

# VALUING LOVE AND VALUING THE SELF IN IRIS MURDOCH

TONY MILLIGAN

## RESUMEN

El artículo cuestiona aspectos de la interpretación de D. Velleman, la cual parte de un acercamiento entre el amor en Murdoch y el respeto en Kant. Esta aproximación es inexacta porque el amor para Murdoch no se define solamente por lo cognitivo, sino que incluye una dimensión conativa (deseo orientado hacia el otro particular) Además se propone una forma de reconocer el valor de sí mismo sin basarlo en el amor o respeto de sí mismo.

Palabras clave: amor, respeto de sí mismo, egoísmo, Iris Murdoch.

## ABSTRACT

David Velleman's influential analytic reworking of Iris Murdoch's account of love is problematic. It proposes a rapprochement between Murdochian love and Kantian respect. Both are taken to be responses to, and *recognitions* of, personhood. I shall try to show that Velleman's emphasis upon recognition (hence *vision*) is faithful to Murdoch, but his treatment of love as (i) a purely cognitive response; and (ii) a response which is oriented towards sheer personhood, departs from her position. Murdochian love is both cognitive and conative, it includes *desire oriented towards particular others*. The paper will go on to address a problem that Velleman's reading of Murdoch obscures, the problem of recognizing self-worth without appealing to self-love. I will suggest a way in which Murdoch can manage to do so by attending to the importance of seeing ourselves in the light of another's love.

Iris Murdoch figures repeatedly in contemporary discussions within the philosophy of love, and particularly in work by philosophers who write within the analytic tradition. However, there is a gulf between Murdoch's own way of writing about love and the way in which love is treated in contemporary analytic debates. An added complication is that

an influential analytic account of love set out by David Velleman over a decade ago claims to be broadly in line with Murdoch's approach. This is an association that may not entirely help her case, given that Velleman's position, while still a core reference point, is currently out of favour. What follows will nonetheless be broadly sympathetic to Velleman's strategy of appealing to Murdoch while curtailing the role that love has to play by setting it alongside some other moral response or responses. But I will be less sympathetic towards Velleman's way of reading Murdoch and his execution of this curtailing strategy. The final section of the paper will address a problem that Velleman's reading of Murdoch helps to obscure, the problem of recognizing self-worth without appealing to self-love. I will suggest a way in which Murdoch's commitment to (i) a self/other asymmetry that requires love to be directed outwards, towards others, can be sustained while allowing for (ii) a recognition of the value of the self that does not take the form of self-love or self-respect.

Keywords: love, self-respect, selfishness, Iris Murdoch.

## I. Faith, Hope and Love

In *Vision and Choice in Morality*, we encounter one of Iris Murdoch's earliest appeals to the reality-disclosing work that love can do. 'There are, however, moments when situations are unclear and what is needed is not a renewed attempt to specify "facts", but a fresh vision which may be derived from a "story" or from some sustaining concept which is able to deal with what is obstinately obscure, and represents a "mode of understanding" of an alternative type. Such concepts are, of course, not necessarily recondite or sophisticated; "hope" and "love" are two of them' (Murdoch 1999, 91). Murdoch's suggestion is that a particular *hopeful* or *loving* way of seeing can improve our moral vision. This may seem like a beautiful but implausible idea. After all, a loving gaze or a hopeful way of looking *may* provide insight, but it may instead mislead and distort.

Murdoch's early response to this concern, in *Vision and Choice* is to accept that when a full and precise description of a situation eludes us, we must try to look in a loving or hopeful way and simply accept that we may be wrong. In all but the most resistant of circumstances we must simply have 'faith' that a hopeful and loving way of seeing will also be a realistic way of seeing (Murdoch 1999, 90). This language of 'faith', 'hope' and a kind of 'love' borrows heavily from Christianity. And so too does Murdoch's justification for her position. There is, in *Vision and Choice*, no clearly worked-out defence of the loving gaze. Instead, there is a rather awkward justification by faith. This is not the assertive faith of Martin Luther and not faith that is underpinned by belief in any supernatural agent who will ensure that everyone ultimately gets what they deserve. Instead, it is the faith of the individual who knows that love and hope can err, and that a loving way of seeing may not always yield clarity.

Even so, a good deal of Murdoch's subsequent writing, in her philosophical texts and in her novels, attempts to show that a loving gaze *will* tend to be reliable. It will tend to disclose more often than it conceals *because* a loving gaze removes or at least resists egocentric sources of distortion. In doing so it improves our overall ability to see what there is to be seen. 'The love which brings the right answer is an exercise of justice and realism and really *looking*' (Murdoch 2001, 89). This resistance to the distorting impact of egocentricity provides us with a straightforward reason for trust in the power of love. But while this gives us a reason to allow that *in general* love reveals rather than conceals, it may do little to remove uncertainty about how love operates in particular cases where the possibility of over-estimation and *giving too much credit to the other* remain in place.

A familiar context in which this problem arises is Murdoch's case of D and M in *The Sovereignty of Good*. Love, paired with justice, allows a mother-in-law to see her daughter-in-law as lively rather than crude. Love allows the mother-in-law to see in a less jealous and (we are led to assume) more realistic manner. But here we may wonder how she, or the reader, can be sure that a gain has been made? Christine Swanton voices this concern by asking 'What if the daughter-in-law really is vulgar and juvenile?' (Swanton 2003, 112). And this seems like a reasonable question. When it comes to particular cases of this sort, faith and hope still seem to be at work. We may at least suspect that, for Murdoch, however much work we may do to supply reasons, faith remains an ineradicable feature of moral life. There are times when we just do not know, but must nonetheless find some acceptable way to proceed, times when we need something to rely on. At times of this sort, Murdoch wants us to keep faith with love not just because it tends to yield clarity, but because love is something good and worthwhile in itself. The fact that it also happens to be instrumentally useful may obscure this dimension of love's value.

Nonetheless, love's instrumental role will remain important if, as Murdoch suggests, love is our best and most indispensable guide and if, as Murdoch suggests in the very same text, 'the central concept of morality is "the individual" thought of as knowable by love' (Murdoch 2001, 29). For Murdoch, love seems to be both valuable in itself *and* required to do work that other responses, such as respect, cannot do.

## II. Velleman's Kantian Reading of Murdoch

One of Murdoch's fictional characters takes this sense of love's value to extremes and suggests that 'all our failures are ultimately failures in love' (Murdoch 1962, 235). This idea has strong associations with the tradition of Christian thought about love and it captures, beautifully, the idea that love matters *in a unique way*. But here we may wonder whether it matters *in just this*

way. Surely we can and do fail regularly in our moral responsibilities towards strangers, but it is not obvious that such failures are always failures of love. We may fail to show some unfamiliar person hospitality and compassion, but it is tempting to say that we cannot love such an unfamiliar person and that our inability to love them is not a moral weakness, but is a feature of what love is like. Love (by which I mean genuine love and not some plausible imitation) is a response to a shared history which in the case of strangers happens to be missing. But if we cannot love them, it follows that our failure to give them their due is a failure of some other sort. And here, perhaps, we might want to think about failures of compassion, of respect and of justice.

But perhaps it may be tempting to follow a more Christian line of thought and to say that *in some sense* we can and ought to love everyone, but not necessarily in the same manner or with the same kind of love. Love for strangers will then be one kind of love, love for friends and neighbours will be love of another sort, but action and response ought always and everywhere to be open to the influence of love *of some sort*. What is worrying here is that this threatens to place an intolerable burden upon love. If every move that we make ought to be, in some respect, informed by love, then love will have to take on so many forms that the connection between what Murdoch means (or ought to mean) by 'love' and our ordinary familiar understanding of the concept may be lost. Love will be left to do too much work.

This is a danger that Murdoch tries to address in her later writings when she sets love alongside duty, moral principles and a reasonable concern for our own happiness. Her way of curtailing the demands upon love involves a move in a Kantian direction. And it mirrors Kant's own shift in his later writings, and especially in *The Doctrine of Virtue* where he abandons a prior suspicion about love and finally situates it within the domain of the moral. His earlier dismissal of love as pathological (in the *Groundwork*), and (even worse) beyond our wilful control, is replaced by an appeal to duties of love and to a distinction between love and respect as complementary moral responses that involve *drawing close* and *keeping our distance*. 'The duty of love for one's neighbour can, accordingly, also be expressed as the duty to make other *ends* my own (provided that these are not immoral). The duty of respect for my neighbour is contained in the maxim not to degrade any other to a mere means to my ends (not to demand that another throw himself away in order to slave for my end)' (Kant 1996, 199). On this account, love seems to involve altruistic desire that the lives of others should go well. More formally, it involves adopting the ends pursued by others. By contrast, respect involves restraint, restraint of a sort that involves recognition that others have autonomy as well as interests (although the two are connected). Together, love and respect may seem to relieve one another of the burden of having to do too much. On the Kantian side, this is a matter of making sure that the role of

respect is not stretched too far. On Murdoch's side, it is a matter of safeguarding love.

Both end up with a conception of moral life where love is centrally placed, but is not called upon to do everything. And although Kant's understanding of the love in question is based upon the Christian exemplar of love for our neighbours, while Murdoch's exemplars are always more intimate, the distance between the two may now seem to be much less than we might imagine if we had read only Kant's *Groundwork* and Murdoch's response to it in *The Sovereignty of Good*. So, we may wonder, just how far apart were Kant and Murdoch on the place of love in the life that is lived well?

According to David Velleman, they were not far apart at all. Their positions converge once the Kantian account is charitably reformulated to remove any suggestion that love involves desire. The connection between love and desire is, for Velleman, a misleading myth reinforced by Freudianism, a myth that threatens to render love covertly egocentric. While my comments so far have committed me to the view that love should not be left to do an impossible amount of work, and they have leaned clearly in the direction of bringing Murdoch and Kant closer together, I want to draw attention to some shortcomings in Velleman's way of doing so, shortcomings in his way of relieving love of some of its burden.

Velleman's combined appropriation of Kant and Murdoch is immediately geared to address and to combat a particular position in the philosophy of love, a position set up by Harry Frankfurt. On Frankfurt's account (with various qualifications) the lover cares for the beloved, desires their well-being and, in doing so, comes to confer value upon the beloved. 'The lover does not invariably and necessarily perceive the beloved as valuable, but the value he sees it to possess is a value that derives from and that depends upon his love' (Frankfurt 2004, 39). This comes perilously close to saying that the lover *projects* value, a view that fits conveniently with a series of metaethical commitments that have more to do with David Hume than with either Iris Murdoch or Immanuel Kant (or, indeed, David Velleman). Murdoch, in particular, is clearly committed to the idea that the value of others is part of the world. It is not, of course, part of the world as it is described by our best science, but it is part of the world as it is experienced by moral agents. Murdoch, Kant and Velleman all allow that value may be discerned or figuratively *seen* and both Murdoch and Velleman hold that it may be seen by 'really looking'. It is not my intention to take a detour through the familiar naturalist and non-naturalist underpinnings of this position, suffice it to say that moral realism *of some sort*, and the use of a visual metaphor for *seeing* that other matters, go together.

It is this visual aspect of Murdoch's approach to love, her treatment of love as a *discernment* of the other, that appeals to Velleman. Love (on a broadly Murdochian account) and respect (on a broadly Kantian account) are taken

by Velleman to be complementary ways in which we recognize the inherent value of persons. More precisely, for Velleman, respect ‘arrests our self-love’ and our readiness to use others simply as a means. To respect is to see the other as separate and as an independent centre of value. By contrast, he claims that ‘Love disarms our emotional defenses; it makes us vulnerable to the other’ (Velleman 1999, 360, 361). That is to say, love does not arrest our self-love, but rather it arrests our self-protective egocentricity. While the line between these two is rather fine, this way of representing matters helps to explain why love is an exercise in ‘really looking’, just as Murdoch claims (Velleman 1999, 334).

‘Many of our defenses against being emotionally affected by another person are ways of not seeing what is most affecting about him. This contrived blindness to the other person is among the defenses that are lifted by love, with the result that we really look at him, perhaps for the first time, and respond emotionally in a way that’s indicative of having really seen him’ (Velleman 1999, 361). This is broadly similar to Murdoch’s view that love is an opening up in the sense that it is ‘the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real’ (Murdoch 1999, 215). I shall accept that Velleman’s account *is* in this respect a broadly Murdochian account of love, but there is a strictness and an exclusiveness about the Velleman account that is at odds with Murdoch’s position. More specifically, Velleman not only resists Frankfurt’s reduction of love to desires that result in the projection of value, he goes on to suggest that desires are only ever the regular accompaniments of love and are not constitutive parts of love itself.

I will suggest that on this matter of desires Murdoch and Kant are closer in line with one another than Velleman allows. Both regard love as at least partly conative, as a response that includes some component of desire. This component of desire helps us to make sense of the Kantian (and indeed Platonic) metaphor of love as *drawing close* or as a matter of wanting *to be near* or *to be in the presence of*. I will also suggest that Velleman’s *exclusion* of desire makes familiar features of love difficult to explain.

Love that is purely cognitive, purely a matter of seeing (and that has no component of desiring) will have the convenient feature that it involves no disposition to meddle in the affairs of others or to act in ways that might compromise their autonomy. With love’s wings clipped in this way, the potential for conflict between an *intrusive* love and a *distance accepting* Kantian respect is minimal. This is part of Velleman’s strategy for showing that love is a moral emotion and is not a threat to good moral agency. On the other hand, it is no longer quite so clear why respect might be required to rein in love. They both seem to be performing roles that are so close to one another that the serious prospect of *any* major tension between the two is excluded. And this does not seem to reflect what moral life is like. Furthermore, Velleman does not simply claim that love and respect complement one another. He claims that they have

a shared intentionality such that, when we love someone, we are not responding to their unique or distinctive quirks or idiosyncracies, 'we are responding to the value that he possesses by virtue of being a person or, as Kant would say, an instance of rational nature' (Velleman 1999, 365). Love, like Kantian respect, turns out to be a response to, and more precisely a recognition of, rational personhood.

It is at this point that Velleman's approach ceases to sound like an analytic clarification of Murdoch's position and begins to sound instead like an attempt to turn Murdoch into a covert and reluctant Kantian. This makes Velleman's reading problematic. Murdoch, notoriously, insists that love is a response to the *unique* and the *particular*, to the individual who is thought of as 'knowable by love' (Murdoch 2001, 29). From a Murdochian point of view, what we see when we 'really look' is not always going to be the same. As a result, it is difficult to avoid Elijah Millgram's conclusion that 'although Velleman has adopted some of Murdoch's turns of phrase, he has abandoned Murdoch's interpretation of love and of vision' (Millgram 2004, 512). Velleman's response to this (anticipated) objection is that Murdoch's emphasis upon particularity is couched in a language of 'impersonality, detachment and realism'. Such an emphasis upon being fair, just and realistic, or as Velleman says 'strictly objective', suggests that loving a particular person is not actually a matter of partiality. It is not a matter of responding to something that one individual may have and that others might lack (Velleman 1999, 342). For Velleman, Murdoch is not, on the whole, saying what she seems to be saying in those passages where particularity is emphasized.

We have, I think, two main reasons for rejecting this claim. The first is that Millgram's reading is simply more faithful to Murdoch's texts. It is one thing to say that, in *The Sovereignty of Good* and perhaps elsewhere, Murdoch is unfair to Kant and, as a result, she over-estimates the gulf between her position and his. But it is quite another matter to suggest that behind or beneath her concern for the unique and the particular, Murdoch is covertly promoting an impartialist ethic. Here we may note that the phrasing of 'strictly objective' belongs to Velleman and not to Murdoch and that the bias overcome by the loving Murdochian gaze is not partiality *per se*, but is a special and distorting kind of partiality in favour of the importance of the self. Partiality in favour of others, partiality that is a recognition of special bonds and connections (such as those between lovers, or between parent and child or between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) does not seem to be *in any way* ruled out by *any* Murdoch text.

Secondly, Velleman's account of love's intentionality (that love is a response to *sheer rational personhood*) is implausible and it therefore does no favours to Murdoch to suggest that her position agrees with Velleman's or that the latter is a charitable analytic reconstruction of the former. But my concern here is not simply with the way in which regarding love as a response to per-

sonhood stands in the way of our appreciation that non-persons can also be loved. I also have a concern about the way in which this view fails to do justice to the phenomenology of love when the love in question *does* happen to be directed towards someone who *is* a person. When we are in love with other people, our concern does not seem to be about anything so abstract as their rational personhood.

Furthermore, if love, like Kantian respect, is a response to rational personhood, then we will have equally good reasons for loving all rational agents. Velleman's position is that, ultimately in some sense we do. Here, I will suggest that while others may be, generally if not universally, lovable, in the sense that there is no barrier to their being *loved for a good reason* or for a good cluster of reasons, this is not the same as saying that the *reasons for love* are in each case identical. In a straightforward way, there is a difference between claiming (i) all persons are worthy of love; and (ii) our reasons for loving one person are just as good as our reasons for loving another because our reasons for love are always ultimately the same.

The first of these claims draws upon a basic commitment of Christianity that I will not dispute here (although I do consider it problematic in the case of individuals who have betrayed their humanity). The second claim is straightforwardly implausible, although it is not implausible because it appeals to there being *reasons for love*, which is, after all, shared ground between Murdoch, Velleman and, I suspect, the later Kant.

Velleman tries to soften the implausibility of his endorsement of (ii) by pointing out that *of course* we cannot love everyone simultaneously. But, in a move that is strikingly reminiscent of Freud, this is regarded by Velleman as simply a matter of economy. We have a limited amount of love to go around and so we direct it (in Freudian terms we 'cathect it') towards those whose quirks, personal traits and peculiarities help us to recognize the deeper reality of their personhood. But these quirks, traits and peculiarities operate only as enablers for our love, they are not themselves *reasons for love*. Ultimately, the only defensible reason for love is that someone is a rational moral agent or, more simply, a person.

What this fails to do justice to is the idea that loving someone involves seeing them as *irreplaceable*. This is a feature of love that helps to explain a great deal about love and loss. It helps to explain the phenomenology of grief. Irreplaceability is also a feature of love that Velleman does not dispute. To do so would place *his* account of love too far from our ordinary understanding of what love involves. But his way of making room for irreplaceability is by suggesting that while love is a response to the generic value of personhood, it is also a response that involves a refusal to measure persons against any potential replacements. However, this seems akin to a special kind of stubbornness and is, in no way the *perception of actual uniqueness*. And so here we may wonder,



that is to say I am inclined to wonder, whether Velleman has given himself the right resources to resist Frankfurt's idea that love is associated with the *projection* of a special importance.

It is difficult to resist the view that regarding others as irreplaceable, if it is to be more than projection or stubbornness, requires appeal to properties that the loved individual *and only the loved individual* happens to possess. And this cannot be a matter of rational personhood, on whatever account of the latter we happen to prefer. What Velleman does have going in his favour is the point that any appeal to mere *quirks* and *idiosyncracies* will not help us to make sense of such properties. If, for example, I love Suzanne because of the way that she wears her hat and sips her tea, I will also have a reason to love anyone else who happens to wear their hat and sip tea in precisely the same way (Velleman 1999, 371). In a rather extreme case, if I love her because of her enticing physiological quirks, I should also love any physiologically exact duplicate of her, and I should love such a duplicate *for precisely the same reason* that I love the original.

There is, however, a standard way of dealing with the problem of uniqueness by pointing out that the *relational* properties of others do make them unique and that such properties may plausibly be appealed to as giving us reasons for loving them. I may for example love Suzanne *because* she was the person I met at the end of my teens who sat out with me under the stars and who cared for me when I did not expect her to. Even a physiologically exact copy would lack this history. This is (broadly) the line taken against Velleman by Niko Kolodny (with, perhaps a few cognitive demands too many) and at present it represents (with many variations) the dominant position in the philosophy of love. In more familiar terms, drawing from Wittgensteinian literature, love is a response to a shared history. And it is a response to an individual whose history makes them unique. Even a perfect duplicate could not have my past, or the past of the woman I love (Kolodny 2003; Cockburn 1990, 154-5).

While it would be a stretch to suggest that Murdoch anticipates this appeal to relational properties, the less heavily analytic appeal to a shared past is at least consistent with her position and with her concern for individuals as the product of a history that shapes and bounds their moral vision (a key theme of *The Idea of Perfection*). It is also worth noting that Murdoch persistently situates love within the context of an existing connection to the other. Her exemplary case of love in *The Sovereignty of Good* is an appeal to a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law and not to two strangers on a train. And part of what makes her case of D and M work is that we can understand the standpoint of the mother-in-law as someone who re-evaluates the *role* that her daughter-in-law has played. This daughter-in-law gave her son a chance of happiness and enriched her own life or at least would have done so had the mother-in-law been more open and just or less possessive and jealous. This involves, as Mur-

doch recognizes when she considers that the daughter-in-law may now be dead, an attitude towards the past and not simply towards what is immediately present. I will suggest that all love is like this. That is to say, the intentionality of love is mixed, it is not purely a response to an *immediately present* other or to their sheer rational personhood. And it is for this reason that love for strangers is excluded (Milligan 2011, 127-32). Moral relations with them ought to be thought of in other terms, such as respect, compassion and duty, concepts that need not be bound up with the recognition of a shared history.

### III. The Direction of Love

However, it is not just Velleman's mistaken view that love and respect share the same intentionality that threatens to obscure important aspects of Murdoch's account of love. There are two further, and important, features of Murdoch's approach to love that Velleman's account sets aside or fails to accommodate.

Firstly, and as already noted, Velleman insists upon a strictly recognitional account of love with no constitutive component of desire. Love is purely cognitive and not conative. This fails to do justice to the way in which Murdoch associates love with Platonic *eros* and thereby distinguishes it from a Christian account of love that is directly modelled (as Kant's account of love seems to be) upon legitimate concern for our neighbours. The whole point of deploying a metaphor of 'eros' by contrast with '*agape*', '*philia*', '*caritas*' or just plain 'love' is that doing so sets up sexual desire and longing as in some respects a good starting point for understanding love *of any sort*. This is a standard Platonic move and it favours, I think *necessitates*, the inclusion of a component of *desire* as well as a component of *recognition* within love.

In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Murdoch is explicit about this matter. "Eros" is the continuous operation of spiritual *energy*, desire, intellect, love, as it moves along and responds to particular objects of attention . . . good and bad desires with good and bad objects' (Murdoch 1993, 496). Note how the continuous operation of this figurative energy of *eros* brings together the cognitive and the connative, the intellect and desire. This being the case, how worried should we be about Murdoch's apparent inclusion of desire as a constitutive part of love? Does it, for example, mean that love must be egocentric, with *eros* operating more or less in the same manner as Freudian *libido*? Not obviously, desires may, as Velleman acknowledges, take the form of altruistic concern or longing for the well-being of others. But when loving desire is altruistic in this way, does the love involve a *meddlesome disposition* of the sort that worried Kant and which Velleman is at pains to exclude? Here, it may be pointed out that a disposition to meddle is not the same as *actual meddling*. Such desires, reined in by a recognition of the separateness of others, by a recognition of the fact that they have *their own* lives, seems to fit rather well

with the phenomenology of love. Often, we may *want to help*, but we may also feel that we ought to *stand back* and let the person that we love find their own way. Murdoch's novels contain agents who feel the pull of both considerations. There are, furthermore, no obvious reasons why moral life should not include tensions of just this sort, tensions that help to motivate the claim that a plausible account of moral life needs to find room for *both* love and respect.

Secondly, Velleman's way of attempting to bring together love and impartial respect obscures a central feature of Murdoch's treatment of love's normativity. For Kant, it is an admirable feature of respect that what it responds to in others is what we ourselves possess: *I have rational personhood just as you do and both are equally worthy of respect*. This entitlement of others to respect generates a reason for self-respect. By contrast, the appropriate object of our love in Murdoch is *always* other than the self. Love, in the sense of a morally defensible love, is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real. Murdoch not only endorses partiality, she more specifically adheres to a strong self/other asymmetry in which (as something of an impractical over-statement) 'the direction of attention should properly be outward' (Murdoch 2001, 58). This is not to say that an everyday commonplace concern for our own happiness must be overlooked, but it does mean that such concern ought not to be thought of as a matter of self-love.

#### IV. The Recognition of Self-Worth

What this leaves us with is, inconveniently, a problem about the recognition of our own worth, a problem that is all the more acute if we resist the temptation to equate Murdoch's project of a figurative 'unselfing' with self-abnegation and restrict it, instead, to the curtailing of egocentricity (Milligan 2007b and 2010). How may we come to recognize our worth by looking outwards towards what is other? Here I want to allow that there *is* an awkwardness about Murdoch's commitment to valuing ourselves and doing so in a legitimate manner. Or at least there is an awkwardness about valuing the self in her philosophical texts. In the novels, valuing the self is taken for granted in order to picture what life is like in a realistic manner.

I want to present a story about valuing love that may help us to understand that valuing ourselves involves more than the recognition of our rational personhood, and it involves something that does not obviously constitute self-love (or, minimally, it does not constitute self-love *in any morally troubling sense*). Love is ordinarily valued and seen as important because of its motivational role. A recognition of this is central to Harry Frankfurt's account of why love matters (although Frankfurt does in fact tie this motivational role to self-love) (Frankfurt 2004). The same point about motivation is at the heart of Plato's concept of *eros* and it figures as well in Murdoch. I will accept that

love's depth and its value is, in part, a matter of this indispensable motivational role. However, love is deep in a way that makes it a necessary requirement for well-being because our *appreciation* of our own worth is bound up with the recognition that we too are intelligible objects of love (Milligan 2011, compare with Gaita 2000). More specifically, it is bound up with the recognition that we are loveable by others. This requires the actual experience of having been loved by someone whose responses are, in at least some matters of the heart, regarded as authoritative. (Or at least believing that we have been loved in this way.)

In Murdoch's novel *Bruno's Dream*, there is an illuminating treatment of the way in which the love of another plays this role of facilitating a sense of self-worth. Murdoch centres the novel upon Bruno, an old man who has become increasingly cut off from others and is now confined to bed. His sole carer is a son-in-law who has inherited Bruno just as he has inherited the family printing works. These two damaged men have a shared history together and each feels something for the other but, if it is love, it is love of a sort that neither can readily acknowledge.

Up to a point, Bruno still retains his mental faculties. His physical movement is restricted, but he continues to reason well enough to torture himself with thoughts about the past, about the son he has alienated and the wife he has betrayed. Fear of her dreadful reproaches kept Bruno away from her deathbed, but now he is dying and cannot escape from the desire to try and make order out of the disorder of his life. Bruno's greatest torment is not the suffering of a man whose autonomy is all but spent, it is the more dreadful thought that he has, at the end, become monstrous, an unlovable being. In earlier days, Bruno had the beginnings of a scholarly interest in spiders. In the room where he is going to die, he now feels himself to be a spindly creature, withered in body and with an implausibly large head. He has no sense that, had his wife lived, she would now love him.

While there is no medical recovery for Bruno, matters do change and improve. His steady loss of autonomy, like his medical condition, is irreversible. But there is a return of love, of a sort, from a woman who is brought to the house by his son-in-law. With her, a different, if brief and loving relationship begins to grow. The love is not sexualized but it does answer a longing. For Bruno, it is love that he can recognize and accept with wonder and gratitude. And this recognition of being loved by another authoritative being brings an awakening of other possibilities concerning his sexualized relationship with his wife. While sex itself is no longer an option, *being loved* shows him that he is not *morally* or *physically* monstrous, he is not unlovable. And with this comes the realization (partly insight but again partly faith and hope) that the wife he betrayed was calling out at the end so that she could forgive him, so that she could be with him. Bruno, who has until now been tormented by the past, comes to see it in a new way. This is not redemption, it does not undo all the wrongs

and untangle the web of his mistakes, but it provides a pathway towards acceptance of personal failings rather than despair about the self.

The case of Bruno illustrates the importance of being ready to acknowledge and to accept the love of others and above all to accept its genuineness. I want to close by suggesting that the case of Bruno also shows a way in which Murdoch can hold onto the view that the proper direction of love is outwards while also acknowledging that self-valuing is a legitimate form of valuing (Milligan 2010). For Murdoch, the recognition of our own value does not require self-love and it does not reduce down to a respectful recognition of autonomy or rational personhood. Rather, valuing the self *in the right way* requires that we *look outwards* with a just and loving gaze and see ourselves in the light of the love of others.

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