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TOGETHERNESS AS A MORAL NOTION

DOCTORAL THESIS

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Abstract

Moral philosophy for the most part conceives of morality in terms of rational action. An agent acts morally, in other words, if she acts as she ought to act on pains of rational inconsistency. Accordingly, interpersonal relationality, to the extent that it reflects moral value, is understood in terms of two or more individuals interacting with one another in rationally called-for ways. This approach can be called third-personal: what is morally decisive is the agent's reasons for acting, abstract entities equally accessible, and assessable, by all. This dissertation takes issue with two variants of such a third-personal approach to moral relationality, namely the moral thought of Immanuel Kant and John McDowell. The main effort of this work is to show that a) Kant's and McDowell's accounts fail to do justice to what it means to find oneself vis-à-vis a unique other, addressed by, and responding to, her, and b) to develop an alternative understanding of moral relationality that seeks recourse to Martin Buber's dialogical phenomenology and post-Wittgensteinian moral philosophy. The proposed alternative revolves around the notion of the second-personal relation – or the 'I-You relation,' as Buber speaks of it – and explicates how this mode of relationality not only underlies the third-personal understanding of morality but comes with its own *sui generis* moral-existential charge – namely the claim to respond lovingly to the other.

Keywords

Togetheress, I-You relation, Martin Buber, love, morality, goodness, conscience, Immanuel Kant, John McDowell

1. Problem Definition and Delineation

a. *On Togetherness*

The task that the present dissertation sets itself is, as the title says, the development of an account of *togetherness as a moral notion*. Yet, what I am after is not an analysis of the word ‘togetherness’, for what I want to show does not hang on it. Instead, I will develop the notion by speaking in various different terms, mostly of *relationality* and, more specifically, of *second-personal relationality* – or, differently put, of the *I-You relation*. Speaking of second-personal relationality in the way that I do *is* to speak of togetherness, namely of the togetherness of I and You. That is not to say that I-You togetherness is solely a matter of two or more individuals being mutually attentive to one another, as is the case, say, in a good conversation or in a loving embrace – far from it. Even the Good Samaritan – in the parable which I will discuss in chapter 6 – saw in the half dead man in the ditch a You and, in this sense, was together with him. So, wherever there is an I relating to a You, I and You are together in this minimal, yet already morally charged, sense. Yet, speaking of moral togetherness in this minimal sense is merely the *terminus a quo* of the present analysis and, thus, one side of the coin. The other side of the coin, the *terminus ad quem*, is togetherness understood as that towards which I-You relationality is ‘geared,’ so to speak, namely *loving togetherness*, or, as I will at times speak of it, *togetherness in a loving spirit*. This is not to be understood as an end or as some kind of intentional object of those who relate to one another as I and You; rather, it is, as it were, intrinsic to I-You relationality to move in the direction of loving togetherness. Phenomenologically, this movement is reflected in I and You finding themselves claimed in loving response to one another, as well as in the experience of witnessing love, especially when it is pure, as something of manifest and unqualified *goodness*. Accordingly, the less-than-good, all the way down to the morally bad and the evil, are, on the account that I offer, understood in terms of *unlovingness*, reflected in the forces that inhibit, oppose, or even destroy the movement of I and You towards one another in a loving spirit, fostering withdrawal, rejection, and separation instead.

b. The Second- and the Third-Personal

To many, this presumably sounds somewhat elusive, if not outright arcane. However, I will not throw you, the reader, in at the deep end but instead begin my discussion in a terrain that will be more familiar to most, especially those who are acquainted with ‘established’ moral philosophy, namely with the moral thought of Immanuel Kant and John McDowell. Both thinkers are particularly influential exponents of what I will call a third-personal approach to morality. To adopt a third-personal approach to morality means to conceive of it as primarily concerned with abstract entities that are equally accessible to, and assessable by, all, namely with *reasons*, as well as with the investigation of reasons and of what gives them their normative force, namely *rationality*. On third-personal views, then, moral relationality – that is, the relation between individuals to the extent that it is of moral significance – is understood as mediated by the respective individuals’ practical reason. In other words: when I relate to You, or You to me, in ways that reflect moral worth (or its lack), then this can be traced back to our capacity for rational thought and action, as it is this capacity that is in charge of judging, deliberating on, and deciding for the morally called-for ways of interacting with others. Accordingly, reflecting on the moral dimension of our interpersonal relations is understood in terms of articulating and assessing our reasons for interacting with one another as we do.

To conceive of morality in second-personal terms means to take issue with such a picture. In the following investigation, the criticism of third-personal accounts of morality revolves around the motif that a concern with reason directs one’s attention away from the unique other – the second-personal (You) – and towards the abstract – the third-personal, i.e. reason (It). This motif will play out in different ways throughout the dissertation, especially in the critical discussions of the first three chapters. Let me thus give an outline of the structure and the trajectory of the present work, beginning with the criticisms of the reason-centred accounts of moral relationality in the first three chapters and the subsequent development of the alternative, i.e. the second-personal and ‘love-centred’ conception of moral relationality, in chapters four to six.

2. Overview

Chapter 1: Kant

I begin in chapter 1 with an analysis of Immanuel Kant's conception of moral relationality. The reason for choosing Kant as my first 'opponent' is, in addition to the above mentioned factors, that his thought embodies a particularly deep variant of what I called a third-personal approach to moral philosophy, namely one that is, as it were, *purely* or *absolutely* third-personal. In other words, Kant's moral philosophy, at least as far as its metaphysical underpinnings go, has no room for the particular individual other than as an *occasion* for exercising one's moral duty.¹ At the same time, however, this disregard of the particular other leaves this other in a better position than do many other moral theories, namely in that it does not force the other into some positive conception but, in an attitude of respect, keeps the distance and, thus, leaves the other free.² This brings me to the structure of the chapter.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I begin by briefly outlining Kant's conception of reason, reason-giving, and the will before then showing what it means to relate to others in such a way that reason demands, i.e. by living up to one's positive duty (of beneficence) towards rational humanity.³ As this duty does not require personal interaction with particular others at all, I will then broaden my analysis so as to include the view that Kant developed in his later writings, namely of respect and love as complementary forces;⁴ in doing so, I show that, although thereby refining his account, Kant ultimately still fails to deliver a satisfying account of moral relationality because he remains unable to conceive of love as more than a mere inclination.⁵

In the second section, I then examine what it means for a will to be embedded in a concrete situation among others, thus bringing to light that Kant is unable to conceive of a relation with others that is not always already pre-

¹ Tim Henning, *Kants Ethik: Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2016), 74–5; my translation.

² Cf. Marina Barabas, "Transcending the Human," in *Religion Without Transcendence?*, eds. D. Z. Phillips & Timothy Tessin (London: Palgrave, 1997), 177–232, at 197–9.

³ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. & transl. by Allen W. Wood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 48.

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, transl. & ed. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 530–1 & 568–73.

⁵ *Ibid.*

mediated by the subject's reflective self-relation, failing to recognise that a reflective self-relation presupposes the relation with others.⁶

In the third section, finally, I set out to seek for traces of the second-personal in Kant's philosophy. To this end, I first subject his concept of the end-in-itself to a critical analysis that unearths the phenomenological presuppositions of his notion of absolute worth⁷ before eventually turning to his *Third Critique* and his belated attempt to develop a mode of relationality to the particular that is not mediated by the universal.⁸ After illustrating that this is where Kant gets closest to a proper understanding of the second-personal, I conclude my discussion by showing that he is ultimately kept in check by his failure to conceive of a relation to the world that is not practical yet still filled with meaning and salience.⁹

Chapter 2: McDowell

In chapter 2, I then turn to John McDowell. The reason for this turn is that McDowell sees similar problems in Kant's account as I do and that he locates the 'cure' for these problems in concepts that I also take to be crucial, namely *responsiveness*, *spontaneity*, and *perception*. In other words, McDowell seeks to re-embed the Kantian subject, detached from the world in rational self-relation, in the lived engagement with others,¹⁰ and in such a way that does justice to the spontaneous responsiveness that marks much of our interactions, even those that are morally charged.¹¹ Yet while I do think that McDowell enriches the Kantian 'story' in some respects, he falls behind it in others, eventually also failing to bring us closer to a genuine understanding of the second-personal. The main problem I see in McDowell's thought is his flawed account of the moral development of children.

⁶ Cf. Michael Theunissen, *Der Andere*, 273–7.

⁷ The examined section is found in the *Groundwork*, 45.

⁸ The passages I will focus on are found in the "Introduction" of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer; transl. Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66–7 & 57, as well as in the "Analysis of the Beautiful" (*ibid.*, 89–104).

⁹ Cf. Marina Barabas, "Transcending the Human," 207–19.

¹⁰ McDowell develops this line of thought primarily in John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), lectures 4–6 (66–126).

¹¹ Cf. John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason" & "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives," *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) respectively at 50–73 & 77–94.

This is how I will proceed to bring these issues to light: the chapter is subdivided into three sections. In the first section, I critically examine McDowell's language-centred conceptualism. To this effect, I first look at how McDowell conceives of the child's awakening to the world – namely as an awakening not primarily to *others*, but to *language*¹² (which, conceived of as a “repository of tradition,”¹³ means that the child is from its earliest moments onwards entirely at the mercy of the socio-historic forces shaping it). In the following two sub-sections, I then examine how McDowell conceives of the individual – which is, unsurprisingly, as always already *conceptualised*. Seeking recourse to Hannah Arendt and Christopher Cordner's discussion of Emmanuel Lévinas, I expose that McDowell can conceive of the particular other only as *relative* other, not as *absolute* other (Lévinas),¹⁴ only in terms of ‘what’ she is, not as a unique ‘who’ (Arendt).¹⁵ I transition towards his ethical thought by showing that McDowell, not unlike Kant, can conceive of salience, or meaningfulness, only as a function of the respective agent's conceptual outlook.

In the second section, I then turn towards the specifically ethical dimension of McDowell's understanding of relationality, again with a focus on upbringing. Here, Aristotle becomes far more central than Kant. I begin by sketching McDowell's understanding of ethical education with recourse to Aristotle's notions of ‘the *that*’ and ‘the *because*’,¹⁶ illustrating how, for McDowell (as for Aristotle), the child's moral life begins with the *acceptance* of what it is taught. The social dimension of the child's habituation into virtue becomes even more central in the following sub-section in which I bring to light an aspect of Aristotle's ethics that McDowell neglects, namely the important role of *the desire for social recognition* in the child's development of a conception of what is noble and, hence, virtuous.¹⁷

¹² John McDowell, “Anti-Realism and the Epistemology of Understanding,” *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 314–44, at 333.

¹³ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 126.

¹⁴ Christopher Cordner, *Ethical Encounter. The Depth of Moral Meaning* (London: Routledge, 2002), 84–5; cf. also Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, transl. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979) 194.

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 179.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.7 1098a33-b4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* e.g. X.9 1180b 3-7.

In section 3, I problematise the one-sidedness of the Aristotelian picture of moral development, suggesting that the parent-child relation is of moral significance not only to the extent that the parent *praises* the child when it acts appropriately and reproaches and *shames* it when it does not. I discuss this one-sidedness by means of an example which illustrates that, while the Aristotelian parent qua authority figure may make the child come to internalise a desire for doing what is noble, she is unable to make it see *the moral point* of what it is doing; indeed, an Aristotelian ethical upbringing may even turn out morally seriously flawed, namely to the extent that it diverts the child's attention away from others and towards a concern for nobility. I conclude the chapter with some remarks on the peculiar *lovelessness* of the McDowellian-Aristotelian account of ethical upbringing.

Chapter 3: From the Third- to the Second-Personal

Chapter 3 marks the transition to the second half of the dissertation. In the first section, that means 'becoming concrete.' This 'becoming concrete' takes the form of a detailed discussion of a multi-faceted example depicting a morally charged engagement of two individuals. I deliberately chose an autobiographical encounter, and one that is of great significance to me, both personally and in that it has been the object of much philosophical reflection already before I began to work on the present thesis. The motivation behind choosing this example is that it has served me for a long time as an exemplary case of an engagement of two individuals which emphatically *cannot* be made sense of by the kinds of reason-centred approaches to moral philosophy that I discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

The discussion of the example proceeds in three steps; in each of the three steps, one segment of the conversation is presented and subsequently discussed. The aim of the discussion is to illustrate that the conceptual armamentarium of thinkers such as Kant and McDowell – which I will refer to as 'the language of practical reason' – is unable to capture the morally salient dimension of the engagement. In the first step, I thus reveal the limitations of conceiving of interaction with others as grounded in deliberation and decision.¹⁸ In step two, I first show that neither Kant nor McDowell is able to account for the moral significance of emotions, such as pity, before problematising the notion of

¹⁸ For a good discussion of Kant's conception of deliberation and decision, cf. Tim Henning, *Kants Ethik*, 51–2; for McDowell on deliberation, decision, and choice, cf. "Eudaimonism and Realism," *Philosophical Essays*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 23–41, at 34.

(rational) intentionality, both in its Kantian and its McDowellian form.¹⁹ Lastly, I discuss the role of giving and asking for reasons in our morally charged engagements with one another, showing that the level of moral understanding that I am concerned with underlies rational discourse (to the point where the asking for reasons may itself become nonsensical).²⁰

In the chapter's second section, I then proceed to illustrate in which sense, and to which extent, both the Kantian as well as the McDowellian conception of moral relationality can be re-described in terms of what Martin Buber calls the I-It relation.²¹ This discussion reveals McDowell as the less radical moral thinker than Kant, precisely because he cannot but conceive of the other as an always already conceptualised other – an It, in Buber's language. Kant, on the other hand, while in a certain sense being *the* paradigmatic thinker of I-It relationality, is a decisive step ahead of McDowell, namely in that he, as already mentioned, puts at the heart of his moral thought the idea that the moral relation to the other must be a relation in which the other is *not* squeezed into a conceptual mold, hence refraining from conceiving of the other in terms of an It. This being said, conceiving of the other as *not-It* is not the same as relating to the other as *You* – which is why I leave Kant and McDowell behind at this point and turn towards the alternative offered by Buber.

Chapter 4: Buber and the I-You Relation

The discussion of Martin Buber's thought in chapter 4 marks the turning point of the dissertation. By this point, so I hope, the theoretical groundwork will have been laid so thoroughly that my shift towards a markedly different philosophical approach – namely one that fuses the phenomenological and the dialogical – will not strike the readers as elusive or arcane anymore but, instead, be welcomed as a promising alternative for countering the shortcomings that were laid bare in my discussion of the reason-centred accounts of interpersonal relationality.

¹⁹ Kantian intentionality will be understood in terms of instrumental or practical intentionality (cf. *Groundwork*, 31–8); McDowellian intentionality will be understood as 'for the sake of'-intentionality. (For a good discussion, cf. Stephen Crowell, "Who is the Political Actor? An Existential Phenomenological Approach," in *Phenomenology of the Political*, eds. Kevin Thompson & Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 11–28, at 20.)

²⁰ Cf. R. F. Holland, *Against Empiricism. On Education, Epistemology and Value* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1980), at 122–125.

²¹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), esp. at 53–6.

The chapter begins, in section 1, by positioning the present work in relation to the thought of Buber. This is important in that Buber considers himself as a religious thinker, whereas my work hardly addresses the religious.²² Yet, although God plays an important role in Buber's dialogical philosophy, a discussion of the moral-phenomenological dimension of the I-You relation, so my claim, need not make substantial reference to God. After this lead-in, section 2 picks up where I left off in the previous chapter, namely with Buber's thought that in-between I and You, there stands no It and that, in this sense, the relation is unmediated. This claim raises the question, discussed in section 3, as to how the relation between I, You, and It is to be understood; the answer is provided in the form of a differentiation between two forms of 'spokenness',²³ namely *speaking-with* and *speaking-about*: whereas speaking-with is unmediated and refers to how I and You address, and respond to, one another simply in virtue of their "whole being,"²⁴ speaking-about means I and You speaking about something, some It. In section 4, I then address the objection of an imagined McDowellian who holds that one need not postulate an unmediated I-You relation to account for contact with reality if one conceives of the mind-world relation dialectically.²⁵ In a final discussion of the subtleties of McDowell's thought, I show that, even dialectically understood, he ultimately fails to get us even an inkling closer to the You.

Section 5 then turns to Buber's own alternative, namely his dialogical phenomenology of what it means to find oneself standing in a relation to a You. Here, I first examine the temporal dimension of the encounter with the You, that is, a *presence* that is both lived and open to the future.²⁶ Then, I turn to how the You appears in space, namely as standing out from the It-world, indeed as that in the *light* of which the It-world appears.²⁷ In section 6, this phenomenological groundwork is implemented by showing what it means for I and You to relate to one another in a world shaped by social and historical forces. Here, Buber's differentiation between *person* and *ego* becomes central: while the ego relates to

²² The passage I will discuss is found in Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Routledge, 2002), 20–1.

²³ Buber, *I and Thou*, 175.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁵ For a helpful exposition of what it means to conceive of a mind-world relation dialectically, cf. Alessandro Bertinetto & Georg W. Bertram, "We Make Up the Rules as We Go Along: Improvisation as an Essential Aspect of Human Practices?," *Open Philosophy* 3 (2020): 202–21.

²⁶ Buber, *I and Thou*, 63–4.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 59.

others by first defining itself in terms of the concepts that it has acquired by being part of a socio-historical world, the person unreservedly puts itself at the mercy of the dialogue with others, so that any socio-historical factors merely constitute the necessary background.²⁸ I then shift my attention to the ethical dimension of Buber's thought. In section 7, I first discuss the encounter with the You in terms of a meeting of will and grace,²⁹ thus showing that on a Buberian picture, the ethical is never merely a matter of the I and its will but concerns just as much how the I is approached by, and thus encounters, that which is absolutely other to itself. In the final section, section 8, I eventually turn to responsibility and conscience, two notions that will become central in the dissertation's final chapter, and how, on a Buberian outlook, the moral demand announces itself from out of the dialogical precisely where the I had failed to respond wholeheartedly to the You and, thus, is haunted by the call of conscience.³⁰

Chapter 5: Love and the Second-Personal Relation

Chapter 5 functions as a transition between the dialogical (discussed in chapter 4) and the moral (discussed in chapter 6). The notion that I use to mediate between the two is *love* or, as I will often speak of it, *lovingness*. The task that the chapter sets itself is to translate the dialogical philosophy of Buber into a 'language of love,' that is, to show that, for an I to relate wholeheartedly to a You means to respond *lovingly*, or *in a loving spirit*.

The first section takes as its starting point the discussion of Buber's contentious remark that love, as a "metaphysical and metapsychical fact,"³¹ is "[t]he essential act that [...] establishes immediacy,"³² and, thus, relation. I first examine what Buber means when he speaks of love as 'metaphysical and metapsychical,' namely that love is emphatically not a feeling 'within' the respective individual and its psyche³³ but, instead, something that manifests between I and You (sub-section a.). That this does not mean that Buber thinks that all relations are perfectly loving is then shown in the subsequent discussion, namely by bringing to light that the I may reject the claim to respond lovingly that

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 111–5.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 62 & 124.

³⁰ Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 81 & 196–7.

³¹ Buber, *I and Thou*, 66.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ The view against which Buber positions himself is developed in more detail in Martin Buber & Maurice Friedmann, "Guilt und Guilt Feelings," *CrossCurrents* 8, no. 3 (1958): 193–210.

it faces vis-à-vis the You, thus turning away from the You and the relation (sub-section b.).³⁴ I then turn to the already mentioned distinction between love and lovingness, the former referring to love in the substantive or verbal sense (“There is *love* between them” or “I *love* you”), the latter in an adverbial sense (“She responded *lovingly* to him”); unsurprisingly, my attention will be focussed on the latter (sub-section c.).

In section two, constituting the main body of the chapter, I then examine how the notion of lovingness outlined in section 1 plays out in real life encounters and engagements between individuals, including what it means to respond unlovingly to others. This is done via five examples. The first example displays a loving engagement of two young lovers and, thus, examines what it means for two persons who love one another (in the ‘substantive’ sense) to engage lovingly with one another, paying special attention to what it may mean for them to lapse into unlovingness (sub-section a.).³⁵ Example two reflects on what it means for a moral-spiritual authority to respond lovingly to another who seeks him out for advice, thus raising the issues of what it may mean to be present in one’s words and of the relation between lovingness and power (sub-section b.).³⁶ I then turn to the Biblical story in which Jesus heals a possessed man³⁷ so as to examine what it means to respond lovingly in the face of danger and derangement; given that Jesus engages with the possessed man and with the evil spirits possessing him, the discussion will also provide the occasion for reflecting upon what it means to respond lovingly to two ‘individuals’ at the same time (sub-section c.). The fourth example returns to the conversation around which much of chapter 3 revolved, this time shifting the attention to the position to the ‘friend in need’ so as to examine what it means to bare one’s heart and to share one’s suffering with another in a loving way (sub-section d.).³⁸ Example five, finally, turns to Daryl Davis, a well-known political activist known for ‘converting’ Ku Klux Klan

³⁴ For similar view, cf. Simone Weil, *Simone Weil. An Anthology*, ed. Sian Miles (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 292.

³⁵ For a discussion in a similar spirit, cf. Camilla Kronqvist, “The Promise That Love Will Last,” *Inquiry* 54, No. 6 (2011): 650–68.

³⁶ The example that is discussed is taken from Raimond Gaita’s “The Personal in Ethics,” *Attention to Particulars. Essays in Honour of Rush Rhees (1905–89)*, eds. D. Z. Phillips & Peter Winch (London: Macmillan, 1989), 124–50, at 136–40.

³⁷ Mk 5.1-20.

³⁸ This discussion will draw substantially from Olli Lagerspetz & Lars Hertzberg, “Trust in Wittgenstein;” in *Trust*, eds. Pekka Mäkelä & Cynthia Townley (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 31–51.

members to leave their organisation,³⁹ so as to illustrate what it means to respond lovingly to those who are filled with hatred – and what it means to be ‘infected’ by their hatred (sub-section e.).⁴⁰

Chapter 6: Love’s Goodness

In chapter 6, I connect the love-centred understanding of interpersonal relationality, developed in chapter 5, to the moral domain. I do so in two steps, the first focussing on the ‘negative’ connection between love and morality, the second on the ‘positive’.

The negative connection between love and morality, discussed in section 1, is elucidated via the concept of conscience⁴¹ that was already introduced in chapter 4. Beginning sub-section 1 with a discussion of an everyday example in which someone is struck by her conscience after having failed to respond lovingly to another, I investigate the nature of conscience by juxtaposing three ‘contenders,’ namely *guilt*, *shame* and *remorse*. Expatiating that guilt and shame direct one’s attention away from the individual whom one has hurt or wronged – i.e. to a rule one has violated (guilt)⁴² or to one’s own flaws and shortcomings (shame)⁴³ – I expose them as spurious forms of conscience. Once again returning to Buber’s notion of conscience as the pained awakening to the belated address of the other, I expound that conscience, at least in cases of serious moral wrongdoing, is best understood in terms of remorse.⁴⁴ Before the background of this insight, I then critically discuss Raimond Gaita’s rich but in my view troubled claim that there are socio-cultural boundaries as to who does and who does not

³⁹ Cf. Daryl Davis, *Klan-Destine Relationships. A Black Man’s Odyssey in the Ku Klux Klan* (Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ For Buber on hatred, cf. *I and Thou*, 67–8.

⁴¹ Two other works to which I am especially indebted are Hannes Nykänen, *The ‘I’, the ‘You’ and the Soul* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2002), 318–90, as well as Joel Backström, *The Fear of Openness. An Essay on Friendship and the Roots of Morality* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2007), 318–68.

⁴² Cf. Christopher Cordner’s “Remorse and Moral Identity,” in *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*, ed. Kim Atkins & Catriona Mackenzie (London: Routledge, 2008), 232–51.

⁴³ Cf. Frederik Westerlund, “Shame, Love, and Morality”, *The Journal of Ethics* 26 (2022): 517–41.

⁴⁴ My understanding of remorse is, despite my reservations, strongly influenced by Raimond Gaita (cf. *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception* (London: Routledge, 2002), 43–63).

count as an intelligible object of remorse.⁴⁵ In sub-section two, I then reverse the set-up by turning to cases in which it is not *one's own* unlovingness that one is struck by but that of *another*. To this end, I return one more time to the example featured in chapter 3, this time so as to elucidate what it means to be disappointed and betrayed by another. After expounding that a loving response to another's unlovingness entails the attempt to bring the other (back) into a togetherness in which a loving spirit prevails, I reflect on the intricacies of the relation between remorse and forgiveness.⁴⁶ I end the discussion by turning to Kafka's short story "The Judgment"⁴⁷ in order to bring to light what it may mean for someone to be stuck in a life that is (almost) entirely devoid of the kind of love that I am concerned with.⁴⁸

In section two, I conclude the dissertation with a discussion of what it means to encounter love's moral charge in a 'positive' way. This takes the form of an examination of the experience of finding oneself standing witness to love that is of such a purity that one is struck by its manifest and undeniable *goodness*. The discussion begins, in the first sub-section, with a reimagining of the Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan⁴⁹, taking as its protagonist the Levite who turns around, and is moved, by the goodness of the love displayed in the Samaritan's response to the wounded man. Turning to Marina Barabas's insightful discussion of goodness,⁵⁰ I first develop the idea that the good person just *is* the loving person before complicating her claims that goodness inspires wonder and is encountered as extraordinary, showing that, while not mistaken, more nuance is required. This paves the way for my discussion of Raimond Gaita's understanding of saintly love in the second sub-section. The discussion revolves around an autobiographical anecdote of an encounter Gaita had in his youth with a nun

⁴⁵ Ibid., 156–63.

⁴⁶ This discussion will draw substantially from Hugo Strandberg, *Forgiveness and Moral Understanding*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) as well as Christopher Cowley, "Why Genuine Forgiveness must be Elective and Unconditional," *Ethical Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (2010): 556–79.

⁴⁷ Franz Kafka, "Das Urteil," in *Arkadia: ein Jahrbuch für die Dichtkunst*, edited by Max Brod (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1913), 53–65.

⁴⁸ In the course of this discussion, I will also critically discuss Judith Butler's reading of the story (*Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 46–49, 60 & 74–7.)

⁴⁹ Lk. 4.25-29.

⁵⁰ Marina Barabas's "In search of goodness", in *Philosophy, Ethics and a Common Humanity: Essays in Honour of Raimond Gaita*, ed. Christopher Corder (London: Routledge, 2011), 82–105.

whose pure love towards the ineradicably afflicted left a deep mark on him.⁵¹ Although Gaita's discussion offers deep insights regarding what it means to be struck by love's goodness and how such experiences may deepen our moral understanding, I nonetheless take issue with some of what he says. My main reservation once again concerns his culturalistic tendencies and his claim that what is and is not an intelligible object of love is bound up with, and in a certain sense bounded by, the prevalent 'language of love.'⁵² In sub-section three, I raise a further point of criticism against Gaita, namely his failure to see, or to address, that the light cast by love of a strikingly pure kind illuminates the life of the witness not only in the form of a practical challenge to overcome one's own flaws, but also by deepening how one will find oneself claimed in loving response to others.⁵³ I then conclude the dissertation by bringing to light that speaking of love's goodness does not, in the last instance, mean speaking of *the goodness of the one who loves purely* but, instead, *the goodness of loving togetherness as such*.

3. Results

The present dissertation a) has shown up the limitations of two seminal reason-centred accounts of moral relationality, namely those of Immanuel Kant and John McDowell, and b) has developed a more promising second-personal approach revolving around the notion of love.

The philosophical upshot of my critical discussions of Kant and McDowell (chapters 1 to 3) is multi-faceted. Firstly, showing up the flaws and limitations of any theoretical account is certainly a philosophical end in itself. Moreover, much of the criticism I provided, although delimited to the thought of two thinkers, also holds, in one way or another, for many, if not most, other philosophical accounts of moral relationality, at least those who also take reason as their central concept and understand morality primarily in terms of rational action. Lastly, the present work has offered a valuable contribution to moral philosophy in showing that, even in a particularly subtle contemporary vestment (i.e. in the thought of John McDowell), a conceptualistic outlook makes it

⁵¹ Cf. Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity. Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice* (London: Routledge, 2002), 17–26.

⁵² *Ibid.* 25–6; cf. also Gaita, *Good and Evil*, xxiii–xxxii.

⁵³ In this discussion, Christopher Cordner's "Unconditional Love?" (*Cogent Arts & Humanities* 3 (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2016.1207918>) will play an important role.

impossible to conceive of a relation to the unique, yet morally salient other – that is, to You.

The second part, from chapters 4 to 6, yielded further results. For one, it contributed to the re-actualisation of the thought of Martin Buber as a serious and profound philosopher and not merely as the ‘the forerunner of Lévinas’ or as the preacher of authenticity who, as Adorno derisively put it, plays “the Wurlitzer organ of the spirit.”⁵⁴ Secondly, it helped to connect the thought of Buber – and continental philosophy of the phenomenological/dialogical/existential kind, more generally – to contemporary post-Wittgensteinian moral philosophy, especially to a presently emerging, yet still somewhat minor current in moral philosophy that takes as its central notions love, conscience, and goodness and, thus, presents a very potent (and urgently needed) alternative to the moral philosophical mainstream. Its most valuable contribution, however, lies in its going beyond Buber by bringing to light the moral dimension of his thought, thus offering a new and radical understanding of moral relationality which subserves not only to criticise established, reason-centred moral philosophy but, as was shown in the final chapter, also the far more nuanced thought of thinkers such as Raimond Gaita.

4. Implications for Further Research

The dissertation paves the way for further research in various directions. Some of them are already adumbrated in the above, so I will be brief. One way in which the insights gained by the present dissertation can be put to use is by engaging in a critical dialogue with approaches that leave little or no room for an understanding of the second-person as irreducible to the third. Another is by further delving into the writings of Martin Buber so as to fathom the potential of his thought for moral philosophy. A third, no doubt promising, route would be to deepen the co-operation with the proponents of the above mentioned strand of post-Wittgensteinian moral philosophy so as to help to establish and strengthen a new direction in moral thought.

Apart from – or in addition to – these options, there is one possibility for further research that strikes me as especially attractive, namely that of implementing the philosophical insights of the present work in social and political philosophy. In a nutshell, the question that arises is the following: if morality is, at bottom, a matter of the relation between I to You, then what role

⁵⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, transl. Knut Tarnowski & Frederic Will (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 17.

does that relation play in the social or the political arena, that is, the realm in which a plurality of individuals stands in – often abstract, partly depersonalised – relation to one another and in which groups and institutions are substantially involved in how this dimension of our shared life is shaped? It would seem that pursuing this question promises an enriched understanding of the relation between the moral, the social, and the political, at the same time blurring the boundaries – for *some* kind of residue of I-You relationality is certainly also in *some* way present in the social and the political domain – and clarifying how they differ from one another – after all, the relation between, say, the citizens of a country is certainly *not* an I-You relation.

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