

Loving a Stranger

Jan Bransen
Radboud University Nijmegen

1. Introduction

People can be strangers to one another in many different ways. In our pluralistic global world this is often merely a matter of unfamiliarity between anonymous people accidentally meeting one another in public space. But sometimes the estrangement is deeper and seems to reflect not merely one's ignorance of the other person's scheme of orientation, evaluation and interpretation, but especially a lack of empathetic access to the stranger's motives. We may be inclined to relate to such strangers with indifference, with a lack of interest that under the influence of our respect for impartial morality might develop into something more decent: politeness, tolerance and civility.

In this paper, however, I shall explore an alternative motivational structure for our engagements with strangers, one that highlights the importance of reasons for love. Besides being a useful and promising alternative to impartial indifference, this motivational structure is theoretically interesting in its own right because it will enable us to improve our understanding of an important distinction between two types of reasons related to love – reasons *of* love and reasons *for* love.

I should like to set up the stage by distinguishing between three different scenarios in which someone interacts with a stranger, scenarios that will prove useful in developing my argument:

Meeting a Stranger:

This is the ordinary case of meeting an anonymous stranger in public space where each is engaged in a project of his own, say passing someone on the pavement or buying a newspaper. Strangers need some means to successfully attune their behaviour for each to succeed in pursuing their own project.

Standardly this is thought to be what I shall call the *Citizen Attitude*, grounded in impartial morality.

Love at First Sight:

This is the special occasion of meeting the love of your life for the first time.

Whatever the situation, you will feel intensely impressed by and attracted towards the other person. It need not literally be the first time you meet him or her¹, but this person, who is definitely still a stranger to you, clearly evokes reasons of love that unsolicitedly but empathically introduce themselves to you, such as the wish to know him better and to satisfy his desires.

Alienation:

This is the familiar albeit rare situation in which your partner significantly appears to be a total stranger. In such a situation your partner is of course not an ordinary stranger, but from a psychological point of view it is clear that the lack of resonance between your own and the other's scheme of orientation, evaluation

and interpretation amounts to the fact that your partner is in a relevant sense indeed a stranger.

I shall argue that an agent in *Alienation* has a specifically interesting type of reasons: reasons *for* love. *Alienation* lacks what is characteristic of *Love at First Sight*: the unsolicited presence of reasons *of* love, reasons that flow from love. And precisely because of the absence of these reasons of love, *Alienation* is a fruitful place to look for another type of love-related reasons: reasons *for* love. These are reasons to regain empathetic access to the reasons *of* love that used to motivate the agent's interactions with his beloved before his situation changed into *Alienation*.

The aim of the paper is to prepare the conceptual ground for the claim that people in *Meeting a Stranger* should reconstruct their motivational structure to acknowledge that – like the people in *Alienation* – they too have reasons for love and might better take on what I shall call the *Loving Attitude*.

2. The *Citizen Attitude*

There seems to be a standardly recommended way of approaching anonymous strangers in public space. It involves a variety of closely related civic virtues: politeness, respect, tolerance, considerateness, decency, law abidance, civility. It is generally associated with a basic respect for impartial morality, a set of constraints enforced by no one in particular but assumed by all of us as the broad and implicit context in which it is possible for the government to enforce the law. I shall call this standardly recommended way the *Citizen Attitude*. It gets ingrained in most of us by socialisation and moral

education, and it makes us treat strangers as fellow citizens, people entitled to an equal share in the fundamental conditions of well-being and respect. The *Citizen Attitude* requires us to acknowledge that in public space every person is in an important sense equal to every other, subject to the same laws as us, not merely the same political laws but also the same moral laws, whatever their nature will turn out to be. The idea is that just as we would want the bureaucracy to treat everyone equally and without special privileges, we should want ourselves to treat one another in a just and respectful manner, at least in public space where we meet numerous anonymous strangers whose interests might conflict.

The basic import of the *Citizen Attitude* is that we need confidence in the binding power of socially established rules to get along with one another as strangers in public space. Precisely which rules may be unclear, contested or debatable, but according to the *Citizen Attitude* we need rules for peaceful co-existence and fair social cooperation. Displaying our willingness to abide to the rules and to invest in reasoned dialogue about the rules in case they appear unclear or problematic, is key to what the *Citizen Attitude* recommends us to do in public space. In contrast, the *Loving Attitude* that I shall develop and defend in this paper does not focus on rules as the appropriate place to look for social glue.² Obviously, I shall be painting with broad strokes here, in an attempt to identify two basic attitudes – the *Citizen Attitude* and the *Loving Attitude* – that may not differ so much in how they treat difficult theoretical cases but that reinforce highly opposite mentalities in ordinary practice.

The *Citizen Attitude* encourages us to annul our personal loyalties in public space. That is, in the public realm we are supposed to act as if we are anonymous bureaucrats, quasi-official representatives of the government that execute a quasi-official function in

being a citizen and treating everyone as a stranger, as one more anonymous person entitled to the same treatment as everyone else. *Qualitate qua* bureaucrats are supposed to have neither friends nor relatives.

To be sure, bureaucrats are ordinary human beings, like you and me, people with friends and family. Their citizenship is just a role they play among other roles they are familiar with and between which they can easily switch: parent, child, neighbour, colleague, friend. They are just like us, and in public space we are just like them, full-blown persons that promise their colleagues to be in time, kiss their partner goodbye, say hello to their neighbour, and step aside to let a stranger pass by. We know when to take on the *Citizen Attitude*, and when we do we treat other persons as if they – and we – are *strangers*, impersonal equals with no recognizable loyalties. And rightly so, we may wish to emphasize. After all, in public space, where anonymous strangers interact, it seems just right that there is no partiality, that we are all treated as equals and that there is no arbitrary interference with the projects of some of us.

And yet, despite the assumed flexibility to switch between roles, the *Citizen Attitude* recommends us to hold on to the role of citizen in public space, especially in case of everyday conflicts between our loyalties and our civic obligations. The reason, actually, is simple. In public space – think, for instance, of some business party – an ordinary stranger who meets you and your friend might well be unacquainted with your relationship. For him, you are just two strangers. From his perspective he is just as strange to you as he is to your friend, *and in addition*, he will be right to assume that from the citizen point of view he is just as strange – or just as familiar – to you as your friend is to you. When we take on the *Citizen Attitude* there will be just three strangers none of whom can claim any special privileges based on loyalties. Loyalties, that is, are

in fact inconceivable from the citizen point of view. In public space, friends and relatives are so much more strangers.

Of course, in critical examples, such as Susan Wolf's, involving a mother who hides her lawbreaking son from the police, the impact of parental love may be so dramatic that it cannot, and should not, be silenced by the *Citizen Attitude*.³ But in many everyday examples the message of the *Citizen Attitude* will be plain and simple. Awaiting your turn with a stranger at the groceries you are not allowed to let a friend jump the queue and offer him your turn. Even if you wouldn't mind the wait, or would even love your friend to go first, you would disadvantage the stranger for a reason that according to the *Citizen Attitude* should have been silenced beforehand.

Giving up our loyalties has two closely related impeding consequences. The first is a depersonalizing effect. The *Citizen Attitude* invites us to act as if we (both ourselves and our interlocutors) are anonymous bureaucrats, agents without specific personal motivations. We are invited to address one another as if we are merely moved by impersonal reasons, reasons that would remain after we have filtered our identity, loyalties, projects and the like through the sieve of impartial morality. The *Citizen Attitude* suggests that the only kind of motives that are entitled to wiggle their part in our 'psychic stew'⁴ are impersonal ones, impartial concerns abstracted away from our personal engagements. Of course, this depersonalizing effect will in ordinary people be corrected by the weight of their personal concerns. But considered in isolation an extremely perfected *Citizen Attitude* would yield 'rational fools'⁵, not the egoistic variety Sen writes about, but equally distorted agents, perfect strangers, estranged by a deplorable 'veil of ignorance' from one another as well as from their own personal motives.

The second disadvantage is that the denial of our loyalties by the *Citizen Attitude* supports a division between our personal and our public life each having its own motives. It is as if we are to think of our 'psychic stew' as divided over two bowls, one for friends and family filled with reasons of love, and one for strangers filled with impartial and impersonal commands. This is bad for two reasons. One is that we deprive ourselves in the public domain of the prosocial, harmonizing and reconciling powers of reasons of love. The other is that we support the tendency for reasons of love to go 'underground', to play a secret and subconscious role, to produce *strange* behaviour concealing double standards.

3. Interlude: two ways to read the parable of the Good Samaritan

One way to emphasize that the *Citizen Attitude* is problematic as a mentality, even though it may produce good results in certain critical examples, is to point out two different ways to read the parable of the Good Samaritan. This story is obviously intended to inspire us with a striking example of the right attitude towards strangers in anonymous public environments. Yet, the Good Samaritan's behaviour can be understood as motivated by two very different attitudes. On the first reading the Good Samaritan is an *Impartial* Samaritan, someone who has adopted the *Citizen Attitude* and helps the injured stranger because he ignores and silences his own loyalties in public space. But on the second reading the Good Samaritan is rather a *Loving* Samaritan, someone who has adopted the *Loving Attitude* and accordingly is inclined to expand his loyalties, to include injured strangers in his moral circle, and to care for them as he would for himself, his family and his friends.

The *Loving Attitude* provides us with a special type of reasons – reasons *for* love. These reasons enable us to cope with strangers because of our loyalties. This has edifying effects, reinforcing our willingness and capacity to create and support lovable plural subjects. As such the *Loving Attitude* encourages us to draw our motives from resources we know to be strong but have learned to overlook in *Meeting a Stranger* and are likely to misunderstand in *Alienation*.

In the next two sections I shall elaborate on these issues, discussing in section 4 the distinction between reasons *of* and reasons *for* love and in section 5 the possibility of a plural subject constituted by a loving agent and his beloved stranger. In the final section I shall try to get a bit beyond the preparatory work that dominates this paper and fill in some of the details of what the *Loving Attitude* amounts to.

4. Love and its reasons

There is an interesting difference between *Love at First Sight* and *Alienation*. In *Love at First Sight*, upon meeting the stranger that is to become the love of your life, the reasons of love introduce themselves quite forcefully and undeniably, whereas in *Alienation* they seem to have disappeared completely leaving you behind helplessly. What are these reasons *of* love? In *Love at First Sight*, the person you meet is a stranger, in looks, history, background and identity. But yet you're touched. You want to know him, to care for him, to know what moves him, to resonate happily and satisfyingly with his scheme of orientation, evaluation and interpretation. You want to identify, to value what he values, to share actions, to unite, to constitute one plural subject, that is, to be able to use the plural pronoun "we" as if it naturally refers to you and him as one single entity.⁶

Interestingly, even though the stranger elicits this loving response, the reasons for this response seem to flow from your love itself. They don't seem to be grounded in the object of your love.⁷

Love is a complex volition structure that generates an abundance of reasons to selflessly care for your beloved, to be with him, and to experience your life as fulfilled in virtue of his flourishing. This structure includes cognitive, evaluative, affective, emotional and motivational states.⁸

This volitional structure is painfully silent in *Alienation*. There is a dreadful lack of resonance between your and your partner's scheme of orientation, evaluation and interpretation. In *Alienation* the intimate relationship between two people is seriously threatened. The plural subject constituted by the bond of love is threatened to fall apart, to be blown to pieces. And since you are obviously and deeply invested in this plural subject, since this plural subject is in an important sense providing the vital context of your life, you are fighting for your life, so to speak, in protecting and trying to revive this plural subject.

Let me elaborate a bit on how this looks like for the various mental states involved in the complex volitional structure of love.

Cognitively speaking the problem in *Alienation* seems to be that you fail to grasp your partner's lovability. Here is a way to describe this in abstract terms, neglecting many difficulties. Assume for a moment that lovability is a supervening property. It need not supervene on just a small list of natural properties of your partner. We all understand the desperate non-starter of having to answer in virtue of which properties you love your beloved. Your partner's lovability is a relational property that will, if at all, supervene on a complex and scattered set of properties – properties of him, of yourself, of the context, of the relation, and perhaps even more. God knows on what properties

your partner's lovability supervenes, but in *Alienation* you seem to have quite convincing evidence that whatever your partner's lovability supervenes on it does not, it *cannot*, supervene on the properties your partner obviously seem to have. You just cannot understand anymore what made him so lovable. His identity and behaviour – the very person he *is* – just seem to make it impossible that he is lovable. So what went wrong? Was it blind projection to begin with? Was it mere appearance? Did he change in hopelessly disappointing ways? It seems obvious that you actually do not know him at all.

There is one obvious lesson here, a lesson too obvious to overlook for the disengaged observer, but easily neglected by the characters in *Alienation*: do engage in some serious and critical reflection. After all, if there is something to know that you fail to grasp – in this case your partner's lovability – then there is, in line with the nature of cognition, only one person to blame: the knowing subject. You. You are epistemically responsible for your failure to see your partner's lovability. There used to be evidence, abundant evidence, that he *is* lovable. There used to be reasons *of* love that relate him to you as the object of your love. So if you fail to grasp them now, in *Alienation*, you have reasons *for* love to reflect critically on your cognitive attitude towards him. How is it possible that you fail to perceive his lovability? What is the evidence you have about his scheme of orientation, evaluation and interpretation? What inferences are you entitled to? Have your circumstances changed such that you are now incapable of taking up the appropriate perspective? These are the kind of questions your reasons for love will advise you to address.

Emotionally speaking, however, this cognitively motivated advice is easily defeated. As is well-known from psychological and neurological research, emotions are a fundamentally adaptive resource that easily and often outflank cognitive

considerations.⁹ Of course, people react emotionally in many different ways. Some will be angry and fight, will try to change their partner's subverting properties, attempt to undo his appalling changes. Others will respond with fear and flight, have an affair, become a workaholic, or loose themselves in a pointless hobby. Still others will become indifferent, will give in to what the Spanish call 'desamor', and will allow themselves to accept that the disappearance of reasons *of* love amounts to the disappearance of *love*. Full stop. And some may feel an emotion that resonates with the cognitively motivated advise: curiosity. They might discover the motivating force of reasons for love.

After all, motivationally speaking, *Alienation* is most interesting. It allows us to distinguish between reasons *of* love and reasons *for* love. That is, in *Alienation* there are important reasons to search for and to find reasons of love. These reasons *for* love flow from the scenario you find yourself in, but unlike reasons *of* love, they do not flow from your own volitional response to the scenario. These reasons are in some sense objectively afforded to you, but somehow you seem to have lost the subjective capacity to attune to them. These reasons *for* love come from without, whereas reasons *of* love come from within.

It is important to grasp the sense in which reasons for love come from without. Loyalty is a key issue here. You are invested in the plural subject that is constituted by the relationship. You are acting out this plural subject, playing your own part as good as you can and as long as you can. But loyalty can be self-interest in disguise. Reasons of self-interest, however, differ from reasons for love. If the relationship is merely of instrumental value, if you have an interest in its survival merely because you have an interest in your own flourishing, and if you are inclined to see your partner merely as a means to your own well-being, then your motives are obviously no reasons for love.

To be sure, in the practice of living a human life it may not be so easy to get the relevant distinction right. It may be difficult to distinguish clearly between on the one hand yourself as a person that is *not* essentially engaged in the plural subject that is your relationship and on the other hand yourself as a person that *is* essentially engaged in this plural subject. You might wish the plural subject to flourish because you might wish to flourish yourself, while thinking at the same time that you are essentially determined by being a part of this plural subject. If that is the right picture there may be no difference between reasons of self-interest, thus conceived, and reasons for love.

But if this is the picture, it is not enough to think of your *reasons for love* as basically structured as reasons of self-interest. That would get the order wrong. Being satisfied, having your own actual desires met, is – to formulate it as radically as I can – an unintended side-effect of acting on reasons for love. Love is importantly selfless, and this is so, as I have argued elsewhere, even in the case of self-love.¹⁰ Your reasons for love are reasons to make the plural subject, the relationship itself, flourish. There is a sense in which this means that what you love is the relationship itself, even though I have some doubts about the overall plausibility of a view such as Kolodny's that focusses crucially on the relationship rather than on the person you love.¹¹

The distinction between *Alienation* and *Love at First Sight* might explain some of my worries about a view such as Kolodny's. In *Alienation* your reasons for love motivate you to restore the situation in which your reasons of love make you tick, enjoy life, and love your partner. In *Love at First Sight* you do not need reasons for love, since the reasons of love present themselves clearly and empathically. Kolodny's theory, therefore, seems most plausible for situations close to *Alienation*. In *Alienation* you lack the reasons that present themselves abundantly in *Love at First Sight*, the reasons of love that move you, unreflectively and as if in flow, to care for the flourishing of your beloved.

In *Alienation*, however, you have reasons for love, reasons for actions aimed at recovering the reasons of love you need to experience and enjoy your love for what it is: love.

The resulting picture is that the reasons for love you have in *Alienation* are grounded in a psychological attitude that is not itself the state of *being in love*. This attitude is what I shall call the *Loving Attitude*, an attitude characterized primarily as a volitional structure comprised of reasons *for* love, but not, as such, a structure that consists of, implies, or necessarily will produce reasons *of* love. It rather is an attitude somehow informed by the remembrance of the reasons of love, the associated lovability of your beloved, and of the love – the *loving* – itself. The image I like most is that in *Alienation* you are moved by the apperception of the lovely, deeply rewarding and fulfilling *future* that is contained as a promise in the plural subject's *past*. This is the image that allows me to develop the *Loving Attitude* as an attitude that seems appropriate not merely in *Alienation* but also in *Meeting a Stranger*.

5. Meeting alienation: sharing a step into the future

There is of course a very important difference between *Alienation* and *Meeting a Stranger*. Although it may be convincing that in some sense the experience of your partner as a total stranger is very real in *Alienation*, and although it may be plausible that in psychological matters experiences are materially real in their consequences, it is also obviously true that the stranger in *Alienation* differs tremendously from the stranger in *Meeting a Stranger*. The latter stranger is unfamiliar in all dimensions, but your partner, even if you experience him as a stranger, is of course very familiar in terms

of looks, history, and background. And even in terms of identity it is only in an intimate sense that your partner may appear to be a stranger. It almost seems confusing to use one and the same word, *stranger*, for both persons.

There is an important corrolary. In *Alienation* there already exists a sufficiently substantial plural subject of which you and the so-called 'stranger' are the building blocks, and in which, therefore, both partners are seriously personally engaged. But in *Meeting a Stranger* no such plural subject exists and we might even wonder whether we should wish there to be such a plural subject. It is just a stranger, after all, someone you meet on just a single occasion, someone whose trajectory through space and time is likely never again to cross your own trajectory. What could be the point of wishing to use the plural pronoun "we" as if it naturally refers to you and the stranger as one single entity? Why should we look for reasons of love? What reasons do we have for love in *Meeting a Stranger*?

I intend to suggest an answer to these questions indirectly, by taking a detour into *Alienation*. I have no conclusive argument to motivate you to love a stranger. I wouldn't even want to. The very idea of such an argument sounds grotesquely naïve and confounded. I merely want to paint an attractive picture of how we could and why we might wish to love strangers. But just as there is no overriding reason to give up an unhappy marriage there is no such reason to love a stranger.¹²

In *Alienation* it is clear, however, that something has to go. Something should happen, and the reasons for love in this situation definitely suggest that a *change of heart* is needed. As I suggested above, these reasons are grounded in the apperception of the lovely, deeply rewarding and fullfilling *future* that is contained as a promise in the plural subject's *past*. Acknowledging as a sad and broken partner in a plural subject's

decline that you have arrived in *Alienation* requires, in itself, quite a change of heart. You might fail to see it. You might continue to act on your habits as you did for years; you might act on faint memories of your reasons of love. But those are not reasons for love, reasons you need when the love seems gone. *Alienation* is a situation that is itself easy to misunderstand, to overlook, to mistake for something else, for your fate in life, for instance, a miserable, loveless life.

To realize that you are in *Alienation*, and to be capable of talking about it with your partner and to collectively share with him the judgement that the two of you have indeed arrived in *Alienation* – that, actually, may already be a major step towards making the change of heart you need to overcome *Alienation*. Once you have acknowledged that you reached *Alienation*, you might be well-placed to take up the *Loving Attitude*, and to act on reasons for love that might enable you to regain your love and the flow of the plural subject you are part of. This requires you to sublimate your history in order to regain a future.¹³ It requires you to accept that hanging on to the way things were is not going to work. It requires critical reflection on your own inclinations, in an attempt to distinguish responses that support your partner's lovability from those that don't.

Central to the argument of this paper is a distinction between two notions of sharing a history. One can share a history by sharing a past; just a past, a collection of memories, such as what you share, for instance, with a fellow traveller with whom you waited a couple of hours for a delayed flight. But one can also share a history by sharing a continuing story, a narrative trajectory through time, such as what you share, for instance, with a colleague working on a similar subject. One basically shares a step into the future then, rather than a past. Maximizing the difference between the two clarifies an important sense in which sharing a past does not provide much of a ground for

sharing a continuing story. How much we already did together is not in itself a good reason to think we share a step into the future as a plural subject. And it is the future bit of sharing a history that is needed for a plural subject to flourish.

In *Alienation* people know they share a past. They will remember things they did together. But precisely its being a past rather than a continuing story reinforces the alienation. You may continue as usual. Sure. You may stick to your habits. You may hang on to the plural subject that dominates your life. Sure. But that has nothing to do with acting on reasons for love. That is not what the *Loving Attitude* would recommend.

I should like to argue that the same holds true for *Meeting a Stranger*, despite the obvious difference that you do not share a past with the stranger. But just as the past in *Alienation* is motivationally inert, it is in *Meeting a Stranger*. You may continue as usual. Sure. You may stick to your habits. You may trust your abstract way of getting along with a generalized other, adopt the *Citizen Attitude* and act on merely impartial reasons. Sure. You may proceed as a single individual, a social atom, an anonymous bureaucrat, moulding others to fit your own action scheme, navigating hopefully unharmed through public space. You need not act on reasons for love to coordinate your actions in public space. But you may. You may try to instigate a plural subject, create a “we” that comprises both you and the stranger. Out of sympathy; out of reasons for love.

Of course, the past in *Alienation* used to be a history, not merely a collection of memories, but an ungoing narrative that bears the promise of a fulfilling future. But in *Alienation* all that is left is a past. That is why you require a change of heart to get out of *Alienation*. What you need is a *Loving Attitude*. You should be able and willing to sublimate your history to regain a new future, a new “we”. You need reasons for love – in the absence of reasons of love.

With respect to *Meeting a Stranger* this means that the fact that you do not share a past with the stranger you meet is no reason to think you could not constitute a flourishing plural subject. What *Alienation* teaches us is that the fact that we share or do not share a past is irrelevant to the promise that we might share a step into a flourishing future. In this respect *Meeting a Stranger* is much more similar to *Alienation* than one might have thought at first sight. *Meeting a Stranger* is, therefore, a situation in which the *Loving Attitude* might be well appropriate.

6. The *Loving Attitude*: a rough outline

Much of this paper has been preparatory. It is time now to fill in some of the details of what the *Loving Attitude* amounts to. The argument so far has made a case for this attitude being a matter of acting on reasons for love in an attempt to set up a plural subject, to be able to use the plural pronoun “we” as if it naturally refers to yourself and a stranger as if the two of you constitute a single unity. The aim of this plural subject is to allow the stranger to flourish, as if it were your object of love. That is, your reasons for love motivate you to selflessly bring this plural subject into existence and to appreciate it for providing the context in which you will love your care and concern for the other person’s flourishing. The *Loving Attitude* is an interesting mix of evaluative sensitivity, imagination, courage, and trust.

Here is an outline of how the attitude would look like in two concrete examples, illustrating how the *Loving Attitude* could appropriately be adopted in both *Alienation* and *Meeting a Stranger*. In the first example you really have arrived in *Alienation* with a partner who spends lots of money and lots of time to a hobby you honestly think is

extremely boring. And in the second example you enjoy a drink at a terrace and witness a very unpleasant, slightly rude argument between a waiter and a customer who complains that his salad tastes too bitter. Suppose you feel inclined to do something. How will your reasons for love look like if you have a *Loving Attitude*?

1.

The first step will be to discover why the stranger does what he does. You cannot love another person unless you know what will make him flourish in terms of his own agency, in terms of how he will be able to live his own life. You would not be able to form a plural subject with a stranger unless you know enough about his scheme of orientation, evaluation and interpretation. The superficial question about a stranger's reasons for action takes on a much more substantial character as soon as your point is not merely to predict the stranger's behaviour but to approach him as if he could be the object of your love, someone to identify with, someone with whom to constitute a lovable plural subject. You may dislike the hobby of your partner, but if you want to overcome *Alienation*, you should figure out why it seems to make sense to him to spend so much time and money to it. And you may dislike the loud voice in which the customer complains about his salad, but the *Loving Attitude* requires that you come to understand why he acts in public space as shamelessly rude as he seems to be doing. This means you will have to develop the right kind of sensitivity and imagination to uncover the stranger's reasons for action. Motivationally speaking this can really be demanding; it requires you to reconsider your own reasons for action, to overcome your emotionally charged inclination to fight, flight, or loose interest, and to put your self-interest in proper perspective.

2.

The next step is to endorse the stranger's values. In order to love a person and form a plural subject, you should not merely know why the stranger acts as he does, but you should be able too to support the stranger in acting in line with what he values. This is not an advise to become the stranger's servant and to give up your own goals; not at all. But to share a world in which you could join the stranger and act together as a plural subject, you should critically investigate how your and the stranger's schemes of orientation and evaluation can be attuned. Once you know why your partner spends time and money on her hobby, you can begin to look for some common goal that would allow you to act as a plural subject to realize the value that made your partner spend time and money on that boring hobby. Likewise, there may be some value that the customer is absolutely right in defending, perhaps even in the rude way he displays, a value you may succeed to support in a way that is less embarrassing to the waiter. Of course you may reject the customer's behaviour, but still stand up for him. And you can do so out of love, without this being an attempt to pacify wild animals by playing music.

3.

Adopting the *Loving Attitude* implies that you should acknowledge your own and the stranger's vulnerability. Attempting to share a world and to constitute a plural subject is a matter of engaging in a precarious adventure. There is no guarantee you will succeed. You will need the courage and trust that are characteristic of the agent in *Love at first sight*. When reasons of love enthusiastically introduce themselves to you they typically also provide you with the courage and trust to embark on the adventure of love. In *Love at First Sight* you need no reasons for love. In *Love at First Sight* love precedes its reasons. But in *Alienation* and in *Meeting a Stranger* our reasons for love precede the

anticipated reasons *of* love. That is what makes the adventure precarious. That is what creates the vulnerability, which is one of the typical features we have to deal with in matters of trust. Sharing a world and sharing values requires you to accept that each one of you is partially in control of the conditions of satisfaction of your shared agency. You should trust the other to play their role and to sincerely stay oriented to the good and the true. But there is no guarantee that the stranger will do as you please like there is no guarantee for the stranger that you will do as he pleases.

4.

Yet, precisely at this point the *Loving Attitude* will make a difference and will differ most significantly from the *Citizen Attitude*. The *Citizen Attitude* advises you to ground your trust in what is assumed to be a social contract. You will be reminded of the fact that there is an underlying agreement to respect the commands of public morality. The *Citizen Attitude* will presumably advise you to neglect the argument between the waiter and the customer. It is none of your business. There is no need to interfere and what is more, the *Citizen Attitude* will give you reason to blame the customer for his loud voice and his rude manners. After all, he should not interfere with you and should allow you to enjoy a quiet drink at the terrace.

The *Loving Attitude* gives you a completely different picture. The customer and the waiter share your world, whether you want it or not. You may decide to ignore them, but it is easy to imagine that there comes a point at which ignoring them makes no further sense. Suppose the customer asks you what you think of the hospitality of the waiter. Or suppose he starts throwing with the cutlery and a fork almost hits you. So if they entered your world anyway it seems appropriate to take the lead if you see reason to do so. And the *Loving Attitude* gives you reason to do so. The analogy with *Alienation*

is telling. In *Alienation* it is abundantly clear that there is no point in reminding your partner that you made an agreement. There is no point in complaining and no point in claiming some right, as if your partner promised in matrimony not to become a stranger. The *Loving Attitude* turns the issue around and advises you to take the lead. It gives you reason to set up a plural subject and to take the responsibility to make it work. The *Loving Attitude* advises you to be courageous and to trust yourself, to accommodate the stranger, to invite him to share in a plural subject for which you will take the responsibility. The *Loving Attitude* gives you reason to be the stranger's host in a valuable shared world and a lovely companionship.

In *Alienation* this is compatible with lovingly working towards the end of the relationship. The companionship you host with your *Loving Attitude* may be short-lived, as it will in *Meeting a Stranger*. The *Loving Attitude* doesn't require the stranger to reciprocate with love. It is not the anticipatory first step of what is intended to develop into dialogical love.¹⁴ The *Loving Attitude* recommends you to take the lead and be the stranger's host, independent of his attitude towards you.

It will not be easy to adopt the *Loving Attitude*. Especially not in *Alienation*. People know that. It may seem equally difficult in *Meeting a Stranger*. But it is not. It is just highly unusual. Yet it is easy to imagine that some charming kind of courtesy might do a wonderful job at the terrace. Some people know how to strike the right chord and to settle in an affectionate and warm manner such an uncomfortable argument as I imagined between the waiter and the customer. This is a competence we may think some have but most lack. Yet you can develop it and practice it. It will reinforce your *Loving Attitude* and cultivate a 'psychic stew' crowded by reasons for love.

Probably you even have much more experience in the *Loving Attitude* than you are aware of. After all, most of us will be quite capable of striking the right chord in our

friendships or in our interactions with some of our relatives. Most of us are capable of loving, of responding appropriately when reasons of love introduce themselves. We may remind ourselves of these successes, of the courage and the trust and the lightness of our undertakings when we are in love. Reminding us of the loving behaviour we are naturally capable of when we are touched by reasons of love might help us adopt the right attitude when we are looking for love, when we are acting on reasons for love.¹⁵

References

- Bransen, J., 2006, 'Selfless Self-Love', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 9(1): 3-25.
- Bratman, M., 2000, 'Reflection, Planning, and Temporally Extended Agency', *The Philosophical Review*, 109(1): 35-61.
- Calhoun, C., 2000, 'The Virtue of Civility', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 29(3), 251-275.
- Frankfurt, H., 1999, 'Autonomy, Necessity, and Love', in *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 129-41.
- Frankfurt, H., 2004, *The Reasons of Love*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Greenberg, L., 2008, 'Emotion and Cognition in Psychotherapy: The Transforming Power of Affect', *Canadian Psychology*, 49(1): 49-59.
- Haybron, D., 2008, *The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-Being*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Helm, B., 2010, *Love, Friendship, and the Self: Intimacy, Identification, and the Social Nature of Persons*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kolodny, N., 2003, 'Love as Valuing a Relationship', *The Philosophical Review*, 112: 135-89.
- Nagel, T., 1991. *Equality and Partiality*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scheffler, S., 2010. 'Morality and Reasonable Partiality,' in Feltham & Cottingham (eds.), *Partiality and Impartiality: Morality, Special Relationships, and the Wider World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 98-130.
- Sen, A., 1977, 'Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 6(4): 317-44.
- Velleman, J. D., 1999, 'Love as a Moral Emotion', *Ethics*, 109: 338-74.

Williams, B., 1981, 'Persons, Character, and Morality,' reprinted in *Moral Luck*,
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–19.

Wolf, Susan, 1992. 'Morality and Partiality,' *Philosophical Perspectives*, 6: 243–59.

¹ I would prefer the use of gender-neutral language, but for reasons of space I shall refer to your partner as if he is male, without suggesting anything about your gender or your sexual orientation.

² There is a lot of highly interesting work that explores in different ways the kind of tension that I am hinting at here between on the one hand the requirements of impartial morality and on the other hand the requirements of friendship, personal loyalties, special relationships, and the like. Cf. Nagel 1991, Scheffler 2010, Calhoun 2000, Williams 1981, Wolf 1992.

³ Wolf, 1992: 253.

⁴ The catchy metaphor is Bratman's. See Bratman, 2000.

⁵ Sen, 1977.

⁶ And, of course, you want to have sex with him. That too. Cf. Ben-Ze'ev, this volume.

⁷ This is a dominant, contested theme in Frankfurt's work on love. See Frankfurt 1999, 2004.

⁸ Whatever the differences between today's leading philosophers of love, this much seems uncontested. Cf. Frankfurt 1999, 2004; Helm 2010, Kolodny 2003 and Velleman 1999.

⁹ Greenberg 2008.

¹⁰ Bransen, 2006.

¹¹ Kolodny, 2003.

¹² We seem to be quite good in adapting ourselves to circumstances that in the end make us unhappy. See Haybron 2008.

¹³ To be sure, this future may be one with or without the continuation of the relationship. In *Alienation*, reasons for love might encourage some to end the relationship and others to revive it.

¹⁴ Pace Krebs, this volume.

¹⁵ Thanks to the editors of this volume for their keen comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Thanks as well to the participants of the Pardubice workshop on love and its objects for their comments and questions, and especially to Monica Roland for many valuable suggestions.