

QUALITIES AS PROPER GROUNDS OF LOVE

INTRODUCTION

Talk of the “reasons” for love has been a recurrent theme in the contemporary philosophical discussion of love for people.¹ These reasons have often been understood as features that render such personal love appropriate or fitting in certain cases.² Niko Kolodny has offered a persuasive account according to which *relationships* are such reasons for love.³ For example, on Kolodny’s view, a person’s spousal relationship is what renders her love for her spouse appropriate.

One reason Kolodny holds this view is that he thinks it fares better against certain objections that he takes to devastate the competing view that certain *qualities* of the beloved may render love appropriate. According to this “quality theory”, it might be a person’s physical beauty, winning personality, virtuous character, or prodigious talent that renders love for him appropriate. One objection that Kolodny thinks debilitates the quality theory is what has been called the “substitution problem.”⁴ The problem may be put roughly as follows: if my reasons for loving my wife are any of her qualities (e.g., beauty, character, talent, etc.), then it seems I will have just as much reason to love

¹ For example, see Bennett Helm, “Love,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2009, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries/love/>>; Niko Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” *The Philosophical Review* 112, no. 2 (April 2003): 135–189.

² Importantly, this topic is different from the one Harry Frankfurt has in mind in *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). 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.

³ Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship.”

⁴ For example, Alan Soble calls it this. See Alan Soble, *The Structure of Love* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 45–47. In fact, Kolodny thinks the quality theory is “beset by problems” and gives an impressive list of them. See “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 139ff. I will not try to answer all of his objections in this paper.

anyone else with the identical properties. Thus, to the extent that my love is responsive to these reasons, my love should be unaffected by substituting my wife for her type-identical doppelganger. But, insofar as it seems my love *would* be affected by such a substitution, the quality theory must be wrong.

My central aim in this paper is to defend the quality theory against the substitution problem. After some preliminary remarks, I will articulate the quality theory and the substitution problem more clearly, and subsequently show that the substitution problem does not hold for the case in which it seems most applicable: romantic love.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

First, I wish to narrow somewhat the cases of love I will focus on in this paper. Specifically, I will focus on cases of love for *people*. It is, of course, perfectly sensible to talk, in English, of love for animals (e.g., pets), for activities (e.g., hiking), and for inanimate objects (e.g., chocolate). By not focusing on these non-personal cases, I do not mean to suggest that love for such objects is entirely different from love for people—indeed, I think there are both similarities and differences. Rather, I just mean to make the discussion more manageable. Thus, more positively, the cases of love for people that I have in mind typically occur in friendships, romantic relationships, and familial relationships.

Second, although the subject matter of this paper is sometimes characterized as the “reasons for love,” I will set aside talk of reasons since I think it can be confusing. In particular, talk of reasons for love prompts some to assume a view on which love arises via a process of reasoning, which view I reject. Furthermore, the term “reason for love”

suggests to some that if one apprehended sufficient reasons for loving a person, then one would be irrational if one did not subsequently love the person, as one might be if one apprehended sufficient reasons for believing a claim and then failed to believe it. In fact, I think reasons for love may be different from reasons for belief in that respect: apprehending sufficient reasons for love does not necessarily put one under a rational requirement to love.⁵ Thus, to avoid confusions like these, instead of “reasons for love” I will talk of “operative grounds” of love and “proper grounds” of love. I will clarify what I mean by these terms below.

Consider first the notion of an “operative ground” of love. By an operative ground of love, I mean that in response to which love arises or is sustained. Put another way, the operative ground of love is what explains the production or sustenance of the attitude of love.⁶ 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 Romeo sees Juliette across a crowded room and is taken with her beauty. As a response to her captivating beauty, Romeo’s love is awakened: “Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!/ For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.”⁷ Here, Juliette’s beauty would be a *producing operative ground* of Romeo’s love, i.e., that in response to which love arises in Romeo, or that which explains the production of Romeo’s love. Now

⁵ My tentative view, here, is controversial, though I cannot defend it in this context. 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. There Lamb takes the view contrary to mine.

⁶ The rough analog for “operative ground” in reasons-talk might be “explanatory reason”.

⁷ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, I.v.50-51.

suppose Romeo and Juliette have a long and satisfying relationship,⁸ and that the importance of Juliette's beauty fades over time for Romeo. Instead, Juliette's kindness becomes that which sustains Romeo's love for her. If Juliette's kindness suddenly vanished, Romeo's love would vanish along with it.⁹ Not so Juliette's beauty. Here, Juliette's kindness would be a *sustaining operative ground* of Romeo's love, i.e., that in response to which love is sustained in Romeo, or that which explains the continuation of Romeo's love. As the example illustrates, the producing and sustaining operative grounds of love may be different.

Speaking more precisely, operative grounds of love are contents of cognitive attitudes about the beloved. So, where I claimed above that the producing operative ground of Romeo's love is Juliette's beauty, strictly speaking the operative ground is the content of some cognitive attitude resulting from the apprehension of Juliette as beautiful. One important example of such cognitive attitudes here, of course, would be a *belief* that Juliette is beautiful. However, I wish to leave space in my account for the content of less elevated cognitive attitudes to be operative grounds of love too.¹⁰ 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 cognitive 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 central theme in this paper, I will generally speak of the beloved's properties themselves as operative

⁸ We must, of course, suspend our disbelief.

⁹ Admittedly, the example here is crude and artificial: if their relationship was long and satisfying, it is hard to imagine that Romeo's love would vanish with the disappearance of Juliette's kindness. Nevertheless, this toy example helps us see the relevant distinctions.

¹⁰ I am inspired here by Thomas Aquinas's distinction between sensitive and rational love, and the different cognitive attitudes that underlie these different kinds of love. See *Summa Theologica* I-II 26.1.

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., beauty, kindness) is typically the basis for the relevant cognitive 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 cognitive attitudes about the beloved would be opaque to the lover to some extent.

Now, a "proper ground" of love is that which makes love appropriate or fitting in cases where it is.¹¹ So, for example, if Kolodny were correct, Romeo's relationship to Juliette would be the proper ground of his love for her, i.e., that which renders it appropriate or fitting (on the assumption that it is). The appropriateness or fittingness that proper grounds of love may bring about is a non-moral kind of goodness or correctness similar to the appropriateness of being moved by a beautiful piece of art. In both cases, the fit between the object (i.e., the piece of art or the beloved) and the response to it (i.e., being moved by it, or loving it) is non-morally good, correct, or appropriate in the sense I have in mind.

Importantly, if a proper ground of love is to do its appropriate-making work, it must also be an operative ground of love. Suppose Kolodny is correct that relationships are the sole proper grounds of love. Now, returning to our example, suppose that Romeo

¹¹ The rough analog of "proper ground" in reasons-talk might be "normative reason". 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.

loves Juliette, and that they have a relationship of the sort Kolodny has in mind. If the operative ground of Romeo's love is not their relationship, but rather Juliette's beauty or kindness, then Romeo's love for Juliette will not be fully appropriate. Of course, his love will still be appropriate in some attenuated sense, since a proper ground of love is cognitively "available" to him, i.e., their relationship is actually in place and he knows this. However, since the operative grounds of his love (i.e., qualities) are features that do not (we are temporarily supposing) properly ground love, then his love is not entirely appropriate. As an analogy, the case would be like one in which Romeo held a justifiable belief but held it for reasons that did not actually justify the belief. Here, his belief would be appropriate in a certain sense—since justifiable—but it would not be *entirely* appropriate since he would hold it for the wrong reasons. 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.

As a final preliminary point, I will *not* offer a developed account of love in this paper.¹² I take this strategy since I hope that my arguments will not depend on any such account. Nevertheless, my account will assume a certain broad *kind* of view about love, since this seems necessary if the notion "ground of love" (whether "operative" or "proper") is to make any sense at all. Specifically, as suggested by my explanation above, I will understand love as an attitude (or set of attitudes) that arises and is sustained in response to value encountered in the world—or, more strictly, in response to the contents

¹² I do offer a developed account of love elsewhere.

of cognitive attitudes that attribute value in the world.¹³ On this picture, then, the debate about proper grounds of love might be understood as a debate about what kind of value, exactly, personal love is properly a response to. This sort of view of love contrasts sharply with “bestowal” views of love on which love is a bestowal of value on the beloved, rather than a response to (or “appraisal of”) encountered value.¹⁴ Although I cannot argue the point here, I doubt that talk of the proper grounds of love, or the appropriateness of love, makes much sense on such bestowal views. As such, I set them aside.¹⁵

I will turn, now, to the central issue of the paper: the quality theory and the substitution problem.

THE QUALITY THEORY

The quality theory holds that certain good non-relational qualities of the beloved are the sole proper grounds of love for him, i.e., the only things that might render love for him appropriate.¹⁶ So, for instance, a person’s beauty, wit, virtue, or talent might serve as proper grounds of love for him according to the quality theory.¹⁷ Importantly, the view

¹³ My view, here, is inspired by that of Thomas Aquinas, who claims, “the proper object of love is the good,” and “that good is the proper cause of love.” See *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Ave Maria Press, 1981), I–II 27.1.

¹⁴ Irving Singer coined the terminology of “bestowal” and “appraisal” views of love. He is also perhaps the foremost proponent of the bestowal view. See Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love, Vol. 1: Plato to Luther* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3–22.

¹⁵ This is not to say that I think there is no interesting philosophical question about whether bestowal views are correct. It is just a question for another paper.

¹⁶ It might turn out to be difficult to distinguish relational from non-relational qualities as Kolodny does, and thus difficult to distinguish the quality theory from Kolodny’s relationship theory. However, I set this issue aside and grant Kolodny’s distinction for the sake of argument.

¹⁷ 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

here is not that qualities are the *objects* of love. Rather, *people* are the objects of love.

The qualities are merely proper grounds of such love.

As the Romeo and Juliette example suggests, the quality theory seems fairly intuitive, at least to many westerners. It fits with the “love-at-first-sight” tradition,¹⁸ and it seems particularly applicable to the love characteristic of friendships and romantic relationships. The (producing or sustaining) operative grounds of our love in these cases often do seem to be the kind of qualities I have mentioned.¹⁹ This is, of course, an observation Aristotle made long ago.²⁰ Now, if it is correct that qualities typically function as *operative grounds* of love in cases of romantic relationships and friendship, then there is some pressure to think that they also function as *proper grounds* of love in such cases.²¹ If not, it seems we are left affirming that love in friendships and romantic relationships is *typically* not appropriate (since the operative grounds would not be proper grounds), which might seem surprising.

Nevertheless, just because it might seem surprising does not mean it is false. Indeed, it might well be that love in friendships and romantic relationships *is* systematically inappropriate in just this way. The charge of inappropriateness seems particularly applicable to the early stages of romantic love. Our view of the beloved is often far from clear-eyed in such instances—hence the proverb, “love is blind”—and so

grounds of love. I am interested in this more abstract view since it is usually the one that is attacked by opponents.

¹⁸ 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 Soble, *The Structure of Love*, 31.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII and IX.

²¹ 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.” “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” 162.

perhaps a gap between operative grounds of love and potential proper grounds of love *is* typical in those cases after all.

While there is surely merit to the thought that 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 operative grounds. As David Velleman has observed (with reference to Freud), the problem with early romantic love is that it is characterized by overvaluation and transference.²² In other words, the lover tends to view the beloved as possessing a host of excellences that he does not, in fact, possess, and to love the beloved in response to these falsely attributed qualities.²³ 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 such love is a response 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 cognitive attitudes about the qualities that the beloved possesses. By transference, the lover has come to a set of false cognitive attitudes 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

²² David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* no. 109 (January 1999): 350.

²³ 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.

grounds of romantic love. In other words, 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 romantic and friendship cases (i.e., qualities) may also serve as proper grounds of love in such cases.

Having motivated the quality theory of love's proper grounds, I will turn now to the objection to it that I wish to consider: the substitution problem.

THE SUBSTITUTION PROBLEM

Kolodny raises the substitution problem for the quality theory.²⁴ He states the problem briefly as follows:

If Jane's qualities are my reasons for loving her, then they are equally reasons for my loving anyone else with the same qualities. Insofar as my love for Jane is responsive to its reasons, therefore, it ought to accept anyone with the same qualities as a substitute. But an attitude that would accept just as well any *Doppelgänger* or swamp-Jane that happened along would scarcely count as love.²⁵

Kolodny's notion of a "reason" for love is the same as my notion of a proper ground of love, i.e., that which makes love appropriate in cases where it is. In context, it seems clear that the objection is *not* supposed to be that, on the quality theory, the lover *should* or actually *would* substitute the type-identical doppelganger for Jane, given the option. If this were the point, we might well wonder why simple *addition*, rather than substitution, would not be the thing to do according to the quality theory. After all, *both* Jane and the

²⁴ Bennett Helm calls this the "fungibility" problem since it suggests that, according to the quality theory, people with identical qualities are fungible with respect to one's love for them. See Helm, "Love."

²⁵ Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," 141.

doppelganger would exhibit the relevant qualities that render love appropriate. Given that there are easy replies to the claim that one should or would substitute the doppelganger for Jane given the option—replies which, in context, Kolodny clearly thinks do not address his objection—it seems this is not the most charitable reading of his point.²⁶

Rather, I take the objection to be that if the substitution were to occur, then according to the quality theory it would not make a difference to the attitude of love that was once directed at Jane but would now be directed at her doppelganger. The love that once took Jane as its object would now take the doppelganger as its object and would continue to be sustained by the doppelganger's qualities just as it was by Jane's. This seems to be Kolodny's point when he says that insofar as his love is "responsive to its reasons"—i.e., insofar as the sustaining operative grounds of love are identical with the proper grounds of love—it would "accept" a type-identical substitute. Moreover, given that Kolodny is concerned with the "responsiveness" of love to its proper grounds, he seems focused on *what would actually happen* to the attitude of love upon substitution, and not on whether love would be appropriate upon substitution. Kolodny's worry, then, is that an attitude that would be unfazed by substitution of a known particular object (like Jane) for an unknown type-identical object (like the doppelganger) could not be love. If substitution were to occur, we would expect that the lover would *not* simply give up his love for Jane and love the doppelganger instead. Insofar as the quality theory seems not to allow for this result, Kolodny thinks it is the wrong account of love's proper grounds.

²⁶ One of the easy replies is that if the situation is one of love for a friend, when the doppelganger comes along it seems there is no reason the lover would or should substitute. Instead, he could just add the doppelganger to his group of friends. Furthermore, if the situation is one of romantic love, the exclusive nature of such love or the fact that the lover only has the emotional and physical resources for one romantic beloved at a time, could readily block the view that the lover would or should substitute. Kolodny anticipates this reply for the case of romantic love and brushes it off, implying that it misses the point.

REPLY TO THE SUBSTITUTION PROBLEM

Despite the seeming worry raised by the substitution problem, it is not a genuine problem for the quality theory. Consider a case of romantic love. Suppose I am inclined toward my romantic partner because she is courageous, and that her courage serves as both the sustaining operative ground and proper ground of my love for her. Now suppose her type-identical doppelganger comes along. It seems the quality theorist would have to say that my love would just as well be sustained by the doppelganger's courage as by my partner's, and thus that if the doppelganger were substituted for my partner, I would love the doppelganger and not my partner. However, if we suppose that I am very early in a romance—e.g., in the “dating” phase—then the “worry” raised by the substitution problem might actually be the right result: why not think my love *should* be indifferent to substitution of my current romantic partner for her doppelganger? Indeed, it seems that people in such an early phase of romantic love sometimes voluntarily pursue something like this sort of substitution behavior, and it is not clear there is anything wrong with it. Thus, at least for certain cases of early romantic love, Kolodny's objection does not seem troubling.

Now, if we assume that I have been in a relationship with my partner for a while, the situation is different. In that case, it seems the continuation of my love should *not* be indifferent to the substitution of my partner for her doppelganger. However, this fact need not indicate that courage fails to be the sustaining operative ground and proper ground of love for my partner. Rather, it could simply be that as time passes, we come to have a kind of *commitment* to love one another, which blocks the result that I would cease to love her and love her doppelganger instead. By ‘commitment’, I mean something like a

promise to do something, by which one incurs a requirement (perhaps a moral one) to do that thing. While the typical case of commitment is explicit—i.e., one says that one will do something, and thereby incurs a requirement to do it—I take it that commitments can also be implicit and just as well generate requirements to perform. In this case of mature romantic love, I imagine that I would have an exclusive commitment to my partner, i.e., a commitment to love my partner *and* a commitment *not* to love anyone else romantically.

But how, exactly, would such a commitment block my love from accepting the doppelganger in place of my partner, given that both are equally courageous? In light of my commitment, it seems clear enough that if, upon substitution, I did simply cease loving my partner and love the doppelganger in her place, then my attitude would be inappropriate in two senses. First, my lack of love for my partner would be inappropriate, given my commitment to love her. Second, my love for the doppelganger would be inappropriate, given my commitment *not* to love anyone romantically, other than my partner. Moreover, this inappropriateness of attitude would obtain regardless of the fact that, under other circumstances (e.g., if my partner and I were merely dating), ceasing to love my partner and loving her doppelganger instead *would* be appropriate, given that my partner and the doppelganger are identically courageous. It is just that, in this case, a different sort of consideration—namely, my commitment to love only my partner—renders love for the doppelganger instead of my partner inappropriate. Here, I imagine the commitment to exclusive love (and its associated requirements) as an analog of a moral side-constraint on action. In the case of action, we might imagine two equally attractive acts, one of which is morally off limits. The equal appeal of each act makes each equally choice-worthy, and so equally appropriate in one sense. However, the moral

side-constraint—a consideration of a wholly different kind than that which makes the acts equally appealing—renders one act inappropriate in a different (moral) sense. Similarly, while love for my romantic partner and her doppelganger might be equally appropriate in one sense (since both are courageous), they are not equally appropriate in another sense (since I have a commitment to love my partner exclusively). Thus, insofar as my love for my partner is “responsive” (as Kolodny puts it) to my commitment to her, it will not simply accept a doppelganger as her substitute.

Have I slyly introduced, here, a new kind of proper ground of love (i.e., commitments) that does not comport with the quality theory? After all, the quality theory maintains that non-relational qualities *alone* are the proper grounds of love, and it looks like having a commitment is a relational property.²⁷ One might think I have made this move insofar as commitments, as I have characterized them, are things that bear on the appropriateness of love and that love may be responsive to.

The answer, here, is “no”: I have not introduced a new kind of proper ground of love at odds with the quality theory. This is so for several reasons. First, the main job of the commitment is to render certain attitudes *inappropriate*, not appropriate. In the case we are considering, it renders love for the doppelganger and lack of love for my partner *inappropriate*.

Second, while there *is* a sense in which my exclusive love for my partner would be made appropriate by my commitment to her, this sense of appropriateness seems to be different from the non-moral goodness or fittingness that proper grounds of love bring about. Specifically, the sense of appropriateness rendered by my commitment seems

²⁷ Kolodny raises this sort of objection when he engages a version of my reply to the substitution problem in the footnotes of his paper. See Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” Note 6.

more akin to moral appropriateness than to the non-moral appropriateness I have in mind. To see the difference, contrast the case of the appropriateness of fulfilling a promise with that of the appropriateness of being moved by a beautiful work of art. Although it is hard to put a finger on exactly what distinguishes them, they seem different just as moral rightness seems different from non-moral goodness.

Third and finally, it seems clear that an exclusive commitment to love someone could not function as an operative ground of love as properties like beauty or virtue can. For example, it would be very odd to think that one's love for a person could arise in the first place in response to a prior exclusive commitment to love her. Even in arranged marriages, where such a prior commitment might occur, the love that the partners often eventually gain for each other typically arises in response to things the partners learn about each other over time and not the commitment itself. The commitment puts the partners in a position to notice aspects of the other, which aspects then function as producing operative grounds of love. Similarly, it would be odd to think that a commitment could serve as a sustaining operative ground of love. While a commitment might prompt one to spend time noticing good things about the other person—in response to which love might be sustained—it does not seem that a commitment is the sort of thing to which love may be *directly* responsive (though love can be indirectly responsive to it). But, if a commitment cannot be an operative ground of love, then it cannot be a proper ground of love, i.e., it cannot be a feature that love is properly (and directly) a response to.

At this point, one might object that committing *to love* someone cannot actually generate the sort of moral side-constraint that blocks the substitution problem. Kolodny

expresses this sort of objection when he claims, “one cannot have a promissory obligation to give a response, such as love, that is beyond one’s voluntary control.”²⁸ If the notion of commitment I have invoked above is something like a promise to love (which I grant), then the worry is that such a promise cannot generate a genuine (perhaps moral) requirement to love a person, since we can never be required to do things we do not have voluntary control over, such as love.

However, Kolodny’s claim that we cannot incur requirements to love a person seems unwarranted. As noted, his objection turns on the idea that we cannot be required to do things over which we do not have voluntary control, i.e., a simple version of “ought implies can”: if we cannot do something voluntarily, then there could be no requirement to do it. By “voluntary” control, Kolodny seems to have in mind something like the kind of direct control we have over the raising of our arms under normal circumstances. But, why think *that* sort of control is necessary for a requirement to be in place? Even if we accept a version of the “ought implies can” thesis, it seems less direct forms of control would suffice to allow for the possibility of requirements to love.²⁹ For example, recent research in social psychology shows that a couple’s engaging in novel and exciting joint activity frequently gives rise to improvements in the quality of their romantic relationship, including attitudes typically characteristic of love.³⁰ This research suggests that couples can exercise some measure of indirect control over their love for one

²⁸ Ibid., Note 10.

²⁹ I wish to leave open the question of whether the kind of control I gesture at here would amount to “voluntary” control. The idea I am pushing—that we could have requirements to do or be things over which we do not have direct control—is, of course, not a new one. Robert Merrihew Adams argues persuasively for something like my point in “Involuntary Sins,” *The Philosophical Review* XCIV, no. 1 (January 1985): 3–31.

³⁰ Arthur Aron et al., “Couples’ Shared Participation in Novel and Arousing Activities and Experienced Relationship Quality,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78, no. 2 (2000): 273–284. I thank Jessie Wojdak for pointing me to this literature.

another, perhaps by putting themselves in a position to notice good things about the other that directly stir and sustain love. If this research is correct, then there is nothing terribly worrying about a commitment to love someone, and a corresponding requirement that it might generate. Thus, even if some version of the “ought implies can” thesis is correct, and even if Kolodny is right that we do not have the sort of control over our love that we typically have over the motion of our arms, it seems we have enough control to make sense of requirements to love.

A skeptic might raise the further objection that the notion of a “commitment to love” applies, at most, to certain married couples that affirm this sort of commitment in their wedding vows. But, if only some cases of married couples are in view, then it seems less serious romantic relationships and all forms of friendship will lack a commitment to love one another, and thus they will remain open to the substitution problem. However, while the case of two married people who make explicit reciprocal promises to love each other is the most pronounced example of the commitment I have in mind, it seems that commitments like this are present in established friendships and unmarried romantic relationships too. In the case of friendship, the commitment to love the other is rarely (at least in western culture) explicit. However, it would still strike us as unfaithful to the friendship if one friend suddenly and without reason ceased to love the other as she did in the past. The judgment of unfaithfulness, here, suggests that there is an implicit commitment to love the other friend. Similarly, in unmarried yet established romantic relationships, suddenly and without reason failing to love the other person would strike us as unfaithful to a commitment to love, whether implicit or explicit. It seems that such a commitment to love the other friend or romantic partner grows stronger as the

relationship matures. Moreover, nothing in what I have claimed here suggests that such commitments to friends and romantic partners can never be broken. Indeed, there are often good reasons to break such commitments (just as there are sometimes good reasons to break promises), such as when the other person has been unfaithful to the relationship in some way, or when life circumstances force the friends or lovers apart, or when one person changes in radically bad ways (e.g., becomes a murderer). But, these (possibly) legitimate reasons for breaking a commitment do not change the fact that the presence of a type-identical doppelganger is not a legitimate reason for breaking such a commitment, and so the commitment can do the substitution-blocking work I have in mind for it. In any case, the main reply, here, is that the sort of commitment in view is not restricted to married couples, but rather would show up in any relationship for which the substitution problem might seem to arise.

CONCLUSION

It has been my aim in this paper to defend a version of the quality theory of the proper grounds of love against the substitution problem. The quality theory holds that non-relational qualities like beauty, wit, virtue, or talent may be proper grounds for loving someone—i.e., features that render love for a person appropriate. The substitution problem holds that the quality theory is mistaken insofar as it suggests our love should be indifferent to the substitution of the beloved for his type-identical doppelganger. After all, if the beloved's properties are the operative and proper grounds of our love, then we would have identical grounds for loving the doppelganger.

In reply, I argued that either substitution is unproblematic (e.g., in dating situations) or the reason we would not be indifferent to the substitution of our partner need have nothing to do with the proper grounds of love. Rather, our further *commitment* to loving our partner could be the reason we would not be indifferent to substitution. Such a commitment can be viewed as a kind of (moral) side-constraint wholly different from those features that properly ground love. In light of such a commitment, we can understand the qualities of the beloved as proper grounds of love without the threat of the substitution problem.