

Grace and Alienation

Vida Yao

Rice University

© 2020 Vida Yao

*This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 3.0 License.
<www.philosophersimprint.org/020016/>*

I. Introduction

You have come to the troubling realization that a friend of yours, whom you have loved with affection for many years, isn't the person he seemed to be.¹ You hadn't taken seriously enough the gossip about his obnoxious and cruel behavior. You never doubted his values when he made "colorful remarks". And in the last few years, you've been so busy and distracted with work and family that you haven't really been paying much attention to him at all. But now your attention is focused, your awareness heightened, and your eyes clear. You see now that he really *is* a pig, that his kindness really *is* put on, and that his charms are merely that — charms. He is not refreshingly flakey, but unreliable and insincere. Not charismatic, but sloppy and arrogant. What you once believed to be his good qualities you now see as veneer over a mix of vice and hollowness underneath.

Given this revelation, it would be reasonable to conclude that you'd be justified in cutting your friend out of your life.² But let's suppose that even if you'd be *justified* in doing so, you feel — maybe because you've known one another so long and your lives are now so interwoven, or maybe because he is so isolated and disconnected from his other friends and family, or maybe because you simply don't *want* to, given that you love him — that this seems too simple of an answer. Let's suppose, too, that your friend isn't oblivious or totally beyond the pale. He recognizes in himself the flaws you see, and sees that

1. For clarity and consistency with an example I will discuss in more detail below, I will use the male pronoun for the beloved and the female pronoun for the lover.
2. One might conclude that you *must*, in some way, stop loving your friend because one might think it simply impossible, conceptually or psychologically, to knowingly love the vicious. Alternatively, one might think that there is a *moral* obligation or duty to not love the vicious. This second claim is often presented as an intuition about what morality demands, but has also been defended by, for example, Julia Driver. Driver, "Love and Duty", *Philosophic Exchange*, 44:1 (2014). Bernard Williams criticizes a similar view advanced by David A. J. Richards in Williams, "Persons, Character, and Morality" in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Richards' view is presented in *A Theory of Reasons for Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). Also, consider Aristotle's view of friendship, according to which the highest form of *philia* is strictly reserved for the virtuous.

they *are* flaws. But though this gives you some reason to resist writing him off entirely, it also complicates your continued relationship. You now realize that his self-awareness is accompanied by bouts of shame, which in turn (you now realize) explain his caginess, artificiality, and withdrawal from those whom he suspects have seen him truly — including, now, yourself.³

I am interested in cases like this, where one loves someone of vicious character and flawed personality, where the beloved is ashamedly aware of the qualities that both drive others away and drive him away from others, and where there may be very little he could realistically do to change the qualities that may both challenge one's love of him and spur his feelings of shame. What is interesting about such cases is that though they seem to simply yield a hostile environment for human connection, love can still make communion or intimacy between lovers possible. But it isn't obvious how this is so, given a certain understanding of interpersonal love and given a certain understanding of shame.

Consider two assumptions about interpersonal love that drive the puzzle. The first is that, *ideally*, love encourages and fosters connection and communion rather than estrangement between its parties, and second, that one centrally important and desirable aspect of love, discussed by Iris Murdoch, is that it is *attentive*, where the ambition of this directed attention is to see the beloved *as he truly is*.⁴ So imagine:

3. As Stanley Cavell writes,

There are no lengths to which we may not go in order to avoid being revealed, even to those we love and are loved by. Or rather, especially to those we love and are loved by: to other people it is easy not to be known. "The Avoidance of Love" in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 284.

4. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Murdoch's ideal has been discussed by, among others, Martha Nussbaum, David Velleman, and Susan Wolf. Nussbaum, "This story isn't true': Madness, Reason, and Recantation in the *Phaedrus*" in *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Velleman, "Love as a moral emotion", *Ethics*, 109:2 (1999). Wolf, "Loving Attention: Lessons in Love from *The Philadelphia Story*" in *Understanding Love*:

in light of the ideal of attentive love, you look again at your friend to make sure your judgment isn't simply mistaken. Maybe you've been in a bad and unforgiving mood given what's been happening at work or on the news. Or maybe, following Murdoch here, a fundamentally egoistic concern of yours (perhaps, for example, you are really just worried about your own moral reputation) is preventing you from seeing your friend as the decent person he really is. As Murdoch reminds us, you need not only strive to see your friend accurately, but also, *justly*. But suppose that your new view of him is not best explained by moral-epistemological imperfections on your part.⁵ The more you observe your friend now and the more your moral consciousness is raised, the more certain you are that you were badly mistaken before seeing him in this new light. And again, complicating matters, though you've attended to your friend *out of love* for him, your friend, aware that his mask has slipped and your perception has honed, shrinks from your gaze, exacerbating the estrangement you might have hoped your love could overcome.

At this point, one might propose a way of loving your friend that is *less* attentive. As philosophers have discussed, there are other forms of love that do not place so much importance on attending to your loved ones, but instead, on sharing in their ends or being committed to their wellbeing.⁶ Consider, also, that many good friendships are constituted

Philosophy, Film and Fiction, Susan Wolf and Christopher Grau (eds.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

5. Thus, the case I am interested in is an inverse of Murdoch's famous case of M who (arguably because of her snobbishness, classism, and not-disinterested hopes for how her son's life should go) cannot initially see or appreciate her daughter-in-law, D, for who she really is. Murdoch's meta-ethical positions are more complex than I can address here, but importantly, my argument should not necessarily be understood as a *challenge* to Murdoch, but rather, as a development of the conception of love as attention. Thank you to Bridget Clarke for pressing me on this point.

6. See Kyla Ebels-Duggan, "Against Beneficence: A Normative Account of Love", *Ethics* 119:1 (2008). There, she considers Harry Frankfurt's view as paradigmatically representative of what she calls the "benefactor view", which proposes that love is essentially about desiring the beloved's wellbeing for his own sake.

by simply passing time together given a shared hobby.⁷ And if you are worried that given your discovery, you would no longer have a *reason* to love your friend, other views of love could either dispel your worries by pointing out just how blind love can be,⁸ or justify your continued love in some other way, perhaps by making reference to the long history you've shared.⁹

But I shall argue that attentive love, though seeming to give rise to the puzzle, is the way out of it as well. Although it may appear as though less attentive forms could re-establish connection between lovers in such cases, I will argue that they cannot precisely *because* they are insufficiently attentive, and because of what it is like to be ashamed of who you are. Rather than give up on the ideal of attentive love in light of this problem, I argue instead that we should reconsider *what it is* that we love about the people we attend to in a loving way. We should not, I propose, limit what we see and love in others to either just the good qualities of their characters or personalities, or to an isolatable or abstract value that they possess simply in virtue of being fellow human beings or ends-in-themselves. I shall articulate and argue for a secular, or interpersonal, conception of *grace*: a love that is not blind, but is also, as Robert Adams has put it, non-proportional to the excellence of its objects.¹⁰ On the proposal I will offer, grace is

7. Aristotle's taxonomy of friendships might allow for you to continue being friends in this case, as long as it was not a "character" friendship, leaving only the possibility of either a relatively shallow friendship of pleasure or relatively depressing friendship of utility.
8. The Irrationalist position that we do not love for reasons at all has been most recently and prominently defended by Harry Frankfurt in *Necessity, Volition, and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
9. Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship", *The Philosophical Review*, 112:2 (2003).
10. Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). There is nearly no work on grace in contemporary analytic moral philosophy, with Adams and Glen Pettigrove as rare exceptions. Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). The fact that I propose a *secular* or interpersonal conception of grace gives rise to an important worry. One ought to wonder: is it really

an affectionate love that is sensitive and responsive to *qualities* of the beloved, where the qualities it responds to are not exhausted by *good* ones, but include the *qualities of human nature*.

II. Shame, Vision, and Alienation

Let me begin by describing the problem in more detail, which I will refer to as *the problem of alienation*. Importantly, this problem is distinct from another that has drawn most, if not all, contemporary philosophical discussions of love: the question of the *justifiability* or *rationality* of loving another human being, either in contrast to others (imagined to be just as lovable) or given the impartial demands of morality. This narrowing of our focus has been, I think, a profound mistake. My discussion will be instead on the ability of interpersonal love to satisfy what we might think of as one of its internal ideals, or proper ends: to foster connection, communion, or intimacy between its parties.¹¹

possible for *this* concept to be extricated from its theological background and still found to have value in non-theological ethics? I propose that we try. Consider a methodological observation in Annette Baier's pivotal work on the value of *trust*:

Just as the only trust Hobbist man shows is trust in promises, provided there is assurance of punishment for promise breakers, so is this the only sort of trust nontheological modern moral philosophers have given much attention at all to, as if once we have weaned ourselves from the degenerate form of absolute and unreciprocated trust in God, all our capacity for trust is to be channeled into the equally degenerate form of formal voluntary and reciprocated trust restricted to equals. But we collectively cannot bring off such a limitation of trust to minimal and secured trust, and we can deceive ourselves that we do only if we avert our philosophical gaze from the ordinary forms of trust I have been pointing to. "Trust and Anti-Trust", *Ethics* 96:2 (1986), 252.

In this spirit, I offer a nontheological conception of grace or gracious love, the need for which remains even if God is dead. Once we have "weaned ourselves" from His grace (for worse or for better), it would be a mistake to avert our philosophical gaze from our need for it, as well as from the ordinary forms of grace I will point to here, that sometimes — miraculously, albeit in a non-supernatural sense — human beings feel and express toward one another in thoroughly human circumstances.

11. While "intimacy" is ambiguous, I shall focus on *connection* and *communion*, rather than on *fusion* and *procreation*; thus, there is a respect in which the

The problem of alienation is best illustrated by a familiar kind of situation one can find oneself in either as the lover or the beloved. As described above, the more extreme versions are situations where one loves someone of vicious character and flawed personality, where the beloved is ashamedly aware of these qualities, and where there may be very little he could realistically do to change who he is. Thus, the beloved is alienated from others, including his intimates, not just because he *lacks* the qualities that may make loving him easy and clearly warranted, but because of the characteristic feelings and motivations that come with the experience of *shame*. While it may be most vivid and philosophically challenging to think of cases where the beloved is especially or seemingly thoroughly vicious or his shame especially cutting, the problem can arise in less extreme circumstances, simply between any two lovers, even relatively decent ones and well-disposed ones who nonetheless have flaws about which they are ashamed.¹²

Above, I noted two assumptions about interpersonal love that motivate the problem: ideally, that it is both attentive and fosters connection or communion. But the logic of shame shapes and drives the problem as well.¹³ Roughly, shame is the painful experience of being viewed in “the wrong way” by a real or imagined (internalized) other, where this other is (i) a person whose view the agent recognizes as partly authoritative, (ii) an embodiment of a real social expectation, and (iii) a person with whom the ashamed person can partly identify. This complex structure mirrors the complexity of the experience of

ideal I am discussing is of *philia* and not *eros*. I will not primarily use examples of erotic lovers, or the love that parents have for their children to illustrate my arguments, but rather, on friends and siblings. Of course, we sometimes aspire to have *philia* with our erotic lovers, our parents, and our children, so the lines cannot be drawn sharply here. Thank you to John F. Bowin for discussion of this point.

12. Thank you to Ryan Preston-Roedder for this observation.

13. This rough sketch is all I need for my purposes here; I am relying on the detailed work of Sartre, Gabrielle Taylor, Bernard Williams, John Deigh, Herbert Morris, Jeffrie Murphy, and Sandra Lee Bartky, especially her essay, “Shame and Gender” in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

shame. For example, it explains why one does not feel shame when viewed negatively by others whose views one does not recognize as authoritative at all, as well as why one can be ashamed in light of standards that one does not fully share, for example, by one’s appearance or bad manners, even if one does not actually endorse the standards of appearance or manners at play. The real social expectations embodied by the other who sees you may not be wholly identical to your own, but you must identify with them enough to not be fully outside their authority, as one might feel when a tourist in foreign lands. And because shame is prompted by being *seen* or *viewed* by this other (real or imagined), it gives rise to its characteristic feelings, expressions, and behavior: for example, of not being able to look others in the eye, covering one’s face, wanting to hide, to sink through the floor, or as Bernard Williams puts it, *to simply disappear*. In a wave of shame, one’s whole self can feel diminished, because of the feeling that “the other sees all of me and all through me”.¹⁴ And because the imagined other can be fully internalized, these urges to hide typically fail to resolve themselves, since one will be trying to escape from one’s *own* gaze — hence for the tendency of shame to lead to self-destructive impulses. I will focus here primarily on the significance of shame in interpersonal relationships with actual others: on how it alienates or estranges one from those whose seemingly diminishing, penetrating, and authoritative gaze one strives to escape.

Guilt, too, can lead to interpersonal alienation and estrangement.¹⁵ Through one’s action, one has violated the terms of a relationship with

14. *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 89.

15. As T.M. Scanlon writes, “... the pain of guilt involves, at base, a feeling of estrangement, of having violated the requirements of a valuable relation with others”. *What We Owe To Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 162. While I agree with Scanlon about the feeling of estrangement, it’s not clear that I must believe I’ve *damaged* a relationship in order to feel guilty. I can feel guilty for just directly wronging you (even if no relationship is in place), and I can feel guilty even if I don’t suspect I’ve damaged our existing relationship. Thank you to Samuel Reis-Dennis for discussion of this point.

another; guilt is the pained recognition of what one has done, and perhaps of the damage one has done to one's relationship with the wronged person. But as many have noted, guilt has its advantages when it comes to overcoming this estrangement.¹⁶ When one wrongs another and feels guilt in response, one is characteristically motivated to make amends — when I feel guilty because of something I've done to you, I want to look you in the eye, apologize, compensate, and re-establish relations with you. I hope for your forgiveness, and if I am fortunate, you may give it to me. I may want to kneel before you, not *hide* from you. And importantly, your resentment or indignation in response to my wrongdoing may motivate you to come to me, to *demand* something from me for what I have done, thus facilitating reconciliation in a way that simply avoiding me or feeling contempt or pity for me would not.¹⁷

Shame, however, is more complicated, and the route from the circumstances that prompt it to re-established relations with those it estranges one from is less clear for three reasons. First, when I am ashamed, the people whom I will feel estranged from will not be limited to those I have affected. If one is disposed to be ashamed of one's appearance, *any* stranger's gaze might prompt an episode of shame; if one is disposed to be ashamed of something less visible than one's appearance (one's social class, perhaps, or one's lack of acumen, for example), any stranger's *imagined* discernment of this fact could do so. Second, while guilt is productively paired with the resentment or indignation of the people my wrongdoing estranges me from, shame is not obviously paired in this way. When one is ashamed in front of an actual other, the other may simply feel contempt, pity, or vicarious embarrassment — emotions that do not characteristically prompt her to *engage* with the person who is ashamed, but rather, to withdraw

or look away. This is why when one is ashamed, one might not feel *punished*, but rather *exiled*. And third, the aspect of shame that explains these two features is that shame is felt in regards to *who I am*, and not *what I've done*. As John Deigh writes, "shame is felt over shortcomings, guilt over wrongdoings".¹⁸ While I can of course be ashamed because of an action I've performed — given that it reveals something shameful about me or because it is part of a larger pattern that reveals something shameful about me — often there is no *particular* wrong I could apologize or compensate for that would alleviate my shame, and moreover, often what I am ashamed about has *nothing* to do with what I owe to others. Thus, it is either not enough, or would involve a category mistake, for me to apologize or compensate others in order to overcome my shame and re-establish relations with them. Rather, I need to *change who I am*. As Herbert Morris writes, while guilt leads to restoration, shame leads to creativity.¹⁹

But what happens in the non-ideal case, when creativity is not a realistic option for the ashamed person? Return now to the case I started with, in which the beloved, though aware of his failings, cannot or will not change in the relevant way. Perhaps he *cannot* because the appropriate task he must accomplish here is the difficult one of *substantive moral improvement*, which is challenging for all kinds of mundane reasons. If a change of character necessitates something like habituation and reflection, one actually needs the time, energy, and resources to do both. Bad habits are difficult to quit, we are too susceptible to mixed motives and many different forms of *akrasia*, and it is a common phenomenon, as Murdoch warns, that many who actively strive to become better people may find themselves caught in a self-absorbed spiral.²⁰

16. Herbert Morris, "Shame and Guilt" in *On Guilt and Innocence: Essays in Legal Philosophy and Moral Psychology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

17. For discussion of this point about angry blame, see Samuel Reis-Dennis, "Anger: Scary Good", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 97:3 (2019).

18. Deigh, "Shame and Self-Esteem: A Critique", *Ethics*, 93:2 (1983), 225.

19. Morris, 62.

20. "The self is such a dazzling object that if one looks *there* one may see nothing else", *The Sovereignty of Good*, 30. For discussion of this observation, see Samantha Vice, "The Ethics of Self-Concern" in *Iris Murdoch: A Reassessment*, Anne Rowe (ed.) (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

But another difficulty is that the ashamed person may be partly *unwilling* to change in the appropriate way, even though he can see the reasons for doing so. One problem with emerging from a shameful state is not just that it is difficult to become a better person given the assumption that one is wholeheartedly invested in doing so; it is also that in many cases, because one's character and outlook is partly *constituted* by vices (the very ones one may be ashamed of), one may be inclined to *resist* the authority of the moral view from which one is being seen. Yes, it may be true that I am riddled with envy, arrogance and malice — but given that I just *am* this envious, arrogant and malicious person, I may feel ashamed while *also* challenging the moral gaze which issues this assessment, and which I am ashamed in light of.²¹ In wanting to disappear from the view of others, then, I am not simply trying to avoid the pain of being seen by them — I may also, in a last-ditch effort at self-respect and defiance, be trying to protect myself.

III. Love and Attentive Affection

Let me now restate the puzzle I started with, incorporating the complexities of shame. How are we to respond to the ashamed beloved — not just so that he has, for example, his wellbeing attended to, or his ends respected and shared — but so that he feels a connection or communion with those whom he loves and who love him, rather than the alienation and estrangement exacerbated by his shame? What reactions are available to those who see him as he is?

One answer is *tough love*. That is, you could rely on the attitudes that are typically paired with wrongdoing, but which can also be intelligible responses to someone (usually only our intimates) in an effort to get him to become a better person. You could sit him down and have

21. Consider how in *The Symposium*, Alcibiades, wracked with shame and desire, both loves and hates Socrates for revealing to him the possibility of virtue, and for reminding him that he cannot achieve it without becoming someone else entirely. The tension arises because morality and virtue civilize and constrain our baser natures, but also because certain moral systems can threaten the status of things that are good and which constitute the *good* aspects of who we are. Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints", *Journal of Philosophy*, 79:8 (1982).

a good heart-to-heart. Should a cool-headed conversation fail to move him, you could rely on blame's prolepsis, *insisting*, perhaps even *angrily*, that he get himself and his life in order.²² But again, suppose the situation is not amenable to your hopes. On better days, your friend is convinced he should reform himself, but finds that though he tries, he keeps returning to his usual haunts; on worse days, he becomes embittered and resentful that you are treating him in this way because he is certain he either can't or won't change — your sanctimonious harping cannot now make the difference.

So you might consider another response: *compassion*. You could see him, after all, as having gotten to where he is because of events from his past that he is not responsible for. You could see him now presently subject to forces and motives that make him a victim of his circumstance, brain chemistry, or even of himself. Seeing a person in these ways can often *mitigate* the reactive attitude of resentment, fill one's heart with pity and sorrow instead, and move one to sincerely want to simply help the poor thing. But notice how risky an attitude like compassion is in this kind of situation. Even sincere pity for the suffering of a *well-disposed* person can threaten his dignity; and in the cases I have focused on, the operations of shame will make sense of why the less well-disposed person, in an effort of self-protection, might not take well at all to your compassion — it may only be an insult.²³

In contrast to tough love and compassion, the answer I shall explore is *attentive* love. According to Murdoch, the task of really *seeing*

22. Bernard Williams, "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame" in *Making Sense of Humanity: And Other Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

23. For an argument that well-intentioned and effective beneficence can be disrespectful and offensive, with a focus on cases of the disabled, see Adam Cureton, "Offensive Beneficence", *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 2:1 (2016). Part of the explanation is that to view a person *compassionately* involves, at least on standard conceptions, seeing him as a patient rather than an agent. Unmoderated compassion is commonly mistaken for complete moral vision, even (perhaps especially) for the most well-intentioned. For a recent film that succeeds in cultivating a sincere form of compassion at a severe cost to seeing the object of compassion as a full human agent, see *Roma*.

another person accurately and justly is a moral achievement as it takes seeing past our “fat, relentless” egos in order to recognize another person as part of a reality that exists beyond ourselves. It is to resist seeing him tainted and shaped by our fears, needs, and (typically narcissistic) fantasies. I agree with Murdoch. But it is important not to forget that attentive love is not just an ideal because it involves a moral and epistemological improvement in the lover, but because it provides the beloved with the sense that he — who he really or most fully or deeply is — is the object of another’s loving attention.²⁴ He can let down his guard, and let another in.²⁵

To illustrate the difference that loving attention to and of the beloved’s self or soul can make to *him*, let’s revisit Michael Stocker’s famous example of Smith, dutifully visiting you while you are “bored and restless and at loose ends” in hospital.²⁶ In Stocker’s example, our concern about the quality of Smith’s attitudes toward you arises when we learn that he has come to see you not because he was motivated to do so “directly”, but “... because he thought it his *duty*, perhaps as a fellow Christian or Communist or whatever, or simply because he knows of no one more in need of cheering up and no one easier to

cheer up”.²⁷ Stocker characterizes this as a problem of the “indirection” of Smith’s motives: he doesn’t actually care about *you* “directly”, but rather, cares about doing his duty given that you are a *fellow x*, or the neediest *x* around.²⁸

But a different concern arises once we take into consideration that there are, after all, duties that can obligate one directly to a particular person. Consider a variation of Stocker’s hospital case. An old friend of yours, Zahra, is not visiting you because you are a fellow whatever. She is visiting you because it’s *you*, her old friend. She would not, outside of a philanthropic venture, visit some other *x* in the hospital. She is here to see you in particular. But importantly, imagine that she is nonetheless motivated by her sense of *duty*.

Consider that you and Zahra were once thick as thieves, but she has been consistently irritated with and bored by you for months, or even years now — not because of any particular thing you’ve done, but just because she has come to grow tired of your neurotic fussiness or alternatively, your filthy sloppiness, or your elaborate love of bespoke cufflinks or nerdy memorabilia, or your endless griping about “breeders”. Importantly, Zahra doesn’t *hate* you. She genuinely wishes you

24. As Nussbaum characterizes this ideal in her reading of the *Phaedrus*, it is love of the beloved’s character “through and through” (218). That one’s *whole self* is the object of love is why, as Susan Wolf writes, love can boost one’s self-esteem. For a discussion of a related feature of love, how it functions as a bestowal of *status*, see Sandra Lee Bartky, “Feeding Egos and Tending Wounds: Deference and Disaffection in Women’s Emotional Labor” in *Femininity and Domination*.
25. “I don’t want to change you/ I don’t want to change you/ I don’t want to change your mind/ I just came across a manger/ Where there is no the danger/ Where love has eyes and is not blind”. Damien Rice, “I don’t want to change you” in *My Favourite Faded Fantasy* (2014).
26. Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories”, *Journal of Philosophy* 73:14 (1976), 462. Stocker did not refer to the problem he describes as one of “alienation”, though both Peter Railton and Adrian Piper do. Railton, “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*: 13:2 (1984). Piper, “Moral Theory and Moral Alienation”, *Journal of Philosophy*, 84:2 (1987).

27. Stocker, 462, my emphasis.

28. More recent Kantian projects attempt to resist this objection; for example, Steven Darwall’s “second-person standpoint” is an attempt to conceptualize respect as essentially directed toward and responsive to an *individual*, partly in response to Murdoch’s complaint that this is what Kant, by having us concerned with the moral law without, cannot capture. However, Darwall’s conception of Strawson’s “participant stance” that one takes on when engaging from the second-person standpoint wholly moralized is most fundamentally about making and responding to certain kinds of *claims* on one another. He only briefly mentions the role of *love* in engaging with an individual from the participant stance. More recently, Melissa Merritt has argued that Kant takes our obligations to be grounded in and directed to particular *individuals*, and not simply to “the human being as such”. Nonetheless, I will argue below that even if Kantians and Kant can respond to Stocker’s objection as he originally presented it, my variant of the problem of alienation still has teeth. Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Merritt, “Love, Respect, and Individuals: Murdoch as a Guide to Kantian Ethics”, *European Journal of Philosophy*, 25:4 (2017).

well, wants to alleviate your boredom and loneliness, and hopes you will recover and get back to your life soon, all for your sake. She does, in a real sense, love you. But she has found that she finds you tedious or impossible to spend time with; she is not curious about your life, has little desire to stay in touch, and absolutely no desire to spend a lazy day chatting and lounging around the house, as once you loved to do. But when she hears that you are in hospital, she unhesitatingly recognizes that, after all, she owes it to you to pay you a visit. And seeing you lying there all sick and pale and at loose ends, she feels genuinely sorry for you.

In this case, the obligation that Zahra is and feels bound by, is an obligation to *you*. She does in some sense care about you in particular. And by visiting you, she is fulfilling her obligation to you. But why might you still find Zahra's attitudes not exactly what you had hoped for, even though you have no moral grounds to *object* to them?²⁹ The worry in this case cannot be that *you* get into the picture in only an indirect manner. Rather, it is that even though you may want your friend to visit you because it's you, you might also not want your friend to visit you mainly or solely because she is *obligated* to do so, or even if she desires your wellbeing for your sake — even when you are the particular person she is obligated to, or the particular person whose wellbeing she cares about. As Stocker notes elsewhere, there is a familiar and crucial role that duty and obligation play in close interpersonal relationships: as being relied upon precisely when our feelings of affection are "worn thin".³⁰ And we should not forget, also, that much of caring about the wellbeing of another, sincerely and for their own

29. Angela Smith argues that included among the many things we *owe* our friends are certain attitudes; however, she emphasizes attitudes of care and concern, respect, taking pleasure in their accomplishments, and feeling sadness in their losses. We can imagine that Zahra feels all these things toward you. She just doesn't *like* you. Smith, "Guilty Thoughts" in *Morality and the Emotions*, Carla Bagnoli (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

30. Stocker, 465, fn. 9.

sake, can be done without affection, without enthusiasm — sometimes *without love at all*.³¹

What is unfortunate for you about a dutiful friend's visit is not that her love is lacking in moral quality, but just that your friend finds you burdensome because she no longer has affection for your character or personality. Though she sincerely hopes for your speedy recovery for your sake, she is not *interested* in you. To put this plainly: she doesn't *like* you. This is glum, and you may justifiably feel — even as she sits by your side and tells you a story about her day to keep your thoughts occupied — estranged from her, though you may also have no moral complaint nor doubts about the fact that she loves you.³²

Thus, it matters that we are not just loved, but appreciated or liked for who we are. However, it is still not clear that attentive love, now understood as partly a matter of having *affection* for the beloved's character, will alleviate the beloved's feelings of alienation in the kind of case I started with, where we can imagine that precisely what is at

31. "To be committed to meeting children's demand for preservation does not require enthusiasm or even love; it simply means to see vulnerability and to respond to it with care than abuse, indifference, or flight". Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 19. This point, I think, is exactly right and can clearly be extended beyond the vulnerabilities of children.

32. Though I have other objections to his account of love, I agree with Frankfurt's observation that

... lovers often enjoy the company of their beloveds, cherish various types of intimate connection with them, and yearn for reciprocity. *These enthusiasms are not essential. Nor is it essential that a person like what he loves. He may even find it distasteful.* *The Reasons of Love*, 43, my emphasis.

Nonetheless, this may lead to some justified saltiness on the part of the beloved. Consider an example from the recent film *Lady Bird*. In response to her mother's retort that a pink and frilly dress which Lady Bird takes to exemplify her personality is *too pink*, Lady Bird (Saoirse Ronan) laments, "I just wish... I wish that you liked me." Her mother (Laurie Metcalf) replies, "Of course I love you." "But do you *like* me?" Her mother replies, "I want you to be the very best version of yourself that you can be." "*What if this is the best version?*" (It is no accident that writer-director Greta Gerwig was influenced by Simone Weil, whose proposal that *love is attention* is developed by Murdoch and given voice to by Sister Sarah Joan (Lois Smith).)

issue is the question of whether or not the beloved, because of his character, is *worth* this kind of attentive affection, and where this question is for him live enough to animate his shame. Having spelled out shame's connection with vision, I can now state more explicitly the challenge facing the ideal of attentive love if it is to foster connection rather than threaten it. What attentive love strives to do (to see the beloved as he really is) is *exactly* what prompts his shame: he is being seen by the other as who (he fears) he really is.

Nonetheless, I will argue that alternative views of love, precisely because they are *less* attentive, only exacerbate this problem, and that the ideal of attentive love, when modified or supplemented by *grace*, can resolve it. In section V, I will discuss this supplementation. Before doing so, I will first consider three otherwise promising views of love and demonstrate how they each exacerbate rather than alleviate estrangement between lovers.

IV. Love, Vision, and Connection

To guide and illustrate this discussion, I will use as an extended example Marilynne Robinson's novel, *Home*. In it, Glory faces a problem that is similar to the one I started with. As an adult, she is now finally getting to know her older brother, Jack, who has been away from home for twenty years, and of whom Glory has only childhood memories. Their re-acquaintance begins tenuously and develops in fits and starts as Jack reveals and confesses his vices, always with the wariness and expectation that at some point his sister will either have to direct her attention elsewhere, or attenuate her affection for him. And his apprehensions are partly justified: she comes to see that he really is, among other things, a "drunk", a "thief", and a "liar". She comes to learn that he has no excuse for fathering and abandoning a daughter, whom Glory comes to care for and eventually love before the child dies of illness. And importantly, Glory comes to see the traits of his character and personality that underlie and explain Jack's drunkenness, thievery, and lying: he is, among other things, partly cowardly and partly predatory, arrogant, and belligerent.

One way of understanding the challenge Glory faces is that it arises given certain assumptions about what traits of character or personality love can be an appropriate response to. Consider, for example, Kate Abramson and Adam Leite's conception of love.³³ In elaborating on Peter Strawson's suggestion that there is a particular kind of reactive love that, in his words, is "the sort of love which two adults can sometimes be said to feel reciprocally, for each other",³⁴ they propose a love that is "an affectionate attachment appropriately felt as a non-self-interested response to particular kinds of ... features of character expressed by the loved one"³⁵ So far, so good.

The problem emerges once we see that the features of character that Abramson and Leite believe love is an *appropriate* affectionate response to must be "morally laudable ones". Putting aside a more general objection one could raise to this idea, when it comes to the problem of alienation, it is *exactly* this kind of love that the beloved will be wary of. Jack cannot trust it, as at this point in his life, he (reasonably) believes that he cannot satisfy the conditions that it sets, nor is it even clear to him — given who he actually and presently is — that he would *want* to meet its conditions if he could.³⁶ And so, Glory's problem is complicated by the fact that not only is Jack lacking in good qualities that may make him easier or more appropriate to love according to this view, he is also *alienated* by certain forms of love, including this one. They have driven him from his home.

33. "Love as a Reactive Emotion", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 61:245 (2010).

34. "Freedom and Resentment" in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1974), 9.

35. Abramson and Leite, 677.

36. Consider this constructed type of conversation between Jack and his father, combining memories of different token conversations: "Jack, can you tell me why you have done whatever you did, acted however you did? No, sir. You can't explain it, Jack? No, sir. ... You do understand that what you did was wrong. Yes, sir, I understand that. Will you pray for a better conscience, better judgment, Jack? No, sir, I doubt that I will. Well I'll pray *for* you then. Thank you, sir."

Glory is able to meet this challenge better than any of the other members of their family or townsfolk of Gilead who become reacquainted with Jack upon his return. Consider this scene late in the novel, in which Glory reflects on the quality of Jack's soul while helping him wash up from a night of heavy, self-destructive drinking:

Glory said, "You might rub your hands with shortening. That would probably dissolve the grease. ..." She took the can from the cupboard, scooped out a spoonful, and put it in his palm. She said, "Remember when you talked to me about your soul, about saving it?"

He shrugged. "I think you may be mistaking me for someone else."

"And I said I liked it the way it is."

"Now I know you're mistaking me for someone else." He did not look up from the massaging of his hands.

"I've thought about what I should have said to you then, and I haven't changed my mind at all. ... [Y]our soul seems fine to me. I don't know what that means either. Anyway, it's true."

He said, "Thanks, chum. But you don't know me. Well, you know I'm a drunk."

"And a thief."

He laughed. "Yes, a drunk and a thief. I'm also a terrible coward. Which is one of the reasons I lie so much."

She nodded. "I've noticed that."

"No kidding. What else have you noticed?"

"I'm not going to mention vulnerable women."

"Thanks," he said. "Very generous in the circumstances."

She nodded. "I think so."

He said, "I am unaccountably vain, despite all, and I have a streak of malice that does not limit itself to futile efforts at self-defense."

"I've noticed that, too."³⁷

37. Marilynne Robinson, *Home* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008),

This marks an important moment in the novel: an affirmation of Glory's attitudes toward Jack. Earlier in their re-acquaintance, Glory had noticed and remarked that she, as she puts it, *likes* his soul *the way it is*. Given the sort of person Jack is, and the person Glory is, she was puzzled by this.³⁸ Now, explicitly within a context in which Jack has again failed to live up to values and standards of conduct they both recognize the authority of, and in response to another breaking and darkening of his soul, Glory re-affirms and expresses her *affection* for his soul *the way it is*. Though Jack tries to deflect the comment by suggesting that Glory doesn't really know what his soul is like, she pointedly demonstrates that her affection toward him is paired with a discerning awareness of his vices and the distinctive ways in which they manifest in his behavior. Rather than quarrel with or reject his claim that she doesn't know him by citing the good qualities one might argue he nonetheless possesses, she alludes to those she knows he finds *most* shameful. But he need not fear that her love assumes too much, nor need he shrink from her gaze. She likes his soul the way it is; her love is *gracious*.

Before offering one proposal for how to understand what grace or gracious love is, and before showing how it alleviates the problem of alienation, I will now consider three contemporary theories of love that can ground the appropriateness and rationality of loving the people we do, even when their souls are in a bad state. However, none emphasizes the importance of attention to and affection for the beloved's character or personality. Though these forms may make it less puzzling how it could be *coherent*, *rational*, or *appropriate* for Glory to love Jack, they will not help with the problem of alienation, precisely because of their lack of attention to who the beloved is, and because of the operations of shame.

277–278.

38. Glory is both a morally good *and* pious person. We also learn that Glory's dreams of a simple family life had been painfully shattered by a man who, like Jack, took advantage of a "vulnerable woman".

I'll consider three views here: (i) the proposal that loving people often involves being epistemically partial toward them, (ii) the proposal that we love people just because of the relationship we stand in with them or because of our shared history, and (iii) the neo-Kantian proposal that when we love a person, we love not the qualities of his character or personality (good or bad), but his *personhood* or *humanity*.

Begin with the proposal that Glory should focus her attention on more optimistic or charitable interpretations of Jack's character. As Sarah Stroud has argued, there are many ways in which we can see another in a more positive light, some of which result from an epistemic partiality that good friends (and good lovers more generally) exhibit toward one another.³⁹ In a similar vein, according to Ryan Preston-Roedder, faith in another person involves believing of him that he is fundamentally good or decent, even when one lacks the evidence needed to fully justify that belief.⁴⁰ While this sort of faith is the basis of a moral virtue, Preston-Roedder also argues that it is an important aspect of sustaining and nourishing a loving relationship with another, noting how having faith in a person can bolster his self-esteem.

I have no objection to the claim that in many of our friendships, forms of epistemic partiality are needed and valuable; it is also true that faith in others can sustain loving relationships, may be exactly the kind of response that your beloved needs to bolster his confidence in his abilities, and is the basis of a centrally important moral virtue. The challenge, again, is that in certain contexts, with people of a certain temperament, something else may be needed to fully reach out to the beloved without alienating him further — a kind of love that isn't based on partial or charitable interpretations of who he is, on faith that he is better than he is, or that he will eventually become the better person you believe him to be. To illustrate this, return to Jack. He objects and resists when his family members offer charitable interpretations

39. Sarah Stroud, "Epistemic Partiality in Friendship", *Ethics*, 116:3 (2006).

40. Ryan Preston-Roedder, "Faith in Humanity", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 87:3 (2013).

of his actions.⁴¹ His father's love, which, when affectionate, is based on the interpretation of Jack that emphasizes the fact that Jack *started off* a lonelier and more estranged child, only leaves Jack feeling more ashamed and defensive. When siblings and well-wishers express their *faith* in Jack, these expressions only push him further away.⁴²

Why is this? Return to the operations of shame. First, even if others have faith that Jack will become a better person, or that deep down he *is* a better person, *Jack does not*.⁴³ Thus, their love does nothing to alleviate the shame he would feel in light of a more discerning other who he imagines sees all of him, and all through him, or who would not take his childhood as providing a genuine excuse for who he has become. He cannot trust himself to be the kind of person that those who have faith in him believe he can be, nor does he fully identify as the kind of person that the charitable see in him. So their vision of him, in failing to see him as he sees himself, cannot pierce through and dispel the shame prompted by who he fears he is — it instead changes the topic.⁴⁴ Second, his shame is exacerbated by their willingness to continue to give him the benefit of the doubt: though a temperamentally different person might react more positively to another's sincere

41. Glory offers: "That was all so long ago. You were young," Jack responds, "No, I wasn't young. I don't believe I ever was young. ... Excuses scare me, Glory. They make me feel like I'm losing hold. I can't explain it. But please don't try to make excuses for me." Excuses often work by distinguishing what one did from who one really is; Jack feels disoriented by excuses because, as he experienced his actions, they *were* the product of who he really is, not, for example, the result of weakness or immaturity or a lapse of thought.

42. Faith is expressed by another character (Lila), implicitly as a way to think about Jack: she suggests that God's grace is the understanding that *everyone can change for the better*. Immediately following this, Jack goes off the rails once again, drinking himself into oblivion. It is *after* this episode that Glory restates her sentiment. "I'm trying, but I've gone/Through the glass again/ Just come and find me/ God loves everybody, don't remind me". The National, "Graceless" in *Trouble Will Find Me* (2013).

43. "Graceless/ I figured out how to be faithless/ But it would be a shame to waste this/ You can't imagine how I hate this/ Graceless". Ibid.

44. Jack responds to Glory's claim that she wouldn't care if he were a petty thief (implying that she trusts or has faith that he is *not*, in fact, a petty thief), "That's very subjunctive of you".

faith in him, Jack's shame has already made him touchy and resentful in response to the blind charity of others, and unable to handle the unspoken burden made on anyone who one has trust or faith in.

Similar problems arise with forms of love that are inattentive to a person's character not because they involve forms of epistemic partiality, but because they are grounded in facts that lie outside it. As Niko Kolodny has argued, a paradigmatic form of love is the love we feel toward those we stand in certain relationships with.⁴⁵ One can love a person in this way even if there is nothing about the *quality* of that person's character that one thinks of as good: it is sufficient that one has shared a history with him, or that one stands in a certain important relationship to him, such as being his genetic parent.⁴⁶ Who he is otherwise is not of much importance.

The problem with this kind of love is not that it isn't intelligible, rational, appropriate, or valuable. It can be all these things, and importantly, it can make sense of why, in the kind of case I began with, you might continue to love your friend simply for having known him for all these years; it is also what seems to be at work in the example of you and Zahra. There is a kind of loyalty exemplified by those who love in this way. However, within certain contexts such as the ones I've focused on, the beloved might need something else beyond a love that is stable because it is based on just one's relationship or history with him: a kind of love that is attentive and responsive to *who he is*.⁴⁷

45. "Love as Valuing a Relationship".

46. Niko Kolodny, "Which Relationships Justify Partiality? The Case of Parents and Children", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 38:1 (2010).

47. Part of the tension toward the end of the novel involves Jack making sure that he leaves the family household before Teddy, his good and accomplished older brother, comes to tend for their dying father. Jack recollects:

[Teddy] came to St. Louis and hunted me down. He walked around the back streets with a couple of photographs until he found someone who recognized me. It took him days. He was just out of medical school. And I was — not in very good shape. That may have been my nadir, in fact. We sat on a bench and ate sandwiches together. He asked me to come home with him, but I declined. He offered me some money and I took it. A miserable experience for both of us.

Why is this? In the hospital example I described above, you may feel a bit glum or hurt that your friend doesn't like or appreciate your personality or character anymore. But now consider how you might feel if, like Jack, you are also *ashamed* of who you are. He knows that not only has his family's affection for him worn thin (and that they often rely on a sense of duty to motivate their love of him), but he also knows that he is a *disappointment* to them.⁴⁸ When his family nonetheless continues to love him and express this love through a sincere concern for his wellbeing simply because he is *their brother or son*, and not because of who he is, this only confirms Jack's fears that if they *were* to look more closely at who he is, their affection, if not their concern for his wellbeing, would be challenged and attenuated — *as it in fact is*. Moreover, that his family members remain committed to his wellbeing for the simple reason that he is their brother or son only furthers his shame and exacerbates his feelings of vulnerability and lack of self-respect, and this in turn causes his self-protective touchiness.

Finally, what about the idea that Glory loves Jack because Jack — like all human beings — has the value of *personhood* or *humanity*? According to David Velleman, all persons, even those with the kind of character that Jack has, are worthy of both respect and love simply in virtue of their existence as rational beings. Others have objected to Velleman by denying that there is an essential and valuable feature that all rational beings share, or by arguing that Velleman's account,

48. Jack's shame is surely compounded by the fact that he knows that his family members are not just liable to be disappointed by him, but they are also *ashamed* of him. Ward E. Jones argues that this is partly because one's wellbeing depends upon the wellbeing of those whom one loves (and so their shame is your shame), and because to love someone is to persistently believe in the beloved's moral goodness. I agree about the connections Ward proposes, but disagree that this persistent belief is just *part* of what loving another person is. As I am arguing here, it may be ideal to give up the persistent belief in the beloved's moral goodness, and love the person as he is regardless. It's true that one's wellbeing can depend upon the wellbeing of one's loved ones, but the ideal of attentive love strives to eliminate the extent to which this will determine and shape how one sees and what one needs from the beloved. See Ward E. Jones, "A Lover's Shame", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 15:5 (2012).

in grounding love in what also grounds respect, cannot accommodate for the selectivity of personal love. I will discuss a different worry from these, raised by the problem of alienation.

I've already noted that other views of love do not take seriously the idea that Jack is to be appreciated for who he is. While Velleman's account *seems* better able to accommodate the beloved's self (and while Velleman himself presents his view as an articulation of the Murdochian ideal of attentive love), it is important to see what Velleman considers that self to be, and the way in which we are to appreciate it. Velleman writes:

The immediate object of love, I would say, is the manifest person, embodied in flesh and blood and accessible to the senses. The manifest person is the one against whom we have emotional defenses, and he must disarm them, if he can, with his manifest qualities. Grasping someone's personhood intellectually may be enough to make us respect him, but unless we actually *see* a person in the human being confronting us, we won't be moved to love; and we can see the person only by seeing him in or through his empirical persona.⁴⁹

In other words, Velleman's Kantian view relies on a distinction between a self that is accessible to the senses ("the manifest person" or "the empirical persona"), and a self (his "personhood") that is grasped "intellectually". When we love the "empirical persona", our love is "a response to [his manifest qualities] as a *symbol* or *reminder* of his value as a person".⁵⁰ As Velleman then puts this point, "One doesn't want one's *value as a person* to be eclipsed by the intrinsic value of one's appearance or behavior; one wants them to elicit a valuation that looks through them, to the value of one's inner self".⁵¹

49. "Love as a Moral Emotion", 371.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 372, my emphasis.

Notice how Velleman has demarcated the territory of the self here. It's true that many people might reasonably not want to be loved *solely* because of, for example, the yellow of their hair (an example that Velleman uses), their flesh and blood (literally), or their mere *behavior*. Even if these are intrinsically valuable qualities, they (on their own) serve as relatively shallow reasons for somebody to love you, and they are shallow because the qualities of one's appearance or patterns of behavior are not on their own aspects of one's character or personality.⁵² These are qualities accessible to one's "empirical" sense of vision. But importantly, these shallow qualities are altogether and importantly different from one's sense of humor, taste in music, boisterous temperament, or cutting temper. It is important that we not conflate the first set of qualities (of one's appearance and behavior) with the second (of one's character or personality), even though it would be strange to think of either as "accessible to purely intellectual" experience. Moreover, one might want to be loved for the second set of qualities (of the character or personality) not because they are expressive of a "deeper" value or "inner self" that lies *underneath* or *beyond* them, or because they are the necessary means to loving that deeper value, but because they constitute *who he is*. Indeed, these qualities are of the very kind that are at issue when it comes to Jack's shame.⁵³

But Velleman's proposal is Kantian. What about *Kant*? Consider Kant's proposal when he considers the question of whether we can

52. To be clear, I am not claiming that these shallow forms of love are not "really forms of love", or that they are obviously *worse* than other forms of love that ground themselves in character or personality, or that anyone who is after a shallow form of love is doing so under the guise of a deeper form of love. They strike me as just different ways for human beings to be attached and attracted to one another, and that we have some reason philosophically, and in our personal lives, to not confuse them for one another. Thank you to Ulrika Carlsson for discussion of this point.

53. Though of course, we can also be ashamed of our more empirically accessible qualities (e.g. our bodily appearance) — in which case, one's shame might very well be alleviated by a love of those qualities. I might have affection for your paunch, your scar, or your snaggle tooth; should you care at all about how I see you and whether I love you, this might very well go some way in alleviating some of your shame about these things.

“well-like” and not just “well-wish” a villain. His answer, like Velleman’s, treats the qualities of the villain’s character as of secondary or non-essential importance in comparison to his abstract *humanity* or *personhood*:

... nobody can have such a liking where there is no object of which to approve. There is, however, a distinction to be drawn in a man between the man himself and his humanity. *I may thus have a liking for the humanity, though none for the man.* I can even have such liking for the villain ... for even in the worst of villains there is still a kernel of good-will.⁵⁴

So we have two answers that will be unsatisfying. On the one hand, Glory can draw a distinction between Jack and his humanity, have affection for the latter and none for the former. Alternatively, Glory can have affection for *Jack*, as long as she believes that (or has the faith that) even in the worst of villains, there remains a kernel of good will. The objection here is not that there *isn't* this kernel of good will in Jack — arguably, there is, even if he and the people of Gilead cannot see it. The objection is that, on this picture, in order to have affection for Jack, Glory must either rely on what can only seem to him to be a kind of faith or charitable interpretation (that even in him there is still a kernel of good will); or, supposing that there *is* there “no object of which to approve” (as Jack fears), all he can receive from her is sincere well-wishing, and *not* well-liking. We have already seen that either option — faith and charity, or good will without affection — will only exacerbate Jack’s estrangement.⁵⁵

54. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. J.B. Schneewind, ed. Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27:418, my emphasis.

55. This discussion is not meant to be an exhaustive consideration of the various forms of love that one might have in response to Jack. Michelle Mason has suggested to me that the kind of love that Glory has is a love “in prospect”: that is, it’s a kind of love that recognizes that Jack, like all human beings, doesn’t have a static character and is liable to grow and change. This proposal captures the importance of loving a person over time and the dynamism of

V. Grace and Shame

So far, I have argued that views of love which are less attentive will only exacerbate the problem that Glory and Jack face. This is because, I have argued, given that what gives rise to Jack’s alienation is his shame and fear that *if one were to see him as he truly is*, he could only inspire feelings of disappointment, pity, or contempt, less attentive forms of love do not *alleviate* his fear, but rather, serve to confirm it.

Return now to the ideal of attentive love, which Glory’s love exemplifies in the passage above. Glory’s love does not skirt around the facts of Jack’s past and the conclusions that one would justifiably draw about his character. It is *not* evasive. And because her response is nonetheless one of *attentive* and *affectionate* love for his soul, rather than contempt or disappointment or resentment, it allows her to see and speak truthfully about him without the reactions that have made that truth so painful to him. Because her response is nonetheless one of *attentive* and *affectionate* love for his soul rather than compassion or pity, it doesn’t risk being insulting or overbearing. In letting down his guard, given Glory’s affection for him, Jack allows himself to be seen and loved by her, thereby retaining some small but utterly *priceless* connection with another human being.

However, there is still a challenge remaining even if we are to understand Glory’s love as providing us with an image of the ideal of attentive love. Suppose that one grants that the ideal is valuable if it can be made sense of, but that it is hard to see how it could be.⁵⁶ One might

character, but it is again a kind of love that Jack, given his inability to believe that he *will* change over time, would find alienating. Those who have a more fluid conception of themselves, or who aspire to a quasi-existentialist process of continually creating who they are, may also not need or want fully attentive love as I’ve described it. Jack, however, is at the point at which he cannot believe that he will ever really change at all. For a dynamic view of love that can accommodate existentialist lovers, see Benjamin Bagley, “Loving Someone in Particular”, *Ethics*, 125:2 (2015).

56. A different important worry that one might have is whether loving someone graciously can come at the cost of other important values and ideals. Could being *gracious* toward a loved one come at the cost of one’s own dignity or self-respect? Could it come at the cost of being giving others — perhaps those

think a person's soul in these cases would *repel* a discerning eye rather than attract it. As Kant plainly puts this claim in the passage I quoted above: "Nobody can have such a liking where there is no object of which to approve".

The ideal of attentive love can respond to this challenge, but we must modify or supplement the ideal of attention with the ideal of *grace*. Consider first Robert Adams' discussion of grace, by which he means love's *non-proportionality* with the goodness of its object — capturing the idea that grace is a meritless gift. Adams argues that this is an essential aspect of all genuine or good forms of love. I am inclined to agree with this, at least when it comes to interpersonal love. But I shall use the term 'grace' to focus on a more specific attitude, where this love's lack of proportionality is explained by the fact that though it is responsive to qualities of the beloved, it is not fundamentally responsive to his *good* qualities. The proposal I offer is that grace is love that is non-proportional to the goodness of its object because it is an affectionate love felt in response to perceived qualities of human

nature.⁵⁷ Those qualities are *not* always qualities that we should think of as good in any non-trivial sense. Nonetheless, it is still possible to become endeared to an object upon noticing its possession of such qualities, *in virtue of* recognizing its possession of those qualities.

There are many everyday examples of this kind of affection that I could point to, but I'll start with an illustration from within philosophy.⁵⁸ In her discussion of what she describes as "arational" actions, Rosalind Hursthouse proposes that while some aspects of our emotional lives as human beings can be "rationalized" and made valuable through this process, other aspects are typically left untouched. Examples of "arational" actions include those explained by anger, hatred, or jealousy, such as

violently destroying or damaging anything remotely connected with the [hated] person ... e.g., her picture, letters or presents from her, awards from her, books or poems about her; the chair she was wont to sit in, locks of her hair, recordings of 'our' song, etc.⁵⁹

Here, too, Hursthouse discusses in detail the example that has puzzled action theorists: that of Jane, who, "in a wave of hatred for Joan,

who have suffered at the hands of the beloved, or perhaps just others who are even more needy — their due? (Might it even constitute a wrong to them?) Perhaps. Is there a way for the practically wise person to balance or harmonize one's graciousness with her other virtues and fulfill her duties to others? I hope so. A few points about the emotions may help alleviate some worries here. The first is that to experience an emotion is not *ipso facto* to *act* in some determinate way rather than another (e.g. saving one's beloved wife rather than a drowning stranger), even though emotions typically come with characteristic behavior and actions. It is dogmatic behaviorism to deny this. To borrow a quote from Murdoch, slightly out of its context, "We are such inward secret creatures, that inwardness is the most amazing thing about us, even more amazing than our reason". *The Sea, The Sea* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 173. The second is that it would be a mistake to think that one can only feel one emotion at a time toward the same object, and that seemingly antithetical emotions cannot be held consistently with one another. Gracious love need not be inconsistent with, for example, feeling resentful toward the beloved when he does something wrong, just as to forgive someone, need not involve completely foregoing resentment, as argued by Andrea Westlund in "Anger, Faith, and Forgiveness", *The Monist*, 92:4 (2009). How exactly grace would interact with other emotions, and how graciousness would interact with other virtues, is beyond the scope of this paper.

57. Adams notes that certain undesirable qualities can also serve as qualities that ground love of a particular person, but gives alternative (and, I think, non-competing) explanations of how this is possible. One is that some of our qualities — those that we can see in light of a person's suffering or need — "... can be a window into her humanity" (168). Such qualities can draw us closer to the beloved because of the possibility of helping or comforting her. I agree. But grace as I've described it is different in two respects. Not all qualities of human nature are those we should see as resulting from suffering or need, at least without seeing them in a fairly condescending or inattentive manner, e.g. if my friend were to view my impatience or rudeness as arising from my suffering or need, and not just from how I construe the world given who I am, I'd probably conclude that my friend really didn't know me after all. And again, I want to emphasize the *affection* we can feel toward such qualities, not just the motivations we have to care for or comfort those who suffer or are in need (which again, can be condescending — at least to those like Jack).

58. Rosalind Hursthouse, "Arational Actions", *Journal of Philosophy*, 88:2 (1991).

59. *Ibid.*, 58.

tears at Joan's photo with her nails, and gouges holes in the eyes".⁶⁰ My interest here is not in Hursthouse's arguments about the nature of intentional action, but rather in an observation she makes about the kinds of beings we are. While suggesting toward the end of the paper that we would not want to rid ourselves of or totally suppress these actions and the unruly emotions and motives that prompt them, Hursthouse writes:

We might well find something rather touching or endearing about people's performing many of the arational actions; even the disturbingly violent ones seem to evoke some sort of bond of sympathy. When I have read this paper to discussion groups, I have found that the list of the examples at the beginning always provokes instant delighted recognition⁶¹

Hursthouse's remark highlights the distinctive affect of the emotion I'm interested in: it is "delighted" recognition, a feeling of "endearment" — rendering it, again, a love of *affection*, rather than a response of compassion or respect. Along with her observation, we can reflect on the common idea that people are more *likeable* to the extent that they are "humanized" in light of their flaws; it is a journalistic cliché to write about the likeability of athletes, artists, or actors given how *human* (i.e. imperfect) they seem to be — a reminder that such people are, after all, mere human mortals. Hursthouse also offers an alternative explanation for those who would suggest that this feeling is always the result of "the weak and fallible finding improper pleasure in having company".⁶² What can also explain this affection is that what we value, or at least *like* about ourselves (that is, us human beings), is that we are partly *plainly* emotional creatures and not always rational-emotional ones.

60. Ibid., 59.

61. Ibid., 68.

62. Ibid.

This is not a complete explanation of why we are affectionate toward these aspects of ourselves and others, nor is it a systematic presentation of these aspects, but it is the beginning of one. We have some sense already of what we mean by "human nature". As Philippa Foot emphasizes, virtues are best understood as *correctives* to the emotional and motivational tendencies that one finds in human beings.⁶³ Thus, in investigating virtues and vices at all, we must already have in mind some conception of what human nature is like — one that is understood in terms of thick psychological qualities and dispositions. And what we know about those qualities and dispositions will inform the *content* of the virtues. For example, we know that courage is a virtue that corrects the emotions, motives, pains, and pleasures that partly constitute both cowardice and foolhardiness; we know that temperance is a virtue that corrects for the emotions, motives, pains, and pleasures that constitute gluttony and (as Aristotle observes, more rarely found in human beings given our nature) abstemiousness. On this picture, grace would then be a love for human nature, where human nature is understood to include those emotional and motivational tendencies and qualities that the virtues are needed to correct for: the intemperate, the immoderate, the cowardly and the foolhardy, the stingy and the ostentatious, the boastful and the undignified. To be gracious would be to have the disposition to love those qualities with affection, at the right time, to the right extent, and in the right ways, not because they are *good*, but because they are *human*.

Why would *these* qualities bring us closer to a clear-eyed view of the *person* who is the object of our love? Typically (perhaps ideally), these aspects of a person's psychology will *not* be fully tamed by virtue or brought in line with moral obligation and duty, and may even buck up against its constraints. But importantly, they nonetheless render him and his actions what Peter Goldie has called "primitively intelligible".⁶⁴ As Goldie argues, this kind of intelligibility allows us to

63. "Virtues and Vices" in *Virtues and Vices: and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

64. *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

get a sense of what is going on with the person we are attending to in a way that is distinctively “personal” — we are able to see him as another human being with a point of view, thoughts, feelings, and emotions of his own, vicious though he may be. It is to see him from what Strawson calls the “participant stance”, and to love him graciously is to respond to him in light of these qualities — as another person, a fellow adult — with *affection*.⁶⁵

2009). As Aristotle notes, we can *understand* human vice; we do not react with blame (a second-personal, or participatory reaction) to the *bestial* vices, but rather, with *fear* (VII, NE). For some more discussion of these ideas and their relationship to the guise of the good thesis, see Vida Yao, “The Undesirable and the Adesirable”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 99:1 (2019).

65. At this point, one might hope for a more general, theoretical approach to understanding what the qualities of human nature are, and so arrive at a more determinate picture of what qualities grace is responsive to, or harbor some skepticism about the legitimacy of the claims that there *are* such qualities. I have not offered such a theoretical approach, nor have I fully defended the legitimacy of the idea of human nature; my proposal can thus be seen as a framework for grace. Note, however, the extent to which *any* moral theory operates by already assuming that there are such qualities, as well as proposing concretely what they are. As Allen Wood argues, Kant’s ethics is formulated *given* a particular conception of human nature. For Kant, we are the species that sets its own ends, but we are also highly competitive and possess deep impulses of both self-love and self-conceit. We need the moral law to strike down our self-conceit in particular, precisely because (so Kant claims) it is such a powerful, natural tendency within us. Wood also makes a more general methodological point about ethical theory worth pausing on:

Basic to any practical science is a knowledge of its materials ... it must be based on a knowledge of human nature, on human psychology in a broad sense (Kant’s name for it is ‘anthropology’). The intellectual power of an ethical theory is mainly a function of its anthropology. “Unsociable Sociability: The Anthropological Basis of Kantian Ethics,” *Philosophical Topics*, 19:1 (1999), 326.

Wood’s remark reminds us that it is not just Aristotle and Kant who must, in offering us powerful ethical theories, strive to understand human nature in terms of thick qualities of psychological disposition, and so not just Aristotelians and Kantians could adopt the framework of grace I am offering. Think of Hobbes’ conception of human nature (fearful, curious, and narrowly self-interested); think of Plato’s (appetitive, spirited, always at risk of illusion). Think of Freud’s. As pointed out by Jeffrie Murphy, consider the love that one may feel for Frau Anna G, the central figure of D. M. Thomas’s novel, *The White Hotel*, and how the intimacy of one’s knowledge and love for her colors

Again, the qualities that render a person primitively intelligible to us and which can also be the basis of affection are not in any non-trivial sense, *good*. A clear-eyed view of your friend will respect this. But to love in this way is to refuse to look away from these aspects of who he is, excuse them, or see them as what one abstracts from when loving him, leaving a core of who he more truly or deeply is (if only he were better than he in fact is). Combined, gracious love’s two attributes — its accuracy and its affection — render it able to alleviate the problem of alienation. Like shame, it is a complex emotion. It incorporates both how the shameful agent sees himself in the discerning and penetrating eyes of another, and so acknowledges that this *is* who he is, rather than evading the issue. Rather than excusing his bad behavior as not really part of who he is (and thereby undermining his sense of himself as an agent), it grants to him and his shame that he really is that kind of person who sees the world this way and acts as he does. But at the same time, it allows for a reaction unlike disappointment, pity, contempt, or compassion for who he is — it is to feel *affection* for who he is, through and through.

Because affection is not based on *merit* (and is thus a “free gift” to the beloved), it avoids encumbering him with the presupposition that he is what he isn’t, or the faith or trust that he can become what he cannot or will not. And because the attitude of affection is not a gift that is *typically* merited, but given in this particular case without consideration of merit, it does not “lower” or presuppose the lower status of the receiver in the way that charity or mercy can. Thus, it is less of a threat to the beloved’s dignity. Importantly, however, we should not confuse the fact that grace’s affection is *meritless* with it being either *blind* or ultimately focused on something beyond the person it is felt toward. It is a response to qualities the lover sees in the beloved. And when felt for a particular human being, it is not love for the qualities of human nature abstractly understood, or the abstract concept of

and amplifies the horror of her murder at Babi Yar. Murphy, “Kant on Theory and Practice” in *Theory and Practice*, Ian Shapiro and Judith Wagner Decew (eds.), (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

“human nature”. It is distinct from forms of love justified by a person’s *bare* or *abstract* personhood or humanity, as well as the explicitly theological view that all human beings are worthy of love simply because we are God’s creatures.⁶⁶ These ideas on their own pick out too thin or abstract a quality to serve as the right object of fully attentive love, given the richness of the qualities of our psychological lives, our characters, and our personalities, and given how our feelings of shame are typically generated by those concrete, richer qualities that can be so apparent to those who see us.⁶⁷ To be loved graciously is for one’s lover to grant, and then rely on, this repertoire of qualities to inform and sustain her affection for him. As an ideal of love, grace asks one to *notice more* and feel *affection for more* of one’s beloved — though it is true that he may be too unruly, too fearful, or too wild, to be good.⁶⁸

66. Kieran Setiya has recently argued for an *agapic* form of love that is sufficiently justified simply on the basis that the object of one’s love is a fellow *human*, and not on the basis of any qualities of the beloved. While I agree with Setiya that the fact that someone is a human being can sometimes be sufficient for love, I think that without further qualifications, this kind of love is too inattentive to avoid the problem of alienation, and depending on the quality of the love Setiya has in mind, it might, to put it a little too bluntly, give rise to justified feelings that the lover is being *creepy*. After all, it presupposes no knowledge of who the beloved actually is. I also believe that my proposal alleviates at least some of Setiya’s worry that a quality-based view of love would render some people unlovable. Kieran Setiya, “Love and the Value of a Life”, *Philosophical Review*, 123:3 (2014).

67. For the metaphysical thesis of original sin, which of course can be the basis of shame for some, a theological conception of grace might be needed. Again, I have no ambition or interest in defending a theological conception of grace.

68. “I am not my rosy self/ Left my roses on my shelf/ Take the wild ones, they’re my favorites/ It’s the side effects that save us/ Grace/,” “Graceless.” For their comments, discussion, and encouragement throughout several developments of this paper, I am grateful to Susan Wolf, Thomas E. Hill Jr., Ryan Preston-Roedder, Samuel Reis-Dennis, Robert Smithson, Douglas MacLean, Benjamin Bagley, George Sher, John Lawless, and Francey Russell. Especially helpful with early versions of this paper was the conference on neglected virtues held in honor of Rosalind Hursthouse at the University of Auckland in 2015; my thanks, especially, to Glen Pettigrove, Noell Birondo, and Nim Kirkham. Especially helpful with later versions of this paper were comments from Michelle Mason Bizri and Bridget Clarke at the 2018 Eastern APA in Savannah, and the 12th Annual Northwestern Society for the Theory of Ethics and Politics Conference in 2018. I am grateful for comments from and

discussions with Laura Gillespie, Kyla Ebels-Duggan, Ryan Davis, and Oded Na’aman. I have benefited from discussion with audiences at UNC-Chapel Hill, the University of Toronto, New York University, and the University of Chicago. Special thanks are owed to Kristina Gehrman, Ulrika Carlsson, Andrea Westlund, and Uriah Kriegel for detailed comments as well as stylistic suggestions. Finally, I am indebted to Zahra Hussain Rizvi, Mary Renee Lindsey, and Christopher R. Hakkenberg.