
HOW WE HURT THE ONES WE LOVE

BY

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Abstract: Paradoxically, the practical necessity of love seems to combine the personal character of psychological necessity with the inescapable and authoritative quality of moral necessity. Traditionally, philosophers have avoided this paradox by treating love as an amalgam of impersonal evaluative judgments and affective responses. On my account, love participates in a different form of practical necessity, one characterized by a non-moral yet normative type of expectation. This expectation is best understood as a kind of second-personal address that does not support derivative third-personal demands. It is revealed when we react with hurt feelings instead of resentment upon its disappointment.

1. *Introduction*

Our concern for those we love can tempt us away from morality. While otherwise unmotivated to lie, cheat, or steal, one might struggle with the duty against nepotism, for example, or the obligation to report the criminal behavior of a sibling, parent, child, romantic partner, or best friend. Moreover, although the desire to act immorally for one's own benefit is often condemned, when a comparable impulse involves acting on a loved one's behalf, it is more likely to be excused or praised as a sign of genuine attachment to another person. This tension between love and morality suggests that loving relationships involve a type of practical necessity – a way of being compelled to act – that is not obviously moral.¹

In fact, we seem to experience in love a kind of practical necessity that has not been accounted for in philosophical discussions, which focus on moral necessity and psychological necessity.² In this article, I argue that love participates in a peculiar, non-moral yet normative, form of practical necessity. This form of practical necessity is characterized by a uniquely second-personal type of expectation we place on each other, which does not support objective, third-personal claims, as moral expectations do. Moral necessity is a rational kind, experienced because we recognize

morality's objective authority over us and other people. Psychological necessity, on the other hand, arises from our individual set of personal preferences, which we experience as strong inclinations, impulses, or desires. But love does not fit comfortably in either the realm of moral obligation or psychological preference, as Bernard Williams's well-known 'one thought too many' example reveals (1981a, pp. 17–18).³

Williams imagines that two people are drowning and they might be saved by only one potential rescuer, who has enough time to save just one person and is, crucially, married to one of them. How the man should act is relatively uncontroversial: Williams emphasizes that objective moralities would likely recommend, as he does, that the man rescue his wife instead of the other person. Diverging from objective moral theories, however, Williams contends that we would hope the man would be motivated to rescue his wife – that irreplaceable person he loves – simply out of a deep personal concern for her, without a thought for what morality recommends or permits, because such a thought would be 'one thought too many.'⁴ This would be to act from a kind of necessity that is strong, authoritative, and inescapable, like the necessity of moral obligations, but also deeply personal and particular to him as an individual, like the necessity of psychological preferences.

To make sense of inescapable yet ineluctably personal motivations, I argue that love involves a unique type of expectation on another person, which is neither a moral demand nor a mere prediction of that person's behavior, and that this unique type of expectation accounts for the different kind of practical necessity that we experience in loving relationships. To show this, I first illustrate (in Section 2) the type of expectation we place on each other in loving relationships by examining our responses when those expectations are disappointed. I argue that the disappointment we experience in love is best understood as hurt feelings, which is an attitude that differs structurally from resentment (the attitude that is warranted when we are morally wronged). More specifically, in Sections 3 and 4, I contend that the second-personal expectations we place on each other in the moral context (that can result in resentment) support derivative third-personal claims, whereas the expectations in love (that can result in hurt feelings) involve a uniquely second-personal form of address, which does not license third-party participation. Next, in Section 5, I show that this uniquely second-personal form of address (one devoid of third-personal claims) operates in Kant's analysis of judgments of beauty: although we expect others to make the same judgment we do when we find an object beautiful, that expectation cannot be offered in objective, third-personal terms. For that reason, I call this type of expectation 'non-moral yet normative.'

Finally, I argue in Section 6 that in love we place these non-moral yet normative expectations on particular other people because we implicitly appeal to them to maintain or strengthen the intimacy of our relationship.

The intimacy of loving relationships enables our distinctive, first-personal perspectives, which explains the hurt we experience when our expectations in love are disappointed (as I elaborate in Section 7). Three interrelated characteristics of the intimacy of loving relationships support this account: we have the standing to interpret each other in a constitutive manner; we share a perspective; and, we see each other as distinctive and special. The argument of this article, in summary, is that love participates in its own form of practical necessity, one that is characterized by a non-moral yet normative type of expectation, which, in love, amounts to appeals for the intimacy that enables our first-personal perspectives. More broadly, I conclude that a Kantian moral psychology provides the conceptual framework that makes sense of the inescapable yet ineluctably personal necessity we experience in love.⁵

2. *Disappointment in love*

Two common types of expectation – the predictive and the moral – make sense of two familiar ways of being disappointed. We might say we are disappointed when our predictions go unmet and when we are morally let down. But consider the following example, in which Oliver is disappointed when his partner, Erica, gives him ‘a pair of very ordinary Finnish wellington boots’ for his birthday (Indridason, 2004, pp. 127–8). Oliver attempts to hide his disappointment and pretend enthusiasm for them. But Erica realizes the gift has let him down:

‘You’re not pleased with them,’ [Erica] said morosely. ‘Sure I am,’ he said, still at a total loss because he couldn’t stop thinking about the [250 dollar] wristwatch he’d given her for her birthday, bought after a week of explorations all over town.... He’d applied all his detective skills to find the right watch, found it in the end and she was ecstatic, her joy and delight were genuine. Then he was sitting in front of her with his smile frozen on his face and tried to pretend to be overjoyed, but he simply couldn’t do it for all his life was worth (pp. 127–8).⁶

Clearly, Erica’s gift of the wellington boots has disappointed Oliver, but less obvious is the type of expectation she has failed to meet.

In one sense, to expect something of someone is to predict that that person will act in a certain way, perhaps in light of evidence about psychological dispositions or behavioral history. If you often share extra food with me and you brought brownies for a snack today, I might predict that you will give me one of your brownies. If I make this prediction, and I happen to want a brownie, I will likely be disappointed in the event that you do not have an extra. Perhaps Oliver’s disappointment is like this: he generally receives more luxurious presents from Erica and the wellington boots did not match his preferences. Alternatively, since Oliver’s disappointment

seems more significant than that, we might think that Erica owes Oliver a certain type of present. Sometimes, expecting a person to act in a particular way means placing a moral demand on that person. For instance, if I expect you not to steal my lunch from the common refrigerator at work, I do not merely *predict* that you will not take my property without permission, but rather I *demand* that of you. Since personal relationships involve the establishment of implicit and explicit reciprocal practices, in those relationships we place moral demands on each other beyond the ones we place on strangers. As a result, we might interpret Oliver's expectation in this scenario as derivative of a special set of moral demands (localized to a personal relationship), and fault Erica for not meeting the standard of what qualifies as an appropriate practice of gift-giving in the context of her relationship with Oliver.

Of these two familiar accounts of disappointment, the moral one provides the more compelling interpretation of Oliver's non-trivial reaction to his partner's behavior. I contend, though, that this example reveals that we can be disappointed in a third sense – we can have our feelings hurt – even when moral demands have been satisfied. Even if Erica's gift had been the morally right one, and had met reciprocity's demands, Oliver's reaction might still make sense. This is because acting from a moral motivation can itself be a powerful source of hurt. Presumably, Oliver would be hurt if Erica had been motivated by the conditions of reciprocity in seeking out a gift (for example, if she had calculated that she must spend a certain amount of time, effort, and money in order to satisfy the moral demands of gift-giving existent in the context of her relationship). Oliver's hope might be, instead, that her initiative in searching out a gift would come as naturally and spontaneously as it did to him. If Erica was motivated by morality, it would make sense for Oliver to be hurt, irrespective of whether Erica's action was moral and met the conditions established by reciprocity. Relatedly, imagine a version of Williams's example, in which the wife – overcome with emotion after her rescue – says to her husband, 'You saved me! Why did you save me?' and her husband responds, 'Of course I saved you, it was the moral thing to do, the thing that husbands ought to do for wives.' On this version of the example, the wife might be deeply hurt to learn that her husband had saved her for a moral reason. (Such a conversation would not, after all, characterize a great love story.) Consequently, it seems that we can satisfy moral demands and still disappoint someone we love. This idea, that acting from a moral motivation can itself be a source of disappointment, provides some evidence that the attitude of hurt feelings (which arises when we are disappointed in love) does not reduce to resentment (our reaction to moral offenses). In the next section, I will stake out the further claim that the attitude of hurt feelings differs structurally from the attitude of resentment. Namely, where resentment is appropriate, the third-personal attitude of indignation is also appropriate. But hurt feelings involve no such third-personal analogue, which implies that it is not a moral attitude (though,

I contend, it tracks a normative expectation). The development of this argument requires an initial characterization of resentment.

3. *Resentment and the reactive attitudes*

For an analysis of resentment, I draw primarily on the accounts provided by Peter Strawson and Stephen Darwall.⁷ Critically, these accounts characterize resentment as a form of address – as, more precisely, an attitude that one person adopts and directs toward another person in response to being wronged by that other person. So, with the attitude itself, I communicate something to you: namely, I protest the way you treated me (Strawson, 1963/2003, p. 83; Darwall, 2006, p. 68).⁸ Consequently, Strawson calls resentment a ‘personal reactive attitude,’ and Darwall emphasizes the role ‘second-personal address’ plays in such attitudes. These significant concepts warrant elaboration.

Resentment serves as Strawson’s primary example of a class of attitudes he identifies as the ‘personal reactive attitudes.’⁹ But he highlights gratitude, forgiveness, love, anger, and hurt feelings as other members (1963/2003, pp. 75, 79). In general, he claims, we address personal reactive attitudes directly to other people in response to ‘... the quality of others’ wills towards us, as manifested in their behavior: to their good or ill will or indifference or lack of concern’ (p. 83). Paradigmatic occasions for resentment involve someone demonstrating a ‘contemptuous disregard of my existence’ or displaying a ‘malevolent wish to injure me’ (p. 76). When someone steps on my foot, for example, I react with resentment if I believe that the harm was inflicted intentionally, and not merely accidentally (though it is a harm to me either way) (p. 76).

Strawson elaborates that not only do we experience *personal* reactive attitudes, but also their analogues, *self-reactive* attitudes and *impersonal* (or vicarious) reactive attitudes. These three forms of reactive attitude are usefully understood in terms of three major shifts in perspective. We experience the personal reactive attitudes, such as resentment, in the second-person (e.g. I, the wronged party, direct resentment to you, the wrong-doer). From the first-person perspective, we experience the self-reactive attitudes, such as guilt. These are demands we make on ourselves on behalf of other people (p. 84). From the third-person perspective (that of a person standing outside of an encounter), we experience the impersonal analogues of the personal reactive attitudes, for example, indignation. Crucially, the same essential demand is implicit in all of the reactive attitudes (including guilt, resentment, and indignation): that all people treat all other people with ‘... a reasonable degree of goodwill or regard ...’ (p. 84). Strawson contends that in response to any particular wrongdoing, the offender appropriately experiences guilt, the offended person appropriately

directs resentment at the offender, and all other people appropriately direct indignation at the offender. In other words, indignation and guilt – the third- and first-personal corollaries of resentment – are warranted on all and only those occasions when resentment is warranted (p. 84).¹⁰ Furthermore, in Strawson's view, an insusceptibility to the full range of parallel first-, second- and third-personal attitudes makes a person something other than a normal moral agent.¹¹ On this account, no well-functioning, moral person can experience resentment, anger, gratitude, forgiveness, love or hurt feelings without being disposed to experience their first- and third-personal corollaries.

Darwall agrees with Strawson that we respond to the presumed good or ill will of another person with a host of attitudes. But Darwall emphasizes the role of 'second-personal address' in his interpretation of the reactive attitudes.¹² In Darwall's understanding, all of Strawson's 'reactive attitudes' amount to moral addresses made in the second-person (from one person to another), and they are ways of holding someone accountable. This means that the reactive attitudes have a communicative function: they demand, protest, challenge, or affirm and assent. Darwall underscores that even indignation – the reactive attitude people take up as third-parties – presses a demand in the second-person (2006, p. 67). With our indignation, *we*, the moral community (standing outside of the interaction), challenge *your* treatment of someone. For my purposes, the important point on which Strawson and Darwall agree is that indignation is appropriate on just those occasions when resentment is appropriate, because any moral reactive attitude taken up in the second person has an objective, third-personal corollary. When it is morally appropriate for me to experience a personal reactive attitude on my own behalf, it will also be appropriate for all other people (all members of the moral community) to experience some version of that reactive attitude on my behalf.

4. *Hurt feelings as distinct from resentment*

Resentment properly involves the backing of the moral community. If hurt feelings are best understood as a moral response, or even a form of resentment, then hurt feelings should share the major characteristics of the personal reactive attitudes. In particular, hurt feelings, like resentment, should properly involve the backing of the moral community. I suspect, though, that in contrast to resentment, the participation of third parties is inappropriate on occasions for hurt feelings. Imagine that I go to visit my friend for the weekend. She does everything she has committed to doing in terms of hosting me: she picks me up at the airport, shows me the sights, and makes sure I have a place to sleep and food to eat. In this regard, she fulfills all the obligations she has to me. Yet she seems distracted during

my visit, and I get the impression that she could take me or leave me. I took for granted that she would pay a certain kind of attention to me, and I am hurt when she fails to do this.

Certainly our friends and family can wrong us, warranting resentment. When this happens, it is also proper for third parties to direct indignation toward our loved ones, because that indignation reflects a moral demand that all people treat all other people with 'a reasonable degree of goodwill or regard' (Strawson, 1963/2003, p. 84). And any individual appropriately presses that moral demand on behalf of any other person. Immoral behavior, such as emotional abuse, for instance, calls for the indignation of strangers. But I contend that friends and family can also treat us in ways that make us feel hurt, irrespective of whether they morally wrong us (though, of course, the same act might elicit both responses: hurt feelings and resentment). In response to my inattentive friend's behavior, I do not adopt an attitude of blame or resentment; I do not hold her morally accountable. This becomes clear if we imagine how I might express my disappointment to my friend. I do not use the language of moral blame, as I would if she had failed to provide me with a place to sleep. In that case I would remind her that we had agreed that I should come visit. If, however, my friend fails to provide me with her attention, I do not reference moral commitments to describe my reaction to her. When she is not concerned with me in the way that I had expected, my only recourse is to tell her that I thought we cared about each other, and that when I came to visit I was confident she would take a familiar interest in me. I do not resent her; I am hurt by her. Even if we were to think that my friend owed me her attention because the duties of friendship dictate that she be attentive when I visit, I doubt this is what matters from the first-person perspective. Indeed, if my friend were to apologize for her behavior in moral terms, by reference to duties of friendship, the conversation would leave me unsatisfied. (As previously discussed, acting from moral motivation can itself be hurtful).

Significantly, in such a situation – when, for instance, my friend hurts my feelings by not paying a certain kind of attention to me – third-parties do not have available to them a reaction analogous to indignation. There is no attitude that third-parties, i.e. strangers, should direct *to my loved one* as a corollary to my attitude of hurt feelings. That is not to say that my hurt feelings are unintelligible to a stranger. I could explain the series of events, and the stranger could easily understand how I might feel when my friend does not show a special concern for me. My point, rather, is that if a stranger were to direct to my loved one an attitude similar to anger, hurt, or indignation, she would be overstepping her bounds by inserting herself into an intimate relation that does not involve her. A stranger's attempt to participate in an inherently personal conflict would be intrusive and offensive. Were the wife in my alternate version of Williams's example to feel hurt

because her husband saved her out of a moral motivation, strangers might sympathize with the wife and find it unfortunate that her marriage was not a more loving one, but they would not appropriately direct a reactive attitude as a corollary of hurt feelings toward the husband. I contend, therefore, that no reactive attitude comparable to indignation is available to third-parties in situations that involve hurt feelings, making hurt feelings structurally different from resentment and other moral reactive attitudes.

Moral reactive attitudes, like resentment, have derivative third-personal components in the sense that third-parties can make second-personal addresses in those situations. But third-parties have no such role to adopt when we experience hurt feelings. Consequently, the type of expectation that has been disappointed when feelings are hurt is an expectation that does not support derivative, third-personal, objective claims, as moral expectations do. So the question becomes: what kind of expectation is at play in loving relationships, the disappointment of which elicits hurt feelings? I suspect that Kant's discussion of beauty in the *Critique of Judgment* begins to explain the type of expectation that arises in love (and ultimately accounts for the necessity that we experience in love). For that reason, I focus in the next section on Kant's analysis of judgments of beauty.

5. *Expectations in judgments of beauty*

Through his discussion of beauty in the third *Critique*, Kant carves out the conceptual space for the kind of expectation that we have in love. He argues that we make a type of judgment that is neither grounded in objective, rational terms, nor expressive of a mere preference. Kant takes judgments of the beautiful to be one prominent instance of 'reflective judgments,' which resemble judgments of the good and judgments of the agreeable, but are not reducible to either one. By virtue of their intermediary nature, understanding Kant's idea of judgments of beauty requires situating them between judgments of the good and of the agreeable.

According to Kant, we judge an object to be good when we believe it has value not just for us in particular, but for any rational creature: '... the good ... is valid for every rational being in general' (1790/2000, 5:210).¹³ The 'good' is that 'which pleases by means of reason alone' (5:207). Consider, here, Kant's test of the Categorical Imperative: a proposed action is good when it passes the test of universalizability, when, in other words, any person could act in a similar way in a similar situation. In this way, moral actions please by means of reason alone. And, judging the goodness of an object involves demanding that others make the same judgment about the same object. If others do not respond to the object as we do, then we rightfully believe that they have failed to appreciate something that rationality requires of them. Judgments of the good are thus, in principle, universally

communicable. Nothing about the content of these judgments restricts any rational agent from making or understanding them.

Whereas judgments of the good are objective and demand the assent of all rational beings, judgments of the agreeable are subjective. A judgment of the agreeable concerns the way in which an object pleases us as particular, sensible creatures. When we judge an object pleasurable, implicit in the judgment is the recognition that the experience depends upon what is distinctive about us as individuals, which need not be shared or sharable. For instance, my judgment that chocolate is pleasing inherently concerns my particular sensibility. Such a judgment is about my experience of the object and how it gratifies me, not about the object itself. Indeed, nonrational, sensible creatures can be gratified by objects in the same way we are: 'Agreeableness is also valid for nonrational animals ...' (5:210). Since judgments of the agreeable concern a subjective reaction that depends upon our physiological constitution, we cannot demand that others experience an object in the same way we do. Unlike judgments of the good, judgments of the agreeable presuppose no normative stance toward others. But, given that our gratification depends upon our having the sensibilities that we do, we might predict that others with similar physiologies will have comparable experiences, though such an attitude is not implicit in the judgment of the agreeable.

Judgments of the beautiful are instances of reflective judgments, and depend upon the combination of our sensible and rational natures. For instance, when I appreciate a beautiful sunset, my response is both about the object and the subject: the interplay of the sunset and me, *qua* human being, causes me to experience the object as beautiful. Implicit in judgments of beauty is an expectation that others will make the same judgment. Kant writes:

When we call something beautiful, the pleasure that we feel is expected of everyone else in the judgment of taste^[14] as necessary, just as if it were to be regarded as a property of the object that is determined in it in accordance with concepts; but beauty is nothing by itself, without relation to the feeling of the subject (5:218).

When we deem an object beautiful, we expect the accord of others who encounter the particular object (5:216). We address these judgments to the range of rational creatures who also have sensible natures, which is a category that includes other human beings (5:210).

Judgments of beauty differ from both judgments of the good and of the agreeable. On the one hand, they cannot be translated into objective terms: 'If one judges objects merely in accordance with concepts, then all representation of beauty is lost. Thus there can also be no rule in accordance with which someone could be compelled to acknowledge something as beautiful' (5:215–16). When we judge in accordance with concepts,

as when we make judgments of the good, we are in possession of a rule, by reference to which we can rationally demand that others judge as we do. In contrast, although we expect people to make the same judgments of beauty that we make, we cannot demand it because these judgments do not result from rule-governed inference. Judgments of beauty must be made through direct personal encounters with the objects involved. On the other hand, we are equally mistaken if the expectation we place on others to judge beauty the way we do is too weak. A judgment of beauty differs significantly from the judgment that something gratifies oneself. Kant writes:

Many things may have charm and agreeableness for ... [a person], no one will be bothered about that; but if he pronounces that something is beautiful, then he expects the very same satisfaction of others: he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things (5:212).

Unlike purely subjective judgments of the agreeable, judgments of beauty participate in a kind of universality – they make a ‘rightful claim to the assent of everyone’ (5:213).

In Kant’s view, judgments of beauty ‘must be combined with a claim to subjective universality’ (5:212). The expectations made in judgments of beauty are neither predictions nor rational demands. In my interpretation, they are essentially second-personal addresses, without derivative third-personal claims. When I make a judgment of beauty, I implicitly appeal to you – all of you, as individuals – to make the same judgment about the same particular object. I appeal to you directly to have a personal encounter with the object, rather than employ rules or concepts that will rationally compel your agreement; third parties who are not directly engaged with or encountering the phenomenon cannot participate in the experience I appeal to you to have.¹⁵ In contrast, moral expectations support derivative third-personal claims. For that reason, I propose that the type of expectation made in judgments of beauty – those that involve a uniquely second-personal address – is best understood as non-moral yet normative.

In judgments of beauty, this uniquely second-personal type of address extends universally; the appeal in judgments of beauty is made to every other person. But when we love someone, we do not appeal to all other people to love that person with us. Although I may expect everyone to find a certain sunset beautiful, I certainly do not expect everyone who has ever met a particular friend of mine, for instance, to love her. In love, we address our expectations directly to the beloved. Consequently, the structures of the non-moral yet normative expectations in love are importantly different from those of judgments of beauty. But, if the expectations in love are not appeals to judge an object as loveable, comparable to judging an object as beautiful, then what are they appeals *for*?

To answer that, it helps to consider other contexts in which this uniquely second-personal, non-moral yet normative, type of expectation appears. I suspect that, like those of beauty and love, the expectations we place on others to share the humor of jokes also involve a uniquely second-personal address, and participate in the same structural dynamic as the expectations of love. Ted Cohen argues that appreciating a joke, like appreciating beauty, is not a matter of ‘... latching on to the objective features of the world ...’ (1999, p. 30). This type of appeal is not a rational demand: ‘You cannot show that the joke is an instance of something that must be acknowledged as funny, as you might show that an argument is an instance of valid reasoning’ (p. 29). Instead, one expects the joke itself, that particular object, to elicit a certain response from another person (p. 29). Yet, in sharing a joke, we make a significant type of appeal, and Cohen claims that the person who does not appreciate your humor (like the person who doesn’t care to watch a sunset) ‘... is a kind of stranger to you’ (p. 26). He reports ‘... feel[ing] stricken every time one of my jokes does not reach you’ (p. 32), because in the experience of humor or beauty, ‘I discover something of what it is to be a human being by finding this thing in me, and then having it echoed in you, another human being’ (p. 31). When I tell you a joke, I appeal to you ‘... to join [me] in a community of appreciation’ (p. 26). Such a community of appreciation is grounded in the shared feeling that appreciating a joke together involves, which might be the feeling of a common humanity (pp. 40, 31). Jokes are ‘... devices for establishing and maintaining intimacy ...’ (p. 69), because sharing a joke makes explicit our common background (p. 27). (Consider, for instance, how ‘inside jokes’ function to strengthen the bonds of a community.) Comparable to Cohen’s point that jokes appeal for intimacy, I argue in the following section that our appeals in love seek to maintain and strengthen three interrelated characteristics of the intimacy of loving relationships.

6. *Expectations in love*

The uniquely second-personal appeals we make in love seek to strengthen the intimacy we take for granted in loving relationships, an intimacy that is threatened or damaged upon the rejection of those appeals. In what follows, I identify three interrelated characteristics of the intimacy of loving relationships: those we love have the standing to interpret us in a constitutive manner; we share a perspective with those we love; and, being loved enables us to see ourselves as distinctive and special. The character of intimacy in love reveals what kinds of non-moral yet normative expectations we place on others in loving relationships, thereby explaining how we are hurt when the appeals we make in love are rebuffed.

6.1. STANDING TO INTERPRET

First, in a loving relationship, we incorporate each other's interpretations of our concerns and interests into our self-understandings. Our concerns and interests have an indeterminate quality until we fine-tune them – in part – by accepting the interpretations provided by those we love. We grant those we love the standing to interpret us in a constitutive manner, which amounts to the conferral of a normative power. As a result of their having this normative power, part of who we are as distinctive individuals cannot be specified without reference to them: the people we love help to constitute us. Consequently, we implicitly appeal to those we love to help us form the character of our concerns and interests.

This process of helping each other make determinate our attitudes occurs frequently in ordinary circumstances. Take, for instance, an average day during which I happen to have a conversation with a co-worker that leaves me unsettled. For a period subsequent to the conversation, my emotional response amounts to a nebulous discontent. Beyond that discontent, my feeling about what just occurred is unspecified. Whether I am angry, sympathetic, dismissive, bemused, or otherwise, remains to be worked out; in other words, within a range of possibilities, my response has yet to form. On such an occasion, the robust development of my reaction to the event occurs through my discussion of it with someone I love. The interpretations of the people I love contribute to it being the case that I feel *x* instead of *y* – perhaps that I am sympathetic instead of angry.

Along these lines, Williams defends the point that the precise nature of an experience can be indeterminate at the moment of its central event, as we see if we consider his discussions of *akrasia* and 'essentially retrospective justification.' Beginning with the phenomenon of *akrasia*, he argues that future attitudes and decisions can qualify or disqualify an earlier act as *akratic* (1993, pp. 44–46).¹⁶ He invokes the example of a man who resolves to end an extramarital affair, but continues to see his lover even after the two 'had decided not to meet' (p. 45). According to Williams, those episodes of infidelity do not have a determinate character at the time of their occurrence, because at that time there is no fact of the matter about what the man wants. Not until later, when the episodes of infidelity join a larger narrative in the man's life, does it become the case that they were *akratic* acts or, alternatively, '... intimations of what were going to prove his truly stronger reasons' (p. 45). Williams writes:

The relevant descriptions of what happened are available, in many cases, only retrospectively, as part of an interpretation that establishes or reestablishes one's identifications and the importance of one reason rather than another. Consequently, whether an episode was an episode of *akrasia* at all may depend crucially on later understandings (p. 45).

In this case, the correct characterization of the man's will does not derive from isolated moments of choice. More generally, Williams's point is that

the precise nature of certain events in our lives depends on how we develop our stories; it is not written into them as they occur, but is subject to how we conceive of them in the future. We reflect on potential interpretations, and those we accept establish the character of the event. My contention – to which I will return – is that we engage in this process with those we love.

Because certain of our choices have an indeterminate character when we make them, Williams argues for a type of justification that he calls ‘essentially retrospective’ (1981b, p. 24). Essentially retrospective justifications are uniquely first-personal; they concern only our own evaluations of our choices. In this way, they differ from moral justifications because they do not assess the quality of rational deliberation, which could be done from the third-person. To illustrate, Williams relates the story of Anna Karenina, who leaves her husband for her lover, Vronsky, thereby abandoning her son and sacrificing her place in Russian society. Ultimately, she finds she cannot live the life that resulted from her decision, and she commits suicide. According to Williams, Anna’s decision to leave her husband is of such a kind that ‘... if it succeeds, [her] stand-point of assessment will be from a life which then derives an important part of its significance for [her] from that very fact; if [she] fails, it can, necessarily, have no such significance in [her] life’ (p. 35). Her interpretation of this choice hinges on the fuller context of her life, which has yet to develop. As it happens, the remainder of Anna’s story develops such that she interprets her earlier choice to run away with Vronsky as ‘unjustified’ and ‘insupportable’ (pp. 25, 27). When we make choices like Anna’s, we are ‘... putting a great deal on a possibility which has not unequivocally declared itself’ (p. 23). At the time of her choice, Anna gambles on the possibility that her relationship with Vronsky will deepen. But for Anna, that possibility does not crystallize – her life with Vronsky does not result in a storyline she can endorse or identify with. The life that becomes available to her with Vronsky is not what she would need it to be in order to weave her choice into a larger narrative: in this case, to see it as a decision that supports a larger narrative (even the narrative of a miserable life). As a result, the path she follows is so incomplete and underdeveloped that she cannot recover her way. This is why Anna kills herself, on Williams’s interpretation (p. 26). Had her story gone differently, an alternative interpretation of her earlier choice would have been available to her; Anna might have conceived of her choice as one that supported a larger narrative despite, perhaps, having become miserable. In this sense, the nature of Anna’s decision depends upon later interpretations, which are, in principle, not available at the moment of choice.

From Williams’s discussions of *akrasia* and essentially retrospective justification, I take the point that with some choices, actions, and events, there is no fact of the matter about what we want or how we feel at the central moment. Instead, we give them a nature by applying later interpretations to them. Of course, some possible characterizations can be ruled out as

clear outliers – as unrealistic. But in an important sense, the character of our choices and actions can be unsettled at the moment they occur. Although Williams emphasizes the unformed nature of some of our choices, he neglects the way in which we form their nature by accepting the interpretations of those we love. It is striking, however, that his examples turn on the development of relationships with other people: whether the episodes of infidelity are *akratic* hinges on the extent to which the man comes to understand himself and his life in terms of his relationship with his mistress, his spouse, both, or neither; and, whether Anna's choice develops into a robust enough storyline to support her depends upon how her relationship with Vronsky realizes itself.¹⁷ I contend that we do not engage in this process alone. Instead, we fine-tune our concerns and interests – in part – by conferring on those we love the normative power to provide interpretations of the events in our lives. In this way, the people we love help determine what we care about and, consequently, who we are as distinctive individuals.

6.2. SHARED PERSPECTIVE

A second characteristic of the intimacy of loving relationships is the way in which we and our loved ones share a perspective or engage the world together, which has to do with sharing interests and emotional coordination. Sharing a perspective and engaging the world together involve a specific way of sharing interests with those we love. On Harry Frankfurt's account, loving someone essentially involves sharing interests, which often requires adopting (as much as possible) the other person's interests as one's own (2004, pp. 81–89). On this conception, the interests we share in relationships are often an amalgam of our pre-established desires. I agree, of course, that individuals in relationships have their own interests, taken seriously by those who love them. But Frankfurt's focus on the meshing of pre-existing individual concerns misses a significant dimension of what occurs in a loving relationship. In contrast to Frankfurt, I argue that love centrally involves forming concerns together. We do not merely adopt the interests the other person brings into our relationship, but we begin to explore possible avenues of interest together. We create new desires and concerns together. Our individual perspectives inform what we entertain as possibilities and shape our joint explorations, but we determine together what we pay attention to.

This process is analogous to Christine Korsgaard's account of joint reasoning. When we deliberate together, she argues, nothing qualifies as a reason for either of us individually until it is ratified by both of us jointly. Although we might each contribute preferences and suggestions as the raw material for consideration, we do not genuinely *reason* together unless we treat that procedure itself as determining the reasons we take ourselves to have – we must regard ourselves as having a unified will and determining together what decision to share (2009, p. 190). In contrast, if we each attempt

to persuade the other person to adopt our independently-established reasons, then we approach each other's independently-held reasons as 'tools and obstacles' and engage in a process of bargaining, not deliberation (p. 194). Comparably, I argue, in a loving relationship, the content of our concerns is not determined prior to the activity of exploring possible avenues of interest together. Individually, we shape our joint exploration by contributing suggestions and possibilities, but we form and determine our interests together. Consequently, being in a loving relationship changes our nature as experiencing subjects: we belong to a new, irreducible subjectivity from which we view the horizon of possible interests and concerns (or, share a perspective). In other words, our practical orientations depend upon the people we love because we no longer encounter the world as the creatures we were before. In loving relationships, we are creatures whose capacity for feeling and desiring is co-dependent with particular other people's.

The way in which we share a perspective or engage the world together can also be understood in terms of our emotional coordination. Annette Baier emphasizes that love '... is a coordination or mutual involvement of two (or more) persons' emotions, and it is more than sympathy, more than just the duplication of the emotion of each in a sympathetic echo in the other' (1994, p. 43). We do not merely echo the emotion of the other, rather, we utilize 'mutually responsive feelings' and offer appropriate emotional responses in a way reminiscent of how '... the cello replies to the violin in a duo ...' (p. 44). Baier's discussion suggests to me that playing a game as a team or improvising music together are the appropriate models on which to understand how we share a perspective when we are in loving relationships. These activities are not performed simply by following a set of determinate rules. In a similar mode, we develop interests together: we share a life in a way that we make up as we go along, in a way that is purposeful but non-instrumental. Although the practices of playing as a team, improvising music, and forming interests together do not follow determinate rules, they are governed by normative standards. We can certainly respond to each other inappropriately: when the cello plays after the violin, for instance, some sets of notes will count as replies and others will not. In this way, the manner in which we share a perspective and engage the world together involves non-moral yet normative expectations.

6.3. SUBJECTIVE IMPORTANCE

The type of significance we have to the people who love us constitutes a third characteristic of the intimacy of loving relationships. More specifically, we have a subjective importance to those who love us that does not track our objective merit; our importance to those who love us need not reflect any thoughts about how special we are in the eyes of all other people. Consider, for instance, the preference loving parents have for their own children, which does not depend on whether the children would be considered outstanding

by an unbiased observer. Having a subjective importance to those who love us enables us to see ourselves as distinctive and special, which in turn enables us to develop our own personal interests and projects.

Our importance to those who love us does not rely upon our possession of objectively-prized qualities or traits, such as being especially smart or witty. In fact, those who love us see us just as ourselves and not in terms of a set of characteristics, a point that Frankfurt emphasizes:

The focus of a person's love is not those general and hence repeatable characteristics that make his beloved *describable*. Rather, it is the specific particularity that makes his beloved *nameable* – something that is more mysterious than describability, and that is in any case manifestly impossible to define (1999b, p. 170).

For those who love us, proper names best capture our individuality because those names conjure something beyond sets of attributes. (Consider our tendency to turn even 'Mom' and 'Dad' into proper names.) Niko Kolodny interprets this as the claim that the focus of a person's love is another's irreplaceable '... bare identity: her being Jane, her being this very person, her being she' (2003, p. 142).

I suggest that being seen and cared about in this way enables us to have distinctive, first-personal perspectives, which in turn enables us to have enough of a personal self to undertake our own interests. Williams emphasizes the significance of maintaining a sense of the special, non-objective importance of our own lives. We are chiefly concerned with our particular projects, he claims, not because we imagine that '... a distinctive contribution to the world will have been made, if [our] distinctive project is carried forward' (1981a, p. 14), but because such projects '... give [us], distinctively, a reason for living this life' (p. 15). I agree with Williams that the projects and interests we adopt or develop throughout our lives – such as careers, hobbies, or social causes – contribute to our practical orientations. But developing personal interests and projects only makes sense against the backdrop of a distinctive, first-personal perspective, which our loving relationships give rise to. Having a sense of ourselves as subjectively important is the precondition for pursuing our own projects, and being loved enables that sense. Overall, the intimacy of loving relationships (which I have described in terms of three characteristics) enables our distinctive, first-personal perspectives. As I discuss in the following section, this explains the hurt we feel when the expectations we place on those we love are disappointed.

7. *Explaining hurt feelings*

The non-moral yet normative expectations we have in love are appeals to each other to maintain or strengthen the intimacy of our relationship. When

such appeals are rebuffed, we react with the attitude of hurt feelings, which accounts for the examples introduced earlier in this article. The second-personal reactive attitude of hurt feelings is appropriate when a loved one does not engage with us about how to interpret our concerns and interests, or does not participate in our shared perspective, or does not see us as subjectively important.¹⁸

As I have argued, we appeal to those we love to help constitute us by interpreting our concerns and interests. In this regard, occasions for hurt feelings arise both when loved ones dismiss the normative power we have conferred on them, and when they refuse to give us the normative power to interpret them in a constitutive manner. The inattentive friend does not give me the standing to interpret her inner life; she does not share with me, or appeal to me to help her settle the matter that distracts her.

This source of hurt feelings also speaks to the kind of disappointment that can arise in gift-giving. We confer on those we love the normative power to interpret us in a constitutive manner, and, I argue, gift-giving is one mode of interpretation – one way in which we make each other's concerns and interests determinate. In the context of loving relationships, gift-giving can be a mutually self-defining activity. Recall how Erica disappointed Oliver when she gave him the wellington boots after he had searched out the perfect watch for her birthday. This gift disappoints Oliver because it does not expand his style, refine his taste, help him develop interests, or go beyond what has already been determined about him. To see this, consider the various ways gifts can be inappropriate in the context of loving relationships. Gift-giving can disappoint if you do not select your present for the recipient in particular (think, for instance, of the person who gives money or gift-certificates, has an assistant shop for his gifts, or buys presents without specific recipients in mind). The process goes wrong, too, when the gift-giver uses her own preferences to guide her selection, rather than contemplating what the recipient might enjoy. I suggest that these non-ideal modes of gift-giving all have in common a failure to help define the other person.

Recognizing gift-giving in loving relationships as a mutually self-defining activity also makes sense of one way in which gifts can be received. Graciously receiving gifts from those we love affirms their power to provide constitutive interpretations of us. On the other hand, gift-givers are understandably hurt when their genuine attempts to help determine another's tastes are rejected. If I carefully select a gift for you and you do not use it – if you do not listen to the mix-tape I spent a weekend making for you, or never wear the sweater I thought would excite you, or generally return, sell, or give away my presents to you – then you signal an unwillingness to let me refine your tastes. And that indicates an unwillingness to let me interpret you in a constitutive manner. Consequently, the occasions for hurt feelings introduced into loving relationships by the practice of gift-giving make sense

if we understand gift-giving as one mode in which we interpret each other in a constitutive manner. Not attempting an interpretation of someone or refusing to accept someone's interpretation are both hurtful behaviors.

Withdrawing from the shared perspective also constitutes hurtful behavior in loving relationships. The shared perspective typically operates as an implicit feature of loving relationships, becoming explicit only when someone ceases to engage in it. At such times we feel hurt; we 'feel stricken' (to use Cohen's language) when someone we love does not respond to our (implicit) appeals to engage the world together. The distant, inattentive friend also exemplifies a loved one who withdraws from the shared perspective. She does not engage the world with her friend in a manner characterized by emotional coordination or the joint exploration of possible interests.

Finally, those who love us enable our distinctive, first-personal perspectives, and we implicitly appeal to them to affirm our subjective importance. Rejection on this front threatens our ability to have a special concern for ourselves, which is a precondition of developing and maintaining personal projects and interests. When loved ones fail to provide us with a sense of our subjective importance, our sense of self is diminished. Returning to Williams's 'one thought too many' example, if the man were to rescue his wife for the wrong reason, she would naturally question the type of importance she has to her husband, and be hurt by the suspicion that she is fundamentally one among others in her husband's eyes.

Our feelings are hurt when the appeals we make for the intimacy that characterizes loving relationships are rebuffed. Generally speaking, the attitude of hurt feelings involves a sense of abandonment and, consequently, personal diminishment or deflation. Not interpreting me, not engaging in our shared perspective, and not seeing me as special and distinct, are all ways of abandoning me. Williams's 'one thought too many' example resonates because the threat of abandonment is literal: the wife might be left to drown. And in loving her, the husband should have no choice but to save her with an almost primal need – with an urgency comparable to that with which he would try to save himself. The husband needs the wife he loves to stay alive because there is no he without her: he is constituted through her, he shares a perspective with her, and his sense of himself depends on her. Were he not to act from the same unreflective exigency that would motivate him to save his own life, he would be abandoning his wife – discarding her as someone he does not need – regardless of whether he rescues her from some other motivation. Because if another motivation were emotionally available to him, if he could adopt a different perspective on the event, that response would reveal that he does not love her.¹⁹

Love is not altruistic on this account, but it is not egoistic either. Consider that the rational egoist sees all value relative to himself, which implies that he would not save others over himself, since that would eliminate the source of value in his life. Contrary to this, my account implies that we do not

abandon those we love. Depending on the particular expectations at play in a loving relationship, this will mean in some cases that a person will save those she loves over herself, for instance, in the case of someone who loves her children. In such a case, abandoning her children would be worse than dying because it would corrupt her as death would not. Korsgaard emphasizes such a point when she considers the cost of betraying our fundamental commitments:

It is the conceptions of ourselves that are most important to us that give rise to unconditional obligations. For to violate them is to lose your integrity and so your identity, and to no longer be who you are. That is, it is to no longer be able to think of yourself under the description under which you value yourself and find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking. *It is to be for all practical purposes dead or worse than dead* (1996, p. 102, my emphasis).

Korsgaard argues that the activity of giving ourselves standards and living by them is constitutive of personhood in general, and our personal practical identities, more specifically, are constituted by our fundamental commitments (p. 102). On my view, violating our most basic commitment to those we love – our commitment not to abandon them – does such a deep violence to ourselves that it is to be ‘for all practical purposes dead or worse than dead.’

What I do for you out of love is deeply personal – deeply ‘of me,’ which makes sense of how you can hurt me if you react to what I do for you out of love as though I act from a moral motivation. If I visit you in the hospital because I love you and you respond with moral gratitude, *I am hurt*.²⁰ In moral interactions, gratitude functions to praise those who perform dutiful actions (including supererogatory ones). This kind of gratitude has a distancing effect in personal relationships. Imagine that both my loved one and a casual acquaintance are hospitalized, and I visit each one. Both might thank me for coming, but I suspect that their expressions of gratitude would track different sentiments. In the context of loving relationships, an expression of gratitude that thanks someone for doing her duty rejects the intimate dimensions of the relationship. The thanks we offer in loving relationships, instead, express the sentiment ‘I am glad to be loved by you.’

8. Conclusion

Recognizing a non-moral yet normative type of expectation makes sense of a variety of appeals that we make to each other, ranging from the minimally intimate (attempts to share a joke with a stranger) to the maximally intimate (what occurs in loving relationships). This conceptual space can accommodate at least our experiences of beauty, humor, and love, none of which fit

comfortably as either mere psychological inclinations or real values recommended by reason. Against the background of Kant's discussion of beauty, it becomes clearer how love could involve a non-moral (but still normative) set of second-personal appeals and attitudes. For that reason, I suggest that a Kantian moral psychology is uniquely situated to provide the conceptual framework for a satisfying theory of love, according to which love participates in its own form of practical necessity, different from both moral necessity and the necessity of a psychological impulse. The dimensions of intimacy that I identify explain what we appeal for in loving relationships, and how we are hurt upon the rejection of those appeals. Interpreting love through this lens allows for the possibility that being disappointed in love is neither trivial nor warrants casting moral blame.²¹

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NOTES

¹ My discussion of 'love' focuses on the type of attachment we experience to particular other people and provides a characterization of the intimacy involved in personal loving relationships. As such, the aim of my article should be distinguished from that of accounting for the causes of love. It is also worth noting that I intend my discussion of love to apply primarily to the attitude we can have for close friends, family members, and romantic partners. My references throughout the article to 'the ones we love' or 'the ones who love us' should be understood as shorthand for 'the people with whom we are in loving relationships.' Certainly, the experience of love need not be regarded as a unified phenomenon, and the use of the term is not uniform (for instance, we might speak of our love for any of a variety of objects, places, pets, our love for God, small children, and other rational adults, and we classify love in terms of the type of relationship it tracks, such as romantic, filial, parental, or friendly). But I discuss interpersonal love generally, working under the hypothesis that exploring that type of love will ultimately organize our understanding of other common occasions of love.

² Significant philosophical discussions of love assume a dichotomy between it as a fundamentally moral attachment (generating a moral necessity) and a fundamentally affective attachment (generating a psychological necessity). In other words, love is presumed to be either an attachment grounded in the rational recognition of the objective value of another person, or in a subjective feeling. Philosophers who characterize love as a rational or moral attachment include: Plato (385? BCE/1997), as he discusses love in the *Symposium*; Kant (1797/1996), as he discusses 'practical love' in *The Metaphysics of Morals*; Gabrielle Taylor (1976) in 'Love'; Robert Solomon (1993) in *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* (see especially pp. 277–278); Christine Korsgaard (1996) in *The Sources of Normativity* (see especially Lectures 3 and 4); David Velleman (1999/2006) in 'Love as a Moral Emotion'; and Kyla Ebels-Duggan (2008) in 'Against Beneficence: A Normative Account of Love.' Philosophers who characterize love as an affective attachment include: Hume (1739/1978), as he discusses love in Book II of *A Treatise of Human Nature*; Kant (1797/1996), as he discusses affective (or pathological) love in *The Metaphysics of Morals*; and Harry Frankfurt (2004) in *The Reasons of Love*. Additionally, a number of philosophers seem to recognize the inadequacy of this dichotomy, though I do not believe they propose satisfactory solutions in response, for reasons that will become apparent in this article. Those authors include: Bernard Williams (1973/1988, 1973, 1981a, 1981b, 1985), insofar as he emphasizes the significance of 'personal projects' in 'Consequentialism

and Integrity,' *Problems of the Self*, 'Persons, Character, and Morality,' 'Moral Luck,' and *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*; Harry Frankfurt (1988 and 1999a), insofar as he introduces the concept of 'volitional necessity' in the collections of essays *The Importance of What We Care About* and *Necessity, Volition, and Love*; Annette Baier (1994) in 'Unsafe Loves'; Jean Hampton (2002) in 'Feminist Contractarianism' (see especially the final section); and Susan Wolf (2010) in *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*.

³ Williams adopts this example from Charles Fried and presents his own version of it.

⁴ Of course, marriage does not always imply love, but I contend that Williams's analysis of the example makes more sense under this assumption. Harry Frankfurt provides a similar interpretation of the example and its significance (2004, pp. 35–37).

⁵ I call my account of love Kantian because I draw on a type of non-moral yet normative expectation that Kant employs in his account of beauty. As such, my account is best situated in a Kantian moral psychology. Whether this account of love is properly interpreted as one Kant himself might provide, however, I leave as an open question.

⁶ For purposes of presentation, I have renamed the characters in this story and converted the figure from Icelandic krónur to American dollars.

⁷ Specifically, the accounts found in Strawson's (1963/2003) 'Freedom and Resentment' and Darwall's (2006) *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability*.

⁸ If you wrong me, I hold you responsible to me with a protest such as, 'You can't do that to me' (Darwall, 2006, p. 68).

⁹ In 'Freedom and Resentment,' Strawson is concerned with making sense of the possibility of moral responsibility in general (though that aspect of Strawson's account is beyond the scope of my article). He discusses personal reactive attitudes by way of providing a theory of how we hold ourselves and others morally responsible. For further discussion of Strawson's account of personal reactive attitudes, see Lucy Allais's (2008) 'Wiping the Slate Clean: The Heart of Forgiveness,' especially pp. 51–55.

¹⁰ Strawson claims there is a 'logical' relation between the three forms of a reactive attitude (1963/2003, p. 84).

¹¹ Typically, this person would 'appear as an abnormal case of moral egocentricity, as a kind of moral solipsist.' Strawson calls this the 'human' relation between the three forms of the attitude (1963/2003, pp. 84–85).

¹² See especially Darwall, 2006, pp. 65–90.

¹³ When referring to Kant's work I use the Prussian Academy pagination.

¹⁴ Kant uses 'judgment of taste' as an alternative term for reflective judgment.

¹⁵ Assenting to the idea that a given object has the requisite properties to make it beautiful would be a logical judgment. Kant explains, '... by means of a judgment of taste I declare the rose that I am gazing at to be beautiful. By contrast, the judgment that arises from the comparison of many singular ones, that roses in general are beautiful, is no longer pronounced merely as an aesthetic judgment, but as an aesthetically grounded logical judgment' (1790/2000, 5:215).

¹⁶ In his discussion, Williams retains the Greek term *akrasia* out of dissatisfaction with translations as 'weakness of will' or 'incontinence' (1993, p. 44), so I use the Greek term here as well.

¹⁷ Anna's case is extreme because she has given up her other relationships, with the result that everything hangs on her relationship with Vronsky transforming into a loving one. Few of our choices are as radical as Anna's.

¹⁸ That is, hurt feelings are appropriate on at least these occasions.

¹⁹ Since I think the act of saving her is comparable to an act of self-preservation, I suspect that it does not call for moral justification. Think here of how Hobbes (1651/2002) characterizes self-preservation as a fundamental natural instinct and thus our right in *Leviathan* section XIV.3.

²⁰ Susan Wolf uses the example of visiting her brother in the hospital, which inspires my use of a similar example (2010, p. 4).

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