The Racial Veil:
Racial Perception and The Inner Moral Life

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Abstract: Philosophers of race and other writers in the Black and Latinx intellectual traditions have remarked on what it is like to live under "the racial gaze," to be shaped and limited by the way whites perceive us. However, little work has been spent developing how the racial gaze functions in whites', and other racially privileged people's, moral psychology. I argue in this paper that there is a morally objectionable way of perceiving people of color. This claim builds on an insight from Iris Murdoch that our perception can be morally evaluable and extends it to issues of race. I articulate how racial stereotypes and misvaluing distort one's perception of people of color and that these distortions are organizing around a dominant conception for race that plays an important role in the oppression of people of color. I believe understanding racist perception lays a foundation for understanding the moral dimensions of interpersonal (as opposed to structural) racism.

Sick venom in men and women overcome with pride
…Race barriers make inferior you and I

-Kendrick Lamar, "PRIDE."

In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Frantz Fanon (2008) analyses how whites often talk to people of color like how adults talk to children, by "simpering, murmuring, fussing, and coddling" them (p. 14). This practice, Fanon writes, is extremely common and results in the person of color feeling inferior. As he puts it, "to speak gobbledygook to a black man is insulting, for it means he is the gook" (2008, p. 15). But it was what Fanon says next about this insulting, inferiorizing behavior that is fascinating. Fanon writes, "we'll be told there is no intention to willfully give offense. OK, but it is precisely this absence of will—this offhand manner; this casualness; and the ease with which they classify him, imprison him at an uncivilized and primitive level—that is insulting" (2008, p. 15). It is specifically the *lack* of

intention, the *casualness* that makes this behavior morally objectionable. Whatever is going morally wrong here, it cannot be found in one's *will.*

Moral philosophy, particularly in the analytic tradition, has largely been preoccupied with making moral judgments based solely on the will, actions, and attendant consequences. Philosophers might find themselves reaching for a Kantian notion of will, arguing that an *ill will* or racial antipathy produces such racist behavior, as Jorge Garcia (1996) does. However, this explanation is unsatisfying, for as Fanon (2008) recounts, "speaking to black people in this way is an attempt to reach down to them, to make them feel at ease, to make oneself understood and reassure them" (p. 14). Such speakers believe to be acting from a *good* will, with the purest of intentions.[1]

One may then reach for the consequentialist analysis, looking at how such behavior, when done regularly, harms people of color, limiting their ability to move about the world. While there is something certainly right about this move, there *are* morally bad consequences from this behavior, it does not capture the offensiveness of casually placing someone in a lower station. It provides, then, only a partial explanation of the harm but misses something important going on inside the agent's consciousness, something that cannot be explained by one's will.[2]

Iris Murdoch (1970) argues that focusing just on the will and consequences keeps us from recognizing important aspects of our moral lives, particularly our inner moral lives. For Murdoch, the very way in which we perceive others can be morally objectionable, bringing in a host of self-preoccupied anxieties that get in the way of us properly attending to the people around us. While Murdoch is concerned with how our anxious, self-preoccupied psyche gets in the way of attending to others well, she does not consider the way the self is constructed socially, including racially constructed. Racially distorted perception is precisely what is going wrong in the case Fanon presents us. There is something in the perception of people of color that is morally objectionable, something that immediately and invisibly traps people of color at the "uncivilized and primitive level."

[1] Charles Mills (2003) discusses at length how the will, particularly Garcia's conception of ill will, fails to capture what is going wrong in many racist interactions due to whites often having good will toward Blacks.

[2] The consequences approach to understanding racist behavior is evident in the literature on microaggressions, focusing on how the microaggressee experiences the microaggression (McClure and Rini 2020) or what the microaggression communicates to the victim (Perez Gomez 2021).

I argue that there is a morally objectionable way of perceiving people of color.[3] I build on the existing racial perception literature, supplemented by Murdoch, to show how such perception shapes our ethical lives. Currently, philosophers' discussion of racial perception has largely concerned *racial embodiment,* detailing how the white gaze makes people of color aware of our difference and political inferiority (see, Alcoff 1999; Yancy 2008, 2014; Al-Saji 2014; and Ngo 2017). Although there is general recognition that such perception is harmful, constituting part of the lived experience of racial oppression, there has not been significant attention to how racial perception shapes our moral psychology. By recognizing how our perception is morally problematic—before one engages in potentially harmful and racist actions—we gain better understanding of the moral dimensions of interpersonal (as opposed to structural) racism, with those interpersonal varieties constituting a separate problem from the structural varieties.

I begin by detailing the racial perception literature, articulating the insights of how to understand racial perception and the way it manifests in white subjects. I then turn to Murdoch, using her account of self-preoccupied perception to articulate a moral psychology of racial perception. I argue that when someone internalizes racist ideology, it habituates the anxious, self-preoccupied psych to engage in racially problematic patterns of attention.[4] I then consider what insights and explanations this perceptual approach provides us when considering interpersonal ethical issues that arise out of racism. I conclude with some thoughts on Murdoch's view that morally good perception involves a just and loving attention and how such attention relates to the task of overcoming racial perception.

1. Racial Perception and Racial Embodiment

"Visual differences are 'real' differences, and by that very fact they are especially valuable for the naturalizing ideologies of racism," writes Linda Martín Alcoff (1999), proposing a new way to engage with the concept of *race*. Alcoff noticed a continuing

[3] I specifically refer to perception of this kind as either 'morally objectionable' or 'morally problematic' as opposed to 'immoral' to mark a difference in the way in which perception can be morally bad. For something to be immoral, I take it that one needs to have wronged another or failed to live up to some moral obligation or duty. On the other hand, something is morally problematic if it is in some way wrong, objectionable, or lousy, while still not being strictly speaking morally impermissible.

[4] I use the locution 'racist ideology' to mark that I understand ideology in the critical, evaluative tradition that by having an ideology one is functioning with the faulty system of thought. For more on ideology see Shelby (2003, 2014) and Mills (2017).

confusion over the concept of race, with many either essentializing race or dismissing it as empty despite the clear political influence it has in our lives. Instead, Alcoff argues we should focus on a more contextualist account of race that centers the experience of racial embodiment, particularly how we as people of color are *seen as* black or brown, and the various ways this gaze is communicated to us, creating the awareness of our place in the racial hierarchy.

Racial perception explains how racist ideologies create the experience of being racialized, making people of color aware of their racial embodiment. George Yancy (2008) describes how a white woman looks at him with suspicion as he enters an elevator, "I feel that in their eyes I am this indistinguishable, amorphous, black seething mass, a token of danger, a threat, a criminal, a burden, a rapacious animal incapable of delayed gratification" (p. 18). Notably, the white gaze plays a role in white embodiment as well. Philosophers such as Alcoff (1999), Yancy (2014), and Helen Ngo (2017) build on the work of Merleau-Ponty to show how the white gaze creates a white embodiment, an embodiment that communicates to people of color their difference (see Yancy 2014 p. 48-50). Racial perception brings with it several habits, norms, and pressures that make race all too real to those of us who are not white. George Yancy (2008) recounts being followed by white security guards and white sales people avoiding touching his hand, illustrating the habits white people engage in that communicate their racialized perception. Yancy (2014) also recounts the chilling effect of car doors locking (*Click. Click. Click.*) as he walks by, regularly accompanied by "white nervous gestures, and eyes that want to look, but are hesitant to do so" (p. 48). Yancy (2014) argues that these *clicks* perform white identities, acting as signifiers of regulated space, disciplining bodies (p. 49). The awareness brought on by such intimations of perception make clear the different space people of color and whites occupy, creating unease in those of us on the wrong end of the racial hierarchy.

But racial perception is not just about how whites perceive people of color, but how that kind of perception can be internalized by people of color. W.E.B. Du Bois (2008) famously writes that Black people in America are "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others… measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p.7). Furthermore, people of color can develop a double-conscious, perceiving oneself both "through the eyes of others" and clearly through their own "eyes." As Charles Mills (2017) notes, such double-consciousness involves conceptual labor, partitioning off the white gaze from one's own self-perception, recognizing the falsity and

harm in it (p. 107). Notably, double-consciousness allows one to see the same things differently, finding new ways to understand and conceptualize the world that are closed off by the racist ideology present in the internalized white gaze.

This is an important dimension of racial perception: it is *thick.* It is not the case that such perception is thin, providing neutral, isolated information that is then misinterpreted in racially oppressive ways—it is a *way* of perceiving the world as racially hierarchized. As Alia Al-Saji (2014) argues, it is a perception that naturalizes race, where all is given to the perceiver before their own judgment intervenes (p. 137 & 144). Building on Fanon and Merleau-Ponty, Al-Saji (2014) argues that the perception is a learned activity, that it is habituated and makes the visual, bodily features of people of color stand in for race itself, leading to essentialist notions of race. These perceptual activities and habits go unnoticed by the perceiver, taking what lies before one's senses as unmediated information. Many claims which might appear as judgments, are actually ways of viewing the world that are harder to dislodge than consciously reflected on beliefs due to how they appear as given.

To illustrate the thick and immediate nature of racial perception, imagine that you are walking with a friend through the park. As you are walking, you notice a Latinx family walking through the park as well. Ahead of them is a police officer. Your friend points out that once the Latinx family notices the officer, they take a path that leads them away from the officer and deeper into the park. Your friend remarks, "Look at those illegals, they are trying to avoid that police officer!" You are struck by this remark because to you they are simply a Latinx family walking in the park. In response, you question, "why do you think they are even immigrants?" Your friend responds, "well, why else would people who look like *that* want to avoid the officer?" Your friend's perception of the Latinx family as "illegals" turns on your friend seeing a brown-skinned family (potentially) trying to avoid the officer.

One can perceive this same behavior in several different ways, however. Perhaps that was their planned route the whole time, or perhaps, since they are Latinx, they have experienced harassment from police in the past, so they would rather not interact with them.[5] The family is being perceived in two different ways. Your friend, due to racist socialization, is perceiving the family as "illegals", whereas your perception of them is as a Latinx family walking in the park.

[5] Notice that the second interpretation here turns on recognizing the family as Latinx, in this case the family's race is salient in your perception, but the notion of race being recognized here is different.

Racial perception sustains these misperceptions by rationalizing itself (see, Al-Saji 2014, p. 137). This perception provides answers for the way we perceive the world, taking the "unmediated given" as a reaction to the racialized others. There is an underlying racist logic to perceiving the Latinx family as "illegals" based on their behavior around the police officer. By rationalizing appearances, this perception is also self-sustaining (ibid., p. 138-9). It is difficult for counter evidence to come into view if everything is already explained as if it were a given truth.

Importantly, such perception can sustain itself through forgetting there is a *self* involved in the perceiving. The role the self plays in such perceiving will be central for understanding the moral dimension of such perception. Racial perception is structured to forget that there is an agent engaged in perceiving, partly explaining the intractability of such perception, and the difficulty in recognizing the underlying moral problem. In this way, racial perception is also *affective*. Racial perception is not solely a matter of perceptual processing, but also the way our affect shapes and adds texture to such perceptions, creating the embodied nature of such perception that communicates itself to people of color while leaving itself unrecognized by those perceiving us (see, Al-Saji, 2014, p. 138-142).

Racial perception, through these various functions and processes, perpetuates racial oppression, effectively creating interpersonal barriers for people of color. The way it does this is through multiple means. George Yancy (2014 and 2017) argues racial perception can serve as a form of violence to people of color, involving profiling and policing of black and brown bodies (p. 8). Racial perception also maintains racial privilege (Yancy 2014, p. 49). Similarly, Al-Saji (2014) argues that the naturalizing effect of racial perception makes it so racialized bodies must be seen as inferior (p. 137). Such perception, then, certainly harms people of color, perpetuating our position under a racial hierarchy, limiting our movement through the world.

Current philosophical research into racial perception provides a series of insights into the metaphysics and embodiment of racial existence, explaining how the nature of racialized judgments is rooted in ideology, evading conscious deliberation, and how such perception harms people of color and limits our ability to live our lives. It is hard to read work about how the white gaze makes our lives more anxious, dangerous, and marginalized and not conclude there is a moral harm present. Racialized perception, I believe, provides us with a good story about what's going wrong in many interpersonal instances of racism that takes seriously the political and material roots of oppression. As

I will discuss in the third section, many approaches to ethical issues of racism, which arise in interpersonal contexts, do so without recognizing how racism is structured politically, often to their detriment. Furthermore, de-centering the will and consequences in our moral evaluation opens new ways of approaching moral problems.

Giving a moral psychological account of racial perception allows us to both recognize how the interpersonal and institutional instantiations of racism are related and enrichen our moral analysis of the moral problems that arise from racism.

2. Iris Murdoch and Racial Perception, Moralized

Many of the dimensions of racial perception philosophers discuss were foreshadowed by Iris Murdoch's (1970) work on moral perception. However, where philosophers of race recognize how we are influenced by racist society and ideology, Murdoch focused almost exclusively on the role the self played in distorting our perception. My aim here is to explore the moral dimensions of racial perception by attending to how racist ideology shapes the anxious, self-preoccupied psyche that Murdoch thought got in the way of our moral perception.

Murdoch (1970) sought to open the scope of ethics by making us aware of how we *perceive* one another, arguing that there is significant moral change occurring in a person's inner consciousness. She illustrates this point through the example of a mother-in-law's (M) perception of her daughter-in-law (D). Stipulating that M always acts perfectly well toward D, and that we can even assume that D has moved away or died, Murdoch writes that M perceives D as "certainly unpolished and lacking in dignity and refinement," a girl inclined to being "pert and familiar, insufficiently ceremonious, brusque, sometimes positively rude, always tiresomely juvenile," believing her son to have married a "silly vulgar girl" who is "beneath" him (p. 17-18). Time passes, and M decides to re-attend to D, telling herself, ''I am old-fashioned and conventional. I may be prejudiced and narrow-minded. I may be snobbish. I am certainly jealous. Let me look again" (p. 18). On this deliberate reflection, M finds that D is "not vulgar but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful" (p. 18). M's perception of D not only changes, but morally improves upon discovering a more accurate picture of D's character, doing so without M engaging in any different behavior—the change happening internal to M's consciousness.

While Murdoch uses this example to illustrate a criticism of utilitarianism and behaviorism, it serves as a nice example of how perception morally functions, its relation

to one's character, and the influence of social forces on our perception. Her picture of perception is active, involving certain forms of engagement and habituation (in the same way many philosophers talk about racial perception). For Murdoch, these habits have to do with the kind of attention one gives. Like most of us, M is caught up in certain *patterns* of attention that direct one's focus, making specific details salient, providing self-confirming information all while disappearing the act of perceiving itself. Notably, misperception can involve both attending to the wrong details and failing to attend to the correct details. Many instances of misperception involve failing to recognize morally salient information, having important details disappear from our senses. One can consciously direct one's attention (like M), but just as often we passively let our habits organize the information. But how can such patterns of attention be morally problematic?

Murdoch (1970) writes that "…by opening our eyes we do not necessarily see what confronts us. We are anxiety-ridden animals. Our minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying *veil* which partially conceals the world" (p. 76-77, 82). When we perceive in this self-preoccupied way our perception is vicious or morally objectionable. This is because the self gets in the way of attending to others or the world around us, filling in details that help preserve our own beliefs, desires, goals, and values. One's vices begin to inform one's view of the world, filling in details, creating this "falsifying veil." However, when someone gets distance from their "self" one can start attending in a morally good way, in a way that recognizes the other's humanity, looking beyond one's own beliefs, desires, goals, and values. One can give what she calls a "just and loving attention" to others, perceiving them virtuously. Consider how this works in the example of M and D.

M's patterns of attention are deeply self-preoccupied. It is what leads M initially to perceive D as a "silly vulgar girl." Murdoch states that M is snobbish, jealous, and likely prejudicial against D. M's "anxious" and "self-preoccupied" psyche organizes M's attention altering her picture of D. M's snobbery and prejudice, we may suppose, causes her to perceive D as vulgar and undignified as opposed to refreshingly simple and spontaneous. Her jealousy causes her to perceive D as noisy and tiresomely juvenile as opposed to gay and delightfully youthful. The various vices arrange her attention, leading her to these distorted images. Snobbery, prejudice, and jealousy are all ways that one's psyche can protect and insulate the self by inflating the value of one's personal taste, by judging those who don't conform to their values, and by believing themselves to be worthy or entitled to what others have.

The morally problematic nature of this self-preoccupation is rooted in the way patterns of attention constitute a habit that keeps one from properly engaging with others. While there are certainly degrees of conscious attention various people in our lives are owed—our best friend deserves greater attention than the employee who bags our groceries—no one deserves to be engaged with via a self-preoccupied fantasy. When the patterns of our attention are organized by our prejudice or jealousy, these patterns function as habits of perception. The moral problem is not a mere case of doing disservice to any one person, but the way we show up in others' lives as self-preoccupied. The morally evaluable trait is inner because it's not just distorting specific instances of perception, but altering how we move about the world, habitually perceiving and conceptualizing the people and the world around us in faulty ways.

In effect, Murdoch opens a new area of moral evaluation, carving out a space where the morally evaluable aspects of our inner mental lives are immediate; do not involve the will, deliberation, or conscious inferences; and often run contrary to or are in contradiction with our explicitly held beliefs. Notice the connection to how philosophers talk about racial perception, often emphasizing its immediacy, lack of conscious judgment, and perpetuation despite beliefs in racial equality (Alcoff 1999). If someone mistakes a Chicano professor as a janitor while exiting the restroom it is not the case that they are making a conscious inference from the Chicano's appearance to his job at the university. The immediacy of the perceptual mistake could leave one shocked. Imagine our perceiver calls out, "this restroom needs more toilet paper!" only to then, upon further attention, recognize what they did, finding themselves embarrassed and apologetic. Being embarrassed is evidence that racial perception often runs contrary to or are in contradiction with our explicitly held beliefs. Such embarrassment is rooted in their consciously endorsed beliefs that not all Chicanos are janitors or that Chicano professors deserve their jobs, yet they perceive this Chicano professor as a janitor all the same. Furthermore, it is not solely the act of shouting out, "this restroom needs more toilet paper!" that is morally objectionable, but the way one perceives the Chicano professor-mistook-as-janitor in the first place. There is a clear sense in which our perceiver can and should attend better.

This example brings in something beyond our self-preoccupied nature to distort the perception. Murdoch writes that our anxiety and self-preoccupation are products of our natural character as humans, failing to explore the ways in which our socialization leads to these features. The self, however, is not unaffected by the society in which we are

raised; it is racialized. The reality of race alters our self, weaving the fabric of the veil that gives shape to our anxieties, desires, and preoccupations. Of course, it is not just one's race, but one's gender, ability, class, and other social identities that shapes our self and subsequent perception of the world. My current focus on race is not to separate these features, following the consensus that intersectionality is not additive, but to explore a dimension of said perception that nevertheless involves these other features.[6]

Although Murdoch explains the distortions in the M and D case as instances of self-preoccupation, they have a clear social element to them. The way M is self-preoccupied is directly connected to M's class. That M believes her son to have married "beneath" him reveals that she (perhaps unconsciously) buys into class stratification, believing others of lower classes to be things like vulgar, undignified, noisy, or juvenile. Classism constitutes a significant way that M's self-preoccupation manifests itself. Our selves are not innate collections of traits and dispositions but socially constructed, built through our experience of society. So, just as something like class can organize our self-preoccupied anxieties, certainly too can race.[7]

Racial perception is morally problematic because of the way racist ideology influences and shapes the self. Many racial distortions are clear cases of a racialized self's anxious fantasies, such as the way many poor whites think Latinx immigrants are "stealing their jobs." There is an unjust material insecurity placed upon such whites, an insecurity that manifests as an anxiety about racialized others being either responsible or exacerbating their material insecurity. This is an anxiety that arises from racist ideology about white entitlement. In the aforementioned cases of misperceiving a Latinx family as "illegals" or the Chicano professor as a janitor, the self is also involved because the perception is rooted in one's social position with people of color often construed as in some way *Other*.

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[6] My own approach to focusing on race is influenced by Kristie Dotson's (2016) arguments that "race-only" work often follows three connected assumptions: that we can disaggregate "race-only" investigations and "race-and" investigations, that "race-only" work is more fundamental than "race-and", and that "race-only" work therefore transcends "race-and" work, effectively making the conclusions in "race-only" work is unaffected by "race-and" work. While I do take on the disaggregation assumption (that there is an analytically distinct "race-only" investigation), I do not take on the fundamentality or transcendent assumption, which ignore intersectional concerns.

[7] Lawrence Blum (2012) notes the way the example of M and D consists in both personal fantasies and social class influence, in addition to suggesting that Murdoch's moral philosophy is suited for talking about racialized perception (p. 316-318).

While racist ideology often has the veneer of view-from-nowhere objectivity it does not function this way. Recall how Al-Saji (2014) argues that racial perception *rationalizes* itself by taking itself "as a mere reaction to the racialized other," an insight she credits to Fanon (p. 137). Racist ideology is heavily situated, and one's own race will dictate how the internalization of such ideology directs one's attention. For example, Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* explores the way racist ideology affects one's self perception and construction of the self when the person internalizing the ideology is black. The larger literature on racial embodiment is an exploration of how internalized images shape one's experience as a person of color. Similarly, when those with racial privilege internalize this ideology, it is in reference to their whiteness. In effect, one creates a racial fantasy, placing oneself in certain relations to others that reflects and reinforces the larger racial systems at play in one's society. Racist ideology provides the content of such fantasies, but the anxious, self-preoccupied psyche is the mechanism, directing and habituating ways of perceiving the world. Following Murdoch's own discussion of a self-preoccupied, falsifying veil, I refer to the patterns of attention (and inattention) of a racialized self's distortions as *the racial veil*.

The racial veil is the result of racist ideology shaping our self-preoccupied patterns of attention by introducing a key piece of information: race. The existence of races is often considered the "linchpin" of racist ideology, the "fundamental illusion" that organizes the system of thought (Shelby 2003, p. 168). Race can play this organizing role because it is not purely, or most importantly, about the color of one's skin but one's social function. Race, as it is dominantly constructed in our society, is a concept that is used to control and inferiorize people of color, serving as a tool for creating social cohesion, economic prosperity, or political mastery.[8] Race serves as a cog in the machinery of oppression, to not merely separate people into groups, but also to give those groups roles in an overall society so that some in that society may benefit (see, Russell 2018, p. 53-54). Race functions to do more than merely place one in hierarchy, but also rationalizes the unjust distribution of social, economic, and political goods.[9]

Racist ideology introduces to the self this notion of race, drawing one's attention to it and the attached fictions. Racist ideology provides the anxious white self with something to distract one's gaze, something to organize one's attention whenever one

[8] See, Camisha Russell (2018), p. 53 and Fields and Fields (2012).

[9] For more on how the concept of race creates racial hierarchy see Charles Mills (2018).

interacts with a person of color. In effect, race is often made salient in both improper times and ways. The Chicano professor's race is completely irrelevant to that situation at the university, being recognized in this context is a sign of how race is being made salient when it should not. Similarly, the Latinx family is having their race made salient in an improper way. Given the history of racial abuse by the police, that the family is Latinx is relevant, but what is relevant is their increased likelihood to be *abused*, not their immigration status. Race leads us away from the individual, affecting the quality of the attention they receive, directing us toward a morally problematic fantasy.

This racial fantasy importantly involves two kinds of distortions, which enforce race's organizing aims of creating social cohesion, economic prosperity, and political mastery: stereotypes and misvaluing. Both of these play a role in racial misperception, often overlapping and interweaving their respective meanings and distortions.

Racial stereotypes are a clear example of misperceiving people of color. Just as Latinx people are often called "illegals," there are a number of stereotypes like indigenous people being "savages," Black women being "welfare queens," or Latina and Asian women being "exotic." Stereotypes are often ways of giving people of color a certain station or purpose. Being "illegal" make Latinx people criminal outsiders, being "savage" makes it necessary that indigenous people be "civilized," being a "welfare queen" makes Black women appear lazy and depleting social resources, and being "exotic" objectifies women of color, centering their sexuality as a product for the white gaze. One's value is often reduced to fulfilling this role, for the pleasure or ease of the racially privileged. Thus, racial stereotypes reflect and reinforce racist ideology by essentializing these characterizations to races. They are stereotypes that are embedded in racist ideology, not free-floating instances of prejudice. This is part of the explanation for what makes racial stereotypes of this kind different from other stereotypes that may be similarly inaccurate in their generalization but not morally problematic.[10]

By essentializing these traits into who a person is, it is much easier to perceive individuals of certain races *as having* certain shortcomings, deficiencies, abilities, or traits that make them fit certain roles in a society while simultaneously erasing the act of perceiving, ultimately aiding the use of race as a tool for social, economic, and political mastery. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) calls these stereotypes "controlling images" since they serve as a form of both justifying race/gender relations and a means of controlling how

[10] See, Erin Beeghly (2015) for a defense of what she calls the "descriptive view" of stereotypes which holds that stereotypes are not always morally or epistemologically objectionable.

others think of, in her cases, black women in the U.S. (p. 76-106). Such controlling images provide the underlying story to justify treating people of different races in ways that benefit some at the expense of others. However, to the person perceiving through the racial veil, it is simply the way things are. These stereotypes are a central part of the racial veil that allows these images to have such control over us.

Stereotypes also contribute to another way in which one's perception can be distorted: through misvaluing. Many of the stereotypes I discussed in the previous section carry with them notions of inferiority, like that of a "savage"; of evaluative fault, like that of "welfare queen"; or of maintaining a lower social station, like that of "exotic". The stereotypes can both communicate this lower moral value and can justify the misvaluing, making these different ways of misperceiving bound up with one another. But misvaluing can be a substantive distortion on its own, a distortion of what is owed to that person or to what extent they appear to deserve our care and attention. Consider the following example.[11]

Yessenia is an Afro-Latina woman who regularly enjoys pick-up softball with a group of friends. One day when playing, an opposing player runs into Yessenia, knocking her over and injuring her arm. Only her teammates notice (at first) since she is no longer able to play, but once she subs out everyone forgets and continues as if nothing happened. However, there have been numerous instances when white players in this pick-up league have been similarly knocked over and people have stopped the game to make sure they're okay. When Yessenia was injured, they quickly resumed the game, and no one followed up with her.

Here, her fellow basketball players do not seem to be perceiving her in accordance with any substantive stereotype, or at least not one that is clearly relevant to their actions. But there is still a difference in behavior due to her race—being ignored in this way happens to women of color constantly (see, Dotson and Gilbert 2014). The players' perception of the situation leaves out the imperative to be helpful and attentive to Yessenia's injuries, an imperative that is present when their white friends are hurt. They do not perceive her injury as to-be-attended to. The racial veil inhibits their ability to determine what actions are appropriate, making them not only act differently but fail to recognize how they are acting differently.

[11] This example is based on a real-life case with details altered for anonymity.

In this example, Yessenia is being morally misvalued. The white athletes are given a sort of moral care and concern that Yessenia is not receiving, even though the circumstances are the same. One way to make sense of this discrepancy is to say that the white athletes are perceived as needing or deserving care in those circumstances where Yessenia is not perceived as needing or deserving that care. Insofar as Yessenia is perceived as needing or deserving less care she is being undervalued. And since it is moral care she is perceived as not needing or deserving, she is being morally under, or mis-, valued. Since moral value is not the kind of thing people have varying levels of—no one is morally more important than any other person—being undervalued in this way is being misvalued. It is important to note that not all cases of misvaluing are cases of *moral* misvaluing. [12]

This kind of misvaluing gets at the inferiorization that Acloff (1999), Yancy (2008), Al-Saji (2014), and Ngo (2017) discuss. It is important to recognize though how misvaluing goes in both directions by undervaluing people of color and overvaluing whites. While in Yessenia's case she is being undervalued, there may be cases where she is accurately valued, and her white friends are *over*valued. Imagine comparing more trivial injuries where Yessenia getting hurt does not warrant stopping the game, but similarly trivial injuries among the white players do warrant stopping their game out of an abundance of caution.

The way misvaluing reflects and reinforces racial hierarchy also helps us understand the affective element of perception.[13] Both the racial perception literature (Al-Saji 2014, p. 140) and Murdoch (1970) emphasize the affective component of perception, with gives

[12] There are other ways one may be misvalued, such as aesthetic misvaluing (where people of color are considered less attractive due to white beauty standards) or epistemic misvaluing (where people of color's testimony is counted as less, or other instances of what has been called "epistemic injustice"). These other instances of misvaluing go beyond the scope of this particular example but are all instances of misvaluing interrupting our perception of people of color.

[13] Shannon Sullivan (2014) argues that there is an important affective component (which she understands in embodied biological terms, i.e. "guts") to Mills' white ignorance. That white ignorance, and thus the racial veil, involves more than merely cognitive phenomena, but emotional and attitudinal phenomena as well seems right, particularly in the cases of misvaluing. This affective component is present in stereotyping as well. Sullivan's primary example is that of a white woman student who interjects in a discussion of racism that she *is* afraid of Black men and finds them threatening. The stereotype of Black men being dangerous or threatening thus is manifested in the attitudes and emotions of many white people and is part of how, I believe, they misperceive others.

this perception its texture and motivational dimension.[14] When someone perceives themselves as having a place over another person emotions and attitudes like disgust, pity, contempt, or superiority will manifest. The way these emotions play out in any particular situation will be different depending on the context. In the case of Yessenia's pick-up basketball game, the white players attitudes when perceiving fellow white players fall is different from their attitudes when Yessenia falls. White players are looked on with compassion and concern when they fall, and this affective manifestation is largely absent when Yessenia falls. We are largely socialized not to look on women of color with the same compassion and concern, but to instead perceive them with other attitudes and emotions or, in this case, with apathy. This difference in affect largely has to do with where Yessenia "ranks" among her white peers.

These two overlapping perceptual distortions originate in the conception of race given to us by racist ideology, shaping the self, weaving race into one's anxieties and fantasies. These distortions are a significant moral problem because of how they direct and habituate one's attention to race. One starts to perceive race in a way that props up systems of racial oppression, creating significant hurdles to morally good perception. How any one or set of these stereotypes or misvaluing manifest in a person's perception will be determined by the relevance to their self. Ideology is not a single, complete set of stories and scripts and the way it manifests in individuals via their anxiety and self-preoccupation will similarly vary.

A point from earlier is worth reiterating here: it is not just individual instances of such misperception that creates the inner moral problem. Race shapes someone's entire perception of world. We bring it with us when we go out in the morning and when we come home at night.

It can be easy to mistake the moral problem as one of consequences, i.e. to think, that the moral problem is not the perception but the way subsequent behaviors end up reinforcing racial oppression. Racial oppression is constituted by the barriers, pressures, and limits that people of color face due to their race. For people of color to live in a world where others perceive them through a racial veil is such a pressure and barrier, being limited by the perception before any actions occur. Recall George Yancy's (2008) description of a white woman's gaze and he enters an elevator. He writes, "I feel that in their eyes I am this indistinguishable, amorphous, black seething mass, a token of danger,

[14] Furthermore, there is significant work on understanding emotions themselves as perceptual in nature. See, Tappolet (2016) and Milona and Stockdale (2018).

a threat, a criminal, a burden, a rapacious animal incapable of delayed gratification" (2008, p. 18). The perception *itself* is often felt, an invisible barrier making us aware of our limited mobility. Furthermore, the systematic nature of such perception, our regularly and continual interaction with such stares, down-turned heads, and closed body language makes such perception inescapable while limiting us. It limits our opportunities to work when people systematically misperceive us as less competent, it limits our opportunities to build special relationships when people systematically perceive us to be less desirable,[15] and it limits our opportunities to live when people systematically perceive us to be dangerous. That perceiving through the racial veil limits and diminishes people of color in this way makes such perception morally bad in itself, not only morally objectionable because of its role in perpetuating downstream actions—reinforcing oppressive barriers—it *is* an oppressive barrier.

I have been articulating a picture of racial perception that is intertwined with an anxious self that gets in the way of perceiving others in a morally appropriate way. Racist ideology constructs the self, habituating patterns of attention that draws one's gaze to race, making it salient when it is not, creating controlling images that get in the way of attending to people as individuals. In effect, people conceptualize the world around them in racist ways, having these patterns of attention shape the way they show up in their relationships and interactions. Importantly, it's the way racist ideology and the self organizes one's attention that is morally problematic; the moral problem is part of one's inner consciousness, not just the subsequent actions or behaviors. This makes racial perception a significant moral problem, a hurdle that must be mantled in order to attend in morally good ways. Furthermore, the way racial perception disappears the perceiving self makes it a particularly difficult hurdle to mantle.

Sarah Hoagland (2007) argues that many whites are "enormously unself-conscious about whiteness as a cultural and political phenomenon much as the middle class seems enormously unself-conscious about middle classness" (p. 99). Since those with racial privilege often fail to recognize the role race plays in society, they hardly ever perceive their actions as nodes in a network of pressures and barriers of racial oppression. Instead, they perceive their actions as isolated and autonomous, resulting solely from their will or character. To them, their actions result solely from an untouched self, as opposed to being influenced by their socialization in a racist society. The way racial perception disappears

[15] Or, conversely, when they are perceived merely as a sexual object to be fetishized without deeper connection and love.

the self, forgetting that there is an agent doing the perceiving, helps explain how many often retreat to their (good) intentions or character to excuse racist behavior (See Hoagland 2007, p. 103). Conceiving of oneself as being autonomous in this way is a form of self-preoccupation, focusing solely on one's own individuality in acting as opposed to how one's actions are influenced by and affect societal pressures around them.

The disappearing of the self in racial perception also contributes to racial anxiety. In addition to rationalizing racial perception, disappearing the self is a way of protecting it from criticism. One reason why Murdoch criticizes the self is how it gets in the way of *looking again*. While M in Murdoch's example can self-reflect, taking an honest look at herself, our self-preoccupation often gets in the way of considering we might be the problem. When it comes to matters of race, someone may believe themself to be a "good white" who has read all the anti-racist best sellers and has a #BlackLivesMatter yard sign or believe that we live in a post-racial society (after all Barack Obama got elected U.S. President in 2008!), and therefore conclude that they don't carry any ill-will toward people of color. Such people, when faced with criticism or the suggestion that they may be perceiving things wrong or acting in ways that are racially prejudiced, may interpret this as an attack on their *self*. And in a need to self-preserve, such people are unable to re-attend to how they view others and miss a valuable opportunity to correct their perceptions.[16] In this way, the racial veil not only involves misperceiving others, but misperceiving oneself. The distorted self-perceiver is no longer accurately accounting for how they move about in the world or what vices they carry with them.

These various defensive mechanisms, attempting to protect the self from criticism, shows how central the self is for racist perception. It is not merely a mistaken ideology that organizes our attention but the way that ideology interacts with who we are as individuals. Racist perception is shaped by our own cares, concerns, goals, and anxieties are and how race plays into these aspects of who we are. What are you entitled to certain things due to race? Who deserves your time and attention? Why do you deserve the things you have gained from racial privilege? These concerns shape what you attend to

[16] This response to such criticism has been explored by Rachel D. Godsil and L. Song Richardson (2016) as a form of racial anxiety. Furthermore, the idea that we have a second-order inattention has been described by José Medina (2013) as meta-blindness or meta-insensitivity in *The Epistemology of Resistance* and by Charles Mills' (2017) as a function of ideology (Medina, p. 70-81). Looking at how the self-preoccupied veil and the racial veil are intermeshed gives us insight into how these two phenomena are intimately connected. That racial anxiety is part of the mechanism that prevents one from reflecting on their limited perceptual horizon. Further exploring this connection is left for future work.

and what you ignore. In effect, the systemic oppression of people of color becomes a significant moral problem for racially privileged individuals, existing inside their perception.

Understanding how racist ideology exists *inside* one's perception, realized through the self, centers how the moral problem is inside the viewer, revealing why certain attempts at undermining elements of racist ideology like stereotypes and misvaluing fail. People of color have regularly engaged in efforts to subvert these stereotypes by cultivating attitudes and traits that could in no way be counted as those of, for example, 'welfare queens' or 'savages.'[17] However, these stereotypes were never thin descriptions, inferred from a direct perception of reality. They're thick, entrenched concepts that are near impossible to alter from the outside by the object of perception changing their behavior. People of color were never the issue and even prudential attempts at changing hearts and minds through building stronger moral character are likely to fail since it doesn't attack the problem where it lives—inside the perception of the racially privileged. However, understanding this element of our moral psychology also points to real ways forward.

3. Going on to Interpersonal Ethics

By articulating a moralized picture of racial perception, I am emphasizing the importance of perception when evaluating and navigating moral issues that arise in interpersonal situations. The extant literature on racial perception teaches us how perception is a thick, conceptually loaded way of perceiving others, rationalizing itself and its attended ideology, making this way of perceiving self-sustaining, taking the way one sees things as the way they are, erasing the perceiver from the equation, constituting and creating opportunities for racial violence. From Murdoch, we have a way of talking about how such perception is morally problematic, this way of perceiving creates self-preoccupied patterns of attention, drawing one's gaze to race, making it salient when it is not, creating controlling images that get in the way of attending to people as individuals. In thinking about racial perception in this way, we can gain insights into interpersonal instances of racism.

Before exploring how racial perception can provide insight on issues of normative ethics, I want to consider the relationship between the interpersonal and the institutional

[17] See Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) discussion of these attempts (p. 94-97).

to contextualize the discussion. In the analytic philosophy literature, there has been a regular debate about whether interpersonal or institutional racism should be our primary focus when theorizing (and defining) racism. Philosophers like Jorge Garcia (1996) and Lawrence Blum (2002) have defended interpersonal accounts of racism, focusing on moral normativity as central to understanding the contours of the phenomenon. In response, philosophers like Charles Mills (1997, 2003) and Tommie Shelby (2002, 2014) have defended institutional accounts of racism, focusing on political normativity as central to understanding the contours of the phenomenon. Much of the formers' work is trying to capture something in moral language when we criticize someone as "racist," whereas the latter argue that this approach gets something *backwards* (Shelby 2014, 61). Mills (2003) and Shelby (2002, 2014) believe there is room for moral analysis, but hold that the political has "theoretical primacy in analyses of racism" (Shelby 2014, 58). Shelby (2014) argues that an adequate political-philosophical account of racism gives us a clearer picture of what's going wrong in individual, interpersonal instances of racism (58). It is here that Shelby (2003, 2014) introduces the idea of racist ideology to show how the political injustice of racism creeps into our individual lives. Putting the question of how to define racism to the side, the ethics of interpersonal racism should be respondent or aware of racism as a political phenomenon. This debate shows us is that providing a story about how the interpersonal and institutional are related is important if we are to get a helpful explanation of the moral wrongs of racism.[18] Centering the role of ideology in racial perception allows for a moral analysis that is clearly related to the political analysis.

With this relationship as the context, I will now turn to three things that racial perception provides insight into the tension between intentions and consequences in microaggressions, why having friends of color doesn't undermine racial perception, and an alternative explanation and role for racial antipathy.

Let's begin with a famous example of a common racist microaggression: during the 2008 Democratic Primary for U.S. President, then presidential candidate Joe Biden described Barack Obama as "the first mainstream African-American [candidate] who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy."[19] It would be difficult to find a person of color in a professional position who has not been told they're "articulate." While many who say this take themselves to be praising the person's trait, it is not how such

[18] Charles Mills (2003) provides many good examples of how moral theorizing can go wrong when we disconnected it from the history and politics of racism.

[19] https://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/31/biden.obama/

remarks function. Biden's statement implies that most African-Americans, at least those who run for presidential office, are not articulate, bright, clean, and nice-looking guys. Furthermore, in many contexts in which positive traits are problematically applied to people of color, such "compliments" understate their qualities—they reveal misvaluing. One expects the person of color to be lower, and then is surprised when they recognize good qualities in them. Their typical way of viewing people of color prime them to not expect much, taking those they find "articulate," for example, as exceptional—just as Biden took Obama as being exceptional in this way.

Racial perception gives us a nice explanation of what's going on here—that the distortion leading to this remark is based in misvaluing people of color. But what I'm particularly interested in is how recognizing this as a problem of perception moves a common conversation forward. When Joe Biden was criticized for calling Obama "articulate" he was quick to say that he did not have racist intent.[20] Appealing to intentions is regularly employed to excuse racist behavior or speech. The idea is that the person's motivations for the behavior or statement are not racist, not attempting to limit or degrade a person of color. In response to this excuse, anti-racism activists shift the focus away from intentions to that of consequences, to draw attention to how the morally problematic behavior caused actual harm to people of color. The standard response insists, whether one intends to harm or not, the harm is still done and that needs to be accounted for, a harm that perpetuates one's experience of racial oppression, emphasizing the structural nature of racist harm.

The standard response certainly gets something right: we should be aware of the harmful consequences of racist behavior, especially when the harm is systematically inflicted. It provides a clear way to shift one's attention from individual wills and actions to macro-level issues of how people of color are regularly treated as inferior. But I suspect this shift from intentions to consequences is rarely satisfying to the individual who behaved in a racist way. Someone may find it is easy to recognize that harm was done and to be sorry about causing it but will still want to know if they are blameworthy, concerned that their actions are being too easily misinterpreted. They may further wonder what they could do differently next time to avoid this mistake. Perhaps it feels like a lose-lose situation, that no matter how they act, they are likely to fail. When it comes to being blamed and criticized, a person wants their actions to be understood in terms of how

[20] "Biden's description of Obama draws scrutiny," CNN, February 9, 2007, https://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/31/biden.obama/.

those actions resonate with their character, motivations, and reasons. Intentions matter because of the role they play in making sense of an agent's actions to themself, being an important feature of how agents understand their movement in the world. When someone is criticized for consequences that seem out of harmony with their motivations and reasons, it can be confusing and disorienting.

There is a different response to the agent who excuses their behavior by appealing to their intentions, a response that focuses on what's going wrong with the agent. As Murdoch (1970) argued, too much weight is put on the will, which is connected to one's motivations, reasons, and *intentions* (p. 51-54, 76). Simply put, the will is not the source of all morality. The way intentions are often appealed to in excusing racist behavior is a place where overemphasis on the will as the locus of moral activity is at play. Since behavior is often taken to be a product of a person's will alone, they mistake their lack of bad intentions as an exonerating excuse. But to make this about a person's will is to ignore the role of their perception. While they may not have *intended* harm, their perception of the situation or person may already have been corrupted. When actions are viewed as a product of perception, and not only of the will, it is easier to recognize how something morally problematic is occurring. Furthermore, this response preserves the recognition of how issues of racism are structural, but without losing track of the individual's place in that system. This response also provides a way forward for said individual. Recognizing the role of moral perception reveals that improvement doesn't require better moral reasoning or altering a decision-making procedure, but by changing the way they perceive others. Shifting our focus from the will to one's perception gives us an opportunity for growth that is absent if we restrict the possible explanations of moral shortcomings to the intentions of the agent and the consequences to the victims, gaining a more robust understanding of the racist behavior.

Appealing to one's good intentions is of course not the only common excuse for racist behavior. It is also extremely common to hear white people deflect racist criticism by appealing to the fact that they have a Black or Brown best friend, spouse, or child. By focusing on how the self is inflected by racial ideology, my account also helps us address such cases. Note that this deflection is a way of preserving the anxious self, deflating the criticism, while simultaneously protecting their relationship with their friend of color. If they were to face the reality of their racist behavior this might lead to recognizing how they fail their friend along lines of race.

Let's consider this scenario a little further.

Imagine that your best friend is a Black woman who is exceptionally calm, caring, and slow to anger. You know these details about her because you have grown up with her, having fights with her, consoling her when her exes have dumped her. You would never perceive her as an "angry black woman," as the trope goes, because your understanding of her is too clear, too rich, and too specific to ever be captured by such a flat stereotype. However, your ability to perceive her, unaffected in this respect by racist ideology, is a consequence of your loving attention to her as your friend and not evidence of a lack of racist perception. You may still perceive other Black women with this trope, despite your relationship with your friend. It is therefore justified to be skeptical of the person who claims they cannot be racist because their best friend, or spouse, or child is Black or Brown. Even if the person is not mistaken about the quality of their relationship (though they can be and often are mistaken) it does not guarantee an escape from racist perceiving in general. It is also possible that even though your knowledge of her emotional life undermines the "angry black woman" trope, your perception of her may still be racially distorted in some other way, knowing a loved one well does not make one immune from internalized racist ideology.

When racism invades our interpersonal relationships and interactions, it is rarely due to ill will or failures to be good friends, but the way racist ideology organizes our attention, directing it toward race in a way that distorts the person or situation we're perceiving. Yet, many in our society take such interpersonal failures to be a result of hate, ill will, and angry prejudice with racial antipathy playing a central role in both Garcia's (1996) and Blum's (2002) accounts of the moral psychology of racism. This emphasis on hate though is misleading, obstructing the systemic, institutional nature of social oppression. However, there clearly are angry, hateful racists. No one breaks into a Black church, guns blazing, with a cool and calm demeanor. That some racism manifests in such a hateful way is not surprising given the affective nature of perception. The way racist ideology directs our anxious, self-preoccupied attention will manifest in a number of affective ways. Racist ideology, when mixed with a certain kind of anxious, insecure, weak self, will manifest as hatred, perceiving inferiority as something to recognize with disgust, perceiving otherness as something to hate. Racial perception provides a good explanation for racial antipathy without centering such antipathy and without obstructing the structural elements of racial oppression.

4. Concluding thoughts

I began with Fanon's insight that there is something about the off-hand manner, casualness, and ease that makes racial prejudice particularly offensive. The immediacy, non-reflective dimensions of racial perception help explain this. That such prejudice is rooted in self-preoccupied, ideological patterns of attention that make it so easy to cast people of color in an inferior place, perceiving them as means to social, economic, and political ends, is morally offensive. It disregards our underlying humanity to be systematically perceived in this way. The natural questions that this raise is, "What can one do about it? How does one perceive better?" I'd like to conclude with all too brief reflections on how one can perceive in a better, less racist, way.

There is one common, though mistaken, answer that what we need to do is simply ignore race or regard race as irrelevant. If racial perception involves making race salient then we should remove that factor. One should simply, "no longer see race." I hope my arguments make clear that such removal is not a feasible response. We are so deeply socialized to perceive the world through a racial veil and to behave in ways that reflect that, that one's reflectively endorsed values of racial egalitarianism cannot override it. In addition, ignoring race entirely will not move us toward racial egalitarianism because throwing race out of view will also throw the history of racial oppression out of view. The problem, then, is not that race is salient, but that it is unreflectively accepting an internalized racist ideology. The attempted removal of race from attention will simply reinforce our failure to recognize the way race affects our perception. Instead of ignoring race, we must be attentive to it but in ways that undermine, as opposed to supporting, the structures of racial oppression.

This kind of attention requires us to take control of our attention instead of relying on the habits of attention that result from internalized racist ideology. Conscious attention, of course, involves a slower, more careful kind of attention. Alia Al-Saji (2014) develops this idea nicely as a phenomenology of hesitation, arguing that "hesitation allows an interval wherein vision can become self-critical—questioning the structures of habituation and socialization that it takes for granted and yet cannot see" (p. 153). Therefore, hesitation can create space that makes perceptual change possible, interrupting our habits, allowing "truth that falls outside us" to interrupt and resist our perceptual and conceptual schemas (2014, p. 158).

Similarly, Emily McRae (2022) argues for the relevance of mindfulness in cultivating loving attention in the face of systems of oppression (p. 374-375). Building on the rich literature of Buddhist epistemology and moral psychology, McRae states that mindfulness

is "the ability to place one's attention and the careful maintenance of that attention," providing space to combat the "mindless" inattention that often leads to immoral actions (p. 374). It is in being *mindful* that one can undo the problematic patterns of attention that one habitually engages in. Furthermore, McRae points to how the Buddhist notion of equanimity, the "freedom from craving and [being averse to]" others, also has a role in developing loving attention (p. 372). In Indo- Tibetan Buddhist moral psychology, McRae writes, craving and aversion are central to the anxious, self-preoccupied vices that get in the way of loving attention. The role of equanimity, then, is to provide a way to move beyond our self-preoccupation while mindfulness allows us to direct our attention to what is important.

The notion of loving attention that McRae (2022) works with is akin to the one Murdoch develops when arguing for a "just and loving attention." The need for a just attention should be clear given the political dimensions of racist ideology that are present in racial perception, but one may question whether it is important for such perception to be loving. The suggestion may rub one as trite, endorsing a vacant platitude that love can heal all wounds.

This reaction misplaces the importance of why Murdoch recommends a just and loving attention. Someone perceiving with a just and loving attention just is eliding the racial veil's distortions of people of color. A just and loving attention is not the answer to the question, "How do I be less racist?" It is the answer to the question, "How do I live a moral life?" Since the internalization of racist ideology leads to a moral problem in one's inner moral life, it makes a just and loving attention a necessary element to morally good perception. When someone internalizes racist ideology, one is oriented toward the values and justifying logic of political and social domination. When that becomes part of how one perceives and interacts with the world around them, this will get in the way of living a moral life. One can no longer engage with one's family, friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens in a way that is equitable and fair to them, because invariably some subset will be of a different race than you, not to mention a different gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, religion, or ability. You unfortunately can't love your way out of racism. Instead, it is when you get out from under racism that you begin to be able to love properly. It is, for Murdoch, an ideal to strive for—a virtue.[21]

[21] Several philosophers argue for the importance of loving attention in feminist philosophy for dealing with issues of race and gender, see Frye (1983), Lugones (1987), Hernandez (2021), and McRae (2022).

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