

Dissertation Abstract

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What difference does it make to the way you relate to other people that you are relating, specifically, to other *subjects*? Philosophers often write as though having a point of view makes humans a kind of object that warrants special treatment, much as being beautiful makes works of art warrant contemplation and preservation. My dissertation argues instead that the subjectivity of other people bears on the question of how to relate to them by changing why that question matters. Your deliberative conception of how other people count does not just inform what you should do; it provides others with recognition, acknowledgment to them of how they count for you.

I defend this picture by arguing that it solves two problems. First, it makes sense of the relational features of interpersonal morality that motivate contractualism but leave its foundations obscure. Second, my picture reconciles the thought that we love other people for who they are with the essentially intersubjective character of some of love's most valuable expressions.

According to contractualists, whether an action is right or wrong depends on whether it can be justified to each person it affects. Contractualism is meant to be an alternative to consequentialism: contractualists deny that the action with the best consequences is always justifiable to each person. But for that to be true, the justifiability of an action *to* a person cannot be a mere matter of its being justified, *simpliciter*, in light of how it affects everyone.

In Chapter 1, I reject two influential analyses of justification-to. The first, due to Stephen Darwall, analyzes justification-to in terms of the authority to demand something from someone. The second, recently defended by R. Jay Wallace, draws on the idea that duties are always directed, i.e., owed to a particular person. Both views locate the directionality of justification in what it is to have an obligation, rather than in how the balance of different people's interests determines which obligations one has. As a result, I argue, neither view may appeal to the requirement of justifiability to each person to explain the source of obligations not to produce the best outcome.

My own proposal has two parts. In Chapter 2, I argue that when you care about what is good for you, you are not concerned with the instantiation of some property, e.g., your welfare. Rather, you care about how what happens to you bears on your ongoing activity of living your life. And this agential conception of why it matters what happens to you is at odds with the impersonal conception of value that underlies consequentialist reasoning. Chapter 3 draws on Marx's early writings about recognition and alienation in productive activity to argue that it is alienating to be treated in accordance with a conception of how you matter that you cannot affirm in your own voice. Action must instead be justified in terms of its bearing on each party's activity of living, something it does not make sense to aggregate across people. What results is a reinterpretation and defense of Rawls's charge that consequentialism cannot respect the "separateness of persons."

In Chapter 4, I turn to actions and attitudes central to love and friendship—expressing care, sharing in action and experience, understanding one another deeply—that must be undertaken for the right reason to be undertaken at all. Consoling your distraught friend only so that she will owe you a favor, for instance, does not merely fail to merit praise: it fails to constitute real support. I argue that what separates genuine care from its alienated imitation, shared activity from strategic coordination, and being understood from being monitored is whether the other person figures in the agent's practical thought in an essentially second-personal way. To grasp a second-personal thought, one must understand it to corefer with the first-personal thoughts of its referent, congruent with the interconnection of uses of 'you' and 'I' in conversation. Love for another subject is thus shaped, like respect, partly by the conditions of its intelligibility as such to that person.