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Love and Ethics in the Works of J. M. E. McTaggart

Trevor J. Bieber

The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor

Anthony Skelton

The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Philosophy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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LOVE AND ETHICS IN THE WORKS OF J. M. E. MCTAGGART

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Trevor Jacob Bieber

Graduate Program in Philosophy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Dissertation Abstract

This dissertation attempts to make contributions to normative ethics and to the history of philosophy. First, it contributes to the defense of consequentialist ethics against objections grounded upon the value of loving relationships. Secondly, it provides the first systematic account of John M. E. McTaggart's (1866-1925) ethical theory and its relation to his philosophy of love.

According to (maximizing) consequentialist ethics, it is always morally wrong to knowingly do what will make the world worse-off than it could have been (i.e., had one chosen one of the other courses of action available to one at the time). Many consequentialists also recognize that love is one of the most important goods worth pursuing for its own sake and so this implies a strong duty to promote love.

Recently, however, philosophers (such as Stocker, Cocking, Oakley, and Badhwar) have outlined what I call the "love-based objection." It argues that consequentialism ought to be rejected on its own terms because a commitment to maximizing aggregate overall goodness precludes forming the kinds of commitments necessary for highly valuable loving relationships. Other philosophers (such as Railton and Mason), however, have argued that a particular kind of consequentialist theory (i.e., "sophisticated consequentialism") that recognizes the intrinsic value of love and that restricts evaluations based on maximizing goodness to only the most fundamental realms of moral evaluation and guidance overcomes the love-based objection. While philosophers have indicated how to overcome the objection through sophisticated consequentialism, the task of constructing a plausible version of such a system is currently ongoing.

This dissertation argues that, more than fifty years before this contemporary debate started, McTaggart outlined a version of consequentialism called "Ideal Utilitarianism" that can (with some supplementation) overcome recent love-based objections in the way suggested by Railton and Mason. McTaggart's work in moral philosophy, therefore, has a previously unrecognized relevance to contemporary issues in normative ethics and so his contributions ought to be considered alongside other, currently more prominent, ethicists of his day such as Hastings Rashdall and G. E. Moore.

Keywords

McTaggart, ideal utilitarianism, consequentialism, love, friendship, ethics, moral philosophy, value theory, Rashdall, Moore, Stocker, Coking, Oakley, Badhwar, Railton, Mason, utilitarianism, intrinsic value, emotions, sophisticated consequentialism, person

For Wendy

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Preface

This dissertation attempts to make contributions to normative ethics and to the history of philosophy. First, it contributes to the defense of consequentialist ethics against objections grounded upon the value of loving relationships. Secondly, it comprises the first systematic account of John M. E. McTaggart's (1866-1925) ethical theory and its relation to his philosophy of love.

According to (maximizing) consequentialist ethical theories, it is always morally wrong to knowingly do what will make the world worse-off than it could have been (i.e., had one chosen one of the other courses of action available to one at the time). Many consequentialists also recognize that love is one of the most important goods worth pursuing for its own sake and so this implies a strong duty to promote (or at least preserve) as much love as possible in the world. Any actions or policies that could be reliably expected to make the world worse by impeding the establishment or preservation of genuine loving relationships (friendships, romances, or family bonds) will be immoral. Those actions which could be reliably expected to improve the world by providing more opportunities for people to establish and maintain loving relationships ought, morally, to be pursued whenever the opportunity arises. All of this, of course, will be limited by considerations of other intrinsic goods; love ought to be promoted only so long as doing so will not make the world worse-off on the whole in terms of other intrinsic goods and evils. Increasing love at the cost of diminishing long-term health or at the cost of eroding social trust would presumably make the world much worse-off on the whole than if we could have a world with less love but that maintains current levels of health and social-co-operation. Nonetheless, if love is as good as many people throughout history have reasonably claimed that it is, then a consequentialist must take the effects of an action or policy on loving relationships (whether actual, possible, in one's own life, or the lives of others) as seriously as its effects on other aspects of well-being such as health, freedom from unnecessary suffering, or the development of a strong moral character.

Recently, however, some philosophers (such as Michael Stocker, Dean Cocking, Justin Oakley, and Neera Badhwar) have outlined what I call the "love-based objection." It argues that consequentialism ought to be rejected on its own terms because a commitment

to maximizing aggregate overall goodness precludes forming the kinds of commitments necessary for highly valuable loving relationships. If I am fundamentally committed to making the world, on the whole, a better place, then – so it is argued – I must merely view my relationships and the people I love either as *mere* means to some more important end (i.e. making the world a better place) or I must view commitments to such relationships as permissible only insofar as they do not get in the way of something more important to me (i.e. making the world better). These thinkers warn ethicists against believing that one can both genuinely love “maximizing goodness” and genuinely love individual people at the same time. Being a consequentialist would, it seems, make the most valuable forms of genuine love impossible, thereby making the world worse-off on the whole. Consequentialists, therefore, ought to reject consequentialism on their own consequentialist terms. Unless ethicists can explain why it is that these critics are wrong, this does seem to be a decisive reason to reject consequentialism.

Is it possible for consequentialists to respond to this love-based objection? I think that it is. Philosophers (such as Peter Railton and Elinor Mason) have argued that a particular kind of consequentialist theory (i.e., “sophisticated consequentialism”) that recognizes the intrinsic value of love and that restricts evaluations based on maximizing goodness to only the most fundamental realms of moral evaluation and guidance overcomes the love-based objection. While philosophers have indicated how to overcome the objection through sophisticated consequentialism, the task of constructing a plausible version of such a system is currently ongoing.

Fortunately, for consequentialists, it is not necessary to construct such a system from nothing. This dissertation argues that, more than fifty years before this contemporary debate started, McTaggart outlined a version of consequentialism called “Ideal Utilitarianism” that can (with some supplementation) overcome recent love-based objections in the way suggested by Railton and Mason. McTaggart’s work in moral philosophy, therefore, has a previously unrecognized relevance to contemporary issues in normative ethics and so his contributions ought to be considered alongside other, currently more prominent, ethicists of his day such as Hastings Rashdall and G. E. Moore.

My dissertation has five chapters. The first and second outline the main features of McTaggart’s philosophy of love. The third chapter looks at the evolution of what I call the “love-based objection to consequentialism” (LBO) over the last forty years. In it, I compile

(in a single list) the various features scholars have argued a consequentialist theory of ethics needs in order to overcome both versions of the LBO. The fourth chapter presents McTaggart's value theory with a special emphasis on McTaggart's understanding of the intrinsic value of love and the fifth chapter presents his moral philosophy. In the fifth chapter I also argue that McTaggart's moral philosophy (with some modifications) has the features necessary to overcome the LBO.

CHAPTER 1

1 Introduction: Psychology, Persons, and Methodology in John M. E. McTaggart

1.1 Introductory Summary of Love

The next two chapters present a summary of McTaggart's philosophical theory of love as it was presented and developed over his career. William Mander and Dennis McKerlie have recently written valuable articles meant to reintroduce McTaggart's philosophy of love to contemporary readers¹. In what follows I present some of the details and arguments of McTaggart's theory of love that (understandably) could not be included in their work. In order to present a comprehensive and coherent exegesis of his philosophy of love I will, where appropriate, attempt to clarify his position by putting it into the context of his broader psychological and metaphysical views, and also by looking to the broader historical and philosophical context of his day. In certain cases I also identify nuanced changes from his early view (primarily represented in "The Further Determination of the Absolute" [1893] and *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* [1901]) to his later view (primarily represented in his posthumously published book: *The Nature of Existence, Volume II* [1925].) My exegesis takes a sympathetic and charitable approach to constructing McTaggart's arguments and ideas; nonetheless, I have tried to ensure that my constructions accurately represent McTaggart's own views and I have tried to identify concerns about his claims or arguments where appropriate. Before getting into the details of his theory, it will be useful to present a short synopsis of his overall account of love in order to see where the chapter is going and to put each section that follows into a broader perspective.

McTaggart conceives of love as an emotion. It is an intense and passionate form of liking and is present in a broad range of relationships: erotic, friendly, and familial. McTaggart believes that emotions are indefinable, but can be distinguished and identified

¹ See: Dennis McKerlie, "McTaggart on Love," in *Underivative Duty*. (Ed. T. Hurka. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 66-86; and William Mander, "On McTaggart on Love," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 13.1 (Jan. 1996): pp. 133-147. For some very brief and general summaries see: Rochelle, Gerald, *The Life and Philosophy of J. M. E. McTaggart*, (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1991), pp. 130-137; and Peter Geach, *Truth, Love, and Immortality*, (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp. 165-170.

according to their causes and objects². While we often speak of ‘loving’ various kinds of objects (persons, animals, inanimate objects, nations, abstract ideas, etc.), McTaggart’s investigation is exclusively concerned with love of persons; so, on his account the object of love is always another person. A person is a being that exists both as an object in the world and as a self-conscious subject of experiences of the world. As an object, qualities and relations are attributable to a person, and, as a subject, the person is capable of pursuing its own ends (in action) and is also capable of assigning qualities and relations to beings it experiences (including itself). Love is always directed at another person as a unique and particular experiencing subject and not merely as a bearer of particular characteristics (‘characteristics’ is used by McTaggart to cover both ‘qualities’ and ‘relations’); nonetheless, a person cannot exist and cannot be known independent of any particular set of characteristics, and these characteristics can and do act as causes of love. There is only one necessary and (if strong enough) sufficient cause of love: an awareness (of varying degrees of intensity and certainty) of an intimate union with another self. This is described as a “bond stronger and more intimate than any other by which two selves can be joined³.” Nonetheless, a number of things may be involved in causing such an awareness, and so also indirectly cause love – aesthetic approval, moral approval, pleasure, sexual desire, benevolence, or sympathy. McTaggart stresses that the sense of union with the other is so strong that it approaches the sense I have of my bond with myself; however, he also insists that love must be felt for *another* person and always in a way that respects each person’s uniqueness and individuality; if love results in a blending of the two, then the relation is no longer the union of two persons but some other relation of identity. In the early works McTaggart also stresses that through the emotional experience of love for another we come to regard the other as a subject and not just as a mere object or thing. This means that the lover values the beloved’s person’s qualities and all other objects in the world for the sake of the beloved and not only relative to these qualities’ and objects’ importance to me. As such, we do not reduce the other to a mere means to our own ends (as we might in seeking ‘comprehension’ or ‘satisfaction’); rather, through this emotional state we are able to appreciate the other as an intrinsically valuable unique. The emotional states of loving (and

² His criteria and method of classification bears important similarities to those employed by Hume, as I will show later in the chapter.

³ John M. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, Vol. II, Ed. C. D. Broad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), §464.

being loved) have non-instrumental value and their value is independent of the value of whatever causes the emotion and is also independent of any possible effects that might follow from it (for instance, my own pleasure or satisfaction, or that of the others).

The remainder of this first chapter focuses on three introductory topics that are necessary for understanding McTaggart's philosophical conception of love. First I will summarize some of the main aspects of McTaggart's general theory of psychology, placing special emphasis on his general theory of emotion. Next I will look at McTaggart's philosophical account of the 'person' in order to make sense of a core distinction that will play a central role throughout his discussion of love: the distinction between a 'person' and the 'qualities of a person.' Finally, I will outline McTaggart's methodology for describing and classifying different emotions, such as love. These three topics will provide the background needed for understanding the arguments McTaggart puts forward to support his claim that while the qualities of a person may cause love, they are never the object of love; the object of love is a person and not a person's qualities. These arguments will be the subject of the second chapter.

1.2 Love is an Emotion: Love in the Context of McTaggart's Theory of Psychology and Emotion

In order to understand the detailed and specific description of love that he provides, it is useful to summarize some of his main views about psychology. McTaggart's overall views on psychology changed over the course of his career, so it is useful to divide his views up into what I call the 'early works' and the 'later works.'

1.2.1 Love as an Emotion: The Early Works

In the early works, emotion is one of four kinds of conscious states; the other states are knowledge, volition, and feeling⁴. During this period, McTaggart describes knowledge and volition according to the relative 'disharmony' or non-correspondence between 'fact' and 'idea'⁵. Both knowledge-states and volition-states involve one term (fact or idea) that is normative and the other is judged according to the degree it approaches that norm. In more

⁴ "Volition" is meant to cover a broad range of conative terms, including 'desire' and 'wishing.'

⁵ John M. E. McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), §278. [A second edition was issued in 1918. The new addition only contains minor changes and some additional notes. The section numbers are identical in both editions. I will indicate the second edition in the note if I am referring to material only found there and not in the first edition.]

contemporary terms, knowledge and volition are distinguished by a kind of normative “direction of fit” account. States of knowing are those where 'facts' (objective states of affairs) are given priority and one's ideas (subjective representations) are 'condemned' insofar as they are in 'disharmony' with (or fail to correspond to) those facts. Volitional states of consciousness are those where 'ideas' are given priority and the facts about our 'environment' are condemned insofar as they fall short of the ideals. In each case the mind posits an 'ideal' unity between ideas and facts that is to be attained. Knowledge and volition not only report the degree of 'disharmony' between the two terms -- fact and idea -- but also motivate conscious agents towards resolving any existing disharmony between the two terms, as much as possible.

In addition to knowledge and volition, there is a third kind of conscious state. These are states of feeling. Feeling is divided into pleasure and pain. Pain is the feeling resulting from disharmony between fact and idea (in knowledge or volition) and pleasure is the feeling resulting from harmony between fact and idea (in knowledge or volition). Knowledge and volition are experienced as a “struggle towards a goal” whereas feeling is experienced as the “result” of a process.⁶ Every state of consciousness is accompanied by a state of pain or pleasure (neutral states are the result of an equilibrium of pleasure and pain, but not an absence of both).⁷ Feeling (considered at the conceptual level) does not refer to any object, but is “a pure self-reference of the subject.”⁸ However, McTaggart asserts that all consciousness has intentionality, and therefore we can never directly experience a pure and objectless feeling⁹. Instead, what we experience is an ‘emotion’ which McTaggart describes as “a state of consciousness tinged with feeling, or rather, since feeling is never quite absent, a state of consciousness, insofar as it is tinged with feeling.”¹⁰ An emotion is a non-reducible “concrete whole” constituting all three elements of consciousness: knowing, willing, and feeling. An emotion, however, is not a mere aggregate of these three elements; instead, these

⁶ John M. E. McTaggart. “The Further Determination of the Absolute,” in *Philosophical Studies* (Ed. S. V> Keeling (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1934), p. 217; McTaggart, *SHC*, § 267.

⁷ McTaggart, *FDA* 217.

⁸ McTaggart, *FDA* 251; McTaggart, *SHC* §281.

⁹ For McTaggart, consciousness is always a “consciousness of [intentional object].” If we did have pure feelings we could not be aware of them. “It [feeling] has nothing to do with objects at all, but is a pure self-reference of the subject. And this, while it makes it in some ways the most intimate and personal part of our lives, prevents it from ever being self-subsistent, or filling consciousness by itself. For our self-consciousness only develops by bringing itself into relation with its not-self. ... Feeling therefore is only an element in states of consciousness, not a state by itself. We are conscious of relations to an object, and in this consciousness we see an element of pleasure or pain. But pleasure or pain by themselves can never make the content of our mind.” *SHC* §281.

¹⁰ McTaggart, *FDA* 251; McTaggart, *SHC* §282.

elements form a concrete whole.¹¹ In McTaggart's technical language this means that one can isolate one of these elements of an emotional experience in reflective thought, but these aspects of the emotional experience cannot be adequately understood apart from the whole experience of which they are a part. It also means that the emotion as a whole cannot be adequately described by merely listing its parts. There is some aspect of the experience as a whole that is not present in the parts considered as members of a set. For any emotion we are cognizant of an object and recognize it to be more or less consistent with our desires. Also, we are conscious of the pleasure or pain resulting from the extent to which knowledge or volition has succeeded in establishing a harmony between fact and idea.¹²

When the object of awareness is another person, when we perceive that we are in some kind of ideal harmonious relation with that person, when we experience our ideals as fulfilled or satisfied in such harmony, and when the combination of these cognitive and conative experiences result in a feeling of pleasure, the emotion is love. The ideal (or perfect) form of love will result from a perfect epistemic and volitional harmony between myself and others. All of our current experiences of love fall short of this ideal, but they all point towards it. In the early works, love is not differentiated from or classified among other emotions; instead, emotional love is always contrasted with states of knowledge and volition that are related to another person. So, though the early works identify how it is that emotions like love are distinct from other kinds of mental states, they do not help us understand what makes love unique from other emotions. This is only addressed in the later works.

To summarize, in the early works love is an emotion and so is a state of consciousness involving three aspects. The first is some kind of cognition of an object that will be the target of the loving emotion as a whole. The second will be a desire for the continued existence of the object. Finally, there will be a pleasant feeling that accompanies the cognitive and conative elements. Each aspect (cognition, conation, and feeling) is related to the other two elements and all three form an emotion that is not merely reducible to a mere aggregate of its parts. In contemporary terms this means that love has intentionality. Love is not an objectless feeling or bare mood, but rather it is an emotion that is always directed towards an object.

¹¹ McTaggart, *FDA* 251; McTaggart, *SHC* §283.

¹² McTaggart, *FDA* 251; McTaggart, *SHC* § 283

1.2.2 Love as an Emotion: The Later Works

In the *Nature of Existence (Vol. II)*, McTaggart maintains again that love is an emotion, but he changes his understanding of human psychology. As a result, what he means by an ‘emotion’ is slightly different in this work than in his earlier works. While the details surrounding his theory about mental states (including emotions) changed, it seems that the changes adopted did not significantly affect his overall views about love. Nonetheless, the later account provides a clearer and more positive description of what the experience of love involves and it more clearly delineates love from all other emotions.

McTaggart continues to maintain that all mental states have intentionality: each kind of mental state presents an object (in its own unique way) and each presumes a subject-object distinction. Also, McTaggart retains his view that cognitive, volitional, emotional, and hedonic (pleasant and painful ‘feeling’) states are basic psychic components¹³. Yet despite these general similarities, how each state is described and related to the other states is very different from what is found in the early works. One important development is that feelings are now treated as independent forms of experience and as having intentionality; this contrasts with earlier works where feelings are recognized as ‘objectless’ aspects of conscious experiences (that can be conceived abstractly in thought), but that cannot be experienced independently of cognitive or conative states having an object. Feelings are no longer merely an aspect of emotions; instead they are a special form of consciousness analogous to emotions (and volitions). Feelings are no longer described as a result of any other conscious state, though experience may show that certain feelings may be discovered to be concomitant with certain kinds of conscious states.

Another development is the much expanded account of the nature of cognitive conscious states in the *Nature of Existence*. In the later work, McTaggart employs the term ‘cogitations’ to cover five kinds of cognitive states. These are¹⁴:

¹³ McTaggart, *NE2*, §481.

¹⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §§406, 420-423, 450-541; also, C. D. Broad, *Examination of McTaggart’s Philosophy*, Vol. II, Part II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp. 20-21.

- 1) *perceptions* (direct awareness of substances *as having* characteristics)
- 2) *awareness of characteristics* (direct awareness of some qualities of a substance and of some relations of that substance to other substances)
- 3) *judgements* (propositions that are asserted to be true or false)
- 4) *assumptions* (propositions without any assertion about truth: it may be either true or false)
- 5) *imagings* (direct awareness of a substance as having characteristics without asserting that the substance exists: it may exist or not-exist).

All five kinds of cognitive states have intentionality: they are all various forms of ‘*consciousness of x.*’ Cogitations cannot be ‘defined’ by reducing them to more basic components, but each is distinguishable by the kind of object it has (a particular substance/quality or a proposition) and as to whether or not it presents that object as affirmed or denied (existent – non-existent or true – false), or whether it remains neutral about the existential or truth status of the proposition. It is not necessary to go over the distinctions in detail here. The main advantage to adding these distinctions is that it allows McTaggart to describe conscious states that have a ‘hypothetical’ orientation and states that have non-existent or fictitious objects. Cogitations, of any kind, form the fundamental basis for all forms of consciousness in the later work. If a state does not ‘contain’ a cogitation (how a cogitation can be ‘contained’ will be discussed next) it cannot be one of the elements of philosophical psychology.¹⁵

Next, McTaggart describes what he calls “volitions”¹⁶ and emotions. Like cogitations, volitions and emotions cannot be defined but only described. Volitions cover all conative states such as wishing, desiring, and willing, but, unlike cogitations, McTaggart does not think that volitions can be divided into species or natural kinds.¹⁷ There are, however, a number of species and sub-species of emotions, but he does not claim to provide a complete account of them or their relations in this work. He presents two major species of emotions: liking-repugnance and approval-disapproval. He also mentions at least twenty-four different emotions.

¹⁵ In *The Further Determination of the Absolute*, McTaggart does acknowledge the possible existence of non-conscious states. It is not clear from these works whether or not he rejects or accepts the existence of non-conscious or sub-conscious mental states. In *NE2*, §802, he discusses unconscious states and makes reference to Freud’s work. In *NE2*, §803, he ends up denying any existence to them in ultimate reality, but the question seems to remain open for the ‘pre-final’ stages of reality.

¹⁶ McTaggart, *NE2*, Chapter XL, §§444-454.

¹⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §455 “The first point to be noticed is that emotion has many species. This is a marked difference from volition, which has no such species. Cogitation, indeed, is divided into species ... But there are only five of these, and no one, as far as I know, would suggest that they do not cover the whole extent of cogitation, or that any of them are not fundamental.”

McTaggart provides an account of the nature of volition that he attributes to G. E. Moore's review of August Messer's book *Empfindung und Denken*.¹⁸ In the review, Moore describes Messer's account of the relation of volitional and emotional acts to cognitive acts ('acts' = mental states having intentionality). Moore observes that on Messer's account (and he thinks also on Brentano's and Husserl's views) volitional and emotional mental states do not just simultaneously accompany cognitive acts; instead, volitional and emotional acts are "founded upon" cognitive acts.¹⁹ Such states are not mere aggregates of cognitions and emotions/volitions; rather volitions and emotions, though having a cognitive aspect as part of their essence, are organic wholes that cannot be decomposed into more basic and independent parts. Because volitions and emotions are founded upon cognitive acts, they have intentionality: they are always an *emotion towards* or a *desire for* some object. For instance, if we compare a pure cogitation and desire that are both directed at the same object, what is different is the *way* in which the object is presented in each. What is 'added' to the cognitive foundation in volitional or emotional consciousness is a qualitative aspect. It is this "quality" that is indefinable and that makes the experience as a whole a desire or volition. C. D. Broad describes this as "To *desire x* simply is to *cogitate x desiringly*,"²⁰ and analogously we can say that to have an *emotion towards x* is to *cogitate x emotively*. On McTaggart's later view, emotions are analogous to and independent of volitions.²¹

An important implication of McTaggart's psychological theory in the later works is that cogitations can be seen to have a kind of priority or independence that volitions and emotions lack. Volitions and emotions cannot exist apart from cognitions, but it is possible (at least conceptually) to have cognition of an object that does not have volitional or emotional qualities.²² Another important implication is that whenever we have a cognitive awareness of P, we can also simultaneously experience desires and emotions towards the same object. For instance McTaggart observes that we can simultaneously feel hope and

¹⁸ NE2, §446. The works referred to by McTaggart are: G. E. Moore. "Review: *Empfindung und Denken* by August Messer," *Mind* 19.75 (July 1910): 395-409; August Messer. *Empfindung und Denken* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1908).

¹⁹ G. E. Moore. "Messer," 400-401.

²⁰ C. D. Broad. *Examination of McTaggart's Philosophy*, Vol. II, Part I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 89-90. It is noteworthy that Broad expresses the quality adverbially. This seems to be the most accurate formulation given that mental states are always *intentional acts* wherein the mind is not merely passive, but contributes to the presentation of the object. I will also employ the adjectival form (emotional cogitation or volitional cogitation) to describe the quality at times, but in these cases the words 'cogitation' or 'cognition' should be understood as gerunds and not as mere nouns.

²¹ McTaggart, NE2, Chapter XLI, §§455-481.

²² McTaggart, NE2, §446 and §456.

desire for some imagined future event.²³ We can also identify certain volitional and emotional qualities that go together; for instance, love is often accompanied by a benevolent desire and also sympathetic emotion.²⁴ Such conative-cogitations or sympathetic-cogitations would not be internally (or essentially) connected to cogitating Bob lovingly. At best the connection of ‘desiring Bob’s good’ and ‘sympathizing with Bob’ with ‘loving Bob’ could only be established through observation and perhaps some mechanism of association. While all of these states would be founded upon the ‘same’ cognitive act (‘consciousness of Bob’), each act is separate and non-reducible to the others. McTaggart strongly emphasizes that love is distinct from sympathy and benevolence and ought not to be confused with it, even though we often do (and perhaps ought to) experience all of three towards the same person.

Feelings are the third type of quality that can be assigned to cogitations. As mentioned earlier, pleasure and pain are no longer conceived (even abstractly) as states that can lack intentionality, as was the case in the early works. As qualities of cogitations, they are presumably always *feelings of x*, just as emotions and volitions always have intentionality. Also, feelings cannot be qualities attributed to emotions or volitions. They can only be applied to cogitations. He states:

They [pleasure and pain] are not emotions, but the class of which pleasure and pain are members – sometimes called the class of feelings – is analogous to emotions and volitions. To be pleasurable or to be painful are *qualities* which can belong to states of cogitation and *only* to states of cogitation. When a state of cogitation has the quality of being pleasurable, it is a state of pleasure; when it has the quality of being painful, it is a state of pain.²⁵

Also, in regards to the causes of pain or pleasure, there is no mention of the existence of harmony or disharmony between idea and fact as there was in the earlier work. A feeling quality (pleasantness or painfulness) can be added to any cogitation regardless of whether the cogitation of an object also already has an emotional or volitional quality. It is therefore possible to have an experience of love for someone and this could *also* be experienced as either pleasant or painful (perhaps depending on the circumstances). A feeling felt towards an awareness of a feeling is described as *sympathetic pain or sympathetic pleasure* (sympathetic

²³ McTaggart, *NE2*, §457: “A cogitation can have both the quality of being a volition and the quality of being an emotion. I can simultaneously hope for and desire some future event, or love *X* and acquiesce in his existence. And there seems no reason to suppose that in such a case there must be two separate cogitations of the event, or of *X*.”

²⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §460.

²⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, § 481. [My emphasis.]

feeling) by McTaggart.²⁶ Sympathetic pain can occur when contemplating the pain of another and sympathetic pleasure can occur when contemplating the pleasure of another. Interestingly, McTaggart claims that sympathetic feelings that take another person's feelings as their object are only one kind of sympathy. His more general formulation of sympathetic feelings of pleasure and pain take the object of the feeling as the "good in others" or the "evil in others."²⁷ He states:

But experience shows us that we often feel pleasure in contemplating *good in others*, which is *not itself pleasure*, and pain in contemplating *evil in others*, which is *not itself pain*. It is convenient to include the pleasure and pain of this latter contemplation under the title of sympathetic pleasure and pain.²⁸

It seems, therefore, that the object of feelings can also be the cognition of the properties of good and evil.

In summary, under the new psychological theory we can have four different kinds of mental states directed towards the same object **P**: a) cogitation of **P**; b) **P** cogitated volitionally; c) **P** cogitated emotionally; and d) **P** cogitated feelingly (pleasurably/painfully). Only cogitations can be experienced independently of any other mental states and the remaining mental states (volition, emotion, and feeling) are all dependent on a *cogitation of P* but independent of each other. If we have a cognition of **P** that also has some of these three qualities, then there is just one experience of **P** and not a conscious experience for the cogitation plus an experience for each qualified cogitation. In this sense, it seems that the experience of **P** is a whole and not a mere aggregate. We can abstract the bare cogitation and each of the qualities of the cogitation from the experience, but presumably we only have a single unified holistic experience of **P**. Yet, it is important to highlight that in order to have an emotional quality, it is not necessary that a cogitation also have a volitional quality and a feeling quality. The independence of emotion from volition and feeling (though not from cogitation) makes the account of emotion in the later works essentially different from that of the earlier works. So in summary, McTaggart's taxonomy of psychological elements in the later works is as follows:

²⁶ McTaggart, *NE2*, §898.

²⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §898.

²⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §898.

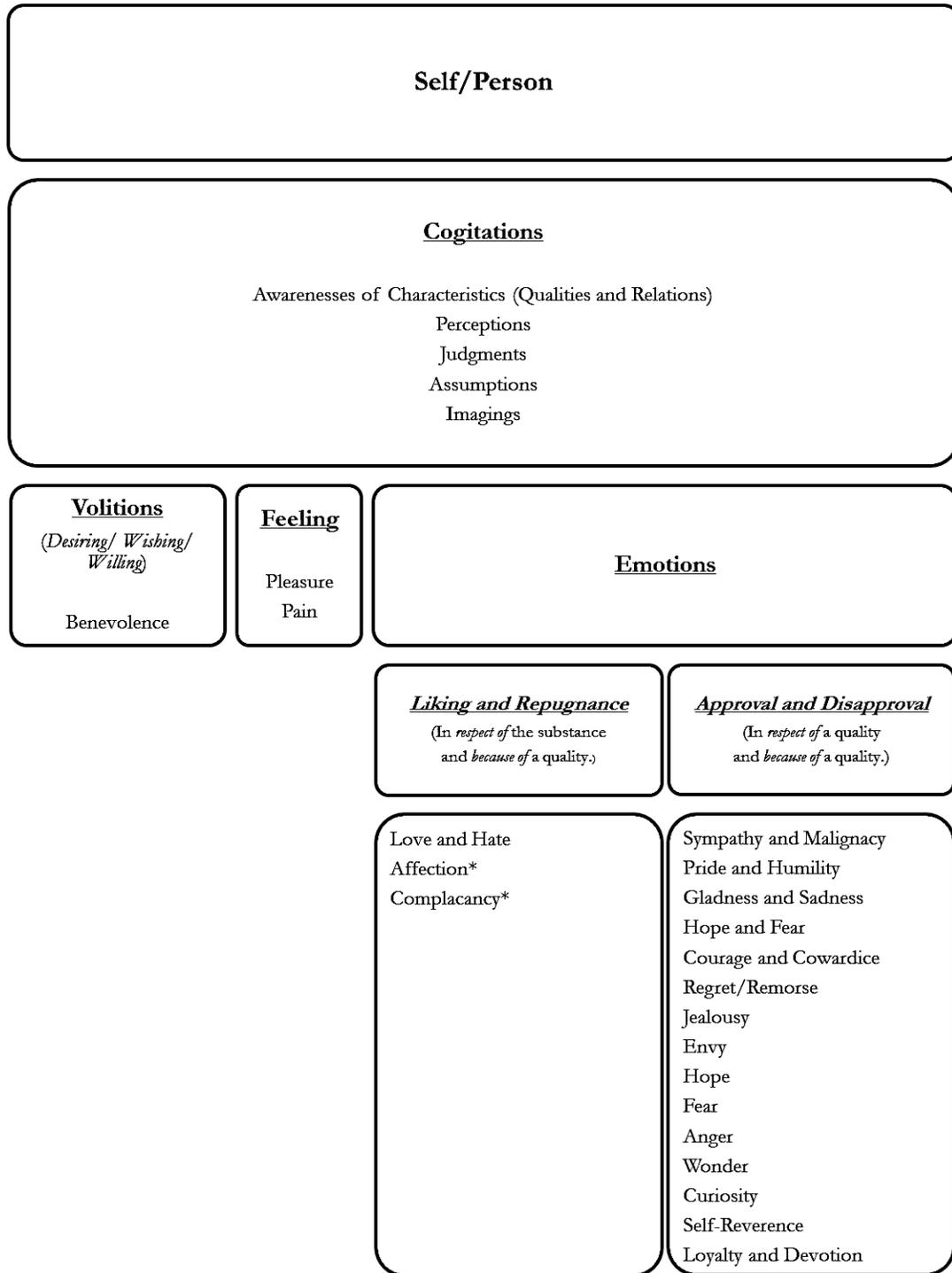


Figure 1: Taxonomy of Psychological Elements in McTaggart's Later Works

*McTaggart does not explicitly state that these emotions are in the category of liking-repugnance. However, they seem to be directed towards the substances (persons or their conscious states) themselves and not in respect of any of their qualities.

1.2.3 The Theories Compared: Advantages and Disadvantages

The psychic elements (cognitions, volitions, emotions, and feelings) are related to each other in importantly different ways than in the earlier works. Elements are no longer described with reference to harmony (or normative direction of fit) between idea and fact. Emotional states are no longer described as containing volitional states and so there is no longer a direct connection between emotion and desire. In other words, there is no longer an internal/intrinsic connection between “having a particular emotion towards an object” and “having certain desires towards it” because emotions no longer contain desires as one of their elements. Overall, therefore, each kind of act must be connected externally to other acts. Also, since feeling is not part of emotion (as it was in the earlier works), at most pleasantness/painfulness can accompany an emotional quality as an additional *sui generis* quality in a holistic awareness of an object (cogitation) having these other qualities. So too, therefore, feelings are only externally linked to emotions in the later works (and not internally as in the early works).

Each theory of emotions has advantages and disadvantages. The early view's direction of fit account has the advantage of providing a clear way to distinguish different kinds of psychic states. Also, direction-of-fit accounts have some currency in contemporary discussions in philosophy of mind (with some reservations of course). If one believes that emotions and desires are fundamentally different kinds of conscious states, this model will be attractive. On the later view, however, it is very difficult to understand how emotions and volitions are essentially different kinds of mental state. Each just appears to be a pro-attitude towards an object and so it is difficult to understand how these are fundamentally different ways of cogitating an object. While each particular desire or emotion is a qualitatively unique way of cogitating certain objects, it is not clear what exactly it would be that all ways of cogitating emotionally would have in common that no ways of cogitating desiringly would not (and vice versa). For some theorists this is not necessarily a problem. During the late nineteenth century some major philosophers, such as Franz Brentano, thought emotions and desires were really just one kind of conscious state: a pro- or con- attitude taken up towards the object's existence.²⁹ It is not clear what McTaggart would lose by collapsing the

²⁹ Franz Brentano. *The Origin of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong* (Tr. R. Chisholm and E. H. Schneewind. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), §§19-23, pp. 14-18; Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*

distinction between emotions and desires in the later works; he could still distinguish between benevolence and love, for instance, by pointing out that each has its own qualitatively unique way (desiringly or emotionally) of taking up a pro-attitude towards an object. McTaggart's later theory of emotions might actually be best understood as describing desires and emotions as basically being the same kind of conscious state.

The early account also seems to provide a promising way to explain the affinity between certain kinds of conscious states. For instance, love, sympathy, benevolence, and pleasure all seem to be related in a non-superficial way. They are often experienced together, and the experience of each seems to 'fit' with the experience of the others. However, this apparent theoretical advantage may come at too high a price in terms of its coherence with lived experience. It is clearly possible for these emotions to occur apart from each other and even in the presence of one of the negative versions of the other states. For instance, it (unfortunately) is possible to experience love for someone and yet still experience this love as painful. It is also possible to feel love for someone and at the same time desire that the other suffer. McTaggart, correctly I believe, describes such experiences as "morbid."³⁰ Luckily, such combinations are rare and most people would surely agree that ideally they should not occur together; nonetheless, they are possible. On the early account it seems impossible (or at least very difficult) to explain such combinations if love is the result of a harmony between my desires related to the beloved and my knowledge of the beloved. The later view, however, establishes connections between these states inductively, and so such counter-examples to our normal experiences (or normative ideals) of combinations of conscious states do not themselves constitute a threat to such connections.

In his recent book entitled *Love, Friendship, & the Self*, Bennett Helm has made what I take to be a very convincing case for moving away from direction of fit accounts insofar as they perpetuate a false "cognitive-conative divide" in our understanding of psychology; instead, he proposes an account of conscious states that focuses on "rationally structured patterns of emotion and desires" to explain caring, valuing, and loving.³¹ I am also sympathetic to the idea that emotions and desires may be fundamentally more similar than

(Tr. A. C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell, and L. McAlister. London: Routledge, 1995), Book II: Chs. VI-IX, pp. 150-210.

³⁰ McTaggart, *NE2*, §463.

³¹ Bennett Helm. *Love, Friendship, & the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), passim. (See pp. 40-46 for a synopsis of his overall argument and resulting theory.)

different (there is something attractive about the coherence involved in thinking about desire and emotion at pro/con-attitudes and thinking about value according to the "fitting attitude account" for instance). These, however, are not decisive arguments in favour of one view over the other. The good news, it seems, is that McTaggart is able to preserve the core elements of his understanding of love on either theory of emotion, though each theory allows him to emphasize different aspects. One advantage to McTaggart's account of love, therefore, is that it provides options to contemporary philosophers who are looking to expand on various kinds of existing theories of emotions. Insofar as understanding the context of the larger theories of emotion at play will help us to understand McTaggart's account of love, it was important to review them here.

One thing that is constant between both theories of emotions, however, is the emphasis on the cognitive aspect of emotions and their structure of intentionality. Claiming that emotions, such as love, have structures of intentionality has important implications for understanding how emotions can be incorporated into ethics (a topic that will be explored at length later on in the dissertation).

First, emotions, being essentially cognitive, can be influenced by our knowledge and beliefs. This means that we are able to assess (approve or condemn) an emotional response to a given object based on whether or not our beliefs about the nature of its object are correct. If the nature of a particular emotion is determined by what kind of thing we believe the object to be (or by the way the object is presented cognitively in my awareness of it), we can say that an emotion is appropriate or not depending on whether or not the object is what we believe it to be.³² For example, if we assume that 'respect' is an emotion that is properly directed towards beings that have rational agency (have the ability to adopt ends and select means for attaining those ends) then we can condemn any instance of respect if it turns out that a particular object of respect is not (upon further reflection) the kind of being that has rational agency. For instance, I might mistakenly believe that my fish has rational agency (perhaps I believe that it *planned* to jump from its bowl into a nearby glass of water) and so feel respect for it. If, however I come to realize that my belief was false (that fish cannot make such *plans*), then I can condemn such an instance of 'respect' as inappropriate.

A second implication is that even if our beliefs about the object of our emotion are correct, we might be able to condemn emotions that are not directed at the right kind of

³² McTaggart, *NE2*, §468.

object for that emotion. This kind of emotion is not condemned as ill-founded; instead it is condemned as *inappropriate* for its particular object. Perhaps, despite knowing that my fish lacks rational agency, I still feel respect for it. While our beliefs can influence our emotions, it is still possible that certain emotional states (especially if they have become embedded as habits or dispositions towards certain kinds of objects) can persist even where we know/believe that the object is inappropriate. So here, the implication is that emotions can be condemned according to their own nature.

A third implication of this cognitive account of emotions is that emotions are not merely private or subjective (though in terms of their ‘what it is like’-ness or *qualia* they may be). Because emotions are structured intentionally towards an object and are differentiated in terms of the way the object is presented (e.g., positively or negatively) we can describe our emotions towards other people in terms of their objects and modes of presentation and other people can identify emotional experiences of their own that share those features. If emotions are understood in this way, as McTaggart does, a fourth implication is that emotions could play a central role within an ethical theory without necessarily making the ethical theory ‘non-cognitive’ in the contemporary sense of the term.

Now that emotions have been distinguished from and related to other kinds of psychic elements, we are almost ready to proceed to McTaggart’s account of what makes love a unique kind of emotional state of consciousness. In order to do this he will identify the unique and essential causes and objects of love. He will argue that love is an emotion that takes a pro-orientation towards a person that involves a sense of intimate union with that person. The sense of union is arrived at by means of the lover’s awareness of certain qualities of the beloved person (perhaps beauty, shared experiences, courage, etc.). Such qualities however are never the object of love, but only its (proximate) causes. Before looking at the arguments McTaggart uses to support these claims, it is useful to consider his distinction between a ‘person’ and ‘the qualities of a person,’ since most of what follows rests upon it.

1.3 The Core Distinction: “Person” vs. “Qualities of a Person”

McTaggart had a highly developed ontology and he also presented a number of long and complicated arguments related to what a ‘person’ is and how we can have knowledge of

selves (either myself or others).³³ It is beyond the scope of this project to consider all of his arguments in detail and so I will merely highlight the aspects of his theory most relevant to this dissertation. My primary aim is to clarify for the reader what McTaggart means when he makes a distinction between a “person” and the “qualities of a person.” He relies on this distinction throughout all of his discussions of love and it shows up in various statements such as the following:

And my contention is that while love may be because of qualities, it is never in respect of qualities.³⁴

And:

Love is for the person, and not for his qualities, nor is it for him in respect of his qualities. It is for him.³⁵

It is very important, therefore, to get a sense of what he means by each phrase before continuing.

According to McTaggart, a person is a special kind of substance. He defines a substance as that “which has qualities without being itself a quality.”³⁶ Qualities can also be attributed to, or predicated of, other qualities and the same quality can be attributed to more than one substance or quality. Therefore, it is not merely ‘bearing qualities’ that makes something a substance; it must also be something that cannot be attributed to, or predicated of, something else. Nonetheless, substances are the primary bearers of all qualities. Substances can be in relation with other substances and so ‘relations’ can also be attributed to/predicated of substances.³⁷ McTaggart calls anything that can be attributed to a substance – whether a quality or a relation – a “characteristic.”³⁸ One could reformulate the definition of substance, therefore, and say ‘a substance is that which bears characteristics but is not itself a characteristic.’ McTaggart also believed that some substances can have parts which

³³ McTaggart, “Personality,” in *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Volume IX: Munda—Phrygians (Ed. James Hastings, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1917), pp. 773-781; and, McTaggart, *NE2* (§§381-404).

³⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §465.

³⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, §468.

³⁶ John M. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, Vol. I. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), §65.

³⁷ McTaggart, *NE1*, §79-80.

³⁸ McTaggart, *NE1*, §87.

are also substances. These are called “compound substances,” as opposed to “simple substances” which have no substance-parts.³⁹

Each substance has its own unique ‘nature,’ and the nature of a substance is the whole containing all of the qualities, relations, and parts of a substance. McTaggart then proposes what he calls the principle of “Dissimilarity of the Diverse.”⁴⁰ The principle holds that each substance has its own unique nature: no two substances can have identical natures. This means that no two substances can be wholes resulting from the exact same parts and characteristics united in the exact same way. A substance is the unique and particular kind of whole that it is (it has the ‘nature’ that it has) because of the unique way in which its parts and characteristics are united.⁴¹ According to McTaggart, a person is a compound substance comprising various conscious states (each of which is also a substance). In order to understand what exactly this means, it is useful to understand two theories about the person that McTaggart rejects.

John Knox, Jr. understands McTaggart’s conception of the self as a rejection of two dominant theories of the person: the “Pure Ego” Theory and the “Bundle” Theory.⁴² On the Pure Ego theory, the self is considered to be some entity that unites a series of experiences, but it also holds that none of these experiences are included *in* the self. The self remains separate or transcendent from its experiences. It possesses these experiences, but the self does not comprise experiences. In a way, one might say that the ‘ego’ is merely an ‘experience-bearer’ (though an ‘active’ bearer) and is merely externally related to its experiences in a way analogous to how substances are externally related to their qualities (substances *possess* qualities, but are not themselves qualities nor are they made up of qualities). In other words, on the Pure Ego view, conscious states are analogous to qualities in relation to the ego. On this theory, the self is also never directly experienced; we come to know its existence only through inference (i.e., it is posited as a necessary condition for the

³⁹ McTaggart, *NE1*, §127. Each compound part of a substance will have a corresponding characteristic of a substance: if P is a part of W, then ‘contains P as a part’ will be a characteristic of W. Yet P ≠ ‘contains P as a part.’

⁴⁰ McTaggart, *NE1*, §§94, 99. McTaggart acknowledges that his principle is similar to, and inspired by, Leibniz’s principle of “Identity of Indiscernible.” He rejects Leibniz’s name, however, because “the principle does not assert that there are indiscernibles which are identical, but that there is nothing which is which is indiscernible from anything else.” (§99)

⁴¹ McTaggart, *NE1*, §144.

⁴² John Knox, Jr. “McTaggart’s Theory of the Self” *Idealistic Studies* 11.1 (Jan. 1981): 151-166. The summaries that follow are based upon Knox’s descriptions of them, but also go beyond what he says. While I think that what he says of each theory is true, I also think that he overlooks some important aspects of each kind of theory, aspects McTaggart distances himself from (in addition to those aspects Knox mentions).

possibility of unified experience or for personal identity). Kant and Green are often thought (accurately or not)⁴³ to formulate this kind of theory of self. This theory has the advantage of being able to offer a way to account for personal identity through processes of change. What a person *really is* remains unaffected by change because of its ‘purity’ (it is separate from what is changeable and therefore does not include anything changeable within it). One of the major problems for this theory is to explain how it is that the ego is related to the changing experiences. While one might be able to accept its unifying role, it is hard to understand how it is that the true self merely unifies without being affected or formed by the experiences themselves. Time and change seem to be too wrapped up with our pre-theoretical conceptions of selfhood, personhood, or identity to be excluded by the theory so problematically.

The alternative account, the Bundle Theory, is most famously associated with Hume, though as McTaggart rightly points out in many of his works it is also prominent among Eastern religious and philosophical thought such as Buddhism.⁴⁴ On this account the self is a mere collection, aggregate, or set of mental states. The mental states are ultimately real and insofar as they are grouped according to some criteria these groups are *named* selves. One common way of grouping mental states is according to some kind of psychological connection (perhaps causal).⁴⁵ On these views the self is the ‘result’ or the ‘label’ of the group of ontologically prior mental states, but it does not have any independent existence apart from these. If one is aware of the group (the parts and the appropriate kind of relation they have to each other) then one has a direct and adequate experience of the self. Since the self is nothing beyond the mere collection or bundle of states, if you know the bundle, then there is nothing else to know. The advantage of this theory is that it does not need to posit any problematic or mysterious metaphysical entities like the “pure ego.” The theory also makes change an essential part of what it means to be a person. So long as from each moment to the next there is a sufficient amount of psychological connectedness, it seems to be able to offer a plausible account of diachronic identity. However, the debate gets murky

⁴³ T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Ed. A. C. Bradley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), §100: Green, for instance, seems to explicitly reject the Pure Ego view in this section.

⁴⁴ McTaggart, *SHC*, §44. For a detailed study of the similarities between McTaggart’s arguments and conclusions with those of Asian Religious and Philosophical traditions see: Robert Leet Patterson, “McTaggart’s Contribution to the Philosophy of Religion,” *Philosophy* 6.23 (July 1931): pp. 323-335.

⁴⁵ Derek Parfit endorses ‘psychological connectedness’ when outlining his contemporary version of this kind of account. *Reasons and Persons*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), Chapters 11-13. For the conclusion see: pp. 302-304.

when trying to set that minimal level of stability. Also, these theories are subject to the problem that Green identified: if selves are *derived from* collections of fundamentally basic mental states, then such states must pre-exist any self that we normally assume experiences them; but, how can there be a mental state that does not presuppose some pre-existing conscious subject that undergoes it?⁴⁶ There is clearly something odd about ‘unattached’ or ‘subject-less’ mental states existing independently of any self that are then somehow grouped together (by what?) to create a self, so it seems that mental states presuppose some self that *has* or *experiences* them.⁴⁷

McTaggart rejects both of these views because each ultimately posits a mere abstraction as an ultimate existent reality. The British Idealists, as a group, were generally wary of what they called “abstractions,” and McTaggart was no different. For these Idealists, we can (and do) directly experience wholes upon which our minds are able (consciously or pre-consciously) to discover or impose distinctions within the whole. These elements are abstractions from the whole and though they can be distinguished in thought from the whole in which they were experienced, they can never be experienced apart from the whole nor can they exist independently of the whole. An example of such a case is the distinction between the concave and convex sides of a curve. What is given in experience is a curve. Upon this single experience, the mind distinguishes a side where the line curves towards itself and a side where the line curves away from itself. According to these thinkers, the mind does not assemble two lines (separately experienced) into one curve, but rather abstracts two *aspects* of a whole single experience of the curve. Though a convex line can be distinguished from a concave line, the idea of a convex line will always imply the idea of a concave line and ‘convex’ cannot be adequately conceived independently of ‘concave.’ A major philosophical error that all British Idealists seek to identify and to avoid is positing abstractions as independently existing parts. While most British Idealists tend more towards the Pure Ego Theory over the Bundle Theory, almost all would reject either theory on its own because

⁴⁶ Green, *PE*, Book I (passim): especially: §§9, 15-18, 46, 55-65; Book II, §§85-86, 116-117. Also see: David Brink *Perfectionism and the Common Good*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 8-17 (especially p. 16); W. J. Mander, *British Idealism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 89-96; Geoffrey Thomas, *The Moral Philosophy of T. H. Green* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 130-135.

⁴⁷ McTaggart explicitly denies the possibility of ‘impersonal’ or subject-less mental states in “Personality,” pp. 779a-780a and *NE2*, §400. In the “Personality” article this assertion is considered an ‘ultimate truth’ that cannot be proven, but it is more certain the more one comes to clearly understand what experience is.

each takes an abstracted element of experience (the conscious ego or conscious states) and posits it as an independently existing entity.⁴⁸

Knox argues that McTaggart proposes a third view that is a kind of synthesis of elements of both.⁴⁹ He calls this view the “Substance Theory” and describes it as follows:

The remaining alternative would be for McTaggart to agree with the bundle theorist that experiences are parts of the self which is said to ‘have’ them, but to agree with the pure ego theorist that ... [selves] – the fact of their individuality as selves – are determined by no quality or relation or combination of qualities and relations, but are instead ultimate. The notion of an ultimate particularity, a particularity which is not grounded in qualitative uniqueness... A view of the self such as that which I am proposing for consideration could be called a ‘substance’ view; for selves are to be distinguished from the totality of their qualities and from their separate experiences, and furthermore are to possess ‘an individuality apart from their qualities,’ in McTaggart’s phrase. [No reference given by the author.] But it would not be the pure ego theory. According to that theory, the self is the inner core which ‘has’ its experiences, but which does not include them. On the present view, the self *is* the experiences – but the experiences as parts of a whole whose unity and individuality are, as ultimate, not explicable in terms of the fact that the whole possesses certain universal characteristics.⁵⁰

The substance theory, therefore, argues that a person is a compound substance comprising the ‘conscious self/subject’ as one part and conscious states as the remaining parts. The ‘conscious self’ is not reducible to the mere sum of experiences (the bundle) nor is it – on its own – the person itself (pure ego). Conscious subjectivity and its conscious states can be distinguished conceptually, but they exist as correlative aspects of a single substance: the person. Making the “consciousness” or “subject” a part of the person-substance helps him to avoid the problems he found in the two alternative theories. He avoids Green’s objection

⁴⁸ Green, *PE*, §100: In this section Green rejects “a mysterious abstract entity which you call the self of a man apart from all his particular feelings, desires, and thoughts – all the experiences of his inner life” (my underlining). F. H. Bradley is an exception here insofar as he seems to have only offered criticisms of theories of the self and denies that the self is real in any ultimate sense. See *Appearance and Reality*, 2nd Edition (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1897) Chapters IX-XII.

⁴⁹ He also suggests that McTaggart tends more towards the Bundle View, than the Pure Ego view. I am not totally convinced by Knox’s conclusions because he seems to exclusively consider the account in the Nature of Existence and makes no mention of the two Chapters in Studies of Hegelian Cosmology that directly consider the concept of ‘personality’ (“Chapter II: Human Immortality” and “Chapter III: The Personality of the Absolute.” Also relevant are “Chapter VII: The Conception of Society as an Organism” and finally “Chapter IX: The Further Determination of the Absolute.”), and also completely overlooks McTaggart’s entry on “Personality” in *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1917), pp. 773-781. On the whole, however, I think that Knox sufficiently captures the general outline of McTaggart’s positive theory of the self (the so-called “Substance Theory”) for the purposes of this section.

⁵⁰ Knox, “Self,” 159-60.

to the Bundle Theory insofar as he is not positing conscious states capable of existing independently of a conscious self; though conscious states are parts of the self, they can only exist in relation to the conscious subject that is *also* a part of the self. He avoids the problems of the Pure Ego theory by denying that the conscious subject is a substance that merely bears thoughts (conceived as analogous to attributes) but is not itself affected by them; instead the conscious subject is a part of the person-substance and conscious states are also parts of the same person-substance. The “ego” is not a transcendent unaffected entity; instead, it is an intimately and dynamically embedded part of a whole person-substance that is, as a whole, constantly changing. A ‘person,’ therefore, is 1) a whole compound substance comprising conscious subjectivity and conscious states, and 2) the bearer of characteristics (qualities or relations). The “nature” of a person consists in the whole comprising its parts, qualities, and relations.

Person-substances can be viewed from two perspectives. They can be viewed as involving a unifying activity that creates and unites some of its parts and characteristics or they can be viewed as *mere* bearers of characteristics and mere compounds of parts. The first perspective views the person as a “subject” and the second as an “object” (or quality-bearer).

McTaggart’s account of the person as a compound unity of consciousness and conscious states views the person-substance as a subject. The person involves a kind of activity that organizes experience by assigning various characteristics to various substances (including itself) and assesses what is experienced according to ideal representations of the way the world *ought* to be). The person can also formulate and pursue goals on the basis of their ideas and ideals, and so certain actions can be traced back to the person-substance as their source. To view a substance in this way is to see it as a “living unity.”⁵¹ Insofar as it (at least partly) causes some of its own parts and its own characteristics through its own activity, these parts and characteristics are understood to “manifest” the subject to which they are attributed.⁵² This is how each person experiences oneself from the first-person perspective

⁵¹ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 249.

⁵² McTaggart uses the word “manifest” in this sense in the earlier works, but in *The Nature of Existence* he seems to assign a much more restricted meaning to this term (see *NE1*, §§114-116, 144-166.) While he no longer uses this term, he clearly thinks that that person-substance does something like what I call ‘manifest’ here (*NE2*, §§381-404). Since I am not familiar with any other term to express this idea, I am opting to use ‘manifest’ in McTaggart’s earlier sense.

and this is the kind of nature that we assign to other person-substances we encounter in the world. He expresses this idea well in the following quotation:

It would seem then, that we have here reached a standpoint [other persons experienced as subjects] from which we are able to regard the object as it regards itself. We are able to regard the history and content of the object of a manifestation of its individuality, instead of being obliged to regard the individuality as a dead residuum in which the content inheres. We are able to see the object from within outwards, instead of from without inwards. And so its claims to independence and substantiality become no more alien or inharmonious to us than our own.⁵³

In this citation, we see that McTaggart strongly contrasts this approach to substance as “subject” with approaching a substance as an “object.”

The best way to understand how to approach a substance as an object is to contrast how we approach “subjects” with how we normally approach inanimate substances.⁵⁴ When we encounter other persons, we can perceive (or at least infer) the same kind of conscious activity in them as we experience in ourselves (perhaps through their use of language) and so we take up a perspective that regards them “from within [the subject] outward [the subject’s qualities].” But when we encounter an inanimate object, we only ever experience its various qualities, relations, and parts and assign these to an ‘object’ of experience (according to the various categories of the understanding); we have no experience of what (if anything) is underlying and uniting the parts and qualities we assign to it. In this way the perspective we take on such a substance is “from without [the qualities] inwards [the qualities’ object].” Viewed as a *mere* quality-bearer, a substance has no determinate content. Conceived abstractly apart from any of the characteristics it bears, there is no reason to think that it has any parts and there is nothing to distinguish it from any other “pure” characteristic bearer.

McTaggart does not deny that we can approach person-substances as objects, nor does he say that it is inappropriate to do so. Presumably, not all of a person’s characteristics or conscious parts are the result of the person’s own activity and so they cannot all be regarded as manifestations of a subject. We can and do describe people according to their repeatable qualities and according to their relations to other people and we also group and categorize people according to these characteristics. A person’s nature, as we have seen,

⁵³ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 258. [My emphasis.]

⁵⁴ I am purposefully avoiding discussion about substances that are animate but non-persons (i.e. animals) since these kinds of ‘substances’ occupy a kind of middle-ground, it seems, and therefore only introduce difficulties that are not necessary to consider here.

includes *all* of the qualities and relations assigned to the person. One important implication of this is that our relations to other persons and the world in general make up a central part of our nature in addition to our own unique set of personal experiences. Viewing the person according to her external relations to others helps to balance the very isolated and atomistic emphasis encountered when merely considering the person as a conscious subject with a completely unique perspective on the world (i.e., the tendency to subjective solipsism or monadistic solipsism). Our relations to others constitute who we are, and so our nature (or identity) is essentially social.⁵⁵ Viewing person-substances as objects (bearers of qualities) whose nature is (at least partially) constituted by its qualities and relations is important and necessary if one wants to discover the full nature of an individual person.

What is problematic, however, is viewing persons *merely* as objects. To do so is to view a person as we view merely physical substance: as a “dead residuum in which the content [qualities] inheres”⁵⁶ or a “dead abstraction.”⁵⁷ Part of the concern here is that viewing persons *merely* as objects means that one assigns merely instrumental value to the ‘substance’ and intrinsic value to the qualities. Physical substances are valuable insofar as they bear certain qualities that I deem good or useful; since they have no determinate content of their own, merely physical objects have no intrinsic value. He states,

Only their [other persons regarded as *mere* objects] external relations to ourselves and to one another have any significance for us. They [as subjects] are individuals, they live from within outwards. But as we find satisfaction in them, we are aware of them from without inwards, and their centre, instead of being a living unity is a dead abstraction. We fail, then ... to do justice to the independence of the object.⁵⁸

However, when persons are *also* regarded as subjects, those qualities (and parts) that are seen to be manifestations of the person’s ‘inner life’ are primarily valuable *because* they are manifestations in addition to any value they might have according to their relation to other goods or to someone else’s goals. Regarding the perspective that allows us to view persons as subjects (and not *merely* objects) He states,

⁵⁵ For instance: McTaggart, *SHC*, §192; McTaggart, “The Individualism of Value,” in *International Journal of Ethics*, 18.4 (July, 1908), p. 442; McTaggart, *NE2*, §791.

⁵⁶ McTaggart, *FDA* p. 258.

⁵⁷ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 249.

⁵⁸ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 259.

we do not, when it has been once reached, feel that the person is dear to us on account of his qualities, but rather that our attitude towards his qualities is determined by the fact that they belong to him.⁵⁹

This finally allows us to clarify the distinction that McTaggart makes between attitudes taken up towards “a person” as opposed to those taken up towards “a person’s qualities.” Instances of the first kind of attitude (such as love) are understood to be in respect of a subject-substance. They are aimed at a compound conscious substance comprising a “consciousness” (or “I”) with its own unique and unrepeatable first-person perspective and a completely unique set of conscious states experienced from that perspective. This compound person-substance continually grows by undergoing new experiences or creating new ideals or goals, but according to McTaggart it has a persisting diachronic unity and so the same substance persists through the addition of new parts and any changes in its qualities. Such substances are never experienced apart from their qualities; however, our approach to qualities when the person is the object of an attitude is always dependent on our interest in the person.

The attitudes that have a person’s qualities as their object do not necessarily treat a person as a *mere* object, but they are not directed at them *qua* subject. These attitudes pick out the qualities and assign value to the person due to its possessing these qualities. One does not experience any qualities of a person independent of any existing individual person, but our interest in the person – in terms of this kind of attitude – is always dependent on their possessing this characteristic. Presumably, we might even be interested in the fact that such a characteristic manifests the person, but again this will only be *because* we are interested in the characteristic itself and not the person. In these attitudes, my interest in the person is conditional on their having the characteristic that is the object of the attitude, whereas in the other kind of attitude (those directed to the ‘person’) the interest in any characteristics is conditional upon my interest in the subject.

Having discussed what McTaggart means when he distinguishes between “the person” and “the qualities of a person,” the final section of this chapter will outline McTaggart’s method for describing love according to its objects and causes.

⁵⁹ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 255; McTaggart, *SHC*, §295. The perspective McTaggart describes here is the perspective of love. As we shall see, McTaggart argues that love allows us to regard another as a subject (and not merely as a means) by being directed towards the person and not merely the person’s qualities.

1.4 Methodology: The Object-Cause Distinction: Describing and Differentiating the Emotion of Love

According to McTaggart, emotions are always experienced as having intentionality (i.e., are always directed towards an object), and they are always brought about by certain psychological and physical stimuli or causes. McTaggart classifies and describes a kind of emotion by identifying its “essence,” which he associates with the causes and objects that are necessary and unique to it. While there is always a phenomenological aspect (e.g., the *qualia* or *what-it-is-likeness*) of an emotional experience that is lost if we try to give a reductive analysis of an emotion merely in terms of its causes and/or intentional structures,⁶⁰ this does not mean that we cannot communicate meaningfully about our emotions by appealing to these non-private features of our experience (their objects and causes). This is, in fact, the very approach that was used above to differentiate and describe the different kinds of conscious states in both the early and late periods, as described in the previous sections. So, in order to describe the nature of love, McTaggart will identify the object and causes that are necessarily involved in love and are unique to it.

The method of classifying and describing emotions by identifying objects and causes that are both necessary and unique to particular kinds of emotions had been used by philosophers in the past, but perhaps one of the most famous uses of this method occurs in David Hume’s *A Treatise on Human Nature*. There is no doubt that McTaggart has Hume’s account of love in mind in his own formulation of love in the *Nature of Existence*, even though he never explicitly references Hume in it. Hume first introduces the distinction when describing the emotions of pride and shame and then re-introduces it in his discussion on love.⁶¹ His use of the distinction is the same for both emotions, so I will only consider his discussion of love and hate.⁶² Hume asserts that love and hate both share the same object:

⁶⁰ This non-reducibility into more basic components seems to be one way to understand what McTaggart, Moore, and others during this time mean when they say emotions (or anything else) are “indefinable.” Something is definable only if it is a complex thing that can be fully described merely by listing its basic parts (each of which can be understood independently of all of the other parts and independent of being included in the whole). Simple things or organic wholes (complex things where the whole and the parts are changed in essential ways by inclusion or exclusion of any part from that whole), therefore, cannot be defined.

⁶¹ Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, (Eds. D. F. Norton and M. J. Norton, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Book II, Parts 1 and 2.

⁶² “Since then the qualities that produce pride or humility, cause love or hatred; all the arguments that have been employed to prove, that the causes of the former passions excite a pain or pleasure independent of the passion, will be applicable with equal evidence to the causes of the latter.” Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, SB332.

another person (pride and shame both share the same object as well: the person that is me). The problem that he faces is explaining how it is that two different emotions can both be directed at the same object; merely identifying an emotion's object is clearly not sufficient to adequately describe and distinguish different emotions. Hume introduces his solution by stating that the philosopher must "make a distinction betwixt the cause and the object of these passions; betwixt the idea, which excites them, and that to which they direct their view, when excited."⁶³ Hume asserts that the cause of an emotion need not necessarily be the same as that towards which it is directed (and vice versa). Hume then looks towards the causes of love and hate and finds that for each the causes are different. In the case of love the cause is the *idea* of a quality that is both approved of (pleasing) and associated with the person that is the object of love; in the case of hate the cause is the *idea* of a quality that is both disapproved of (displeasing) and associated with the person that is the object of hate. If the idea of Bob is associated with the idea of "being a liar" we do not hate "being a liar;" instead we hate Bob. The quality of a person, on Hume's account is not the target of love or hatred, and so the cause and object are distinct. Noting this distinction allows Hume to classify emotions according to both the object and the cause. If there were no such distinction, then it would be impossible to explain how it is that both love and hate can be directed at the same object.

The most notable difference between Hume's use of the distinction and McTaggart's use is that while Hume takes the object of love for granted ('another person') and uses the distinction to identify unique causes of each emotion, McTaggart uses the distinction to isolate the exact object of the emotion. Hume does not entertain the possibility that the exact nature of the object of love may not be immediately obvious; McTaggart, however, assumes that some people might legitimately question whether love is for 'the person' or merely 'a person's qualities,' and so he goes beyond Hume's use of the distinction and uses it to provide a series of arguments in defense of his claim that the proper object is 'the person.' While their approaches differ in this regard, their overall project remains the same. McTaggart's argument (considered in detail in Chapter Two), can therefore be understood as an extension of Hume's original attempt to classify and describe love according to its necessary and unique object and causes.

⁶³ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, II.1.§2: pp. SB278.

1.5 Summary

In this chapter I have provided important background material necessary to understand McTaggart's account of the nature of love. We have looked at the two theories of emotion out of which McTaggart was working when he described love in the early stages of his career and the later stages of his career. Understanding what exactly McTaggart means by "emotion" at each stage will be important for understanding some of the particular features of love that he identifies in each stage. While his overall theory of love does not change in its core aspects, the shift in theories of emotion allows him to emphasize different aspects of experience of love in each stage of his career. We also looked at McTaggart's theory of the person in order to understand how it is that a person's conscious states and a person's properties are each related to and distinguished from the person itself. Understanding the underlying metaphysical theory of the person will help make sense of McTaggart's central claim that that object of love is a person and not a person's qualities, (though a person's qualities are the cause of love). Finally, we looked at the general approach that McTaggart uses to distinguish and describe different kinds of conscious states according to their necessary and unique causes and intentional object. In the next chapter I will summarize in detail how McTaggart describes love in terms of its necessary and unique causes and object and I will summarize and assess his arguments supporting these claims.

CHAPTER 2

2 McTaggart's Philosophy of Love

This chapter summarizes, explains, and assesses McTaggart's philosophical account of love. McTaggart describes love, and differentiates it from all other kinds of conscious states and emotions by identifying certain causes and objects as essential for love (employing the method outlined at the end of Chapter 1). The chapter proceeds in two parts. The first considers what causes loving emotions. McTaggart seeks to isolate which causes, if any, are necessary and sufficient for love and then explain the role of any other (proximate) causes that might be involved in bringing about love. The second part looks at McTaggart's argument for the claim that the object of love is a person and never a person's qualities. McTaggart's argument is very compressed and I will reconstruct and explain the various steps required for it to succeed. My analysis will also provide reasons for thinking that McTaggart held a particular view about the nature of the value of love: that it is a higher-order intrinsic good. This has important implications for the following chapters on McTaggart's theory of value, his moral philosophy, and the role that love is assigned within moral philosophy.

Before beginning, however, it is important to clarify the kind of love that McTaggart is investigating. There are clearly many senses in which we can be said to love things, and McTaggart was aware of all of these. We often speak of loving inanimate objects, animals, persons, abstract entities such as one's nation/state or one's "alma mater," and even what is represented by abstract concepts such as 'justice' or 'truth.' McTaggart's interest is *solely* in describing the love that we have for persons.¹ Furthermore, it is clear that he is describing love between fully developed and fully functional persons. It is not clear how his account would apply to love for beings whose status as persons is ambiguous (e.g., a young child), compromised (e.g., those suffering from certain psychological diseases), or controversial

¹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §459: "But how is love to be distinguished from other sorts of liking? I propose to confine the word, in the first place, to a liking which is felt towards persons. Here, perhaps, it is more doubtful if common usage supports the restriction. It is not so clear that we are speaking metaphorically when we say that a man loves the Alps, as when we say that he loves justice. Still less is it clear that we are speaking metaphorically when we say that he loves his school or his country. But it is important to have a separate name for the liking which is felt only towards persons, and there is, I think, no question that, however far the common use of the word may extend, the central and typical use of it is for an emotion felt towards persons. And thus, in using it exclusively for that emotion, we shall not depart much from the common use, if we depart at all." (Underlining is mine.)

(e.g., some non-human animals). For instance, while there is clearly a legitimate and important sense in which we can love young children, it is not clear that children are the kinds of beings that can love in the way described below. While they certainly (at some point in their development) have many of the core capacities associated with personhood (e.g., the ability to self-consciously reflect on their own thoughts, actions, and character in a way that allows them to contrast and compare these with the world outside of them; the ability to set goals and make plans to carry them out; etc.) they clearly – as children – do not have the capability to exercise such capacities at will, or in a constant way, or in a reliably successful way. Being a child just means being the kind of entity who is developing such capacities and who is (ideally) working towards a sufficient degree of aptitude and proficiency that is typical of adulthood.² McTaggart does not discuss the love of children in his work. He does discuss issues surrounding child development when he discusses the extent to which we ought to allow children the freedom to make mistakes and how we ought to discipline children, but there is no explicit mention about love in these discussions.³ There is also the issue about whether the love a parent feels for their child is just one kind of love throughout the whole process of development (in utero, infancy, early childhood, late childhood, and adolescence) or whether one moves between one distinct kind of love to another at various points in the process. Since the person-status of children is very complicated (and would widely be recognized as a “grey area” in regards to ethical issues) and since McTaggart’s account of love was clearly only meant to apply to love for adult persons, I will not be addressing issues related to loving children in what follows. There are surely some interesting questions to be raised in this regards (and in regards to the other experiences of love for non-adult persons), but it would take us far off task to address them in a meaningful way.

2.1 The Necessary, Sufficient, Immediate, and Proximate Causes of Love

2.1.1 The Various Causes of Love Identified and Classified

McTaggart describes the distinction between the ‘objects’ and ‘causes’ of love as the difference between love being *in respect of x* and love being *because of y*. That to which love is

² Schapiro, Tamar. “What is a Child?” *Ethics* 109 (July 1999): 715-738.

³ McTaggart, *SHC*, Chapter V: “Punishment,” and Chapter VI: “Sin.” (pp. 129-150 and 151-176.)

in respect of I am calling the ‘object of love’ and that of which love is *because of* I am calling a ‘cause of love.’ These are the terms that Hume used and they clearly correspond to McTaggart’s phrasing.⁴ McTaggart establishes that the cause and object of an emotion can be distinguished by considering the case of approval. According to him, approval is always *in respect of* a quality of a person-substance but he adds that it is always also *because of* a quality of a person-substance. He then notes, however, that “the quality in respect of which I approve of him may be different from the quality because of which I approve of him.”⁵ He demonstrates this by considering a case of approval of the historical figure Oliver Cromwell in respect of his courage.

If we assume that I approve of Cromwell in respect of his courage, the object of the emotion is ‘courage’ (or, more accurately the general quality of ‘possessing courage’ or in this particular case ‘Cromwell’s courage’). The cause of my feeling approval for ‘Cromwell’s courage’ is not ‘Cromwell’s courage.’ Rather, McTaggart claims that the *immediate cause* of my approval of Cromwell is *my belief* ‘that Cromwell was courageous.’ McTaggart suggests that my belief about Cromwell can be restated as a quality of Cromwell in the following way: “he [Cromwell] has the quality of being believed by me to be courageous.”⁶ So, the object of my approval is the quality ‘[Cromwell’s] possessing courage’ and the cause of my approval is ‘[Cromwell’s] being believed by me to be courageous.’ And, as McTaggart observes, these are not the same thing. Since the object and the cause of my approval of Cromwell are not identical, the object and cause of an emotion of approval are distinct and since other emotions have the same general structure as approval (i.e., intentionality) it is possible that their objects and causes will not be identical and are therefore distinct as well.

McTaggart also notes that while the “*immediate*” cause of my approval is my belief that Cromwell was courageous there can be a number of ‘*proximate*’⁷ causes of my approval insofar as they determine my belief in Cromwell’s courage. For instance, my belief could be caused by the fact that Cromwell was *in fact* courageous (assuming that I knew him personally and had first-hand exposure to his courageous acts). In this sense the object of

⁴ Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Parts 1 and 2.

⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, § 465.

⁶ McTaggart, *NE2* §465. While it initially seems a bit awkward and forced to say that the fact that ‘P believes x about Q’ results in a new quality of Q, upon further reflection it seems more plausible. For instance, to say that someone was ‘famous’ or ‘notorious’ just is to say that they were the sort of person (quality) that people held certain kinds of opinions about. Also, to be called ‘trustworthy’ can be a quality that comes about from a single person’s belief that I can be trusted.

⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §465. McTaggart uses the term “remote.” I have opted for ‘proximate’ instead.

my approval – ‘Cromwell’s courage’ – could also be a proximate cause of the approval. Nonetheless, McTaggart notes that it is not necessary that ‘Cromwell’s courage’ be a proximate cause at all. In cases of a *false belief* that Cromwell was courageous, the quality of ‘Cromwell’s courage’ never actually existed and therefore could not have been a cause at all. In Gettier-type cases, where my belief is true but for the wrong reasons, it is also the case that the quality that is the object of the emotion need not be the proximate cause of it. For instance, if we assume that Cromwell was actually courageous and also assume that I falsely believe Cromwell was courageous because he fought at the Battle of Waterloo (even though he died 157 years before that battle), then Cromwell’s actual courage is not the proximate cause of the emotion at all.⁸ So while the object of an emotion might be a proximate cause of it, it is not necessary that it is a proximate cause of it.

Finally, McTaggart notes that there are all kinds of proximate causes of emotions that are certainly never the objects of that emotion. For instance, in the case McTaggart outlines above, the fact that ‘I did not die before Cromwell was born’ and the fact that ‘I have read about Cromwell’ are both necessary conditions of my having any beliefs about Cromwell; nonetheless, facts of this kind are never the objects of the emotion they cause.

Having established that the causes and objects of an emotion are distinct, and that in some cases they cannot be the same, McTaggart now needs to determine the causes of love and determine whether any of those causes are also the object of love. He will ultimately argue that none of the characteristics (qualities or relations) that cause love (immediately or proximately) are the object of love; instead, the object of love is always the individual concrete person.

2.1.2 The Necessary and Sufficient Causes of Love

In order to identify causes that are uniquely related to love McTaggart asks whether there is “any characteristic which, in our present experience, is always present when *B* loves *C* (either in *B*, or in *C*, or as a relation between them?)”⁹ He considers a number of candidates and rules them out one by one before finally considering what he thinks is a necessary (and if present in a high enough degree) sufficient cause for love. The candidates that McTaggart rules-out are pleasure (caused in the lover by the person loved), moral approbation of the

⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §465.

⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §461.

beloved, benevolence, and sympathy.¹⁰ McTaggart argues that for each candidate, love is conceivable in its absence, even if it does (as a matter of fact) ordinarily attend love and even if we would agree that the whole state of affairs would be better if they did attend love.

In reference to pleasure and pain, McTaggart observes that sometimes we can fall in love with someone who we do not really find pleasant at all.¹¹ He also notes that loving someone can involve both pleasurable and painful causes and effects. In addition to all of the pleasant feelings involved with love, love can also involve feelings like jealousy or perhaps even betrayal. Also, when we love someone, we may be more likely to sympathize with them (though this is not necessary, as will be shown below). If the person we love endures a high amount of suffering and our love for them involves a deep level of sympathy, then conceivably our love might be more painful than pleasant on the whole. Pleasure (or pain) is therefore not a necessary cause of love nor is it necessarily concomitant or correlated with it.¹²

Next McTaggart considers moral approbation.¹³ He observes that moral approval of someone may attend love or may even cause it, but experience also shows that it is not necessary for love, nor must it always attend love. He acknowledges that it is “possible that he [the lover] should love him [the beloved], though he [the lover] knows him [the beloved] to be wicked.”¹⁴ McTaggart hypothesizes that people have connected love so closely with moral approbation in an attempt to distinguish it from mere sexual desire, but claiming that we must view the beloved as moral or virtuous in order for love to arise plainly contradicts experience. McTaggart also rejects aesthetic approbation as a necessary cause or concomitant of love. Just as we can love someone who is wicked, we can also love someone who is ugly.¹⁵

¹⁰ McTaggart, *NE2*, §§461-462.

¹¹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §462.

¹² This is a clear departure from the definition of an emotion in the earlier works as “a state of consciousness insofar as it is tinged with feeling (*SHC*, §828).” In the earlier works it is clear that love itself must be pleasant (apart from any consideration of the pleasantness of causes or effects). In *The Nature of Existence* we get a much more tentative claim that “[i]t might perhaps be maintained that love always involves some pleasure, even if it involves a balance of pain (*NE2*, §481).” The pleasure involved in loving someone, however, would be a quality of the cogitation of that person distinct from the emotional quality of love. Yet, nothing in the early work suggests that pleasure is a cause of love, even if love is always itself pleasant. In this sense, McTaggart’s earlier theory is consistent with these observations. Also, even if pleasure is considered to be an essential component of love itself, this does not rule out the experience of love being more painful than pleasurable on the whole for the reasons outlined above.

¹³ McTaggart, *NE2*, §463.

¹⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §463.

¹⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, §463.

After this, McTaggart considers benevolence and sympathy.¹⁶ He considers benevolence to be a desire and sympathy to be a feeling or emotion. Benevolence is a desire directed at someone else's well-being. If the other's well-being can be improved, then a person experiencing benevolence will desire its increase; if the other person is currently experiencing a sufficient, or high, level of well-being, then one still experiences benevolence if one desires the maintenance of that level of well-being (such a desire to preserve existing goods is called "acquiescence" in McTaggart's terminology). Sympathy is directed towards another person's state of experiencing pleasure or experiencing pain. Insofar as they are experiencing either of these feelings, sympathy causes the same kind of feeling (pleasure or pain) in myself. McTaggart admits that love may be caused by either benevolence or sympathy, and that things are better on the whole if love for someone involves both. Yet, he maintains that it is conceivable that someone could love someone without desiring her well-being or without feeling any sympathy for her. He cites cases where people have been known to voluntarily cause their loved one to experience pain or be worse-off. And it also seems possible that I could fail to have sympathy for someone I love (perhaps through callousness, inattentiveness, or a lack of my own personal experience with situations comparable to those in which my beloved finds herself). McTaggart notes that cases where benevolence and sympathy are lacking in love are rare and are probably best described as "morbid."¹⁷ Nonetheless, they are conceivable and they are experienced by some people. He concludes that the options listed above are either necessary, or sufficient causes of love.

Next, McTaggart argues that there is only one experience that always accompanies love. He states that whenever someone loves someone else "he feels that he is connected with him by a bond of peculiar strength and intimacy – a bond stronger and more intimate than any other by which two selves can be joined."¹⁸ It is this awareness of the union between two persons that McTaggart identifies as the necessary and sufficient cause of love and that it helps isolate the "essence" of love.¹⁹ He states:

¹⁶ McTaggart, *NE2*, §463.

¹⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §463.

¹⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §464.

¹⁹ As we shall see, this aspect of love helps us to both isolate what exactly the particular emotion of love is like, but it will also help us to isolate the particular kind of object. Since consciousness of 'union' is a necessary cause, this implies that the object of love will always be *another* person. This is because two distinct elements are required for any union (as opposed to mere identity/identification). So while the immediate cause of love is not the object of love, it does tell us something about the object of love: that it is always directed towards another person (with whom I am conscious of being in an intense and intimate *union*).

And this seems to be the essence of love. Love is an emotion which springs from a sense of union with another self. The sense of union is essential – without it there is no love. And it is sufficient – whenever there is a sense of a sufficiently close union, then there is love, whatever may be the qualities of the lover and beloved, and whatever may be the other relations between them.²⁰

A few sections later, this important aspect of McTaggart's theory is further elaborated in the following passage:

We come then, to the conclusion that love, as we see it in our present experience, involves a connection between the lover and the beloved which is of peculiar strength and intimacy, and which is stronger and more intimate than any other bond by which two selves can be joined. And we must hold, also, that whenever one of these selves is conscious of this unity, then he loves the other. And this is regardless of the qualities of the two persons, or of the other relations between them. The fact that the union is there, or that the sense of it is there, may depend on the qualities and relations of the two persons. But if there is the union and the sense of it, then there is love, whether the qualities and relations which determine it are known or unknown, vital or trivial. Qualities and relations can only prevent love by preventing the union, or the sense of it, and can only destroy love by destroying the union, or the sense of it. Love is for the person, and not for his qualities, nor is it for him in respect of his qualities. It is for him.²¹

Before attempting to understand what exactly this essential “union” is, it is useful to clarify the kinds of causes that may be necessary and sufficient for love. As we have seen, McTaggart identifies two kinds of causes of an emotion: immediate and proximate. The lover's sense of union (whatever the exact nature of this union turns out to be) can be expressed as a belief ‘that P is intimately united with me,’ and it is this belief that is the immediate cause of love. The proximate causes of love will be whatever caused the lover to have a belief in an intimate union with the other person: if the belief that is the immediate cause is true, then one proximate cause will be the fact that P is actually intimately united to me (i.e., P has the relational property that I believe P has); if the belief is false (i.e., P does not actually have the relational property I believe P has), then whatever caused me to have the belief that an intimate union existed will be the proximate cause.

It is clear that the immediate cause (the ‘sense of union’ or ‘the belief that another is intimately united to me’) is thought to be a necessary cause of love. However, it is not clear if

²⁰ McTaggart, *NE2*, §464. My underlining.

²¹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §468. My underlining.

a belief in union – on its own – is sufficient for love. In the first of the two quotes provided prior to this paragraph, McTaggart speaks as if merely having a sense of union is all that is required for love to come about: “whenever there is a sense of a sufficiently close union, then there is love.”²² But in the second quote he seems to require that *in addition* to one’s belief in an intimate union with another, an actual union – corresponding to one’s belief – must exist as a matter of fact: “But if there is the union and the sense of it, then there is love.”²³ So, there seem to be two possible ways to interpret McTaggart:

- 1) An awareness of the right kind of deep intimate union on its own (independent of whether or not an actual union of that kind exists) is sufficient for love. (Supported by the first quote provided above from *NE2*, §464.)
- 2) An awareness of the right kind of deep intimate union and the existence of the right kind of deep intimate union are both necessary for love and so only *jointly sufficient*. (Supported by the second quote provided above from *NE2*, §468.)

The first interpretation means that one’s emotion of love is *always* authentic, even if one’s sense of union turns out to be ill-founded. The second interpretation restricts authentic emotions of love to those cases that are based upon true beliefs about the sensed union from which loving emotions spring. So how should we interpret McTaggart?

Except for a few places (such as Section 464 of the *Nature of Existence*), McTaggart almost always mentions *both* a sense of an intimate union *and* the existence of an intimate union as the necessary and sufficient conditions for love. This, on its own, gives some weight to the second interpretation. The case for the second interpretation is also strengthened by the fact that McTaggart’s exclusion of the existence of the appropriate union can be explained by the fact that McTaggart seems to presuppose that where there is an awareness of intimate union between myself and another there is also always an actual intimate union between myself and another. This claim that an awareness of an intimate union implies the existence of such a union shows up in two ways.

First, McTaggart sometimes suggests that having a loving emotion *produces* an intimate union with the beloved. In a number of places in the late and early works McTaggart states that love ‘justifies itself.’ For instance, he claims in *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* that,

²² McTaggart, *NE2*, §464.

²³ McTaggart, *NE2*, §468. [My emphasis.]

[l]ove is itself the relation which binds individuals together. ... It does not require or admit of justification or determination by anything else. It is itself its own justification and determination.²⁴

In passages like this he seems to claim that once I love someone, I simultaneously establish the very kind of state of affairs (an intimate union with another) that corresponds to (and so justifies) the belief from which love springs. This means that even if one assumes that authentic love is not possible without the actual existence of an intimate union between the lovers (making the existence of such a union a necessary condition), if love produces an intimate union, then the mere sense of union (whether this is a true or false belief) is sufficient – on its own – to produce genuine love.²⁵

Secondly, McTaggart believed, on metaphysical grounds, that while we only ever have a sense of deep intimate union with a few people, ultimately all individuals are actually intimately connected with each other through the kind of union that we sense when we love someone. He argues that if we perfectly knew someone, we would also always be aware of this union (since part of knowing them perfectly would also always involve knowing about this actual intimate connection with me) and so we will always love everyone we perfectly know.²⁶ It seems that under our imperfect conditions of existence, which for McTaggart are always characterized by a lack of full knowledge about the ultimate nature of the universe, we only ever arrive at an awareness of this intimate union through our encounters with a very limited number of people.²⁷ So, it seems that sometimes McTaggart is assuming that whenever we do have a sense of union with another, we are merely coming to a subjective (yet very real) appreciation about what is always already objectively true about any two people. McTaggart's description of love does not depend on any claims about the kinds of relationships that actually exist between people; therefore, one could (justifiably I think) reject this part of McTaggart's metaphysics without rejecting his philosophy of love. His theory still makes sense even if it turns out that not everyone is actually intimately united in the way required to experience love. However, the fact that McTaggart did believe that these

²⁴ McTaggart, *SHC*, §310.

²⁵ I will address the issue of love 'causing itself' through producing its own intimate union below. Some of the counter-intuitive implications involved in love producing its own necessary and sufficient cause can be mitigated if one can show that there is more than one kind of intimate union and that love-independent forms of intimate union can also act as necessary and sufficient causes of love.

²⁶ McTaggart, *NE2*, §§472-473. McTaggart does not, however, claim that we know everyone perfectly (even in an ideally conceived universe) and so he does not claim that we will love everyone. (McTaggart, *SHC*, §311n.1; McTaggart, *NE2*, §475.)

²⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §470.

types of relations actually always exist between everyone (even though for the most part we are completely ignorant of this) might help explain why McTaggart speaks as he does in the first quote and only mentions an awareness of an intimate union as the necessary and sufficient cause of love.

I think, therefore, that there is good reason to adopt the second interpretation outlined above. McTaggart uses the two condition formulation more often, and when he does not use it, it may be because he is implicitly assuming that the first condition is always already met (given his conception of the ultimate nature of the relations between persons/the ultimate nature of reality) and so doesn't need to be mentioned. Therefore, if the shorter single condition formulation shows up, it must be understood as merely a short-form of expressing the longer two-condition formula.

Apart from the sections dedicated to discovering the necessary and sufficient cause(s) of love, when McTaggart discusses causes and qualities in *The Nature of Existence*, he makes no mention of the quality of 'being united with me in an intense and intimate way;' instead the qualities considered are largely moral qualities or qualities such as 'being beautiful' or 'being conducive to pleasure.' These qualities are only brought up to exclude them as objects of love, even though they are acknowledged to be potential (proximate) causes of it. Such qualities may be the reason why we start spending time with another person and they can (and do) serve as *the means* by which we become aware of, or create, an intimate union between myself and another. It is not always clear whether the union is the result of knowing the other in a more intimate way or if it is rather discovered through knowing the other in a more intimate way; whichever it may be, some quality of the beloved directs our attention to our union with another person. This awareness of the union stimulates the loving emotional response that is then directed towards the other person (and not their qualities). Also, the qualities of another person can act as obstacles to the awareness of the union with the other so also as barriers to love. Presumably, if one came to an awareness of union with another unmediated through an awareness of some other quality, love could arise and so these other proximate causes are neither necessary nor sufficient for love. We obviously do not love everyone that we know or everyone that we have relations with. For example, it is possible that out of two siblings, I might feel love for only one of them, yet my knowledge and relation to both is presumably very similar in terms of intimacy. We can be aware of many other kinds of qualities and relations related to myself and another

and still not fall in love with the other unless that sense of union is added.²⁸ This seems to support the idea that merely having beliefs *about* the properties (qualities or relations) of another, independent of any belief about an intimate union existing between us, is not sufficient for love. And while it is, at least theoretically, possible to have a direct sense of this union independent of any beliefs about the qualities of another, in actual experience we never experience another as united to us without also experiencing them as having a wide variety of other properties. So, while love might be conceptually independent of considerations of the characteristics of another person, at the practical level considerations about the various qualities of the people we know play an important role as proximate causes of love by promoting, or at least not preventing, an awareness of an intimate union with another.

2.1.3 The Nature of the “Intimate Union”

2.1.3.1 “Awareness”

Before considering what it is that we are aware of – an intimate union between two persons – it is worthwhile to consider what it means to “be aware.” McTaggart asserts that in the idealized conception of perfect reality (“Absolute Reality” in McTaggart’s terms) the awareness of union would be “perception” of union. This is emphasized throughout both the early works and the later works. A perception provides the strongest and most accurate form of awareness on McTaggart’s psychology. Presumably, in our current experience there is some lesser degree of awareness: either directly through some imperfect form of perception or indirectly through some form of inference. Whatever form our imperfect awareness takes under current conditions of experience, he makes it clear that it is less certain and intense than it would be if we had a perfect and clear perception of it. McTaggart also claims that experience show us that “[t]he more intense the consciousness of unity, the greater the love,”²⁹ or in other words, that the less imperfect our awareness of the union is, the greater is the intensity of our love.

It is important to keep in mind that while McTaggart is speaking about the cognitive aspect of the emotion of love, he is not saying that love is *only* some form of cognition. Love

²⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §470.

²⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §470.

is a way of perceiving in a uniquely emotional way, it is a way of *perceiving lovingly* (see the previous chapter). So while love is cognitive, and is stronger in proportion to how clear and distinct the cognitive aspect of it is, love always also involves some additional “non-cognitive” element.³⁰ Therefore, while McTaggart’s discussion of love normally speaks about perceptions of this union and of the beloved, and therefore carries a highly cognitive tone throughout, one must keep in mind that the awareness involved in loving is not *merely* a cognitive form of conscious awareness; loving is an emotional form of awareness.

2.1.3.2 “Intimate Union”

So, what exactly does McTaggart mean by a “union with another self” that is “of peculiar strength and intimacy³¹”? What exactly is a relationship of “union” for McTaggart and how is “intimacy” involved? Overall, McTaggart’s description of the nature of the ‘intimate union’ is vague³²; however, he does provide some hints at to its nature. One hint is provided when he claims that the way I perceive those that I love is comparable (though not identical) with the way that I perceive myself.³³ For instance, in one place he states:

If I perceive another self, I know him with the same directness, the same immediacy, the same intimacy, with which I know myself. There is no longer any of that separation which weakens love. Separation – or rather distinction – of course remains, for if there were not two distinct selves, there could be no love. But there is no barrier between the selves. The unity is unhampered. Love is no longer held back by the inadequacy of knowledge.³⁴

In another place he states:

It is true that love brings us, more than anything else in our present experience does, into a relation with other selves resembling that in which each of us stands to himself. A man’s relation to himself is very close – even omitting the fundamental relation of identity – because he can perceive himself. And since he can perceive himself, his knowledge of himself is more independent of his knowledge of his qualities than is the case, in present

³⁰ McTaggart, *NE2*, §470.

³¹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

³² McKerlie, “McTaggart on Love,” pp. 71-72. McKerlie agrees with this assessment; however, though McTaggart’s account is far from offering a determinate account of the nature of this union, McTaggart does seem to provide more information than McKerlie suggests he does.

³³ McTaggart presents a long argument in “Personality” and *NE2* (§§381-404) to defend the claim that we have a direct perception or awareness of myself (my personality). This is opposed to knowing myself by ‘definition.’ In both cases he is relying upon Russell’s distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by definition. McTaggart insists that we know ourselves by acquaintance and that it is at least conceivable (not logically impossible) that we could know others in this way too.

³⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §473.

experience, with his knowledge of other selves. The intensity of his interest in himself, again, is independent of his qualities which he believes himself to have.³⁵

These passages suggest that McTaggart is thinking of intimacy in terms of something like ‘transparency.’ He seems to have in mind the kind of connection that results when we experience the other – as they are – in a direct way. In a sense, it is like experiencing someone whose guard is down, who reveals themselves to you as they are with raw honesty. These passages betray a cognitive bias in McTaggart’s description of love. Love is described as a sort of passive contemplation of the other, and its intensity is proportional to how much I can observe about the person that I love. While there are shortcomings to placing such emphasis on the cognitive or perceptual aspects of intimacy, there is a sense in which McTaggart’s insight can be interpreted in a way that makes it sound plausible. There are experiences where others seem to impress themselves upon us in a uniquely intense and transparent way in our encounters with them. Also, I am sure that many of us have experienced a situation where we encounter someone who seems to ‘get us’ right from the start. Though McTaggart rarely acknowledges the experience of the person loved, it is helpful to take up that perspective here. In cases where I encounter a person that seems to ‘get me’ in a unique and intense way, it is both exhilarating and a bit disarming. There is a real and immediate sense of vulnerability. There is also a sense that they see me in the way that I see myself (or perhaps even better than I see myself). This kind of experience is possible even on the first encounter between two people; in fact, my strongest friendships have almost all started with an initial encounter like the one described above. When we ‘get someone’ else in this way, there is an intense sense of a connection, and this might be the root experience that McTaggart has in mind. We do not experience this kind of awareness with everyone we meet, know, or are connected to in an important way, and it is not strictly a kind of ‘knowing’ in any regular sense of the term. The connection, therefore, appears to be one of transparency and vulnerability and this fits well with the ‘intimacy’ that he indicates is involved.

In the early works, McTaggart also describes the ‘intimacy’ essential to love in terms of perceived equality between the lover and the beloved. These works emphasize that through love we regard the beloved as *equal* to ourselves. Within this intimate union neither

³⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, §469.

person is subordinated to the other. In relationships based purely on need or desire, McTaggart insists that the other must be reduced to a mere means to my own satisfaction. By its very nature volition seeks to adapt the world to correspond to my ideas. Even when I acquiesce in a person's existence, this is only because she corresponds to *my* idea of who she should be. As discussed at the start of the last chapter, knowledge and volition are distinguished from each other insofar as either fact or ideal is given normative priority and the other is subordinated to the norm and must comply with it. Emotions, in the early works, result from (approaching) perfect harmony between fact and idea and so McTaggart suggests that the loving subject experiences the beloved object (the beloved person) as an equal and that "... [n]either side has the pre-eminence in love..."³⁶ and "... where the sides have equal rights, where neither is bound to give way..."³⁷ McTaggart also observes that "[t]his complete equilibrium between subject and object is the reason why love cannot be conceived as a duty on either side. It is not our duty to love others. ... It is not the duty of others to be loveable by us."³⁸ Our intuitions that duty does not apply to love are therefore also grounded upon the egalitarian nature of the intimate union, the awareness of which is the essence of love. So, the intimate union can also be characterized as a union of complete equality and harmony between persons where each person's intrinsic value is recognized and neither is reduced to the means of the other.

McTaggart also emphasizes that to love a person is to take up an attitude towards him that emphasizes that the person loved is a special kind of substance that not only bears properties (such as qualities and relations), but also has a centre of conscious *subjectivity* that is aware of those qualities and that unites all of its various states of consciousness into a unified whole (a unified conscious substance). In other words, it is to take up an attitude towards another person that emphasizes that they are the same kind of being that I experience myself to be: a "self" or a "*subject*."³⁹ This type of attitude is opposed to those that give priority to qualities instead of the person that bears those qualities and that, in doing so, emphasize that the person is an *object* (i.e., a quality-bearer). The quality-bearer itself need not have any positive content (as is the case with mere physical objects) and McTaggart sometimes describes the 'mere object' as a "dead residuum in which the content [qualities]

³⁶ McTaggart, *SHC*, §284.

³⁷ McTaggart, *SHC*, §284.

³⁸ McTaggart, *SHC*, §284.

³⁹ Mander, *On McTaggart on Love*, pp. 144-146.

inheres”⁴⁰ or a “dead abstraction”⁴¹ as compared to the “living unity”⁴² that is captured in the attitude that treats the person as a unique individual personality (and not *merely* as an object). The real interest of this kind of attitude is the qualities. In the loving attitude, however, the primary interest is in the person and the person’s qualities are assigned value based on their relation to it. Since a person is experienced as both a subject and an object, both attitudes are appropriate to have towards persons; however, regarding a person merely as an object would be inappropriate.

McTaggart sometimes expresses the difference outlined above by distinguishing attitudes which present the person “from within outwards” and those that present the person “from without inwards.” The attitude which gives priority to the experiencing person as a whole is “from within outwards.” From the first person perspective, this is how I experience the world and give priority of importance to what I find in it. I always experience my own perspective as the starting point and I relate everything to each other and to me from this point of view. The attitude which gives priority to the qualities is “from without inwards.” This is how I experience mere ‘objects.’ I experience qualities and then assign them to an object. I start from the qualities and work my way towards the object. The importance that I assign to objects is arrived at in this way too. Our primary interest is in certain qualities, and any objects that have those qualities are therefore deemed important too. Usually, the qualities we are most interested with are those that will serve as means to some adopted end (either my own end, a shared end, or even the end of another). This means that on the second attitude, objects are usually important because they are merely useful and so are only good in a derivative way. Any other object that has the same quality will be equally good (useful) and any other object that has the quality to a higher degree will be better (more useful). If the object loses that quality for any reason, then it also loses its importance. This view is summarized by McTaggart when he states:

Only their [other persons experienced as objects] external relations to ourselves and to one another have any significance for us. They are individuals, they live from within outwards. But as we find satisfaction in them, we are aware of them from without inwards, and their centre, instead

⁴⁰ McTaggart, *FDA* p. 258.

⁴¹ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 249.

⁴² McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 249.

of being a living unity is a dead abstraction. We fail, then ... to do justice to the independence of the object.⁴³

When the emphasis is on the other *as a subject*, qualities are treated differently. They are seen as “expressing” or “manifesting” the nature of the person as a whole, a nature that is not exhausted by a quality or set of qualities. Of this attitude, McTaggart states:

It would seem then, that we have here reached a standpoint [other persons experienced as subjects] from which we are able to regard the object as it regards itself. We are able to regard the history and content of the object as a manifestation of its individuality, instead of being obliged to regard the individuality as a dead residuum in which the content inheres. We are able to see the object from within outwards, instead of from without inwards. And so its claims to independence and substantiality become no more alien or inharmonious to us than our own.⁴⁴

But in the harmony which we are now considering [love], we do not, when it has been once reached, feel that the person is dear to us on account of his qualities, but rather that our attitude towards his qualities is determined by the fact that they belong to him.⁴⁵

Here knowledge of qualities is not seen as an end in itself, but as a means towards coming to know the person that underlies those qualities.

McTaggart observes that one of the most notable characteristics of love “is the manner in which reference to the object tends to become equivalent to reference to self.”⁴⁶ He describes this experience of ‘equality’ as follows:

The position here is different. The subject is no longer in the same position of one-sided supremacy. In knowledge and volition it exists as a centre of which the world of objects is the circumference. This relation continues, for without it our self-consciousness and our existence would disappear. But conjoined with it we have now the recognition of the fact that we ourselves form part of the circumference of other systems of which other individuals are the centre. We know of course that this must be so. But it is only in love that it actually takes place. We are not only part of someone else’s world in his eyes, but in our own. And we feel that this dependence on another is as directly and truly self-realisation as is the dependence of others on us.⁴⁷

Whereas we often only regard things as good relative to my own beliefs, desires, emotions, and feelings (i.e., what I think is good for me), McTaggart suggests that in the case of love,

⁴³ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 259.

⁴⁴ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 258.

⁴⁵ McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 255; McTaggart, *SHC*, §295.

⁴⁶ McTaggart, *SHC*, §296; McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 256.

⁴⁷ McTaggart, *SHC*, §298; McTaggart, *FDA*, p. 259.

we come to experience (and not merely know *via* inference) the value of many things as dependent on the existence of another person and her beliefs, desires, emotions, and feelings (i.e., what is good for them). In love, things that are good for the beloved are regarded as *equally important* as things that are good for me and they are recognized as good independent of what happens to be good for me (though, of course, it will often happen that for those who fall in love, the good of each will be intimately overlap with the good of the other).⁴⁸ This is not merely because we happen to also be interested in the same things or values as the other person (i.e., we share the same ultimate ends); rather it is “because all our interest in the universe is conceived as deriving force from his existence.”⁴⁹ In loving another person, McTaggart suggests that our interest in the world is no longer solely determined by reference to me. In fact, when experiencing the emotion of love for some person, in many cases the world seems to derive most of its value from the existence of the beloved and it is difficult to see how the world would have any value without the beloved in it; in fact, such an imagined world may seem horrific. Even the value of truth and virtue (even if granted *prima facie* intrinsic value independent of ‘my own good’) also begin to be valued by reference to the beloved.⁵⁰ McTaggart sometimes describes seeing all value as dependent on the beloved as experiencing the world “*sub specie amati*” or under the mode/guise of the beloved.⁵¹

So, McTaggart claims that to love someone is to take up an attitude towards them that gives priority to the person as a whole over their qualities. This means that one has an emotion that is directed towards them as a ‘subject’ and not merely as an object. The emotion of love both indicates and springs from a subject-subject relation and not from a subject-object relation.⁵² In love, the other person is experienced in the same way that I experience myself. In love, my primary concern is for the person as a whole and my interest in their qualities is derived from this concern. This relationship does not reduce the beloved

⁴⁸ This experience of the other’s good as *equally important* to my own should not be confused with experiences of benevolence or sympathy. While another’s good (or bad) is clearly the object of such attitudes, it is possible to feel benevolence or sympathy for another without recognizing that their good as equally important as my own. I could take up such attitudes towards another by thinking that my own good is more important than theirs, or thinking that their good is more important than my own. What seems to be of central importance in these passages, is that through love I experience in a direct way the importance of the other (and all other things in the world in relation to this importance) and that I directly experience this importance as equal to the importance I assign myself by default as a conscious subject/person.

⁴⁹ McTaggart, *SHC* §296; McTaggart, *FDA* p.256.

⁵⁰ McTaggart, *SHC*, §296.

⁵¹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §297.

⁵² See Mander, “On McTaggart on Love,” pp.-. 144-146 for a discussion of McTaggart’s distinction between subject-object attitudes and subject-subject attitudes.

to a mere bearer of a quality that is useful for attaining some ultimate end of my own or to a mere bearer of some intrinsically valuable quality. In other words, McTaggart says that the other is not ‘subordinated’ to my own projects or to some quality that I judge to be ultimately valuable. Rather, the other is experienced as the same kind of being as myself and so produces a harmonious relationship of equality.

It is worth noting that respect might also be a form of subject-subject attitude; however, it seems clear to me that any plausible account of respect would not involve an emphasis on intimate union, as is the case with love. At the very least, if the essence of respect involves some form of union, it will not be nearly as intimate as that involved in love. It is likely that had McTaggart distinguished between love and respect (which he did not), the intimate nature of the union involved in love would surely have been a defining and distinguishing feature in relation to respect. Marcia Baron argues that this is one way that Kant might have made a distinction between love and respect in the *Metaphysics of Morals* when he states: “... mutual love admonishes men constantly to come closer to one another; that of the respect they owe one another, to keep themselves at a distance from one another ... (MM, 449).”⁵³

Even though the intimate union that is essential for love is characterized by regarding the beloved as one regards oneself – as a living, autonomous person whose good is as equally important as my own – McTaggart makes it clear in *The Nature of Existence* that loving does not involve a form of ‘identification’ between the lover and the beloved which would remove (or at least reduce) the individuality, the uniqueness, and the separateness of each person. He states:

If I perceive another self, I know him with the same directness, the same immediacy, the same intimacy, with which I know myself. There is no longer any of that separation which weakens love. Separation – or rather distinction – of course remains, for if there were not two distinct selves, there could be no love.⁵⁴

In contemporary terms, we might say that the loving attitude must always recognize the importance of each person’s unique perspective on the world and each person’s autonomy. An ‘intimate union’ does not refer to some new entity that is formed through a process of

⁵³ Marcia Baron, “Love and Respect in the Doctrine of Virtue,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 36.Supplement (1997): pp. 29-44.

⁵⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §473.

‘subsumption’ or ‘absorption’ of the individuals that entered into it, such that each individual no longer has any individual identity or autonomy apart from that relationship (as some nineteenth century proponents of Romanticism or Hegelianism might have proposed). Nor is it the case that the lover comes to view the beloved merely as an extension of herself. Nor, finally, is it the case that the lover loses herself completely by identifying herself with the beloved, fully sacrificing her own unique ideas, desires, aims, and autonomy. For McTaggart, an ideal form of the intrinsic union that is essential to love is a union that strikes a perfect balance between harmony and differentiation; it is a union which both allows people to fully become who they are as unique individuals and at the same time allows them to be deeply and fully connected with another unique individual person.⁵⁵ Since a union is not possible unless there is a multiplicity to be united, and since there cannot be an ‘intimate union’ between persons unless there are two persons, McTaggart concludes that “[w]hile it is essential to love that it should be felt towards a person, it is also essential that it should be felt towards another person.”⁵⁶ Love, therefore, is essentially social: it is a relation that can only exist between a plurality of persons.

An implication of McTaggart’s view is that “the emotion which a man feels towards himself is never the same emotion which, when felt towards others, is called love.”⁵⁷ Self-love, in the strictest sense, is not possible on McTaggart’s view. The emotion denoted by self-love (an emotion McTaggart suggests “seems only to mean an interest in my own well-being” while love for another person “is very much more than an interest in his well-being”)⁵⁸ is called “self-reverence” by McTaggart to emphasize this point.⁵⁹ In denying the possibility of authentic self-love (in the strictest sense), McTaggart is aligning himself with other famous philosophers. For instance, a similar claim is made in the Aristotelian work *The Eudemian Ethics* which states:

For this friendship – that to oneself – is, in a way, friendship by analogy, not absolutely. For loving and being loved requires two separate individuals. ...

⁵⁵ McTaggart, *SHC*, §§12-15, 64-65, 97-98, 197, 300-303. McTaggart, *NE1*, §256.

⁵⁶ McTaggart, *NE2*, §469. As will be discussed below, McTaggart argues that the object of love is a person and not a person’s qualities. McTaggart’s considerations about the necessary and sufficient cause of love (intimate union) work together with that argument to narrow down the scope of potential objects for love: from any person to any person except myself. The various aspects of McTaggart’s account of love must therefore be understood as working together to support his ultimate conclusions about the nature of love.

⁵⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §469.

⁵⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §469.

⁵⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §477.

these relations require two separate individuals; so far then as the soul is two, these relations can in a sense belong to it; so far as these two are not separate, the relations cannot belong to it.⁶⁰

Hume also makes a very similar claim in his discussion of love in *A Treatise on Human Nature* when he states:

... so the *object* of love and hatred is some other person, of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations we are not conscious. This is sufficiently evident from experience. Our love and hatred are always directed to some sensible being external to us, and when we talk of *self-love*, 'tis not in a proper sense, nor has the sensation it produces any thing in common with that tender emotion, which is excited by a friend or mistress.⁶¹

So, even though McTaggart's understanding of the nature of intimate union results in a seemingly counter-intuitive claim that self-love is impossible, he is not alone in arriving at this conclusion. This aspect of love is important to keep in mind, since McTaggart also claims that love is an intrinsic good. This means that there are some intrinsic goods that are possible only by means of establishing some form of relation between two people. Though McTaggart will not claim that love must be reciprocal to have value, his view implies that in order to attain the good of love at least two individual people must exist and must be related in a way that recognizes and preserves the individuality and autonomy of each individual person. If love is one of the most important intrinsic goods that can be attained, a claim that McTaggart will also attempt to defend, this means that there may be very strong consequentialist reasons to respect, honour, and promote the individuality and autonomy of others so that love is possible and can be maintained where it already exists. These issues will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Four and Five.

One final characteristic of this intimate union between persons — already mentioned above — is the idea that love itself *produces* a kind of intimate union between individuals. McTaggart does sometimes speak as if this is the case. For instance, in *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* he claims that,

[l]ove is itself the relation which binds individuals together. Each relation it establishes is part of the ultimate nature of the unity of the whole. It does not

⁶⁰ Aristotle, "Eudemian Ethics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Vol. II*, Ed. Jonathan Barnes, Tr. J. Solomon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984): VII.6 1140a10-23. [Solomon's translation originally published in *The Works of Aristotle*, Vol. IX. Ed. W. D. Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915.]

⁶¹ Hume. *A Treatise on Human Nature*, II.2.§1, p. SB 329.

require or admit of justification or determination by anything else. It is itself its own justification and determination.⁶²

So it would seem that once I love someone, I establish the very kind of relationship sufficient for maintaining love (at least so long as nothing interferes with my awareness I am aware of the kind of intimate union that love itself creates between persons).

Now, it would be viciously circular to say that the kind of intimate union produced by love is necessarily identical to the kind of intimate union that is the immediate, necessary, and sufficient *cause* of love: if a loving intimate union is necessary for love, then how will love ever get started? Presumably if love is to be ‘created,’ then the kind of intimate union resulting from love cannot be presumed to exist. There seems to be only two ways to avoid such circularity yet maintain that once love comes about it is (potentially) self-sustaining.

First, one could maintain that there is only one kind of intimate union involved – the intimate union resulting from love – but insist that since love can arise from the mere belief that such a union exists, the origin of love can be accounted for by means of false beliefs. This option would only be available so long as the existence of an actual intimate union is not also required in addition to the awareness of that union (the first of the two interpretations of McTaggart’s description of the necessary and sufficient descriptions discussed earlier in this chapter). One could claim that the origin of love is always a false belief that a love-like intimate union exists between myself and another (when it actually does not). Perhaps the belief is not described as false, but rather as “unfounded” or as a kind of “leap of faith” (in the spirit of Pascal, Kierkegaard, and William James). This false/unfounded belief would turn out to be a kind of “self-fulfilling prophecy” since once the belief exists, it is sufficient to cause love and will thereby produce the actual intimate union sufficient for justifying love thereafter. This is possible, but I think that most would agree that it is not an attractive option. It would mean that love could only ever originate in a delusion or fiction.⁶³ Also, it does not seem to be a viable option for McTaggart if he accepts that in addition to an awareness of an intimate union, an actual intimate union must also exist in order for there to be love (and as I suggested earlier, there seems to be good reason to think that this was McTaggart’s actual view).

⁶² McTaggart, *SHC*, §310.

⁶³ Alan Soble, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love: An Introduction: Second Edition: Revised and Expanded* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2008), 143-144. Soble attributes the view that love requires false beliefs or delusions to arise at all to Zizek.

A more attractive option would be to claim that there is *more than one kind* of intimate union that is sufficient to cause love. In one of the passages where McTaggart outlines the necessary and sufficient conditions for love (a quote provided earlier in the chapter) he says that “The sense of union is essential – without it there is no love. And it is sufficient – wherever there is a sense of a *sufficiently close union*, then there is love.”⁶⁴ While a loving relationship is itself one kind of intimate union (awareness of which is itself a sufficient condition for love), it may not be the only kind of intimate union that is sufficient. Perhaps in the case where I feel that another person ‘gets me’ (even before we fall in love), I am aware of a kind of transparency and vulnerability between myself and that person; this awareness could surely result in a union describable as intimate and yet may not be intimate enough to be the union that is essential for love. Perhaps the awareness that who I am is (at least in part) meaningfully linked to another person (such as a parent, sibling, teammate, etc.) is an awareness of one kind of intimate union. McTaggart allows that circumstances such as “birth in the same family, or by childhood in the same house,” while not themselves necessary and sufficient for love may give rise to the conditions that are.⁶⁵ Presumably he is referring to a bond formed by the shared experience of growing up (and not merely the fact of geographic proximity). Having an awareness of a shared history or shared goals with another person may be another form of a union that while intimate is not as deeply intimate as the union characteristic of love. Surely it is possible to feel some kind of connection to people that is more intimate than that I would have with a mere stranger, or even an acquaintance, yet it not nearly as intimate as the union we experience as love. Such unions might lead to the deep intimacy of love, but it is also possible they will not. If there are lesser degrees of intimate union that are possible independently of the presence of the emotion of love (which these three examples seem to be) then the vicious circle can be avoided by claiming that the *original* intimate union, and the *original* awareness of the intimate union, that are necessary and sufficient conditions for love, must be one of these ‘non-love’ forms of intimate unions. Once a deeply intimate loving union *is* originally established in these ways, there seems to be nothing viciously circular about claiming that love is thereby able to sustain itself on its own because it produces its own unique kind of awareness of itself that is also a sufficient condition for love (to continue). There seems, therefore, to be an interesting

⁶⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §464.

⁶⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

‘virtuous’ circle wherein love is potentially self-sustaining so long as our awareness of the deeply intimate loving union itself is not destroyed or interfered with by some other factor.⁶⁶

One might wonder if an infinite regress is possible in regards to this second option.⁶⁷ For instance, assume that there is a certain kind of camaraderie that is established between two people by attending the same political rally. Such camaraderie surely involves some degree of intimate union between them (a union that is not shared between everyone), though not a union deep enough to be called a loving union. Would a necessary and sufficient condition of having an emotion of camaraderie towards someone require the pre-existence of some other kind of intimate union (and an awareness of it)? And if so, would I then need to posit a somewhat less intimate form of union as existing prior to our camaraderie in order to get it off the ground in the way that I proposed for getting love started? And so on, without end?

I am not sure that an infinite regress must necessarily be assumed. There is no reason to think that every emotion that establishes an intimate union between two people, or that arises from the establishment of an intimate union, will require a pre-existing union or any awareness of a union at all. In fact, experience suggests that there are many union-forming emotions that do not require any pre-existing connection between the people involved to get started at all. For instance, I could surely admire or respect someone with whom I am not intimately related with at all.

To see that this is true, imagine that I have deep respect for the fourteenth Dalai Lama even though I have never met him, am not related to him, am not a member of his religion, am not a Tibetan, and I have not been engaged in any shared projects with him. Having this emotion, however, would establish a kind of connection between myself and the Dalai Lama that I do not have with anyone else (I do not admire or respect anyone else in this way). This connection, however, need not be “intimate;” respect, it seems does not require intimacy in order to be directed towards someone. The very presence of this emotion, however, establishes some kind of connection between myself and the Dalai Lama,

⁶⁶ Niko Kolodny “Love as a Valuing Relationship,” *Philosophical Review* 112.2 (2003): 161; 169-170: He presents a similar solution to the fear that a “Relationship” theory of love (where the object and cause of love are the relationship itself and not the relations) cannot explain how love can arise without ‘bootstrapping.’ On his solution, two potential lovers start engaging in the *kinds* of activity that constitute a loving relationship, and if this works out love will result as they come to accrue more shared history, activities, goals, and values. (See next Chapter).

⁶⁷ I thank Anthony Skelton for pointing out this issue.

but I need not be aware of it for me to respect him. Nor need there be any pre-existing connection between myself and the Dalai Lama in order to develop or maintain my admiration and respect for the Dalai Lama. However, if situations are such that I become aware of my admiration and respect for him, and if I also become aware that my emotions towards him are unique and so connect me with him in a way that I am not connected with anyone else, this may act as a kind of platform or fulcrum from which more intimate forms of union can arise and so may potentially (though not necessarily) lead to a deeply intimate loving union with him.

Imagine that my respect for the Dalai Lama motivates me to attend a peaceful political rally he organized for freeing Tibet from Chinese rule, and so I engage in a shared project with him. I later get the chance to meet him at a book-signing and mention my experience at the rally. We feel a connection through this shared experience and so engage in more conversation about our unique interests and histories. This eventually leads to a deep sense of understanding between us and within this deep sense of mutual understanding we come to a realization that a deeply intimate friendly love has developed between us. All of this started from a feeling of respect that did not presuppose any connection between myself and the Dalai Lama, and so an infinite regress is not necessary in order to establish love. In order to avoid the regress, it must be possible to establish unions through emotions such as admiration and respect that do not themselves require any intimate union or sense of union to be established. If admiration and respect are two examples of such emotions, which they seem to be, then such starting points are both plausible and very common.

So, while McTaggart says very little in a direct way about the nature of the intimate union that he identifies as the necessary and sufficient cause of love in *The Nature of Existence*, looking at his statements about it in that work and in the earlier works we can summarize the intimate union under consideration in the following way. It is a union that unites two persons without diminishing the individuality, uniqueness, or autonomy of each person. As such, the union is essentially social and therefore non-reflexive: it can only exist between distinct individuals. The intimacy can be understood as a kind of transparency and vulnerability sensed between two people who 'get each other' (even from the very start) in a way in which no one else does. The intimate union also relates two persons as persons equally and without subordination. Finally, there is likely more than one species of intimate union of which the relationship established through love is just one example. Other types of

intimate unions will be necessary to get love started, but once it exists love can provide its own sufficient sustaining cause through establishing its own kind of intimate union between persons.

2.2 The Object vs. Cause Distinction and The Argument for the Restriction of the Object of Love to the Person (and not Qualities of a Person)

2.2.1 Classifying Emotions into Genera According to their Objects

Now that we have looked at McTaggart's account of the causes of love, we can look at his account of the object of love. Early in his discussion of emotion in *The Nature of Existence*, McTaggart divides emotions into two genera based on the general kind of object that each picks out.⁶⁸ One class of emotions are directed towards 'the qualities of a substance.' One might also say that the object of these emotions is 'a substance insofar as it possesses certain qualities.' In these cases the substance is only included in the object in an indirect or conditional way. The primary focus is on the quality, and should a substance lose that quality there is nothing about it (in itself) that directs the emotion towards it. These kinds of emotions are called "approval" and "disapproval" (differing in their positive or negative attitudes to their objects).

Another genus of emotions are those directed at "particular substances as wholes, though they may be *determined* by the qualities of substances."⁶⁹ As we have seen, a substance cannot exist without qualities and we cannot know the nature of a particular substance apart from its qualities (a substance without qualities is a mere abstraction and would have nothing to distinguish it from the 'bare' substance of any other particular thing). McTaggart, therefore, is not claiming that these emotions are directed to some kind of pure substance-core to which qualities are added. Instead, he is claiming that these kinds of emotions are directed towards the substance conceived as a whole made up of its parts and that is a bearer of qualities. These kinds of emotions are called "liking" and "repugnance." McTaggart wants to argue that love is a species of liking and so is directed towards persons (substances) *as* persons.

⁶⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §455n1, §459.

⁶⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §455 n.1.

While the distinction between “approval” and “liking” makes sense at a conceptual level, it is also possible that no actual emotions that can be classed under the ‘liking’ genus. McTaggart takes seriously the possibility that someone could (plausibly) doubt that substances (including persons) are ever actually the object of an emotion. He has acknowledged that qualities play a prominent and core role in causing all emotions (including love) and he also acknowledges that the proper objects of many (and possibly most) emotions are qualities of a person. McTaggart also acknowledges that qualities play an important role in determining the ‘nature’ of each person, and so qualities cannot be ruled out as merely superficial aspects of personality. Considering these facts alone might lead one to conclude that the object of any emotion – including love – is always some quality of a person. So McTaggart must show that there is reason to believe that some emotions, like love, do in fact pick out the person as their object and not merely the person’s qualities. He needs to explain why we have reason to think that love “is more independent than any other emotion of the qualities of the substance towards which it is felt.”⁷⁰ In other words, he needs to provide an argument for why one should accept that love is such an exceptional and unique kind of emotion. McTaggart’s terminology can be confusing and may give the impression that he is begging the question if some of the language is not cleared up. Stating that McTaggart wants to prove that ‘loving’ is a species of ‘liking’ (as opposed to ‘approval’) may make his conclusion seem much more obvious or trivial than it is because the meanings of these words are so closely connected in their ordinary usage. Rather than using ‘liking’ and ‘approval,’ as the names for the two fundamental genera of emotions, I think it is useful and clearer to say that emotions having persons (or substances) as their objects (*P-type objects*) are ‘*genus-P emotions*’ and emotions having qualities as their objects (*Q-type objects*) are ‘*genus-Q emotions*.’ So, using this more neutral terminology, the question that McTaggart must answer is whether or not the emotion that we call ‘love’ is a *genus-P emotion* or a *genus-Q emotion*. If we do this it should be clear that McTaggart’s conclusion is not trivial and his distinctions and lines of reasoning should be easier to follow.

McTaggart’s method for differentiating and classifying emotions is based on two fundamental assumptions. First, it is clear that he assumes that an emotion cannot have more than one object. Second, it is also clear that the fundamental and ultimate distinction between emotions is the type of object towards which they are directed. Any other unique

⁷⁰ McTaggart, *NE1*, §465.

features (such as causes or pro/con qualities) can only be used to create species within the fundamental object-based genera. If one rejects either of these assumptions, then they are not merely rejecting this argument, but rather McTaggart's whole system.

The second assumption is important to keep in mind. In one of C. D. Broad's criticisms of McTaggart's theory of emotion (and theory of love) he states that he cannot see why the same emotion cannot start by being directed towards a person's qualities and then shift towards the person "as a whole" (or vice versa).⁷¹ He provides two examples to explain his point. In the first, he sees a snake, and without any more thought fears it. He does not judge that 'this snake is poisonous' or 'this snake is angry' and then feel fear towards the qualities of 'being poisonous' or 'being hostile.' Broad concludes that we must feel fear for the snake "as a whole" (prior to any reflection, analysis, or judgment). Afterwards, however, he might reflect on the experience and make these judgements and then feel fear towards these qualities instead of unsophisticated immediate awareness of a 'snake as a whole.' In the second example, Broad suggests that I might come to admire a person because of certain qualities, but then as I get to know her my admiration is directed towards that person as a whole without thinking of the qualities at all. In both cases, Broad wants to suggest that emotions can be distinguished and classified based primarily on each emotion's unique phenomenological quality. Under Broad's assumptions, a person can have two emotional experiences having the same phenomenological quality, but each can be directed at a different kind of object (either qualities or persons). The difficulty with this approach, as mentioned earlier, is that the phenomenological quality is very difficult to describe in a determinate way. This means that any disputes between people about classification or differentiation will be difficult to resolve. Also, the qualitative characteristic of some emotions can be very similar, and where these emotions are intense it can be difficult to distinguish them, even from the first-person perspective where one has access to the phenomenological quality of the emotions. If there is no necessary (or at least highly reliable) connection between certain emotions and certain kinds of causes or objects and, so, if one cannot appeal to other aspects of the emotion – i.e., causes or objects – in order to distinguish and classify such emotions, it is very difficult to conceive of what other options might be available.

⁷¹ C. D. Broad. *Examination of McTaggart's Philosophy*, Volume II, Part I, pp. 109-110.

Broad's interpretation of the emotions involved in his two examples does not provide a decisive objection to McTaggart; they merely provide an alternative method of classification. They are not decisive against his view because McTaggart can explain the same experiences, only differently. He might state that when we first see the snake the phenomenological quality of the emotion itself (fear) is more clear and distinct than our knowledge of the object of that emotion. That we can be certain that we are experiencing a certain kind of emotion but still be in doubt as to whether its object is a person's qualities or the person as a whole is assumed from the start. This is why we must determine what the object of love is: it is not immediately clear. When I am afraid of the snake, I am aware in a vague way that the object is the snake, but what needs to be determined is whether it is directed towards the snake (as a whole) or towards its qualities. According to McTaggart, it is not that fear is directed to the snake as a whole at the start and then to its qualities; rather, fear is always directed towards the snake's qualities, but this is only clarified upon reflection. If Broad insisted that he felt a strong negative emotion towards the snake as a whole, then McTaggart could just insist that we would have to call such an emotion 'hate,' and not 'fear.' McTaggart could then say that what is happening is that a person is alternating between two kinds of con-emotion each with its own object (hate for the snake as a whole and fear of its qualities) and not that there is just one emotion with alternating objects.

I think that the same explanation could be employed in Broad's second example. McTaggart holds that I always admire a person in respect of her qualities. I might lose awareness of this fact as I become familiar with the person such that I no longer call to mind the qualities even though the emotion persists. But McTaggart would point out that if I became aware that the qualities that I admire are no longer possessed by the person (or never really were) the emotion would/should end.⁷² If Broad insists that once I know the person I have an emotion directed to her independent of those qualities, then McTaggart would just say that the emotion described is love, and not admiration. Perhaps I only started having admiration for her, but then love for her also developed. I might alternate focus between these two simultaneous emotions; however, in order to distinguish the promotions I have for her McTaggart would say I would have to isolate what exactly the object is (P-type or Q-type) in each case.

⁷² McTaggart, *NE2*, §468.

I mention this because it seems that in this objection Broad is not really taking issue with McTaggart's understanding of the phenomenon of emotions (though perhaps in general he does); rather, he is ultimately rejecting McTaggart's assumption that emotions are fundamentally differentiated and classified according to each emotion's unique object. This might be a fair criticism of McTaggart's classification of emotions as a whole, but it cannot be an objection to his attempt to explain love according to it. Since McTaggart's approach to differentiation and classification is plausible, and since it does offer a way to bypass the problem of the privacy of 'qualia' by appealing to aspects of the emotion that are more 'public' (i.e., the causes and objects accompanying each phenomenologically unique emotion) it is reasonable to accept McTaggart's method and focus on the argument that he develops based on it.

2.2.2 McTaggart's Argument for Why We have Reason to Believe that Object of Love is a Person and Not a Person's Qualities

McTaggart argues that the object of love must be a person and not just a person's qualities by showing that particular cases of love can only be explained if we assume that their object is a person and not some quality of a person. In order to do this, he must assume that there is a conceptual link between the type of emotion (of which a particular emotion is an instance or token) and its type of object (of which the object of a particular emotion is a token). If there were not some kind of conceptual link between the types in question, then McTaggart would not be able to infer from these examples that it is *necessarily* the case that the object of love is never a quality but always a person; rather, at most the argument could be inductive. Since McTaggart is clearly making a universal and necessary claim about the kind of object that love is directed towards, McTaggart must be assuming this kind of conceptual link. I want to suggest that the conceptual link is a kind of definitional (or bi-conditional) link.

This conceptual link holds that *an emotion is a P-type emotion if and only if the object of that emotion is a P-type object, and an emotion is a Q-type emotion if and only if the object of that emotion is a Q-type object*. The division of objects into two types is an exhaustive and mutually exclusive disjunction and so McTaggart is also proposing that *the object of any emotion must be either a P-type object or a Q-type object, but not both*. McTaggart must also assume the following principle to carry out his categorization: *If two particular emotions each have a different kind of object, they will be different kinds of emotions (they will belong to different genera). Emotions of the same kind (genus), therefore,*

cannot have different kinds of objects. This does not mean that all emotions having the same object are really just one kind of emotion. There might be other factors – such as the causes of emotions or the kind of orientation (pro- or con-) it has towards its object – that might allow for genera of emotions to be further sub-divided into species of emotions.

The important implication of this conceptual link is that if one determines that an instance of any species of emotion must have a particular kind of object, then one can infer that all other instances that belong to that species will have the same kind of object. If McTaggart can show that, in some particular instances, love cannot be directed towards a Q-type object, and must therefore be directed to P-type objects, then he can conclude that every particular instance of the emotional species of love will have a P-type object and belongs to the P-type genus of emotions. McTaggart argues that some instances of love cannot have Q-type objects by appealing to intuitions about the inappropriateness of ‘condemning’ love in three situations where we would ‘condemn’ other kinds of emotion. Each case presents a characteristic of love that could only be maintained if the object of love were a person, and not merely a person’s qualities.

The general structure of argument is as follows:

Key:

“type-**P** object”: an object that is a person (or substance)

“type-**Q** object”: an object that is a quality (attributable to a person or substance)

“genus-**P** emotion”: an emotion having a person (or substance) as its object

“genus-**Q** emotion”: an emotion having a quality (attributable to a person) as its object

“species-**L**” emotion: the species of ‘loving emotion’

“**I**”: a particular instance (or token) of L (the species of ‘loving emotion’)

Argument:

- P1:** The object of an emotion x is either a **P**-type object or a **Q**-type object (but not both). [Assumption of Emotional Classification]
- P2:** All instances of an emotion x belonging to the same species of emotion X have the same kind of object. [Assumption of Emotional Classification]
- P3:** An emotion x , or species of emotion X , belongs to genus-**P** if and only if it has a **P**-type object, and an emotion x , or species of emotion X , belongs to genus-**Q** if and only if it has a **Q**-type object. [Assumption of Emotional Classification]
- P4:** Every emotion x , or species of emotion X , belongs to either genus-**P** or genus-**Q** (but not both). [P1-P3]
- P5:** For each instance of **I** (belonging to the species **L**): if **I** has a **Q**-type object, then **I** ought to be condemned for reason(s) **R**. [General intuitions about norms for ‘approval’ and ‘condemnation’]
- P6:** There is an instance of **I** (belonging to the species **L**) where it is not the case that **I** ought to be condemned for reason(s) **R**. [Particular intuitions about applying norms for ‘approval’ and ‘condemnation’]
- C1:** Therefore, the object of **I** (belonging to species **L**) is not a **Q**-type object. [P5-P6]
- C2:** Therefore, the object of **I** (belonging to species **L**) is a **P**-type object. [P1+C1]
- C3:** Therefore, a **P**-type object is the object of every instance of a species **L** emotion and a **Q**-type object is not the object of any instance of a species **L** emotion. [P1-P2 +C2]
- C4:** Therefore, **L** is a genus-**P** emotion and not a genus-**Q** emotion. [P1-C3]

Explanation of Premises:

P1 – P3: Assumptions of Classification: McTaggart assumes that emotions can have only one kind of object (and still be the same emotion). Emotions are divided into genera according to the type of object they are directed at (P-type or Q-type). Genera of emotion can be sub-divided into species, but the members of each species will be either P-objects or Q-objects, but not both. On McTaggart’s classification-system species cannot include members in two different genera.

P4: The division of objects into P-type and Q-type is exhaustive and mutually exclusive; therefore, any emotion must therefore be directed towards either a P-type object or a Q-type object (but not both) and so any emotion or species of emotion will either be a P-genus emotion or a Q-genus emotion.

P5, P6, C1, C2: Certain intuitions about the (non-)condemnation of love cannot be explained if the object of love in those cases is a Q-type emotion. In each case (described below) if the object was a Q-type object, then the emotion ought to be condemned; but in these cases there are strong common-sense intuitions that these cases of love should not be condemned. Therefore, in these cases the object of love is not a Q-type emotion and so must be a P-type emotion).

C4: Since all members of a genus (and so all members of a species) must have the same kind of object, and the objects of these particular cases of love cannot be a Q-type object, the object of all instances of love must be a P-type object and so love is always a P-type emotion. In other words, the object of love is always a person and never a person's qualities.

2.2.2.1 The "Three Characteristics of Love" Supporting McTaggart's Thesis

In order to establish **P5**, **P6**, and **C1** of the overall argument, McTaggart considers three cases. Each example contrasts love with typical genus-Q emotions (such as admiration) where the (represented) quality that causes the emotion is also the object of that emotion.⁷³

Next, each case appeals to intuitions about whether certain emotions ought to be condemned (or approved) for various reasons. The first case involves the evaluation of an emotion according to whether or not its object is proportionate to that emotional response; rephrased, it evaluates an instance of a kind of emotion according to whether or not that kind of emotion is an *appropriate* response to the object towards which it is directed. The third case involves evaluations of emotions according to whether or not the emotion's represented object actually exists. The second case considers cases where it is not possible to determine whether or not the object of the emotion is appropriate nor whether it exists and how emotions are evaluated under these conditions of ignorance. Each of these grounds for evaluation provides a particular form of condemnation for each instance of **I** (belonging to the species **L**): if **I** has a **Q**-type object, then **I** ought to be condemned for the following reasons: i) because of an inappropriate object-emotion combination (disproportionate), ii) because the object does not exist, or iii) because it is unknown whether the object is appropriate or if it exists. All three reasons could be summed up by the following test: *'If the relation between the emotion and x is inappropriate, then x ought to be condemned.'* For the first reason, the failure is direct: the object is inappropriate and so ought to be condemned. We condemn an emotion for the second reason because since there is no object, there cannot an appropriate object.⁷⁴ The condemnation of an emotion for the third reason assumes that to

⁷³ As noted earlier, the immediate cause of any emotion will be some belief in the person experiencing the emotion. In the case of Q-type objects, the belief is always that some quality is possessed by someone (Qp). So the quality that causes an emotion is always the 'represented quality.' The actual possession of that quality causes grounds for approval or condemnation, but it is not the cause of the emotion itself. So while McTaggart speaks of the qualities as 'determining' or 'causing' emotions, it is clear that he is considering the qualities as objects of emotions in these instances.

⁷⁴ The lack of an object, in itself, may not be sufficient for condemning the emotion. If, for instance, certain emotions are properly directed towards non-existent objects (such as grief, hope, or anxiety, for instance) then

approve an emotion one must establish that the object is appropriate. If one cannot establish appropriateness, then one ought not approve it and so love ought to be condemned.⁷⁵

Finally, each case then identifies a ‘characteristic’ of love. Each ‘characteristic’ represents a kind of independence from the qualities that cause love, an independence which we intuitively think makes love immune to condemnation on account of qualities in a way the Q-type emotions are not. In each case, such intuitions prove P6 that can be described as the ‘hinge’ allowing McTaggart to arrive at his ultimate conclusions. Therefore, in order to fully understand the argument as whole, it is important to look at each case in detail.

2.2.2.1.1 Case 1: “love is not necessarily proportional to the dignity and adequacy of the qualities that determine it.”⁷⁶

In the first case McTaggart observes that genus-Q emotions arise because we believe that someone has a certain quality. The object of these emotions is this quality (or the person only insofar as they possess this quality). He then proposes that we condemn or approve such emotions depending on whether or not there is a certain kind of proportionality between the quality at issue and that emotion. If the necessary kind of proportionality is lacking, then we condemn the emotion as inappropriate. One example of a typical Q-type emotion that he considers is ‘admiring’ someone (as a hero) because I believe they are highly skilled at playing soccer. He suggests that if my belief about someone’s soccer skills causes an emotion like admiration (of those soccer skills), this emotion would be condemned because the quality at issue “is trivial and inadequate.”⁷⁷ While the extreme development of physical skills (and the discipline involved to attain such excellence) is worthy of some admiration, McTaggart’s intuition about the problem with admiring the skills of a soccer player is especially salient when we consider a case where I passionately admire (as heroic) one woman’s ability to kick a penalty shot as much (or more than) the courage of another woman who saved 30 children from being kidnapped by notoriously brutal extremists. It seems correct to say that the quality that I admire in the soccer player does not justify such

a non-existent object would be an appropriate object. The second reason therefore presumes the inappropriateness established in the first.

⁷⁵ McTaggart does not appear to entertain the possibility of taking a neutral attitude towards the emotion in terms of approval or condemnation (i.e. remaining agnostic about whether it should exist or not). However, since such an attitude would not tell us anything about the object, and determining the object is the goal, it may be understandable that he excluded this option here.

⁷⁶ McTaggart, NE2, §466.

⁷⁷ McTaggart, NE2, §466.

intense admiration, whereas the courage of the woman who saves the children does; therefore, the admiration of the soccer skills (as heroic) is condemned insofar as the object of admiration is inappropriate or disproportionate. The same will be true for any Q-type emotion: if the quality that is the object of the emotion is not appropriate for the emotion, then the emotion ought to be condemned.

If love is assumed to be a Q-type emotion, then love should arise from my belief that the beloved has some quality and this quality should be the object of my love. McTaggart notes that it sometimes happens that love arises because we notice a very trivial quality in someone else, perhaps something as trivial as his or her eye colour.⁷⁸ Presumably, given his account of the causes of love, my noticing this quality results in an awareness of a deep intimate union existing between myself and another and so I experience love. If love is a Q-type emotion, however, then a trivial quality – such as eye colour – would be the object of love and this type of object would seem to be disproportionate to “the value of the emotion,”⁷⁹ and so we should condemn love if this is the case. McTaggart claims, however, that we do not think that love should be condemned in these cases. Instead, he suggests, we think that what actually happens in such cases is that we are “determined to a very great thing by a very small cause,” and that “[i]f what is caused is really love – and this is sometimes the case – it is not condemned on that ground.”⁸⁰ This characteristic of love (“that love is not necessarily proportional to the dignity or adequacy of the qualities that determine it”⁸¹), he thinks,

would seem to indicate that the emotion is directed to the person, independently of his qualities, and that the determining qualities are no the justification of that quality but only the means by which it arises.⁸²

As McTaggart noted earlier, if the object of an emotion is inappropriate/disproportionate for that type of emotion, then that emotion ought to be condemned. He observes that the qualities that give rise to love are often trivial and so *if they were* objects of love they would surely be judged to be disproportionate or inappropriate objects of that emotion. But, McTaggart claims, when it comes to love that arises from trivial qualities we judge that it is

⁷⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

⁷⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

⁸⁰ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

⁸¹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

⁸² McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

not the case the love ought to be condemned in such cases. So, by *modus tollens*, the object of love is not inappropriate/disproportionate to the emotion. And so McTaggart concludes that qualities are not the object of love in this instance, but only its causes and so such an instance of love would not be a Q-type emotion (C1). That love has an object cannot be doubted (love has intentionality on his theory). The object of love, in these cases, must be something appropriate, and since it cannot be the qualities that caused love, McTaggart suggests that it must be the person.

Before moving on to the second case, it is important to note that in this example McTaggart also provides a hint as to why we *approve* of love, even in cases where its cause is clearly trivial. He states that love is a “very great thing” and because it is so great “[i]f the love does arise, it justifies itself, regardless of what causes produce it.”⁸³ He ends the example by stating that if qualities are merely the cause of love and not its object then:

it is natural that their value should sometimes bear no greater relation to the value of the emotion than the intrinsic value of the key of a safe bears to the value of the gold to which it gives us access.⁸⁴

These quotes, especially the last one, indicate that love ought to be approved because as a loving state of consciousness it is highly intrinsically valuable: it is a kind of conscious state that we ought to desire for its own sake.

2.2.2.1.2 Case 2: Love is not condemned even “in those cases in which we are unable to find any quality in the object of love which determines love to arise.”

In the second example, McTaggart observes that for a Q-type emotion, if we were unable to determine what quality caused the emotion, then we would have to condemn the emotion because there is no way to determine if the quality is “adequate.”⁸⁵ For instance, if I admired someone, but I could not trace my emotion back to any beliefs that I have about the person I admire (i.e., I cannot explain my admiration in terms of any of the qualities that I believe that person to have), then my admiration would be condemnable. This seems to follow from the first case: Q-type emotions should be approved only if their object (the quality I believe them to have) is appropriate. Since I cannot determine if the object is appropriate, I cannot approve of love and so must condemn it.

⁸³ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

⁸⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

⁸⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, §467.

When it comes to love, however, McTaggart claims that it does not matter if I cannot explain why it is that I love one person (and even if I cannot explain why I do not love others instead of the one that I do love). Why? He does not say, but presumably this is because “[n]o cause can be inadequate, if it produces such a result.”⁸⁶ What kind of result? Presumably, as the first case indicates, a highly valuable emotion such as love. The example seems to be designed to show that the intrinsic value of love is not dependent on any quality in the person loved; presumably, for other Q-type emotions, their value (and so their approval/condemnation) will be dependent on the appropriateness of the quality that is its object. McTaggart concludes that this characteristic of love further supports the claim that while qualities can cause love, they cannot be the object of love (instead it must be the person that is the proper object of love).

2.2.2.1.3 Case 3: “If love has once arisen, there is no reason why it ought to cease, because the belief has ceased which was its cause. And this is true, however important the quality believed in may be.”

The third case is based upon considerations about what happens when we discover that the (represented) object of our emotion no longer exists, or never actually existed at all (i.e., our belief was false). In the case of Q-type emotions, my belief that **p** has some quality **Q** that causes me to have a certain Q-type emotional attitude towards **Q**. If, however, we discover that **p** does not have **Q**, or never actually had **Q** at all, then “such a discovery would at once condemn the emotion, and in many cases, though not in all, would soon destroy it.”⁸⁷ So for Q-type emotions, once it is established that the ‘belief that **p** has **Q**’ is false – that the quality towards which the emotion is directed does not actually currently exist – then that emotion ought to be condemned. So, if I admire someone because I think they are wise, but it turns out they are a merely clever, then my admiration for that person on this basis ought not exist. If I continue admiring the person for their wisdom, in spite of the new information and in spite of my revised beliefs, then my continued admiration ought to be condemned.

Once again, however, McTaggart claims that this is not the case with love. He states:

But with love it is different. If love has once arisen, there is no reason why it ought to cease, because the belief has ceased which was its cause. And this is

⁸⁶ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

⁸⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §468.

true, however important the quality believed in may be. If a man whom I have come to love because I believed him virtuous or brave proves to be vicious or cowardly, this may make me miserable. It may make me judge him to be evil. But that I should be miserable, or that he should be evil, is irrelevant to my love. It often happens, of course, that such a strain is too hard for love, and destroys it. But while such a result would be accepted as the only reasonable course with any other emotion, it is felt here as a failure. Admiration, hope, trust, ought to yield. But love, if it were strong enough, could have resisted, and ought to have resisted.⁸⁸

Our intuition, McTaggart asserts, is that love *ought* to persist even if the qualities that originally caused us to love the person turn out to be false (either because the person has now lost those qualities or because I was mistaken to think they ever had them). McTaggart must have in mind the intuition that is at the core of many literary explorations of love, an intuition that I think is aptly captured in Shakespeare's 116th sonnet:

... love is not love/ Which alters when it alteration finds/ Or bends with the
remover to remove./ O no, it is an ever-fixèd mark/ That looks on tempests
and is never shaken;/ It is the star to every wand'ring bark/ Whose worth's
unknown, although his height be taken.⁸⁹

McTaggart's assertion is somewhat radical. He is not claiming that love ought to persist through trivial or minor changes, but that it ought, ideally, to persist even through major changes in the qualities of the person one loves; the claim is that love for the beloved ought to persist independently of *all* qualitative changes in the beloved. An implication of the third characteristic of love is that love is not condemned on *any* consideration of qualities. Some may, understandably, consider this intuition too controversial. However, McTaggart does concede that under existing non-ideal circumstances the discovery that someone lacks certain important qualities that I believed them to have may introduce enough psychological interference to cause love to end and this concession may make his claim more plausible. Most of us recognize that it is best to remove ourselves from situations and relationships with people who turned out to be more abusive or vicious than we originally believed. Nonetheless, removing oneself from a situation and altering the terms of one's relationship does not mean that all love for that person must cease: we can acknowledge that we love someone (at least in some way), but also recognize that the best thing for both parties is to

⁸⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §468.

⁸⁹ Shakespeare, "Sonnet 116," <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/shakespeares-sonnets-let-me-not-marriage-true-minds>

end any shared activities. Yet if love does end, many of us would admit that it is always at least somewhat regrettable that a loving relationship had to end: things would have been better if there had been a way to salvage the relationship (even though it turned out that it was impossible, practically, to save it).

Once again, this case gives us a hint as to why love is approved, and not merely an assertion that it (intuitively) ought not to be condemned. Given McTaggart's previous claims about love's intrinsic value, it makes sense to think that an instance of love ought (at least *prima facie*) to exist because by existing it adds value to the universe and so makes that universe better than it would be without it. Under certain conditions, we might think that love for a person who has a certain quality would make love instrumentally evil: love for that particular person will result in more suffering and harm overall than the goodness contributed by its own intrinsic value. For instance, perhaps I love someone who is only ever extremely cruel to those he thinks love him (perhaps because he thinks that such people will not be immediately alienated by his cruelty in the way strangers or mere acquaintances would be). Loving this person will result in the beloved committing serious acts of cruelty, result in intense suffering for the lover, and likely result in suffering for many others as well. Clearly, there is a reason to end love in such a case, but this does not affect the fact that love is intrinsically good. There is nothing about love itself that causes this tragic situation; instead it is a particular characteristic of the beloved (that they are intensely cruel to those who love them) that introduces the evil results. In an ideal situation, it would be best to remove this characteristic in the beloved so that an instance of intrinsically good love could exist; however, if such a situation is not plausible or would require sacrifices from the lover, beloved, and others that would outweigh the value of that particular instance of love, then *regrettably*, there would be reason to remove an intrinsic good from the world in order to reduce certain evils. The total amount of good in the world would be decreased by the removal of this good, but since evil having a greater disvalue than love is also removed, the overall balance of value in the world is better than it would have been with this instance of love in it. Clearly, removing goods in order to decrease greater evil is required in some cases, but removing intrinsic goods is not an ideal way to make the world better. If evils can be removed and goods preserved, this option, it seems, is *prima facie* preferable. Understanding that love is approved because it is intrinsically valuable helps make sense of McTaggart's claims in this case and may help make his claim that love *ought* to persist all qualitative

changes at least somewhat more plausible. McTaggart concludes the third case by claiming that this feature of love also confirms that the object of love is a person and not a person's qualities. Love is not condemned as a Q-type emotion would be and so it must be (by process of elimination) a P-type emotion.

All three cases and the role each plays in establishing **P5-C1** in the general argument can be schematized as follows:

Table 1: Schematization of the Arguments Related to the Three Characteristic of Love

Schema	Characteristic 1	Characteristic 2	Characteristic 3
P5: if <i>I</i> has a Q-type object, then <i>I</i> ought to be condemned for reason(s) R .	P5a: If <i>I</i> is has a Q-type object, then being caused by a quality that is disproportionate to it is a sufficient reason to condemn that instance of the emotion. (Since the cause and object are the same for Q-type emotions, the object would be <i>inappropriate</i> for that emotion.)	P5b: If <i>I</i> has a Q-type object, then being unable to identify the quality that causes the emotion is a sufficient reason to condemn that instance of the emotion. (Since the cause and object are the same for Q-type emotions, one must determine if the quality that caused the emotion would be an <i>appropriate</i> object of the emotion.)	P5c: If <i>I</i> has a Q-type object, then the discovery that a belief in the existence of a certain quality that caused the emotion is false is a sufficient reason to condemn that instance of the emotion. (Since the cause and object are the same for a Q-type emotion if a belief 'that a quality exists' caused the emotion turns out to be false, then there is actually no appropriate object of the emotion.)
P6: it is not the case that <i>I</i> ought to be condemned for reason R (or: 'R is not a sufficient reason to condemn x.') (Intuition)	P6a: Being caused by a quality that is disproportionate to love is a not sufficient reason to condemn that instance of the emotion. (Instead, this means only that a highly valuable intrinsic good was caused by something less valuable than it.)	P6b: Being unable to identify the quality that causes love is not a sufficient reason to condemn that instance of the emotion. (The mere existence of an intrinsic good such as love provides grounds for approving it, regardless of what caused it.)	P6c: The discovery that the belief in the existence of a certain quality (which caused love) is false is not a sufficient reason to condemn that instance of the emotion. (For any instance of love, once it exists it <i>ought</i> to exist regardless of the truth-value of my beliefs about the beloved's qualities and regardless of the actual qualities of the beloved.)
C1: Therefore, <i>I</i> is not a genus-Q emotion.	C1: Therefore, love is not a genus-Q emotion.	C1: Therefore, love is not a genus-Q emotion.	C1: Therefore, love is not a genus-Q emotion.

As indicated earlier, P5, P6, and C1 ultimately lead to an argument by elimination concluding that the object of love is a person and not the qualities of a person.

2.2.2.2 What Does this Argument Tell Us about the Kind of Intrinsic Value Possessed by Love?

Each of the cases in Chapter XLI of *The Nature of Existence* represents love as a highly important intrinsic good. McTaggart directly (and repeatedly) confirms this claim throughout the final Chapters (LXIV-LXVIII) which are dedicated to value theory. But what *kind* of intrinsic value does love have? Dennis McKerlie proposes two options: love can be a first-order (or basic) intrinsic good or it can be a higher-order intrinsic good.⁹⁰ His concept of a higher order intrinsic good is similar to the one proposed by Thomas Hurka as a way to understand the kind of intrinsic value that is often assigned to virtue. It is worth briefly outlining Hurka's view in order to clarify the two options McKerlie proposes.

In his book *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, Hurka outlines a concept of "higher-order" intrinsic goods.⁹¹ The concept is meant to preserve the idea that certain goods are 'non-instrumentally' valuable (i.e., their value is not [completely] conditional upon the value of its results), but moves away from the idea that the non-instrumental value of such goods must also be independent of its relationships to other (valuable) objects in the world (i.e., intrinsic value must depend solely on non-relational or 'intrinsic' characteristics).⁹² While this is true of some kinds of intrinsic goods (what he calls 'basic' or 'first-order' goods), it is not true of all of them. The non-instrumental value of some intrinsic goods (what he calls 'higher-order' goods) is a function of the relation of that higher-order good to some other intrinsic good (either another 'higher-order' good or, ultimately, to some 'basic-good') and so Hurka describes such higher-order goods as intrinsic goods. Due to their structure of intentionality, conscious states are prime candidates for higher-order intrinsic goods; such conscious states are related to (directed towards) objects of consciousness, and it seems (intuitively) the value of some conscious states is a function of the value of the attitude's object and the kind of

⁹⁰ Dennis McKerlie. "McTaggart on Love," *Underivative Duty*. p. 70

⁹¹ Dennis McKerlie. "McTaggart on Love," *Underivative Duty*. p. 70; see also, Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 11-19.

⁹² Hurka, *VVV*, p. 6, 13. The restriction of 'intrinsic value' solely to considerations of 'intrinsic characteristics' seems to illegitimately ignore a distinction between teleological relations (an cause to its effects) with all other kinds of relations and Hurka's theory offers a way to avoid this error.

attitude that is taken up towards the object (either a ‘pro-’ or a ‘con-’ attitude).⁹³ For example, Hurka argues that virtues (conative attitudes) are best explained as taking a “positive orientation” towards a basic good (in itself)⁹⁴ or taking a “negative orientation” towards a basic evil (in itself). Vices are taking a positive orientation towards a basic evil (in itself) or a negative orientation towards a basic good (in itself). The value of the higher-order conative attitude is therefore a function of the intrinsic value of its object (some basic intrinsic good) and its pro- or con-orientation to the basic good. This function will identify a particular conative state as proportionate and appropriate (virtuous) or disproportionate or inappropriate (vicious). Considered apart from any basic goods, the value of a positive or negative orientation could not be determined. If Sarah had a pro-orientation towards *x* we could meaningfully condemn her attitude as ‘vicious’ (higher-order evil) by showing that *x* is a basic intrinsic evil. Sarah could defend herself, however, by convincing us that *x* is a basic intrinsic good. Even if we accept that *x* is a basic intrinsic good, we might be able to criticize her pro-orientation towards it by stating that the pro-orientation is too strong. If *x* is a polite gesture performed by Sarah, and the pro-orientation is expressed in pride, we could criticize Sarah for taking too much pride in being polite (perhaps she views her politeness to be as intrinsically valuable as heroism). These examples show how on such an account of value the intrinsic value of certain attitudes depends on the value of its object.

As McKerlie notes, McTaggart describes ‘virtue’ as a higher-order good in exactly this fashion.⁹⁵ McTaggart, in accordance with others such as G. E. Moore and Hastings Rashdall, defines the ‘ideally’ virtuous person as one who always has virtuous desires and whose “volitions must be directed towards what is good, or at least, to what appears to him to be good.”⁹⁶ Virtuous desires are always pro-conations directed towards goods. Furthermore, McTaggart clearly states that the intrinsic value of the desire depends on the value of the object of the desire: “If *J* [a “volition”] is to be virtuous, then *K* [the object of the volition] must be good.”⁹⁷ So there is good textual evidence to support the claim that McTaggart had a conception of higher-order intrinsic goods (even if he did not explicitly

⁹³ Hurka, *VVV*, p. 11-23.

⁹⁴ Instead of pro-attitude, Hurka uses the term ‘love.’ Since the meaning of ‘love’ has a much broader meaning for Hurka in his book than what McTaggart assigns to it, I have substituted ‘pro-attitude’ to avoid any unnecessary confusion.

⁹⁵ McKerlie, “McTaggart on Love,” p. 70n11.

⁹⁶ McTaggart, *NE2*, §828 (also §815, §§827-829).

⁹⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §829.

describe them in the same terms used by Hurka). Is there reason to think that McTaggart assigned this kind of higher-order intrinsic value to conscious states of emotion (such as love) in addition to assigning it to conscious states of volition?

McKerlie thinks that there is not; instead, he thinks McTaggart conceives of love as a “first-order” good.⁹⁸ Some of McTaggart’s language could be interpreted in this way. For instance, as we saw, McTaggart makes claims like the following:

If the love does arise, it justifies itself, regardless of what causes produce it. But if what is caused is really love – and this is sometimes the case – it is not condemned on that ground [disproportionality of the quality to love]. It is there, and that is enough.⁹⁹

He also compares the relation between the value of the causes of love (qualities) to the intrinsic value of love to the relation between the value of the key to a safe and the value of the gold within it. It seems that the value of the gold, at least in this example, is completely independent of its relation to what causes my possession of it (the key) and so love is the same. One might interpret these passages to mean that love’s intrinsic value is solely dependent on non-relational qualities.

However, close examination of these quotes shows that McTaggart is merely claiming that the value of love is independent of any *causal relations* to other conscious-states (e.g., beliefs) or to other objects; he does not explicitly deny that the value of emotional states is a function of the *intentional relation* to its object as is the case with the value of conative states.¹⁰⁰ Instead of reading “justifies itself” as meaning that we approve love independently of any of its relations (of any kind) to anything else, we could read these statements as claiming that we have a (prima facie) reason to approve love directly because of its own intrinsic value – a value that is independent of its causal relations, but not necessarily independent of its intentional relation to its object.

Furthermore, in the later works McTaggart describes emotions as having the exact same kind of structure of intentionality as volitions do (though they are qualitatively different). It is not immediately obvious why the structure of intentionality allowing for higher-order intrinsic goodness in conative states would not allow for the same kind of

⁹⁸ McKerlie, “McTaggart on Love,” p. 70.

⁹⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §466.

¹⁰⁰ Hurka distinguishes between ‘causal’ and ‘intentional’ relations and states that the value of desires (on Hasting Rashdall’s theory) is independent of the former but a function of the latter. (*VVV*, p.11.)

goodness for emotional states. Also, Moore (a student and colleague of McTaggart) thinks that both conations and emotions (including the ‘personal affection’ or ‘love’) have higher-order intrinsic goodness.¹⁰¹ Love, on Moore’s view, has intrinsic value (and great intrinsic value) because it is directed towards a conscious being in respect of “admirable mental qualities” (which include the other’s appreciation of beauty and the other’s appreciation [love] of other persons) along with the beloved’s beautiful qualities.¹⁰² It is not clear why McTaggart, unlike Moore, would arbitrarily rule out higher-order intrinsic goodness for love and identify it as a basic first-order good (as McKerlie suggests), even though it is so similar in structure (though different in quality) from conative states.

Finally, it seems that in his consideration of the three characteristics of love outlined above, McTaggart assumes that Q-type emotions have higher-order intrinsic value. As noted earlier, Q-type emotions are evaluated in terms of the appropriateness of the relation between the emotional attitude and the object. The judgements of ‘condemnation’ or ‘approval’ in each of the cases do not make sense unless one assumes that certain Q-type emotions are ‘condemned’ because their object (some quality) is inappropriate (either because the object’s value is ‘disproportionate’ to the emotion or because there is actually no appropriate object at all). It would be odd if the value of all Q-type emotions was dependent on its intentional relations to intrinsically valuable Q-type objects, and yet the intrinsic value of a P-type emotion was completely independent of its intentional relations to its intrinsically valuable P-type objects. If we pay attention to McTaggart’s arguments and conclusion, he never claims that considerations about the object of love – the person – do not play any role in determining the value of love. The negative conclusion of the argument is *only* that qualities cannot play the role of the object of love because our intuitions about the value of love are independent of any considerations about the qualities of a person; nonetheless, his argument allows (and, as I am arguing, must assume) that our intuitions about the value of love may be linked to our intuitions about the value of *the person* (and so the person is the object of love).

While these considerations provide circumstantial reasons in favour of thinking that McTaggart assigned higher-order intrinsic goodness to love, there is another strong indirect

¹⁰¹ Hurka, *VVV*, p. 25. Thomas Hurka, “Moore’s Moral Philosophy,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)*, Section 4. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moore-moral/>; G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* [1903] (Editor: Thomas Baldwin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.) §122.

¹⁰² Moore, *PE*, §122.

reason for attributing this kind of value to love on McTaggart's view. I want to argue that if love is assumed to be a basic good for McTaggart, then his whole argument that persons are the object of love and not the qualities of a person – as outlined above – will not work. I will make this argument by showing that the argument gets McTaggart the conclusion he needs if we assume that love has higher-order goodness. If we assume, however, that love is a basic good, he cannot get the conclusion he sets out to prove. On a charitable interpretation of McTaggart we would want to assume that he made assumptions of the first kind and not the second. Even if he did not assume that love is a higher-order good, the following argument shows that he should have assumed this given his ultimate aim, and so we are justified in assigning love this kind of value in our interpretation of McTaggart in order to preserve his overall project.

2.2.2.2.1 Assume that love is a higher-order intrinsic good:

If McTaggart thinks that love, like the Q-type emotions he considers, is a higher-order intrinsic good, then the intrinsic value of love will be determined by the intrinsic value of its object (just as Q-type emotions are). This means that there will be a necessary connection (i.e., a constant function) between the value of an emotion and the value of its object. An implication of this is that if one were trying to determine what kind of object an emotion has (if for instance the kind of object an emotion has is under dispute) then one could identify possible candidates for objects of that emotion and determine if there is any necessary connection between the value of the assumed object and the value of the emotion. If it turned out that there were no necessary connection between the intrinsic value of the emotion and the proposed object (say of proportionality) then that kind of object could be ruled out. If you had a limited set of options for types of object-candidates then one could potentially isolate the correct object by a process of elimination. It seems to me that this is exactly the kind of argument that McTaggart needs in these sections and I believe that it makes most sense to understand him as employing this type of argument.

If we assume that love is a higher-order good, the argument based on intuitions about (non-)condemnation (P5-C1 in the argument) could be expanded and reformulated in the following way:

[P α]: An emotion is a higher-order intrinsic good if and only if, x determines the intrinsic value of an emotion if and only if x is the object of that emotion (The intrinsic value of love will be determined by its object.) [Assumed Definition: higher-order intrinsic good.]

[P β]: Love (an emotion) is a higher-order intrinsic good. [Assumption]

[C α]: Therefore, x determines the intrinsic value of love if and only if x is the object of love. (The value of love is determined by its object.) [**P α** + **P β**]

P1: The object of an emotion x is either a P-type object or a Q-type object (but not both). [Assumption of Emotional Classification]

...

P5: For each instance of **I** (belonging to the species **L**): if **I** has a Q-type object, then **I** ought to be condemned for reason(s) **R** (If the relation between the emotion and the object is *inappropriate/disproportionate*, then that emotion ought to be condemned.) [Intuition supported by **C α**]

P6: There is an instance of **I** (belonging to the species **L**) where it is not the case that **I** ought to be condemned for reason(s) **R**. (A disproportion between the value of the qualities of the person loved and the value of the emotion of love is not (in fact) grounds for condemning love: *the value of the emotion of love is not determined by Q-type objects*.) [Intuition]

C1: Therefore, the object of **I** (belonging to species **L**) is not a Q-type object. [**C α** , P5-P6]

C2: Therefore, the object of **I** (belonging to species **L**) is a P-type object. [P1+C1]

C3: Therefore, a P-type object is the object of every instance of a species **L** emotion and a Q-type object is not the object of any instance of a species **L** emotion. [P1-P2 +C2]

C4: Therefore, **L** is a genus-P emotion and not a genus-Q emotion. [P1-C3]

This reformulation adds a sub-argument represented by **P α** , **P β** , and **C α** . This argument establishes the kind of constant (and necessary) relationship that would exist between a loving state and its object if loving states are assumed to be higher-order intrinsic goods. This argument would help explain why emotions (such as love) can be condemned based on the reasons identified in each case: objects are approved or condemned (as intrinsically good or evil) according to the kind of relationship (appropriate/inappropriate or proportionate/disproportionate) existing between the emotion and the object. These premises – especially **P β** – also provide a link between the intuitions about (non-)condemnation in P6 and the kind of object that love picks out.

On this interpretation, McTaggart's argument is a kind of transcendental argument. It starts from a given phenomenon and then attempts to determine the necessary conditions

for the possibility of that experience. In this case McTaggart starts from the intuition that (in each of the cases considered) love ought not to be condemned, even where there is a disproportion between the qualities that determine love and the emotion of love itself, and then he reasons towards the kind of object of love that would be necessary to justify such non-condemnation. To do this however, he needs some kind of necessary link between the object and the non-condemnation of love. The account of love as having higher-order intrinsic value provides this connection for McTaggart.

As the reformulated and expanded argument shows, this connection (established through **P α** , **P β** , and **C α**) not only allows him to rule out Q-type objects because they lack the required kind of necessary connection to the value of love, it also allows him to assert that the object is a P-type object. This is because if love is a higher-order good, then its value *must* be determined by *some* object. Since there are only two kinds of objects, and Q-type objects are ruled out McTaggart can conclude (validly) that the object of love is therefore always a P-type object. Assuming that love is a higher-order intrinsic good allows McTaggart to arrive at the conclusion he is looking for: that the object of love is always a person and not a person's qualities.

2.2.2.2 Assume that love is a basic first-order good (the intrinsic goodness of love is independent of any relational properties, including intentional relations)

If we assume (with McKerlie) that McTaggart thinks that love is a basic good, this will mean that love has an intrinsic value that is completely independent of any relationship it has to anything else, including its intentional relationship to its (good or bad) object. In other words, the intrinsic value of love will not be determined by the intrinsic value of the object of love. There will be no necessary connection between the value of love and the value of the object of love. If McTaggart really did believe this, it is not clear how the intuitions about non-condemnation ('characteristics' of love) that he identifies can help him establish **both** that the object of love is not a Q-type object and that it is a P-type object. If we can judge that an instance of love is good-in-itself (and so *ought to exist*) or that it is evil-in-itself (and so *ought not to exist*) independently of *any* relation it has to anything else (i.e., solely by its intrinsic characteristics), then it is not clear how any consideration about whether we approve of the object or condemn it tells us anything about the kind of object that is proper to love. The considerations that McTaggart brings up about the existence/non-existence of the qualities corresponding to the beliefs we have about the beloved (beliefs that are proximate causes of

love) might be relevant to epistemic evaluations about our attitudes (i.e., whether the beliefs which underlie our attitudes are true or false), but again, it is not clear how this helps us determine anything about the unique kind of object that can be used to help classify love.

By denying that there is any necessary connection between the value of love and (the value of) its object, one removes the possibility of using any considerations about whether love ought to be approved or condemned to establish anything about the kind of object that is a necessary condition for the possibility of such judgements. The impotency of the argument, if it is based on the assumption that love is a basic first-order good, is made clearer if we look at the structure of the argument itself and compare it to the structure of the argument if love is assumed to have higher-order goodness.

[P α]: An emotion is a higher-order intrinsic good if and only if, x determines the intrinsic value of an emotion if and only if x is the object of that emotion (The intrinsic value of love will be determined by its object.) [Assumed Definition: higher-order intrinsic good.]

[P β ']: *Love (unlike all other Q-type emotions) is not a higher-order intrinsic good.*
[Assumption]

[C α ']: *Therefore, it is not the case that x determines the value of love if and only if x is the object of love. (The value of love is not be determined by its object.)* [P α + P β ']

P1: The object of an emotion x is either a P-type object or a Q-type object (but not both).
[Assumption of Emotional Classification]

...

P5: ~~For each instance of l (belonging to the species L): if l has a Q-type object, then l ought to be condemned for reason(s) R . (If the relation between the emotion and the object is *inappropriate/disproportionate*, then that emotion ought to be condemned.)~~ [Intuition supported by ~~C α~~]

P6: There is an instance of l (belonging to the species L) where it is not the case that l ought to be condemned for reason(s) R . (A disproportion between the value of the qualities of the person loved and the value of the emotion of love is not (in fact) grounds for condemning love: *the value of the emotion of love is not determined by Q-type objects.*) [Intuition]

C1: ~~Therefore, the object of l (belonging to species L) is not a Q-type object.~~ [C α , P5-P6]

C1': *The object of this instance of love (l) is either a P-type object or a Q-type object (but not both).*

C2: ~~Therefore, the object of l (belonging to species L) is a P-type object.~~ [P1+C1]

~~C3: Therefore, a **P**-type object is the object of every instance of a species **L** emotion and a **Q**-type object is not the object of any instance of a species **L** emotion. [P1-P2 +C2]~~
~~C4: Therefore, **L** is a genus **P** emotion and not a genus **Q** emotion. [P1-C3]~~

In order to represent this alternative assumption (that love is a first-order intrinsic good) **Pβ'** and **Cα'** are substituted for the **Pβ** and **Cα** for the previous assumption (that love is a higher-order intrinsic good). Whereas the bi-conditional in the original **Cα** allowed us to make a connection between our intuitions about what emotions ought to be condemned (as intrinsically evil) and the kind of object of such emotions, **Cα'** denies this kind of link: the value of love is independent of its relations with any other kind of object (no matter what kind). **Cα'** conflicts with P5; even if intuitions about the (non-)condemnation of certain emotions are correct (P6), our (non-)condemnation cannot be for any of the reasons listed, since these all take into account the appropriateness or existence of things other than the emotion itself. Our condemnation or approval will be made solely on the basis of the 'intrinsic qualities' of the emotion in question (i.e., admiration or love) and not on the basis of any considerations as to the 'appropriateness' or 'existence' of the object of such emotions. This means that P5 cannot be combined with P6 in a *modus tollens* argument to rule out Q-type qualities as the object of love (C1). As a result we are also not able to arrive at C2 and C3 of the original argument and this means that we cannot use a process of elimination to assert that the object of love is P-type. The ultimate conclusion, that the object of love is always a person and never a person's qualities (C4) is therefore also ruled out. At most, McTaggart could arrive at C1', which is merely a more specific form of P4: the object of love is either a P-type object or a Q-type object. Since the very question that McTaggart is trying to answer – Is the object of love a Q-type object or a P-type object? – is left open if we assume that love is a basic intrinsic good, this is a good reason to reject the claim that McTaggart thinks love is a first-order intrinsic good. Considerations about the problems involved with this assumption combined with observed benefits of the alternative assumption provide us good reason to think that McTaggart assigned (or at least ought to have assigned) love a higher-order intrinsic goodness since this kind of value is necessary for him to establish his conclusion from the kind of reasoning that he puts forward in his considerations of the three characteristics of love in *The Nature of Existence*.

There is one last implication of these considerations that is worth mentioning here. If McTaggart thinks that love is a higher-order good, then this means that McTaggart and Moore (his student and colleague) are not opposed in the way that is suggested by McKerlie.¹⁰³ As mentioned earlier, McKerlie thinks that the main difference between McTaggart and Moore is that love is a higher-order good for Moore and a basic good for McTaggart; however, if both agree about the kind of intrinsic value that love has, then the real point of dispute between them is over the proper objects of love. Moore apparently thinks that the objects of love are Q-type (the person is loved insofar as they have beautiful qualities and they have certain kinds of good ‘mental qualities’: mental states appreciating what is beautiful and appreciating good mental states in others)¹⁰⁴ and McTaggart clearly thinks they are P-type. This makes the difference between them far more interesting (I think) given criticisms that views like Moore’s cannot handle problems like “the fungibility problem” of love because it focuses too much on ‘repeatable qualities.’ By focusing on such qualities he makes the person a *mere* ‘bearer’ of what ‘really matters’ (the good qualities)¹⁰⁵ and so ignores the intrinsic value of the unique individual person that is loved.¹⁰⁶ If McTaggart is correct that while the qualities of a person may cause love, the object of love is always an individual person, then McTaggart may be able to avoid some fungibility problem more successfully (though perhaps not completely) than Moore.

Before ending, it is necessary to note one final complication related to McTaggart’s theory of love. In many places McTaggart refers to love as an intrinsic good. Love is clearly a pro-orientation. If love is a higher-order good, then it seems possible that love could be either intrinsically good or intrinsically bad depending on the value of the object. If a person can be intrinsically bad, then loving that person would be intrinsically bad. McTaggart, however, never entertains the idea that the person can be intrinsically evil. If love is *always* intrinsically good, this can only be because the person *qua* person is *always* intrinsically good.

¹⁰³ McKerlie, “McTaggart on Love,” pp. 69-70.

¹⁰⁴ Moore, *Principia Ethica*, §122.

¹⁰⁵ Vlastos, Gregory. “The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato,” in *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of Love* (Ed. Alan Soble, New York: Paragon House, 1989): pp. 96-127.

¹⁰⁶ Hurka, “Moore’s Moral Philosophy” SEP. Section 5. McKerlie, “McTaggart on Love,” pp. 69-70. The fungibility problem arises when a theory of love implies that the person that I love could be completely replaced (without any loss) by another person having the identical relevant qualities (perhaps even to a greater degree). If repeatable qualities are the sole reason that I have for loving another, then an implication is that I have an equal reason to love every person that has the same relevant qualities as my beloved and more reason to love those who have a greater quantity or more perfect instantiation of those qualities than my beloved. This is a widely recognized and discussed problem in contemporary philosophy of love.

This claim, however, is hard to accept. While we may accept that it is possible to distinguish the ‘person substance’ (as a conscious subject) from the qualities assigned to that person-substance and accept that love is (primarily) directed at the person-substance independent of these qualities, it is difficult to accept the claim that a person’s qualities do not affect the overall intrinsic value of ‘the person’ that love picks out. Someone who repeatedly and purposefully tortures other human beings, for instance, seems to be evil *qua* person precisely because they have the qualities we assign to vicious and brutal people.

One might try to defend McTaggart and claim that even such vicious people have rational capacities, autonomy, and so an inviolable dignity, regardless of what they do, and so on these grounds are always deserving of love. Such an abstract ‘rational capacity’ seems, however, to be exactly the kind of abstraction that we saw McTaggart tries to avoid in his theory of the person. Whatever is loved is an individual and particular person and it is not clear how an individual particular person’s value cannot be affected by one’s life history and the qualities that one gains thereby. McTaggart assumes that persons are ultimately more good than evil. The second volume of *The Nature of Existence*, as a whole, is a complex argument that seeks to establish such a metaphysically optimistic view. McTaggart believed that the ultimate nature of persons is truly revealed in our conceptualization of perfect reality: whatever persons are like in this perfectly conceived state are what persons will ultimately become, and for McTaggart they ultimately become more good than bad. Our present experience, however, is far from perfect. It seems more likely that at least some persons will be ‘intrinsically evil,’ and thus that loving such beings would be intrinsically evil. Given that McTaggart’s argument, as we have seen, requires assigning love higher-order intrinsic value, this seems to be a concession that McTaggart will have to make. Luckily, it seems that as a matter of fact most people are not normally so bad *qua person* that they are ‘intrinsically evil.’ For most people, their faults are balanced by a number of good qualities and the persistence of intrinsically good capacities that could be developed if the person converted from their vicious ways. So while there might be cases of intrinsically evil love for intrinsically evil persons, such cases would be rare and do not pose a major threat to many of McTaggart’s conclusions about love (or, as we shall see, the role that love plays in ethical theory).

McTaggart, then, might not be able to claim that we *never* ought to condemn love when he presents the cases above; at most, he should claim that normally (except for in very

rare circumstances where the potential object of love is an extremely evil person) our intuition is that we *ought not* to condemn love in each of the three circumstances. Yet, it seems that this is all he needs to claim in order for his arguments to be plausible. It seems reasonable to assume that in each case the love referred to is not love for a rare instance of an extremely evil person. Furthermore, this concession would not threaten McTaggart's overall goal, which is to show that the object of love is a person and not a person's qualities. So long as our intuitions about the higher-order intrinsic value of love track the intrinsic value of the person loved (the P-type object), then the value of love does not depend on the qualities of the object in the way that it ought to if love were a Q-type emotion having higher-order intrinsic value. And, this establishes the kind of relationship that enables McTaggart to conclude that the object of love is not a quality of a person but, instead, must be a person. If it turns out that we have strong intuitions that we ought to condemn love for highly evil persons, this does not threaten McTaggart's main point so long as what is grounding the condemnation of love (as intrinsically evil) is the intrinsic value of the object of love: the person.

The previous sections have provided an outline of McTaggart's argument for the claim that while the qualities of a person may be the causes of love, they are never the object of love. While scholars have recognized the presence of the distinction between the object and the cause of love in McTaggart, and while they have acknowledged the existence of the argument based on the 'three characteristics of love,' the exact form of the argument and the assumptions necessary to make it work has been largely unexplored. McTaggart's argument shows that he recognized that the motivations (or causes) of love are distinct from its justification: the reasons that we have for condemning or approving love are based upon its value (which is a function of the appropriateness of the object to the loving attitude), and such reasons are independent of the nature of the qualities which bring love about. Deeper consideration of the structure of the argument and the intuitions that are introduced as premises in the argument have allowed us to better understand the kind of intrinsic value that McTaggart must assign to love in order for his argument to succeed. McTaggart, I have argued, should be interpreted as conceptualizing love as a higher-order intrinsic good (*pace* McKerlie). Its value is determined by the intrinsic value of its object: the human person. Insofar as persons are intrinsically good (which it seems plausible to assume almost all humans, with rare exceptions, are) then love is intrinsically valuable. Because love is

intrinsically good we have reason to preserve or promote it (at least unless there are overriding reasons not to do so).

2.3 Conclusion

Having considered that nature of love and the nature of its value, I will now investigate the role that McTaggart assigns to love within his consequentialist moral philosophy. Contemporary philosophers have developed various forms of what I will call the “love-based objection” to consequentialism (LBO). I will outline this objection in the next chapter. I will then argue (in Chapters Four and Five) that McTaggart’s philosophy of love, when combined with specific features of the kind of ethical theory he adopted (Ideal Utilitarianism) is able to overcome this objection. His observation of the object-cause distinction, his recognition of the distinction between the motivational and justifying reasons, and his recognition of the higher-order intrinsic goodness of love will all play a central role in overcoming this objection.

3 Love Based Objections to Consequentialism

3.1 Introduction: The Love-Based Objection (LBO) to Consequentialism (1971 – Present)

Over the last forty years, philosophers have formulated various versions of an objection to consequentialist ethical theories that is based upon certain assumptions about the value and importance of loving emotions and the loving relationships grounded upon them.¹ Two of the most well-known and influential versions of this love-based objection (**LBO**) were formulated in Michael Stocker's "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories,"² and Bernard Williams' "Persons, Character, and Morality."³ Peter Railton later defended consequentialism against core aspects of these objections in his famous article, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality."⁴ In response to Railton, Neera Badhwar wrote a paper called "Why it is Wrong to Always be Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship," which reemphasized a number of Williams' and Stocker's original objections that she believed Railton's proposed solution did not address.⁵ Dean Cocking and Dustin Oakley built upon all of these criticisms and formulated their own highly influential criticism of Railton's view in their essay "Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation."⁶ In response to Badhwar's, Cocking's and Oakley's criticisms of Railton's solution, philosophers such as Elinor Mason, Robert Card, and Matthew Tedesco

¹ Critics usually focus on friendships and romantic relationships; however familial relationships grounded in love are also clearly valuable in the ways described here and are clearly comparable in terms of importance. Also, if loving familial relationships (as opposed to mere biological or legal relationships) could be expected to be reliably impeded or threatened by an ethical theory, there would be reasonable and sufficient grounds for rejecting such a theory.

² Michael Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," *The Journal of Philosophy* 73.14 (August 1976): 453-466.

³ Bernard Williams, "Persons, character, and morality," *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp. 1-19.

⁴ Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 13.2 (Spring 1984): 134-171.

⁵ Neera Badhwar, "Why is it Always Wrong to be Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship," *Ethics* 101.3 (April 1991): 483-504.

⁶ Dean Cocking and Justin Oakley, "Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation," *Ethics* 106.1 (October 1995): 86-111.

have attempted to once again defend various forms of consequentialism from Cocking and Oakley's concerns.⁷

This chapter outlines the main versions of the love-based objection and the various ways in which consequentialists have tried to meet this objection. I will conclude this section by noting what structural and substantive features any plausible version of consequentialism will require in order to overcome these objections.

3.2 Integration: Michael Stocker and the Requirement of Harmonious Integration of Motives and Reason

One of the earliest and most influential versions of the love-based objection (**LBO**) was formulated in Michael Stocker's "Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories" (1976). The argument in "Schizophrenia," is very rich and complex. It targets both consequentialist and deontological forms of 'modern moral philosophy.'⁸ The following synopsis does not provide a comprehensive summary of all of Stocker's arguments in that work (or other subsequent works); however, I do believe that the argument that I reconstruct below does accurately capture his core objection to consequentialism. This is confirmed by statements Stocker has made in a more recent work where he claimed that "one of the central points of 'Schizophrenia,' is that our moral theories are defective as moral theories precisely because they fail to recognize the moral value and importance of friends and friendship."⁹ This objection identifies an 'incompatibility' occurring between the reasons (aims, values, or justifications)¹⁰ at work in morality and love or between the motivations required for morality and love. The basic assumption is that a single person cannot (psychologically) hold

⁷ Elinor Mason, "Can an Indirect Consequentialist be a Real Friend?" *Ethics* 108.2 (January 1998): 386-393; Elinor Mason, "Do Consequentialists Have One Thought Too Many?" *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 2.3 (1999): pp. 243-261; Robert Card, "Consequentialism, Teleology, and the New Friendship Critique," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85.2 (2004): 149-172; Matthew Tedesco, "Indirect Consequentialism, Sub-optimality, and Friendship," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 87.4 (2006): 567-577

⁸ "Modern moral philosophy' is generally used to identify any ethical system that requires that agent-neutral moral considerations always overrule agent-relative reasons (if such agent-relative reasons are given any important recognition at all). Modern moral ethical theories are often described as requiring the agent to take up the 'moral point of view' which gives (lexical) priority to rationality, universalizability, and impartiality over concerns related to particularities and partiality.

⁹ Michael Stocker, "Friendship and Duty: Some Difficult Relations," in *Identity, Character, and Morality* (Eds. O. J. Flanagan and A. O. Rorty, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), p. 231.

¹⁰ Stocker often lists 'reasons, aims, values, and justifications' together and seems to use these terms as interchangeable at points. Throughout this chapter I will just use the term 'reasons' to cover all of these different terms (though I recognize that they are not all equivalent). Since 'aims, values, and justifications' are all aspects usually included in one's reasons, it seemed most appropriate to primarily use 'reasons' as Stocker seems to do.

two incompatible motivations or reasons at the same time; furthermore, if a person cannot somehow integrate one's motivations and reasons, the result will be alienation from others or from the self (through an undesirable form of psychological splitting). So, mere compatibility between motivations and reasons is not enough; she must also have motivations and reasons that are 'integrated' in a way that reflects the unity of the moral agent – a unity that a functioning and mature moral agent *ought* to have. In order to understand how his argument works, it will be necessary to explain what kind of 'integration' he thinks is required for love and ethics to be compatible and to explain what kind of 'reasons' and 'motives' are characteristic of love and of ethics.

Stocker's objection to consequentialism is based upon an assumption that the "mark" of a "good life" is "harmony between one's motives and one's reasons, values, and justifications."¹¹ For Stocker, 'reasons' are expressed in the form 'act *for the sake of* x.' Reasons are grounded in the ultimate aims of our actions (the ultimate/intrinsic values we seek to attain through action) and/or the normative standards that outline which actions are permitted/required. Motivations are expressed in the form 'act *out of* x/*out of concern for* x,' and they involve a 'sensitivity' to certain features of objects and states of affairs.¹² A motive cannot be explained solely in terms of 'aims,' or teleological 'reasons'; nonetheless, a motive 'embodies' a particular reason for acting if it involves having a 'sensitivity' to the specific aims, values, and justifications that are centrally involved in the reason.¹³ It is possible (and common) that one's motives do not embody one's reasons for acting; however, Stocker's main point is that if embodiment is seriously lacking within an agent, then that agent is suffering from some kind of "malady" which he calls "moral schizophrenia." As moral agents, our reasons *ought* to be embodied in our motives: there *ought* to be a 'harmony' between an agent's motives and reasons. He states:

At the very least, we *should* be moved by our major values and we *should* value what our major motives seek. *Should*, that is, if we are to lead a *good life*. To

¹¹ Stocker, "Schizophrenia," pp. 453-454. In the remaining summary of Stocker, I will use "reasons" to represent "reasons, values, and justifications." Stocker seems to understand these terms and intimately inter-related and he also seems to use 'reasons' to refer to all three in the article itself.

¹² Stocker, "Friendship and Duty," 221-222; Stocker, "Values and Purposes," pp. 753, 757.

¹³ Stocker, "Schizophrenia," p. 458 (Stocker uses the term "embody" here, and in other places in this specific sense.); Stocker, "Values and Purposes," p. 753.

repeat – such *harmony* is a mark of a good life. Indeed, one might wonder whether human life – good or bad – is possible without *some integration*.¹⁴

So, ideally, if one has particular reasons for doing x, then those reasons ought to be embodied in one's motive to do x; furthermore, if one has a motive to do x, then such a motive ought to embody one's particular reasons for doing x. Reasons without corresponding motivations and motivations without corresponding reasons are an indication of a problematic form of alienation or division, signs which reliably indicate that one's life could be better.

This represents what I will call the “Harmonious Integration Requirement” (**HIR**): ideally, one *ought* to integrate one's motives and reasons (if one wants to live a ‘good life’). Stocker appears to use this normative (ideal) standard to formulate what I will call the “Harmonious Integration Test” (**HIT**) for assessing the adequacy of an ethical theory: *if one cannot both achieve the ultimate goals of an ethical theory and at the same time achieve an integration of one's motivations and reasons, then there is a sufficient and reasonable ground for rejecting that ethical theory*. He ultimately concludes that modern ethical theories like consequentialism “fail by making it impossible for a person to achieve the good *in an integrated way*.”¹⁵ It is this normative requirement of harmonious integration (represented in **HIR** and **HIT**) that when combined with the basic schema of the love-based objection provides the particular version of the love-based objection raised against consequentialist theories.

In order to show that the motives and reasons of consequentialism cannot be harmoniously integrated with the reasons and motives of love, Stocker describes what he understands to be the essential ‘aims’ or ‘reasons’ and the essential ‘motives’ required for genuine love and loving relationships.¹⁶ Stocker states:

For it is essential to the very concept of love, that one care for the beloved, that one be prepared to act for the sake of the beloved. More strongly, one must *care for the beloved* and *act for that person's sake as a final goal*; the beloved,

¹⁴ Stocker, “Schizophrenia,” p. 454. My emphasis.

¹⁵ Stocker, “Schizophrenia,” pp. 455-456.

¹⁶ Stocker tends to speak of ‘friendships’ and ‘friends’ but it is clear that he understands friendship to be an instance of a much broader category of ‘love,’ ‘loving relationship,’ or ‘beloved.’ This is clear in the following passage: “Just as the notion of doing something for the sake of another, or caring for the person for that person's sake is essential to love, so too is it essential for friendships and all affectionate relations.” “Schizophrenia,” p. 457.

or the beloved's welfare or interest, must be *a final goal of one's concern and action*.¹⁷

In genuine love, one values the beloved as an end-in-herself – as intrinsically valuable. Any aim which would treat the 'beloved' *merely* as a means to some other end (so some end other than the sake of the beloved) would be directly opposed and therefore incompatible with love.¹⁸ A loving motivation involves acting *out of* concern for the beloved person (or the beloved's welfare or interest) for the sake of that beloved person. One's concern for the beloved is direct. Such a motivation embodies the aims/reasons of friendship. Someone might act merely 'in accordance' with love by doing what would be required if one were to act for the sake of the beloved, but if one lacks the motivation of love – if one lacks a sensibility to the intrinsic value of the beloved and does not act directly as a result of such a sensibility – then one's action will not be a genuinely loving action. If my relationship with the other merely comprises actions that do not originate from loving motivations, then my relationship is not a genuinely loving relationship.

Consequentialism claims that an act is right insofar as (out of the options available to the agent in the situation) that act maximizes net aggregate goodness (or insofar as that act does not produce results that are worse than any other option available to the agent in the situation). One's ultimate aim, as a moral agent, will be to maximize goodness where one's actions allow one to do so. The content of a consequentialist's aims will be determined by an account of what has intrinsic value and so various forms of consequentialism can be distinguished according to the theory of value each adopts. For instance, if I am a Classical Utilitarian, I will ultimately value only happiness or well-being. Alternatively, if I am a perfectionist consequentialist, then I will ultimately value only the highest possible attainment and exercise of each being's 'essential' capabilities. Finally, if I am a consequentialist adopting a pluralist theory of value (an Ideal Utilitarian, for instance), then I will ultimately value those states, relationships, objects, actions, states of affairs, etc. that are identified as intrinsically good. Actions will be justifiable or condemnable insofar as they

¹⁷ Stocker, "Schizophrenia," p. 456; emphasis mine.

¹⁸ While love requires us to value the beloved for the sake of the beloved (as an end) this does not seem to rule out *also* valuing the beloved as a means to some other ends (for the sake of some other end). So long as this instrumental valuing does not preclude or outweigh the non-instrumental valuing, it would be compatible. In this sense the kind of valuing required for love seems similar to the kind of valuing required for Kantian respect: 'not merely as a means but also always at the same time as an end.' (See J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109.2 (January 1999), pp. 338-374.)

meet the consequentialist criterion of rightness. In short, consequentialists ought to guide their behaviour such that they act *for the sake of maximizing goodness*.

In order to ‘embody’ the reasons required by consequentialism in a consequentialist agent, such an agent would need to establish a ‘sensibility’ to those values that are identified as intrinsically good and important and give priority and attention to those features of the world. A consequentialist agent would also, presumably, be required to act *out of a concern for maximizing goodness*.

Stocker argues that one cannot both ‘act *for the sake of* this beloved person’ and ‘act *for the sake of* maximizing goodness.’ Any attempt to embody such reasons, values, or justifications into one’s motives would also produce incompatibility. Love requires the kind of ‘sensibility’ where one is moved directly *by* and acts directly *for* the uniquely intrinsically valuable human person that is loved, and love requires that one treat the beloved always and primarily as an end and *never merely as a means* to some other end (even moral ones). Having moral motivations, on the other hand, means forming a sensibility directed primarily at ‘maximum goodness’ and so requires regarding and treating everything else merely as opportunities to contribute to what one is ultimately concerned with: maximizing good. He concludes that the aims and motivations of ethics require that we “dehumanize” people or treat them “externally” by treating them as *mere bearers* of abstract intrinsic values or as *mere instruments* to a maximally good state of affairs.¹⁹

Stocker’s overall argument can be summarized as follows:

The Love-Based Objection (LBO)

- P1:** Love and loving relations are highly valuable and important intrinsic goods.²⁰ [Assumption]
- P2:** Love-based Adequacy Test (LBAT): If a moral theory – e.g., consequentialism – can be expected to reliably and significantly impede, interfere, or terminate instances of loving emotions/relations, then there is a sufficient and reasonable ground for rejecting it. [Assumption grounded in P1]
- P3:** Love/loving relationships require acting for the sake of/out of concern for ‘the beloved’ (as an ultimate end).
- P4:** Consequentialism requires acting for the sake of/out of concern for ‘maximizing overall good’ (as an ultimate end).

¹⁹ Stocker, “Schizophrenia,” p. 160.

²⁰ In addition to having intrinsic value, love and loving relations may be (and are) instrumentally or constitutively valuable also.

- P5:** Harmonious Integration Test: if one cannot both achieve the ultimate goals of an ethical theory and at the same time achieve an integration of one's motivations and reasons (the 'mark' of a 'good life'), then there is a sufficient and reasonable ground for rejecting that ethical theory [Assumption]
- P6:** Because an integrated agent committed to both consequentialism and love would have to act *for the sake of/out of concern for both* maximizing overall good (primarily/solely) and the beloved person (primarily/solely), the reasons and motivations required by consequentialism are incompatible with the reasons and motivations required for love in a way that can be expected to reliably and significantly impede, interfere with, or terminate instances of loving emotions/relations. [P3+P4+P5]
- C:** Therefore, there is a sufficient and reasonable ground for rejecting consequentialism. [P2+P6]

P1 is plausible and I suspect that this is a widely held opinion among those who take morality seriously. **P2** and **P5** are independent adequacy tests, and one could possibly arrive at **P2** without **P5** by arguing that the mere exclusion of an important intrinsic good is sufficient grounds for reasonably rejecting a moral theory. One might, however, acknowledge that love is an important intrinsic good, but also think that morality (as embodied in individual characters or as embodied as a social institution) is *more* valuable (perhaps even 'lexically' or 'infinitely' more valuable) and so is willing to sacrifice love for the sake of all the other goods morality includes. I am not personally convinced that I would be willing to sacrifice all love for the other goods provided by morality (and equally unconvinced I would be willing to sacrifice all morality for love), and I suspect that many others would share these hesitations. The addition of **P5** supplements the force of **P2** insofar as it emphasizes that the kind of incompatibility between love and morality at issue in **LBO** is not merely an 'external' conflict between two incompatible goods; rather the incompatibility of the **LBO** involves a deep and highly problematic conflict within the moral agent and it is this *internal* conflict which forces the agent to have to choose between either acting out of/for the sake of only one of the two goods and thereby maintaining one's integrity (in Stocker's sense of having integrated motives and reasons) or try to accommodate both of them and give up one's integrity.

Given the incompatibility described in P6, one is faced with the following options:

1. Give up love and loving relationships.
2. Give up consequentialist ethics.
3. Preserve both consequentialism and love/loving relationships by segregating (psychologically) consequentialist reasons and motivations from an agent's loving reasons and motivations.

The third option, according to Stocker, would have to be achieved through some form of self-distraction or self-deception and it represents the kind of move that is often introduced by ‘self-effacing’ forms of consequentialism. It is ruled out, though, by the harmonious integration requirement (**HIR**) represented in **P5**. Any self-effacing version of consequentialism posits a separation of incompatible motives/reasons within an agent. This is done either diachronically (by separating moments of action from moments of reflection) or synchronically (either by preventing certain reasons from being embodied as motives in the agent or by segregating incompatible reasons/motives by splitting the agent psychologically through some form of deep self-deception). Such effacing ‘techniques’ are clearly designed to prevent the kind of integration outlined in **HIR** and so clearly conflict with it. The first option is not a live option given the assumption about love’s important value. This only leaves the second option which is represented by the conclusion of the **LBO**.

This version of the love-based objection is therefore a serious issue that cannot be ignored by those hoping to formulate a plausible version of consequentialist ethics. It is therefore necessary for consequentialists to respond to this objection.

3.3 Peter Railton’s Response to the Love-based Objection: Sophisticated Consequentialism

Peter Railton presents a highly detailed and complex defense of consequentialist ethics against the charges of the **LBO** in his article entitled “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality.” He begins with a description of how a person named John is imagined to explain the “extraordinary quality of concern” that he shows towards Anne, the person he loves. John responds as follows:

I’ve always thought that people should help each other when they’re in a specially good position to do so. I know Anne better than anyone else does, so I know better what she wants and needs. Besides, I have such affection for her that it’s no great burden – instead, I get a lot of satisfaction out of it.

Just think how awful marriage would be, or life itself, if people didn't take special care of the ones they love.²¹

This response seems to be the kind of response that Bernard Williams worries about in the 'Drowning Spouse Example' in "Persons, Character, and Morality."²² Like Williams, Railton notes that the person 'loved' (Anne) could reasonably object to this kind of response pointing out that John *ought* to pay special attention to her *directly for her sake*. John's response seems to cast his love and Anne *merely* as the best *opportunity* to promote John's own welfare ("I get a lot of satisfaction out of it") or general welfare ("how awful marriage [in general] would be, or life itself?"). John only singles himself out as specially related to Anne through his particular knowledge of her and not by his particular emotion of love towards her or her unique importance for him as the person he loves. If the reasons mentioned here are ultimately authoritative for John and are embodied as primary motivations (what Stocker's **HIR** claims *ought* to happen) then John's motives and reasons appear to be incompatible with acting out of love and for the sake of Anne. If we grant that John merely forgot to include his love for Anne in the explanation, then this seems to be a clear case of 'one thought too many;' on the other hand, if it turns out that his love for her does not play any

²¹ Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality," p. 135.

²² Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character, and Morality," p. 15-18. The case relates to a man who must choose between saving only one of two people who are drowning: either someone he deeply loves (his wife) or a stranger. The man chooses to rescue his wife. Williams points out that if an ethicist were to try to provide a justification "on behalf of" the rescuer for saving his wife and not the stranger, it would have to be along the following lines: "in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's wife." The permissibility would be determined by one's ethical criterion of rightness. If one was a utilitarian this would mean that 'in situations of this kind, saving one's spouse (or the person one loves most) tends to promote the objectively best possible state of affairs out of those options available to the agent.' On further consideration, however, Williams shows that this kind of ethical 'justification' appears deeply counter-intuitive. There is a strong sense this this kind of justification is somehow inappropriate and is somehow misdirected. If this is the only reason why the rescuer saved his spouse, then, as Williams suggests, the spouse might have reason to doubt that the rescuer genuinely loves her. The inappropriateness seems to arise because it ignores the fact that one of the people drowning is loved by the rescuer. It seems that if the love alluded to here is real and is to survive the tragedy, then the rescuer's love should somehow be included among the rescuer's reasons and motives. According to Williams, the more intuitively appropriate justification "on behalf of the rescuer" should be something like: 'I saved my spouse (and not the stranger) because I love my spouse.' This kind of reason, suggests Williams, provides a sufficient justification for the rescuer's actions. Furthermore, he claims that any attempt to combine a love-based justification with an ethically-based justification is problematic in an important way. For instance, if the rescuer said, 'I saved my spouse because I love her *and* in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's spouse,' then the rescuer has "one thought too many." Providing the additional justification seems to involve the assumption or admission that (at least for the rescuer) 'I love her' is not a sufficiently motivating or justifying reason for saving the spouse and so the presence of the ethical justification seems to threaten or infect authenticity of the rescuer's love. Perhaps it might even taint our judgements about the goodness of the rescuer's character on the grounds that if a rescuer provides this kind of compound-explanation then this reveals that the rescuer has some kind of under-developed (or deficient) capacity for genuinely loving people, will be unlikely to maintain personal relationships, and is therefore lacking a highly important and valuable aspect of well-being and good character.

authoritative reason-giving or motivational role for John, then it is clearly a case of ‘not enough thoughts at all.’

Later in the article, John is contrasted with Juan who gives a very different response when asked to explain his special concern for the person he loves – Linda. He states:

I love Linda. I even like her. So it means a lot to me to do things for her. After all we've been through, it's almost a part of me to do it.²³

Juan is then imagined to be challenged by his interviewer to justify the special care he gives to his wife especially given the fact that the time and resources he dedicates to her could be used to effect more good by relieving the extreme suffering of poverty affecting so many people in our world. Juan responds:

Look, it's a better world when people can have a relationship like ours and nobody could if everyone were always asking themselves who's got the most need. It's not easy to make things work in this world, and one of the best things that happens to people is to have a close relationship like ours. You'd make things worse in a hurry if you broke up those close relationships for the sake of some higher goal. Anyhow, I know that you can't always put family first. The world isn't such a wonderful place that it's OK just to retreat into your own little circle. But still, you need that little circle. People get burned out, or lose touch, if they try to save the world by themselves. The ones who can stick with it and do a good job of making things better are usually the ones who can make that fit into a life that does not make them miserable.²⁴

The point of the article is to explain how it is that “what Juan recognizes to be morally required is not by its nature incompatible with acting directly for the sake of another [which is required for genuine love/loving relationships].”²⁵ Railton assumes that both John and Juan care about doing the right thing in consequentialist terms and both genuinely feel love for another person; yet, he claims that only Juan’s response is able to integrate both kinds of reasons and concerns. In other words, Railton thinks that the kind of response given by Juan models how love-based objections can be overcome.

The kind of consequentialism Railton understands Juan to endorse and the motivational structure he attributes to Juan are the core elements of his response. Railton rejects oversimplified accounts of consequentialism and human motivation he finds in versions of the **LBO**. By offering a more complex account of consequentialism Railton

²³ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 150.

²⁴ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 150.

²⁵ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 151.

challenges the claim that consequentialism requires an agent to always act ‘for the sake of and ‘out of concern for’ maximizing overall goodness (and so rejects P4 in the argument outlined above and opts for the third option outlined on page 87.) The more complex account of moral psychology introduces the idea of multi-level higher-order motivations/dispositions and offers a way to separate potentially conflicting motives and reasons at different psychological levels while still maintaining harmonious integration through a hierarchical motivational structure that satisfies a ‘counter-factual condition’ he describes as characteristic of ‘sophisticated consequentialism.’

3.3.1 Sophisticated Consequentialism: Value Pluralism and the Distinction between ‘Criteria of Rightness’ and ‘Decision-Making Procedures’

Railton suggests that love-based objections to consequentialism are often based on an oversimplified representation of it. The first oversimplification represents consequentialism as based upon a monistic theory of value. This may arise from focusing too exclusively on classical forms of utilitarianism that hold that there is only one intrinsic good: ‘happiness’ understood to consist in pleasure. Railton accepts that such theories will be problematic for love insofar as agents will be forced to represent loving relationships and those they love *solely* as means to what is really valuable (mere instrumental value) or as *mere* parts of what really matters: net aggregate happiness. Love and loving relationships demand that we regard the person loved as valuable as an ultimate end and that we act *for the sake of* and *out of concern for* the beloved (and not something else that *really* matters to us). It also seems that love and loving relations are also good in themselves (in addition to their high instrumental value). Railton concludes that monistic forms of consequentialism cannot accommodate our intuitions about the intrinsic value and role of love in morality and so rejects such forms of it.²⁶ Any consequentialist theory capable of overcoming **LBO** will have to be based on a value theory recognizing a plurality of “intrinsically, non-morally valuable” goods that can be compared and that need not be lexically ranked.²⁷ Among these it should recognize love/loving relationships among the most important and valuable intrinsic goods.²⁸

²⁶ Railton does not entertain the idea of a monistic consequentialist theory that accepted love/loving relations as the only intrinsic good. Since I am ultimately considering Railton (and the others) for the sake of assessing McTaggart’s pluralistic form of consequentialism it seems appropriate to ignore this possibility here.

²⁷ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 149. “let me suggest and approach that seems to be less hopeless as a way of capturing human value: a pluralistic approach in which several goods are viewed as intrinsically, non-morally valuable – such as happiness, knowledge, purposeful activity, autonomy, solidarity [including friendship (p. 149n21)], respect, and beauty. These goods need not be ranked lexically, but may be attributed weights and the

The second oversimplification ignores an important and widely recognized distinction between a “criterion of rightness” and what is called a “decision-making procedure.”²⁹ It was explicitly recognized by Sidgwick in *Methods of Ethics*³⁰ and it is at least implicitly endorsed by Mill in his account of his experience of overcoming the “paradox of happiness” in his *Autobiography*.³¹ In 1971, R. Eugene Bales re-emphasized the distinction in order to respond to some objections made to consequentialism in the 1950’s and 1960’s. He noted that ethical theories can be thought to serve a number of purposes, but one of the most widely held expectations of an ethical theory is that it will “provide an account of right-making characteristics” which is what is meant by the term “criterion of rightness.”³² According to consequentialism, the right-making characteristic that makes an act *x* right is ‘*x* maximizes goodness’ and so this is the consequentialist ‘criterion of rightness.’ Another widely recognized purpose of ethical theories is to provide a “decision-making procedure” that Bales describes as “a procedure which would help us single out, in the particular case *and under immediately helpful description*, which alternative would in fact maximize utility.”³³ Bales notes that it is a mistake to assume

criterion of rightness for an act would be that it most contribute to the weighted sum of those in the long run. This creates the possibility of trade-offs among values of the kinds discussed in the previous section.”

²⁸ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 139.

²⁹ This term is misleading insofar as one might accept that the best way to guide one’s action is not to explicitly ‘deliberate’ or ‘decide’ between options, but to act from certain dispositions to perceive and act in certain contexts. A better term might be “option-selection procedure” but I will stick to the established term here.

³⁰ Henry Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, 7th Edition [1907] (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1981), p. 413: “Finally, the doctrine that Universal Happiness is the ultimate standard must not be understood to imply that Universal Benevolence is the only right or always best motive of action. For, as we have before observed, it is not necessary that the end which gives the criterion of rightness should always be the end at which we consciously aim: and if experience shows that the general happiness will be more satisfactorily attained if men frequently act from other motives than pure universal philanthropy, it is obvious that these other motives are reasonably to be preferred on Utilitarian principles.”

³¹ John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Volume 1: Autobiography and Literary Essays* (Eds. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981). pp.145, 147: “The experiences of this period had two very marked effects on my opinions and character. ... I never, indeed, wavered in the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, and the end of life. But I now thought that this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. ... This theory now became the basis of my philosophy of life. And I still hold to it as the best theory for all those who have but a moderate degree of sensibility and of capacity for enjoyment, that is, for the great majority of mankind.”

³² Bales, “Act-Utilitarianism: Account of Right-Making Characteristics or Decision-Making Procedure?” *American Philosophical Quarterly*. 8.3 (July 1971): p. 260.

³³ Bales, “Act Utilitarianism,” p. 261.

that the acceptance of the act-utilitarian account of right-making characteristics somehow commits one *a priori* to a particular decision making procedure: the procedure of estimating and comparing probable consequences of alternative acts. ... the account [of right-making characteristics] itself places no *a priori* restrictions on the procedures we use to isolate that [objectively right] alternative.³⁴

The choice of the appropriate decision-making criterion for a particular kind of action or situation will be determined by facts about human capacities (intellectual and motivational) and the situation itself. Bales' advice for selecting a decision-making procedure:

look and see what kind of procedure has *tended* to work in given situations. If he doesn't have a foolproof procedure for determining in each and every case which of the acts open to him will maximize utility, at least he can look to those procedures which have *tended to be reliable* in the past, and he can look to strategists for *reliable* procedures to use in the future.³⁵

Railton fully accepts and employs this distinction in his article.³⁶ Railton also emphasizes that in many cases it is not an explicit form of deliberation that leads to the best outcomes. Human nature is limited in its capacity to consciously self-regulate and carry out certain forms of deliberation. Our attention is limited and we are also susceptible to erroneous and biased perception and reasoning.³⁷ Therefore, oftentimes, the most reliable method for arriving at the best outcomes is to act from certain stable dispositions. Such dispositions cause one to perceive the world in a certain way and so respond to it accordingly without engaging in any (explicit) cost-benefit analysis. Once we have identified the intrinsic goods that we are to seek, the nature of these intrinsic goods will determine which stable dispositions are the most appropriate to select in order to fulfill our consequentialist duty to create the best world possible. Any form of deliberation or any stable disposition that interferes with attaining the particular kind of good it aims at would therefore be rejected on consequentialist grounds. The criterion of rightness guides our selection of decision-making procedures but this does not affect its primary role in determining the objective moral status of particular acts. The main purpose of the criterion of rightness remains unchanged: to assess whether particular actions are objectively right or wrong.

³⁴ Bales, "Act Utilitarianism," p. 263.

³⁵ Bales, "Act Utilitarianism," p. 264.

³⁶ Railton does not explicitly attribute the view to Bales, nor is the distinction unique to him. I selected him as representative of those who accept this distinction due to the clarity with which he described that distinction and the process for selecting a decision-making procedure.

³⁷ Railton, "Alienation," p. 158.

To provide a more nuanced account of consequentialist ethical theory that can overcome the **LBO**, Railton introduces some terminology of his own. “Objective consequentialism” refers to theories that accept the consequentialist criterion of rightness.³⁸ “Subjective consequentialism” and “sophisticated consequentialism” each represent a different way to accept the consequentialist criterion of rightness and commit to living an “objectively consequentialist life” which refers to “those acts (or that life) of those available to the agent that would bring about the best outcomes.”³⁹ “Subjective consequentialism”, requires additional commitments to act solely for the sake of/out of concern for maximizing overall good and to only employ a cost-benefit analysis decision-making procedure in all circumstances.⁴⁰ “Sophisticated consequentialism,” on the other hand, rejects such exclusive fixation on maximizing goodness by also endorsing any other reasons, motivations, or decision-procedures that are thought to be more conducive to an objectively consequentialist life.⁴¹ Railton suggests that Juan is a sophisticated consequentialist. He has a strong commitment to ensuring that his actions contribute to the best world possible but he does not think that such a world can be achieved if people adopt this as their only goal, life project, commitment, or decision-making procedure.

If Juan rejects an exclusive commitment to using cost-benefit analysis to guide his behaviour, what decision-making procedure does Juan select? If Juan does not act directly for the sake of/out of concern for maximizing good, how are consequentialist values, justifications, and reasons harmoniously integrated within Juan’s motivations, dispositions, or character? Why doesn’t Juan suffer from ‘moral Schizophrenia’ as Stocker suggests he should? The answers to these questions are provided by the complex moral psychology described by Railton.

3.3.2 Sophisticated Consequentialism: Multi-level Dispositional Structures

Railton suggests sophisticated consequentialists recognize that certain “stable dispositions” tend to reliably produce actions that are morally right (i.e., actions producing optimal states of affairs) and adopts a certain pattern of dispositions (a ‘character’) thought to produce the best possible amount of right actions and the best possible life in the long-run. When one

³⁸ Railton, “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality,” p. 152.

³⁹ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 152.

⁴⁰ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 152; see also: David Sosa, “Consequences of Consequentialism,” *Mind* 102.405 (January 1993): p. 107. David Sosa describes this as “consequentialist deliberationism.”

⁴¹ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 153.

acts from a disposition, one perceives situations in a certain way and responds to them accordingly. So, the sophisticated consequentialist selects certain stable dispositions as decision making procedures. Such dispositions do not infallibly produce optimal actions; however, insofar as dispositions are the *most* reliable way to guide one to the action that is morally right, they ought to be developed and maintained.

As noted by Stocker, certain attitudes, dispositions, and relationships (such as love/loving relationships) preclude consequentialist aims and motivations. Railton proposes to solve this problem by explaining that one can embody one's commitment to consequentialism within one's motivational structure – not by including a concern for maximizing goodness as one motivation among others – but by structuring one's whole motivational structure so that it meets the following counterfactual condition: “while he ordinarily does not do what he does simply for the sake of doing what is right, he would seek to lead a different sort of life if he did not think his were morally defensible.”⁴² Phrased in more consequentialist terms one might express such a counter-factual condition as:

One does not always act for the sake of maximizing goodness, since one may develop/maintain certain dispositions which lead one to do various things for their own sake or for the sake of others, but one would not develop/maintain a certain disposition (and so act as one does) if it were not compatible with one leading an objectively consequentialist life (that life of those available to the agent that would bring about the best outcome).⁴³

If one is a sophisticated consequentialist, then one's character (stable set of dispositions) can be described this way.

If one were to make an analogy, one might say that on Railton's view the consequentialist criterion of rightness functions more like a ‘political constitution’ than a ‘prime-minister of a legislative assembly.’ It is not merely a motivation that is ‘first among equals,’ nor is it clearly reducible to any single member of the ‘community’ of motivations that make up the agent's complete motivational set; nonetheless it clearly exists in the *way* it orders the members, sets limits on what any member can do, and so guides what occurs in it,

⁴² Railton, “Alienation,” p. 151.

⁴³ This is my own formulation. Railton notes that the formulation mentioned in the previous sentence is “akin to that of the sophisticated hedonist” which he formulated as follows: “he need not always act for the sake of happiness, since he may do various things for their own sake or for the sake of others, but he would not act as he does if it were not compatible with his leading an objectively hedonistic life.” I base my formulation on this one by swapping out the ‘egoist’ characteristics of rightness (maximizes my own happiness) with the consequentialist criterion of rightness (maximizes overall good).

even if it is not explicitly invoked by every member for every particular action. Railton's account implies a multi-leveled (hierarchical) motivational structure comprising various higher-order motivational dispositions, each of which is directed to objects at some level below it.⁴⁴ Elinor Mason describes a 'disposition' as "*feeling like* doing certain things on certain occasions."⁴⁵ One might say that one is habitually or naturally 'inclined' (or 'disposed') to act in certain ways under certain circumstances: it is part of one's character to perceive the world in a certain way and respond to it accordingly under particular kinds of circumstances. On such a view, a disposition is always some *readiness* to act '*for the sake of x*' or '*out of concern for x*' and so is always directed towards some *x*. At the most basic level, dispositions can be directed towards certain values or things (actions, persons, etc.) that are not themselves dispositions; these might be called 'first-order motivations' and are directed at 'base-level motivating objects.' In addition to these, however, a disposition can take as its object another disposition; these can be called 'higher-order' dispositions.

An example of a first-order disposition is the stable structure of motivations and reasons required for love. Such a 'pro-love disposition' comprises a readiness to have certain emotional perceptions of and responses to the beloved person, motivations to act *out of concern for* the beloved, and intentions to act *for the sake of* the beloved.⁴⁶ Pro-love dispositions will be directed towards the person loved, will perceive that person as valuable for his/her own sake, will include stable intentions to act for the sake of the person loved, and include stable motivations to act out of concern for the beloved. Since 'the beloved person' is not a disposition, pro-love dispositions are first-order dispositions that will operate alongside other first-order dispositions. Such dispositions presumably make up the majority of one's character and directly produce the majority of one's everyday actions. Character would also include higher-order dispositions that take other dispositions as their object.

A sophisticated consequentialist, if I understand Railton correctly, has a higher-order consequentialist disposition (C-disposition) directed at first-order dispositions. A consequentialist disposition is a stable attitude of endorsement or condemnation towards particular first-order dispositions (or combinations of them) in accordance with whether or

⁴⁴ Elinor Mason, "Do Consequentialists Have One Thought Too Many?" *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 2.3 (1999): pp. 252-253.

⁴⁵ Mason, "Do Consequentialists Have One Thought Too Many?" p. 253. (Italics in the original.)

⁴⁶ Elinor Mason, "Can an Indirect Consequentialist be a Real Friend?" *passim*: Mason refers to the dispositions at issue in Railton as "pro-friendship dispositions." I use 'pro-love dispositions' to be more inclusive regarding the kinds of loving relations at issue: friendship and romantic relationships.

not they tend to reliably produce (in the long-run) individual actions that will, in fact, promote the best possible state of affairs. Endorsed dispositions will be developed or maintained *for the sake of* maximizing overall good and we will be disposed to assess our dispositions (where appropriate) *out of concern for* maximizing the good. Presumably, the process for forming a C-disposition initially requires some sort of conscious and reflective consequentialist assessment and endorsement (or condemnation) of first-order dispositions. However, once a stable C-disposition is formed at the higher-order, an agent need not be conscious of it for it to operate and so approved first-order dispositions will operate unimpeded. The recognition of disapproved first-order dispositions will directly illicit responses of resistance, though such resistance may not necessarily be effective if the first-order disposition is already deeply imbedded in one's nature. Finally, if a first-order disposition is unrecognized (i.e., there is not yet a stable evaluation or response to it) – either because the unrecognized disposition was previously un-encountered or because circumstances have significantly changed since it was last encountered – the agent will be moved to take up the higher-level process of explicit consequentialist assessment and endorse/condemn the unrecognized kind of first-order disposition according to the criterion of rightness. Therefore, the higher-order C-disposition will only operate consciously when first-order dispositions are not recognized; however, most of the time first-order dispositions are recognized by mature agents and so are allowed to operate directly upon their objects without the agent engaging in any explicit consequentialist assessment. In other words, once an agent has established a stable C-dispositional endorsement of pro-love dispositions, one is generally free to 'love without counting the costs' or to 'love without measure' (to quote some popular proverbs).

Railton makes it clear at various points that he is proposing a version of act consequentialism: the criterion of rightness is applied *directly* to individual actions in moral judgements of rightness.⁴⁷ While the sophisticated consequentialist approves certain

⁴⁷ An *indirect* form of consequentialism -- such as virtue-consequentialism -- would produce a different judgement of the particular action's moral status. This version of consequentialism would identify "being the result of an optimal disposition" as the right-making characteristic of an action as opposed to "that action which maximizes overall good." According to indirect virtue-consequentialism Juan's act would be morally right since it is consistent with a pro-love disposition which is (when combined in a particular set of other dispositions) a reliable producer optimizing actions. As Neera Badhwar notes that though this indirect version of consequentialism and sophisticated version of (direct) act consequentialism will produce different judgements about the moral status of particular non-optimal acts of friendship, their "motivational structures are identical." (Neera Badhwar, "Why it is Wrong to Always be Guided by the Best," p. 494.) So while it might

dispositions to function as ‘decision-making procedures,’ she will still judge each individual action according to the relative value of its resultant state of affairs. One implication of this is that one might not have a reason to resist a particular act one knows is morally wrong. Railton imagines a case where Juan can buy a plane ticket to help cheer up his anxious spouse or Juan can donate that money to OXFAM where it will relieve the extreme poverty-related suffering of many more people.⁴⁸ If Juan already has a higher-order C-disposition of endorsement towards first-order pro-love dispositions, then Juan will – as a matter of fact – respond to this situation by buying the ticket home without thinking much about it. Yet, if Juan is a sophisticated *act* consequentialist, then when Juan evaluates the moral status of his action (perhaps because he is challenged by another or finds himself in a moment of leisured reflection) he would have to conclude that the particular act of flying home to his spouse is objectively wrong *because* other options would have made the world as a whole objectively better. Yet, this would not necessarily change the (assumed) fact that normally pro-love dispositions do reliably result in right action and an objectively consequentialist life. So while Juan would have to acknowledge that this particular action was morally wrong, this conclusion would not provide a reason to change his standing endorsement of pro-love dispositions and he would have no reason to resist the dispositional pull towards buying the ticket. There would have to be a serious change in circumstances or Juan’s own nature to make it such that the pro-love disposition itself would no longer be optimal and so could not be endorsed by the C-disposition at the higher level.

Railton observes that this kind of account of a multi-level dispositional structure helps explain how it is that we overcome common examples of similar kinds of psychological interference in everyday life. Many of us have experienced how a desire to win can prevent us from actually developing the skills and psychological resilience required to do so.⁴⁹ More commonly, we are usually all too familiar with how difficult it is to fall asleep if one is aware that one is not sleeping while at the same time desiring to sleep (the insomniac’s paradox). Yet, through various indirect methods, we are able to overcome these forms of psychological interference. We can develop dispositions not to have certain dispositions and through enough practice we can adjust our stable dispositional set such that when the

produce judgements about the moral status of certain actions (such as Juan’s) that seem less counter-intuitive to some, it would not really affect the overall motivational structure that Railton is focused on here.

⁴⁸ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 159.

⁴⁹ Railton, “Alienation,” pp. 144-146; 154.

opportunity to achieve the end we desire at the higher-level presents itself we automatically respond in the ways that will most reliably achieve that end. Railton concludes, therefore, that such solutions are not absurd or ridiculous, but actually quite common and necessary given our psychological make-up.

3.4 Sophisticated Consequentialism and LBO

How does Railton's argument stand-up to the **LBO** outlined in previous sections? It is clear that Railton accepts many of the assumptions underlying **LBO**. For instance, it is clear that he accepts the claim that love is a highly important and valuable good (**P1**) when he says:

we must recognize that loving relationships, friendships, group loyalties, and spontaneous actions are among the most important contributors to whatever it is that makes life worthwhile; any moral theory deserving of serious consideration must itself give them serious consideration.⁵⁰

He proposes to give them this serious consideration by adopting a “pluralistic approach” to human value: “a pluralistic approach in which several goods are viewed as intrinsically, non-morally valuable—such as happiness, knowledge, purposeful activity, autonomy, solidarity, respect, and beauty.”⁵¹ He immediately expands on what it means to call “relationships of solidarity” (i.e., “friendships” or other loving relationships) intrinsically valuable in a long footnote, part of which states:

It becomes a complex matter to describe the psychology of intrinsic value. For example, should we say that one values a relationship of solidarity, say, a friendship, because it is a friendship? That makes it sound as if it were somehow instrumental to the realization of some abstract value, friendship. Surely this is a misdescription. We may be able to get a clearer idea of what is involved by considering the case of happiness. We certainly do not value a particular bit of experienced happiness because it is instrumental in the realization of the abstract goal, happiness – we value the experience for its own sake because it is a happy experience. Similarly, a friendship is itself the valued thing, the thing of a valued kind. Of course, one can say that one values friendship and therefore seeks friends, just as one can say one values happiness and therefore seeks happy experiences. But this locution must be contrasted with what is being said when, for example, one talks of seeking things that make one happy. Friends are not “things that make one achieve friendship”- they partially constitute friendships, just as particular happy experience partially constitute happiness for an individual. Thus taking

⁵⁰ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 139.

⁵¹ Railton, “Alienation,” p. 149.

friendship as an intrinsic value does not entail viewing particular friendships instrumentally.⁵²

It is clear from these passages that he thinks that love and the loving relationships beloved people that constitute it are highly important intrinsic values (alongside other important intrinsic values such as happiness) as is required by P1.

He also explicitly accepts the **LBAT (P2)** in the following passage:

If we were to find that adopting a particular morality led to irreconcilable conflict with certain types of human well-being, as cases akin to John's ... have led some to suspect, then they would surely give us a good reason to doubt its claims.⁵³

He also accepts the claim that love requires the lover to act *for the sake of* and *out of concern for* the beloved (as an ultimate end) in an unmediated way (**P3**).⁵⁴ The beloved should be valued intrinsically and one should have a stable commitment to the beloved: other concerns should not easily override one's commitment to the beloved as an end (though in some extreme cases they may actually do so). It is at this point that Railton observes that "strength is not the same as structure," and that one must avoid confusing the idea that 'one values x as an end' with the idea 'x cannot be overridden by other important goods.'⁵⁵ So while the beloved, the loving affection, and the loving relationship are acknowledged to be important intrinsic goods by Railton, they are not such that they cannot be overridden nor are they lexically more important than any other goods.

As explained above, Railton rejects the claim that consequentialism requires those who accept its criterion of rightness and are committed to living an objectively consequentialist life are also required to always act *for the sake of* and *out of concern for* maximizing goodness. He also denies that cost-benefit analysis must be accepted as one's decision-making procedure in all circumstances. As a result, Railton rejects **P4** and replaces it with a much more complex consequentialist view: sophisticated consequentialism.

Railton challenges the claim that alienation is as problematic as the **LBO** suggests, and ultimately rejects the over-simplified understanding of human moral psychology implied in the representation of the harmonious integration requirement (**HIR**) (**P5**). He notes that a certain degree of alienation or distance from our emotions, our loved ones, and our own

⁵² Railton, "Alienation," p. 149.

⁵³ Railton, "Alienation," p. 139.

⁵⁴ Railton, "Alienation," pp. 136-137 & 140-141.

⁵⁵ Railton, "Alienation," p. 141.

dispositions and commitments is healthy and necessary to ensure autonomy in agents.⁵⁶ While Stocker never claims that an absence of alienation is a necessary condition for a good life in his formulation of the LBO – he only states that it is a reliable ‘mark’ or index which usually accompanies a good life⁵⁷ – it does seem that a certain amount and a certain kind of alienation is more common in the good life than the **LBO** advanced by Stocker (and others) indirectly leads readers to believe.

Railton is ultimately suggesting the kind of multi-level dispositional model outlined here is able to integrate our various motivations and reasons within a hierarchy of higher- and lower-order dispositions. Because each disposition has a different kind of object, each operates at a different psychological level and so need not conflict or interfere with those to which it might be opposed if one directed them towards the same object or tried to integrate them at the same level. While there is a certain kind of internal ‘alienation’ or self-division involved in positing different dispositional layers, the kind and amount of alienation involved in Railton’s model does not provide a reliable ‘mark’ of a bad life and is not obviously problematic. A person’s dispositional structure is ultimately a unified whole and, though hierarchical and multi-layered, it can harmoniously integrate the various dispositions and the dispositional structures necessary for morality and love within the organized system that makes up an individual person’s character.

Furthermore, Railton’s model meets Stocker’s requirement that we ought to be “moved by our major values and we should value what our major motives seek.”⁵⁸ The motivations and reasons that comprise a pro-love disposition are all focused on a highly important intrinsic value of the beloved individual human person. Through first-order pro-love dispositions, we are clearly moved by our major values – the intrinsic value of the beloved – and we value (intrinsically) what our major motive (loving concern for the beloved) seeks. At the higher-order dispositional level we are also moved by important goods and we recognize the first-order pro-love disposition as highly valuable both instrumentally and in-itself. Our motivations and reasons are not only consistently united in an integrated whole, but they are integrated with each other in the kind of way Stocker seems to envision.

⁵⁶ Railton, “Alienation,” pp. 146-148.

⁵⁷ Stocker, “Schizophrenia,” pp. 453-454.

⁵⁸ Stocker, “Schizophrenia,” p. 454.

Therefore, Railton's model suggests that it is not the case that the integration of reasons and motives of love and morality in a unified dispositional set (character) must reliably prevent the existence of the highly important and valuable goods of love and loving relations. In fact, it turns out that pro-love dispositions, loving emotions, loving relationships, and the people we love are all given a highly important place within moral life. They are so important that their continued existence can even justify the permissibility of morally wrong individual actions in certain cases. Consequentialism can acknowledge the important role that love and loving relationships play in making the world as good as possible and in doing so strongly approve of our natural dispositions to love others and also provides strong reasons to try to make the world as conducive to love as possible.⁵⁹

3.5 The New Love-Based Objection and the Defense of Railton's Model of Consequentialism

In the decade following Railton's proposed defense of consequentialism, two articles were published containing a new love-based objection directed at Railton's model. The first was published by Neera K. Badhwar and was entitled "Why it is Wrong to Always be Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship." The second was co-authored by Dean Cocking and Dustin Oakley "Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation." The concerns they raise were not absent from the earlier versions outlined by Stocker but they place new emphasis on them in light of Railton's sophisticated consequentialism. Again, I will not be summarizing all of their arguments in this section; instead, I will try to represent what I take to be the core objection they pose for views like Railton's. I agree with Elinor Mason that this objection, as they present it, is avoidable with a proper understanding of Railton's claims, but the objection still highlights an important and difficult challenge that consequentialist theories cannot ignore when trying to develop the kind of consequentialist system with the structural features outlined by Railton.

⁵⁹ Railton, "Alienation," p. 161. As Railton notes, if the existence of extreme poverty threatens the permissibility of our current loving relationships, then this provides a strong motivating reason to seek individual and political solutions to this wide-spread problem so that the world as a whole need get to a state where it must be made seriously worse in order to get better at all.

3.5.1 Cocking and Oakley: Sophisticated Consequentialists Must Avoid the Kind of Commitment Necessary to be Friends

Cocking and Oakley grant that Railton's view addresses the concerns about psychological integration raised by the original **LBO**. In particular, they strongly agree with Railton's claim that certain high-level commitments and dispositions based upon what they call "regulative ideals" (such as a conception of moral rightness as 'maximizing overall goodness') are able to guide our actions without becoming either purposes or motives for acting after these regulative ideals have become sufficiently embedded and internalized in an agent through a process of character formation and education.⁶⁰ They observe that the regulative ideals of grammar guide the formation of sentences in a fluent person's conversational speech without being included in the motives or purposes of the speaker's conversational responses (the speaker's motives and aims are presumably to express her thoughts in response to the other speaker's comments). It is plausible, therefore, that the regulative ideals of morality might also operate in this way. They are willing to grant that if consequentialist morality operates in this way, then consequentialism can be psychologically compatible with pro-love dispositions. Nonetheless, while they grant this to Railton, they still insist that love and morality conflict, though not in the way emphasized in the original **LBO**. Cocking and Oakley argue that the counter-factual condition of the motivational structure that defines the sophisticated consequentialist requires a kind of (non-)commitment that is incompatible with the commitment distinctive of friendship.

Cocking and Oakley agree that *acting for the sake of* and *out of concern for* the beloved are necessary for genuine love/loving relationships, but they also note that many other relationships require these attitudes as well. In particular they mention that relationships characterized by 'therapeutic care' or 'educative care' also have these purposes and motives. What distinguishes these kinds of person-purposive and person-motivated relationships is the kind of commitment involved and one way to characterize commitments is in terms of 'governing conditions.' Governing conditions comprise the set of 'acceptance conditions' and 'terminating conditions' for a particular kind of relationship. The acceptance conditions identify the properties a person, relationship, or state of affairs must have in order for there to be a reason and a desire to have that kind of relationship with a particular person at all. The terminating conditions identify the properties a person, relationship, and state of affairs

⁶⁰ Cocking & Oakley, "Indirect Consequentialism," p. 87-91.

must have in order for there to be a reason and a desire to end a kind of relationship with a particular person. For example, the governing conditions for a therapeutic relationship are determined by the ‘need’ of the person requiring assistance and the ability of the therapist to provide the assistance necessary. If I can help remove the cause of someone’s current suffering, then the acceptance condition is met. If I can no longer assist the person anymore (either because they are cured or because the condition is now beyond my capability to help) then the terminating condition is satisfied. If we continued our relationship after I can no longer provide the needed assistance, then either it is the case that I *should* end the relationship (because there is a good reason to do so) or it is the case that other conditions govern the relationship and so the relationship is not (merely) therapeutic after all.

Loving relationships will therefore have a distinctive set of governing conditions.⁶¹ Cocking and Oakley do not provide a positive account of what these are; however, they do identify some terminating conditions that are consistent with our intuitions about genuine loving relationships and some terminating conditions that are not. Among the legitimate kinds are those based upon trust and the mutual well-being of both people involved: if trust is no longer possible or if the relationship is clearly harming one of the people in a serious way, then there are legitimate reasons and motives to end such relationships, even if they were genuinely loving (at least at some point). One example of an illegitimate terminating condition for love is the ‘inability to supply the other’s need’ (the terminating condition characteristic of the therapeutic relationship). If I stop loving someone because they no longer need my assistance to overcome some form of suffering, then I might have a therapeutic attitude towards them and a therapeutic relationship, but not a loving one. Most importantly, they note that a terminating condition based on optimality (on being a reliable means to maximizing overall goodness) cannot be included among the governing conditions of love. But, the counter-factual condition embodying the higher-level commitment to the consequentialist regulative ideal *is* a terminating condition based on optimality. According to the counter-factual condition, if one has reason to believe that certain dispositions – and presumably certain relationships or certain people – are no longer reliable sources of optimal actions, the consequentialist agent will seek to adapt her life so that such dispositions (or friendships, or friendly acts) are no longer a part of it.

⁶¹ Cocking & Oakley, “Indirect Consequentialism,” pp. 96-107.

Cocking & Oakley conclude that insofar as the consequentialist regulative ideal guides behaviour through the consequentialist counter-factual condition (even if only in the background) a sophisticated consequentialist's relationship with others will always include 'optimality' among its terminating conditions. But the readiness to end a friendship or to refuse an act of friendship because it is recognized as being less-than-optimal is in direct opposition to the kind of readiness and commitment necessary for genuine love and genuine loving relationships. So, according to Cocking & Oakley, consequentialism will seem to reliably prevent or terminate instances of love/loving relationships (if consistently followed), and so there is a reasonable and sufficient ground for rejecting consequentialism.

3.5.2 Elinor Mason's Response to Cocking and Oakley: The Counter-factual condition only supplies terminating conditions for pro-love dispositions and not particular loving relationships or acts typical of them.

In "Can an Indirect Consequentialist be a Real Friend?" Elinor Mason argues that Cocking and Oakley misinterpret Railton's account of the counterfactual condition and its guiding role when they suggest that it applies directly to loving relationships or loving acts and when they claim that it introduces a terminating condition into our relationships that is incompatible with the governing conditions typical of love. Mason notes – correctly, I think – that Railton's position is founded upon the assumption that human behaviour is very difficult to guide or change.⁶² Most of our actions occur as a direct result of settled dispositions to respond to the world in certain ways. This means that, oftentimes, merely acquiring a desire, intention, or motivation to 'act differently' than one has in the past is not sufficient to alter such deeply embedded action-guiding habits. In attempting to improve and adjust our behaviour, most of us have surely experienced situations where good intentions and motivations are present but are too weak to overcome well-established dispositions to do otherwise.⁶³ The best way to guide behaviour, then, is to focus on the level of dispositions. This, combined with previous observations about the problems involved with

⁶² Mason, "Can an Indirect Consequentialist Be a Real Friend?" pp. 388-389; see also, Railton, "Alienation," pp. 144-146 & 153-154. In these passages Railton describes complex strategies and processes designed to alter one's dispositions. These clearly imply that changing human behaviour is difficult and must focus on the dispositional level: "People can learn to avoid certain characteristically self-defeating lines of thought – just as the tennis player in an earlier example learned to avoid thinking constantly about winning – and the sophisticated consequentialist may learn that consequentialist deliberation is in a variety of cases self-defeating, so that other habits of thought should be cultivated" (154).

⁶³ The phrases "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," (Mark 14:38) and "what I do is not what I wish to do, but something which I hate," (Romans 7:15) succinctly capture experience of the difficulty involved in changing one's behaviour that Mason and Railton allude to here.

appealing to consequentialist principles at the level of deliberation, leads Railton to restrict higher-order C-dispositional endorsements to first-order dispositions and not to particular relationships or actions.

Mason also notes that a particular situation would have to be extremely abnormal to bring about a state of affairs where a pro-love disposition would not be optimal (perhaps some pathological psychological condition would result in a ‘perverted’ set of loving actions or perhaps an extreme state of anarchy would make the person endorsing pro-love dispositions extremely vulnerable to abuse). The higher-order C-disposition to endorse pro-love dispositions would be established based on the vast majority of normal instances of love/loving relationships and so we would not be disposed to question it unless we experienced a radical and thorough change in circumstances. This means that it is very unlikely that the counterfactual terminating condition typical of consequentialism would result in a disapproval of pro-love dispositions and so impede any loving relationships/loving actions depending on them.

Since it is not the loving relationships themselves that are subject to consequentialist terminating conditions, Mason concludes that these relationships can have the typical governing conditions required for love. Therefore consequentialists *can* and *should* have the kind of commitments required by genuine loving relationships. Practically, this means that a consequentialist friend *should* stay committed to particular relationships even if they are sub-optimal in some cases and *should* keep commitments to their beloved even if doing so would be sub-optimal in some cases because in the long-run having stable dispositions to keep and not challenge these commitments is required for living the most virtuous life possible (understood as an objectively consequentialist life which maximizes that good, impartially understood).

3.5.3 *Badhwar, Card, and Tedesco: Defending Consequentialism against NLBO: The counter-factual condition required for sophisticated consequentialism represents a terminating condition legitimately applicable only to objects that have mere instrumental value.*

In her article entitled “Why it is Wrong Always to be Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship,” Badhwar indicates another direction for criticism. There are a number of issues identified in her article, but one in particular seems to present a serious problem for

Railton. Apart from Robert Card and Matthew Tedesco, it is not clear that many defenders of consequentialism have fully appreciated this particular aspect of her criticism.⁶⁴

Badhwar summarizes her own conception of “end-friendship” which is consistent with the characterization of love presumed throughout the debate: one ought to act *for the sake of* and *out of direct concern for* the beloved and one ought to value the beloved as an end-in-herself. Both the beloved and the loving relationship itself are acknowledged to have *both* intrinsic *and* instrumental value. There is nothing problematic about recognizing both kinds of value or valuing beloveds/loving relationships in both ways (as Railton himself emphasized throughout his article). Nonetheless, our commitments to our beloveds and to our loving relationships must be such that they always reflect a commitment to the beloved as an end in herself and never *merely* as a means to something else. This is a structural feature of our commitment. So our commitment to our friends must not only be strong, it must be the right kind of commitment.

The counter-factual condition, however, seems to Badhwar to be inconsistent with the kind of commitment necessary for love. Love requires that “I place special [intrinsic] value on you out of friendship and not out of consequentialist considerations,”⁶⁵ and consequentialism requires that “I place special [instrumental] value on you only so long as, all things considered, valuing you promotes the overall good.”⁶⁶ Badhwar appears to be claiming that the counterfactual-condition could be represented as follows:

If a pro-love disposition (**L**) is no longer a reliable means to maximizing goodness (**R**), then this is sufficient reason to terminate **L** in favour of what is the (best) means to **R**.

If **L** *also* had intrinsic value in addition to its instrumental value as a means to **R**, then *merely* lacking that instrumental value should not be a sufficient ground for terminating **L**. If **L** has intrinsic value but has lost all of its instrumental value, then its overall value will be decreased by this loss, but insofar as it still has value there are at least *prima facie* grounds for not terminating it. It is possible that there might be overriding reasons to terminate **L** despite its intrinsic value if, for instance, some other good (**G**) had value that significantly outweighed the intrinsic value of **L** and was not compatible with **L**. But if this is the case,

⁶⁴ Card, “Consequentialism,” 149-172: see especially pp. 151-154 & 161-166; Tedesco, “Indirect Consequentialism,” pp. 567-577.

⁶⁵ Badhwar, “Always Wrong,” p. 493.

⁶⁶ Badhwar, “Always Wrong,” p. 493.

then ‘lacking instrumental value’ is not the sufficient condition; rather, the sufficient condition is ‘lacking *enough* intrinsic value *in comparison to* another option (**G**)’. If the counterfactual condition applies directly to loving relationships, loving acts, or the value of the beloved, then this counterfactual condition would reliably and significantly interfere with love/loving relationships and would therefore provide reasonable and sufficient grounds for rejecting consequentialism.

I think that Badhwar is right to observe that the counterfactual condition, in its original formulation, can only be applied legitimately to objects having mere instrumental value. Yet, if Mason interprets Railton correctly, which I think she does, the object of the counter-factual condition is not a loving relationship, a loving action, or a beloved person; instead, the object is a pro-love disposition. Therefore, if pro-love dispositions are intrinsically valuable, adopting such an attitude towards them *is* an inappropriate way to value them. It seems that for those who want to defend a version of sophisticated consequentialism along Railton’s lines there are only two options.

First, one could maintain the counter-factual condition as formulated and merely accept that ‘dispositions’ are not intrinsically valuable. Those attitudes, actions, or emotions that we are disposed to have can be acknowledged to have intrinsic value, but the *disposition to have them* (the ‘persistent readiness’ that is the essence of a disposition) is not itself intrinsically valuable.

There are some problems, however, with this option. First, if one acknowledges that certain conscious states having intentionality, such as emotions and desires, are intrinsically valuable, it seems merely *ad hoc* to rule out assigning intrinsic value to other similarly structured conscious states such as dispositions merely to avoid the problem identified here by Badhwar. Some philosophers have suggested that since emotions and volitions can be described as pro-/con- attitudes towards intrinsically good/bad objects, we can understand the intrinsic value of such conscious states as being a function of the kind of attitude they take up towards the object (pro- or con-) and the intrinsic value of the object. Emotions and desires, on this view, are higher-order intrinsic goods.⁶⁷ Could not one apply the same account of intrinsic value to dispositions? It seems that one could plausibly claim that that value of a disposition is a function of the mode of dispositional attitude (‘disposed to’ vs. ‘disposed against’ certain desires, emotions, actions, etc.) and the intrinsic value of its object.

⁶⁷ The concept of a ‘higher-order intrinsic good/evil’ was discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

For example, if I am disposed to have intrinsically good desires, then this disposition is intrinsically good; if I am disposed against having certain intrinsically good emotions, then this disposition is intrinsically evil. The degree of value (goodness or badness) might also be a function of the ‘stability’ or ‘strength’ of the disposition: having a disposition not to lie that usually overcomes competing motivations to lie is good but having a disposition not to lie that almost always overcomes such temptations is better. Based on their structural features alone, it is not clear how one could deny attributing higher-order intrinsic value to dispositions in this way while still asserting that it is okay to do so in the case of emotions and desires. So if one is going to deny dispositions intrinsic value (yet keep it for other states such as emotions and desires), one will bear the burden of proof for why it is that dispositions cannot have this kind of value, and merely asserting that they don’t to avoid a potentially devastating problem will not be sufficient justification (it seems).

Furthermore, if one insists that pro-love dispositions are merely instrumentally valuable, then that seems to imply that other dispositions, such as a pro-virtue disposition (a standing readiness to desire the good in proportion to its absolute and relative value) are not intrinsically good either. But virtuous dispositions are widely accepted to be intrinsically good: a morally good character (which is often described – at least partly – as a collection of virtuous dispositions) is widely held to be an intrinsic good that ought to be pursued for its own sake and that warrants commitment for its own sake. Insofar as denying loving dispositions intrinsic value potentially calls into question the intrinsic value of virtuous dispositions – and so threatens to conflict with widely and strongly held intuitions – there seems to be good reasons not to pursue this line of defense.

The alternative option is to revise the counterfactual condition. Is there a way to phrase the counterfactual condition so that it *both* expresses one’s overarching commitment to do what is objectively morally right (maximize overall goodness) *and* expresses one’s intrinsic valuation and (*prima facie*) commitment to the intrinsically good dispositions (such as love) that are subject to the counterfactual condition? I want to suggest that the following formulation is able to do this:

If a pro-love disposition (**L**) is no longer a reliable means to maximizing overall goodness (**R**), then this is a sufficient reason to *suspend/supress L until* conditions change such that **L** is once again a reliable means to attaining the best possible state of affairs in the long run (**R**).

What is expressed in this formulation is the fact that, though some disposition (love) is valuable in itself, its value can be outweighed by other goods (or other combinations of goods) and so we might have to turn our attention from our commitment to that pro-love disposition in favour of other commitments. Yet, even though one's (*prima facie*) commitment to loving dispositions may be outweighed by one's other (*prima facie*) commitments to other intrinsic goods, this does not mean that one's commitment to love is terminated. In other words, it does not require that one completely give up one's commitment to loving dispositions; one still acknowledges that the pro-love disposition is in itself valuable and that there are still reasons to seek to promote and preserve it for its own sake. This is captured by the inclusion of the "until" clause. Once more favourable conditions avail themselves, the agent will immediately re-instate pro-love disposition. Such a re-instatement of "suspended" loving dispositions is not the result of a new commitment to love; rather, the re-instatement occurs because of a pre-established and persistent commitment to love that has merely been overruled by other concerns due to an imperfect state of affairs. This formulation acknowledges that since loving emotions and loving relations are intrinsically good there is always a *prima facie* obligation to create/preserve loving dispositions where possible. This implies that even in an imperfect world where (extreme) conditions require that one's commitment to promoting loving dispositions be suspended, there is still always a moral reason to try to reform the world such that one's commitment to loving dispositions is no longer overruled. In other words, there is always a moral reason to make those conditions which require overruling one's commitment to promoting love in favour of one's commitments to alleviating other evils (or promoting other important goods) are temporary. Fortunately, however, the actual existence of the kind of state of affairs bad enough to require suspending one's pro-love disposition (or at least one's commitment to it) is so extreme, rare, and improbable, that this is unlikely to be an issue for almost all moral agents.⁶⁸

If the counter-factual condition is understood in this way, then it seems that one does not inappropriately value pro-love dispositions. One does not value them merely as a means, but instead one values them as an intrinsic good that may (under certain imperfect conditions) happen to be outweighed by other intrinsic goods that also legitimately demand

⁶⁸ Mason, "Can an Indirect Consequentialist Be a Friend?" pp. 392-393, (393n18); Mason, "Do Consequentialists Have One Thought too Many?" p. 258; Tedesco, "Indirect Consequentialism," p. 570.

my commitment towards them (as valuable in themselves). This seems to address Badhwar's concerns about the *may* pro-loving dispositions are valued and also seems to capture the core insight of Railton: that consequentialists have a persistent overarching commitment to do what is best. This means that a sophisticated consequentialist is not only able to acknowledge that loving emotions, loving relationships, and beloved persons are intrinsically valuable, but is able to acknowledge pro-love dispositions are intrinsically valuable as well. It therefore seems that sophisticated consequentialism, with the necessary adjustments outlined here, is able to overcome the various components of the love-based objection that have been raised over the last forty years.

3.6 Summary of the New Love-Based Objection (NLBO) and the Defense of Sophisticated Consequentialism against NLBO

The various insights captured by Cocking & Oakley and Badhwar can be compiled to produce the following comprehensive version of the New Love-Based Objection (**NLBO**):

- P1:** Love and loving relationships are highly important and valuable intrinsic goods (i.e., highly valuable in-themselves). [Assumption]
- P2:** Love-based Adequacy Test (LBAT): If a moral theory – like sophisticated consequentialism – can be expected to reliably and significantly impede, interfere, or terminate instances of loving emotions/relations, then there is a sufficient and reasonable ground for rejecting it. [Assumption grounded in P1.]
- P3:** If it is not the case that a sufficient terminating condition treats *the loving relationship* and *the person loved* as valuable as ends-in-themselves and never merely as means to some other end, then it is incompatible with the terminating conditions characteristic of the commitment required by love. [Grounded in P1: Cocking & Oakley; Badhwar]
- P4:** The counterfactual condition characteristic of the sophisticated consequentialist's dispositional structure expressed as a terminating condition (**CTC**): if x will not result in an objectively consequentialist life, then the sophisticated consequentialist will terminate x in favour of y which will result in an objectively consequentialist life ($x \neq y$). [Railton]
- P5:** (Because of **CTC**'s structure) if **CTC** represents a sufficient terminating condition for x , then x is merely instrumentally valuable (as a means to an objectively consequentialist life). [Badhwar; Cocking & Oakley imply in P4]

- P6:** The **CTC** represents a sufficient condition for terminating love or loving relationships. [Cocking & Oakley’s interpretation of Railton]
- C1:** Therefore **CTC** treats love and loving relationships as merely instrumentally valuable. [P4,P5,P6]
- C2:** Therefore **CTC** is incompatible with the terminating conditions characteristic of the commitment required by love [P3,C1]
- C3:** Therefore there is a sufficient and reasonable ground for rejecting sophisticated consequentialism. [P2,C2]

The defense of sophisticated consequentialism against **NLBO** can be summed up as follows. Mason rejects **P6** as a misinterpretation of Railton; I think she is right. Railton does not claim that **CTC** should be applied to particular instances of love or loving relationships; instead he only claims that it applies to pro-love dispositions. The rejection of **P6** would block conclusions **C1**, **C2**, and **C3** and so the reasons outlined in the new LBO do not provide a sufficient and reasonable ground for rejecting sophisticated consequentialism. **P6** should read: “The **CTC** represents a sufficient condition for terminating pro-love dispositions.”

If, however, one includes pro-love dispositions among those aspects identified as intrinsically good in **P1** and **P3** (love and loving relationships), then, as I have suggested, **NLBO** does lead to **C3**. In order to avoid the new version of **LBO**, someone who wants to adopt an ethical view similar to Railton’s version of sophisticated consequentialism would have to do one of two things: either one would have to come up with a new formulation of the counterfactual conditions such that it avoids treating what is subject to it as merely instrumentally valuable or one would have to accept that pro-love dispositions are not intrinsically valuable (though one would still accept that love and loving relationships are intrinsically valuable). I have argued above that denying pro-love dispositions intrinsic value may involve strongly counter-intuitive implications. Instead, I argued that if we revise the counter-factual condition such that it both recognizes the intrinsic value of loving dispositions (along with the kind of *prima facie* commitment proper to intrinsic goods) and allows for this commitment to be outweighed by other legitimate commitments to other intrinsic goods under certain conditions, then the revised counter-factual condition (provided above) would not result in the **CTC** included in the **NLBO**. The new counter-factual condition does not represent a terminating condition; rather, it might be better described as a ‘suspending’ or ‘overriding’ condition. On the revised version, the agent does

not terminate her commitment to promoting intrinsically good loving dispositions; instead, the agent pursues other commitments (when one is forced to choose and the other commitments are overriding). Once the conditions are such that agent's persisting (though suspended) commitment to loving dispositions are no longer outweighed, the agent will immediately resume promoting loving dispositions out of that commitment once again. Since my proposed revision to the counterfactual condition no longer implies the **CTC**, **P4** and **P6** are removed from the argument and the conclusions (**C1-C3**) do not follow.

3.7 Summary of the Requirements Necessary for a Consequentialist Ethical Theory to Overcome the Love-Based Objections

The previous discussion has outlined various objections to consequentialism that have been advanced based on the nature of love and our intuitions about love's value and its role in morality. Various philosophers have responded to these objections in order to defend consequentialism and in this process each one has proposed a feature that a consequentialist theory must adopt in order to meet the love-based challenges raised against it. The final result of this forty-year debate is a list of characteristics that any consequentialist theory must have in order to avoid the various versions (**LBO** and **NLBO**) of the love-based objection discussed here. In summary, any consequentialist theory must have at least the following features to be plausible:

1. **Value Pluralism:** any plausible version of consequentialism must recognize a plurality of intrinsic goods and in particular it must recognize that love, loving relationships, and the person loved are intrinsically valuable.
2. **Love-Based Adequacy Test:** any plausible version of consequentialism must ensure that the motivations and reasons endorsed by/required by consequentialist ethics will not reliably and significantly impede the highly valuable and important intrinsic goods of love or loving relationships.
3. **Harmonious Integration Requirement:** any plausible version of consequentialism must ensure that our motives embody our reasons and that our reasons are embodied in our motives. In other words, consequentialist agents must be "moved by our major values and we should value what our major motives seek."⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Stocker, "Schizophrenia," p. 454

4. **Sophisticated Consequentialism**: a plausible consequentialist ethical system must:
- a. Distinguish between a ‘criterion of rightness’ and a ‘decision-making procedure’ and it must acknowledge that dispositions may function best as ‘decision-making procedures’ even though they do not involve any explicit process of deliberation.
 - b. Adopt a multi-level account of the motivational/dispositional structure of moral agents that meets the following counter-factual condition: *One does not always act for the sake of maximizing goodness, since one may develop/maintain certain dispositions which lead one to do various things for their own sake or for the sake of others, but one would not develop/maintain a certain disposition (and so act as one does) if it were not compatible with one leading an objectively consequentialist life (that life of those available to the agent that would bring about the best outcomes).*
 - c. Only apply the sophisticated consequentialist counter-factual condition to pro-love dispositions and not directly to love or loving relations. (This implies that a sophisticated consequentialist will accept that one has reason to adopt pro-love dispositions as ‘decision-making procedures’ even though they will sometimes (and rarely) result in individual actions that are objectively morally wrong).

In what follows I will argue that McTaggart’s moral theory, when combined with observations he makes in his philosophical account of love, has most of these features and can be supplemented to include others without detracting from any of his positive claims about love or morality. This is important because though Railton identifies the necessary structural features for a plausible version of consequentialism, he does not himself provide a detailed account of what such a theory might look like. In order to assess the actual plausibility of sophisticated consequentialist theories, it will be necessary to work out a substantive version so that theorists can assess whether or not it is plausible in other ways. McTaggart’s version of consequentialism provides a starting point from which theorists can work from to address other issues facing consequentialism. This will lend support to the overall claim of this dissertation: that McTaggart’s moral philosophy and philosophical account of love successfully anticipated a number of issues raised by later philosophers and offers important insights as to how those complications can be addressed. McTaggart’s moral philosophy, though less systematically worked out than his metaphysical work, merits contemporary attention. The final two chapters of this dissertation will present McTaggart’s value theory and moral philosophy and assess to what degree his theory (with some

supplementation from the work of other Ideal Utilitarians of his time) is able to successfully avoid the concerns raised in the versions of LBO raised here.

4 McTaggart's Version of Ideal Utilitarianism: The Importance of Promoting Love

4.1 General Introduction to Chapters Four and Five

The previous chapter concluded that any (consequentialist) moral theory must have at least four features if it is going to be able to overcome the Love-Based Objection (LBO):

- 1) Value Pluralism
- 2) Passes the Love Based Adequacy Test
- 3) Meets the Harmonious Integration Requirement
- 4) A Form of Sophisticated Consequentialism

The first characteristic related exclusively to the axiological basis of the proposed moral theory. The final three relate to the hierarchy or structure of commitments, motivations, or dispositions necessary to accommodate the demands of the moral theory.

In the next two chapters, I argue that McTaggart's Ideal Utilitarian moral philosophy (with some supplementation) is able to integrate love and loving relationships in a way that is consistent with many of our pre-theoretical opinions about the role and value of love in a good and moral life and in creating a good and moral community of persons. This reconciliation of love and morality is very difficult to achieve, and even if McTaggart's account of moral philosophy (as a whole and in its details) would have to be significantly updated in order to serve as a plausible ethical theory in the contemporary context – which it would need to be – the version of consequentialist ethics that he outlines can serve as a foundation upon which those working on contemporary formulations of consequentialist moral theories (or moral theories in general) can build.

This chapter will focus on McTaggart's value theory. I will show how it is that McTaggart attempts to defend the claim that love is intrinsically valuable, that it can outweigh other intrinsic values (including the intrinsic goodness of 'virtue'), and why it is not unreasonable to think that love ought to be considered among the most important goods. The next chapter will explain how it is that McTaggart's moral philosophy incorporates the final three characteristics.

4.2 Introduction to Chapter Four

Proponents of the LBO noted that there is a widely held pre-theoretical belief that love is intrinsically valuable and that when we love someone, we love them for their own sake, and not merely as some means to something else considered good.¹ An implication of this was that any value theory that denied intrinsic goodness to love, loving relationships, and the beloved person necessarily conflicted with these intuitions; therefore, such theories ought, on these grounds, to be rejected. Since proponents of the LBO also widely believed that happiness and virtue are also intrinsically good, the only plausible moral philosophies will be those that are founded on pluralistic theories of value. Proponents of the LBO also noted that love is widely believed to be a highly important intrinsic good. They observe that while there are clearly cases where moral demands may require us to sacrifice some acts of love, in other cases the value involved in preserving or promoting love can plausibly outweigh the disvalue of doing something wrong (a vicious act). Therefore, they argue, any plausible moral theory must also allow for the possibility of genuine conflict between love and morality (though of course it is not necessary that they must always, or even normally, conflict).²

There is no doubt that McTaggart endorsed value pluralism. This chapter will argue that the value pluralism that McTaggart does endorse is the right kind of value pluralism to overcome the various axiological concerns underlying the LBO. I will begin by identifying the various intrinsic goods McTaggart considers in both the early and later works of his career. Next, I will explain the two main categories of intrinsic goods that he outlines in *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*: goods of happiness and goods of perfection. After this, I will make the case that in addition to recognizing intrinsically good states of consciousness, there is some textual evidence that suggests that McTaggart also believed that the person itself has intrinsic value in relation to autonomy, virtue, and subjectivity (rational consciousness and agency). Next I will look at the kind of intrinsic value virtue and love have for McTaggart. I will suggest that his description of the value of virtue and love is consistent with understanding them to have higher-order intrinsic value in the sense outlined by Hurka in *Virtue, Value, and Vice*. Finally, I will consider how it is that McTaggart thinks that love can outweigh other intrinsic goods – including virtue – and why it is that he thinks that love

¹ Stocker, “Schizophrenia,” p. 456; Stocker, “Value and Purposes: The Limits of Teleology and the Ends of Friendship,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 78.12 (December 1981): pp. 750, 754ff.

² Stocker, “Friendship and Duty,” pp. 223, 228-232; Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 79.8 (August 1982): pp. 419-439. *Passim*.

ought to be considered one of the most important (if not the most important) intrinsic goods that can be included in a good life. Before addressing these main issues, it is important to explain why McTaggart should be taken seriously as a moral philosopher. It is also important to briefly summarize the Ideal Utilitarian moral philosophy.

4.3 McTaggart as a Moral Philosopher

McTaggart is not usually recognized by contemporary historians of moral philosophy as having significantly contributed to developments in moral philosophy. This oversight, though understandable, is not totally justified and so is worthy of being addressed at the start. As a student at Trinity College Cambridge, McTaggart studied for the Moral Tripos Exam (1885-1888). In 1888, he achieved “First Class” status on the Mental and Moral Sciences Tripos, earning Distinction in Metaphysics.³ He was also awarded the Marshall Prize in Political Economy.⁴ As a student he was deeply influenced by Henry Sidgwick, who at the time was (arguably) the most prominent living moral philosopher of his day (T. H. Green having died in 1882). After graduating, McTaggart served as a Fellow and Lecturer in Moral Sciences at Trinity for almost all of his adult life (1897-1923). As a Fellow and Lecturer, he profoundly influenced his student and future colleague G. E. Moore and was also in correspondence with Hastings Rashdall; both Moore and Rashdall would go on to provide the most complete and systematic accounts of Ideal Utilitarianism during this period. Throughout his life, “Moral Sciences” at Trinity included the philosophical disciplines of Psychology, Metaphysics, Logic, Moral and Political Philosophy, and Political Economy. Both contemporary and historical works were studied under each discipline. Even though McTaggart clearly dedicated most of his professional publications and teaching to Metaphysical topics – such as time, matter, and immortality – such work was seen to be a division within Moral Science at Cambridge and not a topic completely separate from it. Much contemporary scholarship on McTaggart focuses on some of his arguments related to

³ McTaggart’s examiners are listed as: W. E. Johnson (King’s), W. R. Sorley (Trinity), A. Caldecott (Joh.), and G. F. Stout (Joh.). See *The Cambridge University Calendar for the Year 1888* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Company, 1888), p. 266.

⁴ Rochelle, Gerald. *The Life and Philosophy of J. M. E. McTaggart* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1991), p. 57; G. L. Dickinson, J. *McT. E. McTaggart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931). Rochelle and Dickinson both note that the Headmaster of Clifton, Canon Wilson, had strongly suggested to McTaggart’s mother that McTaggart study the more practical branches of philosophy especially “political economy in its larger aspects as the basis of social philosophy and finally of ethics.” (Dickinson, *McTaggart*, p.18.) This no doubt had some influence on McTaggart’s early interests in philosophy and he continued to be interested in political and economic issues throughout his life.

the ‘unreality’ (or mind-dependence) of time considered in isolation from the larger context or projects within which they were formed. However, a survey of McTaggart’s metaphysical work clearly shows that moral and value considerations were never far from his mind. In many cases, claims about value play important roles in his metaphysical arguments.⁵ So while McTaggart was a ‘specialist’ within the discipline of Metaphysics, Cambridge’s ‘interdisciplinary’ orientation to “Moral Sciences” clearly permeates McTaggart’s philosophical project on the whole.

4.4 Note on Methodology

McTaggart did write a number of papers and chapters in his books that were directly dedicated to the study of value and the ethical problems prevalent in his day, in addition to his metaphysical works (which are more widely known to contemporary scholars). These works on moral philosophy will be the focus of this chapter and the next. The fact that McTaggart never attempted to provide a complete and fully systematic account of Ideal Utilitarianism poses a significant challenge to an attempt to provide a coherent summary of his views. To overcome this difficulty, in some cases I will draw upon the work of other Ideal Utilitarians published during his lifetime to fill in the gaps where necessary. I will draw especially upon the work of Hastings Rashdall because McTaggart was familiar with his work on ethics (he provided extensive comments on a pre-publication manuscript of Rashdall’s *Theory of Good and Evil*) and because Rashdall’s version of Ideal Utilitarianism appears to be largely consistent with McTaggart’s, at least on many of the foundational points.⁶ When I introduce such supplementation, however, I will explain how it merely adds needed details or can be understood to extend insights or arguments that McTaggart has already established.

4.5 McTaggart and Early Ideal Utilitarianism

McTaggart espoused a form of consequentialism called “Ideal Utilitarianism.” The theory emerged as a distinct form of moral philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century. The first systematic accounts of it were produced by G. E. Moore’s *Principia Ethica* (1903) and

⁵ Mander, *British Idealism: A History*, p. 375-376; 466-467.

⁶ The philosophical views of McTaggart and Rashdall seem to have converged on a number of issues. This is especially true about their versions of “Personal Idealism” which stressed the priority of the existence of ‘persons’ in Metaphysics, Axiology, and Ethics. See Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 376, 40.

Hasting Rashdall's *Theory of Good and Evil* (1907). In this book, Rashdall finally settled on "Ideal Utilitarianism"⁷ as the name for this new theory and succinctly summarized it as a theory that held that

the way to find out whether an action is right or wrong, when we are forced to consider such a question for ourselves without reference to some established rule, is to consider whether it will tend to produce for society in general a Well-being or εὐδαιμονία or good which includes many elements possessing different values, which values are intuitively discerned and compared with one another by the moral or practical Reason. The right action is always that which (so far as the agent has the means of knowing) will produce the greatest amount of good upon the whole. ... This view of Ethics, which combines the utilitarian principle that Ethics must be teleological with a non-hedonistic view of the ethical end, I propose to call Ideal Utilitarianism. According to this view actions are right or wrong according as they tend to produce for all mankind an ideal end or good, which includes, but is not limited to, pleasure.⁸

Ideal Utilitarians, therefore, accepted the Classical Utilitarian view that one's duty is always to do that action which will result in the best possible overall state of affairs for the aggregate. As a theory it is both teleological and maximizing. It departs from classical forms of utilitarianism – such as those proposed by Bentham, Mill, and Sidgwick – by rejecting their monistic theory of value which had recognized only pleasure or happiness as an ultimate intrinsic good. Ideal Utilitarians agree that pleasure (or happiness) is an ultimate intrinsic good worth pursuing for its own sake, but they also recognize that there are additional ultimate intrinsic goods (whose value is irreducible to pleasure or the ability to produce pleasure) that we also ought to pursue for their own sake, such as knowledge and virtue. Oftentimes these non-hedonistic goods are human capacities that are represented as fully developed or perfected and such goods are often referred to, severally, as 'ideals.'⁹

⁷ Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil: A Treatise on Moral Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), pp. 216-217. Other candidates he considered were: "non-hedonistic utilitarianism," "idealistic utilitarianism," and "teleological ethics" (Paulsen, *A System of Ethics* (Trans. F. Tilly, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1899)). Rashdall also gives a kind of genealogical account of this view through the history of philosophy. He explicitly identifies McTaggart and Moore as proponents of Ideal Utilitarianism: 217n3.

⁸ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 184.

⁹ Most ideal utilitarians limited the bearers of intrinsic value to conscious beings or states of consciousness; however, Rashdall allows for the possibility that certain kinds of acts might have intrinsic value: "We emphasize the fact which eudaimonistic systems of Ethics are apt to overlook – that acts are the objects of moral judgements as well as consequences. ... but many, nay most, of the acts which do conduce to further ends have a value (positive or negative) of their own ; and this value must be taken into account in estimating the rightness or wrongness of the acts." (*TGE1*, pp. 96-97) This suggestion was taken up in more detail by philosophers such as O. A. Johnson (*Rightness and Goodness: A Contemporary Ethical Theory* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959)). Since McTaggart was one of the main defenders of the restriction of intrinsic value to

4.6 McTaggart's Axiology

While all Ideal Utilitarians accept the basic elements outlined by Rashdall above, various versions of Ideal Utilitarianism can be differentiated according to the particular axiological theories each one adopts. While all Ideal Utilitarians agree that we ought to promote as much overall good for the aggregate as possible, the kinds of intrinsic goods and the rankings of those goods will affect the moral directives and judgements produced by their theory. In order to understand McTaggart's particular system it is important to understand his axiology, especially the prominent role granted to love.

4.6.1 The Restriction of Value to Conscious Beings and States of Conscious Beings

McTaggart strongly supported the claim that only conscious beings or the states of conscious beings are bearers of value. An implication of this assumption is that all non-conscious beings, considered in themselves apart from any consciousness directed towards them, have no intrinsic value. They can, and do, have important instrumental values, but these are always relative to the existence of some conscious beings. As a result, the list of intrinsic values (goods and evils) that McTaggart provides is restricted to those that can be attributed to conscious beings or their conscious states.

The claim that only conscious states have value appears to have been an assumption shared by many ethicists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and McTaggart states that he accepts it as an assumption because "rightly or wrongly, there is a large consensus of opinion in favour of this view."¹⁰ It was proposed by Sidgwick in *Methods of Ethics*,¹¹ and it was also accepted by Rashdall.¹² Moore, however, challenged the assumption in *Principia Ethica* by suggesting that one could conceive of a 'beautiful' world containing no consciousness in it at all and so he proposed that while moral value would still be restricted to conscious beings or their states, aesthetic value might not be.¹³ However, neither McTaggart nor Rashdall seemed convinced by the thought experiment that Moore

conscious beings and states of consciousness, I do not take up this aspect of Ideal Utilitarianism here. If it was allowed, however, this might add additional support to McTaggart's claim that love is intrinsically valuable by also assigning intrinsic value to acts of love (done out of love and for the sake of the beloved).

¹⁰ McTaggart, "Individualism of Value," p. 434.

¹¹ Sidgwick, *ME*, Bk I., Ch. IX, §4, pp. 112-115. Also, in Bk. III, Ch. XIV, §§4-5, pp. 398 – 407. Sidgwick maintains that value is restricted to conscious states/beings, but ultimately denies the Ideal Utilitarian position in favour of Hedonism.

¹² Rashdall, *TGE1*, p.152. "The ethical judgement pronounces that something has value, and we do not on reflection pronounce that anything can have value except some state of consciousness."

¹³ Moore, *Principia Ethica*, §50.

introduces here.¹⁴ McTaggart claims that the answer as to whether non-conscious beings or states can bear value can only be the result of an ultimate judgement of value – it cannot be deduced from more basic judgements. McTaggart admits that he is “unable to give any arguments for my view as Mr. Moore is to give any arguments for his contrary view,” and he also admits that this claim must be treated as a foundational assumption.¹⁵ While some of McTaggart’s claims stand or fall based on this assumption,¹⁶ his claim that love is a highly important intrinsic value does not; the fact that McTaggart’s recognized list of goods might turn out to be too short does not mean that his judgements about the goods he does recognize are therefore incorrect (though it may have some implications for his ranking of values if it turns out that certain non-consciousness related values are also considered to be highly important – such as the good of a fair distribution of benefits and burdens, for instance).

McTaggart suggests that ethicists may make this assumption purely on moral grounds (i.e., based on surveying the most plausible axiological and moral theories proposed in the past) and he warns against associating this assumption with any form of Idealism (epistemic or metaphysical). He notes that even ‘materialists’ classify some physical phenomena as “mental” or “conscious” and insofar as they also hold that value only pertains to this kind of physical phenomena, they too can accept this axiological assumption.¹⁷

I mention this assumption here for two reasons. First, it was clearly important to McTaggart since he explicitly mentions it at length in all of his works on moral philosophy and value. Secondly, it is important to note this assumption in order to understand why some states of affairs widely thought to be *prima facie* plausible candidates for intrinsic goods – such as justice – are not even entertained by McTaggart. McTaggart never claims to have provided a complete list of goods,¹⁸ and so the fact that the list could (and perhaps should) be expanded should not distract us from appreciating the valuable insights he does offer about the intrinsic values that he does recognize.

¹⁴ McTaggart, “Individualism of Value,” pp. 434-437; McTaggart, *NE2*, §788; Rashdall *TGE1*, 152.

¹⁵ McTaggart, “Individualism of Value,” p. 437.

¹⁶ McTaggart, “Individualism of Value,” p. 434.

¹⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §788.

¹⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §786.

4.6.2 *The Early Works*

In *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (1901), McTaggart identifies two main classes of intrinsic goods: Pleasure (or Happiness) and Perfection. Contained under the ‘Goods of Pleasure’ are an individual’s pleasant conscious experiences or – more importantly – one’s consciousness experienced as pleasant on the whole. McTaggart seems to reserve the term ‘happiness’ for a more global assessment of the overall pleasantness (or painfulness) of a person’s consciousness on the whole, either at a given moment or as an historical whole.¹⁹ It is a necessary part of the essence of these kinds of goods that they be *experienced* positively or negatively.

As explained in Chapter One, on McTaggart’s early psychological theory we can never have a direct or pure experience of pleasure or pain. Instead, we always experience pleasure/pain as supervening on another conscious state (cognitions or desires). Pleasure/pain supervenes on such states, we saw, insofar as a harmony was achieved between one’s ideas/ideals and facts about the world. McTaggart called such states of consciousness “tinged with feeling [pleasure/pain]” emotions.²⁰ This means that all hedonic goods will be emotional states of consciousness, and pre-eminent among these is the emotion of love. As we saw, love is the emotional state resulting from the pleasure that supervenes upon our states of knowing and desiring related to another person when such knowing and desiring are in harmony with the facts about that person. Other emotions will arise in analogous ways in regards to the harmony achieved between our ideas/ideals and that actual state of affairs of the world. This means that overall happiness (or suffering) will always comprise various emotional states. Considerations about hedonic goods, such as love, will therefore be considerations about positive or negative forms of emotional conscious states.

McTaggart’s account of the second category of goods – the goods of perfection – imports many of the core axiological insights characteristic of the Ethics of Perfection

¹⁹ Bosanquet, “Hedonism Among the Idealists,” in *Science and Philosophy: and Other Essays* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1927), p. 201. Bosanquet claims that McTaggart accepts the “the immediate identification of Happiness with the greatest quantity of pleasure,” and criticizes him for this. Bosanquet wishes to reserve the term ‘happiness’ to “complete satisfaction” of desires and capacities (201). I mention this only to clarify the sense in which McTaggart uses the term and to distinguish it from other meanings assigned to it by his contemporaries.

²⁰ McTaggart, *SHC*, §282

endorsed by most British Idealists such as F. H. Bradley, T. H. Green, and J. S. Mackenzie.²¹ In direct opposition to classical utilitarianism, proponents of this view rejected the claim that pleasure was the only ultimate intrinsic good. Instead, they argued that what persons ought to ultimately seek for its own sake is the development of human persons and of human society such that they more perfectly instantiate our ideal conceptions (i.e., the ideal of a community of mutually supporting fully developed and integrated human persons). According to Perfectionist Ethics, ‘ideals’ are representations of the way that individuals or societies ought to be and so they provide the ultimate ends of moral action and they serve as norms according to which any existing state of affairs, character, or action is morally assessed.

Ideals, however, are not innate nor are they immediately obvious. Perfectionist ethicists, such as Green, often observe that since humans are still discovering new truths about the world and about the practical capacities of persons all the time, our understanding of human nature is not determinate and so our ideals are not determinate. Oftentimes, our assessment of actual conditions merely leaves us with the conviction that persons and our society as a whole could be better, but it does not provide any complete description of what these better people or communities would actually be like. For instance, many people recognize that perpetual global peace is an ideal all of us ought to strive to approach as much as possible (i.e., minimize war as much as possible), even if we have serious doubts that it could be fully attained without drastic changes in global circumstances and human attitudes and dispositions; however, the exact nature of the kinds of persons and political institutions required to attain this ideal are difficult to formulate, predict, or express. Therefore, ‘ideals’ must be discovered, and constantly revised, through the experience of individuals and communities seeking to develop the best persons and society possible.

Yet, ideals need not be (and are not, according to T. H. Green) fully determinate in order to serve as norms or ultimate ends in ethics. While our ideal of the perfect person or community may only provide an incomplete sketch of the way things ought to be, through

²¹ While various forms of Perfectionist Ethics, such as the one proposed by Green, are teleological in nature, they reject the claim that one has a duty to ‘maximize’ good; at most one has a *prima facie* duty to increase good where such increase is not prohibited or restricted by other non-teleological duties (such as the duty to never treat a person merely as a means but always also as an end). See Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 203-204; T. Irwin, *Development of Ethics, Vol. III* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 582, 615-618. So while I am suggesting that McTaggart draws upon some of the Perfectionist’s claims about what has intrinsic value, I am *not* claiming he is not accepting their claims about moral rightness or obligation.

reflection on past experiences and on past struggles, humans can identify patterns of improvement relative to the previous set of beliefs, practices, and institutions and these can indicate the *direction* of improvement towards the ideal.²² For instance, while philosophers may not be able to provide a completely determinate and substantive account of moral and political ‘autonomy’ (a widely accepted ideal in contemporary political and moral philosophy) ethicists can look at events such as the abolition of slavery and conclude that such movements were improvements towards the ideal of autonomy and claim that such experiences provide hints as to how to fill in the remainder of the conception in more detail. Therefore, the general trend or direction of improvement is accessible, even if the final destination is not.²³

Perfectionist ethics strongly emphasized that human beings are fundamentally social in nature. The attainment of ideals cannot occur in isolation, and many of our capacities – such as the capacities for sympathy and benevolence – presume the existence and improvement of other persons. On this view, the imperfection of an individual, or group of individuals, threatens the perfection of all others. It is therefore of utmost importance to ensure that development is encouraged and that persons are provided the resources and skills necessary to develop their own capacities (if they choose to utilize them). Therefore, according to perfectionist ethics, the fundamentally social nature of persons means that “common goods” will play a central role in our conception of the ideal of perfection.

The fact that ideals must be discovered and developed led Perfectionists to also conclude that a certain amount of individual freedom is necessary to ensure that people can discover better (yet previously unconsidered/tested) ideas, moral rules, or institutions for organizing society. It is also important to note that Perfectionist Ethics also recognized that though all of us can encourage and support each other’s development, the capacities for knowing and willing can only ultimately be developed by the agent herself and no one else. Nobody can force another person to see the truth and no one can be externally compelled to assent to it. Also, no one can be externally compelled to have the particular intentions essential for virtue (i.e., to seek the good for the sake of the good, do the right for the sake of the right). Idealists (especially Green) therefore afforded a central place to a kind of ‘liberalism’ within Ethics and Politics. In order to attain Perfection, individuals had to be

²²Green, *Prolegomena*, §172; §§353-354.

²³Green, *Prolegomena*, §172; §§353-354.

given space to exercise and improve their own intellectual and moral capacities. In order for a person to come to her own understanding of what is ultimately good and her own desire to do what is good/right, she must be allowed to reject the resources and services offered to her if she so chooses; also, she must be free to make mistakes (though under the condition that she knows she may be legitimately subjected to punishment for some of these mistakes).

That McTaggart accepted certain ‘perfectionist’ intrinsic values proposed by British Idealists is clear throughout his works. McTaggart does not provide a clear or complete list of intrinsically good capacities in *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, but refers to a number of “ideals,” throughout the book. He identifies ‘virtue’ (desiring good as good),²⁴ benevolence (desiring the good/happiness of others),²⁵ knowledge (the attainment of correspondence between one’s ideas about what exists and what actually does exist),²⁶ and the contemplation of and production of beauty.²⁷ He also describes overall states of ‘painlessness’ and ‘pleasure’ as ideals.²⁸ He also identifies what might be called an ideal of ‘awareness’ when considering choices to be made between relieving intense suffering through mind-numbing drugs vs. preserving conscious awareness by not taking drugs and enduring intense suffering.²⁹

Furthermore, Chapters V and VI (on ‘punishment’ and ‘sin’ respectively) seem to identify the unique intrinsic value of autonomous moral agency and its improvement (especially in children). I will not be addressing the particular arguments made there in detail; however, each of those chapters seeks to establish the best way to foster the development of moral agency, especially in those cases where part of the development may (perhaps necessarily) involve moral ‘failures’ on the part of the developing agent. The aims and restrictions proposed for punishment and for child development clearly represent the moral agency of the developing person as an end to be promoted and protected for its own sake (and so as intrinsically valuable). His repeated emphasis on the importance of the individual person *qua* individual,³⁰ the acknowledgement of the modern ‘discovery’ of the importance

²⁴ McTaggart, *SHC*, §§125-127.

²⁵ McTaggart, *SHC*, §125.

²⁶ McTaggart, *SHC*, §125.

²⁷ McTaggart, *SHC*, §125.

²⁸ McTaggart, *SHC*, §128.

²⁹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §129.

³⁰ See especially McTaggart, *SHC* Chapter VI: “Sin,” and Chapter VII: “The Conception of Society as an Organism.”

of autonomy,³¹ and the importance given to the freedom to make (some minor) moral mistakes (combined with the experience of moral contrition) as an essential part of the process for developing moral agency,³² all give evidence to McTaggart's agreement with the British Idealists emphasis on the intrinsic value of the moral perfection/improvement of the individual person.

Since utilitarians have sometimes been criticized for ignoring the importance (and intrinsic value) of moral autonomy or of the individual person (*qua* individual person) in ethics by focusing merely on aggregate good, it is important to recognize that even in McTaggart's earliest writings on ethics, the intrinsic value of autonomy and individuality (separateness) plays a central role in his characterization of consequentialist ethics. There is no doubt that his exposure as a student, fellow, and teacher at Cambridge to the work of John Stuart Mill, 'liberal' economics (David Ricardo and Alfred Marshall), and T. H. Green – all of whom (consistently or not) emphasized the central importance and value of individuality and autonomy in ethics and politics – had a profound influence on the formation of his value theory and his moral philosophy.

Finally, it is important to note that while McTaggart recognizes many of the same goods/ideals as those identified in Perfectionist Ethics, his account of their goodness is importantly different and so fundamentally distinguishes his axiological view from theirs. On perfectionist accounts what is intrinsically valuable is the perfection (or realization to a high degree) of capacities that are in some way *essential* for being the kind of thing that one is. Perfectionist accounts start with judgements about the ideal of human nature and then determine what is intrinsically good based on such judgments.³³ According to McTaggart's axiological position – and most Ideal Utilitarian theories – one starts with judgements about what things (including capacities) are intrinsically good and then forms a conception of an ideally good person (or ideally good society) by identifying the best possible combination of

³¹See especially McTaggart, *SHC*, §§ 156-157: "But why should the modern citizen regard the state as expressing the moral law? He does not regard it as something above and superior to himself, as the ancient citizen regarded his city, as the child regards his parent, and as the religious man his God. The development of the individual conscience and responsibility has been too great for such an attitude. ... Not only does he not feel bound, but he does not feel entitled to surrender in this way his moral independence. He must determine for himself what he is himself to hold as right and wrong. The result of this is that, if he sees for himself that his action was wrong, he will repent without waiting for the state to tell him so, and if he does not see it for himself, the opinion of the state will not convince him."

³² *SHC*, Chapters V and VI, *passim*.

³³ Hurka, *Perfectionism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3-5.

these goods given the actual nature of things in the world (including the nature of human persons).

This is an important difference because on perfectionist accounts, the development of any essential capacity is intrinsically good; however, on views like McTaggart's, it is possible that the development of some capacities that are judged to be 'essential' to something can also be judged to be intrinsically neutral or intrinsically bad. For instance, it seems that an essential part of being human involves being capable of desiring someone else's suffering, even if one chooses to never exercise this capacity. McTaggart acknowledges such a capacity (a capacity for "malevolence") in his works and, yet, he judges that exercising or developing this capacity is intrinsically bad.³⁴ What a person does with such a capacity determines whether that person/action is morally good or morally bad (whether that person/action is a virtuous or vicious); however, so long as a person has such a capacity, the person's decision about what she does with it cannot change her essence. It seems that a perfectionist would either have to deny that a capacity for malevolence is essential for being human, or (if the perfectionist admits that it is essential) would have to deny that exercising such a capacity is intrinsically bad. One benefit of such a view is that McTaggart has a principled explanation of why some seemingly 'essential' capacities ought to be fully realized and others to be realized as little as possible. However, all of the problems related to a non-reductionist account of value remain: i.e., there is ultimately no derivative justification (from more basic premises) for value-judgments and so instead such judgements must meet certain criteria of 'self-evidence.'

4.6.3 Later Work: The Nature of Existence

4.6.3.1 Five Kinds of Values

In his later work, McTaggart provides a list of intrinsic goods (and evils) but does not distinguish between hedonic goods and perfectionist goods. Instead, he identifies five basic kinds of value.³⁵ According to McTaggart, the assignment of value to an object – intrinsic goodness or badness – is always connected to the object's possession of a characteristic

³⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §832. (McTaggart lists "malignancy" as an intrinsically evil emotion.)

³⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, §813. McTaggart initially lists six candidates but rejects one of them ("harmony") because he "can see no good or evil under this head which does not come under one of the other five."

(quality or relation). This does not mean that the different kinds of value (goodness or badness) attributed to an object are equivalent to these characteristics nor does it mean they can be defined in terms of them. For McTaggart, as for Moore, “goodness” and “badness” are indefinable qualities. Nonetheless, McTaggart asserts³⁶ that that we can (and do) make “universal synthetic propositions” that establish necessary links between possessing some characteristic “**C**” and possessing some intrinsic value “**V**.”³⁷ If “*x* has **C**” correlates to our judgement that “*x* is intrinsically good/bad,” then **C** can be described as a “valifying characteristic” (to borrow a term that Broad used to explain McTaggart’s value theory).³⁸ McTaggart leaves it open as to what kind of necessary connection is involved and how it is established.³⁹ The connection between **Gx** (*x* is good) and **Cx** (*x* has characteristic **C**) occurs either through some kind of immediate synthetic *a priori* intuition/judgement (it is self-evident that $\forall x(\mathbf{Cx} \rightarrow \mathbf{Gx})$) or through some inductive reasoning from particular judgement (the judgement that, in carefully observed experience, **Gx** reliably corresponds to **Cx**). Once it is established that the attribution of a particular kind of value **G** correlates in a law-like way with possessing **C** one can infer **Gx** from any instance of **Cx**. Today, we might describe this connection (however it is established) by saying that the quality of ‘goodness/badness’ “supervenes” on certain properties of the good/evil object in a regular way.

According to McTaggart, the five irreducibly different kinds of values correspond to irreducibly different kinds of ‘valifying characteristics.’ The valifying characteristics corresponding to each intrinsic value are described in pairs (except for one kind of value): one valifying characteristic corresponds to the positive form of that kind of intrinsic value (goodness) and the other corresponds to the negative form (badness). Based on this general understanding of value, McTaggart proposes the following five kinds of value:

³⁶ According to McTaggart, if judgements of the form ‘*x* is good’ did not correlate to any patterns in ‘*x*,’ then each judgement of value would have to be a particular and unique judgement. If this were not possible there could be no systematized science of axiology or ethics. (McTaggart, *NE2*, §801.) However, McTaggart believed that systematic axiology and ethics existed (even if it was highly imperfect) and so he just rules out any form of moral particularism on these grounds. Since he is concerned with improving systematic ethics, he is surely entitled to the working assumption that such a project is in fact legitimate (even if he is overlooking this question too quickly here).

³⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §787.

³⁸ Broad. *Examination of Mr. McTaggart’s Philosophy, Volume II: Part II*. p. 663-665.

³⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §801n1.

Table 2: Five Kinds of Value in *The Nature of Existence*

Kind of Value ⁴⁰	Kind of Conscious State Bearing Value ('goods' or 'bads')	Correlated Positive Valifying-Characteristic of the Value-Bearing Conscious State	Correlated Negative Valifying-Characteristic of the Value-Bearing Conscious State
Intellectual Value	Cognitions	True	False
Moral Values	Conations	Virtuous	Vicious
Emotional Value	Emotions	loving, affectionate, self-reverential, complacent (§832), etc.	hateful, repugnant, malignant, vengeful, regretful, remorseful, jealous, envious, fearful (§832), etc.
Hedonic Value	"Feelings"	Pleasant	Painful
Value of Consciousness	States of Consciousness (or a Conscious Being: Person/Self) (§840)	Mental Vivacity: "Fullness" or "Intensity" of consciousness: degree of the clarity, distinctness, and intensity of one's consciousness. (States 'lacking' this quality: 'feeble-mindedness' resulting from drugs)	[No negative characteristic and no correlated 'evil': to lack consciousness altogether is to be the kind of thing that cannot bear value (only conscious beings or conscious states can bear value)]

4.6.3.2 Value Bearers: States of Consciousness and Conscious Beings

Each kind of value also corresponds to a different kind of value-bearer. Of the five kinds of value, three (Intellectual, Emotional, and Hedonic) clearly have conscious states as their value-bearers (cognitions, emotions, and feelings), but not conscious beings. Moral value (virtue and vice), however, is sometimes described in terms of individual desires for what is believed (correctly) to be good and at other times as values attributed to the person as a whole in respect of having such desires (and in proportion to the 'resolve' of such desires).⁴¹

⁴⁰ These names for "Kinds of Value" are not provided by McTaggart; they are my own contribution. McTaggart merely lists the valifying characteristics lawfully correlated with different kinds of value, but he does not actually provide names for each kind (NE2, §813). He does, however, clearly link virtue and vice to moral value in many places (which is not unique to McTaggart).

⁴¹ McTaggart, NE2, §815. "If by calling *a man* virtuous we mean no more than that he always desires what he believes to be the good, and that he always carries it out, so far as depends on his will, then ... Even if we should add that, to be perfectly virtuous, *a man* must not only desire what he believes to be right, but must have correct beliefs as to what is right ..." It is clear from this passage, and others where virtue is brought up, that the proper bearer of moral value is a person. Particular desires/volitions for what is (correctly) believed to be good might also be said to have moral value, but it also seems clear that a stable/constant volition/disposition to have such desires and to act on them is what is really meant in the fullest sense of 'virtue.'

Also, the value of consciousness is described both as an element of value borne by any particular conscious state, but also as a value borne by persons. Of this fifth kind of value he says that “If amount and intensity of consciousness is a good, it is a good which every *self* must *have* in some degree, since every *self* is more or less conscious.”⁴² McTaggart’s language here is important. He introduces a very strict distinction between saying that something *has* value (the value *of* x) and saying that there is value *in* (the value *in* x). According to his terminology, only value-bearers (goods or bads) can be said to *have* value. Aggregated collections of value-bearers, such as a community of persons, which is not itself a conscious being, or state of a conscious being) are not proper bearers of value; nonetheless we can represent the combined value of each person (and their conscious states) in the community as having a total quantity, and this aggregated sum is the value *in* the community.⁴³ The language used in relation to moral value and the value of consciousness refers to both persons and conscious states of persons as “having” such value and this strongly suggests that the proper value-bearers for these two kinds of values may be *either* conscious states *or* conscious beings. This means that, insofar as persons *have* (or are the bearers of) the valifying characteristics of consciousness and virtue, persons also *have* (or are the bearers of) intrinsic value. In other words, insofar as persons have some degree of clear and intense consciousness or have virtuous dispositions, the person is (to some degree) intrinsically good and is not *merely* a container/collection of intrinsically good states. While McTaggart explicitly claims that conscious states *have* intrinsic value in the *Nature of Existence*, he explicitly remains agnostic as to whether or not “selves” (individual conscious beings) *have* intrinsic value.⁴⁴ However, his attribution of value to ‘consciousness’ in this passage, combined with his earlier claims in *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* and “The Individualism of Value,” strongly suggests that (despite his proclaimed agnosticism) it is reasonable to believe that ultimately McTaggart would ultimately sympathize with the view that individual persons do have intrinsic value, even if he felt that he could not provide (or that it was not necessary to provide) a decisive argument in favour of this view in *Nature of Existence*.⁴⁵ Such an

⁴² McTaggart, *NE2*, §840. My italics.

⁴³ McTaggart, “Individualism of Value,” p. 433; McTaggart, *NE2*, §§788-790.

⁴⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §792-799.

⁴⁵ McTaggart, *NE2*, §799: “I am unable to come to any definite opinion on the point. Nor is it necessary for our present purposes. ... And it will not make any difference to the conclusions we reach in the rest of the work [dedicated to showing that there is reason to believe that there is proportionally more good than evil in the universe considered as a whole] whether the values are values of selves, or values of their parts.”

interpretation is consistent with the view expressed by other commentators on McTaggart's work; for instance, Mander classifies McTaggart as a Personal Idealist because he takes the claim that "that nothing is ultimately good or bad except conscious beings and their conscious states" to be a core element of McTaggart's philosophy.⁴⁶ Even if McTaggart is agnostic about whether persons can be bearers of value, it is clear that he thinks it is a possibility (and hence why he leaves it an open question). So, at the very least, it is clear that McTaggart's axiology is therefore consistent with one of the axiological demands of proponents of the LBO: To love someone is to value them for their own sake, and so any plausible moral philosophy must adopt a value theory that allows for persons to be bearers of intrinsic value.

4.6.4 Love is Intrinsically Good

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is most important to note that McTaggart (and other Ideal Utilitarians, such as Moore and Rashdall), recognized that virtue is intrinsically good and that emotions such as love are intrinsically good. This puts them in opposition to certain passages of *Methods of Ethics*, where Sidgwick denies that virtue has intrinsic value.⁴⁷ In that work, Sidgwick also argued that it is morally permissible to allow for motivating "affection for special individuals [love and friendship]," over "a feeling more universal in scope – charity, philanthropy, or (as it has been called) 'Enthusiasm for Humanity,'"⁴⁸ insofar as such loving emotions involve pleasure (the only intrinsic good for Sidgwick) and insofar as they are conducive *means* for promoting a surplus of aggregate happiness; nonetheless, it does not appear that such emotions, in themselves (apart from their pleasantness/painfulness), are intrinsically valuable on Sidgwick's axiology.⁴⁹ McTaggart's version of Ideal Utilitarianism (as well as Rashdall's) directly opposes these implications of Hedonistic Utilitarianism. McTaggart wants to claim that virtue and love are good in themselves, independent of any pleasure they may involve or produce. It is therefore reasonable to pursue these goods for their own sake. This is exactly the kind of attitude that proponents of the LBO argue is required in order to be consistent with our widely held belief that love (in addition to other goods such as happiness or virtue) ought to be pursued

⁴⁶ See Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 375-376, 464-467.

⁴⁷ Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book III, Ch. XIV, §§1-5, pp. 391-407; and Book IV, Ch. III, §2, pp. 426-430. See also: Rashdall, *TGEI*, pp. 61-62 and pp. 63-76.

⁴⁸ Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 433-434.

⁴⁹ Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book IV, Ch. III, §3, pp. 433-436.

for its own sake and not merely as a means to some other end and that in some cases the value of love can outweigh the value of other goods. In order to show that McTaggart's claims about the intrinsic value of love do match these intuitions – and so meets the first requirement necessary to overcome the LBO – it is useful to consider the nature of the intrinsic value that he assigns to virtue and emotions.

Virtue, according to McTaggart (and other Ideal Utilitarians like Rashdall and Moore), consists in desiring that what is good be preserved or promoted and that what is evil be minimized or destroyed; also, vice consists in desiring that what is evil be preserved or promoted and that what is good be minimized or destroyed.⁵⁰ Also, on McTaggart's terminology, only 'volitions' are called 'virtuous' or 'wicked.'⁵¹ As explained in Chapter Two, on this account virtue can be understood as a higher-order intrinsic good in the sense Hurka outlines in *Virtue, Vice, and Value*. The quality "virtuous" can be attributed both to particular volitions for or against good/evil or it can be applied to stable dispositions of the moral agent (the character) from which particular volitions or actions arise. A virtuous 'character' consists in having reliable (and ideally permanent) dispositions to have virtuous desires. Virtue and morally right action have a particular kind of intrinsic good identified as 'moral goodness.' All other types of good are non-moral. Virtue must ultimately involve taking up pro-attitudes towards some non-moral goods (in addition to moral goods) and so always presupposes the existence of irreducibly non-moral goods. Virtue (moral goodness) therefore, cannot be the only intrinsic good and vice (moral badness) cannot be the only intrinsic evil.⁵² McTaggart adopts such an account of virtue when he describes the ideally

⁵⁰ McTaggart, *NE2*, §§ 813, 815, 828-829; Rashdall, *TGE1*, 123; Moore, *PE* §107. -

⁵¹ McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), §124, p. 152n.1: "I use virtuous and wicked as synonyms of moral good and moral bad when the objects spoken of are volitions." In §124, McTaggart distinguishes between *volitions* and *desires* insofar as desires are not restricted by what one actually has the capability to do or bring about, whereas volitions are: "And, again, no man can will anything (though he may desire it) if he knows that he cannot possibly have any influence over the matter. I should not will that an eruption of Vesuvius should cease, though under certain circumstances I might desire it most passionately." Also, volitions involve *choice* (among other things) (§113) whereas desires do not.

⁵² McTaggart, *NE2*, §§828-829. While one can take up a virtuous attitude towards virtue (in oneself or in others), virtue cannot be the only intrinsic good. Since the intrinsic value of any higher-order good (such as virtue) always depends on the intrinsic value of its object, there must be some ultimate base-level good that determines the intrinsic value of the first higher-order level of virtue. If this was not the case, a vicious infinite regress would occur. In the indicated sections, McTaggart defends the claim that moral goodness always presupposes the existence of non-moral goods. He acknowledges that it could be logically possible for virtue to be the only good if virtue only requires desiring what one *believes* to be good. If we hypothesize a world where virtue is the only good, where everyone *falsely* believed that other things were good (e.g. pleasure), and where people desired these 'false goods' because they (falsely) believed they were good, then virtue could exist as the only good. However, McTaggart thinks that this is implausible since it would require that *no one* recognizes the

virtuous person as one who “always desires what he believes to be good, and that he always carries it out, so far as depends on his will,”⁵³ and that “in order that a self should be virtuous, his volitions must be directed towards what is good, or at least, to what appears to him to be good.”⁵⁴

In addition to choosing to act out of considerations of what is good (bad) or right (wrong), one can also be motivated to act without any regard for the value of the motivating object. In such cases a person is motivated to act out of direct concern for the object (or some property of the object). For instance, one might act directly from a desire to win some competition (regardless of whether winning is or is not intrinsically good, in this instance or any other). Alternatively, one might be emotionally motivated to act directly out of loving concern for an individual person (without thinking of whether the beloved is morally good/bad or perhaps even in spite of such considerations). Such motivations technically cannot be classed as ‘virtuous’ for at least two reasons. First, thoughts about the goodness or rightness of some object or act are not necessary to move us to action in these cases (our actions are not necessarily the result of deliberations about the goodness or badness of the object moving us). Secondly, motivating states, such as love, are not volitions.⁵⁵ Do these motivations have intrinsic value on McTaggart’s view? Is it the case that the only desires that have moral value are those that are directed at the object *qua* the object’s *goodness/badness* of the object and never desires that are directed at the good or bad object *as* the object that it is regardless of its value?

While McTaggart does not explicitly claim that desires can have intrinsic value apart from any explicit consideration of the ‘goodness’ of their object, his account of the object and causes of love shows he accepts this idea for emotions like love. As was discussed at length in Chapters One and Two, McTaggart thinks that the object of love is an individual person *qua* individual person; so, while persons can bear value (or have states that bear

(assumed) true nature of the good (i.e., that virtue is the only good) and it would also imply that anyone who knew what virtue was (i.e., the only good) could not be virtuous. McTaggart concludes that if virtue (moral goodness) involves desiring what one believes to be good, then it is more plausible that virtue ultimately must involve desiring non-moral goods (in addition to moral goods).

⁵³ McTaggart, *NE2*, §815.

⁵⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §828.

⁵⁵ McTaggart, *SDR*, §§124, 129. “But what in this case are we to say about a loving disposition, a fervent patriotism, or a passion for humanity? They are not volitions, or tendencies to volitions, or habits of volition. They are not volitions, or tendencies to volitions, or habits of volition. Nor can they be obtained by willing. (They must of course, be distinguished from resolutions to act in certain ways. A man’s will can cause him to act as if he loved his wife, or country, or mankind, but it cannot make him love them.” (§129, pp. 158-159.)

value), the object of love is not a value-quality like ‘goodness’ or any particular good state (this would be “admiration”). Also, the sense of intimate union that is a necessary and sufficient condition of love need not necessarily involve any explicit awareness of the intrinsic value of the person loved. Once that attitude of love arises, one possible result of love is that we come to a deeper appreciation of the intrinsic value and importance of the beloved, but this valuation of the beloved is not included among the necessary and sufficient conditions for loving. On his view all emotions and desires will have some object and all will involve some pro- or con- orientation towards that object. The intrinsic value of such an attitude (as was demonstrated in Chapter Two) is a function of the objective value of its object and its appropriateness/proportionality in relation to its object. It is not necessary, however, that the person having the attitude recognize the object as good or bad or recognize the attitude as appropriate or inappropriate in order for the attitude itself to be intrinsically good or bad.

Hurka has distinguished two alternative accounts of higher-order intrinsic goods: the ‘emotionalist’ and the ‘intellectualist’ accounts.⁵⁶ Intellectualist accounts take the object of the pro-orientation to be (at least partly) the goodness/badness of the object. Such intrinsically good attitudes, on this view, always involve a judgment that ‘x is good/bad.’ Any conative or emotional response lacking this value judgment about the object cannot count as virtue higher-order intrinsic good. On the other extreme is the ‘emotionalist’ account that holds that the object of the intrinsically valuable pro-attitude is a particular thing or quality (other than goodness or badness) itself, independent of any judgment of its value. It is desired as the thing that it is, and not because that kind of thing is also judged to have value. Between these two extremes are mixed views: these accept that both kinds of pro-attitude can have higher-order intrinsic value. One might hold that the ‘intellectualist’ orientation is relatively more valuable, or that the ‘emotionalist’ orientation is more valuable, or that they are equally valuable; whichever it may be, both kinds of attitude are acknowledged to be higher-order intrinsic goods. Insofar as the goodness of an object can be (and sometimes is) the object of an intrinsically good desire (virtue) and insofar as the object of some desires and emotions are objects considered independently of their value, McTaggart clearly propose a hybrid emotionalist-intellectualist view.

⁵⁶ Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, pp. 173-180.

4.7 McTaggart's Defense of the Claim that Love has a "Unique and Supreme" Goodness (Value)

4.7.1 *The Nature of Existence*

McTaggart believed that, apart from quantitative considerations (amount, intensity, duration, etc.), there was no general rule or principle to guide the selection of one good over another in cases where pursuing/promoting both goods is not possible under the circumstances. If two courses of action would produce results containing roughly the same amount of value of two different kinds, the preference of one option over the other would be 'a particular ultimate judgement of value,' that could not be universalized.⁵⁷ All values, however, are commensurable: they can be meaningfully compared in terms of their relative quantity of value. For any quantity of a valifying characteristic (pleasure, knowledge, virtue, love, etc.) there will be a quantity of value (net goodness or badness) assigned to the bearer of that characteristic (the good/bad conscious state or conscious being). For example, if there are roughly⁵⁸ x units of pleasant feeling, then there will be roughly y units of goodness/badness correlated with that pleasant feeling; and, if there are roughly x units of loving emotion, then there will be roughly y units of goodness/badness correlated with that loving emotion. One implication of this is that for some amount of love, there will presumably be some quantity of knowledge or virtue having a value that is greater than the value of that quantity of love.⁵⁹

Yet despite his strict commitment to aggregation and commensurability, McTaggart was perhaps best known for his claim that love (of persons) ought to be ranked highest among all intrinsic values. Such a view claims that love is the most important good and ought to be treated as such when comparing it to other values in practical reasoning (prudential or ethical). For an Ideal Utilitarian, this implies that the promotion or

⁵⁷ McTaggart *NE2*, §813.

⁵⁸ McTaggart does not think that these quantities will be as precise as other quantitative measurements/comparisons (such as our quantification of surface area or temperature, for example). All that he requires are estimates that generally clear enough to allow for meaningful comparisons. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

⁵⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §§ 869-870: McTaggart imagines two lives: 1) a life containing every kind of good (knowledge, virtue, pleasure, love, etc.) in some large (but finite) amount and lasting for some long (but finite) amount of time. 2) a life containing only a slight surplus of pleasure over pain (and no other good or evil). He concludes that at some point there will be a lifespan for the second kind of life that will have a greater sum of value than the first life. The length of this second type of life would have to be very long, but such an amount is *conceivable*. McTaggart accepts that implications of strict aggregation, like this, may be "repugnant" to some, but he still insists that there is no *a priori* reason to rule out such conclusions.

maintenance of love (whether the instance of love in question involves me or not) ought to have *pro tanto* priority over considerations of other values in ethical evaluations and any proposed decision-making procedure. It also implies that an ideal world would be the one conducive to the most love possible (all things considered). Yet, given his commitment to aggregation and commensurability, how can he defend his claim that love is the “highest” or “most important” intrinsic good?

It is noteworthy that, at least in *The Nature of Existence*, McTaggart does not claim to “prove” that love is the highest ranked good. He thinks that this is a judgement that is “ultimate.” It cannot be inferred from more basic premises; instead, it is experienced as self-evident after careful reflection on the nature of love and all other kinds of goods and values. Though McTaggart claims one cannot prove that love is the most important good, he does think there are indirect ways to defend this hypothesis. Without appealing to any metaphysical conclusions about the universe, he proposes a defense of the *possibility* of this hypothesis solely on considerations about the nature of each kind of value.⁶⁰

McTaggart considers a number of possible avenues for defending the logical possibility (conceivability) of the hypothesis that love has ‘supreme and unique’ value only to reject them.⁶¹ First, he notes that his value pluralism rules out claiming that love is ‘unique and supreme’ because it is the *only* intrinsic good. Next, he rules out defending the hypothesis by claiming that all other goods are dependent on love. This defense would claim that insofar as love is a necessary condition for the possibility of other values, it is the most important value.⁶² McTaggart rejects this option because he observes that at least some intrinsic values can be conceived to exist independently of the existence of love. In particular

⁶⁰ McTaggart does provide a metaphysically based argument supporting the view that love is the highest value, but I will not consider this here. (See *NE2*, Chapter LXVII: “Total Value in the Universe.”) Dennis McKerlie, considers the metaphysical argument in his recent article “McTaggart on Love,” especially pp. 73; 77-86.

⁶¹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §850.

⁶² c.f. Ralph Barton Perry, *General Theory of Value* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), §246, p. 609-610. Perry links the meaning of ‘importance’ in comparisons of value to the concept of ‘causal relations.’ Insofar as a cause [or condition] is necessary for an effect, it is ‘important,’ and insofar as a ‘cause’ makes a task easier or it has more effects, it can be relatively ‘more important,’ than other ‘causes’ [conditions] which do not. His example states that a laboratory’s ‘mechanic’ is more important the laboratory’s ‘director’ in this sense. It is interesting to note that, intuitively, there is also another sense in which the director is more ‘important’ insofar as she has more *authority*. Joseph Butler clearly outlines a distinction between the ‘importance’ related to ‘strength/power’ and the importance related to ‘authority.’ The first is a purely descriptive sense of ‘important’ (what is in fact the most *powerful* element at issue) and the second sense of ‘important’ is normative insofar as something *ought* to be ranked the highest (on some criteria), whether it is ranked this way or not as a matter of fact. The relation McTaggart rejects here is not ‘causal,’ but it does involve a kind of conditionality that makes it analogous to ‘causal’ connections.

he suggests that the values that correlate to the valifying characteristics of knowledge, fullness of life, and virtue are all possible independent of love. One can conceive of conscious states that are true, vivid, and virtuous independent of whether or not one also has emotional states towards persons that are loving. Thirdly, McTaggart rejects defending the supremacy of love on the grounds that love is “eternal,” and all other values are not. McTaggart seems to reject this view on the grounds that any considerations for thinking that love is eternal (or not) will also apply equally to the other values making all other values equally eternal (or not) and thereby making a ‘ranking’ on these grounds impossible.

Fourthly, McTaggart entertains the strategy of claiming that love is “incommensurably” better than all other goods. He states,

Can we say that love is incommensurably [lexically] better than any other good? This seems attractive, but I cannot think it is correct. If it were so, it would follow that, starting from *any* standpoint – my own at present, for example – the smallest conceivable increase in love would be better than the greatest possible increase in knowledge, virtue, pleasure, or fullness of life. And it does not seem to me that this is true.⁶³

He identifies this option as “attractive,” but ultimately rejects it because he suggests it results in judgements that are counter-intuitive. He thinks that if love is ranked infinitely higher than all other goods, then *no matter what one’s current condition is*, we would be able to judge *a priori* that it will *always* be better to select the smallest possible increase in love over the greatest possible increase in knowledge, virtue, pleasure, or fullness of life;⁶⁴ he thinks it is absurd to claim *a priori* that it is always better to choose this way, regardless of the relative quantities of value involved for each kind of good. If one is undergoing great suffering, it seems absurd to claim, *a priori*, that the smallest possible increase of loving emotions in that person will always outweigh any possible relief that could be granted to them.⁶⁵

⁶³ McTaggart, *NE2*, §850.

⁶⁴ McTaggart, *NE2*, §850. The inclusion of ‘no matter what one’s current condition is’ is important to keep in mind in what follows. McTaggart is emphasising that one’s current condition *does* (at least sometimes) make a difference. Clearly, if one is suffering greatly, the smallest possible increase of love will not outweigh the value of any amount of relief from suffering (§853). However, if one already has a large amount of ‘happiness,’ or ‘knowledge,’ or ‘virtue,’ or ‘fullness of life’ it is possible that the value of any increase in these goods will not have the value that the smallest increase of love can offer. This is important to note in order to see how McTaggart can make his statements about quantification and aggregation (in the ‘oyster-life’ examples above) consistent with the argument he advances below.

⁶⁵ This, of course, ignores any additional instrumental value that love might have in causing ‘distraction’ from pain or in allowing the discovery of some additional ‘meaning’ in painful situations. In both of these cases it is not love’s intrinsic value that outweighs the pain, but its value combined with the value (intrinsic and instrumental) the effects it potentially causes. Yet even if there is also some instrumental value to a small

McTaggart offers one last possibility for accounting for the supreme and unique importance (rank) of love in relation to all other intrinsic goods. He insists that to be ranked as supreme it will be necessary that “no possible goodness arising from knowledge, virtue, pleasure, or fullness of life could equal it,” and one way to conceive of love in this way is to think that “when love reached or passes a certain point, it would be more good than any possible amount of knowledge, virtue, pleasure, or fullness of life could be.”⁶⁶ He makes it clear that it is not necessary to believe that I (or anyone) has actually reached such a point in order to conclude that the value has a supreme ranking; rather, he insists that this idea “follow[s] from contemplating the nature of love, on the one hand, and of the other [valifying] qualities on the other hand.”⁶⁷ McTaggart thinks that if we look at the relation between incremental increases in the quantity of valifying characteristics and the correlated value of each increase for each kind of value, then love will stand out as having a unique kind of relation between increases in valifying characteristics and the resulting overall value. He explains this idea as follows:

For, as was pointed out in the last chapter (p. 413), it does not follow that, because the good increased with the increase of each [valifying] quality, it increased proportionately to it. If, in the case of the other [valifying] qualities, the good [total value], after a certain point, should only increase asymptotically – each successive increment of the [valifying] quality yielding a smaller increment of good [total value] – then, in the case of those other [valifying] qualities, there would be a limit to the good [total value] it yielded. The good [total value] would never be complete, for another increment would always be possible. But these increments, continually diminishing as they would be, would never raise the [total] amount beyond the limit. And if, on the other hand, the goodness [total value] of love did not increase asymptotically, but directly in proportion to the love, then a certain [threshold] amount of love would be more good than any amount of the other qualities could be.⁶⁸

So, whereas all other types of value are subject to something like ‘diminishing marginal value,’ McTaggart suggests that the intrinsic value of love is not, and therefore this unique feature of love justifies granting it an importance that other values lack.

McTaggart suggests that there are similar differences that exist between different kinds of intrinsic evils. It seems plausible to him that there might be a certain point at which

increase in love, it is still implausible to claim that the intrinsic value of love (combined with this instrumental value) will always outweigh any other increase in some other good or any other decrease in some other evil.

⁶⁶ McTaggart, *NE2*, §851.

⁶⁷ McTaggart, *NE2*, §851.

⁶⁸ McTaggart, *NE2*, §852.

love will outweigh any possible amount of error or possibly even vice. He doubts, however, that this can ever be possible in the case of pain and suffering.⁶⁹ Also, McTaggart explicitly notes that “there is no reason to suppose that hatred has a unique position among evils, even if love has a supreme and unique position among goods.”⁷⁰ Broad suggests that McTaggart’s claims about intrinsic badness are best understood if one assumes that McTaggart believed that the value of painful states has a similar form of direct proportionality to the quantity of pain as proposed for love and if one assumes that the relation between the quantity of all other bad valifying characteristics and their value is asymptotic, just like all the ‘goods’ besides love.⁷¹

The chart below summarizes the kinds of relationships that exist between increases in the quantity of a valifying-characteristic and increases in the corresponding quantity of value for every kind of value (positive and negative):⁷²

⁶⁹ McTaggart, *NE2*, §853. See also McKerlie, “McTaggart on Love,” p. 76.

⁷⁰ McTaggart, *NE2*, §853.

⁷¹ Broad, *Examination of Mr. McTaggart’s Philosophy*, Vol. 2, Part 2, pp. 680-681.

⁷² For the sake of simplicity, I have assumed that the asymptotic function of the quantity and value of all non-love goods and all non-pain evils is the same. I have also tried to capture the idea that the disvalue of a certain amount of pain can outweigh the disvalue of similar amounts of love by making the ratio between the quantity of pain and its value be 2:1 as opposed to the ratio of 1:1 used for the quantity of love and its value. Love, if there is enough of it, could always outweigh certain finite amounts of pain (and vice versa), but representing their functions this way represents the intuition that ‘relieving pain’ is generally more important than promoting love, an implication which I think is consistent with McTaggart’s treatment of pain and will make his overall ethical theory much more consistent with common sense moral views.

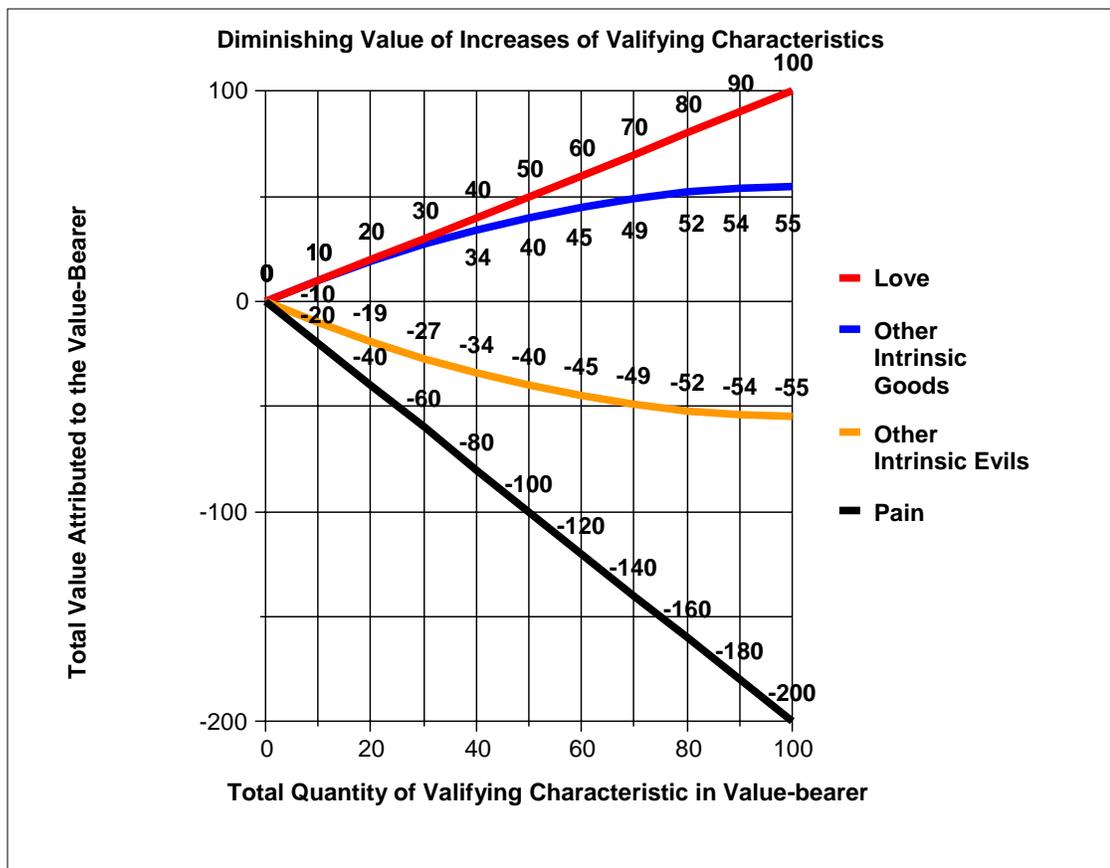


Figure 2: The relationship between the quantity of additional goods and the value of those additional goods as proposed by McTaggart in the *Nature of Existence* for each kind of intrinsic good.

If we assume that the blue line [the line second from the top: “Other Intrinsic Goods”] represents knowledge, this graph shows that as one adds more knowledge to existing knowledge, the increase in overall value will eventually approach a limit. Each increase to the total quantity of knowledge will still increase the total intrinsic value, but the amount of this increase diminishes as the total ‘pool’ of previous knowledge gets larger. So while the amount of new knowledge that can be produced in the universe is never ‘complete’ there is a limit to the total intrinsic value that can be assigned to any amount of knowledge, no matter how much knowledge is introduced.⁷³ The amount of value that results from each increase in

⁷³ This seems plausible if we first learned the core facts about the world and then moved on to learn about the details. At some point any addition to knowledge will be some piece of ‘trivia.’ McTaggart suggest that the value of additional knowledge diminishes like this in *Nature of Existence, Volume I*, §88: “It is true, no doubt, that the occurrence of these [derivative] qualities and relations becomes of less and less interest and importance as we go down the series. It may be very important that ‘*A* is good.’ But the additional fact that *A* has the quality of ‘being a term in a relationship of inherence between himself and goodness’ could scarcely be interesting to

the amount of love is directly proportionate to the quantity of love introduced at each point. This is represented by the red line [the top line: “Love”]. Given this relationship between the quantity of loving emotion and the resulting value it adds to the universe, there is no limit to the amount of value that can be produced by introducing more love. On McTaggart’s proposal, love is supreme because for any non-love good there is a certain quantity after which any addition of love to a life (or to the world) would have more value than any further addition of that non-love good. Presumably, this importance is grounded in the idea that at some ideal point – once a sufficient level of certain kinds of goods (and lack of evils) has been attained – promoting love and relieving suffering will always be the most efficient ways to make things better and are therefore entitled to special *prima facie* standing in moral deliberations (even in imperfect conditions where maximizing or reducing other kinds of goods may *actually* make things better overall). Another way to explain this idea would be to say that for some definite quantity of each good (except for love) the world reaches a value “saturation point” at which no further amount of that good will make the world significantly better.

McTaggart does not explain why the value of each increase of love to the universe does not diminish as love accumulates. Presumably, he must be assuming that if it is possible to bring about new love or deepen existing forms of love, then the mere fact that a certain amount of love has already been attained (by myself or others) does not necessarily ‘trivialize’ or diminish these additions. For instance, it would seem odd to say that the fact that a grandparent already loves her existing ten grandchildren means that her love for the eleventh is only trivial, or somehow diminishes in value. One might grow suspicious of the authenticity of someone’s love if they claimed to love too many people as ‘close friends,’ (given the actual physical, temporal, and psychological limitations of human beings there seems to be a limit on how many people an individual can authentically love in this way); nonetheless, if it is assumed that someone does actually have authentic love for a new friend, in addition to the many friends they already have, it would be odd to say that this new friendship would be trivial in the way that accumulating more information becomes trivial at a certain point.

any sane man, except as an example of a derivative quality. But a fact does not cease to be a fact because no sane man would be interested in it.”

The most daunting challenge facing this proposal is that in order to maintain that love has ‘supreme’ importance, McTaggart would have to show that *only* love can have this kind of proportional relationship between the amount of love and the value of love. McTaggart does not provide any reason for thinking that love is actually the only good to have this characteristic. Presumably, some might think that increases in virtue (virtuous desires, dispositions, or acts) do not diminish in value the more virtue there already is in the world. I am not sure how McTaggart could possibly defend the claim that love is the only good that has this feature and so I do not think this argument can establish that love is *supremely* important.

This, however, may not be a problem in relation to addressing the love-based objection. Those who advance the LBO are primarily concerned with ensuring that love is duly recognized as highly important; there is no reason to think that the LBO requires that love be recognized as *supremely* important.⁷⁴ If other goods, such as virtue, turn out to also have the same kind of proportional relationship as love does, then one could conclude the both virtue and love are among the ‘most important’ kinds of goods and including love among those values at the top is surely a good starting-point for assuring the love-based critic that love is being given its proper axiological due. Of course, the proponent of the LBO will also require that one’s ethical theory does not, by the very nature of its structure, prejudice against love. Even if one’s axiology acknowledges that love is important, one must also ensure that one’s criteria for moral rightness and one’s decision making procedures do not systematically discriminate against or prevent love (even if unintentionally). This aspect of the LBO is addressed in the next chapter.

4.7.2 1906 Correspondence with Hastings Rashdall

In an unpublished correspondence with Rashdall, McTaggart also proposed that love is the most important good. In *Theory of Good and Evil* (1907), Hastings Rashdall claimed that it is a “simple and ultimate deliverance of the moral conscience [rational capacity for moral-judgment]” that virtue is the “greatest of goods,” and the “most important element in the good [ideal objective well-being.]” and claims that it “must always be paramount in the ideal

⁷⁴ Insofar as proponents of the LBO, such as Stocker, take issue with ethical systems that exhibit “moral chauvinism” (i.e. that assume that virtue/doing what is right (moral value) *always* trumps other values) it would be inconsistent for them to arbitrarily grant other values absolute supremacy instead. For example, see: Stocker, “Friendship and Duty,” pp. 224-225.

man.”⁷⁵ This clearly conflicts with McTaggart’s claim that love ought to be recognized as the most important intrinsic good. If virtue is the most important good for Rashdall, then where does ‘love’ fall in his rankings? He argues that though virtue holds the highest rank among intrinsic goods, love may be closely linked to the actual exercise and attainment of virtue and is therefore very important and intimately linked to moral goodness. According to Rashdall, a virtuous person will be someone who is able to correctly identify what conscious states are best for a person to have (whether the person in question is oneself or others) and who reliably seeks to promote such intrinsically good states whenever doing so is in her power. For Rashdall, the best possible objective combination of intrinsically good states for a person is that person’s [objective] “Well-being.”⁷⁶ Rashdall concludes that ideal virtue is expressed in the form of “*ideal love* of mankind” or “*rational love* of persons (including in due measure self-love),” so long as “this love of persons be taken to include a desire of various goods for them [the beloved] in proportion to their [the goods] relative value, and in particular a predominant desire for their [the beloved’s] moral Well-being.”⁷⁷

McTaggart had been asked by Rashdall to review a draft of *Theory of Good and Evil*, and in 1906 McTaggart provided a series of detailed comments in response. In one comment, McTaggart challenged Rashdall’s claim that it is self-evident that virtue is the highest ranked intrinsic good as follows:

I admit that goodness of conduct [virtue] has worth. But the “highest absolute worth”? It seems to me, at any rate, clear that it would be better that a man should be rather less virtuous in heaven than rather more virtuous in hell (assuming that the universe was ruled by the Devil who damned the exceptionally virtuous.) Again, it seems to me clear that love is higher than

⁷⁵ Rashdall, *TGE1*, 107. Rashdall uses a number of different terms for ‘virtue’ that he appears to treat as synonymous in this passage: “morality,” “goodness of conduct,” “performance of duty,” and “sense of duty” I have opted to just use ‘virtue’ to cover all of these phrases for simplicity’s sake.

⁷⁶ Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil: A Treatise on Moral Philosophy*, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), pp. 57-60. “Happiness represents satisfaction with one’s existence as a whole with the past and the future as well as with the immediate present. Happiness certainly cannot be identified with pleasure, not even with the higher or more refined kinds of pleasure. It is possible to get an enormous amount of pleasure into one’s life of pleasures that are recognized as having a value and even a high value and yet to be on the whole unhappy through the presence of desires which are unsatisfied, dissatisfaction with the past, anxiety as to the future, unfulfilled aspirations, baffled hopes and the like. ... Perfect happiness is no doubt an ideal, but it is a different ideal from that of perfect Well-being. It is an ideal which, at least for people who have in their way higher desires and aspirations, is closely connected with the highest elements in life, but still it cannot safely be made the sole and direct object of pursuit by each individual for himself. Perfect Well-being would doubtless include perfect happiness, but it would include much more than we ordinarily mean by happiness. The idea of happiness can no more be dispensed with in any concrete account of the ideal life than the idea of pleasure, and can equally little be identified with that of value.” See also: *TGE1*, p. 123.

⁷⁷ Rashdall, *TGE1*, 128.

virtue (although perhaps, for that very reason, requiring virtue as a stepping stone.) It seems I can no more argue these points than you can. They are ultimate for me.⁷⁸

The challenge asks the reader to imagine alternative states of affairs and make comparative value judgements. The argument is not as complicated as that put forward in *Nature of Existence*; instead, it merely asks the reader to carefully consider one's own intuitive preferences when presented with a choice between two different goods. McTaggart thinks that it is possible to imagine a world having slightly less virtue for the sake of more happiness or more love (perhaps this is a world where people break promises in order to attend to the person she loves) that is, on the whole, more intrinsically valuable than a more 'virtuous' world having less happiness or love in it (perhaps a world where all promises are kept but the number/intensity of loving relations between people drops as a result). McTaggart and Rashdall both agree that virtue and love are core components of well-being (in Rashdall's sense of the term) and both agree that at some point some quantity of one good would outweigh the value of the other good; nonetheless, they disagree on the ranking and relation between the two. For Rashdall, virtue is the highest ranked good. Love will be required to attain and express the most perfect form of well-being, but for Rashdall, virtue is the most important good a person ought to desire. For McTaggart, love is the highest ranked good. Virtue may be required in order to attain and express love in its most perfect form, but love is the most important good. In this regard it does seem that each philosopher has reached a point where the reader must assess the 'self-evidence' of each philosopher's claims and see how those claims fit with the rest of their intuitions. If one cannot decide with certainty between the two, it seems to me that one might also take a kind of middle ground and recognize the weaker claim that (at the very least) love and virtue are two of the most important intrinsic goods while remaining agnostic about whether one is 'more important' than the other.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ McTaggart. "Comments on Rashdall's Theory of Good and Evil." Letter: April 28, 1905. Pg. 81. This comment was made available to me by my supervisor, Anthony Skelton, who had access to the original comments through "Papers of Hastings Rashdall," pp. 79-127, at the Special Collections at Bodleian Library, Oxford University Library Services.

⁷⁹ Alternatively, one could question the plausibility that some intrinsic goods are more important than others. For instance, one might acknowledge the legitimacy of a plurality of intrinsic goods (and evils) but deny that there is any possible ranking of such values independent of considerations of actual quantity. Since both Rashdall and McTaggart both assume that such rankings are at least *prima facie* plausible, I do not pursue this option here. I am grateful to Anthony Skelton for pointing this out to me.

4.7.3 *Other Considerations in Favour of Ranking Love among the Most Important Intrinsic Goods*

In addition to describing love as a pleasant emotion (and so as a hedonistic good as he does in the early works), McTaggart sometimes seems to describe love as a perfectionist intrinsic good. As an intrinsically good capacity, the fullest development and exercise of each person's capacity for love ought to be promoted as much as possible (in a way that is compatible with the fullest development and exercise of other intrinsically good capacities). Love, however, is not a purely isolated or private phenomenon: through loving we establish a certain kind of intimate relationship, unity, and bond between individuals and so love produces a certain kind of society between individual persons. Mander interprets McTaggart as describing love as the capacity for establishing a unique *subject-subject* approach to others as opposed to the *subject-object* approach that is established through other attitudes of knowing, willing, or emotion.⁸⁰ The nature of this relationship is such that it is highly conducive to the highest appreciation and development of intrinsically good capacities in persons (both the lover and the beloved, and possibly those who witness their love). For example, McTaggart states

We have now determined the nature of perfected knowledge and volition, as far as the formal conditions of perfection will allow us to go. What is the concrete and material content of such a life as this? I believe it means one thing, and one thing only – love. ... And I do mean passionate, all-absorbing, all-consuming love. ... [In a perfectly conceived community of persons] [w]e should find ourselves in a world composed of nothing but individuals like ourselves [perfected persons]. With these individuals we should have been brought into the closest of all relations, we should see them, each of them, to be rational and righteous. And we should know that in and through these individuals our own highest aims and ends were realised. What else does it come to? To know another person thoroughly, to know that he conforms to my highest standards, to feel that through him the end of my own life is realised – is this anything but love?⁸¹

And later,

It is clear that no emotion can be the ultimate form of spirit, unless it regards all objects as individual spirits. For the dialectic shows us that, till we regard them thus, we do not regard them rightly. And the dialectic shows us, also, that we do not regard them rightly till we know them to be in complete harmony with ourselves, and with one another. To regard all that we find round us as persons, to feel that their existence is completely rational, and that through it our own nature is realised, to experience unalloyed pleasure in

⁸⁰ Mander, "McTaggart on Love," pp. 144-146.

⁸¹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §271.

our relations to them this is a description to which only one emotion answers.⁸²

Love both brings about perfection in the lover and at the same time also relates the lover towards the beloved in a way that recognizes the beloved's capacity for (and/or achievement of) her own intrinsically valuable perfection. In other words, love is one of the most important ways through which persons can relate to each other as ends-in-themselves. Love, therefore, will be an important and core element for forming a perfect community of perfect persons.⁸³ That love produces a relationship allowing for the instantiation (in persons) of the intrinsic good of love, and that it is conducive to the more general perfection of persons on the whole gives it a uniquely important kind of instrumental value in addition to its uniquely important intrinsic value. In summary, love is essential to both the perfection of individuals and the perfection of society.

The fact that the promotion of loving emotions in individuals (and the loving relationships through which they are expressed) is both compatible with the perfection of others and may actually contribute positively towards the improvement of intrinsically good capacities in others, means that love has features that would qualify it as a kind of "common good" as understood by Perfectionists like T. H. Green. The exact meaning of the common good in Green (and his followers) is highly disputed among interpreters of his work. Nonetheless, in general it seems that the supreme good, or ultimate aim, of ethics can be understood as the attainment of certain goods that are (among other things) non-exclusive/non-competitive and social/common.⁸⁴ Goods are non-exclusive/non-competitive when the attainment of that good by one person does not necessarily deprive another person of equal (or even greater) opportunities to attain the same good. These types of good are

⁸² McTaggart, *SHC*, §283.

⁸³ McTaggart, "Individualism of Value," p.443. While love forms this kind of relationship, it is important to note that McTaggart insists that the value of love does not inhere in the *relationship* existing between two people, but in *the person* in whom the capacity for love is active and in *the person* who is loved. He says: "But the [loving] relation is not good, though both of the terms are good because they have this relation. And though there is only one relation, there are two goods. It is good that A should love [B]. It is good that B should be loved [by A]. And these goods are two and not one, though they are causally connected." That love produces a relationship that allows for the instantiation of the intrinsic good of love in individuals, and that it is conducive to the more general perfection of persons on the whole gives it a uniquely important kind of instrumental value in addition to its uniquely important intrinsic value.

⁸⁴ Thomas, Geoffrey. *The Moral Philosophy of T. H. Green*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980. Pp. 249-255; Brink, David O., "Self-Realization and the Common Good," in *T. H. Green: Ethics, Metaphysics, and Political Philosophy*, Ed. Maria Dimova-Cookson and W. J. Mander. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. Pp. 17-46.

therefore ‘compossible.’⁸⁵ Goods are social/common if the attainment of that good by one person is intimately linked to the good of at least some other persons and so cannot be pursued without some direct concern for the good of another.⁸⁶ According to the perfectionist systems, any goods lacking these qualities cannot be counted among the most important intrinsic goods that comprise the ultimate aim of all ethical actions. Love, as described by McTaggart, is both compossible with the promotion of love (and other important intrinsic goods) in others and by its essence links the good of the lover directly with the good of the beloved. Therefore, it could be argued on these grounds that love qualifies as one of the most important intrinsic goods because it has the features Green and other Perfectionists identified as indices of the most important kinds of goods (as opposed to other goods which are more exclusive/competitive and less social).

In my opinion, this final option is the most plausible way to defend the idea that love is one of the most important goods we ought to pursue as part of a good and moral life based on McTaggart’s conception of love, his value theory, and his Ideal Utilitarian moral framework. Emphasizing the non-competitive and social aspects of love can help capture the intuition that increases in love do not seem to diminish in value the way that some other goods might. I think that it also helps explain why love and virtue seem so intimately connected, as is evidenced in the aforementioned disagreement between Rashdall and McTaggart over which good (love or virtue) was ‘supreme.’ It is clear that both philosophers wanted to claim that love and virtue were related; where they seemed to differ was in their emphasis as to which should ultimately be preferred over the other if forced to choose. Thinking of love as one of the ways through which persons are able to mutually engage each other as ends-in-themselves and through which each can establish stable motivations to promote the perfection of oneself and the other (for the sake of the other) intimately links love and morality, even if conflicts between them are still possible. I think that the most plausible conclusion is that love and virtue are both highly important goods that are linked in a very intimate way. Any plausible moral philosophy will have to ensure that both values are given due priority and consideration, and it will have to ensure that there is a minimal amount of conflict between the two goods in its dictates. I will try to make the case in the

⁸⁵ Thomas, *The Moral Philosophy of T. H. Green*, pp. 253-255.

⁸⁶ Brink, “Self-Realization and the Common Good,” pp. 38-39.

next chapter that McTaggart's Ideal Utilitarianism (with some supplementation) does allow him to do this in the way required to overcome the LBO.

So, though McTaggart cannot *prove* that love is the most important and highest ranked good, he does identify a number of distinctive features of love that distinguish it (positively) from other goods. It seems to me that the fact that love and loving relations provide a way to value individual persons in their uniqueness; provides a way to value persons as intrinsically important; springs forth from, maintains, and strengthens an intimate bond between individuals; provides motives and reasons to promote the good of those we love; exercises a human capacity to respond to what is good with an intense and deeply felt pro-attitude; and provides us with one of the most intrinsically satisfying, pleasant, and positive emotional experiences possible, are all reasons to at least recognize love as one of the most important intrinsic goods alongside happiness, autonomy, virtue, and achievement.

4.8 Summary of Chapter Four

In conclusion, it is clear that McTaggart proposed the kind of value pluralism required for overcoming the LBO. McTaggart clearly recognizes love as one of the most important intrinsic goods (even though, perhaps, his more ambitious claim that love is the 'supreme' good is untenable). Since the proponents of the LBO are primarily concerned with ensuring that love is granted proper weight and importance in axiological and moral considerations, there would be no grounds for objecting to McTaggart's view in this regard. I have also suggested that there is reason to think that McTaggart recognizes the intrinsic value of persons (and if he did not actually adopt this view, that his work as a whole strongly points in this direction). The discussion of McTaggart's philosophy of love in Chapters One and Two also showed that through love we come to value the beloved person for their own sake and that through love the beloved is recognized as having an intrinsic importance comparable to that each of us assigns to ourselves. Again, since proponents of the LBO are concerned to prevent the "dehumanization" of the beloved by reducing them to a *mere bearer* of value (having no intrinsic value of its own) or a *mere means* to some other good, there should be no grounds for criticizing McTaggart in these regards. Finally, McTaggart explicitly recognizes that while both love and virtue are components of a good and moral life, he also recognizes that it is possible that the value of love can outweigh the value of virtue (i.e., what one ought to desire from the impartial perspective of morality). In such

cases, love and morality genuinely conflict and yet the goodness of love is not thereby threatened. Again, proponents of the LBO want to allow for reasons of love to potentially outweigh certain moral demands and they also want to allow the possibility of some form of conflict between virtue and love. So, finally, in these regards it seems there are no grounds for objecting to McTaggart's moral philosophy either.

Nonetheless, having a moral philosophy based upon value pluralism is only a necessary condition for overcoming the LBO; on its own it is not sufficient. It remains to be shown that there is no reason to think that genuinely following McTaggart's version of Ideal Utilitarianism in living one's life will systematically prejudice against the goods of love and so reliably reduce or prevent occurrences of love in one's own life or the lives of others. The next chapter will look at how a version of McTaggart's Ideal Utilitarianism, supplemented with insights from Rashdall's own Ideal Utilitarian theory, has the remaining three features required to overcome the LBO.

5 Sophisticated Ideal Utilitarianism and Overcoming the Love-Based Objection

The last chapter argued that there is good reason to interpret McTaggart's axiological theory as assigning love, loving relationships, and the person loved the kind of intrinsic value that is required to accommodate our intuitions about the importance of love in living a good and moral life. It therefore has the first feature required for overcoming the love-based objection (LBO) to consequentialism:

Value Pluralism: any plausible version of consequentialism must recognize a plurality of intrinsic goods and in particular it must recognize that love, loving relationships, and the person loved are intrinsically valuable.

Nonetheless, as the proponents of the love-based objection have observed, we think that acting *for the sake of* the beloved and acting *out of direct concern for* the beloved are deeply important parts of living a good life and, so, such reasons and motives ought to be integrated harmoniously with one's moral motives and reasons. These critics, however, also noted that it is not possible to integrate the motives and reasons of love with the motives and reasons of consequentialist morality ('for the sake of doing what is right/best' and 'out of concern for doing what is right/best') at the same level and in the same actions. Defenders of consequentialism have suggested that such problems can be resolved through a recognition of the distinction between the 'criterion of rightness' and the 'decision-making procedures' and by adopting the moral psychology outlined in theories such as Peter Railton's account of 'sophisticated consequentialism.' Is McTaggart able to distinguish between a criterion of rightness and a decision-making procedure? And is his system consistent with the moral psychology outlined in sophisticated consequentialism? Ultimately, is McTaggart able to overcome the LBO in the way that contemporary philosophers have suggested?

In this chapter I will argue that McTaggart's moral philosophy (supplemented at times with Rashdall's account of ideal utilitarianism) is a form of sophisticated consequentialism and is therefore able to overcome many of the love-based objections. In the first section, I argue that McTaggart does make the required distinctions, and that if his theory is supplemented by observations made by Rashdall, one can account for how one can embody consequentialist aims and reasons in the agent's overall dispositional structure while also recognizing that loving dispositions are reliable optimizing decision-making procedures.

In the last section I will bring together the various conclusions from the previous chapters of this dissertation and argue that a version of sophisticated Ideal Utilitarianism based upon McTaggart's moral philosophy is able to overcome the LBO to consequentialism in the way proposed by contemporary philosophers such as Peter Railton and Elinor Mason.

5.1 McTaggart's Argument for a Multi-Leveled (Indirect) Version of Ideal Utilitarianism: A Summary and Assessment

According to Ideal Utilitarianism, the criterion of rightness states that an action is right insofar as it contributes to the best possible state of affairs (maximizes net aggregate good). As we have seen, according to McTaggart's value theory, the best conceivable state of affairs (the "supreme good") will include a plurality of goods and (according to the early works) these goods can be divided into two kinds: hedonistic goods and perfectionist goods. However, as McTaggart (and many others) observed, identifying intrinsic values and providing a criterion of rightness is not sufficient for constructing an adequate ethical theory; one must also provide a criterion that will allow us to guide our conduct or behaviour:

It does not follow, however, that, because we have determined the supreme good, we have therefore determined the criterion of morality. They can be identical, no doubt, but they need not be so. The object of a criterion is merely practical – to guide our actions towards a good.¹

The main reason that the criterion of goodness is not necessarily identical to the criterion of moral rightness is that the criterion of rightness is limited by considerations of what human agents can actually (at least partially) cause. Axiological systems seek to identify and systematize (as much as possible) all possible kinds of intrinsic value and all possible kinds of value-bearers. They therefore aim at providing criteria for identifying valid forms of axiological judgements. McTaggart notes that value judgements can be made about any conceivable state of affairs. He states that "[t]he idea of the good comes from that paradoxical power which is possessed by every conscious member of the universe – the power to judge and condemn part or all of that very system of reality of which he himself is a part."² Many moral philosophers during McTaggart's time thought that value judgements that 'x is good' are always also correlated (somehow) with normative judgements that 'x ought to exist.' Rashdall described both kinds of judgments as 'correlative' or mutually

¹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §100.

² McTaggart. *SHC*, §97.

implying concepts, which would suggest that they are equally fundamental³ and Moore seems to suggest something similar at one point.⁴ Sorley suggests that, “[w]hen we predicate worth or value we assert or imply that the object is *worth being* or *ought to be*.”⁵ Yet, regardless of the exact nature of the necessary relationship, it is clear that for these philosophers value judgements always involve normativity in some sense: axiology is a normative discipline and not merely a descriptive science. Both judgements that “x is good” and that “x ought to exist” cannot be derived from any claim about what ‘is.’ Also, whether a state of affairs is actual, possible, necessary, contingent, near, far, past, present, or future, we can judge that it is (overall) good/bad in itself or better/worse than some other state of affairs and so judge that it ought/ought not exist. Such judgements can be made regardless of whether or not any agency is involved in bringing about, sustaining, preventing, or destroying any state of affairs. For example, even if we knew for certain that it was the nature of the currently existing universe to produce significantly more evil than good for every being that ever lives in it, we could judge that this is evil (in itself) and worse than other conceivable worlds. This is true even if the universe was merely the result of purely impersonal natural forces (not created by any agency) and even if it was clear that the nature of the universe could not actually be otherwise than it is.⁶

However, when one moves from merely axiological judgements to ethical judgements about what one ought to *do* McTaggart observes that:

We must remember, also, that for a satisfactory criterion of morality we do not require a sure test of all good, but only a sure test of such good as can possibly be secured by our voluntary efforts to secure it. If we find a criterion which will tell us this, it will be unnecessary to reject it because it is not also a

³ Rashdall, *TGE1*, 138; Rashdall, *Ethics* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1913), pp. 14: “For both notions [‘right’ and ‘good’] really involve the fundamental conception of an ‘ought.’ If we accept this view, we shall say that the notion of good is the notion of something which ought to be or which possesses intrinsic value the notion ‘right’ will then imply a voluntary act which ought to be done as a means to this ultimate good, whatever that may be. The two terms will be correlative terms which mutually imply one another (just as the convex implies the concave, or as the term ‘father’ is only intelligible if we know the meaning of ‘son’): right acts will then mean acts which are means to the good; the good will mean an end which ought to be realized, and which every right voluntary action tends to realize.”

⁴ Moore, *PE*, §13.2, p. 68. “Whenever he thinks of ‘intrinsic value,’ or ‘intrinsic worth,’ or says that a thing ‘ought to exist,’ he has before his mind the unique object – the unique property of things – which I mean by good.”

⁵ W. R. Sorley, *Moral Value and the Idea of God: Gifford Lectures 1914 and 1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), p. 77.

⁶ McTaggart, *SHC*, §97.

satisfactory test of some other element of good, which we may enjoy when we get it, but cannot get by our own action.⁷

And later on, that

the object of a moral criterion is strictly practical. Its object is to guide our action. It follows from this that it is comparatively unimportant if it fails to indicate which of two events would be the better in those cases in which our action cannot bring about or hinder either alternative. It is no doubt convenient to know what would be gain and what would be loss, but the real need to know arises only when our knowledge can help us to bring about the gain or avoid the loss.⁸

A unique criterion is provided by ethics and it aids in identifying what an agent *ought to have done*. The ‘ethical ought’ is limited to the actual capability of an actual agent in actual circumstances to produce the results in question (‘ought implies can’). This distinguishes the ethical level from the axiological level since, as was just explained above, the ‘axiological ought’ does not imply this sort of ‘can.’ In his recent book *British Ethical Theorists from Ewing to Sidgwick*, Hurka notes a similar distinction in Sidgwick’s moral philosophy.⁹ What I am calling the “axiological ought” is described by Hurka as the “wider sense of ought” and what I am calling the “ethical ought” is described by him as the “narrower sense” of ought. Hurka describes this distinction in terms of the applicability of the “ought implies can” restriction: the wider sense (which refers to a state of affair’s correspondence to an “ideal”) is not subject to this restriction, but the narrower sense is subject to it since this sense must “presuppose voluntariness.” Hurka observes that for the wider sense of ‘ought’ it is difficult to distinguish any meaningful difference between the judgements “I ought to x” and “x is desirable/good.”¹⁰ Perhaps the best way to understand how the axiological criterion is normative (the criterion of goodness) is to describe its dictates, as Sidgwick did, in terms of “desire.” The criterion of goodness tells us what persons “ought (ideally) to desire”: “ideally” because its judgments are made independent of any person’s actual capability to choose the object of desire or to choose to have the desire at all. The ethical criterion (criterion of moral rightness), on the other hand, tells us what persons “ought (morally) to do” and such

⁷ McTaggart, *SHC*, §100. (My emphasis).

⁸ McTaggart, *SHC*, §132, p. 125. (My emphasis.)

⁹ Hurka, *British Ethical Theorists from Sidgwick to Ewing*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 44-45.

¹⁰ Hurka recommends, therefore, that the use of the term ‘ought’ in the wider sense be dropped in order to preserve the important distinction between “normative concepts that do and do not presuppose voluntariness.” (*British Ethical Theorists*, p 45.) I agree with Hurka’s reasons for restricting the term in this way in contemporary usage. However, insofar as the ‘wider sense’ was used by McTaggart and his contemporaries I am using it here.

judgements depend in an essential way upon what the person subject to the ‘ought’ is actually capable of doing in the situation.

A third kind of criteria appears to be at work in the fourth chapter of *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*. I will call it the “criterion of choiceworthiness.” It is used to help identify which act-option we ought, morally, to choose under highly imperfect conditions of actual situations of choice. Unlike evaluations of objective rightness – which can be carried out by anyone who can understand the various goods at stake and compare them and which can be postponed until sufficient information is forthcoming – a decision must ultimately be made solely by the decision-maker¹¹ and cannot be postponed until better information is available (as many philosophers have noted, postponing a decision is choosing the act-option of ‘postponement’). Furthermore, human decisions are more limited by our highly imperfect capacities for predicting future results of our decisions and their values than is the case with making judgements about moral rightness. Actual moral judgements about objective rightness are only really possible after the act has been done and the resultant state of affairs has been sufficiently realized (and even in these cases it is still difficult). In situations of choice, one could attempt hypothetical forward-looking moral judgements about the objective moral rightness of various potential outcomes, but this process would take a fair amount of imagination and calculation of probabilities (formal or informal) and so it would be very demanding on the attention and time of the evaluator – resources that are usually much more limited under actual conditions of moral choice. So, unlike assessments of the moral rightness/wrongness of actions, which can be done with the benefit of hindsight, decisions that will impact the future can only be made in the highly uncertain conditions of the present moment.

These special epistemic limitations therefore require a criterion of choiceworthiness that will necessarily have to take into account more limitations than the criterion of rightness and so (by the same reasoning used in regards to the goods involved in the criterion of rightness as opposed to the criterion of goodness) it cannot be assumed that the same intrinsic goods will be used in both of them. Moral agents in situations of moral choice require one of two things: either 1) they need a criterion that will allow them to pick out the option which reliably (though perhaps not infallibly) tends to be objectively right, or 2) they

¹¹ Clearly, the decision-maker can seek advice in some cases, but it is ultimately up to the decision-maker whether they will do what is advised or not. If one merely defers to an authority (which is not seeking advice, but seeking orders) then one still ultimately decides to single out an act-option this way.

need a procedure which will allow them to immediately/habitually respond to circumstances in such a way that they reliably (though perhaps not infallibly) tend to do the act that is objectively right. The criterion of choiceworthiness, or the decision-making procedure, will only incorporate those goods that will reliably guide agents to objectively right actions. McTaggart only considers the first option; it is not clear, however, that awareness of, or deliberation about, every kind of good will reliably guide agents to the objectively right action. Thinking about, or responding to, certain kinds of goods may – as a matter of fact given human nature – tend to reliably impede objectively right action. In other cases, it might be unreasonable to expect that we could have enough information or awareness of certain types of goods or their effects on future states of affairs in moments of decision to make meaningful comparisons or evaluations. An ethicist, therefore, must justify the kind of goods that they include in their criterion of choiceworthiness by showing that considerations about the kind of good will not prevent the decision-maker from reliably selecting the objectively morally right act from among the various choice-options. I will consider the justification of the kind of goods McTaggart includes in his criterion of rightness in *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* in the next section. For now it is important to note that no matter what goods turn out to be appropriate for inclusion in the criterion of choiceworthiness, one cannot assume that they will necessarily be the same goods contained under the other criteria because different epistemic limitations are at play.

It is worth noting that McTaggart's original presentation of this insight is more confusing than it needs to be because McTaggart seems to use the term "moral criterion" ambiguously to refer to either the criterion of rightness or the criterion of choiceworthiness. Without careful consideration of McTaggart's use of the term "criterion" throughout the fourth chapter of *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (considerations which I have tried to provide through the interpretative work here), it may not be obvious that McTaggart is actually talking about three different criteria. He does not explicitly outline the distinction between the criterion of rightness and criterion of choiceworthiness; however, he assumes it throughout his argument.¹² McTaggart states that his argument assumes that the agent is already motivated to do what is 'right' and so presumably already has a (Ideal Utilitarian) conception of the criterion of rightness in mind. The problem he is seeking to address arises

¹² McTaggart only explicitly identifies the first and third of the three levels I describe here (though he only introduces the levels as he goes along throughout the chapter). The second level is implied by McTaggart as will be explained below.

when an agent desires to do the right thing (i.e., the action that will contribute to the best possible state of affairs) but is forced to choose between options where it is not immediately obvious which option will lead to the objectively right action.¹³ The problem does not arise due to a lack of good intentions in the agent, or even a lack of understanding about what is right. What is causing the problem is that under the existing conditions it is not obvious to the decision-maker which of the options is perfect or right. Each option seems to have some features that indicate it might be the right option, and each has some features that indicate it might not be the right option. So what is needed is some criterion, method, or habitual response that will reliably result in the agent selecting what they ultimately seek – the objectively right option – in situations of choice that, by their very essence, involve a unique kind of uncertainty. Given that the distinction between the criterion of rightness and the criterion of choiceworthiness is assumed throughout the chapter, and since he is clearly seeking to identify a criterion of moral choiceworthiness and not a criterion of rightness, I have introduced these terms to help differentiate the various kinds of ‘moral criterion’ at issue.

In summary, these observations about the different sorts of limitations and criteria involved in various aspects of morality result in McTaggart describing a multi-level form of consequentialism. McTaggart identifies three distinct normative levels that can be present in Ideal Utilitarian systems: the axiological, the ethical, and the deliberative. Each level introduces its own criterion: the criteria of goodness (badness), the criterion of moral rightness (wrongness), and the criterion of moral choiceworthiness. Each level is distinguished from the others by considerations of the imperfect epistemic and volitional capacities of actually existing moral agents. While the Ideal Utilitarian criterion of rightness plays an overarching normative role in ethics, there are other criteria besides the criterion of rightness to which an agent might refer such as the criterion of choiceworthiness. Insofar as it is not necessary that an agent refer directly to the criterion of rightness, but may refer directly to some criterion derived from it instead (such as the criterion of choiceworthiness), McTaggart’s version of consequentialism is a form of indirect consequentialism.

¹³ “The practical use of ethics – and it is this we are considering – can only occur, then, *when a man has resolved to act in conformity with duty, and is not certain **what course** duty prescribes*. Two courses of action may each be in itself morally desirable, and may be incompatible, so that we are in doubt which to pursue.” (McTaggart, SHC, §105. Emphasis is mine.)

5.2 *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology: The Hedonic Criterion of Choiceworthiness and its Justification*

Since, as McTaggart observes, one cannot merely assume that the goods appealed to in the criterion of rightness will also be included in the correct criterion of moral choiceworthiness, he will have to provide an argument for the goods that should be included in the criterion of choiceworthiness. In *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, he argues that even though perfectionist goods and hedonistic goods must both be included in an Ideal Utilitarian criterion of moral rightness, there are good practical reasons for excluding perfectionist goods from the criterion of choiceworthiness. McTaggart's argument is best understood as proceeding in two stages, with the first stage divided into two parts. In the first stage, he assesses each kind of good to see if it qualifies as a candidate for inclusion in the criterion of choiceworthiness. Three options are considered: 1) a combination of perfectionist and hedonistic goods (as is the case in the Ideal Utilitarian criterion of rightness); 2) solely perfectionist goods; and, 3) solely hedonistic goods. To qualify, a particular kind of value must allow us – under imperfect conditions – to sort and rank imperfect options in terms of that particular kind of value. McTaggart argues that perfectionist goods are not eligible but hedonistic goods are. Since perfectionist goods are ruled out, this means it also cannot be the case that both kinds of goods can be included in the criterion of choiceworthiness. So, in the first part of the argument McTaggart rules out options 1) and 2). By the process of elimination, this leaves hedonistic goods alone as possible candidates. In the second stage of the argument, McTaggart attempts to show that in addition to being an eligible candidate for a criterion of rightness, hedonistic values provide us with a “correct” criterion of rightness. In order for a criterion of choiceworthiness to be “correct” it must reliably (though not infallibly) direct the agent towards the objectively morally right option.

McTaggart first considers perfectionist values to see if they are eligible to be included in the criterion of choiceworthiness.¹⁴ He ultimately concludes that these kinds of values are ineligible as criterion for guiding deliberation and action because our conceptualizations of the various goods or ideals included in this category of value are too indeterminate to allow us to identify any single act-option as better than another. Each perfectionist good is a representation of a fully developed and fully exercised capacity. Such ‘ideals’ are rarely, if

¹⁴ McTaggart, *SHC*, §§103-110.

ever, fully realized in actual experience. This has two relevant implications. First, 'ideals' are always represented either as goals to be attained, or as norms according to which various options can be assessed according to degree to which each option more or less corresponds to the norm. Secondly, as noted in Chapter Four, our conceptions of 'ideals' are usually only vague representations of the direction in which improvement lies and not a fully worked-out, clear, and distinct idea of what the perfect state is actually like. Both of these aspects of perfectionist goods cause problems when we attempt to compare and distinguish act-options on the basis of these values.

In regards to the first implication, problems arise from the fact that in most (or all) cases the probability of any particular action of any particular individual fully realizing the ideal in the foreseeable future are extremely low. At best, any particular action will be just one of many events in a very long series of events that eventually lead to the full realization of ideals (if they are ever fully realized at all). This means that for most act-options available to an agent, the probability that any single option will ultimately lead to the full realization of any ideal or combination of ideals is so low as to make all options practically equal on these grounds. Such standards do not provide us a way to identify any options as better than others nor any option as the best. McTaggart therefore rejects using perfectionist goods as the goals according to which the instrumental value of each option is determined and compared.

McTaggart also considers the possibility of using perfectionist ideals not as goals to be attained, but rather as patterns or standards according to which each act-option is compared. The agent would judge to what degree each act-option approached/fell-short of the relevant set of ideals. Each option could then be assigned a certain degree of imperfection and this would allow one to identify some option as 'the least imperfect' and so provide moral grounds for choosing to do that action over the others. This bypasses the problem introduced by the fact that the full realization of ideals is likely only to occur as a result of a complex, dynamic, and long series of events in the very distant future. If each agent always attempts to select the currently least imperfect option in each case, then it seems plausible that doing so would be one of the best ways to ensure that things are always improving as much as possible (or at least not getting worse). McTaggart notes, however, that a serious problem still remains. He suggests that if we assume that we are able to compare each act-option to the ideal standards contained under perfectionist values, each

act-option will be perfect in some sense and imperfect in another (since presumably no act-option completely instantiates all of the ideals). One might be able to rank act-options according to how imperfectly each instantiates one particular ideal, but it seems very unlikely that it would ever be the case that *only* one ideal was at stake for any decision. The more plausible scenario is that each act-option will imperfectly instantiate a number of different perfectionist ideals each to a different degree. So while one act-option may be ranked highest in terms of the way it contributes to the overall amount of virtue in the world, it might be ranked lowest in terms of overall amount of autonomy that it allows. An alternative act-option available to the same agent in the same circumstances might be the highest in terms of the degree to which it contributes to the instantiation of autonomy in the world, but the lowest in terms of virtue. (Perhaps one could choose to make people do what is right through terror and coercion or one could instead choose to try to convince people to do what is right.) McTaggart suggests that the very kind of cases that will require the most deliberation will be those cases in which each option, though imperfect, seems to be the least imperfect in some regards (otherwise we would presumably reject it immediately in favour of some other option). His concern is that it is too easy to engage in sophistical or rhetorical reasoning where each 'side' of the deliberation only focuses on the particular perfection involved in each option and ignores the fact that each is also imperfect (or alternatively each only criticizes the other in terms of its imperfection). Even if such sophistical reasoning is avoided, McTaggart still seems to think that in many cases the degree to which each option is imperfect *overall* in terms of *all* ideals will be practically identical and will not allow one sufficient grounds to explain why one act-option (though least imperfect in some regards) is clearly better than the other available act-options.

Finally, McTaggart focuses on the Perfectionists' own admission that our representation of any ideal (and so also our representation of the supreme good) is indeterminate. As noted above, though we often have a sense of the direction of improvement, in many cases we do not have a fully worked-out positive account of what the full realization of a particular capacity (or group of capacities) would be like. We do not have experience of absolute perfection (either of individuals or a society which would foster such individuals) and so it is difficult to imagine, conceive, or describe what exactly an ideal state would be like. This adds further doubt to our ability to use perfectionist ideals in either of the ways discussed above (as goals or as standards). If our representations of ideals are

vague, it will be very difficult to determine – to the degree required to meaningfully compare act-options – how imperfect any particular option actually is. While we might be able to rule out some options which clearly move ‘in the wrong direction,’ if we are choosing between act-options which all seem to point roughly ‘in the same way,’ how will we know which way most resembles the ideal if we only have a rough sketch of this ideal in the first place? All of these considerations lead McTaggart to conclude that perfectionist goods cannot be candidates for criteria of choiceworthiness. Perfectionist ideals do not allow us to compare and rank act-options in a way that would provide clear and decisive reasons for choosing to do one act-options over others on moral grounds.

McTaggart considers hedonistic values next.¹⁵ McTaggart concludes that our conceptions of ‘pleasure’ and ‘pain’ are determinate enough for us to compare and rank different act-options. His arguments in support of this conclusion are primarily based upon appeals to introspection.¹⁶ McTaggart observes that everyone has experiences of pleasure and pain (to some degree) and we are able to make estimates about various quantities (which are a function of durations and intensities) with a fair amount of ease through our sympathetic and imaginative capacities (at least relative to the amount of effort required for the estimation and comparison of ideally perfected and exercised capacities). This is in stark contrast to our vague conceptions of perfectionist ideals. McTaggart also points out that we actually *do* compare and rank both past experiences and act-options according to their overall pleasantness or painfulness all of the time. Furthermore, such comparisons appear to be quite meaningful. McTaggart grants that the degree of precision involved in hedonic comparisons and rankings is not very high, but nonetheless we are able identify some options as clearly better or worse than others. He also notes that in those cases where we cannot discern any difference in the overall hedonic value of two act-options, it is plausible that any actual difference (if one does exist) will not be morally significant.¹⁷ While the lack of precision in the measurement of hedonic values might introduce some indeterminacy, McTaggart argues that this is a different *kind* of indeterminateness. He states that in cases of indeterminacies involved in hedonistic comparisons and rankings:

[t]he impossibility of decision arises, then, not from the facts of the case, but from our ignorance about them. ... There is only one difference between the

¹⁵ McTaggart, *SHC*, §§111-123.

¹⁶ McTaggart, *SHC*, §116.

¹⁷ McTaggart, *SHC*, §§112,123.

difficulties I have described above as arising on my theory and these others which exist on any theory. The latter [the difficulties related to hedonic goods] are merely quantitative. They arise from the complexity, or the equality, of data whose nature is not incompatible with a reasoned choice, and which admit of such choice when the instance is simpler or less evenly balanced.¹⁸

The vagueness involved in comparisons of perfectionist goods was rooted in our ignorance about the ideals (the standards or goals) themselves and not merely in our inability to precisely measure act-options according to them. Here, if doubt or disagreement arises, it will be focused on the tools and procedures used to apply the standards (pleasure and pain) and not on the particular understanding of the standards themselves. McTaggart argues that any plausible criterion will result in cases where it will not be possible to rank one option above another. The way that such cases arise for the hedonic criterion is importantly different for McTaggart, and presumably much less likely to occur given our proficiency at carrying out such comparisons constantly in everyday experience.

McTaggart concludes that hedonic values are therefore a candidate for a criterion of moral choiceworthiness since it is possible to compare and rank act-options fairly often, with relative ease, and presumably with an adequate degree of accuracy and competency. What McTaggart must show next is that there is the right kind of connection between act-options that are the best on hedonic grounds and act-options that are objectively morally right according to the criterion of rightness. If hedonic values are not the most¹⁹ reliable (though not necessarily infallible) *index* of right action, then they will not be a ‘correct’ criterion.

5.2.1 Pleasure is the Correct Criterion for Moral Deliberation

In the second part of “The Supreme Good and the Moral Criterion,” McTaggart argues that the hedonic criterion is a “correct” criterion for choiceworthiness.²⁰ To do this, he says that we must show that the hedonic criterion will *reliably* (though not infallibly) select that option which is objectively right, even though we do not have enough information in situations of choice to know with certainty that our choice is actually objectively right for any

¹⁸ McTaggart, *SHC*, §134.

¹⁹ Since hedonic values are the *only* remaining values, what is really at issue is whether they are reliable (correct more often than not); so, technically including ‘the most’ here is superfluous. However, if it turned out that there were other candidates, it would be the ‘most reliable’ candidate that was the correct one, so it is worthwhile to include it here in case it turns out that there are other options that McTaggart has not considered or in case his case against perfectionist good is not as strong as he thought.

²⁰ McTaggart, *SHC*, §§ 124-136.

particular decision. McTaggart agrees that both perfectionist and hedonistic values are what we might call *determinants* of the overall value of any action and so are both determinants of which action is the best/morally right. However, since conditions of choice generally limit our ability to meaningfully compare and rank act-options according to perfectionist value, we are denied the ability to rank various act-options according to all of the determinants of each option's overall value. Decision makers are therefore forced to look for a "mark" or "index" that tends to track the objectively morally correct action. By selecting options that bear this index, one can be assured that one is making the best possible choice given the limited information at one's disposal in any situation of choice.

He explains such a 'mark of choiceworthiness' by comparing it to the advice of a stockbroker in relation to the objective likelihood of a stock being a good investment.

A stock is not made safe by a stockbroker's belief in it. But an ordinary investor will find the opinion of a good stockbroker a much surer test of the safety of a stock than could be made by his own efforts to estimate the forces, which will be the real causes of safety or danger.²¹

While referring to a stockbroker's opinion cannot be the criterion for assessing the objective status of an investment, it can be the criterion of for choosing how to best invest one's money. The objective status of a stock could be established only by looking at the determinants of its market value (for instance, market factors like supply and demand); it is this kind of consideration that would form the basis of the stockbroker's opinion in the first place. "Market factors" might therefore be said to provide a criterion for 'objectively correct investment.' This criterion, however, may not necessarily be the best criterion for aiding the average investor in selecting the best stock to invest in because attempts to engage in considerations about the determinants of market value (market forces) may be more likely to result in monetary losses due to the average investor's lack of the necessary amount of data or calculating skills required for these kinds of evaluations. While no one would fault the average investor for following good financial advice provided by a good stockbroker – even if it turned out that the stock recommended was, as a matter of fact, *not* the objectively best investment in the long run – one might still find fault with an investor who tried to assess the merit of a stock using the highly imperfect information available to and using the highly imperfect skills of the average investors. This means that the 'criterion of objectively correct investment' is not necessarily identical to the 'criterion for investment choiceworthiness' for

²¹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §100.

the average investor. Therefore, just as the wise investment requires a criterion of choiceworthiness based upon an index of overall market value, McTaggart wants to argue that something analogous to this is required in Ideal Utilitarianism; Ideal Utilitarians need to identify an index of objective moral rightness.

McTaggart proposes that the index of the option which is objectively morally right is the quality of ‘being that option which appears most likely to maximize net aggregate happiness.’ In actual fact, the hedonic value of an act-option is not merely an index – it (alongside perfectionist values) is one of the determinants of the act-option’s overall value; however, under limited conditions of choice it must be treated merely as an ‘index’ of its overall value since the perfectionist determinants of value are not available under these conditions. If we are forced to make a decision between two options, making a decision according to this “index’ will be the ‘morally correct decision.’ Making decisions based on the ‘criterion of moral choiceworthiness’ ensures that one makes a ‘morally correct decision,’ even if it turns out that the normally reliable index failed in this particular case and led one to select an act-option that was not actually objectively morally right. This does not imply that McTaggart is a subjectivist about moral rightness (that he believes that moral rightness is determined by what one believes one has most reason to do or what it is reasonable to believe will promote the best outcomes). The moral rightness/wrongness of the act is still determined by establishing whether or not *as a matter of fact* (independent of the agent’s actual beliefs) the act performed, out of those options open to the agent, resulted in the objectively best state of affairs. Whether my choice was “morally correct or incorrect” will be a separate consideration, and it is only here that my actual beliefs and expectations come into play. Insofar as I believed that the choice-option I selected had the index of moral choiceworthiness (i.e., insofar as I reasonably believe that that option can be expected to maximize net aggregate happiness), then I made the *morally correct choice* under those conditions (even if it turned out that I did the objectively *morally wrong act*).²²

Is it possible for ‘moral choiceworthiness’ and ‘moral rightness’ to conflict if we assume a solely hedonistic criterion of choiceworthiness? Is it actually conceivable that the act-option which we have reason to believe is the best in terms of aggregate happiness will not result in the action which is best in terms of overall good (hedonistic *and* perfectionist)?

²² An implication of this is that it may make more sense – at least sometimes – to say that one has made a choice that is blameless but which is nonetheless wrong.

If the two criteria could never produce different directives, then a hedonistic criterion of choiceworthiness would be an infallible index and therefore the argument for adopting it as the criterion of choiceworthiness would be very straightforward. If, however, it turns out that the ‘happiest’ option is not necessarily the morally right option in all cases, then one will have to show that ‘happiness’ tends to be a (sufficiently) reliable index to morally right actions, even if it is not an infallible index. It turns out that McTaggart must admit that happiness is not an infallible index, and so must advance the more complex defense of the hedonic criterion as the criterion for moral choiceworthiness.

5.2.2 A Limitation of the Hedonic Criterion: A Fallible Index to Objectively Right Action

McTaggart observes that the criterion for moral deliberation (the standard of moral choiceworthiness) and the criterion of moral judgement (the standard of moral rightness) can diverge for the following reasons. According to McTaggart, the fullest possible development and exercise of intrinsically good capacities in an individual person (i.e., ideal perfection), will produce the greatest net happiness (the greatest pleasant consciousness) and therefore the supreme good (the best state of affairs conceivable) will involve the most complete and most harmonious attainment of both kinds of goods.²³ McTaggart describes “pleasantness” as a quality that results when some degree of harmony (correspondence) is reached between a person’s ideas and the world, and ‘painfulness’ is a quality that results from a degree of disharmony (non-correspondence) in this regard. The amount of pleasure/pain is proportionate to the degree to which ‘idea’ and ‘fact’ approaches perfect harmony or disharmony (though complete non-correspondence cannot be fully attained, whereas complete correspondence can be).²⁴ Such harmony is attained either through adjusting one’s beliefs to more accurately represent the facts of the world or by acting to change the world to more closely resemble one’s ideal representation of how the world ought to be. Pleasant states of consciousness cannot be reduced to this harmony, but they are the result of it. As was discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Four, love is sometimes described as a hedonic good. In the early works, it results from pleasure supervening on our states of belief or desire after the attainment of harmony between our ideas/ideals related to a person and the actual facts about that person. Since love is the result of the attainment of

²³ McTaggart *SHC*, §126.

²⁴ McTaggart, *SHC*, §283.

such harmony, it is an index of it. Also, love is one of the most important kinds of good included in our ideal of the supreme good, and so it is also a determinant of the overall goodness of each life and that total goodness of the world.

Pleasure is therefore both an *index* of ‘correspondence’ or ‘harmony’ between ideals and fact and a determinant of overall goodness. Here McTaggart identifies a uniform relationship between two kinds of intrinsic good: pleasure and perfection. Pleasure results from a certain aspect of perfection (the ‘satisfaction’ or fully engaged exercise of intrinsically good capacities relative to their level of development). Therefore, fully attained perfection (the Supreme Good) would necessarily result in the greatest possible happiness.

Nonetheless, while we can know that the perfect development of ideally good capacities (such as knowing and willing) necessarily results in the greatest conceivable happiness, it does not follow that under currently existing imperfect conditions (of ignorance and volitional incontinence) *any* increase of happiness (or decrease in suffering) will always indicate a corresponding improvement of intrinsically good capacities (an improvement in perfection). He states that “it by no means follows that, if we aim at the greatest happiness which we can perceive to be attainable by our present action, we shall be aiming in the direction of complete development.”²⁵ This is because “imperfection” is possible in two ways (i.e., there are two ways to ‘fall-short’ of the Supreme Good).

First, there can be imperfect *development of intrinsically good capacities*. One of the primary causes of this occurs when “the ideals of which we postulate the fulfilment are not absolutely the same ideals which would be found in a [true] state of perfection.”²⁶ Perhaps we think a capacity is intrinsically good when, in fact, it is not. For example, one might think (falsely, I would argue) that one’s capacity for physical violence is intrinsically good and one makes developing and fully exercising this capacity a central aim of one’s moral system. Alternatively, perhaps one correctly believes a capacity is intrinsically good, but underestimates the degree to which it can be developed and fully exercised, in human beings. For example, perhaps one believes (correctly, I would argue) that the human capacity for sympathy is good, but fails to realize that sympathy can be extended beyond one’s immediate relatives to strangers (through the right kind of understanding of what it means to be a person and through the right kind of emotional training). These imperfections are objective

²⁵ McTaggart, *SHC*, §126.

²⁶ McTaggart, *SHC*, §124.

cognitive failures: one's beliefs about what is intrinsically good (what *ought* to be) do not correspond to the facts about intrinsic goods. These false beliefs will result in capacities that are objectively intrinsically good not being as fully developed or exercised as they could be with sounder ideals.

Secondly, there can be imperfect *attainment/satisfaction/exercise of intrinsically good capacities*: “the ideals which we have are not completely satisfied.”²⁷ Here the ideals of perfection that we represent to ourselves (no matter how imperfect) are not fully attained. Each agent's experience of ‘satisfaction’ – a pleasant experience – will be relative to the degree to which their represented ideal is attained. This experience of satisfaction is what results in the states of consciousness contained under intrinsic goods of pleasure. Pleasure and happiness are subjective experiences of the achievement of harmony between ideal and fact; however, the experience of happiness itself cannot give any insight into the ‘objective correctness’ of the ideal.

This has some practical implications. First, McTaggart notes that if one aims at increasing (aggregate) happiness, one should normally tend to produce a greater amount of true harmony between the objective nature of individuals and the objective nature of their environment.²⁸ Happiness is the result of harmony, so in order to attain happiness one will tend to seek out the objective means/conditions (the knowledge and actions) necessary to achieve it. In this regard, the hedonic criterion is a “trustworthy guide” towards right action and decision. Happiness is a constituent of the supreme good and it is the result of the attainment of the other perfectionist elements contained in it, and so pursuing the actual attainment of (reliable, constant, and secure) happiness should motivate one to promote the causes of happiness: the development and exercise of intrinsically good capacities.

Yet, because happiness has “no necessary or uniform relation” to the accuracy of our represented ideals it is possible to experience happiness by satisfying an erroneous ideal.²⁹ For instance, if I believed that I was only capable of following the orders others gave me but not of forming my own plans, I will represent ‘perfect obedience to others’ as an ideal.³⁰ If I succeed in always carrying out what I am told to do, I will experience satisfaction and pleasure in doing so. Objectively, however, I am capable of experiencing a much richer and

²⁷ McTaggart, *SHC*, §124.

²⁸ McTaggart, *SHC*, §125.

²⁹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §125.

³⁰ To be totally consistent here, we would have to assume that someone told me to make this as my ideal.

more stable sense of satisfaction if I also acknowledge that, as an autonomous moral agent, I am capable of formulating and pursuing my own goals and actually set about to do so. The fact that greater satisfaction is available if I improve my ideals does not change the fact that I will experience satisfaction at the attainment of my ideals, even if my ideals are inaccurate.

In addition to satisfying false ideals, McTaggart notes that we might knowingly and willingly choose not to perfect some intrinsically good capacity that we do (correctly) represent as an ideal normally worth attaining. To support his idea, McTaggart refers to cases of suffering (mental or physical) so extreme and long-term that the person suffering can only experience relief through the use of powerful drugs that will certainly diminish the patient's capacity to know and voluntarily pursue ideals.³¹ The administration of drugs in this case clearly increases aggregate happiness as it decreases the suffering in the patient and decreases the sympathetic suffering in those who care for the one suffering. Yet, promoting happiness in this case clearly results in a decrease in the capacity for moral improvement in the patient by impeding the exercise of capacities for reflection, learning, autonomy, and voluntary action in the patient (perhaps permanently if the disease is severe enough).³² In the first case the cause of imperfection was the lack of perfect (objectively true) ideals. However, in the second case the cause is not necessarily ignorance. Even if one assumed possession of perfect knowledge of the capacities that *ought* to be developed in a person, in the face of extreme suffering one might choose to relieve suffering even if this will clearly prohibit the development of some of those capacities. In this case, therefore, the cause of the imperfection is the informed and voluntary *imperfect attainment* of ideals, not necessarily imperfect ideals.

It is therefore possible to both aim at promoting happiness and at the same time prevent or impede the development and exercise of intrinsically good capacities. Given this possibility, McTaggart acknowledges that one might ask why one should accept a criterion that will always tell one that the moral choice is that option which maximizes happiness when it seems clear that in certain kinds of cases alternative options could increase goods of

³¹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §127.

³² McTaggart ignores the possibility that relieving pain (though it reduces intrinsically good capacities in the patient) might also increase intrinsically good capacities – such as the capacity for mercy – in those who care for the patient. This means that we may, once we move beyond considerations of prudence to morality, have to sacrifice the perfection of one person for the sake of promoting overall goodness in terms of the perfection and happiness of all people involved (the patient and the caregivers) in cases of extreme suffering, for example.

perfection instead.³³ The hedonic criterion implies that in such cases choosing an option that is not hedonically optimal would be an *immoral choice*, even if it may turn out to be the *morally right action* once the full information about the actual effects of the action in terms of all kinds of goods is available.

5.2.3 Argument: The Hedonic Criterion is a Reliable Index to Objectively Morally Right Act-Options

For a criterion of moral choiceworthiness (the criterion for moral deliberation) to be ‘correct’ it must ensure that the option that it identifies as morally choiceworthy under the epistemically limited situation of choice will reliably – though not infallibly – pick out the option that the criterion of moral rightness identifies as objectively morally right. To show that the hedonic criterion is correct, McTaggart outlines four possible situations a deliberator might face if they were to adopt the hedonic criterion as their sole criterion for moral choiceworthiness and then he assesses the reliability of the hedonic criterion for each case.³⁴ For the first three, he argues that choosing the hedonically best option is always the most reasonable and most reliable way to identify which action will ultimately turn out to be objectively morally right. McTaggart’s arguments in regards to the first three cases are as follows.

In the first option the person choosing has reason to believe that choosing the option which will promote the most net aggregate happiness will also increase overall perfection. In this case the hedonic criterion is “clearly binding” on the decision maker: choosing it is consistent with both the normative criterion of moral deliberation (moral choiceworthiness) and the normative criterion of moral judgement (moral rightness) and so one has every relevant reason to choose the hedonically best option.

In the second option, the decision-maker has reason to believe that the option that will most likely promote net aggregate happiness will probably make no discernable difference to perfection, either positively or negatively. In such cases, McTaggart concludes that the decision-maker can “safely abide” by the hedonic criterion since it measures the only kind of good that seems to be at issue in this decision – pleasure. Again, decisions like this seem to always be consistent with both kinds of good involved in the criterion of rightness

³³ McTaggart, *SHC*, §127.

³⁴ McTaggart, *SHC*, §131.

and so the hedonic criterion for moral deliberation provides a reliable guide to morally right action.

In the third option, the decision-maker has reason to believe that choosing the option that best promotes net aggregate happiness “may” make a considerable difference to existing levels of perfection, but cannot tell for sure whether it will be a positive or negative difference. Here there seem to be serious doubts about the potential reliability of the hedonic deliberative criterion. Though we are not certain of what kind of result may come about in regards to perfection, there is a possibility of doing something objectively morally wrong by decreasing perfection so significantly that it outweighs the significance of the increase in happiness. To defend the hedonic criterion, McTaggart appeals to a kind of ‘Pascal’s Wager’ or game-reasoning to show that even if there are legitimate doubts about the reliability of the criterion in such cases, the uncertainty surrounding the results on perfection mean that it is always more reasonable to stick with the hedonic criterion for moral deliberation, rather than depart from it. If one does not choose what one has reason to believe will be the ‘happiest’ option, then in the best-case scenario only one kind of good can possibly be optimized: only perfection turns out to be considerably increased, but people are made less happier (or more miserable) than they could have been. In the worst-case scenario for non-compliance with the hedonic criterion, neither kind of good ends up being optimized: perfection is decreased and people are made less happy (or more miserable) than they could have been. If one chooses what one does have reason to believe will be the ‘happiest’ option, then in the worst-case scenario only one kind of good could possibly be optimized: perfection is considerably decreased but people are made as happy (less miserable) as possible. However, in the best-case scenario both kinds of good could be potentially optimized: perfection is increased and people are as happy (less miserable) as possible.

Table 3: Outcomes of possible criteria of choiceworthiness if there is reason to believe that maximizing happiness may considerably affect levels of perfection but it cannot be known if such effects will be positive or negative. (SHC, §131)

Case 3: I have reason to believe the action that maximizes happiness “may” considerably affect levels of perfection but it cannot be known if such effects will be positive or negative.		
Decision	Best Case Scenario	Worst Case Scenario
Choose the option I have reason to believe will produce the greatest net aggregate happiness possible. (Compliant with the dictate of the Hedonic Criterion)	Both kinds of good optimized. - Optimal Happiness: Probable - Optimal Perfection: Probability Unknown	Only one kind of good is optimized (happiness). - Optimal Happiness: Probable - Sub-Optimal Perfection: Probability Unknown
Choose the option I have reason to believe will not produce the greatest net aggregate happiness possible. (Non-Compliant with the dictate of the Hedonic Criterion)	Only one kind of good optimized (perfection). - Sub-Optimal Happiness: Probable - Optimal Perfection: Probability Unknown	No good is optimized. - Sub-Optimal Happiness: Probable - Sub-Optimal Perfection: Probability Unknown

This means that complying with the hedonic criterion offers a worst-case scenario that is equivalent to the best-case scenario of non-compliance: we only have reason to believe that one kind of good is optimized. In best-case scenario of compliance we have reason to believe that optimization of *both* kinds of goods will probably occur whereas the best-case scenario for non-compliance only allows for reasonable belief in the probable optimality in terms of only one kind of good. The worst case scenario of non-compliance with the hedonic criterion leaves us reason to believe that the results for at least one kind of good (happiness) will be sub-optimal. McTaggart argues that given risks and uncertainty associated with goods of perfection under these conditions, it is most reasonable to stick with what one knows more certainly (goods of pleasure) and apply a hedonic criterion of moral choiceworthiness. He concludes that we “do well” to follow the hedonic criterion because “[s]ince the effect on development [perfection] is unknown, the only *rational* course, if we must act, is to be guided by the effect on happiness, which is known.”³⁵ Since we know that morality requires us to maximize goodness, but we are only able to determine optimality for one of the determinants of overall goodness under the conditions of choice, it seems rational to select that option which appears to be best given the limited knowledge that we have, that we have reason to believe will prevent non-optimization of *both* goods, and that

³⁵ McTaggart, *SHC*, §131.

may (as far as we know) possibly result in the optimization of *both* goods. Therefore, compliance with the hedonic criterion is the most rational choice. As we have seen above, the third case must represent what McTaggart thinks almost all instances of choice are actually like given his argument that we are always in a better position (epistemically) to predict and determine which outcomes is most likely to result in the most amount of happiness possible compared to our ability to predict and determine which outcome will least imperfectly resemble the Ideal of Perfection or will be most likely to ultimately result in the Ideal of Perfection in the very distant future.

In the fourth case, McTaggart considers situations where “the course to which the hedonic criterion would guide us has in our judgment an unfavourable effect on the development of ideals [goods of Perfection], as compared with the alternative [hedonically non-optimal] course.”³⁶ Here it is assumed that we have reason to believe that what will optimize net happiness will not optimize perfection and what will optimize perfection will not optimize happiness. The example of using strong and highly debilitating medication to alleviate extreme physical or mental suffering seems to fall under this category. McTaggart concludes that in the Fourth Case:

there seems to be no reasonable solution. For we cannot estimate the quantity of loss to the development, and, if we could, we are ignorant of the common standard by which this could be compared to the gain in pleasure.³⁷

McTaggart is merely rehearsing his previous conclusions here. He has already argued that due to the vagueness of our Ideal of Perfection, we cannot arrive at any definite estimate as to the exact degree to which any choice-option either resembles the Ideal or is likely to eventually produce it in the distant future. Also, since the Supreme Good contains the Ideal of Perfection (combined with the highest quantity of goods of Pleasure conceivable) it will suffer from the same vagueness. So, it will also be impossible to determine whether the state of affairs that optimizes happiness or the incompatible state of affairs that optimizes perfection least imperfectly resembles the Supreme Good or is most (un)likely to eventually result in the Supreme Good in the very distant future. The only deliberative criterion

³⁶ McTaggart, *SHC*, §131.

³⁷ McTaggart, *SHC*, §131. It is worth noting that at the end of the fourth chapter of the 2nd Edition of *SHC* (1918), McTaggart rejects this claim: “I should now attribute more validity and importance to immediate judgments as to the relative value of heterogeneous goods. (Cp. Sections 129-134.)” I will address this claim in my assessment of the argument below.

available is the hedonic criterion, but it cannot help us to compare and rank non-hedonic goods with hedonic ones.

Two sections later he states that:

it remains true that there are cases of the fourth class in which **our decisions will have a decisive effect on the** [overall goodness of the] **result** [and therefore fall under the scope of ethical theory], and that **ethics offers us no principle upon which to make the decision.**³⁸

Such cases, he thinks, will be rare given our limited ability to know or even suspect with any reasonable degree of certainty the degree to which our isolated actions will ultimately produce an objective increase/decrease of overall perfection. Nonetheless, McTaggart thinks that in the fourth case it is possible that the criterion of moral deliberation and the criterion of moral judgement can produce different results. He admits that it is impossible for any ethicist to plausibly deny “that the best and wisest men were sometimes compelled to act utterly in the dark,”³⁹ when making some rare kinds of decisions and they must admit “that there are some cases where it is impossible to see what the best course [in terms of both kinds of good] is.”⁴⁰ He concludes that any system that denied this fact would be “in glaring contradiction to the facts of life.”⁴¹ Since situations like those in Case Four are rare and since almost all other situations are like those in Case 3, the hedonic criterion is the most reliable criterion for moral deliberation where deliberation is morally appropriate and so McTaggart concludes that the hedonic criterion is therefore ‘correct.’

5.3 Evaluation of McTaggart’s Argument

This argument is highly complex and there are certainly some problems with it. G. E. Moore and Bernard Bosanquet outlined some objections to various aspects of it in lengthy papers published within two years of the release of McTaggart’s book.⁴² While I think that some of their arguments are directed towards misrepresentations of what I take to be McTaggart’s

³⁸ McTaggart, *SHC*, §133.

³⁹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §134.

⁴⁰ McTaggart, *SHC*, §133.

⁴¹ McTaggart, *SHC*, §134.

⁴² Bernard Bosanquet. “Hedonism among Idealists,” in *Science and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, Inc. 1927. Pp. 182-222. (Originally published in two separate articles: “Hedonism among Idealists (I),” *Mind*. 12.46 (April, 1903), pp. 202-224; and “Hedonism among Idealists (II),” *Mind*. 12.47 (July, 1903), pp. 303-316.); Moore, G. E. “McTaggart’s Studies in Hegelian Cosmology,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series. Vol. 2. (1902-1902) pp. 117-214; Moore, G. E. “Mr. McTaggart’s Ethics,” *International Journal of Ethics*. 13.3 (April, 1903), pp. 341-370.

main point (especially in the case of Moore's paper), many of their objections are important and highlight problems or confusions in McTaggart's presentation. I will not summarize these criticisms here, but I want to acknowledge that I tried to keep them in mind when providing a charitable reconstruction of McTaggart's position. Trying to provide the most charitable interpretation should help isolate what I think are the core problems with this line of argument (problems which McTaggart must have been somewhat aware of given the changes he adopts in his later writings on value theory). I want to briefly identify two issues here. The first one I will mention in passing because I think it helps make sense about why McTaggart seems to drop his language of "perfection" in *Nature of Existence* and just speak about a list of commensurable intrinsic goods instead. The second relates to the extent to which we should think McTaggart actually thought we should be deliberating and consciously employing the criterion of moral deliberation in one's everyday attempt to live a moral life.

The first issue relates to the form of Perfectionism that McTaggart addresses in this argument. One might ask whether it is really necessary to compare each option to the Ideal of Perfection in order to figure out its 'degree of perfection' and only then be able to compare it with other options that have undergone the same direct comparison to the Ideal. Is it not possible to merely use the Ideal to identify certain capacities that would be fully developed and exercised in the Ideal Person? One could argue that once the intrinsically good capacities are identified, the role of the Ideal could fade into the background if we proposed a maximizing and aggregating form of Perfectionism (somewhat in the spirit of Hurka's theory in his *Perfectionism*). Such a criterion would state that 'one ought to choose that option which would result in the greatest possible amount of perfection' (the greatest possible development and exercise of those various items on the list of intrinsically good capacities). One would then estimate the amount of perfection in each option, aggregate these (like different kinds of pleasant/painful states are aggregated), arrive at some kind of judgement as to the total amount of perfection in each option, and then finally compare the amount of perfection that each option will bring about through that action itself and in the foreseeable future.⁴³ For example, I might judge that having true beliefs about the safety of child vaccination is many times more valuable than having true beliefs about the different kinds of Vitamin B and I could guide my actions accordingly. Perhaps I am a health studies

⁴³ Moore. "Mr. McTaggart's Ethics," p 360ff; Bosanquet, "Hedonism Among the Idealists," p. 194.

teacher at a high school with limited time left in the school year and I can only teach my students about one of these things, so I let students know the true benefits, reliability, and safety of the vaccines they can get for their future children. Such an action would not only exercise my ability to teach (which either option would do), not only expand the scope of my students' understanding of the world, but also potentially ensure that more children live long enough to develop all of their adult capacities and thereby increase the overall development in the world in ways that teaching about vitamin B would not.

It also is not obvious that comparing options in terms of perfection would be any more difficult or vague (as McTaggart claims they will be in his argument) than the kinds of complex comparisons of net pleasure/pain we also have to make between options in actual conditions of choice. McTaggart is surely far too optimistic about our ability to formulate a clear and non-controversial criterion of pleasure/pain to be used for making decisions or for justifying our decisions to others. While McTaggart is surely right that we are able to make simple comparisons between similar act-options in terms of *my* pleasure and pain (e.g., which entrée would I likely find more pleasant at dinner), making comparisons between act-options that are very different or that will affect the pleasure/pain experienced by many other people are surely much more difficult. It does not seem obvious to me how I could go about comparing which of the following options would be more pleasurable on the whole: attending my own convocation or attending my friend's wedding. Both events would make me very happy, but each for a very different reason. Each event will also involve the pleasure of many other people (i.e., the pleasure that will accompany my family's and friends' pride in my having completed my PhD and the wedding guests' satisfaction in knowing that two people have formed a deep loving relationship with each other). There does not seem to be any grounds for thinking that when it comes to the kinds of decisions that matter the most in life and in ethics our judgements about the relative net pleasure or pain of all those involved for each option will be any more or less vague than our judgments about the effects of those same act-options in terms perfectionist goods. It seems more plausible to say that we are (roughly) equally good (or bad) at making comparisons of hedonistic values as we are about perfectionist values.

I agree that the view of Perfectionism considered by McTaggart is not the most plausible view available. Presumably it was what he thought was being proposed by

Perfectionists such as Green, Bradley, and Mackenzie during his time.⁴⁴ In fact, I suspect this must be why ‘perfection’ is not mentioned in the *Nature of Existence* in his discussion of value or while outlining his list of intrinsic goods. His list in that book clearly includes the development and exercise of certain capacities (such as knowledge and virtue) in addition to certain kinds of experience (such as feelings of pleasure and pain and the intensity [vividness and clarity] of consciousness)⁴⁵ but these are not classified under any basic ‘kinds’ or ‘categories’ of good as they were in *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*. Presumably since all goods are considered to be capable of quantification, aggregation, and comparison in the same way in *The Nature of Existence* the need for such classification is removed. In fact, in the Second Edition of *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (1918), McTaggart rejects the idea that we cannot compare the relative value of heterogeneous goods: “I should now attribute more validity and importance to immediate judgments as to the relative value of heterogeneous goods.”⁴⁶ McTaggart’s mature axiology, and presumably his mature ethical theory, seems more consistent with the alternative kind of conceptualization of commensurable heterogeneous goods (perfectionist and hedonistic) outlined in the previous paragraph. So while it might still be the case that not all of the goods listed in *The Nature of Existence* are appropriate for inclusion in a criterion of choiceworthiness, it seems unlikely that a criterion of choiceworthiness consistent with the later works can include only happiness/pleasure. Nonetheless, the fact that the criterion of choiceworthiness proposed in the early works might have to be adjusted in the later works (from what it was in the earlier works) does not affect the insight that the criterion of choiceworthiness is distinct from the criterion of rightness.

The second issue relates to McTaggart’s emphasis on moral deliberation. Is McTaggart saying that Ideal Utilitarianism requires agents to constantly weigh every option and to ensure that they are always guiding their decisions by reference to a criterion for moral choice? Is he proposing a hedonistic version of what Railton called “subjective

⁴⁴ Whether this is an (in)accurate representation of their actual views is far beyond the scope of this paper. For an alternative conception of “Perfection” and the “Ideal of Perfection,” see Bosanquet, “Hedonism Among the Idealists,” especially pp. 210-222. He describes Perfection/Development as “the resolution of contradictions.” The “Ideal of Perfection,” is represented as a completely consistent, unified, and sound set of ideals, aims, and desires. Attainment of this ideal will result in the complete satisfaction (=happiness) of all desires/capacities, whatever these happen to be. As a formal concept of Perfection, this conceptualization of it is very different than the more substantive (though indeterminate) concept considered by McTaggart.

⁴⁵ Since emotions seem to involve both cognitive capacities for representation and also subjective qualitative experiences of consciousness, they are hard to class under either view.

⁴⁶ McTaggart, *SHC* (1918), p. 128.

consequentialism”⁴⁷ or what David Sosa has called “consequentialist deliberationism” which holds that “all right action will include a component of consequentialist deliberation”⁴⁸ where ‘consequentialist deliberation’ is understood as an “attempt to determine which act of those available would most promote the good?”⁴⁹

This form of consequentialism would be extremely demanding on one’s attention and cognitive skills. Humans have a very limited capacity for extended periods of deliberation (except for in a few highly gifted and trained minds). The time and energy required to constantly deliberate in this way would ultimately also tend to cause the person to be far less effective at promoting the good. It therefore seems that Hedonistic Deliberationism can be rejected for the same reason that considerations about certain kinds of goods may prevent them from being included in the criterion of choiceworthiness: the limited conditions faced by the agent in most normal circumstances of choice make demanding such considerations counter-productive to reliably selecting the morally right option and so is unreasonable

Also, as we have seen, consequentialist deliberationism seems to be subject to the love-based objection to consequentialism. One of the most important elements in a meaningful and good life is deep personal relationships. These often require that we act directly out of love, friendship, concern, or sympathy for those with whom we are in intimate relationships and so actions mediated through some explicitly deliberative process that assesses act-options according to a criterion of moral choiceworthiness appear to be alienating. If this is true then a consequentialist view that claims that loving/friendly relationships are one of the most important intrinsic goods will be self-defeating. McTaggart clearly thought that love was a highly important intrinsic good; so, does the fact that he spends so much time defending a criterion of moral deliberation and describing how it can be a reliable guide to right action mean that he endorses a kind of ‘direct’ form of utilitarianism that has been widely thought by many contemporary scholars to be exactly the kind of theory that cannot accommodate our intuitions about the role and value of love?

⁴⁷ See Section 3.3.1 (p. 93) of this dissertation.

⁴⁸ David Sosa. “Consequences of Consequentialism,” *Mind* 102.405 (January 1993): pp. 107.

⁴⁹ David Sosa. “Consequences of Consequentialism,” *Mind* 102.405 (January 1993): pp. 106. Sosa is quoting Peter Railton in this particular quotation (“Alienation,” p. 152). Railton is describing what he calls “subjective consequentialism” but Sosa argues that that term is best reserved for another concept and he substitutes the term ‘consequential deliberationism’ in its place. I am persuaded by Sosa’s reasons for adjusting this terminology and adopt his convention here.

Determining whether or not McTaggart actually requires consequentialist deliberationism is very important.

While there is no direct evidence to refute the idea that McTaggart supports consequentialist deliberationism, it is not necessary that he endorse deliberationism merely because he identifies and justifies a criterion for moral deliberation. One can propose a criterion for moral deliberation (a decision-making procedure) but restrict its use to a very limited set of circumstances. One could acknowledge that there is a criterion for moral deliberation, acknowledge that it can be (or is) distinct from the criterion of moral rightness, but still hold that, on the whole, moral agents are more likely to do what is objectively morally right if they keep explicit moral deliberation to a minimum (i.e., only those cases where habit, direct emotional response, or following established moral rules result in inconsistencies or conflicting directives). Such systems have been described by many contemporary ethicists such as Peter Railton, David Sosa, William Shaw, and David Brink (to name a few). If McTaggart were to reject consequentialist deliberationism, this would remove at least one potential source of conflict between his life-long conviction that love is intrinsically good, his detailed description of love, and his moral philosophy. If there is good reason to think that engaging in moral deliberation in circumstances of love would interfere with the maintenance or promotion of love, then one ought not to engage in moral deliberations in such circumstances: instead one ought to act out of love so long as one does not become aware of any potential conflicts with the promotion or maintenance of other comparable intrinsic goods. Whether McTaggart actually endorsed such deliberationism or not in the early works is not immediately clear, however rejecting consequentialist deliberationism makes his philosophical thought on the whole more consistent and is consistent with his reasons for rejecting the inclusion of certain goods (perfectionist goods) in the criterion of moral choiceworthiness in the first place: including them makes the moral criterion a less reliable way to arrive at morally right actions. The rejection of moral deliberationism can be seen as a natural extension of the reasoning that rules out perfectionist goods from the criterion of moral choiceworthiness: if there is reason to think that something makes some decision-procedure a less reliable means to objectively morally right actions, then that thing ought to be excluded from the decision-making procedure. So, according to the hermeneutic principle of charity there is good reason to think that

McTaggart would not endorse moral (consequentialist) deliberationism and would revise any of his claims that implied it.

One way McTaggart can reject consequentialist deliberationism but still maintain the consequentialist criterion of rightness would be to do as Railton suggested and outline a “sophisticated” version of Ideal Utilitarianism. What might a version of “sophisticated” Ideal Utilitarianism look like? An account of the kind of indirect form of Ideal Utilitarianism that McTaggart would require to make his views on love and his moral philosophy consistent (a form that explicitly rejects consequentialist deliberationism), is suggested by comments Rashdall made in his *The Theory of Good and Evil*. McTaggart commented on drafts of this work and so was surely familiar with Rashdall’s line of thought. Rashdall seemed to endorse following a set of established rules as a criterion of moral choiceworthiness: one ought to select that option that is most consistent with certain authoritative rules. In situations of choice, one should not directly apply-cost benefit analysis in terms of net aggregate goodness; instead, one should generally just follow rules. Such rules, however, must ultimately only be accepted when an individual “comes to see and appreciate for himself the reason, the ground, the principle of the maxims which he at first accepted on authority,”⁵⁰ (i.e., for Ideal Utilitarians, after considering the extent to which general adherence to such rules is conducive to net aggregate goodness).⁵¹ It is at this reflective level that one makes a direct appeal to the consequentialist criterion of rightness. So Rashdall clearly acknowledges a distinction between the criterion of moral rightness and the criterion of moral choiceworthiness. However, Rashdall also suggests that such evaluations in terms of overall goodness ought generally to be limited to situations of moral reflection (when we are setting out to assess/adopt a certain set of general moral rules to guide my behaviour) or to situations where “we are forced to consider such a question [whether an action is right or wrong] for ourselves without reference to some established rule.”⁵² The latter option generally occurs because existing rules are too general to give clear guidance for the particular situation, no general rule has been formulated yet, or the question is about the

⁵⁰ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 156.

⁵¹ Rashdall, *TGE1*, Book II, Chapter V: “Authority and Autonomy,” *passim*.

⁵² Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 184: “In previous chapters I have sought to show that the way to find out whether an action is right or wrong, **when we are forced to consider such a question for ourselves without reference to some established rule**, is to consider whether it will tend to produce for society in general a Well-being or *endaimonia* or good which includes many elements possessing different values, which values are intuitively discerned and compared with one another by the moral or practical Reason.” (My emphasis.); See also: *TGE2*, pp 154ff, p. 170, pp. 435ff.

validity or rank of certain (conflicting) general rules themselves. Apart from these situations, though, it seems best that most people, most of the time, do not too directly engage in consequentialist deliberations to evaluate rules or act-options in situations of choice.⁵³ Rashdall, therefore, suggests a multi-level form of consequentialism that reserves a restricted role for explicit deliberations about the moral choiceworthiness of options, the moral acceptability of a rule, or the moral rightness of a type of action. Such deliberative reasoning about moral matters is limited to situations of careful, reserved, and controlled reflective thought occurring outside of the regular circumstances of everyday moral life and decision-making. Rashdall, however, goes further and also suggests in some places that being directly motivated by certain emotional responses may result in a world that is better on the whole than one where people *always* act directly from explicit deliberations about what is best or what is right. If this is true, then Rashdall is suggesting that there is a reason to reject consequentialist deliberationism on consequentialist grounds: requiring deliberation according to the criterion of choiceworthiness at *all* levels of decision-making will make the world worse-off as a whole by preventing other kinds of intrinsically valuable motivation. It is best if we allow people to guide their behaviour directly from emotional responses in some situations. I will consider this further suggestion presently in order to fill in this aspect so necessary for McTaggart's moral position to be coherent and to overcome the LBO.

Early Ideal Utilitarianism accepted that certain conscious states are intrinsically valuable, even if the person having them is not consciously aware that they are valuable; in other words, it is not necessary that some agent be aware of, or (dis)approve of, the conscious state in order for it to be intrinsically good or intrinsically valuable. This feature of intrinsic value is acknowledged in Rashdall,⁵⁴ Sorley,⁵⁵ and McTaggart. Out of all of these

⁵³ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 154. For example: "In view of all of these facts, it must appear that the attempt on the part of the individual to think out his moral code *a priori*, in entire independence of his environment, in an impracticable one, and one which would be disastrous, if it were practicable. That this is so with the great mass of men is obvious. They have not the knowledge, the experience, the leisure to trace out all the advantages and disadvantages of conflicting courses of action, whether in detailed circumstances or with regard to the general principles of conduct."

⁵⁴ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 155: "The judgement that a certain emotion has value is a different thing from the mere emotion itself." Rashdall does not explicitly defend the claim that awareness of the value of a conscious state is not necessary for a conscious state to have value, but it is clearly assumed in his discussion of the intrinsic value of acts and emotions. In both cases, it is not necessary that the agent is aware that the act or emotion is good for the emotion to be judged intrinsically good by reason (although, of course, the agent's awareness of its goodness would add additional intrinsic value to the act because of the added knowledge and virtue that would be present in the agent). The citation here provides an example of the distinction in his discussion of emotion.

⁵⁵ Sorley, *Moral Value and the Idea of God*, pp. 124-125.

philosophers, McTaggart provides the clearest and most direct articulation of this claim. In *The Individualism of Value*, he states:

In the first place, if I say that only conscious beings and their states have value, I do not mean that they cannot have value unless the conscious being knows them to have value. He might not know that the state in which he was conscious of being had value, and yet it might have it. ... In the same way, the happiness of a kitten or a young child may be good, although they do not judge themselves to be happy, and do not recognize that happiness is a good. ... We may, indeed, go further, and add that there is no necessity, in order that a state should have value, that it should be recognized by anyone as having value. If there were no omniscient being – a hypothesis which is at any rate possible – many men must have acted generously or selfishly on occasions when neither they nor anyone else recognized the generosity or selfishness. But the acts would, all the same, be generous or selfish, and would be good or evil accordingly.⁵⁶

So on this view, for instance, any direct desire for something that is intrinsically good will be intrinsically good. Desiring happiness for the sake of happiness is intrinsically good because happiness is objectively intrinsically good. The value of the desire remains unchanged by whether or not the person desiring comes to the higher-order realization that ‘happiness is good’ or that ‘desiring happiness is good.’ These higher-order beliefs also have value, but having such higher-order beliefs is not a necessary condition for the lower-order states (that are the objects of such higher-order beliefs) to have the intrinsic value that they do. In the same way, some motivations can also be judged to be intrinsically good independently of whether or not anyone explicitly acknowledges their intrinsic goodness. Rashdall and McTaggart both reject the “Kantian” claim that the only morally good motive is ‘duty for duty’s sake.’ It is not the case that the only actions that have moral worth are those that are motivated from a ‘sense of duty.’ Rashdall observes that motivations, such as ‘direct concern’ for another are commonly judged to have intrinsic value and may, under certain circumstances, even make an action morally better than if it was motivated by a sense of duty. Rashdall argues that virtuous motives and desires (those related to ‘doing what is right/best for the sake of doing what is right/best’) are extremely (or even ‘supremely’) valuable, but he also maintains that they are not the only motives and desires having intrinsic value. An ideally good person will have as many kinds of intrinsically good motives and desires as possible and will be moved to action by those that are most appropriate to the circumstances. This observation leads Rashdall to anticipate what would later be known as

⁵⁶ McTaggart, *Individualism of Value*, p. 434-435; See also: McTaggart, *NE2*, §812n.2. (My emphasis.)

the “one thought too many” objection famously formulated by Bernard Williams.⁵⁷ He imagines that someone formulates the following challenge to the view that only acts done for the sake of duty have moral worth:

It is nobler to be so fired by the thought of tyranny and injustice and suffering, so to feel others' wrongs as though they were one's own, that the question never arises at all whether it is a duty to fight against them, or even whether it be καλόν to do so. Would it not show a positive defect in the man's character if he should decline to make a sacrifice which the good of his family demanded till he had calmly reflected that it was a dutiful or a beautiful thing for him to do? Is it not better to be socially useful because one loves one's neighbours as oneself than to regard them with indifference, and yet to feed or serve them only because it is one's duty?⁵⁸

Rashdall notes that having duty as one's motive makes some actions worse than they would have been if some other motive had caused them. For instance, Rashdall would agree that an act of mercy (relieving suffering) towards one's child, would have more moral worth if it was done directly from a sense of love, concern, and sympathy for one's child than if the merciful action had been mediated through considerations of whether that action was one's duty (i.e., whether it was required/permitted by some rule (the criterion of choiceworthiness) or whether it maximized net aggregate goodness (the criterion of rightness)). One can conclude therefore, that motives such as love should play a large role in ethical theory and in conduct than others.

Yet, as we have seen, being moved by a sense of duty is also an important (if not the most important) intrinsic good for Rashdall. This leads him to conclude that the moral life clearly requires **both** being motivated by direct concern, sympathy, or love for persons **and** also motivations/intentions to do what is right and best. Rashdall observes that this leads to a potential “antinomy” in moral philosophy:

On the one hand, it does seem nobler to love the things contained in the law than to do good things unwillingly because we feel bound to obey the law as such. On the other hand, it seems difficult to admit that there can be any nobler motive than devotion to duty as such, or that there can be a perfect character, or even a perfect act, in the inspiration of which such devotion has no place.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Rashdall, *TGE1*, Pp. 124-129; Bernard Williams, “Persons, Character, and Morality,” *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp. 17-19.

⁵⁸ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 124. (My emphasis.)

⁵⁹ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 125.

It seems that in one sense, acting out of a sense of duty makes an action worse, but in another sense acting out of a sense of duty is required for virtue (a highly important intrinsic good). He proposes a solution to this antinomy based on accepting three claims. First, that “an action may be good which is done [directly or solely] from the love of some good object.”⁶⁰ Next, it is true that “love of any particular object is always liable to interfere with the promotion of some other and, it may be, more important good.”⁶¹ Thirdly, he explains, “duty means, as we have seen, precisely devotion to the various goods in proportion to their relative value and importance.”⁶² To be virtuous is to have a standing higher-order desire (or disposition) that one’s motives and desires are proportionate to the value of their objects and that the strength of those desires and emotions respect the relative worth and rank of their objects. He goes on to say,

No one then can be trusted at all times and in all circumstances to attribute to each good precisely its proper degree of worth in whom there is not strong devotion to that supreme good in which all others are summed up. It is not necessary that a man should make the sense of duty the sole motive of all his conduct, provided it is always ready to inhibit an action the moment he sees any reason for believing that it is contrary to his duty. The conscientious man will not seek actually to substitute the sense of duty for other motives of conduct, because he will recognize that many of the commonplace actions of life are better performed from some other impulse, and that the cultivation of altruistic or ideal impulses is actually a part of that ideal of human character which duty bids him promote in himself as in others. He will eat his breakfast from force of habit or because he is hungry; the sense of duty will only be ready, in the background of consciousness, so to speak, to stimulate him when appetite fails or to inhibit him when some call of duty demands the suspension or omission of that meal on a particular morning. ... He will labour for the good of his family because he cares about it as much or more than he does for his own good, but the sense of duty will always be ready to remind him of the claims of the workmen or the customers whom his methods of business may prejudice.⁶³

So, Rashdall preserves motivations from a “sense of duty” *and* motivations such as direct concern by placing the motive to do what is right at a higher-order background level. So long as one has a standing higher-order disposition to do what is right, and so long as there is a sensibility as to situations where direct first-order motivations might not provide sufficient guidance towards actions that are objectively right, the sense of duty (an intrinsic

⁶⁰ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 125.

⁶¹ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 125.

⁶² Rashdall, *TGE1*, pp. 125-126.

⁶³ Rashdall, *TGE1*, p. 126-127. (My emphasis.)

good) can still be present in the agent and at the same time other intrinsically good motivations can be present as well. There are interesting parallels between this idea and Railton's account of "sophisticated consequentialism."⁶⁴ I think that Railton's following claim, in particular, captures the core idea Rashdall proposes in the quote above:

It is consistent with what he [the sophisticated consequentialist] says to imagine that his motivational structure ... meets a counterfactual condition: while he ordinarily does not do what he does simply for the sake of doing what's right, he would seek to lead a different sort of life if he did not think his were morally defensible.⁶⁵

According to the counterfactual condition, the sophisticated consequentialist does not always engage in explicit deliberative moral reasoning for every action, but has the ability to do so if needed; furthermore, one will only exercise this capacity when it is not clear that some already established dispositions are no longer reliable means to objective morally right action. This seems to be very similar (at least in spirit) to Rashdall's "sense of duty" which stands-by "ready, in the background of consciousness," in the passage above. On Rashdall's view, having motivations to do actions because they are right is very important and necessary for any person to possess moral goodness. However, such conscious states need not be front and center in every action. For him, one's sense of duty (informed by the ideal utilitarian criterion of rightness) must always be present as a background capacity capable of successfully impeding and reordering intrinsically good motivations the might conflict with each other in particular circumstances. On both Railton's and Rashdall's view acting virtuously can involve a kind of 'auto pilot-system' as long as the pilot is the one that has programmed the system and as long as the pilot is always ready to override the system when she perceives that the flight is going off course.

So, as McTaggart argued above, just as we judge that only a limited set of the possible ultimate ends (intrinsic goods) should be included in criteria of moral deliberation (only those goods whose value we can estimate and compare under epistemically limited situations of choice) so too, we can also judge that a certain set of non-deliberative dispositions ought to be endorsed, promoted, and in most cases preferred over the exercise of capacities for moral deliberation, in order to ensure we do the best possible actions (i.e., we do what is objectively morally right). Humans are not only limited in our ability to bring

⁶⁴ Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and Morality," pp. 151-153.

⁶⁵ Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and Morality," p. 151.

about certain kinds of results and estimate the potential value of those results, we are also limited in our ability to consciously guide our action at any given moment. Much of our behaviour is the result of carefully (and often laboriously) formed local habits and dispositions. Many activities would not be possible if they were not done habitually, such as walking and riding a bike. This is why so many tasks have to be learned through ‘indirect’ methods. There seems to be no reason to expect that such limitations should not factor into our judgment about the kinds of motivations and desires that have moral worth and ought to be included among the means/procedures proposed by an ethical system for reliably achieving morally right conduct. This is just what Ideal Utilitarians attempt to accommodate for in their multi-level accounts of moral norms and moral motivations.

So, a theory like Rashdall’s or Railton’s leaves space for intrinsically valuable emotions like love (emotions that do not move one directly out of concern for general goodness or moral rightness) to motivate us directly by restricting explicit evaluations of rules or act-options according to criteria of rightness or choiceworthiness to background roles – roles which only come into effect in appropriate situations. Such multi-level accounts of moral deliberation and motivation help us understand how McTaggart’s argument about the important distinctions between the criterion of moral rightness and the criterion for moral deliberation (the criterion of choiceworthiness) can be incorporated in a “sophisticated” form Ideal Utilitarian system in a way that avoids consequentialist deliberationism and so avoids the LBO in this regard.

To sum up, while McTaggart does not directly reject ‘consequentialist deliberationism,’ in his published works, his argument for restricting the deliberative criterion (the criterion of choiceworthiness) to only those intrinsic goods that can be expected to reliably pick-out the morally right act-option (whatever those goods happen to be) can be further extended to show that there is reason to think that ‘moral deliberation’ should only play a limited role in ethical theory since there is also reason to believe that moral deliberationism is not the most reliable way to pick out the objectively morally right action. In other words, McTaggart’s reasoning can be extended to make the case for adopting a “sophisticated” form of consequentialism. The same kind of reasoning is present in Rashdall, even if he (like McTaggart) did not fully realize this or explicitly develop this implication. Therefore, Ideal Utilitarians have reason to believe that deliberation according to some criterion of choiceworthiness (e.g. obeying rules (Rashdall) or maximizing happiness (McTaggart)) might

be the best way to make decisions that will reliably pick out the objectively morally right action. Nonetheless, there is also reason to believe that such explicit moral deliberations should be restricted to only a few appropriate situations and in other situations there seems to be reason to encourage agents to act directly from certain non-deliberative dispositions that are required to attain the most important intrinsic goods such as love and loving relations (goods that every consequentialist has reason to promote).

5.4 CONCLUSION: McTaggart's Moral Philosophy Overcomes the Love-Based Objection (LBO)

In this section I argue that McTaggart's moral philosophy (supplemented at times with Rashdall's account of ideal utilitarianism) is able to overcome the love-based objection (LBO and NLBO). McTaggart's version of ideal utilitarianism clearly accepts a plurality of intrinsic goods while offering some considerations for why love ought to be considered among the most important goods. Insofar as his version of Ideal Utilitarianism directly acknowledges that loving emotions and beloved persons are important intrinsic goods, the axiology underpinning his moral philosophy does not necessarily demote love to being of mere instrumental value (Chapter Four). McTaggart's moral philosophy, therefore, clearly meets the first conditions required to overcome the LBO. Of course, this alone does not show that McTaggart's system is consistent; he must also formulate an ethical system having structures of valuing and motivation that do not treat love as merely instrumentally valuable and thereby contradict its own axiological foundation. Defenders of consequentialism have argued that in order to meet the Harmonious Integration Requirement (HIR) and the Love-Based Adequacy Test (LBAT) one's ethical theory must acknowledge certain kinds of motivational and valuational structures that are deeply integrated and unified, yet can keep potentially incompatible psychic attitudes from interfering with each other by means of a multi-level moral psychology. Each attitude or motive operates at its own level and each level is directed towards and unified through a coherent system of intrinsically related values. Railton describes one version of this theory and calls it 'sophisticated consequentialism.' There is reason to think that McTaggart also proposes an ethical system having a similar structure making it able to overcome the LBO in a similar way.

As we have seen, a multi-level motivational and valuational system was outlined by McTaggart when he argued that we ought to determine the appropriate criterion for

choiceworthiness by determining which criteria are actually viable given the limitations of the situation of choice and, of those viable options, which will be the most reliable (though not necessarily infallible) guide to picking out the objectively morally right act-option. This argument implicitly acknowledges the distinction between what contemporary philosophers call ‘the criterion of rightness’ which is used to determine the objective moral rightness (or wrongness) of an action and ‘decision-making procedures’ (criterion of choiceworthiness) that are used to guide the behaviour of actual moral agents towards those act-options that are objectively morally right. His system, I suggested, proposes an indirect version of Ideal Utilitarianism. I have also suggested that McTaggart’s own argument for restricting the kinds of intrinsic goods that ought to be considered in explicit moral deliberation to those goods that will most reliably pick out the morally right act-option also support a further claim that there may be good reason to opt for *non-deliberative emotional/volitional dispositional responses* to states of affairs where such dispositions reliably pick out the morally right act-option; furthermore, this is especially true if such dispositions are themselves among the intrinsic goods that ought to be promoted by Ideal Utilitarians. I observed that Rashdall acknowledged that certain kinds of direct dispositional responses are intrinsically good and that these dispositional responses also rule out the motivations and aims required for virtue (acting directly *out of concern for/for the sake of* responding appropriately to intrinsic goods and maximizing overall good). He also acknowledged that in many cases engaging in cost-benefit analysis about each particular act-option is not a viable option, nor is it as reliable at picking out morally right act-options as established (and autonomously endorsed) moral rules or as dispositions such as love or sympathy. The extension of McTaggart’s reasoning and the inclusion of Rashdall’s observations about how an ideal utilitarian is best able to guide her actions shows that McTaggart’s version of Ideal Utilitarianism need not be interpreted as a highly problematic form of ‘consequentialist deliberationism;’ instead, I have made the case that it is more akin to sophisticated consequentialism. McTaggart’s account, as he himself presented it, falls short of sophisticated versions of Ideal Utilitarianism insofar as he did not explain how it is that the motives and aims required for consequentialist virtue do not interfere with the motives and aims required for intrinsically good dispositions such as love. Again, I suggested that McTaggart’s commitment to the highly important intrinsic good of love (and the beloved person) and his commitment to Ideal Utilitarianism can be reconciled

by looking at how Rashdall restricted the role of the ‘sense of duty’ to the ‘background’ in order to preserve intrinsically good dispositions.

Rashdall described virtue as a disposition to respond appropriately to various kinds of intrinsic goods according to their absolute and relative value. It also involves having a kind of sensibility for when one’s direct value-responses or one’s moral rules are providing conflicting, unclear, or unreliable guidance and a further disposition to adjust those rules or dispositions where doing so is necessary to promote overall goodness. However, if the agent does not perceive any problems with the direct dispositional responses, the agent’s attention remains directly engaged within those emotional/volitional responses and one’s ‘sense of duty’ remains in the background. One might describe this ‘background’ as a kind of higher-order state of reflection. One could divide one’s dispositional states into two levels. First-order dispositions would be those dispositions that are directed immediately towards intrinsic goods that are not themselves (emotional or volitional) dispositions. Love would be an example of a first-order disposition. It is at this level of attention and consciousness that one interacts directly with the world. Second-order dispositions are directed at first-order dispositions (which may themselves have intrinsic value). Here, one’s state of consciousness involves a kind of introspective reflection on one’s own dispositions and therefore presumes some degree of removal from direct concerns about the world. Virtue – which involves shaping one’s dispositions and actions out of concern for/for the sake of doing what is morally right/best – is a second-order disposition. Humans can shift between these positions, but one cannot operate at both levels at the same time. One can also, presumably, develop an ability to operate at certain levels according to different circumstances and so one can develop a disposition to switch to the second-order where one has a sense that the first-order is not operating optimally. If one’s attention is engaged in first-order dispositions themselves, but one still has the (inactive) capacity to engage in second-order reflection on the first order – one has a virtuous disposition that operates in the ‘background.’

I suggested that Rashdall’s account is similar to Railton’s description of how one’s commitment to consequentialism’s criterion of rightness can best be embodied as a dispositional structure that meets a counter-factual condition informed by that criterion of rightness; furthermore, I think that Railton provides a clearer account of how Rashdall might have understood one’s ‘sense of duty’ to operate in the ‘background.’ McTaggart’s reasoning about the various kinds of moral criteria – when extended and combined with Rashdall’s and

Railton's observations about the optimal role for a 'sense of duty' – is consistent with a version of ideal utilitarian that is a form of sophisticated consequentialism.

An ideal utilitarian theory that both acknowledges that love is a highly important intrinsic good and is also a form of sophisticated consequentialism meets the love-based adequacy test⁶⁶ – one of the two requirements I have suggested are at the heart of the various forms of the love-based objection. McTaggart's insistence that love is among the most important goods that we can try to bring about in the world (for any person – me or anyone else) means that we ought to adjust our commitment to consequentialism and its criteria to allow for as much love as possible while at the same time attempting to promote (me or others) doing what is right. If we are able to embody our commitment to consequentialism and its motives and aims in the 'background' or as a 'counterfactual condition,' in much the same way we embody the commitment to grammar (and its aims and motives) in the background of speech, then there is no reason why love and morality will necessarily be incompatible or that love will necessarily and reliably be prevented by the pursuit of a virtuous life.

McTaggart's philosophy of love also acknowledges a distinction that has important implications for integrating love and moral philosophy: the distinction between motivation and justification. McTaggart argued that love is justified according to its own intrinsic value and not according to its causes. The explanatory reasons that we have for coming to love someone (and perhaps even for continuing to love them) are based on qualities of the beloved and do not, in-themselves, provide grounds for condemning an instance of love. Love is intrinsically valuable, and so we ought – *prima facie* – to value and promote it. Love, once it comes about, causes us to act *out of concern for* and *for the sake of* the beloved, and so it provides the agent its own unique motives and aims; nonetheless, the motives and aims of love are not necessarily the motives and aims that cause one to love or to continue loving another person. I proposed that McTaggart's argument that the object of love is always a person and never the person's qualities makes the most sense if we assume that he conceived of love as a higher-order intrinsic good (as described by Hurka in *Virtue, Vice, and Value*). On this interpretation, McTaggart thinks that love is justified because of its intrinsic value and it has intrinsic value because it is directed towards a basic intrinsic good – the beloved person.

⁶⁶ **Love-Based Adequacy Test:** any plausible version of consequentialism must ensure that the motivations and reasons endorsed by/required by consequentialist ethics will not reliably and significantly impede the highly valuable and important intrinsic goods of love or loving relationships.

Love is ultimately justified, therefore, by being an appropriate (and so intrinsically good) pro-response to an intrinsic good. However, acting out of concern for love's 'intrinsic value' cannot, by any reasonable stretch of the imagination, be an ordinary motive for loving someone. It is clear, therefore, that McTaggart recognizes that in the case of intrinsically good emotion one's motives and one's justifications need not be identical, and so there seems to be no reason why this would not also be true of desires having higher-order intrinsic value: one's motive for doing the right thing need not necessarily be identical (in every case) to the justification making that action objectively morally right. Therefore, one's motive for loving need not be understood as acting from an awareness intrinsic value of love (or an awareness that "I ought to desire love"), nor the fact that loving dispositions are reliable ways to pick-out objectively right act-options.

It is also worth noting that despite the fact that the motivation and justification for love may not be the same, this does not necessarily imply any problematic forms of alienation within the person who loves or between the person loving and the person loved. Acknowledging (at a higher-order level of reflection) that my love is justified by the fact of its own intrinsic goodness, and independently of my particular motives for loving, does not necessarily threaten the strength or authenticity of my own love for another (nor would it necessarily cause me to necessarily condemn another person's love for me). In fact, this may only strengthen my sense of love's value and importance by fostering a sense that love is – in a sense – always a greater good than anyone really deserves due to the inevitable selfishness that taints anyone's motives (even in the most genuine cases of love).

Recognizing that the causes and object of love are distinct and recognizing that the motivations of love and the justifying grounds for love are not identical is an important insight. It supports the idea that the motives, aims, and values of love and morality need not necessarily conflict nor need they impede each other. This further supports the claim that McTaggart's moral philosophy, when combined with observations from his philosophy of love is able to meet the LBAT.

Yet despite being able to avoid incompatibility between love and morality within the moral agent, one must still show that it is possible to integrate one's motives and reasons and thereby avoid the problematic form of alienation that Stocker, and others, emphasized in their versions of the LBO. McTaggart's moral philosophy must therefore be shown to meet the Harmonious Integration Requirement (HIR) that demands that 'one is moved by one's

major values and that one values what one's major motives seek.⁶⁷ Nowhere does McTaggart explicitly endorse an 'esoteric' or 'self-effacing' version of ideal utilitarianism. There also seems to be no reason to attribute such a view to him. He never claims that we must ignore our commitment to a consequentialist criterion of rightness and his arguments related to the criterion of choiceworthiness indicated that there is clearly some legitimate (though perhaps limited) role for it in moral philosophy. So he is able to avoid the most extreme version of alienation ruled out by HIR. I also think, however, that the more subtle form of alienation – where a deep or essential connection between one's recognized motives and reasons/values is lacking – can be avoided.

To see how, first assume that one proposed a sophisticated version of hedonistic utilitarianism where one ultimately endorses pro-love dispositions because they reliably promote pleasure (the only intrinsic good) and also assume that one held McTaggart's view of love. On McTaggart's view, love involves (in an essential way) a sense of a deep intimate union with another person producing an emotional appreciation of the beloved. This loving emotional appreciation of the beloved may then result in loving acts that are directly motivated out of a direct concern for the beloved person (and not merely the beloved's pleasure) and are done for the sake of the beloved person (and not merely the beloved's pleasure). According to the axiology of hedonistic utilitarianism the beloved person would be denied any intrinsic value and the loving disposition itself would be denied any intrinsic value. One's motives and reasons for loving actions would only be instrumentally and extrinsically connected to the justification for love and loving actions: the pleasure they produce. This is clearly the kind of non-integration that the HIR is meant to rule out.

In the case of McTaggart's Ideal Utilitarianism, however, love and the beloved person are both intrinsically valuable. I am motivated at the second-order level (my commitment to live an objectively consequentialist life: to maximize net aggregate goodness) to seek out (at least one element of) what I value most – loving relationships with the people I love; furthermore, I am also motivated at the first-order level (through my experience of love) to seek out (at least one element of) what I value most – loving relationships. The ideal utilitarian also values what their major motives seek: the first-order loving motives are

⁶⁷ **Harmonious Integration Requirement:** any plausible version of consequentialism must ensure that our motives embody our reasons and that our reasons are embodied in our motives. In other words, consequentialist agents must be "moved by our major values and we should value what our major motives seek" (Stocker, "Schizophrenia," p. 454).

directed at intrinsically valuable persons and the higher-order virtuous motives are directed at all intrinsic goods which include first-order loving emotions and the beloved persons to which they are directed. There is an essential and intrinsic connection between one's motives and reasons, even though they operate at different levels, because one's reasons and motives (at all levels) are all directly oriented towards at least some of the intrinsic goods contained in the list of all possible intrinsic goods, all of which ought to be included in some way in the best possible quantity and combination in the ideal state of affairs. Since one's reasons and motives (at any level) are directed at and arise out of concern for promoting intrinsic goods, and one's motivational structure *as a whole* is directed at what is intrinsically good (and so at those elements we have reason to believe will generally contribute to the best state of affairs overall) McTaggart's version of ideal utilitarianism is therefore able to meet the second requirement necessary to avoid the love based objection.

In summary, McTaggart's version of Ideal Utilitarianism – supplemented, extended, and completed where appropriate – is able to meet both the LBAT and HIR and so is able to overcome LBO. It does this because it supports a multi-level and sophisticated version of Ideal Utilitarianism that allows one to embody commitments to both the consequentialist criterion of rightness and to love in a way that ensures the unique motives and aims of each do not interfere with or impede each other. The version of Ideal Utilitarianism considered here has formal features of 'sophisticated consequentialism' that are identified by Railton as offering a way to overcome the LBO. Railton, however, only offers a structural sketch of what such an ethical theory would look like without filling in the details. McTaggart, on the other hand, offers a much more detailed and substantive moral philosophy. While his philosophical system may need considerable improvements and revisions to qualify as a viable alternative to contemporary ethical theories (and in fact it does need these), it at least shows that it is possible to start filling in the details of the kind of theory proposed by Railton in a way that is meaningful and at least *prima facie* plausible. I have not attempted to engage in any detailed application of McTaggart's theory to practical matters, but it is clear that regardless of what problems might arise concerning the intuitive status of its practical conclusions, it will be no worse off in terms of being applicable to practical questions than any other consequentialist system that has been proposed: one would have to estimate and compare the various values involved and one would have to assess the reliability of various proposed methods of moral choice according to their ability to reliably produce objectively

right actions. Ultimately one would have to assess and adjust McTaggart's theory based on the kinds of directives and guidance it produced, but this is a project that goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. If, however, it turns out that his theory can recognize the importance we intuitively assign to love and loving relationships, and recognize the unique perspective that loved ones have in major moral decisions, then this would be an advantage to his ethical theory and it might provide insight on how to develop other kinds of ethical theory. Hopefully, the fact that McTaggart's version of Ideal Utilitarianism is able, at least structurally, to overcome the LBO will give ethicists a reason to consider it more carefully and potentially develop it further.

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Curriculum Vitae

Name:	Trevor Jacob Bieber
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	<p>King's University College at Western London, Ontario, Canada 2000-2003 B.A.</p> <p>King's University College at Western London, Ontario, Canada 2006-2007 B.A. (Honours)</p> <p>Western University London, Ontario, Canada 2007-2008 M.A.</p> <p>Western University London, Ontario, Canada 2010-2015 Ph.D.</p>
Honours and Awards:	<p>King's University College Board of Directors Gold Medal for Academic Excellence in the Bachelor of Arts (3 year) Program 2003</p> <p>Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Canada Graduate Scholarship (CGS) – Masters 2007-2008</p> <p>Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) Doctoral Scholarship 2011-2012</p>
Related Work Experience	<p>Instructor Western University Business Ethics (<i>Philosophy 2074F</i>) September 2012 – December 2012</p> <p>Instructor King's University College at Western Introduction to Philosophy (<i>Philosophy 1300E</i>) September 2014 – April 2015</p> <p>Instructor Western University Global Business Ethics (<i>Philosophy 2075G</i>) January 2015 – April 2015</p>

Publications:

"Max Scheler and the Nature of Self-Love." *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3.1 (2012): 163-75.

"Assessing for Student Success and a Target Class Average: Balancing two grade-related goals facing university instructors and teaching assistants." *Teaching Innovation Projects* 2.2 (2012): Article 4. (<http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/tips/vol2/iss2/4>)