

Relationship, Particularism, and a Case Study of Africville: an  
Argument for Relational Principles

by

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## **Abstract**

In this work, I argue that moral discourse should make use of relational moral principles. To do this, I examine feminist works in both care and relational theory that reject traditional western conceptions of the self and of principles. Through an examination of Jonathan Dancy's particularism, I argue that a complete rejection of principle is not a viable option for feminists. Instead, contextually sensitive principles that have their grounding in the importance of relationship in human life can and should be formulated. I present examples of principles that operate in this way, and show their utility through applying them to the case study of the relocation of the community of Africville that was once on the edge of Halifax.

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## **Introduction**

Traditional western ethics is flawed. This thesis will be contentious in many circles, but certainly not to most modern feminists. In this work I will be examining feminist arguments on how the focus of moral deliberation should be expanded away from individualistic accounts of moral agents, accounts generally found in traditional western discourse, to one that understands the significance of relationship in human life. This change of focus creates a more accurate picture of what human life is like, and better captures the context that moral agents are found within.

Carol Gilligan argued that hierarchical moral reasoning which proceeded from logical moral principles to impartial application in the world could not capture all the ways in which humans approached ethics. She argued that there was a different moral voice that found its focus in particular narratives rather than overarching rules. Margaret Urban Walker argues that this different voice represents a shift in the focus of moral reasoning from focusing on particular sources of value, to an understanding of good relationship as a necessary condition for value to be formed, whatever that value may be. I emphasize this need for a shift away from an individualistic conception of moral agents by looking at Sarah Clark Miller's work which argues for the inaccuracy and inadequacy of any hyper-individualized conception of a moral agent.

Both Gilligan and Walker move from a traditional western framework, which applies principles top down, to one that has its focus on the details of people's lives and relationships. Noticeably absent in this shift is the language of principle. Principles seem

only to be used in reference to inadequate traditional western thinking which marginalizes the details of particular lives. In an attempt to understand to what extent this rejection of principles is necessary I look to Jonathan Dancy's work in particularism.

Dancy argues that the idea of universalizable moral principles in general is illegitimate.

Dancy believes that morality must focus on particular details of human life, and he believes that this is nearly all that the moral philosopher can say. According to Dancy, reasons for action that could be described as principles or values are entirely drawn from, and exist only in, relation to the particular situation in which they occur. Any attempt to formulate a principle or moral directive which spans across multiple situations will be illegitimate. Any such concept can only properly describe one situation.

I will investigate Dancy's position by looking at arguments against Dancy's strong particularism by David McNaughton, Piers Rawlings, Rodger Crisp, Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit, and Michael Smith. This complete rejection of principle comes with a price: morality becomes a shapeless concept with no clearly defined parameters, there is no generalizable way to provide moral education, and beyond advising a close inspection of the situation at hand, there is no way to provide moral advice so as to shape social policy. Through their critiques I argue that a complete rejection of principles is not a viable position. I take this stance in part because of the difficulties that operating without principles creates, but also because Dancy fails to account for the possibility of contextually sensitive principles that do not violate his holism of reasons. By examining the work of Nel Noddings, a care theorist who rejects principles, and Olena Hankivsky, a care theorist who uses principles extensively, I show that principles can not only operate

in a way that does not exclude the details of particular situations, but can also be contextually sensitive and focus our attention on universalizable details.

In order to understand the foundation that contextually sensitive principles will stand on, I examine the work of Soran Reader and Joan Tronto, both of whom establish accounts of responsibility stemming from the fact of relationship in human life. Reader describes relationship as a real connection between an agent and something else. She argues that all humans will find themselves in these relationships and that these relationships will always create responsibilities. This common thread of relationship is what Dancy misses in rejecting the idea that reasons can be generalized. The fact of relationship will generate moral reasons in everyone's life; reasons that we can generalize into principles.

Reader and Tronto defend a theory describing the partial responsibilities created through relationships that, I argue, we can formulate into a principle of responsibility. Jennifer Llewellyn also uses the fact of relationship to ground principles. Yet, instead of looking at responsibility, she provides an account of restorative justice. She argues for justice through an account of equality built on relationships that reflect dignity, respect, and concern. I argue that these principles, coupled with Hankivsky's principles of care, (that argue for contextual sensitivity, responsiveness, and concern for real consequences) provide a rich framework for investigating personal relationships as well as informing social policy.

To demonstrate the use of these relational principles, I apply them through a case study of the Africville relocation of 1964 in the city of Halifax. The relocation was justified through traditional western liberal theory. Following the dictates of liberal

theory turned out to be disastrous for many of the residents. I will show that relational principles can explain what went wrong in the relocation, and could have provided a better framework for advising a course of action to help the community.



## Chapter 1: Looking away from the Individual

### 1.1 Gilligan

In this section, I will be discussing Carol Gilligan's contribution to the groundwork of care ethics and her presentation of an alternative lens with which to view morality. *In a Different Voice* is in itself not an outright rejection of traditional models of morality, but rather a statement that such models are not all that is of value in moral thinking. I will be drawing from Gilligan a picture of what traditional principle-based ethics does not take into account, in particular the fact of relationship in human life.

Gilligan is in part responding to Lawrence Kohlberg, a prominent psychologist who was working on a theory of moral development. Kohlberg described how humans progressed through six distinct levels of moral decision making (Kohlberg 1973, 3).

Gilligan describes these stages as

...a three-level progression from an egocentric understanding of fairness based on individual need (stages one and two), to a conception of fairness anchored in the shared conventions of societal agreement (stages three and four), and finally to a principled understanding of fairness that rests on the free-standing logic of equality and reciprocity (stages five and six). (Gilligan 1993, 27)

The first level starts with the individual obeying rules to avoid punishment, and proceeds to looking for personal gain. These are followed by two more levels that have the individual adhering to social norms in order to fit in, and then following laws to maintain social order. These are followed by a level that accepts principles that promote equality and reciprocity. These last two levels are disconnected from the details of lives in applying principles that need logic, rather than reference to particular situations within the world, in order to be justified.

So it is at the highest levels of moral development in Kohlberg's scale that any rational person would agree on the right course of action based on their understanding of human rights as described through these logical principles (Gilligan 1993, 21-22). Any properly morally developed person could walk into any situation and see the right course of action by referencing principles. Acknowledging these principles, and applying them to particular situations, raises the moral actor to the highest levels of proper moral development. The moral actors in question are understood as rational independent agents for whom being adept at moral decision making comes from how good they are at being rational.

This account seems to be closely tied to aspects of both a utilitarian framework and Kantian ethics, at least at a vague theoretical level. A right action for a utilitarian is determined by looking at a situation, finding out what will maximize utility, and taking that action. In order to be a good moral agent, you have to be rational, look at how your actions will affect other individuals, and then properly follow the rule that directs you to take the action which maximizes utility. While Kohlberg was likely not looking for utilitarians to be at the *top* of the hierarchy with respect to moral development, no matter their position or circumstances, any moral agent can render correct moral judgments in the same way.

The comparison to Kantian ethics is perhaps even stronger. Moral principles are established in a Kantian system by the rational moral actors referencing the categorical imperative, which directs the moral agent to only take a course of action, or follow a maxim, if they are able to universalize that action or maxim. This universalization would hold if, with everyone following the maxim in question, no logical discontinuities would

be formed from their following that maxim. If everyone can follow the maxim, its universalization would not be self-defeating. The connection between these systems is the focus on principles. The good moral agent is someone who possesses a clear understanding of these principles and follows them. It does not require that the agents understand the details of the situation in question. Rather both theories assume that given the identification of proper moral principles, your position in relation to a given moral situation does not matter. You will be able to direct or take proper moral action.

Gilligan was responding to the assumption that these were the only ways to be a good moral actor. She questioned the idea that in order to be morally competent you had to fit into Kohlberg's scale and apply abstract principles to situations. Gilligan argued that Kohlberg was actually painting a picture of how men generally operated in moral situations and that he was discounting the voice of women, some of whom had different ways of arriving at moral judgments. She compares the responses of two children of different genders, Amy and Jake, when presented with one of the more famous thought experiments used by Kohlberg, the Heinz dilemma, to show different routes to moral answers.

In this thought experiment Heinz's moral dilemma is whether or not to steal a drug for his sick wife which they cannot afford. "In the standard format of Kohlberg's interviewing procedure, the description of the dilemma itself-Heinz's predicament, the wife's disease, the druggist's refusal to lower his price-is followed by the question, 'Should Heinz steal the drug?'" (Gilligan 26). This question is then followed by a series of probing questions to try to ascertain the background reasons they have for their answer.

Eleven year old Jake upon answering the dilemma says that stealing the drug is the right thing to do. He points out that human life is worth more than money or property and, as such, stealing the drug is the proper course of action. Jake is described as being fascinated by logic, and thinks that ethics can be described as a kind of math problem with humans (Gilligan 26). This application of principles to situation puts Jake in fairly good standing given Kohlberg's moral scale: "[Jake]'s judgement at eleven is scored as conventional in Kohlberg's scale, a mixture of stages three and four, his ability to bring deductive logic to bear to the solution of moral dilemmas, to differentiate morality from law, and to see how laws can be considered to have mistakes points toward the principled conception of justice that Kohlberg equates with moral maturity" (Gilligan 27). Given traditional accounts of morality, Jake is well on his way to being an expert at reasoning logically. He is applying principles to situations and using logic to defend right actions.

Amy, on the other hand, does slightly less well given Kohlberg's scale. She tries to work around the problem. To her it does not seem to be a choice between stealing the drug and not having the drug; she rejects that dichotomy, and instead tries to push for a different path to solving the problem. She tries to find compromise with the druggist, or if that fails, she thinks Heinz should try to find some other way to get money to pay for it. If he steals it, then Heinz might be thrown in jail, and his sick wife would be left alone with no one to help her, putting them both in a worse situation (Gilligan 29).

According to the Kohlberg scale, Amy's response conveys that she is less morally developed than Jake, since she is not citing universal principles or logic in her response. She is answering the question in a way that it was not originally designed to be answered. Amy is framing her answer in accordance with a different framework from that of

Kohlberg. Her voice is one that Kohlberg's framework doesn't know how to hear. She does poorly on the scale in the same way I would mark someone poorly on a paper that was well constructed and informative but failed to reach the points set out by the professor's rubric. The issue was not necessarily with Amy, but with the framework used to judge her. Gilligan explains that "[Amy sees] a world of relationships rather than of people standing alone, a world that coheres through human connection rather than a series of rules, she finds the puzzle in the dilemma to lie in the failure of the druggist to respond to the wife" (Gilligan 29).

From this, we see that both Jake and Amy see the value in Heinz's wife's life, yet they assess how to save it differently. Jake accepted the assumption that Heinz had the choice between stealing and not stealing, and reasoned using those assumptions, providing reasons for why stealing was the right thing. Amy looked at the situation as a whole, and utilized the relationships between the various people involved to frame her analysis. For Amy, the picture was more complicated than a simple binary choice for Heinz. Choices in our lives are rarely just trolley problems. While Jake's proficiency in applying principles might do him well in an introductory philosophy class arguing over whether or not to push a fat man onto the tracks, it is far from clear that it makes him better than Amy at being moral in day to day life. With her focus on relationships, rather than principles, Amy is able to ask questions and ponder why relationships have deteriorated to the extent that Heinz isn't communicating with his wife or the druggist.

Gilligan is emphasising that here, an ethic of care provides a different lens for viewing morality than traditional models of ethics provide. In the traditional discourse, we have individuals who are self-interested and disconnected, and who act following the

principles that keep each other on their respective toes. Instead, for Gilligan, we have people in relationships responding to the particular nature of those relationships.

Amy's judgements contain the insights central to an ethic of care, just as Jake's judgments reflect the logic of the justice approach. Her incipient awareness of the 'method of truth,' the central tenet of nonviolent conflict resolution, and her belief in the restorative aspect of care, lead her to see the actors in the dilemma arrayed not as opponents in a contest of rights but as members of a network of relationships on whose continuation they all depend. (Gilligan 30)

This different perspective, demonstrated by Amy, is an example of what Gilligan takes as a different voice for discussing morality. Instead of being able to know and apply principles well, Amy is looking at the details of the situation, the history and narratives of those involved, in order to work out an acceptable resolution for everyone. This is the beginning of what we now know of as care ethics. Caring and a focus on the particulars of a situation are seen as important, rather than an ability to apply a set of fixed principles about the nature of morality to a situation. The details of individual lives will be harder to see and understand as you grow farther from the particular situation, so for the care ethicist, your position and situation matter in an assessment of the right thing to do. Not only are the details of a situation important, but your own position in relation to those details matters. It affects what kind of action you can advocate for others or yourself.

Jake however sees things differently. "Considering the moral dilemma to be 'sort of like a math problem with humans,' he sets it up as an equation and proceeds to work out the solution. Since his solution is rationally derived, he assumes that anyone following reason would arrive at the same conclusion and thus that a judge would also consider stealing to be the right thing for Heinz to do" (Gilligan 27-28). In this way Jake does not assume that your point of view or access to the particular details will change the

course of action you should take. Anyone who understands how math problems work should be able to arrive at a correct answer. This creates a divide between the focus of care ethics and that of traditional western liberal theory. Where the more traditional systems are focused on the principles of ethical behavior, care ethics is focused on finding the details of the particular situations.

While Gilligan does use 'girls' to show the different mode of thought, she is not saying that a perspective that highlights care is singularly female or that either one of the genders, or sexes, is absolutely better at one version of moral reasoning than the other. The possibility of having girls and women score lower on the Kohlberg scale was not due to some inability to reason or anything of the kind, but rather because they were approaching the problems in a way that the test was not equipped to analyse:

When I hear my work being cast in terms of whether women and men are really (essentially) different or who is better than whom, I know that I have lost my voice, because these are not my questions. Instead, my questions are about our perceptions of reality and truth: how we know, how we hear, how we see, how we speak. My questions are about voice and relationship. And, my questions are about psychological processes and theory, particularly theories in which men's experience stands for all of human experience-theories which eclipse the lives of women and shut out women's voices. (Gilligan x)

Gilligan was listening to a different voice, not saying which gender was better or how the genders were different, simply presenting a different voice from the one that moral philosophers had been listening to within the western liberal tradition.

The importance of acknowledging the context and the relationships involved in moral situations is an important aspect of the different voice. That these were taken into account and explored by Amy is not an insignificant fact. Yet Jake can be said to have done something like that as well, but from a slightly different perspective. He also

situated his response in terms of society and laws, and argued that the law would treat Heinz more leniently because they would be able to tell that what he had done was right (Gilligan 29). He was acknowledging the context of the situation in a way, yet he was looking at rules, rights, principles, and, to some extent, the roles of the individuals involved. With this focus he did not question what kinds of relationships were behind the thought experiment in Heinz.

The difference is that Amy was not looking at a collection of individuals with roles and rights (of druggists, of wives, of those who are faced with stealing to save a life). She was looking at relationships that connected people that were important in themselves. She sees these as central features rather than viewing the individual as separate from them. This is an important distinction, where the understanding shifts from a focus on individuals as the base factor to a focus on the ways that individuals are connected to each other. Once right and wrong actions are defined by those connections, new doors are opened for investigating moral matters. This explains why the original Kohlberg tests marked Amy poorly. She was answering in a context that went beyond what the test was able to evaluate. The test was not looking at the lives of those involved as a way to draw out more details of the situation. It assumed that good moral reasoning was simply applying principles to situations. All one had to do was take the question at hand, the information you do have, and apply your principles. Because Amy is looking for details, the test assumes she is less morally developed; otherwise she would have simply picked a course of action that was identifiable without needing to know the details. However, Amy was no less moral for attempting to find out more about the



relationships involved. She was in fact showing a better understanding of the world by not merely accepting a few details as the full story.

Looking at moral matters as centered on connections among individuals rather than on individuals themselves does provide many advantages, many of which will be discussed in depth in this work. But this focus is not an uncontroversial move:

Within the context of U.S. society, the values of separation, independence, and autonomy are so historically grounded, so reinforced by waves of immigration, and so deeply rooted in the natural rights and tradition that they are often taken as facts: that people are by nature separate, independent from one another, and self-governing. To call these “facts” into question is seemingly to question the value of freedom. Yet this is not at all the case. The questioning of separation has nothing to do with questioning freedom but rather with seeing and speaking about relationships. (Gilligan 1993, xv)

This traditional view of the individual in western society is what Gilligan is describing as only one voice for morality. She argues that this independent moral agent is a construct of the traditional male narrative and that any discussion that describes this as the only way to reason about morality is not listening to women’s voices. These voices tend to paint a different picture of who and what should be discussed in moral matters.

## **1.2 Walker’s interpretation of a Different Voice**

Margaret Urban Walker, one of the theorists who has worked to develop an ethic of care, emphasizes that there are two interconnected themes that become apparent within Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice*: a commitment to care, as well as a contextual particularist ethic (Walker 1989, 125). In this section I will be investigating how Walker argues that this interplay of care and contextual sensitivity, while important, is not all there is that is important in Gilligan’s work. Care and contextual sensitivity describe the content of

moral decision making, yet Walker believes that along with this content is a different structure to moral thought and application that is distinct from traditional western thinking.

The contextual sensitivity, which Walker describes as a contextual-deliberative picture of moral thinking, (Walker 1989, 124) is a particularist dedication to the particular situation at hand. This picture holds that in order to find the correct course of action in any situation you must source information directly from that situation. The justification for action will be found in the particular situation rather than simply in an abstract concept or principle. This focus on the situation is a premise shared with particularists, in that they also hold that in order to act morally you must directly reference the particular situation in question to understand right action. Particularists, such as Jonathan Dancy, will argue that this means that no principles are possible in moral reasoning, or that there can be no generalizable explanation for particular actions being right and wrong in particular situations (Dancy 1993, 64). Whereas other particularists, such as Margaret Little, also argue against the existence of moral principles, she argues that “[t]here are aspects of our moral epistemic lives that necessarily look beyond the particular to invoke moral patterns, indeed law-like patterns, to carry justificatory weight” (Little 2000, 278). In the chapter that follows, I will look at Dancy’s full rejection of principles in detail, because while particularists do advocate a contextual sensitivity they are far from the only moral theory to do so.

That there is more to Gilligan than a focus on caring for individuals combined with a dedication to the details of a particular situation can be seen by comparing Gilligan’s approach to that of utilitarianism. This step, a comparison of one of the most

principle-based western moral theories with the moral perspective that emerges from Gilligan's interviews with women, might at first glance seem odd. Yet Walker describes utilitarianism as perhaps the "ultimate in care perspectives" (Walker 1989, 126). She takes this step because of the utilitarian's unflinching dedication to maximizing utility, which requires incredible contextual sensitivity to properly complete their calculus. Utility, be it understood as happiness, preference, or some form of hedonism, will be a somewhat subjective thing, such that to maximize it would require a very close examination of the particular situations to get the most utility every time. This radical dedication to the particulars of each situation is why Walker describes utilitarianism as perhaps being the "ultimate in care perspectives."

The utilitarian will always be looking at the particular details because they must always act to maximize utility, which can only be found through a calculation of those details. This focus on particular experiences is a recurrent theme in Gilligan's work, with Amy rejecting cursory descriptions of situations that do not detail the particulars of individual relationships. Walker, however, points out that the different voice that Gilligan is presenting is not advocating a staunch dedication to the utilitarian ethic. The contextual sensitivity, which utilitarian theory so well embodies, is not enough to encapsulate what *In a Different Voice* brings to moral philosophy:

Utilitarians are fully committed to caring about welfare, about the 'well-being of others in their own terms,' about assessing the particular, present situation, and do not traffic in advance ordering of different values (for there is only one) but in reckoning actual consequences. These are all marks of the care perspective Gilligan describes (e.g., pp. 78, 101). But clearly, Gilligan has not meant that women have a bent for utilitarian thinking. This would leave out the emphasis of the different voice on care focused in terms of relationship, intimacy, attachment, and 'natural bonds' (pp. 17, 19, 32, 48, 132). (Walker 1989, 127)

Utilitarians are being contextually sensitive by impartially maximizing their singular source of value. When Walker claims that the utilitarian leaves out the focus on relationship, she is emphasising how relationships are, at best, data to be used in the utilitarian calculus. The details of peoples' lives will be focused on, certainly, but only because the calculus calls for it. This calculus is defined by its impartiality. Walker describes how utilitarians "insist on unqualified and impartial commitment to caring - caring for all, counting each for one and no more" (Walker 127). The focus for the utilitarian is on the uniformity of potential value individuals have (whether that value is pleasure or preference) rather than the diversity of their lives. Yes, they will have to see the particular details of particular lives, but this is a second step that follows from the attempt to maximize happiness for the greatest number. An interest in the relationships of people's lives will come after a focus on the particular life, after an investigation as to whether or not it is relevant to happiness in the particular instance.

The contextual sensitivity that Walker finds in Gilligan is of a different kind than that found in this utilitarian approach. The details of individual lives matter very much in Gilligan's case as well, yet this differs in priority and application. Instead of first assuming a uniformity to human lives (as utilitarianism does with the assumption of equal worth and each person's preference or pleasure counting for one), Walker takes the differences in lives to be the starting point. With a focus on relationship, the particular details of individual lives are the starting point.

Utilitarians might be said to be like a group of river or ocean people, for whom living with and around boats are a ubiquitous aspect of life, who have decided that getting wet is an intrinsically terrible affair. They build and maintain boats, yet they do so

because getting wet is anathema to them; the boats are merely instrumentally useful to keep their feet dry. The different voice also has individuals who build boats, they too might think that getting wet is horrid, yet this belief is not what motivates or pushes boat building. In this case, boat building is a metaphor for a contextual approach focusing on relationships. Relationships are to us the boats that we will live our lives in. Without them, from our point of view, the intrinsic good that the utilitarian seeks would be unattainable. The people of the different voice understand that their lives will necessarily require the building and maintaining of boats and begin with that premise rather than with the principle of the intrinsic value of remaining dry. These theories share interests, certainly, yet go about describing or justifying them in different ways. Instead of beginning with an impartial viewpoint and moving to the particular, you begin at the particular and, if necessary, move to the general and impartial position. This brings us to an important point. Does care itself represent a value that is very much like that of utility? Do the two groups differ in that one thinks being dry is the good, where the other believes that maintaining boats is the root source of value?

It is clear that care is important in Gilligan's work and certainly has normative weight. Proper decision making requires a focus on the details of relationships, all the bits of narrative details that flow from them will be of normative import. A focus on care describes the activities of relationships, taking note of and responding to needs in a way that maintains the relationships and takes into account these details (Gilligan 62).

Traditional ethics certainly does not discuss the importance of such attention to detail, or the need for being attentive to the particularities of individual actors in situations in order to respond to their needs. While utilitarians will have to look at particular details in order

to complete their calculus, the differences among people are not the emphasis, nor is the significance of relationships an important facet of the formal theory. The utilitarian is only on the boat because it is instrumentally useful for promoting a value such as happiness or pleasure or preference. Walker believes that there are two routes that one could take to describe the focus of care within Gilligan. One route where care itself is an intrinsic good, and the other where it is simply a necessary component for human flourishing (Walker 1989, 128-129).

Nel Noddings takes the former path, and argues that care is all that matters morally such that to care well in one-to-one relations is all that there is to being moral (Noddings 82). Caring is itself the good to be pursued, not any of things that result from it. To Noddings, we should care for the boat for the boat's sake. Walker, however, argues that this is not what Gilligan was emphasising when she discussed care:

Are Gilligan's women properly described as caring about care itself? It seems not; different of the different voices invoke, as decisive or central grounds for moral choice, such values as equality (p. 64), honesty (p. 65), authenticity (p. 52), growth (p. 159), safety from danger and hurt (p. 129), self-preservation (p. 111). Further, a striking feature of a number of cited responses is a tendency to extend the scope of concern very widely indeed. ... A number of Gilligan's women seem not at all hesitant to generalize concern and to ponder, troubled, the overwhelming implications. What they seem not to do is to generalize the other persons, to view them abstractly as generalizable kinds of cases (p. 11). The distinction is important and is needed to make sense of a certain kind of strain in these voices. A different way of modelling the moral sensibility at work here captures this. (Walker 129)

In this way, care as distinct in Gilligan's work is not just the feeling of attachment and duty to those close to you. Walker interprets the care that matters to women to include all of these concepts. In her eyes, care is not distinct from authenticity, growth, safety from danger, etc. Rather it is a concept that incorporates these ideas when focusing on

particular real people. Care is an “attentive relation of acknowledgement and understanding” (Walker 130) that focuses on real particular people. In this way a focus on relationship is not describing relationships as intrinsically valuable. Walker takes no stance on whether the value found through relationship is necessarily the singular utility of the utilitarian or some combination of different facets of human life that provide intrinsic good. What she does believe is that relationship must be the focus for moral understanding in any pursuit of what is of value. There does have to be some value that motivates the need for relationships, but Walker believes there “is no reason to think that this cannot be a rich and varied conception in which many important goods (intrinsic, internal, contributory) are complexly related” (Walker 1989, 130). We simply do not need to know the details of what the intrinsic good for humans is to know that we need to focus on the details of individual lives and relationships in order to achieve that good. So the people of the river build boats not because the building of boats is good, but because it is through this building and maintenance that the values in their lives have a chance to be realized.

Utilitarians might argue that they can get the same results as an approach with relationship as its focus. They could say that if the maximization of human happiness, or utility, or preference, or whatever the good is, does indeed require a close inspection of relationships, then their theory would advocate a close inspection of relationships. This is all well and good, and to some extent I agree. If utilitarians took this path of focusing on relationships, they might be said to be relational theorists. Yet the very structure of utilitarian theory, from impartial individual worth, to a deductive calculus, seems to stand in opposition to holding relationship as the focus of moral thought. As we have seen it is

not simply the content that sets Gilligan's different voice apart, but the process through which we come to see this content as significant and important.

Seeing in the dilemma not a math problem with humans but a narrative of relationships that extends over time, Amy envisions the wife's continuing need for the husband and the husband's continuing concern for his wife and seeks to respond to the druggist's need in a way that would sustain rather than sever connection. (Gilligan 1993, 26)

As we can see there is certainly a need for contextual sensitivity, as well as a need for care. Yet if this is all we take from what Amy is proposing we will see the things she looks to, but not *why* she looks there.

Walker describes the focus of Gilligan's work as "two themes, consonant but seemingly addressed to different questions: one to what we must think about morally, one to how we must do so. This seems not simply an ethic of care nor simply a context-sensitive, particularistic ethic, but instead a contextualist ethic of care" (Walker 1989, 125). The contextual sensitivity part is seeing the importance of relationship. The care part is responding to the needs that the relationships create. Traditional principles can take particulars to be important, as we have seen with Walker's examination of utilitarianism, but it is the focus on relationship that really makes Gilligan's work distinct and revolutionary. Gilligan is telling us to do more than simply look at the particulars within relationships when we are acting morally. She wants us to also look at the relationships themselves. "Asked why he should not steal the drug, [Amy] considers neither property nor law but rather the effect that theft could have on the relationship between Heinz and his wife" (Gilligan 2003, 28).

Amy is not just looking at the details of the lives within relationships, she is looking at the relationships themselves. It is not insignificant that Gilligan is interested in



relationships rather than the details of relationship. A utilitarian framework, as described by Walker, can look at those sorts of details, even if in a mathematical fashion, yet the overarching relationship itself is not something it can see as relevant. While the nature of relationship will affect the happiness of the individuals, frameworks that cannot focus on relationships will miss the explanatory details behind the relationships themselves. “Just as she ties the wife's survival to the preservation of relationships, so [Amy] considers the value of the wife's life in a context of relationship” (Gilligan 2003, 28). By placing an emphasis on relationships, Gilligan’s focus is not simply on meeting others’ needs – and understanding why it is important to meet others’ needs – but on changing the lens with which we view morality from individuals to relationships.

In this section, I have been describing relationships as boats. While in many ways I do think this is an apt metaphor I need to caution taking it too seriously. We can only be in one boat at a time, but in our lives we will be in many simultaneous relationships. These relationships will form a web that will affect all the relationships in them. Our relationships are closer to a great patchwork raft of many diverse parts than a dinghy. In the section that follows I will investigate more of this interconnected nature of humans.

### **1.3 Miller’s critique of individualism**

Sarah Clark Miller also wishes to move the focus of ethics away from an understanding of individuals as solitary agents to one of individuals deeply entrenched in relationships. Where Gilligan points to how traditional ethics does not see the significance of relationships, Miller attempts to show that the kind of individual these theories picture does not in fact really exist. Individuals are necessarily parts of communities and always

exist within or through relationships. Miller's precise interest is in critiquing the individual as put forward by theories of cosmopolitan justice. I will argue that the difficulties facing these justice-based conceptions of individuality fall victim to ignoring the same things that Jake failed to see when looking at ethics through the eyes of universal principle:

One of the most distinctive contributions of care ethics has been its emphasis on relationships, both in terms of the relational nurturing and generating of moral agents and the intrinsic moral worth of relationships. Care ethicists would charge that the individualism at the heart of current accounts of moral cosmopolitanism amounts to a hyper-individualism. In the context of cosmopolitan justice, the individual is the ultimate unit of moral concern, a view challenged by the foundational moral importance that care ethicists ascribe to human relationships. The atomistic, disconnected social ontology characteristic of the modern philosophical period, of which feminist theorists have been highly critical, re-emerges, or perhaps carries over to contemporary theories of cosmopolitan justice, where individuals somehow separated from the relationships in which they are intertwined function as primary normative units. ... From this [hyper-individualistic] vantage point, it is not possible to understand the moral self apart from the relationships in which it is embedded. (Miller 2010, 148)

The hyper-individualism that Miller sees in more traditional accounts of ethics, in this case cosmopolitanism, is simply an inadequate and inaccurate account of the individual.

Are those individuals rational agents interested in pursuing some plan of the good life? Certainly. But they are also enmeshed in relationships that have sculpted and created them, and continue to directly influence what they value and how they value it:

The moral cosmopolitan holds a primary commitment to the principles of justice and right, which many varieties of cosmopolitanism often express as an honoring of obligations to other humans because of the abstract humanity shared between them, that is, apart from the features that distinguish them one from another. Such a degree of abstraction willfully ignores the embeddedness of moral agents in at least two significant respects: first, as persons situated in

a nexus of human relationships and second as persons with specific identities. Absent these features, care ethicists would argue, the moral self becomes an unrecognizable wisp of moral abstraction. (Miller 2010, 149)

I will, if you forgive an excursion into tenuous metaphor, describe this hyper-individualism as contrasted with a relational conception of an individual as a tree within a forest. In a forest you have many trees, and the hyper-individualistic conception of the tree will be able to give you a good description of what an individual tree needs to thrive. You can have a description of what type of soil it needs, how much sun, and the amount of water that needs to pass by its roots. This description of the one individual tree would give you a good understanding of what it needs. The forest, however, is not really just a whole lot of individual trees, I mean yes they technically are, just as we humans are individual people, but in order to understand what a tree needs to grow you cannot take the other trees out of the equation. Too many perfectly planted trees in one area will mean that their roots will compete over water and nutrients, their branches would block each other's light, and the lot of them would suffer. Too few trees and they will be vulnerable to wind storms and grazing deer. In order to plant a forest that survives, you must take the relations between trees into account. Trees, unlike us, are fairly self-sufficient once planted. We have drastically more integrated lives with the people around us. Our relationships are diverse and far reaching and probably far more important to us than the neighbouring tree is to the lone pine in the forest. As seen by Miller, this is the problem with more traditional approaches to the individual in ethics; they are describing the tree but not referencing the forest.

One could take this as meaning that in order to know how to make humans prosper you need to know about the relationships they are in. This is technically true, but

there is more to it than that. It is not just that understanding relationships is necessary for pursuing the good of any individual, but that it is necessary for understanding the individuals themselves in a moral sense. Miller points out that “[f]rom this vantage point, it is not possible to understand the moral self apart from the relationships in which it is embedded” (2010, 148). Knowing all sorts of details about an individual without reference to their relationships is simply inadequate to build a picture of who they are morally, what their needs are, or even what they would want from life. If you took all the relationships I am in out of the picture, relationships with family, with friends, with co-workers, with professors, with institutions, with business, with the people I pass on the street, then you are left with not much at all. You need to account for my relationships in order to account for me within a theory of who I am. I am not an individual without connections that matter, and you are not either. This rich interpretation of the self is very different from the rational hyper-individualistic individual at the base of the western liberal tradition. While Miller calls herself a care ethicist, this conception of the individual as deeply embedded within relationships is one that we will see is shared by relational ethicists.

Taking this approach to individuals in relationship is no simple matter. If, for example, someone was going to authorize a drone strike, that an individual was armed and in an area controlled by a hostile force would hardly be sufficient information to have them killed. You would need to really look at the individual if you wanted to act properly in relation to them, look at them in the context of their relationships and their personal historical narrative that emerges from this. A full look at their relationships and their relationship with you, assuming now that you have the rather unfortunate job of

sentencing strangers to die, would be needed in order to act properly. Like Amy in Gilligan's research who looked beyond the 'steal or don't steal' dichotomy, you would have to reject the 'do they die or live' dichotomy and look at the long reaching results of your actions on relationships to identify all the options at hand and make the right decision.

Miller has shown us explicitly a way of seeing what Jake has missed. Some of the fault of Jake's approach might have come from his hieratical acceptance of principles, but it is clear some of it stems from the fact that Jake's principles were based in a hyper-individualistic conception of individuals. While Miller focuses on rejecting the hyper-individualistic individual of traditional liberal theory, Walker has pointed to bypassing the individual and looking to the relationships individuals find themselves in. Having conveyed something of the importance of relationship for the understanding of the individual herself, the next chapter will look more closely at principle. Is there something amiss with the use of principles wherever they may be that will lead to the sort of looking away, or the missing of detail in particular situations? I will argue that it is not principles that lead to the difficulties we have seen through Gilligan and Miller, but rather the conception of the individual. In Chapter 4, I will explore in more detail accounts by care ethicists and relational theorists who make use of these insights. From this, I will be defending a use of principles that understands the importance of relationship that we have seen through the works of Gilligan and Walker, and has no issue with an interconnected individual that we have seen in Miller's work. Yet first we will look at why one might be tempted to reject principles entirely when discussing ethics.

## **Chapter Two: Particularism and the Rejection of Principle**

So far we have seen through Gilligan a different voice that describes a method of approaching moral questions distinct from traditional western theories. Walker described that method as being rooted in a focus on relationships between agents. This focus moves moral theory away from being interested in particular values to an interest in relationship. This focus is not described in Gilligan or Walker with the language of principle. This choice of language could lead us to believe that the moral voice which emerges from Gilligan's work does not use, or need, principles at all. In this chapter I will be investigating particularism, a theory that argues that moral reasons cannot be generalized into meaningful moral principles. They argue that when someone is using moral principles, as in the case of Jake within Gilligan's work, those moral principles would lead them to sometimes ignore the real particular issues that are the actual reasons for action. Jonathan Dancy is a particularist who rejects all moral principles. Because I aim to argue for relational principles that describe good states of relationship, I will examine his arguments against principles in general.

### **2.1 Introduction to the role of principles**

Principles, as used in discussions of ethics and morality, are often used in fairly different ways. We can have lists of actions which have negative moral value, or whenever action x occurs, let's say lying, something 'wrong' or 'bad' has occurred. Moral principles of this sort would say things like 'killing is wrong,' or 'one should not break their promises'. They will be fixed action types, or categories of things that people should or should not do, with a supposed moral valence attached to them, such that they

are either morally good or bad. When presented with a situation, a moral agent who follows these types of principles need only choose the course of action that follows the rules prescribed. Dancy describes these as absolute principles, such that “a moral principle to be a universal claim to the effect that all actions of a certain type are overall wrong (or right)” (Dancy 2013).

Another type of principle can describe sources of value in a hierarchy. These principles will allow you to decide, for example, whether it is moral to switch a train onto a different track. The principles show you what things (or actions) are valuable, and generally provide some list of their priority. In the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Dancy describes these as contributory principles. “Understood in this second way, our principle maintains that if an action involves breaking a promise that counts against it. The action is the worse for being a promise-breaking” (Dancy 2013). On one side, Dancy has a list of action types that are always right or wrong, and on the other, he has a list of action types that will generally contribute to right or wrong action.

While Gilligan does not explicitly state many of the principles that Jake is using, he does seem to be taking a route which would draw on what Dancy thinks of as contributory principles. “Jake relies on theft to avoid confrontation and turns to the law to mediate the dispute. Transposing a hierarchy of power into a hierarchy of values, he defuses a potentially explosive conflict between people by casting it as an impersonal conflict of claims” (Gilligan 2003, 32). It is in this way that Jake can turn morality into a sort of ‘math problem with humans.’ Anyone who would take this approach could in theory step into any situation and from their vantage point describe what the correct course of action would be.

The above accounts of absolute and contributory principles do explain many kinds of principles, ones such as lying is wrong, but they fail to fully understand the function of principles as used by utilitarians or relational theorists. These theories do not simply list things like lying and say that they are either wrong, or right, but instead provide a framework for explaining why in particular situations the act of lying was, in that instance, wrong or right. The principle for utilitarians, for example, will direct one to maximize utility, be it happiness or preference satisfaction or what have you. This will describe actions as being right or wrong dependent on whether or not it lives up to that standard. This will, however, need to be highly subjective to the particular situation, no action but maximizing utility will ever be intrinsically good or bad without reference to that. Utility will always be a subjective concept in that it will need to be understood through the particular situation at hand. What will maximize happiness for one, will perhaps simply annoy another. That utility is maximized must be understood through the person who is experiencing that utility. So while maximizing utility will be an absolute principle, it is one that must always be understood within particular situations.

For example, when I ask why it was a good thing for the boy to smash the ice cream out of an old woman's hands, the utilitarian can explain that in doing so the boy maximized utility as the old woman was deathly allergic to the nuts in the ice cream. These moral principles have nothing to say about hazelnut ice cream itself, yet they do have a system for describing why in some circumstances it is good to ingest it and in others not.

You will remember that Walker described Utilitarianism as perhaps the ultimate in care perspectives. Yet she also pointed out its failing to account for the necessity of



understanding the importance of position and subjective personal realities. While utility is a subjective value, the way in which you go about prescribing the maximization of utility is not subjective. The principle of utility is however incredibly individualistic. Value is measured by seeing each particular individual as a glass than can be filled, and then attempting to get as much water into glasses as possible. The details of lives and relationships matter only as data in seeing where water can fit, and can easily be ignored if doing so would maximize utility. Utilitarianism does, however, provide a good example of the kind of principle that is contextually sensitive and it provides an explanatory framework for why particular situations and actions can be deemed to be correct or not. Utilitarianism argues for a subjective state in an individual to be the justifying reason for normativity.

We have already seen feminist rejections of a hyper individualist conception of the self. Without some serious overhaul, utilitarian perspectives will fall victim to this as well. The lone individual, reasoning on her or his own, is simply a poor representation of human life. The relational theorist, however, begins with the fact that humans live in relationships, and from this brute fact creates principles that describe good, just, relationships. These are normative principles that describes how to ensure that these relationships allow for those involved to live good lives on their own terms.

I am however getting ahead of myself. Principles, as I aim to defend them, are action-guiding generalizations that can explain past wrongs and inform future action. Principles provide the why to normative claims, and as such must be universalizable across normative situations. While I agree that principles can include concepts such as 'lying is wrong,' I argue for relational principles that are agnostic on the value of

particular non-relational action types such as that. I will borrow a description of principle from John Dewey:

A principle evolves in connection with the course of experience, being a generalized statement of what sort of consequences and values tend to be realized in certain kinds of situations; a rule is taken as something ready made and fixed. A principle is primarily intellectual, a method and a scheme for judging, and is practical secondarily because of what it discloses; a rule is primarily practical. (Dewey 1960, 136)

Dewey's description of principle touches on the important point that principles need not be rules in a fixed and unyielding sense. While a principle is a generalization meant to be relevant beyond particular instances, this does not mean that the principle must be blind to the particular details that emerge from different situations. Dewey's example does not specify the breadth of situations that will be relevant under a principle. In this way a principle can describe "lying", a very narrow and easily defined situation, or "abandoning a relationship", a much broader concept with more complexities to be found in its definition.

Dancy does not make the distinction between subjective principles that provide reasons for particular actions being wrong and lists of actions with either absolute or contributive normativity. His two conceptions of principles seem to miss principles that understand value as something that must be understood through subjective reference. When discussing what principles are he seems to be describing rules far more than generalizations that serve as guides for moral action. Despite this he certainly does target both rules and more complicated guides in his arguments against principle. Dancy argues against the utilitarian, who assumes that pain (something that will be understood subjectively) will always be a negative factor when judging a situation. For Dancy there

can be no generalizable reasons in moral thought, no linguistic concepts that can be properly action-guiding from situation to situation. There are no describable things that can be done that will always make a situation better, or worse in Dancy's account of morality.

## **2.2 The Arguments for Particularism**

Dancy's insights into the need for contextual sensitivity are valuable, yet, I have thus far not shown why this need for particularity requires a full rejection of principles for Dancy. One might be tempted, as I am, to take a moderate particularist position that advocates principles that force a high level of contextual sensitivity. This would seem to give us the best of both worlds: principles that could support useful applied ethical theories, as well as contextual sensitivity that pays attention to the lives of real people. This is however not an option for Dancy because he believes that the very nature of normative reasons will discount any generalizable reasons for action.

In fully rejecting principles, Dancy takes a step farther than more moderate particularists. In order to cash out the differences between moderate particularists and Dancy I will borrow a distinction from David McNaughton's and Piers Rawlings' paper "Unprincipled Ethics" in which they describe particularism as being able to be broken down into two variants of particularism: valence particularism and verdict particularism. Verdict particularism holds that:

a correct moral verdict can only be reached by paying close attention to the individual case-to what differentiates it from other cases as much as what it has in common with them. As well as an understanding of the correct moral principles, we need fine judgement, sensitivity and even something approaching a perceptual capacity to appreciate the saliences of the

circumstances in which we find ourselves. Particularism, in this broad sense ...claims that a grasp of moral principles is insufficient for the correct appreciation of the particular case... (McNaughton 2000, 256)

Verdict particularism is contrasted with valence particularism which simply rejects the existence of any moral principles at all rather than defends their sufficiency. The valence particularist agrees that we must look at the particular situation closely and be attuned to its particular moral salience, but they argue that this cannot be done by referencing general moral principles. Every moral situation is unique and cannot be separated from its own moral salience to inform any other situation. It is described as “valence particularism” because the reasons to act one way or another shift between cases. For verdict particularism, the background reasons for acting do not shift, rather it is the verdicts of those reasons in each particular situation that do.

Valence particularism makes the claim “that there are no weak principles (that is, there are no properties, apart from the thin moral properties right, wrong, that have universally and counterfactually invariant valence)” (McNaughton 2000, 258). Dancy is a valence particularist, so while he believes actions can be right or wrong, there are no generalizable explanations for this fact. Reasons explaining why an action is wrong will only be found in the particular situation that the action is in.

Dancy believes that reasons are always holistic. This means that when we examine any reason, be it related to giving money to charity or castling your king, it will always be understood through the situation it is in. The holism here emphasizes that reasons are inextricably tied to the situations they come from. Reasons exist only in the context of the situation from which they arise. This seems pretty straightforward, and in many ways I agree with Dancy. Whether or not I should lend my friend one of my axes will be decided

by the reasons involved in that situation. Where I disagree with Dancy is that he believes explanatory stories behind all reasons exist only in the situation from which they are formed. So if we are told a parable and ask what the moral of the story is, we will be making a mistake. The things drawn out of that story will be pertinent to that story alone. Now Dancy would certainly stop me here and say that this, of course, is not what he means. He does think we can learn things from particular situations, it is just that those things that we learn will never be applicable to all situations. There will always be an exception where the explanation for why something happened in one situation, the reason why it was wrong to give my friend the axe, will not apply to some other situation. The full explanation in every situation will be found entirely within that situation. Dancy explains this by saying “What is a reason in one situation may alter or lose its polarity in another” (Dancy 2000, 132). If Dancy were simply talking about action types like lying, I believe he would be right. I am very sympathetic to his project in general, yet I believe he fails to see that every moral situation involving humans will also be a moral situation in which those humans are embedded in relationships. This fact of relationship will exist whenever and wherever he is drawing a particular moral reason, and these reasons will need to be able to account for the relationships if they are to properly guide human life and moral action.

With this conception of holism, wherever you see a reason for doing something, that reason is drawn from the context in which you find it. The motive force of the reason will not be drawn from some overarching concept. He points to everyday reasons for doing things and says that these will invariably be derived from the situations in which they emerge. For example, I do not wish to hurt my feet, so I put on shoes before going

for a walk. The reason in this case, my desire to not hurt my feet, causes me to put on shoes. But if I have spent hours walking in a museum, the same reason could well require me to remove my shoes rather than put or keep them on. The same reason for taking action in these two situations calls for opposite actions. That everyday reasons like this vary from situation to situation, as they are drawn from those situations, is not contentious. Dancy takes this and argues that there is no reason to believe that moral reasons act in any way that is different from everyday reasons. Doing what is right is like trying not to hurt one's feet. What that involves will depend on what is going on. As reasons for acting one way or another vary depending on the moral situation, there cannot be any moral principles that are generally true for every situation. He believes this is true for moral reasons and for the values that motivate particular actions. Dancy expresses this in the following formulation:

1. What is a reason in one situation may not be the same reason in another; it may even change its polarity.
2. The way in which the reasons here present combine with each other is not necessarily determinable in any simply additive way.

By analogy, then, our value-holism should look like this:

1. A feature or part may have one value in one context and a different or opposite value in another.
2. The value of a complex or whole is not necessarily identical with the sum of the values of its elemental parts. (Dancy 2000, 139)

While many parts of this seem to be not overly contentious, we have to keep in mind what Dancy ultimately wants to prove. He does not want to simply say that reasons are generally holistic; he wants to say that reasons must be holistic. Principles are ultimately reasons for action so they too must be tied to particular situations. This would, according to Dancy, make it impossible for principles to ever be universal and apply

across all cases, thus negating the possibility of justifiable universal moral principles. This would be a problem for Jake's decision making process and would mean he cannot assume that everyone would decide as he would. Jake believes that "Since his solution is rationally derived, he assumes that anyone following reason would arrive at the same conclusion and thus that a judge would also consider stealing to be the right thing for Heinz to do" (Gilligan 2003, 26-27). This would, however, require the principles he was using to remain fixed and rigid and not be dependent on situations or the individual judging the situation. If Dancy is correct, holding a list of principles and following them logically would not necessitate success in moral deliberation. Jake's assumption that everyone would make the same decisions as he if they were rational, would also be incorrect.

For every possible moral principle, minimize suffering for example, there would be a situation where the principle would work in an opposite fashion. So there would be a possible scenario in which creating suffering would be the morally right thing to do. While this seems somewhat difficult to swallow, Dancy believes the possibility, no the inevitability, that there exists some situation where this would occur would flip this principle on its head. This means that what was once seen as a principle is only a contingently applicable concept. The following is an example Dancy uses to describe the valence of reason:

Suppose I am trying to train myself into indifference towards a girl. I very much want to spend time with her. But I also want to not have this want, since she is permanently indifferent to me. It is better for me not to think of her at all. If I spend time with her it will make things worse for me rather than better-so long as I have not yet succeeded in training myself into indifference towards her. Once I am indifferent towards her, I can spend time

with her without loss. In this situation, it seems, my desire to spend time with her might be a reason for me not to do so. (Dancy 2000, 133-134)

In this example, Dancy is trying to show how the desire to spend time with this woman might in some situations be a reason to spend time with her and a reason not to in other situations. The example itself is somewhat unclear because he begins by saying he is trying to train himself into indifference, which seems to be an altogether different reason from the one concludes with. We can assume that this switch is because of the overarching reason that he wants to spend time with her. So we have the desire to spend time with this woman as a reason that Dancy is trying to show can vary in valence in terms of motivation in different situations. On one hand the reason counting for spending time with her and on another hand counting against. He is attempting to show a desire for x can motivate us to pursue not x. In order for this to be interesting to us, the reason has to be somewhat equivalent to some sort of moral principle. Dancy seems to be attempting to show that the reasons that motivate him in this example are not different from those that motivate moral reasons. For the sake of charity, I will assume that such a step is not outrageous.

In order to see what is happening here we have to look closer at the details of the above thought experiment. So Dancy's desire to spend time with this woman in this example is a motivating reason. To show that reasons vary in different situations, Dancy has to show his desire to spend time with the woman is the reason why he should not spend time with the woman. He must show that his reason in one situation motivates one action, and that it switches valence



such that the same reason would then motivate the opposite action. (A different action could also serve his purposes to show valence.) Yet in this thought experiment it seems as though when his desire to spend time with the woman actually motivates him to not spend time with her, he does it in order to spend time with her later on. This seems problematic for Dancy, because he is trying to show that reasons will vary in the goal they advocate. He needs for reason X to cause both y in one situation, and  $\sim$ y in another. Yet the situation cannot simply change what is needed to reach the goal, this would be verdict particularism, or particularism which holds that principles will be instantiated differently given different situations. Not that they, the principles, shift what they advocate in different situations which would be required for valence particularism. For Dancy's holism of reason to hold weight, the reason itself must shift in what it makes you attempt to do, not just in how you do it. Dancy's thought experiment fails to do any of the work he needs it to do.

## **2.2 Criticisms of Dancy**

Rodger Crisp explains quite well where Dancy goes wrong in Dancy's unrequited interest thought experiment. Crisp believes that Dancy is mixing up ultimate reasons and non-ultimate reasons. Ultimate reasons would be things like justice, maximizing happiness, and the like. These are expansive concepts that motivate action. Non-ultimate reasons would be the reasons for action in particular instantiations of ultimate reasons (Crisp 2000, 37). Crisp describes another of Dancy's examples, where, in one situation his having borrowed a book is a reason to return it and, in another, the fact that he has

borrowed the book is not a reason to return the book, because it was stolen. Crisp points out that the borrowing does not seem to be the ultimate reason, rather it is some conception of justice that governs both situations. It is the same with the example of Dancy and his unrequited interest in the unnamed woman. His wanting to spend time with the woman simply was not the ultimate reason guiding him. In the given example the wish for a healthy reciprocated emotional relationship might have been the reason, or something of the kind. Crisp believes that all of Dancy's examples of moral valence fall prey to this same problem, and as such "particularism about non-ultimate reasons [verdict particularism] will be accepted by all, while particularism about ultimate reasons is accepted by no one" (Crisp 2000, 40).

To be fair to Dancy he certainly accepts particularism about ultimate reasons. I am very sympathetic to Crisp's argument. It is not at all clear that particularism in the sense that Dancy presents it can be defended, or that particularism, in the contextually sensitive sense with principles being situationally sensitive, requires much if any defense.

In "Ethical Particularism and Patterns" Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit, and Michael Smith provide an excellent example of how to interpret valence particularism's distinct approach to reasons and principles. They are not critiquing Dancy's holisms of reasons by arguing against reasons operating holistically. Rather they object to the consequences of a strong particularist stance itself:

Consider the following raft of true conditionals connecting facts about particular heights with facts about who is taller:

If x is 180cm and y is 190cm, then x is shorter than y

If x is 185cm and y is 190cm, then x is shorter than y

If x is 180cm and y is 170cm, then x is not shorter than y

and so on.

There is an obvious pattern in the antecedents, and, once you have grasped it, you have grasped what it is for someone to be shorter than someone else. (Jackson et al. 2000, 82)

Here it is clear that by looking at the different descriptions of height you can come to learn what being shorter is, and then take the features of a situation and point out which of a set of objects would be shortest. Jackson et al. point out that, for a particularist like Dancy, if we made an analogous list that contained moral facts about the world (like the one about height above) you could never grasp what it is to be moral. You could certainly have a list of moral facts, but there would be no pattern found within it. There would be no pattern that could allow you to extrapolate and judge another situation as moral or not. If you could, then you could say that being moral extends beyond taking action that is morally permissible to a reason for action that can be understood as a type of principle that would govern all sets. The fact that Dancy claims there is nothing more to acting morally than being properly attentive in particular situations means he accepts this stance.

Jackson et al. argue that this is far from satisfactory:

Particularists cannot answer that what unites right action is *simply* the fact that we properly apply the predicate 'is right' to them. The problem with this answer can be variously put by saying that there is no such thing as bare predication, that predicates apply because of how things are, or that predication supervenes on nature. They might say that all that the right actions have in common is that they belong to the set of right actions. Grasp of the predicate 'is right' simply consists in a grasp of the various  $D_i$  which constitutes that set. But this cannot be *all* that unites the class of right actions. There must be some commonality in the sense of a pattern that allows projection from some sufficiently large subset of the  $D_i$  to new members. If there isn't, we finite creatures could not have grasped through a finite learning process (the only sort there is) the predicate 'is right'. So, there must be a pattern or commonality –in the weak sense operative in this paper of that which enables projection- uniting the set of right acts. (Jackson et al. 2000, 87)

Without any pattern, it seems odd that we can objectively describe some situations as moral and others as not. It would be as if I have a pile of things in my room and told a friend that they were all toolies (a made up word). They could well look at me in confusion and ask me what made these things, which appear to have little in common, toolies. I would shrug and say that there isn't actually any relevant shared properties among the things, but they are certainly all toolies. If they had grown up learning what toolies were, I'd say, they would be able to make them out, but there is no pattern to it. My friends might well be skeptical of my classification of all these things into one category, and I don't think we could blame them.

It could be argued that it is a mischaracterisation to imply that Dancy believes that there is no moral pattern that can meaningfully direct action. Jackson et al., however, certainly think that he claims this, and I believe they are right. Dancy certainly does think that there is nothing you can generalize about morality that will play any sort of meaningful role in moral decision making. It would seem as though any moral pattern would be something that he would have to reject. Dancy certainly believes there is no direction one can give a person to make them a better moral agent.

...our account of the person on whom we can rely to make sound moral judgements is not very long. Such a person is someone who gets it right case by case. To be so consistently successful, we need to have a broad range of sensitivities, so that no relevant feature escapes us, and we do not mistake its relevance either. But that is all that there is to say on the matter. To have the relevant sensitivities is just to be able to get it right case by case. The only remaining question is how we might get into this enviable state. And the answer is that for us it is probably too late. As Aristotle held, moral education is the key; for those who are past educating, there is no real remedy. (Dancy 1993, 64)

In this way, there is no overarching way to describe the right actions of individuals. If there were, we could say more about the relevant features that are seen by the capable moral agent. Yet, for Dancy facts about these features cannot be generalised; they are reasons that exist holistically only in relation to the situation from which they have emerged. If my friend can't understand why the pile of things in my room are toolies, well he is just out of luck. He has obviously missed his chance to be able to learn how to properly categorize them. This is the difficulty with not being able to generalize any of the reasons that motivate and inform morality: it leaves us in something of an explanatory void. This rejection of the possibility of educating people, past a certain stage, in moral sensitivity is incredibly problematic. Dancy does not expand on his belief that there is a point where an individual can no longer learn to be a better moral agent. Nor does he explain how this education would be possible for those yet able to learn. I believe that rejecting the possibility of educating people to be better moral agents would require far more than a passing reference to Aristotle if there is the assumption that at some point it is possible for humans to learn given a holism of reasons. If we accept some ability to generalize morality, we gain a lot. Dancy believes that generalizations will always lead to particular mistakes, yet with some form of generalizations we can show how to educate people, how to improve ourselves, and how to make better social and political policy.

### **2.3 Particularism and Care Ethics: Nel Noddings**

In order to show the differences between moral frameworks that can employ principles and those that attempt not to, I will briefly compare the care ethics approaches of Nel Noddings and Olena Hankivsky. Noddings, unlike Gilligan, is building a care

ethic that is designed not to be a different voice that happens to be one that some women seem to have, but rather a distinctly feminine ethic that rejects universal principles.

“Women can and do give reasons for their acts, but the reasons often point to feelings, needs, impressions, and a sense of personal ideal rather than to universal principles and their application” (Noddings 1984, 3). That reasons are grounded in the particular details of situations rather than in universal reasons places Noddings on much the same page as Dancy. “This approach of law and principle is not, I suggest, the approach of the mother” (Noddings 1984, 2). While Noddings rejects principles as does Dancy, she does offer something more to describe what is going on in moral situations. She “locate[s] the very well spring of ethical behavior in human affective response” (1984, 3). This affective response does not, however, provide any detailed framework for how it would be found instantiated in particular situations.

Noddings, while arguing against principles, does present a picture of how care should function. First, care exists as a relation between two individuals, one that she refers to as the ‘the one caring’ (referred to with a female pronoun) and ‘the cared for’ (given the male pronoun).

The one-caring has one great aim: to preserve and enhance caring in herself and in those with whom she comes in contact. This quite naturally becomes the first aim of parenting and of education. It is an aim that is built into the process itself — not one that lies somewhere beyond it. ... That which diminishes it is rejected, that which casts doubt on its maintenance is postponed, and that which enhances it is embraced. (Noddings 1984, 172)

This great aim of caring that the one caring embarks on is a kind of receptivity, an ‘engrossment’ in the other (Noddings 1984, 30). This engrossment involves seeing the values of the other as if through the eyes of the other. The one caring takes the motives of

the other and takes them partially as her own: “I allow my motive energy to be shared; I put it at the service of the other. It is clear my vulnerability is potentially increased when I care, for I can be hurt through others as well as through myself” (Noddings 1984, 33). In this way caring is in a way recognizing the desires and needs of the one cared for and allowing those needs to become your own.

Noddings does qualify this engrossment with the other such that the one caring should not necessarily override all of her self-concern (1984, 33). Yet there is room for concern for the well-being of the cared for and the one who cares. While relationships are central in all of our lives, that all the relationships we are in are good ones, or beneficial for those involved, is far from clear. That the term abusive relationship exists at all seems to imply the contrary. With care being understood through the level of receptivity in particular situations without reference to good or bad care seems to allow for care to perpetuate bad situations. Moreover with the one caring taking their cue from the other, it seems possible for caregivers to become lost, or subservient to the other. In Chapter 4, I will argue that principles that describe good care within relationships could solve some of these issues. Such principles would allow us to describe ways in which to ensure the dignity of those involved.

We could however deal with this in another way. Noddings describes care as a response in the one caring within a relationship with the one cared for. This seems to be framing individuals in a highly individualistic conception that is not too different from the view of traditional western liberal theory. Should Noddings discard the idea that caring should be understood simply through one-to-one relationships and adopt a relational conception of the self, many of these problems would seem to dissolve. If

caring is a reciprocal action in which all members of relationships take part, and if relationships can be complex and interrelating, then the individuals inside them seem to gain more of a voice. Gone is the fear that the one caring will lose aspects of themselves or become subservient, for as they care for the other, the other sees them just as fully and returns their care. This is because one-to-one relationships exist within networks of relationships that can inform the perspectives of those in them. Drawing this insight from the rich relational nature of the individuals in Gilligan's and Miller's work from the previous chapter seems to solve some of the difficulties that could face Noddings.

Does applying the relational conception of the self to Noddings' care give us a good functioning model describing morality, one that Dancy would be happy with? Well no. Despite Noddings continued rejections of principles (Noddings 1984, 2,3,5,56), Debra L. Simms in "The Role of Principles in the Care Ethic: An Examination of Noddings' Caring" argues that Noddings' conception of care that she describes as the ethical ideal (Noddings, 49) is in fact a moral principle.

Her theory clearly holds to the dictum, 'Always act to maintain not diminish the caring relation,' as a principle that must not be overridden. If it is violated, the one who violates is obligated to justify this violation. (Simms 2001, 23)

The dictum, what I will call the principle of care, does the modest work of any other principle. It reminds us of something, a value, a statement, that holds great meaning for us. Like all other principles (as opposed to rules), it will not tell us exactly what to do. It only sets us thinking along certain lines - in this case, we would consider the moral lives of those immediately affected by the execution - a reasonable suggestion. But does the ethic of care do away with ambiguity or contradictory decisions? Not at all. (Simms 2001, 33)

Remember that Dancy rejected the idea that we could explain what makes a person moral beyond seeing the details (details that could not be described ahead of time), and that he



also rejected the idea that any universal source of value could be valid. Noddings is saying is that there is at least one source of ethical value, and that it is caring. Yes caring will be instantiated differently depending on the situation and on the individuals. There will be very different ways in which individuals will care for each other, yet care itself will always be of value. Aspects of this care have taken books to outline; this is hardly Dancy's skepticism about moral principles. In this, care does not seem too distant in theoretical appearance from the utilitarian principle. Both describe what is of value, yet not how that value will be instantiated in particular situations. Even with Noddings' direct rejection of principle, her work has too much by way of a principle to be acceptable to Dancy.

Much of Noddings' work is based on attempting to build a more caring educational system and on teaching individuals to be more moral. Because she can define a generalizable conception of value, even if she herself rejects the claim of it being a principle, she can provide descriptions of how to foster ethical behaviors in people. Dancy, by contrast, offers none. In sum, while Noddings certainly rejects the idea of principles the fact that she does provide a generalizable conception of moral value allows her to provide far more in the way of moral direction than Dancy.

## **2.4 Particularism and Care Ethics: Olena Hankivsky**

Olena Hankivsky, also a care ethicist, does not share Noddings' rejection of principle. Hankivsky believes that care ethics can directly inform and prescribe approaches to public policy through an articulation of principles. Her project is aimed at using insights such as those found in Gilligan and other care ethicists and presenting a

care perspective that can directly address social justice projects that have traditionally been dominated by liberal theory.

In a sense my argument may seem paradoxical. On one hand, I appear to be accepting the traditional liberal frameworks by working within its confines. To the extent that I rely upon concepts associated with liberalism, this is true. However, on the other hand, I reject the incomplete manner in which social justice has been developed; instead, I explore the potential of an ethic of care to transform the assumptions, content, concepts, and meaning of social justice. (Hankivsky 2004, 30)

Hankivsky is not, as particularists and Noddings do, rejecting the concept of principles, or the theoretical framework that can employ principles. Rather she is looking at the way in which traditional liberal concepts and principles are missing important features of human life, and defending the idea that these principles ought to be able to account for care.

Not all theorists will accept a principled argument for care. I believe, however, that principles are important to an ethic of care, that they are necessary to the development of a publicly defensible ethic. I am not proposing that we simply fit the care ethic into pre-existing principles of justice; rather, I am suggesting that, if we take the care ethic seriously, then its values have the potential to transform our understanding and approach to principles. Principles do not necessarily have to be seen as impersonal, abstract, and rigid rules. And they are not necessarily synonymous with a justice orientation. Properly conceived, principles have the capacity to explicitly encompass the aims and objectives of a care ethic. ... Care principles, I argue, can inform a different, more flexible framework for social policy. (Hankivsky 2004, 33)

Hankivsky is showing us that it is not principles themselves that are problematic in traditional western liberal thought, but rather it is what these principles are taken to be and how they are applied. She shares my belief that principles can be used and reinterpreted in order to better prescribe action, both for individuals and for policy.

Hankivsky, being a care theorist, places value in care itself, rather than placing value in good relationships as would a relational theorist. Yet this distinction is a small one because good care will likely create good relationships, and good relationships will certainly require good care. Because of these similarities, the principles Hankivsky defends will be very close to those I discuss through Jennifer Llewellyn in Chapter 4. In both cases, insight into the value of principles themselves can be found.

Hankivsky's principles are meant to ensure that social policy can reflect a real element of care. These are not an exhaustive list of moral principles, in that Hankivsky is not arguing that this is all there is to morality. These principles are designed for social policy makers to be able to understand the values and priorities within an ethic of care. She provides three principles that she believes can do this: contextual sensitivity, responsiveness, and a real concern for the consequences of choice.

The first, contextual sensitivity, is a focus on the importance of seeing the particularities of each moral situation so as to understand the details and relationships of human lives. This is a rejection of the more traditional universal point of view that attempts to attain justice through treating everyone the same, and, moreover, assuming that everyone ultimately *is* the same as well.

From the perspective of a care ethic, people are shaped by their contexts, including their social, economic, political, historical, and geographic circumstances. Contextual sensitivity therefore requires being attentive and sensitive to the influence of social determinants such as gender, race, class, nationality, religion, sexual orientation and ability. The focus challenges liberal notions of uniformity and sameness by taking into account particular differences. (Hankivsky 2004, 33)

Where Dancy tells us that the moral agent simply has a wide range of sensitivities, Hankivsky can actually point to the kinds of things that do matter. While Dancy could

admit that these factors would often play a role, Hankivsky can use understanding the value of care to explain why these factors should be important in human life. This principle should be very reminiscent of the understanding of relationships that Walker finds in Gilligan. Here Hankivsky has taken this understanding and formulated it into a principle that can be directly applied to policy analysis.

The second principle, responsiveness, takes being able to look at all the salient factors that contextual sensitivity presents to be important. Looking at these details not through your own perspective, but attempting to see them from the point of view of those involved is central to this sensitivity. In this way when we discuss race, it is not simply a history of race that we look at, or statistical facts about how race plays out within a society. For a social policy to take Hankivsky's principle of responsiveness seriously, it must see these factors but also attempt to understand what they mean from the perspective of the particular specific individuals involved: "Responsiveness involves taking seriously the perspectives of citizens who may be experiencing inequality, and it involves doing this by listening to their voices and being open to hearing how they articulate their discrimination" (Hankivsky 2004, 36).

You will note that taking these details seriously and showing us how to see these salient details in a proper way does not require us to stipulate a certain fixed value to be attached to any of the particular details of human lives. This theory says we must try to understand what race, for example, means to individuals experiencing it and that we must look at the particular things that matter in people's lives. It is not telling us what in particular must matter from a universal point of view. Instead it is understanding that

with care as a necessary condition for a good human life, looking for details is a necessary condition for that care to occur.

I will only touch on Hankivsky's third principle, the consequences of choice, briefly. This principle emphasises a need to focus on consequentialism such that the focus of care ethics is not simply on enforcing rights, or seeing needs, but rather on the real outcomes of particular lives: "an ethic of care is concerned expressly with the actual outcomes and practical and material effects on people's lives of making certain choices and decisions" (Hankivsky 2004, 38). This ability to focus on real particular results implies that her principles will refuse to look away from the particular situations. They will always be focused on the real world results within those situations. In this way her principles do not simply look at the motivation for action, the justifications for it, and the position of a moral agent. The consequence of choice brings the real lived consequences into sight in discussions of morality and, importantly for Hankivsky, in discussions of social policy.

Dancy who argues for a need of contextual sensitivity and a close focus on the particulars of every situation would probably be fairly supportive of the contextual sensitivity that care ethics requires. Yet he remains steadfast that his holism of reasons would mean that reasons are derived only from the situations at hand, and that moral reasons and values can never be universalized. Yet, humans are always in relationships and for relationships to be good for those in them (without pure luck), the relationships *must* have elements of care. From these facts of human existence we can derive principles. These principles can be as contextually sensitive as Dancy requires, yet they can also provide explanations for the patterns found in morality. They can provide

guidelines as to how to provide moral education and inform social policy decisions.

These are not universal beyond human experience, as they only exist in connection with human relationships. Yet relationships are an omnipresent aspect of human life and as such these principles will apply whenever and wherever you find human life.

Thus far I have argued that the importance of relationship is the most relevant theme to be drawn from Gilligan's different voice. Through this fact of relationship, I have shown that care ethicists such as Noddings do provide a kind of generalization which goes beyond what Dancy believes reasons are capable of. Moreover, I have shown that Hankivsky, with an account of principles which understand the importance of relationship, allows us to get around the issues that Dancy's holism of reasons creates. In the next chapter, I will be discussing what these relationships are that allow us to defend an account of relational principles.

## **Chapter 3: Relationship as the Reference Point for Morality**

### **3.1 Reader's Account of Relationship**

Relationships are the central feature of human life. You are born dependent on them and the staggering majority of human lives will remain immersed in them. Soran Reader's account is of interest to me because it is both partial, in that it can have particular relations with different moral consequences on the participants, and impartial, in that it can provide a foundation for moral responsibilities to matter across distances. I am discussing her theory because I feel it provides a good description of a relational approach to the individual. Moreover, it understands the importance of human connection. This will provide a groundwork for understanding principles that must be understood through the fact of human relationship. Most importantly, it will make clear why relational principles are justified in assuming the relevance of relationship as a generalizable feature of human life.

Reader believes that we must have reasons to care for those far away and to be in some way morally responsible to them. That morality is somehow stopped at the border of the state, or mitigated by physical distance, does not seem a viable option to Reader. Physical distance should not, without a clear explanation, be able to decrease our responsibilities to others on its own. This restriction of moral responsibility due to spatial proximity is something that follows from Noddings' work. Recall that in Noddings it is care itself that is the justification for ethical behavior; it is the value of caring that motivates us. This caring is moreover a one-to-one relation, where the one caring must see as if through the eyes of the one cared for. For Noddings, both must be to some extent co-present in order for the caring relation to really exist. For Noddings, as well, the

farther one is from another individual, the more your ability to connect, communicate, and care decreases. This means that the duties that stem from caring in our particular close lives will make it difficult if not impossible to put resources into caring for someone far away: “Nel Noddings, for example, simply rejects the idea that we have any obligation to starving children in Africa because the caring act I could do could not possibly be ‘completed in the other unless I abandon the caring to which I am obligated’ (1984, 86)” (Reader 2003, 369). For Noddings, because care exists in spheres of importance, those closest to you require the most care, and the burden of care weakens the farther out you go. Despite the fact that Reader wants to explain why we can have obligations to help those suffering in foreign countries, she also wants to defend some elements of Noddings’ care. She believes that we do have distinct responsibilities to those closest to us that we do not have to ignore the child starving in the Sahara. Yet the prioritization that we give to those closer to us should not, she thinks, entirely negate the responsibilities to those far away:

The problem of distance is an instance of the general problem of moral status: which properties of which things impose what moral obligations on which agents? A useful way of distinguishing impartialist from partialist views is by noting that impartialists believe (certain) intrinsic properties confer moral status and determine obligations, whereas partialists believe that (certain) relational properties do this. (4) I will argue that partialists are right in thinking that (only) relational properties ground moral obligations, but wrong in the kinds of relational properties they have hitherto singled out. (Reader 2003, 370)

Instead of placing care as the reference point for moral value, Reader instead looks to relationship to ground moral claims. She believes that we can describe moral responsibilities as being necessary results of relationships, relationships that humans are always in. Reader’s purpose in putting forward such an account is to create a framework



for partial responsibilities that satisfies two basic concerns that she feels any account of responsibility must meet. The first is that responsibility is not restricted within state borders. This will give her the transnational responsibilities that she believes accounts of morality must be able to explain. If it is relationships that create responsibilities and we can have relationships with those in different countries, then it simply follows that we can have responsibilities to those far away. This, however, leads to the second point; that while we do have responsibilities to people outside our day-to-day lives, we have stronger, or at least different, responsibilities to those closest to us. This allows us to reject the impartial utilitarian conception of the other in which everyone else is just a pile of or container for potential happiness that you should care for, if caring for them is the most efficient way to increase the great pile of happiness.

Relational responsibilities that stem from relationships give Reader the ability to have far reaching responsibilities, yet also have those responsibilities be partial rather than impartial. Relationship is the base of moral claims for Reader, but it is important that when we say relationship we are not talking about a list of specific kinds of relationships. If we did attribute responsibilities to relationships like mother and father, these generalized relationship categories would often incorrectly designate responsibility. These responsibilities would create the problems that Dancy sees in principles; they would ignore the details of the individual lives in question when providing specific moral duties. While these relationships will always create responsibilities of some sort, we have already seen that they may not be the same ones for different people. Such descriptions of relationship are heuristic in terms of understanding responsibility. In theory, at least, motherhood and fatherhood carry with them a host of roles within our societal structures,

many of them very important to meet. These roles are not objective rules with some universal justification. We can imagine the duties of either of these roles being fulfilled by another, and they often are. “In recent years, feminist explorations of the nature of the family and care within it have made clear that all such arrangements are deeply embedded in their own times and places (Hays 1996; Ruddick 1995)” (Tronto 2010, 161). Without looking at cultural practices and individual lives, which roles and responsibilities are given to which people are not clear. In order to fully understand the relationship and responsibilities in question, you will have to look directly at the relationship itself, the narrative history of it, and the contexts from which it has formed. Relationship for Reader is not some fixed social designation with roles and duties but rather a “real connection between an agent and something else” (Reader 2003, 370).

This real connection is anything that literally connects one individual to another in some causal way. This can be as simple as two people being co-present in some situation or one person being a consumer of a good that the other produces. Both situations constitute a real connection that links the individuals. While walking down the street, it is the actual sharing of space between other pedestrians and me that makes the connection. We are in a relationship because our actions can and will affect the others in the shared space, not because we share the property of walking down the street. Any sort of shared feature, be it motherhood, being male, or both being Walmart employees, would only matter if through this property we had some sort of causal relation to each other. If we were walking down two sides of a street with no way of knowing the other was there, and no way of affecting the other in any way, then there would be no relationship between us. For example, the relationship I have with a classmate is predicated on being able to

interact with, or have some causal effect on the other student. Should we share a class, yet both be taking it by watching recorded lectures, we would have a far weaker relationship than if we sat next to one another in an actual classroom.

Reader argues that there must be at least the possibility of an agent knowing that they are in a relationship in order for the relationship to be legitimate (2003, 371). In the above example, it would be possible for the other student and I to know that we shared some connection. Perhaps the class list would be posted or I could meet her at a party she hosted. The possibility of being able to know of the connection is necessary. If for some reason the actions of someone in a nearby universe did have a causal effect on me but there was no way for them (or I) to know of this connection, then it would not constitute a relationship. Simply because it is difficult to find the results of our actions on those far away does not mean that there is no responsibility. It must actually be impossible to access this information. If there is a significant casual connection between individuals or entities in this world, then it will be possible, at least in theory, to know of it. This has a lot of significance when discussing relationships and responsibilities in a globalized world. For example, any connection driven by market forces will not be epistemically inaccessible, even if that information is being concealed because it is not in our, or the suppliers', best interest for us to know about these connections.

Reader does make an interesting move when she says that relationships are connections between moral agents and something else, as opposed to moral agents and other moral agents, a move that most ethical theories would reject. Kant, for example, believed that only *rational* agents are those we should treat as ends in themselves. This is important for Reader because we have to remember that it is not just the values,

preferences, or desires of individuals that are the source of moral obligation but rather it is the relationships themselves that create moral worth. When Reader claims that humans have relationships with their homes, the environment, and their animals, she is opening a new window to what matters and how it matters (2003, 372).

To illustrate, say an arsonist were to burn down my house. Deontological or Kantian theorists could say they had violated my right to property, or a utilitarian could point to the suffering that burning down the house caused me. Yet the importance of that suffering can be explained more coherently if we take insight from Reader. It is the destruction of the relationship that I had with that home that causes the suffering. Moreover this results in damage to the patterns of life that are a part of the person I am. Expanding the conception of relationship to the connections between agents and pretty much anything else allows us to better describe the world and our place in it. When forests are cut for logging or pipelines, a relational view, one that does not ignore an agent's relationship with nature, has an explanation for the strong beliefs held by many that this action is morally problematic. It also explains why many who do not have similar relationships with nature do not share these same beliefs. That these sorts of relationships with nature are not shared universally is not a problem for Reader; that they exist at all gives them weight.

This focus on relationship, beyond those between rational agents, also avoids the problems in traditional moral theory that pass over those who lack the rational capacity to be understood as moral agents. In order to matter, someone needs only to have a relationship with a moral agent. The traditional line of thinking that links moral worth to the ability to think rationally about human interaction, and attributes moral worth only to

those with that capacity, often runs into difficulties explaining why someone who does not think the same way or think at all matters in the same way. These are not insurmountable problems for traditional ethicists. They do have moves to explain how to satisfy our intuition that people who function differently or have different capacities matter. Relational theory, as defended by Reader, needs make no footnote to give people with different capacities recognition. The relationships they are in will have particular responsibilities stemming from them.

It should be noted that Dancy's strong particularism will simply have nothing to say about who matters and when. He will argue that these things are dictated by the particular circumstances, something that relational theorists also claim. The particularist, unlike the relational theorist, will not be able to give a generalizable system to explain why these things matter in that situation. So while the relational theorist can give general reasons for why all humans and the relationships they find themselves in matter, the particularist cannot.

### **3.2 Tronto's Account of Responsibility**

We now have relationships connecting individuals and things and concepts, but relationships are more than simply a list of specific people or things you are connected to. For example, I am in relationships with the members of my family. Yet without more details of the history of those relationships, the statement that I am in a relationship with them is not very informative. To understand a relationship, we have to understand the narrative history of that relationship as well as the present conditions. This will have to take into account the point of view of everyone who is involved and take their

perspectives as important to informing us about the nature of the responsibilities that the relationship entails. The history of any relationship is an essential feature in the description of that relationship. To talk about my relationship with my parents without citing my childhood experiences would be as ridiculous as talking about British-Indian relations without talking about colonial history. This narrative history is what Tronto draws out of Reader's account to show the moral significance of severed relationships and not just ones that all parties involved acknowledge as still existing. She places importance not just on relationships that currently exist, but on the significance of past relationships for actors in the present.

Tronto believes that the responsibilities we have as moral agents are partial, and as such not universal, in the sense of impartiality towards my actions to others (Tronto 2012, 305) She rejects the universal claims of responsibility that are characteristic of utilitarianism; claims that a property like suffering will create responsibilities that another agent will have a duty to meet, no matter their position. I have responsibilities to my family in particular that you do not have to my family. These may be responsibilities that you do not have to your own family if the relationships involved are different. On Tronto's account, if Jake were to approach a situation and apply universal principle that did not account for the particularities of the situation at hand, the specific responsibilities that one particular relationship created, he would be going wrong. It is here that we see the stark difference between Jake and Amy; Amy understood that right action depends on the situation.

Suddenly it became clear why Amy's voice in this book was so striking to so many women and also why it left some women with a profound sense of unease. Amy's phrase "it depends"

has been repeated by many women who also resist formulaic solutions to complex human problems. (Gilligan 1993, xxi)

This “it depends” is a rejection that we can have a simple formula to explain what to do in situations. Jake’s approach of measuring right and wrong action by placing priorities on a hierarchy misses the fact that priorities and values will change and swing depending on the situation. Where Amy understands that right action ‘depends,’ Jake thinks it is always structured the same way. Amy understands the kind of partiality that Tronto believes underlies responsibility, or at least something like it, where the circumstances dictate the duties, not a universal list that stands outside the situation.

Now you might think that I have changed course and suddenly joined the particularist camp. I am in fact certainly a moderate particularist, someone who believes that situations will permeate and directly affect how principles are interpreted. I, like Amy, always think that it will depend. Yet there are some things that do not depend. Dancy believes there are no universalizable values, principles, or tools for describing what is right and wrong across situations. I, however, argue that relationships will always create responsibilities, even if the nature of these responsibilities varies widely from case to case. Tronto’s conception of relational responsibilities is a generalizable and action-guiding concept; she describes the reason behind and the source of our responsibilities, things that Dancy certainly does not think are doable.

Tronto bases her conception of responsibility on what it means to be in relationships. We as humans are born into relationships. If somehow we are abandoned after birth, we die. If we are only given the bare necessities of subsistence, food, and some form of shelter without any other response or interaction, we grow up stunted and unable to speak or to interact easily throughout our life. Without a network of

relationships we could not live and be the people we are. “The fact of being alive and the nature of human vulnerability places one in relationships and thus already in the midst of relationships that produce responsibilities” (2012 308). Rousseau and Hobbes may have debated what humans would be like in a state of nature, arguing that they would be either savages or truly free. The relational theorist would argue those in these states of nature would be either dead or unrecognizable from what we think of as humans. A baby will die of thirst alone in the forest. We necessarily exist in relationships; they are what allow us to survive. All of these relationships that keep us alive carry responsibilities with them.

Responsibilities can be approached in two ways according to Tronto: substantive and relational responsibility. Substantive responsibility is associated with any theory that stipulates that there are certain properties that individuals have that create responsibilities that moral agents must meet. Tronto describes how the substantive theorist would point to properties such as being a parent, a daughter, or an uncle--all properties that necessarily carry certain responsibilities with them. So on this account, the fact that my mother had a responsibility to protect and teach me when I was young would be due to that fact that she is my mother. This kind of responsibility, one that Tronto attributes to Samuel Scheffler's conception of responsibility and duty, works in much the way traditional models of justice work (2012, 304-305). There is a fixed structure of responsibilities, or perhaps duties that can be found by looking at the types of relationships at play in a given situation. On a substantive account, relationship Y will always give you responsibility x and a duty to discharge that responsibility.

The substantive approach to responsibilities returns to an individualist conception of actors; responsibilities are found through the properties carried by individual moral



agents. While these properties necessarily describe some sort of relationship an individual is in, they are general relationships in which individuals with substantive properties are viewed as the same and interchangeable. This account, then faces the same difficulty as any principles that are not contextually sensitive. If it is just the relationship of motherhood that bestows responsibilities, then a single mother living in the Bronx would have the same responsibilities to her daughter as the Queen of Spain has to her own. The children in both situations have many of the same human needs. However, the relationships they are in will mean that these needs are being met, and ought to be met, in different ways, by different people, with different relationships connecting them. This does not, however, mean that we are left in the dark to explain these particular responsibilities. While Tronto does not have details to explain the way each particular responsibility is formed from relationships, that we can describe the way in which connection creates responsibility is a definite step up from what Dancy acknowledges or recognizes.

Now in theory a particularist could argue that some of the salient details in a situation can be past narratives of relationship and as such can argue that they too can understand the moral importance of these things in specific situations. They do say that we must be able to see all the salient details in a situation. As such, if someone were to point to something that they believe is important in an ethical situation, the particularist will simply agree and say, 'yes, in this case that is important'. They will simply disagree that such a feature will always have such a salient import. The particularist can agree that some relationships constitute salient moral information, yet they would reject the claim that relationships will always do so. When Tronto or any other theorist points to

abandonment as morally problematic, the particularist could argue that yes, in that specific situation abandonment does matter. But that does not imply that there must be any sort of general theory to describe abandonment as being problematic. Nor does it imply that abandonment is always wrong. The particularist would claim that to say anything more would be to overstep and create situations where the generalized principle would in some situations cause problems instead of solving them. This, however, is not an issue for Tronto. While she does point out the moral importance of abandoned relationships, she does not argue that this abandonment is equally relevant in each case. Abandonment is not in itself a normative property apart from a reference to a certain relationship. When Tronto discusses abandonment, she is discussing relationship, and how abandoning a relationship does not simply remove the responsibilities that that relationship had created. So when someone abandons the relationship, in the sense of connectedness that Reader associates with relationship, they are still in fact in the relationship with moral responsibilities that stem from that. Simply by leaving a once colonized country to self-govern the colonizer does not stop being in a relationship with the colonized country. Legacies of colonialism run deep and have significant impact on all countries involved. This is certainly not to say that Great Britain is as much affected by its colonial rule of Palestine as the Palestine of today is, but the fact that they no longer control the government does not mean that they do not share a relationship, with the corresponding responsibilities, with the nation they abandoned. The relationships between countries continue to matter after one side attempts to cut ties, and the same is true for relationships between people. In the case of abandonment the moral implications will, of course, be derived from the relationships in question. They will be normative and

impactful in different ways just as relationships themselves are. As Tronto puts it, “Even though relationships are constitutive, in some way, for all of the parties in the relationship, there is no reason to think that those relationships are equally meaningful, important, or central to the lives of each of the parties. Indeed, even in mutually beneficial relationships such as friendships (to say nothing of relationships of caring dependence), it is likely that one person is more needful in that relationship than others” (312).

In this way, as for particularism, the context will describe what is important, yet it is calculated not in terms of an undefinable sensitivity to salient features, but rather in terms of attention to the details of relationship. In this way, while it is not practical to systematize an exhaustive list of what constitutes good relationships, there is a defined good that relational theory strives to achieve. The goal of relational theory can be seen to operate in much the same way the utilitarian principle of maximizing utility would operate. While the relational theorist is interested in particular situations and the links between actors and things, the utilitarian is interested in the wants/feelings of individuals. Both are able to change the application of the theory to suit different situations and individuals. The expanded lens of relational theory will look at individuals differently and will not be able to do arithmetic balancing of lives against each other. Yet the general approach of taking a theory of what constitutes right action and applying it to diverse situations is not so different as to say that relational theory does not operate from principles where utilitarianism does.

It is incredibly important that we consider the significance of being able to give some sort of general principle that is contextually sensitive. It is not simply a minor

semantic point to argue that morality can be described through contextual principles. The difference between having some sort of generalizable concept and pure particularism is the difference between being able to meaningfully discuss applied ethics and social policy and having to approach every situation without any reference point. It is not important that theorists use the word 'principle' when discussing the concepts or providing generalizable reasons for action, yet in order for their theories to be useful and applicable they do have to have a level of generalizability that Dancy thinks is impossible. In the chapter that follows, I will discuss how relational theory can be applied to social policy and how in doing so we must discuss the necessary existence of relationships, the quality of them, and the fact they create responsibilities.

## Chapter 4: Relational Principles

### 4.1 A Principle of Responsibility

In the previous chapter, we have seen the centrality of relationship and the responsibilities that come from them. These responsibilities are not explicitly described as principles by either Reader or Tronto. In order to see if it is legitimate to give them the language of “principle”, we must briefly return to what principles are. Recall from Chapter 2 that I am treating principles as action-guiding generalizations. These generalizations will provide reasons for action across different situations in a way that Dancy believes is not possible. These reasons for action will be able to, at least in part, explain the regularity and connection between different moral situations that a strong particularist cannot explain and be able to give us guidance in future situations. I believe that from Reader’s and Tronto’s work we can derive a principle of responsibility, as well as principles to describe good care necessary for maintaining good relationships. These principles will ensure that our boats do not sink.

A key issue in Dancy’s work is his rejection of the ability to universalize reasons across situations because, for Dancy, reasons only emerge from particular situations. This universalization is an important part of what is generally understood as a principle.

‘universalizability’ refers to the principle of universalizability” ‘What is right (or wrong) for one person is right (or wrong) for any similar person in similar circumstances.’ ... It is called the Generalization Principle and is said to be the formal principle presupposed in all moral reasoning and consequently the explanation for the feature alleged to hold of all moral judgments, that of being generalizable. A particular judgment of the form ‘A is right in doing x’ is said to imply that anyone relevantly similar to A would be right in doing any act of the kind x in relevantly similar circumstances. (*Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* 1999, 940-941)

This type of universalization is the central problem for Dancy. For Dancy, it ignores the individual circumstances that contain particular salient details that morality must account for. Universalization will result in a whitewashing of the really important details of moral situations. Remember that a focus on the particularities of individual lives and perspectives is a theme that runs throughout this thesis. It too seems to be in opposition to this kind of universalizability. Walker's interpretation of Gilligan focuses on taking the particular differences of individuals to be the focus of moral thought, rather than focusing on a shared conception of value. Amy looks to particular relationships instead of Jake's approach of hierarchically applying principles. Hankvisky also directs our attention to the particular by her focus on contextual sensitivity. Despite this shared interest in the particular, the relational theorist does not need to abandon principles. Dancy failed to understand that there was a difference between particular reasons that stem from situations and the reasons that motivate the particularity of one's situation and position. Amy's reasoning does not have to be understood as unexplainable from a general position.

In order to see how this sort of universalizability could function within a relational framework we have to focus on what the relevant similar circumstances are. The focus of relational theorists is on the particular details of situations. These details include the relationships in which these individuals exist and by which their particular lives are shaped. From this perspective, while we could say that we can generalize any act that is relevantly similar, the possibility of finding a truly similar situation would be small. That Joe stole a camera from Susan in one situation would not make another

situation in which Casey stole a camera from Linda similar. The act of stealing a camera is not the kind of detail that the relational theorist is interested in.

Relational theorists might be said to have difficulty in universalizing 'A is right in doing x' if they were talking about specific action types like stealing cameras, but this simply would be a misinterpretation of relational theory. Relational theorists are interested in relational properties, descriptions of general forms of connection between agents and others, and to what degree these connections attempt to understand the value and significance of the other and their needs. Specific simple action types, like kayaking, lying, or stealing, are not the focus of their project.

Let us return to Hankivsky's principles for a moment. Her principle of contextual sensitivity holds that "it is morally relevant to acknowledge that all humans are specific, concrete individuals rather than abstract, generic beings" (Hankivsky 2004, 32). If we were to universalize this principle, it would not be interested in saying that everyone should acknowledge others in the same way. Rather it would say that any A is wrong when they are in a relationship with another and fail to acknowledge that some other is a specific concrete individual. This acknowledgement would have to be understood in the particular situation and be tailored to the particular individual, which is the whole point of the principle. Despite this attention to the concrete other, Hankivsky's principle has no difficulty being generalized across cases and universalized. She is not arguing that sometimes ignoring the details and individuality of people is wrong, she is arguing that this is always morally problematic.

This is how relational theorists can have both a rich contextual sensitivity and universalizable principles. Hankivsky presents a principle which describes a necessary

condition for proper moral interaction. She believes that policy that does not meet her principles is doing something wrong in missing details that are relevant to its enterprise. I do not think it is at all a stretch to say that responsibility, in Reader's and Tronto's work, plays the same kind of action-guiding role that contextual sensitivity plays within Hankivsky.

Reader has identified that relationships always carry with them responsibilities of some sort, and we are all in relationships. Despite everyone having some responsibilities, these responsibilities are partial and are created by individual contexts. This is not a problem to formulating a principle of responsibility. Individual responsibilities are like the details of people's lives in Hankivsky's formulation, they are specific to the situations and relationships from which they come. We do not need, or want, to universalize these individual particular responsibilities. What we universalize is the need to pay attention to, and be responsive to, the responsibilities that relationships create in our lives. The individual responsibilities would be partial, yet the fact of responsibility in human life would be universal. A principle of responsibility would be entrenched in particular situations in the way that Dancy believes ethics must be approached, but with a generalized understanding of the role of relationships and responsibility in human life. This gives us an explanation for the moral pull of the particular individual instances of moral duty and shows us how to teach and improve our own moral thinking.

A simple and clear definition of what Reader and Tronto mean by responsibility is not easy to formulate as the concept of responsibility in human life is itself not simple. I believe responsibility will have to be understood and applied through Hankivsky's principles of care which are contextual sensitivity, responsiveness, and concern for real



consequences. These will be important in properly meeting responsibility, not for explaining what responsibility itself is. I believe responsibility itself is the understanding of the significance of relationship on those involved in that relationship. It is understanding how real connections are affecting those involved in relationships and how needs and being fulfilled through relationships works. It is an understanding of the importance of the continuation of relationships as well as the implications of abandoning relationships. It involves understandings of harm, of dependence, and of power, all of which are immensely complicated but interrelated concepts:

from a relational approach, it is not simply the agent's voluntarism, or the strength of the causal chain, but the consequence of acting irresponsibly that determines the degree of harm that comes from irresponsibility. Some elements become more important in assessing the harm of irresponsibility. For example, the imbalances of power in relationships between a welfare worker and a client seeking welfare are a serious moral dimension of a responsibility relationship. So too the relative strength of competing responsibilities for caregivers would factor into a judgment when a caregiver ignores or downplays a particular responsibility. (Tronto 2012, 308)

A principle of a "responsibility relationship" accepts the moral significance of the connections formed through relationship and the normative force of the partial responsibilities that come from these relationships. From here, other principles can be formulated to describe proper practices for understanding responsibility and for meeting responsibilities. These understandings and practices will have to remain contextually sensitive and general enough not to ignore the details of particular lives.

Hankivsky describes principles of care that are an important aspect in the meeting of responsibility. She directs our attention to whether or not policy is focusing on context, responding directly to that context, and accounting for the real consequences of its

application. She is not, however, alone in describing what is needed to understand good caring practices. Tronto also has an account of what good care in an institutional setting requires:

all forms of caring, institutional as well as personal, require that attention be paid to purpose, power, and particularity. Identifying these three as the critical elements for assessing practices of care grows out of any understanding that takes care as a relational practice. (Tronto 2010, 161)

“Purpose” is very much like Hankivsky’s principle that focuses on consequence. Yet Tronto makes it clear that policy must have purpose clearly in mind when attempting to provide good care. “Particularity” is very much like Hankivsky’s principle of contextual sensitivity as it maintains the need for partiality and a focus on the specific individual salient features of situations so as to allow for their diversity. Tronto’s account of power, however, is something fairly distinct. While it could find itself described through the contextual sensitivity that Hankivsky defends (as power will always play a role in context), it is something that Tronto describes as needing specific attention if proper caring is to be done. Power is itself normatively neutral and can be used to meet needs well, yet it can also allow one party to ignore the responsibilities they have to another without harm to themselves and often with benefit to themselves. Its existence in a situation is simply something that will always matter. In order to see that care is understood adequately, close attention must be paid to how power is being used and for what purposes.

This outlined by way of Tronto’s account of purpose, power, and particularly, it needs to be said that Tronto does not describe these as principles. Yet they seem to be almost entirely analogous in function and scope to the principles defended by Hankivsky.

I am presenting these without judging who does a better job of describing the necessary conditions for care. My purpose, instead, is to show that there is no reason to think that relational principles need be a confined to a small or clearly delineated list. Both Tronto and Hankivsky provide valuable tools for investigating moral matters. It is not a matter of who has done a better job, but a matter of what salient features of human life and human relationships they take to be especially important to bring to light. I believe that there can be many formulations of relational principles that are both contextually sensitive yet generalizable in such a way that they do not lose their ability to be applied across varying human situations.

## **4.2 Relational Principles in Restorative Justice**

In this section, I will be looking at Jennifer Llewellyn's work on restorative justice. Instead of looking at the responsibilities that flow from relationships, Llewellyn is interested in a model of restorative justice, one that is justice described through a relational lens. Her relational approach to justice assumes that we can describe different normative states of relationships. There are ways in which we can describe relationships as being good or bad and Llewellyn formulates this understanding into principles. The principles that emerge from the fact of relationship provide rich explanatory frameworks to describe human moral life and provide action-guiding generalizations that we can use to create policy and to inform our actions in much the same way as the principles that emerged from the work of Reader, Tronto, and Hankivsky do. In looking for justice as described through relationships, Llewellyn covers much of the same ground as these care theorists. It should come as no surprise that descriptions of good human relationship have

much in common with descriptions of good care and of paying proper attention to the responsibilities emerging from relationship.

We have already examined at length how traditional ethical systems have operated from the assumption that ethical principles should apply to or be understood from the point of view of a highly individualized rational agent. Traditional principles take their understanding from this conception of the individual. At the root of these discussions is always a self-interested individual who is autonomous and, at least theoretically, disconnected from others. I have argued that you get a very different account of morality if you take away the radically individualist individual. We have seen that we can build a better account of the individual when we understand the importance of relationship in human lives, and to the very individual we are attempting to take into account. Tronto takes the fact of our embeddedness in relationship and describes the responsibilities that these relationships create. Relational theorists such as Llewellyn also share this rich description of the individual that takes into account the effects of a multiplicity of relationships. Unlike Tronto, however, Llewellyn does not look at what these relationships cause or create in terms of responsibilities. Instead, Llewellyn keeps her focus directly on the nature of the relationships themselves and how they challenge traditional accounts of justice. From this she shapes her own restorative account of justice.

Llewellyn examines relationships through the concepts of equality and justice. Equality is a concept often used in traditional liberal thought, but one that is focused on equality between individuals. Llewellyn reimagines how equality is understood with relationships as its starting point, rather than disconnected individuals. As a relational

theorist, her focus remains on relationships, and on the structure and nature of them. Llewellyn believes that this focus on relationships, and the relationality of humans, provides the best foundation for an account of restorative justice. Llewellyn does not shy away from using principles in her work: “We can and should articulate principles and criteria – respect, concern, and dignity – of what justice requires. However, these principles must be made meaningful and lived out in different contexts in which people are in relationships with particular others” (Llewellyn 2012a, 95). We have already seen that principles do not need to be interpreted as hard and fast fixed rules that discount real individual lives. Llewellyn follows this path and articulates and defends highly contextually sensitive principles.

Llewellyn differs from many of the theorists we have discussed thus far in that she is not explicitly a care ethicist. Her interest is to be found in theories of justice and law. Her justice approach is however drastically different from traditional theories of justice in that her account of justice uses the fact of relationship as its foundation. Llewellyn focuses primarily on the principle of equality that she believes is the aim of relational justice. Christine Koggel, who also develops an account of equality, points out that “a focus on relationships challenges the traditional liberal understanding of equality but does not jettison equality as a concept or goal” (Koggel 2012, 71). While Koggel does not use the language of principles, she, like Llewellyn, is taking the principle of equality and, instead of rejecting it, is reimagining it through a lens of relationship. This allows her to describe the significance of relationship through a conception of equality. “A focus on the complex network of relationships in the global context can show that the

very ways in which inequalities are measured, policies are implemented, and power is enacted are fashioned in and through relationships of power” (Koggel 2012, 74).<sup>1</sup>

Llewellyn points out that relational equality is not interested in a “sense of sameness but, rather in the sense of satisfying the basic elements required for well-being and flourishing” (Llewellyn 2012a, 92-93). She is looking to justice to provide an account of well-being rather than conceiving of justice only as retribution for wrong done. The end goal of justice is not so much to even the score by harming those who have caused harm to others, but rather to remove and alleviate the inequalities created by injustice and oppression.

In this, at least, she is not departing from the traditional narrative of equality. Equal rights movements were not simply about trying to extract punishment from the perpetrators of, or those who gained from, oppression and inequality. Rather these movements are interested in having marginalized groups’ status of living raised to the levels of the more privileged groups and thereby doing away with inequalities. Fighting against institutionalized racism and sexism in the United States was, and is, an incredibly important part of the fight for equality, and it is important that Llewellyn's account of equality can describe that. This push for equality is far from unique to Llewellyn’s

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<sup>1</sup> Koggel has an extensive account of relational equality, and while this account has surely influenced Llewellyn’s, I will for the most part keep my focus on Llewellyn. I do this for a few reasons. First, Llewellyn explicitly uses the language of principle that I am arguing for. Second, Koggel’s account is complex, incorporating contextual sensitivity, the importance of perspective, and the importance of power. This complexity requires that many of the principles already described in this work play a direct role in her account of equality, and would create even more overlap in accounts. Such overlap is, I think, ultimately necessary to create a full rich moral system. Yet, my project is to argue for the creation of relational principles, not to outline a complete description of what these principles could consist of. Too much overlap at this point would serve to confuse rather than enlighten.

approach as liberal theorists also focus on equality as a goal to be reached. Llewellyn points out that, “[t]he identification of justice with equality is not unusual. Indeed, Ronald Dworkin has argued that most theories of justice in the contemporary literature of political philosophy can be readily understood’ as ‘interpretations or conceptions of equality’” (Llewellyn 2012a, 91). It is more difficult to flourish or have your needs met when the state treats you as unwanted and builds structures designed to disenfranchise you. In this, Llewellyn and traditional accounts of equality are in accord. Where she truly departs from the standard accounts of equality is in how she views relationships as needing to be judged as equal and flourishing as opposed to equality as found between disconnected individuals:

The equality that rests at the core of a relational theory of justice is necessarily *relational* equality. To claim that justice is, at its core, about relational equality is not to say simply that it is concerned with equality of treatment or outcome for individuals (although, to be certain, this would be a desirable result). Relational equality is a more fundamental commitment to the nature of connection (of relationship) between and among parties. (Llewellyn 2012a, 92)

While Llewellyn’s account is one of justice, it does not have much in common with other theories of justice. While an eye for an eye was, and perhaps by some, is considered to be justice, such an approach is radically different from the relational justice that Llewellyn defends. Instead of this view of evening the scales by balancing wrongs, Llewellyn’s project is one of identifying better states of relationship:

Recognition that rationality is an unavoidable truth of who we are demands careful and significant attention to relationships and their implications for us. Relationships can be positive or negative and, in so far as we are interested in securing conditions in which individuals can be well and flourish, we need to pay close attention to the character and quality of relationship required. We know from lived experience the sorts of relationships that are antithetical to well-being and flourishing because they cause harm. They are relationships

marked by oppression, violence, neglect, abuse and so on. From this experience we have come to know the quality of relationship needed for well-being and flourishing. I have described this as 'equality of relationship' and by this I mean relationships marked by equal respect, concern and dignity. (Llewellyn 2012b, 294)

So relational justice, as found through Llewellyn's relational account of equality, attempts to promote human flourishing by concentrating on relational accounts of equal concern, respect, and dignity. These three concepts "underpin *equality of relationship*" (Llewellyn 2012a, 93). Now it is important to note that these concepts on their own are not strangers to traditional moral theories either. Dignity, respect, or concern, are commonplace as concepts but they are not directed to relationships in and of themselves. Human dignity is, for example, much of the justification for treating others with respect within Kantian moral theory. This dignity is, however, tied to the rational nature of these individuals. While traditional theories use the same concepts as Llewellyn, they are still tied to the solitary individual that is at the center of many moral theories in the history of western philosophy.

Llewellyn is, instead, taking these principles and reconceiving them through the fact of relationship. Before looking at these concepts that form Llewellyn's principles, it is important to understand that these principles must be understood in relation to each other while each is also understood through relation to relationships. That is why respect, concern, and dignity are described as underpinning equality. They are all necessary conditions of equality, and in order to attempt to achieve equality, these concepts must be understood in their connections to each other.

I argue that these three concepts are very much principles. Llewellyn discusses them as such. They are action-guiding generalizations about morality that hold value in



the way Dancy does not believe is possible. These principles function as guides for action in much the same way as Hankivsky's principles do. In fact, they have some overlap in theme with them as well.

The formulation of the characteristics of equality of relationship at which relational justice aims – respect, concern, and dignity – must be understood as themselves relational values. From a relational starting point, these values are not rooted in our *rational* nature as autonomous agents, as they are for liberals, but, rather, in our *relational* nature. They detail what we require of one another, and in relation to one another, for our well-being. (Llewellyn 2012a, 93-94)

These principles convey value in that they are necessary to relationships and they allow for our well-being and flourishing in and through them. As principles of the sort I defend they do not need to discuss the day-to-day details of what equality of relationship will do for those involved. Like the principles drawn from care theorists, they provide a framework for finding the correct course of action in particular situations rather than universalizing a picture of what life should look like in particular instantiations of justice. Llewellyn's justice does not show us what particular practices or institutions will exist in a just world. As Gilligan's focus was on relationship, so is Llewellyn's, and so her picture of a just world will only describe the way relationships would work, no more, no less. A just world is one where there is an equality of relationship. All of everyone's relationships should reflect dignity, respect, and concern.

The details of application will always be found in the particular situations, not in the principles themselves. In this way this account of principles avoids the difficulties that Dancy feels any attempt at universalizing will encounter. He believes that all reasons are born from the situations in which they are found, and because of this fact simply cannot be legitimately universalized. Any attempt to do so will be drawing reasons from

one situation and applying them to another where it does not belong. Yet humans in moral situations will always be in relationships. It is from this brute fact of relationship that Llewellyn, like Tronto and Hankivsky, draws the justification for universalizable principles. Dancy misses the point that there are moral reasons that can be described across the human condition because the operation that morality describes, the balancing of actions and prescribing of duties, stem from shared reasons. Despite the fact that Llewellyn's principles can, and should, be applied universally, they do not operate in the unrealistic individualistic and impersonal fashion of traditional accounts. They are not based on an individualistic conception of the self and they do not describe specific rules that prescribe specific actions as right or wrong. Harms are described through the violations of failing to meet the demands of these principles, or by violating or preventing the values described from being instantiated. They will always relate back to some harm to a relationship that is understood from within that specific relationship (Llewellyn 2012a, 95). This is quite different from the traditional account, which only understands harm to an individual and not to a relationship.

Rather than harm being simply something felt by a person it should be understood as a negative connection with some other. This can be seen by looking at each of Llewellyn's principles in turn. Dignity, as a relational concept, is not a property of a particular individual, but rather a description of the connections between individuals. "Dignity refers here to the way in which we are connected with others - that such connections must reflect our own values and that of others" (Llewellyn 2012a, 95). Dancy argues against principles in part because of their inability to capture the details of particular lives and particular values that he feels will always be variable from case to

case. Yet Llewellyn defends principles that not only allow for individuals to have different values but force a focus on these differences. A principle of dignity reveals the necessity of good relationships to be able to understand and respect differences in values and moral understandings among individuals who exist in networks of relationships.

Dignity is about being in relationships that acknowledge your value and your own values within the very way the relationship is structured. This is similar to other principles used by traditional western ethics, yet unlike individualist conceptions, it focuses our view on the real ways in which this is expressed through relationships with real people. Llewellyn notes that relational equality “is contextual and grounded. Achieving this equality thus requires attention to the particular context, to the parties involved, and to what will be required to insure respect, concern and dignity in the relations between and among parties” (Llewellyn 2012a, 93).

You will have noticed that dignity required an understanding of relationships that respect the participants and structures of relationships. Dignity in itself is an important aspect of relational equality. Yet as a principle in and of itself it requires something more to ensure that dignified relationships can flourish. This is where both respect and concern come into play. It should be noted that the order in which I describe these principles is not an order of priority. They all interact with one another on an equal plain. Respect is about recognizing others and in so doing understanding their needs and values. “It is not achieved by recognition alone or by non-interference but, rather, by respect rooted in (and understood in the context of) concern for others” (Llewellyn 2012a, 94). This concern reflects the genuine interest in others that is necessary for being in a healthy relationship. It manifests itself not through some enlightened self-interest, but rather

through a real connection to others in which we must pay attention to the perspectives of others and understand others on their own terms. Respect and concern here are interconnected concepts that make sense in relation to each other and with respect to a conception of dignity.

This kind of respect can be thought of in part as a difference between being polite to someone and respecting them. Canadians are famous, perhaps infamous, for being polite. This politeness often shows itself as letting people be; not interfering with their lives. You can be polite to someone you despise, and often this act of politeness is more like an action that is interested in making oneself feel good, to live by some principle that would prescribe politeness as a principle, than a respect for the other. A sneering civility could pass for treating someone with respect if respect was only interested in letting people be and not interfering with them. Llewellyn's account requires more than this for a proper account of respect. Respect is not simply about not intervening in another's life; it is about attempting to see their life from their point of view and taking this view seriously. In order to come to fruition it must be coupled with concern and dignity. Instead of simply letting individuals pass unobstructed, the relationships that connect you with them must be ones that reflect respect, concern, and dignity.

You will have noticed that I have yet to explain Llewellyn's conception of concern in detail and have already been using it in reference to the other principles of dignity and respect. This is once again simply because they are intertwined and must be understood in connection one with the other. Much like humans one might say. Concern for Llewellyn

makes clear that knowledge of, and interest in, others and their well-being is to serve an animating and motivating factor in the equality of relationship. This notion reflects insights

gained from care feminists and some communitarian critiques of liberal justice that are incorporated into some liberal accounts. They point out that the connections we have and want with others cannot be fully explained or accounted for in individualistic and self-interested terms. (Llewellyn 2012a, 94)

Llewellyn argues that because we are necessarily embedded in relationships, simply taking us as self-interested agents fails to understand how humans are. In order to show a real concern for another, one must understand that concern “makes clear that knowledge of, and interest in, others and their well-being is to serve as an animating and motivating factor in equality of relationship” (Llewellyn 2012a, 94). A purely individualistic approach will simply not properly describe how and why we should act. Our relationships matter to us in ways that go well beyond self-interest. While we do gain a lot from our relationships, we are not in them simply because they benefit us. When my friend comes to me with a problem, I do not calculate how much gain I might get in the future if I help them. If your mother is sick I doubt, and hope, that you do not help her only out of self-interest. We need to have real concern for others, not for our sakes, but for theirs, if we are to have respectful, dignified relationships. Treating people with real respect and concern will likely be beneficial to the individual who gives that respect. It is simply a mischaracterisation to say that our own benefit alone can explain why they would do these things. We need good relationships in order to live good lives and, in order for the relationships to be good, we need to have a real concern for others in them. It is not a calculus to see if it will maximize our happiness to help others or even to just respect them; it is just something that happens and should happen in good relationships

To illustrate these ideas from Llewellyn take, for example, the issue of women wearing niqabs during citizenship ceremonies. If the Canadian government wanted to

apply Llewellyn's conception of relational equality to improve its citizenship ceremonies, it would be required to pay attention to whether or not its policies were treating individuals with dignity, concern, and respect. Simply claiming that the government needed to see a person's face, or implying that by some cultural standards it is disrespectful to keep one's face covered when taking the oath of citizenship would be insufficient justification for government policy. In such a description, the perspectives of the people affected by the policy are not taken into account at all. There is no respect, concern, or interest in the dignity of these people. The government would have to investigate the narratives and values of those involved in order to have a just relationship with its citizens. Any conclusion the government would come to would have to maintain a relationship with potential citizens that allowed them to retain their dignity and their own personal and cultural values. Or at least not disregard these values without reason or consideration. Without a close investigation into the question at hand, one that examines the people involved and the relationships they are in, a relational theorist could not give definitive directions. However they can certainly critique the government for not attempting to create relationships built on dignity, concern, and respect.

So while Llewellyn uses principles, these principles will never discount individual lives and experiences in the way traditional universal and generalizable principles do. In order to apply these relational principles, you have to look at the particulars involved in each situation. A particularist would argue that there is simply too much diversity in human lives and too many contradicting values for any meaningful generalization to hold true. However Llewellyn could point out that, as she has said, "Justice is relational, not relative" (Llewellyn 2012a, 95). This is incredibly important because while an account of

relational justice will pay attention to the individual perspectives of those involved in any situation, it would object to a culture that would deny individuals the ability to form meaningful relationships. Relational justice would not accept one culture disregarding a minority group. Understanding particular individuals or cultures does not imply the theory is a form of relativism. Llewellyn's account can describe inequalities cross culturally by questioning whether a state or society is truly treating its citizens with respect by having actual concern for them and treating them with dignity. How this dignity is understood might seem completely undignified [to use the term colloquially] through the eyes of western society, yet this has no bearing on dignity of relationship. What would not occur is an acceptance of repression or oppression that is merely a respect for the values and perspectives of a certain group. Keeping these values in mind and trying to understand them when exploring and dealing with the narratives at hand is important. Llewellyn's is far from an anything goes approach.

We have already seen that relationships are wide reaching and carry responsibilities with them. Llewellyn takes a relational conception of individuals that accounts for the necessity of relationships in human life and shows how we can construct principles that expose how a good relationship is constituted. In this way we not only have relationships carrying responsibilities that we have obligations to meet, but we also have a framework for describing just relationships. I believe that this is important. It allows us to have a lens to examine social policy and, moreover, a way in which we can, without too much difficulty, teach others to examine social policy. Llewellyn takes her theory to be centered on restorative justice, on solving wrongs. Her account may seem less apt for describing interpersonal situations where harms have yet to occur:

Justice is actually concerned with wrongs – that is, with more than general dysfunction and not simply as an aspiration of the ‘good.’ So while the restorative justice tent is bigger than some suggest, it is not without walls. This is not to say, however, that there is no connection between restorative justice (its goals and aspirations) and broader interests in fostering and maintaining relationships and living well with others. In fact relational theory is helpful in explaining this connection. The intuition that seems to drive those who seek to broaden the meaning of restorative justice is a correct one. They recognize that the relational view that underlies restorative justice has broader significance on our lives – to how we structure our social and political interactions, institutions, and systems. (Llewellyn 2012a, 104)

It is certainly understandable that Llewellyn does not wish to expand her restorative justice account to cover all aspects of human life. It is certainly far from clear that we could say that interpersonal relationships that did not reflect respect, concern, and dignity were not problematic. Yet I do not need to push Llewellyn’s theory much farther than she has herself taken it. Taking Llewellyn’s principles and using them in tandem with the principles of other care theorists interested in promoting flourishing moral relationships, we get a very comprehensive set of tools for engaging in applied ethics. With the understanding that humans will always be in relationships, some that matter, some that they abandon, and some that are abusive, we now have an account of what a good relationship amounts to (one that consists of respect, concern, and dignity). We now have the ability to create principles of the kind that Dancy did not believe were possible.

From Hankivsky we have three principles to describe what good care must consist in: contextual sensitivity, responsiveness, and consequence of choice. From Llewellyn we have an account of restorative justice that describes equality through her principles of respect, concern, and dignity. Reader and Tronto have given us an account of relational responsibility that directs us to investigate power, narrative, and the lived effects of the web of relationships in which we find ourselves. While all of these principles take their



force from the particular lives in which they are applied, they give us a very comprehensive framework to approach moral questions, be they interpersonal ones, or questions about policy. This gives us far more than strong particularists such as Dancy who reject any possibility of principle. In the final chapter that follows, I will be investigating the relocation of the Africville community in Halifax through a relational lens. I will show how these relational principles can be applied to reveal what was missed and went wrong in this policy of relocation that relied on traditional individualist models of social policy.

## **Chapter 5: A Case study of Africville**

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the practical use of relational principles by discussing the Halifax community of Africville and its relocation in 1964. Africville was a predominantly Black community neglected by the city of Halifax that existed for nearly one hundred years before the population was divided up and relocated for their “own welfare.” The relocation was justified through traditional principles and, at least in theory, did have the residents’ well-being at heart. I intend to show that while traditional principles could say that the relocation was justified, relational principles can show us why it was in fact wrong. I will also aim to show that relational principles could have directed the city of Halifax to take actions that respected the individuals involved by taking into account their relationships as well as the city’s own actions. I will be predominantly using the Africville Relocation Report of 1971, written by Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis W. Magill, as source material. From this report, I will draw on interviews with citizens from Africville, city staff, as well as the social worker who oversaw the particulars of the relocation. I have not spoken with anyone who lived through the relocation themselves, but such research, while it would have been beneficial, is not necessary within the scope of this thesis. With the information at hand I will show how principles of traditional liberal theory went wrong in this situation by not paying attention to the fact of relationship. Moreover, I will show how the city of Halifax ignored its own complicity in the forming of Africville into a slum, and failed to account for that complicity.

In describing Africville’s relocation and the history of the town I will be discussing two different points of view, both of which the relocation report attempts to

capture. One of them describes a slum; a bunch of ramshackle huts and shanties that stood in the way of modernization and industrialization of Halifax. The other describes a rich vibrant community with colourful painted houses and a rich history. Both of these narratives hold truths. That said, I believe relational theory will allow us to clearly see issues underlying what the city did, and give us a picture of what they needed to do in order to meet the responsibilities they had to their citizens.

## **5.1 The History of Africville**

In order to understand the significance of the relocation of Africville it is necessary to understand the history of the community. The following section will describe some of the history that led up to the relocation.

Halifax was founded in 1749. While it was a city whose economy was not dependent on slavery, much of the early infrastructure of the city was dug out and built by African slaves (*Canadian Encyclopedia*, Africville). The earliest records of land ownership in the area that was to be Africville were from 1761 where “the land was granted to several white families, including the families of men who imported and sold enslaved African men and women” (*Canadian Encyclopedia*, Africville). This was, however, not the beginning of Africville. This was just the first time someone with a colonial heritage claimed to legally own the land. As a predominantly Black community with a continuous narrative, Africville dates back to the early 1830s by most accounts.

Africville had a population with a diverse background, many of whom were recent citizens. There had been a substantial Black community in Halifax prior to the early 1800s, but in 1792 the British owned Sierra Leone Company was offering work to

Black Nova Scotians should they be willing to sail to Sierra Leone. There they would be offered jobs and lives (hopefully) less marked by racism. One thousand two hundred black citizens accepted the offer and emigrated from Canada. (Clairmont 1971, 36) The Black population that did eventually settle in Africville was made up of many who came to Halifax after the war of 1812 as refugees and escapees on the Underground Railroad from the United States to Canada.

In the war of 1812, Britain had offered freedom to any slaves who could escape their owners. This was done more to weaken the United States than to achieve any sort of justice for Black Americans; it was a strategy that had also been used in the revolutionary war. Bleckes Wilson describes the new freedom of the Blacks coming to Nova Scotia as the privilege “to enjoy the comforts of political freedom and physical starvation under the British Flag” (Wilson 1911, 59). Slavery was in decline in Canada, yet equality was not even on the horizon.

For the most part the families who started the Africville community relocated from two different refugee communities to Africville. This can be seen in property records from the era. This contradicts the oral history of interviews after the relocation of Africville in which many of the residents believed that their community was formed directly after coming to Nova Scotia. Official documents, however, point to Africville being the second stop of individuals who left two separate refugee communities that were struggling to survive. Preston and Hammond Plains, the two communities that, for the most part, contained refugees, proved to have poor land that could not properly support any significant amount of grown food and so the people left looking for better opportunities (Clairmont 1971, 42 45). It should be noted that whether or not this was the

whole or even partial reason is at best an informed guess. “Local tradition offers no account of the motivation that led to migration from Hammonds Plains and Preston; almost every interviewed resident of Africville believed that Africville had been founded under the auspices of royalty by former slaves from the United States” (Clairmont 1971, 45). Africville would not be significantly better for growing crops than these other communities, but it was next to the ocean that allowed for fishing and was considerably closer to wage labour jobs in Halifax (Clairmont 1971, 45). The Black refugees settled together but the White communities they encountered in Halifax were far from accepting them as equals:

Although popular opinion and the benevolence of the courts were responsible for eliminating slavery at a relatively early date in Nova Scotia (after 1800 it became rapidly more and more difficult to retain slaves), slavery survived for over half a century. The major undermining influence was not so much a public outcry against slavery; rather, it was the obsolescence of slave labour following the arrival of many hundreds of free Loyalist Blacks and Whites whose service could be had for little more than it had cost earlier to house and feed slaves. (Clairmont 1971, 37)

Despite these conditions people did start coming together, and a community was born in Africville. In 1848, William Brown and William Arnold purchased lots in the area. Although oral histories indicate that this occurred after there was already a Black community growing there, these two were the first land owners who had descendants in Africville. (Clairmont 1971, 42) They were joined soon after by other residents who were leaving Preston and Hammonds Plains. In 1848, the community began its first church congregation and in 1881, after much petitioning, their first elementary school (Nova Scotia Archive, Africville Museum). These were both built and primarily supported by the community.

There were eight original families that could be identified by a list of the first church officers in 1849 (Clairmont 1971, 42). The names of these families were: “Brown, Carvey, Dixon, Arnold, Hill, Fletcher, Bailey, and Grant” (Clairmont 1971, 40). The first three names would stay in Africville for the following century, but the other names would fade out with people intermarrying, or perhaps, moving away. The community would continue to grow to four hundred residents around the Seaview Baptist Church (the name of that church) from which we have records of these first families (Africville Museum), “The fact that Africville was set away from the city proper on a slope by the harbor gave it scenic beauty and made it, in the pre-war era and prior to the City’s establishment of the disposal dump on its border, an especially attractive gathering place” (Clairmont 1971, 79).

Not only was the church a scenic location, it was a place where residents could meet and discuss their problems. The church gave them a public platform from which they could speak and be heard, as members of the congregation could speak to the whole community freely. After service, people would often visit with other members of the church, which helped cement a sense of community. “The church provided a focal point for intense interaction and the buoyancy fostered by the style of service made the visiting after church especially conducive to a sense of group consciousness” (Clairmont 1971, 81). Not only was the church the crux of the community it was also the means by which the community interacted with the city of Halifax. “A detailed examination of the minutes of the Halifax City Council shows that it was church members, usually deacons, who dealt with the White power structure and who petitioned the City for various kinds of services” (Clairmont 1971, 81).

The Seaview Baptist Church was rebuilt from its first incarnation in 1916 and while it was the center of the Africville community for quite some time yet after the Second World War, its importance in the community would begin to dwindle. The population of Africville was growing. With lack of housing for poor citizens in the center of Halifax, many were moving out to Africville to find a place to live (Clairmont 1971, 86). Most of these new residents did not go to the church. Moreover, in the early 1950s the city of Halifax created a large civic dump within half a mile from Africville. (Nova Scotia Archives). The once scenic location for baptisms now shared its location with the city dump and some of the mystique of the place was lost. Both of these factors, coupled with an increase in education and 1950s culture in general, led to the church starting to lose the importance it had once had: “the loss of status by church members and officials appears to have been related, also, to an increasing awareness among community residents that the former’s power to effect change and to obtain an acceptable life-style was very limited” (Clairmont 1971, 87). So in the early 1960s, as Halifax began planning the relocation, there was not a single organizational unit that could represent the community in the way the church had done in the past. The Church itself would be bulldozed in the middle of the night in the spring of 1967 (*Canadian Encyclopedia*, Africville).

The name Africville itself was not commonly in use before 1900. Before that it was known as Campbell Road from the road of the same name on which the community was located (Clairmont 1971, 56). The name Africville

had been imposed by White Haligonians, ‘since our forefathers came from Africa’. One elderly relocate, very conscious of her people’s ancestry in American slavery, was scornful of the African designation: ‘It wasn’t Africville out there. None of the people came from Africa;

you want to believe it. It was part of Richmond, just the part where the coloured people lived.' Another lady of advanced years was favorably disposed to the name 'Africville' and hostile towards those 'meddlers' who would have it otherwise.' (Clairmont 1971, 56)

While the name was taken up by the community and is still used with fondness in remembering the lives they had in that community, it is important to remember the atmosphere in which the name was given. The name Africville was given to this community because Black people lived there, and to many Haligonians it was a derogatory name. Africville was eventually thought of as a disreputable slum (Clairmont 1971 56).

By 1964, it would not have been difficult to see why it was thought of as a slum. When the community was first established, no township on the edges of Halifax had paved roads or a sewage infrastructure. As the years rolled on and roads and sewers reached out from the center of Halifax, they never reached Africville. Instead they were graced with a garbage dump. Improving Africville was never a high priority for the Halifax government despite the fact Africville was a part of the city and paid taxes. These facts alone would go far to explain its characterization as a slum. The neglect from the city ran deeper still. Halifax being a Canadian maritime town gets at least its fair share of snowfall every winter. A social worker writes:

Ordinarily streets in the winter are ploughed as quickly as possible after a snowstorm. Africville was generally left until last, every other street in the city was ploughed and someone decided to go down and run a plough through Africville... Some felt the only reason they did this was for the garbage trucks to get to the dump, and very rarely did they go into the area other than when garbage had to be hauled to the dump. (Clairmont 1971, 189)



The following is another excerpt from an interview with the same social worker who was involved with meeting the people of Africville in preparation for the relocation:

I can't go along with the idea that [some people have] who have just driven through the community and looked at the outside conditions of the houses, and said, 'This is a terrible place to live,' and base their opinions solely on what they saw driving through the community. Not one of these people would go inside and have a look at what was going on inside, because that was an entirely different situation. I could take you into houses there that I was kind of ashamed myself to walk in, because I felt that I was just tracking dirt through their home. The floors were just shining. I can see where people were annoyed and defensive when you had pictures in the paper and it would show somebody's outhouse and the city dump and all that kind of stuff. And then you read the caption 'this is Africville, this is a slum dwelling and the people are this that and the other thing,' which was entirely false. There were many residents who were just as clean as anybody else, but they were in unfortunate circumstances, where they didn't have facilities. There was no sewer or no water; the availability of these services was non-existent. (Clairmont 1971, 190)

That things needed to change by 1964 is abundantly clear. That the city of Halifax needed to re-locate and divide up the population is far from clear. *Canada, a People's History* describes Africville as "A victim of the Times." I argue, however, that Africville was the victim of racism and poor policy planning based on traditional ethical thinking. In the next section, I will be looking at the reasoning the city of Halifax used to legitimate the relocation. I will then show how a relational perspective gives you very different answers as to what to do. I will look at the report published by Dr. Albert Rose, a professor of social work from the University of Toronto, who was brought in to give expert advice to the city of Halifax. I will show how that report, as well as the policies that eventually followed from it, could have been greatly improved with the use of relational principles.

## 5.2 The Relocation of Africville

“...the rhetoric of liberalism that accompanied the Africville relocation seemed empty, if not perverse” (Clairmont 1971, 553).

This section will be investigating the details of the Africville relocation from a relational point of view. I will be taking relationship as the starting point, understanding that relationships will always be important in human lives. It is in and through relationships that an individual's values will be represented and explored. I will assume that moral responsibilities will necessarily follow from the details of these relationships. I will be taking Llewellyn's principles of restorative justice that show it is possible to differentiate between good relationships that are rooted in respect, concern, and dignity and bad relationships that are not. These principles will be used alongside Hankivsky's principles that describe good caring practices for social policy formation, as well as with the principle of relational responsibilities drawn from Reader and Tronto. I will apply these concepts to the relocation of Africville. This focus on relationships with principles that can describe good relationships, responsibility, and care will be able to both show why things did go wrong in the relocation of the Africville population and provide ways that social policy could have been changed to improve the outcome of the situation.

We have already seen how the city of Halifax was not at all interested in providing infrastructure to the community. The lack of infrastructure in Africville existed because Halifax had been ignoring its responsibilities to the citizens who lived there. By the early 1960s, the city of Halifax had grown tired of simply ignoring Africville and allowing bad conditions to continue and decided, instead, to address the issue. Around that time urban renewal projects had been implemented across post war North America,

and Halifax did not want to be left behind. The population of Africville did not expect to be relocated, but the idea had certainly been broached in the past. One of the citizens moved in the relocation was asked about when they had first heard of the relocation and said, “Ever since I was old enough to understand, they were talking about relocation. They talked about it so much we thought it would never happen” (Clairmont 1971, 213).

But happen it did. At the start of 1962, the city of Halifax began looking into how to develop the city, and in a memorandum the assistant city planner described the greatest problem to developing the north shore of Halifax:

Africville stands out as the greatest problem in this study area, and a lengthy legal and administrative problem is likely to stem from establishing ownerships, etc., and forestall an early redevelopment of the 'shanty town'. City Council must also clarify its position and policy in relation to the rehousing of the Africville population. (Clairmont 1971, 115)

So while the city did eventually claim to be acting for the benefit of the people of Africville, the project certainly did not start in that fashion. Robert Grant, the city's development officer, was given the job of investigating the Africville 'problem'. It is incredibly important to note that the perceived problem of Africville was, initially, the difficulty that it would take to develop it. It was only after this that the problem became the conditions that existed in Africville at the time. The problem was never phrased in terms of the responsibility that the city had for allowing these conditions to form. This approach was a flagrant disregard for the historical narrative of the relationship between Africville residents and the city. The conditions were an issue certainly, but the problem that needed addressing from a relational point of view was the disregard for the community that had characterized the relationship between Africville and Halifax. Sewer lines are not an individual responsibility in Canadian cities. The point at which Halifax

saw Africville as an issue, they should have understood that the conditions there were not the result of people living there alone. Long before the relocation began the city had a moral responsibility toward its citizens to improve the conditions in Africville.

When investigating the ‘problem’, Grant decided that there was enough information about the community already supplied by the city. These were population estimates, rough descriptions of living conditions, and tax records. Rather than going into the community itself and interviewing people, something that could cause hostilities and difficulties for the city, he would meet with an ex-resident to learn about the conditions and hear rumours of the happenings within Africville. This approach, the assumption that second hand information was sufficient, was a major issue in the relocation program. Llewellyn’s principle of concern requires us to have a real interest in the particular individuals with respect to shaping policy that will affect them. Meeting a third party to discuss what to do about someone when you could in fact meet the person your policy will affect is simply not paying attention to Llewellyn’s account of concern at all. This approach to gathering information also fails to meet the requirements set out by Hankivsky’s principle of contextual sensitivity. Her principle requires the understanding of individuals as distinct concrete individuals. Interviewing ex-residents would be useful for understanding the social context in which Africville residents lived, certainly. But assuming that this information was sufficient to understand those people for policy purposes would be overly generalizing the population, and ignoring the particular detailed identities of the Africville citizens. After meeting with this ex-resident, Grant came to the conclusion, with this outdated testimonial evidence, that relocation was the only real solution to the poor conditions that existed there.

It was considered ...that this was the only possibility. We examined the possibility of cooperative housing. We had looked at the possibility of sewer and water, installing sewer and water, which was a virtual impossibility. We had looked at the question of rehabilitating their homes, which again was a complete impossibility. And I personally took the view that I wasn't going to be party to rebuilding a coloured ghetto on the same land. Maybe my reasons were pretty primitive, if you wish. But I had seen the operation in a different context in St. John's, Newfoundland, and I didn't want to be party to it. (Clairmont 1971, 117)

Had the residents not been 'coloured,' I wonder if the impossibility of extending sewers to the area would have been quite as set in stone. Eventually the development report was published, and one hundred residents met at the Sea View Baptist Church. At this meeting the citizens expressed concerns with the prospect of relocation. The initial plan was to pay Africville citizens a fair market price for their land if land ownership could be proved, or provide some support if not. These payments were to cover the land or to help with relocation; none of it was tied to the culpability of the city of Halifax in the whole affair. The following are excerpts from that meeting:

'The city pays the market price when appropriating property,' Mr. Wyman said.

'But this is still unfair in many cases.'

'It is not giving a man proper compensation if we take a home he owns, and give him a home someone else owns—even at a cheap rent,' he said.

""What the city considers a fair price is not what you or I consider a fair price,' Mr. Ahern added. (Clairmont 1971, 117)

On the recommendation of a human rights activist who had met one of the people at the meeting, the Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee was formed. The Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee was an informal group dedicated to investigating the Africville situation and looking at options other than relocation for the population. While the group was informal, they were not entirely ignored by the city of Halifax, perhaps

because the group was made up of reasonably well to do citizens. The group was made up of six Black individuals and four Whites, with three of the Blacks being actually from Africville itself. The group, one that was not representing Africville in any official capacity, met 56 times between 1962 and 1967 with approximately (records are unclear why this is approximate) seven meetings with Africville citizens in their church (Clairmont 1971, 125). It is important to note that as the group was formed on the advice of a human rights advocate from Ontario, its members were not elected by the Africville community, or chosen through the church. While they did purport to have the best interests of Africville in mind, they did not have a clear authority to speak for its people. “The alternatives were examined without the active participation of the entire Africville community” (Clairmont 1971, 152).

The Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee did, however, postpone the relocation of the Africville community, and did seriously, if inadequately, investigate options other than relocation. Eventually they decided that they lacked the expertise to give a full recommendation to the city of Halifax and advised the city to bring in an expert to assess the situation. Dr. Albert Rose was recommended for the role through business connections he had with an acquaintance of a member of the advisory.

Rose was a professor of social work at the University of Toronto. Having him brought in to assess the situation was not exactly a neutral move. Rose had studied some of Toronto’s first housing projects, and he believed that integration was the solution for racial injustices within society (Rose 1958). As such, he was hardly going to be a source of impartial opinion as to whether or not they should relocate and disperse the population of a predominantly Black slum.

Rose spent a total of two days in Halifax, from November 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> in 1963, investigating Africville. He had been given documents pertaining to the situation, but “prior to his 1963 visit, he was unfamiliar with Africville. ‘I knew very little about the community of Africville. I had not seen it previously. I had heard that it existed’” (Clairmont 1971, 154).

While in Halifax, Rose did not spend much time in Africville talking to the actual members of the community. He mostly met with city officials and ‘experts’ and did not closely investigate the lives of the people within the community. Rose described his experiences in Halifax years later in an interview for the Africville relocation report:

Bob Grant, or the City Manager, or both, took me through the community, and we drove through it twice. We got out and we walked around. It is not a very big community in terms of distance. And at that time, this was late November 1963, the roads were such that you could barely get in and out, so it wasn't something that would take long. I don't suppose I spent more than perhaps two hours in Africville altogether, on two separate visits.

...in a nutshell, my impressions were devastating. . . . my impression was that, in the Canadian context, this was the worst urban appendage I had ever seen. I was overwhelmed by the visual context of the physical surroundings. It seemed to me that the thing was a bottomless pit; that you could pour in fantastic resources and you have no base upon which to rehabilitate; that if you were to build back a viable community you would really have to start from scratch.

You might just as well assume no one was living there. The whole neighbourhood would have to be serviced with water and sewage disposal. The streets would have to be laid out. There was no street lighting, as I remember it. There were no . . . public transportation facilities. I think the nearest school was outside the boundaries of the area. They had a magnificent view.

I was appalled, frankly, by the feeling that here was a group of Canadians that were as entombed, entrapped, as ever I had even dreamed about. . . . Even in downtown Toronto, it

seemed to me that what we called slums bore no resemblance to the impression that I got of Africville. That was my reaction and it was not a reaction that I certainly wanted to destroy this community. I found it difficult to believe that a community existed. I had no doubt that, by the time I left, and that by the time I met with the leaders, there were a great many values here that were worth preserving. (Clairmont 1971, 155)

After his two days in Halifax, and meeting with the Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee, the only members of Africville that he apparently met, he presented the city with a report on the Africville situation. From Rose's words you would think that Africville was a disaster area, an area that could only provide a terrible life. Yet in discussing all of the relational principles, we have made explicit the need to look at the details of particular lives. Rose seemed more interested in the aesthetic of the land than the life of the people. The report recommended relocation and dispersal of the population. He advised that the city need not do more extensive studies to provide a closer examination of the situation. He advocated that the city should reimburse the citizens for their land, even if proper land ownership was hard to establish, and that they should support citizens should they need help paying rent.

The proposal was accepted unanimously by the city council, the Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee, and by 90 percent of the Africville citizens who met with the Committee in the Sea View Church to discuss the report. In the Committee's report to the city, they failed to mention that this 90 percent of Africville citizens were a group of only thirty seven individuals who actually attended the meeting, out of a population of over four hundred (Clairmont 1971, 167).

If we were to take Llewellyn's conception of equality of relationship in hand we would see problems in how the Rose report was formulated. Remember that Llewellyn requires good relationships to be constructed with respect, concern, and dignity. The



concern requires us to look at the real lived experiences and perspectives of the people with whom we have relationships. The city of Halifax most certainly had a relationship with the people of Africville, yet the Rose report did not take the perspectives of the majority of the people of Africville into account in the decision making. Rose came into the situation with a conclusion already in mind. He drove through Africville yet did not meet the people there. The dignity that Llewellyn argues for needs to be understood with respect and concern that takes people's perspectives into account. Rose did not do this. He took action based on his beliefs that integration was the solution to inequality, and he felt that the fact that the community was almost entirely Black was a kind of segregation with negative normative connotations. Nowhere in the Rose report was there anything about how the residents of Africville felt about living in a mostly Black community. A caretaker (one of the members of the Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee who was not from Africville) recalls meeting with Rose:

The main thing I recall was the viewpoint put forward by the Africville representatives, or people, that they didn't want to move. And they gave [Rose] a rough time, it seemed to me. He may have intimated even then what he was going to report. He was a fairly blunt fellow and may have known the answers even before he arrived. (Clairmont 1971, 158)

With the acceptance of the Rose report by the city of Halifax, the years of rumours of relocation changed into reality. A social worker was hired, Peter McDonald, and the city began moving forward with negotiations for the removal and relocation of the community family by family, and person by person. McDonald is referred to as 'the social worker' throughout the Africville relocation report and I will follow suit. He met with many families in person to discuss their situation, and attempted to help them as best he could.

McDonald was to take on a colossal job. He had to both keep the interests of the people of Africville in mind as well as push the city's plan of relocation forward. While he did seem very much interested in helping the people as best he could, the only option that he could consider was relocation, an option already determined. It was his job to do this as well as possible, but exploring other options was not in fact an option. He described many of his experiences in the Relocation Report:

The first three or four months was a matter of going into the community and meeting the people, listening to their thoughts on relocation. . . . They more or less associated me [as] an employee of the City and used this as a means of ventilating their thoughts. They had gone through many trying times in Africville and didn't get all that much satisfaction from the City. And all these feelings, I suppose, were pent [up] over many years . . . and here was a person who was going to hear them. . . . On many occasions I've gone in, and right off the bat they would start condemning the City for what they hadn't done. Once this [was] over, we could get down to discussing the relocation itself, and what it meant to them, and what their feelings were. I suppose the next step was working with the people who were thinking of relocating, what their expectations were, and what they wanted. (Clairmont 1971, 192)

Within this narrative the social worker was one of the few who seemed to show real care for the individuals in the community. Whereas Rose drove through the city for two hours and spent two days in Africville, the social worker spent three years working with the families throughout the relocation and for a time afterward.

The citizens of Africville interacted with the social worker on a personal or family basis. Yet because the decision of relocation had already been made, they were all looking out for their own best interest, rather than the interest of the community as a whole. The community at this point was doomed, and the individuals did not negotiate as a group. There was certainly advantage to the detailed particular approach taken by the social worker, yet the bargaining power of many in Africville was decreased by not

having the support of their neighbours. Deals were made one at a time with each family getting what they could from the city. Some were moved into new city projects, others bought houses of their own. While this approach of working with the particular families was much more contextually sensitive, the options the social workers had were still dictated before he ever met the families. The fact that this was done in private and without clear guidelines also divided the community. Instead of working together as a whole the individual bargaining pushed people against each other with each pursuing what they saw as in their own self-interest. Mr. Edwards, a member of the Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee, described the divisive nature of the process:

People just didn't trust each other. A lot of suspicion came along with this [relocation]. One [resident] was getting more than the other. I think it would have been a lot better if they had stuck together. My wife and I and the [Ratepayers Association] out there, we tried to stick together. We would have done a lot better if all had stuck together." (Clairmont 1971, 197)

The fact that this process dealt with individuals or at most families rather than the community as a whole contributed to this division. This, along with the fact that the decision dictated that families would be moved out and dispersed, severed relationships they once had in a community with others. Had the process been able to understand that relationships extend beyond familial relationships this could have been different. Yet the process was one that sought to bring individuals and families compensation for land, it could not account for complex relationships. The connections between the people, beyond those of family, simply could not factor into how they planned the relocation because the framework that justified the relocation and the ideology that drove the welfare project saw no value in those relationships. While the city did look for the input of individual families about their particular situations, it did not try to understand the

particular significance of any relationships beyond those of direct family, or the significance that disrupting those relationships would have.

When we had to move and live in Halifax County permanently, I couldn't stand it. ...we're in with a bunch of rotten neighbours who watch us because we're from the city. They're not friendly to us. I had to get out...In Africville we had neighbours all around us; we was as one. (Clairmont 1971, 564)

The city of Halifax had once again simply failed to see the importance of relationship in people's lives. While the social worker was finding particular solutions for particular families, these were monetary and housing solutions. Nothing was done to attempt to maintain the friendships and the sense of community, nor was much done to attempt to help them build new ones. If the social worker had been sent over this three year period to investigate how the city could help with the inequalities and to explore the options from the point of view of the citizens, it could have been different. Yet he was not there to find a solution to the problems of Africville. He had been sent by the city to solve the problem of Africville and to do so with the solution of relocation they had already settled on.

Some of the oldliners were unhappy with the relocation and, "Other oldliners, more positive about their new environment, seemed to accept, more or less reluctantly, that its price was the loss of former close association" (Clairmont 1971, 564). This was a price that was simply not accounted for by the city: the narrative from the city expressed interest in housing, employment, and education, not friendship and connection. The city did attempt to see what mattered in economic terms to the people, yet failed to understand that interpersonal details have a huge influence on the economic prospects and situations of individuals. The level of care a community provides greatly affects the cost of living.

There is one difference that I noticed as far as Africville was concerned, compared with other areas in which I worked. The Africville people generally were always able to make room for one more. By that particularly I am thinking of the older people, the grandfather, and the grandmother, and the aunt, and the uncle who were elderly. These people were looked after. I rarely heard anyone say, 'I'll have to send my mother, my father, or my aunt, to ...the old people's home'. (Clairmont 1971, 188)

The harms, however, were not simply restricted to loss of relationship. Those who did buy their own houses often found the costs of maintaining their homes unbearable. While they could afford to buy a house, living in Halifax proper was much more expensive with many hidden costs not present in living in the tight community of Africville. Moreover the number of people living off of welfare increased as well with their supporting community taken out from under them. If we were to take Hankivsky's principles of care we would quickly see that the city did not pay close attention to the consequences of action. While they did try to settle on somewhat fair deals for the land owned by families, the city certainly did not plan for the real lived consequences that would follow from their policies. Hankivsky's principles *require* that social policy attempt to plan for these eventualities. Seeing the interaction as being fair because the land taken was paid for at the price it could have been for sold privately was far from sufficient. The money given to the people might have been reasonably fair in market terms for the base value of their land, but it did not provide enough for many of the Africville relocatees to live comfortable lives. These payments also did not take into account that the low value of the land was due in great part to neglect from the city of Halifax. With a principle of responsibility in mind, it is clear that the poor conditions that translated to low valued land was very much the responsibility of the city of Halifax. Building codes had not been enforced, sewage was not installed, streets were not cleared,

and the city dump had been moved directly next to the neighbourhood. The value of the land had not been an issue for the city of Halifax until the relocation, and the market value of the land had equally not been of value to those who had been born there and had expected to die there. After all of this, the city paid the citizens far less for the land than it would have been worth had the city been treating the citizens of Africville with dignity, concern, and respect for the entirety of the relationship. A relational account can clearly understand why this was wrong. The city had failed to treat the community with dignity and had ignored the responsibilities it had incurred over the years. Had relational principles been in the minds of city councillors, and explicit in the justification of these policies, then the treatment of Africville would have been very different.

Beyond monetary issues, the relocation did not allow for the possibilities for people to have meaningful relationships with things and places. Reader points out that it is a real connection that is meaningful, and the people of Africville certainly had a relationship that was a real connection with their church. Rose did discuss the church with the Human Rights group but he did not take seriously the idea the church itself was important:

They placed a great deal of emphasis on the church, and I thought that their spiritual gatherings could be re-established somewhere else along with other community facilities. They were pretty skeptical of what I was saying, frankly, and gave up only with a great deal of difficulty that the answer to the problem was to tear down Africville and replace it on the site with a public housing project such as the Regent Park in Toronto which they knew I had studied at one point. (Clairmont 1971, 156)

Despite Rose's lack of understanding, the church was central to life in the community. "An important component of Africville's social structure was the church and the roles and organizations that it engendered. The church was as old as the community

itself and embodied much of Africville's sense of historical continuity” (Clairmont 1971, 62). Reader’s understanding of relationship between an agent and something else allows us to account for the moral importance of the church in these people’s lives. It was the relationship with this place that allowed them to form and maintain other relationships. It was a place to meet and discuss moral matters and was for a time the foundation for the sense of community among residents. Moral theory that cannot account for the value of connections to places would be missing aspects of human life. That Dancy does not see the ubiquity of the importance of connection in human life means that he likewise misses a universal element of being human. The Sea View Baptist Church was bulldozed without warning in the middle of the night in the spring of 1967 (Canadian Online Encyclopedia, Africville). Presumably this was done to avoid conflict with the residents who had not yet been relocated, yet it most certainly was not done with any concern for the feelings and wishes of the community that had built the church. To take a symbol important to the people and destroy it in the night is not to treat them with respect. Without the ability to see relationships themselves as valuable, you cannot easily explain why this disrespectful action was in fact so disrespectful. If we were simply concerned with self-interested agents trying to find reasonable employment, the tearing down of a church in the night in a community you have already left doesn’t seem to have much moral content. If you can understand the importance of relationship with a place for community you have a much better explanatory tool for moral life and moral theory.

From the liberal welfare standpoint, the relocation did not go so badly. Yes it did not translate into financial independence overnight by any means, but families did have running water and sewage. The justification for the relocation was mostly found in

moving the people into housing that was respectable for people, which the slum of Africville was assumed not to be. This was achieved. The families were moved into better housing, even if paying rent was a struggle. They had toilets and did not need to rely on wells for water. Yet, the people of Africville were not particularly thrilled by their new lives:

Virtually all relocatees reported that the City gained more from the relocation than did the Africville people; similarly, an equal percentage (circa ninety-five per cent) believed that the Africville people lost most by relocation. Chiefly the relocatees contended that the City had obtained valuable land whereas the Africville people did not receive enough money to maintain themselves adequately in their new environment. Many relocatees shared the sentiment of one young, female household head who commented: 'I'd say it was a dirty deal. We owned our own places. The City committed highway robbery, got the places and the land. The people lost more than what they should have gained. Places and land worth more than that. We were busy and excited, made stupid mistakes.' (Clairmont 1971, 539)

The people of Africville were taken from their homes, given a pittance, and carted and dispersed throughout Halifax. Some families were literally transported from Africville to their new homes in garbage trucks, a gesture of kindness from the city to provide free transportation that truly represented the city's lack of respect for the people of Africville. Beyond symbolic insults, the relocation tore apart the relationships that had bound the community together.

Among the more disgruntled members of the residual grouping were those Big Town area relocatees who had broken with their Africville associations and purchased homes outside the city; struggling in the post-relocation situation with heavy and unexpected expenses they often found their isolation from friends and relatives to be a significant cost of relocation. (Clairmont 1971, 566)



Social policy must be able understand that relationships matter to people. Unless social policy can evaluate whether or not they are helping or hurting the relationships of the people affected, social policy will probably create harm. In the Africville situation, they did not have principles that understood the importance of relationship:

Clearly something is amiss when, partly because of public social policy, the poor have to abandon warm and supportive kinship intimacy but in order to survive adequately have to accept inconvenience and lack of privacy by performing services for the same welfare system. (Clairmont 1971, 557)

Had the city of Halifax understood the importance of relationship and the responsibilities that relationships entail, and had they attended to principles describing what constitutes good relationship, the community of Africville might still exist. The entire approach would have been different. First of all, the city would have had to look at the responsibilities that it had to the citizens there that did not simply account for current conditions. The city would also need to understand the responsibilities within the context of the history of the relationship with the community of Africville. Moreover, with the use of Llewellyn's restorative justice approach, one would have to look at the relationships between the city and the community and attempt to create a relationship that reflected respect, concern, and dignity. Policy makers would have had to pay attention to the actual perspectives of the people in Africville and take those perspectives into account when planning a course of action. When the Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee first met with citizens, they were for the most part not interested in discussing a possible relocation at all. Instead, they were interested in having the city provide them with services that they had been wanting for years. The social worker described the situation of Africville to the Relocation Report:

probably the City of Halifax was ninety-five per cent at fault for even allowing such conditions to exist, and for even allowing such a condition to begin. . . . Why something was not done by the City Fathers, I don't know . . . because certainly in the other parts of the City this wasn't allowed. You wouldn't just put up any kind of a building and get away with it. If this is discrimination, there you have it. (Clairmont 1971, 189)

Given the history of discrimination, the avoidance of responsibilities by the city, and blatant disregard for the perspectives of the individuals within Africville, the city would have had to take serious action under a restorative justice approach, one that took relational responsibility seriously and attempted to create policies that provided good care. They would have had to attempt to fix the difficulties encountered by the Africville population rather than paying them off, dispersing them, and bulldozing their community.

There were no calls for relocation from the population, and as such this would not have been the first approach. The kind of close work the social worker embarked on to facilitate the relocation should have been instead used to assess what the real needs of the community were. This would have allowed the city to help the citizens by finding ways that allowed them to foster and continue with their relationships. The 'impossibility' of providing water and sanitation was far more likely seen as simply expensive. And a proper respectful approach to restorative justice in this situation would likely be very expensive indeed. Yet this should not come as a surprise given the century of neglect that Halifax had for Africville.

It is important to note that a relational approach can describe how Halifax could have treated Africville better. It is more important yet that it can show why Halifax *ought* to have treated Africville better. A relational lens does not simply describe connections of relationship. It describes what good relationships are by seeing if individuals are able to

participate equally within relationship and if their voices can be heard within relationship.  
Relational theory can provide principles that understand the importance of relationship,  
and it can enforce policy that will also have to take relationships into account.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have shown that feminist theory allows us to see that the traditional individualistic conception of the self is nothing but a figment of the imagination. Humans live connected lives. Relationships matter from the socialite to the hermit. From this fact of relationship, we can describe principles that respect the humans in them. While humans are very distinct and have many values, it is of value for all humans to have the relationships they are in to take them for who they are.

Relationships will necessarily exist in human lives. Dancy rejects that we can form moral principles because moral reasons can only exist in relation to the situation that causes them. Dancy misses that the shared fact of relationship in human lives provides an avenue for a shared normative framework that understands the importance of relationship. Every moral situation he can describe will be one involving relationships. This shared framework allows us to create principles that can direct our actions, inform policy, and direct moral education. These are all things that Dancy cannot account for or describe. With an understanding of the moral value of relationships, we can understand what links different moral cases and provide a shape to the concept of what is moral. Moreover, as I have shown, relational principles can describe how to inform social policy in order to make that policy respond better and with more care and context sensitivity to real people.

Relational principles as seen from the work of Reader, Tronto, Hankivsky, and Llewellyn can be viewed as tools that can improve human life and allow us to navigate the fact of relationship. These principles all govern connections between agents and

others, and must in every occurrence of their instantiation take direct input from that particular situation.

What these principles also provide are tools for explaining moral matters to people who would normally not be interested in theoretical feminist moral arguments. These principles can be given to the so called ‘man of principle’ in a format that is understandable and accessible to them. They can subtly add complexity to narratives. With the understanding that right action needs contextual sensitivity, these principles can bring out the details that need to be seen in individual lives that may come under the influence of changing social policy and practice. We need not shrug our shoulders when asked what the right course of action is in the world and we can have clear ways of seeing if our governments have gone wrong. Principles of the kind that I have defended through accounts by both care and relational theorists can force those who do think they know what should happen in the lives of general others to slow down and look at the real lives and histories of these people instead of sweeping them under some generalization.

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