant changes or if the romantic relationship with y changes in a way for x to no longer value it. I submit that in certain cases, a perceived non-trivial change in something like personality might be enough to justify x 's belief that indeed y has significantly changed. So, presumably, if x 's love for y ceases when x takes y to have changed significantly, the termination of that love does not call into question the earlier love of y by x . That is to say that if x no longer loves y when y significantly changes or their romantic relationship is no longer valuable to x , the love is gone because the reasons for loving y romantically are gone and not because there is some flaw or fault in x 's love.⁵² Most

⁵² On page 212 of *The Structure of Love*, Soble makes a distinction between R_1 and R_2 reasons for the end of love. R_1 reasons are reasons that strongly bring into doubt that the love earlier had been genuine. R_2 reasons are reasons that do not call into question the claim that the love earlier had been genuine. He goes on to say that "love does not end whimsically or capriciously; some reasons for the end of love, but not others, call in to question its reality." The significant changing of y constitutes an R_2 reason for the end of love. Soble calls this the "doctrine of identity constancy." Our principle of constancy admits of R_1 and R_2 type reasons. If x 's love ends because y significantly changed then it is no defect in S 's love (R_2 reason). But if S 's love ceases and y has not changed, it puts itself into doubt (R_1 reason).

importantly, though, is that this principle of constancy is compatible with a reason-dependent account of romantic love. That is, romantic love is compatible with our principle if x and y are rigid in their preferences and properties or if they are continuously flexible.

It is plausible that this is the principle that we have in mind when we talk about the constancy that we desire in our romantic relationships because it more accurately accommodates our language about such matters. We can account for our intuitions about exclusivity better. Z will feel more secure with her love for x and in her relationship with x when she finds that x , whom she is now in a relationship with two years after x ended the relationship with y , can now respond to the question was he ever in love with y . Without compromising exclusivity, x can respond affirmatively without also maintaining that he still loves y romantically.

Recall the thought that the appraisal account of love leads to the unreasonable consequence that the love or the relationship should end when the qualities of the beloved change. However, given this understanding of the principle of constancy, the consequences are not unreasonable. They might be otherwise than we expected. But if this principle of constancy is correct, and I think it is, then something has gone awry in our expectations, not in the love or the implications of such love. But there is also the worry that the reason-responsive account of love that I affirm recommends short-term loves.

This problem is avoided, however, once we understand that the beliefs and wants associated with love are not occasional. They vary far too much to be attached to one particular occasion or type of instance. Gabriele Taylor writes that the emotional states in virtue of which we say that x loves y may, when each is taken in isolation, lack that complexity which is a feature of love itself.⁵³ The concern over the recommendation of short-term loves is a result of

⁵³ Taylor (1976), p. 161-2.

our linking love with these particular occasions. But on any particular occasion x 's emotional state might be (and often is) complex. This state is complex, in large part, because there are several things influencing x 's emotional state. On some occasions, x might have this or that desire involved in love. Love also, perhaps more than any other emotion, may be responsible for x finding himself in any emotional state such as bliss or despair or hope or jealousy.⁵⁴ The reason-responsive account of love takes this very complexity into consideration. This consideration is hardly a prescription for a short-term love.

Last, there is a worry that the reason-responsive account portrays romantic love as far too conditional and that this is a concern for the desire for constancy. However, romantic relationships are attitude-dependent relationships. Attitude-independent relationships (such as familial relationships) can exist without any historical pattern of concern. Whether x is y 's sister depends on a biological bond and not on how they feel about one another. For this reason, the claim that a person has no reason to care about one's parents, siblings, and children would be illegitimate.⁵⁵ Attitude-dependent relationships refer to the pattern of concern the participants have for one another, for the relationship, and for the pattern itself. When people ask us whether we have a good relationship with a friend, they are referring to the pattern. Whether or not we choose to remain romantically involved with our partners depends heavily on our attitudes about these patterns because "a friendship or romantic relationship just is an ongoing pattern of concern."⁵⁶ If x were to cause emotional harm to y , x might hope for the love to remain the same, however, he could not expect this. What is *expected* is y might love him less or love him no

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 162.

⁵⁵ Kolodny (2003), p.149.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

longer. The fact that romantic love is attitude-dependent makes clear the conditional nature of romantic love. Its attitude-dependent nature partly contributes to our desire for constancy and the value we place on long-term relationships.

Velleman and Exclusivity

In “Love as a Moral Emotion”, David Velleman begins his discussion by considering what Kantian morality requires from us. He says that people misrepresent Kant to sometimes mean “equal consideration” in a sense that means “give equal weight to the interests of all.”⁵⁷ Velleman suggests that Kant can be instead interpreted to mean that we should give equal consideration to the *rights* of all which may vary in justification, which is dependent on your relevant knowledge of a situation. So, he thinks that Kant might be read in a way that lends itself to partiality.

The universalizability requirement in Kant raises problems for love. In our clinging to our partners we must ask ourselves if we could be rationally justified in our loving our partners universally. This is, as Bernard Williams has suggested, one thought too many and it seems to count against some of the attitudes we normally associate with loving. That is, the fact that we have to ask this universalizability question itself, *prima facie*, already cuts against partiality.

Velleman says that some have suggested, as a solution to the problem, that the conscious deliberation that seems to be required by Kant should show some credence to love. That, in other words, conscious deliberation should occupy merely the background in cases where one’s loved ones are in danger. He submits that love is a moral emotion and we should focus on how the two

⁵⁷ Velleman (1999), p. 340.

converge.⁵⁸ So if what he has to say is correct, then we should expect that the relationship between love and reason should become clearer and produce reasonable consequences for romantic love.

Velleman thinks that he has succeeded in showing the Kantian idea that reverence to the law is actually more personal for Kant, since what he means by “good will” is the sort of rational essence had by persons. From this, Velleman formulates love by saying, “I am inclined to say that love is likewise the awareness of a value inhering in its object; and I am also inclined to describe love as an arresting of that awareness of that value.”⁵⁹

This is where we encounter the concern for romantic love. If the value that we recognize and are arrested by is the “good will”, and indeed he seems to think that it is, then it is something that all persons possess. One concern for Velleman is that if everyone has it then we have no way to account for the justification question in love—namely what, if anything, justifies my coming to love this particular person rather than someone else?⁶⁰ What particularly about *this* person’s value are we responding to? Any of our natural responses to this question, such as a person’s humor, Velleman thinks, fails to capture essences, and they are merely accidents. Further, he says that this type of response does not refer to value at all for Kant, but rather to what Kant calls “price.”⁶¹ Instead we are responding only to the value that persons have essentially as persons, which involves our capacity to recognize people as also having the capacity to discover rational

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.341.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 360.

⁶⁰ Helm (2010), p. 20.

⁶¹ Velleman (1999), p. 364.

natures in others and for them to respect that capacity as well. Persons have a dignity that amounts to a greater value than the sum of all price for Velleman.

Velleman derives this Kantian compatible notion of love from Kant's respect for persons. Velleman repeatedly says things like "when we love [someone] as a person—rather than a work of nature, say, or an aesthetic object—then indeed, I want to say we are responding to the value that he possesses by being a person or, as Kant would say, an instance of rational nature."⁶² Or "Kant himself believes that each person has a dignity in virtue of his rational nature and hence that all persons should be judged to have the same value."⁶³ But if this is correct then we cannot account for the type of partiality involved in romantic love. We cannot say, for instance, why it is that we have come to love *y* romantically and not *z*, given that my judgment of valuation of these individuals should yield equivalent worth. Velleman suggests that on his account "we can judge the person to be valuable in generic respects while also valuing her as irreplaceable."⁶⁴ But it is not quite clear how we might "appreciate someone as irreplaceable" in the context prescribed by Velleman in which we are responding to a value that is shared by everyone. As Kolodny puts it, "what kind of 'appreciation' of one's beloved as 'special and irreplaceable' could be compatible with the 'judgment' that one has just as much reason to appreciate anyone in that way?" Velleman's account seems to be unable to provide an adequate response to these questions about partiality.

Additionally, Velleman's account fails to accommodate our desire for exclusivity in romantic love as it implies that we love everyone insofar as they possess a rational essence.

⁶² Ibid, p. 365.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 367.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 368.

Given, then, that all of the persons that we encounter possess these essences, Velleman's reasons-responsive account of love implies that we ought to love them all. This implication undermines the desire for the type of exclusivity that gives rise to many varieties of satisfaction had by those people that receive this exclusivity. It appears that any response available to Velleman that might address this concern can only do so in a way that drives the account further from Kantian ideals. If we admit that we do, in fact, value our romantic partners in a special way, then we would be admitting to valuing one person *qua* person more than another person. Given Velleman's own interpretation of Kantian commitments, this is an explicit violation of dignity had by persons. Although Velleman's account of love as moral emotion is a type of reasons-responsiveness account of love, it is an account of love that is more suited to accommodate our moral intuitions pertaining to agapic love where our desires for exclusivity are not as strong and are not as relevantly pertinent.

Exclusivity

Until now, we have been appealing to some *prima facie* intuitions that we have regarding exclusivity in romantic love. We said that we desire to be loved exclusively for a number of reasons. But we have not, in the same way as we have gotten clear on what we are talking about when we talk about constancy, gotten clear on what we have in mind regarding exclusivity.

Intuitively, we desire to be loved exclusively; we insist that our lovers love us and no one else. We are not happy receiving a love that is extended to persons in addition to ourselves.⁶⁵ And although the exclusivity condition alone, in any case, does not guarantee that love will be attained, it does seem to make its attainability and sustainability more probable. We desire to be

⁶⁵ Soble (1990), p. 192.

loved exclusively “because we believe that the other joys of love, and love itself are put in jeopardy when we are not loved exclusively.”⁶⁶

The concept of exclusivity, however, is just as ambiguous as constancy. Similarly, the idea that love is exclusive acquires its ambiguity from it being insensitive to time. We need to discern whether this notion of exclusivity is timeless (for all time) or timed (at one time). Soble holds that “someone who asserts that love is exclusive might mean that x can love one person *period* or that x can only love one person at a time.”⁶⁷ Now, timeless exclusivity implies that we love only once over the span of our lifetime. In other words, “in this sense of exclusivity, (i) after ${}_xL_y$ begins, x can love no one other than y , and (ii) before ${}_xL_y$ begins, x could not have loved anyone else.”⁶⁸ However, it is not clear that this is what we ordinarily mean. Exclusivity, when considered as timeless exclusivity, seems to imply that the first object of a person’s romantic love is that person’s *only* beloved. But what about a less strict, timed exclusivity?

A looser notion of exclusivity is vastly more compelling and does better at accommodating our intuitions about exclusivity. I will formulate the principle of exclusivity as follows:

The Principle of Exclusivity: x ought to only love romantically one person at a time.

So, as long as when x loves y at a time t_1 , the principle demands that he love only y at t_1 . If however, as in our example, x leaves y and x falls in love with z , this principle has not been violated because the love of y by x and the love of z by x occur at times that are temporally

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 169.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

discrete. This principle implies that if xL_y at t_1 and y 's relationship with x ceases, then xL_z can still be true at a time t_2 . So, x is allowed to love y and z romantically at different stages of his life. Additionally, the principle does not entail that a person's first beloved is their only beloved as we saw was the case with the notion of strict exclusivity.

Romantic Love and Exclusivity

Exclusivity, how we have presented it here, does not in any fashion conflict with the nature of romantic love as a response to an appraisal of value. In fact, if a person realizes that she is not being loved in virtue of her prized attributes, how might being loved exclusively make her feel special? That is, if her properties have nothing at all to do with the fact that she has been *chosen* to be loved exclusively, probably she will harbor doubts that there exists any reason at all to feel special. She may think that she is being treated special (if in fact she is being treated special) by her lover for no reason that *actually* makes her special. Our widespread belief that everyone is unique might be representative of a further belief that the quality sets one possesses vary, in some way or other, from other people.

The compatibility of the reasons-responsive theory and our desire for exclusivity in our romantic relationships is straightforward. We love our particular beloveds exclusively for the set of qualities. Although I do not disagree with Velleman in his claim that all persons have some value qua person that grounds our loving them, I, instead doubt whether this is the value that grounds our *romantic* love. The value that we seem to respond to in our romantic relationships is to the qualities about the beloved. It is by the appreciation of these qualities that we prize things more than others.

These qualities help make us unique. There is something special about the way Mary laughs or the unrivaled keenness that Joe has. These qualities do not add to the value of the beloved *qua* person but instead, *qua beloved*. Recall our example of the gold medal earlier. Athletes do not desire the gold medal for the value of the gold in the medal, for that is the same in every gold medal. But we want *this* gold medal in *this sport* because it speaks to *our particular* interests. These interests constitute some value acquired by the gold medal that often make it *more valuable* than just the medal *simpliciter*. In a similar way, our beloveds are like the gold medal. They become more valuable to us as we find that they satisfy our particular interests.

Velleman takes issue with this. He is not favorable to the idea of uniqueness we commonly take ourselves to possess. He says:

Adults often confuse us further by saying that we're special because no one else is quite like us—as if the valuing attaching to us, and to everyone else as well, was that of being qualitatively unique... How valuable can our uniqueness make us if everyone is unique? We sense a similar paradox in attempts to elicit our childish awe at individual snowflakes, of which (they say) no two are alike. Why get excited about any one unprecedented snowflake, when its lack of precedence is so well preceded?⁶⁹

But why think this? The fascinating thing about uniqueness is the arrangement and the degree to which each quality is being had by our partners. If everyone has a different set, we might instead think that this is more reason to rejoice at the fact that there are things about our partners that make them special to us. We are reassured that our beloved can be special in virtue of these qualities because of the lack of demonstrated duplication of the arrangement of qualities had by our beloved.

I have said that the quality theory is compatible with our desire for exclusivity. But what if the beloved set is duplicated in multiple individuals? Will that not violate our desire for

⁶⁹ Velleman (1999), p.363.

exclusivity in romantic relationships? My response is that while this seems to be a theoretical problem, it is not a problem that we have to worry about practically. That there is another person that shares exactly the qualities that another person has and in the exact same way is rather implausible. But supposing that there were such a case where x and y have only and all the same qualities in exactly the same way, it is not immediately clear to me that the exclusivity principle would be violated. It requires only that we love one person at a time.

To further extend my comments that this theoretical concern is not a practical concern, I remind you that that there is more involved than just the appreciation of qualities. In some sense, who we love has to do with the fact that there are only a limited amount of people that we come in to contact with over our lifetimes. This duplication would not only have to occur, but it would have to occur within the scope of eligible candidates of potential beloveds. Again, this seems to me to be highly improbable. We should only worry about this concern if it actually threatens the possibility of romantic relationships as we now know them. So it appears the quality account does indeed accommodate our desires for exclusivity in romantic love.

There is another concern for exclusivity. Consider the more realistic situation where two people equally possess characteristics (even if not even the same ones) that we value equally. In this case x might have a set of qualities Ψ and y might have a set of qualities Φ that yield the same value to the lover. The very desire for exclusivity can only tell us that we have to choose only one. However, if love is reasons-responsive it does not seem to be able to account for *why* we chose x in favor of y . Further, the argument might be made that an account of love that finds its base in something other than qualities better explains why we choose x in favor of y . Another account might be able to pick out something more particular to x than Ψ and thus better explain the choice.

That love is also the appreciation of the history in a relationship will hardly help us here. It can only tell us that x is chosen in favor of y only if there is a relationship to be appreciated with x . But if there is no preexisting relationship with x or y this will not suffice. But while both x and y appear equally valuable having sets of qualities Ψ and Φ respectively, the way we decide often involves our preferences. So while x and y appear equally valuable to us, the reason that we choose x in favor of y is that we prefer the way that the value is personified in x in favor of the way that it is personified in y . Since x and y have Ψ and Φ respectively, it makes sense that the way they demonstrate the perceived value is different. When we choose x in favor of y , we prefer the way x demonstrates that value. The reason we choose x and not y is because this preference gives us reason to pursue x in favor of y . The desire for exclusivity in a relationship motivates us in these situations to find the distinction between x and y and to apply our preferences to those distinctions, and we decide on the basis of that. It makes sense that the personification of the value is contingent upon the qualities had in the set and to what degree a person has those qualities. Further, we might ask ourselves if x and y have Ψ and Φ respectively and they demonstrate the value differently, are they equally valuable? This question, I take it, points us again toward a mere theoretical concern and not a pragmatic one. Insofar as the value of Ψ and Φ will always be demonstrated differently, I deeply question the plausibility of such a concern.

Chapter 4:

A Summing Up

Since love plays such an important role in our lives, it is important that we study it. Earlier we said that knowing what to love aids us in trying to manage our lives sensibly—it aids us in deciding *how to live*. In a way, loving helps make our otherwise meaningless activity purposeful. The reasons we have for coming to love someone do not *dictate* that we should love a person; rather they are reasons or considerations in favor of or against doing so. Our romantic relationships are important because they provide us with a final ends—such as the beloved herself, the beloveds interests, and stability for our romantic relationships—to aim for.

We have worked tediously to develop an account of romantic love. We have worked to show that romantic love involves the response to reasons given to us by the qualities had by the beloved as well as the reasons given to us by our romantic relationships themselves. We said that romantic love is the valuing of the qualities had by our partners as well as the appreciation of a relationship from the perspective of the participants in that relationship, and the valuing of one's beloved.

Later in we worked to get clearer on the ideal of stability. Stability is the ideal that we strive for in our romantic relationships. We said that stability can be broken into two constituent parts—our desires for constancy and exclusivity. We desire constancy because maintaining a strong sense of object constancy helps us bypass emotions that bring us to grief. We desire exclusivity because we like to feel special and we realize that our lovers have only a finite amount of resources to give. We found that all we mean by constancy is that a person romantically loves another person for as long as he values the romantic relationship with that

person or the qualities found valuable are still had by that person. We said that when it comes to exclusivity we mean only that a person can love romantically only one person at a time.

Insofar as our romantic relationships fulfill these criteria, they are loving relationships that are stable. That is, insofar as our romantic relationships involve the valuation and appreciation of qualities had by the beloved and the valuation of our relationships and appropriate responses to the reasons they give us, they are stable romantic relationships. The account provided here, I believe, can best account for the emotional vulnerabilities that we experience in our romantic relationships as well as intuitions regarding partiality in romantic relationships.

At the beginning of this project, I mentioned that a primary goal of this project would be to bridge the gap between love and reason. The relationship between them, I hope, is a bit clearer. I am not, by any means, proclaiming that this account of love is adequate to account for everything that has been called love throughout the course of time. I am however, saying that I take this account to have made some progress in clearing the viscous haze surrounding romantic love. And for that, I believe, we are better off.

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