Exclusivity and Romantic Relationships

The desire for stability as the ideal for our romantic relationships seems to be widespread in western culture. But what do we mean when we say that stability is that thing for which we aim in our romantic relationships? It seems that, amidst other things, this idea of stability involves our having desires for constancy and exclusivity. In his paper, “Love as a Moral Emotion”, David Velleman makes attempt to bridge the gap between impartiality and impersonal nature of Kantian morality with the thinking that love is partial and personal. However, Velleman’s reasons-responsive account of love cannot adequately capture our concerns for exclusivity in romantic relationships. In the coming discussion, we shall revisit what Velleman has to say. I argue that this account is not adequate in accommodating the partiality of romantic love or our desire for exclusivity. Additionally, I will present an alternative reasons-responsive account of romantic love. This account of love, I believe, better accommodate romantic love as well as our intuitions about and desires for exclusivity in our romantic relationships.

Exclusivity

We often desire to be loved exclusively for a number of reasons. One such reason is that we inhabit a culture where exclusivity and monogamy are held highly and indeed revered. The praise attributed to the value of exclusivity by our families, friends, colleagues, and even the media creates in us in some cases, and encourages in other cases, the desire for a relationship that is exclusively involved. That is, when we receive information about romantic relationships from these resources, exclusive relationships are often, although not always, painted in a favorable light. Naturally, we hold these relationships fixed in mind as ends for our own personal romantic loving purists.
Another reason we might desire exclusivity is that even though we might find all human beings to be in themselves valuable, in our romantic relationships we like to feel as if our value is increased over the value of all other humans with respect to being loved by the beloved, even if as it turns out that the value that all humans share is equal. We like to feel special. When we are being loved exclusively, this contributes to a great feeling of satisfaction and we often find comfort in this. This desire for exclusivity surfaces also when we realize that, however perverse, we often want to be revered by our beloveds in the face of others.

There is at least one more reason that it appears that we desire to be loved exclusively in our romantic relationships and that is because of the limited time and resources that the lover has to give. It can often appear to us, from a 3rd person perspective, that when these already limited time and resources are distributed to more than one beloved, the love present in the case of either beloved seems substantially less robust. Whereas, if these resources were concentrated on one beloved, it would foster a more rich love in the relationship. Sometimes these resources are tangible such as monetary resources. Sometimes the resources are little less tangible such as time and energy.

So, we desire to be loved exclusively; we insist that our lovers love us and no one else; we are not happy receiving a love that is extended to persons in addition to ourselves.¹ And although the exclusivity condition alone, in any case, does not guarantee that love will be attained, it does seem to make its attainability and sustainability more probable. We desire to be loved exclusively “because we believe that the other joys of love, and love itself are put in jeopardy when we are not loved exclusively.”²

¹ Soble (1990), p. 192.
² Ibid.
The concept of exclusivity, however, is ambiguous. We need to discern whether this notion of exclusivity is timeless (for all time) or timed (at one time). Soble holds that “someone who asserts that love is exclusive might mean that x can love one person period or that x can only love one person at a time.” Now, timeless exclusivity implies that we love only once over the span of our lifetime. In other words, “in this sense of exclusivity, (i) after _L_y begins, x can love no one other than y, and (ii) before _L_y begins, x could not have loved anyone else.” Intuitively, however, it is not clear that this is what we ordinarily mean. Exclusivity, when considered as timeless exclusivity, seems to imply that the first object of a person’s romantic love is that person’s only beloved. But what about a less strict, timed exclusivity?

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

**The Principle of Exclusivity** - x ought to only love romantically one person at a time

So, as long as when x loves y at a time t₁, the principle demands that he love only y at t₁. If however, x’s love for y ends and x falls in love with z, this principle has not been violated because the love x had for y and the x has for z occur at times that are temporally discrete. This principle implies that if _L_y at t₁ and y’s relationship with x ceases, then _L_z can still be true at a time t₂. So, x is allowed to love y and z romantically at different stages of his life. Additionally, the principle does not entail that a person’s first beloved is their only beloved as is the case with the notion of strict exclusivity.

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3 Ibid. p. 169.
4 Ibid.
Velleman and Exclusivity

In “Love as a Moral Emotion”, David Velleman begins his discussion by considering what Kantian morality requires from us. He says that people misrepresent Kant to sometimes mean “equal consideration” in a sense that means “give equal weight to the interests of all.”\(^5\) Velleman suggests that Kant can be instead interpreted to mean that we should give equal consideration to the *rights* of all which may vary in justification which is dependent on your relevant knowledge of a situation. So, he thinks that Kant might be read in a way that lends itself to partiality.

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

Velleman says that some have suggested, as a solution to the problem, that the conscious deliberation that seems to be required by Kant should show some credence to love. That, in other words, conscious deliberation should occupy merely the background in cases where one’s loved ones are in danger. He submits that love is a moral emotion and we should focus on how the two converge.\(^6\) So if what he has to say is correct, then we should expect that the relationship between love and reason should become clearer and produce reasonable consequences for romantic love.

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\(^6\) Ibid, p.341.
Velleman thinks that he has succeeded in showing the Kantian idea that reverence to the law is actually more personal for Kant since what he means by “good will” is the sort of rational essence had by persons. From this, Velleman formulates love by saying, “I am inclined to say that love is likewise the awareness of a value inhering in its object; and I am also inclined to describe love as an arresting of that awareness of that value.”\(^7\)

This is where we encounter the concern for romantic love. If the value that we recognize and are arrested by is the “good will” and indeed he seems to think that it is, then it is something that all persons possess. One concern for Velleman is that if everyone has it then we have no way to account for the justification question in love—namely, What, if anything, justifies my coming to love this particular person rather than someone else?\(^8\) What particularly about this person’s value are we responding to? Any of our natural responses to this question such as a person’s humor, Velleman thinks, fails to capture our essences, and they are merely accidents. Further, he says that this type of response does not refer to value at all for Kant, but rather to what Kant calls “price.”\(^9\) Instead we are responding only to the value that persons have essentially as persons which involves our capacity to recognize people as also having the capacity to discover rational natures in others and for them to respect that capacity as well. Persons have a dignity that amounts to a greater value than sum of all price for Velleman.

Velleman derives this Kantian compatible notion of love from Kant’s respect for persons. Velleman repeatedly says things like “when we love [someone] as a person—rather than a work of nature, say, or an aesthetic object—then indeed, I want to say we are responding to the value that he possesses by being a person or, as Kant would say, an instance of rational nature.”\(^10\) Or

\(^7\) Ibid, p. 360.
\(^8\) Helm (2010), p. 20.
\(^10\) Ibid, p. 365.
“Kant himself believes that each person has a dignity in virtue of his rational nature and hence that all persons should be judged to have the same value.”\textsuperscript{11} But if this is correct then we cannot account for the type of partiality involved in romantic love. We cannot say, for instance, why it is that we have come to love $y$ romantically and not $z$ given that my judgment of valuation of these individuals should yield equivalent worth. Velleman suggests that on his account “we can judge the person to be valuable in generic respects while also valuing her as irreplaceable.”\textsuperscript{12} But it is not quite clear how we might “appreciate someone as irreplaceable” in the context prescribed by Velleman in which we are responding to a value that is shared by everyone. As Kolodny puts it, “what kind of ‘appreciation’ of one’s beloved as ‘special and irreplaceable’ could be compatible with the ‘judgment’ that one has just as much reason to appreciate anyone in that way?” Velleman’s account seems to be unable to provide an adequate response to these questions about partiality.

Additionally, Velleman’s account fails to accommodate for our desire for exclusivity in romantic love as it implies that we love everyone insofar as they possess a rational essence. Given, then, that all of the persons that we encounter possess these essences, Velleman’s reasons-responsive account of love implies that we ought to love them all. This implication undermines the desire for the type of exclusivity that gives rise to many varieties of satisfaction had by those people that receive this exclusivity. It appears that any response available to Velleman that might address this concern can only do so in a way that drives the account further from Kantian ideals. If we admit that we do, in fact, value our romantic partners in a special way, then we would be admitting to valuing one person \textit{qua} person more than another person. Given Velleman’s own interpretation of Kantian commitments, this is an explicit violation of dignity

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, p. 367.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p. 368.
had by persons. Although Velleman’s account of love as moral emotion is a type of reasons-
responsiveness account of love, it is an account of love that is more suited to accommodate our
moral intuitions pertaining to agapic love where our desires for exclusivity are not as strong and
are not as relevantly pertinent.

An Alternative Account of Love

There is another reasons-responsive account of romantic love that I am sympathetic to
that better handles our desire for exclusivity. This account involves a valuation of qualities had
by the beloved. Additionally, the account contains a conjoining of a traditional quality account of
love and another reasons-responsive account of romantic love that has to do with relationships
presented by Niko Kolodny. My quality account shares similarities with Kolodny’s relationship
account. One element that I want to maintain in the overall account which involves the joining of
the two theories, however, is the element that involves the actual valuing of qualities had by the
beloved. This is because it helps create a more reasonable picture of how it is that we come to
enter in to our romantic relationships.

Romantic Love: Qualities and Relationships

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

1) If a person \( x \) experiences this emotion, then it is possible for \( x \) to articulate,
even if in only a vague sense, what the emotion is about. What the emotion is
about, or the object of the emotion is indicated in sentences of the form, ‘\( x \Phi s \ y \)’,
or ‘\( x \) is \( \Phi \) about/with/of \( y \)’.

2) If \( x \) feels \( \Phi \), and \( y \) is the object of that emotion, then \( x \) will believe \( y \) to have a
certain set of properties or a particular property. Depending on what emotion
is felt, \( x \) will believe that \( y \) is harmful, that \( y \) has done him a favor, or a
detriment, etc.

3) So, \( x \) will believe and in most cases be able to articulate that \( y \) has the
determinate qualities \( \Psi \) and he will believe further that it has the determinable
quality\textsuperscript{13} $\Phi$ because it has the determinate quality $\Psi$. That is to say if $x$ feels the emotion toward some object $y$ then $x$ believes $y$ to have some determinate quality that he would normally be able to specify.

In regard to 3), there are some constraints as to which determinate qualities count in favor of particular emotions. What these constraints are, exactly, will be dictated by the relevant determinable quality. For instance, if $x$ fears $y$, then the determinate qualities picked out by $x$ must be such that they explain why $x$ takes $y$ to be dangerous.\textsuperscript{14} With this in place, we might want to formulate what has been said as follows: if $x$ believes that $y$ is dangerous, then he must believe that $y$ is dangerous because it has the relevant qualities, even if on some occasions $x$ is unable to articulate these determinate qualities. The point is that what we posit as $\Phi$ in 1) will set the restricting conditions on what $\Psi$ could be in 3).

Prima facie, a good reason for questioning whether there are reasons for our romantic love is that it is obscure as to what these reasons might be.\textsuperscript{15} Presumably, these conditions provide us some grounds as to decide whether an experience of a particular emotion is justified. We might not, for example, be justified in having the belief that the object of our emotions is/has $\Psi$. If our beliefs about our objects are irrational then we cannot be justified in having an emotion based on those beliefs.

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

There are, after all, criteria for settling, at least in the paradigm cases, whether or not a person is loveable, just as there are criteria for settling by and large what sorts of situations are dangerous… If this is so and if no more suitable candidate can be found than ‘loveable’ can be found, then we have no determinable quality

\textsuperscript{13} A determinable quality is one that cannot tell us much about the object $y$ or about how $y$ appears to $x$ because it is the type of quality that is supposed to belong to any object of say anger or gratitude. (i.e. in the case of the experience of the emotion of fear, such a quality might be ‘dangerous’ or ‘fear-able’)

\textsuperscript{14} Taylor (1976), p. 148.

\textsuperscript{15} Kolodny (2003), p. 158.
to serve as a guide as to what sort of determinate qualities we are to look for in the object of love and so what substance to give the love-beliefs. So if love belongs to the class of emotions described, then it will have a \( \phi \) quality that ‘\( y \) is \( \psi \)’ relates to and \( \psi \) will be relevantly related to love. But what might this be?

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

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

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We find the distinction between valuing and desiring, Watson says, in the *source* of the want or why one wants what he does.

When a person values something, he wants it because he takes it to be worthwhile to pursue it even if it is not the most worthwhile thing to have amongst the alternatives. This is because it appears valuable in its own right. It is important to note that, since Watson thinks that reason determines the value of things, this notion of regarding as worthwhile involves some evaluation of the thing that is wanted. Conversely, wants that amount to merely desires are such that they might involve no evaluation of the object. When we merely desire something, we might think that the thing we want has no value, or we might think that the thing we want is in some sense worthwhile but only as a means to satisfying another desire. It is the first of these types of wants relevant to love. This distinction gives us a principled way to evaluate whether a want is the requisite kind of want for love or not. From this we are able to distinguish between cases of love and cases of mere infatuation even if the content of a particular want happens to be the same. The primary difference is that the type of want ascribed to love demonstrates that the lover *values* the beloved. Whereas in cases of mere infatuation the person merely wanting their partners.

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

> In all communities people have individual value for one another. We are means to each other's satisfactions and we constantly evaluate one another on the basis of
our individual interest. However subtly, we always setting prices on other people and ourselves.\(^{18}\) So to value (and indeed be evaluated) is a feature of our existence as humans. This allows us to look at the valuation in love, in spite of many philosophers regarding this sort of process in a negative light, as a neutral thing. That is, it is not a good or bad thing; rather it is just what we do.

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

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

Niko Kolodny submits that love consists in the belief that some relationship renders it appropriate; the special concern for a person is not love at all when there is no belief that a relationship renders it appropriate.\(^{19}\) So instances of inappropriate love exist whenever there is such a belief, but the belief is false or when a person is misled by someone just using him. Consider a stalker for example. They often believe that they have relationships to the objects of their obsession when they really do not. The absence love is inappropriate when there is a relationship that calls for it. I agree with Kolodny’s claims here. But what are relationships under my account?

\(^{19}\) Ibid, p. 146.
Relationships are ongoing, with particular people, historical, and reciprocal. Kolodny says that relationships persist over time. For, if $x$ is in a romantic relationship with $y$, we realize that the romantic relationship is not the momentary obtaining of some relation, but something that has persisted and may continue to persist over time.\(^{20}\) Further, relationships hold between particular people through time. That is, relationships are individuated by the identities of their participants.\(^{21}\) Lastly, he says whether or not I stand in a relationship to someone at a given time depends on some fact about our pasts. The claim is that $y$ is $x$ girlfriend only if there has been a historical pattern of attitudes and actions between us.\(^{22}\) This much appears to me to be correct.

Our romantic relationships also involve *romantic contracts*. These contracts are important. They are what the participants gage the expectations for the relationship and for one another on. What I mean by a romantic contract is the mutual understanding of desires and expectations of each lover by one another. The demands of the participants entering in to a romantic relationship are often shaped by their culture, prior experiences, or even frame of mind.\(^{23}\) That is, what we desire and expect for our romantic relationships might be shaped by our perception of our parent’s relationship or romantic relationships that we have had in the past. I believe these contracts point to the importance of *courting*.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{20}\) Ibid, p. 148.

\(^{21}\) Ibid. Kolodny has us consider having a relationship to *some* dentist. He says that the ongoing relation would be constituted by a collection of relations to particular people at contiguous periods of time, but would not itself be a relation to a particular person over time.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) See Epstude, K., & Förster, J. (2011). These psychologists tested whether or not the level of concreteness involved in how a person thinks might have a link to the expectations one have for romantic situations. They found that individuals who think more abstractly tended to have expectations of love and long-term relationship success. On the other hand, individuals who thought more concretely, tend to expectations of sex and other physicalistic elements of intimacy.

\(^{24}\) Although our contemporary society typically refers to the period before formalizing a romantic relationship (whether through marriage or some formal recognition between the participants) as dating, I find the term to be ambiguous as it may refer to mere ‘outings’ with no intention or desire for a romantic relationship. I take ‘courting’ to refer, more specifically, to the period of activities prior to the formalization of a romantic relationship where there is the intention to develop a romantic relationship.
Courting provides us with the opportunity to understand just what the demands are. Romantic contracts are why we take time before establishing a formal romantic relationship to gather as much information about each other as well as the desires and expectations we have for one another and for romantic relationships. Formalizing a romantic relationship prematurely—before a sufficient amount of information is gathered in order to form a mutually understood contract—often leads to disaster. Further, contemporary psychological research suggests that it is only after some time has passed that we are able to make reasonable evaluations while courting and thus gage our expectations sensibly.25 A sensible arrangement of expectations is desired because it decreases the chance that we expect things from our partners that they might simply be unable or unwilling to give; when we do expect such things, it often gives rise to animosity and resentment. Take, for example, the tension usually present in situations when one participant is attention hungry and desires excessive time and the other participant is extremely career driven and not so willing to yield their time.

Problems for our romantic relationships might arise from two things regarding the romantic contract; (1) the lack of a mutual understanding of the contract or (2) the intentional disregard for our romantic contract. In the case of (1), for instance, if $x$ does not understand that $y$ desires exclusivity he might believe, falsely, that his relationship might allow certain courses of action when it indeed does not. This is a problem for $y$ because if $x$ acts against the courses of actions that $y$ believes the relationship dictates to both parties, this causes hostility. The anger and animosity $y$ might have for $x$ under these circumstances might be inappropriate if they are founded on the belief that $x$ intentionally disregarded the romantic contract to conduct a certain course of action. This would not be appropriate because in order for $x$ to form such an intention, he would have to know the course of action he took himself to be intentionally defying. Since $x$

was unclear on the courses of action dictated to him by his relationship, it is not clear that he could form such an intention. At the result of such a misunderstood contract usually awaits a highly frustrated \( x \), upset with \( y \) for harboring what \( x \) takes to be inappropriate responses for his course of action and a disgruntled \( y \), upset with \( x \) for what she takes to be intentional inappropriate conduct. But problems for our romantic relationships might also stem from mutually understood romantic contracts such as (2) the intentional disregard for our romantic contract. In this case, both \( x \) and \( y \) understand the desires and expectations of each other as and their relationship. If \( x \) were to adopt a course of action that disregarded the romantic contract when it is mutually understood, \( y \)’s animosity is more appropriate because the belief that the animosity is grounded in is true. Also, romantic contracts are why, for instance, if neither \( x \) nor \( y \) desire sexual exclusivity, promiscuity, which is often seen as a detriment to the desire for exclusivity, might be possible without the integrity of the romantic love between \( x \) and \( y \) being compromised.

The word “relationship” might be used in two ways. The first way the word relationship is used in regard to attitude-dependent relationships is that it “refers to the pattern of concern that participants have to one another, for the relationship, and for the pattern of concern itself.”\(^{26}\) The other way relationship is used refers to the activities characteristic of that relationship. In the case of romantic relationships some of these activities might include cohabitation, sharing confidences, and having sex with our partners. Kolodny remarks that when people speak of ending relationships, they usually mean deciding to stop engaging in those activities: that is, deciding to move out or no longer see one another socially.\(^{27}\) So when used in this sense the relation to the relationship, understood as the pattern of concern and characteristic activities, is

\(^{26}\) Kolodny (2003). p. 149.
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
complex. While one can engage in these activities without the pattern of concern, extended voluntary engagement in these activities typically gives rise to it. This seems correct as well. We inhabit a “hook-up” culture where promiscuity is not aggressively shunned. When we perpetuate this value of the culture voluntarily and continually, feelings and emotions do seem to emerge. Kolodny and I agree on the further point that the pattern of concern can also persist without the characteristic engagement. He says:

Most people have ‘old friends’ about whom they care deeply, but with whom they rarely have the opportunity to socialize. Nevertheless, the relationship would not be a relationship of the relevant type if it was not marked at some point in its history by engagement in those activities. And in many cases, ceasing to engage in the activities changes the nature of relationship. To the extent that a relationship that was once romantic is no longer structured around the expression of sexual drives, for example, it may make more sense to view it simply as a friendship.28

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

On the relationship theory, there are reasons for love and these reasons are interpersonal relationships. More directly put, love is a kind of valuing. Valuing $x$ in general involves (i) being vulnerable to certain emotions regarding $x$, and (ii) believing that one has reasons both for this vulnerability to $x$ and for actions regarding $x$.29 So valuing is also a matter of being disposed to have certain emotional responses. As Kolodny points out in a footnote, valuing consists not only in a susceptibility to certain emotional responses, but also in certain beliefs: first, the belief that

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
something provides reasons for this susceptibility and, second, the belief that something provides one with reasons for action.\footnote{See footnote 20 in Kolodny (2003).} When we value something instrumentally we value $x$ as a way of bringing about or realizing some distinct $\Gamma$ or some state of affairs involving $\Gamma$ (by causing $\Gamma$, partly constituting $\Gamma$, or being partly constituted by $\Gamma$).\footnote{Ibid, p. 150.} This is not valuing $x$ finally because we see some distinct $\Gamma$ as the source of our reasons for valuing $x$. To value something finally is to value it for its own sake. To value $x$ \emph{finally} is both to value $x$ and to see $x$ as the source of one’s reasons for valuing. In this case, one both (a) is emotionally vulnerable to $x$ and for actions regarding $x$ and (b) believes that the source of the reasons is $x$ itself.\footnote{Ibid.}

\emph{Tying things together}

So romantic love, then, involves the valuation of the qualities that a person has as well as “a final valuation of a relationship, from the perspective of a participant in that relationship, and a nonfinal, noninstrumental\footnote{Such that it is not the case that A’s reasons for being emotionally vulnerable to B is that doing so would bring about an instance of r, where r is a relationship.} value of one’s [beloved].”\footnote{Ibid.} I believe that the first type of valuation (the nonfinal valuation of the qualities that a person has) is a necessary additional valuation if what we have to say is to apply to romantic love. Our preferences for qualities are what warrant our desires for a relationship which Kolodny takes to be what love is warranted by. Romantic love, in other words, is a response that consists, in part, in seeking out and appreciating the qualities that the beloved has to offer. The appreciation of these qualities puts us in a position to want to give rise to the activities characteristic of the particular patterns of concern associated with romantic relationships. Additionally, once these relationships are created and cultivated

\footnote{See footnote 20 in Kolodny (2003).}
\footnote{Ibid, p. 150.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Such that it is not the case that A’s reasons for being emotionally vulnerable to B is that doing so would bring about an instance of r, where r is a relationship.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
they give us insistent reasons\textsuperscript{35} for present concern in our relationships. That is, ceasing to have the relevant kind of concern within the context of an established and valuable romantic relationship is inappropriate. Kolodny provides a couple instances of this. One can fall out of love in response to a belief that one’s partner does not or never did have concern for them. A person’s attitudes can change in response to the belief that their lover has failed to act on the reasons that the relationship provides, even if the lover still has the concern that constitutes the relationship like in the case of cheating. Also, as Kolodny alludes to, “there is the psychologically real, but metaphysically vexed phenomenon of no longer identifying the person now before [you] with the person with whom once had a relationship.”\textsuperscript{36} A person might also find that they are no longer attracted to the beloved. Participating in the characteristic activities no longer engages one. Perhaps this is due to changes in one’s self, in what attracts one, or changes in one’s beloved in regard to the features to which one was once attracted. To the extent that the relationship is marked by attraction, loss of attraction may mean a change in the relationship. It may mean, for example, the end of a specifically romantic relationship.\textsuperscript{37}

\textit{Romantic Love and Exclusivity}

The compatibility of the reasons-responsive theory and our desire for exclusivity in our romantic relationships is straightforward. We love our particular beloveds exclusively for their set of qualities. Although I do not disagree with Velleman in his claim that all persons have some value qua person that grounds our loving them, I, instead doubt whether this is the value that

\textsuperscript{35} The presence of either an insistent or a noninsistent reason renders the presence of some characteristic response appropriate or reasonable. If the only reason for a response is a noninsistent reason, then while it is reasonable to have the response, it is not unreasonable to fail to have it. Insistent reasons require a response, whereas noninsistent reasons leave it optional.

\textsuperscript{36} Kolodny (2003), p.165.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, p.166.
grounds our *romantic* love. The value that we seem to respond to in our romantic relationships is to the qualities about the beloved. It is by the appreciation of these qualities that we prize things more than others.

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

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

> Adults often confuse us further by saying that we’re special because no one else is quite like us—as if the valuing attaching to us, and to everyone else as well, was that of being qualitatively unique… How valuable can our uniqueness make us if everyone is unique? We sense a similar paradox in attempts to elicit our childish awe at individual snowflakes, of which (they say) no two are alike. Why get excited about any one unprecedented snowflake, when its lack of precedence is so well preceded?^{38}

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

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I have said that the quality theory is compatible with our desire for exclusivity. But what if the beloved set is duplicated in multiple individuals? Will that not violate our desire for exclusivity in romantic relationships? My response is that while this seems to be a theoretical problem, it is not a problem that we have to worry about practically. That there is another person that shares exactly the qualities that another person has and in the exact same way is rather implausible. But supposing that there were such a case where $x$ and $y$ only and all the same qualities in exactly the same way, it is not immediately clear to me that the exclusivity principle would be violated. It requires only that we love one person at a time. If $x$ and $y$ are identical, it is not clear that there are two objects being loved.

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

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

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


