

Towards a Unification of Vera and Steve: A Case Study

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1. Introduction

It has long been assumed that Vera and Steve are fully distinct individuals. While this perspective is not without value, it fails to account for a number of obvious facts regarding the compatibility of the subjects. In this ceremony we claim that Steve and Vera should be lawfully joined in matrimony, resulting in a unified state which nonetheless preserves all the crucial elements of autonomy which have formed the basis of earlier accounts.

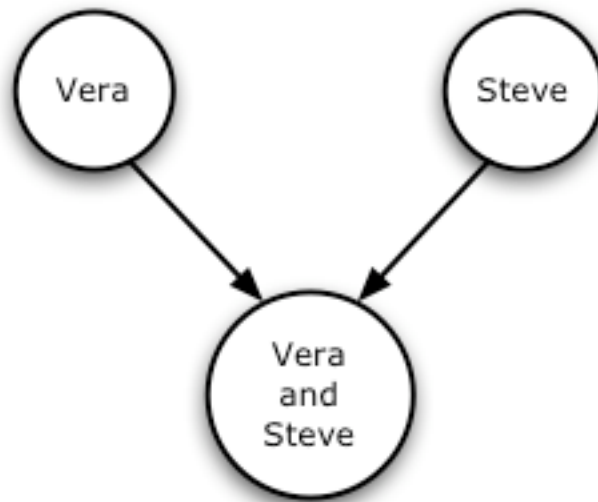


figure 1.1

2. Theoretical Foundations

2a. Performative utterances

“[T]o utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be sent in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it.... When I say, before the registrar or altar, &c., ‘I do,’ I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.” (Austin 1962: 6).

2b. Bricolage

“The *bricoleur* is someone who uses 'the means at hand' that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous” (Lévi-Strauss, qtd. in Derrida 1970: 88).

3. The Question of Intent

Avoidance of the *intentional fallacy* (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1954) was a major tenet of New Criticism. However, at this stage in our investigations we suggest that it will be invaluable to probe the intentions of the subjects on issues of:

- love
- comfort
- honor
- sickness and health
- forsaking all others
- et cetera

4. Ancillary Evidence

4a. Fey Parrill

Love is not all; it is not meat nor drink
Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain,
Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink,
And rise and sink, and rise and sink again;
Love cannot fill the thickened lung with breath,
Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;
Yet many a man is making friends with death
Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.
It well may be that in a difficult hour,
Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,
Or nagged by want, past resolution's power,
I might be driven to sell your love for peace,
Or trade the memory of this night for food.
It well may be. I do not think I would.

(Millay 1931)

4b. Robert Chapman

And you too, O Reader, are meanwhile an object of reading: the Other Reader now is reviewing your body as if skimming the index, and at some moments she consults it as if gripped by sudden and specific curiosities, then she lingers, questioning it and waiting till a silent answer reaches her, as if every partial inspection interested her only in the light of a wider spatial reconnaissance.... And from this start she gains impetus, covers (you cover together) pages and pages from top to bottom without skipping a comma.

Already, in the confused improvisation of the first encounter, the possible future of a cohabitation is read. Today each of you is the object of the other's reading, each reads in the other the unwritten story. Tomorrow, Reader and Other Reader, if you are together, if you lie down in the same bed like a settled couple, each will turn on the lamp at the side of the bed and sink into his or her book; two parallel readings will accompany the approach of sleep; first you, then you will turn out the light; returning from separate universes, you will find each other fleetingly in the darkness, where all separations are erased, before divergent dreams draw you again, one to one side, and one to the other. But do not wax ironic on this prospect of conjugal harmony: what happier image of a couple could you set against it?

(Calvino 1979)

4c. Catherine Chang

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face:

now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

(1 Corinthians 13)

5. Vows

I _i	Steven _i	take	you _j	Vera _j -wa
<i>I-NOM-ISTS</i>	Steven-NOM	<i>take-PRES-FACT</i>	<i>you-ACC-2NDSG</i>	<i>Vera-ACC-TOP</i>
I	Steven	take	you	Vera

to-be	my _i	wife-!øʒ		
<i>to-be-PRES-INF</i>	<i>my-POSS-ISTS</i>	<i>wife-GEN-NUP.PERFORM</i>		
to be	my	wife		

to-have	and	to-hold-χυγ		
<i>to-have-PROG-INF</i>	and	<i>to-hold-PROG-INF-EMBR</i>		
to have	and	to hold		

From	this	day		forth
<i>from-ABL.DEV</i>	<i>this-ABL.DEV</i>	<i>day-ABL.DEV</i>		<i>forth-ABL.DEV-ARCH</i>
From	this	day		forth

For	better	for	worse	
<i>for-ENUM</i>	good-COMP-ENUM	<i>for-ENUM</i>	<i>bad-COMP-ENUM</i>	
For	better	and for	worse	

For	richer	for	poorer	
<i>for-ENUM</i>	<i>rich-COMP-ENUM</i>	<i>for-ENUM</i>	<i>poor-COMP-ENUM</i>	
for	richer	and for	poorer	

In	sickness-ατ[ø.ñæpkη	and	in	health
<i>in-PREP</i>	sickness-ENUM-SNZ	<i>and</i>	<i>in-PREP</i>	<i>health-ENUM</i>
In	sickness	and	in	health

to-love		and	to-cherish	
<i>love-ISTS -INF-CONT</i>		and	<i>cherish-ISTS-CONT</i>	
to love		and	to radish	

all	the	days	of	my _i	life
<i>all</i>	<i>the-DIR</i>	<i>days</i>	<i>of-PART</i>	<i>my-POSS-ISTS</i>	<i>life-GEN-RHYM</i>
all	the	days	of	my	life

KEY			
FACT	factive	ENUM	enumerative case
TOP	topicalizer	SNZ	expulsive case
NUP.PERFORM	nuptial performative marker	PART	partitive
EMBR	embrative case	RHYM	rhyme marker
ABL.DEV	ablative of devotion		
ARCH	archaic marker		

6. The Exchange of Rings

Rings are a mathematical construct consisting of two functions (*addition* and *multiplication*) and a set of numbers that is an Abelian group under addition and for which the multiplication function is associative. Rings are one of the most basic structures studied by number theorists. Zero is the *trivial ring*, and coincidentally bears a striking visual resemblance to a wedding ring.

The study of the ring of polynomials, or *algebraic geometry*, was one of the cornerstones of twentieth century mathematics, leading to many advances in a wide range of fields, including Wiles' proof of Fermat's last theorem (Wiles 1995).

The exchange of rings, by contrast, is a traditional component of Western wedding ceremonies.

7. Vodka

8. Performatives: Benediction and Pronouncement

Performative utterances have *felicity conditions*. “Besides the uttering of the words of the so-called performative, a good many other things have as a general rule to be right and to go right if we are to be said to have happily brought off our action” (Austin 1962: 14).

If Vera were to say at this point, “Let there be light!” such a statement would constitute an infelicitous performative. Similarly, if the officiant, Cathy, were to say, “I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth!*” the performative would be equally infelicitous, although for a different reason.

Happily, the conditions for the forthcoming performatives are fully felicitous:

8a. Benediction

The subjects are blessed.

8b. Pronouncement

The subjects are pronounced husband and wife.

8c. Felicitations

Enseue.

9. Conclusions

This ceremony has demonstrated that the unification of Vera and Steve is both possible and desirable. As we have seen, the individuality of Steve and Vera is, under certain circumstances, subject to an alternate construal, namely, as co-present participants in a marriage. Furthermore, we have successfully performed this Marriage Unification before an assembly of witnesses.

These results should be of interest to scholars of both Steve and Vera. Further research will explore the extent to which London can be enjoyed by (V, S) in their new capacity as husband and wife.

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