'Why Do I Love You?'

David Klier
dklier@asu.edu

Abstract: There are two major conflicting views that surround the debate of the reasons for love. The first being the quality view, where we love for one's qualities, qualities that are specific to the beloved, or possibly generally likable traits. The other is the relationship view, whereby love is the result of sharing a loving relationship. In this essay, I will be looking at two modern amendments to these views, Yongming Han's (2021) 'Humean conception' of love, and Sara Protasi's (2016) 'Experiential view.' First I will introduce some fundamental concepts around the relationship and quality views. Next I will present Han's and Protasi's views charitably. Then, I will be analyzing and critiquing their views. Lastly I will present a synthesis of their work as an originally contributing argument to the discussion along with addressing some possible rebuttals.

Introduction

When we are talking about love, why do we do it? While some answers may be considered, such as some sort of innate human desire, this essay is not in reference to the general question of why people love *at all*, but rather, why do we love our *particular* beloved? There are two fundamental and conflicting views around this topic; the first is the relationship view, whereby the beloved is loved by virtue of having a loving relationship with them. This can be seen as the same way a family member is loved, or by having built up that particular loving relationship. Alternatively, there is the quality, or property view, whereby love is the result of the beloved's qualities. For instances of this essay, the terms 'property view' and 'quality view' may be used interchangeably. There are two different versions of the quality view, the first Protasi (2016) calls the 'basic' property view, whereby love is about general likable traits, the other she calls the

'sophisticated' property view, whereby love is about particular qualities that only the beloved can have.

In this essay, I analyze the debate between the argument Yongming Han (2021) makes in favor of what he calls the Humean conception of love, in favor of a relationship view, as well as the argument Sara Protasi (2016) makes in favor of what she calls the Experiential view, in favor of a quality view. I will charitably deconstruct their arguments and defenses, presenting extractions from their work, then summarizing the issue in a transition. Next I will be analyzing both views from a synthesis perspective, with which I will be generating an argument of my own about why we love our beloved, including an extraction for clarity. I will then address possible rebuttals to my view, followed by conclusions.

The Debate

The reason the debate centers around these two views is that it seems that they are mutually exclusive of one another. If one loves their beloved for their qualities, even their particular intrinsic qualities, there is a fondness, or *philia,* of the traits one has that causes the love of the beloved. Alternatively, with the relationship view, it is more of an unconditional relationship sort of love that one has, like a familial or *agape* love. These could potentially explain the disagreement between the two views, however, both accounts generally give a similar definition of love: the desire of the beloved's well being, for its own sake[1]. For clarity, the type of love regarded in this essay is of an *eros* or romantic love. This kind of love still meets with our definition and does not conflict

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[1] Both Han (2021) and Protasi (2016) have similar definitions of love, citing that love is a desire for the beloved's well being for its own sake.

with either the relationship nor the quality views. Pointing out the difference in types of love shows a difference beyond the eros that both fully admit as part of the equation[2].

Thankfully, the discussion on the topic of why we love our beloved has matured drastically away from one side or another. Modern discussions have considered a sort of synthesis of both views, but almost always leaning towards one view or the other. Protasi (2016) refutes both the basic and sophisticated quality views in favor of qualities that are built from shared experiences. Alternatively, Han (2021) states that attraction comes before love, and that attraction is based on qualities, but attraction itself is not love. Furthermore, he considers that love is ultimately desired for its own sake, for the relational value of it on its own. Love, in other words, is descended from an attraction first, then desired as an end in itself in the relationship.

Han's Argument

Han (2021) creates a different distinction than most when it comes to the discussion of love. He considers a 'rationalist' account and a 'Humean' or 'Non-rationalist' account. The rationalist account, he says, is that "...love is justified by the beloved's qualities…" (Han, 2021). This account is the same as the quality view, which he explicates, however considers it as part of an overarching rationalist view. Alternatively, Han (2021) also explicates his Humean, or Non-rationalist view as disagreeing directly with the rationalist view.

Han disagrees with the rationalist approach (or quality view). While the normal rebuttal has more to do with replaceability, that is, that if love were based on one's

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[2] Both Han (2021) and Protasi (2016) are talking about love in a romantic relationship, and as such the love is a matter of eros as well.

qualities, anyone with those qualities would do (Protasi, 2016), Han takes another direction. Han considers an example, imagine your friends are all in a book club together, but you aren't much of a reader. You join anyways, because joining the book club has the qualities of being with your friends, maybe having a bit of a party with it, gossip, and other qualities that come with being in the club. You grow into liking the book club, even loving reading, however it disbands, or you are no longer in the book club anymore. Does your love of reading end? Han names the person in this example Fran, "After all, Fran continues wanting to read fiction even when she no longer gets to talk about it with her friends." (Han, 2021).

In this rebuttal, Han (2021) is making the argument that when the qualities that surround one's love are gone, love itself is not gone. He recognizes people change and that our beloved will change as well, but our love for them doesn't end because their qualities change. As a result, Han's argument in extraction against the rationalist conception, or quality view, is as follows:

(1) If love is justifiable by the beloved's qualities, then when those qualities are no longer present, love would end. (Basic)

(2) When those qualities are no longer present, love does not end. (Basic)

(3) Therefore, love is not justifiable by the beloved's qualities. (Modus Tollens 1, 2)

I gather this as a fair extraction of his refutation of the quality view. It has two underived premises that I shall go over. In premise (1) we are setting up the modal object. Han gives a basic insight into what an implication of the quality view is. In the

example of Fran that he gives, he considers that if the quality view were right, Fran would stop loving reading. In premise (2) and again from the example, Fran doesn't stop reading, she wants to continue reading, even if she is no longer doing it with her friends. These two premises then lead deductively to the conclusion that it is impossible that love is due to the beloved's qualities. In essence, if love were in fact based purely on one's qualities, when those qualities are no longer present, there would be no way to justify continuing our love, yet when this happens, our love endures.

In considering whether we love for reasons or not, Han (2021) considers it imperative to understand where love begins. He comes to the conclusion that "Attraction (to Properties) Precedes Love: Coming to love someone, especially if they aren't a close family member, often begins with our being drawn to, or being interested in them, for their attractive properties" (Han, 2021). In doing so, he recognizes something crucial, we don't simply love, we *fall* in love. It is not something that is immediate, love is something that eventually comes about, even if it does hit us like a ton of bricks. We are drawn to qualities initially, however, "...an Anti-Rationalist explanation of why coming to want something for its own sake begins with our being interested in it only for its properties" (Han, 2021). In doing so, Han explains that love is desired for its own sake, not instrumentally. He calls this view the Humean conception of love since he calls love a 'final desire.' His argument for this, in extraction, is as follows:

   (4) If attraction precedes love, then love may have a reason to begin but does not
       die when the attractive cause is no longer present. (Basic)

(5) If love may have a reason to begin but does not die when the attractive cause is no longer present, then love is a final desire. (Basic)

(6) Therefore, if attraction precedes love, then love is a final desire. (Hypothetical Syllogism 4, 5)

(7) Attraction precedes love. (Basic)

(8) Therefore, love is a final desire. (Modus Ponens 6, 7)

In this extraction, Han is ultimately concluding that love has no reason, it is ultimately a desire for its own sake, a final desire. This is because we can start out with that recognition in the underived premise (4) that attraction precedes love, which is affirmed in premise (7) and that if that is the case, then love would not die, as it is not something that changes as people change. This goes into premise (5) that states if this is the case, that if love wouldn't die when people change, then love essentially has nothing to do with the beloved's qualities, love is something that would then be desired for its own sake. After explication in the conclusion in (6) and affirming that attraction does precede love in (7) we reach his final conclusion that love is a final desire in (8). That love is something desired for its own sake, it's not instrumental. In doing so, agreeing with the relationship view in that it's simply part of the relationship, valued for its own sake, an unconditional love of a loving relationship. Mainly, it is a relationship view due to the point that the love is unconditional, an agape style love for Han.

Protasi's Argument

In her essay, Sara Protasi (2016) is primarily defending the quality view. Her essay is in response to Niko Kolodny[3], who defends the relationship view. She says whole heartedly "I defend … the thesis that Romeo loves Juliet in virtue of the way she is, that is, in virtue of her properties…" (Protasi, 2016). Her main point of confrontation with the relationship view has to do with unrequited love: "Love as it is need not be reciprocated." (Protasi, 2016) She says that for the relationship view to work, the love would need to be reciprocated as the relationship view requires a loving relationship in order to love at all. This does not mean Protasi thinks the quality view can stand unedited either, however.

> "The relationship view cannot accommodate unrequited love's reasons because of a structural flaw: it does not recognize unrequited love as a genuine and valuable form of love. The property view, instead, can be amended to accommodate unrequited love's reasons" (Protasi, 2016).

Ultimately, Protasi comes to argue for what she calls the *Experiential* view, whereby the quality is of *unique lived experiences* with the beloved. She claims this view fixes traditional quality views, and explains how unreciprocated love can still qualify as legitimate. Her main argument against the relationship view is extracted in the following:

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[3] This is noted for clarity what the intentions of Protasi (2016) was attempting to discuss.

(9) If love is based on having a loving relationship, then the love would be reciprocated in order to be considered love. (Basic)

(10) Love is not always reciprocated and it is still considered love. (Basic)

(11) Therefore, love is not based on having a loving relationship. (Modus Tollens 9, 10)

In this argument, Protasi attacks the relationship view in a perceptual, or phenomenological way. She says "...what is worthy of love is, maybe, only what is experienced as lovable to me." (Protasi, 2016). What she is describing here speaks to premise (10) in that love is something that one feels *toward* the beloved, not something that is *shared* between one and the beloved, which is what the relationship view defends. This speaks to premise (9) in describing the relationship view and its implication surrounding unrequited love. That in order for something to be considered love, to the relationship view, it must be reciprocated. These two underived premises lead certainly to the conclusion that love's reasons are not contingent on a loving relationship, concluding the relationship view would have to be wrong.

Ultimately, Just because Protasi disagrees with the relationship view (and thereby Han's Humean conception of love as a result) does not mean she is in favor of traditional conceptions of the quality view either. Protasi utilizes the doppleganger, or the 'trade-up' response to the basic quality view. The basic quality view being that love is purely based on universally holdable qualities; being funny, being pretty, et cetera. Which states that anyone with higher values of these qualities; being funnier, prettier, et

cetera, would be 'traded-up' if the basic quality view were correct. This response is extracted as:

(12) If love is based solely on one's characteristics, then anyone with those characteristics will suffice. (Basic)

(13) If anyone with those characteristics will suffice, then anyone with a greater level of those characteristics will be loved even more. (Basic)

(14) Therefore, if love is based on one's characteristics, then anyone with a greater level of those characteristics will be loved even more. (Hypothetical Syllogism 12, 13)

(15) Anyone with a greater level of those characteristics is not loved even more. (Basic)

(16) Therefore, love is not based solely on one's characteristics. (Modus Tollens 14, 15)

This is a fair and charitable extraction of the refutation of the basic quality view by means of the 'trade-up' complaint. In (12) she sets forth the basic doppelganger complaint, that if someone with the same qualities as the beloved came along, we could love them just as much. However, the trade up comes in (13) where we can recognize that someone with even better versions of the qualities we are drawn to comes along, we would want to 'trade-up' if the quality view were correct. However, this is incorrect, if someone 'better' comes along, we don't want to 'trade-up' per (15) and so, love cannot be based solely on one's characteristics.

What is incredibly important to note, however, is that Protasi (2016) actually makes a point against Han's (2021) argument about love not leaving when qualities do. She says "No adequate theory of love's reasons should deny the possibility that love ends" (Protasi, 2016). This is an insightful refutation as Han makes the point that love doesn't really end, at least not by a change in qualities.[4] Han considers it as enduring. Protasi (2016) uses this as a means to bolster a more sophisticated conception of the quality view, however, she also gives that this just simply isn't always the case. Love can certainly endure after the qualities are no longer present. The sophisticated quality view that she refutes is that the qualities of the quality view are not general universal qualities that anyone could have, they are qualities of the beloved specifically, possibly the way they sound, the way they smile or do a particular task, or any other *particular* quality. Protasi's (2016) refutation of the sophisticated quality view is as follows:

(17) If love is based on one's particular characteristics, and people do change, then upon changing, one would fall out of love. (Basic)

(18) Though sometimes falling out of love happens, it does not always happen upon changing. (Basic)

(19) Therefore, love is not entirely/always based on one's particular characteristics. (Modus Tollens 17, 18)

The point Protasi is making here is to say that even though falling out of love definitely does happen, it isn't necessarily because anyone changes, as per (18).

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[4] While neither Protasi (2016) nor Han (2021) discuss in much detail why they think we do or do not fall out of love, I am taking it as clear that falling out of love does in fact happen.

Ultimately, this is a half disagreement with the sophisticated quality view as protasi gives that it does sometimes happen because our beloved changed.

Furthermore, Protasi (2016) comes to the conclusion of the Experiential view, by which, she means that the qualities and characteristics are "Relational-historical properties" (Protasi, 2016) and that "The beloved's properties are not generic, because they are perceived through my perspective and my perspective is shaped by the unique interaction I have with that person" (Protasi, 2016). Ultimately, the experiential view is a phenomenological one, Protasi considers love to be a perspectival emotion by which can be reciprocated, but is ultimately experienced individually. Her argument for this is as follows:

(20) The beloved's properties are perceived through my perspective. (Basic)

(21) My perspective is shaped by the unique interactions I have with that person. (Basic)

(22) Therefore, the beloved's properties are perceived through unique interactions I have with that person. (Categorical Syllogism 20, 21)

In (20) Protasi sets up through the lens of the first person perspective of the beloved. Which she says in (21) to have been shaped through our interactions with that person. This concludes that the properties are of our interactions in a relational-historical perspective. The qualities are more phenomenological, as she states:

"...I can be in almost the same place and so have roughly the same view of the object. Even then, how the object appears to you will necessarily be different, albeit minimally, from how it looks to me in virtue of our different perceptual systems. The same holds for beauty: the different views depend not only on where we stand with respect to the person but also on our standards of beauty, standards which are determined by many different factors and whose combination is idiosyncratic. Sense of humor is another clear example of perspectival property for similar reasons" (Protasi, 2016).

The point being that this allows for unrequited love to remain, given the interactions one has with their beloved are the very qualities that are the reason for their love.

Transition

At this point, it might be poignant to describe where we are. The main two views surrounding love's reasons are the relationship view and the quality view. Han (2021) claims that love is an end in itself, a final desire, per his Humean conception of love, in defense of the relationship view. Ultimately, love for Han is something that starts with attractive qualities, but once love is there, it is merely part of the loving relationship that is shared between the lover and the beloved, an unconditional love. Alternatively, for Protasi (2016) love is phenomenological, it needs to be described from a first person perspective in that our interactions with the beloved are the qualities themselves that form the reason for our love. She considers relational-historical properties, such as 'that

time we went to the carnival,' might be a fair example. Han (2021) disagrees with the quality view primarily because when the qualities of our beloved change, our love does not. Protasi (2016) alternatively, disagrees with the relationship view as a loving relationship is not required to still love our beloved.

From this point on, I will be delving into a more original contribution to this discussion. I will first be analyzing and critiquing the argument of Han (2021) and then the argument of Protasi (2016). After which I will be generating an argument of my own for a conception of love. Subsequently, I will refer to a few possible rebuttals one might have of my view and defend it. Finally, ending with the conclusions.

Analysis of Han's Argument

Han makes a fair point when he points out that just because qualities change, does not mean that our love will. He also makes a great point in that ultimately, love is something desired for its own sake. I would have to agree with him that attraction precedes love, nobody should tell someone they loved them without some substantial commitment. Though it does indeed happen, it is most often seen as misguided and disingenuous. At worst it can be seen as manipulative. However, I will agree with Protasi (2016) in refutation to Han (2021) that no theory of love's reasons should forget that falling out of love is absolutely possible. It is incredibly possible that the qualities can change (from being kind and compassionate to cold and distant, for example) that causes one to fall *out* of love with their beloved.[5] This, I think, would mean that Han's argument in refutation to the quality view must be mistaken. In extraction, my argument is:

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[5] Whether they wished they had fallen out of love or not.

(23) If when the qualities we love are no longer present in the beloved, love for the

beloved would end, then qualities play a role in the reason for loving the

beloved. (Basic)

(24) When the qualities we love are no longer present in the beloved, love for the

beloved often ends. (Basic)

(25) Therefore, qualities often play a role in the reason for loving the beloved.

(Modus Ponens, 23, 24)

Ultimately, my point is to say that Han (2021) seemed to have ignored that love

certainly can end if the qualities we were attracted to are no longer present. This does

not guarantee this, however, as I also agree that oftentimes it is not the case, people

change over time and love certainly endures as well. Quite possibly because we change

and grow with the beloved, becoming attracted to the other qualities they take on. This

ultimately means that Han's refutation of the quality view may be in trouble. However,

Han (2021) makes a fair and solid point that love is indeed desired as an end in itself,

and not instrumentally, it is unconditional when the point has been reached. This may

explain the difficulty abuse victims find in overcoming the contradiction that they should

no longer be with the person they love, though the love endures. I think there is a

difference here that needs to be made explicit: while love may endure after qualities

change, it does not mean staying together is the right thing to do, and may even be at a

tremendous cost. Falling out of love can still happen however, surely.

Analysis of Protasi's Argument

  Protasi's (2016) arguments are quite in depth and numerous. She took special care in defense of her Experiential view derived from the quality view. Unreciprocated love is something that many of us have experienced and, indeed, we would still call it love.[6] Protasi's explanation that it's our own individual phenomenological perspective of relational-historical properties makes sense here. In essence, creating the qualities of memories is the reason for love. However, at the same instance, how many memories? How much relational-historical context is required to call it 'love?' It seems this area remains rather vague. Han (2021) has a good point when he shows that attraction precedes love. Maybe this is something important to note here, that we may be attracted to someone because they won us a stuffed animal at the carnival, or having gone on that one specific date. However, I think these kinds of relational-historical qualities are only going to cause an attraction. So ultimately, with Protasi (2016) being rather vague on the number of relational-historical properties and kinds, we are left in the dark as to where to draw the line as to when we can consider something as actually being love. This may be a common error on the part of many when a beloved says "you *think* you're in love with me, but you really aren't." As such my argument is as follows:

  (26) If attraction precedes love, and love is based on a relational-historical set of properties, then we do not know where to draw the line between attraction and love. (Basic)

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[6] Protasi (2016) offers many examples of this for those lucky enough to not experience it.

(27) Attraction precedes love, and love is based on a relational-historical set of

    properties. (Basic)

(28) Therefore, we do not know where to draw the line between attraction and love.

    (Modus Ponens 26, 27)

As you can see, I am agreeing with both Han (2021) and Protasi (2016) here in different aspects per (27). However, given that these two are in fact the case, the line between attraction and love can become quite messy, per (26). These lead deductively to the point that we don't particularly know where to draw the line between attraction and love. It is my attempt, in what follows, to create an argument that is original in contribution as to gain a better grasp of this.

My Argument

So, how can we possibly decide where to draw this line between attraction and love? The goal here is to be original in contribution and academically transparent with my intentions. In full transparency, drawing the line may be a discussion for another day, the goal herein is to decide what is most important for deciding whether we love the beloved or not. First I would like to say that Protasi makes great points on her phenomenological recitation of love, and Han's point being that attraction precedes love. These are points that have been shown to muddy the waters of where we can actually say we 'love' our beloved. It seems quite obvious as well, because love is such an impactful word in modern usage that we want to make sure if we are going to use it, we know for certain that it is the emotion we are feeling. Given the fact that we have to

sit and ponder whether we are actually in fact in love with someone tells us that the line between attraction and love is not clear cut.

In reference to Protasi's (2016) relational-historical properties, I think we must recognize and discriminate *kinds* of these properties. There are generally two: the first being one off memories. Such as that *one* time we traveled to the northeast to see the leaves change color in the fall. The other being consistently recurring; such as having tea and coffee in the morning every day. Let's call the one off memories *occasions* and the recurring memories as *commonalities*.

When we think about someone we love and wonder why we love them, do we really say "because we went to the zoo, the Northeast, and he won me that teddy bear one time?" I would hardly say so. What is more common is "We are travel buddies, they try to get me things out of appreciation." In other words, occasions may be attractive properties, which are important, since as we have seen, attraction precedes love, but commonalities, the things we do on a consistent basis together, are the reasons for love. Occasions can compound into commonalities, travel memories can build into "travel buddy" in our example, occasions are one off instances, things outside the ordinary (but can become the norm). These relational-historical properties are reinforced constantly and serve as a reminder of the love of our beloved. We have occasions to express and share our love, not to build it necessarily, unless it becomes a commonality. So, when deciding whether we actually love someone, it should be based on these commonalities, not occasions. My argument, then, is as follows:

(29) If I have continued attractive commonalities with someone, then I am building a

     perspectival desire for that person's well-being. (Basic)

(30) If I am building a perspectival desire for that person's well-being, then I love

     them. (Basic)

(31) Therefore, If I have continued attractive commonalities with someone, then I

     love them. (Hypothetical Syllogism 29, 30)

       For further explication I will now go through the underived premises. For (29) we are talking about commonalities, again these are similar memories that pop up continually. In the case of this argument, they are attractive commonalities that are specific to the relationship being built. Doing this is going to build a perspectival desire for that person's well-being as it is important to note that commonalities are continual. If they stop happening, they stop being built. In order to ensure that attractive commonalities continue (as it would be reasonable to desire), we are going to care about the well-being of the person with whom we share these attractive commonalities. Thus ensuring its continuing to happen. For example, if tea and coffee breakfast with that person ended, it would be greatly missed. For (30) this is more definitional, at the beginning of this essay, we defined, as most sides of this debate agree, love is a desire for the person's well being. This then leads certainly to the conclusion in (31) that commonalities are what need to be built in order to consider the beloved truly loved.

Possible Rebuttals

While I stand firm with my argument, there are going to be some rebuttals worth considering. The first one that I wish to touch on here is that my argument doesn't tell us when to actually consider the transition from attraction to love as complete. It merely tells us what relational-historical properties are most important when considering whether we love someone.

This is a very good point, and one that I cannot answer the way that one would so wish. The point of this essay is to discover the reasons for love, however. In light of this, my intention is to consider more acutely what it actually is that causes love, *why* we *actually* love someone. As such, when we draw the line between attraction and love is beyond the scope of this essay. That is, how reinforced do the commonalities need to be to be considered love may be a good point of further research. What we can say is that we have gained a better grasp of what it actually is that is the reason for love of a particular beloved. For this reason, I think my argument still stands.

The other major rebuttal that requires addressing is assessing whether the commonalities can be replaced. In other words, my view might be taken to be vulnerable to the 'trade-up' or 'replace' rebuttal. Wouldn't a relational-historical property of a coffee and tea breakfast work with anyone? I think it is important to note that the commonalities are something that is built with a particular person. They get stronger with that specific person the more they happen. For instance, if one of the relational-historical commonality qualities is coffee and tea breakfast together, it is not just general coffee and tea breakfast, it is coffee and tea breakfast *with that person* that leads to love. Not with someone else. Imagine having had a good discussion at a

specific coffee shop with a colleague every morning for twenty years, while you may have a good coffee shop discussion with some other colleague after the first one passes away, it will never be quite the same.

What this, and specifically my example shows is that a loving relationship requires the effort of building these commonalities in order to consider it love. As such, I think my argument survives the replace and trade-up rebuttals.

Conclusions

We are now more understanding of love's reasons. First we took a look at the basic principle views of the debate. We looked at the difference between the relationship view, which says that love is based on the loving relationship one has with the beloved, then we looked at the quality view, in that love is based on the qualities that the beloved has. Then we looked at more refined views of each. Han (2021) came to the conclusion that love is a desire that is desired for its own sake, intrinsically and unconditionally. Alternatively Protasi (2016) pointed out a relational-historical property view in defense of the quality view that showed love is based on our first person perspective historical interactions with the beloved.

Then, we moved onto my own synthesis of the two. Han (2021) has shown that attraction precedes love and in doing so essentially shows that there is a scale between attraction and love itself, attraction turning into, or becoming, love. Protasi (2016) showed the relational-historical properties that go into turning attraction into love. Finally, I presented a refinement to the kinds of relational-historical properties that must be factored in when deciding if we truly love someone. A difference between *occasions* and *commonalities* showed that commonalities are what builds a truly loving relationship

as they compound to build into love. Stating that love begins as attraction to both occasions and commonalities, but commonalities build on top of each other creating those relational-historical properties that we call love.

References

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