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Love and Respect as Moral Attitudes and Practices of Recognition

Respect and Love in Moral Discourse

Among other things, morality calls on us to recognize others' status as persons. In Kantian discourse this recognition takes the form of respect.¹ In certain strands of feminist discourse it takes the form of love or care. A great difference between these two forms of recognition is largely taken for granted by writers in both traditions, and notable scholars have suggested important differences between respect and love. In *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* Kant contrasts them: respect holds people at a distance; love embraces them (Kant 1979/1994: 113 (MM 449)). The distinction between justice and care perspectives on morality first articulated by Carol Gilligan seems to accept a similar conception of both attitudes: respect is detached, impartial, and individualistic; care is involved, responsive, and relational.

Thus, it's not difficult to see why Kant or anyone else would have the impression that these two attitudes seem to pull in opposite directions. But we might also find this puzzling. Both respect and love seem to be responses to personhood, to the fact that someone matters in a

¹ In this discussion, I use the term "respect" to refer to what Stephen Darwall (1977) labeled "recognition respect," as opposed to his "appraisal respect," which is more closely related to esteem. Darwall's is a basically Kantian conception of recognition respect, but see Dillon (1992a, 1992b) for discussion of different conceptions.

moral way. “That love and respect are both vital moral forces certainly seems right,” Marcia Baron writes (1997: 29). Elaborating, she claims that “the notion that respect bids us to hold back from others does not square with some of the specific duties of respect. Respect requires, for example, that we not be contemptuous, yet *that* would not fit under the heading of keeping one’s distance” (30). Robin Dillon argues that care is actually one of a great variety of types of respect because, at its heart, respect “is a particular mode of apprehending something,” “a kind of valuing” with “affective, conative, active, and cognitive dimensions”—and care has these same features (1992a: 108). David Velleman argues that love is a moral emotion similar to respect in that it is a response to personhood, conceived as the capacity to appreciate and value someone without comparison to others (1999).

The idea that love and respect are allies is surely correct. I follow others in contending that they are both modes of recognizing personhood, and are thus distinctively moral concepts. I also maintain that the gap between them is not as wide as some have claimed; the difference, in slogan form, is that respect is an attitude that recognizes another as *a* person, whereas love is an attitude that recognizes another as *the* person they are.² Respect responds to an individual as a source of reasons, an intrinsically valuable member of the moral community. Love responds to a fuller picture, one that includes the abstract individual, but also attends to relationships, projects, interests, and vulnerabilities. In short,

² This distinction is similar to the distinction Elizabeth Spelman makes between treating someone as a person in the “minimal” sense and treating someone as a person in the “maximal” sense (1978: 161). This is a distinction *within* her conception of persons as they conceive of themselves (as opposed to the conception of persons as bearers of rights, which is a more abstract notion).

respect recognizes personhood as such, and love recognizes selfhood or biographical identity. Both of these are important aspects of a person, but they are not the same thing.

The first aim of this essay, then, is to argue that respect and love are modes of moral recognition that vary along a concrete-abstract axis—and thus that love deserves more attention in the discourse of philosophical ethics. Making my case will motivate a second aim, namely to show that respect and love must also be understood along a specific-generalized axis: as a valuing attitude manifested in direct encounter (specific), and as a valuing practice that guides behavior in less intimate settings (generalized).

Respect as Recognition

To flesh out the idea of respect as recognition of personhood, let me begin with Baron's point that respect requires that we not be contemptuous. Contempt, as an attitude that attempts to elevate one person over another, specifically ignores or dismisses another person as worthy of notice. Respect precludes contempt because it requires us to realize that others are in fact real human beings whose concerns are as legitimate as our own, and to behave accordingly. Part of the way it does this is by checking the ego; respect limits the pursuit of our own ends and backgrounds our own interests as we come to see another person as real.³ In this sense it is a leveling force, counting all persons as equals on the basic level of dignity and worth. Thus, respect does not inherently ask us to hold others at a

³ Versions of this idea are present in Velleman (1999); Bagnoli's (2003) discussion of Kant and Iris Murdoch; Dillon (1992a); Murdoch (1971/2014); Buss (1999); and Spelman (1978). Darwall (1977) does not use language like this, but the idea of taking appropriate account of certain facts—such as that someone is a person—amounts to weighing their personhood equally with your own, which means checking our own egos appropriately.

distance—in fact, it quite clearly stands *against* certain ways of holding others at a distance. We are to recognize all persons as persons, as ends in themselves.

“Ends in themselves” is the Kantian phrase for what we are recognizing in a person, and I think it is apt; nevertheless, I do not wish to invoke the full Kantian conception of what a person is. The Kantian picture of personhood places a great deal of emphasis on individualism, reason, agency, and autonomy, so that what makes a person matter is the ability to exercise reason in pursuit of ends, the choices of which are (to be) constrained by reason. In this framework, personhood, or being an end in oneself, essentially consists in the capacity to reason, so that on this picture what we (are to) respect in a person boils down to rationality. This conception has—rightly, I think—been critiqued by feminist philosophers as unrealistic, given our relational, embodied, and emotional nature. Thus, without getting into much detail, I favor a conception of personhood that is more concrete and relational, including a role for emotions and attachments. What makes persons ends in themselves is that they are independent sources of reasons for us (Buss 1999: 536)—and we can recognize this through their ability to respond appropriately to others, whether through reasons, emotions, or relationships. Thus, many people who are not, or not fully, capable of Kantian rational agency are nonetheless real persons who matter morally because of their ability to respond to others and participate in social exchanges—even if they are not doing so in classically rational terms.⁴ Persons in this sense inhabit a concrete reality that is essentially theirs even as it is embedded in a social context.

⁴ See, for example, Kittay 2010.

In construing personhood this way I take myself to be reframing the Kantian idea of persons as members of a moral community. They matter in themselves, and not merely in ways that derive from the mattering of others or because of their potential to become rational as they mature. Membership in a community involves a level of participation, and thus I retain the Kantian idea that personhood is a status that goes beyond merely having intrinsic value as some kind of object.

Thus, respect is an attitude that recognizes persons as real, responsive ends in themselves, members of a moral community. How can we bring ourselves to recognize persons as such, given how very great, and sometimes threatening, our differences can be? Often it is not easy; our egos, which can pull us to see others instrumentally, are sometimes very difficult to check. One way to recognize another's personhood is to learn a little about them—enough so that from that bit, we come to see that they have projects and concerns that matter to them, and background, experiences, and social context, all providing them with reasons to which we may also respond.

A story from National Public Radio will help me develop this point. Reporter David Greene interviewed math teacher Jake Scott, who teaches kids in part through his “alter ego,” rapper 2 Pi (2013). Scott works with students whose backgrounds could easily make them mistrust people in authority, and for whom school may not be as valued as it is among more privileged groups. Having come from such a background himself, Scott is well positioned to reach his students where they are. One thing he says in the interview is striking:

I mean, I think that we can preach to kids until they turn blue and we turn blue, but if there's no connection, then there's no response.... I mean, I constantly search for ways to connect with students—with the language, with conversations, music. Some students are more difficult than others, depending on what they have at home. The interesting thing is, once we have those conversations, that's a connection. And they feel like they've given me a piece of them, and I feel like they've given me a piece of them, and I respect them more. And they respect me more.

I see several striking things here. First, this report suggests that respect for persons as such is not necessarily a default state. This may appear contrary to the way most of us go through life; most of the time, we behave respectfully toward others, and we talk in terms of respecting other people. This behavior reflects a default assumption about others' status, but what Scott's remark shows is that the default is not based on a specific recognition of personhood so much as a generalization. We may behave respectfully, but it is not necessarily *out of respect* that we do so.⁵ I will return to this later.

In this case, there is a further consideration as well: we often respect people as holders of certain roles, and this is not the same as respecting them as persons *per se* (see Darwall 1977: 38 and Spelman 1978). Scott is a teacher and the person he is interacting with is a

⁵ Baron's (1997) discussion examines Kant's treatment of the distinction between acting in accordance with vs. from duty. Furthermore, Buss (1999) ends with an insightful discussion of the fact that we often do not see people as worthy of respect. This is not a claim that we generally disrespect one another; it's a claim that we're mostly indifferent or on automatic pilot. She is not worried about this as long as we occasionally do have a "breakthrough" moment of truly seeing another as a person. Spelman (1978) hints at a similar issue when she distinguishes between treating persons as bearers of rights and treating them as they conceive of themselves in the minimal sense.

student. Rules govern how teachers and students are supposed to interact; they follow their scripts and they behave respectfully toward one another as people in those roles. But it takes a detail, a connection that pricks through the cover of the role, to actually touch off respect for one another *as persons*.

A second striking thing is that *connection* starts the respect that Scott refers to. A certain distance between teacher and students is the given condition; it is part of the rules of teacher-student relationships. The small detail, such as that a student prefers to be called by a different name because his given name comes from his father and he doesn't like his father, starts a connection. This connection is the seed for respect because it points out that the student has a story; he has concerns of his own. This serves as a reminder not to make presumptions about him that limit the teacher's conception of him to his role as student. I cannot offer a phenomenology of respect here (see, for example, Buss 1999, or Bagnoli 2003), but I will go so far as to claim that, however it works, the connection offers a flash of insight that someone else's perspective is real. Perhaps a bit of empathy is involved. This is the moment of recognition of personhood, and it shifts us from generalized,⁶ default behavior or role-based respect to full-blown respect for personhood, an attitude that calls for certain kinds of responses.

We should not forget, however, that the cases that drive the intuition that respect calls for backing off are also legitimate: assuming that the moral status of personhood involves

⁶ I'm drawing here on Benhabib's (1987) distinction between the "generalized" and "concrete" other, and her contention that moral theory is inadequate when it works only with the generalized conception of others. I will elaborate on this below.

(among other things) particularity and the ability to respond to reasons,⁷ in many instances, the very recognition of a person as a person can require that we back off and allow space for them to manage their own affairs and make their own decisions (within their capabilities). Thus, respect seems to require some but not too much connection.

This brings me to a third striking thing about Scott's thought: that what the connection starts is respect rather than love. (This is probably not surprising outside of the context of examining the claim that respect is supposed to separate and love to bring together.)

Among the things Scott recognizes when a student explains why he wants to go by one name rather than another is *that* the student has concerns and projects that give him reasons. This is vital information, but it is not much information. It is enough, however, for him and his student to move beyond the rules that govern their respective roles (student and teacher) and into respect for one another as persons. It's not that they respect one another *more*, I contend, despite Scott's wording. It's that they respect one another *differently*. Scott doesn't know everything about the student; he hasn't taken the student's concerns up as his own (as, for instance, a loving parent would). The student has become a well-defined outline in the shape of a person, a *concrete* person, and not "just" a student. The details have yet to be filled in, but the respect between them has evolved beyond respect for roles into respect for one another as persons—unqualifiedly, that is; outside of

⁷ I use the phrase "respond to reasons" loosely here—for instance, emotions are, in a broad sense, responses to reasons (see Ben-Ze'ev 2000, ch. 6, Jaggard 1989). Thus, persons not fully capable of authoritative, Kantian-style exchanges of reasons can still be understood as responsive to reasons.

prescribed roles. This shifts the view of one another from primarily being a student or teacher (respectively), to being a person, among whose identities is *student* or *teacher*.

Conceiving of respect as a mode of recognition rather than as a granting of space is a more fitting response to a relational conception of persons and the connection that gets the experience of respect going. In contrast, when persons are conceived of in the traditional, generalized way, they are essentially individual, purely rational minds, capable of autonomy, acting on the basis of reasons (Benhabib 1987: 163-4). Recognizing this largely *would* mean backing off and letting reason do its work. On this picture, backing off seems at least as important as the recognition itself, and the two may easily be conflated. But if we expand toward a more relational conception, we see that persons are much more complex and attached and concrete, and recognizing this does not necessarily call for backing off. It can, of course, and often does. But recognizing a person on this more robust conception calls first for acknowledging another's concrete reality and the reasons it provides them, and then crafting an appropriate response to whatever reasons their reality may provide *us*.

My point so far is that although we must act on generalizations most of the time, the real roots of this practice lie in the specificity of others and the normativity of individual recognition. So what we see in traditional literature on respect is the generalized form. As I will elaborate below, generalizations cause a belief in the recognition-worthiness of others, even when we don't have intimate enough encounters to fully experience love or respect. What respect really is, though, is a response to concrete personhood.

Love as Recognition

Respect does not go as far as love in recognizing persons, however. It's a little like observing wildlife: you want to get close enough to recognize what you're looking at, but not so close that you disturb the animal. With our fellow persons, we need to be close enough to recognize *a* person, but once we do that, we typically need further reason to get closer.

Most of us do get close to some people. For many, the people we know best are those in our immediate families: parents, siblings, spouses, children, etc. With the exception of spouses, these relationships are not usually chosen; they don't involve *getting* close so much as finding ourselves close. Two things come quickly to mind when we ask what distinguishes people with whom we have these close relationships from all the other folks we meet and interact with: how much we know about them, and how much we care about them. In other words, the depth of the relationship.

Knowing and caring about others often—though certainly not always—go hand in hand; it's difficult to say which comes first, and it's probably different for different relationships. In the case of families, care likely comes first and motivates us to know one another. In friendships and role-based relationships (like teacher-student and doctor-patient), the reverse is likely typical. But once a relationship is started, knowing and caring frequently animate one another.

For example, consider how good parents pay attention to their children as they grow up: it's a process of both creation and discovery. They hope to shape their children's worlds and values because they want life to be good for them (creation). But making life good also

requires that they learn what their children's interests are and help them develop (discovery), because recognition as a separate person calls for this. Knowing what their interests are can also feed love, since good parents often come to share in children's passion, dedication, excitement, and also mistakes and failures, as they begin to forge their lives for themselves (see, for instance, Helm 2010 and Frankfurt 2004). Similarly, the shared interests that often create friendships motivate care for the friend for their own sake, which motivates further knowledge, and so on. The cycle of knowledge and care signals that love is a mode of recognition, truly seeing a person in fine detail. Unlike respect, however, love recognizes not just *that* the other person is a person, but *who* and *how* they are—what makes them the unique person they are. It fills in and animates the personhood outline that respect recognizes.

I will not give a full account of love here, particularly since there are many varieties of love, but I do want to highlight certain aspects that I think lie at the core of personal love.⁸ I understand love as an attitude characterized primarily by appreciation of and concern for a particular person⁹ for their own sake (not just as an instance of a type), and that endows

⁸ My description of love is indebted to many sources. See Helm (2010); Frankfurt (2004) and (1999); Anderson (1995); Jaworska (2007); Protasi (2014). Some of these sources employ the word “care” for what I am calling “love;” on this, see my discussion below. The notion I employ here, which encompasses the core volitional features I take these accounts to have in common, is also indebted to Velleman (2008 and 1999).

⁹ I confine myself to love of people (and perhaps other living things—like pets—that can be said to have needs and in some way reciprocate) here, though in general I'm willing to follow Frankfurt in saying that we can also love objects, causes and projects; these give us other roles by which we define ourselves, which is to me an important feature of love.

that particular person with personal importance that goes beyond her impersonal value.¹⁰ Loving a person involves caring for her, recognizing her for who she is, with her specific qualities, interests, talents, needs, and so on. At its best, love involves receptivity (Slote 2013) and concern for others for their own sake, as well as reciprocity in the sense that care and love are concerned that a relation, and not just a virtue, is preserved or enhanced (Held 2006: 50ff).¹¹ It requires a genuine understanding of its object, truly seeing, without filtering through egoistic concerns (Murdoch 1971/2014). This appreciation typically motivates the lover to protect the beloved and to help her to grow as a person, in part because love has an emotional-volitional element that ties the lover's welfare to the welfare of the beloved. It builds up another person by connecting with her, both physically and psychologically, taking interest in her interests for her sake. In addition, loving helps to constitute the lover's identity because relationships are among the building blocks of a meaningful life.

I depart here from the accounts of philosophers such as Velleman and Murdoch in that I do think that, ultimately, the lover's identity is involved in love. Like them, I believe that love is

Others, such as Helm, agree that objects and projects contribute to identity but prefer to use another term such as "valuing" for non-person objects.

¹⁰ In this, and in some of what follows, I depart from Velleman's (1999) conception of love. I agree with him that love is first and foremost an arresting appreciation of the beloved, seeing them for who they truly are. But like many feminists, I believe that love is not just appreciation of the beloved's personhood; I believe that love is also appreciation of the empirical details and the particular needs and interests of the beloved, the things that make him who he is.

¹¹ This is not necessarily to say that love must be fully reciprocal and requited; only that love characteristically aims at or motivates a relationship with the beloved. See Protasi (2014) for a discussion of unrequited love.

first and foremost an arresting appreciation or recognition of the beloved, seeing and valuing them for who they truly are. The lover's ego is checked by this recognition, and moves into the background of her concerns. But one important difference between love and respect, in my view, is that because of the intimacy of the valuing relationship, the lover's welfare becomes entwined with the beloved's, so that the self enters back into the picture because of the way the lover takes an interest in the beloved's interests. Since this is for the beloved's sake, however, it is a kind of expansion of the self, and I maintain that it avoids egoism.

If what I have said so far is right, both respect and love are forms of recognition, and are therefore closely related. Respect recognizes outlines, the abstract form of a person; love recognizes particular qualities and fine details. Because their epistemologies are similar,¹² the level of recognition that goes with each attitude probably stands on a continuum.¹³ On one end is the recognition of personhood that goes with respect and, under some circumstances, moves in the direction of love as people begin to know more about one another. Family relationships—particularly parent-child relationships—often work the other way: they begin with love, and move toward respect if they are functioning as they should. But neither attitude precludes or erases—or, for that matter, guarantees—the other.

¹² I thank JWS for making this explicit.

¹³ Dillon (1992a) makes a similar suggestion.

Love as Moral

Thus, I'm contending that both respect and love should be understood as attitudes that recognize others in their concreteness as abstract persons and concrete selves, respectively. And when we view them as forms of recognition, their alliance becomes clear. It's important that we be recognized by all others as persons (apart from any specific roles through which we relate to them). It's important that we be recognized more fully by a handful of intimates as well, because persons in the abstract—particularly under the traditional, autonomy-based interpretation of personhood—are not all we are. We are also social and emotional creatures, “encumbered selves,” with needs and interdependencies that can seem to put limits on the exercise of our autonomy.¹⁴ Full-blown love is not an appropriate response to everyone by everyone, but it is nevertheless a response to a fundamental human need.

I will elaborate these claims by beginning with the latter. In what sense is the need for love—the need to be known and cared for—fundamental? After all, a person could survive without it, if basic physical needs were met. Many have. But part of what love signals is that the beloved matters, and matters not just as any old human being, but as the particular human they are. (Think of Mr. Rogers: “I like you just the way you are.”) It is becoming

¹⁴ Autonomy is complicated, and the superficial way in which ties to others look like they limit autonomy is misleading. The narrowest reading of autonomy as unencumbered freedom to do as we see fit is implausible even for classic liberal theory. For instance, valuing puts limits on what we're willing to do by giving us reasons to do some things rather than others—but exactly because it is reason-giving, valuing can be seen as itself a kind of exercise of autonomy (see Frankfurt 2004, for instance). Feminists have been working to develop broader notions of autonomy that take into account our interdependencies (see Held 2006, p. 13-14 (especially fn. 13 and 14), and p. 48ff for a survey).

more and more clear that the emotional needs that are fed by close relationships are indispensable to full flourishing. Darcia Narvaez (2014, 2015) argues that children who grow up in environments with some particular manifestations of love—including responsiveness to child needs, positive touch, and positive social climate and support—thrive in the sense of being physically and socially healthy, empathic, engaged with others and the world, and communally oriented (see also essays by Slote, Thompson, and McAdams in Snow 2015; Honneth 1996: 38). They have “deep social and cognitive intelligence,” well-developed right brains, and a rationality that “integrates well-trained emotions” (Narvaez 2015: 254). Children who lack these important elements display detachment, an individualistic, self-protective “safety” orientation, and lives in which fear and anger are prominent motivators. This seems like a less-than-flourishing sort of life, even if it is a life, and in this sense the need for love—and the individual recognition that is built into it—is fundamental (Cabezas 2016).

Being a response to a fundamental human need puts love, like respect, squarely in the moral realm. But if love is not something that we can expect between any two people, it doesn’t fit well into our traditional categories of duty. We can talk of a moral duty to respect others, but talk of a duty to love raises difficulties (Cabezas 2016, Spelman 1978: 159-161), given the emotional and volitional investments characteristic of love (though perhaps there is a duty to care in the minimal sense of meeting needs¹⁵). Any person

¹⁵ Noddings (2002:49ff) claims that obligation simply happens to us when we encounter those with needs we can meet. This is, of course, controversial. Dillon (1992a) takes the notion of “care respect” to have an advantage over care in that it can be understood as a duty more readily than care itself can.

deserves to be loved, but it is not clear that it can be incumbent on any particular other person to provide that love—and besides, love is not a thing we can entirely command (though see Liao 2006 and Helm 2010); despite what I said above, even deliberately coming to know another person intimately may not result in love. Furthermore, love as I have described it is partial whereas morality is supposed to be impartial. These are indeed difficult challenges that require attention, though I think they can be met, and what I say below will be an offering in this direction. But even if they were insurmountable, these difficulties would not indicate that love is outside the moral realm. I can think of at least two reasons for this.

First of all, love provides moral goods for both lover and beloved. In particular, it helps to constitute identities, as noted above. Our emotional and volitional intertwining with the people (and projects and things) we love helps us define for ourselves who we are; they are the threads out of which we weave our sense of ourselves. Thus, loving helps to constitute lovers' identities; it helps us become the persons and selves we are (see Honneth 1996).

It works the other way as well: being loved helps to constitute the beloved's identity. As Hilde Lindemann points out, others—particularly those who love us—are telling stories about us, and those stories are part of the fabric of our identities (2014: ix). They can reaffirm or repudiate our conceptions of ourselves. Thus, my identity is constituted largely by me, but it is also constituted by my parents, siblings, spouse, children, friends, and to a lesser extent colleagues, teachers, students, and so on. Simultaneously, I am (to stronger or weaker degrees) contributing to all of those people's identities as well. The stronger the relationship, the more influentially the others' stories about us typically figure in our

identities. In this way, identity is a social practice and being loved helps us to be who we are. This is an important moral good.

Robin Dillon makes related points. She argues that what she terms “basal self-respect”—the “way of being toward and with oneself that is constituted by [an] implicit interpretive framework” that is “prereflective, unarticulated,” and “emotionally laden” (1997: 241)—is formed by the presence or lack of unconditional love, and is fundamentally not a private matter. The framework through which we form our understandings of ourselves is inevitably affected by the relationships and social structures in which we develop. One upshot of this that is especially interesting here is her suggestion that damaged basal self-respect may be improved by two things. First, being loved unconditionally: “[a]s basal self-respect first takes shape in the context of emotional relationships, so some damage may be ameliorated through loving relationships attuned to particularities and contextuality of self-respect predicaments” (249). Second, loving others: “inasmuch as basal frameworks are implicit in ways of being in the world, ...[a] change from a self-obsessive mode to one that centrally involves attentive care for others—a valuing-others way of being—might make valuing oneself a real possibility” (249). If, as Dillon asserts, lacking self-respect is debilitating, then loving and being loved are morally important components of flourishing. (Honneth makes similar points (1996).)

Second, recent work on love and related work on the relationship between emotion, reason, and identity suggest that there is something quite fundamental about love as not only a motivating, but also a normative force in human life (see Held 2006, Helm 2010, Lindemann 2014 and Noddings 2002). For instance, the stories others tell about us—and

those we tell about ourselves—can be more or less appropriate (Lindemann 2014, Spelman 1978). If I think of my daughter as serious because she rarely smiled as a baby, but begin to see a goofy side as she becomes a toddler, I cannot correctly hold on to that “serious” part of her identity, or at least, I need to readjust my understanding of its place in her personality. Similarly, if I conceive of myself as non-racist but regularly make microaggressive racist remarks (even unknowingly), then my story about myself is inaccurate; moreover, I am habitually getting others’ stories wrong by reinforcing damaging stereotypes.

The moral requirements of love are revealed in the idea that we can do better and worse at recognizing people for who they are and holding them in that identity or letting go of it. Either action, as Lindemann argues, can be appropriate depending on the situation. And we do others a moral wrong if we get them wrong. The wrong is worse for those we love; as a mode of recognition, part of what love requires is that we respond to those we love as the people they are, in full detail. A teenager may accuse her mother of not understanding her, for instance, and—just or unjust—the anger behind this may be at bottom a demand that her mother recognize her as she actually is, a particular, detailed individual. This is not something we can demand of everyone, but it is something we may demand of those who love us. Thus, it makes good sense to talk about what love morally requires of us, reinforcing my claim that love is part of the moral realm.

Valuing Attitudes and Practices

The problem with casting both love and respect as attitudes directed toward particular others in relatively intimate encounters is that they seem to lose some of their moral

leverage, because we do not (and cannot) regularly have such encounters with most people we interact with.

A distinction will be useful here to clarify the relationship between the subjective experiences of love and respect and their objective manifestations. There is recognition and there is recognition; recognition can be a specific subjective, emotional-volitional experience (loosely, an attitude) and it can be a generalized practice that arises from and is normatively regulated by that subjective state—the behaviors that the state calls for and characteristically motivates. I wish, therefore, to distinguish two axes along which we can interact with persons: general-particular and abstract-concrete.¹⁶ I have been arguing that as attitudes, both respect and love are on the particular end of the general-particular axis, and are distinguished from one another along the concrete-abstract axis (love is for a particular other as concrete individual; respect is for a particular other as abstract person). Now I wish to look at their analogues on the general end of the general-particular axis.

The recognition I've been discussing so far has been the emotional, subjective kind, the kind that stems from the arresting of the ego in a direct and intimate encounter with another's person- or selfhood. The respect version of this is what I take Jake Scott to have experienced with his student. The love version is familiar from our experiences of friendships, romantic partnerships, parent-child relationships, and so on. When it comes to practices, however, the reverse is true: the respect version is familiar from most people's everyday experience, public discourse, as well as much philosophical discussion; the love

¹⁶ I take myself to be refining Seyla Benhabib's (1987) distinction between concrete and generalized others.

version has not been considered carefully until relatively recently. In this section I will draw out some implications of this.

Generalized Respect: Justice

Like love, respect (the attitude) is both a fundamental human need and response called for by identity as the specific beings we are. Respect responds to people's identities *as persons*—it recognizes you in your capacity to participate in a moral community and respond to circumstances in ways that derive from aspects of your identity, perspective, needs, and relationships—as well as recognizing that you have a particular life that you are leading and are a source of reasons. Further, again as Lindemann points out, the interactions that manifest respect also contribute to that identity. Being treated as a person makes it easier for you to *be* a person.

I have been emphasizing the subjective experience of respect, but treating someone as a person does not necessarily require a direct, arresting encounter as in the example above of Jake Scott and his student. If I am right about respect as recognition, the Jake Scott example demonstrates that the attitude itself is—like love—something we must experience in relatively intimate encounter with others; it is a response to the experience of others as particular individuals. Thus, we are unlikely to have the full-blown attitude toward strangers we encounter only briefly or superficially, like cashiers at the grocery store or even many of our students. But we are able to treat them respectfully on the basis of a generalization: because they are people too, we carry the presumption of their personhood, even though we do not encounter them in ways that emphasize their particularity (Buss 1999: 519, 548).

The behavior of respect, then, can be performed even if we don't fully have the attitude toward each specific person we meet, and it is important that we do so. After all, just as it is difficult to flourish without love, it is also difficult to flourish without receiving respect from others. This is why people go to great lengths to secure justice in the form of rights that institutionalize respect: laws about equality, personal safety, enfranchisement, nondiscrimination, and so on. And it's why we call these things basic human rights. At the bottom of demands for such manifestations of justice is a demand for respect—for recognition. Thus, we can see justice as institutionalized or formalized respect, a complex of values and practices that stem from the behaviors called for by the subjective attitude of respect.

Still, practices of justice cannot guarantee more than respectful behavior, since they cannot compel us to have the kinds of encounters that touch off the subjective experience of full respect for persons, if what I said above is right. Laws and moral rules cannot compel attitudes; they can only compel actions. The drive to recognize rights stems from the need for the recognition inherent in respect: the basic, abstract recognition of mattering (as a source of reasons, a member of the moral community). Probably because respect does not require great detail, it is well-suited to generalization and thus to ground the “justice perspective” in ethical theory. Its primary focus is on the universal and abstract qualities of persons, and thus, in its generalized form it can be applied more universally—to anyone, by anyone. And this places it at or near the core of morality, when this is conceived as universal and impartial, as it often is.

When the practice is distinguished from the attitude, however, it might seem that respectful behavior without the occurrent attitude is problematic; it is at best hollow, and at worst, a deception (which would undermine the whole point of the practice).¹⁷ The behavior itself may not be enough. Even if laws—and we can add less formal social norms and moral rules here—were applied fairly and uniformly, those carrying out their mandates may still fail to *feel* respect for those they do specifically encounter. Sometimes this shows in overt reluctance or grudging obedience to laws or social norms. Often it shows in much less obvious ways, such as implicit bias, microaggressions, and the other ways systemic oppression is realized. The fact that we don't have a subjective experience of respect in many (most?) everyday encounters has serious consequences.

But I think we can distinguish between a belief in someone's respect-worthiness and an experience of respecting them. The former can be the result of a generalization that others we encounter are enough like us to merit respect, even if we are not directly experiencing that attitude at every moment. (For Sarah Buss, acting on the generalization most of the time is enough, as long as we occasionally have "breakthrough" experiences of respect for another (1999: 548).) The generalization can cause the sincere belief in the person's respect-worthiness, thus motivating respectful behavior.

I concede that without the full-blown attitude of respect, someone's practice of respectful behavior is liable to slip. A belief in respect-worthiness is not always as strong a motivator as direct attitudinal respect is. But this may be a strength of my view: it shows why practices of respect break down so easily. If respect is really the attitude I've been

¹⁷ I thank JF for raising this objection.

describing, it's hard, and rarer than we think, despite sincere beliefs in the importance of others. So in everyday practices of respect, it's not that I'm deceiving you; I sincerely believe in your respect-worthiness. But if I don't know you well, I don't have the strong motivation of experiencing respect for you; I just have the weaker motivation of that generalized belief. So I can get complacent, forget to really pay attention, work from autopilot, and thus my intended respectful behavior can misfire. To accord with a true *practice*¹⁸ of respect, then, we must attend to the subjective aspects of respect and intentionally work to bring our attitudes and implicit biases into line with our professed (generalized) respect. A true practice of respect is much more difficult even than we already thought, because it will involve changing attitudes as well as behaviors.

Generalized Love: Care

As noted above, in the case of love, the attitude seems more salient to us than the practice. This is probably true in everyday life, and it is certainly true in philosophical discourse. But I think this can be helped if we distinguish between the subjective phenomenology and the objective actions that are characteristically motivated by that phenomenology. I suggest that care is a complex of value and practice normatively rooted in the values and motivations characteristic of love. If this is so, the practice of love is not as unfamiliar as it seems at first blush, though it remains true that care has not been attended to until relatively recently in the history of philosophy.

Even in recent literature, care and love have not always been carefully distinguished. 'Care' seems to denote an attitude ("I care about you"), a value (caring about the environment or

¹⁸ I'm drawing here on Held's notion of a practice (2006: 36).

religious freedom), and a practice (the work of meeting needs) (Held 2006: ch. 2). I am suggesting that we can achieve some clarity by using ‘love’ as a name for the caring attitude, and ‘care’ as a name for the practice—a practice that, while grounded in the normativity of the attitude, can be performed on the basis of a generalization, just as in the case of respect. Thus, love is at the particular end of the general-particular axis, and caring practice (when not motivated directly by love of concrete others, e.g. in professional caring roles) is at the generalized end.

In saying that love normatively grounds caring action, I do not mean to imply that love is the only ground for undertaking care work. Care work has been carried out by people in subordinate positions throughout history, because it has not been valued in dominant discourse concentrated largely on the public sphere.¹⁹ Many of the people performing care work are not motivated by love and some actively resist emotional attachment to those in their care. But caregiving can be performed on the basis of generalizing from the subjective attitude that characteristically motivates it, and surely this happens frequently in (under)paid care work. Thus it is clearly possible, and even common, to engage in the practice without full-blown love, which as I’ve argued is a response to the identity of a particular individual as an individual.

The work of caring for others is characteristic of one who loves, though of course there are further actions that are also characteristic: hugging, comforting, listening, and so on. These are behaviors motivated and also called for by love. As noted above, it’s becoming clear that these actions are among people’s fundamental needs, so good caring-for will meet such

¹⁹ I thank JK for reminding me of this.

physico-emotional needs as well.²⁰ It seems likely that caregiving is at its best when there is some emotional attachment making the relationship stronger and more genuine, and thus more likely to produce the flourishing that a genuine caring practice aims at. The point is that the relationship between caring-for and loving suggests that caring-for can be viewed as a practice grounded in the normativity of love (in accordance with it), even when it is not undertaken *out of love*, in much the same way that practices of respect are grounded in the normativity of respect as an attitude even when they are not undertaken *out of respect*.

Formal caring practices are more or less familiar: child care, teaching, health care, etc. are all common forms of caring practice. But I think care can be practiced in less formal non-intimate settings as well; if we are attentive to the needs of others, we can do thoughtful things for strangers or acquaintances based on our general knowledge of what it takes to meet needs. “The kindness of strangers” is an example of this: buying the meal for a harassed-looking mother of multiples in a restaurant; stopping at the scene of an accident; cleaning a neighbor’s house when she can’t. Caring for others can happen even when we don’t love them, because we can generalize from our experience with those we do love.

We cannot care for those we do not encounter directly, but we can at least perform actions that can make it more possible that everyone’s needs are met, that everyone is cared for, as I will discuss below.²¹ The overall point is that we can make a practice of caring behavior

²⁰ The deception objection I discussed above may apply here as well, but so does my response to it.

²¹ Noddings notes that “caring-about may provide the link between caring and justice” (2002: 22), which strikes me as correct, and provides further evidence that respect, with its ties to justice, and love are related on a concrete-abstract axis.

and use the value of caring, grounded in the normativity of love, as a guide to our interactions with others, and even social policy. This is the project of care ethics.

Care Ethics: Love as Value and Practice

Moral theories rooted in care and attentive to love are relative newcomers on the ethical scene, but I contend that they are not less important than theories with longer histories. Still, arguments for the legitimacy of love as fundamental to ethics have faced an uphill struggle. Love's connection with emotion, which has long been opposed to reason, has made philosophers suspicious of its stability as a core moral attitude. It's true that emotions are generally non-rational in the sense that they are not the direct result of reasoning processes. But this doesn't automatically mean that they are irrational in the sense of making no sense or providing a false or misleading understanding of a situation (again, see Ben-Ze'ev 2000 and Jaggar 1989). Certainly, emotional sensitivity can misfire, but so can reasoning. And very often, emotions provide a helpful assessment of a situation that cannot be fully articulated in any other way. Some recent accounts of love view it in just this way, as a response that can be merited by others, and that is rationally assessable and influence-able even if it is not directly controlled by reason (Helm 2010; see also Liao 2006).

Love has also been viewed as morally untrustworthy on account of its inherent specificity and intimacy, as well as the way it binds us to others. Similar complaints have long been raised about practices rooted in love or care and related theories such as care ethics, because of these very characteristics. I think there are at least two claims being made when love and care are viewed as morally untrustworthy: first, that care ethics is no good for

public policy, and second, that care ethics ignores the requirement that morality be impartial.

The first of these complaints is a well-known problem, and those working in care ethics have been developing the theory to apply it to public spheres that stretch beyond the parochial concerns that got it started. Virginia Held, Nel Noddings, Joan Tronto, and many others have made significant contributions in this direction.

The second worry, that ethics rooted in love and care results in partiality, is more complicated. Care ethics can answer this worry by pointing to care as a practice *guided by* norms of love, and its resulting primary focus on meeting the needs of others—ultimately all others. Although a specific person cannot provide in-depth care for more than a handful of people, they can (via Humean mechanisms of relevant sentiments amplified by reflection) engage in caring practices toward all they meet, vote for policies that cultivate care and provide space for caring (both the attitude and the practice) to take place, and so on. Something like this may be the “care respect” highlighted by Robin Dillon (1992a). Noddings argues that although direct “caring-for” is where moral action begins, more abstract “caring-about” will play a crucial role in extending care to those we cannot care-for directly (Noddings 2002: 22-24). In an ideal world where we all receive the kind of care our brains evolved to expect, this would come more naturally than it does now. In the meantime, we will have to work hard to cultivate care. But doing so is within our reach, to the same extent as all other difficult moral development is.

If love has an element of self-constitution and identity, however, although the above response will form part of the reply (insofar as love motivates care), challengers may not

be satisfied with this alone. If the project of ethics is significantly about getting us to step out of our own narrow sphere of concerns and take others into account because they matter in their own right, then we may well be wary of an attitude that seems to bind us to a small circle of intimates whose well-being is tied to our own. Such an attitude may seem to limit our practices inherently to that circle and cause us to ignore the plights of people who are not “our” people.

There may be two “narrowness” worries here. First, we might worry that to the extent that love intertwines with identity, it does not avoid egoism; whatever we do is always at least a little bit about us. Something like this charge has been leveled against Aristotelian-style virtue ethics as well. I think Aristotelians have a persuasive answer to this worry, which parallels my own response: this way of viewing love overlooks the fact that genuine love (similarly to virtue) pulls us out of the very narrowest sphere, that of our individual selves. Because it involves caring about things outside of ourselves *for their own sake*,²² love is one antidote to egoism.²³ Furthermore, as Held insists, to the extent that care ethics focuses on relation rather than individual virtue, it is not egoistic (2006: ch. 3). It may be partially about me, but only indirectly and non-egoistically: it is about me-in-relation. And if it is indirectly about me, this is simply an accurate reflection of human embeddedness, contrary to the individualism that prevails in dominant discourse. Furthermore, precisely because of its personal nature, love may be a more powerful antidote to egoism than respect is.

²² That is, when it is not pathological, which it can be. But the fact that it can be suggests that love has a normative element, which supports the point that love is a moral attitude.

²³ See Hume’s arguments about self-love in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751/1983: 88-93)

The second narrowness worry is what we might call the “in-group” worry: that love may pull us out of egoism, but there is a persistent gap between “my people” and everybody else. Just getting out of egoism doesn’t guarantee I’ll be a moral person generally, especially to people I consider significantly different from me. Sure, it may make it more likely, because practice with concerns beyond myself *can* make me better attuned to the needs and moral claims of others (Velleman makes this point (1999: 373)), but this is surely contingent. I could conceive of myself as someone who “takes care of her own,” and nothing in this self-conception necessarily pulls me to take care of others with whom my connections are less strong.

I’m not sure I have a convincing answer for those who find this problem compelling, but I do have a few things to say. First, the “in-group” objection is not an objection to using love as the normative basis of a theory. It seems to be the objection to care theories more broadly discussed above: that they cannot help us shape broad policy. Probably the worry here really boils down to the possibility that the Humean mechanisms of reflection on natural sentiments don’t necessarily work. But again, this is a failure of reflection and not a problem with love itself as a moral attitude that can form the basis for practices and theories.

Second, the empirical work mentioned earlier suggests that if we can do better at caring for children when they are very young, they will grow up to be less fearful and self-protective than people in modern civilizations generally are now. With fear and distrust as less of a default, people will be more open to “Others” than we are now, and this could go some way toward weakening the sense of in-group/out-group; but even if not, it could aid Humean

reflection and help to generate the “caring-about” that can improve day-to-day relationships with strangers and members of other groups, as well as public policy. The individualistic conception of persons so common in Euro-American discourse could begin to give way to a relational conception.

Third, if the worry here is about impartiality, centering moral discussion on love faces the problem squarely. We are not by nature impartial creatures. As Noddings writes, “An ethic of care does not *justify* standing with one’s own; it recognizes that most of us will do this, and it seeks to promote conditions under which this basic psychological orientation will not be called forth to the detriment of others” (2002: 49).

My final response is that love, even—especially—on the intimate scale, is a moral attitude. If morality is fundamentally about recognizing how others matter and how we ought to behave as a result of that recognition, as I have assumed, then we ought to take love as seriously as a moral attitude as we take respect. Doing so has favorable implications for the status of care ethics among the “greats” of moral theory. There is still much to work out, but I maintain that understanding both love and respect as modes of recognition goes some way toward introducing a sense of broad continuity in moral theory.²⁴

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²⁴ Many thanks to JK, JWS, and the audience at UMD for helpful conversation about this work.

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