Troy Jollimore
Love's Vision.
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Writing about romantic love is a tricky business. The cynical will worry that one's theory will be mere autobiography leading to the reification of one's emotional life. Jealous lovers may think jealousy essential to love; the monogamous—and the insecure?—will think exclusivity essential to love. The religious will find god between the sheets. Thus, there are many words of commonsense wisdom that one may choose to reify into an overarching theory. Love is way of seeing, yet love is blind. Love will set you free, yet love is a drug. Love bestows value: beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Yet love responds to the value discovered: he loved her for her wit and kind words. A second problem concerns idealization—not the idealization lovers are said to have for their beloveds, but that of the theorists who want love to be a certain way because that would be best, or most edifying. Hence many writers slip into the moralizing language of *true* love, *genuine* love or *authentic* love, as if they were ashamed that plain ol' love wasn't so beautiful. Finally, a third caution is needed. It is extremely difficult to identify what the core phenomena of love are and distinguish them from typical or usual consequences of the phenomena. One might believe that the majority of romantic lovers love only one person at a time, but is this essential or just common? Such problems are the common lot for writers on love.

Troy Jollimore's preferred metaphor for love is vision. In his pleasantly written study Jollimore attempts to persuade us that love is a way of seeing. His view is object-centered. The beloved responds to the valuable characteristics of the beloved. Although these are reasons to love, these 'reasons' don't imply that these properties justify one's love, such that it would irrational not to love a person with these lovely properties. What kind of vision, then, is love? Jollimore writes: 'What matters is that… one's way of seeing picks him out uniquely, which means making him a subject of special kind of attention that is not directed to others' (44). But what kind of special attention is this? Jollimore discusses a number of issues here. For example, we will not stop and pause to decide between our lover and a stranger when both are in danger and only one can be saved. We see the beloved as the important one. Love's vision may also involve a kind of blindness to the faults of the beloved and, in the other direction, can involve a special awareness of the valuable properties of a person that others will not see. Acknowledging the power of Aristophanes' famous speech about lovers being two halves of one person, Jollimore agrees that love makes us see the world in terms of the interests of the couple and not the individual. Jollimore is keen to show that the cynics are wrong and that love is no obstacle to seeing clearly: the commitments of love do not necessarily transgress on the commitments of epistemology. Rather, the favorable light and faith we have that those we love are innocent, despite evidence to the contrary, for example, often reveal our great understanding of the beloved that strangers would fail to have.

But if love is a response to the value in the beloved—her beauty, wit and compassion, for example—then how is it possible for us to rationally ignore others who have these same properties? Are we not obliged to emote with love to these properties in others? Most people do not think this is correct, so the idea that we have *reasons* for love looks rather dubious. Jollimore's solution is to distinguish between recognizing some property as valuable and recognizing that I value it. Jollimore thinks we often do not value what we recognize or judge has value and that love involves valuing some values over others. Reasons are one thing; *my* reasons are another, apparently. Thus, although the beloved has valuable properties, we will not all emote with love to such properties because we do not all value those properties even if we recognize that they are values. Jollimore writes: 'Indeed, the decision to commit oneself to a given value is, in essence, the decision to treat it as important. Committing oneself to a particular person…involves taking that person's…interests…to generate compelling reasons for action in a way that similar considerations attached to other agents do not' (113).

Love's Vision covers other ground and Jollimore has some interesting discussions of the epistemological relationships holding between friends and lovers. He also offers a nice discussion of the puzzle of individuality: if we love someone because of their properties then we do not love them because of their identity or who they are. Jollimore effectively shows that there is no puzzle in loving a unique person because of their universal or commonly held properties.

However, in the end, Jollimore's account is rather unstable. First, one can make the case that Jollimore's view is not really an object-centered account. He includes so much activity on behalf of the lover that the account is better thought to be one of bestowal. His notion of seeing is misleading as a description of his own view: in fact he has in mind a more active concept of selective attention towards the beloved that he admits may be understood as a form of bestowal. He writes: 'Thus love, as a response to the beloved's valuable characteristics, also has some features of bestowal. What is bestowed, however, is not the value itself—again, presumably that was there all along—but rather the sort of close, generous, and imaginative attention that allows valuable features of this sort to reveal themselves' (72). But the lover's activities don't stop here: the lover must 'actively' value some of these 'already there' valuable properties of the beloved to love her (where others will not). But this combination of phenomena is surely just what most philosophers consider to be the bestowal of value. Of all the beloved's properties we make some of them valuable to me, i.e., I *act* or *emote* from perceiving them, and do not merely *find* them valuable. It is reasonable for you not to emote with love to my beloved's properties because love is tied to the activity of valu*ing*, *not* to the properties of the beloved, except in the trivial way that there must be some properties there for the lover to make valuable.

The second problem concerns Jollimore's solution to the puzzle. If the beloved's beauty gives the lover a reason to love her—he recognizes her beauty and is moved because he recognizes the goodness of beauty—then why is it reasonable for someone else, who recognizes her beauty, not to be moved to emote with love? Jollimore has no answer, except to repeat the idea that we may recognize the beauty as valuable without

having a behavioral or emotional reaction to that judgment, without having what he calls 'valuing'. But, again, the original question was why it is *reasonable* to refuse this 'valuing'

There are other puzzles for the vision metaphor, as Jollimore is aware. It isn't clear why the vision involved is unique to romantic love, since much of what was said could be transferred to nonromantic love. Second, as he often writes of it, the lover's gaze excludes others and focuses on the beloved. But this is a problem, for it appears to support exclusivity: that one can romantically love only one person at a time. Jollimore is wise enough not to commit himself to exclusivity, but by allowing simultaneous romantic love of two or more people, the account of vision as focus and exclusion seems less plausible: imagine having dinner with all four of one's romantic beloveds. The vision of those who love many people simultaneously is surely very different from those who do not. Love's vision, as Jollimore conceives it, might therefore be the result, not of love herself but of obsession or the emotional limitations so common in modern lovers.

Perhaps most of us can romantically love only one person at a time, but for those who are more free in spirit, the narrow vision of love, or our dualism of 'us' versus 'them' will not be acceptable, or part of *their* romance. And lastly, a word from the weird to push the inquiry into the shadows where we need to see more: *must* romance be restricted to *people*, as Jollimore insists? Do none of us know the oddballs who romantically love their plants and pets? Jollimore's vision is blind to their feelings. But *Love's Vision* is otherwise a thoughtful book and is nicely written, even if I fear it is a little short sighted.

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