3. At least, this is true in the usual, recognizably pathological cases of self-hatred.
4. To call such a feature of character a *moral* flaw is not yet to call it blameworthy. The proper form of response may be something in quite a different register from blame or reproach. Here we are working with a broad conception of the moral on which traits are ethically evaluable insofar as they make a person well or ill-suited for (particular) spheres of interpersonal interaction (Abramson 2008; Abramson & Leite 2011.)
5. In Jamie's case, there is in fact a 'there there' – there are projects, interests, desires that are Jamie's own – but her refusal to pursue them, out of dislike for herself, gives the appearance to anyone trying to love her that this is not the case. This distinguishes Jamie's case from, for instance, cases in which the beloved is attempting to live vicariously through the lover's own interests, projects, and desires.

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6
Is It Better to Love Better Things?

Aaron Smuts

1 Introduction

Is it better to love better things? This question is ambiguous in multiple ways. There are at least three variables: (a) What kind of *better* do we have in mind? Prudential, moral, aesthetic, or some other kind of better, such as more meaningful? (b) What do we mean by *love*? Do we simply mean 'liking,' or are we asking about something more robust, such as care or romantic love? (c) What kinds of *things* are we talking about? Ideals, artifacts, places, pets, or people?

From these three variables and the limited lists of suggested options we can generate the following equation: 4 kinds of better × 3 kinds of love × 5 kinds of objects = 60 different questions. And we should probably consider the second 'better' as a fourth variable, making matters more complex. Perhaps the answers are different for every question. It seems clearly better to care about ideals in proportion to their importance. But when it comes to people, the situation is not so straightforward. For example, it is far from clear that parents should love their children in proportion to their merits.

It's not possible to address all these different questions here. To keep the scope manageable, we need to reform the general question into something more specific. I will make two of the variables concrete, the kind of love and the kind of object. Here I intend to answer the question 'Is it better to *love* (in a robust sense that I will explain) better *people*?' I will try to get clear about the kind of better at issue as we proceed.

Truth be told, I won't be offering a fully satisfactory answer to the question. I will try to get a little clearer about the ways it might be better to love better people. And I will attempt to show how this claim is compatible with the 'no-reasons' view of love – the view that love

cannot be justified. In short, the reasons it is better to love better people are not the kinds of reasons that can justify love.

2 The nature of love

I intend to restrict the discussion to love of persons, but this is somewhat problematic. If we ignore important instances of love, we will likely cultivate a deformed theory reared on an imbalanced diet of examples. This is precisely what we find in the literature. Many philosophers are comfortable denying that we can love animals. But this seems preposterous to all but those sheltering some pet theory of love. People care for their pets, spend huge amounts of money on them, and grieve when they die.[1] To deny that someone grieving for their dead cat loves their pet is wildly counterintuitive and horribly insensitive.[2]

For those not blinkered by a benighted theory, it is easy to see that love for persons and for pets is of the same general kind. They pass the joke test for synonymy. There is nothing funny about this sentence: 'I love my wife and my child more than anything.' Nor is there anything funny about this sentence: 'Before she had her first child, she loved her cat more than anything.' But there is something funny going on here: 'Before I met my wife, I loved fried chicken more than anything.'[3] The last sentence fails the joke test. It is funny. The joke test reveals an equivocation that shows us something important about love. The sentence equivocates on 'love.' The kind of love that one feels for one's wife is not at all like what one means when one says 'I love fried chicken.' When people say that they love fried chicken, they merely mean that they like it a lot. But this is not what they mean when they say that they love their cats. Hence, the kind of love at issue is not merely the love of persons. It is broader.

Just how to set the boundaries, though, is far from obvious. Some people really do seem to love their cars. And this does not appear to be a metaphor. One suggestion that might help us distinguish loving from liking a lot is this: we can only love what we perceive to have a good. This does not commit us to saying that cars have welfare. Most plausibly, only sentient creatures for whom things matter have welfare in a non-metaphorical sense. But other things, such as plants and cars, non-metaphorically have goods. Perhaps these are best described in perfectionist terms. It is unclear. In any case, all that my suggestion requires is that the lover see the beloved as having a good. I did not say that the lover must be right. This perception is important because in order for an attitude to be love it must involve a non-self-interested concern for the beloved. To put it more precisely, one must, at least in part, care for the beloved for her own sake.[4]

2.1 Love the attitude and loving relationships

A further point of clarification is in order: we must be careful to distinguish the attitude, or what we might somewhat misleadingly call 'love the feeling,' from loving relationships. It seems perfectly coherent to think that someone could love another from a distance, or merely in absence of a romantic relationship. One of the cold hard facts of life is that much love goes unrequited. Hence, love songs. Given the mere possibility of unrequited love, we can be certain that the romantic love that a lover feels for his beloved is different from any romantic relationship that might exist between the two. This is clear.

However, the difference between the attitude and the relationship is more difficult to see when it comes to friendship. In English we lack a specific word for the attitude that one has toward friends. We talk of eros and romantic love, but not friendros and friendly love. All we have is a word denoting the relationship, *friendship*. I suspect that this is likely because the feelings involved in friendships are more subdued than those in eros. Regardless, on further reflection it is clear that the love one feels for a friend is also distinct from the relationship, distinct from the friendship.[5] One can continue to care for a friend after having moved far away. Although you cannot have a genuine friendship without the attitude, the attitude can persist after the relationship is over. It can even persist after the friend dies. Hence, the attitude and the relationship (the friendship) are not the same.

To put things together: When I ask 'Is better to love better things?' I want to know if it is better to love (to have an attitude that essentially involves a concern for the beloved for her own sake directed at) better people.

The revised version of the opening question is still ambiguous. By asking 'Is it better to love better people?' we might simply be looking for ways in which it is better to love some people rather than others. Clearly it is better for me to love those who make me happy. That's not at all controversial. Hence, I don't think that's all someone might be after when they ask such a question. Instead, they likely want to know if there are reasons in favor of loving someone or another. This concern is captured by a slightly revised version of the question, 'What reasons are there to love better people?'

3 Evaluating attitudes

In the philosophical literature on attitudes, the justification of belief has received far more attention than that of care, love, or the emotions. I

will pursue the issue from the perspective of the philosophy of emotion, while paying attention to the problem of luck that has occupied epistemologists for the past 50 years.

One of the most prominent concerns of philosophers of emotion is whether standard emotions admit of rational justification. This issue is often said to involve the rationality of the emotions. But what people mean by 'the rationality of emotion' varies radically. We can discern at least five different standards for evaluating the rationality of emotional responses. We might wonder if an emotion is *reasonable* given the evidence. Alternatively, we might wonder if it fits the situation, if the emotion is *apt*. For standard emotions, this would require showing that their evaluations are correct. Or we might wonder whether the intensity of an emotion is *proportional* to its object. Or we might ask if the emotion was in one's long-term *best interest*. Finally, we might try to understand why someone would react that way. If so, if we can understand why they reacted as they did, the emotion is *intelligible*. [6]

All of these standards are interesting, and we could certainly add to the list. But I want to focus on just one of the above, that of aptness – whether the emotion is appropriate to the features of its object. This standard is most important in the literature on love. The question of whether we can justify love is primarily a question about the appropriateness of the attitude to its object, the beloved. When we ask whether love can be justified, we want to know if there are normative reasons that could make the love of some objects appropriate and others inappropriate. As I make clear in the next section, justifying love requires showing that the attitude is responsive to these kinds of reasons.

3.1 Motivating reasons, normative reasons, and luck

It is important to make a distinction between motivating and normative (or justifying) reasons. Motivating reasons are best thought of as a species of explanatory reasons. In terms of actions, motivating reasons explain why we act. A motivating reason is the efficacious motive of an action. As the familiar courtroom drama makes clear, a guilty verdict is more likely to be secured if there is a clear motive for the crime. When we try to account for a killer's motive, we are trying to describe his motivating reasons. We are trying to explain, not justify the crime. But sometimes, motivating reasons can also be justifying reasons. For instance, if someone cracks a rapist's dome with a Brooklyn Crusher in order to stop a violent rape, the victim's suffering most plausibly justifies the intervention. The motivating and justifying reasons are the same, or at least close enough. When it comes to actions, normative reasons are those

that count in favor of a course of action. Stopping undeserved suffering is a good reason to act.

But it is important to note that the mere presence of normative reasons does not always justify an action. This is because we are sometimes unaware of the normative reasons there might be to act. A fanatical terrorist with a pressure cooker bomb might be standing in front of us at a crowded event. If so, we surely have good reason to smash the terrorist in the back of the head with a brick before an explosion is triggered. But if we do not know that the person in front of us is a terrorist, this reason is not available to us. If, ignorant of the fact, we nevertheless decide to crack the person's skull for wearing an ugly shirt, the unavailable normative reason could not justify our action. It is certainly not okay to smack someone for wearing an ugly shirt. This reveals something important about normative reasons: in order to justify an action, the normative reasons must feature prominently in the set of motivating reasons for the action. If the person we smacked for wearing an ugly shirt turned out to be a terrorist, this would be a happy accident. But the unknown fact that he was a terrorist would not justify laying him out for his lack of good fashion sense. Happy accidents do not amount to justifications.

There is no reason to think that the situation is any different when it comes to justifying attitudes and other non-actions. Although there are not (straightforward) motivating reasons for attitudes, there are explanatory reasons. They give us the etiology of the attitude. In order for an attitude to be justified in the sense at issue here, the etiology must prominently include the justifying reasons. If there were normative reasons for having an attitude, but the reasons did not feature in the explanation of the attitude, the presence of the normative reasons would merely be a happy accident. To put it another way, an attitude is a happy accident in relation to some normative reason unless the attitude is a response to that normative reason. A justification for an attitude must show that the attitude is a response to normative reasons, not merely that some such reasons exist.

4 Justifying love

There are two competing schools of thought on the issue of whether love can be justified: the no-reasons view and the reasons view. The no-reasons view is just as it sounds. It holds that love cannot be justified or, to put it somewhat ambiguously, that there are no justifying reasons for love. A no-reasons view holds one of two claims: (a) there are no

normative reasons for love, or (b) the attitude is not responsive to whatever putative normative reasons there might be. In contrast, the reasons view holds that love can be justified. Justifying love requires showing both that there are normative reasons for love and that the attitude is responsive to these reasons at the appropriate stage in its life cycle.

This is no place to defend the no-reasons view, but I will sketch some support. The no-reasons view is supported by three types of considerations: love's apparent lack of reasons responsiveness, the failure of the opposition to provide a plausible alternative, and the lack of any clear account of how love could be justified in principle.

Our literary tradition from Sappho to Shakespeare provides support for the claim that love is not an objective assessment of the beloved. To take an extreme and somewhat offensive example, Lucretius sees love as a delusion:

> The black girl is *brown sugar*. A slob that doesn't bathe or clean / Is a *Natural Beauty*; *Athena* if her eyes are greyish-green. / A stringy beanpole's a *gazelle*. A midget is a *sprite*, / *Cute as a button*. She's a *knockout* if she's a giant's height. / The speech-impaired has a *charming lithp*; if she can't talk at all / She's *shy*. The sharp-tongued shrew is *spunky*, a little *fireball*. / If she's too skin-and-bones to live, she's a *slip of a girl*, if she / Is sickly, she's just *delicate*, though half dead from TB. / Obese, with massive breasts? – a *goddess* of fertility! / Snub-nosed is *pert*, fat lips are *pouts* begging to be kissed – / And other delusions of this kind are too numerous to list. (Lucretius 2007, IV, p. 142, ln. 1160–70)

We need not think that love essentially involves error. Lucretius goes much too far. Nevertheless, love does not seem to follow from any objective appraisal. Love rides over and above any assessment of the beloved (Singer 1966). We can work at trying to love someone, but it seems to just happen or not. No matter how good we think that someone is, we may or may not love them. Love, at least to some degree, just does seem to be a matter of chemistry. And chemistry is not responsive to reasons.

The no-reasons view also gains support from the failure of the competition. Any attempt to appeal to the properties of the beloved runs into the problem of trading up: if what justified your starting to love X were X's good features, then if Y has a greater degree of the same features, it seems that you should trade up. How could your continuing to love X be justified in the face of Y? But this is absurd. The objects of our love are not fungible. They are irreplaceable individuals.[7] Love that accepts

substitutes is not worthy of the name. Alternative approaches appeal to the value of the relationship rather than the properties of the beloved. But relationship accounts do not fare much better. They also imply that one should trade up, not when the beloved is better, but when there is the promise of an even better relationship.

These are but the opening moves in the debate. It is out of scope to pursue the issue further. For our purposes, the third source of support for the no-reasons view is most important.

4.1 Love and emotion

There is excellent reason to think that love is not an emotion. At least, it is not an emotion according to the only theory of the emotions on which it makes sense to talk about justification. This is important because the reasons love is not an emotion also show that love cannot be assessed as appropriate or inappropriate. If one assumes that emotions are irrational bodily states, it makes little sense to evaluate them in terms of appropriateness. Hunger can be good or bad for us, but it can't be inappropriate. If the emotions are akin to hunger, there is no sense in trying to justify them. The only theory of the emotions that clearly allows for robust rational justification is also one of the most popular – the cognitive theory. But love is not an emotion according to the cognitive theory.

According to the cognitive theory, emotions are object-directed attitudes that essentially involve evaluations.[8] According to this view, emotions are not mere feelings or physiological reactions. Instead, they require an evaluation of a situation, whether the evaluation be a judgment or a way of seeing, a construal. The object-directed character of standard emotions is apparent in that it always makes sense to say of someone '[pick your emotion] that.' I fear that a Rhode Island driver will crash into me when I'm out for run. I hope that I will make it home safely. I'm angry that yet another driver ran a stop sign as I was running through the intersection. Defenders of the cognitive theory typically distinguish between emotions and mere moods, such as being grumpy, cheerful, or simply in a good mood. Moods do not take objects, at least not specific objects. One is not grumpy that such and such. Rather, one is just grumpy. One might be grumpy *because* of a hangover. But one is not grumpy *at* the hangover. Nor is one grumpy that one is hung over. Although someone might be ashamed of being once again unable to resist the siren call of bourbon, this is not the object of the grumpiness. At most, it is the mere cause. Shame is an emotion; grumpiness is a mood.

There are three excellent reasons to think that if the cognitive theory is right then love is not an emotion. First, in contrast to standard emotions, love is not episodic as are all standard emotions. Unlike paradigmatic emotions such as fear, shame, and anger, love does not present itself in discrete episodes. Sure, you may well up when reunited with someone you love, or burst into tears when you happily discover that your beloved averted disaster, but these feeling are best described as episodes of uplift, happiness, and the like, not love. Then again, perhaps one does sometimes feel love acutely. But even when one isn't feeling whatever it is that we think of as the feeling of love, one still loves. A parent doesn't stop loving their child when they are driving to work, frustrated by traffic congestion. No. Their love remains. Hence, rather than episodic love appears to be dispositional.[9] It is what Alexander Shand calls a sentiment (1914).

Second, although it is plausible that we can sometimes feel love and not just the emotions it gives rise to, the important thing to realize is that our emotions depend on our concerns. They depend on what we care about. Emotions require that we care about that which was or stands to be affected.[10]

As noted above, standard emotions take objects. They essentially involve an evaluation of an object, or what we call the 'formal object.' The formal object is the object under some description. We attribute some feature to the object, such as dangerousness to a snarling dog's long, sharp teeth. An evaluation that the long, sharp teeth are dangerous causes the physiological responses characteristic of fear. The evaluation not only has a formal object, it has a focus. The teeth are not just dangerous in principle. They are threatening. More precisely, they threaten something that we care about – namely, our arms. We wouldn't feel fear if the teeth threatened the destruction of a chew toy. If we call love an emotion, we lose the explanatory power of the priority of cares over emotions. It would become hard to make sense of the interconnectedness of our emotional lives.

The third reason to think that love is not an emotion according to the cognitive theory is the most important for our purposes. Unlike standard emotions, there is no clear evaluation involved that helps individuate love from other species of affect. According to the cognitive theory, standard emotions not only essentially involve evaluations but the evaluations are the principal means by which we distinguish emotions from one another. Consider fear and anger, joy and pride, envy and jealousy, and shame and embarrassment: each pair feels similar. There is hardly any telling them apart merely from the way they feel. But the kind of evaluations they involve differ. For an emotion to be anger, you must judge that someone has wronged you or yours. In contrast, for an emotion to be that of fear, you must judge that something you care about is in danger.

The problem for those who claim that love is an emotion is that there is no plausible evaluation that is necessary for love.[11] The only viable candidate seems to be that the object is lovable. But this is hopeless. It is circular and entirely uninformative. Just what is it to judge an object to be lovable? There are no other good candidates. For instance, to judge that the beloved is irreplaceable to you is simply to recognize that you love it. Hence, it can't be the evaluation responsible for your love.

The moral of the story is that since there is no clear candidate evaluation that is necessary for love, it is unclear how love could be assessed for evaluative correctness. What evaluation should be checked, exactly? In the next section, I show how the disinterested nature of love makes this problem more pronounced. It has important implications for the kinds of reasons that others have appealed to.

5 Prudential, epistemic, and meaningful reasons

So far I have said a bit about the nature of love and the nature of justification. Without assuming the no-reasons view, I will show that the kinds of considerations that one finds in the literature are not the kinds of reasons that could ever justify love. Accordingly, there is no problem for the no-reasons view here.

Harry Frankfurt argues that the principal reason one has to love is self-interest. Since love is so important for living a good life, he argues that the most important consideration when we are thinking about what we should love is simply whether we can love it, not whether it is worthy. The value of the object is of little interest. He asks of the Final Solution: 'What reason would he [Hitler] have, after all, to care about something that makes no important difference to him?' (Frankfurt 2002, p. 248).

Frankfurt obviously thinks that caring (or loving) is good for us. It is good for us to love. Why he thinks this is less evident. As far as I can tell, he thinks that loving makes our lives fulfilling. It does this by helping to prevent apathetic suffering and boredom. This is likely right. It probably is indeed good for us to love. And it is probably prudentially better to love what is better at making us happy. But these kinds of considerations are incapable of justifying any given instance of love. In fact, they appear to be entirely the wrong kind of reasons that one can offer in favor of loving a particular individual. At best, they can justify loving in general.

We are looking for reasons in support of particular instances of love: 'What normative reasons might there be to love X?' We are not looking for a general justification of loving. In the closely related literature on whether partiality (to family, friends, race, ethnicity, or nation) is ever permissible, many are content with a general defense of simply being partial. If we were not partial to our friends and family, our lives would suffer. The goods of close personal relationships would be lost. Hence, it seems partiality is in general justified.[12] Here we need not worry whether this style of argument succeeds. I merely note it to show that it simply does not address the issue at hand. We do not want to know whether it is good to love; we want to know if we can justify our love of specific individuals.

It is crucial to see that the putative prudential value of loving (in general) cannot provide a justification for loving some specific person. The suggestion that one's love for X is justified because it is good for one to love X, or because it is better for one to love X than Y, fails. It fails because love requires non-self-interested concern. And one cannot, on pain of incoherence, love another non-self-interestedly because doing so benefits oneself. The same holds for indirect forms of benefit, say, through the value of a relationship. One cannot care for another for her sake for one's own sake. Remember, for a reason to justify an attitude, the attitude must be responsive to the reason. If the reason is self-interest, the attitude cannot be responsive to this reason and be non-self-interested.[13] Hence, self-interest cannot justify any particular occurrence of love. At best it can justify loving in general, being open to love, or what we might call the institution of loving.

Frankfurt recognizes that there is a 'certain inconsistency' here. He says:

> The apparent conflict between selflessness and self-interest disappears once it is understood that what serves the self-interest of the lover is, precisely, his selflessness. The benefit of loving accrues to him only if he is genuinely selfless. (1999, p. 174)

But this doesn't solve the problem. It won't just disappear in a puff of smoke after a bit of hand-waving. The fact that the benefit can accrue only if the lover is selfless shows that the reasons of self-interest cannot justify love. One can't be responsive to reasons of self-interest and be selfless. In fact, Frankfurt has given us a perfect statement of a happy accident. Although it is not inconsistent to think that one could benefit from selflessness, it is incoherent to think that self-interest could justify one's selflessness.

The same considerations hold for the reasons of truthfulness and the reasons of meaningfulness, reasons that Susan Wolf proposes in response to Frankfurt (Wolf 2002). One cannot love another for her own sake for the sake of truth or for the sake of making one's life more meaningful. That's incoherent. A defender of the no-reasons view could grant that it is prudentially, truthfully, and meaningfully better to love better people but still hold, without any kind of tension, that love cannot be rationally justified.

6 What's wrong with loving Hitler?

Although reasons of prudence, truthfulness, and meaning cannot justify love, there still seems to be something to the claim that it is better to love better people. It seems that some people are indeed more lovable than others, and that some people are just not worthy of love. This seems to be a simple matter of evaluative correctness.

Wolf argues that three factors are relevant when evaluating love: the worth of the beloved, the lover's affinity for the beloved, and the instrumental value of the relationship. She develops her view with an array of examples that concern objects and activities: types of music, watermelon-seed spitting, rubber-band collecting, and the like. A similar set of examples is featured in her work on the meaning of life (Wolf 2002, 2010a). It is plausible to say that one is justified in preferring rock music to classical music by appeal to affinity and instrumental value, regardless of any possible differences in the worth of the two types of music. But the theory sits more uncomfortably when it comes to people.

An athletic father of two might have a greater affinity for his sporty child with whom he will certainly have more fun at the park. We can assume that the two children are of equal worth, but by Wolf's theory this doesn't mean that the father should love both equally. Since he has a greater affinity for the athletic son, and (let's assume) their time together will be more instrumentally valuable, her theory implies that he should love the athletic child more. That's not a nice implication. Perhaps our reaction to this example reflects a quirk of parental love. Maybe we have a deep commitment to a view of unconditional parental love. Perhaps we think of it as a form of agape, the bestowal of love regardless of the worth of the object. Regardless, the situation seems different when it comes to romantic love. As Wolf notes, it seems that some people are indeed more lovable than others and it would be better to love them than less worthy individuals. How should we make sense of this?

If love essentially involves an evaluation, we could easily make sense of this intuition. But there is no good candidate. As noted earlier, the only plausible candidate is that the object is lovable. This is not sufficient, since we might think that people are lovable yet not love them. But it might be necessary. If we had a better handle on what makes someone objectively lovable, we could evaluate love in terms of evaluative correctness. It would be inappropriate to love those who are not lovable. The problem, once again, is that there is no content to the notion of what it is to be lovable. At best, it is subjectively determined. Someone is lovable if someone can love you. But that kind of subjectivity makes it impossible to assess love. All love would be appropriate.

Put aside the nature of being lovable. Perhaps it would be better to talk in terms of an overall assessment of the person. For love to be appropriate, the beloved should be a good person overall. This is a bit more promising, but it is still fails. For starters, what kind of good do we have in mind? Will just any do? Aesthetic? Is it appropriate to love a beautiful person who is not so virtuous? Or does moral worth trump all? That's hard to believe.

Apart from these questions, the central problem with any attempt to evaluate love according to some kind synoptic evaluation of the beloved is that love isn't an evaluation. Nor does it seem to essentially involve any such evaluation. Love rides over and above our evaluations of the beloved. We can be criticized for falsely evaluating people, but love is not an evaluation. Nevertheless, the relationship between love and evaluation is important.

Consider someone who falls in love with Hitler, who somehow faked his death and managed to flee to South America:[14]

> Argentina, 1950: Evita met a strange looking man with a German accent at the market. She finds him oddly attractive. As they get to know each other, she develops a nagging suspicion that he is Adolph Hitler. After a few weeks, he confesses to having faked suicide and fled to South America when the Nazi cause looked hopeless. Evita decides not to turn him, as she thinks that she is falling in love.

Considering this case, it seems that love is indeed sometimes prohibited. It certainly seems inappropriate to fall in love with Hitler. Remember, we are talking about Hitler! And if it is inappropriate, there must be normative reasons against loving.

This is certainly a worrisome problem for the no-reasons view. But the view is not without a plausible reply. An analogy might help. The

French vitalist Henri Bergson noted that humorous amusement requires a 'momentary anesthesia of the heart' (Bergson 1956, p. 64). Simply put, it is hard to be amused if one feels sorry for the butt of a joke. Something similar might be said for love. It is hard to love someone you find repulsive. Hitler is repulsive, not just because of the stupid mustache, but because of what he did. He's a moral monster. How could someone possibly love such a man? How could one spend enough time with him for that to happen? In these observations, the no-reasons view finds a reply: it is not that love of Hitler is inappropriate, but that not finding him repulsive shows a monstrous indifference to horrific evil.[15]

At worse love can be indirectly, counterfactually inappropriate. If Evita had shown proper repulsion to Hitler's crimes, she would have likely found it psychologically impossible to fall in love with Hitler. This does not show that Hitler is objectively unlovable. Instead, it shows that the typical psychological effect of moral repulsion is the blocking of love. The question this leaves us is whether it should block love.

What would we say of someone who found Hitler repulsive but still loved him? If it is incoherent to be both repulsed and in love, then we can say that love is indirectly inappropriate. The person should have been repulsed. Repulsion blocks love. Hence, the person shouldn't love Hitler. At least she shouldn't have fallen in love with Hitler. But I don't see any reason to think that this combination of attitudes in incoherent. Unusual, yes. Incoherent, why? And if it is coherent to both love someone and be repulsed by their character or actions, then there is not much to say of someone who loves Hitler other than that she is very abnormal.

7 Conclusion

As I noted in the introduction, I have not provided a completely satisfactory answer to the question, 'Is it better to love better things?' The question is just too ambiguous and too difficult to tackle in a single essay. Even the more specific question, 'Is it better to love better people?,' is hard to pin down. But I have provided some answers.

I have argued that love essentially involves caring for the beloved for her own sake. This is clearly not a sufficient description of love. Most plausibly, typical forms of love also involve desires to associate with the beloved and for the desire to be reciprocated.[16] These desires might admit of rational assessment. If desires are the kind of things that can be justified, it seems that reasons of self-interest, for instance, could justify a desire to associate with the beloved. But I don't think that these desires

capture what is at the heart of love. At heart is selfless concern. Hence, I focus on this aspect of love. And this aspect is different from both the desire to associate with the beloved and the desire for reciprocation. It's different in that it cannot be justified by appeals to values such as self-interest, truthfulness, or meaning. One cannot care for the beloved for her own sake for the sake of these values. That's incoherent.

Nevertheless, it does seem better, in terms of appropriateness (or fittingness or aptness), to love better people. Although love is not an assessment, it is typically blocked by certain kinds of assessments of the beloved. When we don't understand how a friend can love a boring, immoral, ugly loser, we are puzzled at how he failed to come to the proper negative evaluation of his beloved, or at how the negative evaluation didn't block love. We expect this to happen, though we know it often fails.

I considered an especially clear case, Evita's love of Hitler. Here we want to say that she should not love Hitler – not because he doesn't deserve to benefit from her concern, but because she should have been repulsed. Hitler is hideously evil. If someone falls for Hitler despite the fact that he is hideously evil, they are likely indifferent to his crimes. That's not acceptable. In so far as moral disgust blocks love, love of Hitler is indirectly inappropriate. But, as far as I can tell, there is no reason to think that disgust ought to block love. It just tends to do so. I think that's about all we can say. And it seems like enough to capture our most important intuitions.[17]

Notes

1. A similar argument can be run in support of the surprisingly controversial claim that animals can love. They also grieve! Bekoff (2007), pp. 62–70, Milligan (2011), pp. 124–136, Rowlands (2013), pp. 8–14, and Smuts (manuscript) argue in support of the view that animals can care.
2. Helm (2009), p. 45. Kolodny (2003), p. 187, n. 2 goes so far as to deny that children can love.
3. Green (1997), pp. 210 and 224 brought fried chicken to our symposium.
4. Wolf (2010b), pp. 14 and 17 agrees. Newton-Smith (1989), p. 204 puts care at the top of the concepts analytically presupposed by the use of 'love.'
5. Jollimore (2000), p. 73 concurs.
6. Jones (2004), pp. 333–6 provides a similar list.
7. Grau (2006, 2010) offers the best account of irreplaceability in the literature.
8. Prinz (2004) and Robinson (2005) provide important, recent criticisms of the theory. Deigh (1994) argues that the cognitive theory implausibly implies that animals and babies do not have emotions. Rowlands (2012), pp. 40–70 provides an effective reply to Deigh.
9. Naar (2013) defends a dispositional theory.

10. Taylor (1975), pp. 400–1 notes the connection, as do Stocker (1996), p. 175, Green (1997), pp. 214 and 221–2, and Rawls (1971), p. 487. Solomon (1980), p. 276, argues that emotions are personal and involved evaluations. Taylor (1985), pp. 59–62, argues that emotions reveal what we value, what matters to us. They are import-ascriptions. Roberts (1988), pp. 188–9, claims that emotions are grounded in concerns. Shoemaker (2003), pp. 91–3, argues that emotions are conceptually connected to cares. Helm (2009a), pp. 5–6, notes that emotions have a focus, a locus of concern. And Nussbaum (2003) argues that emotions are evaluations of personal importance. Strangely, in his comprehensive and influential taxonomy of the objects of emotions, De Sousa (1999), ch. 5 leaves out the object of our concern. He uses 'focus' differently, to refer to the focus of attention: the snarling dog's menacing teeth.
11. This leads Shaffer (1983), p. 170, to claim that love is an 'anomalous emotion.' Green (1997), p. 214, thinks that this obscures the problem. He simply denies that love is an emotion.
12. This wheel has been invented a few times: Cottingham (1986) defends this line of argument. Without mentioning Cottingham; the same style of argument is repeated in Wolf (1992), who defends the controversial claim that partiality sometimes trumps morality. And without mentioning Wolf's paper, Cocking and Kennett (2000) reach roughly the same conclusion.
13. Oldenquist (1982), p. 176, argues that since we can sacrifice in the name of loyalty, loyalties are not self-interested.
14. Jeske (1997), p. 62, defends a no-reasons, or 'brute account' friendship. She (p. 69) considers whether one should befriend Hitler. Milligan (2011), pp. 5 and 72, also discusses the love of Hitler.
15. Smuts (2007, 2009, and 2013) develops an analogous line of argument concerning morality and amusement.
16. Thomas (1991), Green (1997), p. 216, and Taylor (1976) all emphasize these aspects of romantic love.
17. I thank Arina Pismenny and Tony Milligan for helpful feedback on an earlier version of this chapter.

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