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# Love and Economics[1]

The purpose of this paper is to philosophically investigate the relationship between love and economics; more specifically, it discusses the prima facie incompatibility between a certain view of love -- in which love essentially involves attitudes and preferences of care toward another person -- and some neoclassical economic models of human behavior -- in which people are understood to be self-interested. I consider several attempts to finesse the difficulty.

It might seem that the relationship between love and economics is of little interest or significance, on grounds that economics studies the public domain of money and markets and love is personal and intimate. But this idea would be mistaken for several reasons. As I explain in more detail below, love and economics are deeply intertwined. Problems like the gender wage gap can be analyzed through economic reasoning but are also thought to be tied to differences in the amount of caring labor women and men do in families. In the growing "law and economics" movement, economic reasoning is used to analyze and to craft legal principles, which in turn govern divorce, custody, inheritance, and other aspects of relationships. In the recent trend of "economics imperialism," economists use their methods in many domains, and theorists in other disciplines sometimes use economic forms of analysis in their own domains, so that economic reasoning is applied to a wide range of domains including family life and culture -- domains in which love might be central. Because the neoclassical conception is prominent in contemporary economic theory, and because economic theory is being used in various domains, it is necessary to understand how the neoclassical conception interprets, or might interpret, love and caring.

Though philosophers have not written much that addresses this matter directly, there is a substantive literature from various disciplines that bears on it in one way or another. I won't be able to cover all of that literature here, but my purposes are to introduce a certain framing of the issues, to survey some of the relevant writings, and to draw out some extended implications of dealing with the incompatibility in various ways.

It's worth taking a moment first to notice that in the early days of Western economic theory, the question we're asking might have seemed unimportant, if not downright incoherent. In the relevant cultural context, appropriate romantic love could only be heterosexual, and only men were seen as economic agents. In her historical work, feminist economist Michèle Pujol discusses how early neoclassical economists such as Jevons and Marshall dealt with the problem of categorizing "caring labor" by simply classifying all such activities as natural women's work, and then denying that women were economic agents at all.[2] As wives and mothers, they were naturally dependent on male relatives, naturally suited for reproduction and caring, and essentially irrational. In marriage, a woman's identity and preferences were subsumed into those of her husband, so the idea of reciprocal care between them would be outside the default frame.

To keep the scope of my discussion appropriately focused, I mostly consider love as it exists among adults, though I touch on other family relationships well. Some responses to the seeming incompatibility between love and economic models involve interpreting the economic approach so that it can accommodate other-regarding attitudes and preferences, while others involve theorizing about love in different ways. With respect to the first sort of response, I argue that some ways of incorporating other-regardingness lead to potential difficulties when they are used in contexts of bargaining or the pursuit of efficiency. For example, an asymmetry can result, leaving those who are more other-regarding in danger of exploitation and create pressures to be less caring and loving. With respect to the second, I draw on Robert Nozick's work to show how resolving the various tensions through union views of love creates other difficulties, essentially demanding that we divide our various relationships into discrete and non-overlapping categories of "caring relationships" and "economic relationships" in ways that are potentially problematic.

## Section 1: What is the problem?

Let me begin with a bit of background. Central to the modern neoclassical conception of economics is the model of people as rational maximizers of their own utility, where utility can be understood in a range of ways but is often theorized in terms of preference-satisfaction. As one standard textbook puts it, economics "assumes that human behavior reflects 'rational self-interest.'"[3] Economists typically use rational choice theory to formalize this conception using axioms, such as transitivity, to model persons: the most common interpretation is articulated in terms of a person's preferences, where those preferences are rational just as long as they satisfy the formal axioms. The theory is silent on which preferences a person ought to have, and is thus not concerned with the content of preferences; the conception of rationality is therefore purely instrumental.

The economic model can be interpreted in various ways, and there is debate over the extent to which the basic elements of the model are to be understood as descriptions of human motivation and the extent to which they should be seen as formalizations or idealizations which may be realized only imperfectly by actual human beings.[4] Furthermore, and as we'll see below, the terms of the theory -- such as "utility" and "self-interest" -- are open to interpretation. But there are reasons to think that in the standard interpretation, neoclassical models approaches model people as "self-interested" in a substantive, and not merely formal, sense. For example, the fact that people care about others, and care about moral issues such as fairness, is central to some criticisms of the neo-classical approach, such as those associated with behavioral economics. Behavioral economists draw on work in psychology and other fields to show that people are not as some of the models in neoclassical theory describe them. In their canonical work in that area, Christine Jolls, Richard Thaler, and Cass Sunstein list "bounded self-interest" alongside "bounded willpower" and "bounded rationality" as the one of the important ways people's actual behavior diverges from that described in the standard neoclassical economic approach.[5] Examples include caring and fair treatment. There is much controversy over the relationship between behavioral economics and its target but that needn't concern us here; the point is just that self-interest is squarely part of the typical interpretation of the neo-classical theory.

Love, in contrast, is often taken to be particularly characterized in terms of one person caring about or having certain attitudes toward another -- that is, with desires, emotions, attitudes, and preferences that are not self-interested. There are many ways to approach a theory of love; I'll be primarily concerned here with views of love in which love involves some kind of "other-regardingness:" these views appeal to some version of the idea that love entails having attitudes that are, in some sense, appropriately for others.

In contemporary philosophical writings on love, the idea of other-regardingess can be seen as relevant to a range of approaches. Most obviously, the idea of love as "concern" involves the idea that love essentially involves caring for the loved person. For example, Harry Frankfurt says that love is "volitional": it gives us reasons to act to foster the well-being of the beloved.[6] Some emotion views of love include the idea of care for the loved one as part of the relevant emotion.[7] In a recent attempt to find something basic about love that will garner widespread recognition and acceptance, Eric Cave proposes "concern for shared agency" -- here, you are motivated to act by some concern because it's one you've come to share with the person you love, or you are motivated to act by some concern of the beloved because it is something they care about.[8] Michael Stocker has argued that if one is ultimately motivated by self-interest, that is not compatible with love.[9] In each of these views of love, there is some sense in which you have reason to do something because of someone else, so your attitude or preference is, in some sense, not self-interested, but rather other-regarding. Relatedly, in his recent book on friendship and economics, Todd May says something similar about "deep friendship": that in it we "seek the good of the other for the sake of the other."[10] Though these approaches may differ in details, the idea that love involves other-regardingness is very widespread.

Because one stipulates self-interest and the other stipulates the opposite, on the face of it, the economic view of persons and the other-regardingness view of love seem incompatible: one can either be a rational economic agent, or one can love others, but not both. In a 1989 paper, the sociologist Paula England argues that the standard economic model and its usual interpretation is based on an idea of "separative selves": we are independent beings, who have their own tastes and preferences; these tastes and preferences concern only ourselves and our own well-being; we make rational contractual exchanges with others; rationality and emotion are opposed.[11] England says that a large body of feminist literature challenges these assumptions for women: women's selves are often intertwined with others', and caring attitudes, emotions, and actions are a large part of their lives. England adds that men are also misdescribed by the theory, since they too are "embedded in emotional bonds of connection that separative-self theories have denied."[12]

I mentioned briefly in the introduction a few reasons to think that the relationship between love and economics is important and significant; let me elaborate a bit on these. First, public policy often confronts issues that bring together economic considerations with those involving love and caring. The gender wage gap in North America is such that women earn roughly 78 cents for every dollar earned by men in the US[13] and 74 cents for every dollar earned by men in Canada.[14] The pay Equity Commission of the Government of Ontario, in Canada, lists several reasons for the wage gap, including "women choosing or needing to leave and re-enter the workforce in order to meet family care-giving responsibilities, resulting in a loss of seniority, advancement opportunities and wages."[15] As feminists have long pointed out, the choices women make to spend more time and energy caring for family members take place in the context of complex factors, including social norms that often direct women to be more caring and nurturing. The gender wage gap thus concerns both economics and love.

Second, among the aims of the "law and economics" movement is that of using economics methods to assess which laws are the most economically efficient.[16] Efficiency can be understood in a range of ways, sometimes referring to "Pareto" efficiency -- where no one's preferences can be better satisfied without further frustrating someone else's -- or maximizing efficiency -- where preference satisfaction is maximized overall. When these laws concern family life, relations among friends and intimates, and market domains like caring labor, where other-regarding attitudes may be common, the question of love, and how it can be understood economically, becomes salient.

Finally, self-described "economics imperialism" means economic modeling is now used in many contexts, e. g. to understand relationships, sexual behavior, racial discrimination, crime, and so on, that used to be more specifically the domain of sociology and related disciplines. In a 2009 paper Uskali Mäki quotes the economist George Stigler as saying, in 1984, "So economics is an imperial science: it has been aggressive in addressing central problems in a considerable number of neighboring social disciplines and without any invitations." Mäki adds that he "was perfectly justified in doing so. The imperialistic inclination of economics has been in operation for the last half a century, and it has gained in strength."[17] As an example of economics imperialism, Mäki offers the work of Gary Becker. Becker, who died in 2014, was an eminent economist who won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1992 and used economic analysis to understand many phenomena including family dynamics. The fact that application of economic methods are being applied to areas where we might expect to find love shows the importance of understanding how economists think about other-regardingness and, more broadly, the relation of love and economics

## Section 2: Self-interest can be other-regarding? The general view

The most obvious solution to the prima facie incompatibility is to say that, even though they seem different, self-interest and other-regardingness aren't incompatible after all, since the other-regarding person is, in some sense, acting to make themselves happy. As the authors of the textbook mentioned above put it, self-interested does not mean "selfish": people give to charity and make personal sacrifices for others, "because they derive pleasure from doing so."[18]

I'll examine several ways of making this idea precise, starting with the views of Gary Becker. Becker is widely regarded as the central figure in applying economic analysis to family life; he developed his idea of other-regardingness in terms of what he called "altruism."[19] In Becker's theory, altruism is understood as involving one person's utility function depending on the utility of another. That is, if your well-being goes up because someone else's well-being did, you are altruistic toward that person. This means that when you care about another person, that is a fact about you and what makes you better off; when you act to increase the utility of the person you care about, you do so because doing so directly increased your own well-being. In Becker's interpretation, when the altruist does something to benefit another person, the altruist and the target are each better off -- because the target is benefited directly, and the altruist gets "psychic income."[20]

We can see immediately that Becker's definition of altruism is incompatible with at least some views of love, since it posits the ultimate aim of one's own utility rather than the ultimate aim of the good of the other.[21] For example, in Frankfurt's volitional theory, love should be "disinterested," so that loving actions must aim at the well-being of the beloved and not at increasing one's own happiness or pleasure. And from a philosophical point of view, approaches like Becker's may seem in tension with our ordinary understanding of "altruism," in which the good of the other is taken to be a primary aim of action. But there are still reasons to analyze the model on its own terms and to examine the implications of adopting and using it. For one thing, we needn't interpret the model as accurately describing individual psychological motivation; we can, instead, take the model as containing a formalization or idealization. In addition, Becker's approach has been highly influential in the domains mentioned in section 1, such as the analysis of family life and the law and economics movement.

Becker extensively analyzed family life using this definition, deriving many conclusions, predictions, and theorems. Many of these show how a rational and altruistic head of a family would structure incentives for other "selfish" members so that those members acted toward the good of other members. For example, in his famous Rotten Kid theorem, he shows how a rational altruistic parent will reward and punish children -- including adult children -- to make them act to benefit and not harm other family members. This is a rational action because of the altruism that parent has toward those other family members.

One of the more striking aspects of Becker's work is that in the model he developed most extensively, it is assumed that there can be only one altruist per family. This is in part because avoiding multiple interdependent utility functions allows for the application of more elegant and familiar mathematics.[22] Of course, in practice, this means the model never fits a case in which there are two or more people each of whom care about the other. When it came to applying his theory to real life, Becker just assumed that families would consist in two heterosexual parents and their children, and for simplicity and consistency, that the patriarch would be the altruist -- he then added that the awkwardness of two parents in a family can be dealt with by simply modeling the wife as one of the selfish children.[23]

Becker's views have spawned a large literature, some of which focuses on the choice to consider the family as a unit -- a choice that may obscure the bargaining and conflict that takes place among its members, especially when those members are not taken into account equally.[24] Martha Nussbaum points to some of this research in her 1997 discussion of ethical problems in the law and economics movement, emphasizing difficulties with Becker's views.[25] In Becker's view, Nussbaum writes, "The head of the household is assumed to be a beneficent altruist who will adequately take cognizance of all the interests of all family members, in the process of maximizing the utility of the household as a whole."[26] She charges this approach with being explanatorily and normatively inadequate. In many families, parents are not equally altruistic toward their children, with some parents strongly favoring boys over girls. Love in families often co-exists with conflicts and bargaining over resources. In glossing over these distinctions, she says, Becker's model does not help us to predict how people will behave in situations like food scarcity. Furthermore, she claims, the model inappropriately treats the household as a kind of unit, which is then evaluated on the basis of whether it is doing well in aggregate. It assumes all is well as long as "no trade-offs that slight any member's interests will be made," and thus, "The potential conflict between maximization of well-being and making some members do badly is not stated or faced."[27] So Becker's approach does not allow us to consider what does happen -- or what should happen -- when people are unevenly or unequally altruistic toward family members. Here, Nussbaum directs the reader to consider Amartya Sen's wide-ranging criticisms of the standard approach, which includes calling attention to the inadequacy of its ability to theorize relationships and inequality.[28]

In response, the economist Robert Pollak says that these criticisms are based on a confusion -- a confusion prompted, in part, by Becker's use of the world "altruism" to describe what isn't really altruism at all.[29] Pollak says that Nussbaum's characterization of Becker's theory, as one in which a benevolent head of household takes into account everyone's interests is mistaken: Becker's definition of altruism is so broad that anything less than complete egoism counts as altruistic. That is, as long as a person has any other-regarding preferences at all, they are altruistic, even if they most of their preferences concern their own good, and even if their altruism is arbitrarily and unequally directed. Since there is no assumption of equal altruism, he says, the fact of unequal altruism cannot be said to falsify the theory. Pollak says that preferences such as those described by Becker are better called "deferential" than altruistic, because the person "defers" to what the other wants, and the confusion with ordinary understandings of "altruism" are avoided.

So in this exchange, Nussbaum notes that altruism is often not equally parceled out in families; Pollak says this is not a problem for Becker's model, because his model never makes an equality assumption. But Nussbaum also seems to be saying that the model should help us understand such inequalities, and their causes and their effects, rather than ignoring them.

This discussion highlights some complex and interesting issues. Some of these concern modeling and idealization. All models simplify and thus capture some aspects of reality better than others; if a model is internally coherent, when do its representational infelicities render it unsuitable? As Sen, Nussbaum, and other critics suggest, answers to this question depend, in part, on what it is that seems salient or important in a given context; in talking about families, relationships, and gender, treating the family as a unit may be particularly problematic because it obscures inequalities and conflict. A further subtlety has to do with the fact that the conclusions derived from within a model are often used for various purposes: indeed, we might particularly want to use such conclusions in planning or making policy, in hopes of bringing about better outcomes.

With respect to the questions of other-regardingness and inequality, there is one idea I think philosophical work can help illuminate and make precise: that certain ways of framing other-regarding preferences and certain uses of the model can promote unfairness, with the more other-regarding at risk of exploitation from the less other-regarding. I propose that philosophical work on contractarianism can help show one sense in which this might be so. Basically, the thought is that if we understand "preferences" broadly, to include the other-regarding preferences often seen as characteristic of love, then there is a sense in which bargaining or the pursuit of efficiency can make the more loving person worse off; depending on how we theorize the relevant normative concepts, this can result in unfairness to, and exploitation of, the more loving person.

Before we get to the details, it's worth noting that a recent philosophical discussion of preferences proposes opening them up in just this way. In a 2011 book about the nature of preferences in economic theory, Daniel Hausman, like Becker, proposes an interpretation in which economic preferences can be altruistic.[30] Unlike Becker's, Hausman's view of preferences is radically expansive, and doesn't focus on self-interest at all. Hausman says that instead of talking narrowly about a certain kind of preference for our own good, we should understand preferences as "total subjective comparative evaluations." This conception of preference is so general that "self-interested" and "other-regarding" preferences aren't even distinguished. In this framework, if A prefers to give B food because A loves B, and B prefers only to eat food because B cares only about themselves, these preference are on a par with one another. As Hausman notes, this way of seeing preferences accords well with the way we think in everyday life about preferences as connected to our beliefs, values, and overall reasons for acting.

Against this backdrop, I claim that certain uses of the model promote unfairness and exploitation in the context where we have asymmetrical other-regardingness. To see how this might arise, let's look first at the idea of intuitive double-counting. In an explanation of why disallowing some other-regarding preferences is important in theorizing about exchanges, the contractarian philosopher David Gauthier writes, "[Supposing that] I, considering us equally fond of cake, prefer that each of us get half, not only to your having a larger share but also to my having it, and [that] you prefer more cake for yourself to less, whatever I get, then it seems implausible to suppose that a rational and fair division gives you three-quarters of the cake and me one-quarter."[31] The point here is that the caring person's preferences are considered normally, but the target's preferences appear twice: once as their own and once as that of the carer.

Notice that this result follows from using the concept of preferences in certain ways. Gauthier is discussing the idea of an appropriate solution to a bargaining problem, and the idea is that even though in life people obviously have other-regarding preferences, because of the double-counting problem we should assume for purposes of this project that people are self-interested -- that they do not take an interest in others' interests. And I claim that the basic difficulty of double-counting arises in the same way when the theory is used in other ways, for example, when we think of a goal of maximizing efficiency and relying on the results of negotiation as well. Generally, suppose A and B start equally well-off, and want to make an exchange. Suppose A has both self-interested preferences and also other-regarding preferences for B's preferences to be satisfied, and B has only self-interested preferences. In this case, maximized efficiency of preference satisfaction, whether through social planning or as the result of negotiation, will result in B being better off, B's preferences having been, in effect, double-counted.

Depending on how we theorize the relevant normative concepts, we may conclude that this is unfair to A and exploits A's other-regardingness. For his part, Gauthier appeals to what seems plausible about a fair and rational distribution, thus seemingly appealing to intuitions about these concepts. Intuitively, he seems to suggest, it is wrong for a more other-regarding person to get less of the world's goods simply because they are other-regarding when others are selfish. Such a result is thus unfair. According to one theory of exploitation, to exploit someone is to take unfair advantage of them.[32] If it is unfair for A to get less, then B can easily exploit A by choosing to engage in exchanges with A in which B will get more and A will get less.

For example, suppose we have a situation of two adults who hope to have a mutually caring relationship, and imagine that one person has deep and wide-ranging other-regarding preferences -- perhaps naturally, perhaps as a matter of patriarchical socialization, upbringing, or other cultural factors -- and the other has almost none. If we take preferences to include other-regarding preferences, and we use this conception to determine which result is efficient and likely to come about through negotiation, we find a result of household inequality in which one person does most of the caring work -- cooking, cleaning, looking after others' well-being -- and the other does very little.

Outside the home, it's been noted that in commercial surrogacy, many surrogates are motivated partly by altruistic caring, while the prospective parents may see themselves as engaged in a more straightforwardly market-style transaction. Elizabeth Anderson's discussion of surrogacy argues that in such cases, where potential surrogates have "non-commercial motivations" but are offered only what "the norms of commerce demand in return," then she is open to exploitation.[33] This is because intuitively, the surrogate is looking out for the well-being of all parties, while the potential parents are looking out for the well-being of only themselves. I believe this sense of exploitation is aptly captured by the double-counting problem I've just mentioned: the preferences of the potential parents are double-counted, and the commercial surrogate is exploited.[34]

The conclusion is that solving the incompatibility by simply opening up preferences to include other-regarding preferences can lead to problematic outcomes. Of course, these problem arises only when (1) outcomes are understood in terms of outcomes related to negotiation and the pursuit of efficiency, and (2) we assume certain views of unfairness and exploitation.

With respect to (1), we needn't think of outcomes this way -- and indeed, Hausman argues that we shouldn't conceptualize well-being in terms of preference-satisfaction but should look at other considerations, including moral ones. But as Hausman emphasizes, standard practice in economics is to identify well-being with preference satisfaction and this creates the condition for our difficulty.

With respect to (2), I think the most obvious objection to my claims of fairness would be that the relevant exchanges are fair after all, on grounds that both the lover and the beloved are getting what they want: the more other-regarding person gets the internal subjective satisfaction of the other being pleased, and the more self-regarding person gets what they want for themselves. So much seems implicit in Becker's idea of "psychic income." To address this matter in full is beyond the scope of this paper and concerns deep issues about value and equality, but notice here that under this conception, if the "gender wage gap" is caused by gender-asymmetrical caring, then it's not a "gap" and not a problem, even if the asymmetry is a result of social norms and cultural factors. Given that other-regarding preferences are things we can choose to cultivate or suppress in others and in ourselves, we would get the odd result that pressuring others to become more other-regarding might be a rational and appropriate way to get more worldly goods for ourselves. I say more about this matter below.

## Section 3: Self-interest can be other-regarding? The nuanced view

I've argued that philosophical work on contractarianism helps pin down a sense in which accommodating love by allowing all other-regarding preferences can lead to problematic outcomes. Not surprisingly, that same work also shows us a more nuanced way of understanding other-regarding preferences. Interestingly, as far as I can tell there's almost no overlap in the philosophical literature on contractarianism and the economic literature on altruism -- perhaps because they are thought to address different topics.

The exception is Ann Cudd's under-appreciated 2001 paper "Rational Choice Theory and the Lessons of Feminism." Here, Cudd responds to England's arguments, described above in section 1, and argues that rational choice theory can help serve the ends of feminism. Acknowledging the double-counting problem as central, Cudd points out that we need not take a completely unrestricted view of preferences. Instead, we can interpret self-interest as "non-tuism" -- that is, self-interest means only that people are "not ultimately motivated by, for good or ill, the preferences of those with whom they are interacting."[35] Even if having preferences concerning the preferences of others is ruled out, we can still have preferences directly concerning their well-being.

For a simple illustration of this distinction, if A prefers that B's preferences for more food get realized and B does as well, then B's preferences might be double-counted. But if A prefers the state of affairs in which B is healthy to the state of affairs in which she is not, then the double-counting of preferences doesn't arise. Cudd says that we can thus distinguish "self-interestedness" from "selfishness": the former rules out preferences concerning the preferences of others, but allows for preferences concerning their well-being; the latter would mean having preferences that concern only one's own well-being and not that of anyone else.

Cudd argues that rational choice theory -- and especially game theory -- can serve the ends of feminism by showing women how to address the unfairness and exploitation that can arise when some people do more caring work and others do less. She writes,

> "If we understand caregiving behavior as, in Gauthier's terms, constrained maximization and noncaregiving behavior as straightforward maximization, then game theory tells us when it is rational to be a caregiver and when it is rational to increase the penalties against non-caregivers in order to increase their numbers in the environment. Game theory suggests that one's disposition is a choice to be caring or to be selfish, and thus that the relative number of caregivers and noncaregivers might be affected by how the collective of the caregivers treats the noncaregivers ... For women this is an especially relevant and important message in light of the fact that women do too much of the caring work in society. Recommending to women that they withhold care from men or others who refuse to reciprocate care is a feminist message."[36]

I take Cudd's basic idea to be as follows: we may have other-regarding preferences, and we may appropriately consider them in the category of "self-interested" for the purposes of theorizing, as long as those preferences are for the well-being of others and not for their preferences being satisfied. In this way we avoid the double-counting problem. Then, if inequality in how much people care for one another's well-being results in unfairness in the amount of caring work done, then the overburdened caregiver can use rational choice theory and its extensions in game theory to figure out when it would be rational to withhold caring work.

In response to the objection that the model, insofar as it treats preferences as all on a par instead of dealing with the fact that social pressures and norms are often the root cause of inequality in caring work, Cudd says, "this is not a problem with the model so much as with reality."[37] In these passages, I take her to mean that if the use of rational choice theory in certain background conditions results in unfairness and exploitation, that's a problem with our world, not with the theory, and it's a problem game theory helps us solve -- by directing over-carers to do less caring work.

This is a sophisticated proposal. But I think that if we try to use her ideas to address, in broad terms, the tension between the economic model and the nature of love, several questions and problems arise. Let's look first at the possibility of deploying the idea at an individual level.

First, notice the crucial shift from interpreting other-regarding preferences as those that concern the preferences of others to interpreting them as those that concern the well-being of others. This is how other-regarding preferences can still obey non-tuism: one is motivated not by a preference that another's preference be satisfied, but rather by a desire for the others well-being. The idea is that this addresses the double-counting problem. But -- as Cudd seems to acknowledge, given that she sees the framework as still allowing for persistent unfairness and exploitation -- the heart of the difficulty seems to persist. Indeed, it is this difficulty that requires her game theoretic solution. If A cares that B eats healthy food, and so spends more time cooking for both, while B cares only for B's own good, the kind of "unfairness" arising seems similar to that involved in double-counting. So it's unclear how significant the shift from caring about preference satisfaction to caring about well-being really is.

Second, this idea of caring about "well-being" as opposed to preference satisfaction is something we might wonder about in the context of love, because there is debate among theorists of love over whether love should be directed at the well-being of the other or at something else, something that better respects the others' autonomy with less potential of paternalism.[38] In a paper challenging "concern views" of love like Harry Frankfurt's, Kyla Ebels-Duggan writes, "In fact, in relationships between well-functioning adults it’s not only substantive but often false to claim that promoting the other's happiness is the loving thing to do. To follow the benefactor view's recommendations is to treat your beloved as a passive object of care rather than as a full-fledged agent. It demonstrates a judgment that your partner is, like the depressive, not to be trusted to make and enact his own choices."[39] This suggests that interpreting love -- especially love between or among equal adults -- through the "well-being" proposal might fail to capture something important about love itself: that it involves respect for what the other person says they want -- their preferences -- more than what would make them better off in some abstract sense.

A third matter is that we might wonder whether "refusing care work" or cultivating a less caring disposition is a removal of a burden for a carer. If A cares about B's health, but B does not reciprocate, the recommendation is, in part, for A to avoid being exploited by refusing to do caring work for B. At least in the context of love, this refusal might come at great cost to A. Anyone who has ever loved someone and tried to stop acting in caring ways toward them --

especially to stop the loved-one from being self-destructive -- knows that withholding care itself or refraining from caring action can be much more difficult than doing caring work.

Fourth, it's unclear, in families with children, how an appropriate negotiation might play out in practice. If one adult parents does less than their share of caring work, what should the other do? Less care of children? Care for children but not adults in the home? Suppose two people trade off making dinner for a family. If one adult in the home always makes a healthy dinner with salad and protein and vegetables and the other always orders pizza, what is the first person to do? Stop making healthy food? Make it only for the children?

Some of these problems seem to arise because of the suggestion to decrease caring labor as opposed to caring itself; perhaps we might go further and suggest the response involves caring itself: we could cultivate in ourselves fewer preferences for the well-being of others. While this might be rational on an individual level and might increase equality, it might do so by bringing about a reduction in the total amount of love -- at least if love is understood in terms of other-regardingness.

It's also worth noting that if other-regarding preferences are things we can cultivate in others and ourselves, it's possible that a person who wants to diminish the bargaining power of others at no cost to themselves may try to instill other-regarding preferences in other people. For example, a selfish person who wants to do less housework might try to instill a social value of other-regardingness in others, so they will form caring preferences and thus choose to perform caring labor. Indeed, though the historical mechanisms are complex and open to multiple interpretations, this has a certain coherence with the way patriarchical societies can prop up the social norm of "nurturing" women to benefit from their caring labor without having to pay a cost.

There may be some evidence of a push toward cultivating other-regardingness in others in commercial surrogacy. In a study of Indian surrogate mothers, Amrita Pande points out how the surrogates are encouraged to see themselves as caring, as engaging in a helping activity. Among other things, Pande says, this makes them easier to control and exploit. One counselor and hostel matron tells her surrogates, "... don't treat it like a business. Instead, treat it like God's gift to you. Don't be greedy."[40] This is an example of how cultivating other-regardingness in others might make them easier to exploit.

The preceding discussion concerned the individual level -- that is, the idea of changing our behavior as individuals. But Cudd's proposal could also be deployed at a broader level -- through policy and social changes. If we notice that social norms pressure a group to do more caring, and if we notice people in that group do more caring labor, we can use our rational choice model to help craft initiatives to change that. In this sense, economic models might be useful for addressing, in broad terms, inequalities that result from other-regarding attitudes. One interesting aspect of such proposals that our discussion highlights is that from the point of view of theories of love, they require a rejection of the Beckerian view we encountered above -- that altruism is its own reward. That is, to even articulate the sense that, from a broad perspective, there is an inappropriately unequal division of caring requires saying that one can care too much. It thus assumes a view in which the satisfaction of an other-regarding preference is, in some way, unlike the satisfaction of other preferences.[41]

## Section 4. Union views

My discussion so far has assumed the other-regarding view of love, and centered largely on the problems that can arise when we allow other-regarding preferences and one person is more other-regarding than another. A different solution to the prima facie incompatibility is to consider a different theory of love. In a union theory like that of Robert Nozick, when two people are in love they form a we, which is a new entity that has well-being and preferences of its own.[42] The question of how and whether the individuals' identity persists and their relations to the we has been fraught from the beginning.[43] It's implausible to think that the individuals completely lose their own identity -- as Nozick himself says, they must retain some sense of their own selfhood. But then how are we to understand the relation of the self to the we, or which parts of our identities become merged? With respect to the vexed question of whether the we is part of the individual selves or the individual selves are part of the we, Nozick suggests perhaps it's the former for men and the latter for women.[44] That is, men have the relationship as part of who they are, while for women who they are is part of the relationship. This, of course, echoes the patriarchical idea of women subsumed into men's identity in marriage. Of course, we needn't interpret the union theory in this gendered way; the point is just that there are practical implications arising from our interpretation of the relationship between the self and the *we.*

In the union view, we needn't talk of other-regarding preferences; instead the love comes from the merging of identities. But when it comes to questions of fairness and exploitation, it's not so much that the questions are resolved as that they can't even be formed in the first place. Without some more specific and subtle interpretation of the relation of the self to the we, a literal merging seems to indicate the preferences are simply added; this means stronger preferences override others. For example, suppose A, a woman, is socialized to prioritize her own health and that of her partner B. Suppose B, a man, is socialized to prioritize his career and ability to earn money. When A and B form a union, the union will then have preferences for As health, B's health, and B's career. Indeed, if B's caring about his career is strong enough, the union will care more about B's career than anything else. A's well-being doesn't factor in at all. The union doesn't allow us a framework for thinking about how individuals are doing as themselves when they are in loving relationships.[45]

Another interesting and problematic implication of the union view is the way it makes love into a binary relationship -- or, at least, a relationship among a limited number of intimates. Binary, because if love is union, then love becomes an on-or-off, a 0 or 1 -- and, amazingly, it would follow from this conception that you can only really love the people who love you back. Admittedly, Nozick says that falling in love involves "wanting" to form a we -- and in fairness to him, he's really talking about romantic love rather than love in general. But still, if we take the essence of love to be a kind of union, then -- at least for some kinds of love, taken to be central or characteristic -- either both of you love in an intensely committed way or there's nothing. And love is essentially limited to a small number of people, because it is a relationship a very small number of people have an intensely personal way, in families, in the home.

Though Nozick doesn't draw out these implications, given what we've seen of other-regarding preferences and the possibility of unfairness and exploitation, it's possible that forming or acting on other-regarding preferences outside the home would be irrational. That is, we've seen conditions under which negotiation and efficient outcomes would result in those with other-regarding preferences being worse off. If we address this problem by moving to a union theory of love, that treatment would make sense only for those with whom one can form a union -- an intense, private, symmetrical affair. Under certain conditions, then, it would make no sense to be other-regarding outside of our most intimate relationships. If you address the questions of love, other-regardingness, and unfairness with a union theory of love, you are led to an argument for small stable families in which members are super-committed to one another, while in the broader world love makes no sense. This arises not because of a defect in the union theory of love itself, but rather from trying to use the union theory to address the problems of potential unfairness already mentioned: if the answer to potential unfairness in contexts of efficiency and negotiation by appealing to a union theory, that theory will work only for those relationships in which union is possible: small groups of people who are highly committed to one another.

## Conclusion

I've discussed several ways of resolving the prima facie incompatibility between the economic interpretation of people and the possibility of other-regardingness in love: a general attempt to accommodate other-regardingness as a form of self interest, a nuanced attempt to direct caring preferences toward the well-being of others and use game theory to address inequalities, and a union view of love that avoids the issue of other-regardingness through the creation of a new entity with preferences of its own. In each case, I've tried to draw out some of the potential implications of thinking in the given way and using the conceptions to various purposes, pointing specifically to themes of unfairness, exploitation, the decline of love and care, and love being appropriate only within narrow bounds. There are many directions for further thought, but I hope at least to have shown how the question of love and economics is both philosophically interesting and bears relation to broad social, political, and cultural matters.

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