

## SUBJECT-RELATIVE REASONS FOR LOVE

*Hichem Naar*

### *Abstract*

Can love be an appropriate response to a person? In this paper, I argue that it can. First, I discuss the reasons why we might think this question should be answered in the negative. This will help us clarify the question itself. Then I argue that, even though extant accounts of reasons for love are inadequate, there remains the suspicion that there must be something about people which make our love for them appropriate. Being *lovable*, I contend, is what makes our love for them appropriate, just as being fearsome is what makes our fear of certain situations appropriate. I finally propose a general account of this property which avoids the major problems facing the extant accounts of reasons for love.

Can love be an appropriate (or inappropriate) response to a person? Not according to the defenders of the no-reasons view, the view according to which there are no justifying reasons for loving particular people as opposed to others, or for continuing to love the people we love as opposed to stopping to love them (or coming to love someone else). More precisely, there are no justifying reasons for loving that are in some sense internal to love, no justifying reason analogous to danger for fear, or having failed to live up to one's principles for guilt, or some achievement by a close one for pride. For the no-reasons theorist, love is a non-standard emotion, as no property (or set of properties) in the world is apt to make it appropriate in the sense other emotions can be. In this paper, however, I argue that, once we get clear on the nature of the relationship between ordinary emotions and the properties which make them appropriate, it is fairly easy to identify a plausible candidate justifying property for love (Section 2). The task will then be to provide an account of this property which avoids the problems facing alternative accounts (Section 3). I start by discussing the no-reasons view which will constitute my target and the arguments in its favour (Section 1).

### **1. The Appeal of the No-Reasons View**

The no-reasons view of love is the view that there are no justifying reasons for love. Stated in such a blunt way, the view is clearly false. We certainly have reasons to love other people. Although it might sometimes lead to one's fall, love can also be one of the wonders of life. A life without at least some amount of love would not be a very satisfying life, at least for some people. As a result, many of us have reasons to love other people. However, the no-reasons view does not deny that we may have general reasons to let ourselves love other people, or to seek love, or to say nice things about love. It need not even deny that we have reasons to love people of a particular sort, provided loving them is instrumental to some end we have. For instance, if loving Jane would make me very happy, then I have a reason to love her.

The no-reasons view thus should not be seen as a blanket scepticism about reasons for love. The view is indeed much narrower in scope, and much more subtle: it only denies the existence of a particular class of reasons, those reasons tied to the *particularity* of the person we love or to that of the relationship we have with her. In particular, it denies that we have reasons to love certain people *as opposed to others*, or to continue to love these people *as opposed to stopping to love them* (or *coming to love someone else instead*). It denies that there is one property (or set of properties) that makes particular occurrences of love appropriate responses to their object.

To understand this last claim, consider ordinary emotions: fear, anger, guilt, admiration, and so on. It is uncontroversial that such emotions can be supported by reasons. Such reasons indeed include not only the general instrumental reasons of the sort we might have for love, but also reasons involving their object and its properties. My fear of the tiger is an appropriate response to him in virtue of the fact that he constitutes a danger to me. The same consideration applies to other emotions, such as admiration and pride: the fact that a stranger won the race would give me a reason to feel admiration towards her, while the fact that *I* (or someone close to me) won the race would give me a reason to feel pride. For each type of emotion, we seem to be able to point to a set of properties instantiated by its objects that would make its occurrence an appropriate response to them.

Now, according to the no-reasons theorist, no such property can plausibly be said to make love appropriate in the sense ordinary emotions are made appropriate. As a result, love is more akin to an urge or a sensation than to an emotion, a belief, or an action when it comes to its relation to justifying reasons: just as one's craving for food, or one's toothache, one's love for another person may sometimes be unfortunate, but it cannot be criticised as irrational (Frankfurt, 2004, Smuts, ms., Zangwill, 2013). At best, therefore, love gives reasons to feel and act in certain ways, but it is not itself supported by reasons; just like toothaches and ice cream cravings, it can be given a causal explanation, but not a rationalizing one.

Two sets of considerations are usually offered in support of the no-reasons view: one pre-theoretical, the other theoretical. Let us consider the pre-theoretical considerations first. These considerations appeal to linguistic use and folk intuitions about the nature of love. One central argument in favour of the no-reasons view appeals to the way we tend to describe the onset of love as primarily a matter losing control: we 'fall in love' (Smuts, ms., 10). And we seem to be right in talking this way, for love is rarely if ever the product of deliberation, argument, or reasoning. As Aaron Smuts eloquently puts it, 'We cannot decide to love in the way in which we decide to raise our arms. One can jump off a cliff, but one does not decide to fall, at least not directly. Falling is something that happens to us, not something that we do.' (ms., 10) Love, therefore, is not, at least typically, *based on reasons*, at least not in the sense in which beliefs and actions can be based on reasons, as when we assess the evidence for a given proposition or weigh the pros and cons of a given course of action (Frankfurt, 2004). 'Love is blind', as we often hear.

These (and similar) considerations are unconvincing, however. The lack of direct control over our loving attitudes, although evidence for the no-reasons view, can be defeated by the fact that lack of direct control over an attitude does not imply that the attitude cannot be supported by reasons. We typically do not have direct control over our emotions or our beliefs, but this does not show that we cannot hold them for reasons. Similarly, the fact that love is typically not the product of deliberation or reasoning (and that to a certain extent it can be 'blind') does not by itself imply that it

cannot be supported by reasons, for ordinary emotions – things that can be supported by reasons – are not typically the product of deliberation or reasoning either. Anticipating this response, Smuts (ms., 11) remarks that ordinary emotions tend to subside once we realize that they are inappropriate, which cannot be said for love. Love, it seems, can coexist with any explicit evaluations we might have about its object, including negative ones. It is indeed hard to imagine our state of love disappearing, like a state of fear would in analogous circumstances, once we form the judgment that our beloved is an awful person. This remark, however, should not be overstated. Not only is it not clear that our love will not subside to the same extent fear will in analogous circumstances (the sudden realization that one's beloved is a terrible person may sometimes be sufficient to fall out love with her), there are clear differences between love and fear that would explain the relevant asymmetry. While fear is an occurrent emotion, love is, or involves, a dispositional emotion or 'sentiment' (Naar, 2013). Falling out of love, as a result, can be as difficult as getting rid of the deeply entrenched anger one has had for one's father in the past ten years, or getting rid of long-term conditions such as addictions or phobias. The fact that love belongs to a general category of mental states (dispositional mental states) which may require time and effort to be given up does not show in any way that it cannot be supported by reasons.

The no-reasons view has some appeal once we consider the theoretical considerations cited in its favour. The general strategy pursued by the no-reasons theorist is to argue that, since none of the views defending the existence of reasons for love (of the relevant kind) – call them 'reasons views' – is successful, we are forced to conclude that there are no reasons for love (of the relevant kind). If the reasons view should be rejected, the negation of this view – the no-reasons view – should thereby be accepted. I will devote the rest of this section to the no-reasons theorist's case against the reasons view.

If we wish to defend the reasons view, we need to provide some account of the properties which would justify our loving particular people and not others, as well as our continuing to love the people we love.<sup>1</sup> A natural option is to appeal to *intrinsic properties* of the beloved. In our context, intrinsic properties are roughly those properties that an entity has independently of its relation to other things. By contrast, *relational properties* are those properties a person has in virtue of his or her relation (or lack of relation) to other things, including other people (Lewis, 1986, 61). While having yellow hair is an intrinsic property of persons, being next to someone is a relational property. The approach under consideration claims that, in order for one's love for A to be justified (in the relevant way), A must have *good* intrinsic properties. Which properties she must have is a matter of dispute, but obvious possibilities include being beautiful, having a great personality, and being a virtuous person.

No matter which properties we decide to select, this approach is highly problematic, however. Suppose that what makes my love for A appropriate is her good personality. A's good personality is the reason why I should love her. But is it the reason why I should love her *as opposed to someone else*? Clearly not. For that someone else could also have a good personality. So, if what justifies my love for A is

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<sup>1</sup> As Smuts points out, the issue concerning reasons for the continuation of love only arise because love, unlike ordinary emotions such as fear, is an attitude whose typical temporal profile is more a matter of days, weeks, months, even years, than a matter of seconds. This might lead us to think that love is not an emotion. In our context, I take it that nothing significant hangs on the decision to call love an 'emotion' or to call it something else.

her good personality, then I have an equally good reason to love B, who also has a good personality. In fact, trading A for B would be perfectly permissible on the account under consideration: if B has a good personality, then I have a reason to love her instead of A. On this account, the people we love are in some sense replaceable: if someone equally good or better comes along, then we no longer have any reason to continue loving the original person. This sounds awfully wrong. Intuitively, the people we love are not replaceable in this way (Grau, 2010). One's love for one's wife, mother, brother, or son should not depend on their having a select set of good intrinsic properties in this way, no matter the properties we consider. For there will always be imaginable cases where one has a reason to trade either of them for someone else on the sheer basis of the latter's intrinsic properties. Consider the love you may have for a sibling. On the account under consideration, what justifies your love for her is some good characteristics she has. Now, a perfect duplicate of her comes along. As a duplicate, she has all the features that makes your love for your sister justified. Do you have a reason to love her instead? This is doubtful to say the least. This is the *problem of trading up*.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of trading up asks the reasons theorist to tell us why loving a substitute is not appropriate when whatever justifies the original love is also present in the substitute. A related problem for the reasons theorist is that the loss of the properties that initially justified one's love for another does not *ipso facto* justify the abandonment of the love, or at any rate make it rationally permissible. A love conditional upon the other keeping his good looks, intelligence or wit hardly looks genuine. So if the loss of such properties does not render one's love inappropriate, why should they render it appropriate in the first place? Call it the *problem of lost properties*.

When considering cases of duplication, one thing is clear: although the duplicate may be qualitatively identical to the beloved, having the same body, the same beliefs, the same character, she has not the same *history*. A natural thought is that the fact that she has a different history is what grounds my love for her, not her intrinsic properties.

It is not the mere fact that the duplicate has a different history from my beloved's that may justify my rejection of the substitute, however. For, it could be asked, why could it not be the case that the fact that the substitute has a different history from my partner's grounds my coming to love *her* (the substitute)? There must be something about my partner's history that makes the relevant difference. So, what has my partner had in the past that the duplicate has not? My partner had certain biological parents, to be sure, but also a childhood, friends, a college education, an art class, a trip to Africa, and a great many other experiences. In all of these, nothing however stands out as *the* reason for which I love my partner. Perhaps this is because they are all part of the reason. But there seems to be something significant that is missing in the list, namely

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<sup>2</sup> Not everyone takes this to be a genuine problem. For instance, when considering cases of duplication, Derek Parfit (1984) claims that one ought to love A's replica if one justifiably loves A in the first place, given that if A has features justifying one's love for her, A's replica will have them too. Although this kind of bullet biting might be ultimately successful (for instance, by being supplemented with an attractive theory of personal identity and an error theory about our intuitions about irreplaceability), I will assume in this paper that this strategy should be employed by the reasons theorist as a last resort, and leave it open whether the resulting view would still be better than a simple no-reasons view. My aim here is to find a middle ground between extreme reasons theorists such as Parfit and no-reasons theorists such as Frankfurt and Smuts. For a similar aim, see Jollimore (2011).

the *relationship* that my partner and I have had in the past and that I never had with a duplicate of her.

According to Niko Kolodny (2003), love is grounded, not in intrinsic properties of one's beloved, but in his or her *relational* properties, in particular in the property of sharing a certain kind of history with one. What kind of history is this? Presumably, it is a history of interactions involving certain positive responses (including, as Kolodny calls it, a 'shared concern') and the sharing of certain activities. If we are to extend this account to other forms of love, which Kolodny wants to do, biological ties and family bonds may ground love as well. We do justify our partiality (in action and feeling) towards our friends, lovers, and family members by citing the very fact that they are our friends, lovers, and family members. And we surely would find no other answer than 'Because she is my daughter' to the question 'Why do you love this particular girl?' Does Kolodny give us a plausible account of how love can be justified?

There are clear advantages to the account. First, in broad outline, it can nicely capture not only love between romantic partners, but love between mother and child, between brother and sister, and between friends. In all these cases, it seems to give an intuitive answer to the question 'Why do you love him or her?' Second, naturally, it does not fall prey to the problems of lost properties and trading up, or so it seems.<sup>3</sup> As we have seen, the mere fact that one has lost some of her valuable properties does not by itself give us reason to consider giving up on loving them. Similarly, the fact that a duplicate of my partner is around should not give me reason to transfer my love to her. Kolodny's relationship account, by giving relational properties the relevant justificatory role, seems to avoid both of these problems. Finally, the account clearly tells us why it is not rationally obligatory to love just anyone who happens to have valuable features. Since it is relationships that justify love, not intrinsic properties, the presence of intrinsic properties in people with whom I have not been in a relationship does not justify my loving them.

Naturally, Kolodny does not claim that any relationship will do when it comes to justifying our love for someone. Relationships must be of the right sort. For instance, a relationship involving a husband repeatedly abusing his wife does not give the latter compelling reasons to love or to continue loving him. On Kolodny's account, therefore, positive properties of the beloved—such as her virtues—play a role in *enabling* a given relationship to become a legitimate source of reasons for love. An abused wife, as a result, has reason to stop loving her husband in virtue of the deterioration of the relationship that he has caused.

At this point, however, it may be wondered whether, on Kolodny's view, what really matters to one in a loving relationship is not one's beloved, but the relationship itself. On the account, the beloved may surely be the intentional object of one's love—we love people, not relationships—but it is in virtue of the value of one's relationship with him or her that one's love is appropriate or inappropriate. Moreover, given the enabling role that the identity of the lover must play for one's love to be justified, the lover turns out to be *instrumentally* valuable. It is as if one's love could be expressed by the thought 'I appreciate you because you make a worthwhile relationship possible'. If anything, it seems to give the wrong order of explanation: 'I appreciate the relationship because it enables me to get to know you' looks like a

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<sup>3</sup> I will shortly raise doubts about the account's ability to answer adequately all worries stemming from irreplaceability.

better thing to say when one expresses one's love. If it is the relationship that matters, it is not even clear why one should not trade up for someone who promises to help build a better future relationship, or why one should not end a relationship turning horrific whose past value outweighs its future disvalue (Smuts, 2014, 521). More generally, an implication of the view seems to be that one *ought* to trade up if by doing so one is able to create a more valuable relationship. To many, this is an unacceptable consequence of the view. Let's call this problem the *problem of the wrong focus*.

The problem of the wrong focus stems from the intuition that, if love is to be at all justified, this must be by things which somehow connect up to the particularity of the beloved, to the very person he or she is, or at any rate to her very properties. With this in mind, it might not be so clear that Kolodny's account dispels all worries about duplication after all.<sup>4</sup> Consider a case where a duplicate of my beloved who, on Twin-Earth, has had a qualitatively identical 'quasi-history' with a duplicate of me. Imagine that my beloved and her duplicate get swapped. Do I now have a reason to love the duplicate? If it is the relationship that matters when it comes to justifying one's love for another person, it seems that I do have a reason to love the duplicate, for my duplicate and her have had a relationship which is qualitatively identical to the one I've had with my beloved; on Kolodny's account, my beloved looks replaceable after all. Kolodny might insist that *actual* history is what matters, and that given that quasi-history is not actual history, the latter cannot justify my love for the duplicate. This will not do, however, as this reply fails to say *why* actual history – as opposed to a quasi-history – can justify one's love for a person. To be successful, in other words, this reply must be supplemented with an *explanation* of the fact that, while quasi-history may not give one a reason to love someone, actual history certainly can.

Although we have reasons to reject Kolodny's specific account, this does not show that history in general, and relationships in particular, have no role to play in an adequate account of reasons for love. As we will see in Section 3, they do have a significant role to play in the justification of love, and they are crucial in preserving the thought that love not only does not accept substitutes but also is right in doing so. Crucially, the view I will put forward might have the resources to explain why actual history – as opposed to quasi-history – matters when it comes to the justification of love.

## 2. The Simple Reply to the No-Reasons View

Given the inadequacy of the extant reasons views, the no-reasons view seems to have the upper hand. It indeed looks like we have exhausted the range of plausible options: reasons for love are neither intrinsic properties nor relational properties of the beloved. Contrary to ordinary emotions such as fear, admiration, and guilt, there may be nothing which makes love appropriate. Love, like hunger, is something we may just happen to have (Smuts, ms., Zangwill, 2013).

We have seen that the strategy of the no-reasons theorist is to show that, while there are properties which make ordinary emotions appropriate, there arguably isn't any property which makes love appropriate. At this point, one may think that there must be such property, namely *being lovable*. According to Smuts, however, this proposal is hopeless, as it is both 'circular and entirely uninformative' (Smuts,

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<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to the following problem.

forthcoming, 16). In this section, I will argue that the proposal, suitably understood, has neither of these features.<sup>5</sup>

To begin with, notice that to each emotion type, we can associate *a priori* a general evaluative property: being fearsome for fear, being admirable for admiration, being disgusting for disgust, being shameful for shame, and so on and so forth. The evaluative property associated with each type of emotion is called its ‘formal object’ (Kenny, 1963, de Sousa, 1987).<sup>6</sup> The question then is what role formal objects should play in a theory of emotions. I contend that the role of formal objects is to delineate a particular class of reasons for the relevant attitudes. For instance, being likely to cause physical harm, being likely to cause emotional pain, and being likely to kill all fall under the heading of the FEARSOME. We may say that they are all *ways* of being fearsome, or that being fearsome is a determinable of these more determinate properties, or that being fearsome is a second-order property of having first-order properties of a certain kind (to be specified shortly). I will not adjudicate on the issue concerning the precise relationship between formal objects and the particular reasons they are related to. What is important to notice though is that, since the role of formal objects is not to appear in the content of the corresponding emotions,<sup>7</sup> but to delineate a certain class of reasons, we thereby avoid the charge of circularity. For if fear (or love) were an evaluation of the form ‘X is fearsome’ (or ‘X is lovable’), then of course there would be something circular in the claim that what makes fear appropriate is the fearsome (or the lovable).<sup>8</sup> But since fear’s (love’s) relationship with its formal object is not conceived of in this way, the proposal does not face this problem.<sup>9</sup>

Even though the appeal to formal objects need not be circular, it may still seem uninformative – Smuts’ second worry – for both ordinary emotions and love. Indeed, just as answering the question ‘Why do you fear the dog?’ with ‘Because he is fearsome’ does not say much about my reasons for fearing the dog, answering the question ‘Why do you love her?’ with ‘Because she is lovable’ does not say much about my reasons for loving the relevant person. In reply, I suggest that we should not expect an appeal to formal objects to be very informative. As I suggested above, the

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<sup>5</sup> In the rest of this section and the next, I draw on a view of reasons for emotions I develop elsewhere (Naar, ms.).

<sup>6</sup> The notion of formal object has some affinity with notions such as ‘ground’ (e.g., Kolodny, 2003, 154) or ‘basis’ (e.g., Velleman, 1999, 366) that we can find in the literature on love. For instance, the formal object, ground, and basis of an attitude are distinguished from its intentional object. The notion of formal object is however different from these other notions in being both more general and *a priori* derivable from the concept of the associated attitude. So, while the fact that A is beautiful might be the basis on which I love her, or the ground of my love for her, it is not its formal object (the lovable). As we will shortly see, formal objects and grounds/bases (which are at bottom specific reasons) entertain an intimate relationship that is important to uncover.

<sup>7</sup> See Deonna & Teroni, 2012, Ch.7 for an argument to this effect. See also Naar, ms.

<sup>8</sup> See Deonna & Teroni, 2012, Ch.7 for an attempt to square the claim that emotions do not have an evaluative content with the claim that they are evaluations.

<sup>9</sup> The argument in this paragraph finds additional support in the recent defenses of ‘objectualism’, the view that there are mental states which can be directed at particular objects and not propositions (Montague, 2007, Grzankowski, 2012). If love is an objectual attitude, which it seems to be, then the role of its formal object – the lovable – is not to figure in its content. So, since love is not even supposed to be *about* the lovable, there is no circularity in the claim that being lovable is what makes love appropriate. In a recent paper (Zangwill, 2013, 303-305), Nick Zangwill argues that, if love is an evaluation (a view usually associated with extant reasons views), it is propositional. However, love is not propositional. As a result, love is not an evaluation. My argument in the text can be seen as a way to do justice to this argument within a reasons framework.

role of formal objects is to delineate a class of reasons which make the relevant attitudes appropriate responses to their object. An appeal to lovability in response to a request for justification should therefore be seen as involving an implicit reference to these more specific reasons.

That said, an appeal to formal objects as such can still be quite informative, given a plausible analysis of them. The concept of the FEARSOME is not the concept of something that is capable of eliciting fear. Rather, it is the concept of *meriting* a distinctive kind of response, namely fear. This point generalizes to the LOVABLE: it is not the concept of being capable of eliciting love, but the concept of *meriting love*.<sup>10</sup> A lovable person, therefore, is a person who merits love, just as a fearsome situation is a situation which merits fear. And given that it is always an open question whether a person I love merits my love – and not an open question whether she is capable of eliciting love in me, given that I *do* love her – the fact that she does merit my love can be a matter of discovery. In an attempt to answer the question ‘Why do you love her?’, citing my beloved’s lovability would thereby be informative in a way citing her capacity to elicit love is not. While the latter’s property is presupposed in the question, the former property – understood in terms of merit – is certainly not; I might indeed *deny* that the person I love is lovable (and perhaps go on to cite the sort of instrumental considerations discussed in Section 1 to justify my love for her). Smuts’ second worry to the effect that an appeal to the lovable would be uninformative – and should be rejected on this basis – can therefore be discarded.

We can now rephrase the original question in terms of merit. Do the particular people we love sometimes merit our love in a way that others (who may have similar features) don’t? And do they sometimes merit our continuing to love them as opposed to stopping loving them or coming to love someone else? The question is whether there is anything which makes people merit our love in these ways. Answering this question will be the task of the final section.

### 3. An Account of Merit-Grounded Reasons for Love

To have an account of the things which make people merit our love (in the relevant ways), it is important to spend some time unpacking the notion of merit at issue here. Merit, as I construe it, is a relation between certain entities (persons, animals, etc.) and certain responses (emotions, actions, activities, etc.). Furthermore, this relation obtains in virtue of certain features of the entities meriting the responses, where the notion of feature here should be understood as including not only (intrinsic and relational) properties of the relevant entities but also their behaviours and actions. For instance, in virtue of all the things she has done for me in the past (a series of actions), and of her kindness (a property), a particular person may at once merit my gratitude (an emotion), my thanking her (an action), and my ongoing support (an activity).

As clear in this last example, certain merit relations do not obtain independently of the relationships obtaining between the meriting entities and the responding parties. It is in virtue of the fact that a given person has done something nice to *me*, and not to someone else, that she merits my gratitude, or my thanking her. If she had done something nice to someone else instead, she would have merited, not *my* gratitude, but

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<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of evaluative concepts appealing to the notion of merit, see McDowell, 1985. Note that the analysis put forward here may not generalize to all apparently evaluative concepts, and can therefore be restricted to concepts, such as FEARSOME and LOVABLE, which are conceptually connected to certain mental states, such as fear and love (see Naar, ms.).



*theirs*. Of course, there may be features of people which make them merit a certain response *from everyone*, irrespective of their relationship with them (admiration may be an example), but this is far from the only possibility. Indeed, certain features of persons seem to give us reasons to respond in certain ways only when *we* are suitably related to these people. I have no reason to thank someone if she has not displayed some form of kindness towards me. A stranger on the street with whom I have never been in contact does not merit my thanks. She may merit my respect, but not my thanks.

Let's call *subject-neutral reason* any (merit-grounded)<sup>11</sup> reason for a given attitude whose existence does not depend on the presence of a relationship between the relevant entity and the responding subject, and *subject-relative reason* any reason for a given attitude which does depend on the presence of such relationship. In the rest of this paper, I will argue that the reasons for love the reasons theorist should be looking for are *subject-relative* ones.<sup>12</sup>

I take it that there might be subject-neutral reasons to love just about anyone who has good features. In general, there are more reasons to love a kind, compassionate, and caring person than a moral monster. Perhaps, indeed, the former kind of person merits love more than the latter kind. Appealing to such properties is insufficient to answer the questions we set out to answer, however. It does not say why we may have more reasons to love the particular people we do love than to love people who are just as (subject-neutrally) equally worthy of love. And it does not say why we have reasons to continue loving them even if they have lost some of their good properties. It does not say why, beyond the fact that they generally merit to be loved, they merit to be loved *by us*.

What reasons do we have to love the people we do love as opposed to similar people we don't love, and to continue loving them? Put in my terms, in virtue of what properties do the people we do love merit our love while the people we do not love do not, and in virtue of what properties do they merit our continuing to love them? I suggest that such reasons are features they have manifested and acts they have performed *in the context of our relationship with them*. Although kindness may be a subject-neutral reason to love kind people as opposed to unkind people, it is insufficient to justify my loving one kind person as opposed to another one. On my proposal, what justifies my loving one kind person as opposed to another one is that the kindness of the first has been manifested in the context of my relationship with *her*. In the context of a relationship with a particular person, kindness is now a subject-relative reason to love her and not someone else, and, so long as she retains

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<sup>11</sup> I am here putting aside reasons which are not tied to considerations of merit, such as prudential considerations in favour of holding certain attitudes (e.g., love) towards people (and other entities).

<sup>12</sup> The view I'm proposing in this section is both similar to and different from the view defended recently in Abramson & Leite (2011). It is similar in that it takes non-relational features of persons as manifested in an appropriate relational setting to constitute reasons for love. It is different, however, in that it does not subscribe to what one might take to be a problematic moralism about the relevant justifying features. While Abramson and Leite's account takes virtues such as kindness and generosity to constitute the relevant reasons, my account is not restricted to the virtues, and might include features which cannot easily be cashed out in virtue-theoretic terms (I will shortly give some examples). This liberal conception of reasons for love is motivated by the plausible thought that features besides virtues and other features involving agency (as manifested in our relationship with them) may make people (and other creatures) merit our love for them. *Being a living being* (as manifested in our relationship with the relevant person or creature) might be an example. Thanks to anonymous referee for pressing me to make it clear how my view differs from Abramson and Leite's.

her kindness (or any rate, does not become unkind), a subject-relative to continue to love her.

I have chosen kindness as a plausible example of the sort of property which could justify love in the relevant ways, the sort of property which, when manifested in the context of a relationship, makes the relevant person merit our love in a way equally kind people do not. But there probably are other subject-relative reasons for love: generosity, honesty, courage, and creativity, in addition to being independently valuable, may constitute genuine reasons to love someone as the very person she is, provided such properties are manifested within the context of our relationship with him or her. Other properties may be envisaged,<sup>13</sup> such as *being there when I needed him*, *being the one who always believed in me*, *being the one who makes me happy*, perhaps even *being someone who loves me*, *being a sentient being (as manifested in a relationship with him or her)* and *being a vulnerable creature (as manifested in a relationship with him or her)*.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, details must be filled in. For instance, something must be said about what it is for a property to manifest itself in the context of a relationship. However, it is important to see how promising the account is. To that end, I will conclude this paper by highlighting ways the proposal might avoid the problems facing alternative reasons views.

Consider the problem of lost properties first. There are ways the view could be spelled out in such a way that the mere fact that someone has lost some of her valuable properties does not thereby give us a reason to stop loving her. On the one hand, we could argue – quite sensibly – that only a subset of the person’s valuable properties matters when it comes to the justification of the continuation of our love. This would allow us to say that only the disappearance of certain properties – for instance, their kindness – can give us a reason to stop loving them. On the other hand, the view has the resources to accommodate a range of claims about the extent to which certain features of the person we love can justify our loving them *even when they have lost their properties*. It seems clear to me that it is sometimes appropriate to love people even after they died, even though they have lost their properties. If so, the fact that they *were* wonderful people (in the context of our relationship with them) may be sufficient to justify our continuing to love them.

Like Kolodny’s account, furthermore, the reasons view I propose does not obviously face the trading up problem facing the version of the reasons view

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<sup>13</sup> Some of which, such as *being there when I needed him*, are hard to specify without an explicit reference to contextual features.

<sup>14</sup> One might wonder whether my account implies that, in the absence of a suitable relationship, a mother does not have (yet) subject-relative reasons to love her newborn child. If this is the case, the worry goes, the view fails to accommodate certain intuitions about irreplaceability, for in the absence of subject-relative reasons, a mother would have no reason to love her own child as opposed to another one – an unacceptable consequence. The worry might be resisted, however, on the ground that it is far from clear that no suitable relationship is present in this kind of case. It should be clear by now that the notion of a relationship at play here is more permissive, and more generic, than the ordinary notion of relationship we deploy in sentences such as ‘Bob is in a relationship with Anna’, including both things we would ordinarily call ‘relationships’ and various interactions between people for which we would not use the label. Now, in this generic sense of ‘relationship’, it is clear that the mother and her newborn child did get the chance to ‘form’ a relationship, for interactions between them have occurred both before (the child’s kicking in her womb) and after the child was born (the child’s cries). Moreover, given that on my view the relevant justifying features need not involve agency in any way, it allows us to love human infants and non-human animals for good reasons. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this issue.

appealing to intrinsic properties, as on this account, the fact that we have no subject-relative reason to love a duplicate of someone we love (because we have not interacted with him or her) is what explains why do not take ourselves to have a reason to trade up. We will shortly see that the view fares better with respect to the subtler trading up problem that was raised against Kolodny's account.

The reasons view defended here, suitably fleshed out, may not face the problem of the wrong focus either. On Kolodny's account, relationships – in particular valuable relationships – are ultimately what justify our love for particular people, giving the latter a simple instrumental role: the people we love seem to be valuable to us only to the extent that they contribute to the formation of an intrinsically valuable relationship. And this seems to imply, contrary to initial appearances, that we have a reason to trade up A for B if B promises to help build a better future relationship (Smuts, 2014). My account does not face this problem. Given that, on this account, it is not the relationship *per se* that justifies one's love, the beloved does not end up merely instrumentally valuable, and so the prospects of a better relationship with someone else does not imply that one ought to trade up. Indeed, to the extent that my account takes reasons for love to be in large part intrinsic properties,<sup>15</sup> it goes some way towards preserving the claim that it is the person herself that is ultimately valued and not our relationship with her. Furthermore, by indexing the relevant properties to a context, the account shows why we don't have a reason to love an intrinsic duplicate of the people we love. Intrinsic properties, in other words, give us reasons to love certain people and not others with identical features only when we are suitably related to them. And given that we are not related to the intrinsic properties of the duplicates of our beloved in the relevant way, we do not have a reason to trade up our beloveds for these duplicates.<sup>16</sup>

Recall Kolodny's difficulty in explaining why actual history matters while quasi-history does not when it comes to justifying our love for someone. In order to dispel worries about irreplaceability and duplication, we have seen that Kolodny could insist that there is a normative difference between loving our beloved (with whom we have been in an actual relationship) and loving her duplicate (who has been in a relationship with a duplicate of us, but not us). The worry was that it is not clear how he could explain this difference with the resources of his account. What's so special about actual history, we might ask? My account suggests an answer to this question. Actual history is normatively significant given that it is the context in which my beloved has manifested *her* features – which, we have seen, are not simply instrumentally valuable (*contra* Kolodny) – and in which *I* am located. In denying that the relationship *per se* plays the justificatory work – and in granting intrinsic properties an essential justificatory role – my view has therefore a clear advantage over Kolodny's.

Yet, it might seem that this simply pushes the problem back, for it is not clear how my account can explain why valuable features my beloved has manifested in the context of a relationship with me matter while valuable features a duplicate of my beloved has manifested in the context of a relationship with my duplicate do not. What explains this normative difference between 'actual-history features' and 'quasi-history features'? I must say at this stage that I do not have an explanation of the

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<sup>15</sup> And behaviours and actions explained by such properties.

<sup>16</sup> For the claim that a special relationship can enable a person's self-standing value to constitute a reason for special treatment, see Keller (2013, Ch. 5). Thanks to Sarah Stroud for drawing my attention to this text.

normative asymmetry between actual-history features and quasi-history features. Notice, however, that this is a problem for anyone who subscribes to the existence of reasons which are dependent on the presence of a certain relationship. It is plausible, for instance, that pride is the kind of thing that can be supported by reasons. A good reason for pride – rather than for mere admiration – towards a given person is that this person is a close one (a child, a parent, etc.) who has done something admirable. This implies that one has no reason to feel pride towards someone who is not in fact a close one. Similarly, while we have no reason to thank someone who has been nice to someone else, we have reasons to thank someone who has been nice to *us*.<sup>17</sup> Now, one might ask why it is the case that, while we have a reason to feel pride towards someone close to us, we do not have a reason to feel pride towards someone who is a duplicate of that person (who performed an equally admirable act on Twin Earth), or that, while we have a reason to thank someone who has been nice to us, we do not have a reason to thank someone who has been nice to someone else (including a duplicate of ourselves). These questions, although sensible, should not make us doubt the claim that emotions like pride and actions like thanking cannot be formed or performed for good reasons. It should not tempt us – at least not too quickly – to accept a ‘no-reasons’ view with respect to emotions and actions of these sorts. Rather, it should make us do our best to explain such reasons, to find an account of why they might obtain. I suggest we do our best to account for our (subject-relative) reasons for love before deciding to give them up.<sup>18</sup>

*Center for Research in Ethics*  
*University of Montreal*  
*2910 boulevard Edouard-Montpetit*  
*Montreal (QC) H3T1J7 Canada*  
*hm.naar@gmail.com*

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<sup>17</sup> Another example is punishment: while we might have a reason to punish (e.g., slap) someone who has insulted us, we do not seem to have a reason – at least not a reason of the same sort – to punish someone who has insulted someone else.

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