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Beyond Respect

Complexities of Identity, Personhood, and Recognition

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Abstract: Mainstream analytic philosophy has long focused on a rationalistic conception of persons as the beings that matter morally. This has led to a heavy concentration on respect as a, if not *the*, core moral attitude. This paper aims to complicate the picture by arguing that personhood is more complex than this, because the identities in virtue of which persons matter are more complex. Persons matter not only as (abstract) persons, but as specific individuals and members of groups. As a result, they should be recognized in corresponding ways that go beyond respect, including love and esteem. Doing so expands our understanding of morality.

Introduction

Persons matter. That is, personhood is a moral status that means a being matters in such a way that it may not be treated as a mere object. Persons' interests are to be taken into consideration and responded to appropriately; they are to be recognized. On the most abstract level, the proper response to personhood is often termed *respect*, in the recognitional sense that Stephen Darwall highlighted in his "Two Kinds of Respect" (1977). This response is an all-or-nothing affair; it does not admit of degrees.

But in virtue of what is someone a person? One influential traditional view—probably the most influential view in analytic moral philosophy—holds that someone is a person in virtue of having a rational nature. In the following discussion I would like to provide a more fine-grained view of personhood, teasing apart different ways of thinking about it by working from two distinguishable but interrelated perspectives: the moral/metaphysical

status on the one hand, and the proper responsive attitudes¹ on the other (what Ikäheimo calls the ethical approach (2010: 344)). These ethical and metaphysical perspectives are interrelated in that the responsive attitudes both help to constitute personhood and are normatively called for when personhood is encountered. Thus, because it is closely related to personhood, the give-and-take of recognition is central to moral practice.

The idea of morality as recognition is not new.² Recognition theory has been developing as its own subdivision of philosophy for decades, and can trace roots back as far back as Hegel and Fichte. The basic idea is that various forms of recognition are necessary for individual self-realization, which makes recognition a fundamental human need and a core moral concept. This line of thinking has been emphasized more in the continental and feminist traditions of Anglophone and European philosophy, but the mainstream analytic tradition has the resources to develop it as well. Kantian and virtue theories, in particular, have conceptions of personhood at their centers, and both give attention to people's attitudes as they make decisions. They have largely concentrated on one narrow construal of personhood, however: the conception that emphasizes reason, autonomy, rights, respect, and individual development. But—as I often tell my students—it's more complicated than that. People don't just matter as individual, autonomous reasoners. They are more than that, and they matter *as* more than that. If we hold on to the idea that morality is about how to respond to personhood, but expand our conception of personhood, we must expand our conception of morality.

I would therefore like to enlarge the recognition of persons beyond its traditional scope in analytic philosophy, and in doing so I will bring together some aspects of recent discussions that have not yet been connected in an explicit way. Starting from the assumption that the fact that persons matter is a bedrock moral idea, my contention is that the moral status of personhood arises from a person's identity, which is broader and more complex than traditionally conceived, and is normative for certain recognitional attitudes; those attitudes are in turn normative for action. To put it less precisely but more

¹ Cf. Strawson (1962).

² Complications quickly arise when extending the idea of recognition to non-human creatures and objects. For present purposes, I will avoid these complications by restricting my discussion to people.

memorably, who we are calls for recognition, and recognition calls for our being treated well. Once we see this, we will see that analytic philosophy's concentration on respect has overlooked some crucial aspects of moral experience, but also that it has the resources to expand its understanding of morality.

Morality and personhood

Before launching into the central argument, I would like to begin with a brief discussion of the premise that persons matter. This idea has obvious and strong ties to Kantian literature, and seems most at home there. Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative take the form they do because he takes the universal dignity of reason to merit our respect. Personhood, in the form of reason, is an inviolable status. But I contend that the fact that persons matter underwrites many of the major approaches to ethical theory, and this is why it is important to understand the complexities of personhood.

Care theories also center on personhood, though they conceive of this rather differently than Kantian theories do; they begin from the idea that persons are fundamentally relational rather than individual, and are defined and developed through their ties with others. According to care theories, this interconnectedness calls for attentiveness and receptivity toward others—putting persons at the heart of morality.

It is less obvious how personhood is at the center of virtue theories, though I would argue that it is still not much of a stretch for them. Virtue theories call for the development of personal virtues, which requires honing certain perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral habits. On the face of it, there is no talk of personhood as such in an individual's own character development. But when we examine the virtues themselves, it becomes clear that their aim is largely centered on how to respond properly to the situation—which is typically a social situation requiring the consideration of other persons. However we cash out “proper” responses, the virtues that deal with people will be concerned with how we are to treat them. Acting virtuously implicitly requires a normative conception of personhood.

The idea that personhood is the normative center of morality is likely to be less palatable to consequentialists, however. Indeed, in his entry on consequentialism in the *Stanford*

Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong opens by defining consequentialism as “the view that normative properties depend only on consequences.”³ This seems to exclude the possibility that a concept like personhood could be normative. Yet one of the major objections to consequentialism remains the idea that it could (theoretically) overlook, and even violate, the special status persons seem to have. It seems to me that the persistence of this objection over time, and the work consequentialists do to answer it, are themselves evidence of the strong presumption that persons are intrinsically important, and their status is normative. After all, the consequences of our actions matter because the persons they affect matter. John Stuart Mill indicates as much.⁴ Thus, I take it that my starting premise is reasonable across a broad range of moral theories.

Personhood and identity: the abstract conception

My first claim is that personhood comes from being *somebody*, which I contend is just to say that personhood comes from having a personal identity. But identity is a complex thing that has what we might call layers, and different aspects are more salient in different contexts and call for differing responses. This is what I want to unpack. I will begin by expanding the concept of personhood as an abstract (“thin”) status, and then move toward fleshing out its less abstract (“thicker”) dimensions and implications.

The traditional Kantian conception of personhood centers the concept of a person on reason, which gives rise to autonomy and rights and requires our respect. Personhood in this sense, what we might call the rationalistic or deontic⁵ sense, is the primary conception of persons in much of moral and political theorizing in the analytic tradition.⁶ Persons are

³ [Insert footnote.]

⁴ “[The] principle [of utility] is a mere form of words without rational signification unless one person’s happiness, supposed equal in degree (with the proper allowance made for kind), is counted for exactly as much as another’s” (Mill 1861/1979: 60).

⁵ This term is borrowed from Heikki Ikäheimo (2010).

⁶ Authors in this tradition whose work has influenced the views in this essay include: Immanuel Kant, J.S. Mill, Sarah Buss, Stephen Darwall, Robin Dillon, and David Velleman.

to be respected simply in light of their status as persons—this basic status recognition is what respect amounts to in this context. Respect calls for leaving space for individual choice and development, and makes few claims on how these choices should go. We might say that respect recognizes the presence of individuality but remains aloof from its content. In the “classic” conception of abstract personhood, the aspects of personal identity that are picked out are the general ability and authority to exchange reasons with others. Heikki Ikäheimo’s insightful analysis of how personhood and recognition interact suggests that this conception of personhood centers on persons’ coauthority to govern our interactions by self-authorized norms (2010: 347). We are thus limited in the ways we may treat others by the fact that any reasons that are valid for us are in principle valid for them too, and in order to remain consistent with our own reasoning we must recognize the validity of theirs as well.

Stephen Darwall has recently argued that this authority is “second-personal,” which is to say that the successful exchange of reasons presupposes that each party has the “authority, competence, and responsibility” to participate in such an exchange (2006: 5). Persons can give one another reasons directly, based on this authority, as opposed to an indirect path through, say, self-interest. To get you off my foot, I could explain that you’re hurting me and engage your sympathy; or I could simply ask you to get off my foot. The former strategy is, we might say, causal, whereas the latter is second-personal. Darwall emphasizes the normativity built into second-personal address, but he does not always emphasize the metaphysical aspects of the idea: because addressing others in second-personal ways presupposes their authority, it is a form of recognition that also helps to constitute authority in those who are still developing the capacity. By presupposing that you are capable of receiving the reasons I purport to give you when I make a demand, I *give* you the relevant authority and responsibility. This point is developed more in the continental tradition, which generally credits it to Fichte (as does Darwall). I note it here because it shows that the recognition that takes place in second-personal interactions is constitutive of as well as normatively required by the narrow sense of personhood under discussion.

This rationalistic conception of personhood goes a long way in developing moral theory; in many contexts, a person’s ability and authority to exchange reasons with others is indeed

the most salient feature in thinking about how to respond to them, as the long history of developing this theme in social and political theory shows. Yet as feminists and others have increasingly pointed out, there are many morally important entities—prominently, young children, humans with diminished mental capacities, and at least some animals—which cannot be said to have reason as understood in this autonomous, authoritative sense. Although they cannot (fully) exercise reason, they are still important, and they seem to be important in just the same inviolable way that fully rational people are; they seem to be sources of reasons for us even if they cannot participate in a fully mutual exchange of reasons. So what else is there that could account for this sense of their mattering?

Other conceptions of personhood focus on embodiment, individuality, and social embeddedness: a person is someone with individuality expressed through their physical being and their emotional and social ties to others.⁷ Because of this focus, this way of thinking conceives of persons less abstractly and more concretely, and it focuses less on rights than on specific roles and needs; as Ikäheimo highlights (2010: 351), this view takes the happiness or flourishing of the entities involved to be intrinsically important. We might call this the relational conception of (still abstract) personhood. For example, Hilde Lindemann argues that personhood consists of four elements: (1) “sufficient mental activity to constitute a personality,” which is (2) expressed physically and (3) recognized by others as a personality, and (4) responded to accordingly (2014: ix). In this account, and in the relational view more generally, we can again see that recognition plays a dual role in constituting personhood and being normatively required by it. Responding to the presence of a personality helps to further develop that personality, which calls for further responses, and so on.

I am persuaded that, from both metaphysical and moral points of view, persons are primarily relational. This is because even in the narrow case, the rational capacities needed for autonomy and rights can be developed only in relations with others. This is Fichte’s great insight, and it is redeveloped and emphasized in feminist literature as well as backed

⁷ Authors in this tradition who have influenced the views in this essay include: Hilde Lindemann, Iris Murdoch, Eva Kittay, Virginia Held, Nel Noddings, Michael Slote, and Elizabeth Spelman.

up by scientific research (Narvaez 2014). As philosophers from Fichte and Hegel through Held, Lindemann, Spelman and others have argued, we cannot become persons in any sense (including the rationalistic one) without the mutually reinforcing, interactive, caring relations we have with those around us as we grow and develop. So relationships are what create persons ontologically; we cannot be persons—indeed, we cannot *be*—without relationships, particularly caring ones. Further, if personhood is by definition what makes a being matter in the moral sense, and this mattering derives from being someone, and being someone is an irreducibly relational thing, then what makes a person matter is relational—not rational. You don't need reason to be someone who matters, even if reason is one of your characteristic features.

Thus, I maintain that what confers the status of personhood (in both the moral and metaphysical senses) is having a personal identity. Personal identity in the sense important for this discussion is “biographical” identity, “who you are,” a complex of individual characteristics shaped by genes and experience. We might call it individuality, as long as that doesn't signal the kind of individualism that the relational view eschews. We come to the world with a unique genetic inheritance that shapes our physical embodiment as well as our social situation (because who our ancestors are influences the social categories into which we are sorted). We also come into a web of relationships and a world of experiences that, for better or worse, shape our psychology, character, and even physiology (Narvaez 2014). Within (or sometimes against) the given, we can make choices that in turn shape our social situation, personal relationships, individual experiences, and projects, which then influence choices, and so on.⁸ Crucial to making these choices is the ability to value things, which in turn makes us capable of happiness (in the eudaimonistic sense) as well as meaning (Ikäheimo 2010, Bauhn 2017). Without values, we would have no basis for decision making, and no sense of a life that is better or worse, without which there are no such things as happiness and meaning.

⁸ This idea shows up in places too numerous to mention. The sources freshest in my mind for this essay include Lindemann (2014), Bauhn (2017), Spelman (1978), Narvaez (2014), Held (2006).

Much more has been said elsewhere to flesh out this conception as an account of personhood.⁹ My point is that this relational view is still a conception of personhood in the abstract sense, the sense of having a basic inviolable status. It's just that the grounds for that status extend beyond rational capacity. In fact, I would venture to claim that rational capacity was never what grounded it in the first place; it was personal identity all along, and reason is just a prominent feature for the paradigm person that forms the basis of traditional theory, the one that figures in traditionally paradigmatic moral contexts.¹⁰ After all, for beings who do have the rational capacities emphasized in that tradition, the exercise of those capacities is a major part of who they are and what constitutes their happiness.

Even if we accept the expanded conception, the rationalistic conception is still a special moral category within the set of persons, because being a rational creature is certainly part of the identities of many persons. Persons with the capacities requisite for participation in rational, authoritative self-governance *are* a special subset of beings who matter, and deserve recognition as such. Furthermore, rational capacities *are* part of personal identity when they are present—part of who I am is a reasoning creature who can participate with other reasoning creatures in mutual exchanges of reasons—and these capacities develop within the nexus of relationships that nurtures our development into persons. But I contend that persons' rational capacities do not make them matter *more* or in a different way than the rest of the beings in the set of persons. It does give them the authority and autonomy to do all the things we normally associate with this view of persons (make and enforce laws, direct their own lives, vote, etc.), actions which cannot generally be taken by persons in the broad relational sense who are not also persons in the narrower rationalistic sense. But reason is not what defines personhood as a basic status.

⁹ For example, see Lindemann (2014).

¹⁰ Joan Tronto has an interesting historical account of how reason came to be emphasized so prominently in her *Moral Boundaries* (1993), Chapter 2.

Recognition of abstract personhood: respect

So far, I have used the term “recognition” to mean, roughly, the perception, acknowledgment, or treatment of someone as mattering in some way.¹¹ It has psychological and normative dimensions. Recognition is an attitude I can take (in this context, it will usually be toward a person),¹² one which should (and typically does) result in behavior toward others that demonstrates an appreciation for their mattering. As I will argue, “mattering” is layered, and so is recognition.

Before proceeding, I need to address an important terminological issue having to do with the way I am using the umbrella term “recognition.” For the most part, following the literature on recognition theory,¹³ I am using “recognition” as a positive thing; it is something we should strive to give and receive, an affirming kind of appreciation or acknowledgment. But there is also a neutral sense of the term, one that means something closer to noticing, or taking into account. We can—and should—also recognize bad things, in order to know how to deal with them appropriately. I need to recognize someone as a threat if they really are one, for example, because otherwise I will put myself in danger. This is the sense in which I can “respect someone’s temper,” for example.

Furthermore, sometimes recognizing a fact—such as someone’s race or gender—which is in itself neutral can have negative or positive meaning. In a racist society, noticing someone’s racial profile may result in discrimination—which could be interpreted as negative recognition, when “recognition” is used as a value-neutral term, or as a lack of recognition, if “recognition” is used as a positive term. On the other hand, ignoring

¹¹ For a more complex and nuanced overview, see Mattias Iser’s article on recognition in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

¹² Laitinen suggests that in what he calls the “adequate regard” sense, recognition can be conferred on non-person creatures and on objects as well; it is fundamentally a response to the “normatively or evaluatively significant features” of its object (2010: 323). This is similar to Darwall’s (1977) broad conception of recognition respect as being a proper response to something in virtue of its features.

¹³ See Iser (2013).

something like race can also be problematic, when it makes a real difference in the situation. In general I will call such misestimation a lack of recognition, because I am primarily employing the positive use of the term *recognition*.

To return to the main thread of discussion: as noted already, the most familiar species of recognition in moral theory has been respect, characterized by Kant as a deep appreciation for the dignity of reason. The Kantian story starts from the premise that morality is universal and overriding, and it holds that when we ask ourselves whether our actions are moral, we are essentially asking whether any rational being would have the same reasons we do; we thus live up to the impartial standards of morality by passing over accidental, individual desires and inclinations and concentrating only on the universal. Rational beings will have the same reasons to the extent that they have something in common. Given the great diversity in forms of life, however, the only thing we can count on as common to all rational beings is reason itself. Any contemplated action must therefore accord with reason, and conversely any action that violates reason does so in virtue of not properly acknowledging the overriding dignity of reason—giving in to inclination and treating others as objects rather than ends in themselves. If others are ends in themselves, they are sources of reasons for us: they have that basic status that requires our respect, and thus limits how we can permissibly treat them.

There is a wrinkle here, however, given my argument that the basic status of abstract personhood does not rest solely on rational capacities. I take it that most readers will be more or less comfortable with the idea that we are to accord recognition respect for personhood to those with fully developed rational faculties. Many will be less comfortable with according this kind of respect to those whose capacities are not as developed. Yet what are advocates for children or the cognitively disabled arguing for, if not that they should be counted as persons, with all the dignity we attach to that status?

Eva Feder Kittay argues forcefully for just this kind of claim. She describes the emotional and philosophical struggle she went through in her fervent attempt to convince fellow philosophers (who were essentially arguing that cognitively disabled humans should have the same moral status as chimpanzees) of her cognitively disabled daughter's personhood.

Her central claim is that “what it is to be human is not a bundle of capacities. It’s a way that you are, a way you are in the world, a way you are with another” (2010: 408). She finds pinning personhood on cognitive capacity to be profoundly limiting and disrespectful. One philosopher apologized for hurting her feelings, and Kittay argues that the whole point is that it wasn’t about *her*; it was about her daughter:

If McMahan and others acknowledge the special relationship that is constituted by parenthood, and if they can grant that the parent of a child with the severe cognitive impairments has a deeper and morally and objectively more significant relationship with that child than does a pet owner with his beloved pet, then I believe that a number of implications suggest that the recognition of the child as possessing moral personhood must follow.

...It is incoherent to grant the special relationship I have with my daughter and then to turn around and say, “But that daughter has no moral hold on anyone but her parent.” Her parent cannot fulfill her role as parent, unless others also have an acknowledged moral responsibility to the child—a moral responsibility on a par with the one it has to anyone’s child. But it is not for my sake that I want my child recognized. It is for *her* sake. (2010: 409-10)

Along different lines, in her article “Respect for Persons,” Sarah Buss argues that the Kantian story is incomplete, and I think her argument opens up space for the more expansive account of abstract personhood I’m advocating here. She examines the phenomenology of respect to show that the only way to make sense of the claim that persons deserve respect simply in virtue of personhood is to show that it is really the experience of someone as a source of reasons that drives the Kantian-style picture. There is nothing about reason itself that compels us to treat others as ends in themselves, Buss argues: “I am willing to concede that the capacity to reason has a sublimity not shared by the capacity to fly, to sing, to devour large mammals in one gulp. But to be sublime is one thing; to impose obligations is another” (1999: 523). Buss argues that the phenomenology of shame shows that it is possible to *experience* another person’s point of view as

matter, and thus that your own point of view is not the only one that matters. As a result, shame plays an important role in developing moral consciousness, and, Buss argues, it does so without being contingent on any personal interest. That is, moral motivation doesn't depend on whether we fear authority or feel empathy for others, either of which would align our interests with those we fear or empathize with; instead, it depends on our perception that others are sources of reasons—reasons which may not in fact align with our interests. In that case, acting in accordance with those reasons is acting on truly moral motivation. Shame shows that this is possible, but shame is not required in order to experience another person as an end in themselves. As Buss writes:

The reason why we believe we ought to accommodate our ends to the ends of others—to 'treat other persons with respect'—is because we have had encounters with other persons which are encounters with something that transcends our interpretive powers and thereby forces us to acknowledge the limitations of these powers. ...[O]ur actual encounters with other persons make it impossible for us to believe that our own concerns and interests are the only possible source of reasons for us. Having experienced other persons as such, we confidently believe that they are ends-in-themselves. (1999: 535-6)

There is nothing in this account that depends on *reason* being the thing we experience as the source of reasons for us. It is couched in terms of personhood. For Buss, the source of reasons is the external point of view's being "a distinct evaluative point of view" (1999: 538). Part of the key here is that noticing the presence of a distinct evaluative point of view—whether through shame or intentional attention (Murdoch 1971/2014) or some other way—involves our own ego fading into the background, at least momentarily (Murdoch 1971/2014: 51). This affords space to see something else as a source of reasons.

Here I would like to call attention to the idea that evaluation need not be entirely rational in the cognitive sense; though it may be responsive to reasons, evaluation need not run through the pathways of reason (see Ben-Ze'ev 2000: chapter 6; Jaggar 1989; Helm 2010), and thus may be present in beings who do not have fully developed rational capacities as

such. Emotions are evaluative in this sense: their objects are tinged with evaluative valences. The object of fear is (perceived as) dangerous and to-be-avoided; the object of curiosity is interesting and to-be-investigated; and so on. If that is so, then children and the cognitively disabled, who can experience these emotions, have a distinct evaluative point of view and could be sources of reasons, which is just to say that they are persons in the normative sense, we can experience them as such, and they deserve recognition as such.

What are we to call this basic recognition, if not respect? I would argue that respect is the correct name for the attitude, if respect is an attitude that recognizes its object as providing reasons to others concerning proper responsiveness (Darwall 1977, Laitinen 2010)—but unlike Kantians, I do not think that reason is the sole, or even main, source of these reasons.

There is a subtlety here worth noting. “Recognition” encompasses two different insights, which Arto Laitinen calls the “mutuality” insight and the “adequate regard” insight (2010: 319). The adequate regard insight interprets recognition as the proper, normatively required response to normatively relevant features of its object. The mutuality insight suggests that there is no true recognition unless it is a two-way interaction: in order for there to be true recognition, both parties must recognize one another as recognizers. If I feel myself to be recognized, then (a) I must believe you to be a recognizer, and (b) I must believe myself to be capable of judging recognizers when I encounter them (2010: 327). This second view of recognition underlies accounts such as those of Fichte, Hegel, Darwall’s second-personal standpoint, and also the intersubjectivity in Buss’s account, as well as the view of personhood I argued for above. Mutuality is a prominent feature of recognition in recognition theory, and it has the implication, emphasized above, that we cannot develop into (moral) subjects ourselves without interacting with others; modern neuroscience bears this out (Narvaez 2014). It thus supports the relational conception of the self and pushes further against the individualistic, rationalistic conception of personhood. Abstract personhood, then, should not be understood solely, or even primarily, in the traditional individualistic, rationalistic way, and recognition in the form of respect should be extended to all persons, rational or not.

In arguing for the expansion of our conception of abstract personhood, I have also been arguing largely from the adequate regard side of things. My claim has been that something other than reason—something Buss characterizes as *having an evaluative point of view*—is what confers personhood and merits the adequate regard afforded by respect. Perhaps someone could object that the expansion comes at the expense of the mutuality insight: once we have expanded beyond the realm of reason, how can recognition remain mutual?

Laitinen notes that the two insights tend to pull in different directions. The mutuality insight tends to restrict the scope of who can recognize and be recognized (only those with the requisite abilities), and the adequate regard insight expands it (anyone capable of responding adequately to the normatively significant features of something or someone can be a recognizer; anything with normatively significant features can be recognized). His solution, however, is to tell a “two-part story” that defines vocabulary for the two phenomena. “Recognizing and being recognized” follows the adequate regard insight; “giving and getting recognition” follows the mutuality insight. Thus, only beings who have the relevant interpersonal capabilities can give and get recognition, but anyone capable of responding adequately to the normative features of an object may recognize it, and anything with normatively relevant features may be recognized. The “relevant interpersonal capabilities” have traditionally been interpreted as rational capacities, though if my arguments so far are compelling, I suggest that the bar is lower and involves only capacities for responsive relations.¹⁴ In any case, we can recognize (adequately regard) the status of not-fully-rational persons even if their abilities do not rise to the level required for mutuality, though I have also been arguing that adequate regard can help develop the mutuality of recognition.

Personhood and identity: more concrete conceptions

The basic status of personhood remains, however, on an abstract level. When I recognize you as a person and respond with respect, I am responding to you as *a* person—but not necessarily a specific one. I am responding to *what* you are, but not necessarily *who* you are. The relational conception of personhood, though abstract, is abstracted from the fact

¹⁴ See Noddings (1984: chapter 3) for a discussion.

that we are embedded in very tangible social and physical contexts that shape who we are and which therefore form the basis for our personhood. I've argued that this conception of persons coheres better with our concrete existence than the rationalistic conception does. I want to turn now to the more concrete layers of our identities on which this conception rests. Briefly, the argument is this: If personhood is important, the basis on which it rests must be important too. If the proper response to abstract personhood is recognition in the form of respect, then the proper response to its basis is recognition in some related form appropriate to that basis. The rest of this discussion will flesh this out.

If asked who I am, I'm likely to say things like: I am a wife, a mother (including of twins), a philosophy professor, a woman, of European (mostly German) descent, a pianist, someone who likes things tidy, who loves being outdoors, etc. These are among the things out of which I weave the fabric of my life and which I can use to help others understand who I am. Personhood is notably absent from this list—and if my morally important personhood is not normally salient to me, but its bases are, then the bases on which my personhood rests must also be morally important.

Each of the characteristics I listed has social dimensions and none is unique to me, but the specific combination of them all is what makes me me. There are two things here I want to highlight. First, our individuality emerges from our intersecting social identities. Second, this means that I can be identified as an individual, and also as a member of social categories. Thus, my identity has layers. The most abstract is personhood, the most concrete is my individuality, and spread in between is an array of social categories to which I belong. The claim I want to defend now is that just as a person is not merely an abstract person, recognition is not merely respect. There are further forms of recognition that correspond to the further layers of our identities, and all of them are morally important.

Recognition of concrete personhood: love, appraisal respect, and recognition-as

In his work on recognition, Axel Honneth distinguishes three main modes of recognition: rights/respect, love, and what he calls "social esteem," which is nurtured by solidarity with fellow members of a value community (1996: 121-9). These forms of recognition

correspond roughly to the three main layers of personhood I identified above. Having discussed respect already, I would like to turn now to the other two.

Love¹⁵ comes in many forms, but at its core, it is an intimate relationship, typically (but not necessarily) mutual, in which two people know one another well and care about one another for their own sakes (as opposed to instrumentally, as in, say, many business relationships). Love is grounded in reasons stemming from the characteristics of the beloved: we love people for their geekiness, attention to detail, ability to design Lego projects, and so on. Yet the people we love are not replaceable when someone else with similar characteristics comes along; love attaches to a specific person. Our beloveds matter to us as the specific people they are, and people who love each other take an interest in one another's interests. There is much more to a complete account of love, of course, but the central idea for my purposes is that loving relationships nurture a very personal sort of recognition, affirming and informing who we are as individuals.

Esteem's function, according to Honneth, is to allow individuals to achieve a healthy relation-to-self in virtue of their being recognized for their "concrete traits and abilities" (1996: 121). The idea here is to single out people according to difference/individuality, rather than (as in the case of legal rights) universals—but unlike with love, the recognition of these differences is social and intersubjective. We have worth as instances of (many different, intersecting) types. The types here can be racial, religious, trade- or career-related, and so on—there is a wide range of group identities, some more voluntary than others.

I think this third category may be more fine-grained than Honneth's discussion suggests. I think there is an appreciable, though blurry,¹⁶ distinction between valuing someone for a trait or ability, and valuing them for their membership in a social group defined by

¹⁵ Although love can have many kinds of objects (see Frankfurt 2004), here I am concentrating on love of other people. My sketch owes much to Helm (2010).

¹⁶ Teasing apart the distinction here would require its own paper, so I hope the undeveloped intuition here is sufficient for now.

characteristics such as gender, race, class, profession, etc. I therefore want to distinguish appraisal respect from what I'll call recognition-as, though I think that because of the blurriness, these should both be considered subspecies of esteem. Esteem in the form of appraisal respect is something we can have more or less of, and it is directed at characteristics, talents, or accomplishments ("excellences") of individuals (Darwall 1977). Such traits are individual, but not intimate. When I admire Fred Rogers for his kindness or Mary Jackson for her engineering skills and courage, this is neither respect for personhood (too particular) nor love of an individual (not particular enough). I am admiring them as instances of a category, something in between *person* and *individual*. They deserve recognition for these exceptional qualities, since these are part of both their personhood and their individuality.

Yet these traits and achievements are not the bases for social groups as they are understood in, for example, social justice education. Thus, we also need a concept for recognizing social group identities in a positive way,¹⁷ because (like it or not) these play important roles in how we experience and contribute to the world, and when they are disvalued, that detracts from our experience. The social categories to which we belong shape the way we are perceived and treated by others (for better or worse) as well as the opportunities that are open to us as we build our lives. These categories can be given or chosen (e.g., gender is more given, profession is more chosen—though of course there are complexities here), they can be embraced or repudiated, and they can be more or less widely valued in the social world. To the extent that our membership in these categories matters to us, we need others to recognize—and value—they. Oppressed groups can undertake a “counterculture of compensatory respect” (Honneth 1996: 124, quoting Max Weber) to make up for larger society’s misvaluation of their group, thus cultivating what

¹⁷ Not all group identities are positive, of course; people should not be valued as white supremacists, for instance. See Bauhn (2017: chapter 5) for an argument on how to constrain the range of permissible identities. Also note the distinction made above between recognition as positive valuing and recognition as taking account of. I may need to take someone’s white supremacism into account even though I should not positively value it.

Honneth calls “group-pride or collective honour” (1996: 128). Seeing one another as members of socially valuable groups supports solidarity with fellow group members, which in turn supports the claim that the group is socially valuable. For lack of a better term,¹⁸ I will call this species of esteem “recognition-as.”

If recognition respect operates at the level of abstract personhood, and love operates at the level of the individual person, then recognition-as operates at levels somewhere in between. It interacts heavily with other levels. At the particular level, our individual traits and group memberships contribute to our individuality, though they do not fully define it. At the abstract level, our group memberships may affect the extent to which others see us as persons or accord appraisal respect for individual talents or contributions. Being Black, for instance, is a group membership that tends to cause others not to perceive members as persons. Black Lives Matter—which puts mattering front and center with its very name—works for the recognition of Black people not merely as persons, but as Black persons.

¹⁸ I have wrestled with what to call this species of esteem. Honneth’s term “solidarity” is promising, but I worry that it suggests too much of an insider’s perspective. Whites can stand in solidarity with their neighbors of color, but this solidarity is different from the solidarity that people of color can have with one another. Furthermore, my acknowledging you as a member of another group does not necessarily mean I stand in solidarity with you in so doing—consider opposing political parties: it may be important in certain contexts that I recognize you as a member of an opposing political party, but that does not mean I will (or should) feel or express solidarity with you. Anthony Cunningham explicates the concept of “fraternity” (1991), which is also promising, because it casts the bond between group members as a matter of identity with and commitment to shared ideals born of shared experience, and thus as a kind of expansion of the self. But as with “solidarity,” what I want to capture should be available to people outside the group, who won’t share the fraternity that bonds group members. The notion I want needs to encompass not only pride or solidarity, but allyship. Thus, I choose “recognition-as” to name this category, though I welcome a better term if there is one.

Group memberships may also affect the way we see ourselves as valuable. This is readily seen in the way people often derive a sense of purpose from work, whether paid or unpaid. We can take pride in the contributions we make as plumbers, programmers, stay-at-home-parents, and so on. When these identities fade or are taken away from us by retirement, illness or injury, it is a major transition. And when those who belong to subordinated social groups struggle to value themselves under those subordinated categories, they may stand in need of countercultural group pride.

To summarize: The personal identity out of which personhood emerges has layers, and each layer has a corresponding kind of recognition. Recognition respect—usually referred to as plain respect—values personhood. Love values someone as a particular individual, someone connected to others, but whose identity is constituted by a complex combination of characteristics. Esteem—valuing people for their qualities—can be divided into two subcategories. Appraisal respect values someone for some excellence—virtue, talent, accomplishment, etc. And recognition-as values someone as a member of some social category (thereby also implicitly valuing the category). Just as we need to be valued as persons, we also need to be valued at these other levels, since these are what give rise to our personhood.

The necessity of recognition for flourishing

Recognition in all its forms contributes to our sense of ourselves as individuals who matter, and we do not fully flourish without significant sources of it.¹⁹ This is directly related to recognition theory's mutuality insight as identified by Laitinen, and its echoes can be found in the work of many thinkers I've discussed here. The idea is that it takes the recognition of others—respect, love, or esteem—and some recognition of that recognition to become a person. Aristotle says that we become good by imitating good actions; in a somewhat similar way we become respectable, loveable, or estimable in part by being respected, loved, or esteemed, and knowing that we are. Here I depart from Aristotle, however,

¹⁹ See Laitinen (2010), Honneth (1996), Ikäheimo (2010), and Zurn (2010), who trace the roots of this idea to Fichte and Hegel.

because imitation alone isn't enough to develop personhood. Role models are necessary, but they cannot serve their function from afar. The interactive nature of recognition is integral to the development of a self. If any type of recognition is lacking, then we are less likely to become full persons.

As discussed above, the need for respect may be the clearest case here, or at least the one with the longest history in analytic philosophy, because it shows up so strongly in Kant's work. Kant doesn't frame anything in terms of flourishing, but he claims that all persons are to be accorded respect in virtue of their status as persons.

Although it is mightily important, as I noted above, we don't normally include abstract personhood as a characteristic that is part of our identity. That basic status is not especially unique (it doesn't contribute to individuality), but more importantly it is easy to take for granted, until someone wrongs us (especially by denying rights or respect). When that happens, we not only notice this aspect of our identities, but emphasize it. It can seem like the most important aspect of ourselves. And in times of acute oppression or injustice, perhaps it is—the recognition of this kind of personhood is in many ways a precondition for flourishing. That's why it can fuel social justice movements such as the Civil Rights movements in the U.S. and South Africa, and why its flaunting in cases of genocide is so egregious. People do not flourish when they are not respected as persons and accorded the sorts of rights and recognition we take persons-as-such to have and deserve. A life of subordinate status is not as good a life as one of equal status with others, as countless struggles for rights and recognition testify.

Although love has not been accorded as much attention in analytic philosophy, it will probably not be shocking to claim that people do not flourish without love. Love is especially important for young children, whose brains are profoundly affected by the attention they receive (or don't) (Narvaez 2014). Of course, the studies that show this do not measure *love* as such, but different modes of attention from caregivers, including being touched and held, breastfeeding, and being responded to promptly to have physical and emotional needs met. We never fully outgrow the need for touch and responsiveness from those who care about us; most people continue to seek out intimate relationships with

others that fulfill these needs. In loving relationships, we are responded to as the specific people we are (Helm 2010, Lindemann 2014). People who are deprived of such relationships tend to become fearful, defensive, domineering, angry, or some combination of these (Narvaez 2014). Lives characterized significantly by such states are surely not flourishing.

Esteem in the forms of appraisal respect and recognition-as is more complicated, in no small part because these two forms of recognition interact with one another—lack of recognition in one of these forms can block the other form. But again, it seems clear that we do not flourish when we're not recognized for characteristics that matter to us, or when we're not valued as belonging to groups that form parts of our identity (or those groups are not valued in wider society). It can be painful to have to hide dimensions of ourselves that we find integral to who we are. Alan Turing received plenty of appraisal respect for his indispensable role in World War II, but he got extremely negative attention for his homosexuality—which was not only the opposite of recognition-as, but also, in effect, a denial of love in the form of an intimate romantic partnership. Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn, and Mary Jackson were not initially accorded much appraisal respect for their mathematical and engineering talents, largely because such respect was generally withheld from both women and African Americans due to a failure of recognition-as.

Any of these painful circumstances detracts from flourishing, and has effects on people's relations to themselves. It is difficult to value your group memberships—and to the extent that these form your identity, it is more difficult to value yourself—when they are not widely valued, and likewise much easier to value your group memberships and yourself when others do so. Again, this is closely related to the mutuality insight of recognition theory.

The normativity of recognition

So far I have been looking at the recognitional attitudes of respect, love, and esteem from the point of view of the recipient, making a case that these are moral attitudes because of the ways they contribute to the recipient's flourishing. But while it is not difficult to see why someone would pursue their own flourishing, why should anyone else protect or

pursue it, beyond noninterference and nonmaleficence? Is there an “ought” here, as well as a “good”?

In a recent book, Per Bauhn explicates a concept he calls “normative identity,” which connects a person’s conception of who they are with a conception of what they ought to do (2017: 1). The idea is that our conceptions of ourselves are often value-laden, and our sense of—and need for—connection to value provides us with meaning and with reasons for action, both long- and short-term. This conception of identity helps to fill in the account of how flourishing is related to reasons for action. Without a sense of who we are, we have no reasons for action beyond meeting the most basic survival needs. Bauhn’s account is focused on the normativity of a person’s identity for her own actions; using the adequate regard insight identified by Laitinen, I wish to extend this normativity to the actions of others: our identities are normative for how others are to treat us.

Again, respect may be the most familiar case. Above I argued that recognition respect is the proper response to someone’s abstract personhood—this is what adequate regard for basic personhood amounts to. Feeling respect for others involves truly seeing them, recognizing them as separate individuals in a way that arrests our self-interest (at least momentarily) and reminds us that others are as real as we are (Velleman 1999, Murdoch 1971/2014, Buss 1999). This feeling calls for certain kinds of behavior toward them: in the narrow, rationalistic sense, it calls for letting them make their own decisions, according them all the rights that society accords persons, working to make institutions inclusive and equally accessible to all, and so on. In the broader relational sense, it calls for taking their interests into account in making decisions. Thus, respect has normative dimensions and has been used widely in analytic moral, social, and political philosophy to ground normative claims and get theorizing off the ground.

Let’s turn, then, to love. Adequate regard for individuality requires close attention to the individual needs, interests, and qualities of another. Love fits this description. Here too is an element of arresting the ego, at least temporarily (Velleman 1999, Murdoch 1971/2014)—loving well is a matter of caring about another for their own sake. There is thus a strong sense in which those who love someone—this is not everyone, but I will

return to the rest of us shortly—ought to provide them with physical and emotional support. Precisely what form that takes can be a delicate balancing act, but someone who claims to love yet frequently acts in ways that are not for the sake of the beloved can reasonably be questioned. There is therefore a normative dimension to the attitude of love.

Finally, appraisal respect and recognition-as also have normative dimensions; they are adequate regard for persons' identities as constituted by accomplishments and group memberships. Both call for valuing someone in a particular way, though precisely what form that takes depends heavily on details. Appraisal respect calls for admiration, perhaps according certain kinds of honors or privileges, consulting for advice, etc. Recognition-as calls for appreciation of a social group as playing a significant role in someone's life, as well as valuing the group in a wider social context. In both cases, proper recognition rules out disparaging remarks and behavior toward the relevant traits or groups.

All of these attitudes are the proper responses to who someone is—to the normativity of (aspects of) their identity. Just as persons' conceptions of themselves function to provide *them* with reasons (as Bauhn argues), the relevant aspects of someone's personhood give *others* reasons to regard them in these specific ways and behave accordingly. Since our identities are complex and layered, so is their normativity. According to the adequate regard insight, what and who we are has value—persons matter—and we are getting something wrong if we do not respond properly to that value.

Now, it is likely that not all forms of mattering result in obligations in the strongest sense. There are two wrinkles here that need to be addressed.

First, while we can morally require certain actions (or at least constraints on action), it may be said that we cannot require the companion attitudes. Attitudes are not fully under our control, though I think the extent to which they are not has been somewhat exaggerated. And if ought implies can, we cannot be obligated in the strongest sense to have the attitudes called for by personhood.

A number of lines of response seem possible here. One is to dig in and argue that there really is a moral obligation to have, or at least attempt to cultivate, the requisite attitudes in oneself. Another is to concede that we cannot require attitudes of people, but insist that

there's still something wrong if the attitudes called for do not materialize and attempts are not made to cultivate them—that there is a looser form of normativity below that of strict obligation. Yet another response is to make a distinction between attitudes and practices, and again concede that attitudes cannot be required, but maintain that practices can be. Practices of respect include anti-discrimination laws, inclusive pedagogy, and day-to-day respectful actions toward strangers with whom we may not interact enough to *feel* respect for fully. Practices of love include almost any sort of caregiving. Care can be given to strangers we do not know well enough to love; we can behave in at least some of the ways we might behave toward people we do love. Practices of esteem include accolades given to individuals or groups for their contributions to some project, activity, or cause, and gatherings with others who have the same qualities (as in a workers' union or student ethnic clubs) and may overlap with both caregiving and practices of respect. These practices can be inter-group or intra-group.

Settling the issue of our specific obligations to recognize others would require a detour into the nature of normativity, and its relationship to value, which is more than I can tackle here. But the distinction between attitudes and practices seems worth pursuing, in part because of the second wrinkle. This is that, while we may be obligated to respect all persons as such (or at least treat them respectfully), it is often said that we cannot be similarly obligated to love them; that attitude is much too personal and requires more investment than we can give to everyone we encounter. This is why the distinction between attitudes and practices is useful. While we cannot love everyone, we can treat those we meet in loving (or caring) ways for the duration of our encounters with them. I will not pursue here the question of whether practices of love may be obligatory for all, which would take us into the territory of positive and negative duties, but I suspect that with proper constraints, a case along those lines could be made. At the very least, it seems clear that practices of love are obligatory for those who actually do love particular others, and for those in positions and roles of caregiving, such as parents and medical practitioners. Similar remarks can, I think, be made about both forms of esteem.

Thus, the state of the argument at this point is that personhood in its various aspects, which develops through relations with others (the mutuality insight), calls for recognition (the

adequate regard insight), and recognition calls for certain actions and practices. Whether or not—or in what sense—the recognition can be understood as obligatory, it helps us to understand the nature of the normativity involved, and defines the contours of the practices that are called for: practices of respect are to embody the actions characteristic of respecters; practices of love are to embody the actions characteristic of lovers; practices of esteem are to embody the actions characteristic of esteemers.

Conclusion

The give-and-take of recognition is thus irreducibly relational and also irreducibly normative. And it is layered in various ways, so that recognition takes different forms as we focus on what we might call the “levels” of personhood or aspects of mattering—abstract persons, individuals, and members of groups. In short, I have argued that because persons matter, they merit certain normative attitudes, and, whether or not the attitudes are present, their normativity governs practices that define the ways persons ought to be treated. Because each of us matters not only as *a* person, but also as a specific self with particular projects, characteristics, and excellences, and as a member of intersecting social groups, the value of persons is not as monolithic as analytic tradition has implicitly made it out to be. We should therefore understand recognition as the core moral attitude, and broaden our conception of recognition to include not only respect, but also love and esteem.

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