

In Defense of Love Internalism

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Abstract In recent defenses of moral responsibility skepticism, which is the view that no human agents are morally responsible for their actions or character, a number of theorists have argued against Peter Strawson's (and others') claim that "the sort of love which two adults can sometimes be said to feel reciprocally, for each other" would be undermined if we were not morally responsible agents. Among them, Derk Pereboom (*Living without free will*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, *Ideas y Valores* 141:5–25, 2009) and Tamler Sommers (*Philos Q* 57(28):321–342, 2007, *Relative justice: cultural diversity, free will, and moral responsibility*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2012) most forcefully argue against this conception of love. However, in this paper, I plan to defend the claim that there is an essential connection between love and moral responsibility, a thesis I will call *love internalism*. To begin, I will specify the content and scope of love internalism, and consider ways in which other theorists have attempted to motivate it. I will then consider the various arguments that Pereboom and Sommers advance against love internalism. These arguments, it seems to me, offer us powerful reasons to reject several of the ways in which philosophers have tried to connect moral responsibility to love. Consequently, in light of these criticisms, I will further precisify the content of love internalism. And as we will see, love internalism (as I argue for it) is immune to Pereboom's and Sommers' criticisms. Moreover, when its content is sufficiently clarified, love internalism *can* serve as a plausible premise in an anti-skeptical argument. I thus conclude by arguing that this suitably reformulated statement of love internalism offers a significant challenge to moral responsibility skepticism of the sort Pereboom and Sommers endorse.

Keywords Moral responsibility · Love · Moral responsibility skepticism · P. F. Strawson

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Destroy love and friendship; what remains in the world worth accepting?
 ~David Hume¹

1 Introduction

In recent defenses of moral responsibility skepticism, which is the view that no human agents are morally responsible for their actions or character, a number of theorists have argued against Peter Strawson's (and others') claim that "the sort of love which two adults can sometimes be said to feel reciprocally, for each other" would be undermined if we were not morally responsible agents (Strawson 1962/2003, 79).² Among them, Pereboom (2001, 2009) and Sommers (2007, 2012) most forcefully argue against this conception of love. However, in this paper, I plan to defend the claim that there is an essential connection between love and moral responsibility, a thesis I will call *love internalism*.

To begin, I will specify the content and scope of love internalism, and consider ways in which other theorists have attempted to motivate it. I will then consider the various arguments that Pereboom and Sommers advance against love internalism. These arguments, it seems to me, offer us powerful reasons to reject several of the ways in which philosophers have tried to connect moral responsibility to love. Consequently, in light of these criticisms, I will further precisify the content of love internalism. And as we will see, love internalism (as I argue for it) is immune to Pereboom's and Sommers' criticisms. Moreover, when its content is sufficiently clarified, love internalism *can* serve as a plausible premise in an anti-skeptical argument. I thus conclude by arguing that this suitably reformulated statement of love internalism offers a significant challenge to moral responsibility skepticism of the sort Pereboom and Sommers endorse.

2 Identifying the 'Love' of Love Internalism

To begin, I certainly do not (and indeed, no one to my knowledge), think(s) that morally responsible agency is required for all forms of love or for all relationships that are grounded in love. Love internalism, then, is a restricted thesis; it applies only to the kind of love that is characteristic of our closest friendships and of our relationships with spouses or partners. In other words, according to love internalism, only the specific form of love that is manifested in *reciprocal* relationships essentially implicates the conditions of morally responsible agency.

But what is reciprocal love?

And how does it differ from other forms of love?

¹ Hume (1742/1987) I.XIX.11. This question immediately follows Hume's humorous response to the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes (the book in which Solomon declares life to be meaningless): "Had he tried the secret of one wife (instead of 700) or mistress (instead of 300), a few friends, and a great many companions, he might have found life somewhat more agreeable."

² For a sampling, see Pereboom (2001, 2009), Sommers (2007, 2012), Waller (2011).

Like many other familiar forms of love (e.g., paternalistic love for very young children), reciprocal love involves a deep and intimate bond (though not necessarily a physical or sexual bond) between friends and/or lovers. Consequently, it can be especially meaningful. Another feature of reciprocal love is that it essentially involves a concern for the beloved for his or her *own sake*; that is, it is other-directed.³ Of course, the love of a parent for her child similarly involves a deep and intimate bond that is meaningful and other-directed. So these two characteristics of reciprocal love do not serve to individuate it from other meaningful forms of love.

However, despite similarities with other varieties of interpersonal love, I want to insist that reciprocal love *is* unique. For example, unlike the love of a parent for a young child, the love we have for our friends is embedded in a relationship of *mutual* regard. Thus a reciprocal love relationship, unlike relationships grounded solely in parental love, necessarily involves mutual expectations of recognition and of respect.⁴ To be sure, there is more to reciprocal love than expectations that the beloved will regard us with good will and respect. But this difference between reciprocal and paternalistic love relationships is important, and, I think, it helps to explain why love for a dear friend and love for a young child are meaningful in distinctive ways.

In other words, although both paternalistic and reciprocal forms of love are intimate, and can be deeply meaningful for it, only reciprocal love strives for a kind of mutuality that is manifested in the form of mutual expectations for concern and for respect. Of course, even in our most intimate reciprocal love relationships, reciprocity and mutuality stand only as an aspirational ideal.⁵ We mostly find ourselves only imperfectly and haltingly taking our friends or lovers seriously in the ways required for full reciprocity. But even though we are quite inadequate in this respect and prone to lapses of mutual concern, we sometimes do find ourselves enjoying another's company in a way that is distinctive of relations grounded in reciprocal love. And when we love our friends in this distinctive way, we are engaged in what Bennett Helm has called "plural agency" (Helm 2010, 282ff.). So even if we regularly fail to achieve full reciprocity, by being engaged in robust forms of plural agency, the norm of reciprocity comes to have practical import for us.

Love internalism, then, is the thesis that love of the sort that characterizes our closest friendships would be subverted (in some way) if moral responsibility skepticism were true. So the fact that we need not regard young children (or even pets) as morally responsible agents in order to love them, does not by itself tell

³ For a helpful discussion of what it is to be concerned for someone for "her own sake," see Velleman (1999).

⁴ Of course, it must be noted that our paternalistic love for young children ideally aims at helping the child grow into the sort of person with whom reciprocal relationships are possible. This will invariably involve forms of engagement that reflect the child's growing, though still less-than-wholly-developed capacities for interpersonal cooperation and interaction. Consequently, even in our relationships with young children, we tend to treat them not as objects to be manipulated but as persons with whom we are reciprocally related. This does not, however, tell against my claim that there is something distinctive about those reciprocal relationships we enjoy with other adults, since adults generally possess the sorts of agential capacities that are necessary for standing in relationships grounded in reciprocal love.

⁵ I am especially indebted to Martha Nussbaum on this and related points (see especially fn. 9).

against love internalism. Similarly, the fact that we rarely (if ever) attain the full suite of conditions that are necessary for full reciprocity and mutuality does not give us reason to doubt love internalism. Of course, though these challenges do not tell against love internalism, nothing I have said so far really tells in *favor* of love internalism either. To remedy this then, in what follows, I will consider some standard motivations for love internalism.

3 Motivating Love Internalism

As I have already noted, the clearest statement of love internalism is found in Peter Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment." There he discusses the "objective attitude," which is an attitude we adopt towards another when we do not regard him or her as a morally responsible agent. And concerning the objective attitude, Strawson suggests that "it cannot include the range of reactive feelings and attitudes which belong to ... inter-personal relationships; it cannot include ... the sort of love which two adults can sometimes be said to feel reciprocally, for each other" (Strawson 1962/2003, 79). It seems then, for Strawson at least, if we do not regard another as morally responsible, then we cannot love that person in the especially meaningful way that characterizes our relations (or our relational aspirations) with close friends and with spouses and partners.

To further motivate love internalism as a thesis worth taking seriously, Robert Kane insists:

there is a *kind* of love we desire from others—parents, children (when they are old enough), spouses, lovers and friends—whose significance is diminished ... by the thought that they are determined to love us entirely by instinct or circumstances beyond their control or not entirely up to them ... To be loved by others in this desired sense requires that the ultimate source of others' love lies in their own wills (Kane 1996, 88).

Laura Ekstrom similarly develops this point when she suggests that

to suppose that human beings are wholly without free will (of the sort required for moral responsibility) seems naturally to require that we give up some of the satisfaction we derive from our relationships... One type of relationship especially illustrative of this dependence of a sense of genuineness upon an assumption of free will is the romantic sort of personal relationship (Ekstrom 2000, 16).

In addition to these statements of love internalism, Kane and Ekstrom supplement their statement of the thesis by approvingly citing Anglin's (1990) discussions of the connection between free will (of the sort required for moral responsibility) and love.⁶ Anglin claims that

⁶ It is worth noting that in very few of these quotations is the thesis of love internalism explicitly or precisely stated. However, it seems clear from context that it is an assumption that underlies each of these claims.

it is an essential part of our most intimate relationships that we view our love as a ‘freely given gift.’ If I learn that my spouse loves me only because this ‘love’ is the inevitable product of some childhood experience then the whole relationship takes on a strange and dark color (Anglin 1990, 20).⁷

It seems, then, that Kane, Ekstrom, and Anglin all agree that one of the things that matters to us, at least when reciprocal love is concerned, is that our lovers are responsible agents. Indeed, perhaps even more succinctly, Susan Wolf claims that she “hopes it is *obvious* why the words ‘friendship’ and ‘love’ would take on a hollow ring (if we did not regard others as morally responsible)” (Wolf 1981, 391, emphasis added). The main upshot of these theorists’ claims, then, is simply that there is *something* about mature reciprocal love that implicates morally responsibility agency.

4 Against Love Internalism

Of course, these are, more or less, simply statements of the intuition that animates various theorists’ commitment to love internalism; they do not by themselves constitute an argument. And in response, Pereboom and Sommers forcefully argue that neither Strawson, nor Kane, nor Ekstrom, nor Anglin, nor Wolf has actually made a satisfactory case in its favor. As Sommers pointedly puts it: “no theorist that I know of has provided any rigorous argument showing that denying moral responsibility would endanger even the most tragic, passionate, romantic, or blissful kinds of love that exist. This conclusion is simply assumed, and then underscored with gloomy metaphors” (Sommers 2012, 181).

No doubt, it would be bad enough if Sommers is right in thinking that love internalists have been replacing arguments with simple “intuition pumps.” But even worse for love internalism, Pereboom and Sommers also offer especially strong arguments in favor of the conclusion that the possibility of meaningful love relationships does *not* hinge on whether the participants to such relationships are morally responsible for their actions. It thus seems that if love internalism is to be a defensible position, then not only does it need to be argued for (rather than assumed), it must also be able to answer the challenges raised by skeptics like Pereboom and Sommers. Accordingly, in an effort to better understand how love internalism can be defended, I turn to Pereboom’s and Sommers’ challenges below.

⁷ Similarly (in a theological context), Anglin writes: “God might have created us in such a way that it was prearranged that we “love” him and each other. This would not really be love. For no one can love truly unless, at some time or other, he is free not to love, and in a sense which precludes an arrangement which would be a sufficient cause of love-like behavior” (Anglin 1990, 20). Of course, as Robert Kane rightly notes, Anglin is hardly the first theologian to make this connection: from Augustine on, Christian theologians have claimed that the kind of free will (or control) that is required for moral responsibility is a requirement on the possibility of love. This is hardly surprising however, since independently of the truth of love internalism, free will theodicies lose much of their motivation.

4.1 Pereboom's Objections

Pereboom (2001, 2009) begins by noting (as I did earlier) the obvious truth that many valuable forms of love do not seem to require morally responsible agency. A mother's love for her newborn infant in no way presupposes that the infant is morally responsible. Nor does her love for her newborn infant presuppose that she has freely chosen to love her child. More plausibly, her love for the infant is what Harry Frankfurt (1982) has called a "volitional necessity," since the mother's love is not up to her. Yet such loves are intimate and deeply meaningful.

Of course, as I have already argued, this by itself does not tell against love internalism, since love internalism is a restricted thesis that specifically concerns *reciprocal* love of the sort that we take ourselves to enjoy with our spouses and partners, and also with our closest friends and confidants. That said, Pereboom's invocation of parental love does provide the first plank in a cumulative case argument against love internalism. After all, if a form of love that is as important and as meaningful to human life as the love of a parent for his or her child does not require moral responsibility on the part of either participant, why should we think that other forms of love do require morally responsible agency?

One possible answer to this challenge that Pereboom considers is found in Søren Kierkegaard's suggestion that marriage relationships require a commitment that is continuously renewed.⁸ As Pereboom describes it, "such a commitment involves a decision to devote oneself to another, and thus ... a marital relationship ideally involves a *continuously repeated decision*" (Pereboom 2001, 204; emphasis added). Unlike the love of a parent for a child, the kind of love involved in marriages (and presumably, in all forms of intimate reciprocal love relationships), seems to involve volitional commitments that are optionally undertaken. That is, the maintenance of this form of love is no accident; it must be *chosen*. Accordingly, this might be seen as a promising explanation of the internal link between love and moral responsibility.⁹

Unfortunately for those seeking to defend love internalism, however, even if we agree with Kierkegaard about this ideal of love, it does not follow that those lovers who continuously renew this commitment must be morally responsible for their decision to do so. And indeed, Pereboom leverages precisely this point against love

⁸ Kierkegaard (1843/1971).

⁹ I want to emphasize that the kind of love I am interested in is, unlike Kierkegaard, not simply confined to marriage. Indeed, given the historical characteristics of marriages (e.g., the widespread view of wives as inferior to or as properly submitted to their husbands), they are probably not the best example of a love relationship that aspires to full reciprocity of the sort I am discussing. Moreover, marriages often serve to isolate one of the partners—most frequently women—from healthy networks of friends and relations, and this seemingly makes one partner dependent on the other in a way that unfortunately promotes deep asymmetries in the relationship. Thus, many marriages fail to facilitate or even aspire to the conditions of reciprocity.

Instead, intimate friendships seem to be a better example of such a relationship. But because it seems to me that what Kierkegaard says about marriage is plausibly true of close, long-term friendships, I address it here. Moreover, because in many parts of the world, friendship is now thought to be a feature of marriage, I think it is plausible that a great many marriages do aspire to full reciprocity (though again, whether marriages are successful in this aspiration is another question—even in those societies that prize marriages made of love and friendship).

internalism: while it might be a relational *good* that lovers are morally responsible for their continuously renewed commitment to one another and to the relationship, what reason is there for thinking that it is *necessary* for lovers to be morally responsible for their decision(s) to continuously renew commitment to one another? After all, even a moral responsibility skeptic can accept that we very frequently decide to commit ourselves to various things, since moral responsibility skepticism does not entail that we do not make choices. So put baldly, we might ask: why do the commitments implicated by the sort of love Kierkegaard describes have to be commitments that the agent is morally responsible for undertaking? This is Pereboom's challenge and without a compelling answer to it, I think we should side with him and conservatively conclude that love internalism is false.

Now at this point, the defender of love internalism might claim that I have given up the game too quickly: perhaps we will see that love internalism can answer Pereboom's challenge by reflecting on the following case.

Toothpaste

Suppose that Margaret continuously renews her commitment to her wife, Pearl. But suppose also that unbeknownst to Margaret, Pearl has been daily manipulating her, by lacing Margaret's toothpaste with *Love Potion No. 9* every morning. This concoction causes subtle neurological changes in Margaret, which cause her to daily renew her loving commitment to Pearl.¹⁰

Plausibly, despite Margaret's daily choice to renew her commitment to Pearl, the idea that Margaret and Pearl enjoy a meaningful form of love is suspect. And what explains this, the defender of love internalism might claim, is that Margaret is not morally responsible for her choice. Thus it is actually necessary for love that the lovers are morally responsible for their continuous renewals of commitment. After all if we are not morally responsible for our continual renewals of commitment, then that commitment does not seem to constitute the form of commitment that Kierkegaard identifies with marital love. It seems then, that our considered judgment in *Toothpaste* shows love internalism to be vindicated.

Against this, however, it is worth noting that there is actually a better explanation for why Pearl and Margaret cannot really enjoy the relevant sort of love—an explanation that does not appeal to the fact that Margaret is (putatively) not responsible for her decisions to renew her commitment to Pearl.¹¹ Indeed, the best explanation for why Pearl and Margaret do not enjoy “the sort of love which two adults can sometimes be said to feel reciprocally, for each other” is simply that in *Toothpaste*, the sort of love Pearl and Margaret enjoy is not reciprocal.

¹⁰ This is, I think, exactly analogous to the sort of case that Anglin has in mind. However, in *Toothpaste*, it is Pearl and not God, who manipulates Margaret's love.

¹¹ Indeed, if the neurological changes induced by the *Love Potion No. 9* in Pearl's toothpaste bring about her daily renewals of commitment in the right way, then I (and other so called “hard compatibilists”) would judge Pearl to be morally responsible for her commitment. However, I also think that there is something suspect about Pearl and Margaret's relationship. Thus, on my view, and on the view of other love internalists who accept hard compatibilism, that Pearl is not morally responsible can play *no* role in explaining why her relationship with Margaret is not meaningful in the way that we take our relationships with loved ones to be.

Because Pearl daily manipulates her wife, she secretly enjoys a position of differential power within the relationship. That is, by lacing Margaret's toothpaste with *Love Potion No. 9* every morning, Pearl does not treat Margaret as having equal standing to determine the course of their relationship. Rather than being agents acting collectively, Margaret's agency is co-opted by Pearl's machinations. And by undermining the basis for equal engagement, Pearl's covert manipulation thereby undermines the basis for reciprocity. Thus, while Margaret really does love Pearl, it is plausible that her love is not meaningful in the way that we take our own loves to be meaningful. But this has nothing to do with whether or not Margaret is morally responsible for her decisions to continually renew her commitment to Pearl. Indeed, even if Margaret is morally responsible for her decisions, Pearl's role in bringing about Margaret's love undermines the status of their relationship as reciprocal.

So despite initial appearances, *Toothpaste* does not vindicate love internalism. Love internalism still has the burden of explaining why, in light of Pereboom's challenge, morally responsible agency is *necessary* for reciprocal love of the sort we value.

In addition to showing that moral responsibility is not required for reciprocal love in virtue of it being necessary for continuous renewals of commitment, Pereboom also argues (fairly convincingly by my lights) against Kane's claim that what we desire in reciprocal love relationships is a form of love (and an accompanying relationship) that is brought about by the free choice of the lovers. Inviting us to consider college roommates who were randomly assigned to share a dorm room or a couple whose marriage is arranged by their parents, Pereboom (2009) argues that the relationships that often form from such arrangements can nevertheless inculcate a very meaningful form of reciprocal love, even though the lovers are not morally responsible for initiating the relationships. Specifically, Pereboom claims that although

we might desire that another person make a decision to love ... it is far from clear that we have reason to want the decision to be *freely* will in the sense required for moral responsibility. ... Moreover, while in circumstances (involving arranged roommates or spouses) we might desire that someone else make a decision to love, we would *typically prefer* the situation in which love was not mediated by a decision (Pereboom 2009, 27–28; emphasis added).

Here Pereboom not only reemphasizes his earlier challenge—what necessary ingredient for reciprocal love does moral responsibility *add?*—he presses further. Not only should we not care about whether our friends or lovers are morally responsible for initiating our love relationships, it is plausible (from a psychological perspective) that what we really want, for example, in our spouses, is not someone who dutifully and responsibly decides to tolerate us, say, on the basis of weighing reasons for and against loving us. Rather we want someone who finds us irresistible, warts and all. What we want, then, is someone who could not help but to love us.¹²

¹² Of course, this does not mean that what we really want is someone who will let us walk all over them or someone who will remain committed to us no matter what. Rather, we want their love for us to respect the fact that we are not fungible. And if some loves us only because on balance, the reasons favor love, then presumably, in a case in which the reasons favor love of someone else to some greater degree, they should love that person.

It follows then, that if love internalism is true, it is not true in virtue of reciprocal love requiring lovers to be morally responsible for initiating the relationship. But to reiterate, this should come as no surprise. After all, it is often the case that, e.g., our closest friends are people we grew up with, and we are certainly not morally responsible for initiating those relationships. Likewise, many of us have fallen in love with others, quite plausibly for physical reasons beyond our control. But the love that blossoms from these relationships is no less meaningful simply because we were not responsible for the conditions under which the attraction developed into something more significant.

Thus Pereboom gives us reason to doubt that love internalism can be true. Not only does love internalism have a significant explanatory burden, it does not seem accurate in its description of what we desire in love. And Pereboom's not alone in his criticism of love internalism. Sommers has similarly taken up these themes from Pereboom, also arguing that love internalism is untenable. I consider Sommers' skeptical arguments below.

4.2 Sommers' Objections

Sommers (2007, 2012) offers further reasons for doubting love internalism. First, Sommers notes that many great love stories—e.g., *Tristan and Isolde*—“involve a love that was generated by fate, potions, or arrows” (Sommers 2012, 182). And this is plausibly correct, since many stories of reciprocal love do begin with some event outside of anyone's control that puts the lovers on an inevitable course to bliss (and then often tragedy). Presumably then, since the agents in question are not morally responsible for their love, by either libertarian or compatibilist standards, this presents a problem for love internalism. After all, in these stories, we are imagining—even lauding—reciprocal love between two adults even though we would not judge them to be morally responsible for its initiation or maintenance.

Second, Sommers considers what he takes to be another kind of reciprocal love that *clearly* does not involve a belief about moral responsibility: our love for pets. According to Sommers:

Those of us who love our dogs and believe the love to be reciprocated form this deep bond without presuming anything about moral responsibility and certainly without in any way viewing the love of a dog as a freely given gift. We know that it is a result of our having cared for them, played with them, walked them, and fed them since they were puppies. Moreover, we know that dogs have been bred to form deep attachments with human beings—their loyalty and eagerness to please have been both artificially and naturally selected for. We know that they do not reflectively endorse their feelings of love, or subject them to the light of reason. We know this, and we do not care. We still love them, and we view their love for us as genuine (Sommers 2012, 182).

There is obviously a lot going on here, but one of the most striking things—at least for our purposes here—is Sommers' claim that those of us who love dogs (or other animals that possess relatively sophisticated social and relational capacities)

believe our love to be reciprocated. This is important since love internalism is, after all, a thesis about reciprocal love (rather than say, a thesis about paternalistic love). So if Sommers is right to think that our love for dogs is genuinely reciprocal, then he is also right to think that reciprocal love can be genuine, deep, and meaningful without requiring that we believe the dog to be a morally responsible agent.

Of course, the love internalist might reply that there is something odd about Sommers' invocation of our love for pets as a reason to doubt the truth of love internalism. Love for pets, he must admit, is an attitude we take towards *animals*. And, however, deep or meaningful this form of love may be—surely it is not really of a piece with our love for *persons*. There is simply too much difference between the reciprocal love we have for persons and the possibly reciprocated love that we might enjoy with animals like dogs. Sommers anticipates this objection and responds as follows:

...the two kinds of love *are* different, but this difference has nothing to do with moral responsibility. The difference is that human beings have far more complex, maddening, and exciting ways of expressing and feeling love for another.... The love we feel for husbands, wives, partners, close friends, and children is deeper in many ways than the love we feel for our dogs, just as our love for dogs is deeper than our love for a good wine. Romantic love, friendships, parent–child relationships evolve because of who we are, how we naturally complement each other, the good times, good jokes, and tragedies that we go through together. None of this is undermined by the objective attitude. None of this requires a belief in desert-entailing moral responsibility (Sommers 2012, 182–83).

Here Sommers brings home his point—a point that nicely echoes Pereboom's earlier challenge to love internalism, I might add. Although there are differences in the depth and meaning of interspecies relationships and interpersonal relationships, we can explain these differences as differences in *degree* and not in *kind*. And because the former relationships obviously do not require a commitment to moral responsibility, neither should we think that the latter require such a commitment.

Again, as with Pereboom, I think we should understand Sommers here as placing an explanatory burden on love internalism. Not only have love internalists refused to offer a sufficiently “rigorous argument” (Sommers 2012, 181) for their thesis, reflection on the meaning and significance of ordinary love relationships reveals that we can participate in love relationships—even reciprocated love relationships—without any beliefs whatsoever about whether our beloveds are morally responsible agents. And if that is right, it suggests that love internalism cannot meet its explanatory burden. Like many other high-minded theses one might accept about human persons (e.g., transparency of mental states, the infallibility of certain forms of self-knowledge, etc.), love internalism sounds nice, but it is not accurate as a plausible understanding of human beings and of our cherished relationships, which are grounded in reciprocal love.

Now, it seems to me that much of what Pereboom and Sommers argue is correct. But ultimately, I think it fails to undermine love internalism. The fact that we can have deep and meaningful love relationships even if we do not believe our beloved

to be morally responsible in no way vitiates the claim that morally responsible agency is internal to reciprocal love—at least not when love internalism is properly understood.

5 Reformulating Love Internalism

As I introduced it, I claimed that relationships grounded in reciprocal love would be undermined by the truth of moral responsibility skepticism. But I stated very little about how the truth of moral responsibility skepticism would subvert these reciprocal love relationships. So to remedy this, I want to clarify this point. To begin, I will try to offer an argument for love internalism—one that should assuage Sommers' worries that love internalism rests on nothing more than "gloomy metaphors." I will then (in §6) show that the thesis that emerges from this argument is not only well motivated (therefore meeting Pereboom's and Sommers' explanatory burden) but that it is not undermined by their counterarguments. In short, I will show love internalism to be vindicated.

5.1 The Argument for Love Internalism

To begin, consider this straightforward Argument for Love Internalism (which I will call "ALI").

1. Relationships that are constituted by reciprocal love are, *inter alia*, relations of mutual regard.
2. The participants in relations of mutual regard have normative expectations of one another.
3. One such normative expectation is the expectation that each participant relate to the other in respectful ways.
4. A normative expectation that others respect us is constituted by our susceptibility to the reactive emotions.
5. Thus, it is appropriate for us to have normative expectation of others only if they are apt targets of the reactive emotions.
6. Thus, it is appropriate for us to engage in relations of mutual regard only if they are apt targets of the reactive emotions.
7. Thus, it is appropriate for us to engage in relationships grounded in reciprocal love only if our beloveds are apt targets of the reactive emotions.
8. But to be an apt target of the reactive emotions just is to be a morally responsible agent.
9. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to engage in relationships grounded in reciprocal love only if our beloveds are morally responsible agents.¹³

Now, as I understand it, 9 is simply a reformulation of love internalism. After all, if 9 is true, it would follow that moral responsibility is required for *appropriate*

¹³ I take ALI to do little more than make explicit a thread of argumentation in Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment."

participation in relationships grounded in reciprocal love. In other words, the propriety of relationships grounded in reciprocal love would be subverted if moral responsibility skepticism is true.

Importantly, however, this reformulated statement of love internalism, I will argue, can answer Pereboom's and Sommers' criticisms of love internalism. Of course, before we see how 9 constitutes a defensible precisification of love internalism, I first want to offer a more thorough defense of ALI.

5.2 Mutual Regard

The first three premises of ALI are, I hope, among the least controversial. According to 1, one of the many characteristics of a reciprocal love relationship is that it is what Scanlon (and others) have called a relationship of mutual regard.¹⁴ The idea here, spelled out more in 2, is simple. Because relationships grounded in reciprocal love are (surprise, surprise!) *reciprocal*, they must be relationships in which both parties can expect things of each other—e.g., that she will keep her promises, that he will help me move, that they will listen when things are not going so well, etc. Indeed, for Hume, relationships like friendship have their *source* in “mutual obligations” (Hume 1742/1987 I.XIX.20).¹⁵

But even more fundamentally, as 3 states, relations of mutual regard involve shared expectations that the other party will regard us with good will and respect. Likewise, relations of mutual regard involve recognition of ourselves as being legitimately subject to the other's expectation that we show him or her good will and respect. Since this form of mutual regard facilitates the equal standing of the participants, these shared normative expectations are the basis of reciprocity. After all, reciprocal relationships are not built on a standard of *quid pro quo*; rather they are built on the equal standing of their participants—an equal standing that depends on shared expectations of mutual respect.

5.3 Normative Expectations

Of course, as *uncontroversial* as 1–3 should be, 4 will undoubtedly be much more controversial. Yet despite this, I think it is quite plausible to think, with Strawson, that “the making of the demand (i.e., the normative expectation) is the proneness to (the reactive emotions).” (Strawson 1962, 90)¹⁶ Echoing Strawson, R. Jay Wallace similarly claims that our “susceptibility to (the reactive) emotions is what constitutes holding someone to an expectation.” (Wallace 1994, 21)

Now, on its face, this claim seems very implausible. After all, I might expect that my beloved Braves will lose in the Wild Card round of the Major League Baseball

¹⁴ Cf. Scanlon (1998).

¹⁵ Here is the context of Hume's claim: “But *friendship* is a calm and sedate affection, conducted by reasons and cemented by habit; springing from long acquaintance and mutual obligations...” (Hume 1742/1987 I.XIX.20).

¹⁶ Though Strawson uses the language of demands here, it is implausible to think that he literally means demands, where these are a particular kind of speech act. Rather, he means normative expectations. For more on this point, see Wallace (1994).

playoffs since they lack a dominant ace. And yet, if they do manage to make it through the first round, I will not be resentful or indignant; I will be pleasantly surprised and excited. Consequently, it seems implausible to suppose with Wallace that expectations are somehow grounded in the reactive emotions of resentment, indignation, and guilt.

In response, note that there are at least two ways in which we might expect something to happen—one predictive, the other normative. In the former case, we expect something to happen just in case we believe that it is likely that that thing will happen. And while this kind of expectation does seem to be associated with emotional responses of certain kinds, it does not seem to be constitutively tied to any specific forms of emotions. As Wallace puts it:

My expectation about the start of classes may be suffused with a feeling (of) anxiety that has its roots in my childhood experiences of school; the failure of my TV to go on as expected when I activate the remote control may provoke a fit of rage and frustration. But it is not in general the case that expectations of this sort—that is, beliefs about the future—are presumptively associated with any particular attitude. I may equally contemplate the expected start of classes with depression, enthusiasm, or with complete indifference, and none of these emotional responses would necessarily be more fitting than the others (Wallace 1994, 20–21).

So while predictive expectations (e.g., my expectation that the Braves will get knocked out the playoffs in the first round and Wallace's expectation that he will turn on the TV by pressing the remote control) are tied to beliefs about what will (or is likely to) happen, normative expectations are a bit more complicated. Plausibly, normative expectations cannot be reduced to a belief that something will happen (or a belief that something is likely to happen). Developing this idea, Wallace writes:

There is, however, a different way of expecting something to occur that is *essentially tied* to particular emotional responses. ... In the case of my students, for instance, I ... hold them to the (normative) expectation that they will not lie, cheat, attempt to blackmail me or their fellow students, and so on. In holding them to these various expectations, I often believe that the expectations will be fulfilled. Thus I generally believe that my students will not in fact attempt to blackmail me. But even when a belief of this sort is present, it does not capture what is centrally involved in holding a person to an expectation... *The crucial element, I would suggest, is attitudinal: to hold someone to an expectation is essentially to be susceptible to a certain range of emotions in the case that the expectation is not fulfilled, or to believe that the violation of the expectation would make it appropriate for one to be subject to those emotions* (Wallace 1994, 21; emphasis added).

In other words, normative expectations are not just associated with some or other emotional response that is generated when the expectation is not met. Rather, they are specifically tied to the reactive emotions of resentment, indignation, and guilt.¹⁷

¹⁷ Though this seems plausible, it might be that Wallace has overstated his case somewhat. After all, when I teach entry level ethics courses, I have a normative expectation that my students appreciate and

But one might reasonably object to this claim. For you might think that it is possible for us to hold others to normative expectations through non-reactive emotions like moral sadness or disappointment. And if that is right, then it would be possible to be engaged with someone in a relationship of mutual regard without being prone to engage with them through the reactive emotions. Indeed, this is precisely the strategy that Pereboom himself adopts. According to Pereboom, these non-reactive emotions are able to play the same interpersonal role as the reactive emotions of resentment and indignation. By responding to a friend's failure to meet our normative expectations with sadness or disappointment, we are just as likely to alert them to their wrongdoing and bring about conciliatory responses that will preserve the relationship. But unlike resentment and indignation, non-reactive emotions are not "aggressive" or "intimidating." (Pereboom 2001, 200) So in addition to not presupposing that wrongdoers deserve (in a basic sense) to be held accountable, the non-reactive emotions of moral sadness or disappointment do not introduce morally suspect modes of interpersonal engagement. Thus, dispositions to resent or to feel indignant¹⁸ are neither necessary for holding another to the normative expectation of good will and respect nor are they desirable.¹⁹ It seems,

Footnote 17 continued

understand (at least some of) the content of Kant's *Groundwork*. However, as it turns out many of them do not ultimately come to appreciate or understand its content. But despite the fact that many of my students routinely fail to appreciate or understand Kant, I do not feel disposed to resentment or indignation. Nor do I believe that such responses would be appropriate in the situation. In fact, I actually believe that it would be positively *inappropriate* for me to be susceptible to the reactive emotions in this case.

Now, Wallace might reply that I do not really hold my students to the normative expectation that they appreciate and understand Kant. Perhaps Wallace could argue that I have taught it too many times, and seen too many times that students will inevitably fail to understand the subtleties of the *Groundwork*. And this predictive expectation that many students will fail has led me to abandon the normative expectation that they not fail. While I cannot deny this is a possibility, it seems unlikely. After all, like me, my students are also convinced that I hold them to the normative expectation that they appreciate and understand Kant. I continue assigning them those pesky readings, papers, and tests. And even more frustratingly, when they do not do well on those assignments, I give them poor grades. But my grading is not (I hope!) motivated by any proneness to resentment; rather it is determined by external standards (i.e., my proneness to test students). So in this case, it does not seem like my normative expectation is essentially connected to the reactive attitudes.

Of course, despite this, it does seem plausible to think that some normative expectations, those tied specifically to the quality of agents' wills, are essentially connected to the reactive emotions. On this view, then, not just any normative expectation is (in part) constituted by a susceptibility to the reactive emotions in the case that the expectation is not met. Rather, it is only those normative expectations that are tied to our concern for good will and respect. Thus plausibly, we have a normative expectation of others that they will show us good will and respect in virtue of the fact that should they fail to do so, we will be disposed to feel resentment or indignation towards them or to judge that resentment or indignation would be appropriate. Or in the self-regarding case, we have a normative expectation of ourselves that we will show others good will and respect in virtue of the fact that should we fail to do so, we will be disposed to feel guilty or to judge that feeling guilty would be appropriate. However, even if I am wrong in restricting Wallace's claims about normative expectations, Wallace's account of normative expectations will nevertheless serve as the basis for 4.

¹⁸ Or in the self-regarding case, we can speak of a disposition to feel guilty.

¹⁹ For more on this point, see Pereboom (2001: 199–201). And for encouraging me to explicitly address this objection to 4, I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for *The Journal of Ethics*.

then, that love internalism, if it rests on the claim that proneness to resentment or indignation is constitutive of a normative expectation, is in trouble.

As I stated, this seems to be a reasonable objection. But ultimately, I think it fails for two independent reasons. To see this, begin by considering that when we genuinely engage with someone as a friend, we must take their agency seriously in a really fundamental way.²⁰ But note that sadness and disappointment can be fitting responses to hurtful events even if those events are not caused by agents. It seems to follow then, that if we were to *exclusively* respond to another's ill will or disrespect with sadness or disappointment—the very same emotions with which we might fittingly respond to the destruction caused by a tornado or a hurricane—we would be failing to take seriously their agency.²¹ After all, in such a case we are emotionally exercised in a way that makes insufficiently fine-grained distinctions between the causal role an agent's will plays in the production of a hurtful event and the causal role that swirling winds and rain play in the production of a hurtful event.²²

Seth Shabo has recently made a similar point. Specifically, Shabo has suggested that given the nature of our participation in interpersonal relationships, it is not really plausible that we could marginalize resentment from the range of attitudes that are characteristic of those relationships.²³ As Shabo puts it:

Insofar as trying to overcome one's ordinary susceptibility to resentment *in the context of a particular relationship* entails trying to make it the case that, *when* one comes in for maltreatment in that relationship, one will be able (more or less reliably) to disavow (resentment), and perhaps even avoid it altogether, there is reason to doubt that many of us could make this effort (globally, as a strategy for dealing with every instance of maltreatment). This is because we lack sufficient control over whether we will take such treatment personally, or how our susceptibility to so taking it will be manifested. (Shabo 2012: 118)

²⁰ Again, though I use the example of friendship, I think that what I claim here will be true of any other form of reciprocal interpersonal relationship.

²¹ It seems undeniable that in some cases, we are within our rights to predominantly feel sadness or disappointment rather than resentment or indignation when a loved one lets us down. And in such cases, it is not obvious that we are failing to take seriously their agency. But in such cases, it is also plausible to think that we are also *disposed* to resent them or feel indignation towards them, even though circumstantial features of case make sadness- or disappointment-inducing properties of the friend's action particularly salient. And this is how our responses to other agents is fundamentally different from our responses to natural disasters: even when a loved one's wrongdoing makes me feel sad (rather than indignant), I am still disposed, to some degree or other, to feel indignant towards him or her, but when a tragedy like Hurricane Katrina strikes, I am not disposed to feel indignation towards the swirling winds and rains (even if I am disposed to feel indignation towards the former director of FEMA, Michael Brown).

²² There is, at a very general level, an important parallel between this line of argument and Joel Feinberg's (1970) defense of rights. Just as something important is lost at the level of the society if people lack rights (even if they have other morally significant obligations, duties, etc.), something important is lost at the level of interpersonal engagement if we cannot engage with others through reactive emotions like resentment and indignation.

²³ Shabo (2012). Shabo's discussion of Strawson on love and resentment is illuminating, and in many respects, it provides the compatibilist with a response to Pereboom that is complementary to my own. I am therefore grateful to an anonymous referee for *The Journal of Ethics* bringing Shabo's paper to my attention.

The important idea here is that in interpersonal relationships generally, but in particular, in love relationships like friendships, we invariably take the others' actions *personally*. As a result, one might think, that our normative expectations of others will invariably involve a susceptibility to reactive emotions like resentment, since a proneness to resentment seems necessary for taking something personally. To see this, consider that while I take a colleague's snub personally, I do not take it personally when a gust of wind blows a tree onto my roof. The difference, of course, is that in the latter case, I have no normative expectations that trees not fall down on my roof, and so, I have no susceptibility to resentment when they do. And this difference explains why I take snubs, but not fallen trees, personally. Thus, Shabo also seems to be thinking that, *pace* Pereboom, we cannot lack a proneness to the reactive emotions and still take others seriously in the ways required for reciprocal interpersonal relationships (i.e., we cannot hold them to the normative expectations that are characteristic of such relationships).

Second, the emotions of sadness and disappointment provide an insufficient basis for normative expectations, since they can be fitting even in contexts in which normative expectations are not present. In other words, although such emotions are understandably present when a normative expectation is violated (we are undoubtedly prone to be sad and disappointed when a loved one hurts us), our proneness to these non-reactive emotions cannot by itself constitute the normative expectation in question. For if a disposition to feel sadness or disappointment in the event that x occurs constitutes a normative expectation that x not occur, then it would implausibly follow that we have normative expectations that hurricanes, tornados, cancer diagnoses, and the like not occur. Moreover, because sadness and disappoint are fitting responses to these sorts of events, it would further follow that it would *legitimate* for us to have normative expectations that such things not occur. But of course, while none of us want these things to happen, it seems strange to think that we have normative expectations that they not happen simply in virtue of our proneness to sadness and disappointment. This seems like a category mistake since non-agential entities like hurricanes are not the sort of things for which we can have legitimate normative expectations. Therefore, by themselves, non-reactive emotions cannot serve to constitute normative expectations.

Consequently, we should identify normative expectation with a proneness to the reactive emotions because failing to do so (i) entails a failure to take seriously others' agency and a failure to explain the sense in which we take others' actions personally, and (ii) it is a category mistake. It therefore seems that Wallace's account of normative expectations—one according to which only a proneness to reactive emotions (rather than non-reactive emotions)—is vindicated in the face of this objection.

The upshot of Wallace's account of normative expectations, then, should be clear. On this account, we have normative expectations of ourselves and others in virtue of our susceptibility to the reactive attitudes. In other words, Wallace's account of normative expectations lends credibility to 4. And together with 3, which tells us that A cannot participate in a relation of mutual regard with B without (i) having a normative expectation that she will show B good will and respect and (ii) having a normative expectation that B will show her good will and respect, we

arrive at 5, ALI's first lemma: it is appropriate for us to have normative expectation of others only if they are apt targets of the reactive emotions. After all, if part of what it is for *A* to have a normative expectation that *B* will *x* is for *A* to be prone to target *B* with the reactive emotions of resentment and indignation should *B* fail to *x*, then it will be appropriate (in the sense of *fitting*) for *A* to have such expectations only if *B* is, in general, an apt target of the reactive emotions. But this is precisely what 5 tells us.

Having motivated 5, which follows from 4, the following lemmas, 6 and 7, fall into place. ALI's premise 6, which holds that it is rational for us to engage in relations of mutual regard only if others are apt targets of the reactive emotions, follows from the conjunction of 2, the claim that participants in relations of mutual regard have normative expectations of one another, and 5. And ALI's premise 7, which holds that it is rational for us to engage in relationships grounded in reciprocal love only if our beloveds are apt targets of the reactive emotions, follows from the conjunction of 1, the claim that relationships grounded in reciprocal love are, *inter alia*, relations of mutual regard, and 6.

5.4 Reactive Emotions and Moral Responsibility

ALI's last point of contention is premise 8, which holds that to be an apt target of the reactive emotions of resentment, indignation, and guilt just is to be a morally responsible agent. Like 4, this premise owes to the Strawsonian theory of responsibility that has led many to accept love internalism. And though it is difficult to argue directly for this view, it does have an impressive list of supporters.²⁴

Of course, even if you do not accept this conception of *what it is* to be morally responsible (what is an argument from authority after all?), you probably do accept the following entailment relationships: (i) if *S* is an apt target for the reactive emotions, then she is a morally responsible agent, and (ii) if *S* is a morally responsible agent, then she is an apt target for the reactive emotions. But if you accept (i) and (ii)—even if you do not think that *being morally responsible* is ontologically grounded in *being an apt target of the reactive emotions* (as 8 states)—you are committed to the following claim:

8* *S* is a morally responsible agent iff. *S* is an apt target of the reactive emotions.

And even 8*, which is weaker than my preferred 8, will, in conjunction with 7, entail 9.

Indeed, even a *weaker* premise will serve here, since (i)—the claim that being an apt target of the reactive emotions entails morally responsible agency—will, in conjunction with 7, entail 9. Thus, though my statement of ALI relies on a strongly Strawsonian conception of what it is to be morally responsible, 9—i.e., love internalism—will follow from weaker claims about the relationship between being morally responsible and being an apt target of the reactive emotions. And these claims should be accepted by all theorists, even those who do not accept the Strawsonian conception of moral responsibility.

²⁴ Cf. Strawson (1962), Wallace (1994), Fischer and Ravizza (1998), and Darwall (2006).

5.5 Surveying the Landscape

As I have stated, the conclusion of ALI, the claim that it is appropriate for us to engage in relationships grounded in reciprocal love only if our beloveds are morally responsible agents, is a form of love internalism. So, having *argued* for love internalism (rather than say, relying only on gloomy metaphors), I will now show that love internalism is not subject to the criticisms that moral responsibility skeptics like Pereboom and Sommers develop.

6 Vindicating Love Internalism

As I have argued for it, love internalism is the following thesis:

Love Internalism

Relationships grounded in “the sort of love which two adults can sometimes be said to feel reciprocally, for each other” would be inappropriate if we were not morally responsible agents.

Given this statement of love internalism, we are now in a position to adequately respond to Pereboom’s and Sommers’ criticisms.

6.1 The Appropriateness of Love

First, note that love internalism does *not* entail that, if moral responsibility skepticism were true, we would not be able to engage in meaningful relationships grounded in reciprocal love.²⁵ So when Sommers asks, “why on earth would (the truth of moral responsibility skepticism) undermine the genuineness of the feeling (of love) itself” (Sommers 2012, 182), the love internalist has an easy answer: *it does not* undermine the genuineness of the feeling. Of course, if moral responsibility skepticism is true, then as ALI shows us, the *propriety* of our love *would* be undermined. In other words, if moral responsibility skepticism is true, then no mature reciprocal love relationships would be appropriate. And this is undoubtedly a significant loss, for we should not, in general, act in ways that are inappropriate.

But for all that, it is nevertheless the case that the feeling of love itself would be perfectly genuine and natural. Thus, love internalism does not implausibly entail

²⁵ Ultimately, I do not think this is surprising. Nor do I think this is really a revisionary statement of the view that Strawson articulated. After all, people sometimes express the claim that our practices of blaming would not be appropriate if no one was morally responsible by saying that if moral responsibility skepticism were true, it would not be possible to blame others for their actions. But this is, strictly speaking, false, since even if we are not morally responsible agents, we could still successfully blame others for their actions. Of course, the strict reading is not what is meant. Rather, all that is meant is that our practices of blaming would in some way be inappropriate and that we could not (in the permissive sense of “could”) go on blaming people for their actions if moral responsibility skepticism were true. This is precisely parallel to what I want to argue about love internalism. That is, if moral responsibility skepticism is true then we cannot go on as we have in loving others—at least not without doing something inappropriate.

that feelings of love and the relationships grounded in these feelings are not real or not meaningful if we lack moral responsibility.

Moreover, note that love internalism does not actually require that agents be morally responsible for initiating or sustaining relationships grounded in reciprocal love—at least not in the ways that Kane or Kierkegaard describe. Rather, love internalism entails that it is a presupposition of appropriate or warranted engagement in reciprocal love relationships that friends or lovers are morally responsible agents—that they are apt targets of the reactive emotions. But by seeing this, we can see how love internalism is well-positioned to answer Pereboom's challenge, which is, simply put: what necessary feature of the relationship is added by moral responsibility? In response, the love internalist can again admit that moral responsibility adds nothing that is necessary for the mere *possibility* of engaging in such relationships. However, love internalism can explain why it is that moral responsibility is nevertheless required for appropriate instances of reciprocal love relationships. Love relationships essentially involve holding others to normative expectations. And, as we saw from ALI, holding others to normative expectations requires that agents are morally responsible, at least if such normative expectations are appropriate. Thus, engagement in love relationships will be inappropriate if we are, in general, not morally responsible agents. So love internalism can meet Pereboom's explanatory challenge because it can explain why it is that morally responsible agency is necessary for *appropriate* love relationships.

6.2 The Desirability of Love

Second, love internalism as I have stated it does not have any specific commitments concerning what we desire in a love relationship. This is important, since Pereboom forcefully argued that love internalism (of the sort Kane endorses) is psychologically inaccurate. We do not really care, argues Pereboom, about whether another agent is morally responsible for initiating their love for us. Instead, what we actually want is the deep and meaningful bond that emerges from relationships grounded in reciprocal love.

But as I argued, since it is a thesis about when relationships grounded in reciprocal love are appropriate, love internalism per se is not committed to the particular psychological claim that what we really want in being loved is being *freely* or *responsibly* loved. Indeed, it is consistent with love internalism that what we really want in being loved is the idea of being irresistible to someone else. And this certainly does not require that lovers are morally responsible, since who is or is not irresistible to you is largely outside of your control. Thus, *pace* Pereboom, love internalism does not by itself entail any implausible psychological claims.

Moreover, love internalism is consistent with more of the reasons we desire relationships grounded in reciprocal love than is moral responsibility skepticism. After all, part of what we want in reciprocal love relationships is a partner with whom we can engage in meaningful collective action, someone on whom we can rely, someone who will help us grow and develop. And these all seem to be things that involve normative expectations of some kind, which as we saw from ALI, are appropriate only if they are made of morally responsible agents. Love internalism,

but not moral responsibility skepticism, respects this fact. For if moral responsibility skepticism is true, then our psychologies are naturally disposed to reflect a deep concern for something that we cannot engage in appropriately—viz., relationships grounded in reciprocal love. It seems, then, that on the basis of our psychological states alone, there is little reason to deny love internalism.

6.3 The Reciprocity of Love

Third, we can see what goes wrong with Sommers' argument from our love of pets. Sommers offers our love for pets as a form of reciprocated love that does not require moral responsibility. On this point, I simply reiterate that love internalism is consistent with this relatively weak claim, since love internalism is a claim about whether relationships grounded in reciprocal love are *appropriate*—not whether they are possible (or even whether they are valuable).

But we can restate Sommers' worry in a way that is perhaps more threatening to love internalism as I understand it. As Sommers rightly notes, we do have very deep and meaningful attachments to some animals. And it seems like these attachments are reciprocated. That is, it seems like some animals have deep and (perhaps) meaningful attachments to their owners. Moreover, it is not obvious that such attachments are inappropriate. But if it is fitting to be engaged in a relationship grounded in reciprocal love with a dog, then love internalism is false, for surely dogs are not morally responsible agents.

Now, in response I would first state that it is not clear to me that we really engage with (or even aspire to engage with) animals in fully reciprocal ways. Indeed, since full reciprocity presupposes equal standing, it seems very unlikely, given the great gulf in our cognitive and conative capacities, that even in the closest of human-animal relationships, the human and the animal genuinely enjoy an equal standing.²⁶ If this is right, then although some of the feelings and attitudes that are characteristic of the closest and most meaningful human-animal relationships are *reciprocated*, the relationship itself is not reciprocal. In other words, the mere fact that loving attitudes are reciprocated in these relationships does not entail that these are relationships grounded in reciprocal love.²⁷

More evidence for this comes when we notice the similarities of our love for animals with our paternalistic love for young children. After all, for all the love we do feel for and perhaps from our pets, when push comes to shove we interact with them very paternalistically. But paternalistic treatment, of course, would be out of place in a truly reciprocal love relationship. For example, decisions that affect our relationships with animals are not typically made together, as is characteristic in relationships grounded in reciprocal love. Rather, we make unilateral decisions. Of

²⁶ Of course, there is the old joke from *Seinfeld* that though we do not enjoy equal standing with animals, it is not because we are "better" than them. Rather, they enjoy the higher standing. As Jerry puts it in the closing scene of an episode, if an alien saw humans' interactions with animals (especially their pets), the alien would certainly think the animals were in charge.

²⁷ Recall again Hume's claim that reciprocal relationships like friendship are built on mutual obligations. But what obligations does a pet have to its owner? If a pet does not love its owner, it might be a bad pet (in some sense), but it has hardly *wronged* its owner.

course, our attachment with beloved animals is other-directed, so the animal's welfare plays a large role in determining what we will (unilaterally) choose to do. But this is very different than letting our beloveds *participate* in the decision of what to do. And *pace* Sommers, this difference is one of kind rather than degree. Whereas partners' loving relationship requires that they are each party to the decision to, say, move to a new city, the beloved cat has no such say. Although animals can enjoy reciprocated feelings of love and attachment, they do not *participate* in relations of mutual regard. And so, they do not participate in relationships grounded in reciprocal love.²⁸

As a result, our relationships with pets are no challenge to love internalism. They can be appropriate because they do not involve the mutual regard and collective participation that is characteristic of reciprocal love relationships. Thus, the basis of these attitudes as appropriate is not upset by the fact that animals are not morally responsible agents.

Taking stock, I have not only offered an argument for love internalism, but here I have also argued that love internalism, properly understood, is not undermined by the objections offered by Pereboom and Sommers. Specifically, I have suggested that love internalism can meet the explanatory challenge offered by Pereboom and Sommers, that it is psychologically accurate, and that it does not merely rest on "gloomy metaphors" but on plausible premises concerning the nature of love relationships, normative expectations, and the reactive emotions. Consequently, I, think we are in a position to see that love internalism is true. But what, we might naturally come to wonder, follows from the truth of love internalism? I take up this last question below in my concluding remarks.

7 Conclusion

The conjunction of love internalism and moral responsibility skepticism entails that when we engage in relationships grounded in reciprocal love, we are *inappropriately* regarding our lovers as apt targets of resentment and indignation. This would suggest that we have a very powerful *pro tanto* reason to refrain from engaging in such relationships. Consequently, perhaps we should, if moral responsibility skepticism is true, reevaluate our reciprocal love relationships, and distance ourselves from others so that we do not unfairly hold them to normative expectations that they are not legitimately subject to.

Of course, the moral responsibility skeptic might reply that the other goods associated with such relationships outweigh the impropriety of engaging with people in this way. In other words, the enjoyment, personal growth, support, and safety that we gain from relationships grounded in reciprocal love might, in a full analysis of the pros and cons, win the day. On this view, although there is something admittedly inappropriate about our reciprocal love relationships, their overall

²⁸ To be explicit, I am not meaning to denigrate the form of love that many have for their pets. Such love can be part of a valuable life even if it is not appropriate to regard one's pet as one with whom you can have fully reciprocal relations of mutual respect.

instrumental value makes them something that we should, all things considered, engage in. Moral responsibility skepticism therefore, does not entail that we should abandon relationships grounded in reciprocal love.

But this kind of optimism seems worrisomely akin to another kind of optimism that Peter Strawson discusses.²⁹ Like that more familiar optimism, this optimism regards our attitudes and relationships merely instrumentally. Moreover, this variety of optimism tells us that because it is an all things considered instrumental good that we engage in relationships grounded in reciprocal love, we are justified in doing so. But it seems to me that to regard our attitudes and relationships in this objective way—as if we can step outside of those attitudes and relationships and evaluate them from an external, God-like perspective—fails to take seriously our humanity. For our attitudes and relationships are not just tools we use to get around in the world, they genuinely do manifest who we are and our place in the world.

More plausibly then, given the truth of love internalism, the moral responsibility skeptic should counsel us to abandon our reciprocal love relationships. Of course it must be admitted, this is a very *significant* cost of moral responsibility skepticism. A world without morally responsible agents is not, despite what skeptics like Pereboom and Sommers say, a safe place for relationships grounded in reciprocal love. And for those of us who, like David Lewis, think that the deliverances of philosophical theorizing “cannot credibly challenge ... the positive convictions of common sense” (Pyke 1990), the idea that we should not engage in relationships of reciprocal love is too much to swallow. Love internalism then, leads us back to the more conservative, and by my lights, more plausible conclusion: that we are morally responsible agents and that our reciprocal love for others is proper and justified. Accordingly, to the degree that my arguments here have shown love internalism likely to be true, so too have they shown moral responsibility skepticism likely to be false.³⁰

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²⁹ For more about this other kind of optimism, see Strawson (1962/2003).

³⁰ As John Martin Fischer has pointed out to me, some will no doubt worry that I am engaged in “wishful thinking” here, but I do not think this is right; instead I simply accept a set of methodological constraints according to which, we can be justified in rejecting an argument as unsound if we are more justified in believing the denial of its conclusion than we are in believing the truth of all the premises or the validity of all its inferences. And I think that I am more justified in believing that our love relationships are (at least sometimes) legitimate than I am justified in believing that moral responsibility requires sourcehood, that moral responsibility requires the ability to do otherwise, or that some version of transfer of non-responsibility principle is valid. Of course, a full defense of this methodology and of these substantive first-order claims would require more than what I say here. But though that is a worthwhile task, it is one for another paper.

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