

AARON MEAD

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EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Philosophy, June 2015.
Dissertation: see below.
M.A., UCLA, Philosophy, December 2009.
M.A., California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), Philosophy, September 2007.
Thesis: *Evaluating Actions in Virtue Ethical Theories*
M.Div., Fuller Theological Seminary, June 2005.
M.S., Stanford University, Civil Engineering, June 1995.
B.S., Stanford University, Civil Engineering, June 1994.

DISSERTATION

On Loving Some People More Than Others

It seems we should love some people more than others, e.g., our own child more than a new friend. But, why is this? In my dissertation I offer an answer to this question, along with accounts of love and the relation between love and value. (See abstract.)

Committee members:

Pamela Hieronymi (chair)
John Carriero
Calvin Normore
Gavin Lawrence

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of love and friendship, ethics, history of ethics.

AREAS OF FURTHER INTEREST

Metaethics, philosophy of action, political philosophy, philosophy of religion, medieval philosophy, ancient philosophy.

PUBLICATIONS

“Hegel and Externalism about Intentions,” *The Owl of Minerva* 41:1-2 (2009–10) 107–142.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

“Augustine on Loving Equally.”

“Love and Union.”

PRESENTATIONS

Refereed

“Qualities as Proper Grounds of Love,” American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division Conference, Baltimore, December 2013.

“Qualities as Proper Grounds of Love,” SoCal Philosophy Conference, San Diego State University, October 2013.

“Some Doubts that Love is a Value-Response,” International Conference Convened by the Dietrich von Hildebrand Legacy Project, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome, May 2010.

“Non-propositional Knowledge of Persons,” Inter-Mountain West Graduate Student Philosophy Conference, University of Utah, April 2006.

Other

“On Relationships and their Value,” Ethics Workshop, UCLA Philosophy Department, October 2014.

Guest lecture on Books VIII and IX of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (on friendship and self-love) for Professor Samuel Baker, Philosophy 151A History of Ethics: Ancient, UCLA Philosophy Department, June 2014.

“Love as a Twofold Tendency of the Will,” Ethics Workshop, UCLA Philosophy Department, November 2013.

“Qualities as Proper Grounds of Love,” Albritton Society, UCLA Philosophy Department, October 2013.

“On Loving Some People More Than Others,” Job Market Seminar, UCLA Philosophy Department, June 2013.

“A Pluralist View of the Proper Grounds of Love,” Ethics Workshop, UCLA Philosophy Department, May 2013.

Guest lecture on “The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility” by Galen Strawson and “Human Freedom and the Self” by Roderick Chisholm, for Professor Pamela Hieronymi, Philosophy 154B: Moral Responsibility and Free Will, UCLA Philosophy Department, April 2013.

“Comments on ‘A Posteriori Reduction of Moral Judgment,’ by Victor Kumar,” American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division Conference, Seattle, April 2012.

“Augustine on Loving Equally,” Ethics Workshop, UCLA Philosophy Department, March 2012.

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division, October 2014–June 2015.

Romani Fellowship, UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Oct. 2013–June 2014.

Mellon Pre-dissertation Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division, January 2012–March 2012.

Graduate Research Mentorship, UCLA Graduate Division, October 2009–June 2010.

Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, UCLA Graduate Division, Summer 2009, 2010.

California Pre-doctoral Scholarship, CSU system, September 2006–June 2007.

PRIZES AND DISTINCTIONS

- Graduate Student Travel Stipend, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, December 2013.
- Thomistic Seminar, “Themes in the Philosophy of Peter Geach and Thomas Aquinas,” The Witherspoon Institute, Princeton, NJ, August 2011. (Participants chosen competitively.)
- Graduate Seminar in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, “Aquinas and Contemporary Ethical Theory,” Lumen Christi Institute, University of Chicago, June 2011. (Participants chosen competitively.)
- Ryan & Jack O’Shaughnessy Prize, CSULA Department of Philosophy, June 2007.
- David Allan Hubbard Award, Fuller Theological Seminary, June 2004.

EMPLOYMENT

- Lecturer, California Institute of Technology (Caltech), Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences, March–June 2015, March–June 2016 (expected).
Right and Wrong (HUM/PL 8)
Moral Philosophy (PL 185)
- Adjunct Professor, Azusa Pacific University, Department of Theology and Philosophy, September–December, 2014, September–December, 2015 (expected).
Ethics (Philosophy 330)
Introduction to Philosophy (Philosophy 220)
- Course Instructor, UCLA Philosophy Department, summer session, June 2012–August 2012.
Introduction to Philosophy of Religion (Philosophy 2)
- Teaching Fellow, UCLA Philosophy Department, September 2011–June 2014.
(Teaching Fellows and Teaching Associates lead two weekly 1-hour discussion sections, hold office hours, grade student papers and exams, and attend lectures in support of undergraduate lecture courses.)
Ancient Ethical Theories: Plato, Aristotle, Prof. Samuel Baker (spring 2014).
Free Will and Moral Responsibility, Prof. Pamela Hieronymi (spring 2013).
History of Ethics: Kant’s Moral Theory, Prof. Barbara Herman (winter 2013).
Rationality and Action, Prof. Calvin Normore (fall 2012).
Introduction to Ethical Theory, Writing Intensive, Prof. Barbara Herman (spring 2012).
Introduction to Political Philosophy, Prof. A.J. Julius (fall 2011).
- Teaching Associate, UCLA Philosophy Department, September 2008–June 2011.
Introduction to Philosophy of Science, Prof. Sheldon Smith (spring 2011).
Introduction to Ethical Theory, Writing Intensive, Prof. Pamela Hieronymi (winter 2011).
Ancient Ethical Theories: Plato, Aristotle, Prof. Gavin Lawrence (fall 2010).
Introduction to Ethical Theory, Prof. Gavin Lawrence (spring 2009).
Introduction to Ethical Theory, Writing Intensive, Prof. Barbara Herman (winter 2009).
Introduction to Political Philosophy, Prof. A.J. Julius (fall 2008).

REFERENCES

Research References

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Teaching References

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ABSTRACT: *On Loving Some People More than Others*

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Most of us think we should love some people more than others. If we did not love our own children more than a new friend, something would be wrong. However, in *De doctrina christiana* Augustine makes the following argument, which I explain in Chapter One of my dissertation:

- (1) The degree to which we love something should be proportional to the value it has.
- (2) Every person has equal value.
- (3) Therefore, we should love all people equally.

Obviously, Augustine's conclusion conflicts with the intuition that unequal or preferential love is, in fact, called for in certain cases. Thus, it seems there is something wrong with his argument. Premise (1) seems like the obvious point of attack. However, as I suggest in Chapter One, the problem with the first premise is not immediately obvious. Indeed, it seems there is *some* connection between appropriate love and value. Thus, even if premise (1) turns out to be false, it is worthwhile trying to say just what is wrong with it, since that effort promises to illuminate the connection between appropriate love and value. The first aim of my dissertation, then, is to point out the central problem with Augustine's argument and thereby illuminate this connection. The second aim of my dissertation is to offer an account of why we should love some people more than others.

I take the main problem with Augustine's argument to be an unstated assumption underlying premise (1): that love for a person should be a response to the value *possessed by that person as such*. My argument for this claim begins in Chapter Four, where I consider different views of love's "proper grounds"—those valuable features in response to which love properly arises or is sustained. David Velleman agrees with Augustine that mere personhood is love's sole proper ground. Niko Kolodny argues that only certain relationships between lover and beloved (e.g., friendships, and romantic and familial relationships) may serve as proper grounds of love. Both Velleman and Kolodny oppose the view that qualities like wit, talent, or virtue might play this role. In Chapter Four I reject the views of Velleman and Kolodny, arguing that love's proper grounds are plural and include, in addition to mere personhood and relationships, certain valuable qualities. With the pluralist view in hand, in Chapter Five I argue that Augustine has misunderstood the connection between love and value. Love need not be a response to the value of a person as such; rather it may appropriately be a response to the value of certain qualities of the beloved, or to the value of a relationship to the beloved, neither of which necessarily constitutes his value as a person. Thus, in the end, Augustine, Velleman, and Kolodny all take too narrow a view of love's connection to value.

Having understood the main problem with Augustine's argument for equal love, we might still wonder why we should love some people more than others. Since addressing this aim requires an account of what love is, in Chapters Two and Three I give such an account. Harry Frankfurt and Eleonore Stump have argued that love consists in certain desires. Velleman holds that love is a certain emotion, while Kolodny has argued that love partially consists in certain standing intentions. In Chapter Two I claim that none of these views are adequate. I begin with Thomas Aquinas's claim that love aims at two targets: the good of the beloved and union with him. I then argue that love could not consist in occurrent desires for such things, or related emotions, since love often remains steady while desires and emotions come and go. It seems more plausible that love consists of two standing intentions: to bring about the beloved's good and to bring about union with him. However, since the lover cannot always achieve love's two targets, it seems love cannot consist of intentions either, since we only intend things that seem achievable to us. For example, if the good of your beloved includes her promotion at work and you cannot bring this about, then you cannot intend this aspect of her good. Nevertheless, love involves some motivational attitude toward such goods.

Thus, in the end, I follow Aquinas in claiming that love consists of two tendencies of the will—toward the beloved's good and toward union with him. Consider, for example, love's tendency toward the beloved's good: if some aspect of the beloved's good is lacking or threatened, and if it seems both possible and appropriate for the lover to remedy the situation, then the lover will intend to do so. If it seems either impossible or inappropriate to do so, then she will merely desire it for him. If no aspect of the beloved's good is lacking or threatened, then love's tendency toward the beloved's good simply remains in the background until relevant circumstances arise. On my view, then, the occurrent desires, emotions, and intentions often associated with love are all downstream effects of love and do not constitute the attitude itself.

Given this account of love, in Chapters Six and Seven I explain why we should love some people preferentially. I begin by arguing that properly love-grounding relationships consist in union between lover and beloved—a collection of states (e.g., knowledge of one another) and activities (e.g., attending to one another) that make the people “one” in some sense. Since love is (in part) a tendency of will toward such union, *preferential* love may be understood as a tendency of will to prefer or prioritize one properly love-grounding relationship over another. I then argue that since closer instances of such relationships are more valuable than more distant ones, we should (*ceteris paribus*) choose a closer relationship over a more distant one, if we cannot choose both. Finally, then, we should preferentially love those we are relationally closer to since such love is, in part, a tendency of will to choose those closer and more valuable relationships over more distant and less valuable ones.