

Fitting Love and Reasons for Loving

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1. Introduction

Suppose Sam happens by a stray boot in the park and spontaneously comes to love it deeply and dearly. He wraps the boot in a blanket before placing it in the front seat of his car and, prior to driving off, makes sure it's buckled in safely. Sam tends to his beloved boot for years thereafter, relishing his time with it, and dreading any time he must spend in its absence.

We feel Sam's attitude is perverse. We want to say that his love for the boot is unintelligible, irrational, or crazy—that it's unfitting to feel the way that he does about it. We would feel the same way about someone in love with sour milk, Trump's literary style, or the number 246. This suggests that love is the sort of attitude that can be fitting or unfitting to its object. And this, in turn, raises the question: what sorts of considerations *make* love fitting?

This paper defends the following, simple answer: What makes love fitting are the lovable qualities of the beloved. Just as a person's admirable qualities make that person fitting to admire, and an outcome's desirable qualities make that outcome fitting to desire, the lovable qualities of the beloved are what make the beloved fitting to love. This is the so-called "quality view."¹

The quality view promises a highly natural account of what kinds of considerations can make love fitting. Moreover, it has a number of theoretical virtues. For example, it offers a simple and elegant explanation of our reaction to Sam's bizarre love for his boot: Sam's love is unfitting because it's based either on lovable qualities his (unlovable) boot lacks, or on qualities of the boot that don't make it lovable.

But despite its attractions, the quality view is often quickly dismissed in the recent literature on love. This is because the view seems to face a battery of embarrassing difficulties. If you have lovable qualities that make it fitting for me to love you, does that mean that it's fitting for me to love anyone who has those qualities? (The problem of promiscuity.) That if someone is more lovable than you, it's fitting for me to love her more? (The problem of trading up.) That if you lose your lovable qualities, it would be

¹ Proponents of (some version of) the quality view include Badhwar (1987), Delaney (1996), Velleman (1999), Keller (2000), Abramson and Leite (2011), Jollimore (2011), and Protasi (2016).

unfitting to love you? (The problem of inconstancy.) That it's fitting for anyone who's aware of your qualities to love you, too? (The problem of universality.)²

And that's just a sample. In addition to the "big four" listed above, the quality view seems to face several other difficulties. But in this paper I'll address each of the putative problems facing the quality view. The defense is intended to be comprehensive.

One notable virtue of the approach I'll recommend is that it doesn't rely on a substantive account of the particular properties that comprise lovability. In this respect my defense differs from extant defenses of the quality view, all of which attempt to answer the various problems the view appears to face by advancing and defending highly specific accounts of the qualities that make people lovable. Each such defense of the quality view is correspondingly committal in this regard. But my own defense is not. I'll remain neutral with respect to the issue of exactly what properties comprise lovability.

2. Preliminaries

Love is complicated. I won't try to give an exhaustive account of its nature. Occasionally I will make a claim about love's essence, but when I do the claim will be uncontroversial. Is love an emotion (Brown 1987)? Does it constitutively involve a desire for union with the beloved (Nozick 1989)? Does it lie in the essence of love that if you love someone, then you take his interests as reasons to serve those interests (Frankfurt 2004)? I don't know. I won't take a stand. For now I assume only that love is properly understood as a distinctive kind of attitude that we might take toward persons or things.

Most parties to the debate concerning what kinds of considerations can make love fitting focus only on *personal* love—i.e., love that takes a person as its object.³ These authors offer accounts of what makes it fitting to love romantic partners, family members, friends, colleagues, etc. But I won't limit myself in this way here. Although most of my examples will concern personal love, the version of the quality view that I'll defend in this paper can easily be generalized to cover love for favored animals, football teams, films, and fiction. I take this to be a considerable advantage of the account.

A few words about what the quality view is and is not. The quality view, as I'll understand it, claims that the kinds of considerations that can make love fitting are specifically *intrinsic* qualities of the beloved, such as his kindness, wit, empathy, and grace. Some authors explicitly or implicitly regard themselves (or are regarded by others) as quality theorists, but suggest that extrinsic qualities of the beloved can make love fitting (e.g., Keller 2000, Protasi 2016). But I find this suggestion unattractive. One reason is

² I borrow the names for these problems from Jollimore (2011).

³ Some limit their focus even further to "reactive" love between adults (Abramson and Leite 2011), or to romantic love (Protasi 2016), or to a specific species of romantic love between adults (Bagley 2015).

that quality theorists who hold that only intrinsic qualities of the beloved can make love fitting can easily accommodate the natural and plausible thought that what makes love fitting must be something about the beloved *in her own right*—qualities the beloved possesses in virtue of the way that she herself, and nothing else, is. But quality theorists who claim that extrinsic qualities can make love fitting can't also claim this virtue. Still, this isn't a hill worth dying on.⁴ None of the arguments I'll advance in this paper contradict the claim that, in principle, certain extrinsic qualities could make love fitting.⁵

Now for what the quality view is not. The kind of quality view I'm concerned to defend does not imply that lovable qualities are the *objects* of love. When you tell your beloved that you love her on account of her remarkable poise, you aren't thereby claiming that the object of your love is your beloved's *poise*. Instead, what you're claiming is that you love *your beloved*, and that her remarkable poise partly grounds (or makes *pro tanto* fitting) that love. The version of the quality view that I'll defend in this paper doesn't contradict this plausible diagnosis. The kind of quality view that I'm interested in claims that the lovable qualities of your beloved are what make your love for her *fitting*. It doesn't claim, implausibly, that these lovable qualities are the objects of your love.

Next, some remarks about *fittingness*. The fittingness relation can be glossed as the relation in which a response stands to an object when the object merits—or is worthy of—that response. The quality view is thus the view that what makes someone merit love—what makes him worthy of it—are the lovable (intrinsic) qualities he possesses. To characterize fittingness a bit further, we can note some connections it bears to certain other normative properties. There's wide consensus that something is *valuable* just in case it's fitting to value, and that parallel equivalences hold between more specific value properties and the fittingness of certain, correspondingly specific ways of valuing. For example, it's very plausible that someone is *admirable* just in case she's fitting to admire, and that something is *desirable* just in case it's fitting to desire. There's also some consensus that fittingness is a permissive rather than a requiring notion. You're not required to value everything that merits being valued (let alone to love everyone who's worthy of love), though it is plausible that, at least other things equal, you're permitted to do so.⁶

⁴ Thanks to Geoff Sayre-McCord and Jonathan Way for convincing me of this.

⁵ The "certain" qualifier is important: later, I'll consider and reject "the relationship view" of what makes love fitting, according to which your beloved's having the extrinsic property of being in a valuable relationship with you is what makes your love for him fitting (Hurka 1997, Kolodny 2003). But this view is also rejected (for different reasons) by even those "quality theorists" who allow that certain extrinsic qualities can make love fitting. As far as I can tell, the only disagreement between these latter theorists and relationship theorists concerns exactly *which* extrinsic qualities can make love fitting.

⁶ For discussion, see especially McHugh and Way (2016).

And lastly, it's widely held that facts that make attitudes fitting provide (normative) reasons for those attitudes. For example, if the fact that you're intelligent makes you fitting to admire, then, plausibly, that fact provides a reason to admire you. Similarly, if the fact that you're empathetic makes you fitting to love, then that fact plausibly provides a reason to love you. So there seems to be necessary covariance, at least in one direction, between the fittingness relation and the reason relation. But beyond these reasonably clear connections, the question of how fittingness metaphysically relates to other normative properties lies fairly open. In a way, this will be our main topic of discussion.⁷

Finally, let me be clear that, aside from the motivation for the idea sketched at the outset of this paper, I'll provide no positive argument that love can be properly assessed as fitting or unfitting to its object. I'll simply be assuming that this is so in what follows. This assumption is somewhat controversial, though increasingly less so. Most authors who argue that love can't be fitting (or unfitting) appeal to either (or both) of two considerations: (1) that no existing account of what makes love fitting is satisfactory; and (2) that love is nonvoluntary (or, as it's sometimes more poetically put, "blind"), and so isn't subject to the relevant kind of normative assessment.⁸ But responses to the latter consideration have been rehearsed (*ad nauseum*) in the literature on love,⁹ and the defense of the quality view I'll provide in this paper yields a counterexample to the former.

3. The Big Four

I'll start by addressing the "big four" objections to the quality view: the problems of promiscuity, trading up, inconstancy, and universality. I'll suggest a unified solution to all four problems, as opposed to piecemeal solutions to each. Then, a bit later (in section 5), I'll draw on certain components of my proposed solution to the "big four," in order to address the remaining difficulties (purportedly) faced by the quality view.

Let's begin by rehashing the "big four." The quality view claims that what makes love fitting are the lovable qualities of the beloved. This seems to imply (1) that if your beloved has lovable qualities that make her fitting to love, then it's fitting for you to love anyone who has those qualities (the problem of promiscuity); (2) that if someone is more lovable than your beloved, it's fitting for you to love him more (the problem of trading up); (3) that if your beloved loses her lovable qualities, it would be unfitting for you

⁷ For historical discussions of the notion of fittingness, see, among others, Brentano (1889/2009) and Ewing (1948). For more recent discussions of the notion, see in particular D'Arms and Jacobson (2000), Chappell (2012), McHugh and Way (2016), and Howard (2018, FC).

⁸ See, for example, Frankfurt (1999) and Zangwill (2013).

⁹ One of the earliest responses is due to Kolodny (2003), the most recent to Naar (2017).

to love her (the problem of inconstancy); and (4) that it's fitting for anyone who's aware of your beloved's lovable qualities to love him, too (the problem of universality).

My response is straightforward: I accept all of these implications. I accept, for example, that if newcomer Max really is more lovable than your beloved partner George, then it is fitting for you love Max more than George; that if George loses all of his lovable qualities, it *would* be unfitting for you to love him; and that if George has lovable qualities that make him fitting to love, then it would be equally fitting for you to love absolutely anyone else who happens to have those very same qualities. But what I deny, crucially, is that from the fact that it would be *fitting* (unfitting) for you to love someone, it necessarily follows that you have sufficient reason (not) to do so. To claim otherwise would be to fall victim to what Justin D'Arms and Dan Jacobson (2000) call the "conflation problem": the problem of conflating the fact that it's fitting to feel a certain way with the fact that there is sufficient (or decisive) reason for that feeling.¹⁰ I submit that this move mitigates the force of the "big four" considerably if not entirely. The quality theorist can happily accept, e.g., that if someone is more lovable than your beloved, then it would be *fitting* for you to love that person more, without being committed to the implausible claim that you thereby have sufficient all-things-considered reason to do so.

So quality theorists should deny that facts about which attitudes are fitting necessarily amount to facts about which attitudes there's sufficient reason to have. Is this plausible? Yes. Although rejecting the relevant equivalence between *fittingness* and *reasons* isn't uncontroversial, the position has many proponents (see, e.g., Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004, Danielsson and Olson 2007, Rosen 2015, Howard FC).¹¹ And the work the distinction does for quality theorists, in particular, suggests that they should follow suit. And notice that the move in question doesn't commit the quality theorist to denying the very plausible claim that considerations that make love fitting provide genuine reasons for love. The quality theorist can maintain that the lovable

¹⁰ D'Arms and Jacobson (2000) introduce and discuss the conflation problem in a different context. They present the problem as a difficulty for certain forms of neo-sentimentalism. In particular, they argue that existing neo-sentimentalist theories lack the resources necessary to distinguish moral and prudential assessments of certain sentiments from assessments of the appropriateness, or fittingness, of those sentiments. According to D'Arms and Jacobson, this poses a threat to the (neo-)sentimentalist idea that values are grounded in the sentiments: very roughly, if sentimentalists can't draw the relevant distinction, then this undermines their analyses of value properties (or terms or concepts). But as many have noted, the conflation problem isn't a problem only for sentimentalists—it's relevant to a variety of other debates, as well. For discussion of the generality of the problem, see Schroeder (2010).

¹¹ For two prominent, recent defenses of the equivalence in question, see Shah (2006) and Way (2012). For my response to the former, see Howard (2016a); for my response to the latter, see Howard (2016b).

qualities of people provide genuine “fit-related reasons” for loving them; she just has to hold that fit-related reasons for love aren’t the *only* reasons for love that there are.

What other sorts of considerations might provide reasons for love? Notice that each of the purportedly implausible implications of the quality view we’ve considered so far seems implausible only if we assume the presence of a valuable, loving relationship. Take the problem of trading up. If you’re not in a valuable, loving relationship with George, then why *shouldn’t* you love Max more than George, if Max is more lovable? And this point generalizes to all the “big four” problems facing the quality view. Consider the problem of promiscuity. If Maxine has lovable qualities that make her fitting to love, and you’re not already in a valuable relationship with someone else, then why shouldn’t you love Maxine, or anyone else who shares her lovable features? Or take the problem of universality. If you’re not in a valuable relationship with Max, then why shouldn’t anyone who’s similarly unattached and aware of his lovable qualities love him, too? And consider finally the problem of inconstancy. If Maxine is truly unlovable, and you’re not already in a valuable, loving relationship with her, then, barring reasons of beneficence, why think you have any reason to love Maxine at all?

What all this reveals, I think, is that valuable loving relationships have normative significance for love.¹² In particular, since loving someone with whom you’re in a valuable relationship is necessary for the continued existence of that relationship, the presence of the relationship provides derivative “value-related” reasons for love. For example, in cases in which, intuitively, I shouldn’t trade up, what explains this is the presence of value-related reasons, which are (ultimately) provided by the value of my extant relationship. Similarly, in a situation in which my beloved loses her lovable qualities, but it seems that I shouldn’t cease loving her, this is due to my value-related reasons to continue loving her, which derive from our valuable relationship. And similar appeals to the presence of value-related reasons provided by valuable, loving relationships are, I think, sufficient to adequately explain the rest of the relevant data.

The picture that emerges is this. The considerations that make love fitting are the lovable qualities of the beloved. These qualities provide genuine (fit-related) reasons for love. But the fit-related reasons provided by a person’s lovable qualities aren’t necessarily the only reasons to love him. If you’re in a valuable, loving relationship with the relevant person, then, in addition to the fit-related reasons to love him, you have value-related reasons to love him, which derive from the value of your valuable, loving relationship. This is the picture of fitting love and reasons for loving I think the quality theorist should adopt.

¹² That valuable relationships have normative significance for love shouldn’t be all that surprising. As I noted earlier, a number of writers have suggested as much (see note 5). But the specific account of the normative significance of valuable relationships for love I’ll proceed to offer is, in fact, a new suggestion.

4. The Relationship View

On the picture I've suggested, the normative significance of a valuable relationship for love consists in its being a source of value-related reasons for love. Valuable relationships are normatively significant for love, on my account, because they contribute to explanations of why your continued love for your beloved would be somehow valuable, or *good*. But Niko Kolodny (2003) offers a different account of the normative significance of valuable relationships for love. He claims that the fact that you have a valuable relationship with your beloved is what makes your love for her *fitting*. This is the "relationship view" of what makes love fitting.¹³ It is the quality view's main competitor. But in this section I'll argue that the relationship view is false: the fact that your beloved has a valuable relationship with you does not (and indeed, cannot) make your love for her fitting.

My argument against the relationship view is simple. Part of what it is to love someone is to value him noninstrumentally, for his own sake. If you don't value someone noninstrumentally, you don't love him at all. So whatever suffices to make love fitting must also make fitting noninstrumental valuation of the beloved. But a fact can make it fitting to value someone (or something) noninstrumentally only if that fact makes that person (or thing) noninstrumentally valuable. And while there are likely many facts about your beloved in virtue of which she's valuable for her own sake, the fact that she has a valuable relationship with you is not plausibly among them. So the fact that your beloved has a valuable relationship with you doesn't make it fitting to value her for her own sake. It follows that this fact can't make your love for your beloved fitting.¹⁴

I take it to be obvious that loving someone essentially involves valuing him for his own sake and that it follows from this that whatever suffices to make love fitting must also make fitting noninstrumental valuation of the beloved. These claims seem uncontroversial. I also take it to be obvious that a given fact can make it fitting to value someone (or something) noninstrumentally only if that fact makes that person (or thing)

¹³ As noted above (see note 5), Kolodny isn't the only defender of the relationship view. I focus on Kolodny, and his version of the view, because he's offered the most sustained defense of it. That said, the argument that I provide in this section generalizes to apply to any version of the relationship view.

¹⁴ Several authors have argued that a valuable loving relationship isn't necessary for fitting love, focusing on cases of fitting love at first sight, and fitting unrequited love (Setiya 2014, Protasi 2016, Clausen MS). The arguments offered by these authors seem to me to be successful, but the argument I've just offered above is in an important way stronger, since it purports to show that a valuable loving relationship isn't *sufficient* for fitting love. This is a stronger conclusion, because the claim that a valuable relationship isn't necessary for fitting love is compatible with the possibility that fitting love is "multiply realizable"—that a person's (intrinsic) qualities *or* a valuable relationship with that person could make love for that person fitting. But the claim that a valuable loving relationship isn't sufficient for fitting love entirely rules out the possibility that such a relationship could (ever) make love fitting.

noninstrumentally valuable. This much follows from the equivalence of being (noninstrumentally) valuable and being fitting to value (noninstrumentally). The above argument, then, turns entirely on the substantive, axiological premise that your beloved isn't made noninstrumentally valuable by the fact that she has a valuable relationship with you. Two clarifying points regarding this claim are worth making. First, in advancing the claim in question, I'm not suggesting that your beloved *lacks* noninstrumental value, and thus that it's unfitting to value her for her own sake. Rather, I'm claiming only that the particular fact that your beloved has a valuable relationship with you isn't among the facts that *make* her noninstrumentally valuable, and so fitting to value as such.

Second, in claiming that the relevant relational fact about your beloved isn't one in virtue of which she's of noninstrumental value, I'm not presupposing that it's impossible for noninstrumental value to be grounded in a relational fact. That would be (close to) question-begging against the relationship view, given the plausibility of the essentialist claim that loving someone constitutively involves valuing him for his own sake.¹⁵ Moreover, while I'm not particularly persuaded by the proposal, a number of philosophers at least tentatively endorse the idea that relational facts do sometimes ground noninstrumental value (Beardsley 1965, Korsgaard 1983, Kagan 1998, Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000).¹⁶ For example, Shelly Kagan suggests that the pen that Abraham Lincoln used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation might be valuable for its own sake in virtue of the (relational) fact that it was used by Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. And Kolodny (2003) himself suggests that human remains have noninstrumental value in virtue of the relation they bear to the human whose remains they are. These claims may seem plausible. But my suggestion is that it's not similarly plausible that your beloved has noninstrumental value in virtue of the particular relational fact that she has a valuable relationship with you. So I'm not necessarily opposed *in principle* to the idea that relational facts can ground noninstrumental value; instead, I'm (officially) opposed only to this very specific instance of the idea's application.

My claim that your beloved's being in a valuable relationship with you isn't a consideration in virtue of which he's valuable for his own sake is, I think, intuitively compelling. However, one might think that at least Kolodny's version of the relationship view has the resources to resist it. To see why, we need to get a little more of Ko-

¹⁵ Another would-be question-begging assumption is that loving someone essentially involves valuing that person not just noninstrumentally, but *intrinsically*, i.e., in her own right. As I indicated earlier, I find this idea very plausible. However, since it's clearly question begging, I won't rely on it here.

¹⁶ For a recent argument that relational facts can't ground noninstrumental value, see Tucker (2016). And for further resistance to the idea, see Zimmerman (2011). And note if that either of these authors is correct—if relational facts *can't* ground noninstrumental value—the relationship view is a non-starter.

lodny's view on the table. So consider first that, according to Kolodny, loving relationships have noninstrumental value in addition to any purely instrumental value they might provide.¹⁷ Moreover, loving relationships are individuated, in part, by their participants: your loving relationship with your beloved wouldn't be the particular relationship that it is if either you or your beloved didn't figure in it. So on Kolodny's picture, the fact that your beloved has a valuable loving relationship with you entails the fact that she's a constitutive part of a noninstrumentally valuable whole, viz., your loving relationship. And perhaps one might think that this relational fact about your beloved does in fact make her noninstrumentally valuable, since one might suspect that, as a fully general matter, the fact that something is a constitutive part of a noninstrumentally valuable whole suffices to make that thing itself noninstrumentally valuable.¹⁸

But this suspicion would be mistaken. The fact that something is a constitutive part of a noninstrumentally valuable whole does not thereby make that thing noninstrumentally valuable. To borrow a nice example from Nicholas Stang (2012), consider a Beethoven piano sonata with a particularly dramatic rest. The rest is a constitutive part of the sonata, and the sonata (let's assume) is a noninstrumentally valuable whole. But the rest itself has no noninstrumental value—it's not fitting to value for its own sake.

¹⁷ Specifically, Kolodny suggests that certain types of loving relationships have *final value*, where something is finally valuable just in case it's both noninstrumentally and intrinsically valuable. For some criticism of the proposal that relationships (of any type) have final value, see esp. Keller (2013).

¹⁸ Strictly speaking, I take it that, on Kolodny's picture, the fact that your beloved has a noninstrumentally valuable relationship with you *grounds* (rather than merely "entails") the fact that she's a constitutive part of a noninstrumentally valuable whole. If this is right, then the former fact would *mediately* ground the fact that your beloved has noninstrumental value, insofar as the latter fact immediately grounds this fact (on the distinction between mediate and immediate grounds, see Fine 2012). And this would seem to suffice: the fact that your beloved has a noninstrumentally valuable relationship with you would (mediately) make it the case that she's valuable for her own sake (and so fitting to value as such). I omit from the main text this more precise explication of the suggestion under consideration for ease of exposition; I include it here because I simply can't help myself. Also, I should register that this is the best I can do to construct a possible rationale for thinking that being in a noninstrumentally valuable relationship with someone could make that person valuable for her own sake. Kolodny seems to suggest that it's fitting for you to love your beloved (and thus to value her for her own sake) in virtue of some relation she bears to your noninstrumentally valuable relationship (Kolodny 2003, pp. 156-7). Unfortunately, he never specifies what this relation is, and I can't think of another candidate other than that of *being a constitutive part*. Since Kolodny thinks that relationships are individuated in part by their participants, I don't think he'd disagree that your beloved *does* bear this relation to your relationship. So I suspect Kolodny's thinking is that it's fitting for you to love your beloved (and so to value her for her own sake) in virtue of the fact that she's a constitutive part of your noninstrumentally valuable relationship. But as I'll go on to argue, this is ultimately misguided.

ke. Rather the rest is fitting to value only in virtue of its constitutive contribution to a larger whole—the sonata—which is itself fitting to value for its own sake. And as a perfectly general matter: if something is fitting to value in virtue of its constitutive contribution to a (noninstrumentally) valuable whole, that thing isn't fitting to value *for its own sake* in virtue of its contribution. So the fact that something is a constitutive part of a noninstrumentally valuable whole doesn't suffice to make that thing, itself, noninstrumentally valuable. And so contrary to the suggestion we're currently considering, the fact that your beloved is a constitutive part of your noninstrumentally valuable relationship is not plausibly a fact in virtue of which she has noninstrumental value.

I can think of only one other way in which relationship theorists might try to defend the idea that your beloved's being in a valuable relationship with you is among the considerations that make him noninstrumentally valuable. They might admit that the relevant relational fact about your beloved is not one in virtue of which he's of *agent-neutral* noninstrumental value, but maintain that it is one in virtue of which he's of *agent-relative* noninstrumental value. In particular, relationship theorists might propose that the fact that your beloved has a valuable relationship with you makes him noninstrumentally valuable *relative-to-you*. They might then suggest that once the relevant relativization is made explicit, the axiological claim under consideration seems far more plausible.

This suggestion is difficult (for me) to evaluate. That is because I have no grip on the notion of agent-relative value, and so no idea what it would mean to say that your beloved is “valuable for her own sake relative-to-you” in virtue of the fact that she has a valuable relationship with you. But I am not alone in, nor plausibly at fault for, my befuddlement. For as many authors have observed, the notion of agent-relative value is of questionable intelligibility.¹⁹ Indeed, as Mark Schroeder (2007) has forcefully argued, it's not at all clear what it means to say that something (or someone) is valuable-relative-to-you, if this is meant to be distinct from saying, for example, that that thing is valuable *for* you, or something you believe to be (agent-neutrally) valuable.²⁰ But with no independ-

¹⁹ See, *inter alia*, Dancy (2000), Schroeder (2007), Zimmerman (2011), Maguire (2016), and Hurley (2017).

²⁰ Schroeder (2007) canvasses and rejects several suggestions for how to understand ‘agent-relative value.’ Suikkanen (2009) offers an account that Schroeder doesn't consider, and which avoids Schroeder's criticisms, but which faces other difficulties due to Zimmerman (2011). I think it's fair to say that no proposal about how to understand the notion of agent-relative value has gained wide acceptance. And note that for the relationship theorist's purposes, not just any (reasonable) proposal will do. For in order to respond adequately to the current objection, the relationship theorist's account of agent-relative value must entail a certain connection between agent-relative value and fittingness. In particular, it must predict that facts that make something noninstrumentally valuable relative-to-someone make it fitting for that person to value that thing noninstrumentally. Perhaps the most obvious way to ensure this result would be to claim that while agent-neutrally valuable things are

ent grasp of the notion of agent-relative value, it would seem difficult if not impossible to evaluate the relative plausibility of the proposal that your beloved's having a valuable relationship with you makes him valuable for his own sake relative-to-you. And at any rate, insofar as agent-relative value does look philosophically dubious, the relationship view's commitment to its existence would make the view correspondingly less attractive. And notice that neither the account of what makes love fitting that I've offered above, nor the supplementary account of the normative significance of valuable relationships with which I've proposed to pair it, comes with this commitment. Indeed, no component of the picture that I've suggested requires commitment to the existence of agent-relative value, or to any other, similarly suspect "philosopher's trinket." So even if relationship theorists opt for the response under consideration, they do so only at the cost of accruing significant theoretical disadvantage. And given the current dialectical situation, theoretical disadvantage isn't something that relationship theorists can afford to accrue, since the principal motivation for their view over the quality view lies in its purported ability to avoid the (putative) difficulties faced by the latter; difficulties that, as I'm currently in the process of arguing, the quality view does not, in fact, face.²¹

That concludes my defense of the claim that your beloved's being in a valuable relationship with you isn't among the considerations that make her noninstrumentally valuable. I can think of no other way for relationship theorists to resist this claim beyond those discussed. Since whatever makes love fitting must also make fitting noninstrumental valuation of the beloved, and since a fact can't make it fitting to value someone noninstrumentally unless that fact makes her noninstrumentally valuable, it follows from the claim in question that the fact that you have a valuable relationship with your beloved does not (and indeed, cannot) make your love for her fitting. The relationship view is false.

things that are fitting for *everyone* to value, agent-relatively valuable things are things that are fitting for *someone*, but not everyone, to value. However, as Schroeder (2007) convincingly argues, this way of drawing the distinction can't be right. For suppose some outcome *O* is overall agent-neutrally valuable, but that *O* is overall disvaluable "relative-to-you." If agent-neutral and agent-relative value are distinct kinds of value, then this situation should be possible. But on the way of drawing the distinction we're currently considering, it isn't. For on the proposal under consideration, if an outcome is overall agent-neutrally valuable, then it's fitting for everyone, including you, to value. So in the situation described, it's fitting for you to value *O*. But by hypothesis, *O* is overall *disvaluable* relative-to-you, and so not an outcome that's fitting for you to value. So this way of drawing the distinction can't be right.

²¹ That the main attraction of the relationship view is its (purported) ability to avoid the putative difficulties facing the quality view is evident from the discussion in Kolodny (2003); see also Naar (2017).

5. Modes of Love and the Amnesiac Biographer

I've just argued that the relationship view offers an unsatisfactory account of the normative significance of valuable relationships for love, since it claims that the normative significance of a valuable relationship for love consists in its making love fitting, and valuable relationships do not (and cannot) make love fitting. And just prior to that, I argued that by accepting a certain picture of fitting love and reasons for loving, quality theorists can easily avoid the "big four" problems standardly raised against them. However, two (putative) problems for the quality view remain: the problems of "modes" and "amnesia" (Kolodny 2003). So in this section, I'll draw on certain components of my solution to the "big four" in order to address these remaining difficulties.

Consider first the problem of modes. You probably do—and more importantly for our purposes, *ought to*—love your romantic partner in a way that's very different from the manner in which, e.g., his mother ought to love him. For the quality theorist, the problem of modes is the problem of explaining why this should be. If your partner's qualities are what make it fitting for both you and his mother to love him, then why should the particular ways in which you and his mother love your partner differ so considerably?

The picture of fitting love and reasons for loving I've proposed suggests a simple answer. What explains the fact that you ought to love your partner in a way that's very different from the manner in which his mother ought to love him has nothing to do with the fit-related reasons provided by your partner's lovable qualities, but rather everything to do with the value-related reasons provided by the value of your loving relationship. On the account that I've suggested, you have value-related reasons to love your partner because your continued love for him is necessary for the continued existence of your valuable, loving relationship. And the same goes for your partner's mother. But crucially, the value-related reasons provided by your respective relationships don't favor loving your partner in precisely the same *ways*. This is for the simple reason that the kind of love that would facilitate the continued existence of your relationship with your romantic partner is very different from the kind of love that would facilitate the continued existence of his relationship with his mother. And so the value-related reasons provided by your respective relationships favor loving your partner in rather *different* ways. And that is why, despite the fact that your partner's lovable qualities are what make it fitting for both you and his mother to love him, the particular kinds of love that you and your partner's mother ought to feel for your partner differ so considerably. So quality theorists who accept the picture of fitting love and reasons for loving that I've proposed have a simple and intuitive answer to the problem of modes.

Consider next the problem of amnesia. The problem of amnesia, as Kolodny characterizes it, is the problem of explaining why the loss of certain memories extin-

guishes love. Assuming (as we have been) that love is an attitude we can hold for reasons, a natural explanation of this phenomenon is, as Kolodny suggests, that the amnesia victim loses cognitive access to his reasons for love. And if this is right, then, according to Kolodny, quality theorists would need to explain amnesia's effect on love by appeal to its effect on the lover's awareness of the beloved's qualities. But in some cases, such an explanation seems unavailable. For example, suppose Tom is somehow highly knowledgeable about someone's personal qualities despite the fact that he's never met her—perhaps, to borrow Kolodny's example, Tom is a biographer who's produced a “strikingly intimate portrait” of his subject's life and character via the detailed testimonies of her family and friends (2003, p. 141). And suppose also that, eventually, Tom meets the person whose qualities he knows so well, that the two of them fall in love, and marry. But years later, Tom suffers severe memory loss. He can recall everything that happened to him up until a year before his relationship with his wife began, but his memories of everything that happened after are lost—Tom's forgotten his relationship with his wife. In this case, Kolodny claims that “we would not expect [Tom] to love [his wife], and indeed it is hard to see how he could” and that “[t]his is so even though [Tom's] beliefs about [his wife's] personal qualities, and his confidence in them, have changed only slightly, if at all” (ibid.). So, Kolodny concludes, in this case, amnesia's effect on love can't be explained by appeal to its effect on the lover's awareness of the beloved's qualities. So for quality theorists, the problem of amnesia is the problem of explaining why, in the kind of case just described—viz., a case in which the lover forgets his relationship with the beloved, but not the beloved's qualities—the lover's love disappears.

My response to the problem of amnesia proceeds in two steps. First, I think quality theorists should simply reject the demand to explain why forgetting a relationship with someone (whose qualities you continue to know) would extinguish your love for that person, since that seems like no fact at all. It is surely possible to love someone without believing you have (or had) a relationship with her. This happens all the time.²² So I think quality theorists should reject Kolodny's claim that, despite remaining fully aware of your beloved's qualities, forgetting your relationship would extinguish your love.²³

Still, something close to Kolodny's claim does seem plausible. For while it's not certain nor even necessarily likely that your love for your beloved would *disappear* in the kind of case we're considering, it does seem reasonable to expect that the character or intensity of the love that you feel for your beloved would *change*. Indeed, we can easily

²² As I noted earlier, it seems very plausible that a valuable loving relationship isn't necessary for fitting love (see note 14). And if it isn't, then, *a fortiori*, such a relationship isn't necessary for love, either.

²³ I'm not denying that it's *possible* that your love for your beloved would disappear if you forgot your relationship with her. But this (mere) possibility isn't a philosophically interesting explanandum.

imagine Tom, our amnesiac biographer, now loving his wife in the way that he did prior to their relationship, or in its early stages, rather than in the way that he came to love her after years of marriage. But if this is the datum that quality theorists need to be able to explain, then those who accept the picture of fitting love and reasons for loving that I've suggested can easily deliver—and this is the second step of my response. For as I just argued, value-related reasons provided by valuable relationships favor loving people in particular ways, viz., in ways that facilitate the continued existence of the relevant relationship. So, prior to Tom's memory loss, we can assume that he possessed value-related reasons provided by his valuable relationship to love his wife in a particular way, viz., in a way that would help to ensure that their relationship persists. But, as an effect of his memory loss, Tom *lost* those reasons, in the sense that the relevant reasons are no longer in his epistemic ken. And this, I think, easily suffices to explain why, as a result of his memory loss, the kind of love that Tom feels for his wife is different from the kind of love that he felt before: from Tom's epistemic perspective, there simply are no considerations that favor loving the woman before his eyes *as his wife*. And so he doesn't. So quality theorists who accept the picture of fitting love and reasons for loving that I've suggested have a natural and attractive answer to the problem of amnesia, too.

6. Still Weird and Trading Up Redux

I've now given my answers to each of the problems the quality view is often claimed to face. I know of no other challenges to the view in the literature.²⁴ But all of my answers to the problems putatively faced by the quality view turn on the specific picture of fitting love and reasons for loving I've proposed for it. So I'll conclude by considering some objections to that picture: what I call the "still weird" objection and the problem of trading up redux.

6.1 Still Weird

In response to the "big four," I argued that quality theorists should deny that facts about which attitudes are fitting necessarily amount to facts about which attitudes there is sufficient reason to have. Rejecting this equivalence allows quality theorists to deny that, necessarily, from the fact that it would be fitting for you to love someone, it follows that you have sufficient reason to love that person. And I claimed that this gambit mitigates the force of the "big four" considerably if not entirely. But isn't it *still weird* to think that

²⁴ There do of course remain challenges to specific *versions* of the quality view, i.e., to quality views that specify exactly what personal qualities comprise lovability. But my aim was never to defend a specific view about what qualities make people lovable. Instead my aim was to address each of the extant challenges to the claim that unites *all* versions of the quality view, viz., that what makes love fitting are lovable, personal qualities. And as I say above, I know of no further challenges to *this* claim in the literature.

it could be fitting for you to love someone else's partner (or child!) more than your own? And doesn't it sound *odd* to suggest that it would be unfitting for you to love someone whom you've loved for a lifetime if she lost the qualities that make her lovable, perhaps through no fault of her own? Questions like these constitute the core of the "still weird" objection. They rhetorically suggest that denying an equivalence between fittingness and reasons does not, in fact, do much to mitigate the force of the "big four."

In response, I think that once we're equipped with a proper understanding of the notion of fittingness, none of the purportedly peculiar implications of the kind of quality view I've been defending really do seem all that weird. Remember, the fittingness relation is the relation in which a response stands to an object when the object merits, or is worthy of, that response. So to say that it would be fitting for you to love someone else more than your beloved is to say only that that person merits or is worthy of more love than your beloved—i.e., that the relevant person is *more lovable*. And it would seem naïve and romantic (in a bad way) to deny the possibility that someone could be more lovable than your beloved—to believe that your beloved is the most lovable person there is. And the beauty, of course, is that he doesn't have to be; your beloved has other things going for him that suffice to make it the case that you have sufficient reason to love him more than any (even more lovable) alternative(s)—viz., he figures essentially in your valuable, loving relationship. And for broadly similar reasons, I don't find it problematic to hold that if your beloved loses his lovable qualities, it would be unfitting to love him. Indeed, one of the most wonderful things about the sort of love that we feel for those we love most is that it can (rightly) persist even if its object isn't worthy of it—i.e., even if there's nothing about our beloveds in virtue of which they *merit* the intense love that we feel for them. And I think that similarly plausible things can be said to mitigate any residual, apparent weirdness that might seem to attach to certain implications of the kind of quality view that I've been defending in this paper.

6.2 *Trading Up Redux*

I've argued that quality theorists can answer the problem of trading up in the same way they can answer the rest of the "big four" problems standardly raised against them: by rejecting an equivalence between the fittingness relation and the reason relation, and by supplementing their account of what makes love fitting with the substantive normative claim that valuable, loving relationships provide (derivative) value-related reasons for love. In a situation in which, intuitively, I shouldn't trade up, what explains this is the presence of value-related reasons, which are provided, ultimately, by the value of my current relationship. But suppose that someone is more lovable than

my beloved and that my relationship with that person would be even *better* than my current one. Why shouldn't I trade up then? This is the problem of trading up redux.²⁵

I'll offer two distinct and incompatible types of response to this problem. I think either type of response provides an adequate answer to the objection, but I want to remain neutral between them. I leave it to the reader to choose her own adventure.

The first type of response to the problem of trading up redux is what I call the "diehard romantic" response. According to the diehard romantic, the problem of trading up redux falsely presupposes the possibility of legitimate trade-offs between loving relationships. This is because, according to the diehard romantic, loving relationships have a kind of value that precludes this possibility—in Kant's terminology, they have a *dignity*, as opposed to a *price*.²⁶ And as a consequence, the kinds of justified trade-offs the possibility of which the problem of trading up redux presupposes are in fact impossible: your loving relationship is *irreplaceable* in the sense that it could never justifiably be sacrificed in exchange for another relationship (or anything else for that matter) of equal or greater worth. A corollary is that the value-related reasons provided by a prospectively valuable relationship can't possibly justify loving someone more than, or instead of, someone with whom you already have a valuable relationship. And so for the diehard romantic, the problem of trading up redux in fact presents no problem at all.²⁷

The diehard romantic response is not implausible. We certainly tend to treat and regard our most valued loving relationships as irreplaceable with potential alternatives. Indeed, we tend to value our loving relationships (and the loving relationships of others) in precisely the ways that Kant (and various Kantians) think that it's fitting for us to value things with a dignity—we respect, esteem, and revere them. So perhaps the correct response to the problem of trading up redux is that of the die-hard romantic.

Still, some will likely find the diehard romantic response objectionably saccharine. Is there really no possible situation in which it's permissible to swap for someone who might be a "better match?" Or some might simply prefer a less axiologically extravagant proposal—one which doesn't posit the special (spooky?) kind of value that Kant calls a

²⁵ It's important to note that the problem of trading up redux can (and will) be relevant only in those circumstances in which a new loving relationship would be incompatible with an existing loving relationship in the sense that the former couldn't be initiated and sustained without sacrificing the latter.

²⁶ Kant says that morality (and humanity insofar as it's capable of morality) is the only thing that has (or could possibly have) a dignity rather than a price (1785/1964, 4:435). But I see no reason to think that other kinds of entity couldn't also have this kind of value; see also Anderson (1993) and Velleman (1999).

²⁷ Of course, in order to guarantee the result that you ought *never* to trade up, the diehard romantic would also need to commit to the claim that the fit-related reasons provided by a prospective partner's lovable properties couldn't possibly justify your sacrificing an extant loving relationship, either. This is no doubt a strong claim, but presumably not too strong for the tastes of a "diehard romantic."

“dignity.” So to those who might harbor such worries, let me recommend an alternative response to the problem of trading up redux: what I call the “austere realist” response.

In contrast to the diehard romantic, the austere realist simply accepts the apparently problematic implication to which the problem of trading up redux points: if a new loving relationship with someone else would be discernably better than the loving relationship you currently have with your beloved, then, other things being equal, you have decisive all-things-considered reason to trade up. (Alternatively, if a new relationship would be *equally* valuable to your current one, then the austere realist accepts that, other things equal, you have sufficient all-things-considered reason to trade “sideways.”)

Now, to the diehard romantic, the austere realist response will likely seem harsh. But there are things that can be said to mitigate its initial abrasiveness. First, other things are not always equal. In many cases, ending a valuable relationship with your beloved in favor of a new relationship with someone else will come with heavy costs. The pains of heartbreak and loss are real. And at least sometimes, the great disvalue associated with these pains (and other possible costs of ending a valuable loving relationship) will be enough to tip the scales in favor of “making it work” with your current beloved.

Second, the austere realist might point out that, in many cases, even if a new relationship would in fact be better than (or equally as good as) your current relationship, this fact will lie beyond your epistemic ken. This is for the simple reason that, no matter how lovable someone is, we can in general have little to no idea *ex ante* of how valuable a loving relationship with that person would be. Accordingly, in many cases in which a new relationship would in fact be better than your current one, it won’t be the case that you ought to trade up relative to your perspective, i.e., your epistemic position.

Now, admittedly, the relevance of this last fact can vary depending on our view of the relationship between what you ought to do relative to your epistemic position and what you ought to do, full stop.²⁸ If we hold, as is increasingly popular, that what you ought full stop to do just is what you ought to do relative to your epistemic position, then it follows from our general ignorance about the value of prospective relationships that, in many cases, even if a new relationship would in fact be better than your current one, it won’t be the case that you ought to trade up, full stop. This kind of ‘perspectivism’ about what we ought full stop to do thus pairs nicely with the austere realist re-

²⁸ What you ought “full stop” to do is what you just plain ought to do. It is the (correct) answer to the central deliberative question, ‘What ought I to do?’ It is the ‘ought’ I’ve been referring to throughout this paper whenever I’ve used the term without relativization. I follow many in recognizing the existence of this unqualified ‘ought’ (see, e.g., Broome 2013, Lord 2015, Schroeder 2011, Zimmerman 2014).

sponse.²⁹ For if perspectivism is true, then the austere realist response predicts that you ought to trade up only if, relative to your current epistemic position, a new relationship would be better than your current one, and the value of the new relationship would be at least sufficient to outweigh whatever disvalue might be associated with leaving your current relationship. This may be unromantic, but it doesn't sound all that implausible.

But suppose we reject perspectivism, and instead accept *objectivism*—the view that what you ought full stop to do is determined by *all* the facts, irrespective of your perspective.³⁰ Still, our general ignorance about the value of prospective relationships remains relevant, albeit in a different way. For it's widely held (particularly among objectivists) that the facts about what we ought (and may) do should be separated from the hypological facts, the facts about what we can be fittingly blamed or praised for doing. And very plausibly, the hypological facts (as they pertain to you) *are* determined by your perspective (perhaps along with other variables). So even if objectivism is true, and the facts of your situation make it the case that you ought to trade up, you might blamelessly fail to do so. Indeed, in some such cases you might be *blameworthy* for trading up, if doing so is forbidden, relative to your perspective. So although the exact relevance of our ignorance concerning the value of prospective relationships can differ depending on whether we're objectivists or perspectivists, the fact of our ignorance in this regard seems to mitigate significantly the abrasiveness of the austere realist response, either way.

So the austere realist response isn't as harsh as it may initially seem. Still, it does predict that there are possible situations in which you have decisive (or sufficient) reason to trade up. But maybe this is exactly right. Perhaps, contrary to the diehard romantic, if it truly would be (objectively or perspectivally) better to be with someone other than your current beloved, then you really ought, all-things-considered, to be with him.

Now, as I said, I want to remain officially neutral between the austere realist response and that of the diehard romantic. The right route isn't clear to me. But as I also said, I think that either type of response is sufficient to answer the problem of trading up redux. So, I don't think this problem speaks decisively against the proposal of this paper.

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²⁹ Recent defenders of (some version of) perspectivism include Broome (2013), Kieseewetter (2011), Lord (2017), Mason (2013), Scanlon (2008), and Zimmerman (2014).

³⁰ Recent defenders of objectivism include Graham (2010) and Thomson (2008).

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