

LOVE AND ORGANIC UNITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

Love is crucial to a good human life; it animates our most meaningful relationships, and it also reveals to us what we value and who we hope to become. My research focuses on the relationship between love and valuing, and defends a version of the *quality theory* of love. According to quality theories, love's fittingness is determined by properties of the beloved. Quality theories face many objections. In the first part of my dissertation, I argue that five prominent objections to quality theories miss the mark. In the second part, I argue that a less-appreciated objection to quality theories, the *problem of love's object*, has not yet received a satisfying response. In the third part, I present a new quality theory that both avoids the problem of love's object and is independently well-motivated. Brief summaries of these three parts follow.

Quality theories, again, hold that love's fittingness is determined by properties of the beloved. These theories contrast with *relationship theories*, on which love's fittingness is determined by features of the (substantive, historical, ongoing) relationship between lover and beloved. I motivate quality theories by arguing that loving someone and valuing a relationship are distinct phenomena, subject to different norms. I then defend quality theories in general against several objections. The most important of these is the *fungibility objection*: if love is fitting because of qualities of the beloved, then the lover should gladly swap out a loved one for a qualitatively similar other. I argue that this objection rests on the moralistic fallacy, which involves treating norms extrinsic to an emotion – e.g. moral or prudential norms – as if they were intrinsic to it. I show how the quality theory can accommodate the importance of loyalty to relationships without requiring the impossible – that our loved ones be the most fitting of all possible candidates.

Next, I turn to an objection that is harder to answer than most quality theorists allow, the *problem of love's object*. Briefly, if we love people on the basis of certain of their properties, then our love must be *for* these properties, not for the person who has them. Some (Delaney, Keller) respond to this problem by distinguishing the ground from the object of love: even if some of the beloved's properties ground love—i.e. make it fitting—the beloved as a whole is nevertheless the object of love. I argue that the ground/object distinction is no more than a narrow, technical fix. To address the problem meaningfully, the quality theorist must explain why the object of love is also *valued* by love. Kolodny attempts such an explanation, but implausibly maintains that the beloved is valued only extrinsically. Others (Velleman, Badhwar) respond to the fungibility objection and the problem of love's object together, by making the beloved's "true self" both the object and the ground of love. This is more promising, but neither account works; in answering the fungibility objection, each winds up still vulnerable to the problem of love's object.

Finally, I propose a new quality theory that answers the problem of love's object and is independently well-motivated. I argue that in loving someone, we value them for qualities attributable to them as an organic unity, not for qualities that constitute merely a part of them. That is, love does not value some aspect of a person, like her wit or good looks; rather, love is a way of seeing the whole person as possessing some valuable property, such as beauty or goodness, that is attributable to organic unities. This general approach has many advantages. It allows the quality theorist to say that love intrinsically values the whole person, because the valuable

property is attributable only to the beloved as a whole, not merely to some of her parts. It also explains why love is fitting, because the properties in question really are worthy of a positive emotional response. Finally, because the valuable property needn't depend on common base properties, the organic unity view offers an expansive account of what we might fittingly love.

Fitting Love: A Defense of the Quality Theory

1. Introduction

People love who they do for reasons. Some of these reasons will be mere causes or background conditions, such as loving a friend in part because you walked to school together. But others feel less arbitrary, and seem to make normative sense of love. For example, during these walks you might have learned that your friend is kind to those around her, and you might see her kindness as part of what makes her lovable. Thus, when explaining why one person loves another, some reasons feel more central to the story—they seem to make sense of why the love is *fitting*, rather than simply why it happened.¹

The concept FITTINGNESS is useful here, because it helps guard against what D’Arms and Jacobson have termed “the moralistic fallacy,” which treats extrinsic reasons for some emotion as though they were intrinsic reasons for it.² The fallacy occurs in arguments that take some moral or pragmatic consideration against having an emotion as indicative that the emotion is unfitting. For example, even if people who never feel regret are psychologically better off, this does not entail that regret would not be a fitting response to having acted badly. Likewise, even if it is psychologically destructive to live in perpetual fear of death, this does not entail that one’s own death is not a fitting object of fear. So, in these two cases, we could say there is a reason in favor of the emotion and a reason against it, but it is more informative and precise to say the emotion is fitting and yet there is a pragmatic reason to quell it.

¹ Those who maintain there are normative reasons for love include Velleman (1999), Kolodny (2003), Badhwar (1987), Delaney (1996), Keller (2000), Abramson and Leite (2011), Milligan (2013), Protasi (2014).

² D’Arms and Jacobson (2000).

The primary thesis of this paper is that once we frame the debate about love's reasons in terms of fittingness, it becomes clear that the *quality theory* is the most promising account. The quality theory (thus reframed) is the view that features of the beloved make love fitting.³ Quality theories capture the fact that we see things to value in those we love, and we see our love as stemming from our appreciation of that value. Quality theories also account for three ways that love can be unfitting: when someone loves someone based on a property that they lack, based on a property that is not really valuable, or based on a property has the wrong kind of value (e.g., some would argue, merely physical beauty). Despite their immediate plausibility, quality theories have met with many objections. Objections to quality theories have motivated some to accept the view that the existence of a valuable relationship between the relevant parties makes love fitting. On such a view – the *relationship theory* – we have reason to love people who are our friends, siblings, lovers, spouses – anyone with whom we stand in a valuable relationship – but no one else.⁴

The paper has three main parts. The first explains the competing theories. I note there that both are compatible with a wide range of accounts of the nature of love, and of what specific features (quality theory) or relationships (relationship theory) make love fitting. The second part motivates the quality theory by arguing that loving someone and valuing a relationship with them are best conceived as distinct phenomena, subject to different norms. I present two cases the relationship theory cannot capture, because they involve situations in which love is

³ I use the term “quality theory” to encompass a wide range of views: e.g. Velleman (1999), Badhwar (1987), and Delaney (1996), among others. “Quality theory” would not be the best name for any one of these accounts, but it is the most appropriate, non-hideously technical sounding name for this class of accounts. See Section 2 for more on this matter.

⁴ Such a view is defended in Kolodny (2003), and Milligan (2013).

appropriate even in the absence of any valuable relationship. The third part defends the quality theory against five prominent objections.⁵

One of these is the non-substitutability objection: if love is fitting because of qualities of the beloved, there should be no problem, from the perspective of a lover, with swapping out a loved one for a qualitatively similar other. I argue that this objection is a case of the moralistic fallacy, which involves treating norms that are extrinsic to an emotion – e.g. moral or prudential norms – as though they were intrinsic to it.⁶ I show how the quality theory can accommodate the importance of loyalty to relationships without requiring the impossible - that our loved ones be the most fitting of all candidates. Another objection claims that the quality theory cannot explain why love manifests differently within different kinds of relationships. Using an analogy with fear, I argue that while (for example) expressions of parental love differ from expressions of romantic love, this does not entail that valuable relationships make love fitting.

Typically, quality theorists argue that their own view can answer these objections, while other versions of the quality theory cannot. I show that no version of the quality theory is vulnerable to the objections, thus directing focus to the more important differences among quality theories. Finally, I examine how these conclusions affect the arguments particular quality theorists advance for their views. I show how my conclusions weaken the argumentative support for two prominent theories of love: Velleman’s account in “Love as a Moral Emotion,” and Abramson and Leite’s account in “Love as a Reactive Attitude.”

⁵ These five objections are presented in Kolodny (2003, pp. 139-42) as evidence against quality theories.

⁶ The concept of a moralistic fallacy is introduced in D’Arms and Jacobson (2000).

2. The Theories

The relationship theory and the quality theory are views about what makes love fitting. Each also takes a stand about the nature of love: love is a response to seeing something as valuable, and that a person's standing in the right relation to this value is what makes loving them fitting.⁷ According to the relationship theory, the fittingness-conferring value is the value of the relationship. According to the quality theory, the fittingness-conferring value is a feature of the beloved. Both views leave many questions about the nature of love open, such as whether love is essentially an emotion, whether it essentially involves being motivated toward some particular end, and whether it essentially involves a desire to merge one's life or interests with the loved one.

Furthermore, the quality theory and the relationship theory each admit of a variety of competing specifications of what kind of feature the lover values by loving. David Velleman's (1999) account of love as an emotionally disarming appreciation of a person's rational will counts as a quality theory,⁸ as does any account on which we are loved for more distinguishing features – from our character traits to our looks to our capacity to bring out virtue in prospective lovers. Likewise, relationship theories might vary in the kinds of relationships they take to ground love: whether these relationships have some value-making feature in common, or whether it is just basic that certain kinds of relationships are valuable. Thus, “the quality theory” and “the relationship theory” are umbrella terms, under which a wide variety of (extant and merely

⁷ Thus, the relationship theory and the quality theory are what Bennett Helm has termed “appraisal” accounts of love. Cf. Helm (2013).

⁸ Velleman (1999) does not classify his view as a quality theory, and indeed his account of love is different in many ways from most other of what I am calling “quality theories.” However, given the way I've defined these terms, his view counts as a quality theory, because on his view the evaluative basis of love is a feature of the person, not the relationship.

possible) accounts of love can be categorized. The defining difference between the two categories is simply that according to relationship theories, what makes love fitting is that the beloved and lover are in a substantive, historical, ongoing, valuable relationship, while according to quality theories, features of the beloved make love fitting.

Not all theories that take a stand on love's reasons use the language of fittingness. Some talk simply in terms of reasons for love, others in terms of the ground or "evaluative basis" of love; still others use the language of loving a person *for* certain properties.⁹ However, each of these discussions maps directly onto fittingness talk. To say that feature *F* makes love fitting is to say that feature *F* is the evaluative basis of love; or that Person *P* is loved "for" *F*. So, talk of reasons for love, or grounds of love, or the properties *for which* one is loved can all be understood in terms of what I am calling "fittingness reasons" for love. These concepts refer to the same entity: the features in the world that make normative sense of instances of love.¹⁰

With these preliminaries established, I now turn to my defense of quality theories.

3. *Fitting Love outside of Valuable Relationships*

Most of us are mature enough to acknowledge that the people we love have faults. We recognize that they might not be the best possible partners or friends for us, while also recognizing that continually seeking a better match will result in a lonely and unfulfilled

⁹ Kolodny (2003) and Protasi (2014) talk in terms of reasons for love, Velleman (2000) talks in terms of the evaluative basis of love, Badhwar (1987), Delaney (1996), and Keller (2000) talk in terms of loving a person "for" certain properties.

¹⁰ Some quality theorists maintain that precisely the same feature(s) ground(s) love in every case of love of persons, while others maintain that different instances of love might be grounded by different properties (even if these properties are determined by a common function – e.g. the properties that ground love might be properties that the beloved sees as central to their self-conception [cf. Delaney (1996)]). But this difference is not relevant to the issues discussed in this paper.

existence. Still, many are resistant to the idea that they've "settled," and find it tempting to think of their beloved(s) as the most fitting of all possible candidates – more fitting, even, than those with more admirable features – in virtue of the shared history that constitutes the valuable relationship. I will argue that there is positive reason not to do this: contrary to appearances, making love normatively dependent on a valuable relationship diminishes both and underestimates the human ability to balance reasons for love against duties of loyalty. With the help of the quality theory, we can preserve the truism that the ones we love might not be the most fitting possible matches and allow for an emotional richness that is not achievable on the relationship theory, while respecting the importance of loyalty and the value of mutually invested attachments. I make the preliminary case for this conclusion in this section, starting by telling a story the relationship theory will have trouble explaining.

Suppose that Amory meets David during a giddy magical summer when he (Amory) has a lot of sparkle and feels especially charming. He becomes attracted to David, who runs with a cool crowd, is genuinely sweet and kind to his friends, and has a passionate sense of justice, which he uses shrewdly and bravely in his activism for an indisputably worthy cause. Amory had never given much thought to the indisputably worthy cause, but now that he has, he finds himself drawn both to it and to the person who fights for it with such unique verve. As he absorbs and thinks about how David acts towards his friends and the wider world, Amory starts to appreciate much more than David's sense of justice and charming persona. He catches glimpses of David's soul – the music that moves him, what he finds funny, how he speaks of his parents and larger heritage, how he amuses himself on idle afternoons. He is enabled in this knowledge because David is attracted to Amory too – Amory is new, he

appears to be living in some kind of prime, he has an interested and welcoming smile, he's kind and keen and encourages easy intimacy.

But as time passes, Amory's shine wears off a bit, and David doesn't find much to sustain interest in the acquaintance – Amory begins to blur together for David with his many other admirers. David, though, remains completely absorbing and inspiring to Amory. What should be said in such a case? Amory loves David as much as ever, but David does not love Amory and is even a bit embarrassed that he has let himself become so entangled with him in a kind of relationship that ought to be between equals. Amory has begun to pick up on this dynamic and accepts that David has, in his heart, fully moved on from their passing intimacy. Yet, Amory's love is undiminished, and I say that this is fitting. David has many fine and rare qualities, which Amory discerned through a deep acquaintance with him, and he cares for David deeply and unselfishly. But Amory and David are not in a paradigmatically valuable relationship. They are in a relationship (friendship, romance, it doesn't much matter which) that should involve roughly equal levels of care and regard, but that is drastically out of balance.¹¹¹²

Or consider Jason and Griselda; a romantic couple who constantly tear at each other because they're stubborn and spirited and their egos are deeply entwined. Despite their toxic relationship, they might be fitting objects of love, even for one another—it's just that they should probably keep their distance. But the fact that they should keep their distance doesn't undermine

¹¹ See Protasi (2014) for further discussion of the importance of considering unrequited relationships in work on love's reasons.

¹²Kolodny (2003 pp. 164-5) uses precisely this kind of imbalance to explain why his theory doesn't wrongly imply that we should never stop loving a friend, even if they turn vicious. (If they turned vicious we would lose respect for them and thus no longer see ourselves as being in an instance of a valuable relationship-type.)

the fittingness of their love. Even if they are compulsively cutting and derisive when they meet in person, they might be capable of feeling very warmly toward one another once they have made their retreat and passions have cooled. Suppose, then, that Griselda is spending a quiet hour in her study, and happens to think of Jason. She might take some pleasure in remembering their earlier days, and acknowledge to herself that even though being around him now is horrible and destructive for her, he remains the man she grew to know so well and love so deeply. Because she can see even now the qualities she always so admired in him, she loves him still, though she knows they would be better off severing ties. The relationship theorist would seem committed to the view that Griselda's continued love is unfitting. But her love is an emotionally rich and mature response to the contours of her situation, and no less warranted than it would have been during the rosier stages of their romance.

A defender of the relationship theory could deny that love can be appropriate outside of a valuable relationship because of the danger of hurting oneself or imposing on others. Love is often accompanied by a desire to be near one's beloved, to be seen as important and special and beautiful by them, and to be instrumental to their happiness.¹³ When love is unreciprocated, these desires will be painfully thwarted, and attempts to satisfy them will be unwelcome. But this does not entail that love is only appropriate in the context of a valuable relationship; to say so would be to treat norms that are extrinsic to love (moral or prudential norms) as though they are intrinsic to it.¹⁴ There might be perfectly good pragmatic reasons to suppress the love, insofar as it cannot be disentangled from the accompanying pains or frustration. There might be perfectly

¹³ Some think that more than "often accompanying" love, some or all of these desires are *essential* to love. I disagree, but remain neutral on that question here.

¹⁴ That is, it commits a moralistic fallacy. Cf. D'Arms and Jacobson (2000).

good moral reasons to suppress it insofar as one cannot stop oneself from acting on one's feelings inappropriately. But this is irrelevant to the question of whether love is fitting in these cases. Indeed, in the absence of overwhelming pain to oneself or unwelcome interference with others, there seems little reason to wish love away. To insist that love is only appropriate when it occurs against the background of a valuable relationship, then, underestimates our ability to respond with maturity to conflicts between reasons to love and reasons to value a relationship.¹⁵

Separating reasons to love from reasons to value a relationship also allows for a more expansive account of the value of relationships. If we don't expect valuable relationships to be the ground of love, we can appreciate them as wonderful and important even when love is absent from them. Lack of love in the context of a valuable relationship will not automatically call for correction, and it will not undermine the importance of the relationship to one's life as a whole. Furthermore, once we recognize that love is normatively distinct from valuable relationships, we can better account for the experiential richness of relationships. Valuing your relationship with someone differs from loving them. Love can come and go throughout a relationship without affecting the strength of the reasons the relationship provides, but nonetheless enriching it when present. And the fact that love tends to vary as each party to a relationship changes or sees different aspects of the other suggests that love is a response to awareness of features of the loved one.

¹⁵ An advocate of the relationship theory could argue that these relationships should be added to the list of valuable relationships. But to do so, they must say what makes the relationships valuable without referring to their involving an appropriate kind of love. Possibly any relationship in which love occurs is valuable for that reason, but then the fittingness of the love cannot depend on the value of the relationship-type.

I have here offered a preliminary argument in favor of the view that fittingness reasons for love are separable from valuable relationships. A perhaps more difficult task is to address the many objections that have been made against the quality theory, without being forced into an implausible version of the theory. In the next three sections I offer responses to some classic objections to the quality theory that can be adopted by any version of that theory, with the consequence that none of these objections should lead us to favor one version of the quality theory over the others.

4. The Fungibility Objection

Both relationships and love compel us in certain ways, but the compulsions are different in kind. Love may compel us motivationally, by drawing us close to our loved ones and inspiring us to share in and enrich their lives.¹⁶ But it does not morally require us to act in any particular way toward them, or to treat them any differently from intrinsically similar persons. A valuable relationship, on the other hand, not only moves us in certain ways but also requires that we treat the other party (or parties) to the relationship differently from intrinsically similar others.

If valuable relationships call for treating one's beloved differently from intrinsically similar others, that might seem to count against the quality theory and in favor of the relationship theory. For if, as the quality theory maintains, reasons for love rest on features of the beloved, then one might seem to have no more reason to love one's spouse than to love another person with the same features. Worse yet, one might have reason to *trade up* for a person with superior features. This is the *fungibility objection* to quality theories,¹⁷ which presses the point that loved

¹⁶ I don't think it always has this motivational profile, for reasons like those offered in Velleman (1999), but I remain neutral on that question here.

¹⁷ Cf. Kolodny (2003 p. 140).

ones take pride of place in our emotional economy over other relevantly similar persons and even superior persons, and are treated accordingly. If the quality theory cannot account for this felt distinction, it will be tempting to say that love is grounded in valuable relationships rather than in features of the beloved.

It is true the quality theory might imply that we have equally strong fittingness reasons to love those who instantiate the relevant features to a similar degree (call these “Equals”), and stronger fittingness reasons to love those who instantiate them to a greater degree (call these “Superiors”). However, it need not imply that we have even insistent (let alone requiring) reason to behave toward Equals or Superiors in any particular way.¹⁸ Prior commitments shape how we view new people, which shapes how we interact with them, and how we react to the way they interact with us. So, to take the most emotionally pressing case: when a romantic partner encounters and interacts with a Superior, the quality theory needn’t deliver any untoward results. Relationships generate insistent norms of behavior; love does not. Thus, one might have strong fittingness reasons to love someone, but reason not to act in the ways that love would incline one to act in other circumstances, because a prior relationship prohibits such behavior. To put this more technically: in cases where pursuing a certain kind of relationship with a fitting object of love is prohibited by the norms of an extant relationship, what would otherwise count as favoring reasons for pursuing such a relationship would in this case be silenced.¹⁹

However, this reply is unsatisfactory as it stands. It’s no great comfort to imagine one’s relationship as a felt barrier to a lover’s romantic bliss. The idea that one’s lover could meet a

¹⁸Unlike non-insistent reasons for a response, insistent reasons for a response render the absence of that response inappropriate or unreasonable. However, unlike requiring reasons, insistent reasons can be “defeated” by other kinds of reasons. Cf. Kolodny (2003 p. 163).

¹⁹ Thanks to Mark Timmons for suggesting this phrasing.

Superior and feel compelled to remain loyal only out of duty raises the heart's hackles and seems to count in favor of the relationship theory. However, if the lover values the relationship, it won't be felt as burdensome. Hopefully, Superior would not intentionally pose a threat to a valued relationship; instead, they might make a valuable addition to your lover's life as a friend. If all is right with your partner, then if Superior does pursue your lover romantically, what might otherwise seem enticing would in this case show an unappealing disrespect for important and valued relationships. If the disloyalty appeals, then this would reveal, not create, a problem – a problem with the way your partner views your relationship, not (necessarily) with their assessment that Superior is a fitting love match.

Some of life's most important relationships require us to lovingly value some small number of persons above all (or at least many) others, but that does not require the impossible, that they be the most fitting of all possible candidates. Once the quality theory is purged of any troublesome fungibility implications, there is no need to make love normatively dependent on valuable relationships.

5. Modes of Love

Quality theories might seem unable to explain why we love different people in different ways, depending on our relationship to them. Jack's parents, for example, love him in a different way than Mark does. Indeed, the quality theory might seem unable to account for the fittingness of familial love in the first place, since that kind of love seems independent of any positive assessment of our relatives' personal traits.²⁰ Relationship theories, in contrast, face no such difficulties.

²⁰ See Kolodny (2003).

These concerns dissolve when we examine the relationship between love and care. Again, love entails no insistent norm to care for the loved one.²¹ Accepting this allows love a more expansive, less disruptive role in one's emotional and motivational economy. Valuable relationships, in contrast, are partly constituted by insistent norms of care from at least one party to another. These norms, not the norms internal to love, determine the appropriate modes (if any) in which to express one's love of the loved one. If no relationship makes demonstrations of care appropriate, then one should avoid such demonstrations. If a relationship makes certain forms of care appropriate, then the appropriate form of care will be fixed by the ideal expression of such a relationship, and ought to be given even in love's absence. As norms of care differ among relationships, so too do emotional vulnerabilities. A parent is more emotionally vulnerable to their child's academic failure than a friend, because the parent is personally invested in seeing the child well brought up while the friend may not be. Thus, I grant the obvious: one loving relationship feels different from another, and different modes of care are appropriate to different kinds of relationship. However, this does not undermine the quality theory.

Consider a parallel case involving fear. Suppose Jack is prone to psychotic episodes that make him erratic, violent, and cruel. Both Jack's parents and Jack's friends will understandably fear him; certainly fear would be fitting. But the fear would have a different shape for each. A parent will feel vulnerable in ways that a friend will not. They would have a stronger obligation

²¹ Here I agree with Velleman (1999).

to help see Jack through – to tolerate his cruelty – than a friend would.²² But the nature of the parental or friend relationship does not make the fear fitting. It would be equally fitting for a vulnerable stranger to fear Jack, even if that fear would be differently shaped. Thus, patterns of emotional response can be dependent on one’s relationship to the object of the emotion(s) without this entailing that the relationship is what renders the emotion fitting.

There is another putative reason to hold that familial love is made fitting by familial relationships: most of us encounter plenty of people who have features that we admire more than those of some of our family members. But we often love our family members more than those others, and see it as fitting that we do. Thus, the familial relationship must make the love fitting, and not the beloved’s features.

However, preferential love for family members can be explained and vindicated without conceding that relationships make love fitting. Most human beings have features that would make them fitting objects of love for most others. Some may have an easier time perceiving such features, and we tend to love those whose lovable features are more perceptible to us, even if others might be equally fitting in principle. But since family members tend to share activities with one another and are obliged to show one another attentive care and generous attention, it would be strange if they did not perceive a profile of features sufficient to inspire love. Thus, the quality theory can explain why we tend to love our family members, even when they would not appeal to us as love objects independently of our familial relationship. Keeping close company with a person can make us see what we might otherwise miss, but which inspires love when

²² Compare to Kolodny’s discussion of the difference between parental love and friend love: “[a parent’s] love ought to be more resilient than [a friend’s love], and it ought to ask for less in return” Kolodny (2003, p. 139).

seen. And if we haven't seen the lovable features that (would) make a stranger a fitting love object (if we were to perceive them),²³ our love for family members rather than for strangers with more or equally admirable features makes first-personal sense.

Thus, the psychological, normative, and behavioral phenomena involved in familial love can be explained without recourse to the relationship theory. In the usual case one will have fittingness reasons to love one's family members, and the relationship will provide additional but in principle separable reasons for care and concern.

6. Insufficiency of Features?

A different cluster of objections to the quality theory revolves around the idea that a person's features alone cannot determine fittingness even for the kinds of love that involve more choice, such as friendship and romantic attachment. There may be two people with identical features, one of whom we have reason to love, and one of whom we intuitively do not. The fungibility problem is one form of this objection. I responded to the fungibility problem by noting that someone's being a fitting love object entails no insistent norms of behavior. So, the consequence that there might be some more fitting love object out there is no occasion for concern.²⁴ Further, even if one meets and encounters a fitting love match, one's preexisting relationships and other commitments determine how and how much it is appropriate to interact with them.

However, other versions of this worry might pose lingering concerns. One such worry is the problem of constancy. If I come to love someone in virtue of their possessing certain features,

²³ I intend to remain neutral about whether love's reasons are internal or external.

²⁴ Or, gives only a weak and easily overridable reason to promote their good [love them?] especially.

and they subsequently lose those features, the quality theory seems to suggest that I no longer have a reason to love them. But some changes in features are irrelevant to continued love, e.g. changes in looks, wit, and self-confidence. Love is not love which alters when it alteration (of this sort) finds.²⁵

Of course, when one is in a valuable relationship with another, that relationship provides reasons for care and concern whether or not love is fully constant. But more can be said to meet this objection. A quality theory might rule out certain shallow and fleeting features as appropriate grounds of love, so that changes in the features of the beloved can be accommodated up to a point.

Crucially, the features for which we love people are features *of them*. And while each of us may fall under general kinds like ‘wittiness’, the wit that appears in one’s love object will not be easy to disentangle from her other features, the combination of which forms her (at least somewhat) unified and constant character.²⁶ Thus, to say that David is loved for his wit is already to imply that a great deal of him is taken in under his lover’s appreciative eye. So even if his wit dulls with time, there will be enough already appreciated in what remains to justify continued love. The features that make love fitting need be neither static nor completely separable from the rest of the beloved’s character.²⁷

Another worry: the quality theory might seem unable to account for even non-familial love because one cannot have reason to love someone, whatever their features, unless one comes

²⁵ This objection is presented in Kolodny (2003 p. 140).

²⁶ Cf. Badhwar (1987).

²⁷ And indeed if the love occurs within the context of a valuable relationship, the relationship would motivate viewing one’s beloved with caring generosity, and searching out new qualities to delight in and admire to replace the old.

to know them in the right way. Kolodny asks us to imagine a biographer who drew on the testimony of his subject's friends and family to give an intimate account of her life. He finds her admirable and attractive, but does not love her, as they have never met. Eventually they meet, and he falls in love with her. But he views himself as already having learned everything there was to know about her – her beliefs, motivations, and feelings – from writing the biography. He then experiences a case of amnesia that wipes out his memories of having met her and their subsequent relationship, but leaves intact his memories of having written the biography.

Kolodny says he would have no reason to love her.²⁸

Quality theorists can meet this objection by distinguishing what makes an *instance* of love fitting from what makes an *object* of love fitting. They can then say that the fittingness of an instance of love generally requires knowledge by acquaintance of the features that make the love fitting. Thus a person can be a fitting object of love even if some instance of loving them is unfitting; as, for example, with a wonderful person we have not yet met. This response is motivated by considering the comparative richness of understanding that can be gleaned from interacting with someone, as opposed to hearing even the accounts of those who know them well. Think of someone you know very well, and imagine conveying their full richness to a third party. Even if everything you say is true, and is a thorough account of the beliefs and motivations and feelings that sustain and shape them, it could hardly convey the full person, or even the fullness of any of their features.

Thus, quality theories can deny that a mere description of a person's features can convey those features with such richness and distinctness as to inspire love, and maintain that only

²⁸ Kolodny (2003 pp. 141-2). The amnesia seems unnecessary; the objection could simply press the point that he didn't come to love her until they met.

through acquaintance can one grasp the features that make someone a fitting object of love.²⁹ But even given all this, the relationship that makes that acquaintance possible might play no more than an enabling role, rather than being what makes the love fitting.³⁰

7. Summary and Looking Ahead

The relationship theory seems attractive if we consider cases where love would appear inappropriate because it would fail to respect prior relationships (e.g. fungibility cases), or intrusive when felt toward someone who does not welcome its expression. But these cases really just show that (certain kinds of) loving behavior are sometimes morally inappropriate. Nothing about fittingness reasons follows from this. When this instance of the moralistic fallacy goes unnoticed, such cases encourage us to see love as normatively bound up with insistent reasons to care. (Kolodny, for example, defines love as viewing oneself as being in a relationship which gives one reason to engage in the kind of caring behavior appropriate to the relationship-type and justifies emotional vulnerability to the loved one and to the relationship.)³¹ Once this picture of love is in place, the quality theory seems unable to explain why some kinds of relationships call for different caring behavior than others. But this is not a problem if we deny any indefeasible connection between love and caring behavior. From here the defender of the relationship theory might retreat to the idea that love is not possible outside of a relational context, as evidenced by the amnesiac biographer. But this shows not that the relationship makes love fitting, but only that the relationship is a precondition on the kind of intimate knowledge required to reveal reasons for love and call it forth.

²⁹ Though there could, at least in principle, be exceptions (e.g. Jesus Christ of the bible, or Socrates).

³⁰ Abramson and Leite (2011) make a similar point.

³¹ Kolodny (2003 pp.150-1).

Valuable relationships are in fact important to our emotional and normative landscape. My defense of the quality theory makes heavy use of their importance to block certain untoward consequences, and indeed any full account of love that doesn't identify it with valuing a relationship will have to explain how the reasons provided by love and the reasons provided by valuable relationships fit together. This might lead one to wonder, however, whether the disagreement between me and the relationship theorist is merely verbal: I don't deny the normative relevance of valuable relationships to caring behavior and emotional vulnerability, so it might appear as though the only difference between us is that the relationship theorist calls that pattern of behavior and concern love, and I do not.

The difference between our views is in what I am endeavoring here to make room for. I have argued that identifying love with valuing a relationship overlooks or undervalues a kind of emotional condition called by and deserving of that name. More must be said about this kind of love, and I have argued that, despite the typical objections, some version of the quality theory is up to the task. And by showing how no version of the quality theory is vulnerable to many of the alleged problems for such views, I hope to have cleared the way for a discussion of the more substantive differences among quality theories.

8. Application: Fungibility and Types of Quality Theories

In this section, I explain how my answer to the fungibility objection affects the arguments advanced by a few select quality theorists. I will discuss two quality theories: Velleman's *rational personhood quality theory*, and Abramson & Leite's *reactive emotion quality theory*.

8.1 Velleman's Rational Personhood Quality Theory

Velleman's account of love is modeled on Kantian respect for persons. In particular, he suggests that love and Kantian respect have three shared features.

First, both attitudes take a person's rational nature as their object. A person's rational nature, on Velleman's reading of Kant, is "[his] capacity of appreciation or valuation—a capacity to care about things in that reflective way which is distinctive of self-conscious creatures like us" (Velleman 365). While both respect and love take a person's rational nature as their object, love requires a deeper epistemic intimacy with that object than does respect: "Grasping someone's personhood intellectually may be enough to make us respect him, but unless we actually *see* a person in the human confronting us, we won't be moved to love; and we can see the person only by seeing him in or through his empirical persona."³² Thus, love requires awareness *of* a person's rational nature, whereas respect may be induced by mere awareness *that* a person has a rational nature.³³

Second, Kantian respect involves an awareness of the intrinsic value of its object.³⁴ Indeed, it involves a recognition of the special *kind* of value its object possesses. Other objects may be valuable as means to achieving some end, but persons *qua* rational natures are ends in themselves, and respecting someone involves recognizing this. Because love is properly felt in response to a person's rational nature, it contains an implicit norm to view the beloved as an end in herself.³⁵ (Anything less would be an unfitting response to awareness of her rational nature.)

³² Velleman (1999 p. 371).

³³ For more on object awareness vs. fact awareness, see Dretske (1999 pp. 103-124).

³⁴ On this point, Velleman cites a footnote of the *Groundwork* (4:400): "Reverence is properly awareness of a value which checks my self-love." Velleman (1999 p. 360).

³⁵ I say love is "properly" felt in response to rational wills, because Velleman suggests that love may be grounded by other things, though such a love would be inferior. (Velleman 370).

Finally, Kantian respect involves a “negative second-order motive”; that is, rather than inducing us to bring about some particular result, respect for a person “arrests” some of our prior motives—in particular, the motives that would incline us to treat someone as a mere object to serve our own ends rather than as a self-existent end.³⁶ Love, too, has a negative second-order motive, but whereas respect arrests our inclination to treat persons as objects, love “arrests our tendencies toward emotional self-protection from another person [...] [it] disarms our emotional defenses; it makes us vulnerable to the other.”³⁷

On Velleman’s view, then, we are loved for our rational natures. Velleman tries to soften the idea that we are loved for something so impersonal as our personhood; for example, he argues that “the rational nature whose value commands respect is the capacity to be actuated by reasons; that the capacity to be actuated by reasons is also the capacity to have a good will; and that the capacity for a rational and consequently good will is that better side of a person which constitutes his *true self*” (emphasis mine).³⁸ Furthermore:

The idea that love is a response to the value of a person’s rational nature will seem odd so long as ‘rational nature’ is interpreted as denoting the intellect. But rational nature is not the intellect, not even the practical intellect; it’s a capacity of appreciation or valuation—a capacity to care about things in that reflective way which is distinctive of self-conscious creatures like us. Think of a person’s rational nature as his core of reflective concern, and the idea of loving him for it will no longer seem odd.³⁹

So, Velleman suggests that in being loved for our rational natures, we are loved for our “true selves.” Our rational natures are our true selves, because they are our “core[s] of reflective

³⁶ Velleman (1999 p. 360).

³⁷ Velleman (1999 p. 360-1).

³⁸ Velleman (1999 p. 365).

³⁹ Velleman (1999 p. 365).

concern;” our “capacit[ies] to care about things in that reflective way which is distinctive of self-conscious creatures like us.”

However, most will find it difficult to accept that our rational natures are our true selves, even granted that our rational natures can be thought of as our capacities to see things as valuable. For surely, my true self is not just my *capacity* to reflectively care about things, but something more like the guiding principles by which I *exercise* that capacity--in short, my character. So, while it is plausible to think the best kind of love is love for a person’s true self, it is less plausible to think that a person’s true self is their rational nature.

Velleman has a ready response to this concern. He considers a child who wants to understand why he is loved, and who is unsatisfied with various kinds of answers. The hypothetical child wonders:

We are told by adults who love us, and who want us to feel loved, that we are special and irreplaceable. But then we are told by the same adults, now acting as moral educators, that every individual is special and irreplaceable. And we wonder: If everyone is special, what’s so special about anyone?⁴⁰

And Velleman notes:

Adults often confuse us further by saying that we’re special because no one else is quite like us—as if the value attaching to us, and to everyone else as well, was that of being qualitatively unique. This explanation seems to invoke scarcity as a standard of value, but it is easily defeated by the very same standard. 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 precedents is so well preceded?⁴¹

Thus Velleman draws our attention to the paradoxical fact that we are supposed to be loved as special and irreplaceable, and yet we (and those who love us) recognize that every person is

⁴⁰ Velleman (1999 p. 363).

⁴¹ Velleman (1999 p. 363).

equally special and irreplaceable. Why, then, is any person loved over any other? And since love seems to depend on judging one person to be especially special and irreplaceable when others are clearly just as special and irreplaceable, love seems to be a form of blindness. It won't help to argue that we are loved for our specific qualities:

Matters only get worse if adults start to detail the personal qualities for which we are loved, since these qualities fail to distinguish us completely, and they consequently feel like accidents rather than our essence. We are like the girl who wants to be loved but not for her yellow hair—and not, we should add, for her mind or her sense of humor, either—because she wants to be loved, as she puts it, “for myself alone.”⁴²

It is fruitless to say we are loved for our specific qualities, because these qualities are not unique to us, and so neither capture our essences nor pick us out as special. Indeed, there is something unseemly about loving someone on the basis of a cluster of qualities specific enough to individuate them:

Someone who loved you for your quirks would have to be a quirk-lover, on the way to being a fetishist. In order for his love to fit you so snugly, it would need so many angles as to be downright kinky. Of course, you may hope that love would open a lover's eyes to everything about you, including your quirks, and that he would see them in the reflected glow of your true, inner value. But if you learned that they were themselves the evaluative basis of his love, you would feel trivialized.⁴³

Thus if we are loved for a cluster of properties that we uniquely possess, we will inevitably feel that we are not loved for the things that make us *valuable*. The trivial properties will be lumped in with the meaningful ones, just in order to fully individuate the beloved's manner of being in the world.

Velleman offers an answer to the inquiring child that avoids the above problems:

Kant's theory of value reveals that being valued as a person is not a matter of being compared with others, anyway. If you assimilate Kant's insight, you will realize that being

⁴² Velleman (1999 p. 363).

⁴³ Velleman (1999 p. 370).

prized or treasured as special doesn't entail being compared favorably with others; it rather entails being seen to have a value that forbids comparisons. Your singular value as a person is not a value that you are singular in possessing; it's rather a value that entitles you to be appreciated singularly, in and by yourself.⁴⁴

By making use of Kant's conception of the special value of persons, Velleman's account of love is able to explain how one can be valued at the same time as special, and as possessing a value that many others possess. In loving us for our rational wills, our lovers love us both for something that is truly valuable, and in a way that does not admit of comparison with other valuable things. By invoking the special kind of value only rational wills possess, Velleman's account is able to explain how we can be loved for a feature every person has, but at the same time valued as irreplaceable.

Thus concludes Velleman's case against the idea that love could be grounded in properties that are more individuating than a person's rational nature. I now commence my case that (most of) these arguments fall apart once we recognize that the fungibility objection is ultimately toothless.

Velleman objects to quality theories of two stripes: first, those on which we are loved for properties that some but not all persons might share, such as having nice hair or a good sense of humor; second, those on which we are loved for a cluster of properties that distinguish us entirely.⁴⁵ He suggests that neither of these accounts can offer a satisfying answer to the paradox that drives his discussion of these views; namely, that we want to be loved as special and irreplaceable, but there seems to be no way of explaining how this is possible. A closer look at his objections to these two rival views, however, reveals that he has additional criteria in mind. In

⁴⁴ Velleman (1999 p. 370).

⁴⁵ I discuss the second kind of view in "Love of Whole Persons."

objection to the first kind of view, on which we are loved for properties that some but not all persons might share (call this the “repeatable qualities” view), he notes that “these qualities fail to distinguish us completely, and they consequently feel like accidents rather than our essence.”⁴⁶

So, there are two problems with such views, which are purportedly related in the following way: if some set of our features fails to distinguish us completely, then that set of features cannot be our essence. However, Velleman’s own view denies this implication: he argues that even though our rational natures do not distinguish us completely, they are nevertheless our “true selves.” So, by Velleman’s own lights, the fact that some proposed grounds of love are repeatable do not entail that those proposed grounds do not capture our true selves.

Velleman does not offer any other reason to doubt that these kinds of repeatable properties can be our “true selves.” Instead, he offers some support for his own view that our rational natures are our true selves (quoted above). But it was precisely because this support was unconvincing that it was necessary to object to alternative views in the first place. As it turns out, Velleman offers a number of criteria for an account of love, which he suggests only his view can entirely meet:

- (1) The account must capture the fact that we are loved “for ourselves alone.” (or “for our essences,” or for our “true selves.”)
- (2) The account must explain why it is inappropriate for our lover to compare us against others – to see us as fungible with anyone with similar qualities.
- (3) The account must maintain that we are loved on the basis of things that are actually valuable (and so not trivial).

But we have seen that all quality theories can meet criterion (2), which is just a statement of the fungibility worry. Thus, the only remaining criteria that might favor one version of the quality

⁴⁶ Velleman (1999 p. 363).

theory over another are (1) and (3). As I have argued, Velleman’s own account does not adequately capture (1), and at least some versions of the repeatable qualities view (those on which we are loved for our virtues, say) can clearly meet the third criterion. So, the only point that might be thought to favor Velleman’s view over repeatable quality theories is that it alone could answer the fungibility worry. Thus, once the fungibility worry is rejected, Velleman’s view has no benefits over the repeatable quality theory—and indeed, as suggested earlier, some version of the repeatable quality theory may have a better chance than Velleman’s view at capturing the idea that we are loved for our “true selves” rather than merely for our selfhood.

8.2 Abramson and Leite’s Reactive Emotion Quality Theory

In “Love as a Reactive Emotion,” Abramson and Leite defend something close to a repeatable quality theory, with a twist that allows them to position their account as a response to the fungibility objection. They begin by proposing to take seriously Strawson’s remark that (at least one variety of) love is a reactive attitude. That is, love is an interpersonally directed response to broadly moral features of the loved person. Abramson and Leite defend this picture of love, which they distinguish from less theoretically ornate quality theories:

The suggestion that love is a reactive attitude shares a certain similarity with what has been termed the ‘quality view’, the idea that love is properly grounded in non-relational features of the beloved. Niko Kolodny has objected that were love grounded in features of the beloved’s good conduct or character, this would imply ‘absurdly, that in so far as one’s love for (say) Jane is responsive to reasons, it will accept any relevantly similar person as a replacement’. But as we shall argue, once love is treated as a reactive attitude, this objection does not get off the ground.⁴⁷

Thus, from the start, Abramson and Leite frame their view as a response to the fungibility objection. Of course, they motivate their view in other ways as well, in ways I describe just

⁴⁷ Abramson and Leite (2011, p. 674).

below. However, the complications they introduce with an eye to overcoming the fungibility objection are not otherwise well-motivated, and indeed come with significant independent costs.

Abramson and Leite's account has two main features, both of which emerge from the idea that love is a reactive attitude. First, love is a response to the beloved's good qualities (where "good" is understood in a broadly moral sense.) Second, love arises in a context of interpersonal interactions between the lover and the loved one. So far, there is nothing too contentious here. Some may object to moralizing the grounds of love, but Abramson and Leite point out that while people can love others for shallow or perverse reasons, grounded in amoral or immoral qualities respectively, love in such cases is inappropriate. We cannot fully endorse such attachments, and they seem to reveal deficiencies in the lover's character.⁴⁸

Likewise, most will agree that love can only be appropriate when it arises in a context of interpersonal interactions between lover and loved one.⁴⁹ This observation motivated Kolodny's amnesia objection to the quality theory, and it undergirds the idea that there is something strange about loving someone you have not yet met. Indeed, Abramson and Leite's second condition on love is similar to my suggested response to Kolodny's amnesia objection (§6). There, I argued that a quality theorist could explain the unfittingness of loving a (believed) stranger by distinguishing what makes an *instance* of love fitting from what makes an *object* of love fitting. One person may be a fitting object of love for another even before they have met, but fitting love requires knowledge by acquaintance of a person's qualities; usually, this must be acquired through interpersonal interactions.

⁴⁸ Abramson and Leite (2011, pp. 678-81, 697-99).

⁴⁹ Though I raised some possible counterexamples to this view in fn 28.

However, Abramson and Leite explicitly deny that the relational context is only important for the epistemic access it grants to the loved person's qualities. They make this point while discussing their central case—Elinor's love for Edward in *Sense and Sensibility*. They center their discussion of this case on the following passage from the novel, in which Elinor describes her love for Edward to her sister:

Of his sense and his goodness ... no one can, I think, be in doubt, who has seen him often enough to engage him in unreserved conversation. The excellence of his understanding and his principles can be concealed only by that shyness which too often keeps him silent. You know enough of him to do justice to his solid worth. But of his minuter propensities, as you call them, you have ... been kept more ignorant than myself... His abilities in every respect improve as much upon acquaintance as his manners and person. At first sight, his address is certainly not striking; and his person can hardly be called handsome, till the expression of his eyes, which are uncommonly good, and the general sweetness of his countenance, is perceived. At present, I know him so well, that I think him really handsome; or, at least, almost so.⁵⁰

As Abramson and Leite observe, this passage touchingly illustrates how getting to know a kind person can increase their beauty in our eyes. However, they suggest that Elinor's newly loving perception of Edward is not simply a matter of her having gotten to know him better:

[T]o suggest that Elinor and Edward's relationship is of mere epistemological relevance, a background condition for adequate insight into his good character, would be wildly distorting. In a variety of interactions with Elinor and her family, Edward displays a touching and admirable combination of attentiveness, consideration, concern for and empathetic understanding of those around him. Suppose, then, the story went like this. Elinor responds to Edward's good qualities with simple esteem, and out of admiration tells a friend (who has never met him) of the episodes in which his good traits were revealed. In response and still without having met him, Elinor's friend announces that she has fallen in love with Edward. How easily one can imagine responding 'You cannot really love him, you have never even met him!'⁵¹

Thus Abramson and Leite conclude that Elinor and Edward's relational context cannot have

⁵⁰ Quoted in Abramson and Leite (2011, p. 675).

⁵¹ Abramson and Leite (2011, p. 676).

merely epistemological significance, because it would be inappropriate for a friend of Elinor's to fall in love with Edward based solely on Elinor's testimony. Instead, the relationship must be relevant because it must matter how Edward behaves toward Elinor *in particular*. If Edward were virtuous in other contexts, but callous toward Elinor, then there would be something inappropriate about her continuing to love him.

Abramson and Leite use this second-personal aspect of their view to fend off the fungibility objection. They point out that on their view we have no reason to love an intrinsic duplicate of our loved one absent the relevant relational context. So, our loved ones are not fungible for people with the same intrinsic properties whom we have not yet met. They continue:

If one were in an appropriate relationship with an intrinsic duplicate of [one's beloved], one would indeed have reason to love her too, but not as a replacement. [...] Non-relational features are reasons for love, but only in an appropriate relational setting. This is enough to secure our view from the standard objection to the 'quality view'. Any further demand for 'irreplaceability' is an infantile fantasy of specialness.⁵²

I am sympathetic to Abramson and Leite's conclusion that the fungibility worry, taken to an extreme, amounts to an infantile demand for specialness. I also agree that it may well be fitting to love two people on the basis of the same properties at the same time without this viewing one as a *replacement* for the other. Still, to make these arguments go through, one need not accept Abramson and Leite's requirement that to ground love, the beloved's admirable traits must be expressed toward the lover. All that is necessary is the simple distinction I advocated above, between the fittingness of an instance of love and the fittingness of an object of love.

To see this, it may help to further articulate the difference between Abramson and Leite's

⁵² Abramson and Leite (2011, p. 696).

strong relational context requirement and my *weak relational context* requirement.

Strong relational context requirement: In order for an instance of love to be fitting, the beloved must demonstrate their laudable character by showing kindness to the lover.

Weak relational context requirement: In order for an instance of love to be fitting, the lover must have the right kind of epistemic access to the qualities that make the love fitting.

Either requirement can answer the fungibility objection in the way that Abramson and Leite suggest. But this reveals that their answer to the fungibility objection is not as strong as it might seem at first. Despite appearances, the aspect of their theory that distinguishes it from other quality theories doesn't do any work in their response to the objection. Thus, their response to the fungibility worry is basically: sure, two people might possess the properties that ground love to the same degree, but that doesn't mean that one person is *replaceable* for the other as far as the lover is concerned. I sympathize with their claim, but to simply assert it without further argument begs the question against those who take the fungibility worry seriously.

One can justify the claim that two people might share properties that equally fittingly ground love without requiring that the person who loves them sees them as interchangeable, but Abramson and Leite's strong relational context requirement is not necessary to that end. Nor, indeed, does their requirement truly address the fungibility worry. After all, requiring the beloved to show their goodness in interactions with the lover in particular does not at all palliate the worry that the lover will regard her beloveds as fungible; it only adds one more requirement on someone's being a (for all they have shown, interchangeable!) fitting object of love.

Contrast this with Velleman's more powerful reply to the fungibility objection. On his view, the very nature of the ground of love implies that anyone who fittingly loves another will

not view them as interchangeable with anyone else: we are loved for our rational nature, which has a value ("dignity") that demands to be appreciated singularly and non-interchangeably. Dignity contrasts with "price," which is possessed by things that are valuable, but not finally valuable. This view is laden with Kantian value theory, which may be a liability in other ways, but at least it explains why the particular feature that warrants love prevents the fungibility worry from getting off the ground. Abramson and Leite's view, in contrast, does not do this. It is possible to love someone for the fine character traits they display toward you, and yet still to think, "for all I care, this role could be filled by anyone who loved me enough to act well towards me." Nothing in Abramson and Leite's view forbids this form of narcissism, and so nothing in their view distinctly responds to the fungibility objection.

Further, Abramson and Leite's strong relational context requirement faces other problems. They support their requirement first by appealing to Elinor's love for Edward in *Sense and Sensibility*. They suggested that it matters that Edward was kind to Elinor in particular, rather than merely being kind in general. This point was further strengthened by pointing out that a friend who came to love Edward solely from Elinor's testimony would be misguided. I suggested, however, that we can explain that misguidedness simply by appealing to the weak relational context requirement: the friend's love is unfitting not because Edward hasn't been kind to her in particular, but because Elinor's testimony can't possibly offer rich enough knowledge of Edward to ground the friend's love. Had her friend observed Edward's kindness to Elinor herself, but without having occasion to interact directly with Edward, her love would not seem so strange.

As further support for the strong relational context requirement, Abramson and Leite offer the story from *Hair*, Sheila's love for a peace activist ("Berger") who neglects both her and

the child they have together:

When confronted, [Berger] raises his hand dismissively, and [Sheila] sings in response ‘How can people be so heartless? ... especially people, who care about strangers, who care about evil and social injustice? Do you only care about the bleeding ground? How about a needing friend?’. Here is someone who has made the mistake of founding her love on a laudable aspect of character that as a matter of fact has no connection with good conduct as partner or father. Her lament pays tribute to the misdirected nature of her love, for the heartbroken complaint only makes sense if she thinks her beloved’s passion for social justice should yield good conduct as lover and parent.⁵³

So, they consider two kinds of cases:

Global and Relational Virtue: A person who is virtuous both generally and in relation to the lover.

Virtuous in some contexts but not toward the lover: A person who is virtuous in one domain, but does not show virtue in their interactions with the lover.

The first is what Edward portrays toward Elinor, and the second is what Berger portrays toward Sheila. Here I am using the distinction between global virtue and virtue within a domain. If you are globally virtuous you will be virtuous whatever the situation in which you find yourself. (Or at least, you will readily become virtuous in a domain once you gain whatever nonmoral knowledge is necessary for virtue in that domain, which your virtue will motivate you to do.) If you are virtuous only within a domain and not globally virtuous, then there is no guarantee that you will behave well in a domain that is far enough removed from the domain in which you are virtuous. Virtue theorists debate whether so called “virtue-within-a-domain” is even a legitimate category; some think virtue must be global, and that so-called “virtue-within-a-domain” is not virtue at all—at best, it is an aspect of global virtue, and in the absence of

⁵³ Abramson and Leite (2011, p. 680).

global virtue it can only be the appearance of virtue.⁵⁴

The point of the distinction is this: something more akin to global virtue is necessary to ground love. In particular, love should be felt in response to knowledge of a whole person, and so the sum total of that person's character traits is relevant to whether or not they are lovable. This view delivers the same verdicts on the Elinor and Edward case, and the Sheila and Berger case, as do Abramson and Leite—except that on this view, Berger would be revealed to be unlovable not because he was unkind to Sheila in particular, but because his actions toward Sheila show him to be a cad. His actions toward Sheila should give anyone—not just Sheila—a reason to stop loving him. A further difference between the views can be brought out by considering another case:

Virtuous toward the lover but in few other contexts: Romeo is loving and kind to Juliet, but cruel, heartless, and selfish toward most others.

Perhaps Romeo is a mobster who looks after his own, but smashes the heads of anyone who gets in his way or threatens his family. Again, it is contested whether he could really be virtuous to his family; considering how cruel he is to others, perhaps he only appears virtuous toward his family. Still, Juliet believes that he treats her well—that he possesses some fine qualities which he displays in his relationship toward her, though he has few generous feelings for outsiders. This effectively reverses the *Hair* case. But if Juliet loves Romeo *simply because he is nice to her*, then Juliet is perversely narcissistic. We certainly can't imagine Elinor loving Edward if he were generally mean and violent, however kind he was toward her in particular.

Abramson and Leite might say that the strong relational context requirement is only a

⁵⁴ For discussion of these issues see Annas (2011) and Badhwar (1996).

necessary condition, not a sufficient one. They might allow, then, that for love to be appropriate, the beloved must show virtue not only in interactions with the lover, but also more globally. However, their arguments for this view lose much of their force once we see that the strong relational context requirement is not needed to deliver the desired verdicts on any of the cases they use to justify it. And, as I argue in my next paper, love is best thought of as a way of valuing the whole person--so, there is independent reason to deny the specialness of the qualities the beloved shows toward the lover in particular.

9. Conclusion

I have defended the *quality theory* of love – the view that love’s fittingness is determined by properties/characteristics of the beloved. The quality theory contrasts with the *relationship theory*, on which love’s fittingness is determined by features of the relationship between the lover and beloved. I argued that loving someone and valuing a relationship are best conceived as distinct psychological phenomena, subject to different norms, and I defended the quality theory against five prominent objections. Typically, quality theorists argue that their own view can answer these objections, while other versions of the quality theory cannot. I argued that no version of the quality theory is vulnerable to these five objections, thus clearing the way for a more substantive discussion of the differences among quality theories. In particular, Velleman’s and Abramson and Leite’s arguments for their accounts of love over other quality theories look considerably weaker once we see that any version of the quality theory can address the fungibility worry. But the situation is worse than that. As I show next in “Love of Whole Persons”, when quality theorists try to show how their view uniquely addresses the fungibility worry, they become all the more vulnerable to a different objection, the problem of love’s

object.

Love of Whole Persons

What is the self?

A man goes to the window to see the people passing by; if I pass by, can I say he went there to see me? No, for he is not thinking of me in particular. But what about a person who loves someone for the sake of her beauty; does he love her? No, for smallpox, which will destroy beauty without destroying the person, will put an end to his love for her.

And if someone loves me for my judgement or my memory, do they love me? me, myself? No, for I could lose these qualities without losing my self. Where then is this self, if it is neither in the body nor the soul? And how can one love the body or the soul except for the sake of such qualities, which are not what makes up the self, since they are perishable? Would we love the substance of a person's soul, in the abstract, whatever qualities might be in it? That is not possible, and it would be wrong. Therefore we never love anyone, but only qualities.

*Let us then stop scoffing at those who win honour through their appointments and offices, for we never love anyone except for borrowed qualities. [Pascal, *Pensées* Sec. 688]*

1. Introduction

According to *quality theories* of love, love is made fitting by properties of the loved person.⁵⁵

Quality theories capture the fact that (i) we see things to value in those we love, and (ii) we see our love as stemming from our appreciation of that value. Quality theories also capture three ways that love can be unfitting: when someone loves someone based on a property that they lack, based on a property that is not really valuable, or based on a property has the wrong kind of value (e.g., some would argue, merely physical beauty).

Despite their immediate plausibility, quality theories have met with many objections. Here I focus on an objection that has its germ in the Pascal passage above: if we love people on the basis of certain of their properties, then the love must really be *for* these properties and not the

⁵⁵ Many views of love count as “quality theories” so understood: e.g. Velleman (1999), Badhwar (1987), and Delaney (1996). “Quality theory” might not be the best name for any one of these accounts, but it is the most apt umbrella term.

person who has them. Call this “the problem of love’s object.”⁵⁶ Gregory Vlastos famously raised the problem of love’s object in objection to Plato’s account of love in the *Symposium*:

We are to love [...] persons so far, and only insofar, as they are good and beautiful. Now since all too few human beings are masterworks of excellence, and not even the best of those we have the chance to love are wholly free of streaks of the ugly, the mean, the commonplance, the ridiculous, if our love for them is to be only for their virtue and beauty, the individual, in the uniqueness and integrity of his or her individuality, will never be the object of our love. [Plato’s theory] does not provide for love of whole persons, but only for love of that abstract version of persons which consists of the complex of their best qualities.

Pascal and Vlastos maintain a common premise: If we are loved for properties such as beauty, then we are not loved for ourselves. However, the reflections that each offers in support of this premise are importantly different. Pascal focuses on the problem of *constancy*. He notes that insofar as we are loved for properties like beauty, we cannot be loved for ourselves, because when our beauty fades, we will remain ourselves, but cease to be loved. Vlastos, on the other hand, focuses on the problem of *wholeness*. He notes that insofar as we are loved for properties like beauty, we cannot be loved for ourselves, because insofar as we are loved only for our best qualities, we are not loved as the whole persons, abundant with good properties and bad, that we are.

Pascal and Vlastos arrive at different conclusions. They both accept the premise that we cannot be loved both for ourselves yet also for our admirable qualities. However, Pascal suggests that whatever the self is, it’s not an appropriate object of love. Selves cannot be identical to qualities, because qualities can change without loss of the self. Thus, selves, if they exist at all, must be something more like abstract essences, and these, he asserts, are neither possible nor appropriate to love. Vlastos, on the other hand, does not suggest that a person’s self consists of an

⁵⁶ See also Vlastos (1981).

abstract essence that is somehow separable from her qualities. Instead, he suggests that a person's self is the total of her properties; bad and good. (Here and throughout, I use "self" as a technical term, to denote whatever it is that, when we are loved for it, we are loved "for ourselves.")

Despite these differences, each musing carries with it a theory about the nature of the individual, and purports to show that accounts of love on which we are loved for our qualities cannot do justice to the idea that we are loved as individuals. Thus, Pascal and Vlastos pose a common challenge to the quality theory: If a quality theorist wants to reject Pascal's pessimistic conclusion about the impossibility of loving a person's actual self, it must explain how we can be loved as the individuals we are, and at the same time on the basis of our qualities.

Accordingly, quality theorists have responded to the problem of love's object in broadly two kinds of ways. The first kind of response distinguishes the *ground* from the *object* of love, and argues that even if some of the beloved's properties ground love—i.e. make it fitting—the beloved as a whole is nevertheless the object of love. The second kind of response argues that the ground and the object of love are the same entity, namely the beloved's self. This second strategy carries with it more theoretical baggage, because it entails offering an account of the composition of a person's self. So, to respond adequately to the problem of love's object, theorists taking the second strategy must offer both a plausible account of the self, and at the same time address concerns that arise from thinking that the self is the ground of love. It verges on a criterion of an adequate account of love to maintain that the self is the *object* of love. However, it is difficult to motivate the view that a person's self is the proper *ground* of love.

To get some sense of the difficulty, consider the theories of self implicit in the quoted Pascal and Vlastos passages. If Pascalian bare abstract selves are the ground of love, then in what

sense can we be loved for something that makes us valuable, and so in what sense can our love properly be grounded in reasons that make sense of our love at all? And if instead our selves are the sum of our properties, then we are loved in part on the basis of our worst features.

I will speak more about these issues in the course of this essay but first, I will discuss the first kind of response to the problem of love's object, that of distinguishing between the ground and the object of love. Neil Delaney offers a response of this form:

Let me try to forestall a predictable worry by emphasizing that the ideal of romantic love involves a relation between *persons*, not between a person and a set of properties. By claiming that *A* wants to be loved for properties [...] I am claiming that *A* wants such properties to be the ground of the attitude *B* has adopted, not the object. It should be absolutely clear that by claiming you want to be loved for properties [...] I am maintaining that you want to stand in a relation that essentially relates persons partly in virtue of their instantiating various properties; an ideal of love that involves relating persons to properties directly is Platonic in spirit and peculiar in any case.⁵⁷

Simon Keller makes a similar point: "My love for you holds in virtue of, or is justified by, your having certain properties, but this does not at all imply that I love your properties instead of loving you (whatever that would mean)."⁵⁸

This distinction between the ground and the object of an attitude is familiar from elsewhere. For example, what grounds my fear of a teetering rock is its ability to crush me, but the object of my fear is the rock itself. However, this maneuver cannot resolve the problem of love's object. We can see this by reflecting on the quality theory's implicit account of what the lover values by loving. The quality theory is appealing because it makes sense of the idea that we see love as grounded by valuable features of our loved ones. But if this is what love looks like, then it seems that love values only certain *features* of the loved person, rather than the person as a

⁵⁷ Delaney (1996 p. 343).

⁵⁸ Keller (2000 p. 165).

whole. Thus, even if the quality theorist can maintain that the person is the *object* of love, it is not clear that they can explain how it is that love *values* the person as a whole, rather than merely some of their properties. This reveals that the ground/object distinction was never more than a narrow, technical fix. To address the problem substantively, the quality theorist needs to explain why the object of love is also *valued* by love (in a way that goes beyond valuing the object *qua* possessor of property).

To see the importance of meeting this criterion, consider an analogy with anger. Suppose Bob is angry at his spouse, Juan, because Juan spoke on Bob's behalf at a group gathering at which Bob was present. Adopting the structure of Delaney and Keller's accounts of the relation between the ground and the object of an attitude, we can say that the object of Bob's anger is Juan, and the ground of the anger is Juan's failure to have let Bob speak for himself. However, while we may fairly say that Bob's anger disvalues Juan's inconsiderate speech, it does not disvalue Juan as a whole. But now consider Bob's love for Juan—assume he loves Juan on the basis of some but not all of his properties. If the evaluative structure of love is like that of anger, then Bob's love too values some of Juan's properties, but does not value Juan as a whole, unless the properties that ground the love are identical to what we might call Juan's self. But then this first strategy collapses into the second. Unless it can be shown how love, unlike anger, involves valuing the whole person and not just some of their properties, Delaney and Keller's response to the problem of love's object offers hollow consolation.

2. *Love as Intrinsic Valuing of Persons*

The preceding discussion shows the need to explain how love values the loved person, rather than merely valuing some other thing. But an object can be valued in many ways, and

some theorists say that the object of love is valued *extrinsically*. Niko Kolodny, for example, replies to the problem of love's object on behalf of his relationship theory. According to Kolodny's relationship theory, the proper ground of love is not any of an individual's qualities, but rather the existence of a valuable relationship between the lover and the loved one. So, the problem of love's object is particularly salient for his view, on which we are loved not even on the basis of any particular *part* of ourselves, but instead as participants in a valuable relationship. Kolodny admits the difficulty: "The quality theory is focused on at least intrinsic accidents of one's beloved, properties that she has in her own right. The relationship theory, by contrast, appears to focus on the mere accident of her association with oneself."⁵⁹

However, he immediately counters that this objection mistakes the nature of his view:

This appearance, however, results from confusing the ground of valuation with its focus. The ground of valuation is the reason for the associated emotional vulnerability and actions. The focus of valuation is that to which one is emotionally vulnerable and that which one acts to serve, protect, and so on. On my proposal, love has a single ground (one's relationship) but two foci (one's relationship and one's relative).⁶⁰

On its surface, Kolodny's reply has a similar structure to Keller and Delaney's use of the ground/object distinction. Both replies distinguish the ground of an emotion from some other structural part of the emotion – its object, that on which it centers, its focus. We have seen that Keller and Delaney's ground/object distinction does not adequately address the problem of love's object, because it does not explain how it is that the beloved *values* the loved one, and this was always the concern implicitly driving the objection.

⁵⁹ Kolodny (2003 p. 154).

⁶⁰ Kolodny (2003 p. 154).

Kolodny's reply, however, is more robust than Keller's and Delaney's. In the passage above, he makes clear that his ground/focus distinction is meant to account for how the loved person is *valued*. And he suggests that the distinction is not ad hoc, because "we often value things nonfinally: that is, we often value X as a focus, while taking some other thing, Y, to be the ground of valuing X in that way."⁶¹ To motivate this claim, he offers an example of nonfinal valuing with a putatively similar evaluative structure to love. He suggests that the valuing of the beloved involved in love is akin to the valuing of human remains: we value these non-instrumentally, but extrinsically—for their own sake, but only because of their relation to the person they were.⁶² Likewise, in loving someone, we focus our positive evaluation on them, even if only on the basis of their relationship with us.⁶³

But this analogy fails; love values persons not just non-instrumentally but also intrinsically. Consider the case of the human remains. It is impossible to hold in mind one's reverence for them without some reference in thought or feeling to the person they once were. This suggests that the valuing truly is extrinsic. If one thinks of them merely as the pile of dust they would otherwise be, one would not have the same feeling of reverence for them. In contrast, call to mind a person you love. As best you can, allow yourself to feel in your mind the fullness of them. Surely you can call your love for them to mind, and feel it in all its intensity, without also calling to mind your relationship to them (or anything else for that matter). This suggests that the valuing involved in love truly is intrinsic.

⁶¹ Kolodny (2003 p. 154).

⁶² Kolodny (2003 p. 150). Kolodny uses the term "nonfinal (valuing)" to describe cases where "one values X, but sees some distinct Y as the source of one's reasons for valuing X." but I prefer the term "extrinsic (valuing)."

⁶³ Kolodny proposes in fn 25 that the quality theorist can make use of his answer to the problem of love's object.

This argument that love values its object intrinsically uses a *phenomenological isolation test*, according to which if you isolate in your mind the features that an attitude values or disvalues intrinsically, the attitude will be (or at least can be) called forth. Conversely, if you isolate features that the attitude neither values nor disvalues intrinsically, the attitude cannot be called forth. I propose that this test provides an apt guide to what an attitude values or disvalues in a variety of cases. Consider our case of Bob, who is angry at his spouse, Juan, because Juan spoke on Bob's behalf at a group gathering at which Bob was present. We concluded there that Bob's anger disvalues Juan's action, but not Juan as a whole. The phenomenological isolation test reflects this: if Bob thinks about Juan independently of his inconsiderate act, he won't feel the anger (indeed, this ability to carve off Juan's act from his larger character may be the basis on which it is appropriate for Bob to forgive Juan and maintain their relationship). On the other hand, if he considers only Juan's act and not his overall character, the anger will return.

Second, consider a sumptuous looking burger that is specifically designed to photograph well in a promotional pamphlet for a local burger joint. Because cooking burgers can dry them out, food that needs to look its best for a photograph, rather than being cooked, is often merely seared with a blowtorch. Grill marks are then added with a branding iron, and a layer of shoe polish is applied to enrich the color.⁶⁴ Imagine, then, that the sumptuous looking burger has been put aside, and some passerby, assuming it was cooked in the usual way, desires to eat it and takes a bite. Discovering that the patty is raw and coated in shoe polish, he disgustedly spits it out.

In response to this burger, then, our passerby has formed two evaluatively laden judgments: the first that it looks delicious, the second that it tastes terrible. In each case, the

⁶⁴ Or so I have read. Cf <http://mentalfloss.com/article/30195/11-ways-advertisers-make-food-look-delicious>. In any case we can assume this description is accurate for the sake of argument.

object of the attitude is the burger as a whole. However, the ground of the former judgment is its appearance, while the ground for the disgust is its taste. The phenomenological isolation test will reveal here that the passerby values the look of the burger but disvalues its taste. If he calls to mind the look of the burger and banishes its taste from his memory, he will feel desire to eat the imagined burger made real. (Indeed, if he is served a similar looking burger at a restaurant his mouth will water.) However, if he focuses on the taste of the burger, his disgust will return.

It may be countered that if he pictures both the taste and the look of the burger, he will feel disgusted, and this shows that the burger as a whole is disvalued by the judgment that the burger tastes disgusting. Or (since the memory of the taste alone also brings forth disgust) both the burger as a whole and the taste of the burger are intrinsically disvalued by the disgust. If this is so, however, it is so because the primary role our passerby envisioned for the burger is that of a potential meal. This is reflected in the fact that even the approving attitude toward its burger on the basis of its appearance was ultimately felt with reference to how it would taste. (“The burger looked delicious.”) So, the discovery about the burger’s taste undermined the validity of the desire—the burger looks but isn’t delicious, so the desire that its appealing looks would usually bring forth is not felt at all when the facts they represent are known to be false.

But this shows not that the passerby’s disgust disvalues the burger as a whole *simpliciter*, but only that he disvalues the burger as a whole *as something to eat*. If the passerby considers the burger as a whole as an aesthetic object, then he may lose his sense of disgust and come to appreciate it for its looks. This would be a new attitude—no longer the desire to consume the burger nor disgust at its taste, but something more disinterestedly appreciative. And the isolation

test will show that this attitude of appreciation values the look of the burger, not its taste (even though the object of the attitude is the burger as a whole).

Along with Kolodny and many others, I am taking it as a criterion of an account of love that the loved person is loved *disinterestedly*, so that, unlike the desire for the burger as food, love is properly felt in response to a person without an eye to how the person can benefit the lover.⁶⁵ Of course, Juan's love for Bob is *consistent* with the feeling that his relationship with Bob enriches his life, but it is separable from this feeling. So, if one cannot call forth one's feeling of love for a person without picturing all the benefits that person brings to one's life, then what one loves is the benefits the person brings, not the person herself. I have suggested that the phenomenological isolation test shows that in addition to love properly involving non-instrumental valuing of the beloved, it also involves intrinsically valuing her. The phenomenological isolation test reveals that, unlike our respect for human remains, which will not occur without bring to mind their relation to the person they once were, our loved ones are valued intrinsically by love.

Of course, all versions of the quality theory already grant this; in fact, the defining feature of quality theories is that they propose love is grounded by features of the loved person. So, even when some of those features are relational—e.g., she is kind to the people she encounters—the lover values them as traits of hers that would exist even in absence of people to be kind to.⁶⁶ Thus, the love values those traits intrinsically, because the lover's appreciation of those traits does not depend on their relationship to any other entity, even though the traits themselves are

⁶⁵ This criterion is contained in Aristotle's idea that a friend should be valued for her own sake (EN VIII.2-3), and it is generally accepted by philosophers of love.

⁶⁶ So long as the absence of others wouldn't affect her character overmuch.

relational. Quality theories are united, then, in the idea that love intrinsically values features of the loved one.

So, quality theories can account for the fact that love values the beloved intrinsically. Thus, perhaps quality theorists can make use of a combination of Kolodny's and Delaney/Keller's reply. They might suggest that while certain of the beloved's properties are the ground of love, the beloved as a whole is the object of the love, and, what's more, is valued as a whole in virtue of possessing the grounding properties. This would seem to allow them to maintain both that the beloved is loved as a whole, and that they are loved in virtue of possessing certain properties.

However, this reply still does not go far enough. It does better than Kolodny's relationship theory, in that it can account for the fact that the beloved is valued intrinsically. However, it cannot account for the fact that love values the *beloved-as-a-whole* intrinsically. Rather, it takes on, with Kolodny, the idea that the beloved as a whole is valued only extrinsically, in virtue of certain of their properties being valued intrinsically. But the phenomenological isolation test reveals that this alone is not adequate. To see this, consider that if we merely call to mind certain traits of our loved ones (insofar as it is possible to bring some distinctively to mind without bringing the whole person along already), we will not feel our love in its fullness until we make the natural step of picturing how the traits fit in with their personality as a whole. Thus, certain shallow and superficial properties will be ruled out as grounds of love for persons, as will properties that carve out some separable part of a person's character. In order to account for how love values the loved person, then, we must pursue the second strategy

discussed above: we must maintain that the ground and object of love are identical, and that they both somehow capture the loved one's self.

3. *Love of True Selves: Two Views*

I have argued that quality theories are only plausible insofar as they suggest that we are loved on the basis of our selves. In this section I discuss two accounts of love that agree with this basic idea and attempt to unpack it. The first is advanced by David Velleman in "Love as a Moral Emotion" (1999); the second by Neera Badhwar in "Friends as Ends in Themselves" (1987). These accounts represent very different approaches, but they are united in taking the second strategy in response to the problem of love's object: that is, they suggest that their views avoid the problem of love's object because on their views, the beloved is loved on the basis of features that are so suitably central that they can count as the beloved's "true self."

No article defending an account of love has focused entirely on the problem of love's object, and the two discussed in this section are no exception. Most articles defending some kind of quality theory attempt to show how their account can uniquely answer many of the typical objections to quality theories. In particular, the problem of love's object is often discussed together with the *fungibility worry* about quality theories: if we are loved for properties that could in principle be possessed by more than one person, it might seem to make no difference whether one's beloved is switched out for another person with the same relevant properties. Worse, the lover might have reason to *trade up* to a more fitting candidate.⁶⁷ There are many versions or aspects of the fungibility worry, among them:

⁶⁷ The alternate candidate might be more fitting by having the relevant properties to a more perfected degree, or having some different set of properties that is superior objectively or relative to the lover.

Disloyalty: If A is in a loving relationship with B but C is a more fitting love object for A than B, then it would be fitting for A to leave B for C.

Replaceability: If A's love for B is fitting in virtue of feature(s) xyz, then if C has xyz, A ought to view/accept C as a suitable replacement-love-object-for-B.

Trading up: If A's love for B is fitting in virtue of feature(s) xyz, then if C has x'y'z', where x'y'z' is (are) the greater perfection(s) of xyz, then A should view/accept C as a superior love object to B.

Velleman and Badhwar each respond to the fungibility worry with the same theoretical apparatus with which they respond to the problem of love's object. This is a mistake: while each of them succeeds in addressing the fungibility worry, neither adequately resolves the problem of love's object. In the remainder of this section I will explain the apparatus each uses to address the fungibility worry and the problem of love's object, and argue that each fails to sufficiently address the latter. Then, in the following sections, I will outline the structure of a new kind of quality theory that can answer the problem of love's object.

3.1: Velleman

Velleman develops his account of love as a response to the claim that love conflicts with (Kantian) morality. The alleged conflict arises from the fact that love seems to require seeing one's loved ones as having some kind of value that others don't – value that generates reasons to show partiality toward them in our actions and feelings. This way of viewing one's beloveds might seem in tension with the (Kantian) moral point of view, which is supposed to regard everyone as equally valuable in virtue of their rational will.

Velleman argues that rather than conflicting, the perspectives of love and morality converge. In fact, loving someone and having reverence for the moral law are different ways of valuing the same object: namely, a person's "true self." His argument comes in two parts: first, he

suggests that the Kantian moral perspective is actually more person-centered than it might at first appear; second, he suggests that the proper object of love is less particular or idiosyncratic than it might at first appear. Taking the first part first, Velleman argues that Kantian reverence for the moral law is best understood as reverence for persons, because the moral law is the guiding principle of the will which makes it possible for a person to transcend the empirical realm (i.e. to actually be a person). Thus, the moral perspective is a way of seeing the rational will as valuable. And since the rational will is the condition that allows a person to be a person, one's rational will is one's "true self." Without the rational will, there would be no self to speak of. So, in taking the moral perspective, one reveres persons for their rational wills, and thus, for their true selves.⁶⁸

The second part of Velleman's argument makes the case that love is a different way of valuing this same object, and, therefore, the perspectives of love and morality converge. Velleman maintains, that is, that the proper object of love is the rational will, which is a person's true self. It is natural enough to say that love's object is the "true self." But it is much harder to show that love's object is a person's rational will – that is, that a person's rational will is her true self. Velleman doesn't say much in direct support for the view that a person's rational will is their true self (but more on what he does say below). Instead, he argues that alternative accounts of what the lover values by loving face devastating objections to which his theory is immune. Prominent among these is the fungibility objection. Velleman's account is not vulnerable to the *disloyalty* or *trading up* versions of the fungibility objection, because on his account we are loved for a feature that every person possesses, and none more than others. This may seem to make him all the more vulnerable to the *replaceability* version of the objection. He argues, however, that since

⁶⁸ Velleman (1999 p. 348).

the lover values the beloved for their rational will, the lover will not *view* the beloved as having comparative value: rather, the beloved will be seen as an end, and thus not the sort of thing it makes sense to compare against others. This is just what it is to really see someone as having a rational will.

This provides an elegant and plausible response to the fungibility objection. However, the same apparatus that solves the fungibility objection exposes Velleman all the more to the problem of love's object. He resolves the fungibility objection by saying that the true object of love is a person's rational will. But absent good reasons to think that a person's rational will is their true self, this would seem to imply that the beloved herself is not the object of love.

Velleman does not say much in support of the view that a person's rational will is their true self, other than to offer and presumably endorse the following line of Kantian thought: "[R]ational nature [...] is the capacity to be actuated by reasons; [...] the capacity to be actuated by reasons is also the capacity to have a good will; and [...] the capacity for a rational and consequently good will is that better side of a person which constitutes his true self."⁶⁹

Few will find it plausible, however, that the mere *capacity* for having a good will is a person's true self. Even if the rational will is what *makes* one a self rather than a mere thing, this does not entail that to appreciate someone for their rational will is to appreciate them for themselves. The self might be something that develops out of a rational will without thereby being identical to it. Indeed, most of us do not identify with our *capacity* to be actuated by reasons (i.e. with our rational wills), but instead with the distinctive manner in which we use that capacity to generate and respond to value in the world (i.e., with our characters). So, one may reasonably

⁶⁹ Velleman (1999 p. 365)

object that on Velleman's account, *personhood*, rather than any individual person, is the true object of love.⁷⁰

3.2: *Badhwar*

In "Friends as Ends in Themselves," Neera Badhwar addresses the problem of love's object directly. She suggests that it only gets started if we accept a peculiarly Platonic metaphysics on which quality-possession is better or worse approximation to a determinate, abstract Form. On such a view of quality-possession, the *trading up* and *replaceability* versions of the fungibility objection have obvious force: if every instance of, say, kindness, is only understandable as a better or worse approximation to Kindness, then each thing's intrinsic value *qua* kindness is straightforwardly a matter of how closely it approximates Kindness; and anyone kind can be measured against anyone else kind by reference to a dimension of value on which they are wholly commensurable. Thus if we accept this ontology of kindness, and if, further, love is fitting only in virtue of properties like kindness, then the loved one will be fungible for someone who possesses the properties to a like or greater degree.

Badhwar's solution is to deny the Platonic account of quality-possession. Instead, she argues for a view on which, as she puts it, "a person's essential qualities are inseparable from his numerical or historical identity, both in fact and as object of cognition and love" (Badhwar 19). She motivates this view by bringing in the notion of a "style" with which we express our fundamental qualities. Our style of expressing ourselves is shaped by our particular history and consequently shapes our manner of existing:

Thus, for example, Cyrano de Bergerac would not be the person he is without his poetic wit and physical daring. His wit and daring constitute *his* particular stylization of his

⁷⁰ "Fitting Love" makes similar points in the context of a different line of argument.

qualities: his independence of mind, his courage and loyalty his passion for the ‘white plume of freedom . . .’—as well as his tragic conviction that he is too ugly for a woman’s love. What makes these qualities uniquely *his*, is the style of their expression. Equally, what makes his poetic wit and physical daring uniquely *his*, is the qualities they express.⁷¹

So, to love Cyrano de Bergerac for who he truly is, one must appreciate not only his possession of certain admirable or valuable qualities, but also his own particular way of exemplifying those qualities. It is only when we love a person for their *style* of expressing certain fundamental qualities that we love them for who they truly are.

This view answers the *replaceability* and *trading up* versions of the fungibility objection by denying the metaphysical premise those versions share: the idea that people can be compared along a determinate scale in terms of how closely each approximates to some abstract ideal. Deny this premise, and the fungibility objections can’t be coherently formulated in the first place: styles are too unique to repeat across persons, and this very uniqueness undermines the notion that two expressions of a trait can be compared on a common scale.⁷²

Badhwar’s account has the benefit of capturing the idea that we are loved for our specific selves. However, it faces a serious objection, pressed in this way by Velleman:

Someone who loved you for your quirks would have to be a quirk lover, on the way to being a fetishist. In order for his love to fit you so snugly, it would need so many angles as to be downright kinky. Of course, you may hope that love would open a lover’s eyes to everything about you, including your quirks, and that he would see them in the reflected glow of your true, inner value. But if you learned that they were themselves the evaluative basis of his love, you would feel trivialized.⁷³

⁷¹ Badhwar (1987 p. 19-20).

⁷² Badhwar allows that a style-duplicate is possible in principle (though this will never happen actually) and says that in that case the reasons for love will duplicate.

⁷³ Velleman (1999 p. 370). Though Velleman doesn’t present this as an objection to Badhwar’s view specifically, her view is nonetheless one of the general kind of theories that is vulnerable to it.

Velleman's objection is that it is trivializing to suggest that we are loved *for* our distinguishing features, because these features are not what make us valuable. This objection has special force if we imagine someone composing a list of reasons why they love another, and then imagine them listing their beloved's every feature. Such love seems insufficiently *discriminating* – it lumps trivial properties in with important ones, just in order to uniquely pick out the beloved's specific way of being in the world.

To press the point further, consider that if certain features make love fitting, the loss of those features makes love no longer fitting (or at least less fitting).⁷⁴ This brings out the difference between the romantic-seeming idea that a lover loves everything about their love object, including what might seem to be quirky, inessential features, and the idea that these features are what make their love fitting. Consider, for example, the protagonist of *High Fidelity*, "Rob," who lists "top five" things he misses about a number of his exes. Of one of them, he says, "she does this thing in bed when she can't get to sleep, she kinda half moans and then rubs her feet together an equal number of times... it just kills me."⁷⁵ This scans as a romantic comment, even though it basically represents him valuing what is probably either unconscious or compulsive behavior. Here we can agree that, even if Rob's comment is a valid *expression* of love, if the feet-rubbing were the *basis* of his love, this would indeed be trivializing, and suggest that the object of Rob's love really was a set of (highly peculiar) properties, not his ex as a whole.

To bring this point back around to Badhwar's view: Badhwar claims that what makes love fitting is the style with which a person expresses their "essential" properties; those that reflect

⁷⁴ Assuming that they aren't replaced by features that render the person even more an even more fitting object of love.

⁷⁵ Thanks to Connie Rosati for drawing my attention to this case.

the beloved's character and value-schemes.⁷⁶ But this carves up the loved person in a strange way. Certain idiosyncratic details like Cyrano de Bergerac's tragic conviction that he is too ugly for a woman's love will count as part of his style, because they shape the expression of his wit, which counts as an essential property. Presumably other idiosyncrasies would not. For example, probably, Rob's appreciation of his ex's foot rubbing, assuming this is unconscious and so not informed by her character.

There are two things worth noting here. First, it would be strange if the loss of either of these features were relevant to the fittingness of continuing to love the person.⁷⁷ Second, the difference between the foot-rubbing and the ostensibly more relevant idiosyncrasies seems less relevant, *qua* reason why love is fitting, when we note this. Take Badhwar's case of Cyrano de Bergerac's wit being shaped by his tragic conviction that he is too ugly for a woman's love. Now imagine that a woman grows to love him, and he comes to understand that he can be so loved, but he remains just as witty. This would change the style of expression of his wit, but it's not clear that it would change it in a way that should be relevant to the fittingness of loving him. And if it would be fitting to continue to love him for his wit despite the change in its expression, then it's hard to see what role the "tragic conviction" plays in rendering the love fitting in the first place. The tragic conviction may be part of the expression of a valuable thing, namely, Cyrano de Bergerac's wit, without itself being something that it makes sense to value.

⁷⁶ Badhwar (1987 p. 2, 6, 17).

⁷⁷ Though there may be exceptions in idiosyncratic cases like when the shared feeling of being physically unappealing to others is an important source of bonding.

4. Summary and Synthesis

In their different ways, Velleman and Badhwar both try to answer the problem of love's object by suggesting that what makes love fitting is inextricably bound up with the proper object of love, namely, the beloved individual. The advantage of this general kind of account is that it makes it straightforward that the true object of love is the loved person, rather than any of her properties—or at least, the contrast between the person and the relevant properties is blurred. Such accounts might be thought plausible insofar as single out the truly essential element of one's loved one as the proper object of love. Badhwar and Velleman offer different versions of this strategy. Velleman maintains that the proper ground of love is the person's rational will, because this is her "true self;" Badhwar argues that the proper ground of love is the style with which a person expresses certain fundamental properties.⁷⁸ However, Velleman's account suffers from an implausible view of the self *qua* object of love. Our "true selves" (understood as the proper objects of love) are not our rational wills; instead, they must be something more like the ways that we use our rational wills to shape our manners of existing in the world. This would seem to bolster Badhwar's account, because she thinks we are loved for the style with which we express our fundamental qualities. However, her view does not do enough to distinguish the aspects of our styles that are relevant to reasons to *stop* loving, because it seems to put all grounds of love—even ones that are easy to lose without a plausible loss of overall value—on a par.

Still, each account gets something important right. Velleman's account captures the idea that we are loved for something fundamentally valuable. Badhwar's captures the idea that we are

⁷⁸ "[P]art of what it means to love a friend as an end is that one loves her for the features that make her the person she is. [...] The friend is seen as lovable on account of what she essentially is, and not just on account of incidental features that make her useful or pleasurable" Badhwar (1987 p. 2).

loved as the distinctive individuals we are. Each of these seem like important desiderata, but it seems difficult or impossible to combine them in a single account, thereby retaining a plausible account of how the person is the object of love without making love fetishistic. However, there is another way of connecting what makes love fitting with the proper object of love, without singling out the truly essential element of the beloved; namely, by making the whole of the beloved relevant to love's fittingness. In the following section, I will elaborate and defend a version of the quality theory that employs this strategy, rather than the more essentialist strategy undertaken by Velleman and Badhwar.

5. Love of Whole Persons

In this section I will introduce a new kind of quality theory that makes the whole of the loved person relevant to love's fittingness, yet avoids the fetishism problem. On my view, the qualities that ground fitting love are qualities that the beloved possesses *as an organic unity*, rather than qualities that constitute merely a part of them. So, love does not value some part of a person, like her wit or her good looks; rather, love is a way of seeing the whole person as possessing some valuable property, such as beauty or goodness, that it makes sense to think of as emerging within organic unities. In this section, I introduce and defend this "Organic Unity Account." First, I explain the structure of organic unities, and show how we might usefully incorporate that structure into an account of love. Then, I show how the Organic Unity Account solves the problem of love's object, and explain some of its other advantages.

5.1.1: Organic Unities

There are three main accounts of the structure of organic unities: the *dissolving values* account, the *holistic* account, and the *variability* account.⁷⁹ Each account has in common a commitment to the *Principle of Organic Unities*: that is, the principle that the value of a whole need not equal the sum of the values that each of its parts would have alone. However, each account explains this principle differently. To wit:

Dissolving Values Account: When x and y combine to form the whole z , x and y lose whatever independent value they had, so that the only locus of value in z is the value that z has as a whole.

Holistic Account: When x and y combine to form the whole z , (a) x and y retain the value they had independently of combining to form z ; (b) when z has a value distinct from the sum of the values x and y , this is because z has value as a whole. (c) the value of z on the whole is the sum of the values of x and y and z -as-a-whole.

Variability Account: When x and y combine to form the whole z , and z has a value distinct from the sum of the values x and y , this is because either x or y changed its value as a result of entering into the whole, not because there is some additional value attributable to z as a whole.

The dissolving values account was held by idealists such as Bradley. G.E. Moore rejected that account in favor of the holistic account, which is distinguished by the fact that unlike either the dissolving values account or the variability account, it maintains that the value of an entity does not change when it combines with other entities into a whole. The parts retain the values they had before combining into a whole, and the principle of organic unities is explained by the fact that a new entity has been created, and this entity will have its own value, separate from the values of its parts. This allows Moore to distinguish between value an entity possesses “as a whole” and the value “of the whole.” When x and y combine to form z , the value z possesses *as a*

⁷⁹ These three interpretations of the principle of organic unities are outlined in Hurka (2015).

whole is the value it has independently of the values of x and y . The value *of* the whole z , however, is the sum of the values that z has as a whole and the values of x and y .⁸⁰

Hurka proposes the variability account as an alternative to Moore's holistic account. The variability account denies Moore's thesis that objects never change their value by entering into a larger whole, and suggests instead that when x and y combine to create a whole z , the value of x or y might change in a way that explains why z has a value that differs from the sum of the values x and y would have alone. Hurka argues that the variability and holistic accounts can always be made to agree on how much value is possessed by a whole, because "whatever conclusion the holistic interpretation reaches by ascribing a value to the whole as a whole, the [variability] interpretation can reach by changing the values of the parts."⁸¹ Similarly, we might add, the dissolving values account can always be made to agree with the variability and holistic accounts about how much value an organic whole possesses, because whenever holistic and variability accounts imply that a whole has a value V , the dissolvability account can likewise maintain that the whole has the value V .

The fact that it is so easy to make seemingly very different accounts achieve the same result should raise some flags. In particular, the fact that each account can be manipulated to give any desired result is a consequence of the fact that these accounts represent purely *formal* interpretations of the principle of organic unity. They all take for granted that organic unities exist, but they don't provide any very deep explanation of how it is that an entirely new value is created when a whole is formed. Instead, they simply offer competing accounts of where in the whole this value is located. Thus, it is easy to make them all deliver the same result concerning

⁸⁰ Moore (1903, pp. 263-4), cited in Hurka (2015).

⁸¹ Hurka (1998, p. 305).

how much value a whole has, because they all take for granted that the whole has some specific value over and above the value of its parts.⁸²

However, even though the accounts can be tweaked to deliver the same ultimate assessment of the value of an organic unity in any particular case, it may be that one of the accounts more accurately reflects the *phenomenology* of appreciating a certain kind of organic unity. In the next subsection, I will consider which of these three accounts best captures the phenomenology of love for persons. I will then show how a quality theory inspired by these results can adequately answer the problem of love's object.

5.1.2: Organic Unities and the Problem of Love's Object

Let us first consider a lover, April, whose appreciation of her loved one, Bertha, is best modeled by the dissolving values account. Call the evaluative structure that this love exemplifies a *dissolving values structure*. So, April sees Bertha as a valuable whole, but does not see any of Bertha's parts as having any discernable value. In one way, such a love would be strange—it would seem to involve not valuing any of Bertha's features, so that if asked why she loved Bertha,

⁸² Hurka (1998, pp. 305-6) argues that while the purportedly competing accounts of organic unities may always deliver the same verdicts on the amount of value in the world, there may still be benefits to choosing one account over another, depending on the features of the unity in question. For example, suppose A admiringly contemplates beautiful object P, and while neither the admirable contemplation nor the beautiful object have independent value, the contemplation of the beautiful object has a positive value V . Even if both the holistic and the variability account can maintain that the A's contemplation of P has value V , the accounts will locate additional value generated by the organic unity in different places. The holistic account will locate the value of the organic unity in the contemplation-of-the-beautiful-object, whereas the variability account can locate it in the painting (even though the painting only has this value when perceived). Thus, we might prefer the variability account in this context, because it can make sense of the fittingness of A's appreciation of P. However, as Hurka points out, it may be possible to preserve the fittingness of A's appreciation of P under the holistic interpretation by simply denying the claim that P doesn't have intrinsic value independently of being appreciated by A. So, again, it is all too easy to achieve desired results by simply adjusting the values that get inputted into the accounts.

or even simply to list some of Bertha's good qualities, April would come up short. There is, however, a response to this worry. First, it may be consistent with the dissolving values structure of love that April is able to list Bertha's good qualities. Such a view might maintain that there are contexts in which it makes sense for April to consider Bertha's features discretely, and reflect on their beauty or value. However, such a view would have to maintain that this is not a *loving* way of evaluating her, because love always involves a felt dissolution of the values of the individual traits into the overwhelming value of the whole beloved.

Odd though it may seem to deny that one lover can appreciate another's fine qualities from a loving perspective, there is a case to be made for the view. After all, there does seem something unloving about imagining your lover as divisible into traits which can be isolated for appreciation, and then concluding that she merits an overall positive evaluation because some or enough of her traits are individually worth appreciating. Indeed, this is the sort of concern that drives the problem of love's object in the first place. If a loved one is valued in this way, they are valued at best as a sum of valuable qualities, rather than as the whole and integrated person they are.

However, these last remarks ignore the fact that we are deciding here between different interpretations of the evaluative structure of organic unities. All of the accounts in question here agree that a person's value is not entirely exhausted by the sum of the values of their parts. The disagreement between the views lies instead in how (if at all) entering into the whole changes the value of the parts. Acknowledging this, the dissolving values structure is left without a response to the bizarreness inherent in denying that appreciating a person's distinguishable qualities can be undertaken as a part of a loving evaluative perspective on a person.

Consider, then, the differences in perspective inherent in lovers whose loving perception of their loved ones is best modeled by the holistic account or the variability account. Suppose Clementine's love for Dustin exemplifies a holistic structure. She appreciates the value of Dustin's valuable parts, and her assessment of the value of these parts does not change when she considers how they combine to make a whole in Dustin. However, she sees a new value emerge when she considers Dustin as a whole, conceived as the integration his parts. On the other hand, suppose Dustin's love for Clementine exemplifies a variability structure. He sees the value of Clementine's parts changing when he considers how they combine to make the whole, but does not see the whole as possessing any value over and above the sum of the values of her integrated parts.

Clementine and Dustin could usefully learn from one another. Surely Dustin is right to notice that certain of Clementine's properties gain value from being combined with certain of her other properties. (For example, her quick wit gains value from being combined with her kindness; it would be much less valuable were it accompanied instead by cruelty.) Nevertheless, there is something lovely in Clementine's perception that the integration of Dustin's traits possesses a value of its own, independently of the sum of its parts (even when the values of the parts are adjusted by virtue of their integration into the whole).

Fortunately a hybrid account of the evaluative structure of love's object is available, on which the lover appreciates how the value of the beloved's parts may change by being integrated into the whole, and yet in addition the lover sees the whole loved person as possessing a value that is attributable to the beloved taken as a whole, and which value is not simply a sum of the values of the integrated parts. Call this the *variable holistic account*.⁸³ This hybrid view retains the

⁸³ Hurka (1998) raises the possibility of such a hybrid account of the structure of organic unities.

benefits inherent in both Dustin's and Clementine's loving perspectives. On such a view, the lover's appreciation of the beloved is sensitive to both how the beloved's parts gain in value by being integrated into the whole, and also to the value attributable to a whole person independently of the values of the sums of their integrated parts.

Finally, taken together, the two defining components of the variable holistic account make available a compelling response to the problem of love's object. The holistic aspect of the view guarantees that the lover values the whole person, because it mandates that the lover sees the beloved as possessing a value that is attributable to the beloved considered as an integrated whole, and is not merely a tally of the values of the beloved's parts. So, the holistic aspect guarantees that the beloved is valued as a whole, on the basis of a valuable intrinsic property. Moreover, it cannot be complained that love values the grounding property *as opposed to* the loved person. Because the valuable property emerges within the person taken as an integrated whole, the grounding property is not relevantly *separable* from the whole of the loved person (or, from the loved person's other properties), and so the problem of love's object doesn't even get off the ground.

One might worry that this response to the problem of love's object is *ad hoc*. It will not do to simply posit that the ground of love is both valuable and attributable to the person as a whole, which arguably is all I have accomplished here. Instead, a substantive account must be offered that explains *in virtue of what features of the whole* the valuable grounding property emerges. I have not offered such an account. As I suggested earlier, the dissolving values account, the holistic account, and the variability account are all merely formal interpretations of the principle of organic unities. In *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations*, Nozick offers something closer to a

substantive account, when he proposes that an organic unity always involves a unification of diversity. (He proposes further that organic unities come in degrees: the greater the diversity that is unified, and the “tighter” the unification achieved, the greater—and by his lights, more valuable—the organic unity.)⁸⁴

Such an account, while abstract, at least attempts to explain what grounds the newly created value inherent in the organic unity. A complete account of love that incorporates organic unities must offer a likewise substantive account. Furthermore, it must, as far as possible, specify exactly what kind of valuable property emerges. The two prime contenders are beauty and goodness, but other possibilities may be worth exploring. I do not undertake any of this important work here.⁸⁵

However, the contribution of the variability account to the holistic variability structure provides some reason to think these questions can be worked out. After all, if we grant that some aspects of a part change their value by being integrated into the whole, we are already granting that a new kind of object is being created, whose interconnections justify reassessing the values of the parts. As such, it makes sense that a person who takes themselves to be in a position to appreciate any one of their beloved’s properties had better have some understanding of how the value of that part may be affected by all the other aspects of the beloved. Thus, even to fully grasp the value of any single property, one must have an understanding of how the whole fits together, and it is natural to expect that one in possession of this understanding will form some kind of positive or negative assessment of the whole. And if this is so, then it is wholly plausible that this evaluation of the whole should be what makes sense of love or its lack.

⁸⁴ Nozick (1990, p. 164).

⁸⁵ I take up these questions in “Moore and Amour.”

5.1.3: Advantages of the Organic Unity Account

I have argued that a version of the quality theory that adopts the holistic variability structure can answer the problem of love's object. Call this version of the quality theory the Organic Unity Account. I will now enumerate some additional advantages to the Organic Unity Account. First, it is immune to Velleman's "fetishism" objection. That objection, recall, protested that any account of love maintaining we are loved for our distinguishing characteristics must necessarily be fetishistic, because it will necessarily include within the grounds of love qualities that have no real value. On the Organic Unity Account, however, we are not, strictly speaking, loved "for" our distinguishing characteristics. Rather, we are loved for the valuable property that these distinguishing characteristics manifest when integrated into a whole; much as I don't enjoy *Pale Fire* "for" each letter on its pages, but rather because the text as an integrated whole is beautiful.⁸⁶

Second, unlike other answers to the problem of love's object (e.g. Velleman's), the Organic Unity Account does not entail that only a part of the person is valued by love. Nussbaum has suggested that insofar as we are loved for general properties like "goodness" and "beauty," we are loved for only part of ourselves.⁸⁷ However, the Organic Unity Account makes clear that to love someone for their beauty or goodness is not to love only part of them, so long as it is the whole person one sees as beautiful or good. And this is not a merely verbal trick, as it would be to say "it is the whole one sees as tall;" while only one aspect of the person (physical

⁸⁶ The explanation can get more specific. E.g. I love *The Color Purple* in part because of the chapter where Shug talks to Celie about God. But that chapter would not be as beautiful without the preceding narrative.

⁸⁷ Nussbaum (1996).

stature) determines their height, the whole of the person determines their beauty or goodness in the relevant sense.

Finally, the Organic Unity Account explains what is sweet rather than fetishistic about Rob's love of the way his ex rubs her feet together. Here we might use the phenomenological isolation test as a criterion for distinguishing fetishistic from loving appreciation of distinguishing features or "quirks." There are ways of loving bodies that are fetishistic, but I think we also usually value the distinct bodies of those loved, and the way we value their bodies can be loving rather than fetishistic. Each of us lives in the world through our bodies, and has had our character and outlook shaped to some extent by the way other people have reacted to our bodies, and the way our bodies feel to us, the way we move and use our bodies, and the way we have been able to change our attitudes toward our bodies over time. So, our bodies are crucial components of our whole selves – they are the vehicle through which we interact with the world, and they shape and are shaped by (the rest of) who we are.

This suggests a criterion for loving appreciation of a body. If one's valuing of the body would not be nearly so strong without reference in thought/feeling to the role it played (plays) in shaping and expressing the beautiful whole, then one's valuing of the body is loving. But if one's valuing of the body would be equally strong without reference to the person whose spirit animates and has been shaped by it, then the love is more likely to be fetishistic. So, contra Velleman, valuing distinguishing features is not always fetishistic, and the Organic Unity Account, which emphasizes the importance of seeing how an individual's properties integrate into a whole, can explain why. The Organic Unity Account can make sense of this example by appeal to the

possibility represented in the variability condition; when a part is integrated into a whole, its value may change.

6. Conclusion: Fungibility and Reasons to Stop Loving

I suggested earlier that rival views run afoul of the problem of love's object because they are obsessed with responding to the fungibility objection. But it might seem that the Organic Unity Account does not take the fungibility worry seriously enough. At any rate, the ways in which Velleman and Badhwar address the fungibility worry are not available to the Organic Unity Account; the emergent properties that ground love are neither of a kind that does not admit of comparison, à la Vellemanian rational wills, nor such as to uniquely specify an individual, à la Badhwarian styles.

However, there are two points to make here. First, the fungibility worry can be addressed in other ways. Briefly, as I argue elsewhere at greater length, the fungibility worry seems problematic only when we think that someone's being a fitting object of love for us entails that we ought to cultivate a relationship with them. If we deny this premise—which we should anyway, because it is bizarre to think it is unfitting to love someone and yet want to keep one's distance from them—then the fungibility worry dissolves.⁸⁸ To see this, consider again the three versions of the fungibility worry discussed above:

Disloyalty: If A is in a loving relationship with B but C is a more fitting love object for A than B, then it would be fitting for A to leave B for C.

Replaceability: If A's love for B is fitting in virtue of feature(s) xyz, then if C has xyz, A ought to view/accept C as a suitable replacement-love-object-for-B.

⁸⁸ cf “Fitting Love.”

Trading up: If A's love for B is fitting in virtue of feature(s) xyz, then if C has x'y'z', where x'y'z' is (are) the greater perfection(s) of xyz, then A should view/accept C as a superior love object than B.

Once we deny that someone's being a fitting object of love implies that we ought to behave in any particular way toward them, none of the three inferences go through.

Second, on the Organic Unity Account, seeing someone as beautiful/good is a *way* of appreciating their distinctness. In this it differs from merely believing that someone is good/beautiful. The latter might be warranted on the basis of testimony, but the former won't be possible without acquaintance with distinguishing features. Compare: believing that *The Color Purple* is a beautiful book because someone you trust recommends it is quite different from reading it for yourself and coming to see it as beautiful on the basis of a full, first-hand experience of it as the distinctive book that it is.

The solution to the fungibility worry that I have proposed recognizes the possibility that B might be a more fitting love object for A than C, but that nevertheless A has overriding reason not to pursue a relationship with B, or act in the ways that A would be inclined to act if C and the obligations A's relationship with C generates were not in the picture. Thus, a person's being a fitting object of love does not in and of itself generate any insistent norms of behavior. Velleman and Badhwar could accept this solution to the fungibility objection on behalf of their own views. But this would mean that the tools they use to fend off the fungibility objection are dispensable. And in fact, the tools they use, different though they are, lead to the same problem: they can't account for reasons to *stop* loving. On Velleman's view, it could never be fitting to stop loving someone, because a person will always have their rational will. And on Badhwar's view, it seem

as though either each change in style results in a change in one's reasons to love, or styles were never really relevant to reasons for love in the first place.

Moore and Amour

1. Introduction

I have argued that love has an intensional structure in which the object of love is valued for qualities that emerge within that object as an organic unity. In loving, that is, a lover does not merely value some part or aspect of her beloved, like her wit or good looks. Rather, love is a way of seeing the whole beloved as possessing a valuable property, such as beauty or goodness, that is attributable to organic unities. In “Love of Whole Persons,” I explained how such an account of love addresses the problem of love’s object. Briefly, it explains how love is a way of seeing the *whole beloved* as valuable while still explaining how such an assessment can be warranted.

I also considered four accounts of the structure of organic unities, and suggested that the *holistic variability account* provides the most promising basis for an account of the evaluative structure of love. On the holistic variability account, the values of an object’s parts may change by being integrated into the whole, and in addition the whole might possess its own value which is not simply a sum of the values of its integrated parts. Fitting love involves responding appropriately to both of these features of organic unities. This account of the evaluative structure of love is schematic, and needs further specification. For example, which parts of the loved person change their value by being integrated into the whole person? How and why do they change their value? Further, what specific kind of value is the whole beloved seen to have independently of their parts? This paper aims to address these questions. I begin by extensively analyzing the most carefully developed extant account of these matters: G.E. Moore’s account of love and the relationship between love and organic unities. I then critique certain aspects of

Moore's view and present my own view as a successor view that avoids the problems with Moore's.

2. Moore on Love

In a letter written to Clive Bell on 3 August 1908, Virginia Woolf described her experience of reading *Principia Ethica*: “I am climbing Moore like some industrious insect, who is determined to build a nest on top of a Cathedral spire. One sentence, a string of ‘desires’, makes my head spin with the infinite meaning of words unadorned; otherwise I have gone happily.”⁸⁹ One sympathizes with this response. Still, I hope to show that the structure of the spire is strong, and that with some adornment, Moore’s words offer a rich and compelling account of the relationships among love, value, beauty, and organic unities.

Moore discusses love in the final chapter of *Principia Ethica*, “The Ideal.” There, Moore sets himself the task of answering the “fundamental question” of ethics: namely, what things are good in themselves?⁹⁰ Ultimately, he argues that the two greatest intrinsic goods are the pleasures of human intercourse, or “personal affection”, and the enjoyment of beautiful objects. He classifies love (along with admiration and other positive attitudes) as forms of personal affection. Thus, love is one of the greatest intrinsic goods, at least when certain conditions are met. In the course of his discussion, he presents a promising account of the evaluative structure of love.

However, Moore's theory is expressed in dense, theory-laden, rebarbative prose. So, in order to

⁸⁹ Mepham (1991) p. 27. She didn’t go on happily for long. On 19 August 1908 she followed up with Bell: “I split my head over Moore every night, feeling ideas travelling to the remotest part of my brain, and setting up a feeble disturbance, hardly to be called thought. It is almost a physical feeling, as though some little coil of brain unvisited by any blood so far, and pale as wax, had got a little life into it at last; but had not strength to keep it.” *Op. cit.* p. 28.

⁹⁰ Moore (1903) p. 184. He distinguishes this inquiry from inquiries into other possible conceptions of the ethical ideal, e.g. (a) the *Summum Bonum*, and (b) the best possible state of affairs achievable in a human world.

properly understand his remarks on this topic and appreciate their value, we must first understand background theoretical commitments that structure those remarks. Among these are Moore's "method of isolation" for testing whether something has intrinsic value and his account of the proper appreciation of beautiful objects. So, I begin by explaining these two aspects of Moore's thought. Then I turn to his remarks on love, and it will become clear why all of this preliminary work was necessary.

2.1. Moore's method of isolation

Moore introduces the method of isolation in the course of objecting to Sidgwick's defense of hedonism. So, to understand Moore's method we will first need a sketch of Sidgwick's view. First, Sidgwick argues that pleasure is a great good. Next, he considers other possible sources of value and argues that none of them can be good in themselves; their goodness depends entirely on their connection to pleasure. In support of this view, Sidgwick claims that it is clear to "common sense" that (a) nothing can be valuable independently of the possibility of its being appreciated by humans, and that (b) goods other than pleasure, such as knowledge and virtue, not only produce pleasure themselves, but receive "the commendation of common sense" precisely in proportion to the extent that they produce it.⁹¹ This suggests that pleasure is the sole intrinsic good: from (a), we see that nothing can be valuable absent the possibility of its being a source of pleasure, and from (b) we see that conduciveness to pleasure is the criterion by which the value of other valuable things is determined.

⁹¹ Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*, Book III, Ch. XIV; quoted in Moore (1903) pp. 81-86.

Moore introduces and tries to demonstrate the utility of the isolation test in response to (a)—the claim that nothing can be valuable without the possibility of someone taking pleasure in it. In his first response to Sidgwick, Moore famously remarks:

Let us imagine one world exceedingly beautiful. Imagine it as beautiful as you can; put into it whatever on this earth you most admire—mountains, rivers, the sea; trees, and sunsets, stars and moon. Imagine these all combined in the most exquisite proportions, so that no one thing jars against another, but each contributes to increase the beauty of the whole. And then imagine the ugliest world you can possibly conceive. Imagine it simply one heap of filth, containing everything that is most disgusting to us, for whatever reason, and the whole, as far as it may be, without one redeeming feature. [...] [E]ven [...] supposing them quite apart from any possible contemplation by human beings; still, is it irrational to hold that it is better that the beautiful world should exist than the one which is ugly? Would it not be well, in any case, to do what we could to produce it rather than the other? Certainly I cannot help thinking it would; and I hope that some may agree with me in this extreme instance.⁹²

Moore describes two worlds of superlative beauty and ugliness, neither of which has any hope of being seen or otherwise appreciated by humans. He suggests that despite this, it would be better for the beautiful world to exist than for the ugly world to exist. Thus, even when we *isolate* beautiful objects from their ability to cause pleasure, we still deem them better—more valuable—than ugly objects. So, Sidgwick's first argument falsely maintains that beauty is valuable merely as a means to pleasure, when in fact it is valuable as an end.⁹³ This introduces the isolation test: to determine whether something has intrinsic value, we must consider whether a world containing it and it alone would contain anything of value.

Crucially, Moore is not rejecting Sidgwick's moral epistemology, which gives authority to "common sense". Indeed, throughout the *Principia*, Moore is happy to appeal to common sense as an important source of ethical knowledge. Rather, he objects to Sidgwick's failure to give

⁹² Moore (1903) pp. 83-4.

⁹³ Moore (1903) p. 85.

common sense all the evidence it need to perform its function well. The method of isolation is introduced and used precisely as a tool to provide common sense with all the evidence necessary to make its authoritative judgments about what is intrinsically valuable.

Moore's second objection to Sidgwick's first argument also uses the method of isolation to gather evidence for common sense. Moore argues that even if beautiful objects have little intrinsic worth apart from their ability to induce pleasure in their contemplation, this does not support the view that pleasure is the sole good. To think that it does is to ignore the possibility of organic unities. For perhaps neither beautiful objects nor pleasure have great value in themselves. Perhaps it is the organic unity formed when one takes pleasure in a beautiful object that has great value—far greater value than that possessed by either the pleasure or the beautiful object independently. Thus, the claim that beautiful objects are worthless in themselves does not, contra Sidgwick, support the view that pleasure is the sole good. To see whether the pleasure involved in an organic unity of which that pleasure is a part is good, we need to consult the isolation test.

Both in this case and more generally, the results do not look good for hedonism:

Pleasure does seem to be a necessary constituent of most valuable wholes; and, since the other constituents, into which we may analyse them, may easily seem not to have any value, it is natural to suppose that all the value belongs to pleasure. That this natural supposition does not follow from the premises is certain; and that it is, on the contrary, ridiculously far from the truth appears evident to my 'reflective judgment.' If we apply either to pleasure or to consciousness of pleasure the only safe method, that of isolation, and ask ourselves: Could we accept, as a very good thing, that mere consciousness of pleasure, and absolutely nothing else, should exist, even in the greatest quantities? I think we can have no doubt about answering: No.⁹⁴

When we consider pleasure in isolation, that is, we see that, far from being the sole good, it has little or no independent worth. Indeed, the wholes of which pleasure is a part far surpass it in

⁹⁴ Moore (1903) pp. 93-4.

value. Here again, we can see this by considering in isolation an example of a whole of which pleasure is a part—Moore’s example is the “pleasurable contemplation of a beauty”—and noting that common sense judges that this whole possesses far more value than would the pleasure involved in the whole, taken in isolation.

Moore’s discussion may seem so abstract that it obscures the phenomena it purports to clarify. Take his example of a “pleasurable contemplation of beauty.” Moore argues that this organic unity has greater value than the pleasure would in isolation from the contemplation of beauty, even if the pleasure in isolation from the contemplation of beauty has more value than the contemplation of beauty would in isolation from the pleasure. This sounds plausible in the abstract, but particular instances of pleasurable contemplation of beauty may not decompose so neatly into these boxes. Consider, for example, the organic unity composed of the pleasure I take in relaxing to the piano stylings of Bill Evans. How would I isolate the components of this experience into (a) pleasure, and (b) contemplation of beauty? The experience seems inextricably unified; I can’t imagine what the pleasure of this experience would be like independently of its particular object, and so I cannot, even in imagination, isolate that pleasure in my mind to evaluate its independent intrinsic worth.

However, insofar as this is a problem, it is not Moore’s problem. After all, Sidgwick maintains that pleasure is the sole item of value within the experience of (in Moore’s example) pleasurable contemplation of beauty. Moore’s target thus presupposes that the component of pleasurable contemplation of beauty that is its “pleasure” is, in principle, conceptually separable from the other aspects of the experience. To make his point, Moore only needs to observe that *insofar as* we can imagine the pleasure of the experience in isolation from the rest of the

experience, we must agree that this entity has less value than that possessed by the experience as a whole. If someone maintained that pleasure is not separable in thought from its object, they could hardly go on to disagree with Moore's view that the experience as a whole is the primary locus of value.

So, Moore uses the method of isolation to ensure that our reflective judgment takes account of all relevant evidence. The method of isolation allows us to come to an informed judgment about the intrinsic value of an attitude. Isolating that attitude from any of its external relations—even such external relations as may be necessary for the existence of the state given the laws of nature (i.e., surely an instance of pleasure cannot exist without someone who has some history to feel it)—forces one to consider the value it has in and of itself. Both in the case just discussed and more generally, the isolation test guards against two fallacies common in discussions of intrinsic value: the fallacy of confusing means and ends, and the fallacy of assuming that because no value is attributable to one part of the whole, the entire value of the whole must be attributable to its other part. (This is effectively a case of false dichotomy, since it assumes that the value of a whole must be attributable to one or more of its parts in isolation, thereby neglecting the possibility of organic unities).⁹⁵

2.2. *Moore on the Proper Appreciation of Beautiful Objects*

⁹⁵ Cf Moore (1903) p. 187. According to Moore, Sidgwick's argument fails to distinguish means and ends because it does not look beyond the admittedly great value of contemplation of beauty, for which beautiful objects are in some sense means, to see the value that beauty has as an end in itself. Moore also accuses Mill of this fallacy, for maintaining that pleasure is the sole good. Moore suggests that the isolation test shows that pleasure has little value in itself as compared to the *consciousness* of pleasure, to which pleasure is a mere means. I don't find Moore's conception of "means" particularly helpful (because the things he calls means are in fact constituents of the end), so I mostly leave his means/ends discussions aside here.

Unsurprisingly, when Moore offers his own views about what has intrinsic value, in the final chapter of *Principia Ethica*, he uses the same method of isolation. On his view, aesthetic enjoyments and personal affections include “*all* the greatest, and *by far* the greatest, goods we can imagine.”⁹⁶ He suggests that once we look clearly at the *nature* of these goods—that is, once we use the method of isolation to pull them apart and then put them back together—common sense will conclude that these are the greatest goods. Thus, he aims to show that once we closely examine the structure of aesthetic enjoyments and personal affections, we will see that they merit the highest attribution of value. As he puts it: “[Personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments] are highly complex organic unities; and in discussing the consequences, which follow from this fact, and the elements of which they are composed, I may hope at the same time both to confirm and to define my position [that they are the greatest goods].”⁹⁷

My ultimate goal in this paper is to construct an account of love from Moore’s materials. As Moore discusses it, love falls under the category of “personal affections.” However, his discussion of personal affections piggybacks on his account of the structure of aesthetic enjoyments. So, in this section, I explain his account of aesthetic enjoyments (including what counts as an aesthetic enjoyment and what the method of isolation reveals to common sense about the value of different aesthetic enjoyments). Only in the next section do I explain his subsequent account of personal affections.

Moore analyzes aesthetic enjoyments into three parts, and considers the relative values of wholes produced by combinations of the parts. The three main parts are:

⁹⁶ Moore (1903) p. 189.

⁹⁷ Moore (1903) p. 189.

Cognitive element: Cognition of the beautiful qualities of the object.⁹⁸

Emotive element: Some kind of positive feeling toward the object.⁹⁹

Belief element: A belief in the reality of the object.¹⁰⁰

In the following three subsections, I explain each of these elements, and, where applicable, how Moore considers various ways they might be combined and then, using the method of isolation, arrives at a judgment the contours of the most valuable form of aesthetic appreciation.

2.2.1: *The Cognitive Element*

To understand the cognitive element of aesthetic appreciation, we must review some of Moore's epistemological positions circa 1903.¹⁰¹ In Moore's terminology, 'cognition' is a broad term that refers to an instance of proper activities of the intellect, imagination, or perception—any state, that is, with propositional content. In his 1899 paper "The Nature of Judgment," Moore argues for a theory of direct perception. However, his theory of direct perception is peculiar in that, on his view, all objects of cognition are concepts. Because all objects of cognition are concepts, and cognition occurs in all faculties whose products have propositional content, objects of imagination and objects of perception are of the same kind. This would seem to conflict with

⁹⁸ Moore (1903) p. 192: "By the cognitive element, which is equally necessary with emotion to the existence of a valuable appreciation, I mean merely the actual cognition or consciousness of any or all of an object's *beautiful qualities*—that is to say any or all of those elements in the object which possess any positive beauty."

⁹⁹ Moore (1903) p. 190: "It is not sufficient that a man should merely see the beautiful qualities in a picture and know that they are beautiful, in order that we may give his state of mind the highest praise. We require that he should also *appreciate* the beauty of that which he sees and which he knows to be beautiful—that he should feel and see *its beauty*." It is not clear that Moore thinks this element is ever truly separable from the cognitive element; more on that below.

¹⁰⁰ Moore (1903) p. 194: "I think that the additional presence of a belief in the reality of the object makes the total state much better, if the belief is true; and worse, if the belief is false."

¹⁰¹ Henceforth I will admit the "circa 1903" clarification, but it should be understood to apply throughout.

direct realism: if objects of perception are of the same kind as objects of imagination, then the objects of perception surely cannot be physical objects (since objects of imagination are not physical objects—at least not in any unmediated sense).¹⁰²

Nonetheless, Moore maintained that the objects of cognition are always concepts (or propositions, which are composed of concepts), and he reconciled this with “commonsense” direct realism by positing a peculiar ontology of physical objects. On his view, physical objects *just are* other concepts bound together with the concept “existence” by the relation of truth. (According to Moore, a proposition’s truth is determined by its internal structure—truth, that is, is a function of the relationships among the concepts that a proposition contains, not a function of correspondence between the proposition and some external entity or entities.)¹⁰³ Thus, objects of imagination and physical objects really are the same *kinds* of entities. The only difference is that physical objects contain one crucial concept that objects of imagination lack; namely, “existence.”

This is a peculiar view, but knowing that Moore held it helps us understand some of the finer points of his discussion of the cognitive element of aesthetic appreciations—for example, his analysis of the various ways one might be said to “see” a beautiful thing. He introduces that analysis by pointing out an ambiguity in the term “object”:

There is an ambiguity in the term ‘object,’ which has probably been responsible for as many enormous errors in philosophy and psychology as in any other single cause. This ambiguity may easily be detected by considering the proposition, which though a contradiction in terms, is obviously true: That when a man sees a beautiful picture, he may see nothing beautiful whatever. The ambiguity consists in the fact that, by the

¹⁰² Moore (1899) pp. 179-180.

¹⁰³ Moore (1899) p. 181.

‘object’ of vision (or cognition), may be meant *either* the qualities actually seen *or* all the qualities possessed by the thing seen.¹⁰⁴

It may seem as though Moore is preparing to remark on the fact that when one only visually perceives (i.e., “sees”) a *part* of an object, one might miss some of the features that make it beautiful. And indeed, what comes next seems to bear out that explanation:

When it is said that the picture is beautiful, it is meant that it contains qualities which are beautiful; when it is said that the man sees the picture, it is meant that he sees a great number of qualities contained in the picture; and when it is said that, nevertheless, he sees nothing beautiful, it is meant that he does *not* see those qualities of the picture which are beautiful. When, therefore, I speak of a beautiful object, as an essential element in a valuable aesthetic appreciation, I must be understood to mean only the cognition of the *beautiful qualities* possessed by that object, and *not* the cognition of other qualities of the object possessing them.¹⁰⁵

Here Moore remarks that when we say a man sees a beautiful picture but sees nothing beautiful whatever, we mean that he sees some of its qualities, but he doesn’t see the qualities that are beautiful. But it becomes clear that Moore is not using the term “sees” merely to refer to visual sensory input – his person who sees the painting but does not see its beauty does not fail to see the beauty because his line of sight is obscured. Rather, he fails to see the painting's beauty because he does not appreciate its finer properties. The person who sees the beautiful qualities of the painting here is having an experience with richer conceptual content than the person who merely sees the painting but does not see its beautiful qualities.

Such an account of the perception of aesthetic qualities fits seamlessly with Moore’s theory of perception, on which all physical objects are made of concepts anyway, and so it should be no surprise that perception can involve high-level conceptual content. It becomes clearer still that this is Moore’s account of the cognitive element of aesthetic appreciation when he turns

¹⁰⁴ Moore (1903) p. 191.

¹⁰⁵ Moore (1903) p. 191.

from visual perception to auditory perception of beautiful objects. He describes an imperfect aesthetic appreciation of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony: that of someone who "mere[ly] hear[s]" Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but is not "aware of any of those melodic and harmonic relations, which are necessary to constitute the smallest beautiful elements in [it]." ¹⁰⁶ As with the example of the person who merely sees some of the painting's qualities but does not see its beautiful qualities, Moore maintains that such an exclusively low-level cognition cannot be part of the most valuable form of aesthetic appreciation, and for the same reason: it constitutes a failure to perceive the beautiful qualities of the Symphony—i.e. the melodic and harmonic relations. Even when one hears all the notes of the Symphony, one may fail to hear its beautiful qualities.

From these claims of Moore's, we learn something about his conception of beautiful qualities. They are in a sense *perceptible* features of the object, but they are not features that can be perceived merely via low-level sensory content. Rather, they are something more like *structural* features of the object, which can only be perceived by a person sensitive to such higher-level conceptual features of the object. In a sense, that is, the beautiful qualities form a kind of *overlay* upon the other properties of the object, which one may fail to perceive even when one is looking right at the whole thing (or hearing all of its notes, as the case may be). Indeed, further along in the chapter, Moore offers some reflections that seem to warrant attributing to him the view that aesthetic properties supervene on an object's other properties. He argues that because beautiful objects are organic unities, there can be no unifying criterion of beauty:

[I]t is to be observed that beautiful objects are themselves, for the most part, organic unities, in this sense, that they are wholes of great complexity, such that the contemplation of any part, by itself, may have no value, and yet [...] unless the contemplation of the whole includes the contemplation of that part, it will lose value.

¹⁰⁶ Moore (1903) p. 192.

From this it follows that there can be no single criterion of beauty. It will never be true to say: This object owes its beauty *solely* to the presence of this characteristic; nor yet that: Wherever this characteristic is present, the object must be beautiful. All that can be true is that certain objects are beautiful, *because* they have certain characteristics, in the sense that they would not be beautiful *unless* they had them.¹⁰⁷

This passage clues us in to two features of Moore's view. One is that in order to assess the beauty of a thing, one must consider the relations among its parts. The other is that while certain qualities of the whole may be *essential* to the beauty of the whole, in that if these qualities were lost, the whole would lose its beauty, it can never be the case that an object's beauty is contained in a mere *part* of it: rather, the beauty of an object is always attributable to the object as a whole. This interpretation is confirmed by the following passage, which begins a few lines after the last one left off:

[I]t is important to observe that the very qualities, which differentiate one beautiful object from all others are, if the object be truly beautiful, as *essential* to its beauty, as those which it has in common with so many others. The object would no more have the beauty it has, without its specific qualities, than without those that are generic; and the generic qualities, *by themselves*, would fail, as completely, to give beauty, as those which are specific.¹⁰⁸

Thus, an object's unique characteristics—the features that make it the object that it is—are essential to its having the beauty it has.

We can now understand Moore's account of the cognitive element of aesthetic appreciation. To cognize the beauty of an object, one must (a) be aware of its parts and the relations among its parts, and (b) see the beautiful quality or qualities that overlay or supervene on these parts and the relations among these parts. This account uses a peculiar ontology of perception, on which all objects of perception are bundles of concepts, but since ordinary objects are also composed of concepts, we perceive them directly. But while this theory of perception is

¹⁰⁷ Moore (1903) p. 202.

¹⁰⁸ Moore (1903) p. 202.

strange, and while we needed to understand it to understand Moore's account of the structure of aesthetic appreciation, his account of aesthetic appreciation does not depend on the strong account of perception. However, before substantiating this claim, I will finish explaining Moore's account of aesthetic appreciation, and his account of the most valuable form of love.

2.2.2. *The Emotive Element*

Moore does not actually offer a full account of the emotive element of aesthetic appreciation. Rather, he distinguishes the emotive element to argue that *some* sort of appropriate feeling toward the beautiful object is a necessary constituent of the most valuable forms of aesthetic appreciation. He establishes this point by using the isolation test: a pure cognition of a thing's beauty, he suggests, surely has less value than the whole composed of the cognition of a thing's beauty plus an appropriate positive feeling toward the thing's beauty. However, he does not advance any strong views as to the nature of the emotive element—i.e. whether it amounts to a mere bodily sensation, or whether it has any propositional or cognitive content. Indeed, he notes that what he calls the cognitive element of aesthetic appreciation is “commonly thought of as a part of the emotion,” and, rather than arguing that the emotional element is distinct from the cognitive element, he claims only that *if* the emotive element were stripped of its cognitive content, *then* it would surely have little value in itself, and yet it would still add immense value to the whole experiences of which it is a part (when it is).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ This is not unlike the example discussed earlier, in presenting Moore's method of isolation. There, we saw that any doubts about whether pleasure could be separated from pleasurable contemplation of beauty were not relevant to the success of Moore's refutation of Sidgwick's argument, because Moore only needed to show that the experience containing both pleasure and cognition of beauty is more valuable than the pleasure alone; and if the pleasure can't be separated, then there is all the more reason to think the value lies in the larger experience. Here, too, Moore's primary concern is to argue that the experience that contains some emotion is more

Although Moore's account of the emotive element is vague, he does make comments about the relationship between the appropriateness of emotions (i.e. their fittingness) and the goodness of those emotions. What he says here will help to make sense of some things he says about personal affections. On his view, "different emotions are *appropriate* to different kinds of beauty," but appropriateness is to be understood in terms of goodness:

By saying that different emotions are *appropriate* to different kinds of beauty, we mean that the whole which is formed by the consciousness of that kind of beauty *together with* the emotion appropriate to it is better than if any other emotion had been felt in contemplating that particular beautiful object.¹¹⁰

Because the isolation test is the appropriate method for determining a state's intrinsic worth, this suggests that the proper way to determine which emotion is appropriate to an object is to imagine various possible emotional responses to that object. Having reviewed all the evidence, we should then arrive at an informed judgment about which one of the states thus considered is best. These states include both the object and the emotional reaction to it, but whichever emotion is a part of the best possible state will then be the appropriate emotion.

This picture seems unduly limiting. After all, some beautiful objects may merit more than one emotional response: perhaps, for instance, it is fitting to feel both awe and joy in response to Beethoven's Fifth. However, Moore's framework can accommodate this, because we will have arrived at our judgment that joy and awe are both appropriate responses by using something like the isolation test; and, if the isolation test says that the wholes containing these responses are equally good, then the responses will be equally fitting. (Alternatively, perhaps some combination

valuable than that which does not, and he doesn't need to maintain that the emotion is in fact separable in order to make that point successfully.

¹¹⁰ Moore (1903) p. 190.

of emotions or some single emotion that captures both, i.e. joyful awe, will be the most fitting response.)

Of course, one may doubt the overall view that goodness is fundamental and fittingness derivative. It is not the purpose of this paper to take a stand on that debate; I only draw attention to Moore's views on the relation between fittingness and goodness because it will help us to make sense of some of the turns of phrase in his section on love. The limited defense I wish to make of his theory of fittingness is only that it is not as restrictive as it may at first seem; it does allow that more than one emotion might be a fitting response to an object.

2.2.3 The Belief Element

Moore argues that the most valuable forms of aesthetic appreciation involve, in addition to the elements just described, a true belief in the reality of the beautiful object. Moore does not think that knowledge—let alone true belief—is very valuable in itself. Indeed, he holds that the primary value of knowledge is instrumental: it helps us to understand how we might bring about certain desired outcomes. However, true belief in the reality of the object is a crucial component of the most valuable forms of aesthetic appreciation, because it guarantees a connection with the world. Moore argues for this account of true belief's addition to the value of aesthetic appreciation by using the isolation test. He has us imagine the case of “a single person, enjoying throughout eternity the contemplation of scenery as beautiful, and intercourse with persons as admirable, as can be imagined; while yet the whole of the objects of his cognition are entirely unreal.”¹¹¹ We cannot help but judge that such a state is worse than one in which the objects are real, and our subject accurately cognizes them, and truly believes in their existence. Moore

¹¹¹ Moore (1903) p. 197.

establishes the import of proper connection with reality still more precisely by having us imagine that the items the man hallucinates *do* exist, but they are not what causes his hallucinations. He is confident that we would judge this state of affairs to be lesser in value than the one in which the man's cognition of these objects is based upon direct perception, and so he concludes that true belief is crucial to the most valuable forms of aesthetic appreciation.¹¹²

Moore distinguishes two broad ways of failing to connect one's aesthetic attitudes with reality: errors of judgment, and errors of taste. One errs in judgment when one attributes to an object beautiful qualities that it does not possess, and one errs in taste when one accurately perceives an object, but has an inappropriate emotional response to the object. Errors of judgment are located in in the cognition and/or truth elements, and errors of taste are located in the emotional element.¹¹³

In conclusion, then, Moore argues that all instances of aesthetic appreciation can be evaluated along three dimensions: the extent to which the beautiful properties of the object are accurately perceived, the extent to which the emotion involved in the aesthetic appreciation is appropriate to its object, and the extent to which one's perception of the object is appropriately grounded in reality. The value of an aesthetic appreciation, that is, is a matter of how well the attitude *fits* its object, factually and emotionally, and whether the conceptual and emotional content of the attitude are induced by direct epistemic access to the real beautiful object itself. Of course, on Moore's view, we do not determine the value of a state by first considering its conceptual and emotive fittingness; instead, these dimensions of fittingness are themselves a function of how valuable we judge the attitude to be by using the method of isolation. However,

¹¹² Moore (1903) p. 198.

¹¹³ Moore (1903) p. 193.

for present purposes, what matters is Moore's account of the *structure* of valuable aesthetic appreciation, not his meta-ethical views about the derivability of fittingness from goodness. His account of the structure of aesthetic appreciation helps us to understand his account of love—as I will now show.

2.3 Moore on Personal Affections

On Moore's view, love is structurally similar to aesthetic appreciation; its most valuable forms contain a cognitive element, an emotive element, and a belief element. Also as with aesthetic appreciation, the more valuable the isolation test reveals an instance of love to be, the more comprehensively cognized its object, the more fitting the emotion felt toward the object, and the tighter the connection between the cognition of the object and reality of the object. Love, however, presents additional complications, because its objects – persons – are (in the ideal case) both physically beautiful and loci of intrinsic value. Thus, the objects of love are more complex than the objects of aesthetic appreciation. Moore explains the additional complexity thus:

It is evident that this [...] complication only occurs in so far as there is included in the object of personal affection some of the *mental* qualities of the person towards whom the affection is felt. And I think it may be admitted that, whenever the affection is most valuable, the appreciation of mental qualities must form a large part of it, and that the presence of this part makes the whole far more valuable than it would have been without it.¹¹⁴

Our preliminary work on aesthetic appreciation helps us to understand the distinction between the two entities Moore is evaluating; the first the “object” of affection—that is, the loved person—and the second, the “whole” that Moore is primarily concerned to evaluate, namely, the affectionate attitude toward that person. Moore's claim here is that an instance of love is most valuable when the lover cognizes the beloved's mental qualities. This does not mean that the best

¹¹⁴ Moore (1903) p. 203.

forms of love are exhausted by appreciation of the beloved's mental qualities; Moore insists that the best forms of love also involve appreciating the beloved's physical qualities. Nor is the most valuable form of love decomposable into appreciation-of-the-mental-qualities plus appreciation-of-the-physical qualities. (Indeed, Moore claims that the appreciation of mental qualities alone is of even less value than appreciation of merely physical beauty.)¹¹⁵ Instead, the most valuable instances of love involve appreciating the *bodily expression* of a person's mental qualities. The lover's appreciation of mental qualities contributes to the value of the affectionate state only by being indispensable to this appreciated whole.¹¹⁶

Importantly, recall, Moore's primary object of analysis here is the value of *instances of loving* rather than the value of the *objects of love* themselves. So, when he claims that the appreciation of a person's mental qualities in total abstraction from their physical qualities has little intrinsic worth, this does not entail that valuable mental qualities by themselves have little intrinsic worth. Indeed, he has just argued in the section on aesthetic appreciation that certain mental acts—e.g. the most valuable forms of aesthetic appreciation—have great intrinsic worth. Instead, Moore's objection to valuing purely mental properties seems to be twofold. First, it is difficult if not impossible to contemplate a person's mental properties in isolation from her corporeal expression of them. Second, Moore appeals to the isolation test: "in so far as we succeed in making this

¹¹⁵ Moore (1903) p. 203-4. "It is, indeed, very difficult to imagine what the cognition of mental qualities *alone*, unaccompanied by *any* corporeal expression, would be like; and, in so far as we succeed in making this abstraction, the whole considered certainly appears to have less value. [...] It even appears to be doubtful, whether, in itself, it possesses so much value as the appreciation of mere corporeal beauty undoubtedly does possess; that is to say, whether the appreciation of what has great intrinsic value is so valuable as the appreciation of what is merely beautiful."

¹¹⁶ Moore (1903) p. 203. "The importance of an admiration of admirable mental qualities lies chiefly in the immense superiority of a whole, in which it forms a part, to one in which it is absent, and not in any high degree of intrinsic value which it possesses by itself."

abstraction [that is, insofar as we isolate the attitude of appreciating a person's mental qualities in absence of their corporeal expression], the whole considered [that is, the admiration of the mental qualities so abstracted] certainly appears to have less value."¹¹⁷

As if to downplay the significance of appreciating mental qualities still further, Moore reminds us of his earlier arguments that admirable mental qualities themselves "consist very largely in an emotional contemplation of beautiful objects," and that this emotional contemplation is only valuable insofar as the objects of contemplation actually exist and are beautiful for the features cognized.¹¹⁸ So, in a way, the lover values nothing but beauty: the beauty of the beloved's physical form; and the beloved's cognitive and emotional response to beautiful objects, as expressed in her admirable mental qualities:

It is true that the most valuable appreciation of persons appears to be that which consists in the appreciation of other persons: but even here a reference to material beauty appears to be involved, *both* in respect of the fact that what is appreciated in the last instance may be the contemplation of what is merely beautiful, *and* in respect of the fact that the most valuable appreciation of a person appears to *include* an appreciation of his corporeal expression. Though, therefore, we may admit that the appreciation of a person's attitude toward other persons, or, to take one instance, the love of love, is far the most valuable good we know, and far more valuable than the mere love of beauty, yet we can only admit this if the first be understood to *include* the latter, in various degrees of directness.¹¹⁹

This passage affirms that for Moore, the appreciation of beautiful objects is always at the root of the most valuable attitudes: The most ideal form of love is a cognition of the bodily expression of the beloved's love for other persons; but this is at bottom a form of love for merely physical beauty, because the properties worth loving in another person can always be traced to an appreciation of beautiful objects. Even when we love a person for their ability to love others,

¹¹⁷ Moore (1903) p. 204.

¹¹⁸ Moore (1903) p. 204.

¹¹⁹ Moore (1903) p. 204.

what we are at bottom loving is their ability to appreciate other people's appreciation of beautiful objects.

3. *Objections and Adjustments*

Hurka has criticized Moore's account for seeming to suggest that "the supreme expression of love [is] 'Virginia, what wonderful taste in pictures you have.'"¹²⁰ (Or, perhaps more accurately, "Virginia, how wonderfully you appreciate people who appreciate art!" or "how wonderfully you appreciate people who appreciate those who appreciate art!") In one way, this criticism is unfair because it does not account for beauty's expansive role in Moore's overall meta-ethical framework. On Moore's view, goodness is an unanalyzable property, and beauty is "that of which the admiring contemplation is good in itself." Thus, Moore's concept of beauty is much broader than merely physical or corporeal beauty; it is instead to be understood as the quality of an object which makes contemplation of that object an intrinsically valuable whole.¹²¹ So: "the question, whether [an object] is *truly* beautiful or not, depends upon the *objective* question whether the whole in question [that is, a person's appreciation of the object] is or is not truly good." And since Moore relies on the isolation test to establish which wholes are truly good, he has the resources to claim that *if* one person's valuing of another person's moral character, say, is a valuable whole, then this entails that a good moral character is beautiful. So, when Moore says that love of love comes down to love of beauty, this does not in principle rule out the importance of appreciating the beloved's moral character. Essentially, on Moore's view, the object of love is the beloved's ability to take part in intrinsically valuable wholes by having fitting attitudinal

¹²⁰ Hurka (2003) p. 625.

¹²¹ Moore (1903) p. 201.

responses to the world, and this basic account might be stretched to accommodate many of the great human features commonly held by quality theorists to ground love.¹²²

In another way, though Hurka's objection is fair. It really is problematic that on Moore's account, even expanded to include such features as moral character under the umbrella of "beautiful," we are still valued only in virtue of our aesthetic *appreciations*. It is not clear why the only valuable relationship we should stand to with beauty is that of a mere appreciator. Why should we not also be valued as creators, protectors, or promoters of beauty?¹²³ In fact, valuing others for more imaginative and creative relationships to beauty is commonplace. For example, some friends and I have played the game "name that thing," in which one person thinks of a thing, and then everyone else shares a thing they're thinking of, and whoever's thing is closest to the original thing (as judged by the thinker of that thing) wins. The fun of this game is in imagining the existence of charming things, and guessing at what sort of charming things others might be imagining. Two of my favorite imagined things are: a knife that automatically zests the rinds of citrus fruits as you peel them, and a market that trades entirely in autumn leaves. The moment in which I appreciate my friends' imaginings in this way seems like a paradigm case of occurrent love—it reinforces and brings to mind the more longstanding love I feel for them, which is grounded in large part by my knowledge of the very minds that brought forth these imaginings.

¹²² Admittedly Moore does not avail himself of this more expansive conception of beauty when he discusses love. But it is available nonetheless. And, if one's refined emotional responses to value are crucial to one's moral character, then perhaps a Moorean account could capture the idea that we are loved for certain of our character traits, or for how we treat others.

¹²³ Hurka raises an objection like this not in the context of Moore's theory of love, but rather in the context of his discussion of the value of aesthetic appreciation. See Hurka (2015).

In other words, Moore's account of personal affection is limited by his emphasis on loving someone for the way they *appreciate* beauty, rather than for other positive relationships they may have to beauty, including creating it. However, Moore could accommodate this insight within the basic structure of his account. He need only allow that creating beautiful objects, in addition to appreciating them, shows evidence of mental qualities that may be appreciated by the ideal forms of love. And this would not be ad-hoc: he could appeal to the isolation test to show that creating beautiful objects is itself beautiful. Think, he might say, of a world in which a person imagines a knife that zests citrus fruits as it peels them. Wouldn't this be a better world than one in which the person could only ever conceive of knives and citrus and sugar as they actually are? If the world in which the automatic zester is imagined is truly better, then Moore can say that appreciating someone for imagining this is itself a valuable state; thus, he can maintain that loving someone for their delightful imagination is fitting.

Other aspects of Moore's account, too, are overly restrictive, but can be improved upon without sacrificing the overall structure of his view. For one, the suggestion that love has little value in absence of an appreciation of the beloved's body seems insufficiently sensitive to the possibility of coming deeply to love a pen pal whom one has not yet met. Surely it is possible, through candid back and forth, to get a real sense of someone's character without ever seeing how they express themselves through their body. Even if such love could be deepened by seeing how the other person lives within their body, it is an exaggeration to suggest that before meeting one another the love had little value at all.

Finally, Moore's account gives pride of place to love for people who are capable of having admirable mental qualities – that is, adult humans. But since it is fitting to love babies and (at

least some) animals, the possession of admirable mental qualities cannot be an absolute requirement on something's being an appropriate object of love. So, in addition to the reasons given above for questioning the necessity of appreciating the beloved's physical properties, we now have reason to doubt the necessity of admirable mental qualities – at least of the robust evaluative attitudes that Moore seems to have in mind.¹²⁴

However, these objections can also be answered without altering the fundamental structure of the view: again, a Moorean could simply expand possible objects of fitting love upon consulting the isolation test: surely love for babies and pen-pals is valuable in isolation: thus, since, on Moore's account of fittingness, whatever instances of love are valuable in isolation must be fitting, babies and pen-pals must therefore be fitting objects of love. But opening the door so that such disparate objects can be fittingly loved raises the question: what can all these objects of love have in common? And if we can't say what they have in common, then to what extent have we even offered an account of love? On Moore's stated view, after all, it is very clear what all fitting objects of love have in common: beautiful bodily expressions of beautiful mental qualities. Once we let in babies and pen-pals, a unified analysis might seem impossible. In the next and final section, I show that even if we expand the possible objects of love to include babies and pen pals, we can still construct a unified and informative account of love out of Moorean materials. I explain which parts of Moore's view we should retain, and articulate a neo-Moorean account of love that answers the concerns I've raised in this section. Along the way, I revisit Moore's epistemology of beauty and show, as promised, that we can update that epistemology to a more sensible one without greatly altering Moore's account of aesthetic appreciation.

¹²⁴ These arguments leave open that *some* kind of mental life is a necessary condition on something's being a fitting object of love.

4. Love of Beautiful Wholes: A Neo-Moorean Account

The specifics of Moore's account of the evaluative structure of love are interesting but not compelling. But the foundation of a promising account can be constructed out of materials we have covered. Most importantly, I draw on Moore's discussion of the conditions under which attitudinal organic unities are valuable. On his view, the most valuable attitudinal organic unities are those in which a person feels an appropriate emotional response to the beautiful qualities of an object they accurately cognize and correctly believe to exist. This provides a kind of accuracy condition on the value of an attitude. If the attitude gets it wrong about whether the beloved exists as cognized, it loses much or all of its value. I propose that fitting love contains this and two other elements, which also trace back to Moore. Thus there are three elements of fitting love:

Accuracy element: The beloved is perceived wholly and accurately.

Unity element: The beloved is perceived as an organic unity.

Beauty element: The beloved's beautiful qualities are perceived.¹²⁵

When these three elements are components of an instance of love, that instance of love is fitting.¹²⁶ I will now explain each element, how each connects to Moore's discussion of aesthetic appreciation, and how they work together to explain the evaluative structure of fitting love.

First, I will explain what I mean when I say I am analyzing the evaluative structure of fitting love. I am proposing a view about what makes love fitting, and by doing so I am explaining one aspect of love: namely, its evaluative structure. The "evaluative structure" of an attitude or an emotion is the way in which the object of the emotion or attitude is valued (or

¹²⁵ These conditions allow for degrees of fittingness: if the beloved is seen mostly but not quite accurately, then the love may be very but not quite maximally fitting. Likewise, if only a part of the beloved is seen, then the love can't be wholly fitting.

¹²⁶ The feeling of love itself is parallel to Moore's emotive element of aesthetic appreciation.

disvalued) by the one who experiences the emotion or holds the attitude. On my view, the object of love is valued as a beautiful organic unity, and love is fitting to the extent that the *whole person* is seen (and seen accurately) as a beautiful organic unity.¹²⁷

Earlier, I said that Moore's view of aesthetic appreciation could be abstracted away from his peculiar theory of perception—on which the objects of perception are concepts, and yet we perceive external objects directly, because they are composed of concepts. I now make good on that claim by offering an alternative, more plausible theory of aesthetic perception that still fits well with Moore's overall account of aesthetic appreciation. I then argue that this account of aesthetic perception can be adapted to explain the perceptual/evaluative structure of love.

The alternative theory of aesthetic perception I wish to invoke here is defended by Dustin Stokes in his paper “Cognitive Penetration and the Perception of Art.” Stokes argues that the perception of art is subject to cognitive penetration.¹²⁸ So, depending on one's level of background expertise, one person's visual experience of an object may differ from another's, even when they are looking at the same object from the same spot in the same lighting. The phenomenon of cognitive penetration is common to many situations in which expertise can be brought to bear; as examples of the general phenomenon Stokes cites an oncologist who can better perceive the presence of tumors on an x-ray than her student, and an experienced auto

¹²⁷ Moore discusses love and aesthetic appreciation in order to give an account of the greatest intrinsic goods, and as part of that project he uses fittingness as a guide to intrinsic value. I will not take a stand on either the intrinsic value of fitting love or the relationship between fittingness and intrinsic value.

¹²⁸ Cognitive penetration of perception occurs when “cognitive states like belief causally affect, in a relatively direct way, the contents of perceptual experience.” Stokes (2014) p. 1.

mechanic who can recognize just by hearing it that the squealing sound coming from a car is a failing serpentine belt.¹²⁹

Similarly, in aesthetic contexts, one's background knowledge of art theory and art history can directly affect one's perception of a painting. Stokes describes the different ways in which an art novice and an art expert might perceive Mondrian's *Composition A*. *Composition A* is one among a series of paintings created by Mondrian in the 20's and 30's. The compositions in this series are structured by grey and black vertical and horizontal lines, whose intersections create rectangular shapes. Some of these rectangular shapes are painted primary colors; others are painted black or white. Stokes maintains that:

There is a category of art, 'IN THE STYLE OF MONDRIAN'S COMPOSITION PIECES', relative to which these lines and colored rectangles are standard, while variable will be the width, quantity and spacing of the lines, plus the number, size and color of the filled rectangles.

Someone familiar with this category of art perceives *Composition A* differently from one who lacks relevant background expertise. The novice views *Composition A* under the more course-grained category 'PAINTING', perceives it against the background of other kinds of paintings—e.g. impressionist and pointillist works—and so experiences it primarily as a stark collection of lines and basic colors.¹³⁰ An expert, on the other hand, perceives the composition under the category 'IN THE STYLE OF MONDRIAN'S COMPOSITION PIECES'. The expert sees the same lines and colors and rectangles as the non-expert, but “she also sees the lack of negative space and the dominance of coloured rectangles (since relative to other works in the more sophisticated

¹²⁹ Stokes (2014) p. 21.

¹³⁰ Stokes (2014) p. 17.

category, *Composition A* is significantly less sparse).”¹³¹ Thus there is a difference in phenomenology between the visual experience of the expert and the novice, even when they look at the same painting from the same spot in the same lighting conditions.

Compare this account of the cognitive penetrability of aesthetic perception with Moore’s account of perceiving beautiful qualities. Moore, too, maintains that awareness of an artwork’s fine-grained structural features is crucial to fully perceiving its beauty, and contrasts the experience of one who merely “hears” a Symphony with the experience of one whose hearing of the Symphony is attuned to the harmonic relations expressed by its notes. I submit that a Moorean can take on Stokes’s account of aesthetic perception in place of Moore’s own account, according to which all physical objects are made of concepts. Instead of Moore’s “bottom up” cognitive penetrability, on which perceptual content is conceptual because objects themselves are concepts; we can take on Stokes’s “top down” view that the conceptual content of a perceptual experience is made possible by having internalized the conceptual categories that enable a more fine-grained perceptual experience.

Moore draws important parallels between aesthetic appreciation and appreciation of other persons. But now, consider how this Moorean insight, combined with Stokes’s account of aesthetic perception instead of Moore’s own view of perception, results in an interesting account of the perception of persons. On such an account, the more we study character, the richer the conceptual repertoire we will bring to our perception of persons. An expert in character will perceive subtleties in another’s personality that others who have had just as much exposure to the person may miss. I maintain that the more refined the lover’s knowledge of the beloved’s

¹³¹ Stokes (2014) p. 17.

character, the more fitting the love. I now bring this point to bear in my discussion of the three elements of fitting love, which are:

Accuracy element: The beloved is perceived wholly and accurately.

Unity element: The beloved is perceived as an organic unity.

Beauty element: The beloved's beautiful qualities are perceived.

Stokes's account of aesthetic appreciation reveals a tight connection between the accuracy element and the beauty element of fitting love. On Stokes's account, one cannot truly appreciate the beauty of a work of art unless one brings a rich conceptual background to one's experience of it. One gains the ability to perceive in line with such a rich conceptual background in part by educating oneself in the relevant area, and in part by natural perceptiveness and intelligence. So too, I submit, we cannot truly appreciate the beauty of persons without bringing a rich conceptual repertoire to our experience of them. Two people may spend the same amount of time with a third, but only one may be attuned to the subtleties of her character to a degree sufficient to ground fitting love. It is only by including the strong epistemic requirement expressed by the accuracy condition that we guarantee that the person herself is the object of love, rather than the sorts of generic broad-brush properties that anyone might possess. But by including the beauty condition, we guarantee that the beloved is appreciated as a locus of a generic kind of *value*, even though she is appreciated so specifically. Compare again with aesthetic assessment: I judge that *Composition A* and Beethoven's Ninth are both beautiful, but my judgment is only fitting if I have appreciated each work of art in its specificity with an appropriately conceptually informed perceptual richness. So too, I see those I love as beautiful persons, and this

perception is fitting when my perception of them is undistorted, and is informed by background knowledge sufficient to appreciate the subtleties of their personality.

The unity element is entwined with the two elements just discussed. As with aesthetic perception, perception of persons is fully accurate only when it is attuned to the ways in which parts of the entity are enhanced by their relations to the other parts (i.e., in the case of a Mondrian composition, how the red rectangle gains in splendor by being surrounded by empty space), and only when one sees the whole as possessing a value greater than the sum of its parts (i.e., when one attributes the beauty of a composition to its *structure*, not merely to the blotches of paint of which it is composed). As I have argued elsewhere [in “Love of Whole Persons”], I think that *holistic variability account* of the structure of organic unities provides the most promising model for an account of the evaluative structure of love. According to the holistic variability account, the values of an object’s parts may change by being integrated into the whole, and in addition the whole might possess its own value which is not simply a sum of the values of its integrated parts. Here, I agree with some of Moore’s claims about the structure of love for persons. In particular, I agree that in the eyes of a lover, the value of a person’s mental qualities is enhanced by seeing how these qualities are expressed by the beloved’s physical form. I would add that we often see greater value in our beloved’s physical form by the same mechanism, as Jane Austen describes beautifully through her character Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility*. Here Elinor is describing her changing perceptions of her eventual husband Edward to her sister Marianne:

I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure. His abilities in every respect improve as much upon acquaintance as his manners and person. At first sight, his manner is certainly not striking, and his person can hardly be called handsome, til the

expression of his eyes, which are uncommonly good, and the general sweetness of his countenance, is perceived. At present, I know him so well, that I think him really handsome; or, at least, almost so.¹³²

In addition to expressing the way in which a lover's knowledge of their beloved's mental qualities can enhance their perception of the beauty of the beloved's physique, this passage serves as an excellent example of the cognitive penetrability of love: Elinor's background expertise in matters of character and taste works in concert with her exposure to Edward and sensitive attunement to the particularities of his mind and body, and now she perceives both his character and his physique—indeed, his character as expressed *through* his physique—in a subtle, detailed manner. She begins to see not only that some parts of his character are enhanced by others, but that these parts are integrated together into a beautiful whole.

One may worry that this account is overly elitist, both in respect of what type of person is capable of fitting love, and in respect of what type of person is an appropriate object of fitting love. It may appear that only those in possession of a sophisticated intelligence can love fittingly, and they may love only those who are themselves truly beautiful and subtle: the ugly and meager need not apply.¹³³ I will address each component of this objection in turn, beginning with the worry that my account only allows for highly intelligent people such as Elinor to fittingly love. I can offer three responses to this worry. First, the intelligence relevant to the fittingness of love is not the kind of intelligence that gets one high marks on the LSAT, but rather something more like what is known as *emotional* intelligence—intelligence about persons and character. And, while some significant level of logic-puzzle kind of intellect may be necessary for perfect emotional intelligence, very high levels of logic-puzzle intellect are neither necessary nor sufficient for

¹³² *Sense and Sensibility* Ch. 4.

¹³³ I am grateful to Connie Rosati for raising this worry.

meeting the accuracy element of fitting love—all that is necessary is knowledge of persons in general, and, more crucially, of the person you love in particular.

Second, these norms of fittingness make sense as guides for how a love might *become* more fitting over time. That is, they offer plausible internal norms for the development of ever more fitting love in the context of an ongoing relationship. Imagine that Elinor had been struck by a schoolgirl crush on meeting Edward, and admired all the qualities she saw evidence of in his behavior, but didn't yet know him very well. So, rather than perceiving the subtleties of his generosity, she merely observed enough to indicate that he was generous rather than mean. Now suppose she comes to know him as well as the above passage indicates. Surely her love has become more fitting by her having gained this knowledge and appreciation of the subtleties of his character. Now, imagine a version of Elinor who is not very intelligent about persons, and so never moves beyond the stage of a schoolgirl crush. Her love is not as fitting as the real Elinor's, even under the assumption that her appreciation of Edward is the most sophisticated as it can be *at the present moment*. This claim is not elitist, however, because she may develop better knowledge of persons over time, and if this knowledge informed her perception of Edward, then her love would be more fitting.¹³⁴

Finally, my account allows not only for *degrees* of fitting love, but also for *dimensions* of fitting love. So, suppose Clive has reached his personal limit when it comes to knowledge of his beloved Deacon's character, and his personal limit is significantly below that which Elinor achieves in her love of Edward. Even though Clive is inherently limited in the amount of conceptual sophistication that can inform his conception of Deacon, his love can still be very

¹³⁴ Compare Svensson (2008), in response to the objection that virtue ethics is elitist.

fitting if he sees Deacon as a beautiful whole, and the beauty he sees in Deacon really is there and really is how he sees it, even if he does not see it in the fullness of its sophistication. Compare to the aesthetic case: someone may fittingly enjoy a Mondrain composition because they enjoy thoughtfully placed lines and bold colors. It does not take much background conceptual sophistication to perceive the Mondrian compositions under these concepts, and, these features of the paintings do contribute to the beauty of the painting as a whole. So, one's appreciation of a Mondrian composition may be very fitting when perceived under these concepts, even if it is not as fitting as the perception of the art expert who sees greater subtlety in the work. Just as one can become a better appreciator of art, one can become a better appreciator of persons; and in both cases, the greater one's expertise, the more fitting one's attitudes. This does not reflect a problematic elitism within my account of fitting love; rather, it reflects the fact that is hard to truly appreciate something so complex and beautiful as another human being, but, as lovers, we should aspire to be better poised to really see everything there is to see in our beloveds.

Turning, then, to the second aspect of the elitism worry: that the ugly and meager are, on my view, unfitting objects of love. I will make two points in response to this objection. The first is that, like Moore, I maintain that the paradigm object of love in the case of adult humans is a person's character as expressed through their physical form. So, the ugly are less fit for love than the beautiful, but only when ugliness and beauty are understood as applying to the whole of the beloved object. So, someone very physically beautiful with a rotten character may be a less fitting object of love than one who is less physically beautiful but whose stand-up character shines through. Consider, for example, Elizabeth Bennett's fleeting infatuation for George Wickham in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth is initially taken by Wickham because he is handsome, and

attentive, and seemingly noble, despite having purportedly suffered much at the hands of others. In fact, however, he is a cad who squandered away a generous inheritance and tried to regain financial security by seducing a wealthy 15 year old. When Elizabeth discovers the truth about Wickham's rotten character she is naturally repulsed. On my account, her love for Wickham was never fitting, because she did not perceive him accurately. But if she continued to love him even after learning of his rotten character, her love would be unfitting for another reason: namely, she would be loving something irredeemably rotten. It may be her right to love him, and not to love others whom she knows to have noble characters, but it would be unfitting nevertheless.

This brings me to my second point in response to this worry, which is that most people are not irredeemable cads. Most people have beauty in them, and so are candidate objects of fitting love. Even a real person, rather than a literary character, who had duplicated Wickham's bad deeds, might yet have some glimmer of beauty that redeems him as an object of at least some degree of fitting love. Furthermore, and just as importantly, as I argued in "Fitting Love: A Defense of the Quality Theory," even if A is not a fitting object of love for B, this does not mean that B has no duties to care for A. So, there may be people who have genuine duties to care for someone like Wickham, and they may undertake these duties enthusiastically and with a kind heart, without this entailing that he merits the kind of love I am discussing here—the kind of love one feels when awestruck by the beauty of a fellow creature.

I have explained how the accuracy element, the beauty element, and the unity element combine into an account of the evaluative structure of fitting love, and defended the account against the charge of elitism. In objection to Moore's account, I argued that surely we can fittingly love pen pals and babies. I will now argue that my account can explain what makes these

instances of love fitting. In the case of coming to love a pen pal, when such a love is fitting, it is fitting because lots of information has been conveyed about the content of each person's character and general sensibilities in the back-and-forth. The fact that the information is conveyed in the absence of bodily expression does not make the information any less a source of knowledge about a person. So, even if we grant that the pen pals learn new information when they meet, this does not mean that they didn't already know enough about each other in order to accurately perceive each other as beautiful organic unities. Because the pen pals' knowledge of each other is not yet complete, it cannot yet be *maximally* fitting, but then, probably no actual instances of love are maximally fitting; and when two pen pals really "get" each other, they may in fact know each other better than people who have shared physical company for years.

Consider now the case of a parent who loves their newborn infant, who, of course, does not yet possess any admirable mental qualities. My account can explain the fittingness of such love by invoking the cognitive penetrability of perception: in the course of one's life, (if one is so fortunate) one may learn to appreciate valuable familial relationships, and value the prospect of occupying the role of parent within the context of one's own family. There are different ways to value the prospect of parenthood, each perhaps legitimate in its own way. Some may place high importance on the biological or genetic connection to the child, and value it as a kind of extension of one's own bodily self, or a physical manifestation of having merged with one's lover. So, one *perceives* the infant as an extension of oneself (and one's lover), whether a genetic extension of oneself or a continuation of sorts of one's body, or as the creature that will be brought up within one's family. These are optional, not required, ways of valuing infants; it may also be fitting to fail to perceive an infant in this way (as when one gives it up for adoption).

Nevertheless, when an infant is loved in this way, they are loved for something genuinely valuable; and even though the valued features are extrinsic, they are beautiful, and both *attributable to* the infant and *seen in* the infant. But even if we might at first value the infant for its extrinsic features, we will very soon start to value it intrinsically, as we begin to see a unified mental life in the making, which is itself a thing of beauty. And we will be fully primed to appreciate all the fine qualities it develops, which will put us in a position to perceive it in all its subtleties and fittingly love it through its life.

5. Conclusion: Moorean Love and Holistic Variability

I have defended an account of the evaluative structure of love on which we are fittingly loved to the extent that we are seen wholly and accurately as beautiful organic unities. This account is appealing because it allows that love for all manner of beings (including babies and animals), in a wide variety of relational contexts, might be fitting. It also explains why being fittingly loved is such a great compliment: to be loved in the right way is to be fully known and fully admired – seen as a truly beautiful whole even despite flaws, or features that would be thought flaws were they not integral to the whole.

In explaining Moore’s writings on beauty and love, I aimed to see if any insights could be extracted that would help to fill out the schematic account of the evaluative structure of love defended in “Love of Whole Persons,”—namely, the idea that love’s evaluative structure is best modeled by the holistic variability account of organic unities. On the holistic variability account, the values of an object’s parts may change by being integrated into the whole, and in addition the whole might possess its own value which is not simply a sum of the values of its integrated parts. I have argued that fitting love involves responding appropriately to both of these features of

organic unities. For example, as Moore notes, the value of our mental qualities may be enhanced by their corporeal expression. This in one way in which the parts of a fittingly loved object may change their values by being incorporated into the whole. But further, as Elinor perceived in her interactions with Edward, when you are in a position to perceive the whole of a person's existence in the world from a position of adequate conceptual richness, you may see structural features that render their whole selves really beautiful; or, at least, almost so.

Conclusion

My dissertation comprises three papers: “Fitting Love,” “Love of Whole Persons,” and “Moore and Amour.” These papers are in principle separable, but they are mutually supporting, and they contain a continuous line of argument when read in the above-listed order. Here, I clarify that continuous line of argument by briefly summarizing and linking together those aspects of the three papers that are most relevant to it.

While they approach this topic from different angles, all three papers engage with the question of what the lover values by loving a person. That is, they study the *evaluative structure* of love. “Fitting Love” considers this question at the most general level: what *kind* of thing grounds love? Is it a quality of the beloved or the existence of a valuable relationship between the lover and the beloved? That is, should we endorse a *quality theory* of love or a *relationship theory*? I defend quality theories in general against five prominent objections. Along the way, I take on board the point that valuable relationships are important features of the normative landscape. Indeed, the reasons generated by valuable relationships often need to be considered alongside those generated by the features that ground love. Once we understand the interplay between these two different kinds of reasons, we can see that many objections to quality theories are based on conflating them. Thus, even if we call valuing a relationship a form of ‘love,’ another important human emotion is also worthy of the name ‘love,’ and this kind of love will be best articulated by a quality theory of some sort.

However, attempts to explain this kind of love face a more serious difficulty. The *problem of love’s object* challenges quality theorists to explain how the person herself is the object of love, rather than merely (some of) her properties. I take up this challenge in “Love of Whole Persons.”

Some quality theorists try to brush off the problem of love's object by distinguishing between the ground of love and the object of love; they insist that even if properties are the ground of love, the beloved is nevertheless the object of love. I show that this response does not address the heart of the objection: to address the problem meaningfully, the quality theorist must explain why the object of love is also *valued* by love. The ground/object distinction does not accomplish this, because an attitude may take a person as its object without thereby valuing or devaluing the person as a whole. (This often happens with anger, for example.) Other quality theorists take the problem of love's object more seriously, but they either make the grounds of love too specific to be worthy of positive evaluation, or they fail to capture the whole beloved in their account of love's positive evaluation.

So, I suggest that a new kind of quality theory is needed to explain how love is a way of valuing whole persons. In particular, we should say that love values qualities that the beloved possesses *as an organic unity*. This allows the quality theorist to maintain that love values the whole person for valuable general qualities that are attributable to the whole in all its specificity. This response naturally raises the question of how to understand organic unities. I suggest that the *holistic variability account* offers the most promising basis for an account of the evaluative structure of love. On that account, the values of an object's parts may change by being integrated into the whole, and the whole might further possess its own value which is not simply a sum of the values of its integrated parts. Fitting love involves responding appropriately to both of these features of organic unities.

The account of fitting love defended at the end of "Love of Whole Persons" is schematic, and invites further specification. It seemed natural to me to begin to fill in my own account of the

relationship between love and organic unities by analyzing the most developed extant account of these matters, which is Moore's. However, Moore's remarks on love in *Principia Ethica* are embedded in a larger context that makes them opaque when taken alone. So, the first task of "Moore and Amour" is a historical one: I outline and elucidate Moore's remarks on love. I then critique certain aspects of Moore's view, and present a new account of the evaluative structure of love that fills out the schematic account advanced in "Love of Whole Persons."

Moore correctly observes that the object of love is appreciated as an organic unity, and that love is more fitting the more accurately the object is seen, and the more beauty is seen in it. However, his account suffers from two flaws: first, it is based on an implausible account of aesthetic perception, and second, it unduly restricts the possible objects of fitting love to adult human beings whom we have visually observed. I put forward an account of love that updates Moore's account of aesthetic perception, and offers a more expansive account of who we may fittingly love. On my account, love is fitting insofar as (a) the beloved is perceived wholly and accurately, (b) the beloved is perceived as an organic unity, and (c) the beloved's beautiful qualities are perceived. Paired with a plausible account of aesthetic perception, this account can explain how love is a way of seeing value in the beloved as a whole. Further, because beauty may be fittingly perceived in a wide variety of objects, my account can allow that a wide variety of beings may be fittingly loved (not only adult human beings with whom one has shared space, but also, for example, babies and pen-pals).

In sum, then, the papers flow as follows. In "Fitting Love," I defend the idea that love is a way of valuing the loved person because of certain of her qualities. In "Love of Whole Persons," I argue that love can only be a way of valuing persons because of certain of her qualities if we

understand the object of love as an organic unity. In “Moore and Amour,” I offer an account of the evaluative structure of love on which we are valued as organic unities. This provides a version of the quality theory that satisfies the criteria for such an account advanced in the first two papers.

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