Feminist Philosophy Quarterly

Volume 2
Issue 2 *Fall 2016* Article 1

2016

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Recommended Citation
Emerick, Barrett. 2016. "Love and Resistance: Moral Solidarity in the Face of Perceptual Failure." Feminist Philosophy Quarterly 2 (2): Article 1. doi:10.5206/fpq/2016.2.1.

Love and Resistance: Moral Solidarity in the Face of Perceptual Failure[1]

Barrett Emerick

Abstract

In this paper I explore how we ought to respond to the problematic inner lives of those that we love. I argue for an understanding of love that is radical and challenging—a powerful form of resistance within the confines of everyday relationships. I argue that love, far from the platitudinous and saccharine view, does not call for our acceptance of others' failings. Instead, loving another means believing in their potential to grow and holding them to account when they fail. I argue that loving others means meeting them where they are and working to understand the role that oppressive ideologies, coupled with cognitive biases, play in generating and entrenching their problematic mental states. I then argue that we ought not disengage with our loved ones or write them off as lost causes, nor should we accept that we will simply "agree to disagree." Instead, we should stand in moral solidarity with our loved ones and press them to become better while simultaneously understanding that such moral growth is usually a slow and painful process—often, the project of a lifetime.

Keywords: Love, solidarity, resistance, anger, disappointment, contempt, civilized oppression

In the conclusion to his famous letter to his nephew, James Baldwin says, "We, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it" (Baldwin 1962, 10). Baldwin is not alone in claiming that love should play an important role in the promotion of social justice; many other scholars and activists have made similar claims. Unfortunately, such appeals are easily

[1] I presented an earlier version of this paper at the 32nd International Social Philosophy Conference, sponsored by the North American Society for Social Philosophy, where I received invaluable feedback. Additionally, I am grateful to Emily Saari, Elizabeth Spelman, Corwin Aragon, Shane Gronholz, Rosa Terlazzo, Saba Fatima, Rachel Fredericks, and Kayleigh Doherty for their support and insight. I am also grateful for the very helpful feedback given by both anonymous referees and the editors of *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*.

watered down, white-washed, or co-opted by others, either intentionally or unintentionally, to maintain the unjust status quo. In the aftermath of political violence, for instance, it is dangerously easy to press survivors to forgive, to move on, to remain passive and complicit in the perpetuation of the oppressive structures that harmed them, all in the name of love.

In this paper I will argue for an understanding of love that is radical and challenging—a powerful form of resistance within the confines of everyday relationships. I will argue that love, far from the platitudinous and saccharine view, does not call for us only to celebrate our loved ones' strengths and accomplishments, nor for us to accept our loved ones' failings. Instead, part of what loving another requires is believing in their potential to grow, holding them to account when they fail, and expecting them to be better. Specifically, I will focus on the role that love can play in the promotion of social justice within the context of any type of loving relationship where one party bears racist, sexist, homophobic, or other prejudicial attitudes, beliefs, or emotions. I will focus, in other words, on how we ought to respond to the problematic inner lives of those whom we love.

The group to which Baldwin was referring were ignorant white people who were pitiful in their failure to understand their complicity in racial injustice.[2] I will later argue that pity is an inappropriate response to those that we love (though I do not necessarily disagree with Baldwin's more general claim about how we should regard others in our lives). So, though my project is inspired by Baldwin's work, and though I will return to his prescription throughout this paper, I am here taking the scope of who should be "forced to see" to be much narrower, in that I am not focusing on how we should respond to others in general, but how we should respond to those we love in particular. (Hereafter I will use the more inclusive and precise 'perceive' or 'recognize' rather than 'see.')

Students of mine who have studied and become concerned with promoting social justice often hope for a "magic" argument—one that will instantly cause their prejudiced interlocutor (perhaps especially those that they love) to come to perceive things differently. Of course, I would also like to discover such an argument, but in my experience they don't exist. As Sally Haslanger says in the introduction to *Resisting Reality,* "Social justice will never be achieved by just working to change beliefs, for the habits of body, mind, and heart are usually more powerful than argument" (Haslanger 2012, 4). So, though I join my students in sometimes feeling frustrated by the failure of rational argumentation to change the mind of one's interlocutor, I want in this paper to take seriously the whole person whose mind one is trying to change and to think about what hindrances or blocks might get in the way. One form such effort

[2] For a helpful discussion of Baldwin's view, see Spelman 2002 (especially p. 90-95) and Spelman 2007.

DOI: 10.5206/fpq/2016.2.1

ought to take is the patient and deliberate work that occurs within loving relationships as they unfold over time. I will argue that we ought to play the long game with others in order to stand in moral solidarity with them and help them to change their oppressive mental states in a more realistic fashion. This is part of what it means to force others to perceive, with love.

Note that I will not give a thorough analysis of love itself, nor will I focus on any particular type of loving relationship. Instead of exploring what love *is*, my primary project here is to explore (some of) what love *requires*. Though there are a variety of different philosophical accounts of love, my project starts simply from the assumption that one party loves another in some meaningful way—as a parent or child, grandparent or extended family member, friend or lover. I do not commit to a particular analysis of love because I intend for my project to be useful to anyone who claims to love another who holds oppressive attitudes, beliefs, or emotions. Furthermore, I will not provide an exhaustive analysis of all that love requires; in focusing on some of what love requires, I do not mean to suggest it is all that love requires.

That said, it is still worthwhile to ask at the outset why we should think that love in particular generates the obligations I will explore throughout the paper. The answer is this: those that we love, even those with whom we do not feel close, play a significant role in the formation of our identity. In an important sense, who we love makes us who we are; we are identified in part by those with whom we are in loving relationship.

This might sound similar to the "union" view of love defended by Robert Nozick (1989) and Marilyn Friedman (2003). Indeed, I am influenced by and sympathetic to their views. However, I do not wish to commit myself here to the more robust ontological claim they make, that in loving another a new being exists—a "we"—that did not exist previously. Instead, I am making the weaker claim that those whom we love are a part of who we are (Haslanger 2005) in a way that strangers, mere acquaintances, and casual friends usually are not.[3] I am my parents' son, my sister's brother, my spouse's partner. Because those roles help to identify me, when any of those that I love challenge me to grow, that challenge matters in a way that impersonal challenges from strangers, or even personal challenges from

[3] This is not to say that we don't have agency within loving relationships. I might choose not to be identified by a loved one any longer, to separate myself and refuse to have the other contribute to who I am. I again follow Marilyn Friedman here in recognizing the importance of autonomy in being able to leave a harmful relationship. The fact that someone might need to do so is illustrative of the fact that we are able to affect each other in the deep ways I am here describing. For more on this, see Friedman 2003, Chapter 5.

acquaintances or colleagues, do not. In short, loving someone brings with it special responsibility; in virtue of being able to affect and craft others more profoundly, we bear special responsibilities to help them become not just who they are, but to become better than they are. And, of course, they bear the same responsibility to us.

To be clear, my argument is not grounded in the self-interested claim that because my relationships constitute a significant part of my identity, I ought to help loved ones to become better in order to make myself better. Instead, my focus is other-directed; because I have the power to help shape who my loved ones become in a way that most of the others in their lives do not, I owe it to them to help them to grow. This is a special obligation that I bear to those that I love in particular, rather than an impersonal obligation that I bear to others in general, because it is within loving relationships that I can satisfy the obligation.

That is not to say, however, that it is only within loving relationships that the special obligation to help others to grow can be satisfied; we might sometimes bear the same obligation to others whom we do not love. For instance, teachers[4] often help their students to grow and become more than they otherwise would have been; in that way teachers often play an important role in the formation of their students' identity. But in many senses of 'love' it is inappropriate or wrongful for teachers to love their students. There are other, non-loving relationships that also help to contribute to participants' identity formation. In claiming that love generates the obligations I will explore throughout this paper, I am not claiming that it does so exclusively. Nevertheless, we bear these obligations to those we love because we have the ability to affect who they become in virtue of being in loving relationships with them, and with that ability comes the responsibility to do so.

Hard Conversations over Holiday Dinner

To begin, consider the conversation I've often had with students who come to office hours in the week before they head home for the holidays. Whatever class they're taking with me, be it in environmental ethics, feminism, or philosophy and race, they ask some version of the question: what am I supposed to say at dinner? Having just finished studying challenging work by philosophers like Karen Warren, Charles Mills, or Alison Jaggar, they are often worried how their families will react to their newfound beliefs about speciesism, racism, and sexism. It's not, of course, that they think their families are populated by bad people. Instead, my students face the challenge of confronting the attitudes and beliefs that generate what Jean Harvey called civilized oppression in those that they love the most.

[4] Thanks to an anonymous referee for this point.

DOI: 10.5206/fpq/2016.2.1

Civilized Oppression and the Failure to Perceive

Harvey distinguishes civilized oppression from more overt forms of oppression by arguing that it is neither formally codified by law nor violent. Instead, civilized oppression is grounded in what Harvey called "distorted relationships." Civilized oppression involves:

> A systematic and inappropriate control of people by those with more power. The oppressed are treated with disrespect, moral rights are denied or blocked, their lives are deprived of proper fulfillment, and they experience a series of frustrations and humiliations beyond all normal bounds. (Harvey 1999, 37)

One reason why civilized oppression is so pernicious is precisely because it is "civilized." It often goes unnoticed or unrecognized as oppression and is thereby able to, all the more pervasively, structure and limit the lives of those it affects. Otherwise well-meaning people often fail to realize that they act generally as agents of civilized oppression or to recognize particular actions that they commit as oppressive. Though they know that there is injustice in the world, they fail to recognize themselves as being complicit in its production. It's that failure to perceive with which I am concerned. Next, I will explore both what makes such failure possible and likely, again, with the goal of lovingly coming to better understand our interlocutor—to meet them where they are—so as to be able to help them to come to perceive.

Ideology and the Difficulties of Perceiving

One of the hallmarks of structural oppression is that it can exist even, as Iris Young argues, within a liberal and well-meaning society (1988, 271). Unjust and oppressive social structures are propped up and maintained by otherwise kind people—neither heroes nor villains—who are complicated and messy. People are able to act inconsistently, applying kindness in some areas of life but cruelty or indifference in others, in part because they are caught in the grips of an ideology (or overlapping ideologies) that helps to justify and make sense of why that disparate treatment is appropriate or fitting.

Ideologies are the social stories we tell ourselves that help to frame our understanding of the world. Following Haslanger, an ideology "is the background cognitive and affective frame that gives actions and reactions meaning within a social system and contributes to its survival" (Haslanger 2012, 447). Ideologies come to colonize consciousness (2012, 467); they craft what we perceive and how we interpret it, as well as what habits of body and attitudinal responses arise in us upon that interpretation.

None of this is to say that participation in an ideology is deterministic and unavoidable. Instead, ideologies should be understood as the social stories we tell

ourselves—and that telling is active; it's a thing that we collectively do and could stop doing. So, part of what Haslanger's ideology critique involves is working to tell ourselves different stories: stories that promote justice rather than oppression.

System Justification Bias and the Costs of Perceiving

Engaging in ideology critique and changing the social story that we tell ourselves is often very difficult and personally challenging because of various forms of cognitive bias that hinder such efforts. Though I will not here offer a thoroughly developed theory of the self, it seems clear that any plausible account will acknowledge that part of what it means to be you is (following Miranda Fricker) to be a knower (Fricker 2007). In short, what you believe is part of who you are. But of course, not all beliefs are equally important—some are more central or crucial to your identity than others. Your belief that today is Tuesday when it turns out to be Wednesday does not make up an important part of your identity. Your religious or cultural beliefs might.

Furthermore, work in social psychology demonstrates that we need to believe that the world is basically just and that we are basically morally good agents.[5] Such beliefs are often deeply important to us. It is existentially threatening to face the recognition that you are complicit in unjust social structures, that you participate in and prop up unjust institutions, that you enjoy unjust privilege, or that you have practiced what Harvey called moral abandonment—leaving others to suffer civilized oppression without acknowledging their situation, much less trying to help them to escape it (Harvey 1999, 71–73).

My point is that, since some beliefs help to identify us, challenging another's important, identity-defining beliefs can be a threat to the other herself. It is often said that, when we argue, we should critically engage with what our interlocutor is saying but not critically engage with the person saying it. Of course that's good rhetorical advice and *ad hominems* are bad arguments. But saying that we ought to critically engage with the content of what someone says, rather than with the person saying it, obscures the fact that it is often the case that to challenge someone's beliefs is to challenge the believer.

The beliefs that tend to be challenged at holiday dinner are often exactly the types of beliefs with which others are likely to identify. Take vegetarianism, one of the topics that gives my environmental ethics students the most concern, and one that will arise when their family members ask what they studied in class. If the students' newfound beliefs about speciesism and environmental justice are true, then their nonvegetarian family members must confront the fact that they are complicit in

[5] For a very helpful survey of these theses, see Jost and Hunyady 2002.

the exploitation of factory farm workers, the domination[6] of nonhuman animals, and the marginalization of the poor, who are disproportionately affected by the toxic waste produced in factory farms.[7] The realization of that complicity is deeply challenging for those whose sense of self is bound up with and partly defined by their moral innocence. It is not just that others don't like being confronted with their wrongful actions; it is that such confrontation is likely to be experienced as a challenge to how they understand themselves and their place in the world.

As another example, consider the privilege that white people enjoy in racist societies. If you are white, the suggestion that some of the things that you have accomplished are due to a stacked deck that works in your favor can challenge your sense of self, your sense of accomplishment. Since our accomplishments often serve as points of pride that bolster us and help us to keep going when things are hard, being confronted with the fact of white privilege can shake the sturdy foundations on which we ground our sense of self. So, even if we grant that someone does not actively contribute to structural racism, one is still likely to feel deeply challenged when one of the forms of privilege they enjoy is named.

In short, it is in our own intensely personal interest to believe both that we deserve the good things we have and are the sole causes of those impressive acts we have committed. Furthermore, we often need to believe that we are morally praiseworthy, that the world is just, and that our hands are clean. Agency itself can weigh heavily on someone, regardless of their social location. It is often hard just to be a person in the world, and each of these beliefs can help someone to get through the day. So it is no surprise (though it is still wrongful) that someone might respond, sometimes with linguistic, physical, or material violence, when their own sense of self is in some way threatened.

How Should We Respond?

I have so far said that what it means to lovingly force someone to perceive the world as it is and recognize themselves as they are includes understanding more fully what allows and encourages their working as agents of civilized oppression. Ideology

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[6] Here I follow Karen Warren who argues that humans dominate non-human animals when they treat nonhuman animals as appropriately subordinated to humans, and when this treatment is justified by what Warren calls a "logic of domination," which I take to be an unjust or oppressive ideology. For more on this, see Chapter 3 of her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (Warren 2000). Also helpful in understanding the domination of nonhuman animals is Jason Wyckoff's paper, "Linking Sexism and Speciesism" (Wyckoff 2014).

[7] Because factory farms emit significant amounts of toxic waste, it is usually the poor who are most directly affected by them, as they are often unable to move away.

enables perceptual failure; existential vulnerability and cognitive bias encourage it. Since different people occupy different social locations with varying forms of privilege and oppression, and since those features of their identity play a role in what type of bias they display or what part of the social story they emphasize or especially participate in telling, then meeting Baldwin's call in part requires knowing the person whom you are engaging—knowing them and their particular constitution—and meeting them where they are in order to help them to become better.

The next thing to explore is what the appropriate response is, once you have come to achieve at least some degree of that understanding. First, I will explore two examples of what not to do that I hope will be illustrative of what we should do instead.

Disengagement Is an Inadequate Response

The first response is what I'll call disengagement with the other party. There are two types of disengagement with which I'm concerned. The first is straightforward disconnection from a person—removing them from your life. This can take different forms, ranging from formally ending a relationship to passively dodging invitations to talk or spend time together to blocking them on social media. This approach, though often attractive, does nothing to challenge the oppressive views of the other; it does nothing to create what José Medina calls "epistemic friction," the internal tension we feel when we encounter beliefs that are contrary to our own and that we cannot easily dismiss or reconcile (Medina 2012, 27–55). If others do the same thing it promotes a type of intellectual segregation that thereby encourages the very beliefs that are oppressive. In other words, if I believe false things, but the only people who will talk with me also believe false things, then I never encounter those contradictory beliefs that are necessary for me to change my view. There are of course other methods by which I can encounter such beliefs; I could go to the library, for instance, and read some philosophy. But a major motivator for doing that type of research is direct intellectual engagement with others.

As Medina argues throughout *The Epistemology of Resistance*, we bear a variety of epistemic obligations, both to ourselves and to others. One of those obligations is to help others to learn and believe true things, especially when their current beliefs are themselves open to moral appraisal, or when they might lead to wrongful actions. There are various foundations that can ground such obligations, depending on the context in which you are operating. For instance, the duty to promote justice in general might ground the obligation to help a particular person who is likely to promote injustice through their actions as a result of their false beliefs. What I want to focus on here, however, is the special obligation that comes with being in a loving relationship with others. Part of what it means to love someone is to care about whether they act rightly, not because of some larger, more general goal, but

DOI: 10.5206/fpq/2016.2.1

because we care about them and their moral standing in particular. (I will return to this point in my discussion of moral solidarity, which I will argue is one of the appropriate responses to those whom we love.)

The second type of disengagement I want to explore is attitudinal. It is about how I regard someone when I write them off, seeing them as a lost cause. In this case I do not disengage from them in the ways just described—I might not refuse to spend time with them any longer—I simply refuse to engage with their oppressive views. I reconcile myself to the fact that we will "agree to disagree"—that their mind is set and there's no changing it, no matter what I say or do. I then disengage, not from the other, but from the particular parts of the other that I find objectionable. I might have good reasons to disengage in this way; it might, for instance, make for a much more pleasant holiday meal should we simply talk about things about which we agree or which don't inspire significant emotional response. But, as in the first type, by disengaging with the other in this way and writing them off as someone whose view is set, I leave the other's objectionable views unchallenged and thereby leave it to others, or to no one, to press them to grow.

Both types of disengagement, then, fail to accomplish my goal as someone committed to the promotion of social justice. By disengaging from the other, either wholly or in part, I leave their oppressive views unchallenged and do nothing to encourage the moral growth that Baldwin calls for.

Patronizing Disappointment Is an Inadequate Response

The second response that I believe we should avoid is one proposed by Fricker in *Epistemic Injustice.* She suggests that the proper attitudinal response to older people from less progressive generations who hold objectionable views is not anger or blame but disappointment (Fricker 2007, 106–107). For instance, when your grandfather says something racist at holiday dinner, you shouldn't get mad, but you should be disappointed. Becoming angry with him the way you might with your sister (or another contemporary) seems inappropriate, since he grew up in a time where such attitudes were the norm.

This is a curious conclusion, since Fricker granted that he does not suffer from what she later terms a hermeneutical lacuna; he has access to the collective interpretive resources necessary to get things right. If he didn't have access to those resources, it might indeed be inappropriate to be angry with him. But he does, so why should you hold the bar lower for him than for others?

Part of what motivates Fricker's conclusion might be that it is harder or more arduous for someone from an older generation to come to perceive things the way that a member of a younger generation does. After all, members of the younger generation have only to adopt the current story; members of the older generation had to adopt one story, then reject it, and then adopt another. It requires, as she says,

exceptional moral imagination (Fricker 2007, 106-107). That's more work, and insofar as our attitudinal responses ought to track the degree of work that it takes to act rightly, it seems excessive to blame your grandfather as much as you'd blame your sister (or another contemporary).

Again, as with disengagement, disappointment is often (though not always) an inadequate response to others' objectionable views. It is inadequate because we care about the regard others have for us, not just contingently as a matter of personal self-interest, but deeply, in virtue of being largely social beings. As P. F. Strawson argued in his canonical "Freedom and Resentment," when you get angry with me, you adopt a personal reactive attitude (Strawson 1974, 7–10) and simultaneously demonstrate your belief that I am a person rather than a thing; I'm a moral agent against whom resentment can appropriately be leveled, rather than a naturally occurring event, *about* which you might become angry, but *with* which you would not. Moral anger, then, can serve as a demonstration of respect (Murphy 1988, 16), both for yourself as the wronged party (Frye 1983, 87), and for the other as a moral agent (Strawson 1974, 6). It also conveys forward-looking expectation: born from your own sense of self-respect, your anger conveys that you expect to be treated differently in the future (Spelman 1989, 266–267).

Building on Medina's term, I contend that anger can serve as a valuable form of *affective friction.* Expressions of anger tend to stay with us long after the moment has passed, and we can often recall them with painful clarity. When others are angry with us, it often stops us short, encourages us to think through our past actions or reconsider our intended actions, and scrutinize our accompanying mental states. The anger of another is a challenge; it confronts us and forces us to account for ourselves and either provide some exculpatory defense (including the claim that the other is angry with us without good reason) or to accept responsibility when we have in fact acted wrongly and offer some type of reparative response instead. Or sometimes we actively choose to ignore the other's anger, as you might with a child throwing a tantrum or an adult whose position you judge (either rightly or wrongly) not to be worth engaging (Frye 1983, 89). Either way, it is experienced as something that requires active response. It can serve as a fixed point in your past when you make a choice either to continue down the path you are on or adjust course. In short, anger can serve as a powerful source of pushback that affects us deeply, either for better or worse. It is predicated on our recognition that the other is a person (Manne 2014) who is morally responsible for their actions rather than a thing or a naturally occurring event. It usually belies, from the beginning, the possibility that one has adopted what Strawson calls the objective attitude (Strawson 1974, 10), which is a way of regarding the other as someone to be managed, handled, or trained, rather than deeply engaged with as an equal.

DOI: 10.5206/fpq/2016.2.1

I do not mean to imply that all anger is valuable, healthy, or just; others are often angry with us for bad reasons, or they *express* their anger in morally reprehensible ways that can be deeply traumatic and painful. Furthermore, when expressed in a way that is threatening, anger can often shut someone down and prevent them from engaging deeply with the moral claim being made. Far from helping them to understand their own behavior as wrongful, inelegantly communicated anger can thwart such understanding by causing the other to dig in their heels and become defensive. Even that fact, however, is itself illuminating. The fact that such inappropriate expressions of anger can affect us so deeply demonstrates its power and demonstrates that it can be to help others to perceive and recognize clearly their own oppressive behavior.

On the other hand, disappointment often implies, not respect for the other, but a sense of patronizing superiority, perhaps also pity or haughtiness. You are disappointed when the puppy you are training soils the carpet, or when a child you are rearing fails to be honest at a point when their character is tested. Neither are full moral agents, and so the attitude is not disrespectful. However, when leveled against your grandfather, your disappointment might signal that you have adopted the objective stance towards him and that you do not think very much of him or his ability to grow. Since you adopt a different stance towards him than you would a contemporary, you assume some type of difference between them that is born, not from who he happens to be in particular but to "his generation" in general. Generalizing in that way reduces him to a caricature of himself rather than meeting him where he is and expecting him to do the hard work that living rightly entails.

Though I believe that Strawson and others are correct when they argue that moral anger (or resentment) is in some ways a special moral emotion, in that it usually conveys the types of value judgment named above, I do not claim that it does so necessarily or exclusively. Indeed, our emotional responses are often not so rational, and sometimes in practice we really might become angry *with* the puppy for soiling the carpet, forgetting that it is a puppy and not a full moral agent.

Furthermore, it is often the case that, because of differences in power between the parties involved, anger is not possible (at least not in the short term). Anger from a member of a subordinated group is a form of insubordination, and since it signals to the wrongdoer that the victim is willing to push back against wrongful treatment (Spelman 1989, 267), expressing anger can often be dangerous for the less powerful party and so not felt to be a live option. In the same way, anger might not feel like a live option for a child responding to a parent's oppressive views, even if the child is not herself a member of a subordinated group. For these reasons it is a mistake born from an overly idealized understanding of anger to claim that it is always the appropriate response to wrongdoing. Under nonideal circumstances, other moral

emotions might serve the same evaluative and communicative role as anger (MacLachlan 2010, 432).

It is also a mistake to claim that disappointment is always inappropriate. When communicated effectively, disappointment can avoid conveying that you have written the other off; instead, it is precisely because you hold them to a high standard that you are even capable of feeling disappointment about their behavior. In that way, like anger, disappointment can serve as a form of expectation; it is a bar that you set for the other and that you insist that they work to meet. Perhaps this is what Fricker was after in her discussion of whether we ought to feel disappointment rather than anger towards our grandfather. If so, then we have no disagreement, though it seems very important to be explicit in communicating to the other that you do not pity them, think them less than a full moral agent, or discount their ability to grow. I therefore distinguish between patronizing and non-patronizing disappointment, where the former is an objective attitude that treats the other as someone to be managed, and the latter is a personal reactive attitude that treats the other as a full moral agent capable of growth.

It may be illuminating at this point to note the ways in which moral anger differs from another moral emotion: contempt. Macalester Bell has argued that feminists ought to revalue contempt as they have revalued anger. On her analysis contempt entails four distinguishing features: a negative judgment concerning the status or standing of the object of contempt; a way of regarding or attending to the object of contempt accompanied by an unpleasant affective element; a comparison between the contemptuous and the object of contempt, generating positive self-feeling for the contemptuous; and psychological withdrawal or distance from the object of contempt (Bell 2005, 85). Importantly for my purposes, Bell says that "the contemptuous person takes herself to be *superior* to the object of her contempt along at least one dimension of comparison" (85). In short, contempt entails distance born from a judgment of moral superiority. The contemptuous person judges oneself to be better than the object of one's contempt, which creates psychological distance between them with the contemptuous elevated above the other. Moral anger, on the other hand, entails the judgment that the wrongdoer is not superior to the wronged party, and though it does not commit the angry party to keeping the wrongdoer psychologically close in their life, it is compatible with doing so in a way that contempt is not. Contempt entails disengagement from the object of your contempt as well as the comparative judgment that you are (at least in some respects) better than the object of contempt, whereas anger is engaged with and recognizes the moral agency of the other. In the next section I will argue that part of what it means to love another is to stay engaged with them and to recognize that your loved one is a fellow traveler, who like everyone else, has room to grow. For both of these reasons, then, love and contempt are incompatible (Bell 2005, 90).

DOI: 10.5206/fpq/2016.2.1

In summary, the core problem with disengagement, patronizing disappointment, and contempt is that all three communicate that the other is a finished product rather than a work in progress. In holding them in such poor regard, we abandon them to their condition. We treat "the way they are" as a static, unchangeable state when we fail to engage with them, when we fail to feel anger or non-patronizing disappointment for them, or when we feel contempt for them. And when we communicate that poor regard to them, we sacrifice the opportunity to press them to grow.

Moral Solidarity Is the Appropriate Response

Instead, we ought to be in moral solidarity with others rather than what Harvey called moral abandonment. She argued that part of what often makes civilized oppression harmful is that victims are alone in it, left to suffer its costs without the recognition of others in their moral community (Harvey 1999, 71–73). Harvey also argued that we ought to always remember that everyone is a moral work in progress. It's just not true, she said, that once a thief, always a thief (Harvey 1993, 220). Combining these claims, I contend that if we abandon agents of civilized oppression to their past actions and view others as lost causes or static states of affairs (adopting permanently Strawson's objective attitude towards them), then we fail to heed Baldwin's advice. In so doing, we retreat from our general responsibility to promote justice and are thereby complicit in the perpetuation of civilized oppression. In order to create the epistemic and affective friction necessary for those that we love to be less racist, less sexist, less speciesist, etc., we must not disengage from them.

However, that does not mean that we must always remain in relationships that are harmful. I believe we bear self-regarding obligations to care for ourselves, and sometimes those obligations take the form of exit from a relationship that is harmful or dangerous; sometimes we owe it to ourselves to disengage from others. Yet our circumstances are often not a zero-sum game. Many times we are able both to honor our own projects and care for ourselves while continuing to engage with those we love who bear oppressive mental states. It is those types of relationships with which I am concerned in this paper. I cannot explore here when exit is appropriate, except to note that determining when obligations to the self trump obligations to others is the messy and challenging work of everyday moral life that cannot be known in advance, free of context.

One reason why we should create epistemic and affective friction for those that we love who hold oppressive mental states is that, should we fail to do so, we become complicit in the wrongful behavior they might later commit. That is true, but I also take it to be relatively uncontroversial; surely I am partly to blame if I know someone plans to wrongfully harm another based on a false belief and do nothing to disabuse them of it. Furthermore, that general duty likely applies to those we do not

love; we might often have the obligation to confront the oppressive mental states of coworkers or acquaintances.

Importantly for my purposes, there is another reason why we ought to be in moral solidarity with those that we love—why we ought to stay with them rather than disengage from or abandon them and thereby work to create the epistemic and affective friction for them to grow and develop. Part of what being in a loving relationship means is caring about and being invested in their moral standing. That care and investment is particular rather than general, and it crucially involves concern for them—for who they are—rather than for justice itself. That means that when I fail to try to help you act rightly, when I fail to provide the pushback that we all need to correct course, it's not just that I might be complicit in your wrongful action, but that I fail to do what love requires. As I argued earlier, for various reasons we often fail to perceive injustice when we encounter it and fail to recognize ourselves as its agents. None of us are moral agents in isolation; we all need others in our moral community to help us to act rightly. Loving another involves not just being concerned for what others will do but for who they are. In other words, it's not just that I owe it to the world to help a loved one believe fewer racist things so that they will commit fewer racist actions, it's that I owe it to my loved one to help them not be racist. And I need my loved ones to try to satisfy the same obligation to me.

So we ought to be in moral solidarity with those people in our lives whom we love, but who hold oppressive attitudes, beliefs, or emotions. Part of what that means is not writing them off by assuming them to be lost causes and simply "agreeing to disagree." That doesn't mean, however, that we must always actively work to come to agreement whenever the opportunity presents itself. Think again about the scenario I described in the Holiday Dinner case. As it turns out, it might indeed be the right decision *not* to directly engage in controversial conversation, but to wait until later, for several reasons.

Returning again to the earlier point that system justification bias encourages us to perceive the world as fundamentally just and our own place in it as basically moral, it is deeply challenging to force someone to recognize that this is not the case. To do so in front of an audience (many of one's friends and family) and to do so during what is often an already stressful time (the holidays) is not only an unkindness, but counterproductive. Someone is primed to be defensive, and when threatened, to dig in to their beliefs and existing self-conception rather than being open to change and growth. Challenging at every turn the oppressive views of loved ones might often work against that goal.

I suggest instead that, in following Baldwin's recommendation that we lovingly force others to perceive themselves as agents of oppression, we do so slowly, over time. It involves not agreeing to disagree, but neither does it involve always looking for or seeking out active disagreement. It instead involves deep knowledge of the

DOI: 10.5206/fpq/2016.2.1

position of vulnerability and insecurity that others demonstrate when they lash out and shut down. It involves building an argument slowly, helping others to accept small premises that build cumulatively to more significant conclusions. And perhaps most of all it involves patience – the willingness to play the long game with someone, and to be with them through their moral development—just as we need others to be with us in ours.

Patience, however, does not imply the absence of emotion. As I have argued, anger is both a powerful form of self- and other-respect, as well as a powerful motivator for change. Part of what lovingly forcing others to perceive involves is anger: resenting their oppressive attitudes, beliefs, and emotions and communicating that anger, to the extent that doing so works to serve some useful and justifiable end. Disappointment also can urge others forward; it too can serve as a challenge—a moral bar that you claim the other ought to strive to meet and that you claim they are capable of meeting. They have *disappointed* you and fallen short of the high expectations you hold for them, but are not themselves *a disappointment.*

However, the fact that we should feel angry or disappointed with others does not mean we should always be as angry or disappointed as we can be, or that either emotion must always be present and felt in each moment. I can feel angry about some injustice or some past wrong, even if I do not currently, actively feel it (though a few moments' reflection would likely summon those feelings to the surface). Though loving others requires that we feel angry or disappointed with them, we should be careful not to become overwhelmed by either, or let those feelings ruin us or our relationship with those that we love, the way that sustained anger or disappointment can sometimes threaten to do. In short, we must attempt to strike a balance in which we hold on to our moral emotions as far as it is productive for us to do so, but no further (which is of course often a very hard line to detect and therefore easy to cross).

Does Strategic Thinking Amount to Adopting the Objective Attitude?

One might object that thinking strategically this way is the same as adopting Strawson's objective attitude. After all, that amounts to handling someone, treating them as something to be managed or trained, the same way we might train a dog or a very young child.

Admittedly, the difference between the two might often seem hazy. Strawson himself can be read to say that we can often switch back and forth between the two attitudinal stances, often from one moment to the next, and that doing so might be an important part of healthy interpersonal interaction (Strawson 1974, 23–24). So, if you are playing host for a holiday dinner and have a big group coming over, some of whom don't get along with each other, you might indeed think about how to

"manage" them (who should sit next to whom or what to say to change the subject in the event that an especially explosive topic is broached).

There is an important difference, however, in temporarily adopting the objective stance in order to minimize harm and discomfort and attempting to adopt (though Strawson doubts we ever could) the objective stance towards someone indefinitely (Strawson 1974, 27). I contend instead that when I feel anger or disappointment with a loved one who holds oppressive beliefs or attitudes but refrain from expressing it in the moment (or when I am intentional about crafting how, when, and under what circumstances I express it), I do so not in an attempt to manage my loved one, like I would a dog or a very young child, but as a fellow traveler who knows that moral growth is painful, dangerous, and often very slow. I thereby attempt to meet them where they are, respect them, and care for them in their complex uniqueness, not in order to get them to do what I want, but in the hope that they will achieve the potential that I recognize in them, knowing simultaneously that I require the same patience, care, and attention from others. Indeed, this journey is one that everyone (or nearly everyone) must undertake (Harvey 2007, 33). We all are steeped in oppressive ideologies that shape and mold our hearts, minds, and bodies. As a result, we all have considerable moral work to do, and we cannot do it alone. Remaking our inner lives so that they are free of prejudice and we may revel in liberation from oppression is an ongoing project with which we all must struggle.

Loving Others and Helping Them to Grow

Loving others involves not accepting them as they are and saying that they never need to change[8]; that is anathema to Baldwin's claim, and as I have argued, avoids creating the epistemic and affective friction necessary for them to grow. In practice, creating such friction can mean many things. A loved one's anger or disappointment, when communicated effectively, can alert me to a problem. It helps me to know that someone who loves and respects me believes I have work to do; an important project lies before me. Furthermore, moral solidarity, when communicated effectively, conveys to me that I am not alone and that my loved one is committed to me, both in the short term as I confront my problematic and existentially challenging

[8] None of this implies that everyone must undertake exactly the same type or degree of personal growth; of course there may well be some truly extraordinary people whose inner lives are already mostly in order, who are oriented attitudinally towards others with the proper type and amount of respect and kindness, and who do not harbor any prejudices based on social location. Loving such rare exemplars would then not require creating epistemic or affective friction for them. Unfortunately, most of us are not such exemplars and so need the type of pushback that Baldwin prescribes.

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inner life, and in the long term as I work to develop new attitudes, form new beliefs, and feel new emotions.

Of course, the mere expression of anger or disappointment alone is usually not enough. One must also be willing to share what they have learned, either in or outside the classroom, with their loved one. My students often feel daunted by that prospect. That feeling is justified, since doing so could come with serious costs, some of which might include the temporary or permanent severing of the relationship, ostracism from a group of friends or family, and the withdrawal of financial or material support by the one being challenged. Sometimes, such challenging conversations can result in physical violence. Being willing to risk those costs can require terrific courage. Since loving another often requires such engagement and challenge, that means that being willing to love another can itself be a courageous act.[9] Furthermore, though you might hope that your efforts will be appreciated (either in the short or long term), there is no guarantee that they will be. That means that in being willing to risk incurring those costs, you do so without any assurance that your loved one will be grateful for your efforts (or even that they will succeed). Doing what love requires, then, is often a risky and costly endeavor.

Even assuming that those serious costs are unlikely, I join my students in feeling daunted by the prospect of challenging a loved ones' problematic views, for there are many important differences between the conversations we have in the philosophy classroom and those that we might have out in the world, without the institutional power that comes with a grade book, and without a dedicated series of weeks in which to slowly and carefully unpack those concepts and understand how they fit together. It is for that last difference—time—that I contend that moral solidarity demands that we play the long game with those we love.

As I said at the outset, there are no arguments that magically change our interlocutors' attitudes, beliefs, and emotions. Instead, there is only the patient, slow work of arguing for minor premises that build, cumulatively and over time, to more significant conclusions. And often that "argumentation" won't be recognizable as such. It will frequently take the form of conversations that do not engage directly with the topic at hand but can serve as the groundwork from which fruitful conversations can grow in the future.

Sometimes exploring questions together will be more important and effective than arguing for specific claims. Socratic dialogue might often turn out to be a useful

[9] I reiterate my earlier point that we bear self-regarding duties to care for ourselves, which often trump those that we bear to others. I stress to my students that they must, first and foremost, take care of themselves when working to promote justice, so if they genuinely believe that these types of serious harms are likely to follow any particular conversation, it might well be the case that they ought not pursue it.

method of engaging with loved ones; after all, trusting that your loved ones don't just need to be lectured to but are thoughtful people who can think for themselves when prompted with particular questions demonstrates the respect I have argued we all ought to manifest through our attitudes and ways of engaging with others. Consider, for instance, a white student who is committed to promoting racial justice and who wants to help a loved one to recognize that some of their beliefs are racist.[10] Instead of straightforward confrontation, where the student simply accuses their loved one of being racist, they might start a conversation in which they say that one of the things they have been thinking and learning about is whether all white people contribute to structural racism without intending to, in virtue of the unfair advantage they have over people of color. If their loved one replies that there are no such advantages, the student might reply by asking questions like, "What if you had been born black? Would you now be in the same situation? Would you own the same property? Would you have the same job? Would you have built the same amount of wealth? Would you have the same types of interactions with the police?" Though it is likely that, in the moment, the student's loved one will feel defensive, when left to simmer over time such questions can be profoundly revelatory.

There are a host of resources that can be brought to bear on such conversations. Being in moral solidarity with a loved one and forcing them to confront their problematic inner life might come by way of shared activities like reading books or articles, watching films, or going to museums. And it will sometimes mean being willing to be vulnerable, to share your own lived experience of either the type of oppressive mental state involved (sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.) or some relevantly similar type, and then making the case that, if your loved one is concerned about the type of poor treatment you have experienced, they should also be concerned about their own oppressive mental states. It can mean helping your loved one to recognize that those who accuse them of sexism, racism, or homophobia are not just being "oversensitive." It can do so by giving your loved one epistemic access to particular experiences of those things as painful, frightening, and profoundly disrespectful, rather than experiences that simply require a thicker skin. Creating such access points for others to recognize that they believe or feel oppressive things will often require deep knowledge of their inner lives: their fears and struggles, joys and successes, how they think, what experiences they have had, and what types of points resonate with them or fall flat. Since we do not always have such knowledge of those we love, part of what love might then require is getting to know the other better in order to be able to build an argument whose force they might one day feel. These are but a few of the methods by which one might challenge a loved one to perceive.

[10] I owe this helpful example to an anonymous referee.

DOI: 10.5206/fpq/2016.2.1

Throughout such efforts it is essential to reject an attitude of self-importance or haughtiness. As Harvey argues, it is likely that everyone has gaps in their awareness and perceptual abilities, including those who are committed to promoting social justice (Harvey 2007, 33). Furthermore, even if someone is aware of their own biases and is able to overcome them, the theory on which they operate will often itself be flawed or incomplete. Indeed, a great deal of progressive and radical theory has turned out in retrospect not to be adequately inclusive, or to be subject to its own limitations, smuggled in via the background ideology within which the theory is born. And so it is crucial for my students (as well as for their teacher!) to remember that though they believe that they have good insight into the nature of social justice, and though they are right for wanting to share that insight with others, they should not view themselves as "fixing" their backward loved ones, as being superior to their loved ones for not knowing any better, or as having all the answers. Love and moral solidarity leave no room for moral arrogance.

In short, loving another involves meeting them where they are but expecting, urging, and insisting that they continue to grow and develop. Since belief is tied to identity, what we believe is a part of who we are. Pressing others to perceive the world as it is and to recognize themselves as agents of oppression can be an act of love when born from the belief and hope that they have the potential to be better. And, since we are very likely subject to similar perceptual failures, it is one of the ways in which others can love us as well.

In admiring the world-changing, liberatory work of famous activists, it is easy to fail to appreciate the small points of resistance in which almost everyone will have the opportunity to engage. We are all likely to love others who hold oppressive beliefs, attitudes, or emotions. That means that we all have the opportunity to work to challenge injustice, at least insofar as it is born from and perpetuated by such problematic inner lives. Though we very often should not stop with such efforts—our duties to promote justice often will require much more of us—we also should not fail to recognize and appreciate the important inner work that everyone should do, including those we love. Though such points of engagement might seem small, they are not insignificant. Since ideology colonizes consciousness, and since challenging ideology is a form of resistance, if loving another requires such challenge, then love itself becomes a form of resistance.

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