For Yourself Alone
On the Specificity of the Reasons to Love Someone

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Abstract. This paper is about reasons to love people. I defend a "particularist" view: that the central reason to love someone is simply who she is. I begin with a framing question—"why do you love me?"—and a taxonomy of views of love's reasons (§I). I argue that a particularist view is demanded by that framing question (§II). But offering such a view requires saying something about *who the beloved is*—so I borrow an account of human nature from Edith Stein which, I hope to show, yields a compelling account of love's reasons (§III). I conclude with an argument that the extent to which a view of love's reasons genuinely answers our framing question is the extent to which it becomes particularist (§IV).

I. Reasons to Love Someone

I.1. "*Why do you love me?*"

Eurydice has been stuck in the anonymous dimness of Hades for what feels like many lifetimes at this point. Even from her first days in this place, it was obvious that the vast subterranean gray would rarify her spirit to a mere space, and there would be no way of stopping it. Even her favorite memories—of joy, of music, of dancing in long grass—have thinned to a low noise. If we asked her what she is doing in this moment, she would be unable to answer. Perhaps she is staring at a rock, perhaps at nothing.

It is in this moment that Orpheus lays a hand on her shoulder. Eurydice turns to look into his eyes. Somewhere in the back of her mind, there is the echo of a feeling that this is someone

important, but it is a long while before her mind forms a faint impression of the name 'Orpheus', and another long while before that name regains its significance.

"You're alive," she says, "but you're here."

"Yes," he says. "It was such a long journey. I'm sorry."

She stares at him. "Why?"

He repeats her question in puzzlement. "'Why'?"

"Why did you come?"

"To bring you home, of course."

"Why?"

"What do you mean?"

She looks down at her skeletal knees, quiet for an uncomfortably long time. Finally she asks again: "Why? I am not your wife, you know. 'Till we are parted by death', remember?" A younger Eurydice would have smirked, but this one does not. "I am emptied out. I am a shriven stalk. Do you still love me?"

"Of course," says Orpheus.

"Why?" says Eurydice.

I.2. *Answers to Eurydice's question*

By opening this way, I am trying to lend seriousness and urgency to Eurydice's question, "Why do you love me?", so that no false or suspicious answer can hide its implausibility, so that a shallow answer will be stripped of the satisfactory ring which it might have enjoyed in a lighter context. I want to make the question as pure and as stark as possible. Hopefully then Orpheus's answer will be especially useful: it will show us the *central* reason for the best sort of love.[1]

Let us ask, then, how Orpheus could answer. Let us seek inspiration in the current philosophical literature on the reasons to love someone.

Some hold that the question "why do you love me?" has no answer of the kind we are looking for. This is the view of Harry Frankfurt, Laurence Thomas, Aaron Smuts, and others.[2] Call these *arationalist views*.

Some, the arationalists among them, hold that Eurydice's question cannot strictly be answered. Although I will say a few things in the question's defense, my primary intention here is not so much to defend the question as to see where taking it seriously leads us. So I will more or less set arationalism aside.

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[1] I am not demanding that the best love must always be *undiminished*, no matter how diminished (so to speak) its object is. That is a very difficult question. All I am saying is that our question must have an answer even in a situation as dim as Eurydice's. Perhaps a love which can survive difficulty like this is rare, but it is not unheard of. More to the point, it is *more* loving—more a love, better *qua* love—than a love which would not survive, so that its rarity is no strike against its representativeness. Cf. §IV.1.

[2] Frankfurt 2001; Thomas 1991; Smuts 2017. See also Han 2019 and Zangwill 2013. Though Frankfurt holds that there are no reasons to love (which is important because, for him, love is itself the source of all practical reasons), he says other things about love—e.g., that its focus is not on what can be described, but only on what can be named—which are quite particularist in spirit.

Some hold that the answer will appeal to relationships: "She's my mother", "We've been good friends for years", etc. This view's primary defender is Niko Kolodny, and a version has also been articulated by Carolyn Price.[3] Call these *relationship views*.

Some hold that the answer will appeal to some feature that is essential to you: your rational nature, your personhood, or your humanity, or perhaps your virtue if we can maintain that virtue is, in an important sense, a person's very self.[4] Kieran Setiya, David Velleman, and Jennifer Whiting have defended influential views of this sort (preferring the humanity, personhood, and virtue angles respectively).[5] Call these *essence views*.

Finally, some hold that my reasons to love you are your qualities: your youthfulness, your yodeling, your yellow hair, etc. Call these *quality views*.

Because these are accounts of *good* reasons to love, those who endorse quality views usually place at least some limits on which qualities count. This gives us a spectrum of quality views. At one end are views very near essence views, emphasizing central or fundamental qualities. At the other end are views which give equal place to more accidental qualities.

At the former end we might place a figure like Neera Badhwar, whose view is akin to Whiting's essentialist view insofar as they both hold that we love our friends for qualities of character which are essential in some sense.[6] Call views which are at this end of the spectrum (but which are not quite essence views) *essential* quality views.

At the other end there is, for example, Troy Jollimore, who holds that we can love others for all sorts of qualities—that, though some loves will be less noble than others, they are not therefore less truly *loves*. (Jollimore is also concerned to qualify love's rationality, characterizing it as "something in between" rational and non-rational.)[7] Call views which are at this end of the spectrum *inclusive* quality views.

Near the middle of the spectrum we find views like Kate Abramson and Adam Leite's, on which love (of the paradigm sort) is a reactive attitude: it works just like blame or anger or gratitude, responding to good character traits exhibited in relationally contextualized actions. Then there are views like Ginger Clausen's, which is inclusive, but in an interesting way. For Clausen, the central reason to love someone is an organic unity made up of all her qualities—it includes things like her yellow hair, but as parts of the whole.[8]

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[3] Kolodny 2003; Price 2012. Though it will not come up later, it may be useful just for taxonomic purposes to note that some quality views (see below) emphasize *relational* properties (i.a.). These could be counted in an extended sense as relationship views: e.g., Protasi 2014, and I note Abramson & Leite 2011 below.

[4] The word "essential" will come up often. I intend it in the traditional and more or less colloquial Aristotelian sense: pertaining to the essence, the "what it is to be", of the thing. (Cf. Ishii and Atkins 2023.) My purposes here will not require an "account" beyond that.

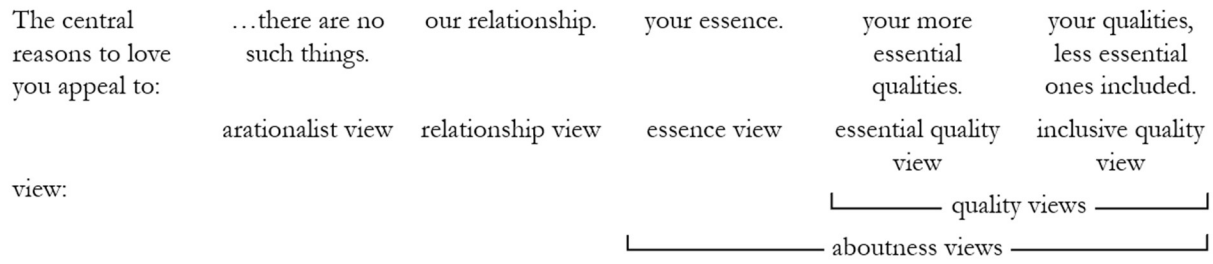
[5] Setiya 2014; Velleman 1999; Whiting 1991.

[6] Badhwar 1986.

[7] Jollimore 2011. Cf. also Scruton 1994 p97 etc.

[8] Abramson & Leite 2011; Clausen 2019.

This spectrum encompassing essential and inclusive quality views accounts for almost all of the contemporary accounts. I'll call views on this spectrum, essence views included, *aboutness views*, because they maintain that my reason to love you is something about you.



If this "something about you" is general, then we have a *general aboutness view*. As it happens, almost all aboutness views are general. A *particularist* view, on the other hand, is a view on which the reason to love someone is not general but specific. It may or may not be an aboutness view. It should become clear in what follows what counts as "specific".

I'll make two final notes about the field. First, quality views are often supplemented with further machinery in order to better explain the multifarious phenomena of love, especially its constancy: some views limit the qualities they focus on (but not according to how central those qualities are to the beloved), while others specify *how* the beloved takes them as reasons. James H. P. Lewis, for example, argues that the central reasons to love are the beloved's *fine-grained* qualities, e.g., not the beloved's tenderness so much as the ineffably special way in which the beloved understands birds.[9] Ting Cho Lau counts all important qualities equally, but argues that one does not *possess* the same reasons to love Alva as to love Bjorn just because Alva and Bjorn have the same relevant qualities, and that, if one knows and loves Bjorn already, one should be *committed* to possessing reasons to love Bjorn (but not likewise for Alva).[10] These accounts differ on the details, but agree on what *sorts* of reasons are central. We could distinguish such views by calling them *augmented quality views*. (These could in principle fall anywhere on the essential / inclusive spectrum. In practice, they're usually inclusive.)

Finally, much of this literature emphasizes *romantic* love specifically. I will generally adopt that emphasis (implicitly) in order to maintain broad continuity with the literature, but I will be careful not to hang my arguments on it: I think we can ask a question like Eurydice's of *any* sort of love—that of a parent, friend, neighbor, or even child (though it does *feel* less urgent in the latter two cases)—for all of which her question poses the same difficulty (§I.3 & §II.2). And my positive account (§I.4 & §III) is meant to apply in any of these relational contexts. So I will press the puzzles which follow without reference to any particular relational context—but, if a given reader

[9] Lewis 2023; Craig Arnold's (2009) poem "Bird-Understander" is indeed a beautiful illustration of the idea. Cf. §III.2 for an articulation of this phenomenon that I like even better than Lewis's.

[10] Lau 2021, and cf. Howard 2019 for a parallel and simpler strategy. See also the other examples, plus a discussion of this approach, at fn. 21.

thinks general aboutness views can answer the challenge in *some* of those contexts, I hope that reader will still find my positive account useful in the others, and as a supplementary thought.

I.3. *What Eurydice will think*

Now, my objection to general views is not that the reasons on which they focus are bad reasons to love someone—only that, to the extent that they are general, they are *incomplete*. One evidence of this is that they do not provide fully satisfying answers to the question Eurydice is asking.

Certainly Eurydice will not be satisfied with talk of her fine qualities. If Orpheus mentions her shining curls, or her rosy cheeks, or her childlike enthusiasm, she will scoff. She knows better.

Neither will she be satisfied with talk of her humanity (personhood, selfhood, rationality, subjectivity, etc.). Perhaps she would reply, "Aren't there human beings above as well? Why *me*?" It is not that she wants him to be unable to say why he loves anyone else. But when *she* asks "why do you love me?", his final answer *to her* should not apply in exactly the same way to just anyone.

She will not be satisfied with talk of their relationship either. Perhaps she would reply, "You could have had another marriage, you know, in all this time. But you came here." Again, she is not objecting to Orpheus valuing any other relationship. She is pointing out that, if it were the nature of *the relationship* as such that mattered, then it would have been reasonable for Orpheus to weigh the value of their marriage against that of a new one.[11]

On all of these accounts, the answers Orpheus must give feel somewhat incomplete, insofar as they do not offer Eurydice quite what she is seeking. She wants to know what there is about *her*—Eurydice herself—that would make Orpheus brave the depths of the Earth for her.

Now, if there just is no such thing as what Eurydice is looking for, then so be it. Again, some will insist that her question cannot be answered. But for my part, I think her question is a good one. If it can be answered, then it should be. What answer, then, would satisfy Eurydice, neither ringing false nor missing the point?

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[11] This is the objection to the relationship view which fits best into a very short dialogue, the purposes of which are, at this point, merely illustrative. As a real objection to a relationship view, it is not complete on its own. So here is the rest of the thought: an answer to Eurydice's question having to do with a relationship treats the question as if it is just as much about Orpheus as about her, and therefore doesn't quite answer the question she is actually asking.

It is like this. "Why do you love me?" on an actual person's lips, is a question specifically about that person. Indeed, any question of that form presumes that the grammatical object of the verb denotes the correct *de dicto* object of the act, i.e., at the correct level of description—cf. §II.2. Now, we can interpret "me" as picking out the individual either *in se* or under some other description, e.g., "me" as I am today, or "me" the winner of the derby, or "me" the fourth person in line, etc.

The *in se* reading of the question is the strict one, and the intended one. Eurydice wants to know why Orpheus loves *her herself, as such*. But the version of the question which the relationship view answers is the other. It explains why Orpheus loves Eurydice *secundum quid*, that is, *as she relates to him*. In other words, in an extremely subtle way, the relationship view gives reasons of the wrong kind. It is a reasonable answer, but it is not an answer to precisely the question Eurydice asked.

Of course, the relationship view could avoid this problem by referring the value of *this* relationship to that of *Eurydice*. But then what we have is just an indirect particularist view.

Perhaps Orpheus could answer like this: "Do I not know you? You are Eurydice of the Auloniads, beloved daughter of Apollo. When I have seen you dance, I have seen in you something which I could not express in a thousand songs—not my thousand very best songs. Why do I love you? How could you ask such a thing?"

Undoubtedly, Orpheus will carry on a little longer in a manner somewhat unsuited to an academic publication. What he is trying desperately to express, grasping at poetic threads, is that there is something here which does not reduce to anything *common* at all. He is insisting that there is something about Eurydice *herself* which she has not lost, and that *this* is the deepest thing on which his love is founded. She may perhaps have difficulty believing him. Perhaps she will have difficulty even understanding what he is saying. But if she does understand and believe him, she will accept his answer. It will not seem shallow or cheap, nor will it miss the point. In other words, if Orpheus's answer can be vindicated, then it is a good one.

I.4. *Particularist views*

Orpheus's answer is an attempt to express a "particularist view" of the reasons to love someone. A particularist view is one on which the central reason to love someone is who she is. Not *what* she is, nor what she is *like*, nor who she is *to you*—those are (general) essence, quality, and relationship views. These may be reasons to love her, but the *central* reason, says the particularist, is simply who she is.

Note well: *who the beloved is* is not the same as her *uniqueness* or *individuality* or *particularity* (these qualities are general—e.g., everyone is unique), nor her haecceity or self-identity (which are too metaphysically thin), nor her property tokens (which would be rather unprincipled). It is simply who she is. Further discussion comes in §III.[12]

Among contemporary philosophers writing on love's reasons, Ginger Clausen and Neera Badhwar (mentioned above) offer views which, if not particularist, are very close.[13] Berislav Marušić

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[12] One further clarification, the inspiration for which I owe to Marshall Bierson: strictly speaking, what the particularist view demands is that the reasons to love someone are *specific to her*, which is not precisely to say that they must not be *multiply realizable*. If, by some miracle, two people were totally indistinguishable in every (relevant) respect, a particularist view might *or might not* maintain that the reasons to love each would still be different in their content: the central reason to love each is *who she is*, and perhaps, or perhaps not, who the one is and who the other is are the same. In §III, I'll take no official stand on whether it is (metaphysically) possible for one individual nature (contra the term) to inhere in numerically distinct individuals (but cf. Stein 2002, p502).

Consequently, wherever I describe my view's commitments, I say 'specific' (vs. 'general') rather than 'particular' (vs. 'multiply realizable'). I retain the term 'particularist', though, because it quickly and intuitively suggests the right idea, whereas 'specificist' sounds silly. Furthermore, whenever I make intuitive appeals to the beloved's uniqueness, I do not distinguish modal senses of 'unique': after all, we *are* unique—and for reasons which are deep and important—regardless of whether we are (metaphysically) *necessarily* unique. The phenomenology on which my claims will sometimes rest does not have any specifically modal character to it. But if one did want to distinguish versions of particularism along these lines, one could use 'strong' or 'necessary particularism' for the version I won't defend here.

[13] At times, Badhwar even speaks of an "individual nature". She seems to think of it as something made up of qualities of the ordinary sort but with a personal spin. I believe what she is speaking of is the same

defends a particularist view in the course of a slightly different project: he says, "We should think of the person we love as, at once, a reason for love and also as our love!"[14] Simon Keller's view of partiality might also be particularist: he says, "Our reasons of partiality, on [Keller's view], are grounded in the ethical significance of the individuals with whom our special relationships are shared. Your reason to give special treatment to a friend is grounded in the ethical significance of your friend."[15]

II. Answering Eurydice

II.1. *Remarks on Eurydice's question*

The first part of my defense of particularist views is simply a suggestive elucidation of Eurydice's question. First on our list of things to notice is that Eurydice's question is relevant because it is the question which isolates our subject. Views of love's reasons are formulae for answers to the question "why do you love me?". I should make five brief remarks on the question, in descending order of obviousness.

First, there are several things we must keep distinct: i) reasons *to love*, i.e., what justifies loving someone; ii) reasons *of love*, i.e., the justifications which love gives rise to (or constitutes) for loving acts; iii) the reasons grounding love the relationship (vs. love the psychological state)—reasons *for love*, we could say; iv) reasons stemming from loving relationships—we could say reasons *from love*. All of these are distinct from v) reasons *to bring about love* (either the relationship or the psychological state), e.g., that it is mentally healthy, or you always liked the idea of the hopeless romantic. Our concern here is with (i), reasons *to love*.

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phenomenon I will discuss in §III.2. If so, then, although we think somewhat differently about what a personal nature is, I would count Badhwar as a particularist. Cf. fn. 23 on Clausen.

Benjamin Bagley (2015) also seems to be aiming for particularism. Personally, I am not sure his view quite fits the meaning I've given to 'particularism' here, since his account involves a notion of who the beloved is which is relative (implying that who Eurydice is to her mother and who she is to Orpheus are two different things, and he mentions no further "who she is" beneath those).

[14] Marušić 2022, §5.4 (p149). I hesitate slightly because, after explaining that his view is "much in the spirit of Velleman and Setiya" but that he does not quite agree that humanity or personhood are the reasons for love, he says, "I settle for the notion of *individuality* here…. I want to second Setiya, who says, 'my view is that whatever property gives us moral status of the sort that commands respect, it is this property that justifies love'" (p149, fn. 31). If this is to be taken literally, Marušić's view is generalist. Individuality is a quality which everyone has. But this might reflect no more than a difference of focus and language, and elsewhere, he seems quite clear that the reason for love is *the beloved* herself. Cf. fn. 14.

[15] Keller 2013, ch. 4 (p98). I take it love is one kind of partiality. I say "might be" because Keller, too, sometimes appears to depart from a particularist view. He says "are grounded in" here rather than "are", and he offers further explanations for the value of your friend (i.e., one step back) in terms of essential qualities (p99-105). Elsewhere, Keller (2000) defends an inclusive quality view specifically for ideal romantic love.

Granted that Marušić and Keller's views are only particularist if *who the beloved is* and *the beloved herself* are, in this context, interchangeable. I think so, but I will not go out of my way to argue.

Second, "Why do you love me?" is a request for justifying reasons to love, not mere explanations of love's occurrence. ("Why should you love me?" is the same question, as is "why love me?".) Evolution or hypnotism would not answer our question.

Third, the love in question is *personal*. It is love *for someone*. We can love other things—but, even if that is not a genuinely separate phenomenon, it is not my subject right now.

Fourth, the question "why do you love me?" is a search for *good* reasons to love. It is true that our question reads as if it is after the reasons of the one to whom it is addressed, and perhaps someone would sincerely answer that she loves me for my money—yea, my vast piles of obscure philosopher's wealth. But that would be an ignoble love with an ignoble justification. There *are* such loves, of course. Friendships of utility or pleasure happen, but they are subjects for other investigations. What we are wondering now is how our question is to be answered *well*. We are hoping to find the best and most central reasons for the fullest and most perfect loves.[16] (Most perfect, that is, *qua* love: by the evaluative standard internal to love itself. That phrase does not pick out *by its very meaning* the best by any further standard, e.g., the most "morally good".)

Finally, "why do you love me?" does not presume a comparative emphasis. It is not "Why do you love me rather than fear me?" nor "Why do you love me rather than someone else?" These comparisons may be helpful for communicating the sense of the question, but they are not part of it. This is not a matter of the context, but of the form of the question. If I ask "Why do you love French food?", I am not asking why you love French food more than Indian food—maybe you don't—nor, more subtly, am I asking why you love French food *as opposed to* Indian food, i.e., requesting a reason to love French food which does not apply to Indian food. The reason's inapplicability to Indian food might be a telling *mark* that it gets at the heart of what makes French food so love-worthy, specifically *as* French food, but it doesn't suffice. In short, *Eurydice as such* and *Eurydice vs. someone else* are not the same idea. What else Orpheus loves, and what else is out there to love, do not have to bear on what Eurydice's question is after, and might not change the answer. Her question is simply after reasons to love her.

II.2. *A challenge with Eurydice's question*

Eurydice's question immediately gives rise to a difficulty, which showed in Orpheus's first three attempts at an answer. The answer Orpheus gives really ought to have something to do with *Eurydice specifically*, and many of the immediately intuitive answers are ultimately unsatisfactory on that score. In fact, after a few attempts, it might begin to look as if any answer which mentions

[16] These restrictions on the question are not unique to me. Some would rather not say "best and most central", but "full-blooded" or "genuine". Others frame their views as seeking sufficient or requiring reasons to love. But these notions, too, are normative, not merely statistical, so there is no important disagreement between these different ways of putting it. (It may also be worth noting that the point of the phrase "fullest and most perfect" is not that it is superlative, as if there must be a *single* best, but that it picks out the "better" end on the scale.) If a given non-particularist says "I have only tried to answer the question 'why does one love?' or 'whence this love of mine?' or 'what are some reasons to love?'", etc.—*as substantively opposed to* "why do you love me?"—or if she insists that her view is not about *the* (or *a central*) answer, then very well. My concern here is with views which *do* aim to give the privileged answer to *our* question.

anything *about* Eurydice at all cannot work. What, then, are we left with? Let us give this difficulty a formulation and a label:

> *the specificity problem*: If my reason to love you is something general about you, say, *a*, then my love does not have to do with you specifically in the way that it should, so the central reasons to love you cannot take the form of *a*.

The problem seems like a principled one. All the obvious candidates for a reason to love someone which can be said to be "about" her pertain properly to a category which is wider than her—i.e., they are general. (Again, think of humanity, height, virtue, sisterhood, etc.) And if the reasons for Orpheus's love are general, then it is open to Eurydice to wonder whether his reasoning, thus his love, really has to do with *her herself*.

This notion that Orpheus's love ought to have something to do with Eurydice specifically is an assumption of her question. And it is an appropriate assumption. It is common to every question of this form, about why some act or attitude should take *this* object.[17] For example, I may ask why you made your pie with pears. I am asking why you used *pears specifically* (perhaps as opposed to other fruits). Obviously you *could* give a more general answer: you needed something sweet which is soft when cooked, and when I point out that peaches might also have done that much, you just shrug. In shrugging, you are rejecting my question past a certain level of specification. You chose, say, *a sweet and soft fruit*, not *a pear* as such. (Or we could imagine instead that you give an even more specific answer: these aren't just any pears, but yellow pears from Mrs. Crisp's orchard, chosen for their notes of spiced honey and because of your fond memories of them from childhood.) In general, "why α X?" (where α is an act or attitude) is a question about how X as such justifies α. A genuine answer to the question will therefore say something about *X*, not merely about a category to which X belongs. It will answer at the level of generality at which X is specified.

In love's case, too, it is possible to deny the question past a certain level of generality. I might claim that I love you because of your yellow hair. Perhaps, in some real-life cases, that is truly the end of it. I have no answer to the question "why do you love me?", then, properly speaking—only an answer to the question "why do you love blonde people?" (plus some causal reasons why my love latched onto you the individual). But it is not always so, nor for the best loves. Again, I would suggest that, if Eurydice's question can be answered, then it should be. If it can be answered, then it will show us what is most centrally at issue in the best sort of love.

To put a slogan to what I have argued about our question, "Why do you love me?", on Eurydice's lips, is less a question about love, or about Orpheus, than about *her*. It is the same question as "Why am I worth loving?", "Why am I to be loved?"[18]

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[17] Indeed, specificity in the present sense *is* what's conveyed by this use of italics, or by the phrase "as such".

[18] The reason *why* this is so is that love itself, just like belief, is "transparent" in Moran's (2001) sense. Marušić (2022) defends this point in depth.

As an aside, I would suggest that the specificity problem is the real backbone of a class of similar often-discussed problems. Call them "targeting problems". They all employ some version of the following claim.

> *targeting problem*: If my reason to love you is some contingent or peripheral feature of you, say, *a*, then my love might rationally fail to target you as it should, so the central reasons to love you cannot take the form of *a*.

Fill in just about anything you like for *a*—money, eye color, personality, rational nature, etc. Objections of this form are presented via all sorts of cases, alongside all sorts of further implications. Some speak of how it may be rational to love someone else *more* if that person better exemplifies the qualities at issue. Some speak of how it may be rational for me to *stop* loving you if you lost this or that feature. (In these two cases, the word "might" in my statement of the problem indicates a future empirical possibility.) Some speak of how it may turn out that what I *really* love (or ought to) is the quality itself, not *you*. (Here the possibility is epistemic.)[19]

Part of why I say the specificity problem is the "real backbone" of targeting problems is that targeting problems can be solved in letter, but seemingly not in spirit, by strategies which simply lean on a sharp distinction between *who* is loved and *why*. These strategies distinguish love's "focus" from its "grounds", or point out that love is "indexical", and maintain that that is enough to dissolve the problem.[20] From the fact that my *reason* to love Alva is general, the claim goes, it simply does not follow that my love should target anything other than Alva (or target her in any particularly precarious way). But whether or not that strategy can successfully resolve targeting problems, it certainly does not resolve the specificity problem. What the beloved wants is not just assurance that a certain love will unfailingly target her, but assurance that *she warrants* this true-aiming love. The specificity problem is not about whether something prevents love from latching onto something other than her; it's about whether love has to do with her in the way it ought to. It is a problem of love's grounds *and* love's focus from the outset.

Generalist views are compatible with a host of variations on this "who vs. why" strategy, many of which I do think can satisfactorily resolve various targeting problems. But I know of no generalist view which provides a solution to the specificity problem as such (or is even clearly trying to). For example, augmented quality views are often designed precisely to address targeting problems by appealing to the manner in which love's reasons are possessed or play their role—but these make no attempt to secure the deeper assurance Eurydice is seeking, that she (herself, as

[19] Versions of these problems are everywhere. For the "shouldn't I love someone else more?" problem, see, e.g., Jollimore (2017) discussing Aaron Smuts (2017) and Ronald de Sousa (2015); for the "shouldn't I stop loving you?" problem, e.g., Robert Nozick (1989); for the "isn't my love really for a quality of yours?" problem, e.g., Gregory Vlastos (1981); for all three at once, e.g., Bagley (2015). Some break the problem into more than three (e.g., Setiya 2014, Howard 2019, Lau 2021). At least one version of the problem is mentioned in almost every paper I cited in §I. Again, I take these to be offshoots of the specificity problem, but that claim can be taken or left as far as my primary thesis is concerned.

[20] "Indexical" is the term in Spaemann 1996, p76; and cf. Kolodny (2003, p154 etc.).

such) warrants this love.[21] I.e., these views do not address the specificity problem. I am not suggesting that generalist views *cannot* address the specificity problem in principle. I only suggest that, as of now, they don't—and that, *prima facie*, it is difficult to see how they would do it.

Meanwhile, if we do not want to simply reject Eurydice's question, then the solution the problem itself naturally calls out for is a particularist view: love has to do specifically with the beloved because it is the beloved's specific character which grounds it. I love you—properly *you*—because I love you for who you are. It is a good answer if only it can be vindicated. "Vindicated" here means it must deliver on the thought that there is something which is both appropriately resilient—recall Eurydice's story—*and* specific to the beloved.[22] That would give us a straightforward solution to the specificity problem, but it requires that we say something about what "who the beloved is" actually means.

III. Who We Are

III.1. *Edith Stein on who the beloved is*

We could understand this notion "who the beloved is" in any of several ways.[23] The one which I find most elegant is drawn from the work of Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross).

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[21] I discuss Velleman's essence view below (§IV.2). See also the augmented quality views cited at fn. 10, as well as Neil Delaney's (1996, p346) and Hichem Naar's (2017) quality views, and, especially interestingly, Christopher Grau (2010) (cf. Robert Kraut (1986)). In their different ways, all of these accounts maintain that my reason to love you is general in form but does not extend to other people in practice, then offer *explanations* why that's okay. Bennett Helm's (2010, Part II) view aims at particularism—though, in addressing "fungibility" worries, it offers reasons *to maintain love* once begun (and ones having a good deal to do with the lover), i.e., what I labeled "reasons to bring about love" (§II.1, item (v)). This is another way of skirting rather than answering Eurydice.

[22] Some think there can be no such thing. In this spirit, Kieran Setiya (2014, p258) appeals to targeting problems as objections to Troy Jollimore's quality view. He argues that, if love's reasons were the beloved's particular merits, and if it is possible for her to lose those merits (or for the lover to find out she never had them), it would then be irrational to continue loving her. He concludes that "if there are reasons for love, they do not consist in a person's particular merits."[22] The inference suggests that anything which is specific to the beloved is too fragile to ground love, which ought to be resilient. Setiya himself does seem to think he has shown that the central reason to love someone *must* be something general. He endorses humanity (or rational nature).

[23] Recall that, by "particularist view", I mean a view on which the central reason to love someone is who she is. Other particularist views might speak of an individual nature but differently (as Badhwar (2003) does; cf. fn. 13), of the beloved herself (perhaps like Marušić and Keller; Keller 2013 p100 is relevant here), of the organic unity of her features (like Clausen), of the beloved's particular *esse* (as Josef Pieper (1997) does), or perhaps of the beloved's quiddity (if that differs from the Steinian view). Spencer Smith has suggested to me that *the fact that Eurydice is Eurydice* is a further distinct and plausible option. In general, those with differing metaphysical commitments will favor different metaphysical underpinnings for their particularist views. A Humean, for example, might favor the organic unity of properties approach. (Cf. the second part of §IV.2.) As far as concerns my defense of particularist views *as such*, this Steinian account serves as an example. Though, because I do also happen to think it's right, I will say a few things in its defense. Others have said more: cf. fn. 28.

As part of her work on metaphysics—I will quote mostly from *Potency and Act*, though she develops the account further in *Finite and Eternal Being*—Stein articulates a striking picture of human individuality. She begins from the view of St. Thomas Aquinas, who holds (like any good Aristotelian) that *human* is a species of *animal*, differentiated by *rationality*, but that *human* is not in turn a genus: it has no further species (in the technical sense) within it. Rather, members of the species *human* are individuated by their matter, i.e., by each individual's body, in which the form *human* is instantiated. We can therefore have different *accidental* features, but essentially—with respect to *what* (or *who*) *we are*—we are all the same.[24]

Stein accepts Aquinas's framework, but she rejects this view that human individuality is "due to the matter".[25] If it were, then, according to the metaphysics on which Aquinas and Stein agree, if there were any difference between two people *qua people*, it would entail that at least one of them suffers a privation in the selfsame human form which we all share. But Stein thinks there are differences between us which do pertain to our nature and yet are not (in one case or the other) flaws or deficiencies: introversion vs. extraversion, for example, or fox vs. hedgehog thinking, or (perhaps more controversially) an affinity for writing vs. dance.[26]

Stein therefore offers her own explanation of human individuality. In her view, *human* is indeed a genus, and each human being *is* of her own species, in the technical Aristotelian sense. Each one differs from the others not just materially—insofar as the general form *human* is instantiated in *this* body and is thereby linked to particular accidents—but also formally, in *what it is to be her*. In Stein's words,

> …the soul shapes its body not only into an organism of the human kind but into an expression of its own individual distinctiveness and into a tool for its specific (= individual) spiritual working, although it does shape it more or less perfectly depending on the disposition of the matter (and on other circumstances that we mentioned earlier when discussing "self-shaping").[27]

In my words, though it is true that we all share in the same human nature, we also differ; and while some of the differences between us are attributable strictly to our bodies and external influences, it is not so of every difference—nor, crucially, is it true of those central differences which make us who we are. (The account of "self-shaping" to which she alludes is interesting and helpful, but too far afield from our purpose.)

This is the primary idea which I would like to borrow from Stein's account. Her notion of an *individual nature* is one way—my preferred way—to explicate "who the beloved is". What I

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[24] Stein 2009 (hereafter "*PA*") p394. Cf. Aquinas, e.g., *Summa Theologiae* I 76.1 ad 1.

[25] Part of what Stein intends by "individuality" is simply individuation. On her view, though individuation and individuality are distinct concepts, they are not ultimately separable in the case of human beings.

[26] *PA* p398. Stein offers one other argument here, and others in *Finite and Eternal Being* (2002) (hereafter "*FEB*") VIII.2.5, which I omit for brevity's sake.

[27] *PA* p396. Cf. *FEB* VII.9.3-4. I say I will leave aside the matter of a soul's development here, but Stein has a lot to say about it. In addition to the account in *PA*, cf., e.g., *FEB* VII.1-4.

mean by that phrase is that of which Stein is giving an account, and my account of it is Stein's account. For those concerned, the metaphysics of the account can be summarized as follows.[28] Each person's individual nature is a specification of her human nature (just as *human* is in turn a species of *animal*). And just like a human nature, an individual nature grounds, but is not identified with, certain qualities—one's temperament, talents, loves and inclinations, etc.—just as human nature grounds, say, my ability to think. Whereas human nature is supposed to explain what belongs to humans as a species, one's individual nature plays a similar role with respect to what is distinctive of the individual. Many of these differences *develop* over the course of life, sometimes intentionally, sometimes not, in virtue of the fact that each individual nature itself differs from every other.[29] According to §I.2's taxonomy, this makes the Steinian view a particularist essence view.

Now, why think Stein is right? She makes her case partly on theological grounds. Aquinas, she points out, gives good reasons to think it is *possible* that human beings are all of the same species, individuated by their bodies, but he does not show that this is *necessary*. In fact, he comes close to showing that it is *not* necessary, for he holds that it is otherwise for angels, and there is no reason why our ontology must differ from the angels' on this point. And if it is *possible* that each human being is her own species, then we have some reason to think it is actually so, because God would want it so, because we image him better in diversity than in uniformity.[30]

Stein also makes her case partly on phenomenological / empirical grounds. She points out that, in our experiences of ourselves and others, we "take it that every one of us, every individual, is unique in kind, I mean, each of us is our own species—the claim Thomas made for the angels."[31] For example, whenever someone insinuates that we are merely members of a kind, we feel our dignity insulted, as if something important about us has been missed. Or consider how others present themselves to us. Stein says, "Our response to this 'personal impression' that we receive from a man is a spontaneous attitude of our own being toward him: an attitude of sympathy and antipathy or, in their most intense forms, love and hate."[32] By 'personal impression' she means the experience of another specifically as a unique other.

My own sense is that it is love itself which embodies this experience best of all. It is in loving that we best understand the other as someone unique, whose loveliness is incommensurable

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[28] This paper is a defense of particularism about love, not a defense of Stein's metaphysics of persons, and my remarks here cannot be more thorough without taking us too far afield. But if you would like to look further into these matters, in addition to Stein's own works already cited, see Szanto & Moran (2025, esp. §3.2), and the excellent treatment in Sarah Borden Sharkey (2010).

[29] Thus Stein says "This innermost center of the soul cannot be grasped in such a manner that it could be given a universal name, nor can it be compared with anything else. It cannot be divided into properties, character traits and the like, because it is located at a greater depth than any of these" (*FEB* p501). It is also worth noting that this view of persons is grounded in a wider metaphysics, and that it is not just people to which Stein attributes some sort of individual form, though it is not quite alike in the personal and impersonal cases. See, e.g., *FEB* VIII.2.9 on animals, or IV.3.5 on everything.

[30] *PA* p400. Cf. *FEB* VIII.3.1.

[31] *PA* p395.

[32] *PA* p400. Cf. *FEB* VIII.2.10, and, for further arguments, Sharkey (2010), ch. 2.

with that of anyone else. To my mind, these are compelling experiential grounds for the Steinian particularist view. It is precisely this sort of thought by which Iris Murdoch has been so influential on care ethics, moral particularism, and love. Her notion of "loving attention" is the notion of a sustained fine-grained perception of another's unique character. It is limitlessly perfectible—even dialectical, in Tal Brewer's sense.[33] Thus Murdoch's analysis of loving vision of another is fruitfully understood as the complement of Stein's analysis of the other herself—and so the *act* of lovingly attending to another provides experiential grounds for Steinian particularism.

That is not to say there are no experiential grounds for Stein's view apart from love. In fact, I think the phrase "who she is" is particularly helpful because one of its primary uses in English suggests Stein's view. We speak of *who we are* precisely when we are trying to speak of someone's nature *not* as a sort of kind membership. The phrase "*what* you are" can pick out something essential about you and distinguish you from many other things. But the phrase "*who* you are" picks out precisely what is essential about you specifically, distinguishing you from everyone else (without presuming a theory, of course), and we all understand the difference.

III.2. *Edith Stein on the beloved's qualities*

There is one other element of Stein's view which I would like to mention for two reasons. First, it elaborates this phenomenology of love which supports her view of a person's nature. Second, it shows us an (optional) implication of particularist views which is interesting on its own merits.[34]

Somewhat in passing, Stein says, "[The other] addresses us through what we are calling his expressive phenomena, not through what reveals the changing actuality of his life nor what reflects his enduring character traits—both occur in a general, typical expressive language—but in an individual stamp of these typical expressive phenomena…."[35] In other words, this individual nature we have been talking about is *expressed* by the person's habits and traits—and in that way, these themselves are not general but "individually stamped", specific to the person herself.

On an inclusive quality view, the rational movement in which loving someone consists runs from qualities to person. To use value language (just to illustrate, because it is simple and clear), Orpheus values Eurydice because he values her qualities first. ("First" logically, that is—probably also chronologically, but that could be true on any view.) It would threaten the view's consistency to maintain that the reasons could run the other way, from person to quality.

On a Steinian particularist view, though, the logical starting point is who the beloved is—her own nature, identified with the beloved herself as closely as anything in the category of form could possibly be. That makes it possible to flip the inclusive quality view's logical order: to acknowledge the possibility of loving a beloved's qualities because of her, rather than the other way around. And that would seem to be an advantage, insofar as it is true to experience.

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[33] Murdoch 1970, Brewer 2009 (esp. ch. 2).

[34] "Optional" because it is possible to hold that the central reason to love someone is who she is, and to give an account of who she is in terms of a Steinian individual nature, and yet to deny that there are such things as individual "stamps" of general qualities. I see no reason to do that myself, but one could.

[35] *PA* p400.

Sometimes we love certain qualities in our loved ones without having any *general* attraction to the quality at all. For example, perhaps one of the things you loved in your first boyfriend was his total inability to carry a tune. You probably did not have an antecedent love for the quality of being unable to carry a tune. But *his* inability to carry a tune was not *just* an inability to carry a tune. It was *his*. In a small and ineffable way, it expressed *him* whom you loved. A quality is different, *more*, in your beloved than in general, and therefore may well be the sort of thing in which you properly delight, even if, in the abstract, it would be neutral or undesirable. These cases, in which the quality in question has little or nothing going for it in itself, make the point easier to see, but it holds just as well for qualities which *are* good in themselves. I love my wife's sincerity, for example, partly because it is a virtue, but also partly because it conveys something deep and lovely about *her*. It expresses who she is. So I love it not only as a virtue, a general good, but also as having what Stein calls "an individual stamp".[36]

An essential quality view or essence view might seem to respect the person-to-property logical order even better, since it doesn't assign the beloved's qualities the logically prior place from the outset. But, if it is not particularist, then what it *does* assign the logically prior place—the beloved's humanity, personhood, etc.—is not specific. So it is not suited to be logically prior to (an appreciation for) the beloved's qualities *as she expresses them*, but only to her qualities generally, if even that.

One especially important role for this idea—that who the beloved is is expressed in the special character of her acts and habits—is quite practical.[37] I have *not* said that these expressive acts and habits are themselves the central reasons to love her. But the expressive acts and habits, true to the term, *are* what *express* her individual nature. They are what *show* the beloved's peculiar character. If Eurydice asks "Why do you love me?" and Orpheus simply says "For who you are," he is, on a particularist view, *correct*, but he has probably not successfully conveyed his meaning. For that, he would need to point to some of these expressive acts and habits: these things in which who

[36] Some accounts of the reasons of love are sensitive to this phenomenon. I am thinking especially of Badhwar here (2003 §5.3, and 1986); I have also cited Lewis (2023) and (Bagley 2015) above. As I've said, I think of Badhwar as an ally. My only criticism is that such views tend to give this phenomenon of unique quality expression too central a role, as if the special ways in which the beloved exhibits qualities are themselves the (central) reasons to love her—i.e., as if the central reason to love her is not strictly *who she is*, but, so to speak, *how she is what she is*. That doesn't quite seem right to me. Sure, to some degree, I do love my wife for her unusual way of sitting on chairs, but cf. Velleman's concern about fetishism (1999, p370), reiterated by Clausen (2019). These sorts of idiosyncrasies shouldn't exhaust the central reasons to love someone. Even if we iterate over all the beloved's unique expressions of her most important qualities, the fetishism concern remains, for the *mode of expression* of her courage, for example, is not deeply and self-sufficiently valuable in the same way that courage is *per se*; it could only serve as a rational central ground of personal love if the quality (or essence) itself (e.g., courage) were therein understood. And in any case, as with anything that has the nature of a sign or an expression, my wife's special way of sitting is what it is, and has the value it has, because of *her*, not the other way around. Love should not be constrained to misrepresent that proper order of explanation.

[37] I thank Brendan Case for inspiring this point. Cf. also Marušić (2022, p151), who does not make the mistake I noted in fn. 36. This is *in addition*, by the way, to the more mundane observation that the beloved's qualities can be perfectly good non-central reasons to love her.

Eurydice is is manifest to him (and, likewise, to her). Hence, in my story above, Orpheus's rambling: "How could you ask such a thing? Why, in just the week of your—of your death, what delight was in your voice as you sang to yourself, gathering golden-thistle! The care and self-assuredness of your hands as you prepared it! What of the weight of compassion in your eyes when poor Aikaterine lost her favorite piglet?" And so on.[38]

IV. Why a Particularist View in Particular?

IV.1. *Two brief questions*

Before moving on, let me briefly address two further questions for particularist views. First, one may wonder whether a particularist view entails that one ought to love someone even if who she is is a rotten scoundrel—or does it imply the opposite, that such a person should *not* be loved?

The simple answer is that a particularist view as such is not committed either way. I myself think *who you are* is never wholly rotten, unlovable in principle. But that is a further commitment of mine, and there is no need to dwell on it. If one thinks it *is* possible that who someone is is rotten through and through, then there are two options: i) if one thinks we should not (or cannot) love what is evil, then one will hold that such people can be loved only incompletely, i.e., for less central reasons; or ii) if one thinks we may (or can) love what is evil, then one might hold that we could (should?) love even a deeply rotten person. All three positions are consistent.

The second question is this. What if a person can lose who she is? What about serious strokes, dementia, iron spikes through the left frontal lobe, and the like? In such cases, does a particularist view imply that we no longer have our central reason to love?

Again, I have my own view. I do think individual natures have gradations to them, but I take it to be part of the Steinian view that it is not possible *entirely* to lose who you are. I certainly think one does not lose who one is just by going through Hades, as Orpheus pointed out, for a person is not who she is moment by moment, but over time. Partial, reversible, or redeemable damage does not destroy one's nature.

Nonetheless, there is still a question here. The story I told at the beginning suggests, quite intentionally, that the beloved might change drastically, or at least be obscured. Perhaps, in the end, she may even be unrecognizable. What then?

I believe this possibility does not falsify the particularist view but supports it. We know that, in these sorts of tragic situations, our love changes. It may not *diminish*, but it does become a more sorrowful love, sometimes with more grief in it than delight. We think with fondness of who the beloved was. Sometimes we hope she may one day be restored. If there is neither memory nor hope, then our love *does* tend to fade with time, or else it attaches to whatever it can find. Think of

[38] I suspect it's not unusual that people who reach for these sorts of characteristics, like Orpheus, are trying to describe who the beloved is. I also suspect that the difficulty of *voicing* these reasons explains some of the competing descriptions of our experiences: e.g., on the one hand, I cannot explain why I love my wife as exhaustively or as sufficiently as I can explain why I chose this chair for the living room; on the other hand, if you challenged me, I would insist that I am certainly justified in loving her. But particularism has no patents on these observations. Cf. Ebels-Duggan 2019.

the way a son's love for his mother changes as her senility advances: many of his loving memories are of who she was, and his present-focused love is increasingly like love for a young child whose personality has not finished developing. All told, it is much like grieving. This suggests precisely what a particularist view would predict: that, since who the beloved is is the central reason to love her, as she fades or becomes increasingly obscured, our love should change accordingly.

So, if the suggestion was that other views can better handle the resilience of love in these cases (e.g., the "humanity" view would still have the beloved's humanity to point to even if she were in a persistent vegetative state), it is not so. A Steinian particularist view predicts that love will change in these cases: it will ground itself increasingly via memories or hopes, or else in shallower or more general attributes of the beloved.

IV.2. *From general aboutness views to particularist views*

I mentioned above that I believe those versions of aboutness views which make a real and well-aimed attempt to answer Eurydice's question are increasingly particularist.[39] Let me say why.

I will begin with (general) essence and essential quality views. What these views capture best is the intuition that our reasons to love those closest to us are things central to who they are, highly resilient, and (in some sense) to be found in everyone, so that no one is unlovable. But I think particularist views capture these intuitions even better: they foreground the *whole* core of who the beloved is, rather than some more general description of it, and not at the cost of love's resilience, nor its wide reach.

The problems which I called "targeting problems" have led some defenders of essence views to articulate accounts of the "essence" in question which can take on a certain individual flavor. Badhwar, for example, speaks of the unique ways in which people express their characteristics.[40] One is reminded of Stein. And in general, this inclination seems right. Even if it *is* some general characteristic—say, personhood—which constitutes my reason to love you, there must still be something special about personhood *in you* if we are going to address the specificity problem. I will not be able to say why I love *you* just by citing personhood generally; it must be that *your* personhood somehow pertains to *you specifically*.

From here, there are two ways to go. One could emphasize the universality of love's reasons—e.g., personhood as something we all share, but which "comes through" uniquely in each person, where this way of coming through is part of the central reason to love someone.[41] Or one could emphasize the specificity of it—e.g., *your personhood* as something nowhere else to be found, which is nonetheless your own case of universal personhood, which is common to everyone. But if either path is taken seriously, to the point that it becomes apt to say that the central reason to love you is who *you* are (this being understood as a species or expression of personhood generally), then emphasis is the only difference. These are both particularist views. It's just that, in one case, the further analysis of *who you are* is in terms of personhood.

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[39] I focus on aboutness views because they are the standard, but cf. fn. 11 on relationship views.

[40] Badhwar 2003. Cf. fn. 8 and 36 on Badhwar possibly being a particularist.

[41] Perhaps this direction would appeal to someone similar to Velleman (1999, p372: "One reason….").

There are other paths which an essence view could take which steer wider of particularist views, but these fail to address Eurydice's question. Velleman's view, for example, does not make the same sort of appeal to the particular way in which someone expresses personhood. Rather, it focuses on love itself as an attitude which silences alternative objects of focus. Love arrests the attention, we might say.[42] This is a helpful insight, but if it were meant to help supply a *complete* answer to Eurydice's question, it would not suffice. In fact, it would amount to denying the question.[43] For it gives a *general justifying* reason to love, but to the question "why do you love me specifically?" what it adds to this general justifying reason is a specific *causal* reason: love's effect on attention. Suppose you ask me "Why *Mrs. Crisp's* pears specifically?" and I say, "Well, pears are just so very delicious. And when I saw Mrs. Crisp's pears in the store, I was so overcome that I was simply unable to consider any other option." That is a general reason to love *pears*, and then a specific psychological *cause* of my love of *Mrs. Crisp's* pears. It is not a reason to choose Mrs. Crisp's pears as such. So, likewise, this tenet of Velleman's view does not suffice to answer Eurydice's question.

Any essentialist view that can hope to answer Eurydice's question must somehow attribute the credit for one's love to the beloved herself, as such. But once it does so, it is a particularist view (similar to Badhwar's view, or to my own, depending on the underlying metaphysics).

The story is similar if we begin with (general) inclusive quality views. These views capture best the ordinary experience of coming to love someone as you notice things about her that you like, and how loving her feels as if it depends on your appreciation of those things. But I would suggest that the particularist view captures this experience even better: it emphasizes not just the particular things which you like about the beloved, but the deeper thing underlying and uniting them, on which love increasingly centers as it grows fonder and wiser. In that way, it captures the best and most complete sort of love, that is, the most paradigmatic love. Nor does it ignore the fact that love arises from seeing the other's qualities, and even, in some sense, depends on it. We discussed that matter in §III.2 just above.

The most convincing argument I can think of here is the experience of love itself. But that is hard to convey in academic prose, so, instead, I will give the second most convincing argument I can think of. Let us ask *in what manner* the beloved's qualities provide reasons to love her.

On the one hand, we could have (so to speak) a conjunctive picture of love's reasons. I love her humanity, her patience, her humor, and her smile, in that order. (Presumably the real list would be longer.) Were we feeling ambitious, we might even assign measures to these reasons—e.g., 4, 8, 15, 16—perhaps not with that much precision, but at any rate the attempt would not be a category error. On this picture, our reasons have weights, and together they make up a set (or a sum). They are related to each other conjunctively (or arithmetically), and to the whole as elements (or as portions).

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[42] Velleman 2008, p200.

[43] The other part of Velleman's solution is his observation that a person's value does not admit comparison. But this is a reason why the possibility of exchanging one beloved for another is not to be entertained, which still does not amount to a reason to love the beloved specifically.

Alternatively, we could have (so to speak) an organic picture of love's reasons. I love my wife's humanity, her patience, her humor, and her smile—perhaps still in that order. But this time, though there may be an order of importance, it is not quantifiable, neither in the sense that the members of our list are related by relative weights, nor in the sense that we could sum them up to a total. These reasons are related as parts to a whole. Some are vital (like the heart and brain to a human body), some less so (like a capillary or an eyelash) although they do have their contributions to make. On this picture, our reasons have interrelations as parts, and together, each according to its role, they make up a whole. They are related to each other organically, and to the whole mereologically.

This second picture better represents how reasons to love someone actually work. If my wife lost her sense of humor and her smile, I would have lost two good reasons to love her—and perhaps, if I were not a steadfastly loving person, I would also love her less. But it does not follow that I would have reason to love her less, nor that I would have less reason to love her. And that is because reasons to love someone are related not as quantities to totals, but as parts to wholes. Likewise, if she became very impatient but also became a much more honorable person (supposing these virtues have equal value on the quantitative picture), I would not have the *same* overall reason to love her. Reasons to love cannot simply be exchanged for other reasons of supposedly equal value. That is because they are related to each other not simply as greater or less or equal, but as interrelated parts.

If this is all so, then the best way to state the central reason to love someone will be in some phrase which captures all of her qualities, not as disparate atoms, but as composing a whole—and which captures the fact that the most important of these qualities are deep and abiding features (and *expressions*) of the beloved herself. I would suggest "who the beloved is". And suddenly our quality view has become particularist (in the spirit of Clausen's view).[44]

Either way, whether we begin with an essence view or a quality view, the better the view is addressed to Eurydice's question, the more particularist it becomes.

IV.3. *Concluding note*

I have defended a particularist view about the reasons to love someone: that the central reason to love someone is who she is. I have contrasted this with the alternatives: that the central reason to love someone is what she is, or what she is like, or her relationship with the lover. A particularist view, I have argued, is preferable insofar as it best articulates the experience of love (including the way in which we love people's qualities) and is necessary for a proper and satisfying answer to the question "why do you love me?". Insofar as other views make a serious attempt to answer that question, they become particularist. Finally, I have explicated and defended Edith Stein's elegant understanding of this notion, *who the beloved is*. On Stein's view, who you are is, simply and intuitively, your nature—but your nature is specific to you. It is love itself which most strongly attests to this. In this way, Stein's metaphysics gives rise to a compelling account of love, and love

[44] Clausen 2019. Cf. other references to Clausen at fn. 8 and 23. I say "in the spirit" because Clausen's account is about the beloved's properties, not the reasons themselves—but the structure here is parallel.

in turn plays an important grounding role in our understandings of other people, and thereby of Stein's metaphysics.

Here is a bumper sticker for what I have argued here: if the question is how specific the central reason to love someone is, the answer is "as specific as *she* is!" Some might think it is a weakness of the view that it should depend in that way on an understanding of our nature. But it seems to me that the truth is precisely the reverse. That dependency is simply the theoretical parallel of one beautiful feature of love. Love leads us to look hard at another person, so that we see her deeply. Thereby, we come to the best understanding of another to be found anywhere in our experience—and, often, we love her better because of it. And just as love leads us to understand a person rightly, philosophy of love can lead us to a better philosophy of the person (and back again). If ever two inquiries were right to be inseparable, it is these.[45]

[45] I am grateful to several editors and anonymous reviewers, to Brendan Case, and especially to Marshall Bierson, Bob Bishop, Mark LeBar, John Schwenkler, Spencer Smith, and Andrea Westlund for their patient feedback on far too many drafts of this paper.

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