

CHAPTER 4 – THE PROPER GROUNDS OF LOVE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

We love people for reasons. Or, so some philosophers have recently thought.¹⁸⁴ In this context, a reason for love has sometimes been understood as that which renders love appropriate or fitting in certain cases.¹⁸⁵ There are several competing views of what these reasons for love are. One common view is that certain qualities of a person may serve as such reasons. According to this “quality theory”,¹⁸⁶ it might be a person’s physical beauty, winning personality, virtuous character, or prodigious talent that renders love for him appropriate.¹⁸⁷

However, the quality theory seems open to a range of pressing objections. For example, David Velleman has argued that people want to be loved “for themselves,” not merely for their

¹⁸⁴ For example, see Bennett Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship.”

¹⁸⁵ Importantly, this topic is different from the one Harry Frankfurt has in mind in Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*. There, Frankfurt’s concern is not the considerations that render love appropriate, but rather the reasons for action that an agent has once she loves someone. These are reasons “of” love and not reasons “for” love.

¹⁸⁶ I take this label for the view from Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship.”

¹⁸⁷ We might view Aristotle’s account of friendship—a kind of mutual love—as an example of a quality theory of the reasons for love insofar as the qualities of being useful, pleasurable, or virtuous each render a different corresponding kind of friendship appropriate.

superficial qualities.¹⁸⁸ As a result, Velleman takes the human capacity for valuation—his reading of the Kantian rational will—to be that which renders love appropriate.¹⁸⁹ This capacity, thinks Velleman, is what every human being truly *is*, and so to love someone for this capacity is to love him in the way he would want to be loved.

Niko Kolodny has also raised a number of objections to the quality theory.¹⁹⁰ One of these is that it cannot properly account for familial love. For example, it does not seem that the beauty, personality, or virtue of a baby is what renders a parent’s love for the baby appropriate.¹⁹¹ For that matter, Kolodny also rejects Velleman’s proposal that it might be the baby’s (potential) capacity for valuation that makes the parent’s love appropriate.¹⁹² Instead, Kolodny argues that the parental *relationship* does this.¹⁹³ Indeed, Kolodny holds that relationships are what render love appropriate in all cases in which it is.

In this chapter I will defend a pluralist view of love’s reasons, or “proper grounds,” as I will call them.¹⁹⁴ According to this view, the features suggested by the three theories just mentioned—i.e., the quality theory, Velleman’s Kantian theory, and Kolodny’s relationship theory—may *all* function as proper grounds of love. Thus, there is some truth to each theory. However, I will argue that none of the theories, by itself, gives a sufficient account of love’s proper grounds. After defending this pluralist view, I will suggest that what unifies love’s plural proper grounds is that each kind may support or sustain a healthy relationship in some way. Thus, love’s proper grounds are features that are good in this particular way.

¹⁸⁸ Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” 363.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 365–366.

¹⁹⁰ Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 139–142.

¹⁹¹ Harry Frankfurt makes this same point, as I noted in Chapter Three, Section 3.4.

¹⁹² Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 173–179.

¹⁹³ I made the same point in Chapter Three, Section 3.4, inspired by Kolodny’s view.

¹⁹⁴ I will explain shortly my preference for the term “proper ground of love” rather than “reason for love.”

4.2 LOVE AND ITS GROUNDS: TERMS AND ASSUMPTIONS

I begin with an explanation of certain key terms and assumptions that I will rely on throughout the chapter. First, as in Chapters Two and Three, I will focus my discussion on cases of love for people that typically occur in friendships, romantic relationships, and familial relationships.

Second, although the subject matter of this chapter is sometimes characterized as the “reasons” for love, I will set aside such talk since it can be confusing and distracting. For example, the term “reason for love” suggests to some that if one apprehended sufficient reasons for loving a person, then one would be making a rational mistake if one did not subsequently love the person. This question about the rationality of love is slightly adjacent to my aims here and might distract from them.¹⁹⁵ Thus, I will set aside talk of reasons and speak instead of “proper grounds” of love. The idea of a proper ground of love may be easily grasped when contrasted with the notion of an “operative ground” of love, introduced in Chapter Three (Section 3.2).

Consider, again, the notion of an “operative ground” of love. If we set aside the possibility of love potions and pills, we may understand an operative ground of love as that in response to which love arises or is sustained. Importantly, that in response to which love *arises* could be different from that in response to which love is *sustained*. Thus, we might speak of two kinds of operative grounds of love: producing operative grounds and sustaining operative grounds. Suppose Juliet’s love is awakened in response to Romeo’s wit.¹⁹⁶ Here, Romeo’s wit would be a *producing operative ground* of Juliet’s love, i.e., that in response to which love arises in Juliet, or that which explains the production of Juliet’s love. Now suppose the two lovers have

¹⁹⁵ For a sustained discussion of rational requirements to love, see Roger E. Lamb, “Love and Rationality,” in *Love Analyzed*, ed. Roger E. Lamb (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 23–47.

¹⁹⁶ The exchange between the two lovers toward the end of Act I, Scene V, may support this idea.

a long and satisfying relationship,¹⁹⁷ and that the importance of Romeo's wit fades over time for Juliet. Instead, Romeo's kindness becomes that which sustains Juliet's love for him. If Romeo's kindness suddenly vanished, Juliet's love would vanish along with it.¹⁹⁸ Not so Romeo's wit. Here, Romeo's kindness would be a *sustaining operative ground* of Juliet's love, i.e., that in response to which love is sustained in Juliet, or that which explains the continuation of Juliet's love. As the example illustrates, the producing and sustaining operative grounds of love may be different.

Now, a "proper ground" of love is that which makes love appropriate or fitting in cases where it is.¹⁹⁹ So, for example, if Kolodny were correct, Juliet's relationship to Romeo would be the proper ground of her love for him, i.e., that which renders it appropriate or fitting (on the assumption that it is). The appropriateness that proper grounds of love may bring about is a non-moral kind of goodness or correctness. There may be stronger and weaker forms of this appropriateness, corresponding to stronger and weaker kinds of proper grounds. In some cases, love's appropriateness might be fairly robust, similar to the appropriateness of being moved by a great piece of art. In this case, although it might not be irrational for someone to be unmoved by the art, if they were unmoved we might count it a significant loss (for them) and wonder whether they were really able to see the piece or understand it properly. In other cases, love's appropriateness might be weaker, like the appropriateness of someone's taste for chocolate ice-cream. Such a taste may not be robustly good—if she did not like the ice-cream we would not

¹⁹⁷ We must, of course, suspend our disbelief.

¹⁹⁸ Admittedly, the example here is crude and artificial: if their relationship was long and satisfying, it is hard to imagine that Juliet's love would vanish with the disappearance of Romeo's kindness. Nevertheless, this toy example helps us see the relevant distinctions.

¹⁹⁹ The rough analog of "proper ground" in reasons-talk might be "normative reason". The added phrase "in cases where it is" suggests that proper grounds are "prima facie" in some sense: if one of them is in place, then it does not necessarily follow that love is appropriate. There could be countervailing considerations that render it inappropriate. My point is that, for cases where love is appropriate, something makes it so, and that is what I want to put my finger on.

count it a loss on the same scale as being unmoved by great art—but there is nothing objectionable about her taste, and so it is appropriate in a weaker sense.

Importantly, if a proper ground of love is to do its appropriate-making work, it must also be an operative ground of love. Suppose someone held a justifiable belief but held it for reasons that did not actually justify the belief. Here, her belief would be appropriate in a certain sense—since justifiable—but it would not be *entirely* appropriate since she would hold it for the wrong reasons. Similarly, proper grounds of love must also be operative grounds if they are to render love fully appropriate. Suppose Kolodny is correct that relationships are the sole proper grounds of love. Now, returning to our example, suppose that Juliet loves Romeo, and that they have a relationship of the sort Kolodny has in mind. If the operative ground of Juliet’s love is not their relationship, but rather Romeo’s wit or kindness, then Juliet’s love for Romeo will not be fully appropriate. Of course, her love will still be appropriate in some attenuated sense, since a proper ground of love is cognitively “available” to her, i.e., their relationship is actually in place and she knows this. However, since the operative grounds of her love (i.e., qualities) are features that do not (we are temporarily supposing) properly ground love, then her love will not be entirely appropriate. Given the picture I have explained here, we can say that the proper grounds of love are those features to which love is *properly* a response, or those features upon which love properly depends.

As a final preliminary point, although I have given an account of love in Chapters Two and Three, I hope that my pluralist account of love’s proper grounds will be relatively neutral with respect to the particular attitudes that love consists in.²⁰⁰ My account will, however, assume that love is an attitude that has proper grounds.²⁰¹ This assumed view contrasts with the view

²⁰⁰ The unity I see in love’s plural proper grounds, which I argue for in Section 4.8, will not be neutral in this way. However, that aspect of my view may be understood as distinct from my point about pluralism, and hence as distinct from my claim that the three competing views of love’s proper grounds all fail.

²⁰¹ I will also assume that love has operative grounds, which I argued for in Chapter Three.

that love is “brute,”²⁰² according to which love has operative grounds but not proper grounds. On this brute view, love is not properly subject to evaluations of appropriateness; all we can do is give an explanatory account of how love came about or is, in fact, sustained. While I will not argue the point at length here, it seems to me that love *is* properly subject to evaluations of appropriateness. For example, we typically judge a stalker’s love for a movie star inappropriate, and a parent’s love for his child appropriate.²⁰³ So, it seems some features must render love appropriate or inappropriate in each case, and thus that love, in fact, has proper grounds.

With these preliminary remarks complete, I will turn to a consideration of the quality theory of love’s proper grounds. In the next section I will explain and try to motivate that theory.

4.3 EXPLAINING AND MOTIVATING THE QUALITY THEORY

The quality theory holds that qualities of the beloved are the sole kind of proper ground of love for him, i.e., the only kind of feature that might render love for him appropriate. So, for instance, a person’s wit, virtue, or talent might serve as proper grounds of love for him according to the quality theory.²⁰⁴ It is important to note that qualities are *not* the objects of love on this view. Rather, *people* are. The qualities are merely proper grounds of love.

A corollary of the quality theory is that certain bad qualities might serve as features that render love *inappropriate*. For example, certain vices or unattractive qualities might play this role, in the absence of countervailing good qualities. Now, in most cases, of course, there *are* countervailing good qualities that weigh against the negatives, so it is not as though the quality

²⁰² My choice of terms here is inspired by Jennifer Whiting’s term “brute friendship” in Jennifer Whiting, “Impersonal Friends,” *Monist* 74, no. 1 (January 1991): 7. She employs the same sort of distinction I make here, but applies it to friendship. On her Aristotelian view, friendship is something like mutual love.

²⁰³ I borrow examples here from Niko Kolodny. See Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 137.

²⁰⁴ I am not here interested in the view that any *particular* quality is a proper ground of love. Rather, I am interested in the view that the class of non-relational qualities I am gesturing at contains possible proper grounds of love. I am interested in this more abstract view since it is usually the one that is attacked by opponents.

theory necessarily condemns a person with negative traits to be properly unloved. Indeed, I take it that all of us are flawed in certain respects, and thus that it is *typically* the case that appropriate instances of love are so despite certain negative traits. Nevertheless, if someone is untrustworthy or dangerously violent, these qualities generally render friendship and romantic love for such a person inappropriate.²⁰⁵ I will say more about negative qualities and inappropriate cases of love in the penultimate section of the chapter.

The quality theory seems fairly intuitive, at least to many westerners. It fits with the “love-at-first-sight” tradition,²⁰⁶ and the producing operative grounds of our love in friendships and romantic relationships often seem to be the kind of qualities I have mentioned.²⁰⁷ This is, of course, an observation Aristotle made long ago.²⁰⁸ Now, if it is correct that qualities typically function as *operative grounds* of love in cases of love for friends and romantic partners, then there is some pressure to think that they also function as *proper grounds* of love in such cases.²⁰⁹ If not, it seems we are left affirming that love in friendships and romantic relationships is

²⁰⁵ Heroic cases in which nuns befriend hardened criminals might seem to undermine this point. One such case is featured in Sister Helen Prejean and Tim Robbins’s film (and Prejean’s book) *Dead Man Walking*. However, while these cases are interesting, and while I take them to be genuine cases of love, it seems to me that they are cases of friendship love only in an extended sense, since the relationships are highly constrained, taking place while the criminals are incarcerated and so can no longer pursue the behavior that landed them in prison. For example, I take it we are not talking about a case in which a nun and a criminal have coffee together “on the outside” and discuss the criminal’s next murder, as two ordinary friends might have coffee and discuss their plans for the next day.

²⁰⁶ For example, Montaigne, in “Of Friendship”: “At our first meeting...we found ourselves so taken with each other,...so bound together, that from that time on nothing was so close to us as each other.” I owe this quotation to Alan Soble, *The Structure of Love* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 31. Romeo’s love for Juliet is, of course, another classic (albeit stereotypical) example: “Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!/ For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.” (William Shakespeare, “Romeo and Juliet,” in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, The Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1994), I.v.50–51.) Dante’s love for Beatrice is another famous case in this tradition.

²⁰⁷ For an example of psychological research suggesting this point see Arthur Aron et al., “Experiences of Falling in Love,” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 6 (1989): 251. This research also suggests that someone’s interest in us is often a feature to which we respond with romantic or friendship love.

²⁰⁸ See, for example, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.2-3.

²⁰⁹ Kolodny makes a similar point when he claims, “What, in normal cases, causally sustains [love] is a good guide to the normative reasons for it.” Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 162.

typically not appropriate (since the operative grounds would not be proper grounds), which might seem surprising.

Nevertheless, surprise does not necessarily indicate falsehood. Indeed, it might well be that love for friends and romantic partners *is* systematically inappropriate in just this way. The charge of inappropriateness seems particularly applicable to the early stages of romantic love. As suggested in Chapter Three (Section 3.5), our view of the beloved is often far from clear-eyed in such instances—hence the proverb, “love is blind”—and so perhaps a gap between operative grounds of love and potential proper grounds of love *is* typical in those cases after all.

While early stage romantic love is often inappropriate in some sense, if we look more closely at this phenomenon it seems clear that the inappropriateness does not necessarily make trouble for the inference I wish to draw about the character of love’s proper grounds from the character of its typical operative grounds. As David Velleman has observed (with reference to Freud), and as I suggested in Chapter Three, the problem with early romantic love is that it is characterized by overvaluation and transference.²¹⁰ The lover tends to view the beloved as possessing excellences that he does not, in fact, possess, and to love the beloved in response to these falsely attributed qualities.²¹¹ On the Freudian story, these falsely attributed qualities, in turn, are the qualities of idealized versions of important figures from the lover’s past (e.g., parents), irrationally “transferred” onto the beloved. However, notice that the problem here is not necessarily that love is responding to the wrong kind of qualities. If the beloved really possessed the excellences attributed to him, it is not clear we would worry about inappropriateness in these cases. Rather, the problem seems to be one of mistaken world-to-mind attitudes (e.g., beliefs,

²¹⁰ Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” 350.

²¹¹ Velleman points out (349-350) that there is a still darker Freudian storyline on which the lover is not even really drawn to the beloved because of his falsely imagined excellences, but rather only because of the lover’s sub-conscious sexual drives, with respect to which the “beloved” is a mere instrument of satisfaction. However, this storyline does not seem plausible to me.

impressions, perceptions, etc.) about the qualities that the beloved possesses.²¹² By transference, the lover has come to a set of false views about the beloved's qualities, and her love is thereby inappropriate, since it has mistaken operative grounds. Thus, these cases should not necessarily make us doubt that the transferred excellences are really proper grounds of romantic love. After all, it is not that the lover is responding to the wrong thing, which would scuttle my inference; rather, it is just that the qualities that *would* properly ground love are not instantiated in the beloved, despite the lover's attribution to the contrary. Thus, there seems to be no reason here to reject the idea that typical operative grounds of love in cases of romantic love and friendship (i.e., qualities) may also serve as proper grounds of love in such cases.

Having motivated the quality theory of love's proper grounds, in the next four sections I will present objections to it by David Velleman and Niko Kolodny, along with the alternative view of love's proper grounds that each supports. I will address their objections on behalf of the quality theory, though I will not manage to deflect the full force of the objections. My aim, instead, will be to leave space for qualities as one of several kinds of proper grounds of love in a pluralist view. I will also suggest ways in which the views preferred by Velleman and Kolodny are incomplete, and thus require the pluralism that I advocate.

²¹² This point suggests that my account of love's operative grounds should be refined slightly. Speaking more precisely, operative grounds of love are contents of attitudes about the beloved with a world-to-mind direction of fit. So, where I claimed above that the producing operative ground of Juliet's love might be Romeo's wit, strictly speaking the ground would be the content of some world-to-mind attitude resulting from the apprehension of Romeo as witty. One important example of such attitudes here, of course, would be a belief that Romeo is witty. However, I wish to leave space in my account for the content of less elevated attitudes to be operative grounds of love too. (I am inspired here by Aquinas's distinction between sensitive and rational love, and the different world-to-mind attitudes that underlie these different kinds of love; see *Summa Theologica* I-II 26.1.) One upshot of this point is that lovers can be mistaken about the properties they attribute to the beloved—i.e., they can have mistaken attitudes about such properties—and thus operative grounds of love can be properties that the beloved does not possess. Because the possibility of mistaken attitudes about the beloved's properties will not be a major theme in this chapter, I will generally speak of the beloved's properties themselves as operative grounds of love, rather than the contents of attitudes about the beloved's properties, since it is a more convenient locution. And, of course, this locution is not far off since in cases where the property-attribution is correct the beloved's property itself (e.g., wit, kindness) is typically the basis for the relevant world-to-mind attitude. It is also important to note that, according to my view, the lover need not be aware that certain properties serve as operative grounds of her love in order for them to play that role. Similarly, if she is aware that her love has operative grounds, she need not be aware of exactly what they are. In these cases, the lover's world-to-mind attitudes about the beloved would be opaque to the lover to some extent.

4.4 DAVID VELLEMAN AGAINST THE QUALITY THEORY

Velleman rejects the quality theory in the following passage:

...these qualities fail to distinguish us completely, and they consequently feel like accidents rather than our essence. We are like the girl who wants to be loved but not for her yellow hair—and not, we should add, for her mind or her sense of humor, either—because she wants to be loved, as she puts it, “for myself alone.”²¹³

Velleman’s thought here is that the qualities in view on the quality theory are mere contingent accidents of me and thus do not characterize who I *really am* as a person. As a result, if the operative grounds of someone’s love for me were such qualities, she would fail to love me as I want to be loved—for who I really am. Therefore, Velleman thinks qualities cannot be the proper grounds of love, i.e., that to which love is properly a response.

Given this worry, Velleman takes the view that love is properly a response to the value of the Kantian rational will, and so that this will is the proper ground of love. Lest his proposal seem too austere, Velleman reminds us that this aspect of our nature, on Kant’s story, is the capacity “to be actuated by reasons” and “to have a good will,” and so he thinks this aspect of a human being is “that better side of a person which constitutes his true self.”²¹⁴ Further, he explains that this capacity is that by which we appreciate the value of ends—including the Kantian “end-in-itself” of humanity. Since he thinks love just is an activation of this capacity toward ends-in-themselves, he holds that what we love in another is her capacity to love. As Velleman cleverly puts it, “what our hearts respond to is another heart.”²¹⁵ Unlike mere contingent properties like wit, virtue, or talent, Velleman thinks the Kantian rational will, so understood, just is the essence of who we are as human beings. As a result, he thinks possession of this capacity is the property for which we want to be loved, since we want to be loved for

²¹³ Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” 363. Velleman here quotes Yeats’s poem “For Anne Gregory,” from *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1956) 240.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 365.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

ourselves. Thus, on Velleman's view, this is the property to which love is properly a response, and so it is the sole proper ground of love.

Despite its seeming plausibility, it is not clear that Velleman's objection to the quality theory sticks. At least two responses seem in order. First, it is not clear that the qualities picked out by the quality theory fail to characterize who we really are. Ethical virtues seem the most obvious example here. On an Aristotelian picture, activity according to virtues such as courage, temperance, or justice is central to what a human being should be. Thus, on the Aristotelian picture, to love someone in response to character traits like that is to love him in response to the highest expression of his nature as a human being—part of his essence, and not mere accidents. Moreover, the Aristotelian picture is not just a restatement of Velleman's point in different language. Virtuous traits like courage, temperance, or justice are not the same as Velleman's Kantian "capacity for valuation"; rather, they are that capacity formed in a certain way—formed to express a particular set of correct values. Put another way, the virtues are not merely the *capacity* "to have a good will"; they are the *having* of the good will itself (or the Aristotelian equivalent). Virtues are weighty, substantial character traits on most any plausible view of human beings, so my point here seems important even if one rejects the Aristotelian picture.

A similar point may be made about talents or abilities. Many people identify strongly with certain of their talents or abilities. Athletes and academics are conspicuous examples here. This strong identification is evident in the fact that people often undergo crises of identity when they suddenly lose abilities that play an important role in their lives (e.g., the football player paralyzed in a car accident). Indeed, it does not seem too much to say that someone deeply invested in a certain activity that demands a particular talent or ability might quite properly come to view that quality as a central part of who and what she is. But, if we take some quality to be central to who we are in this way, to be loved (at least in part) in response to it hardly seems

unwelcome. Indeed, as Neil Delaney has argued, it seems plausible that someone who strongly identifies with one of her qualities in this way might well *want* to be loved (at least in part) in response to that quality.²¹⁶ Therefore, in cases where a talent or ability is central to who a person is, there seems nothing wrong with the idea that such a quality would be an operative ground of love.

Finally, it is not even clear to me that being loved in response to attractive physical traits (e.g., beautiful brown eyes) or aspects of one's personality (e.g., a sharp wit) is unwelcome. It seems quite appropriate and typical to desire that one's physical appearance be appreciated by a romantic partner, or that even relatively minor aspects of one's personality be appreciated by one's friends. Thus, I see no reason to reject the idea that we might want to be loved (in part) in response to such traits.

However, a second and somewhat more concessive reply to Velleman's complaint about the quality theory also seems in order: perhaps physical qualities or minor traits of personality make for weaker proper grounds of love than other features. While love in response to such qualities may not be objectionable, we might still think it fails to be robustly good in the sense that a parent's love for his child is. Surely Velleman is correct that in some cases we would not want to be loved *merely* for our qualities. For example, after 30 years of marriage you would likely want to be loved by your spouse for more than mere wit. This is so not because wit could never be a proper ground of love, but because, after 30 years, you would hope that your spouse could see more in you than your wit. This comment gestures at the idea that mature cases of love are typically over-determined by operative grounds, suggesting a plurality of proper grounds for love. I will return to this idea later in the chapter, but for now the point is to grant that long-term love that took a single quality as its operative ground would be shallow (and perhaps

²¹⁶ Neil Delaney, "Romantic Love and Loving Commitment: Articulating a Modern Ideal," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1996): 343–347.

impossible). This concession does not, however, imply that there is no place for qualities as proper grounds of love, but only that many cases of love will require more than one operative ground, or kind of operative ground, if they are to be loves that we might desire.

4.5 OBJECTIONS TO VELLEMAN'S VIEW

I will now offer a brief critical discussion of Velleman's Kantian alternative to the quality theory. Recall that he takes the capacity for valuation and love—his reading of the Kantian rational will—to be the proper ground of love. As a convenient shorthand, I will refer to this putative proper ground as the beloved's "humanity," since Velleman thinks it amounts to our essence as human beings and is a property that all human beings have.

As I see it, the main challenge for Velleman's proposal is whether there are ever cases in which the beloved's humanity actually serves as a producing or sustaining operative ground of love. If not, then it seems Velleman would be left suggesting that we always love on the wrong operative grounds, which seems implausible.²¹⁷ In Velleman's favor, it seems possible that the producing operative ground of a certain thin kind of love we might have for a stranger on the street (e.g., someone in need) would be the stranger's humanity. This might be the kind of love I called "love for neighbors" in Chapter Two (Section 2.11).

However, Velleman's view still seems to have difficulty explaining the majority of cases in which love is produced more selectively. Indeed, if Velleman's view is correct, we might well wonder why someone would come to love a particular romantic partner, a particular friend, or a particular family member rather than any number of other people, given that the particular partner, friend, and family member share the property of humanity with literally *every* other

²¹⁷ Of course, it is not impossible. If his view did imply that we always love on the wrong operative grounds, then the view would look something like Kant's view of moral motivation, according to which whether anyone has ever really acted from duty is irrelevant to the thought that this is the motive that confers moral value on an action. And Velleman might be quite pleased with this result.

human being. Of course, we may attribute some of the selectivity to contingent circumstance: you live in the same city, you attend the same school, and you work in the same office as some people and not others. Nevertheless, love is still selective from among those with whom we interact. Because of this selectivity, it seems hard to see how the producing operative ground of love could be a characteristic that all human beings share, as Velleman suggests it should be.

Velleman anticipates this issue and responds by claiming that there is a sense in which we love a person because of his particular qualities, namely insofar as we understand his qualities to be “an expression or symbol or reminder of his value as a person.”²¹⁸ Velleman further suggests that the value of the beloved’s humanity is “reflected in or refracted through” his personal qualities, that we respond to the value of his humanity “through” his qualities, and that such qualities function “as conduits rather than sources of value.”²¹⁹ Though somewhat obscure, the prevailing idea here seems to be that a person’s qualities serve as the medium by which we attend to, or comprehend, the value of the property of humanity to which love properly responds. Metaphorically, a person’s qualities are like a window through which we can see her value as a human being. Velleman then claims that contingencies of the human ability to express and perceive the value of humanity through qualities are such that we are not all equally able to attend to the value of any given person in the way that precipitates love.²²⁰ This then explains why I selectively love some people and not others: because of who I am and because of who you are, I may or may not be able to grasp your value as a human being in the way that brings about

²¹⁸ Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” 371.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Importantly, Velleman thinks we *are* all able to attend to the value of any given person in the way demanded by respect.

love. Metaphorically, some people's windows need cleaning, and some people just can't see through certain kinds of windows. So, we love some and not others.²²¹

While Velleman's solution here is creative, it seems highly implausible. First, it completely botches cases of parental love: do I really love my newborn child because her qualities and my capacities are such that I can see through her qualities to her value as a human being? The regularity with which parents love *their* newborn child and not some other child in the nursery suggests that this story about parental love is false. If it were true, I would expect parents to exhibit parental love for newborns *other* than their own very frequently, given that the qualities of most infants are very similar and so, presumably, any parent that could see through the qualities of her child to the child's humanity could also do so for most any child in the nursery. But, obviously, parents generally do not exhibit parental love for infants other than their own. Indeed, it seems implausible that *any* qualities—whether physical beauty, wit, virtue, or the property of humanity—are the producing operative grounds and proper grounds of parental love for a newborn child. Rather, as Kolodny has argued (and as I argued in Chapter Three and will reiterate shortly), the parental relationship seems to play this role.²²²

²²¹ There is another story Velleman tells in his paper that might seem like it could help him respond to the selectivity problem, namely the story about human dignity. On Velleman's Kantian view, the value of humanity is such that a human being does not have a price, but rather a dignity. While price allows for comparison between valuable objects, dignity does not. Dignity is a singular sort of value that precludes the possibility of comparing the value of one dignity-bearing thing to another. While this is an interesting aspect of Velleman's (and Kant's) account, I do not think it is necessarily relevant to the selectivity problem since selectivity need not imply comparison. In other words, it seems to me possible that we could select certain people as friends or lovers (and not others) without making explicit comparisons between people.

²²² One might try to attribute the production of parental love for an infant to mere hormones or biological instinct. This claim might be at the root of two different objections. First, it might seem that if parental love for infants is attributable to mere instinct, then it is not properly subject to any sort of normative evaluation, positive or negative, including evaluations of appropriateness or fittingness. Rather, it is a kind of "brute" love that only has an explanation. However, this seems false: surely we think it is fitting for a parent to love his infant. Second, if parental love is merely instinctive, it might seem false that the parental relationship is the operative or proper ground of love. However, as I argued in Section 3.4, this instinctual account would still not explain why we love the particular infant we do, rather than another in the nursery. Suppose a new parent looked out over all the babies in the nursery without knowing which one was his child. In this case he would not experience a surge of parental love for a particular child until it was pointed out to him which of the babies was his. Indeed, he would likely experience parental love for a child that was not his if he was mistakenly told it was his. This suggests that it is the parental relationship (as the content of the parent's world-to-mind attitude) that is the operative (and I would say proper) ground of love.

Second, even if we restrict ourselves to cases of romantic love and friendship love, Velleman's story still seems implausible. When I am taken with someone's character or personality and the love of friendship arises in me, it certainly *seems* like I am responding to her character or personality. What I would never have said about such cases is that I am *seeing through* such qualities and responding to the value of the person's humanity. I might say that I am appreciating the qualities as aspects of the value of the person, i.e., as things that *make* her good in some respect. I might even say that I appreciate some of her qualities as *universally* good when instantiated in humans, i.e., properties of which we might say, "It is good for *the* human to have X." However, in saying these things, I am still appreciating the instantiated qualities themselves; I am not looking past them to some other property and value of humanity. To say that it is not really *these* qualities that are operative grounds of love—rather, the property of mere humanity—seems to add an unnecessary and implausible layer to the story.

Thus, while I see a possible role for Velleman's property of humanity as that which properly grounds a thin kind of love we should have toward any fellow human being—love for neighbors—I reject his view that mere humanity is the *sole* proper ground of love. I will turn now to a discussion of Kolodny's view of the proper grounds of love, and in particular his rejection of the quality theory. The aim of this discussion will be to draw a conclusion similar to the one I drew for Velleman's view, namely that Kolodny's monistic view of love's proper grounds is incomplete.

4.6 NIKO KOLODNY AGAINST THE QUALITY THEORY

As noted above, one reason Kolodny rejects the quality theory is that he thinks it fails to capture cases of familial love. Again, one obvious case it fails to capture is that of parental love for newborn infants: the qualities of an infant seem not to be the proper grounds of parental love

for her. Kolodny thinks this problem holds quite generally for familial love: the qualities of our family members are simply not what render our love for them appropriate. As he puts it, “While we typically admire and appreciate certain qualities of our parents, siblings, and children, it is odd to suppose that we see these qualities as reasons for loving them. It is enough that they are our parents, siblings, and children.”²²³ Recall that Kolodny’s notion of a “reason” for love is the same as my notion of a proper ground of love. His point, then, is that *relationships*—being someone’s parent, sibling, or child, etc.—are the proper grounds of familial love. Indeed, Kolodny makes the still more general claim that relationships are the sole proper grounds in *all* cases of love, including romantic and friendship love.²²⁴

But, what does Kolodny mean by “relationship”? He has in mind paradigm cases like friendships, romantic relationships, and familial relationships.²²⁵ He takes these relationships generally (though not always) to have several identifying characteristics. First, properly love-grounding relationships are *ongoing*, i.e., “they persist over time.” Second, such relationships hold between *particular* people. Third, they are *historical*, i.e., dependent on facts about the past: “Sarah is my mother only if she raised me, gave birth to me, or supplied the egg from which I developed.”²²⁶

In addition to pointing out these typical marks of all properly love-grounding relationships, Kolodny distinguishes two broad kinds of such relationships: “attitude-dependent” and “attitude-independent.”²²⁷ Romantic relationships and friendships are paradigm cases of attitude-dependent relationships. As the label suggests, whether an attitude-dependent

²²³ Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 139.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 135–136.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

relationship obtains depends on whether a certain pattern of attitudes between people obtains. Chief among these attitudes is mutual concern for the wellbeing of the other person and of the relationship itself. Kolodny suggests that certain patterns of mutual activity (e.g., social, sexual, etc.) also partially constitute attitude-dependent relationships.

In contrast, attitude-*independent* relationships may obtain without any pattern of mutual attitudes or activity. According to Kolodny, familial relationships are the paradigm cases of attitude-independent relationships. For example, on Kolodny's view, that Amy is my sister does not depend on whether either of us are concerned about each other's wellbeing, or whether we communicate or spend time together. Rather, it simply depends on "a biological tie, or a fact about our upbringing."²²⁸ Of course, attitude-independent relationships often do involve patterns of mutual concern and activity. The point is simply that such patterns are not necessary for the relationships to obtain, or for them to function as proper grounds of love, according to Kolodny.²²⁹

Kolodny seems right that familial relationships are an important proper ground in cases of familial love. Indeed, the parental relationship might well be the *only* proper ground of parental love for a newborn. It also seems that relationships are proper grounds of love in many mature cases of romantic and friendship love: the history of mutual activity and benevolent attitudes that I have with my spouse and close friends does seem to be at least part of what renders my ongoing love for them appropriate. However, these concessions do not rule out the possibility that qualities may also serve as proper grounds of love in some cases. In the next section I will offer reasons for thinking that a pluralist account that includes qualities among love's proper grounds is better than Kolodny's relationship view.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ I explore and develop Kolodny's view of relationships in further depth in Chapter Six.

4.7 PROBLEMS WITH THE RELATIONSHIP VIEW

One problem with Kolodny's view is that it cannot account for the fact that the appropriateness of love often seems over-determined. In other words, often there are properly *many* operative grounds for a particular case of love. This seems especially true of mature, well-developed love in attitude-dependent relationships. Suppose a spouse has been happily married to her partner for 30 years. As noted above, in that case it would seem strange if her love was sustained by, or responsive to, just one thing, even if it were their relationship. Rather, in addition to the relationship we would expect there to be many features to which the spouse's love responds, such as the partner's kindness, trustworthy character, or abilities as a parent. Indeed, this diversity of sustaining operative grounds might well account for the stability of such cases of love. If certain qualities fade with time (e.g., intellectual powers, physical attractiveness, etc.), other sustaining operative grounds can compensate. Thus, mature cases of love seem over-determined by sustaining operative grounds in this way. But, as argued above in support of the quality theory, if we affirm such a range of possible *operative* grounds of love, there is pressure to affirm them as *proper* grounds as well. Otherwise, such mature cases of romantic love will seem inappropriate to some extent, insofar as they would be responsive to the wrong features. I take it that we could tell a similar story for a case of mature friendship.

Moreover, even the appropriateness of love in attitude-*independent* relationships—e.g., cases of familial love—seems to be over-determined in this way. Consider the case of a parent's love for his child. As noted above, when the child is an infant, Kolodny seems right that the proper ground of parental love is the mere fact of the parent's attitude-independent relationship to the child. However, in good circumstances, as the child matures the parent would come to appreciate particular characteristics the child has and these would begin to function as further sustaining operative grounds of his love for the child. Again, it seems best to think of these

further operative grounds also as *proper* grounds of love; otherwise we will be left affirming that there is, under these circumstances, a certain inappropriateness in parents' love for their children. The sort of over-determination I propose would account for the fact that healthy parent-child relationships can develop into rich friendships as the child becomes an adult. The development of the friendship parallels the addition of new sustaining operative grounds of love (that are also proper grounds) as the parent and child discover new good things about each other, beyond their mere familial relation.²³⁰ Insofar as Kolodny's narrower view of love's proper grounds does not allow for the sort of over-determination I describe here, it seems to fall short. Obviously, the pluralist view that I advocate easily accounts for such over-determination.

Second, certain cases of relational tension seem well explained by a pluralist account of love's proper grounds, and difficult to explain on Kolodny's view.²³¹ Consider a child's ambivalent attitude toward an abusive or untrustworthy parent. This ambivalence seems plausibly explained by the presence of two kinds of features that pull the child's attitude in different directions. On the one hand, the child has an attitude-independent relationship with his parent that serves as a proper ground of love for the parent. On the other hand, the parent has some bad qualities—i.e., being violent, or untrustworthy—which render love for her *inappropriate*. So, if the child loves the parent, this love is undermined to some extent, or at least strained, by the parent's character qualities that would—in a situation without a parental relationship—render love for her inappropriate. It seems Kolodny's relationship view of love's proper grounds is unable to account for the ambivalence of the child's attitude in such a case.

²³⁰ Kolodny would likely object that the non-relational properties are not really functioning as proper grounds of love when a parent appreciates the qualities of his child. He would suggest, rather, that one *effect* of love is a tendency to this sort of appreciation of non-relational qualities, and that this tendency has nothing to do with rendering love appropriate. See Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 139. I obviously disagree.

²³¹ I have drawn inspiration for this argument and these cases from Thomas Aquinas. See the *Summa Theologica*, II-II Q26, especially articles 6-10.

Kolodny might reply by suggesting that the significance of the qualities I have cited—being violent or untrustworthy—is that they represent patterns of behavior that undermine the appropriate-making *relationship* between parent and child, and thereby undermine the appropriateness of the child’s love. However, this sort of story seems unavailable to Kolodny in the familial case since, according to Kolodny, the sort of relationships that properly ground familial love are supposed to be attitude-*independent*, i.e., *not* dependent on patterns of attitudes and behavior. Thus, it is not clear that Kolodny can say that the child’s proper grounds for loving the violent and untrustworthy parent have been undermined in any way. Moreover, if we shift to a case where the parent is violent and untrustworthy toward the child’s *sister*—not the child himself—then it still seems the child’s proper grounds for loving the parent might plausibly be undermined, even though the parent treats him well. Why? Because the parent’s qualities play some role in rendering the child’s love appropriate or inappropriate.

Finally, Kolodny’s view comes with what seems to me the significant cost of dismissing early-stage romantic attitudes as forms of love. As noted earlier with regard to the quality theory, the pluralist about love’s proper grounds can tell a straightforward story about new love for a romantic partner: you recognize a good quality in a person (e.g., his kindness, her wit) and a kind of appropriate love is stirred in you. Kolodny rejects this picture, however, insisting that until you have a relationship of some sort, you do not really love the person at all.²³² As a result, he would characterize early-stage romantic attitudes as mere “attraction” and not love.²³³ However, this claim seems costly to me. For example, with one fell swoop it dismisses the “love at first

²³² Strictly speaking, Kolodny thinks the attitude is not love until the lover *believes* that she has a relationship of the relevant sort. See Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 139–140, 146.

²³³ If Kolodny conceded that romantic love typically begins in response to good qualities—i.e., if he conceded that qualities are typically the producing operative grounds of such love—he could hold that the initial romantic attitude is genuine love, but just of an inappropriate sort, since the relevant appropriate-making relationship would not yet be in place. However, this would leave him claiming that we typically and systematically respond to the wrong features in cases of new romantic love. As I argued above, there does not seem to be any reason to posit *this* sort of systematic inappropriateness about early romantic love. Perhaps for this reason, Kolodny does not take this position.

sight” tradition, which has a fair history in western culture. I readily concede that early romantic attitudes are *immature* forms of love at best (though, in the right context, no less appropriate for this), and that they grow and develop in various ways—including the gaining of Kolodny-style relational operative grounds as they mature. Nevertheless, to deny that they are cases of love at all seems a significant theoretical cost.

4.8 PROPER GROUNDS OF LOVE AS RELATIONALLY-CONDUCTIVE

In the foregoing sections of this chapter I addressed objections to the quality theory of love’s proper grounds mounted by Velleman and Kolodny. I tried to show that their objections do not undermine the idea that qualities could be proper grounds of love, though I conceded that qualities could not be the *only* kind of such proper grounds. Additionally, I suggested ways in which the positive views of love’s proper grounds proffered by Velleman and Kolodny are insufficient. With these arguments, then, I rest my case for a pluralist view of love’s proper grounds. However, before concluding the chapter, in this section I will speculate briefly on what might be a kind of unifying structure for the pluralist view. Put another way, I will reflect briefly on why love can have the different kinds of proper grounds that I have argued it can have. The arguments above should be understood as entirely distinct from my speculations here: if the latter fail, that need not bear on the former.

The basis for my speculation is the idea that love for a person is an attitude that draws us into and sustains a properly love-grounding relationship with that person.²³⁴ We can begin to see this by noticing that union, as described in Chapter Two, just is a kind of properly love-grounding relationship, and that union is one of love’s targets. Thus, as I will put it metaphorically in Chapter Seven, love is a kind of “glue” that draws us into relationships and

²³⁴ For now, Kolodny’s account of such relationships will do. I will revisit his account and develop it somewhat in Chapter Six.

holds them together.²³⁵ To properly support this idea that love is a kind of glue for relationships I will need a fully developed account of properly love-grounding relationships, and I will need to substantiate my claim that union just is one kind of such relationships. Since I will not provide this account or substantiation here, I will put off fully defending the idea until Chapters Six and Seven. Here I will simply assume it is correct and speculate on that basis.

Given, then, the idea that love draws us into and sustains properly love-grounding relationships, my speculation is that proper grounds of love are features of the beloved that would support such a relationship with him. To give this speculation a useful shorthand, I will say that proper grounds of love are *relationally-conducive* features of the beloved. My unifying claim, then, is that the features that may serve as proper grounds of love (as argued above) are all relationally-conducive features of the beloved. Indeed, I take it that a feature's being relationally-conducive is necessary and sufficient for its being a possible proper ground of love.

Since, as I will argue in Chapter Six, properly love-grounding relationships are incredibly valuable for human beings, if my speculation here is correct then we can see one important sense in which love's plural proper grounds are good: they are features that are conducive to, or supportive of, valuable relationships, and so they, themselves, are also good. Of course qualities like courage, wit, and talent are also good in a sense distinct from the value of relationships, and from the value of humanity. For example, virtues like courage are typically thought to make one a good person; the value of properly love-grounding relationships is typically not thought of in these terms. Thus, if my speculation is correct, there is both a unity and a plurality to the kinds of value reflected in proper grounds of love. In contrast, those features which cannot serve as proper grounds of love—e.g., the quality of cruelty—are bad: cruelty makes for bad people and bad relationships. Thus, my pluralist view of love's proper grounds follows Aquinas's view that

²³⁵ After beginning to use this metaphor of "glue", I noticed that Robert Nozick has coincidentally used the same language to describe infatuation, which he takes to be a precursor to romantic love. See Nozick, "Love's Bond," 78.

“the good” is the “proper cause of love.”²³⁶ A feature may serve as a proper ground of love only insofar as it is good.

To see whether my speculation can bear any weight, it will be helpful to consider each kind of proper ground of love that I have included in my pluralist view. Consider first traits of character. If my speculation is correct, the reason they may serve as proper grounds of love is that they are relationally-conducive. For example, it seems clear that the trait of trustworthiness is relationally-conducive.²³⁷ In relationships we depend upon each other. In particular, we must trust that those with whom we have relationships are telling us the truth when they communicate, and that they are being faithful to the relationship with their actions. If someone is lying to me, or secretly sabotaging my interests, it will be nearly impossible to have a healthy relationship with her. Thus, if I am to have such a relationship, it is essential that she be trustworthy in these ways. The trait of kindness also seems important for healthy relationships, though in slightly different ways. While kindness might not be quite as necessary for healthy relationships as trustworthiness, without kindness a relationship will be much more difficult and unpleasant than it should be. The friend with a tendency toward biting and unjustified criticism should not long be a friend. For similar reasons, a wide range of virtuous character traits—courage, temperance, wisdom, justice, generosity, loyalty, etc.—are also relationally-conducive features and thus may serve as proper grounds of love.

²³⁶ ST I-II 27.1.

²³⁷ Aristotle made something like this point: Friends cannot “admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each.” Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross, J. L. Ackrill, and J. O. Urmson, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), VIII.3.

Healthy existing relationships are also relationally-conducive features of a person.²³⁸ For example, the fact that you have had a strong healthy friendship with someone in the past indicates quite clearly that an ongoing friendship of the same sort with her is possible in the future. Indeed, there is good reason to think the past friendship itself will make the future continuing relationship closer and better in certain respects. The knowledge you have gained of your friend's particular aims and goals over the course of the past friendship—e.g., that he wants to become a doctor, or to start a business, or to raise a family, or to lose weight, or to become more generous—will tend to help you better serve these aims appropriately in the future of the friendship. Similarly, your history of activity together will tend to make future activity richer and more enjoyable. Thus, a history of good friendship is a feature that supports an ongoing friendship, and so it is, on my account, a proper ground of love. We can make similar arguments that past healthy romantic relationships and familial relationships are relationally-conducive, and thus may also serve as proper grounds of love.

Even a person's mere humanity—the proper ground of love proposed by Velleman—seems relationally conducive in a relevant sense. As suggested above, I take it that a person's mere humanity is the proper ground for a thin kind of love that we ought to have for any fellow human being—what I have called “love for neighbors.” Such love might manifest in a willingness to help a foreigner find her way in one's city, to open a door for a delivery person, or to provide emergency aid to an injured stranger. To be sure, the sort of societal relations that such love draws us into are nowhere near as substantial as close friendships, romantic relationships, or familial relationships. Indeed, they are as thin as the corresponding love for one's fellow human

²³⁸ One might worry, here, that relationships are not really features *of a person*. However, it seems to me that they are. A relationship essentially involves the two participants. Without both people there is no relationship. This essential connection between a person and her close relationships suggests to me that it is perfectly intelligible to think of a relationship as a feature of a person. I also think that our close relationships partially constitute our identities in certain ways, which would allow for a stronger sense in which a close relationship is a feature of a person. However, this point requires more argument that I will not give here. In any case, the point is one that others have made. For example, see Nozick, “Love's Bond,” 71ff.

being. Nevertheless, it seems to me they still amount to a kind of union or relationship,²³⁹ and that a person's humanity is conducive to such a relationship. Such social relations are not obviously possible with objects that lack the property of humanity.

Other properties that sometimes function as *operative* grounds of love seem to fit my model less well. For example, as noted above, love often arises in response to physical characteristics (e.g., green eyes, red hair) and it seems hard to claim that such properties are relationally-conducive in any robust sense, or objectively more so than certain different properties (e.g., brown eyes or blond hair). Indeed, love is sometimes stirred in response to idiosyncratic qualities that others might find downright unattractive. (Consider Descartes's self-reported attraction to cross-eyed women.)²⁴⁰ And yet, as discussed above, there seems to be nothing wrong with loving on such operative grounds, and so, in this weaker sense, such properties may render love appropriate and function as proper grounds of love. Thus, we have a set of features that my speculative account seems not to capture: I hold that they are proper grounds of love, but they seem not to be relationally-conducive.

However, I think my speculation can yet be harmonized with these cases if we employ part of Aristotle's account of love and friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. According to Aristotle, there are three kinds of love, reciprocal instances of which partially constitute three corresponding kinds of friendship.²⁴¹ Each kind of love is distinguished by (what I would call) its operative ground. In one kind, the operative ground is something the lover finds pleasant or appealing about the beloved. My thought, then, is that qualities like red hair or crossed eyes are *appealing* to some lovers, and as appealing they are also relationally-conducive in some way.

²³⁹ Aristotle's idea of friendship between citizens lurks in the background here. See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII.

²⁴⁰ René Descartes, *Descartes: Philosophical Letters*, ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 224–225. I thank Calvin Normore for this example.

²⁴¹ *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.2.

The pedestrian idea here is that relationships just go better when you find the other person pleasant or appealing. Indeed, if you find a person unpleasant it is hard to see how you could have a healthy, functioning friendship or romantic relationship. Of course, I can concede, here, that other features may be *more* important to the well-functioning of a healthy relationship (e.g., virtue, or a history of relationship). Nevertheless, that you find someone pleasant does support the possibility of a healthy relationship with that person. Therefore, love in response to such qualities would fit with my picture whereby love's proper grounds are relationally-conducive features.

One might worry, here, that whether something is pleasant is either entirely or at least partially subjective, and thus that we still cannot say that such properties are genuinely relationally-conducive, since whether something is relationally-conducive is an objective matter. I grant that whether something is pleasant is at least partially subjective. However, it seems a bit quick to say that this entails there is no sense in which pleasant features, *qua* pleasant, are genuinely relationally-conducive. There does seem to be an objective fact of the matter about whether something is pleasant to someone. This is just a fact about the given person's psychology. Thus, perhaps we should say that properties like red hair or crossed eyes are genuinely relationally-conducive *to* some people, or *for* some people, since such properties may not be pleasant to, or for, all. Nevertheless, it still seems that the at least partially subjective and relativized sense of 'relationally-conducive' indicated by the use of these prepositions ("to" and "for") is a genuine sense of the notion, and thus that pleasant properties yet fit with my picture of love's proper grounds as relationally-conducive.

A deeper worry might be that some people find thoroughly bad qualities pleasing. Consider the girlfriend of a biker who finds her man's cruel, violent streak pleasing, and loves him romantically on that operative ground. Is his cruel and violent character thereby a

relationally-conducive feature and a proper ground of love? On balance, I think not. Here we should say that the overwhelming tendency of such a trait to undermine *healthy* romantic relationships completely drowns out any relationally-conducive value of the fact that she finds the trait pleasing, and thus that the trait is not a proper ground of love (merely an operative ground), and that the case of love is inappropriate due to his violent streak.²⁴² In short, cruel, violent character is not relationally-conducive, despite the sad fact that some people might find it pleasing. This kind of case reminds us that the sense of appropriateness attributable to cases of love with merely pleasant qualities as operative grounds is quite weak, and may be outweighed by features that render love inappropriate in a more substantive sense.

What are the bad features that render love inappropriate? Working from my positive model, I speculate that they are features that undermine healthy relationships. For example, that someone is violent or untrustworthy renders romantic or friendship love for her inappropriate. Why? Because such qualities undermine the possibility of healthy instances of the concomitant relationships. This is not necessarily so for a quality like vulgarity. In many cases, minor vulgarity—though perhaps unpleasant and bad in some sense—will not render love inappropriate since the vulgarity does not necessarily undermine the possibility of a healthy friendship or romantic relationship. If a case of vulgarity were such that it *did* undermine the possibility of such relationships, then I would be inclined to think it did, in fact, render the relevant forms of love inappropriate.

4.9 CONCLUSION

It has been my central aim in this chapter to defend what I have called a pluralist account of the proper grounds of love. According to this account, a wide range of features may function

²⁴² There may yet be a kind of love she could have for him—perhaps with his humanity as its operative ground—that would be appropriate. However, her romantic love, with his cruelty and violence as its operative ground, surely seems inappropriate.

as proper grounds of love, i.e., features that render love appropriate in certain cases. I began by motivating the quality theory—the simple view that qualities such as wit, talent, or virtue may function as proper grounds of love. I proceeded by addressing certain objections to the quality theory mounted by David Velleman and Niko Kolodny, and by raising problems for each of their alternative views. One result of this discussion was that while it seems qualities cannot be the *only* kind of proper ground of love, nothing Velleman or Kolodny have said suggests that qualities could not be one of several kinds of such grounds. Indeed, I argued that a view on which there is a plurality of proper grounds of love has more explanatory power than any of the other three theories alone. I speculated that what unifies these plural proper grounds of love is that each is a feature that supports or sustains a relevant relationship with the beloved.

The central upshot of this chapter, then, is that there seem to be several kinds of proper grounds of love, including personal qualities (e.g., beauty, virtue, talent, etc.), the property of mere humanity, and certain relationships. Indeed, I wish to leave open the possibility that there are still further kinds of proper grounds that I have not discussed. If I am right, where most contemporary theories of love’s proper grounds have gone wrong is in their monism about the kinds of such grounds.

This central upshot of the chapter has important implications for Augustine’s argument in Chapter One. Specifically, I think it can help us to see just what is wrong with premise (1) of Augustine’s argument—“The degree to which we love something should be proportional to the value it has.” The aim of Chapter Five will be to draw out that point and to clarify my criticism of Augustine’s argument.