

LOVE AND HISTORY

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ABSTRACT: In this essay, I argue that a proper understanding of the historicity of love requires an appreciation of the irreplaceability of the beloved. I do this through a consideration of ideas that were first put forward by Robert Kraut in “Love *De Re*” (1986). I also evaluate Amelie Rorty’s criticisms of Kraut’s thesis in “The Historicity of Psychological Attitudes: Love is Not Love Which Alters Not When It Alteration Finds” (1986). I argue that Rorty fundamentally misunderstands Kraut’s Kripkean analogy, and I go on to criticize her claim that concern over the proper object of love should be best understood as a concern over constancy. This leads me to an elaboration of the distinct senses in which love can be seen as historical. I end with a further defense of the irreplaceability of the beloved and a discussion of the relevance of recent debates over the importance of personal identity for an adequate account of the historical dimension of love.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this essay I explore the different ways in which love involves a historical dimension, and I argue that the proper way to capture the relevant historicity of love includes an appreciation of the irreplaceability of the beloved. I do this in part by offering an elaboration and a defense of some ideas that were originally put forward by Robert Kraut in “Love *De Re*” (1986). I think Kraut’s paper has been unjustly neglected in the subsequent literature on love and attachment, and I think this neglect may be due in part to the rather uncharitable treatment it received when it was discussed in a (now

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more famous) paper by Amelie Rorty entitled “The Historicity of Psychological Attitudes: Love is Not Love Which Alters Not When It Alteration Finds” (1986). While Rorty’s paper has plenty of independently valuable insights about the nature of love, I argue that she basically misses Kraut’s point and, thus, misses out on his helpful contribution to the topic. I also consider a treatment of these issues by Hugh LaFollette in which, I believe, he makes mistakes similar to Rorty’s. This will lead us to a clearer understanding of the distinct senses in which love can be seen as historical and to a better appreciation of both the strengths and weaknesses of the Kripkean analogy Kraut has offered.¹ I conclude with a further defense of the irreplaceability and historicity of the beloved, one that situates these issues in relation to philosophical debates concerning personal identity.

2. KRAUT’S ANALOGY

In his essay “Love *De Re*,” Robert Kraut considers the phenomenon of loving individual persons in an interesting and unexpected way: he draws a striking analogy between the referential behavior of linguistic terms and the attachment of a lover to the beloved. As several contemporary philosophers have noted, when we love an individual *as an individual*, we do not simply love the person’s characteristics. Probably the most influential discussion of this issue comes from Nozick.

Apparently, love is an interesting instance of another relationship that is historical, in that (like justice) it depends upon what actually occurred. An adult may come to love another because of the other’s characteristics; but it is the other person, and not the characteristics, that is loved. The love is not transferable to someone else with the same characteristics, even to one who “scores” higher for these characteristics. And the love endures through changes of the characteristics that gave rise to it. One loves the particular person one actually encountered. Why love is historical, attaching to persons in this way and not to characteristics, is an interesting and puzzling question. (1974, 167–68)

Our love seems crucially to involve a historic tie to the beloved, one that can survive a change in properties and is not necessarily proportional to any such change. The parallel here is with the way in which proper names refer to persons: the phenomenon of “rigid designation” made famous by Kripke

¹ I should note that my defense here is limited to Kraut’s discussion of an analogy between love and the reference of proper names as well as the notion of irreplaceability at play in each. I share Deborah Brown’s (1997, 53–56) skepticism regarding whether Kraut’s functionalist theory of the emotions provides an adequate framework for appreciating his insights regarding reference and replacement.

involves the idea that a proper name “rigidly” attaches to an object in such a way that its reference does not switch or transfer to even an exactly similar object. Kraut explains the analogy:

The kind of “historical tie” of which Nozick speaks is precisely the kind of tie that holds between a proper name and its semantic referent (at least, according to several popular accounts of proper names). Once a name *n* comes to denote object *o* (and this might come about by virtue of *o*’s having certain general characteristics), the name comes to be hooked up with *o* in a way that does *not* warrant the applicability (“transferability”) of *n* to some distinct though relevantly similar object *o**. This is what rigid designation is all about. So we might say: a proper name is committed to its bearer, in much the way that a lover is historically committed to the object of his love.²

The dominant theory for the reference of proper names (pre-Kripke) was what is known as a descriptivist theory. According to this theory, what secures the reference of a proper name is the speaker’s grasp of a description that uniquely picks out the object to which the name refers.³ In other words, I can successfully refer to John Waters because I recognize him under the description “the film director who lives in Baltimore and directed *Pink Flamingos*,” and this description does indeed uniquely pick him out: there is only one such person, and that person is in fact John Waters. The apparently commonsense thought is that something like this must be going on in order for names to succeed in singular reference.

While this approach seems to work for many proper names, Kripke pointed out that there are many others for which it does not. His insight was that reference has a crucial historical or causal dimension. His so-called causal theory of reference was inspired in part by his realization that we “often use a name on the basis of considerable misinformation.”⁴ While descriptivism claimed that reference presupposed some set of uniquely referring descriptive statements, we can think of many everyday cases where we have nothing close to the kind of knowledge required by such a condition. All I might know about Lewis “Scooter” Libby is that he is a dishonest politician, yet this is certainly not a unique description. Similarly, my only “knowledge” of Chubby Checker might be that he wrote “The Twist,” but this is actually false. Yet in both these cases we would still want to claim that I successfully referred to the person in

² Kraut 1986, 424. Compare with Harry Frankfurt (2006, 40): “The lover’s concern is rigidly focused in that there can be no equivalent substitute for its object, which he loves in its sheer particularity and not as an exemplar of some general type.”

³ The *locus classicus* of which can be found in Searle 1958.

⁴ Kripke 1980, 84. Kripke himself explicitly denied proposing a “theory” and instead referred to a “picture.” For more on this distinction see Gutting 2009, 40.

question.⁵ Kripke effectively demonstrated that a proper name refers to a person through the tracing of a particular historical path and is not based on a particular cluster of descriptions that may or may not apply to the person in question.

The analogy with love should be clear at this point: just as the reference of a proper name is historical (depending on a past causal history) and does not refer to the person named in virtue of a description of his characteristics, one's love for another often has a historical (backward-looking) dimension and does not attach to a collection of properties but, instead, to a singular person with a particular origin and causal history.⁶ This analogy can be pushed even further: while descriptivism fails as an account of the reference of many proper names, it is plausible to view certain *general terms* as referring by virtue of descriptive content.⁷ The term 'stapler', for example, arguably refers to any object that matches the proper description of a stapler. Some general terms are accordingly nonhistorical in this respect (Kraut 1986, 425). Similarly, when the focus of my love is a property or a collection of properties *rather than* an individual person, presumably my love will (or at least should) extend to whatever person or thing has those properties.

One way, then, to determine the *focus* of one's love is to consider whether a different person who had the same properties would evoke the same attitudes as the beloved. If so, then this is evidence toward the conclusion that what one really loves is not the person as a singular individual but some

⁵ I am ignoring subtleties here, such as the fact that descriptivist theories have been revised (by philosophers such as Searle) in order to allow an individual to rely parasitically on the linguistic community's knowledge of descriptions of the person being named. However, similar (though more complicated) counterexamples can be constructed that raise similar problems for such accounts.

⁶ Though not explicitly discussing reference or Kripke's views, and perhaps unaware of Kraut's discussion, David Cockburn (1990, 152) offers a nice mocking example of a love relationship that parallels the earlier Chubby Checker "failure" of reference: "What I think would be absurd is the suggestion that my thought about my child is of a form such that empirical discoveries could bear on it in the way suggested. For example, if I do not know my child well it is possible that another should fit any description that I can give of the object of my concern better than does my child. Perhaps, then, my distress over the sufferings of the boy who lives in the same house as me is invariably misplaced!"

⁷ Kraut speaks as though no general terms have a rigid or historical dimension (e.g., "nonhistoricity" is an earmark of general terms rather than proper names" [1986, 425]), but Kripke seeks to extend his account of rigid designation to cover natural kinds and certain other general terms, including terms for natural phenomena like 'heat', 'light', and 'sound'. It is unclear exactly what Kraut would say about this attempt: perhaps he is just reserving the expression 'general term' for whatever terms do function along descriptivist lines, and he would consider natural kinds and the like to be "names." Whatever he might say, even Kripke can agree that some terms (such as certain artifact terms) presumably refer along something like descriptivist lines.

aspects or properties of the person. Analogously, one way to determine whether a word is being used rigidly as a proper name or, instead, more like a general term (which functions along descriptivist lines) is to see if the user is committed to applying it to any object that meets a certain descriptive content, or if it is applied only to a particular historical object (or set of objects). Kraut sums up his discussion of the analogy between love and proper names as follows:

It is usually agreed that Lisa's history and origin are essential to her. If so, a name that uniquely refers to Lisa is not properly applicable to any possible object with a history and origin different from Lisa's. And, analogously, a love that is genuinely directed toward Lisa does not get directed toward any object with a history and origin different from hers. It is that that confers upon love the property of being directed toward Lisa. And it is that that makes love, at least love of individual persons, historical. (1986, 427)

In the end, the analogy between the bonds of love and a theory of reference is perhaps not so surprising after all. When we use proper names to refer, we are attempting to pick out concrete individuals, and when we love someone as a particular person, our attachment is also to a concrete individual, that is, the beloved.

3. THE IRREPLACEABILITY OF PERSONS

Kraut ends his essay by considering the relevance of this analogy to a proper analysis of love, and he concludes that the analogy helps to show that “irreplaceability or nonsubstitutivity” is the key notion to consider; he argues that counterfactuals involving replaceability help to show us the intentional focus of love and help us to determine whether a given love is genuinely historical (and rigid) or not (1986, 427). As Kraut puts it:

The notion of a historical attitude is characterized in terms of a kind of *bonding*, whether to an inanimate object or to a person. Bonding is in turn, a matter of replaceability; and this latter notion involves counterfactuals about substitutes—about whether a certain item *could* take the place of the original. . . . There is thus an intimate tie between historicity, construed in terms of counterfactuals about replaceability, and the intentional focus of emotional attitudes. (1986, 428)

He does not go on to sketch out this account in much detail, but his general analogy is helpful, and his drawing an explicit connection between this “rigid,” historical dimension of love and irreplaceability helps us to better understand the logic of the concepts involved. Consider the theoretical possibility of a swap between a loved one and a qualitatively exact duplicate: one's response to such a case helps show whether one's bond is directed at a

particular individual or not. Kraut and I both want to defend a vision of love in which resistance to such substitution can be legitimate.⁸ There are others, such as Derek Parfit, who disagree. Parfit, who in *Reasons and Persons* (1984) notoriously denied “the importance of identity” and with it the reasonableness of nonderivative self-concern, also denied that we have legitimate grounds for preferring the original loved ones over exact duplicates. Considering the fictional case of a woman named Mary Smith who creates a duplicate of herself using a replicating device, Parfit says,

I fall in love with Mary Smith. How should I react after she has first used the Replicator? I claim both that I would and that I ought to love her Replica. This is not the “ought” of morality. On the best conception of the best kind of love, I ought to love this individual. She is fully psychologically continuous with the Mary Smith I loved, and she has an exactly similar body. If I do not love Mary Smith’s Replica, this could only be for one of several bad reasons.⁹

Here we have something close to (what we might crudely call) a descriptivist conception of love rather than a conception of love as genuinely historical—on Parfit’s account the *actual* history and identity of Mary Smith are both deemed intrinsically unimportant.¹⁰ This is not to say that Parfit does not recognize our natural tendency to prefer the original; he just thinks we are ultimately irrational to place any significant weight on such a preference.¹¹

⁸ Another noteworthy discussion of the relevance of duplicate swap cases to our understanding of love is offered in Bernstein 1985. Writing in the first person, Bernstein considers what his reaction would be upon learning that his wife Nancy was going to be replaced with a qualitatively indistinguishable individual Nancy*. He claims that he would “feel as if [he] were to suffer a tremendous loss,” even though he acknowledges that should the switch occur he would be unable to perceive any differences between Nancy and Nancy* (1985, 287). His own diagnosis of this response leads him to conclude that “loving someone is, among other things, an expression of our identity, of our uniqueness in the world around us” (291). While I think he tends to overstate the degree to which our own self-conception hinges on love (and perhaps to understate the degree to which love can be a direct response to the beloved), there is much in his discussion with which I am sympathetic.

⁹ Parfit 1984, 295. Note that this passage comes in a discussion of the legitimacy of attaching to “series-persons” rather than persons, and so Parfit’s goal at that point is the more limited goal of defending such attachment. In the end, however, his position commits him to denying the importance of the identity of a loved one *in our world* (and not just in a world where series-persons are common) and, with this, the idea that resistance to replaceability is irrational. This is because Parfit argues not just that identity does not matter but that what does matter are psychological relations with *any* cause—and a duplicate possesses these psychological relations (1984, 287).

¹⁰ Parfit is not alone here, of course: versions of a love-is-for-qualities approach stretch back at least to Plato (cf. Grau 2006). On the similarities between Parfit’s and Plato’s accounts, see Warner 1979. Later we will see that Persson 2005 takes a similar approach to the topic of replaceability.

¹¹ There has been a fascinating recent debate (kicked off by Machery et al. 2004) over the possible cultural relativity of our intuitions regarding reference. (Machery et al. suggest that East Asians are more inclined to descriptivist intuitions than to Kripkean ones.) To my knowledge no

We will return to this worry about irrationality later, but next I want to consider Rorty's response to Kraut's arguments about the importance of history to love's bond.

4. RORTY'S "HISTORICAL" ACCOUNT

Rorty offers a rather unsympathetic response to Kraut's analogy. She begins her essay by citing Yeats's beautiful lady asking "Do you love me for myself alone, or for my yellow hair?" and goes on to endorse Yeats's reply: "Only God, my dear, could love you for yourself alone, and not for your yellow hair" (Rorty 1986, 399). While she acknowledges that we do *seem* to long to be loved in a way that transcends our properties, she proposes that this longing is best understood as a way of "expressing concern over [love's] constancy or endurance" rather than as a genuine worry over love's "proper object" (399).

One of Rorty's primary goals in her essay is to defend a particular conception of love: what she calls "dynamically permeable" love. Such love between two people allows for a dynamic interaction that in turn allows both to grow and to change through the love. As she puts it:

It is *permeable* in that the lover is changed by loving and changed by truthful perception of the friend. Permeability rejects being obtuse to change as an easy way of assuring constancy. It is dynamic in that every change generates new changes, both in the lover and in interactions with the friend. Having been transformed by loving, the lover perceives the friend in a new way and loves in a new way. (Rorty 1986, 402)

This kind of love ideally involves changes that help bring about the flourishing of both partners (402). Also, the changes cannot accurately be described as simply changes in interests due to the influence exerted by the other. Rather, the changes are much more subtle and interactive, culminating in a transformation of each party through the capacity of the other person (and the love relation between both persons) to open them up to new ways of seeing the world (403). There is of course a danger that the changes induced by such love could, in the end, help change the lovers in such a way that their relationship cannot continue, but this does not show that the love was weak or otherwise flawed. It is just one of the many risks attached to giving oneself to another, and to strive for a less permeable or

one has yet done empirical research investigating the possibility of a similar relativity when it comes to intuitions regarding replaceability and "rigid" attachment in love. It would, of course, be extremely interesting if these intuitions also seemed to track cultural divides, especially if it turns out that the people with (supposedly) descriptivist intuitions are also less resistant to substitution scenarios (or less concerned with personal, numerical identity generally).

more static relationship is, as we all know, more likely to extinguish the love than to preserve it (404).

Rorty seems to think that this conception of an ideal loving relationship as dynamic and permeable is somehow *strongly* at odds with Kraut's notion of love relationships being analogous to the rigid-designation of proper names. She explicitly acknowledges Kraut's (and Kripke's) use of the term 'rigid designation' in the first footnote to her paper, in which she reveals that the piece was originally presented as a response to Kraut's article.¹² Rorty then goes on to describe something *related* to Kraut's notion when she discusses "constant" love: acknowledging that love often involves a concern with continuity and constancy, she distinguishes her "interactive historical continuity" account of love from a notion of love as requiring "enduring constancy" (1986, 401).¹³ This latter notion is presumed to involve a love that "persists despite changes in the friend's traits, even changes in those traits that first awoke the love and that were its central focus" (401). That description by itself seems to fit both Nozick's description and bears some similarity with Kraut's notion of love as involving a rigid (and historical) dimension. Rorty goes on to add, however, that such love "remains at roughly the same level of devotion" and claims that the superior, dynamically permeable love "is historical precisely because it does not (oh so wonderfully) rigidly designate its object." Her dynamic permeability account is also said to be preferable to "constant" love because it "rejects being obtuse to change as an easy way of assuring constancy" (402). There is the implication here that Kraut's notion of "rigid" historical love is motivated by nothing more than a fear of love coming to an end, and there is also the suggestion that a Krautian lover is thus committed to both accepting *any* change in the beloved and to trying to keep a love relationship at some set level of devotion.¹⁴ But the idea that a "rigid"

¹² "In that paper Kraut examined an account of love as a *de re*, rather than a *de dicto* attitude; he also analyzed it on the model of naming, as a rigidly designating relation" (Rorty 1986, 411–12 n. 1).

¹³ Things become rather confusing when Rorty appropriates the label 'historical' for *her* account of love as dynamically permeable and contrasts that with what she calls a nonhistorical rigid love. (And we will see that LaFollette 1996 will also use 'historical' in Rorty's misleading manner.)

¹⁴ This interpretation of Krautian rigidity actually carries over to a treatment of these topics by LaFollette 1996. Here is a representative passage from his discussion: "The claim that Jane wants to relate to Sarah as a unique individual is ambiguous. Jane may want to be with Sarah simply because she (Sarah) is the object of her (Jane's) care, not because Sarah is funny or kind or intelligent or moral. If so, Jane's attachment to Sarah is rigid: she wants to relate to the person named 'Sarah', regardless of Sarah's traits, no matter how Sarah changes. . . . Conversely, Jane's relationship with Sarah could be historical: Jane may relate to Sarah as identified by her particular array of embodied traits. If so, Jane's relationship is based on who Sarah is—right now—as a historical creature" (LaFollette 1996, 5). It is unclear to what extent LaFollette is familiar with Kraut's piece—he lists it in his bibliography, but there are no citations

relationship is one in which one is committed to loving a person “no matter how” the person changes is not an idea we actually find in Kraut’s essay.

Perhaps Rorty thinks that, while Kraut never actually claims rigid love ought to survive *any* and *all* possible changes in the beloved, he is nonetheless committed to such an extreme view, given the analogy he draws with rigid designation. If she is right about this, then there would be good reason to reject Kraut’s approach: while most of us want to be loved in a way that can survive certain changes in our character, it is not clear that we think such love should survive *any* possible change, no matter how severe. If I went from being a decent guy to a horribly immoral and unlikeable character, not only would others understand if my partner stopped loving me (or came to love me in a very different way), they might even respond with puzzlement if she did not change her attitude toward me.¹⁵ A love that is *overly* rigid in *this* sense could very well be a bad thing, and perhaps this kind of worry motivates Rorty to say the following:

For the moment, let us suppose . . . Louis came to realize that he would continue to love Ella even if she were to lose those traits that first drew him to her . . . he would not transfer his love. This does not mean that he would see or love her *de re*, whatever that might mean. Nor does it mean that the character of his devotion would remain unchanged by whatever changes might occur in her. He’d be a lunatic to love her at 60 in just exactly the same way as he had at 20. (1986, 403–04)

This sounds sensible enough. However, not only do I happen to think that Kraut *could* agree with this idea that an appropriate love relationship might fade or change if the persons involved change, he *does* agree:

The nontransferability, or historical nature, of love is a defining condition of its being directed toward a unique individual. Thus construed, a nonhistorical love is one that is directed toward general characteristics instantiated by a person rather than a love directed toward the particular. This does not, however, entail that genuinely “person-directed” love endure through *all* changes of characteristics. Historicity may only require endurance through *certain* changes in *certain relevant* respects. . . . Historicity does not entail permanence; analogously, proper names are not eternally bound up with their referents. Every proper name can lose its use. Every love has its limits.¹⁶

to it in the text. My hunch is that he is relying primarily on Rorty’s discussion, and so I think what we have here is some evidence of a trail of damage done by Rorty’s misleading discussion of Kraut.

¹⁵ At the same time, we might also understand if my partner retained a sense of real commitment to me. That such a commitment can become entirely *mysterious* on accounts that reduce love of persons to a love of characteristics (as well as accounts of personal identity that reduce the identity of a person to a cluster of psychological states) is, to my mind, a serious objection to such accounts.

¹⁶ Kraut 1986, 425. Admittedly, it is hard to know exactly what Kraut means here by ‘analogously’: proper names can of course “lose their use” if we no longer have a need to refer

Now in fairness I think Kraut is stretching the analogy with proper names here (and perhaps elsewhere), but even if he is going a bit overboard, it is still nonetheless quite clear that he does not see his account of historical/rigid love as being committed to accepting *any* and *all* changes in a person. It is quite uncharitable of Rorty to ignore passages like this and to suggest instead that he is offering a wildly implausible view about the nature of love's bond.

Unfortunately, this misrepresentation of Kraut's view as requiring both an utter obtuseness to change and a bizarre demand for constant devotion is not the only problem with Rorty's discussion of Kraut's essay. As she continues on in her essay, she slides from discussing "constant" and "rigid" love as being *obtuse* or blind to change to a rather different worry about a constant love that involves *resistance* to change. She offers a series of remarks in which "rigid" love is spoken of quite dismissively and is linked to "nonpermeable" love. Here is one of several such remarks: "[They] might want constancy and think of nonpermeable *rigidity* instead of historicity as the best way to achieve it. (The pathological form of this attitude is an attempt to control and bind the friend)."¹⁷ As we saw earlier, Rorty is surely aware that Kraut's use of the terms 'rigid' and 'rigid designation' are derived from the technical terminology introduced by Kripke in *Naming and Necessity* (1980). However, 'rigid' as she is using the term in the passage above (and related passages) seems to be equated with nonpermeability, in the sense that both the lover and the beloved ought not to change (either through the love or otherwise), and it is clear that this is *not* what Kraut had in mind in his use of the term.¹⁸

It is rather ironic that Rorty ends up implying that Kraut's position involves a rigid attachment which is *resistant* to change in the beloved. Indeed, someone who loves me "rigidly" in *Kraut's sense* loves me as an irreplaceable individual and thus our love *can* survive significant changes,

to the object in question, but one might object that there is still a sense in which the name refers, even if it is no longer regularly used. Kraut might have in mind examples like Kripke's "Santa Claus," where the referent for the term has, over time, probably switched from a certain historical saint to a fictional entity (Kripke 1980, 93, 97). This case is also not particularly analogous to the example of love fading, however. (For another discussion of ways in which the analogy falls short, see Brown 1997, 55.)

¹⁷ Rorty 1986, 405; emphasis added. There are other similar passages at Rorty 1986, 404 and 405.

¹⁸ There are now at least three distinct senses of a "rigid love" in play, so it might be helpful to explicitly distinguish them. (1) "Rigid" love as *person-directed* love rather than quality-directed. (This is Kraut's sense.) (2) "Rigid" love as *blind* love: an attachment to another in a way that survives *any* changes in the properties of the beloved. (3) "Rigid" love as *static* love: a relationship in which the lover desires that the beloved *never* change. (This is the notion Rorty uses later in her essay when she speaks of an "impermeable" love.) Things are complicated by the fact that, as we have just seen, Rorty's essay displays an unacknowledged shift from the second sense of rigid to the third, while LaFollette (see note 14) seems to stick to the second sense.

whether those changes are brought about by the love itself or by something else. Though this might sound odd, it is the un-“rigid” lover in Kraut’s account who is more prone to crave a frozen or static love. While it is *possible* that someone who loves me “rigidly” (in Kraut’s sense) might also want me to stay as I am, one who *instead* loves me (in a non-Krautian fashion) as a collection of characteristics has a rather straightforward reason for desiring that our love remain static: dynamic interaction could bring about a change in my properties and thus risks a possible diminishment of the love. There is no reason why Kraut must deny that one of the positive aspects of love is that it allows us to grow (and thus change) from each other. Rorty’s emphasis on the advantages of dynamically permeable love is fully justified, but it is puzzling just why she thinks this conception of love is at odds with Kraut’s insights about the historical nature of love and the rigid dimension that love often takes.

The distinction Kraut is after is not between a love that cannot accept *any* change and one that is dynamically permeable, nor between a love that will accept *every* change and one that is dynamically permeable but, rather, between a love that is truly directed at a person and one that is instead directed at properties or qualities possessed by that person. When Rorty is arguing against *other* notions of rigidity (as either lack of openness to accept change, or as a blindness to change), she is not arguing against Kraut, nor do her arguments succeed in showing his analysis and comparison with proper names to be futile, despite her repeated comments to the contrary.

5. CONSTANCY AND ATTACHMENT

What are we to make of this strange slide in the use of ‘rigid’ in Rorty’s essay? Rorty’s main target seems to be an unhealthy demand for constancy in love relationships. In battling this demand and in trying to promote the virtues of her dynamic permeability account, Rorty seems to be confusing and conflating two different conceptions of what a *constant* love might involve: one is Kraut’s (or at least derived from Kraut’s) and involves the idea that a love that is true is constant in the sense of persisting in spite of (at least some) changes in the beloved’s character. The other is a conception of love that remains constant through a requirement that the beloved (and perhaps also the lover) remain the same—the attachment is constant because the properties exhibited by the beloved have remained constant. While it is obvious enough what is wrong about the latter (frozen) form of love, it is much less obvious that the former is misguided or in need of correction. To the extent that Rorty

succeeds in casting doubt on the former Krautian conception, she does so by tying it to a demand that such love remain at the same level of devotion and in the implication that such love must also survive *any and all* changes in characteristics, but as we have seen these are not aspects of Kraut's conception of "rigid" love.

Rorty's article does at times more directly address Kraut's actual concerns about the intentional focus of love, but it is unclear to what extent she rejects his affirmation of irreplaceability as an indication of love for an individual. While the title of her essay and her initial approving citation of Yeats certainly imply that she rejects an account of love as ever (coherently) being for something beyond properties, she does at other points seem to agree with the idea that "we want to be loved 'for ourselves alone' rather than for our most lovable traits" (Rorty 1986, 405). Still, as I mentioned earlier, she interprets this desire as being at bottom simply an indirect way of expressing a desire that the relationship continue.¹⁹ Though to some extent her apparent differences from Kraut can be attributed to her confusion between different senses of 'rigidity', her claim that a desire to be loved "for oneself" is best understood as simply a desire *for constancy* does seem to go directly against Kraut's claims that the intentional focus of our love should be the person. It is frustrating, then, that she does not offer more in the way of an actual argument for this claim that we are *muddled* in our desire to be loved "for ourselves alone" but seems instead to take it as a given that such a desire is obviously reducible to a desire for constancy.

While a desire to be loved for myself and a desire that the love endure are often conjoined, it is not obvious why the former should be taken as *nothing more than* a confused expression of the latter. I might well be perfectly content with a relationship that I know cannot endure yet nonetheless insist that the relationship involve an acknowledgment of me as an individual person rather than as a collection of qualities. These two concerns are logically distinct and need not always go together. Imagine, for example, that I have fallen in love even though I am terminally ill and have only a month to live. My concerns over the brevity of the relationship might well be entirely independent of any concerns I have regarding whether my lover loves *me* or just (say) my remarkable prowess at croquet and my hypnotically blue eyes.

¹⁹ "Because the continuity of protective devotion is not automatically assured by the permanent individuating effects of interaction, we want to be loved 'for ourselves alone' rather than for our most lovable traits, traits we realize we may lose" (Rorty 1986, 405). "This concern about the proper object of the attitude is a way of expressing a concern about its constancy or endurance" (399).

6. LOVE'S OBJECT

I do not know what motivates Rorty to ignore the fact that concerns about the focus of love seem to be conceptually distinct from worries about constancy. Perhaps she feels the need to explain away a concern about the object of love because she thinks such a concern is incoherent. However, Rorty does want to acknowledge that love obviously involves some sort of historical dimension. (She wants to be able to call her account the “historical” one, as we have seen.) While she is not explicit about this, presumably she thinks that the intentional focus of love is best understood as a cluster of properties that changes gradually over time, though at any given time sharing enough of a “family resemblance” with the previous cluster to be considered continuous. So long as changes are not too abrupt, she can then agree with Kraut that love often survives some changes in the properties of a person and, thus, has *something* of a historical dimension.²⁰ (Though, again, the sense in which it is “historical” is quite different from that discussed by Kraut.) This is the sort of approach that Hugh LaFollette, inspired by Rorty, ends up taking in his more extended discussion of these issues in *Personal Relationships*.

[T]he relationships of special interest to this book will be those based, in important respects, on the beloved's traits. It is, of course, inappropriate to love someone because of a single characteristic. We should not love someone simply because she is intelligent or funny or kind. But that is inappropriate because love should not be based on a small segment of the person, not because she is separable from her characteristics. I cannot (voluntarily) love someone devoid of characteristics. Thus, for voluntary relationships, we should have reasons for love, and those reasons must be based on the beloved's characteristics. (LaFollette 1996, 49)

I think there are a number of confusions in this passage. One of them involves the apparent suggestion that someone who thinks love is directed at an individual rather than at a cluster of properties must have an improper metaphysic lurking in the background, one that requires positing a mysterious bare locus or substrate that somehow exists beyond and behind the qualities of a person. If this is LaFollette's (or Rorty's) basis for rejecting the possibility that love can be directed at an individual and for concluding that love must be directed at a collection of abstract qualities, it is misguided for reasons that Kripke offered in *Naming and Necessity*.

²⁰ This position, as I have described it, is ambiguous: it is compatible with thinking that we attach to the cluster because *that is all there is to being a person* and is also compatible with the view that a person might be something beyond that but all it makes sense to attach to are the properties. Presumably Rorty holds the former position, but she might well be following Yeats in holding the latter.

What I do deny is that a particular is nothing but a “bundle of qualities,” whatever that may mean. If a quality is an abstract object, a bundle of qualities is an object of an even greater degree of abstraction, not a particular. Philosophers have come to the opposite view through a false dilemma: they have asked, are these objects *behind* the bundle of qualities, or is the object *nothing but* the bundle? Neither is the case; this table is wooden, brown, in the room, etc. It has all these properties and is not a thing without properties, behind them; but it should not therefore be identified with the set, or “bundle,” of its properties, nor with the subset of its essential properties. (1980, 52)

A particular person, like any particular object, is correctly understood as something that possesses properties without “lurking behind” those properties in a problematic manner. Elsewhere I say a bit more about this passage and its relevance for sorting out metaphysical versus normative worries about love (worries that often get unhelpfully conflated).²¹ My point here is not to deny that there are metaphysical issues and controversies concerning the nature of substances, individuals, and so forth. Rather, I am instead suggesting that Kripke’s discussion can help remind us that there is not a *special* metaphysical puzzle concerning persons as objects of love.²² We should not feel forced into a metaphysical dichotomy such that love of qualities is all it makes sense to acknowledge since the only alternative is taken to be an attachment to an obviously unlovable bare locus.

7. BASIS/GROUND VERSUS OBJECT/FOCUS

As I said, it looks like LaFollette may be falling prey to a false dichotomy of this sort in the passage I cited earlier. It may be that there is more going on, however. (Or it may be that Rorty herself had different reasons for rejecting Krautian love.) So I want to consider another reason that has been offered in favor of the view that love must be directed at qualities. Often such an assertion has been based on the observation that love certainly seems to *get going* through an attraction to certain qualities of the beloved. If qualities are what *ground* our love, aren’t qualities what we are in fact loving? We get this sort of reasoning in Ingmar Persson’s recent treatment of these issues in *The Retreat of Reason*.

For if love is to be love of a particular person, it must be caused by (awareness of) that person. There must be something that attaches the love to this person rather than anyone else, and it is hard to see what could provide this attachment if it is not

²¹ Grau 2006, 120–21. The remaining *normative* worry (i.e., how can it be *reasonable* to be so *partial* in our attachment?) is one that I attempt to address in sec. 10.

²² A related and persuasive treatment of these issues with which I am in sympathy can be found in Chappell 2003.

causality. But when a thing causes something, it is always in virtue of having certain features. Hence, when you love somebody, you love her in virtue of her having certain features. In other words, it is the instantiation of those features that you love. (2005, 330)

Persson goes on to describe his view as one in which “love of a particular is reducible to love of some properties it exemplifies,” and he concludes that the beloved is thus replaceable.²³ While I can certainly feel the force of this sort of move, I think it is mistaken, for reasons that have been repeatedly pointed out by others who have written on this topic. David Velleman, citing earlier work by Alan Soble, points out that there is confusion in this sort of reasoning between “the basis and object of love.”²⁴ Niko Kolodny, also citing Soble, speaks of confusion between the “ground” and the “focus” of love.²⁵ While my own approach differs from Soble’s, Kolodny’s, and Velleman’s in various respects, I share their judgment that we do best to avoid such confusion. The qualities of the person that draw me to them, that is, the ground or basis of my love, need not be identical to the actual object of the love. I love *the person*, not simply some of the qualities the person manifests. I think Kraut’s analogy with Kripke’s approach to reference can be helpful here: it should not surprise us that love might begin with and involve an attraction to qualities yet come to be directed at the person rather than simply the qualities, for consider that we similarly do not tend to find it surprising that the reference of (say) the word ‘water’ may have initially been determined in virtue of various surface characteristics but has come to be directed at water itself (i.e., H₂O).

8. OTHER DOUBTS

Granting all that I have argued so far, skepticism may linger. If love begins with an attraction to qualities but can transcend that to involve a bond to the beloved, why does love *ever* fade? If the analogy with proper names is

²³ Persson 2005, 330. Persson’s endorsement of replaceability flows, like Parfit’s, from considerations about the unimportance of identity and the apparent irrationality of nonderivative self-concern.

²⁴ Velleman 1999, 368. In his wide-ranging and impressive paper, David Velleman offers his own robustly Kantian interpretation of the nature of love. While I agree with many of his specific insights, I reject his general approach for reasons similar to those described in Millgram 2004 and Callcut 2005.

²⁵ Kolodny 2003, 154. My comments later may make it sound like I am adopting what Kolodny has called a “no-reasons” view on love. While I have doubts that the emphasis he places on “valuing a relationship” can do all the *justificatory* heavy-lifting he expects of it, I think much of the analysis in this paper is compatible with (and can indeed supplement) Kolodny’s account of love as valuing a relationship. Given the richness of Kolodny’s essay, however, making the case for this would take more space than I have available here.

supposed to help us, then why is not the bond of love as rigid as the bond of reference? We saw earlier that Kraut does not *deny* that love can fade, but he also does not offer an explanation for why or how this occurs. It might be felt that such an explanation is needed. After all, on a love-is-for-qualities account we appear to have a very straightforward explanation for the loss of love: the fading can be said to occur as a result of changes in the qualities manifested by the beloved. Certainly it seems that the loss of love often tracks qualitative changes. (“You’re not the man I married!” is a remark usually uttered in the context of a divorce.) Doesn’t this show us that the idea of love transcending qualities is, at best, a naïve illusion?

The situation is not as tidy as this line of thought suggests, however, for love’s bond does not seem to *consistently* and *proportionally* track alterations in qualities in the manner one would expect if *all it is* to love someone is to love their qualities. It is not uncommon for love to survive significant alterations and to even survive alterations for the worse.²⁶ Now, as Persson points out in his discussion of this issue, the love-is-for-qualities proponent can accommodate such alterations—they can simply assert that the love has transferred to *new* qualities (2005, 330). However, given just that diagnosis, the reasons (if any) for such a transference are entirely opaque, while on a love-is-for-individuals approach there is a straightforward and sensible explanation for why the love endures: such love involves a commitment to an individual (not just the qualities an individual manifests) and the individual in question has endured the change in qualities. Beyond this issue, we have already seen that a love-is-for-qualities approach is in direct conflict with widespread and quite strong intuitions regarding the irreplaceability of the beloved (as brought out in duplicate swap examples). So the denial that love is directed at individual persons brings with it its own distinct and quite significant challenges when it comes to explaining key aspects of the experience of love.

It might look at this point as if the situation is something of a draw: both approaches, it seems, face real difficulties doing justice to the phenomenology. On reflection, however, I think it is clear that an approach in which love is seen as directed at persons (and not just qualities) is preferable. Though it can be easy to forget the complexities here and to resort to a mode of thinking in which love is seen to be *either* for qualities or for a featureless locus, it is important to remember that the view being argued for is one in which love is for *persons* and persons *possess qualities*. Given that persons have qualities, it

²⁶ Thus the plausibility and appeal of the famous line from Shakespeare’s Sonnet 116 that Rorty mocks in her title: “Love is not love/ Which alters when it alteration finds.” Of course, it is also not uncommon for love to fade despite *no* significant change in qualities, an occurrence explored in Hank Williams, Jr.’s classic musical lament: “Why don’t you love me like you used to do? . . . My hair’s still curly and my eyes are still blue” (from “Why Don’t You Love Me?”).

is far from surprising that love's bond involves *some* connection to the qualities of the beloved. *One thing* that is going on in loving another person is an appreciation of that person's qualities. (In some cases that may be the *main* thing going on, and, in such cases, a loss of love may closely correspond with a change for the worse in qualities.) Usually an attraction to qualities is not *all* that is going on, however. Further complicating matters, qualities can be appreciated in a variety of ways in love relationships. They can be appreciated because they are deemed antecedently valuable, but they can also come to be valued *because* they are the qualities possessed by the beloved. Thus, we have the not unfamiliar phenomenon of someone coming to admire an aspect of a loved one that, prior to the love relationship, held little appeal (either in the beloved or more generally).²⁷

Given that love's bond involves not just an attraction to qualities, it should not be surprising that when the bond alters, such alteration does not necessarily track a change in qualities. This is because the beloved is more than just a cluster of qualities but is, rather, a person who has both qualities and a specific *history*. Properly understanding love's bond requires attention to that history.

9. LOVE AND HISTORY

Rorty and LaFollette both repeatedly insist that their accounts acknowledge the importance of history to love. LaFollette even goes so far as to claim early on in his book that "any attempt to completely identify someone with her traits masks the historical dimensions of 'who she is'" (1996, 7). Since I have accused both of *neglecting* a crucial element of the historicity of love, further clarification is in order. It is instructive to consider an example offered by LaFollette in which one is faced with a "double" of a friend. He sensibly insists that a personal relationship with one woman cannot simply be transferred to a similar "double."

Thus, although Sarah and Ruth [Sarah's "double"] have the "same" traits, Jane's and Sarah's reservoir of experiences and their established patterns of relating differentiate Sarah and Ruth. Sarah is unique: she has experiences Ruth does not have; she has a relationship with Jane that Ruth does not have. . . . Consequently, Jane would not drop Sarah as a friend simply because she met Ruth, who has similar traits. At least she would not do so if they had a genuinely personal relationship. (LaFollette 1996, 8)

²⁷ Alain de Botton offers a charming example of this phenomenon in his first novel *On Love* (1993). There he describes the process of coming to be smitten by the gap between his lover's two front teeth.

What are we to make of this? LaFollette, following Rorty, repeatedly criticizes “rigid” relationships in his discussion of love and friendship, but is not the resistance to substitution described in this passage just what Kraut was after in characterizing love as “rigid” and the beloved as “irreplaceable”? While it is tempting to think that LaFollette is in fact expressing a Krautian point here, differences between the case LaFollette describes and the kind of duplicate swap case we considered earlier turn out to be crucial. LaFollette’s replacement example involves a double that is not exactly identical: while she may have “similar traits,” her different life experiences have left her with different memories and presumably different behavioral dispositions. LaFollette and Rorty often talk of the importance of history, but they mean something *very different* than Kraut does. In fact, their conception of the role history should play in relationships is one that even Parfit acknowledges. Consider Parfit’s comments on the differences between a duplicate swap and a case closer to the kind LaFollette describes.

Ordinary love could not be so transferred. Such love is concerned with the psychology of the person loved, and with the person’s continually changing mental life. And loving someone is a process, not a fixed state. Mutual love involves a shared history. This is why, if I have loved Mary Smith for many months or years, her place cannot simply be taken by her identical twin. Things are quite different with her Replica. If I have loved Mary Smith for months or years, her Replica will have full quasi-memories of our shared history. (Parfit 1984, 295)

A twin might share many characteristics with Mary Smith, but she will not have the same history; accordingly, there will be important differences in the psychological states of the two women. Similarly, LaFollette’s “double” does not share a history; so there is a straightforward explanation as to why love should not transfer. Note, however, that the “reservoir of experiences” and “established patterns of relating” that differentiate Sarah and Ruth in LaFollette’s example would not differentiate Sarah from her Replica (call her “Sarah*”). Sarah* would have perfect copies of the memories of Sarah and, thus, would be able to relate and reminisce in exactly the same way. Since LaFollette never considers the case in which an *exact* qualitative duplicate is substituted, it is hard to know what he would say, but I suspect that he would follow Parfit in thinking that one *ought* to love a duplicate as one loved the original person. Further support for this reading comes from the fact that later in his book LaFollette seems to justify his concern with history on strictly prudential grounds.

Understanding practical reason in this way highlights the importance of one specific reason we sometimes have for loving another (a reason discussed in the first chapter), namely, that we have a history of relating with them. . . . If we have a successful

relationship it is generally imprudent to abandon it to pursue a relationship with another, even another with traits similar to our current partner. . . . Reason cannot predict that we can relate satisfactorily to any potential friend. The only way to know we can relate successfully is to successfully relate. (1996, 63)

Reason *can* predict that we will successfully relate with a *duplicate*, however, or at least it can predict as accurately in that case as it can with regard to the original person. In the end, then, LaFollette's concern with history and resistance to the swapping of a friend with a "double" does not seem to commit him to accepting the kind of irreplaceability or historicity that Kraut highlighted and that I have attempted to defend.

Distinguishing between LaFollette's "double" case and Kraut's "duplicate" (or Parfit's "Replica") case allows us to better understand the different notions of historicity at play in the views of Kraut, Parfit, and LaFollette. Kraut is quite explicit in explaining historicity in terms of resistance to replacement, a resistance that I have suggested can hold even when the replacement in question is a duplicate that shares all the quasi-"historical" properties of the original, that is, a duplicate that has qualitatively identical quasi-memories. On this approach, a love that can be transferred to a duplicate is not a historical love because it fails to recognize the importance of the *actual* history of the person loved. The duplicate has a kind of simulated history (in having the same features that the original has acquired in the course of his/her history), but this is not enough to warrant loving the duplicate *as if* it were the original person.²⁸

In contrast, Rorty's and LaFollette's justifications for a concern for history appear, like Parfit's, to be entirely future directed or forward looking: history matters because of what it allows now and in the future—the past relationship has created a network of shared activities and memories that matter because they come into play when I now (or in the future) relate to the beloved. This approach grants the past a type of instrumental value, one which derives solely from the importance of its future predictive benefits.²⁹ The Krautian approach that I have defended, however, acknowledges that in addition to obvious forward-looking aspects, many love relationships contain a genuinely

²⁸ This is not to say, implausibly, that one would not be attracted or likely to fall in love with such a duplicate. It is to say instead that a simple transference of the bond of love (one that ignores the distinction between the original and the duplicate) can rightly be regarded as problematic. (I discuss this issue at greater length in my "Love, Loss, and Identity in *Solaris*," forthcoming.)

²⁹ This approach bears an interesting similarity to those philosophical approaches to punishment that seek to revise away backward-looking retributive aspects based on worries that only forward-looking consequentialist defenses are sufficiently rational. (It is not coincidental that proponents of replaceability like Parfit and Persson also express skepticism regarding the rational foundations for desert.)

backward-looking element. This is because love often involves, not just an attraction to a cluster of qualities that might be valuable in the future, but a commitment to a concrete individual who has a particular origin and a particular past—in other words, a commitment to an individual with a particular identity.³⁰

10. THE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY

Philosophical discussions of the nature of love do not often interact with the traditional personal identity debate. This is unfortunate, since a conception of love for persons is unlikely to float free of a conception of the nature of persons. It is to Parfit's credit that he highlights this connection in his groundbreaking work on personal identity. We have already seen that his metaphysical speculations lead him to embrace a highly revisionary conception of persons and so personal relationships, for his denial that personal (numerical) identity can rationally matter results in his promoting the legitimacy of love transferring to an exact duplicate.³¹ Of course, this move comes at a significant cost: Parfit's denial that the identity of others can matter is tied to a radically revisionary understanding of self-concern (i.e., of *your own* identity). It is not just the beloved who fades away under Parfitian reductionism—you are *also* not what you might have thought.

Some are willing to bite the Parfitian bullet and accept that their attachment to both themselves and to others cannot have a legitimate basis deriving from the value we ordinarily place on personal identity. My own view is that, despite the justificatory puzzles and dilemmas Parfit's work has brought to light, we need not revise away either a basic concern for the identities of others or our own nonderivative tendencies toward self-concern. I find convincing a broadly Wittgensteinian approach that emphasizes the fundamental and "bedrock" nature of such concerns and, thus, discounts attempts at justification here as neither necessary nor desirable. In an underappreciated article entitled "The Value of Individuals," Kenneth Henley summarizes this approach: "I will argue that the valuing of individuals as individuals is non-rational, but that it is not irrational. The view that valuing individuals as individuals is irrational rests on the inappropriate application of criteria of rationality to one of those natural, unreasoned human tendencies which

³⁰ My thoughts on the importance of the past owe much to David Cockburn (1990, esp. 153–58).

³¹ Note that the most powerful argument offered by Parfit for "the unimportance of identity"—his fission example—has less clear relevance to our concerns about history than, say, his teletransporter/replica example, for the fission case is one in which both resulting persons share the very same (numerically identical) prior history and origin.

underlie our various practices of reason-giving.”³² Henley’s discussion does not mention Parfit, and his focus in that article is our attachment to others as individuals. But he points out that similar reasoning applies to worries about the rationality of our self-concern.

Is it irrational to value oneself as an individual—to regard oneself as irreplaceable? There could be no reason for this valuing of an individual as an individual—though there are statements we are tempted to use as if they stated reasons. Consider the question “Why does it matter to you that you continue to exist and that you flourish, rather than just that someone (like you) exist[s] and flourish[es]?” Perhaps someone might answer, “Because I am I.” But this says nothing at all. Concern for self is unreasoned, though there can, of course, be reasoning based on this unreasoned concern. But surely it does not follow that concern for self is irrational.³³

Mark Johnston comes to a similar sort of defense from the other direction. In an essay in which his primary focus is defending nonderivative self-concern against Parfit’s attacks, he helpfully and explicitly extends his scope beyond self-concern to self-referential concerns and to “loyalism” more generally and, thus, to loyalty toward a particular loved one.

Indeed, in order to get into the frame of mind in which limited self-concern and loyalism need justifying at all, one has to take the view that to justify a concern is to show how having it would make the world go better. But we may well ask, what justifies the concern that the world go better? Nothing does, or at least nothing else does—the concern that the world go better, like self-referential concern, is a basic pattern of concern. This is not to say that these basic patterns of concern cannot be defended against the claim that they are unreasonable. In barest outline the defense of self-referential concern would be that we find it utterly natural and that, at least so far, critical and informed reflection has not made it out to be unreasonable.³⁴

³² Henley 1977, 349. Though Henley does not cite Strawson (or Wittgenstein), this is the sort of philosophical move that is perhaps most well known through the writings of Peter Strawson on free will, particularly his landmark essay “Freedom and Resentment” (1968). Strawson elsewhere (1985) credits the later writings of Wittgenstein as his inspiration for this approach, and in particular Wittgenstein’s remarks in *On Certainty* (1969).

³³ Henley 1977, 349. Similar parallels (between self-concern and attaching to the beloved as irreplaceable) are also drawn by Frankfurt (1999, 169) and Bernstein (1985, 219). Neither of these authors (nor Henley) goes on to connect these considerations to relevant discussions of self-concern in the literature on personal identity.

³⁴ Johnston 1992, 599. Johnston goes on to discuss a duplicate swap case involving a loved one (607–08). He also helpfully points out that the appeals to “naturalness” here are not problematic evolutionary appeals but, rather, involve a broadly coherentist picture of justification, one for which “concerns that are natural and fundamental have a certain kind of defeasible presumption in favor of their reasonableness; they can not [*sic*] all be thrown into doubt at once” (599). See also Wiggins (1987, 307): “These are things we need reasons to opt out of rather than things we have to look for deep reasons to opt into.”

Extending these insights from Johnston and Henley, I think it is reasonable to dig in one's heels and insist that the historicity and irreplaceability of the beloved can be defended as, in an important sense, ungrounded and natural. Such attitudes are best construed as neither rational nor irrational, but as a fundamental, nonrational (or arational) feature of our lives that need not be revised away out of fear of irrationality.³⁵ The felt need to provide a justification here occurs only when one has forgotten just how basic this kind of concern is and how any justification provided will appeal to concerns that are equally basic.³⁶

To describe our commitment to valuing the beloved as a historical individual as being in some sense "beyond justification" is not to claim that this commitment is wholly inexplicable or inscrutable. It is no accident that we attach to individuals as we do, and certain features of those individuals help explain much of the force of our attachments. In general, the fact that persons are subjects of experience seems relevant to our tendency to value them as historical and irreplaceable.³⁷ Also relevant is the additional capacity for responsible agency that most persons possess.³⁸ (Note that this is the same feature that causes *justice* to also be fundamentally backward-looking—recall Nozick's linkage of justice to love in the passage cited earlier.) Finally, the fact that love often involves reciprocity and a *shared* history is surely relevant to a full understanding of love being "rigidly" individual-directed.³⁹ My point here

³⁵ For a similar but slightly stronger argument that such attitudes are rational, see Unger (1990, 254): "Provided that we have stable attitudes to this effect, and no comparably strong attitudes in conflict, we might be entirely *rational* in maintaining these limits. As with reasons for anything, our own reasons in these present matters must come to an end somewhere or else, of course, be within some circle of justification, however large or small" (emphasis added).

³⁶ See also Williams (1985, 114): "A practice may be so directly related to our experience that the reason it provides will simply count as stronger than any reason that might be advanced for it."

³⁷ The relevance to this topic of our capacity for consciousness and subjectivity was pointed out by Henley (1977) but has been given a more thorough and sophisticated recent treatment by Jollimore (forthcoming). In Grau 2002 I argue (*pace* Henley) that our tendency toward valuing some nonsubjects (such as some works of nature and artifacts) as historical and irreplaceable complicates efforts to *completely* explain historicity in virtue of subjectivity. That the beloved's subjectivity is relevant for understanding the depth and nature of our attachment in love relationships is not something I would deny.

³⁸ The relevance of responsible agency for our thoughts on irreplaceability and love is helpfully explored in Gowans 1996. Gowans suggests that facts about agency are themselves sufficient to provide a justification of our attitudes regarding irreplaceability. This aspect of his (otherwise illuminating) discussion strikes me as problematic, both for its inability to explain the irreplaceability of some objects (see n. 39) and for the difficulty such an approach faces in making sense of bonds of love that cannot plausibly hinge on the agency of the beloved, such as a mother's love for her newborn child.

³⁹ Brown emphasizes the role of reciprocity in her discussion. However, she reasonably concludes that a consideration of reciprocity by itself cannot amount to a complete account of individual-directed love. See, in particular, her consideration of a beloved who is in a permanent coma (1997, 62–63).

is not to deny that such features play a role in making sense of our attitudes regarding identity, history, and love; it is rather to explain how we are entitled to our attitudes even though a complete justification of them may not be available through reference to any of these features. In other words, there are indeed “reasons for love,” in the sense that there are reasons that help explain the general practice of “rigid” attachment in love (e.g., both the beloved’s capacities as a subject of experiences and as a responsible agent help make sense of such attachment), but these reasons have limits—they may show the depth of the practice, and how it coheres with our other practices and values, but they do not provide the sort of ultimate justification craved by some. My larger point, however, is to challenge the legitimacy of this craving. Attitudes as fundamental as these do not *require* such a ground. In fact, as Johnston points out, they *provide* the ground for many of our justifications: “On the face of it such limited self-referential concern is among the easiest of things to justify. Much is justified only in terms of such concern.”⁴⁰ Justifications must indeed come to an end, but where they end is also where, in a different sense, they begin: our tendency to attach to others as irreplaceable, historical individuals is best construed as a *source* of reasons rather than as *standing in need of* reasons for its defense.

What about reasons justifying a particular attachment to a particular individual (as opposed to reasons that justify the general practice)? If we are asked to justify an attachment, we can usually offer explanations that reference attractive qualities, shared experiences, acts of responsible agency, and so on—reasons that explain, in part, our commitment to that person. However, such explanations are bound to be incomplete, for in the case of loving a particular individual, the very nature of the bond is such that it ultimately defies the kind of abstraction required for reason-giving.⁴¹ To abstract out features that explain why we love an individual is to undermine the very uniqueness of that individual, the love for whom we are trying to defend. As Henley (1977, 345) nicely puts it: “To value an individual as an individual, the valuer must rule out the possibility of giving reasons for the valuing which are sufficient to pick out what is valued from all other things. Since reasons must always have at least possible application outside of the particular case, there can be no reason for valuing an individual as an individual.” And Montaigne, as usual, was onto something when he famously exclaimed: “If you press me to say why I loved him, I can say no more than it was because he was he, and I was I”

⁴⁰ Johnston 1992, 599. Cf. Lewis (1960, 71): “Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art. . . . It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things that give value to survival.”

⁴¹ This is not to say that there is not a limited sense in which such love is *universalizable*. As Lamb (1997, 39–40) has pointed out, this sort of attachment can be universalizable *across* possible worlds even though it is not universalizable *within* an actual world.

(*Par ce que c'estoit luy; par ce que c'estoit moy*) (1992, 188). At the end of the day, that may be all there is to say on the matter, but if the preceding reflections are correct, that is all that *need* be said.

This brief discussion of the legitimacy of valuing loved ones as individuals and of the importance of identity is not intended to amount to a comprehensive defense against skeptics like Parfit and Persson, but I hope that it has at least made clear one plausible direction of response—a direction that offers powerful resources for understanding and accepting our deep-seated inclination toward a direct regard for the identities of those we love.⁴²

11. CONCLUSION

I have not tried to provide a complete theory of love in this essay. I have doubts whether such a theory is even possible, though I do not begrudge the efforts of those more optimistic than myself on this front. My goal here has been more limited: I have defended and extended some of Robert Kraut's neglected insights into the historicity of love, and I have suggested ways we can make further progress through explicitly connecting concerns about love's historicity with questions of personal identity and rationality. I began by arguing that a proper appreciation of the way in which history matters in love ought to involve the recognition that we love particular historical individuals, not just clusters of qualities that those individuals happen to manifest. Our attachments to such individuals contain an important backward-looking component, a component that makes those individuals irreplaceable to us. This aspect of the historicity of love is ignored or suppressed by approaches like Rorty's and LaFollette's, approaches that attempt to simplify the complexities of love by presenting strictly forward-looking accounts (that they nonetheless dub "historical"). The motives for such simplification remain unclear, but presumably the temptation to revise away the backward-looking elements in love comes from worries about the rationality of those elements.

⁴² This approach to defending the *importance* of identity is compatible with a range of views regarding the correct *criteria* for personal identity. While I cannot argue for this conclusion here, I take some theories of personal identity to be significantly more successful than others at cohering with our intuitions regarding historicity and irreplaceability. In particular, I think the best fit with the vision of love defended here is offered by a cluster of approaches that (roughly) take the continuance of a functioning brain as necessary for identity. (In Parfitian terminology, these views approximate what he calls a "narrow psychological criterion," which insists on normal causation [1984, 207]). Sophisticated versions of the approach can be found in Johnston 1987, Unger 1990, and McMahan 2003. It is worth noting, given the role Kripke's work has played in my discussion, that one of the earlier defenses of this sort of approach is Nagel's treatment in *The View from Nowhere*, where Nagel explicitly (and quite helpfully) connects a "brain as essential" view with Kripkean insights concerning natural kinds, rigid designation, and essentialism. See in particular Nagel 1986, 39–43.

I have argued that such worries, which are significantly connected to worries about the importance of identity and the legitimacy of self-concern, are ultimately misguided. Our tendency to attach to others as irreplaceable, historical individuals is appropriate and defensible, and once we appreciate this, we are better placed to understand at least one important aspect of the very complicated and perplexing phenomenon we call love.⁴³

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