

Loving Someone in Particular*

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People loved for their beauty and cheerfulness are not loved as irreplaceable, yet people loved for “what their souls are made of” are. Or so literary romance implies; leading philosophical accounts, however, deny the distinction, holding that reasons for love either do not exist or do not include the beloved’s distinguishing features. In this, I argue, they deny an essential species of love. To account for it while preserving the beloved’s irreplaceability, I defend a model of agency on which people can love each other for identities still being created, through a kind of mutual improvisation.

Let me begin with a scene from one of the most famous—if problematic—novels about love ever written. In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Earnshaw consents to marry Edgar Linton, a perfectly eligible match. But she is ambivalent about it. So she asks Ellen Dean, her longtime servant and confidante, whether she ought to have done so. The following conversation (related from Ellen’s perspective) ensues:

“There are many things to be considered before that question can be answered properly,” I said sententiously. “First and foremost, do you love Mr. Edgar?”

“Who can help it? Of course I do,” she answered.

Then I put her through the following catechism: for a girl of twenty-two, it was not injudicious.

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“Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?”

“Nonsense, I do—that’s sufficient.”

“By no means; you must say why.”

“Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with.”

“Bad!” was my commentary.

“And because he is young and cheerful.”

“Bad, still.”

“And because he loves me.”

“Indifferent, coming there.”

“And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighborhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband.”

“Worst of all! And now, say how you love him.”

“As everybody loves—You’re silly, Nelly.”

“Not at all—Answer.”

“I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says—I love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely, and altogether. There now!”

“And why?”

“Nay—you are making a jest of it; it is exceedingly ill-natured! It’s no jest to me!” said the young lady, scowling, and turning her face to the fire.

“I’m very far from jesting, Miss Catherine,” I replied. “You love Mr. Edgar, because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you. The last, however, goes for nothing: you would love him without that, probably, and with it you wouldn’t, unless he possessed the four former attractions.”

“No, to be sure not—I should only pity him—hate him, perhaps, if he were ugly, and a clown.”

“But there are several other handsome, rich young men in the world; handsomer, possibly, and richer than he is. What should hinder you from loving them?”

“If there be any, they are out of my way—I’ve seen none like Edgar.”

“You may see some; and he won’t always be handsome, and young, and may not always be rich.”

“He is now; and I have only to do with the present—I wish you would speak rationally.”

“Well, that settles it—if you have only to do with the present, marry Mr. Linton.”¹

Ellen’s “catechism” strikingly anticipates the issues on which contemporary philosophical discussions of love focus and the features that leading accounts defend as necessary conditions for loving someone as a particular individual.² Harry Frankfurt, for instance, insists that someone loved

1. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, chap. 9; all subsequent references to this novel are also to this chapter.

2. As the word is used in contemporary English, many things other than persons can be loved: animals, inanimate objects, institutions, activities, abstract ideas, deities, and so on. Though my discussion touches on love for some of these things at points, I assume as a

in the best sense is valued as irreplaceable: if Catherine really loved Linton, it would not be a matter of indifference to her that she love him in particular, as opposed to anyone else with the same attractions. J. David Velleman stresses that love should involve a special openness to beloveds as they are in themselves, not just insofar as they serve your independent purposes or meet some prior standard. Catherine shouldn't love Linton just because he pleased her, or satisfied her vanity, and it's impossible to see her claim to love him indiscriminately and in total as other than a sarcastic parody of really loving attention. And Niko Kolodny emphasizes that love should be constant: it should endure through a very wide range of possible changes in a beloved. It shouldn't lapse, as Catherine's would, when beloveds lose their looks, youth, cheer, or wealth.³

Even more strikingly, however, the ideal of love the novel presents in opposition to the defective view represented in Catherine's initial responses is one that none of these philosophers can explain or even accommodate. For the real source of Catherine's ambivalence is that, as she well knows, she doesn't really love Linton at all. She really loves Heathcliff, the darkly romantic foundling. And she loves him for a very different kind of reason—"not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire."

Catherine's answer raises a puzzle. Why should qualities of Heathcliff's soul—or, less metaphorically, of his identity or character—do any better by the standards of Ellen's catechism than any of the qualities Catherine cited in Linton's case? Aren't the values with which Heathcliff identifies just as repeatable, in principle, as Linton's handsomeness or wealth and just as liable to undergo changes that real love should survive? Isn't their significance to Catherine just as circumscribed by her private interests and criteria, if not more so? Perhaps impressed by such questions, Frankfurt, Velleman, and Kolodny all defend theories on which the qualities of one's character and values are indeed no more suited to serve as reasons for love than any other quality of one's person. In this, they represent a broad consensus among analytic philosophers on love. But I will argue below that these philosophers are wrong and Catherine is right.

working hypothesis that there is a distinct, philosophically interesting species of love essentially focused on particular persons. It is with this species of love that the following is concerned.

3. Harry Frankfurt gives his theory its signature statement in "On Caring," in his *Necessity, Volition, and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 155–80, and its most refined one in *Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). J. David Velleman presents his view in "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109 (1999): 338–74, and elaborates it in "Beyond Price," *Ethics* 118 (2008): 191–212. Niko Kolodny's proposal is in "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 112 (2003): 135–89.

My defense of Catherine's kind of love will proceed in two stages. In the first, I argue, against Frankfurt, Velleman, and Kolodny, for the possibility and importance of a species of interpersonal love evaluatively grounded in attractive qualities of the beloved. Frankfurt denies that love is a rational response to value to begin with, Velleman argues that it is a rationally optional response to a value that all persons (by definition) share equally, and Kolodny argues that it is a response to the value of the relationship you have to your beloved. But I argue, first, that there must be reasons for love; second, that these reasons must (at least in some cases) be selective; and, finally, that these reasons must ultimately derive (again, at least in some cases) not from the types of relationships you have to beloveds, but from what beloveds themselves are like. These theories, then, leave a void that the ideal of Catherine's love promises to fill.

Still, each theory gets something important right. Taken together, they show that the irreplaceability, openness, and constancy on which Ellen implicitly insists really are necessary to the best kind of love. Therefore, Catherine's answer can fulfill its promise only if the puzzle it raises can be solved. In the second half of the essay, I argue that it can. It's possible, and plausible, to conceive of one's identity as an agent as having special structural features that enable it, distinctively, to support a form of love that fully satisfies Ellen's catechism. In a way, this turn to basic features of agency and valuing should be unsurprising: the philosophical questions raised by the phenomenon of loving someone as an individual turn out to be questions about the nature of individuality itself. I explain these features by taking a simple and familiar idea literally: that who you are is something you have to work out. Taking a cue from the phenomenology of musical improvisation, I suggest that at least some of the values with which you identify are ones you're essentially in the process of determining, such that their content depends on the ongoing sequence of judgments and actions you take those values to call for.

To apply this model of agency to love, I draw another analogy to jazz, this time relating the attraction and concern constitutive of interpersonal love to the reciprocal appreciation and responsiveness of musicians who improvise together as partners. Musicians who improvise together as partners recognize each other to be trying to express the same musical idea, even though the contents of their ideas are still being worked out. Similarly, I propose, to love someone in particular is to view that person in the same way Catherine views Heathcliff: as creating an identity that is somehow importantly like your own, in a way that makes your beloved someone appropriate for you to create yourself together with. But because your reasons for love are grounded in features of your and your beloved's identities that are in the process of being determined, those reasons persist throughout that process and call for essentially open-ended forms of interested attention and emotional vulnerability. Further,

they make you and your beloved irreplaceably valuable to one another, since someone you are creating your values together with can share those values in a way that nobody else can.⁴

I. LOVING SOMEONE FOR NO REASON

Perhaps the most glaring problem with Catherine's reasons for loving Linton is that they make him too easy to replace. What qualifies him as a suitable beloved is simply that he is a member of the general class of handsome, cheerful, rich young men. Any other member of that class would have done just as well. But, as Harry Frankfurt insists: "With regard to what we love . . . that sort of indifference to the identity of the object of concern is out of the question. Substituting some other object for the beloved is not an acceptable and perhaps not even an intelligible option. The significance to the lover of what he loves is not that of an exemplar; its importance to him is not generic, but ineluctably particular."⁵

Someone you love as a particular individual, then, is someone you value as irreplaceable. This means, minimally, that it must be important to you that you love the particular person you do. Now, the simplest way to account for this importance would be to hold that reasons for love are perfectly particular themselves. Thus, Catherine indeed would have reason to love Heathcliff but not Linton, but that reason would be primitive and hence inexplicable. The result would be a direct (if flat-footed) interpretation of Montaigne's famous statement of his love for his best friend: "If a man should importune me to give a reason why I loved him, I find it could not otherwise be expressed, than by making answer: because it was he, because it was I."⁶ But that is a nonstarter. "The beloved's bare identity," as Kolodny explains, "cannot serve as a reason for loving her. To say 'She is Jane' is simply to identify a particular with itself. It is to say nothing about that particular that might explain why a specific response to it is called for."⁷ We might as well say love has no reasons at all.

Such is Frankfurt's view. Love, he argues, "is a particular mode of caring. It is an involuntary, nonutilitarian, rigidly focused, and—as is any mode of caring—self-affirming concern for the existence and the good of

4. In stressing the historical dimension of love (and in attributing it to more basic features of agency), I follow Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, "The Historicity of Psychological Attitudes: Love Is Not Love Which Alters Not When It Alteration Finds," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10 (1987): 399–412; and Alexander Nehamas, "The Good of Friendship," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 90 (2010): 267–94, among others.

5. Frankfurt, "On Caring," 166.

6. "On Friendship," in *Essays of Michel de Montaigne* (1580, trans. C. Cotton and ed. W. C. Hazlitt, 1877), 222–39.

7. Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 142.

what is loved.” Since the “lover’s concern is rigidly focused in that there can be no equivalent substitute for its object, which he loves in its sheer particularity and not as an exemplar of some more general type,” loving cannot be “the rationally determined outcome of even an implicit deliberative or evaluative process.”⁸

Frankfurt’s theory accounts for the beloved’s irreplaceability, but at an unpalatably high cost. Ellen’s catechism illustrates how natural it is to give and ask for reasons for love. Catherine’s initial refusal to give a reason feels like a dodge. The problem with her later answers is that the reasons she gives are bad ones, not that she is making a category mistake in giving them at all.

Two established lines of criticism underscore this point. First, it is simply not plausible that love consists in the attitudes Frankfurt claims it does. There is a difference between loving someone and assuming, for no further reason, the project of being the agent of someone’s interest. Velleman observes that at “the thought of a close friend, my heart doesn’t fill with an urge to do something for him, though it may fill with love.”⁹ I care about my close friends and would do a lot for them if they asked me (and in some cases even if they didn’t). But there are a lot of helpful things I could do for my friends that I feel absolutely no desire to do, like their laundry. It’s not that such desires are overridden by others or that my friends would find it off-putting if I acted on them. It’s rather that these sorts of things just aren’t what friendship is about.¹⁰

Second, there are some things it just doesn’t make sense to love.¹¹ Suppose you were gripped by an involuntary, nonutilitarian, rigidly focused, and self-affirming concern for the existence and the good of a random picnic table. One weekend you eat a hot dog there, but on the drive home your thoughts keep returning to it, a vague fondness rising in your breast. So every weekend thereafter you go back to Table 7-G to clean it off, protect it from the elements, replace rotting beams, and so on. This attitude is not just unusual. It’s positively perverse. Love for a random picnic table is either irrational or unintelligible. We need to explain why, and we need reasons for love to do it.

8. Frankfurt, *Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting it Right*, 40–41.

9. Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” 353. See also Kyla Ebels-Duggan, “Against Beneficence: A Normative Account of Love,” *Ethics* 119 (2008): 142–70.

10. It might be objected that a willingness to do a (typical) adult’s laundry is too overbearing or infantilizing to express a genuine concern for that person’s good. But this objection misses the point. If my friends insisted that they would not feel infantilized if I did their laundry, this might convince me that doing so would be good for them. But it would not incline me to do it.

11. This point comes from Troy Jollimore, in *Love’s Vision* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 22–23. (The reader who doubts that a picnic table can have a good may substitute a shrub, or small animal.)

II. LOVING SOMEONE AS A RATIONAL AGENT

Against Frankfurt, J. David Velleman argues that the “ineluctably particular” nature of a beloved’s importance is not only compatible with love’s being a rational response to a generally held valuable property, but is best explained by viewing love as a response to a property that all persons share by definition. This is one’s bare rational nature—a property equally valuable in everyone, but whose value must be appreciated in ways particular to each instance of it.

In the Kantian framework Velleman assumes, your rational nature is what makes you worthy of being valued as you are in yourself. The responses it warrants come in two varieties: respect and love, “the required minimum and optional maximum responses to one and the same value.”¹² Both of these attitudes are special because the value of one’s rational nature is independent of, because prior to, the value of any properties that not all persons share equally—and hence which distinguish particular persons from one another. This is why respect is equally owed to everyone and why it consists, roughly, in according each individual the basic regard to which one’s dignity as a person entitles one. The same rational independence explains the special openness appropriate to the individual value of a beloved.

While the demands of respect are predominantly negative—they consist, primarily, in prohibitions against treating people in ways that ignore their value as persons (e.g., by manipulating or exploiting them)—love consists in a heightened sensitivity to the significance of whatever specific characteristics, attitudes, or interests a beloved manifests. It “arrests our tendencies toward emotional self-protection from another person,” Velleman writes, “tendencies to draw ourselves in and close ourselves off from being affected by him.”¹³ This means love isn’t to be identified with any specific motives or sentiments: for Velleman, “a sense of wonder at the vividly perceived reality of another person” is the closest thing to a constitutive feeling of love there is.¹⁴ Rather, it exposes lovers to a very wide range of emotional responses—not all favorable—corresponding to the wide range of features their beloveds might exhibit on given occasions. They might be thrilled by the admiration of their beloveds, hurt by their insults, and concerned about their needs, even when the same admiration, insults, or needs would barely register if observed in others.

Though Velleman sometimes motivates this feature of love on phenomenological grounds, he recognizes that its importance goes deeper. It captures, he argues, the way people value their beloveds as special.

12. Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” 366.

13. *Ibid.*, 361.

14. Velleman, “Beyond Price,” 199.

Being valued as special “doesn’t entail being compared favorably with others; it rather entails being seen to have a value that forbids comparison. Your singular value as a person is not a value that you are singular in possessing; it’s rather a value that entitles you to be appreciated singularly, in and by yourself.”¹⁵ This implies, minimally, that if you really love someone, you must be open to unanticipated developments in your own ends in light of what that person has to show you. Your attentiveness and vulnerability to them can’t be contingent on how well they serve your existing ends or conform to your prior ideals, and so you can’t suppose yourself to need any special reason for your heightened sensitivity to whatever is significant to or about them. As an illustration, Velleman describes watching his sons grow up:

In a quick succession of years I became deeply interested in lacrosse and Morris dancing, poetry slams and photography, and specifically in the accomplishments of a particular midfielder, Morris dancer, poet, or photographer, because these were the directions that my children had set for themselves. Of course, I eventually learned to appreciate some of these accomplishments intrinsically: I would realize with amazement that I was cheering as my son walloped a schoolmate with a metal stick or that I was applauding choreography that previously would have struck me as no more than quaint. But I learned to appreciate these accomplishments, to begin with, because they were the ones that my children had chosen to cultivate.¹⁶

But while Velleman is correct to stress the characteristic openness of love, I think he gets its details wrong, because he misconceives the kind of value to which love for an individual responds. People value their beloveds as incomparable, but only up to a point. They still take themselves to have reason to love some people and not others.

On Velleman’s gloss Catherine would be perfectly correct to love Heathcliff for his similarly constituted soul. Their “souls” are their bare rational natures, and these are indeed exactly alike. Her mistake is just in viewing Linton’s soul as any different. Catherine’s disposition to be vulnerable to Heathcliff’s rational nature (which presumably constitutes her love for him) is a strictly causal matter, just an incidental quirk of her psychology.¹⁷ But clearly that’s not how she loves Heathcliff, or how she

15. Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” 370. For another forceful defense of this requirement, also on Kantian grounds, see Rae Langton, “Love and Solipsism,” in *Love Analyzed*, ed. Roger E. Lamb (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 123–52.

16. Velleman, “Beyond Price,” 205–6.

17. Velleman is not explicit about the kind of psychological state in which love consists, and much in his presentation can instead suggest a view of it as an occurrent state of arresting awareness. The latter interpretation, however, should be rejected on grounds of charity. You no more cease to love someone when you are vexed or preoccupied than you forget what they look like when you close your eyes. If this weren’t so, then either most

should. Catherine doesn't see him as someone she just happens to be arrestingly aware of, like someone you happen to be standing next to at a party and might as well make small talk with. Rather, she endorses her love for him specifically.

Consider that the moral and prudential considerations in favor of Catherine's loving Linton instead are substantial. If she could somehow replace her disposition to arresting awareness of Heathcliff with one directed toward Linton, it would help her keep a promise, ease her into a life of comfort and prominence, and orient her toward safer, more socially acceptable, and morally improving pursuits. Given that, on Velleman's view, Catherine has no special reason to love Heathcliff, why shouldn't she regard her disposition to arresting awareness of him as other than a mere inconvenience? Of course, people don't regard their loves as dispositions to be managed at their moral and prudential convenience. For Catherine, suddenly ceasing to love Heathcliff is unthinkable. The prospect would appear as a disturbing failure to appreciate his profound significance to her. In short, it is essential to her love that she experience it as more than merely optional.¹⁸

One might, therefore, ask why Velleman shouldn't just jettison his claim that love is rationally optional. It will be instructive to consider this possibility. So modified, Velleman's view would place love on the same level with respect, as a rationally required response to rational nature as such. Just as you have reason to respect everyone, it would hold, so too do you have reason to love them. It's just that it's generally much harder to love people than it is to merely respect them, and nobody is in a position to blame you for failing.¹⁹ So those of us who fail to love as we rationally ought, even those of us who fail radically—presumably, more or less all of us—do so forgivably. Velleman clearly aims to avoid this view, and it is easy to see why. It completely abandons the idea that love may be unapologetically selective in any but the most superficial sense. But I have just argued that the degree of selectivity Velleman is actually entitled to is pretty superficial anyway. The difference is just that on the present modification one is to regard one's psychological inability to perfectly love everyone as a genuine rational imperfection, one we have reason to work to overcome.²⁰

people would love much less than they think they do, or love would be even more of a headache than it already is. (This point comes from Susan Wolf's first Phi Beta Kappa Romanell lecture.)

18. Or, as Catherine herself puts it, "My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees—my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary."

19. Or at least, on the religious version of this view, nobody on earth.

20. Perhaps Velleman feels the influence of this point in his suggestion that we are not equally inclined to love everyone in part because the "human body and human behavior are imperfect expressions of personhood, and we are imperfect interpreters" ("Love as a Moral Emotion," 372).

This answer is very honest in its way and should not be dismissed out of hand. The idea that we are all to love one another unconditionally is historically important and very powerful. It is fundamental to the Christian ethical tradition and may, not unrelatedly, be truest to the Kantian spirit. So perhaps it should not be surprising if this is really where Velleman's theory leads him. (I suspect it is also the only coherent conception of love as a truly moral emotion.) But the resulting ideal of love is not only demanding, but strangely impersonal. It collapses, or at least trivializes, the distinction between love for particular persons and love for humanity as such.

III. LOVING SOMEONE AS A RELATIVE

Love for particular persons, therefore, must be a selective rational response to valuable properties of the beloved. But not just any sort of property will do. Linton's attractive qualities, remember, would make him too replaceable. Here, Niko Kolodny's appeal to relational properties represents an important advance.

Kolodny argues that reasons for love are grounded in the value of one's ongoing historical relationships to one's beloveds. I love my brother, for instance, because he's my brother. We have the same parents and we grew up together. This makes it easy to explain irreplaceability: it is important to me that I love my brother, in particular, because he is a particular person to whom I stand in the fraternal relation. Other people might stand in the fraternal relation to someone—they might be other people's brothers—but that doesn't give me reason to love them. They don't stand in the fraternal relation to me. (Now, it so happens that I have two brothers; Kolodny's view implies that I thus have just as much reason to love the one as the other. But of course that is the right implication: I do have reason to love both equally.)

More specifically, Kolodny argues that relationships of certain types are nonderivatively valuable and so constitute sources of reasons for love. For him, loving someone consists in (i) believing your relationship to that person to be an instance of a valuable type, and thus (ii) taking it to be a reason both for being emotionally vulnerable to, and for acting in the interest of, both your beloved and the relationship itself, in ways appropriate to relationships of that type, and (iii) believing that others in relationships of the same type would have similar reasons for similar attitudes concerning their own beloveds.²¹ When you love someone, then, you value both your beloved and your relationship itself—but it's the relationship, in virtue of its type, that you see as the source of your reasons to accord special value to each. This isn't to say, of course, that lovers

21. Here I compress Kolodny's formulation in "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 150–51.

don't have reason to be interested in whatever valuable qualities their beloveds might have. On the contrary, my love for my brothers involves, in part, my taking a special interest in all kinds of great things about them. But on Kolodny's theory, my reasons for doing so aren't grounded in the value of the qualities themselves—those reasons would apply to anyone—but in the value of my relationships to their particular bearers.

Note that even if the value of my fraternal relationships were only derivative, I still would have special reason to care about my brothers, since I still wouldn't have these relationships with anyone else. But by claiming that it isn't, Kolodny elegantly accounts for the thought that love should be constant: its reasons should endure through a suitably wide range of changes in a beloved. I leave "suitably wide" vague on purpose, but the basic idea should be intuitive. If my brothers came to have very different valuable qualities, I'd have equally good reason to take a special interest in those. I'd even have reason to care about my brothers in the (distant!) possible world where they ceased to have much going for them at all. For Kolodny, the explanation for this is simple: so long as your beloved remains such that your relationship can somehow endure as a valuable instance of its type, your reasons for love endure as well.

Like Velleman, Kolodny identifies a real and valuable kind of love. In addition to familial love, his theory plausibly accounts for love of animals, gardens, cars, institutions, and other nonpersons.²² Further, I think Kolodny is right that our histories with our beloveds are ultimately what make them irreplaceable to us. But they can't always do so in the way he thinks. His theory gets some of the deepest loving relationships backwards: we value them derivatively and only because of what our particular beloveds are like.

As a first effort at bringing out what Kolodny's view misses, observe that a surprisingly wide range of relationships count as loving by his criteria. One example is teaching. The teachers who get the most out of their jobs normally believe themselves to stand in valuable pedagogical relationships with their students. They take these relationships to be reasons for acting in the interests of their students in pedagogically appropriate ways and for pedagogically appropriate forms of emotional vulnerability to them and (somewhat more subtly) for corresponding attitudes toward the relationships themselves. This isn't to say they go in for overbearing, *Dead Poets Society*-style sentimentalism—just that they are emotionally invested enough to be pleased by their students' progress, troubled by their unnecessary confusion, and concerned to prevent their pedagogical relationships from going badly or ending prematurely—for example, with their students dropping out.

22. While Kolodny explicitly defines "relationships" in his sense as necessarily interpersonal, I see no reason to view this limitation as more than stipulative (*ibid.*, 148).

Though it is arguably possible to love someone specifically as a student, it would be a stretch to say that if you value your pedagogical relationships in this way, you necessarily love every student with whom you have one. What you love in this case is teaching. The students you love, if any, are the special ones. With them, your pedagogical relationships are valuable on another level—valuable not only as instances of a generally valuable type, but because of specific characteristics of the students in question. Thus, Minerva might spend an extra hour helping Neville, who is pleasant enough and tries hard, out of her love for teaching and yet do the same for Hermione, who is brilliant and delightful, additionally out of pedagogical love for her. It will be a matter of indifference to her that her pedagogical relationship is to Neville, as opposed to any of the many other adequate Hogwarts students whom she might have taught instead. But not so with Hermione. Yet it is exactly this distinction that Kolodny's view lacks the resources to draw.

It might be offered on Kolodny's behalf that while Minerva may indeed have a special relationship to Hermione, that relationship could be a nonderivatively valuable relationship of a different type. Minerva could, for instance, simply be Hermione's friend.²³ But once we see how the distinction between nonderivatively valuable relationships and those whose value depends on the specific person in question pertains to teaching, its relevance to more intimate cases becomes apparent. It's possible to value a marriage—even deeply and for its own sake—to someone you don't love. This may be how Alexei Karenin viewed his marriage, for instance, at least before he learned of Anna's infidelity. As Anna's husband, Karenin would indeed have reason to take a special interest in Anna's attractive qualities, like her sensitivity and verve—but only because those were the qualities that happened to be instantiated in his wife. There'd be nothing about Anna's sensitivity and verve as such, much less about Anna herself, that gave those particular qualities a special claim on Karenin's attention. Had Karenin been married to someone else, her qualities would have been just as lovable to him; Anna's would have been merely attractive.

Kolodny claims, in response, that "it doesn't seem like a distortion to say . . . that a wife wants to be loved by her husband, at the deepest level, because she is the woman with whom he fell in love and made his life. . . . Let us suppose that they had never met and had made their lives with other people. Imagining herself in that situation, would she still want him

23. It might also be suggested that the difference in value is merely one of degree. Hermione's virtues might make a difference simply by enabling an especially valuable instance of the same type of relationship Minerva has to Neville, not (as I have supposed) by adding an extra dimension of value specific to Minerva's relationship to Hermione. But whether or not this is plausible for teaching, it is not for marriage.

to love her? Would it make sense to her if he did?"²⁴ At first glance, this reply seems right. But I think this is only because it subtly trades on exactly the point Kolodny's critic should press against him. If love is indeed grounded in the value that certain characteristics of your beloved have for you, it is plausible that the identity of those characteristics depends on the sort of person you are. But love changes you. Had the spouses married different people, they would have become different sorts of people themselves. Of course they would have found different characteristics lovable.

In order for Kolodny's example to vindicate his theory, therefore, we need to hold fixed the nonrelational properties of all parties concerned.²⁵ Suppose you are married to a person named Smith. Your marriage has been long and happy; you and Smith delight in and admire all kinds of things about each other. You also happen to have a colleague, Jones, whom you dated for a semester back in college. If you gave the matter much thought, you'd admit to yourself that you'd likely have grown to love each other if you stayed together and even that you still find her fairly attractive. But you really don't give the matter much thought. Jones is nice enough, but you can't imagine how anything about her could grip you the way so much about Smith does. As far as you're concerned there's no contest. It's crazy to think that, married to Jones while remaining exactly the sort of person you are now and knowing as much about the two as you do, Jones would be just as lovable to you as Smith now is, and Smith's radiance would be dimmed to that of a moderately attractive acquaintance. But that implies that your reasons for loving Smith do not derive, ultimately, from valuable properties of your marriage to him. Rather, they derive from valuable properties of Smith himself.

IV. LOVING SOMEONE FOR A SELF LIKE YOURS

Taken together, the shortcomings of Frankfurt's, Velleman's, and Kolodny's views show the importance of a species of love grounded in a selective appreciation of a beloved's distinguishing features. Again, this is not to say that the attitudes these philosophers defend are not important too. Velleman articulates a powerful moral ideal, and Kolodny accurately describes the bonds people form to family members and others with whom they share significant histories, as well as their love for their children and pets. But it is reasonable to want more. Like Catherine and

24. Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 157.

25. Or, at least, as fixed as possible. It can be hard to draw a sharp distinction between putatively nonrelational properties of someone's personality and character from relational ones like memories and ongoing concrete projects. This theme will turn out to be important later, but bracket it for now.

Heathcliff, the greatest lovers and truest friends love each other for what they in particular are like.

When Catherine says she loves Heathcliff for what his soul is made of, I assume that she is referring to his identity or character (terms I'll use interchangeably), as defined by the values by which he finds it fundamentally worthwhile to live. Now, I haven't yet done anything to show why the properties that constitute selective reasons for love must, specifically, be the beloved's values. In fact, it might seem perfectly normal to love someone for other things. Wealth might be mercenary, and handsomeness superficial, but what's wrong with loving people for their cheerfulness—or, for that matter, for their intelligence, sensitivity, or sense of humor?²⁶

The enduring popularity of *Wuthering Heights* itself suggests, however, that there is something about Catherine's kind of love that many people find compelling. At least in rough outline it's easy to see why. To begin with, it seems on reflection that whether someone finds your other qualities lovable (rather than just interesting, sexy, or otherwise pleasing) normally does depend, a great deal, on what those qualities say about your values—on the interests or drives animating your intelligence, say, or the outlook on life embodied by your jokes, or even the sensibility exhibited in how you dress or walk.²⁷ Further, and more basically, someone who loves you selectively, for the specific values you identify with, sees you for who you distinctively are—and finds you distinctively valuable as such. There's something wonderfully affirming and empowering about this—especially when you love the other person in the same way—though it's

26. Thus, in "Love as a Reactive Emotion," *Philosophical Quarterly* 61 (2011): 673–99, Kate Abramson and Adam Leite defend a view of love as "an affectionate attachment . . . appropriately felt as a non-self-interested response to particular kinds of morally laudable features of character expressed by the loved one in interaction with the lover" (677)—those "especially salient in the context of fairly intimate relationships" (679), like sensitivity and kindness. While I agree that these qualities can matter to love, in my view their importance is derivative, and essentially unrelated to their moral worth: like beauty, intelligence, and vigor, they can be catalysts or background conditions for love between people who identify with values expressed in them or in activities requiring them. This isn't to say Abramson and Leite are wrong about the affectionate attachment the virtues they uphold can inspire, but even if this attitude is best understood as a kind of love—as opposed to a warm combination of trust and gratitude—it seems far short of the kind Frankfurt, Velleman, and Kolodny objectionably neglect. Linton, it turns out, actually has these virtues in spades, and Catherine indeed finds herself becoming affectionate toward him as he expresses them in interaction with her. (Observing this, Ellen wholeheartedly approves: this, to her, is what love should be.) But that affection is quickly and understandably overshadowed by her less virtuous—but more profound—love for Heathcliff.

27. Martha Nussbaum makes the same observation, in defense of a similar thesis, in "Love and the Individual: Romantic Rightness and Platonic Aspiration," in her *Love's Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 314–34, 327.

hard to explain what. (I'll offer more of an explanation below, once I've said more about what Catherine's kind of love involves.)

Once we've seen how essential irreplaceability, openness, and constancy are to love, however, it can seem strange—if not paradoxical—that the idea of being loved for your values could be so appealing. For while these features pose a challenge to any conception of love as a form of selective appreciation, the challenge seems especially severe in the present case. Start with irreplaceability: while the values Catherine loves in Heathcliff might be unusual, there's no reason to think they're essentially unique to him, as would seem necessary for it to be important to her that she love him in particular. On the contrary, they can't be, if Catherine is correct in taking herself to share them. And it's with respect to the beloved's values that openness and constancy seem most important. Think of people who are disappointed when their beloved's evaluations diverge from their own, rather than being open to them as potential enlargements of their own perspectives. Their love—if it's intelligible as such at all—seems narcissistic on the part of the lover and insulting to the beloved. And if these putative lovers further saw the continuation of their relationships as rationally contingent on ongoing adherence to the party line, their interest would go from narcissism to possessiveness.

What I want to argue now, however, is that the idea of loving people for values they share with you only faces these problems if we think of the values in question themselves as fixed, static things. I don't think values are like this—not all of them, at any rate. I think instead that a beloved's values are loved as things that are essentially in the process of being determined, through a kind of ongoing improvisation. To that end, I'll defend this conception of agency in the remaining sections, showing how it yields an account of the nature and value of love for persons as particular individuals that vindicates both Ellen's catechism and Catherine's ultimate answer to it.

V. IMPROVISATION AS A MODEL OF SELF-CREATION

Improvisation differs from other species of rational agency in that improvisers refine the ends they pursue—that is, the norms they are committed to—as they go. When you improvise, you act in ways you take to be appropriate without necessarily being able to explain why. You don't see your actions as random, but rather as parts of a process of working out an expressive musical performance, say—or an overall way of life—that explains why each of the actions that constitutes it is appropriate in relation to the whole. To see how this might go in the music case, consider how Keith Richards recalls the improvisation that went into *Exile on Main Street*:

There was no preparation. But that's not the point; that's rock and roll. The idea was to make the bare bones of a riff, snap the drums in, and see what happens. And it was the immediacy of it that in retrospect made it even more interesting. There was no time for much reflection, for plowing the field twice. It was "It goes like this" and see what comes out. And this is when you realize that with a good band, you only really need a little sparkle of an idea, and before the evening's over it will be a beautiful thing.²⁸

What's exciting here is the immediacy—the spontaneity and adventure—of playing without an antecedently fixed end. That, Richards implies, is rock and roll. But these remarks fit uneasily with Richards's account of improvising with others. "There's something beautifully friendly and elevating about playing music with people," he writes, precisely because of its deep sense of common purpose:

You're sitting with some guys and you're playing and you go "Ooh, yeah!" That feeling is worth more than anything. There's a certain moment where you realize you just left the planet for a bit and that nobody can touch you. You're elevated because you're with a bunch of guys that want to do the same thing as you. And when it works, baby, you've got wings. You know you've been somewhere most people will never get; you've been to a special place. And then you want to keep going back and keep landing again, and when you land you get busted. But you always want to get back there. It's flying without a license.²⁹

What "same thing" could Richards and his bandmates all want to do? Given the first passage, we may safely assume that the content of Richards's end is not especially detailed or determinate at the point at which he first takes his bandmates to share it. They might agree about certain, very general musical goals, but why should so minimal a consensus continue to unite them going forward, as their own ends become more specific? Perhaps they have some external reason for wanting to play together—they know that doing so will tend to produce results pleasing to audiences or critics, for instance—but this fails to explain why playing with just the right band, in just the right way, should be so marvelously freeing. Richards is playing exactly as he wants, for its own sake: he is not compromising in the name of some further goal. To explain this, I want to explore a more direct

28. Keith Richards, *Life*, coauthored with James Fox (New York: Little, Brown, 2010), 306.

29. *Ibid.*, 105 and 97. Richards makes this observation while recounting an early gig that included Mick Jagger and Brian Jones but neither Bill Wyman nor Charlie Watts. For this reason I hesitate to refer to "Keith Richards and his bandmates" by the obvious proper noun.

answer: Richards really does take his bandmates to want to express the same thing he does, even though it is as yet indeterminate what that thing involves.

This is possible because improvised ends can ground reasons for actions and attitudes in a way that other indeterminate or underspecified ends can't. Because their content is fixed by the ongoing sequence of responses improvisers actually take them to call for, improvisers can intelligibly—and potentially correctly—take themselves to have reasons (relative to their ends) to perform certain actions over others, even when the prior states of their ends leave the matter unsettled. And—I will argue in the next section, once the basic model is in place—they can likewise take their ends to be shared by others.

As a first pass, think of a spontaneous decision to play a riff because it strikes you, right then, as especially expressive. Decisions like this seem to occupy an intermediate position between rationally determined conclusions of deliberation and one-off random acts. On the one hand, you make them because they feel like the way to go at the time, not because anything in your performance demands them. Relative to everything you've played up to that point, any number of other riffs may have been equally musically good, or better; you might no less reasonably have played any of them. (The qualification "up to that point" is critical here, as we'll see in a moment.) On the other hand, you make them because they feel like the way to go at the time—the particular riff you pick feels right in some way, as more than just a matter of indifference.

We can plausibly capture this middle ground by recognizing how a riff can strike you as especially expressive of something without your being able to say what it's expressive of. It's not necessary for you to be in the possession, or suppose yourself to be in the possession, of any facts that would explain why that specific riff was the right thing to do, given your end. The causal explanation of your decision to play it, as opposed to anything else you might equally well have played, would cite all sorts of totally incidental features of your psychology and circumstances. (Imagining a causal explanation of Keith Richards's decisions, the mind boggles.) Yet the whole point of improvisation is that in such a case you're not treating your decision as incidental. Parts of a musical performance aren't expressive in isolation. Since the feel of a riff is colored by the past playing that anticipates it and the future playing that integrates and elaborates on it, to take a riff to be expressive is implicitly to situate it, normatively speaking, in a larger context. You regard the riff as part of the process of expressing a specific musical idea; as you work out the contours of that idea, you're simultaneously working out what the riff you took to be expressive actually helps express.

For example, think of what gets expressed in the song "Happy." (A "sublime example of a song winging in from the ether," Richards recalls,

made from start to finish in four hours.)³⁰ “Happy” is a happy song, but it’s not just that. Its opening riff is enormously upbeat, but as it gets repeated in the context of the vocals, the baritone, and the drumming, it quickly takes on a momentum that makes it defiant, even pleading. What the song ends up expressing is an immediately recognizable but very complicated attitude, at once happy-go-lucky, demanding, and vulnerable. I want to say that insofar as Richards was moved to play these opening licks because they struck him as especially expressive, they struck him as expressive of something bigger—something that ended up being this complicated attitude. But in order for him to work out what this bigger thing was, he needed to keep constructing the song and fit together the things that struck him as expressive at various points. In this, he determines the content of his end through pursuing it.

That is, it’s plausible—as a general thesis about rational agency—that when you act for a reason, rather than arbitrarily, you necessarily presuppose that there is an explanation why the action you perform is appropriate.³¹ When you walk down Mulberry Street to get to the post office, you presuppose that Mulberry Street is a route to it. When you play a certain riff in order to express your musical idea, you presuppose that your action admits of justifying explanation in the same basic sense. The difference is that it is as yet unsettled just what the explanation is supposed to be, because it is as yet unsettled what “expressing your musical idea” consists in. It depends on the particular responses you make over the course of the improvisation. Or, more exactly: to improvise is to pursue an end whose content depends, epistemically and ontologically, on the actions you actually take over the course of pursuing it, such that, relative to your end, you have reason to do something just to the extent that it admits of justifying explanation in terms of past and future actions you perform (and take yourself to have reason to perform) that are likewise explicable themselves.

How can a justifying explanation for one response essentially depend on others? The question arises, I think, because it can be tempting to assume that to give a justifying explanation for a response is to subsume it under some general rule or principle: I can explain why it is appropriate to say “10” after “8” in a simple counting game by citing a rule of adding two. But it is a mistake to think that all justifying explanations

30. *Ibid.*, 308. For lyrics, commentary, and a sample of the song, see “Happy—the Rolling Stones,” AllMusic, <http://allmusic.com/song/happy-mt0007444174>. Thanks to an editor of *Ethics* for pressing me for clarification here.

31. For an influential presentation of the concept of an “explanation why” in the sense I have in mind, see John Broome, “Reasons,” in *Reasons and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Philip Pettit, Samuel Scheffler, and Michael Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 28–55. There, Broome argues that this concept is prior to the concept of a normative reason, but it is obviously unnecessary to accept Broome’s conclusion in order to admit a necessary relation between the two.

must be like this.³² It's possible to explain why a response is appropriate simply by citing how it would be appropriate to respond in other cases, thereby making the appropriateness of the response at hand intelligible as part of a natural pattern. In the counting game, for instance, we can say: "Look, we know '8' was appropriate after '6,' '6' after '4,' and, '4' after '2.' So it's only natural that '8' should call for '10.'" Of course, here it's obvious what the general rule in force would be, but in other contexts—including, prominently, aesthetic ones—it may not be. It may not even be possible to state such a rule at all. I doubt it's possible to completely articulate the complex feelings a performance of "Happy" expresses, in abstraction from the particular responses that constitute it. ("If you could say it in words," Hopper said, "there would be no reason to paint.") But there's no need to. We can get a rich understanding of what "Happy" expresses by seeing how its elements cohere, how they instantiate recognizable musical structures and form natural patterns. As Gerald Postema puts it, "melody-thinking is holistic thinking."³³ In my view, it is holistic in the strong sense that the ends relative to which responses in an improvisation are presupposed to be explicable may only emerge over time, as manifested in unfolding patterns of agency.

On this model, improvising is both like and unlike pursuing an end with determinate content you're trying to discover.³⁴ It's similar in the sense that you can intelligibly take yourself to have reason to perform certain actions over others and thereby refine your conception of your end. Even when the content of your end, in the form accessible to you at the time, leaves a choice rationally underdetermined, you can still take

32. Arguably, at least some justifying explanations cannot be like this, in light of the puzzle about rule-following Saul Kripke famously attributed to Wittgenstein in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). Compare John McDowell, "Non-cognitivism and Rule-Following," in his *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 198–218; and Hannah Ginsborg, "Primitive Normativity and Skepticism about Rules," *Journal of Philosophy* 108 (2011): 227–54, the latter of whom likewise takes inspiration from aesthetics.

33. Gerald Postema, "Melody and Law's Mindfulness of Time," *Ratio Juris* 17 (2004): 203–26, 208.

34. In *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Talbot Brewer makes a similar appeal to musical improvisation as a paradigm of what he calls "dialectical activity," which he likewise conceives as a process through which agents refine their conceptions of their ends through their efforts at achieving them. However, Brewer's theory differs from mine in that it is explicitly and unapologetically Platonic. Whereas I use improvisation to model a process through which agents freely create their ends for themselves, Brewer argues that agents gradually acquaint themselves with the ideal forms in which activities of certain types are to be pursued. This leads to some strange results. Jazz turns out to be an effort to apprehend and instantiate objective aesthetic ideals, rather than an act of personal expression. And while persons are properly loved for their developing evaluative outlooks, an "evaluative outlook is properly loved only because and to the extent that it exemplifies the zeal for adherence to objective truths about the good that is the proper *telos* of the human capacity for practical reason" (256). So much for Catherine and Heathcliff.

your decision in favor of a given alternative to both admit of and require justifying explanation in terms of the content of your end. You may not be as yet in a position to explain why a riff that strikes you as expressive is really so, in a way that others aren't, but echoing Richards, that's not the point, that's rock and roll. By presupposing that the riff will cohere with other things you play, you thereby commit to working out the explanation as you go.

Improvising differs from pursuing a determinate but inaccessible end, however, in that the content your end turns out to have depends on what you actually take it to call for. If you happen to take other things to be expressive after playing a given riff, that riff may still end up with a justifying explanation in virtue of them. But it would be explicable in a different way and so expressive of something else. (In another song, the opening riff in "Happy" might have been merely cheerful.) It's even possible that it wouldn't turned out to be expressive of anything, since to the extent that it turned out not to cohere with the rest of your performance (if you ignored it completely, or ended up with a total mess), it wouldn't be explicable at all. In such a case, the presupposition you made in deciding on the riff—that you'd end up with an explanation of its having been appropriate—will be falsified, and your decision to play it will therefore turn out to be a mistake.³⁵

* * *

Having modeled how musicians can literally work out the musical ideas they are trying to express through the processes of expressing them, we can extend the model to show how people, no less literally, can work out the values by which they are trying to live through the processes of living by them. For the sake of a name, call the latter form of agency deep improvisation.³⁶ Deep improvisation is formally similar to musical improvisation but differs from it in its focus and scope. Whereas jazz improvisers determine the content of their musical ideas, deep improvisers determine the content of basic values they identify with, values that define the way of life they find fundamentally worth leading.³⁷ As a deep improviser, you

35. Thus randomly plunking at piano keys isn't improvising; barring some monkey-writing-Shakespeare sort of accident, you could only produce a disorderly jumble of notes.

36. My terminology registers a debt to Charles Taylor, who uses "deep reflection" to refer to a process through which one simultaneously articulates and shapes the values with which one identifies by critically interpreting one's evaluations in light of one's "deepest unstructured sense of what is important" ("What Is Human Agency?" in his *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 15–44, quote at 41).

37. Importantly, I'm not arguing that all the values with which one can identify are up to one to improvise. In fact, it is plausible that at least some of them (such as specifically moral values) are not.

work out who you are by working out your approach to life. When you take some action to be worthwhile, you take it to embody the identity you're in the process of constructing for yourself. As in the music case, this doesn't mean judging the action to be required by values you now determinately have, but it also doesn't mean treating it as rationally equivalent to actions you could have performed but didn't. It means taking the putative fact that you had reason to perform that action into account in your ongoing practical reasoning and conduct as something that is to help explain, and be explained by, what you have reason to do on other occasions.³⁸ But rather than discuss this more concretely now, let me return to the puzzle the section started with.

VI. SHARING AN INDETERMINATE END

The puzzle, recall, was this: in valuing his bandmates as “a bunch of guys that want to do the same thing” as he, Richards apparently takes himself to have special reason to respond to them in certain ways in virtue of some deep similarity in their ends. But how could he do so coherently while recognizing these ends to be indeterminate? To answer this question, we can extend the model of the last section to multiple agents. I've argued that the indeterminacy of an improvised end does not prevent you from intelligibly taking yourself to have reason to perform certain actions over others: it only means that the justifying explanation of your action, if any, depends on your responses at other times. I'll now argue that it likewise does not prevent you from taking yourself to have reason to regard other improvisers as determining the same ends.

The idea of responding to someone's end according to how it's developing—as opposed to what it seems to be at some determinate stage in its development—can be tricky, so it will help to break it down. Bracket the question of what could justify Richards in taking his bandmates to share his end and consider how, if he was thus justified, he should take account of this fact. In the last section, I argued that improvising is like pursuing a determinate but partly inaccessible end in certain respects. The kind of attitude appropriate toward agents you take to share your end is one of them. As a general point, if you are pursuing an end whose content is not fully accessible to you but are justified in taking some agent to be pursuing it as well, that person becomes a valuable source

38. This doesn't mean improvisers are forever bound to their pasts. The requirement that you act in ways that mutually explain each other only holds among actions you in fact have reason to perform. So you may sometimes be justified in rejecting some of your past (or even predictable future) actions and hence in ceasing to treat them as explanatory and to be explained. Since, however, this rejection itself requires justifying explanation (from the perspective you thereby come to inhabit)—and this explanation may be difficult to come by—improvisers are also not free to be entirely capricious.

of practical testimony—someone whose judgments of what counts as appropriate with respect to the end merit *prima facie* acceptance. Now, the fact that the two of you are still determining your ends means that there is not actually some end, existing independently of your respective activity, about which each of you provides the other with evidence. But it does not mean that the two of you cannot intelligibly accord one another the same kind of presumption of normative authority you each would merit if you did share such an end. Thus, if one of Richards's bandmates takes some action to be appropriate relative to his own end, then—absent some compelling reason not to—Richards should also take it to be appropriate, as something he would have reason to do himself, had he been in the bandmate's position.³⁹

In Richards's case, this presumption of authority takes the form of the “beautifully friendly and elevating” attitude of open-ended receptivity and personal freedom he shares with his bandmates. This explains the appeal: if a fellow musician responds to you with something that complements your playing so well it feels like a fuller expression of the musical idea behind it, it feels affirming and enhancing. The thought is something like: “So that's how to do it!—that's what was cool about where I've been going. And better still, now I know to play this”—and you respond reciprocally to your partner. Yet when you do respond by trying to play in a way that coheres with your partner's playing, you're not just returning the favor. You're doing exactly what feels like the natural next stage in your own musical project. The result is a feedback loop of mutual, spontaneous exchange. You express what feels right to you, your partners are spontaneously moved by what they feel in your playing to play what feels right to them, you experience their responses as an apt development

39. The importance of such a presumption of normative authority to love has been noticed before. Thus, Elijah Millgram proposes that friends characteristically share “a primitive trust in [one another's] practical testimony” (*Practical Induction* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997], 168), and Kyla Ebels-Duggan argues that you should “treat [a beloved's] choice of an end as if it were evidence that the end is worthwhile” (“Against Beneficence,” 159). Neither attempts to explain the rational basis of this presumption, however, and I think this leads Ebels-Duggan (and arguably Millgram, who is more tentative) to overestimate its scope. While I claim that it concerns the realization of ends lovers already putatively share, Ebels-Duggan extends it to ends your beloved has adopted but you as yet have not. This is plausible for lovers who share all their fundamental values, but many relationships are less demanding. Using Ebels-Duggan's example, suppose your friend values bird watching and you don't. You don't think it's silly, but you feel no inclination to try to appreciate it yourself. You and your friend are just different people, and bird watching isn't for you. Ebels-Duggan argues that in withholding judgment here you fail as a lover, since you trivialize your beloved's interest as “mere taste” (160). This would be true if valuing something (as opposed to merely desiring it) required judging it objectively valuable. But since it doesn't, someone can respect you as a valuer without either accepting your evaluations as evidence or rejecting them as mistakes.

of what you're playing and delightedly reply to it as such, your partners reply in turn, and so on.

Now for the first question: what could justify Richards in taking his bandmates to share his end to begin with? The answer is simple: you are justified in taking other improvisers to share your end just insofar as they're in the process of determining the same end you are—such that the responses they perform, in pursuit of their own ends, stand in the same mutual explanatory relationship to what you have reason to do on particular occasions as your own responses do, and the presumption of normative authority you accord those agents is thereby vindicated. Importantly, this can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁴⁰ Having recognized his bandmates as provisionally authoritative, what Richards takes himself to have reason to play will depend on what they do—and so, therefore, will the content of his end itself. This consequence is critical in connection to love, because it explains why people who love each other for identifying with the same values do not just mirror each other's values but shape them—and ultimately why such love has the qualities of irreplaceability, openness, and constancy it does.

On the other hand, it also implies that taking someone to share your end may be rationally underdetermined in advance. All the facts about Richards's and his bandmates' ends prior to and independent of his recognition of them may fail to explain fully why that recognition was called for, and had he only happened not to grant it, he might have been right, since he might then have been in the process of determining a different end. This may seem objectionable. Why isn't taking someone to share your end just arbitrary, a leap of faith?

Here we need to distinguish two senses in which a response might be said to be arbitrary. In one sense, a response might be said to be arbitrary in a "leap of faith" sense to the extent that it is not guided or otherwise determined by justifying considerations in principle accessible to the agent in advance. In the other, a response might be said to be arbitrary to the extent that it neither admits of nor requires rational justification in terms of the agent's ends. These senses are easy to run together, but for agents in the process of determining their ends, they come apart. Thus, when we recall what made Frankfurtian and Vellemanian love objectionably arbitrary, we can see that the second sense is the one that matters here. The problems with their views did not arise strictly because they denied that loving one person rather than another was rationally determined by the beloved's antecedent properties. They arose because they denied that it admitted of or required justification in terms of any such

40. Also importantly, it might not be. If someone you take to share your end turns out to be such that you cannot coherently treat what each of you putatively has reason to do as mutually explanatory with respect to it, your attitude will turn out to be unjustified.

properties, antecedently determinate or not. There was nothing about Table 7-G that could make loving it inappropriate and nothing Heathcliff had and Linton lacked that could give Catherine special reason to love the former. But it needn't be antecedently determinate whether or how a beloved's ends are similar to yours for them to play this role. Table 7-G is an inappropriate object of love because it has no ends at all; Catherine may intelligibly and correctly take herself to have special reason to love Heathcliff in virtue of their similarly developing ends. If the initial state of those ends fails to rationally determine her love, this neither renders it unjustified nor renders the question of its justification without application. It only prevents her from knowing the answer to that question prior to actually loving him. It is something she will have to work out, by improvising with Heathcliff and seeing what, if anything, they turn out to share.

If the reader is still skeptical, let me offer a speculative diagnosis. It can be natural to think that justifying reasons must be capable of guiding prospective deliberation, or otherwise be grounded in facts that are prior to and independent of the responses they are to justify. But I suspect this requirement seems plausible largely because much recent work on normativity has taken moral and theoretical reasoning as paradigms, and there are strong (though not uncontested) substantive grounds for affirming it in these cases. Morality, on a natural view, aims to identify deliberative standards the conformity to which is to insulate us from blame, and the vindication of empirical beliefs normally depends on their causes. But these are not reasons to enshrine the requirement as essential to justification as such, and I see no compelling grounds for doing so.⁴¹ In fact, I think its present inapplicability illustrates something that may be obvious from the start: the reasons of love and art are very different from those of morality and science.

More concretely, to the extent that your recognition of another improviser as sharing your ends is antecedently rationally undetermined, your attitude toward that person will not be very articulate, and you will have no guarantee of its justification. In this, it's analogous to taking a riff to be somehow especially expressive: it consists in taking there to be something about the other agent's ends that resonates with yours, even if their essential fluidity makes it impossible to definitively articulate what that something is. But this is just as should be expected. Love is notorious for its intrinsic riskiness, and its language, like that of music, is full of terms for inexplicable but warranted attraction. We've all encountered or

41. For a classic expression of skepticism on this front, see Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck," in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 20–39. Note that my view implies that justification for love may be subject to luck in much the way Williams's remarks about Anna Karenina suggest.

heard of people who admit it to be impossible for them to describe their reasons for loving the specific people they do (or, at any rate, to describe them any more clearly than Catherine or Montaigne did) but nevertheless insist that they do have such reasons. I imagine most of us philosophers have felt the temptation to quietly conclude that such sentiments, while romantic, betray a basic confusion about rationality. But if I'm right, the romantics have been right all along about an important class of reasons that we, for the most part, have missed.

VII. LOVING SOMEONE AS A PARTNER IN DEEP IMPROVISATION

We can say that so conceived, Richards and his bandmates value each other as improvisational partners. In this, they share a relationship with the same general structure as relationships between lovers. To love people for who they are in particular, I submit, is to value them as partners in deep improvisation.

An improvisational partnership is a type of ongoing relationship grounded in the partners' mutual recognition of one another as sharing an end with respect to a given activity.⁴² Like relatives in Kolodny's sense, improvisational partners value their partnership itself as well as one another. But unlike relatives in Kolodny's sense, they need only value their partnership derivatively, only because and insofar as they recognize one another as warranting a presumption of authority in judgment with respect to the relevant activity. And they warrant this authority only because and insofar as they are in fact pursuing the same end. With this mutual recognition in place, however, partners work out the end they share together, each according the other a joint authority in determining its content.

Thus, partners in musical improvisation explore a common musical idea in their playing; students may improvise as partners in working out an interpretive approach to a text, spouses in working out the terms of a marriage. None of these relationships necessarily involve partnership in deep improvisation (in which the partners would work out together the basic significance that their activities of musical expression, textual interpretation, or marriage had in their lives), but all of them can. As a special case, partnership in deep improvisation can also be global, as it is for Catherine and Heathcliff, such that the partners work out their entire

42. Or, equivalently, with respect to a cluster of interlocking activities. Note that while I define improvisational partnerships as mutual (since this makes it easiest to explain the value partners can have to one another), taking someone to share an end you're improvising can be one-sided. This may be pretty close to how Alcibiades views Socrates in the *Symposium*, for instance—at least if it's assumed that he values him for who he is in particular, rather than as a source of evidence about the Good. Such an attitude will share many of the features of love for a partner in deep improvisation, but not all of them.

approach to life together. But it need not be. I love my grad school officemate for much of what he sees in philosophy, but not all of it, and while we have a very satisfying friendship, we each think the other's political views are pretty awful.

Interpersonal love differs from other forms of improvisational partnership because the ends lovers share constitute fundamental values with which they identify. This makes the interest and responsiveness warranted by the similarity of their ends correspondingly more profound. To flesh out what these attitudes involve, let's return once more to Catherine and Heathcliff.

Catherine and Heathcliff love each other for their common wildness. When she tries to explain this to Ellen, Catherine recalls a dream of going to heaven but being miserable there. Ellen points out, reasonably enough, that of course she wouldn't like it: heaven isn't supposed to be the sort of thing sinners would like. "This is nothing," Catherine retorts. "I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath at the top of Wuthering Heights, where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other."

Wuthering Heights is a home to Catherine because of the free and vigorous way of life its rawness, beauty, and isolation enables her to lead there. Unlike anywhere else in her life, it provides opportunities for creative exploration and discovery, physically robust activity, and uninhibited emotional expression—all things to be approached in a very different spirit than the domesticated concerns in which she and Heathcliff are otherwise expected to participate. As improvisers, Catherine and Heathcliff are each engaged in a process of working out just what this wildness means to them: what precisely is to be appreciated in being in the wilderness, and how—and how the spirit of wildness each prizes is to be embodied in an overall approach to life.

By sympathetically engaging with what the other sees, Catherine and Heathcliff offer each other focus and reinforcement. Catherine's judgments and actions serve as a guide for Heathcliff. If something seems worth doing to her, he'll see, and feel, this as a hint about what he himself has reason to do and respond accordingly. I'd imagine most of these instances of shared practical reasoning are small and subtle. They might concern things like what's to be savored in an autumn wind, or what's interesting about a certain bird, or how and why the curate is to be tormented today. In loving Catherine as a partner in deep improvisation, Heathcliff will be drawn to her approach to life. In viewing her judgments as warranting a presumption of normative authority, Heathcliff will experience them as attractive, as having a rightful power to shape his own

sense of his values. Similarly, in seeing what Catherine takes to be worthwhile as to be taken into account in his own normative explanations, Heathcliff will experience her personality as calling out for attention and understanding—that is, he'll find it fascinating. Over time, these instances of sympathetic engagement and exchange add up. They enable the lovers to determine and act from more richly illustrated conceptions of value than otherwise would have been available to them.

It is this mutual self-creation that explains the irreplaceability, openness, and constancy characteristic of interpersonal love. I'll address these features in opposite order to that in which they were introduced. Conveniently, this turns out to be in ascending order of complexity.

Constancy

That partners in deep improvisation have reason to continue to love each other through a wide range of developments in one another's values, not necessarily capable of being anticipated in advance, should be obvious by this point. Someone who loves you as a partner in deep improvisation loves you, throughout your relationship together, for a specific set of values with which you identify. Because these are in the process of being determined, the reasons for love they constitute endure as the content of your values is constantly being reshaped and refined. Change is not the exception but the rule.

Note that even Sonnet 116—probably the single most quoted paean to constancy in English—begins by describing love as the marriage of true minds. This suggests two pertinent observations. First, the fact that reasons for love are constituted by a person's values, rather than external characteristics like Linton's attractions, itself means that love for a partner in deep improvisation can be expected to survive the sort of surface changes it really, obviously should. Second, constancy is important, but so is discernment. Of course it can be appropriate to cease to love a person, if one or the other of you undergoes a fundamental change in character or if the two of you do not turn out to share as much as you thought.

Openness

Partners in deep improvisation are open to each other as they are in themselves because of the distinctive way the values they share are shaped by their particular interactions. As I explained above, the fact that an improvisational partner takes some action to be appropriate is in and of itself a *prima facie* reason for you to do so as well, in virtue of the presumption of authority appropriate to a partner as such. And because the actions you take to be appropriate in improvisation determine the content of your ends, the bare fact that your beloved responds to a particular case in a certain way can in and of itself make a difference to your values.

Thus Velleman was right to stress that you do not need any special reason for heightened sensitivity to whatever is significant to or about your beloved—in any given case, that you love the person is reason enough.

It's important here that a partner in deep improvisation necessarily values your living in the way you find fundamentally worthwhile and that this constitutes a central dimension of autonomous flourishing.⁴³ This is why lovers cannot sensibly be indifferent to one another's well-being—if they were, they'd be indifferent to the continued functioning of their partnership—and why it makes sense to speak of Heathcliff as loving Catherine, rather than just her activity: he loves her precisely for being herself, for engaging in the activity that constitutes who she is.⁴⁴ (Contrast this with other improvisational activities, which may be wholly distinct from your identity or well-being—you may, in fact, be at your best as a musical partner when succumbing to your heroin addiction.) And in loving Catherine as she is in herself, Heathcliff loves her in her sheer particularity, since he must respond to her in her sheer particularity to determine what he loves in her.

Irreplaceability

The most basic reason why partners in deep improvisation are irreplaceable is simply that they are incomparable: the nature of the values in question makes the possibility of a replacement incoherent. Someone counts as a suitable replacement for an improvisational partner if that person enables you to realize the same value in the relevant activity that the original did. This may be possible in most forms of improvisation: if you're ultimately in it for the money or the adulation, one bandmate may be just as good as another, even though you'd be expressing different things with each. But it is not possible in deep improvisation, since the value of the activities you share is itself something your partner plays an ongoing role in determining. So any standards by which putative replacements might be assessed are epistemically and ontologically posterior to continued engagement with the original. If you had a different partner, you'd have different standards: there's no common basis of comparison.

Now, anyone you take to share values with which you identify will be incomparably valuable to you in this way, even when the interest isn't mutual. But when it is mutual, lovers become irreplaceably valuable to each

43. For accounts of the relationship between well-being and the successful pursuit of one's (rational) ends, see, e.g., Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Stephen Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

44. Note that nonglobal partnerships in deep improvisation will support more limited patterns of concern; hence the continuum between intimate companions and activity partners or casual friends.

other in a deeper sense. Catherine says of Heathcliff that he “comprehends in his own person my feelings to Edgar and myself.”⁴⁵ Interpreted as an improviser, she is referring to Heathcliff’s access to the values with which she identifies: as her lover, he can access them in ways that nobody else, in principle, can. He can interpret and develop them through the lens of his own history while still appreciating them as she does.

Catherine works out who she is by improvising from an evaluative currency of things like interesting birds, invigorating autumn winds, and obnoxious curates. She takes these things to be significant in ways that are to help explain how it will be important to her to live going forward, and that are to be explained, in turn, by their relation to the overall way of life they help constitute. This makes her understanding of herself and her values essentially historical and particular. The only way for anyone else to understand them from her perspective is to attribute the same practical significance to particular cases that she does—to see, in the same way that she does, those cases as contributing to, and helping to explain the nature and attractiveness of, the kind of life it is important to her to lead. But I have just argued that to be committed to attributing the same significance to particular cases that you do is precisely what it is to love you. So Catherine and Heathcliff understand each other the same way they understand themselves: through a joint history of particular interactions, constituting a common evaluative currency.

Therefore, Heathcliff’s understanding of Catherine is particular to him because his history with her is particular to him. Heathcliff does not only share a currency of particular cases with Catherine; he offers her a shared evaluative perspective constituted by integrating those cases with his own history, thereby providing Catherine with a unique dimension of access to them. When I think of what the time I spent in a place means to me, that is, I find I cannot answer this question without reference to what it means to the friends I had there. But what it means to each of them depends on the particular evaluative history he or she brings to it; as such, a loss of access to any one of these histories would be a loss of access to a part of myself.

Why, then, might it be so important to us to share ourselves with our lovers? Let me finish by sketching the beginning of an answer. First, the things our lovers bring out of us might not be things we’re capable of bringing out ourselves. This is underscored by the fact that the best lovers

45. Catherine’s statement occurs at the beginning of a speech that has rightly worried many critics. She goes on to proclaim that all her miseries in life have been for Heathcliff, that he is her great thought in living, that the world would be empty without him, and so forth. On my view, the selflessness Catherine expresses is incidental to love proper. Heathcliff is properly lovable to Catherine because he helps her live as more fully herself, not because he gives her something to live for. (It helps to remember here that she speaks as a moody and theatrical fifteen-year-old.)

often seem like opposites: consider Elinor and Marianne, Holmes and Watson, Kirk and Spock. These people all share certain fundamental concerns with their partners—ones centered, respectively, on ideals of feminine autonomy and the enjoyment of everyday beauty, the pursuit of justice tinged with an attraction to danger and a curiosity about criminality, and boldly going where no one has gone before—but embody these concerns very differently from them. This unity within diversity enables the lovers to see how their own values might be realized in ways they probably wouldn't have recognized on their own: moved by Marianne's indignation, Elinor might find it important to stand up to an offense she would otherwise have passively endured; appreciative of Elinor's considered response, Marianne might better understand why her indignation was warranted in the first place. (Recall Velleman's discussion of his sons from Sec. II.) It's even possible that one might not see how one's inchoate jumble of interests and concerns could ground a coherent identity until one sees them complemented in a lover or that one's sense of how to live might become so entwined with one's lover's as to make one lost without them.

More deeply, but more obliquely, there's something wonderful about someone picking up on the value you see in your approach to life and your being immediately able to say: "Oh, so it's not just me!" Elaborating on Heathcliff's comprehension of her in his own person, Catherine tells Ellen: "I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here?" I'm not sure I'm any more able to explain this idea than Catherine was. Still, there seems to be something deeply and intrinsically desirable about communicating to another person who you are and what, as such, is important to you. When you work out your values with a partner, they become more than just the terms of an isolated personal project. Rather, they become intersubjective standards for a way of life that can be lived in common. There's a sense in which values seem more real—more stable and substantial—when they are recognized by another person and can be examined and assessed from multiple points of view. It doesn't matter to Catherine and Heathcliff that their values be ones that every reasonable person could be expected to share, or even tolerate; bracketing specifically moral considerations, I don't see that it should. But it does, and should, matter to them that their personal values are not just personal—that their authority be intersubjective.

This point will have to stay at the level of suggestion. Even if it's right, it doesn't yet make explicit why it matters that the intersubjectivity thus secured have the historical and particular dimension I've claimed to be characteristic of love. To do so, let's take it from the top. If it's true that it's intrinsically desirable that your personal values be more than just

personal, this helps explain why it's reasonable to want to be loved selectively, since it would be reasonable to want the affirmation such love would constitute. Such love says, in effect, that you are worthy, at least to someone, of special interest and attention because you identify with the specific values you do—and if the person in question is someone you love back, you're worthy not just to anyone, but to someone whose judgment really counts. Compare this, again, to Frankfurtian love, which (because arational) does not affirm you in this way; or Vellemanian love, which primarily affirms you, generically, as a valuer; or Kolodnyan love, which affirms you, also generically, as a parent, child, sibling, spouse, or friend.

But the affirmation Catherine and Heathcliff want isn't affirmation from a universal normative perspective. They're too protective of their individuality for that. They want affirmation from a more deeply personal point of view, one that recognizes their values as fundamentally their own. Uniquely, someone who loves you as a partner in deep improvisation can provide this more personal kind of affirmation, in loving you for an identity that remains essentially up to you to freely and continually determine. Most of us, fortunately, aren't protective of our individuality as violently and absolutely as Catherine and Heathcliff are. But in wanting to be loved as distinctive individuals, I think we share the same basic concern. In wanting to be loved as distinctive, we want our lovers to see, and value us for, aspects of our characters that distinguish us from others. In wanting to be loved as individuals, we do not want to be valued merely, as Frankfurt put it, as exemplars of more general types, identifiable and evaluable in abstraction from our particular, concrete, ongoing histories. The improvisational model shows how it is possible to be loved in this way, as persons who are both knowable and endlessly interesting and surprising, with identities that escape determinate categorization but can nevertheless be responded to with fluency and delight.