Introduction: Reasonable Responses

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Most people first encounter Trudy Govier's work and many people *only* encounter it through her textbooks, especially *A Practical Study of Argument* (hereafter PSA), published in many editions. For me it was *God, The Devil, and the Perfect Pizza* (hereafter GDPP), then PSA, and later *Socrates' Children: Thinking and Knowing in the Western Tradition* (Socrates). My friend Pierre recommended GDPP to me for my first time teaching introductory philosophy. He claimed its only drawback was that Govier makes the issues so clear that there remains little an instructor can add. That clarity pervades her work and so does the concern for interpersonal relationships, manifest in the dialogue format she occasionally employs, as in GDPP, and invokes in the title *Socrates Children*. In fact, she tells me that GDPP was based on her discussions about philosophy with her daughter, and is intended to be appropriate for people as young as fourteen or fifteen years old. Few philosophy books have been directed toward younger adolescents, and GDPP may be the only such one written by a professional scholar. That makes it emblematic of the broad and heartfelt concern Govier's work expresses with people's responsibilities toward each other, ranging across ages and beyond academic disciplines. She describes herself on her webpage as a passionate advocate of "reasonable responses" indicating how she directs her analysis of reasoning toward other people and interactions among people.

While a festschrift for a philosopher might typically speak of "the philosophy" of the celebrated theorist, in Govier's case the definite article – "the" – would erase how her work falls into two quite distinct areas, argumentation theory and social philosophy. To

speak of "philosophies" in the plural also seems inaccurate. Even the pluralism in her argumentation theory remains under the umbrella of a uniform standard: the tripartite analysis of acceptable premises, relevant premises, and adequate grounds for the conclusion – captured by the acronym ARG. And broad connections emerge in this volume. So the mass noun "thought" addresses the range of her philosophical work and highlights its importance beyond the discipline of philosophy, such as for post-secondary education and social work practice.

After this introduction, you will find a concerted attempt to provide a comprehensive list of her publications. The publication list includes a key, in bold, to help identify the works as they are cited in this volume.

A Practical Study of Argument, first published in 1985, situates Govier among a distinct segment of informal logicians who take responsibility for making theoretical advances available to the next generation of students by presenting their work in textbook format. That book, like its predecessor by Ralph H. Johnson and J. Anthony Blair (1977), and like recent books by Christopher Tindale (2007) and by Maureen Linker (2014), places pedagogy at the centre of theoretical advancement. That practical social responsibility connects Govier's progress in argumentation theory with her separate work on trust and injustice. More theoretical treatment of her work on argumentation and the philosophical significance of her logical work can be found in the sister collection to this volume, edited by Johnson and Blair and published by the journal *Informal Logic* (2013, volume 33, number 2).

Govier's argumentation theory tends to be more contained within the discipline of philosophy than her social philosophy that reflects a more catholic approach. Yet argumentation may also be considered a field within social philosophy, which includes an array of philosophical subjects that began to be considered as

interconnected in the early 1980s. Thus the emergence of social philosophy appears right on the heels of the informal logic movement and its role in the twentieth century rise of argumentation theory as a distinct academic field.

Both argumentation theory and social philosophy count as "applied" or "social" relative to work that went before them, that tended to treat individual reasoners and political actors as radically autonomous. Govier helped philosophers account for the ways that reasoning and actions operate in a world robustly constituted by interpersonal relationships. Individual people's actions affect others, and responses to others demand care, in the sense of attention to both reason and emotions.

When I interviewed Trudy Govier in 2013 in Windsor, Ontario after the 10th conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation, she explained that her interest in trust arose from her practical political experience in the disarmament and peace movement in Calgary from 1982. She saw trust as central to the Cold War environment: typically taking the form in Canada of distrust of the USSR and trust in strategic experts. Moreover, as a spokesperson to the media and in pubic debates, she observed the difficulties people have interacting with those they don't trust.

Marius Vermaak at Rhodes University first invited Govier to South Africa to work on argumentation in 1997, at the time that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) held its hearings. Govier's freedom from the constraints of a full-time academic position allowed her to immerse herself in the public operations of the TRC and consider it in light of new forms of social philosophy. How the TRC addressed horrific processes through a discourse revolving around ethical concepts fascinated her. So Vermaak introduced her to Wilhelm Verwoerd who at the time was an academic philosopher but heavily involved in the TRC and who later helped to write its report. Verwoerd and Govier began working together on a number of related philosophical problems and continued that work until

2004, a collaboration that gave rise to six co-authored articles.

This collection approximately follows the path of Govier's research publication, moving from argumentation theory to social philosophy. However, as we proceed from the one to the other two things happen: the two fields engage in a little dialectic, as in the papers by Moira Kloster, Laura Elizabeth Pinto, and Alice MacLachlan; and in the very middle, Linda Radzik provides an abstract meta-ethical defense of the sensibility of social philosophy.

Konishi begins our collection with "Where Practical Activity Meets Theoretical Excitement: A Rhetorical History of Trudy Govier's Contribution to the Informal Logic Movement." His historical account describes Govier's contributions to the growth of informal logic, and her place among informal logicians who were dissatisfied with the effectiveness of formal deductive logic for teaching argumentation and reasoning to postsecondary students. Although Ralph Johnson (2013) has noted her distinctive demand for a theoretical account of argument, Govier's research was also – like that of many informal logicians – motivated by responsibility to students, not just those in her own classes but in the larger community whom her text would benefit.

Early in her career, Govier found employment teaching an introductory reasoning course, as many junior philosophers do. Yet her interest in the field began earlier, sparked when she provided a publisher's review for Johnson and Blair's ground-breaking textbook *Logical Self-Defense* (1977). Together, these experiences drew her to the *First International Symposium on Informal Logic* at the University of Windsor in 1978, which galvanized her interest. "Because Govier was so influenced by [Michael] Scriven's speech criticizing formal logic, she became an active participant in theoretical discussions by contributing to Johnson and Blair's *Informal Logic*

Newsletter that started soon after the *Symposium*," Konishi describes.

Govier built on innovations made by other informal logicians and also on prior philosophy, developing Carl Wellman's (1978) notion of conductive argument and attended to analogical reasoning. These provide alternatives to induction and deduction as models for analyzing and evaluating arguments, giving to her account a pluralism not found in other accounts of argumentation at the time. In this way, her work presages the pluralist view of argumentation schemes developed by Doug Walton (1996; 2013), who also studied philosophy at Waterloo.

Kloster, in "The Practical Teaching of Argument," draws our attention to the impact of PSA on post-secondary teaching, its explicit and implicit goals including the avoidance of error and respect for each other as reasoners. Hindsight reveals these goals to be trickier than a committed educator might hope, but the passage of time may also have made the need to reason across social differences even more urgent. Every instructor tailors the assigned textbook to their own tastes, talents, and values, as well as perceived student needs. Govier too adapted her argumentation textbook in each edition to controversies of its time, each time starting the edition of the book by setting the stage for reasoned consideration with an example of an argument favouring an unpopular view.

Govier's general approach to reasoning aimed to transcend academic disciplines and serve students beyond the academy. The pluralism in her view of argumentation did not entail abandoning general standards but articulating how such standards might be applied to different forms of inference. She adopted the tripartite analysis of argumentation from Johnson and Blair, which she formulated as "acceptability", "relevance," and "ground." The A-R-G formulation provides a mnemonic for argument too. (Having been a teaching assistant in a

class that used PSA, I ran into former students on the city bus who waved and chimed "A!R!G!... A!R!G!")

Govier's innovations extended beyond the types of argument she recognizes to the roles she considers argument to play. Like most textbooks in critical thinking, PSA stresses independent thinking; but increasingly as the editions progress reasoning becomes viewed as a cooperative practice, shared among reasoners, Kloster's analysis reveals. That aspect becomes fully expressed in Govier's argumentation monographs, *Problems in Argument Analysis and Evaluation* (1987; hereafter PAEE) and *The Philosophy of Argument* (1999; hereafter POA). Govier views respect as intrinsic to the act of arguing:

> To offer an argument for a claim is to show sensitivity to the thinking of other people and a respect for the minds and intellectual autonomy of those addressed in the actual or potential audience. (POA 50)

The philosophical attention to respect and disagreement that distinguish her monographs on argumentation gains a life of its own in Govier's social philosophy. Her deeper discussion of relationships between people concerns moral values rather than the epistemological values that guide her theory and pedagogy of argumentation. Yet, Laura Pinto's paper "Erosion of Trust in Education: Accountability and Teacher Professionalism" suggests that Govier's analysis of trust bears significantly on current issues in education.

Pinto criticizes current education policy practices in Canada, the USA, and the UK driven by the short term priorities that election cycles encourage. Techniques for producing immediate and measurable results obstruct trust in teachers whereas long-term policies could foster it, for instance by improving professional standards and providing autonomy to address students' specific needs. People's need for professionals and experts makes us

vulnerable, we learn from Govier. Pinto adds that we have a heightened vulnerability to teachers because they act morally and legally in place of parents. Students' and parents' vulnerability to teachers can be best addressed through a personal trust that allows students to take risks that maximize children's learning and general flourishing. Trust does not build quickly and the political demands for measurable results prioritize "accountability" and control over trust, typically through narrow measures such as test scores.

Such accountability may give the public confidence, Pinto recognizes, but that confidence lies in institutions and in people only insofar as they operate in formal roles and follow regulations. Although we can be confident in strangers, we cannot trust them. And confidence does not substitute for the personal quality of trust.

Further, Pinto argues, accountability and the audit culture it fosters actively interfere with the development of trust. Surveillance makes teachers fearful. It encourages inauthentic compliance and attempts to "game" the system. It even gives rise to a personal "blame culture" antithetic to trust. Certainly teachers may make mistakes, but publicly shaming them – as has become commonplace – undermines their ability to perform their jobs and achieve the necessary trust.

Trust, vulnerability, forgiveness, and reconciliation may have received more attention from Govier than from any philosopher before her, and is represented in the following monographs: *Social Trust and Human Communities* (1997); *Dilemmas of Trust* (1998); *A Delicate Balance: What Philosophy Can Tell Us about Terrorism* (2004); *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Acknowledgement, Reconciliation, and the Politics of Sustainable Peace* (2006); and *Forgiveness and Revenge* (2011).

She sparked a conversation that continues among others, in an approach to philosophy now described as "the

relational view." On this view, relationships among people are intrinsic to how we view each other's limitations, desires, and vulnerabilities and the value of relationships provides justification for moral responses to wrongdoing. As Radzik summarizes in "Relationships and Respect for Persons:" "blame, punishment, forgiveness, and atonement are valuable responses to wrongdoing because they repair relations."

The relational view need not draw its value from providing an alternative to traditional moral theories, Radzik explains, and so it cannot be criticized as superfluous to available accounts such as Kantian ethics. George Sher has objected in that way and also to the ambiguity and what he sees as the implausibility of the relational view. If relational claims are intended to be factual or empirical they depend on false generalizations, Sher argues. Radzik acknowledges that existing formulations may be vulnerable to Sher's criticism but she constructs a version that un-packs the tensions between the descriptive and normative dimensions of such claims as "wrongdoing damages relationships" and she shows the ambiguity to be fruitful. Are we in relationships with strangers? Ought we to be? Her answer indicates a little bit of both.

Radzik argues that modest versions of the empirical claims suffice, noting Govier's view that a wrong creates a powerful form of relationship. While that relationship may be more ideal than real, addressing it provides helpful guidance for real world actors. Relational thinking offers a "valuable interpretation of an ethic of respect for persons." Relational wrongdoing operates as "an obstacle to us living together on the terms of respect and goodwill that form our moral ideal," says Radzik. Figuring out how to respond to wrongdoing puts ethics into action. It requires, on Govier's view, recognizing that the people we engage are persons who act for reasons, have preferences, and feel emotions. They are not just objects of our experience but "participants," in the

language of P.F. Strawson. That participant stance accounts for other people's psychology and provides the descriptive dimension of the relational view. We become aware not just of the other person but also of that person's awareness of us.

Thus, people are in fact – empirically – justified in viewing themselves in terms of such relationships, and in adjusting their attitudes accordingly. Radzik stresses that "when we express our normative ideals in terms of achieving appropriate relationships with other people, rather than, say, forming our own maxims correctly, we may be primed to attend to social conditions that enable higher quality relationships."

Relational thinking helps moral reasoners interpret the significance of moral theories such as Kant's, applying them to their actual relationships and considering the extent to which their relationships with others are ideal. While it may be that many people can shrug off wrongdoing, as Sher suggests, Radzik interprets that response as indicating a poor relational state. Theorizing the situation terms of relationality helps us account for real world circumstances: "moral agents are imperfectly rational, emotionally complicated, deeply social, epistemically limited, and intensely vulnerable."

Radzik notes Govier's concern with massive wrongdoing in global politics, starting with her work on South Africa and covering many different national and international wrongs. The nature of real world wrongdoing and our responses to them occupies this collection's remaining three papers. Although Alice MacLachlan's "'Hello, My Name is Inigo Montoya:' Revenge as Moral Address" takes as its central example from the fictional film *The Princess Bride*, MacLachlan shares Govier's concern with the psychological facts about real world wrongs.

MacLachlan builds on Govier's recognition that the desire for revenge is complex, involving "agency, wrong, responsibility, and rightful suffering." Govier

resists the view of some philosophers that the emotional appeal of revenge indicates that revenge itself has a socially constructive function. She maintains that revenge intrinsically violates the Kantian demand of respect for other persons. For Govier, revenge is an especially egregious form of disrespect because it both violates consent and does harm.

MacLachlan argues that the very purpose of revenge may be to express a complex understanding, the revenger's sense of injustice. If we take the mindset of the revenger instead of the harm as the foundation of revenge, then the harm operates as a type of communication. That is why an act of revenge not recognized as retaliation does not succeed, does not satisfy, MacLachlan explains: the message must be received. A change in understanding distinguishes revenge from mere retaliation. Both may be "transformational harms," but revenge intends to restore the balance specifically by communicating the revenger's agency and moral indignation. The revenger wants credit that a retaliator may not.

So it might seem that revenge can be virtuous, expressing respect for the humanity of the revenged whose understanding needs correction, but MacLachlan does not accept that account. That revenger's worldview involves a simplistic logic and "forceful finality" and it treats the revenger as exceptional. "It is intended to end, rather than continue moral conversation."

Alistair Little and Wilhelm Verwoerd in "Private and Public: Practitioner Reflections on Forgiveness and Reconciliation" also recognize that a "messy mixture of fear, violence from the enemy, and political manipulation" stokes hatred and the desire for revenge. In the longer view, they stress that the distinction between victims and perpetrators can be very unclear. Govier worked with Verwoerd on conceptualizing responsibility, apology, forgiveness, reconciliation, and trust in the context of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That work and their friendship provided resources for Verwoerd

in developing with Little the model of Journey Through Conflict in Northern Ireland.

Little and Verwoerd's practitioner realities defy the narrowness and freightedness of the concepts of "reconciliation" and "forgiveness," but demand instead a growth in understanding, a subtle change, moving beyond the demonization of the enemy and an exclusive focus on one's own suffering. Recognizing the humanity of others helps people recover their own humanity, Little and Verwoerd observe. Attention to the suffering of others provides the start of something that they are pressed to call "reconciliation." Steps toward understanding each other's humanity can be served by public forgiveness, and the public space can be made personal, but only with great care and delicacy.

Little and Verwoerd explain the controversial nature of victimhood. Between the extremes of innocent victims and combatants, it's hard to say if the perpetrators were "simply the men who were engaged in paramilitary organizations, or those who went to prison." Beyond that, Little asks:

> What about those who supplied information, washed or burnt clothes after an act of violence, gave financial aid or collected money, or doctors who treated paramilitaries so that they wouldn't have to go to hospital? What about the governments, what about the institutions such as the churches, who in different ways directly and indirectly contributed to sectarianism and violent conflict?

The ambiguity of wrongdoing haunts a community in the aftermath. People can disagree about the value of forgiveness. It can tear apart families and haunt individuals.

Little and Verwoerd suggest that accepting that one cannot ask for forgiveness entails denying oneself inner peace and that constitutes a certain justice. It refuses to

treat oneself as exceptional in the way that MacLachlan observes revengers do. It seriously and earnestly engages the complex humanity of others.

A broader consideration of attitudes toward wrongdoers provides the final contributed paper. Norlock's "Giving Up, Expecting Hope, and Moral Transformation" reconsiders Govier's views on respect and hope for others in light of a moral epistemology in which knowledge does not entail belief.

Norlock agrees with Govier's view that when we recognize a wrongdoing, we must assume that the wrongdoer was capable of doing otherwise and has responsibility for the act. "We do not forgive deeds, we forgive people who have committed deeds." (FR, 109) In granting wrongdoers responsibility we must also grant them the possibility of change, Govier suggests, and Norlock concurs. Even in the worst cases, they agree that we should grant "conditional unforgivability:" "the view that current conditions hold which, if removed, would permit forgiveness" (FR, 102). The conditions may include the person's reveling in harm they've caused, but if we respect their agency we must acknowledge the possibility for change.

However, Norlock's exploration of conditional unforgivability challenges Govier's view that we ought not to consider any individual person beyond reform or transformation. People may recognize transformation to be in principle possible for all people, Norlock argues, and yet we may find the evidence regarding some particular evildoer sufficient to count that person as an exception. What emerges is a form of "relational hopelessness" in which the victim considers it unlikely that the particular wrongdoer will reform, and may reasonably dissociate and deny that wrongdoer sympathy.

Norlock suggests that "Govier's arguments for moral transformation amount to arguments for the metaphysics of personhood itself." Similarly philosophically rich views of individual agency underpin Govier's

work in argumentation, and mark her scholar-ship as foundational to recent developments in both the disciplinary pedagogy of philosophy and the subdiscipline of social philosophy.

This collection exhibits a range of Govier's work and highlights possible areas of connection among her disparate projects in argumentation and ethics. That other scholars see connections not intended by Govier marks the originality of her work. She has forged new philosophical terrain by asking new questions and providing answers that are careful but also enlightening and provocative. At the end of this collection you will find Trudy Govier's response to the contributed papers.