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Author
Garthoff, Jon

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JON GARTHOFF

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I defend and expand on John Rawls's view that what morality requires of major social institutions – the "basic structure of society" – is fundamentally different from what morality requires of individual moral agents. I do so by motivating the view that many moral relations are not purely interpersonal, but rather are specified and mediated by the institutions of the basic structure. I propose that we think of these social institutions as, to the extent that they specify and mediate moral relations among individuals, *embodying* morality.

1. INTRODUCTION*

In both *A Theory of Justice* and *Political Liberalism*, John Rawls (1971, 1993) maintains that what justice requires of the basic structure of society is fundamentally different from what justice requires of individual moral agents. The basic structure comprises a society's major social, political, and economic institutions; Rawls includes in the basic structure not only governmental institutions like police departments and tax collection agencies, but also major nongovernmental institutions like churches and universities. Rawls maintains that the institutions of the basic structure must be organized so as to promote the ends of justice, where these ends include ensuring that all persons are able to exercise fundamental liberties like freedom of speech and thought, ensuring that each person has a fair and equal opportunity to compete for socially defined offices, and ensuring that each person is entitled to a fair share of the goods produced by social cooperation. According to Rawls, individuals in a just society are not called upon

to promote these ends directly. They are not obligated, for example, to provide goods to more needy individuals in an effort to ensure that these individuals have a fair share of society's goods. Rather, individuals are obligated only to support theinstitutional structure that is responsible for promoting these ends. Individuals do this by discharging the obligations they hold by virtue of the roles they fill within the institutional structure and by supporting the continued existence and integrity of the institutional structure through voting and public advocacy. When a just institutional structure functions properly, Rawls writes (1993, p. 269), individuals are "left free to advance their ends more effectively within the framework of the basic structure, secure in the knowledge that elsewhere in the social system the necessary corrections to preserve background justice are being made." Individuals in a just society are thus largely permitted to pursue their own parochial ends, so long as they support the institutions of the basic structure.

Liam Murphy (1998) contends that Rawls's focus on the basic structure of society produces an account of justice that requires too little of individuals. Murphy does not deny that individuals must discharge the obligations they are assigned by a just structure of institutions, but he questions Rawls's view that these exhaust the obligations of justice held by individuals in a just society. Murphy contends against this that individuals have obligations of justice apart from those given by their institutional roles: he maintains that if institutions in the basic structure of society must promote the ends of justice, then individuals must also directly promote these ends.[1] "If people have a duty to promote just institutions," Murphy asks (1998, p. 280, Murphy's emphasis), "why do they lack a duty to promote whatever it is that just institutions are *for*?" Murphy maintains that Rawls's position cannot provide an adequate account of what individuals should do when

their society lacks a just basic structure. Individuals in a society lacking just institutions would have, as Rawls maintains, an obligation to promote the creation of such institutions. But there are also circumstances in which the creation of just institutions is practically impossible, and individuals in these circumstances may be obligated to promote the ends of justice directly; they may be obligated, for example, to provide others with basic goods like food and shelter. Murphy claims that Rawls's view cannot accommodate this latter sort of obligation, for if Rawlswere to allow that individuals have obligations to directly promote the ends of justice when they lack just institutions, then he would need to explain why these obligations evaporate when a just institutional structure is established. Nothing in Rawls's view, Murphy maintains (1998, pp. 278-284), could explain this.

I do not have space here to provide a full and fair account of Murphy's criticism, nor to provide the details of how Rawls could best respond to it. I have briefly presented the dispute between them, however, because I believe that a deep fact about morality is revealed when we look at one way in which Rawls might defend his view against the challenge that Murphy raises. This deep fact, which has ramifications that transcend the dispute between Rawls and Murphy, is that many moral relations are not purely interpersonal, but rather are essentially mediated by social institutions. These moral relations are essentially socially mediated in the sense that they are given specific content by the institutions that form the basic structure of society. There are two important reasons why social institutions must mediate moral relations in this way. The first reason, which is the focus of this paper, is that individuals cannot adequately respect one another in the absence of an appropriate institutional structure. The second reason, which

I will not investigate here, is that many moral relations are systematically indeterminate in the absence of an appropriate institutional structure.[2] In this paper I will motivate the first reason for believing that many of our moral relations are essentially socially mediated and I will briefly explain how this fact helps us to maintain the fundamentals of Rawls's theory in the face of the criticism that Murphy presents.

2. ZARATHUSTRA'S DILEMMA

2.1 Illustrating the Dilemma

Consider the following comment from Rawls's *Political Liberalism* (1993, p. 281):

> The freedom and equality of moral persons require some public form … [a]nd this stands in contrast, for example, to classical utilitarianism, which takes as basic the capacity for pleasure and pain, or for certain intrinsically valuable experiences, defined in such a way that no particular institutional expression is required.

Rawls plausibly presupposes here that all persons have a capacity for free choice and that all persons, as free choosers, must in some sense be respected equally. He claims that, when we accept this presupposition, we thereby accept the need for a certain kind of institutional structure. Let me use an example to help illustrate what Rawls may have in mind here.

Suppose that as Oona the oncologist walks down the street on her way to the hospital where she works, she is accosted by Paul the panhandler. Paul is unemployed, homeless, and starving. He has tried on many occasions to find gainful employment, but lacks the skills needed to succeed in even the most menial of jobs. He also lacks close friends or family with the means to support him. Paul asks Oona for some spare change

in order to get something to eat. Oona, we suppose, is a conscientious moral agent willing to discharge her moral obligations to the best of her ability.[3]

If there is no social institution to mediate her relationship with Paul, then Oona faces a dilemma. If she ignores Paul's plea, then her relationship to him is morally objectionable. Through no fault of his own, Paul lacks basic goods like food and shelter, and hence lacks the resources to make meaningful choices about how to live his life. Oona refuses to provide him with these resources, even though she knows that no social institution is charged with addressing Paul's need, and even though she has the ability to help him without imposing great burdens on herself.

If she heeds Paul's plea, on the other hand, then they are in a different sort of morally objectionable relationship.[4] For if Paul's most basic needs are met only because of Oona's largesse, then he is in a position of extreme dependence on her. This dependence has two objectionable aspects, which I will here only mention, but each of which I will discuss below. First, Paul is vulnerable to exploitation by Oona, since she is in a position of power over him and could better promote her own aims by wielding this power to coerce Paul. Second, Paul is excessively indebted to Oona, since she provides him with goods that are essential to his having an adequate life. A relation of dependence with these two aspects, I submit, cannot be countenanced by a moral theory that values the fundamental equality of persons.[5]

The Paul and Oona scenario is an illustration, in moral terms, of a frustration voiced by Friedrich Nietzsche's Zarathustra (1891a, p. 120): "Beggars should be abolished utterly! Verily, we are angry when giving them anything and are angry when not giving."[6] Unlike Nietzsche, however, we moral theorists cannot simply change the

subject after recognizing our predicament. We must try to resolve Zarathustra's dilemma.

2.2 Resolving the Dilemma

To see how we might resolve the dilemma, consider again Rawls's claim that freedom and equality require social forms. Suppose that we introduce a social institution whose function is to help persons in conditions of extreme need; that social institution is then able to mediate the relationship between Paul and Oona. Suppose also, as I will motivate below, that dependence on a social institution need not have the two features that I identified as objectionable aspects of dependence on an individual If this is right, then institutional mediation can enable Oona to address needs like Paul's without placing Paul in a morally objectionable relationship of dependence. Indeed, if such institutional mediation is established, then strictly speaking we should not say that Oona addresses Paul's need. We should say instead that she attends to what is required of her in response to the moral problem presented by needs like Paul's. There will still be moral relations between Oona and Paul, since the institution makes demands on Oona only because of the existence of needs like Paul's. But these moral relations will be specified by the institution that mediates their relationship.

Oona will now see her responsibility as consisting primarily in an obligation to support the mediating social institution. Given a reasonable division of labor within society, this obligation may not be very demanding on Oona. It may consist only in a duty to provide modest financial support by means of tax payments or contributions to charity, together with a willingness to advocate the institution in public discourse. It is,

nevertheless, an appropriate way for Oona to address the moral problem presented by needs like Paul's.

Paul's need will still be met, though he receives no support directly from Oona. Indeed, although the point is not essential to the purposes of this paper, the needs of persons like Paul will likely be better met under an institutionalized system, since well-run institutions increase efficiency by solving problems of coordination and making informed decisions about the allocation of resources. Most importantly, when the institution meets his needs, Paul is not directly dependent on Oona.

We might wonder, however, whether such an institutionalized system solves the moral problem associated with Paul's dependence on Oona. While it may be true that Paul is not directly dependent on Oona under such a system, he is directly dependent on the institution. For institutional mediation to be a genuine resolution of Zarathustra's dilemma, this relation of dependence must not itself be morally objectionable.

2.3 Vulnerability to Exploitation

The first objectionable aspect of dependence on another individual for basic goods is vulnerability to exploitation. An individual is vulnerable to exploitation, in the relevant sense, when some other individual or institution both has power over her and either has or could reasonably come to have an all-things-considered interest in wielding that power to coerce her. Paul's dependence on Oona is objectionable in part because it makes him vulnerable to exploitation by her: she has power over him because he depends on her for the meeting of his basic needs, and she could have an all-things-considered interest in coercing him, since the aims she cherishes most might be better served if she

did so. The aims Oona cherishes most, we may suppose, are cultivating meaningful friendships and curing those who suffer from cancer. Paul does not have cancer, and Paul and Oona may be ill-suited to be friends. Thus it could be better for her – though not, of course, permissible for her – to coerce Paul in the service of these aims.

But the situation is different when Paul is dependent on a social institution. I want to suggest that Paul is not objectionably vulnerable to exploitation by the institution because the institution serves its fundamental purpose when it meets Paul's needs. The institution's proper functioning consists in appropriately addressing needs like Paul's, and so the good of the institution is promoted to the extent that it does appropriately address these needs. If this is right, then it is never better for the institution itself to exploit Paul's dependence, since such exploitation ipso facto interferes with the institution's proper functioning. This is true, I think, even if the institution could somehow address other people's needs better by exploiting Paul. The institution is needed not only for reasons of efficiency, but also because individuals are unable to address needs appropriately, and hence are unable to respect one another adequately, without it. If the institution is to enable individuals to respect one another adequately, however, then it must be charged not with minimizing the amount of need that goes unmet, but rather with appropriately addressing each particular need. My suggestion is that this makes dependence on the institution morally unobjectionable, since it entails that the institution never has an all-things-considered interest in exploiting Paul.

The same cannot be said when Paul's basic needs are provided by Oona, and that is why his dependence on Oona for the meeting of these needs is morally objectionable. Oona need not count meeting Paul's needs among her most cherished aims, and so

Oona's good need not depend to any significant extent on whether she appropriately addresses Paul's need. Indeed, even if it were Oona's most cherished aim to meet needs like Paul's, Paul's dependence on Oona would still be objectionable. Since Oona has no function, she can subject all of her aims to critical revision. Even if it is better for Oona to help Paul, given her present aims, she can without dysfunction revise her aims so that it is no longer better for her to help him. The institution cannot shed its fundamental purpose in this way, and so it cannot be better for the institution to exploit Paul.

The point here is not that institutions are less likely than individuals to be corrupted; history abounds with institutions, both public and private, that have engaged in self-defeating exploitation. To best illustrate what the present point comes to, we should stipulate that Paul's needs will be met either way: Oona and others like her will give amply in the absence of an appropriate institution, and if it exists the institution will also give amply. The primary problem with having Paul's needs met in the first way is not the risk that Oona will in fact coerce him. It is that under such an arrangement Paul is in a vulnerable condition, since it might be better for Oona to coerce Paul. This vulnerability fails to accord Paul equality of status with Oona, and this failure is objectionable even when exploitation does not occur. There is no parallel vulnerability when the institution holds power over Paul, since it cannot be better for the institution to exploit him.

Oona has a moral obligation not to exploit her power over Paul, and so she cannot have a balance of reasons for engaging in such exploitation. Oona's reasons for helping Paul without exploiting him are not merely stronger than her reasons for cultivating friendships and pursuing a cure for cancer. Moral conscientiousness requires that Oona be responsive to these reasons, and so these reasons are overriding moral considerations:

no nonmoral reasons could balance them. Given the overridingness of moral considerations, we might wonder whether my characterization of Oona is a consistent one. I stipulated that Oona is morally conscientious, and I stipulated further that cultivating friendships and curing cancer are Oona's most cherished aims. We might worry that Oona cannot be morally conscientious unless she cherishes most the aim of acting in a way that is morally permissible. In our example, it is plausible to think that morality demands that Oona help Paul without exploiting him, and so we might think that this has the consequence that she is required to regard helping Paul without exploiting him as acting in the service of her most cherished aim.

This worry rests, I believe, on an erroneous characterization of morality. Morality does not present itself to individuals as an ultimate aim, much like other aims in most respects, but special in that it always takes precedence over them. Aims are the sorts of things that can be realized: Oona can develop a new and meaningful friendship, or a medical treatment that successfully targets only cancer cells. There is no analogous sense in which morality can be realized. It is not morally better for me to perform four thousand permissible actions in a day, instead of thirty-nine hundred. To act morally is not to aim at moral permissibility; it is to respect moral values in choosing and pursuing aims. Morality is thus better thought of as a background condition, consisting in omnipresent constraints on the aims individuals may pursue and the means they may employ in pursuing them. Paradigmatically conscientious agents are not those who choose morality over other aims in times of conflict. Rather, they are those who attempt to choose and structure their aims, and to constrain their pursuit of the aims they have chosen, in response to moral values.[7]

An individual could, of course, structure his life so that his primary aims are moral in character. There is no paradox involved in making it one's life's work to stamp out injustice. But that sort of commitment to moral aims is not presupposed by moral conscientiousness, and so we may without contradiction stipulate that Oona is not committed in that way. What is required of Oona is only that she adopt aims – in her case, cultivating friendships and curing cancer – in such a way that she is prepared to refrain from advancing them in circumstances where morality calls on her not to.

This concludes my remarks on the first consideration motivating the view that many of our moral relations are essentially socially mediated: that dependence on a social institution for basic goods like food and shelter need not involve the vulnerability to exploitation that is involved in dependence on an individualfor these goods I now turn to consider briefly the second consideration motivating this view: that dependence on a social institution for basic goods like food and shelter need not involve the excessive indebtedness that is involved in dependence on an individual for these goods

2.4 Excessive Indebtedness

When one person provides voluntary assistance to another, then it is plausible to think that the person who has been helped becomes commensurately indebted to the helper. If a friend has given me $100 so that I can make the rent during a month in which I have a series of unanticipated expenses, for example, then I have obligations with respect to her that were not previously present. One such obligation is to offer $100 to this friend, should we ever find ourselves in relevantly reciprocal circumstances, even if our friendship alone would have generated no obligation to make such an offer The

purpose of my debt is to maintain our equality of status by keeping the one-sidedness of the assistance from rendering me subordinate to my benefactor.

The indebtedness generated by voluntary assistance explains the reluctance that we sometimes feel to accept assistance from others when it is not necessary to do so. It may be reasonable for me to impose moderate burdens on myself – working overtime, or eliminating inessential expenses – rather than rely on the voluntary assistance of a friend, even if providing the assistance is not burdensome for my friend. There are, of course, limits to this. Part of the point of friendship is that friends provide mutual assistance of various kinds, and so it not reasonable for me to choose to endure extreme hardships – taking on a new and unwanted job, or severely reducing consumption of food – rather than rely on a friend. But it is not mere pride or a misplaced ideal of autonomy that leads us to decline unnecessary assistance.

Indeed, it is plausible to think that voluntary assistance produces indebtedness even when those who provide assistance are morally obligated to do so. If my parents have cared for me and supported me in the usual ways throughout my life, then I have a moral obligation to help them if they face financial hardship near the end of their lives. But if I provide such assistance, and my parents subsequently enjoy an unexpected financial windfall, then it is natural to think they have an obligation to offer to defray the expenses I incurred on their behalf. That I was bound by morality to incur these expenses does not cancel their indebtedness to me.

Let us suppose that these observations are correct, and see how they might be applied to the case of Paul and Oona. Oona helps to provide for Paul's most basic needs, and so much more is at stake here than a mere late fee on the rent. Paul's ability to feed

and shelter himself, and hence his ability to have meaningful choice about how to live his life, is on the line; his indebtedness to Oona and others who support him is therefore tremendous. This debt is of a kind with the ordinary debts generated in our more pedestrian cases of voluntary assistance. But because it is so large, this debt is troubling.

Paul's debt does not, of course, obligate himto adopt an obsequious attitude towards those who provide him with goods, or to otherwise prostrate himself before these individuals; his moral status as a free chooser precludes the generation of such obligations. But the fact that Paul would have an obligation of that magnitude, were it not precluded, suggests that having his basic needs met by voluntary assistance involves an objectionable inequality.

I submit – though I will not attempt here to argue decisively – that Paul's dependence on a social institution need not produce such troubling indebtedness. Since an institution addressing the problem of extreme need is integrated into the basic structure of a society, it helps to specify the property rights held by individuals within that society, and so helps to fix the original entitlements to the goods that are produced in that society. This is particularly clear if the institution operates by means of tax credits or demogrants, but it can also be true, I think, of welfare agencies and private charities that provide money or goods directly. Voluntary assistance by individuals, on the other hand, is activity that takes place after the original entitlements to goods have been specified. When Oona provides assistance to Paul, she is transferring her entitlement to certain goods to him, but she is not making it the case that he was the one originally entitled to them. Unlike the basic structure of society, Oona has no power to make Paul antecedently entitled to the goods she provides to him. It seems plausible that it is only

the transferring of an entitlement, and not the original conferring of an entitlement, that produces indebtedness. If this is right, then the specification of the entitlement by an institution in the basic structure need not produce any objectionable debt.

3. THE EMBODIMENT OF MORALITY

I began by presenting a dispute between John Rawls and Liam Murphy: Rawls maintains that what justice requires of the basic structure of society is fundamentally different from what justice requires of individual moral agents, and Murphy opposes this view. Next I tried to motivate the view that many moral relations are essentially socially mediated. I now want to conclude by making more explicit how this view about the social mediation of moral relations helps us to defend Rawls's view against Murphy's criticism.

It is not obvious that the considerations I have presented undermine Murphy's position. He does not claim, after all, that individuals could meet all of their moral obligations without the help of social institutions. Murphy writes (1998, p. 259):

> I am just as attracted to the ideal of the division of labor [between individuals and institutions] as is Rawls or [Thomas] Nagel. But unlike Rawls, I do not think that this counts in favor of the view that justice is a separate subject requiring different principles. It is true that the ideal of the division of labor presents a further clear motivation for paying special attention to the design of institutions. For these institutions, we now see, have two virtues: not only do they secure justice more effectively than could people acting without institutions, they also minimize the costs people must sustain to secure justice. But none of this supports the idea that different normative principles apply to institutional design on the one hand and personal conduct on the other.[8]

This quotation concerns the general problem of distributive justice, but it applies just as well to the problem of extreme need that we have been discussing. Murphy is

comfortable with social institutions doing the lion's share of the work required to address this problem. He simply claims that if institutions must be responsive to a moral consideration, then individuals must be responsive to it also. In particular, he would claim that if institutions must directly promote the ends of justice, then individuals must do so as well.

But if the considerations I have presented have force, then this claim cannot be right, for it fails to appreciate the fundamentally different way in which institutions and individuals serve morality. Morality presents itself to individuals as a constraint on action and on the adoption of aims. This does not mean, of course, that morality consists in a set of rules dictating which sorts of actions and aims are prohibited. Consequentialist moral theories contain constraints on action: a hedonistic utilitarian, for example, thinks she is constrained by the value of pleasure and the disvalue of pain to maximize the balance of the former over the latter.[9] Nonconsequentialist theories not based on rules also contain such constraints: a Kantian, for example, thinks he is constrained to be always responsive to others' happiness and to his own self-perfection.[10] Now I do not deny that morality presents itself to institutions as a constraint on action. I have tried, however, to motivate the idea that morality also presents itself to social institutions in a distinctive way. I have tried to motivate the idea that morality presents itself as in need of embodiment by these institutions themselves.

There are two aspects to this embodiment of morality, and they correspond to the two reasons we have for believing that many moral relations must be socially mediated. First, an embodying institution helps to enable individuals to stand in morally unobjectionable relationships to one another. The considerations I have presented in this

paper motivate the view that institutions must play this role: I have offered support for the view that persons like Paul and Oona can stand in an unobjectionable relationship to one another only when a social institution mediates that relationship.

Second, an embodying institution helps to specify the way in which morality applies to individuals. In our example, the institution would specify what morality requires of Oona with respect to those who are in a condition of extreme need, and would also specify what morality requires be made available to address Paul's need in particular. This aspect of the embodiment of morality corresponds to the second reason we have for believing that many moral relations must be socially mediated: because they would otherwise be systematically indeterminate. I have not attempted here to elucidate or motivate that aspect of embodiment.

The idea of the embodiment of morality helps to make clear what distinguishes Murphy's view from Rawls's. Murphy denies that individuals serve justice in a way that is fundamentally different from the way in which institutions serve justice, and he makes the plausible claim that individuals who lack just institutions may be obligated to promote the ends of justice directly. Murphy argues that Rawls's view cannot account for why such obligations would exist, since Rawls denies that individuals with a just institutional structure must directly promote the ends of justice. But if Rawls's view incorporates the claim that morality demands embodiment in institutions, then itwill be able to provide an account of these obligations. Briefly, the account would proceed as follows. If we lack a just institutional structure, then in addition to being obligated to support the creation of just institutions, we may also be obligated to respond to the moral problem of extreme need by directly promoting the ends of justice. This is because direct

provision of basic goods by individuals, morally objectionable though it is, may be less objectionable than allowing the needy to go without food or shelter. When a just institutional structure is established, however, it is this structure that is responsible for meeting the moral problem. That direct provision of basic goods by individuals is objectionable is now sufficient reason not to provide directly, for there is no longer a more objectionable alternative that we need to avoid.

This is not a decisive argument against Murphy's view. He would no doubt deny the need for the institutional embodiment of morality, and I do not pretend to have established that embodiment is needed.[11] By articulating and motivating the need for embodiment, however, I have suggested a constructive line of defense for Rawls's view. The aim of this paper has been only to make the need for embodiment seem plausible. If this aim has been achieved, then there is a plausible view that accounts for the coherence of the two views Rawls must endorse to answer Murphy's criticism: that individuals lacking a just institutional structure may be obligated to promote the ends of justice directly and that individuals who have a just institutional structure are not obligated to directly promote these ends. If the embodiment of morality is part of Rawls's view, then we have a strategy available for defending that view against Murphy's challenge.

Moreover, if morality does demand embodiment in social institutions, that fact would have important ramifications in moral theory beyond the scope of the dispute between Rawls and Murphy. Morality would then present institutions with values not only as to-be-pursued, but also as to-be-embodied. Conceiving of morality in this way illuminates Rawls's claim that the values of freedom and equality require social forms in a way that the hedonistic values of classical utilitarianism do not. If our fundamental

moral value is pleasurable experience, or for that matter any other state of affairs, then morality cannot be socially embodied. This is because such an account of value specifies which states of affairs are valuable prior to the creation of any social institutions. Social institutions may be bound to produce, or even to instantiate, these valuable states of affairs. But they cannot specify which states of affairs are valuable, since the moral values themselves already specify this. Social institutions thus cannot give specific content to these moral values, and hence cannot embody morality. A morality based on these values always presents itself as to-be-pursued, and so it always presents itself in the same way to both institutions and individuals. But as we have seen, the same point cannot be made of a morality based on the values of freedom and equality.

NOTES

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[1]This view is also defended by G. A. Cohen (1997, 2000).

[2]Investigations of the indeterminacy issue are found in Chapters 2 and 3 of *The Embodiment of Morality*, my doctoral dissertation in progress, and in Chapter 5 of Onora O'Neill (1996). A fuller discussion of the considerations I focus on in this paper is also found in the dissertation.

[3]To simplify the example, I suppose that Paul is not at fault for his condition of need, and I suppose that Oona is fully conscientious. These respective suppositions are not always true of actual poor and affluent persons, of course, but that does not undermine my argument. The mere possibility of two individuals like Paul and Oona suffices to motivate the view that many moral relations are essentially socially mediated.

[4]I do not claim that Oona faces a moral dilemma in the sense that she acts impermissibly regardless of whether she helps Paul. I claim only that her helping Paul and her refusing to help

Paul each have morally objectionable features. The introduction of an institutional structure to mediate the relationship between Oona and Paul enables Oona to address needs like Paul's in a way that is morally unobjectionable, and so I believe that consideration of the Oona and Paul scenario motivates my claim that many moral relations are essentially socially mediated.

[5]Though I will not discuss the issue in the text, it is worth noting that the dependence of children and the severely mentally disabled on more capable adults is not similarly objectionable. Children and the severely mentally disabled are not fully developed moral agents, and this makes them naturally subordinate to more capable adults. This natural subordination mitigates the indebtedness they incur when they accept help and justifies the vulnerability to exploitation they are, of necessity, subject to (though it does not, of course, justify actual exploitation). The case of those who are dependent because severely physically disabled is more complicated. I will say here only that while severe physical disabilities may justify some relations of dependence that would otherwise be objectionable, the considerations presented in the text offer support for the view that we ought, to the extent that it is practicable, to provide institutional support for the physically disabled that minimizes the extent of their dependence on other, more physically capable individuals. The case of those who are dependent on their employers because they have limited marketable skills is also complicated. I will here note only that the very institutions that are needed to eliminate Paul's objectionable dependence on Oona will also make these persons less dependent on their employers.

[6]The German reads as follows: "Bettler aber sollte man ganz abschaffen! Wahrlich, man ärgert sich, ihnen zu geben, und ärgert sich, inhen nicht zu geben." See Nietzsche (1891b, p. 128).

[7]This picture of morality is presented persuasively in Barbara Herman (2000).

[8]For Thomas Nagel's account of the moral division of labor between individuals and institutions, see Chapter 6 of Nagel (1991).

[9]See, for example, Henry Sidgwick (1874, pp. 411-417).

[10]See Immanuel Kant (1797, pp. 139-170).

[11]I regard it as significant, however, that in a footnote in the midst of his argument against Rawls's view, Murphy writes (1998, p. 282n): "I find it somewhat distasteful even to think about individual efforts to promote justice." The distaste engendered by individual efforts to promote justice is neatly explained by the view that morality demands embodiment in social institutions. If the primary problem with individual efforts to promote justice is merely that they are an inefficient way to promote human welfare – and this is, on Murphy's view, the primary problem with such efforts – then distaste would seem to be an excessive reaction.

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University of California at Los Angeles
Department of Philosophy
405 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90095-1451, USA
E-mail: garthoff@humnet.ucla.edu