

THE 'WHAT' AND 'WHY' OF LOVE'S REASONS

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1. The question and how we should answer it

When we love someone in the way in which we love our friends, our romantic partners, and members of our family, what reasons for action do we have? And why do we have these reasons?

If this were an advice column, it is easy to imagine the answer to the first question. The focus would be on the typical case and the answer would be banal: our loved ones are special to us, so we have reasons to spend time with them in preference to others, catering for their needs in particular, and seeing to it that they enjoy themselves, even when this comes at some cost to ourselves; we have reasons to do what's required to maintain our relationship with them, reasons that are important to remember when we find ourselves lacking the spontaneous feelings of affection that generally undergird our relationship; and we have reasons to let our loved ones do all of these same things for us in return. It is, however, much harder to imagine an advice columnist even attempting to answer the second question, but my guess is that, after expressing some exasperation, something analytic or constitutive would be offered: since our loved ones are special to us, taking ourselves to have reasons like these *is what it is* to love someone; this is the respect in which they are so special.

The imaginary advice columnist's answers are worth thinking about because of the tension that exists between them. Consider a lover and his beloved who are *atypical*. Suppose that both are creative artists, and that they spend all of their time working separately on their artistic projects, but always with an eye out to make sure that the other is able to do the same thing, something they facilitate in part by seeing to it that their material needs are met, and in part by critiquing each other's work. Suppose further that they are completely manic: they get no enjoyment from their pursuits, and they don't crave the enjoyment they miss out on. Moreover, because they are so focused on their work and on each other as creative artists, suppose they don't have spontaneous feelings of affection for each other. Their connection is entirely cerebral. Though very atypical, it seems to me quite plausible that these artists love each other, in the sense in which friends can be said to love each other. But that would be impossible if to love someone just were, *inter alia*, to have reasons to spend time together, to do things that both the lover and the beloved enjoy, and for their ongoing relationship to be underwritten by spontaneous feelings of affection. After all, none of these are true of our imagined creative artists.

Of course, we need to be careful. Typical and atypical lovers must have something in common, but what they have in common might be the possession of the distinct disjuncts of a disjunctive feature, where what it is to love someone is itself just that disjunctive feature. Though we cannot rule this possibility out from the beginning, I suggest that we proceed on the assumption that it is not the case. Instead it seems to me that we would do better to reverse the advice columnist's strategy and answer the second question first. An explanation of why we have the reasons we have in virtue of loving someone should come in two parts. The first part is a fully general account of what it is about any set of circumstances that makes it the case that we have reasons to do certain things in those circumstances, and the second is an account of the difference made to our circumstances by the fact that we love someone, whether our love is typical or atypical. Equipped with such a two-part answer, my hunch is that we would be in an

excellent position to say, at least in principle, what reasons for action are possessed by both typical and atypical lovers.

In the next section I provide an account of what it is about any set of circumstances that makes it the case that we have reasons to do certain things in those circumstances, and in the sections that follow I turn to the difference made to our circumstances by the fact that we love someone. I consider and reject accounts of this difference suggested by Niko Kolodny (2003) and David Velleman (1999), and I then describe and defend an account suggested by Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett (2000). Though this account of the difference made to our circumstances by the fact that we love someone is itself somewhat abstract, when we combine it with the quite general account of what we have reasons to do in various circumstances provided in the next section, a strikingly plausible and illuminating account of the reasons we have in virtue of loving someone, reasons of both a moral and a non-moral nature, comes to the fore.

2. What makes it the case that we have reasons to act in certain ways in certain circumstances?

To have reasons for acting at all, in certain circumstances, we must have some array of options in those circumstances, options that have different outcomes associated with them. My completely unoriginal suggestion is that we have a reason to pursue one of these options, rather than another, just in case the outcome associated with our taking that option is better than that the outcome associated with our taking the other. This account of what it is to have reasons for action is what Joseph Raz calls the 'classical account' of reasons (Raz 1999). It is, however, really just a schema, as it needs filling out with independent accounts of what makes it the case that producing an outcome is an option for an agent, and what makes one outcome more desirable than another.

Though I don't have a theory of what makes it the case that an agent has the option of producing an outcome, for present purposes we can suppose that this requires two things: that the agent could form a dominant desire to produce that outcome, and that, if she had such a dominant desire, and if she believed that the time had come to produce the outcome, she would produce it. What's important about this is that it recognizes that an agent's options are limited by her conceptual capacities, on the one hand, and her physical abilities, on the other. As regards what makes an outcome associated with one of an agent's options more desirable than another, my view is that such facts are fixed in the way suggested by a dispositional theory of value (Smith 1994). According to the dispositional theory, the desirability of the outcome of an agent's acting in a certain way in certain circumstances is a function of the desires that her ideal counterpart has concerning that outcome in those circumstances. What we have reasons to do is thus determined, at bottom, by the dominant desires for outcomes that we have the capacity to form and realize, and which particular desires our ideal counterparts have concerning those outcomes.

One feature of the dispositional theory worth emphasizing is that it makes desirability *evaluator-relative* (Sen 1982). Suppose a certain outcome o would come about if an agent a were to ϕ in circumstances C , where ϕ -ing is one of a 's options in C . In that case, o in C is intrinsically desirable _{a} just in case a 's ideal counterpart intrinsically desires that o obtains in C , and, if a 's ideal counterpart has several different intrinsic desires, then how intrinsically desirable _{a} o is in C is fixed by the relative strengths of the intrinsic desire a 's ideal counterpart has concerning o in C and the intrinsic desires a 's ideal counterpart has concerning other

outcomes. It is thus *a*'s ideal counterpart's desires that fixes the desirability_{*a*} of the outcomes of *a*'s actions, and one consequence of this is that intrinsic desirability-making features of outcomes may themselves be relations to evaluators. Intrinsic desirability claims of both the following forms may therefore be true:

(x)(It is intrinsically desirable_{*x*} that Fx)

and

(x)(y)(It is intrinsically desirable_{*x*} that (Fy))

Whereas the first requires that each agent's ideal counterpart intrinsically desires that *he* has feature F, the second requires that each agent's ideal counterpart intrinsically desires that *everyone* has feature F. Though both entail that it is desirable_{*a*} that Fa, the desirability_{*a*} of *a*'s having F is thus *extrinsic*, according to the second, but not according to the first: according to the first it is desirable_{*a*} that *a* has F *because a is someone*. More on this presently.

What we are after is an account of what it is for someone to have reasons for action, so what it is for her counterpart to be ideal must be fixed by the kind of thing we have to be insofar as questions about our reasons for action arise in the first place. Since we have to be *agents*, and since the function of an agent is to realize her desires, something she might do well or badly, we can restate our account what is desirable in the following terms. The desirability_{*some particular agent*} of that agent's actions is fixed by the desires she has in the nearest possible world in which she is an *ideal agent*: that is, the possible world in which she functions optimally as a desire-realizer. Everything therefore turns on what it is for an agent, a being whose function is to realize her desires, to function optimally, and the answer, in brief, is that such a being would have to have and exercise a maximal capacity to realize her desires, whatever their content, and she would also have to have and exercise a maximal capacity to know what the world is like, no matter what it is like, at least insofar as her having such knowledge is required for her to realize her desires. But since the exercise of each of these capacities is in tension with the exercise of the other—just imagine the possible world in which someone desires that she believes certain things, whether or not they're true—it follows that an optimally functioning desire-realizer would have to have the wherewithal to reconcile this tension.

What must an optimally functioning desire-realizer be like if she is to reconcile this tension in the possession and exercise of her desiderative and epistemic capacities? The answer is that she must have a pair of dominant intrinsic desires that bear on the possession and exercise of those capacities, and that consistency demands that these desires be extended to others as well (Smith 2011, Smith 2012, Smith 2013). To function optimally as desire-realizers, agents must have a dominant intrinsic desire that, no matter what circumstances they consider, they do not interfere with their own or anyone else's current or future exercise of their capacities to know the world in which they live or realize their desires (on condition, of course, that the realization of those desires wouldn't itself constitute such interference), and they must also have a dominant intrinsic desire that they do what they can to see to it that they themselves, and others as well, acquire and maintain this pair of capacities in the first place. In a phrase, every agent's ideal counterpart has the dominant intrinsic desire that, in whatever circumstances she finds herself, she helps and does not interfere, and beyond this, that she does whatever her non-ideal self desires that she does. Optimal functioning as a desire realizer thus entails a limited convergence in the desires of ideal agents.

The upshot is that, if we start with the dispositional theory of value, and we put this together with the observation that the concept of idealization in play in the dispositional theory is the concept of an ideal agent, we are led inevitably to conclusion that, no matter what circumstances an agent finds herself in, certain intrinsic desirability claims of the first of the two forms described above—(x)(It is intrinsically desirable_x that Fx)—must be true. No matter what circumstances an agent finds herself in, so long as she has the capacity to form and realize a dominant desire to help and not interfere in those circumstances, it is most intrinsically desirable_{her} that *she* helps and does not interfere in those circumstances, and, if there is nothing she can do to help, or if there are various ways in which she can help that she must choose between, then the next most intrinsically desirable_{her} thing she can do is whatever *she* next most intrinsically desires to do (on condition, of course, that her satisfying these further intrinsic desires wouldn't require her to interfere). Given the classical account of reasons for action, it follows that all agents, no matter what their circumstances, have most reason to help and not interfere in those circumstances, and beyond that, that they have most reason to do whatever they want to do.

For obvious reasons, let's call the dominant reasons agents have to help and not interfere their *moral* reasons, and let's call the residual reasons they have to whatever they want to do, on condition that their so acting doesn't lead them to interfere or fail to help, their *non-moral* reasons. The reasons for action that agents have in virtue of loving someone must therefore be either moral reasons, derived in some way from their dominant reasons to help and not interfere, or non-moral reasons, derived in some way from their reasons to do whatever they want to do, or they must be some combination of moral and non-moral reasons. Which of these they turn out to be will depend on the difference made to our circumstances by the fact that they love someone. It is to that issue that we turn next.

3. What difference does the fact that we love our romantic partners, family members, and friends make to our circumstances?

(i) Love as valuing a relationship

According to Niko Kolodny, the difference made to our circumstances by the fact that we love our romantic partners, family members, and friends consists in the distinctive historical relationship that we have with them; a set of emotional vulnerabilities to, and beliefs we have about that person and our relationship with them; and the reasons provided by that relationship for such beliefs and emotions (Kolodny 2003). As he puts it,

... love is a psychological state for which there are reasons, and these reasons are interpersonal relationships. More specifically, love is a kind of valuing. Valuing X, in general, involves (i) being vulnerable to certain emotions regarding X, and (ii) believing that one has reasons both for this vulnerability to X and for actions regarding X... In other words, love consists (a) in seeing a relationship in which one is involved as a reason for valuing both one's relationship and the person with whom one has that relationship, and (b) in valuing that relationship and person accordingly. (Kolodny 2003, p.150)

Kolodny interprets this to mean that the lover must believe that he has reasons to act in the interest of the beloved and in the interest of his relationship with them, those reasons being furnished by their historical relationship itself, and he must be vulnerable a range of favourable and unfavourable emotions in response to his belief that that person and his relationship with

them is faring well or poorly, where the reasonableness of these emotions depends on the reasonableness of his beliefs.

How does Kolodny's account compare with that offered by our imaginary advice columnist? Kolodny's account is clearly an improvement, as it allows for the possibility of love between those who are atypical in being indifferent to enjoyment, having no spontaneous feelings of affection for each other, and not wanting to spend time together. To be sure, the lover must take himself to have reasons to promote the beloved's interests, and to have favourable emotions when the beloved fares well, but this...

...should not be understood as being restricted to promoting ...[the beloved's]... well-being. It might also include protecting or promoting what matters to ...[the beloved]..., where this may be something other than ...[the beloved's]... well-being. (Kolodny 2003, p.152)

Indeed, if the beloved's well-being doesn't matter to her, then promoting her interests won't include promoting her well-being. Kolodny's account is thus consistent with our atypical lovers to whom what's important is each other's pursuit of their artistic endeavours, and their well-being of only instrumental significance. What such lovers must take themselves to have reasons to do is to act in ways that promote their respective endeavours, and perhaps also to take pride in each other's achievements. Enjoyment, affection, and spending time together need be neither here nor there.

A crucial feature of Kolodny's account of love as valuing a relationship is that that relationship is supposed to provide *reasons*: reasons to act in the interests of our beloved and our relationship with them, and reasons for certain emotional vulnerabilities towards them and our relationship. However it is less than clear what it is about these relationships—being a romantic partner, a family member, and a friend—that is supposed to be reason-providing. A good question to ask is therefore whether our quite general account of reasons tells us something important about which relationships are reason-providing, and more specifically whether these loving relationships are reason-providing. As it happens, the account suggests that there are at least two such relationships that are reason-providing, those we have with everyone we can affect, and those we have with everyone we can be affected by. The relationship we have with everyone we can affect provides us with dominant reasons to help them and not interfere with them, and the relationship that we have with those who can affect us provides us with reasons for resentment when people fail to help or interfere with us, and for indignation on behalf of third parties when they are so affected by those with whom they have this relationship.

Note that, in the broad sense Kolodny has in mind, our dominant reasons to help and not interfere are reasons to promote the interests of those we can affect. This is because it matters to all agents, by which I mean it is desirable_{all agents}, simply in virtue of being agents, that they have epistemic and desiderative capacities to exercise, and, when they have these capacities, that they be left free to exercise them. These reasons could therefore be objects of belief, and, when they are, they would warrant agents having certain favourable and unfavourable emotions concerning people whose interests they believe aren't being met. Most notably, as already mentioned, they would warrant feelings of indignation on behalf of third parties who are interfered with or not helped. The two relationships furnished by our account thus satisfy nearly all of the conditions that a relationship needs to satisfy in order for valuing it to count as love by Kolodny's lights. But they don't look anything like the loving relationships we identified at the outset: romantic

relationships, familial relationships, or the relationships that friends have with each other. So what is the distinctive feature of these paradigmatic loving relationships, and what is it about these relationships that is reason-providing?

Kolodny's answer is that one distinctive feature of loving relationships is that they are *historical* (Kolodny 2003, p.148). People need to have a history with those with whom they have a loving relationship, according to Kolodny, but of course they need have no history at all with those they are in a position to interfere with or fail to help. Relationships of the latter kind are purely causal relationships. But is Kolodny right that loving relationships are historical? I do not think so. The historical requirement would make love at first sight with a romantic partner, which is the subject matter of countless romance novels and love songs, impossible. But love at first sight doesn't seem to be impossible. Or consider two people who have the same experience, but without the sexual attraction: they meet, click, and immediately become firm friends. The historical requirement would make this impossible too. But, once again, it doesn't seem to be impossible. Or consider infants who seem to imprint on their mothers in all of the ways characteristic of familial love from the moment that they come into existence as beings with desire-realization and epistemic capacities. The historical requirement says that they cannot instantly love their mothers, which again seems false. Or consider parents who seem to begin loving their children, in all of the ways characteristic of familial love, from the very moment that they come into existence, or from the vaguely bounded period of time when they do. The historical requirement tells us that whatever it is that this couple feels at that moment, it isn't love. But that seems not just false but incredible.

The upshot is that Kolodny's suggestion that love of the kind we find between romantic partners, family members, and friends is limited to those with whom we have a history is implausible. But that leaves us with two crucial questions hanging. If loving someone in these ways is a matter of valuing our relationship with them, then what is the difference between valuing the two non-historical relationships we have with everyone we can affect and be affected by, the relationships that give rise to our reasons to help and not interfere with them, and loving someone? What is the distinctive feature of a loving relationship, and why do we value it?

(ii) Love as the optional maximum response to the recognition of another who must, at a minimum, be respected

If we make one further assumption, then David Velleman can be understood as supposing that though there is a difference, that difference is very subtle. The further assumption we need to make is that an awareness of the two non-historical relationships we have with everyone we can affect and be affected by, the relationships that give rise to our reasons to help and not interfere with them, amounts to what Kant has in mind when he talks of respect for persons. Should we accept this assumption?

Respect for persons is a matter of believing of a class of beings that they are never to be treated merely as means, but always also as ends, where this is in turn a matter of believing that there are reasons to leave such beings free to live their lives of their own choosing. This looks a lot like believing that there are beings who we have reasons not to interfere with, one of the reasons for action delivered up by our quite general account of reasons. Respect for persons is also a matter of believing that there is a class of beings each of whose members is owed the basic wherewithal to live lives of their own choosing. This looks a lot like believing that there are beings who we have reasons to help, the second of the two reasons for action delivered up by our

quite general account of reasons. Though the equation isn't perfect, let's therefore suppose that respect for persons does just amount to believing that there are beings who we have reasons to help and not interfere with.¹

In Velleman's view, once we have Kantian respect for persons, loving them is an immediate option for us.

The Kantian view is that respect is a mode of valuation that the very capacity for valuation must pay to instances of itself. My view is that love is a mode of valuation that this capacity may also pay to instances of itself. I regard respect and love as the required minimum and optional maximum responses to one and the same value. Respect for others is required, in Kant's view, because the capacity for valuation cannot take seriously the values that it attributes to things unless it first takes itself seriously; and it cannot first take itself seriously if it treats instances of itself as nothing more than means to things that it already values. That's why the capacity for valuation, when facing instances of itself, must respond in the manner constitutive of respect, by restraining its self-interested tendency to treat them as means. In my view, love for others is possible when we find in them a capacity for valuation like ours, which can be constrained by respect for ours, and which therefore makes our emotional defenses against them feel unnecessary. That's why our capacity for valuation, when facing instances of itself, feels able to respond in the manner constitutive of love, by suspending our emotional defenses. Love, like respect, is the heart's response to the realization that it is not alone. (Velleman 1999, p.366).

It is of course difficult, and in some cases impossible, for human beings to suspend their emotional defenses to everyone in this way, which is why Velleman says that love is the "optional" maximum response to the recognition of another as a person who we must, at a minimum, respect. However he thinks that this is an artifact of two human limitations.

The human body and human behavior are imperfect expressions of personhood, and we are imperfect interpreters. Hence the value that makes someone eligible to be loved does not necessarily make him lovable in our eyes. Whether someone is lovable depends on how well his value as a person is expressed or symbolized for us by his empirical persona. Someone's persona may not speak very clearly of his value as a person, or may not speak in ways that are clear to us. (Velleman 1999, p.372).

As I understand it, Velleman's idea here is that because we are imperfect at seeing that things matter to other people, and why they matter to them, we are prevented from opening ourselves up to them emotionally. Moreover, even when we aren't prevented by our imperfect perceptual abilities, our limited attentional capacities, given the attentional demands of emotional vulnerability, means that opening ourselves up to some inevitably precludes us opening ourselves up to others.

[T]he value we do manage to see in some fellow creatures arrests our emotional defenses to them, and our resulting vulnerability exhausts the attention that we might have devoted to finding and appreciating the value in others. We are constitutionally limited in the number of people we can love; and we may have to stop short of our constitutional limits in order to enjoy the loving relationships that make for a good life. (Velleman 1999, p.372).

For all that, however, the fact remains that by Velleman's lights everyone is "eligible" to be loved

by everyone, and we should presumably love to the extent that we can (Velleman 1999, p.369).

The claim that love and respect are related in this way has some initial appeal: if only we could all be friends, then we should all be friends! But on reflection, it seems to me doubtful that love and respect are related in the way Velleman suggests. There is no general obligation to love people to the extent that we can. Putting to one side love for our children, about which I will say more presently, it seems much more plausible to suppose that love is a voluntary relationship that we enter into because we want to. We are permitted to love, but are not generally required to do so. Moreover it also seems doubtful that love is the optional maximal response to the very same value, the value of a person, to which respect is the required minimum response. This seems doubtful because it would require that the demands of respect be characterizable independently of love. However, as we will see, since the demands of respect are determined *inter alia* by love, it follows that love must have its own independent nature.

In order to see these points, imagine a situation in which you avidly and candidly update your Facebook page, but haven't set stringent privacy settings. One day someone happens across your Facebook page, perfectly innocently, and is drawn in by his perception of a "capacity for valuation like [his], which can be constrained by respect for [his], and which therefore makes [his] emotional defenses against [you] feel unnecessary". He comes to feel a sense of urgency to find out how things are going for you when he hasn't checked your Facebook page; he finds himself wondering what you're doing when he hasn't checked your page for a while; he prints out your photos and attaches them to his 'fridge with alphabet magnets that spell out your name; he takes pride in your achievements, and feels shame when you do something wrong; and so on and so forth. My sense is that, even if he was never to affect you or anyone you know in any way, there are strong reasons for your new Facebook "friend" not to do what he is doing. True enough, he was able to know all of these things about you because you failed to set stringent privacy settings on your Facebook page, but that doesn't entitle him to the knowledge. You had reasons to set more stringent privacy settings, and he had reasons not to avail himself of the knowledge that he could only get because of your indiscretion. The situation is in relevant respects a lot like that of someone on the street who stares in at you undressing and showering when you forget to close the blind in the bathroom, or that of someone who, having found your diary open on your desk, stands over it and reads it.

Why exactly does your Facebook "friend" have reasons not to avail himself of the knowledge he avails himself of, and why did you have reasons to set stronger privacy settings on your Facebook page in the first place? My hunch is that the explanation goes something like this. Given that the concepts of helping and not interfering are somewhat vague, when human beings interact with each other as parts of a large and relatively anonymous group, their success in acting on these reasons requires them to coordinate with each other around a commonly known and agreed upon more precise interpretation. In such circumstances, there is therefore a role for conventions to play to settle that interpretation. Privacy conventions are among these conventions, as they give us control over what other people know about what matters to us and why, and which other people know this, control that is important because it negates an unfortunate effect that human beings would have upon each other, absent such conventions. Human beings are basically nasty, quick to lash out at those whose views they disapprove of, especially in relatively anonymous settings in which the cost to them of their doing so is low. Common knowledge of all the things matter to us, and why they matter, would thus create chaos, and more particularly would make it virtually impossible for many of us to realize our desires.

The reasons we have to abide by privacy conventions is thus sourced in our reason to do what's required to acquire and maintain the capacity to realize our desires and know the world in which we live, given the chaos that would result absent our having a domain of privacy over which we have control.

Here is Thomas Nagel making much the same point.

The social dimension of reticence and nonacknowledgment is most developed in forms of politeness and deference. We don't want to tell people what we think of them, and we don't want to hear from them what they think of us, though we are happy to surmise their thoughts and feelings, and to have them surmise ours, at least up to a point. We don't, if we are reasonable, worry too much what they may say about us behind our backs, just as we often say things about a third party that we wouldn't say to his face. Since everyone participates in these practices, they aren't, or shouldn't be, deceptive. Deception is another matter, and sometimes we have reason to object to it, though sometimes we have no business knowing the truth, even about how someone really feels about us...

What is allowed to become public and what is kept private in any given transaction will depend on what needs to be taken into collective consideration for the purposes of the transaction and what would on the contrary disrupt it if introduced into the public space. That doesn't mean that nothing will become public which is a potential source of conflict, because it is the purpose of many transactions to allow conflicts to surface so that they can be dealt with, and either collectively resolved or revealed as unresolvable. But if the conventions of reticence are well designed, material will be excluded if the demand for a collective or public reaction to it would interfere with the purpose of the encounter. (Nagel 1998, pp.10-11, 13)

Your reason to set stronger Facebook privacy settings and the Facebook "friend"'s reason to avert his gaze thus both have the same source. Both are grounded in our reasons to do what we can to ensure that people have the capacity to realize their desires and have knowledge of the world, given that what it is to act on this reason, in our circumstances, is *inter alia* to do our fair share in the maintenance of conventions, like the current privacy conventions that give us control over what others can know about what matters to us and why, conventions that help guarantee our possession of such capacities in our circumstances.

To switch to the language of rights and wrongs, it follows that the Facebook "friend" and you both wrong everyone, as everyone can reasonably expect everyone to do their fair share in the maintenance of privacy conventions that help guarantee our possession of capacities to realize our desires and have knowledge of the world in which we live. But once these conventions are in place, it is easy to see that the Facebook "friend" wrongs you in a way that he does not wrong others. The existence of the convention means that though we can all reasonably expect others not to avail themselves of knowledge that they have reasons not to get, the Facebook "friend" acts contrary to this reason in availing himself of knowledge about you in particular. Given that you have made decisions about how to realize your desires in the light of your reasonable expectations about the world in which you live, it follows that the Facebook "friend" acts contrary to his reasons not to interfere with your exercise of your capacity to realize your desires in particular, as you might well have been a less avid and candid contributor to Facebook if you'd known that "friend"'s like him were out there.

What does all of this tell us about Velleman's account of love and respect? It turns out that the Facebook "friend" *disrespects* you when he avails himself of knowledge about you that he has no right to have, and in explaining why respect requires this of him, it has emerged not just that there are those against whom we have such privacy rights, as chaos would result if the likes of them had knowledge of the things that matter to us and why, and that there are those against whom we have no such rights, or fewer such rights, as chaos would not result if the likes of them had such knowledge, and we therefore in effect waive our conventional privacy rights against them. The question we are left with is thus what feature these people have that makes us waive our conventional privacy rights against them, and one answer—not the only answer, but a very obvious one—is that we waive our conventional privacy rights against them because we love them and they love us. If this is right, though, then it seems that respect and love are not related in the way Velleman suggests. To repeat, he thinks that respect and love are the "required minimum and optional maximum responses to" the value of persons. But since loving someone has an affect on what the required minimum is, it seems that it must have its own nature, a nature that both explains why it has that affect on the minimum, and that also explains why there is no general obligation, constrained only by empirical limitations, for us all to love each other.

(iii) Love as receptivity to direction and interpretation

So far we have been exploring Kolodny's and Velleman's ideas about the difference made to our circumstances by the fact that we love our romantic partners, family members, and friends. The focus so far has been on the reason-providing nature of the relationships we have with people in virtue of which we have moral reasons, that is, reasons to help and not interfere with them. What we have seen we need is some account of what it is about loving someone that makes it affect what we're required to do, insofar as we have reasons to help and not interfere with people. It is therefore time to shift our attention from our moral reasons to our non-moral reasons, that is, to those reasons we have simply in virtue of having certain desires.

The danger of this shift in focus should, however, be obvious. Our quite general account of reasons tells us that we have non-moral reasons to do whatever we want to do, on condition that our doing so doesn't require us to interfere or fail to help. If the difference made to our circumstances by the fact that we love romantic partners, family members, and friends lies in the non-moral reasons we have, then the obvious suggestion would be that that is because loving them consists in our having certain desires concerning them. We would then be in danger of falling into the same trap as the advice columnist. Though loving someone is typically constituted by a syndrome of desires like the desire to spend time with him, the desire to do things with him that he enjoys, the desires that give rise to spontaneous feelings of affection for him, and so on, atypical lovers don't have such desires. Remember again the manic artists described at the outset. There is, however, an alternative. Instead of supposing that the difference made to our circumstances when we love someone consists in the specific desires we have concerning them, we might suppose instead that the difference consists in the distinctive way in which our desires are formed.

Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett suggest that a distinctive mechanism of desire-formation is a necessary condition of friendship, and their point would readily generalize to other kinds of love (Cocking and Kennett 2000). Unfortunately, they also think that having certain specific desires is a necessary condition for loving someone in this sense, but as we will see, this turns out to be implausible for reasons that they themselves give.

All accounts of the nature of close friendships agree that such things as mutual affection, the disposition to promote the other's serious interests and well-being, and the desire for shared experiences are necessary constituents of the relationship. In addition, we claim that it is a constitutive feature of companion friendships that friends are characteristically receptive to being directed and interpreted and so in these ways drawn by each other. As a close friend of another, I shall be especially disposed to be directed by her in our shared activities—to play in a card game, go bushwalking, or go to the movies. Even if our interests are, as it happens, remarkably similar, my reasons for action where she is concerned do not depend upon this contingent similarity in the way that they might, say, if we were merely members of the same common-interest club. In the case where my close friend's interests diverge from mine, her interests continue to have action-guiding force for me, since in friendship it is her interests as such that are important, not her interests under some description that has no essential connection to her. The interests of the other in friendship, whether serious or slight, are not, in general, filtered through one's antecedent tastes and interests or subjected to rational or moral scrutiny before they acquire action-guiding force...

A second significant feature of close friendship is the way in which friends contribute to each other's self-conception. Close friends often recognize and highlight aspects of one another's character, they often accept such interpretations from one another, and their self-conception is often changed and enriched by seeing themselves through their friend's eyes...

Having one's interests and attitudes directed, interpreted, and so drawn in the ways described is, in our view, both typical and distinctive of companion friendship. This process of mutual drawing goes beyond the altruistic concern and respect for the well-being of the other which is also fundamental to friendship, and clearly shows how the self in friendship is, in part, a relational thing that is developed and molded through the friendship. Understanding one's attachment to a friend in the light of this mutual drawing process helpfully explains the broader and more complex nature of the interest one has in a friend and the distinctive ways in which friendship contributes to one's character and gives rise to reasons not shared by others. (Cocking and Kennett 2000, pp.284-285)

Cocking and Kennett describe loving someone as a dynamic process in which the desires of lovers, and their self-conceptions, develop under each other's influence: the lover comes to desire to do certain things because that fits with what the beloved desires to do, and vice-versa; the lover comes to think that certain things are important to focus on, among the many important things that could be focused on, because that's what the lover thinks is important to focus on, and vice-versa. Though the personalities and desires of each may therefore be in a constant state of flux, the underlying receptivity to direction and interpretation guarantees that the lover and beloved are, quite literally, made for each other: their interests dovetail. This is why loving someone brings with it a certain surrendering of conventional privacy rights. Without the abandonment of those conventional privacy rights, the lover and beloved could not work out what matters, and why it matters, in tandem with each other.

In order to better understand this underlying receptivity to mutual direction and interpretation, it might be useful to contrast it with similar dispositions from which it differs in some crucial way. Consider, for example, the asymmetric version of the receptivity in question. One member of a pair is disposed to desire to do things because their desiring to do those things

fits in so well with the desires that the other has, and he is disposed to think that certain things are the important things to focus on among all of the many important things that could be focused upon because the other thinks so, but the other member of the pair isn't similarly receptive. The direction and interpretation is thus all one-way. Is this asymmetric version of the receptivity in question itself an instance of a loving relationship? It certainly isn't the paradigm case, and whether it counts as a loving relationship at all would seem to depend on additional factors. What does the receptivity lead the one who possesses it to do and think and feel? Does he transgress the boundaries of respect or self-respect? Depending on how we answer these questions, the relationship will seem either like a benign form of unrequited love, or not love at all but rather a pathological fixation of some sort.

Or consider a symmetric version of the receptivity in question, but one that inevitably leads to conflict, rather than a dovetailing of interests. One member of the pair is disposed to desire to do things because their desiring to do those things conflicts with the other's doing the things that they desire to do, and he is disposed to think that certain things are important to focus on among the many important things that could be focused upon because the other thinks that those things are unimportant, and vice versa. Is this symmetric version of the receptivity in question an instance of a loving relationship? Again, it isn't the paradigm case, but this time whether it counts as a loving relationship would seem to depend on where it is in the dramatic arc of a relationship. If this is a blip in a receptivity that normally leads to a dovetailing of interests, then this will seem like one of the downs in the ups and downs of a loving relationship. But if it is the equilibrium point of the relationship, then the relationship will look more like mutual contempt or hatred, and not at all like a loving relationship.

The paradigm case of a loving relationship would thus seem to be one in which there is a receptivity to direction and interpretation that is symmetric and that leads to a dovetailing of interests in the way Cocking and Kennett suggest. I said earlier that their additional suggestion that having certain specific desires is a necessary condition of friendship turns out to be implausible for reasons that they themselves give. The reason why this is so should now be obvious. If friends are receptive to direction and interpretation by each other in the way already suggested, then which desires they will end up with after a long period of interaction with each other will be an open question. Even if they had desires that are typical of friends at the beginning of the dynamic process—"mutual affection, the disposition to promote the other's ...well-being, and the desire for shared experiences"—there is no guarantee that they will end up with these desires at the end. These are, after all, just more desires, desires that reflect what they think is important to focus on, and are therefore exactly the sort of desires that could change as a result of their receptivity to mutual direction and interpretation. Consider once again the manic artists described at the outset. Perhaps they began as typical friends, but then got bitten by the artistic bug and egged each other on. If Cocking and Kennett are on the right track in supposing that the receptivity they describe is distinctive of friendship, then it seems that they should give up the claim that having the desires that are typical of friends is a necessary condition as well.

Have Cocking and Kennett provided us with a way of resuscitating a view in the same ballpark as Kolodny's account of love as valuing a relationship? Yes and no. What's true, if Cocking and Kennett are right, is that loving relationships are such in virtue of their being constituted by a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation, and relationships with that feature are the source of various non-moral reasons for action. However, contrary to Kolodny, it turns out that such relationships are *non*-historical. Beings who have desiderative and epistemic

capacities can acquire, in an instant, a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation, so there is no conceptual barrier to love at first sight, instantaneous familial love, or immediate friendship. Moreover, though such relationships are the source of various reasons for action, they are not the source in the sense of being a justification of the kind Kolodny has in mind. They are rather the causal source of various reasons, both non-moral and moral.

Consider some of the non-moral reasons sourced in a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation. Romantic lovers, family members who love each other, and friends all have a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation, and one of the things that this causes in them is a range of desires. Typically these would be desires like "mutual affection, the disposition to promote the other's ...well-being, and the desire for shared experiences", but they might be more unusual desires—remember again the manic artists—and, whatever desires these turn out to be, those who love each other will, as a result of having these desires, have reasons to satisfy these desires so long as their doing so doesn't lead them interfere or fail to help. As Cocking and Kennett say, a lover might therefore end up having reasons to "play in a card game, go bushwalking, or go to the movies", things that they might antecedently have had no desire to do, and hence no reason to do at all. Moreover, they might eventually end up having no desire, and hence no reason, to do any of these things any more further down the track. Their mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation could eventually drive out these desires. The non-moral reasons we have in virtue of loving someone are therefore potentially quite different from person to person and, within a person, from time to time.

Consider now the moral reasons sourced in a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation. Let's begin with a very simple example. Jill acquires a desire to learn how to play cards. Because she has this desire, her friend Jack, who is receptive to direction and interpretation by her, comes to acquire the same desire. Once they've both learned how to play cards, each for the non-moral reasons they have in virtue of desiring to learn, they make plans to meet and play cards at a café in a week's time. Each knowingly leads the other to expect, quite reasonably, that they will be at the café in a week's time, ready and willing to play cards. As a result of having this reasonable expectation, an expectation that was also caused in each of them, albeit remotely, by their receptivity to direction and interpretation, Jill constrains her plans concerning what she will do to realize her desires in a week's time. Now suppose that some time during the next week, Jack loses his interest in playing cards. Does he still have a reason to turn up at the café, ready and willing to play? It seems that he does. After all, if Jack unexpectedly doesn't turn up, he will thereby interfere with Jill's exercise of her capacity for desire-realization, as if she'd known he wasn't going to turn up, she would have made other plans. It therefore turns out that, even though he no longer has a non-moral reason to be at the café next Friday, ready and willing to play cards, he still has a moral reason to do so, a moral reason grounded in his reason not to interfere with Jill's exercise of her desiderative capacities together with the circumstances in which he finds himself, circumstances caused by his receptivity to direction and interpretation by her.

With this case firmly in view, it should be clear that lovers will end up having moral reasons to do all sort of things for their beloveds that they have no reason to do for others. To take one striking example, romantic lovers often lead each other to expect that, if the fire ever goes out of their relationship, they will take steps to reignite it. It should now be clear what this might amount to, and the moral reasons to which it could give rise. Romantic lovers are receptive to direction and interpretation by each other, and this shared receptivity causes them to have

various sexual desires concerning each other. Finding that the fire has gone out of their relationship could therefore amount either to a loss of their sexual desires, or to a loss of their shared receptivity to direction and interpretation itself, losses that one of them could easily experience without its being experienced by the other. If during the course of their relationship, the one who suffers such a loss has knowingly given the other the reasonable expectation that, should this ever happen, he would take steps to regain his sexual desires, or his receptivity—perhaps he has led her to believe that they would go to relationship counseling—then he has a moral reason to take those steps. To fail to do so would be to interfere with her capacity for desire-realization, as if she had known that he wouldn't take those steps, she may have made other plans. He therefore has a moral reason to do something for his beloved that he has no reason to do, and indeed couldn't do, for anyone else.

The picture that emerges is thus one according to which, when we love, we have a complex mix of moral and non-moral reasons for action, where these reasons are all causally sourced in our mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation. Certain people, like romantic lovers who have knowingly given each other the reasonable expectation that they will reignite their relationship if the fire goes out of it, will also have moral reasons to do what they can to love again when they stop loving, and it is easy to imagine both moral and non-moral reasons for those who don't love anyone to begin to love someone, and moral and non-moral reasons for people who love someone to stop loving them. Let's bring this discussion to a close with a brief explanation of how reasons of these kinds might arise.

Since a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation, whether in the guise of romantic love or friendship or having a family, is one of the primary means by which most people get to lead enjoyable lives, anyone who has a desire to lead such a life, and is not wildly atypical, will have a non-moral reason sourced in their desire to enjoy themselves to enter into a loving relationship of one or another of these kinds. Having said that, there are people who are atypical, so it is important that we do not wrongly assume that those people who have no interest in being part of a loving relationship of one or another of these kinds are making some kind of mistake. Moreover, even for those who are typical, there is no guarantee that coming to love someone will leave their desire to enjoy themselves intact. Remember again the manic artists. Having got into a loving relationship in the hope of finding enjoyment, they might end up with very little joy in their life, and they might not mind this one little bit. One of the surprising things about loving relationships is that, in virtue of their potential to transform us, they can be a success even when they lead lovers in unexpected directions.

As regards moral reasons to acquire a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation, think again about familial love. Since not having a loving familial relationship with their primary care-giver is so crippling for children, sapping them of confidence and emotional stability in ways that can last well into their adulthood, those primary care-givers who find themselves not loving the children in their care have a moral reason to give in to their natural tendency to love them, or, failing that, to look for something to love about them. This moral reason, sourced in the reason that everyone has to do what they can to make sure that people have desiderative and epistemic capacities to exercise, is a reason that makes special demands on primary care-givers, as they play a pivotal role in helping those within their care to acquire such capacities in the first place. But since not everyone is capable of developing a receptivity to direction and interpretation by children, those who find they can't develop such a receptivity

have reasons to make arrangements for the children in their care to be brought up by someone better equipped to care for them.

There are also both moral and non-moral reasons for certain people to stop loving. Consider once again someone who acquires a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation because they desire to enjoy themselves and believe that loving someone is a means to that end. They may succeed in acquiring new desires and losing old ones under the direction and interpretation of their beloved, and they may work hard to satisfy their new desires, and yet, because they find themselves unsuccessful at doing many of the things that they now want to do, and because they have retained their desire to enjoy themselves, they may find themselves with strong reasons to exit their relationship, reasons grounded in the very desire to enjoy themselves that got them into it in the first place. There need be no fault in a situation like this. Lovers can simply discover themselves to be incompatible by trying and failing to make a go of things. They end up with non-moral reasons to rid themselves of their mutual receptivity, non-moral reasons that they will be able to act on only in a morally constrained way. This is especially important to remember when one of the parties finds themselves with reasons to exit the relationship and the other doesn't. When the expectation that a relationship will continue and weather the storms has knowingly and reasonably been created, apologies and compensation for losses may well be due.

In other cases, though lovers may succeed in acquiring a mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation, acquire new desires and lose old ones, and feel perfectly satisfied with the situation they find themselves in, the desires they lose in the process might include all of those that would otherwise have motivated them to act on their moral reasons. Love for someone can in this way lead both the lover and beloved to be so devoted to each other that they're willing to act immorally, interfering and failing to help, all in the name of love. Stories of mafia families are full of characters who love each other in this way. Of course, the desires on which such people act are not reason-giving, as we only have reasons to satisfy the desires we have in virtue of loving someone to the extent that satisfying them is consistent our helping and not interfering. If loving someone is necessarily reason-giving, then what the mafia families feel for each other isn't love properly so-called, though it functions in many respects just like love. Indeed, as Cocking and Kennett remind us, the fact that underlying receptivity to direction and interpretation can have such effects underscores the "moral danger" inherent in loving someone. In such cases, there will be moral reasons to modify or even end the relationship, albeit moral reasons that the lover and beloved may have no motivation to act upon.

Conclusion

We began by asking what reasons for action we have when we love someone, and why we have these reasons. Our answer comes in two parts. The first part is a general account of what we have reasons to do in various circumstances, and the second part is an account of the difference made to our circumstances by the fact that we love someone.

According to the quite general account of reasons offered here, no matter what their circumstances, everyone has reasons to help and not interfere, and beyond that, they have reasons to do whatever they desire to do. According to the account of love offered here, a crucial feature of the circumstances we find ourselves in when we love someone is that a whole range of the desires we possess are the causal upshot of our mutual receptivity to direction and interpretation, a mutual receptivity that is constitutive of our loving relationship. When we love

someone we therefore have non-moral reasons to satisfy these desires, at least insofar as satisfying them is consistent with our still helping and not interfering, and since our acting on these desires will cause our beloved to have various reasonable expectations about how we will comport ourselves in the future, reasonable expectations that the beloved will rely on in making plans, we will also have moral reasons to meet these reasonable expectations, moral reasons sourced in our reason to help and not interfere. Finally, since a loving relationship can be unsatisfying, and even when satisfying can lead us to act immorally, interfering with people and failing to help them, we may also have both non-moral and moral reasons to exit the loving relationships in which we find ourselves.

At this point I have to confess that these claims sound almost as banal as the claims about the reasons of love made at the outset by our imaginary advice columnist. But, even if they are just as banal, perhaps we can take some solace in the fact that these claims are at least true, and that now we know why they're true.

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¹ Why isn't the equation perfect? Kant's idea of respect for persons is generally understood to be an attitude that can only be taken towards beings with a rational nature, where rational nature includes not just possession of the desiderative and epistemic capacities of the kind that would qualify someone as an agent, albeit a very limited one, but also the much more sophisticated capacity for reflective self-control. Infants, the severely disabled, those with degenerative brain disorders like dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and most non-human animals, though limited agents, lack this sophisticated capacity and so cannot be respected according to Kant. Our

account of reasons, by contrast, suggests a rather different picture. All beings with desiderative and epistemic capacities merit respect, as we have reasons to help and not interfere with all of them, even those who lack the specific capacity for reflective self-control. The significance of the capacity for reflective self-control is normative, rather than conceptual. Since only beings with the capacity for reflective self-control can believe that they have reasons, and since their exercise of their capacity realize their desires is mediated by these beliefs, only they can be interfered with by having their beliefs about their reasons manipulated, and only they can be in need of help to ensure that their beliefs about their reasons are formed in the light of all the available evidence. Moreover, only they can be held responsible for their failure to act on their reasons to help or not interfere, as only they have the conceptual capacities required to make helping and not interfering into options, and hence only they have such reasons in the first place.