4. Relationships and Respect for Persons

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Summary: Many theorists writing on the aftermath of wrongdoing have been influenced by Trudy Govier's emphasis on interpersonal relationships. But George Sher has recently challenged this talk of relationships. Read descriptively, he argues, claims about the interpersonal effects of wrongdoing are either exaggerated or false. Read normatively, relationships add nothing to more traditional moral theory. In this essay, I argue that Govier's relational framework both avoids Sher's dilemma and enables her to develop the notion of respect for persons in ways that improve upon traditional Kantian discussions.

1. Introduction

The concept of a relationship plays a prominent role in Trudy Govier's discussions of the moral issues that arise in the aftermath of wrongdoing (DistrustPP, FR, and TWS; Prerogative, PPApologies, and National; and Invitational). Over the past decade, a number of theorists have followed her lead. For example, relationships figure importantly in Margaret Urban Walker's work on forgiveness (2007), T.M. Scanlon's account of blame (2008), Christopher Bennett's defense of punishment (2008), Colleen Murphy's theory of political reconciliation (2010), and my own account of atonement (Radzik 2009). [31] However, George Sher argues that, while it is unclear whether the claims being made about relationships in this literature should be read descriptively or normatively, both readings lead to problems (2013).

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[31] The types of wrongdoing addressed by relational theorists, including Govier, range from everyday slights and betrayals among friends, to criminal acts, to large-scale atrocities. Unless otherwise indicated, I will use "wrongdoing" to refer to this broad class of misdeeds.

In this essay, I will argue that the combination of descriptive and normative concerns that we find in Govier and the writers she has influenced is defensible. As I read Govier, she provides a bridge between an ideal, Kantian ethic of respect for persons, in which human beings are conceived of as rational moral agents, and the messier facts of life, in which moral agents are imperfectly rational, emotionally complicated, deeply social, epistemically limited, and intensely vulnerable. Govier's relational moral-theoretical framework enables her to both diagnose the moral problems that arise in the wake of wrongdoing and show how an ethic of respect offers meaningful guidance to real world actors.

I will not present a close reading of Govier's writings or those of the other authors in this literature. I agree with Sher that relational theories of the aftermath of wrongdoing have been ambiguous or under-described in ways that have left them open to his critique. Yet when I first read *Forgiveness and Revenge*, its relationship-centered moral perspective resonated with me (FR). In this essay, I try to articulate and develop my understanding of that perspective. Trudy Govier may not agree with everything that I say here. But I hope that she will recognize how much I have learned from her.

2. Sher's dilemma

The relational moral theories that Sher targets aim to justify one or another response to wrongdoing: blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement. Sher characterizes these responses as "backward-looking," which captures the idea that such judgments and actions are intelligible only insofar as they harken back to some past wrongful action (2013, 48). For example, one cannot forgive if there has been no wrong. Furthermore, in characterizing these responses as backward-looking, we appeal to the intuition that past wrongdoing intrinsically calls out for some kind

of response. The very fact of the past wrong seems to place someone (the wrongdoer, the community, or the victim) under normative pressure, such that simply continuing as if the wrong had not occurred would be morally problematic. I would add that relational theories are also typically forward-looking. They hope to show that a proper response to wrongdoing will normally lead to a better state of affairs. Blame, punishment, forgiveness, and atonement, at least when done well, aim toward some future good. Whether these backward-looking and forward-looking concerns – giving the past its due while building a better future – are ultimately compatible is one of the issues with which relational theorists wrestle. The tensions are perhaps clearest in the cases of political wrongdoing that Govier has treated in her work with Wilhelm Verwoerd (Prerogative; PPApologies; and National). For example, did the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission wrongly prioritize future political stability over the justified claims of the victims of apartheid?

Relational defenses of responses to wrongdoing generally follow a similar pattern, which can be summarized with the following argument schema:

1. People stand in relationships with one another.
2. Wrongdoing damages relationships.
3. Relationships are (partially) repaired through blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement.
4. We morally ought to repair our relationships.
5. Therefore, such responses to wrongdoing are morally justified (or perhaps even required).[32]

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[32] This schema fits some examples better for others. For example, Scanlon's key claim about blame is that it *registers* the fact that relationships have changed, not that it helps repair them (2008, Ch. 4). However, he does mention the possibility of reparative effects in some cases.

Here, the concept of a relationship provides the link between the backward-looking and the forward-looking concerns that animate the theorist. The problem posed by the past is the damage that has been done to relationships. In repairing that damage, we set ourselves on a better path. Our concern for the past and our concern for the future are reconciled.

In developing a relational justification of any particular response to wrongdoing, one attempts to show how it properly acknowledges the significance of the past while contributing to a better future. So, for example, defenders of forgiveness emphasize its peace-building potential, but they must also address the objection that a victim might subtly condone wrongdoing by forgiving in the absence of an apology (Hieronymi 2001; Holmgren 2012, Ch. 4). A relational justification of blame points to the possible good effects of blaming practices, such as the moral education of wrongdoers or the broader communication of norms (Radzik 2014). Relational defenders of punishment argue that, by punishing, the community sends victims messages of respect and helps them rebuild trust and self-esteem (Bennett 2008; Ciochetti 2003).

Sher objects that relational arguments of the form presented above are ambiguous. The claims that correspond to premises (1)-(3) in my schema often sound as though they are making descriptive, empirically verifiable claims about human relationships. But at other times, (1)-(3) are clearly meant to convey normative standards for how people should relate to one another. So, should we read them as descriptive or as normative? Sher argues that neither reading yields a compelling theory.

Consider first the descriptive reading. People in fact hold certain attitudes toward and expectations of others. They interact according to certain patterns. A wrong committed by one person against the other tends to cause changes in the ways they regard each other and interact with one another. Blaming, punitive, forgiving, or atoning

responses generally cause further psychological and behavioral changes. Sher's first objection to this descriptive reading is what he calls the "problem of the stranger." Since "a stranger is, by definition, someone with whom one has no relationship," an account of wrongdoing and repair that assumes an actual relationship exists will "fail to accommodate many—perhaps a majority—of the cases in which blame, punishment, or the making of amends seems appropriate" (2013, 55 and 48). Govier anticipates the problem of the stranger, writing that, although there may have been no relationship between two strangers prior to the wrong, the wrong itself creates a powerful form of relationship, which is in need of moral improvement (FR, 47-8).[33]

This move may help us to extend the relational argument schema to the entire class of interpersonal wrongdoing. However, Sher further objects that when we read claims like (1)-(3) as empirical generalizations about actual human psychological and behavioral phenomena they seem "remarkably implausible" (2013, 57). Highlighting relational accounts of crime and punishment, Sher doubts that all or even many crime victims are emotionally damaged or rendered less capable of trust as relational theorists suggest. "Where most crimes are concerned," involving as they do things such as petty theft or property damage, "common experience suggests that most victims simply shrug it off, some sooner and some later, and get on with their lives" (2013, 57). Nor does the punishment of criminals seem to heal victims' wounds as effectively as relational defenders of punishment would like us to believe. "[A] crime victim who needs psychotherapy before the criminal is convicted will almost

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[33] Here, Govier provides an explicit response to the problem of the stranger. However, I believe that her work also implies a second response, namely that, strangers always, even prior to any wrong, stand in a distinctively normative relationship with one another (see, for example, DistrustPP, 52). I will develop this second response to the problem of the stranger in section 3.

certainly continue to need it afterward" (2013, 57). Unless relational damage is actually caused and actually repaired, this version of the argument is unable to justify practices of blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement.

If we read claims (1)-(3) as normative rather than descriptive, we can avoid the problem of the stranger. Premise (1) now says merely that people *should* think of themselves as participating in norm-governed relationships with others, even strangers. Premise (2) means that wrongdoing violates the norms that properly govern these relationships. (3) states that responses such as blame, forgiveness, punishment or atonement somehow make more positive normative judgments appropriate. These normative judgments may be applied to situations involving strangers as well as those involving friends.

But given this normative interpretation of relational theories, Sher objects, it is unclear what talk of relationships adds to more traditional moral theories, such as Kantianism (Sher 2013, 51). What is gained in describing the transgressing stranger as having damaged some idealized relationship rather than simply as having violated Kant's categorical imperative, "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end" (1993, 36)? What does the claim that relationships within society are repaired by punishment add to familiar theories that justify punishment through a mix of desert claims and appeals to deterrence? Reference to a relationship appears to be an "idle wheel" in contemporary moral theory (Sher 2013, 55). In the dilemma Sher poses, neither the descriptive nor the normative reading of relationships is compelling.

Sher is correct that the relational argument is ambiguous between descriptive and normative readings. In what follows, I try to clarify the relational approach in a way that dissolves Sher's dilemma. I proceed by examining various possible interpretations of each of the premises in the argument schema. I conclude that the

strongest version of the argument brings in both descriptive and normative claims at a number of different points. In response to Sher, I argue that modest versions of the descriptive claims suffice and that, far from being an idle wheel in moral theory, the concept of a relationship supports a valuable interpretation of an ethic of respect for persons.

3. People stand in relationships with one another

Let us start with the first premise in the argument schema: 'People stand in relationships with one another.' In the relational literature, writers tend to alternate between describing actual patterns of human attitudes and interactions and endorsing normative standards for interpersonal attitudes and interactions. In this section, I will clarify these different ways of talking about relationships.

In describing actual relationships, we attend to the beliefs, attitudes, emotions and expectations people in fact hold regarding others and the actual patterns of interaction shaped by these psychological states. Importantly, the phenomena of interest are *interpersonal*. I hold beliefs, attitudes, and expectations with regard to my car, but theorists would not describe me as having a relationship with my car (in the relevant sense) because the car does not, in turn, hold beliefs, attitudes and expectations toward me. Govier's conception of relationships in *Forgiveness and Revenge* emphasizes the awareness that the other party is a person; he is someone, who, like me, acts for reasons, has preferences, and feels emotions (FR, 164-68). To apply a well-known distinction from P.F. Strawson, one person can be described as standing in a relationship with another person when she adopts the "participant" stance toward him rather than the "objective" stance (1962). Rather than viewing him simply as a complex organism to be studied, hypothesized about, and manipulated, someone

who takes the participant stance perceives him as a responsible agent who will make choices for reasons and with whom she is bound in a web of mutual demands and expectations. As Strawson notes, we are also psychologically capable of viewing other people from the objective stance, at least for a little while. We might do this "as a refuge, say, from the strains of involvement; or as an aid to policy; or simply out of intellectual curiosity" (Strawson 1962, 195). But I suggest that when relational theorists talk about relationships in a descriptive sense, we can interpret them as referring to the psychological phenomenon of people taking up the participant stance with regard to another person.

Strawson coined the term "reactive attitudes" to draw our attention to interpersonal attitudes, such as resentment and gratitude, that are reactions to the attitudes that one person interprets the other as holding (1962, 192). I do not resent someone who unavoidably steps on my foot but only someone who I perceive as acting with an improper attitude toward me, such as animosity or indifference to my legitimate interests. To occupy the participant stance with regard to another person just is to be liable to these sorts of reactive attitudes.

This descriptive conception of what it is to stand in a relationship with another person provides a sense in which we are capable of having relationships with strangers as well as with friends and family members. Though we hold particularly robust expectations of the people close to us, we frequently also inhabit the participant stance with respect to strangers. Insofar as we interact with them, we tend to expect their behavior to be guided by certain norms, and when those expectations are violated we are liable to react with negative attitudes, such as resentment and indignation. Such reactions are signs that we did, in fact, harbor such expectations prior to the breach, even if we may not have noticed them.

Reading Strawson in this way, as identifying distinctive psychological phenomena, we have a rough

interpretation of the descriptive use of the term "standing in a relationship." It refers to a distinctive set of attitudes, expectations, emotional and behavioral dispositions that one person may hold toward another, which we refer to as taking up a participant stance.

The shift to a normative conception of relationships is made when we combine this description of interpersonal relationships with a Kantian ethic, which tells us that we *must* always take the participant stance toward other human beings.[34] That is, we are morally required to regard other human beings as moral agents. We are obliged to interact with them in ways that reflect awareness of their status as persons. Furthermore, a full and proper appreciation of their personhood provides a set of moral standards for these interactions. We are not allowed to treat other people as if they were mere means rather than ends in themselves. Our behavior, and also our intentions and attitudes, must be consistent with their dignity. In addition to avoiding disrespect, a proper appreciation of their value also requires us to have some degree of goodwill toward them, even though we are typically free to choose upon whom we will bestow benevolence (Kant 1993, 32).

This point is important to answering Sher's critique of the normative reading of relationships. For most relational moral theories, normative talk about relationships is not meant to provide an alternative to an ethic of respect for persons, but rather an interpretation of it. What Kant states in terms of obeying the categorical imperative can be translated into the language of maintaining morally appropriate relationships. But the relational framework also helps us articulate significant aspects of the situation that are often occluded by other, more individualistic, Kantian language. For example, I consider not just the

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[34] A Kantian may permit adopting the observant stance toward another person for a particular purpose, such as scientific research. However, one must also, at the same time, take the participant stance if one is to remain aware that the other person is not merely a means for advancing science but also an end in himself.

universalizability of my maxims but whether my actual relationships match up to the ideal of morally appropriate relationships. Conceptualizing the other as a participant in a relationship, I am aware of the other person being aware of me (cf. Darwall 2006, 43). This awareness leads me to consider how she might interpret my intentions and respond to them emotionally, and how these responses may affect our future interactions. When thinking of myself as standing in a relationship with her, I am better prepared to recognize that our beliefs, attitudes and expectations regarding one another will be limited by our epistemic circumstances, personal history, social context, and emotional dispositions. I am led to consider the vulnerability of relationships to miscommunication, failures of rationality, emotional complexity, and unwieldy, socially constructed meanings. All of these factors affect the possibility of restoring relationships of respect and goodwill in the aftermath of wrongdoing.

By conceptualizing persons as standing in norm-governed relationships with one another, a relational moral-theoretical framework can also easily accommodate consideration of special as well as general moral obligations. We are bound up in webs of legitimate expectation and dependency with other people, not just as fellow human beings, but also as friends, colleagues, or family members.

Finally, when we express our normative ideals in terms of achieving morally appropriate relationships with other people, rather than, say, forming our own maxims correctly, we may be primed to attend to the social conditions that enable higher quality relationships. (In this way, relational theory strikes Hegelian as well as Kantian notes.) In many post-wrongdoing scenarios, improved relations turn on issues of trust. Govier argues that basic trust, "a sense that others, even those who are total strangers, have no intention to harm us, [is] a necessary condition of a viable social life"; it is "essential for communication and effective cooperative action"

(DistrustPP, 52). A healthy moral community will be one in which people regard one another with respect and goodwill and feel confident that other people regard them with respect and goodwill in return. Translating Kantian respect for persons into a relational moral-framework helps us see how the achievement of our moral ideals requires an awareness of such social dynamics.

So far we have distinguished a descriptive conception of relationships (people stand in relation when they in fact take the participant stance toward one another) from a normative conception of relationships (people are morally required to take the participant stance toward others and their attitudes, expectations and actions should meet standards of respect and goodwill). As Sher's "problem of the stranger" highlights, if the basic argument of the relational theorist is to apply to all cases of wrongdoing, premise (1), that 'people stand in relationships,' must be given a normative interpretation. If we instead used the purely descriptive interpretation, then one could evade calls to repair relations simply by failing to take the participant stance toward the other parties in the wrongful interaction. Let us, then, read (1) normatively:

> 1n. All people ought to take up the participant stance toward one another and cultivate relationships of respect and goodwill.

The "ought" marks (1n) as a normative claim.

4. Wrongdoing damages relationships

The second premise in the relational argument schema is 'wrongdoing damages relationships.' Sher has pointed out that this claim is ambiguous between a descriptive reading and a normative reading. Let us consider in more detail what each version of this claim would look like. Then we will be in a better place to decide which will contribute to

building a compelling version of the relational argument schema.

Let us begin with the simpler, descriptive interpretation of the claim that wrongdoing damages relationships. On this reading, (2) offers a description of typical psychological and social consequences of wrongdoing (call this the "actual-consequences" interpretation). The claim is that wrongdoing generally causes negative changes in how the victim, the wrongdoer, and sometimes also other members of the community relate to one another following the wrong: their beliefs about one another, the attitudes they experience (such as resentment, anger or hatred), the degree to which they trust or are willing to rely on one another, etc. These factors often combine to result in negative behaviors, such as outright wrongdoing (e.g., revenge) or reduced cooperation. Stronger or weaker versions of this descriptive version of premise (2) would draw stronger or weaker correlations between wrongdoing and such consequences. As we have seen, Sher doubts that these correlations are as robust as relational theorists usually seem to believe. In order to avoid that problem, I recommend a weak version of an "actual-consequences" premise:

> 2ac. Wrongdoing sometimes actually causes negative changes to the involved parties' beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors regarding one another.

The claim that wrongdoing "sometimes" leads to such consequences is so modest that it would be hard to deny.

A second, normative interpretation of the claim, 'wrongdoing damages relationships,' starts with the thought that, although the actual relations between the parties to a wrong might remain unaffected in a particular case, it would be *reasonable* if they did worsen. Let's call this the "normative-consequences" version of (2).

Wrongdoing provides reason for the involved parties to negatively adjust their actual relations with one another. For example, victims of rights-violations would typically be justified in feeling resentment, limiting cooperation, and reducing their confidence that the wrongdoer will behave justly in the future. The strength of the reasons provided varies with the details of the particular cases, of course. I have greater reason to distrust a co-worker who intentionally destroyed my work in order to win a promotion for herself than a co-worker who absent-mindedly broke a promise to cover my shift. Furthermore, these reasons are usually merely permissive reasons and not requirements. There may be nothing irrational, imprudent, or immoral in failing to resent or distrust my promise-breaking colleague (though, there may be in special circumstances). The idea is instead that it makes sense for vulnerable, social beings like us to change how we relate with wrongdoers in response to their misdeeds.

According to the normative-consequences reading, then, to say that wrongdoing damages relationships is to say that wrongdoing provides normative reasons for actual relationships to worsen among beings like us. This claim is not empirical. The point is not to describe or predict how actual people react, psychologically and behaviorally, to experiences of wrongdoing; it is to make a normative claim about what is reasonable—about what a fair, prudent, or at least blameless reaction to a wrong would be. However, the normative-consequences claim is also informed by our experiences with wrongdoing. If our bodies were impervious to the blows of others, if our self-respect were less vulnerable to other people's attitudes toward us, if we did not need other people's cooperation and company to lead fulfilling lives, then what would count as a reasonable reaction to wrongdoing would be different.

So, in developing a normative account of justifiable reactions to wrongdoing, we reflect upon people's actual tendencies to react. But, most important are the emotions,

attitudes, suspicions, and impulses people tend to experience *when they occupy the participant stance with regard to the parties to a wrong*. Sher may be correct that most victims of petty crime simply shrug off their losses. But this might simply be a sign that their relations with other people are already in a poor state. Their lack of resentment seems to indicate that they do not actually expect strangers to treat them with respect. In saying that resentment is a reasonable consequence of crime, the relational theorist (on this reading) is not making an empirical generalization about the actual correlation of crime and resentment, but a normative claim about what would be a fitting response among people like us were we to view one another as fellow participants in a community regulated by equal respect and moderate goodwill. In a healthy community (or at least one that grants property rights), thefts would be resented.

The normative-consequences reading also deals well with other cases that are sometimes presented as counterexamples to relational theories in the literature. For example, Susan Wolf resists the claim that wrongdoing damages relationships by pointing to the everyday wrongs that are part of family life (2011). These wrongs—such as the unauthorized borrowing of clothes among siblings, neglected chores, and excessive nagging by parents—are typically trivial. Though they may lead to fleeting displays of heated emotions, in healthy families, no damage is really done to the underlying relationship. But the normative-consequences interpretation allows us to reply that these little injustices do indeed provide their victims with reasons to negatively adjust relationships, although these reasons are overpowered by stronger reasons to maintain robust goodwill and trust. There is still sense in referring to this as a very mild kind of relational damage or, better yet, as threatening (rather than as actually damaging) the relationship. Even strong interpersonal bonds can be weakened over time by the repetition of minor wrongdoing. One can repeatedly give one's friend a

reason to break trust without actually losing his friendship, but it is like adding straw to the camel's back; one risks a rupture.

So, according to the normative-consequences interpretation, the claim that wrongdoing damages relationships is to be read as the claim that wrongdoing provides reason for the parties to a wrong to adjust their actual views of and interactions with one another for the worse. We should note, though, that while some negative changes are permitted in the aftermath of wrongdoing, there are limits. Central to the Kantian ethic is the principle that a person's moral value is not conditional on his good behavior, but is instead intrinsic to his status as a moral agent. There are fundamental forms of respect, which Stephen Darwall calls recognition-respect, that must always be maintained (1977). If John cheats me, I am not allowed to cheat him in return, or have him beat up, or watch him drown when I am able to save his life. But I am permitted to lose what Darwall calls appraisal-respect for John. I need not think as well of him as I used to. Nor must I bear him as much goodwill as I did before. Since the duty of benevolence is merely imperfect, I can choose to bestow my benevolence on someone other than John. As Scanlon notes, I can also stop seeking out John's company, taking pleasure in his success, or even hoping things go well for him (2008, 144-45). These sorts of negative changes to my actual relations with John can all be reasonable and involve no wrongdoing on my part.

Let us formalize the normative-consequences interpretation as follows:

> 2nc. Wrongdoing provides the involved parties with reasons to negatively adjust their beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors toward one another.

The suggestion that wrongdoing always provides such a reason appears to be a rather strong claim, but I believe

that this is moderated by the fact that the reason in question is both merely permissive (one is not typically *required* to negatively adjust one's relationship) and defeasible (it may be trumped or outweighed by other reasons). A more precise version of (2nc) would say that *some* of the parties have reason to adjust *some* aspects of their relationships with one another. For example, if Marie cheats on her spouse, it is far from clear that her coworkers have even a permissive reason to adjust the level of goodwill and patterns of cooperation that characterize their coworker relationships with her (cf. Radzik 2011). But since we are working toward an argument schema rather than a polished argument, let's leave out these details.

We have, then, two different interpretations of the claim that 'wrongdoing damages relationships' that seem promising: (2nc) and (2ac). Recall, the actual-consequences version, focuses on the *actual harms* that sometimes follow wrongdoing:

> 2ac. Wrongdoing sometimes actually causes negative changes to the involved parties' beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors regarding one another.

In contrast, the normative-consequences version, (2nc), brings our attention to the idea that wrongdoing *permits* or *justifies* some negative adjustments to relationships, even if the parties have not, or have not yet, made these changes.

We will need both of these interpretations in order to fill out our argument schema for relational justifications of blame, punishment, forgiveness, and atonement. Recall, the main idea of the argument schema is that blame, punishment, forgiveness, and atonement are valuable responses to wrongdoing because they repair relations. (2ac) and (2nc) point out two different ways in which relationships may stand in need of repair. They may have *actually* degraded, as compared to our moral ideal of interpersonal relations, or they may be *threatened* or

undermined by the fact that their degradation would be reasonable. If someone continues to trust and show goodwill to her friend only because she does not know that he is the person who wronged her, (2nc) allows us to describe that relationship as threatened, as undermined, and in need of repair. Another reason to keep both versions of the second premise focuses on the fact that actual responses to wrongdoing are not always reasonable. For example, victims may be filled with malice toward the wrongdoer and a desire for revenge. This kind of damage to the victim-wrongdoer relationship may not be reasonable, but it is in need of repair. One thing forgiveness does, on many accounts, is to moderate inappropriate or excessive reactions to wrongdoing (Butler 1827, Sermon IX).

5. We morally ought to repair our relationships

Let us momentarily skip over premise (3) in our argument schema and turn next to premise (4): 'we morally ought to repair our relationships.' How should we interpret this claim? The key term in (4) is 'repair.' In thinking of what repair involves, let us refer back to the two interpretations of damage with which we ended the last section: the actual-consequences and the normative-consequences claims. From these follow two interpretations of repair:

> 4ac. Any negative changes that wrongdoing *actually* causes to the involved parties' beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors regarding one another ought to be reversed or ameliorated, other things being equal.

> 4nc. Any *reasons* that wrongdoing provides to involved parties to negatively adjust their beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors

toward one another ought to be counteracted or nullified, other things being equal.

The notion of repair at work in (4ac) is one of rectifying some kind of damage that has already taken place in a relationship. A wrongdoer apologizing to angry victim would be an example of an attempt to repair a relationship that is already, actually damaged. In contrast, the notion of repair in (4nc) is more like disarming a threat than rebuilding something that is already broken. An illustration of this notion of repair might be apologizing to someone who claims not to care about having been mistreated.

Both (4ac) and (4nc) are left intentionally vague because they are designed only for my argument schema rather than for a complete argument. For example, 'ought' might convey either a full-fledged obligation or the weaker idea that it would be a morally good thing if the relationship were repaired. If we were building an argument about atonement, the language of obligation would be appropriate. On the other hand, forgiveness is typically a matter of virtue rather than obligation; so in building a relational argument about forgiveness we would likely choose the weaker reading of 'ought.' Similarly, both (4ac) and (4nc) fail to clarify to whom the 'ought' is addressed. This again is necessary given the fact that my schema is meant to be adaptable to defenses of a number of responses to wrongdoing. Obligations to atone are addressed to wrongdoers; recommendations to forgive are typically addressed to victims. The 'other things being equal' caveat on both versions is meant to convey the idea that whether one ought to repair a relationship is sensitive to other factors, such as whether restoring trust or cooperation would be unreasonably imprudent or conflict with one's other obligations.

Still, even with all of this ambiguity, I think that both (4ac) and (4nc) suggest compelling moral ideas—ideas that provide an interpretation of respect for persons. We

should live with one another on terms of respect and goodwill. When the actual terms upon which we live with one another become degraded as a result of wrongdoing, we should endeavor to bring them into a more ideal state. Insofar as we give other people, or perceive other people as giving us, *reason to* worsen our relationships, we should try to counteract those reasons and create a context in which we have better reason to relate on good terms.

I imagine that this latter claim, which is associated with (4nc), might cause some puzzlement. The claim that we ought to repair relationships that are actually damaged is understandable enough. But why must we race around trying to erase these free-floating "reasons"? Why does it matter if a reason to worsen relations is in some sense "out there" if no one actually accepts it as their own? My first response is, again, that too many straws break the camel's back. This is just another way of saying that risks of future, bad consequences should be avoided. But this is not a very satisfactory answer. If those risks are low enough, why not take them? Why not continue breaking little promises to my husband? I am confident in his love and capacity for patience. I think I can get away with it for another fifty years. Of course, the proper response is that even if I could "get away with" such behavior, given his virtuous nature, I would not be living on proper terms with him. This state of affairs would be intrinsically bad. At this point, Sher might repeat his objection that the relational theory only works insofar as Kantian principles of right and wrong action are presupposed by it. Yet, as I claimed earlier, most relational discussions are not meant to be alternatives to an ethic of respect for persons; they are an articulation of it. If I am to properly respect with my husband, I should not give him reason to resent me. The mere fact that he (patient, loving fellow that he is) does not actually resent me is no assurance that I am living up to that standard.

6. Relationships are repaired through blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement

We are now in a better position to address the third premise in our argument schema: 'Relationships are repaired through blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement.' I should first mention that not everyone drawn to a relational framework must agree that all four of these responses to wrongdoing should be counted as reparative. Nor must they all be willing to follow the argument schema to its conclusion and claim that a reparative function makes that response morally justifiable, let alone obligatory. Some might follow the schema to defend the value of forgiveness, while doubting that blame is best seen as a form of reparation, or remaining skeptical about whether punishment can be justified at all.

To say that a response such as forgiveness or atonement repairs relationships could mean one of two things, which correspond to the actual-consequences and normative-consequences lines of thought. The first claims that these responses have a kind of causal power.

> 3ac. The negative changes to the parties' beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors toward one another that actually result from wrongdoing can sometimes be reversed or ameliorated by blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement.

For example, Govier describes forgiveness as a process through which a victim rids himself of resentment and comes to a new view of the offender as someone who is capable of better action in the future (FR, 59). Acts of atonement from wrongdoers, such as apologies, sometimes enable victims to restore trust. Punishment of a criminal by the state might cause the victim to feel a more secure self-respect. In expressing blame, a witness to wrongdoing might successfully convince a wrongdoer to

change her ways. I have included the word "sometimes" in (3ac) to avoid Sher's objection that relational theorists tend to exaggerate the causal efficacy of these sorts of responses to wrongdoing.

The second, normative version of premise (3) focuses on how responses to wrongdoing affect the *reasons* we have for relating to one another in better or worse ways.

> 3nc. The reasons wrongdoing provides for negatively adjusting beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors can be nullified or counter-balanced by blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement, when performed appropriately.

Indeed, writings on relationships in the aftermath of wrongdoing are filled with claims that fit this basic pattern, such as: When a community blames a wrongdoer for a misdeed, the victim typically has less reason to feel vulnerable to future abuse. By making amends, the wrongdoer removes or weakens the reason she gave the victim to fear or distrust her. In regaining his ability to view the wrongdoer with compassion, a forgiving victim might counter-balance the reason he has to avoid the wrongdoer. In fairly punishing a criminal, the state may give community members a reason to put the past behind them and once again include the criminal in schemes of social cooperation.

7. Conclusion

It is time now to rebuild our argument schema with the pieces we have fashioned in the preceding sections. The result is less ambiguous, though certainly more cumbersome.

1n. All people ought to take up the participant stance toward one another and cultivate relationships of respect and goodwill.

2ac. Wrongdoing sometimes actually causes negative changes to the involved parties' beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors regarding one another.

2nc. Wrongdoing provides the involved parties with reasons to negatively adjust their beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors toward one another.

3ac. The negative changes to the parties' beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors toward one another that actually result from wrongdoing can sometimes be reversed or ameliorated by blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement.

3nc. The reasons wrongdoing provides for negatively adjusting beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors can be nullified or counter-balanced by blame, punishment, forgiveness, or atonement, when performed appropriately.

4ac. Any negative changes that wrongdoing actually causes to the involved parties' beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors regarding one another ought to be reversed or ameliorated, other things being equal.

4nc. Any reasons that wrongdoing provides to involved parties to negatively adjust their beliefs, attitudes, emotions, expectations, or behaviors

toward one another ought to be counteracted or nullified, other things being equal.

5. Therefore, such responses to wrongdoing are morally justified (or perhaps required), other things being equal.

While this is still a long way from a complete and convincing defense of any of the four responses to wrongdoing, I hope that it helps put to rest Sher's objection that the relational approach is irretrievably ambiguous and implausible.

I hope to have also communicated what I find so compelling in the relational approach to the issues that arise in the aftermath of wrongdoing, which Govier has so greatly influenced. Wrongdoing is an obstacle to our living together on the terms of respect and goodwill that form our moral ideal. It is an obstacle both because of the myriad ways in which wrongs actually cause relationships to deteriorate and also because at least some of these forms of decay are perfectly legitimate. Resenting, distrusting, and fearing wrongdoers are reasonable responses to injustice. Govier asks us to think hard about cases from South Africa to Rwanda to Chile, where mere peaceful coexistence can seem like a miracle given the horrors of the past (Cases). The practical and moral challenges that the past poses to the present come to the fore much more effectively when we adopt a relational framework as opposed to a more traditional, and less social, Kantian one. For this approach, both descriptive and normative discussions of relationships are necessary.