Really Looking and Being Seen

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1. Introduction

Many defects of love are defects of attention. Love that is possessive or otherwise self-centered is inattentive to the *objectivity* of the beloved. If you love someone primarily because you want them to fill a gap in your life, there is a sense in which what you really love is not an actual other person, with their own life and way of being in the world, but an image that has been cropped and resized to fit the gap. Love that is too impersonal or superficial is inattentive to the *particularity* of the beloved. To love someone because they are your type is to attend primarily to a general category, and only derivatively to the person who falls under it. We think love superficial or stagnant if it does not develop in tandem with your knowledge of the beloved, or with the beloved themselves.

These attitudes are not just unflattering to their subject or disappointing to their object. Because they are not wholly about the other person, they seem deficient *as love*. Iris Murdoch ([1959] 1999: 216) gives powerful expression to this intuition in her conception of love as an "apprehension of something else, something particular, as existing outside us." Love, for Murdoch, is a kind of appreciative contact with an objective particular whereby one apprehends it as a source of value outside oneself. In manifesting a normative responsiveness that is ungrounded in antecedent concerns, love resembles moral motivation, as in acknowledging the

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overriding force of obligation, and aesthetic experience, as in pausing to marvel at a passing bird or allowing particularities of material and process to direct the sculpting of a vase.[1] In Murdoch's words: "Love is the perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real. Love, and so art and morals, is the discovery of reality" (215).

The topic of this paper is love for other people. Although I am sympathetic to Murdoch's account of love as attention, I will argue that she (along with some of her influential defenders) applies to interpersonal love a conception of attention that neglects what is distinctive about apprehending the reality of an entity that, unlike a bird or a vase, can understand and engage with one's attitudes toward it.[2] Interaction between human subjects admits of a dimension of expression, concealment, and acknowledgment which makes interpersonal love a site of vulnerability, recognition, and intimacy. Insensitivity to this dimension and its importance can itself constitute a failure fully to appreciate the reality of another subject. I will argue that in order to make sense of the distinctive ways in which we can see or fail to see the people we love, we must replace the spectatorial conception of loving attention that is woven into Murdoch's thought with an intersubjective one. According to the view I will defend, loving attention centrally involves second-personal thought: a type of thought about another subject which stands to their self-conscious thought as uses of 'you' stand to uses of 'I'.[3] On this view, in order to apprehend a particular person as a source of value

[1] These examples are from Murdoch (1959) 1999: 218 and Murdoch (1970) 2001: 82. I am simplifying: in another sense, the object of Murdochian love is the good. For discussion see Hopwood 2017.

[2] For other versions of the charge that Murdoch is insufficiently sensitive to the intersubjective character of loving attention see Nussbaum 2012; Dover 2024; Darwall 2024: 112-113.

[3] The idea that love is essentially second-personal has been defended, above all, by Darwall (2024), expanding the influential framework of Darwall 2006. Axel Honneth has defended a conception of love as a form of recognition in a body of work beginning with Honneth 1995. Like Darwall, I think the intersubjective form of the attitudes in which love consists is essential to their normative significance, in a way that Honneth does not emphasize. But I understand both this form and its significance somewhat differently from Darwall, as I explain in footnote 33.

outside oneself, one must think about them in a way that could make for rational engagement with their own evaluative perspective. One fully counts as seeing another person, in the sense that constitutes loving attention, only if one thereby puts the beloved in a position to feel seen.

2. Two conceptions of loving attention

Consider a well-known example from Michael Stocker, which I will call Impersonal Visit, of a Murdochian contrast between concern that is essentially a response to a particular person and concern for a person that is a corollary to concern for something else:

> You are in a hospital, recovering from a long illness. You are very bored and restless and at loose ends when Smith comes in once again. You are now convinced more than ever that he is a fine fellow and a real friend—taking so much time to cheer you up, traveling all the way across town, and so on. You are so effusive with your praise and thanks that he protests that he always tries to do what he thinks is his duty, what he thinks will be best. You at first think he is engaging in a polite form of self-deprecation, relieving the moral burden. But the more you two speak, the more clear it becomes that he was telling the literal truth: that it is not essentially because of you that he came to see you, not because you are friends, 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. (Stocker 1976: 462)

Because of what motivates Smith, an action that might have manifested good friendship and given you reason to feel cheered up does neither. His mistake is not to have acted "essentially because of you." Like others, I think what explains this observation about the appropriate motivating reasons for acting out of love is a fact about normative reasons of love: that their

source is the beloved themselves.[4] Impersonal Visit, so understood, supports a broadly Murdochian account of love as the direct appreciation of another person as a source of reasons.

It is a theme of Murdoch's work that appreciating the significance of attention should prompt moral psychologists to expand their focus beyond the context of choice and action. But that does not make it unimportant what we do. Indeed, the quality of our attention to the world matters partly because ongoing attention, rather than a pivotal moment of choice, supplies the normative understanding from which we act.[5] If the normative understanding from which you act out of love undermines your action in the way that Smith's motivation undermines his action in Impersonal Visit, we should conclude that your understanding was deficient as loving attention. I am going to argue that the spectatorial conception of loving attention that is woven into Murdoch's thought can undermine loving action in precisely this way. First, let us examine Smith's mistake in more detail and distinguish what I am calling a spectatorial conception of loving attention from an intersubjective alternative.

It is not as though you are absent from Smith's motivating reason. If asked why he is visiting the hospital, he could truthfully say he is there to cheer you up. Moreover, we may suppose, but for you there would be no Christian or communist he is obliged to visit, and some entirely different action would maximize expected utility. The problem is that you do not figure into what is *normatively basic* to the reason for which Smith acts: the part of a motivating reason that, as Elizabeth Anscombe ([1957] 2000: 72) puts it, "gives a final answer to the series of 'What for?' questions that arise about an action."[6] One and the same consideration may

[4] For discussion and defense see Keller 2013; Setiya 2014; Marušić 2022, ch. 5; Ebels-Duggan 2023; Lord forthcoming.

[5] For this clarification see Murdoch (1970) 2001: 42 and Murdoch 1993: 461: "Of course morality is action, not just looking (admiring), but the light of truth and knowledge should be falling upon the path of the agent."

[6] I prefer 'normatively basic' to Anscombe's own term, 'desirability characterization', because the latter does not signal final rather than derivative importance—'the better to slice tomatoes with' is not a true desirability characterization of sharpening a knife, since it leaves open what one is slicing tomatoes for—and because it places a potentially misleading emphasis on desire over other responses to the good or appropriate. That said, 'desirability

provide such an answer in some cases, or for some agents, but not others. One person with Covid might skip a party to avoid infecting others, end of story; for another, the story might not be complete unless one adds that infecting others would jeopardize their invitation to future parties. Someone for whom the health of others is normatively basic might be staying home specifically to contain the pandemic, or might instead be engaged in not spreading any serious illness. If the latter, one can understand perfectly well what they are skipping the party for without knowing that they have, specifically, Covid.

In Impersonal Visit, Stocker describes two types of motivating reason, neither of which makes the visited party normatively basic. One type takes as basic a proposition of the form '… is *F*' (e.g., that visiting you in the hospital is my duty as a friend, or the option with the greatest expected utility). To act for such a reason is to manifest concern for, at root, a property rather than a person. The other type takes as basic a proposition of the form 'Some *a* …' (e.g., that there is a fellow Christian or communist in need of cheering up). To act for such a reason is to manifest concern for any instance of a certain kind, rather than for the particular person who happens to instantiate it. In either case, one can understand perfectly well what Smith is visiting for without knowing that he is visiting, specifically, you.

In order genuinely to act out of love, then, an agent must take their beloved as normatively basic, rather than significant in virtue of their connection to something else. And that is not all. Love involves direct appreciation of the value of the beloved.[7] Raimond Gaita (2000: 17-22) tells of a nun who, while visiting a psychiatric hospital where he once worked, engaged so concretely and evocatively with the humanity of each patient that she showed up the well-meaning psychiatrists, who sincerely believed in the dignity and equal humanity of

characterization' has the advantage of conveying that what is in question is part of the agent's perspective. To capture this I will speak of what an agent *takes* to be normatively basic.

[7] On the significance for love of direct appreciation or acquaintance see Ebels-Duggan 2023, which discusses Gaita's nun at 353-354, and Setiya 2023. One might also frame the contrast I am drawing here in terms of the distinction between de re and de dicto attitudes; see Kraut 1986 for an application of this distinction to love.

their patients and acted accordingly, but whose beliefs seemed abstract and their treatment condescending by comparison. Let us suppose this nun acted from an understanding that each human being is a distinct source of reasons, and had an exceptional capacity to register acutely and respond aptly to any person as an individual—an exceptional capacity, that is, for loving attention. There is an important difference between the understanding of what she was visiting for that the nun could have had en route to the ward, where she knew there would be patients who would benefit from her visit, and upon her arrival, when those patients were before her. Only upon arrival could she exercise her capacity to apprehend and respond lovingly to each patient in particular, in such a way that "her behaviour was directly shaped by the reality which it revealed" (19).[8] I take this example to show that the requirement that love for a particular person be unmediated by something more general applies not only to the metaphysical structure of normative reasons as the lover understands them (true of the nun while en route), but also to the justificatory structure of the lover's grasp of those reasons (possible only upon arrival).

To get a sense of what it takes to satisfy this requirement, it helps to draw on Murdoch's metaphor of love as vision.[9] Consider the singular structure of justification by visual perception. Suppose you believe, of a certain knife you can see, that it is dull. By comparison to thoughts about the largest knife in the kitchen, which are in the first place about whatever satisfies that description and only derivatively about the particular knife that does, your belief is directly or immediately about the particular knife you see. Now compare two different

[8] A similar argument, due to Keller (2013: 87-94), shows why it would be objectionable in Stocker's case to act for the reason that "a friend of mine needs cheering up." This is an excellent reason to set out for the hospital if you know that some friend of yours is ill, but not which. If you learn en route who it is, however, the needs of that particular person should become what you consider normatively basic; otherwise the case resembles Impersonal Visit. It is unobjectionable to be moved by facts about 'a friend of mine', under that description, only when it is unobjectionable to be moved by the fact that one has some reason or other to act, rather than by the reason itself—like following advice to stretch after exercising "because it is good for you" without knowing what actual difference it makes.

[9] As Gomes (2022: 148-49, 153n28) observes, that vision presents us directly with its objects, unmediated by inference from the character of perceptual experience, arguably makes it a better metaphor for Murdochian attention than, say, hearing—though not touch. For an account of intersubjectivity modelled on touch, see Laing 2021. For a different interpretation of the vision metaphor, see Jollimore 2011.

sources of justification for this singular belief. Suppose you believe the knife is dull because you believe it is the largest in the kitchen, and were told that the largest knife in the kitchen is dull. Although your belief is essentially about that knife, what justifies it is not: it depends on an identity premise, which could turn out to be false (just as Smith's friend could turn out not to be a Christian or communist). Alternatively, suppose you believe the knife is dull because it looks dull. In this case, since your belief is based in the very perceptual link which allows you to think about the knife demonstratively, it is essential to this belief that one specific thing, the knife, is at once its topic and its justificatory source. A mark of this tight connection is that your belief is immune to error through misidentification: you are not in danger of knowing that some knife is dull, but being wrong about which.[10] In other words, in the latter case, your apprehension of an objective particular justifies attitudes concerning it in a way that is not mediated by an attitude toward something more general.

This, I suggest, is the sense of "essentially because of you" that we want in love. The motivating reasons in Impersonal Visit are objectionable because, once it is settled what is normatively basic to Smith's action, a further step is required to bring the beloved into the story. The possibility of a gap of this kind between the object of love and its normative basis marks a respect in which the beloved is not the source of the lover's reasons. But there is no room for a gap if your grasp of what is normatively basic to what you are doing has its source in a cognitive relation to another person that allows you to think singular thoughts about them. Not just any such relation will do; perceptual contact with your beloved, for example, supplies you with reasons of which they are essentially the source, just as perceptual contact with the knife does—but not with reasons of love. What kind of apprehension of another person can disclose

[10] Shoemaker 1968 introduced "immunity to error through misidentification" as a mark of one variety of self-knowledge, developing an idea of Wittgenstein's; Evans 1982: §6.6 argues that the phenomenon extends to demonstrative belief and observes that a proposition may be immune to error through misidentification when believed on some grounds, but not when believed on others. See also Rödl 2007: 5-10.

them as mattering in the ways that we characteristically take those we love to matter? Answering this question is a task for a conception of loving attention.[11]

Murdoch conceives of the relation between attentive lover and beloved as one of *spectator* to *spectacle*. She often contrasts projection of one's own wants and fears onto the beloved with appreciation of the beloved that is for their sake in virtue of being "selfless" or "detached."[12] The Oxford English Dictionary distinguishes 'detachment' as in the loosening of attachment—"the action of detaching; unfastening, disconnecting, separation"—from "a standing apart or aloof from objects or circumstances; a state of separation or withdrawal from connection or association with surrounding things." These senses can come apart. A parent might bring themselves to relinquish control over their increasingly independent child, checking an impulse to replicate themselves, without thereby withdrawing from connection or association; indeed, such unfastening might enable a maturer connection. But in a central strand of Murdoch's thought the two meanings are spun together, so that the act of detachment characteristic of love, which she calls "unselfing" ([1970] 2001: 82), produces a state of standing apart or aloof from which one can really see another person. "The self, the place where we live, is a place of illusion" (91), Murdoch writes. In loving attention, "we cease to be in order to attend to the existence of something else, a natural object, a person in need" (58); when "selfish concerns vanish, nothing exists except the things which are seen" (64). With the attending subject removed from the scene, "the highest love is in some sense impersonal"—a truth more readily grasped in art than human relationships, but applicable to both (73).

Unselfing, so understood, is more than being unselfish. Murdoch's ideal incorporates the further thought that loving attention to another person, at its best, abstracts away from the centered point of view of the apprehending subject. Such attention resembles that of a spectator,

[11] For discussion, to which I am indebted, see Setiya 2023, esp. 326-328.

[12] See, e.g., Murdoch (1970) 2001: 40, 63-64, 73, 86-87, 91.

first, in being *unilateral* rather than bilateral: just as a spectacle need not be conscious of its spectator, the beloved need play no active part in the attention of the lover. Second, it is *apositional* rather than positional: just as a spectacle is something visible for anyone to see, and which one can see no less clearly for having lost oneself in, so loving attention, conceived along these lines, apprehends the beloved as significant in a way that makes no essential reference to the identity of the lover or their relation to the beloved.[13]

Murdoch's more recent champions have inherited this spectatorial conception of loving attention. "If we are paying proper attention," writes David Velleman (2013: 331), "we marvel at the bottomless depth of the self-awareness that is embodied in this particular, concrete human being." Although this "state of attentive suspension, similar to wonder or amazement or awe…. disarms our emotional defenses" and thereby "makes us vulnerable to the other," it is in quasi-aesthetic marveling, rather than in making oneself vulnerable, that one encounters the reality of another person (Velleman 1999: 360-361).[14] Kieran Setiya defends a Murdochian view of love as the apprehension of particular other people in his theory of personal acquaintance, a sui generis cognitive relation to someone which underwrites singular thoughts about them, makes it rational to love them, and figures in a distinctive type of moral reasons. We are personally acquainted in Setiya's sense just as fully, and in the same way, with anencephalic humans

[13] Although Murdoch at times endorses something like this view explicitly—in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1993: ch. 15), as I discuss in §4, she argues that loving attention does not have an 'I-Thou' form and insists that "others are given to us as a spectacle" (463)—teasing it out of her work requires interpretative reconstruction. My topic here is the view I have described on its substantive merits, not how to interpret Murdoch; readers who dispute its centrality in Murdoch's thought may take me to be distinguishing two conceptions of loving attention to other people (as opposed to works of art, the natural world, or languages) in a way that goes beyond what Murdoch herself says, then arguing for one over the other. There are hints of a more intersubjective conception in Murdoch's earlier work. In her book on Sartre, she frames her objection that his fiction fails to represent other people as concrete distinct selves in terms of the observation that the relationships he depicts only rarely contain "a real 'I-Thou'" (1953: 52). Also suggestive is her claim in "The Sublime and the Good" that "Freedom is exercised in the confrontation by each other, in the context of an infinitely extensible work of imaginative understanding, of two irreducibly dissimilar individuals. Love is the imaginative recognition of, that is respect for, this otherness" ([1959] 1999: 216). However, this passage might be read as about symmetric but unilateral imagination, and describing a plurality of subjects merely to draw a contrast with the image of totality to which she is objecting.

[14] Echoing Murdoch's claim that love and aesthetic experience have a common structure, Velleman 2013 proposes that the amazement characteristic of love is an instance of the mathematical sublime as Kant understands it. For related views and helpful discussion see Bagnoli 2003; Merritt 2017, 2022; Walden 2023.

incapable of registering our presence as with friends and romantic partners. Even when the other is capable of mutual awareness, "the phenomenology of personal acquaintance is not mutual or interactive" (Setiya 2023: 328).

Such remarks place Murdoch, Velleman, and Setiya on one side of a divide in philosophical approaches to knowledge of other minds. It makes sense to think of loving attention to another subject as an impersonal and detached beholding, akin to aesthetic appreciation and acquaintance with individuals lacking a perspective, given a conception of what it is to have knowledge of another mind that ascribes no active part to the person known. An alternative paradigm of knowing another mind is eye contact.[15] Fully to apprehend the reality of another subject is, on this intersubjective view, to see them as a 'you', the opposing pole of a relation of mutual awareness of the sort that underlies directed address (as in telling, listening, asking, demanding, inviting, etc.). The relation of communication established and exploited by directed address requires me to think about the other in such a way that they can grasp my thoughts about them only by exercising their capacity for self-conscious thought—by understanding, as they would put it, that 'I am being addressed.' And it requires, reciprocally, that I understand myself to be the object of thoughts of this kind that the other has about me.

There is a sense in which thinking of someone as 'you' and understanding oneself to figure likewise in their thoughts are more direct ways of encountering another point of view than observing them or imagining how they must feel. Suppose you notice that I am trying to conceal how funny I find the pigeon eating a slice of pizza bigger than its body a few feet away from the funeral we are attending. Perhaps, your attention now drawn to the pigeon, you even start to find it funny yourself. You have a thought about me that it makes sense to have only about a fellow subject, since only a subject can find something inappropriately funny. And you know that my attitude toward the pigeon is just like what you are now feeling. Still, there

[15] For different versions of this approach see Cavell 1976b; Darwall 2024: ch. 8; Eilan 2020; Laing 2021.

remains a way in which my subjectivity does not figure in your thought, but in which it would so figure were I to notice you looking at me and return your glance, embarrassed; were we to laugh at the pigeon together; or were I openly to make fun of how *you* eat pizza. In each of these scenarios, I figure in your thought not only as another object in the world, on which you, as a subject, have a point of view, but also as a distinct vantage point on the very same world. You encounter my point of view directly in something like the sense in which you encounter a painting directly when you see it, but not when you read about it, or perhaps like the sense in which you encounter heat directly when you feel it, but not when you watch water come to a boil. And the other funeralgoers do not. Unlike unilateral attention to a spectacle visible equally to all, such awareness of another subject is made possible by occupying a certain position with respect to them, which consists partly in being the addressee of an activity of which they are the author. That is to say, it is positional and bilateral.

In my view, the direct encounter with another point of view that 'you'-awareness makes possible is the form of cognitive contact that underwrites reasons of love of which another person is essentially both topic and source. My argument for this claim is as follows. At its best, a hospital visit is valuable as acknowledgment of and participation in the patient's illness and hospital stay, as undergone from their perspective. It is one of the expressive acts through which we sustain and enact a relation of recognition specific to love. Expressions of care provide recognition by communicating to the beloved the importance they have for us, in order that the beloved may see themselves confirmed in our thoughts about them (§3). But spectatorial conceptions of loving attention cannot explain how expressions of loving care put the beloved in a position to feel seen. For were such a conception correct, it would be possible to bear an ideal form of loving attention to another person while failing to engage rationally with their normative take on the situation (§4). We can explain why loving attention to a fellow subject requires openness to rational engagement if we suppose it to be based in second-

personal thought, understood a certain way (§5). And once it is understood how second-personal thought facilitates recognitive expressions of care, its background presence can be felt elsewhere, including in the moments of appreciative awe that motivate the spectatorial approach (§6).

3. Expressions of care

Here is a feature of Impersonal Visit that calls for explanation: Smith's mistake blurs the ordinary distinction between failing to do what you have most reason to do and doing it, but for the wrong reason. Rescuing a drowning child because it will be a good story to tell at parties is less praiseworthy than doing it to save the child's life, but their life will be saved either way. If you take medical advice from your horoscope rather than your doctor but they happen to recommend the same thing, you will be no less healthy for your irrationality. But if you visit a friend in the hospital for the wrong reason, your mistake does not just make your action merit criticism rather than praise. It undercuts what reason your friend might have had to feel cheered up in the first place, thereby depriving the action of its point.

Why is this? What makes Impersonal Visit a case, not of doing the right thing for the wrong reason, but of failing to do the right thing at all? I suggest it is that visiting someone in the hospital out of love is, at its best, a communicative action, the point of which is to express one's care to the beloved.[16] Imagine being the visited party. In the best case, you can see what matters to you about being ill and alone in the hospital reflected in what the visitor takes to be normatively basic about what they are doing. It is as though the significance of your hospital

[16] My focus here is on forms of expression that are intentional and communicative, such as visiting someone in the hospital or writing them a get-well card, rather than intentional acts of care that are not aimed at communicating it to its object, such as changing an infant's diaper, or unintentional behavioral manifestations of care, such as being unable to sleep out of anxiety about someone's health. I use 'expressions of care' throughout to refer to the communicative kind. On varieties of expression see Moran 2018: 85-88. My emphasis on communicative expressions of care echoes Nel Noddings (1984: 71), who holds that "the recognition of caring by the cared-for is necessary to the caring relation."

stay from within your life (say, concern about your health and its implications for your future; the discomfort and loneliness you undergo in the hospital; the disruption to various routines and projects) has an existence outside you in the mind of the visitor. You can see your perspective on what matters to be acknowledged and affirmed by the visitor—not subjunctively, as a plan for how to feel in your shoes, but indicatively, as a guide to their action and feeling.

To say that a fully successful visit *acknowledges* your perspective is to say more than that you come to know that the visitor cares about what you care about.[17] If nothing else, the visit will have the same effect as, in Charles Taylor (1985)'s example, saying, 'Whew, it's hot in here!' to one's neighbor in a sweltering train car: that of turning something you each know, know that the other knows, and so on into something that is, as Taylor puts it, *entre nous*, "out there as a fact between *us*" (259). By creating an intersubjective space in which your health, comfort, and the disruption to your life are taken to matter in the way that they matter to you yourself, a successful expression of care *recognizes* you as the subject of a particular life that is a locus of value. Establishing this relation of recognition gives the significance of your life a kind of intersubjective reality and brings you closer to the visitor. That is what gives you reason to cheer up.

A visit can achieve this communicative aim, however, only if it manifests actual understanding and concern for what matters from your perspective. Yet what typically and rightly matters to us in such situations is not the contribution of our experience to the value of a state of affairs or our role in making it true that a Christian or communist or friend of Smith's is in the hospital. So a visit to which such considerations are normatively basic does not acknowledge what you are going through, and consequently does not give you the sort of

[17] My use of the concept of acknowledgment in this context is inspired by Cavell (1976a, 1976b)'s essays on the centrality of acknowledgment to both knowledge of other minds and interpersonal love.

reason to take heart that it might have done, had the visitor come essentially because of you. That is why one cannot succeed in performing this action at all unless one does it for the right reason.

That a visit, at its best, is a communicative action does not imply that a bungled visit is valueless. Even if Smith visits you for an impersonal reason, you might find his high-minded intentions amusing and his company a welcome distraction. You might be glad to have someone to listen to you vent, to shift your perspective, or simply to pass the time with, no matter why they are there. Whether it makes sense to feel disappointed that his impersonal reason precludes a certain valuable form of intimacy depends on you and your relationship with him. Perhaps the last thing you want is for someone else to dwell on the minutiae and unpleasantness of your illness. Or perhaps you would find it meaningful from some people, just not Smith.

Still, recognition is more than one possible benefit among others of appearing in someone's hospital room. No matter what else makes Smith's visit enjoyable, the impersonal reason for which he acts reflects a defect of loving attention. It would be a piece of outcome luck, like negligent driving that happens not to cause an accident, should the recipient of an impersonal visit prefer emotional distance anyway. While it may be only a mild defect to overlook the importance of recognition in any one situation, a relationship completely devoid of the sort of understanding, affirmation, and intimacy that a good visit can establish would be devoid of a central part of what makes love valuable. (Equally, although a preference for emotional distance while in the hospital may reflect only individual variation in coping with hardship, never wanting to be understood and acknowledged would be its own defect of love, an avoidance of vulnerability.[18]) A satisfactory account of loving attention must explain why a consistent failure to put the beloved in a position to feel seen and affirmed is a failure of love.

[18] See Cavell 1976a for discussion of this defect.

What is crucial for our purposes is that the distinctive value of expressions of care to their recipients is inseparable from that of the intersubjective relation they constitute and sustain. Like questioning, informing, commanding, inviting, and other communicative acts, expressions of care admit of a distinction between *rational engagement* and *miscommunication.*[19] Rational engagement is a relation between subjects, mediated by such communicative acts, in which each is in a position to give a response to thoughts expressed by the other, which the other could appreciate as such and respond to in turn. In the case of informing, such responses include agreeing or disagreeing with the speaker, rather than talking past them, and believing the speaker, thereby extending one's knowledge noninferentially. If you inform me that the semester begins tomorrow, we are rationally engaging if I believe you that the semester begins tomorrow, but not if I tune you out, yet infer from how stressed you sound that the semester must begin tomorrow; and also if I disagree with you about when it begins, but not if we have different universities in mind.

Although testimony is a paradigmatic case of rational engagement, the phenomenon is more general.[20] The mark of rational engagement with a command, for instance, is being in a position to obey, rather than happen to do what was commanded, or to disobey, rather than fail to obey out of misunderstanding; with an invitation, being in a position to accept or decline, rather than choose unilaterally to show up at a party to which one also happens to be invited. Forming a belief or performing an action counts as a response to another person in virtue of the constitutive interdependence of each party's understanding of their own attitude upon that of the other. My reason to believe that the semester begins tomorrow, or mop the floor, is your having informed or commanded me as much; to apprehend this reason is to understand myself

[19] See Heck 2002 and Dickie and Rattan 2010 for discussion of the idea that communication aims at rational engagement, with knowledge transmission as the paradigm case; see also Moran 2018: 160-168.

[20] The sketch I offer here draws on Darwall 2006, Moran 2018, and Eilan 2020.

to be the addressee of your communicative act, and thereby make it succeed. In other words, the apprehension of such reasons is bilateral rather than unilateral, in that it involves the agency of the speaker as well as the addressee. And it is positional rather than apositional, in that it depends on being the intended recipient of the speaker's communication. A third party witness to your command or invitation cannot respond to the same reason I do; if they overhear you informing me of when the semester begins, they can believe what you say, but not thereby make your communicative act succeed.

Expressions of care feature rational engagement in at least two ways that other communicative acts such as inviting, informing, and requesting do not. First, expressions of care engage not only with the content of an attitude, but with the perspective of its subject. If I believe you that the semester begins tomorrow or disobey your command to mop the floor, I am accepting or rejecting not, primarily, you, but rather that the semester begins tomorrow, or mopping the floor. To express my care for how you are feeling, by contrast, is not only to engage with a certain take on the world, but to engage with it in its aspect as *yours*. When I am moved by the importance of an event, not simpliciter, but in a way that is indexed to its significance in your life and experience, there is a sense in which what I am affirming or accepting is you. I am giving uptake in my own practical reasoning to a certain normative conception of you—as the center of a life that is of intrinsic importance—by affirming the centered normative outlook from which that life is led.[21]

The second difference is closely related to the first. Rational engagement figures into expressions of care not as a means to some independent end (such as the transmission of information or the coordination of action) but as valuable for its own sake. The point of

[21] This contrast should not be overdrawn. To engage with your testimony or command is, if not overtly, still tacitly to take a stand on you as trustworthy or authoritative. But we can distinguish background relations of recognition from the communicative acts that may express them. You can disbelieve or disobey someone on a particular occasion without wholly denying their competence as a believer, their trustworthiness, or their authority over you. And the value of ongoing relations of recognition and trust are not reducible to that of any particular act.

expressions of care such as these is to establish or sustain a relation of affirmative rational engagement with the beloved's perspective, and thereby put them in a position to feel seen. But the conception of the beloved such engagement requires is essentially intersubjective rather than spectatorial.

4. Against the spectatorial conception

Here is what I have argued so far. Love involves direct, singular appreciation of the beloved. This relation of cognitive contact might be understood in two ways: one on which the apprehension of another person, like that of a spectacle, is unilateral and apositional; and one on which, like eye contact or the awareness parties to a conversation have of one another, it is bilateral and positional. Some acts of love, such as the expression of care in Stocker's hospital visit case, cannot fully succeed unless done out of the direct, singular appreciation of the beloved that is an ideal of loving attention. What explains this fact is that the value to the patient of an ideally successful visit derives from the agent expressing a kind of concern that is indexed to what matters from the perspective of the patient; such expression is valuable because it constitutes acknowledgment; but it constitutes acknowledgment only if directed toward the patient's understanding of it in a way that aims at affirmative rational engagement. And to be moved by a conception of the patient that aims at affirmative rational engagement with their perspective is to apprehend them in a way that is essentially bilateral and positional.

If my proposal is correct, we should expect there to be cases of singular thought without rational engagement that seem to reflect a defect of loving attention, but do not count as defective by the lights of a spectatorial conception of such attention. Here is such a case:

> *Calculated Visit*: You are in a hospital, recovering from a long illness. You are very bored and restless and at loose ends when Smith comes in once again. Smith's visit

> manifests a standing attitude of appreciation, affection, and care for you in particular. Knowing it is unpleasant to be sick and alone in the hospital, Smith has set out to make you feel better. But the question of what meaning his reasoning and motivation will have for you is simply not on his radar. Smith thinks of himself as trying unilaterally to induce a change in you, and reasons about the best way to do so. He calculates that time with a friend is more likely to cheer you up than installing a TV in the room or increasing the dosage of your pain medication, and decides on that basis to visit you.

Calculated Visit is not a case of someone deliberating about whether to express their care to their beloved by visiting them, keeping them comfortable or entertained, or in some other way, viewing this all the while as a question of what the beloved would most appreciate as loving support. The question Smith's reasoning aims to settle is not what you would most appreciate as loving support, but what would most reliably induce a better mood in you. He compares ways of cheering you up on the basis of their effect *on* you, not their meaning *to* you.[22]

Calculated Visit does not seem as bad as Impersonal Visit. And so one should expect, given that you do figure in what Smith takes to be normatively basic about what he is doing, and therefore that he can, more plausibly than in Impersonal Visit, be said to be acting out of love. Indeed—this is crucial—it follows from a spectatorial conception of loving attention that Calculated Visit ought to be unexceptionable. After all, you in particular are essential to what Smith takes to be normatively basic about what he is doing. He is discerning enough to know

[22] We need not imagine that Smith is reflective enough explicitly to conceive of his own reasoning as spectatorial. One mark of the difference between unreflectively spectatorial and intersubjective lovers is what they are prepared to count as success. Suppose the visit lifts the patient's mood for the wrong reason: imagine an undiscerning patient, who enjoys the diversion but fails to grasp the expressive meaning of Smith coming all the way across town, or a narcissistic patient, who is flattered to have such an illustrious visitor as Smith, signifying as it does their elevated social status. A calculating visitor, however unreflective, would not take their action to have misfired, but instead to have succeeded by an unexpected route. By contrast, a visitor whose loving attention is intersubjective will count as success only a response which appreciatively welcomes their acknowledgment, so that the patient cheers up because they feel seen.

that you prefer a friend to TV or pain medication, and is moved directly by the prospect of raising your mood.

Yet Smith's reasoning in Calculated Visit, too, is intuitively defective in a way that undermines the success of his action. And it is natural to describe what goes wrong as a failure of communication. Sweet as Smith's intentions may be, his attempted kindness is marred by an imperfect grasp of what actually matters to you about his visit. What is normatively basic for him about visiting you is the change it would produce in your mood. From your perspective, however, a change in mood is not something that just washes over you; it is a fitting response to a meaningful visit. What you have reason to appreciate about a visit is that it establishes a shared space in which the disvalue of your illness, boredom, and loneliness is mutually acknowledged. Such acknowledgment must be deliberate, yet in Calculated Visit Smith does not intend it; it requires that you be able to see your perspective reflected in Smith's understanding of the situation, yet what he takes to be normatively basic about a visit is not what you take to be good about being visited, and you do not figure in his reasoning as an addressee upon whose uptake its success depends. As a result, it would be reasonable to feel that you have not been seen or understood. You might be touched by the goodwill that shines through Smith's confusion, but because he does not fully engage with your perspective on the situation, you do not end up with the reason to take heart that his visit might have given you. Calculated Visit thus shows that it is not sufficient, for a communicative expression of loving care to be fully successful, that one be moved by a thought that is essentially, but unilaterally, about the beloved.

Can the gap be closed by identifying some further condition which remains unmet—say, that one must communicate to the beloved that one is so moved—rather than by finding fault with Smith's concern itself? No. It would misconstrue what goes wrong in Calculated Visit to hold that Smith has the right sort of concern for you, and fails only to see the need to

communicate it. Smith's concern for you is itself deficient because of what he does not see. His insensitivity to the essentially communicative aspects of what, in the good case, a visitor would consider normatively basic about their action—the relation of acknowledgment (or its absence) established thereby; the difference between inducing a change in you and giving you a reason—constitutes, in its own way, a failure fully to apprehend the reality of your point of view.

Here is an argument for that claim. To apprehend the point of view of another subject is, in part, to see and respond to aspects of a situation that are grounded in the actual or possible attitudes of that subject. It is to be sensitive, for example, to what is or is not visible, humorous, plausible, or desirable to them, no matter how things seem to oneself. Children learn to do this around age 4-5, when they begin to distinguish between where an object is and where it is rational for someone else to think it is.[23] Yet it is one thing to grasp this distinction in principle and another to be more or less vividly aware, in a particular situation, of how things seem to someone else. Jean-Paul Sartre describes the decentering of one's own perspective such awareness involves in the case of realizing that one is not alone in a park:

> Around the Other, an entire space is grouped… it is a regrouping, at which I am present, and which escapes me, of all the objects that populate my universe.… [T]he lawn is something qualified… [its] green turns toward the Other a face that escapes me.… Everything is in place, everything still exists for me, but now an invisible and frozen flight toward a new object penetrates everything. The Other's appearing in the world

[23] See Tomasello 2018 for discussion and one interpretation of this capacity.

> corresponds… to a decentering of the world that undermines the centralization I simultaneously impose. (Sartre [1943] 2018: 350-351)[24]

The sweep of another point of view does not stop at objects in one's environment. Like the park lawn, I myself turn toward the Other a face to which I lack immediate epistemic access. The other-facing properties of one's own actions and attitudes are a source of reasons both instrumental (to make myself heard, I must moderate how loudly and distinctly I am speaking) and noninstrumental (someone else's presence can make it rude to yawn loudly, or showy to recite poetry to myself). A further set of reasons arise from seeing the situation as one in which there are two distinct points of view, each aware of the other. It would seem strange and intrusive, out of context, for me to shove a dumpling toward you while saying, "Go on, eat it!" But if we are each aware that we are each aware, and so on, that the dumpling is yet uneaten only because fewer remain than people who might like one and nobody wants to deprive anybody else, the action becomes perfectly comprehensible and even friendly. Likewise, taking myself to have reason to avoid your eye at the funeral requires sensitivity to such facts as that you find the jumbo-slice-eating pigeon funny and suspect I do too; that many people around us are openly grieving; that they might reasonably take a burst of laughter to express disrespect for their grief, not to mention the deceased; and that were I to acknowledge my amusement to you, one of us might well begin to giggle. To be more or less sensitive to such facts is to be more or less vividly aware of the reality of points of view other than one's own.

It is the absence of precisely such facts from what moves Smith in Calculated Visit that makes his action less than fully successful. Smith's insensitivity to the reason you have to be cheered up by acknowledgment of the tribulations of your hospital stay from someone with

[24] Since it does not matter here, I am ignoring that Sartre himself considers this an impure case of apprehending another subject because it involves taking another person as the object of one's attention and "the Other is not in any way given to us as an object" (366).

whom you care to share them, and his consequent insensitivity to the reason he has to provide such acknowledgment, constitute a failure fully to integrate into his practical outlook the presence of a point of view distinct from his own. That, I suggest, is no less a failure fully to apprehend the reality of another person, and no less a defect of loving attention, than the sorts of failure Murdoch emphasizes, in which one conflates the beloved's interests with one's own, or their actual characteristics with what one might wish for. That is to say, the intuition that motivates a Murdochian account of loving attention in the first place counts also against a spectatorial conception of such attention. The lesson of Calculated Visit is that apprehending the reality of another person, in the way that serves as a regulative ideal for loving attention, requires the lover to be moved not simply by singular thought about the beloved, but by singular thought that is oriented toward the beloved's perspective in a way that allows for acknowledgment.[25]

Murdoch comes closest to addressing the position I have been advocating in a chapter of *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* devoted to Martin Buber. There she acknowledges the importance we place on how we matter to those who matter to us, but denies that it supports an intersubjective conception of loving attention:

> Looking at other people is different from looking at trees or works of art. We may receive deep consolation from knowing that we are 'present', *pictured*, in someone else's loving thoughts or prayers. It matters how we see other people. Such looking is

[25] My focus on expressions of care should not be taken to imply that care is the only part of love in which recognition is at issue, to the exclusion of appreciating the particular qualities of the beloved, having affection for them, liking them, or enjoying their company. Indeed, as Yao (2020: 7-8) observes, also while discussing the interpersonal dimensions of Stocker's case, these parts are complexly interrelated: the pleasure you have reason to take in a visit from a close friend whose company you enjoy, and who enjoys yours, differs from the solidarity provided by a visit from an old friend from whom you have grown distant, but who continues to care about you. Another advantage of an intersubjective conception of loving attention is that it creates space in which to mark differences between these kinds of value, and between agents who are more or less sensitive to those differences.

not always dialogue, indeed it is rarely mutual. Others are given to us as a *spectacle* which we should treat with wise respect. (Murdoch 1993: 463, second emphasis mine.)

Why does Murdoch insist on conceiving of looking at other people as looking at a spectacle? In part because she believes—incorrectly, I want to suggest—that an intersubjective conception would concede too much to a philosophical picture she wants to oppose, according to which "the inner or mental world is inevitably parasitic upon the outer world" and therefore of derivative importance (Murdoch [1970] 2001: 5).[26] One need not agree with Murdoch (as I do) that such a picture is to be resisted generally in order to find it ill-suited specifically to love. If anything, the idea of loving behavior is parasitic on that of an "inner" way of feeling about someone which such behavior typically expresses, and not vice versa. And yet the intersubjective attitudes essential to familiar kinds of communicative reason-giving (to demand, invitation, and request, for instance) are indeed secondary, both conceptually and normatively, to an outer speech act. Conceptually, it makes no sense to think of someone as your addressee without reference to some overt act of addressing them. Normatively, even if a communicative intention makes an utterance into the kind of speech act it is, it is the outer expression, the speech act itself, that gives the addressee a reason, and does so whether or not you genuinely hope they will do as demanded, invited, or requested. Murdoch is right to resist

[26] A second strand of Murdoch's discussion is focused less on particular worldly objects (people, trees, works of art) than on the perfect object of love, which for her is the good. Against Buber, she argues that ideal attention to the perfect object of love does not have a dialogical or 'I'-'Thou' form, for we can have a dialogical encounter only with a concretely existing person, which the perfect object of love cannot be if it is to play its conceptual role of underwriting the evaluation of worldly objects (Murdoch 1993: 478-479). Murdoch's occasional tendency to treat together questions about attention to people and works of art, on the one hand, and the good, on the other, might suggest a tacit assumption that if ideal loving attention to goodness is not essentially intersubjective, then neither is ideal loving attention to the other people whom we apprehend in its light. But this inference should be resisted. On my view, the source of our judgments about what constitutes ideal loving attention to a fellow subject is, in part, the possibility of this attention being understood and appreciated by them. To insist on a single conception of loving attention for people and the good would be to neglect the constitutive role that a self-conscious being plays in determining what counts as being known, and the inseparability of ideals of loving well from the value to the beloved of being loved.

any view carrying the implication that loving attention stands to loving action as intending to invite someone to dinner stands to following through.

As we have seen, however, this picture of the relation between intersubjective thought and communicative action is too narrow. The forms of recognition that love can provide—understanding, appreciation, vulnerability, acceptance, trust, concern—are not parasitic on "outer" behavior in a way that would prevent them from counting as instances of seeing another person. Although overt expression (such as a hospital visit) is necessary to realize and sustain them, they are conceptually and normatively self-standing. Conceptually, they constitutively involve a way of taking another person to count that is not conditional on having adopted some plan of action (e.g., to issue an invitation or request), which might in turn be done for all sorts of reasons, perhaps unrelated to the beloved. They reflect one's standing take on another person, which precedes rather than being contained within any particular context of choice and action. Normatively, whereas rational engagement is only a constitutive means of request, invitation, and demand—a certain way of giving someone a reason—these relations of recognition are valuable for their own sake, independently of the value of any particular action they facilitate. They are ways of attending to and engaging with another person as a distinct point of view on the world, one capable of attending to and engaging with oneself in turn.[27]

5. Second-personal thought

I have just argued that reflection on expressions of care reveals the need for an intersubjective conception of loving attention. In this section, I begin to develop such a conception by sketching an account of second-personal thought and arguing that it can explain the difference

[27] In emphasizing this form of loving engagement with another subject, I do not mean to deny that such engagement can also take the form of joint attention to some third object. For discussion of joint attention in love and its relation to seeing another person see Kirwin 2024. The point I wish to emphasize is that even seeing another subject, as distinct from seeing with them, takes a special form that is out of place for objects that are not subjects, and is not exhausted by the possibility of their having a symmetric attitude about you.

between how the hospital patient has reason to feel in Calculated Visit and in response to a good visit. In the next section, I suggest how to extend the account beyond cases of overtly communicative action.

Second-personal thought is singular thought based in mutual awareness between the thinker and the other person it is about. It is interconnected with that person's first-personal thoughts in a manner exemplified by the reciprocal use of 'you' and 'I' in ordinary conversation.[28] Consider an example from John McDowell (1998: 222):

> Suppose someone says to me, 'You have mud on your face'. If I am to understand him, I must entertain an 'I'-thought, thinking something to this effect: 'I have mud on my face: that is what he is saying'.

That their referent must entertain an 'I'-thought to understand them distinguishes utterances that refer to someone by 'you' from those that do so in other singular ways, such as by means of a name or demonstrative. Suppose someone says, "That person has mud on his face," pointing to me. I will have understood this assertion if, catching sight of the speaker's gesture and its intended object in a nearby mirror but failing to recognize the latter as myself (perhaps there is really a lot of mud), I think, "He has mud on his face: that is what she is saying." But I have not understood "You have mud on your face," said to me, by picking out its addressee in

[28] Much work on second-personal thought has focused on its relation to first-personal thought: Do 'you' and 'I' express the same thought, perhaps like one person's uses of 'today' and 'yesterday' to track a single day over time (Rödl 2007: ch. 6; Thompson 2013; Longworth 2014, extending Evans 1982: 192-196)? Or is second-personal thought distinct from first-personal thought, either because it is sui generis (Salje 2017) or because it consists of a distinctive bundle of iterated first- and third-personal thoughts (Peacocke 2014: ch. 10)? I will not take a stand on this question here. My purposes require only that second-personal thought (a) is distinct from *third*-personal thought and (b) nonaccidentally corefers with the first-personal thoughts of its referent. That much is compatible with all of these views—though not with Heck (2002: 12)'s claim that "the word 'you' has no correlate at the level of thought." My principal reason for rejecting that claim is the ability of the account of second-personal thought I sketch in this section to explain the difference in cognitive significance for a hospital patient between the reason for which Smith acts in the good case and in Calculated Visit. I am also persuaded by Dickie and Rattan (2010)'s argument that Heck's conception of rational engagement is too thin; see also Salje 2017: 830-833.

a mirror unless I go on to recognize him as myself. Anything less would be a failure of rational engagement.

The contrast between these examples resembles a familiar rationale for taking first-personal thought to be distinct from its third-personal counterparts. If I do not realize how muddy I am, it might be rational for me to believe that the muddy guest is dirtying the carpet, but not to believe that I am dirtying the carpet, even though these thoughts have the same truth conditions. We can explain how it is rational to have different attitudes toward these thoughts by supposing them to involve different ways of thinking about the same person. In Fregean terms, this is a difference in concepts, components of thought that bear a many-to-one relation to the referents of their uses. Concepts are individuated by their rational significance for the thinker, and rational significance depends in turn on what it is in virtue of which a concept is about its referent.[29]

Like others, I think McDowell's observation can be similarly explained by supposing the component concepts of the thoughts normally expressed by 'That person has mud on his face' and 'You have mud on your face' to differ.[30] Even though these two singular thoughts ascribe the same property to the same person, they pick that person out in different ways: one demonstrative, the other second personal. The question facing this proposal is why this difference in means of reference should generate the difference in rational significance that McDowell observes. What reference-supplying relation to another person could explain why one kind of thought (normally expressed with a second-personal pronoun or vocative) but not others (normally expressed with demonstratives, third-personal pronouns, or non-vocative uses

[29] Perry 1979. My exposition of Frege follows Evans 1982, which discusses an example like McDowell's at 314-316. Although my discussion is framed in the terms of Evans's Frege, I think the basic points could also be expressed using other approaches to the contents of thought.

[30] See Rödl 2007; Longworth 2014; Salje 2017.

of names) should be such that its referent must exercise their capacity for self-conscious thought—that is, think 'I'—in order to grasp it?

Consider what it takes to communicate using a perceptual demonstrative.[31] Suppose A and B are standing on either side of a supermarket display of apples. A, looking at a particular apple, tells B, "That apple looks juicy." B, looking at a particular apple, replies, "That apple is bruised." Upon hearing B's reply, A comes to believe that the apple that looks juicy is bruised. For this to be a case of rational engagement, rather than lucky miscommunication, it is not enough that A and B are talking about the same apple. If each is attuned only to the apple, assuming baselessly that the other must be looking at the same one, it could easily have been that B was talking about a different apple, and A's apple was not bruised. To learn from someone else's assertion, "That is *F*," that some object you perceive, *o*, is *F*, you must know that their use of 'that' refers to *o.* And for A and B to have an ongoing conversation about the apple, each adding to the other's knowledge of it through a series of demonstrative assertions, it is not enough that each party know which apple the other is referring to; it must be mutually known that each is referring to the same apple. Only when both know that the demonstratives each uses corefer may we speak not only of each subject rationally engaging with the other's assertion in sequence, but of two subjects rationally engaging with one other.

One source of such knowledge is joint attention. When two people attend jointly to some object, there is mutual awareness between them that both are attending to it. This mutual awareness expands the epistemic basis for demonstrative reference available to each person. Each is in a position to refer demonstratively to the object, not merely on the basis of her own awareness of it, but on the basis of their shared awareness. And when a demonstrative is based in shared awareness, fully understanding it involves understanding that it corefers with the awareness-based demonstrative used by the other party. Joint attention, that is, can change the

[31] What I say in this paragraph and the next is greatly indebted to Dickie and Rattan 2010.

meaning of a perceptual demonstrative so that fully understanding it requires knowledge that it corefers with the use of a certain expression by some other person.

I propose that 'you' is an expression for which this is always the case. Whereas it *can* happen, in virtue of two people's joint attention to some object, that each's use of 'that' acquires a property it ordinarily lacks—namely, that full understanding of such uses must include knowledge of coreference with uses of 'that' by the other—it is *essential* to 'you' that full understanding of a token use of it must include knowledge of its coreference with uses of 'I' by its referent. What underwrites this feature of 'you' is not joint attention to a third object both attenders perceive, but rather mutual awareness of the sort that underlies conversation.[32] Just as joint attention provides an epistemic basis in virtue of which the 'that'-thoughts of two parties necessarily corefer, mutual awareness provides an epistemic basis in virtue of which the 'you'-thoughts of one necessarily corefer with the 'I'-thoughts of the other.

With this proposal in hand, we can explain what distinguishes the good version of Stocker's hospital case from Calculated Visit. The difference concerns the thought about you that figures in what Smith takes to be normatively basic about his action. Only in the good case is this thought based in mutual awareness, so that it is part of its meaning that it corefers with your first-personal thoughts. It follows from this difference in epistemic basis that, in the good case alone, there is no room for a gap, from Smith's perspective, between what he takes to be important about the situation and what you do, when you think first-personally of its impact on your life. And to understand Smith's reason you must take there to be no gap either. (There is room to think he has it wrong—perhaps what you really want is to be left alone—but not to understand what he considers good about his action without taking it as a claim about what you yourself do, or should, consider good for you about it.) That is why, if Smith does get it right,

[32] In appealing to the mutual awareness implicit in interpersonal address to defend the distinctiveness of second-personal thought I am following Salje 2017 and Eilan (n.d.).

fully acknowledging and accepting the care he expresses requires you to acknowledge your own attitudes to him in turn, as it does not in Calculated Visit. Likewise, because if Smith gets it right you can see your own perspective reflected and affirmed in his, and such recognition gives you a distinctive sort of reason to feel cheered up, it is rational to respond to Smith's reasoning in the good case in a way that it is not in Calculated Visit.

The contrast between these cases thus provides an abductive argument for the role of second-personal thought in loving attention. The resulting picture answers our question from §2, about the relation to another person that both underwrites singular thoughts about them and discloses them as mattering in the ways that we characteristically take those we love to matter. The answer is second-personal thought. On this view, what is essentially both topic and justificatory source of loving attention to another person is the beloved *as subject*—that is, thought of from the point of view from which they say 'I'.[33]

6. Situated vision

If my argument to this point succeeds, it shows that spectatorial conceptions of the relation to another person through which we apprehend them as a source of value cannot deliver a complete account of loving attention. This claim is compatible with the ecumenical conclusion that, while there is indeed an essentially intersubjective kind of loving attention, it is merely

[33] We are now in a position to see how my proposal differs from Darwall's view of love as second personal. For Darwall, being second-personal is a property of attitude types which consists, centrally, in aiming at reciprocation (2024: 1-2). My proposal is primarily about the contents of thought: love is fully in touch with another subject only when it picks them out by means of a distinctive mode of presentation. Whereas Darwall holds that one can bear second-personal attitudes toward oneself (32), my view of second-personal thought makes it essential that it involve two distinct subjects. These two differences flow from a third: Darwall rejects appeals to the value of mutual recognition (2006: 317), instead taking the second-personal to matter because it facilitates mutual accountability and responsiveness. (It is because we hold ourselves accountable that Darwall thinks we must be able to adopt a second-personal stance toward ourselves.) By contrast, I believe the content of the regulative ideal of love as an apprehension of another subject is inseparable from the importance for the beloved of being seen by someone outside oneself (and whom one loves in turn). In this way the value of recognition partly explains why loving attention, at its best or most genuine, is second personal.

one kind among others, which might for all that be spectatorial.[34] It may appear to support such a conclusion that not every manifestation of love depends on overt acknowledgment in the way that expressions of care do. As Murdoch and Velleman stress, attentive suspension—as in private responses of amazement to personhood, of fondness to particularity, and of care to vulnerability—is an important part of love, too. Even in mutual interaction, overt acknowledgment is often optional and sometimes counterproductive. If a friend visits from out of town at a busy time, it is not a mistake to conceal your efforts as host so as to avoid making them feel burdensome rather than turn your every act of hospitality into a communicative expression of love. These are just different interpersonal styles.[35] And if your beloved is in the sort of nasty mood that involves being disposed to bristle at any suggestion that they might be in a nasty mood, treating them with kindness might downright require you to keep your intentions below the surface. So we may seem to be presented with multiple kinds of loving attention, and no reason to consider the essentially intersubjective kind more paradigmatic or fundamental than others.

I want to draw a stronger conclusion than this ecumenical one. Spectatorial conceptions of loving attention are not only extensionally incomplete, but also explanatorily incomplete. Even when overt expression is not at issue, how well an instance of beneficence or appreciation manifests loving attention depends on its surrounding intersubjective context.

Consider two contexts other than the overt expression of care in which the presence and quality of second-personal thought is essential to what makes an attitude toward another person good as loving attention. First, even when acknowledgment is not the proximal point of an action, it can matter as something to be avoided. When it does, insensitivity to the question of

[34] Thus Velleman (2013: 332-333) allows that friendship and other forms of mutuality are also ways of valuing a person; Setiya (2023: 328) allows that "the second person matters," though not to personal acquaintance.

[35] Murdoch 1993: 470 makes a similar point.

what is and is not mutually acknowledged can still constitute a failure really to see another person as a subject. My analysis of the hospital visit case as a communicative action turned on the observation that Smith's mistake blurs the distinction between doing the right thing for the wrong reason and failing to do it at all. That is not a feature of graciously hosting a friend at an inconvenient time, or of relating to an ill-humored loved one with tactful kindness: with luck, someone who is wholly insensitive to the meaning their reasoning will have for the other person, as Smith is in Calculated Visit, can still manage to avoid making their friend feel burdensome or to lift their mood. Nevertheless, if in Calculated Visit Smith fails fully to apprehend the reality of the subject for whose sake he is acting, as I have argued, then so does someone who displays the same insensitivity in these cases. The possibility of doing the right thing for a defective reason does not prevent it from being a defective reason.

Second, a background relation of mutual recognition can make an otherwise objectionable action permissible, and even grant it a distinctive value. Take Martha Nussbaum (1995: 265)'s example of using your lover's stomach as a pillow. Within the context of a relationship in which it is mutually acknowledged that each party both respects the other and welcomes physical intimacy from them, this case of treating someone as an object is not one of treating them as a *mere* object. Indeed, what might otherwise be objectifying in the pejorative sense becomes a distinctively valuable way for each party to enjoy the other's objecthood and to be so enjoyed in turn. Likewise, being discreetly gentle to a loved one in ill humor, which might otherwise be patronizing, need not be so against a background mutual understanding that taking care of each other when out of sorts is part of what friends are for. An open readiness to engage in such care can even constitute valuable acceptance of each party's ethical imperfections and acknowledgment of their mutual interdependence.

I propose that when the beloved is capable of reciprocal thought, attitudes that resemble awe or aesthetic appreciation depend for their status as components of loving attention on their

intersubjective context in the same way. Like using a stomach as a pillow, being awestruck by someone's personhood and cherishing their qualities do not always and everywhere constitute a discerning apprehension of their intrinsic value. There is a difference between forms of appreciation that are self-consciously open to uptake from the beloved and those that are possessive or voyeuristic, or that (to use an apt expression) put the beloved on a pedestal. In the happiest case, appropriately receptive appreciation might be open or shared, in the knowledge that it is welcomed and returned. But one-sided appreciation that is accepting of its status as unrequited, too, has a better claim to constitute loving attention than forms of awe, admiration, and enjoyment to which the beloved's response is not essentially in question. And such receptivity requires second-personal thought.[36]

A defender of the ecumenical conclusion might try to accommodate this point by supposing there to be a single quasi-aesthetic form of appreciation common to the good and bad cases which stands on its own as one kind of ideal loving attention, but coexists with a distinct, intersubjective form of appreciation which may be more or less salutary. Yet were that so, then if you are aware that someone is awestruck at your particularity, but not of the surrounding context, it would be fitting to welcome their loving attention, rather than to suspend judgment. If you learn that their appreciation is possessive or voyeuristic, it would be fitting to have mixed feelings, rather than univocal disappointment. And it is not. Being

[36] Although I cannot defend this claim here, I suspect that many hallmarks of interpersonal love to which philosophers have recently drawn attention should be understood along the same lines. For instance, Ebels-Duggan 2008 defends the centrality to love of sharing ends with the beloved, as opposed to unilaterally benefitting them, on the grounds that only the former treats the beloved as a fellow agent; Bagley 2015 defends the centrality of a shared activity of mutual improvisation; and Dover 2022 defends the centrality of receptivity to transformation by the other, as opposed to reciprocal self-revelation, on the grounds that only the former allows for a valuable form of intersubjectivity in which each party is genuinely open to the other. Yet there are forms of collaboration that are merely instrumental, and forms of shaping and being shaped that are manipulative and servile. Conversely, as we have seen, there are forms of beneficence, knowing, and being known that are valuable precisely because they engage with the other as a subject. I suspect that in each case (collaborating, helping, shaping, knowing), as with using a stomach as a pillow, what makes the difference is the presence or absence of background mutual understanding that such actions and attitudes manifest affirmative engagement with the other as a subject, and are welcomed as such.

appreciated from a pedestal or as a prized possession is not a valuable way of being loved at all, for there is an important sense in which the object of appreciation is not really you, yourself.

It is sometimes charged that one or another conception of objectivity presents as stance-independent what is really a view from one particular standpoint, and thereby obscures crucial aspects of the relation between subject and object. I have argued that the Murdochian idea of loving attention as "unselfing" is vulnerable to an objection of this kind if it is understood not merely as the apprehension of and response to another person as a source of value outside oneself, but as a normative outlook that abstracts from how the lover is situated with respect to their beloved. Since how it is fitting to engage with another subject depends on each party's understanding of their importance to one another, the attention that partly constitutes such engagement is the positional view from within an intersubjective relation.

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