

# Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics

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*The paper argues that care ethics should be subsumed under virtue ethics by construing care as an important virtue. Doing so allows us to achieve two desirable goals. First, we preserve what is important about care ethics (for example, its insistence on particularity, partiality, emotional engagement, and the importance of care to our moral lives). Second, we avoid two important objections to care ethics, namely, that it neglects justice, and that it contains no mechanism by which care can be regulated so as not to become morally corrupt.*

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The issue of the status of care ethics (CE) as a moral theory is still unresolved. If, as has been argued, CE cannot, and should not, constitute a comprehensive moral theory, and if care cannot be the sole foundation of such a theory, the question of the status of CE becomes a pressing one, especially given the plausibility of the idea that caring does constitute an important and essential component of moral thinking, attitude, and behavior. Furthermore, the answers given to solve this issue are inadequate. For instance, the suggestion that CE has its own moral domain to operate in (for example, friendship), while, say, an ethics of justice has another (public policy), seems to encounter difficulties when we realize that in the former domain justice is required.

I want to suggest that CE be part of a more comprehensive moral framework, namely, virtue ethics (VE). Doing so allows us to achieve two general, desirable goals. First, by incorporating care within VE, we will be able to imbed CE within a comprehensive moral theory and so accommodate the criticism that such an ethics cannot stand on its own. I will argue that reason has an important *regulative* role to play in intimate relationships, and that a virtuous person is equipped, given that she has the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom, to evaluate whether intimate relationships are morally desirable. Second, we can preserve those elements of CE thought to be most valuable, namely, its appeal

to partiality as a legitimate moral concern, its application to specific individuals in the agent's life, its emotive component, and its relevance to areas in moral life that have been neglected by some traditional moral theories.<sup>1</sup>

I will first explain the type of CE on which I focus and review two important objections to it. I then explain how subsuming CE under VE helps us achieve the desired goals mentioned above. In the penultimate section, I briefly offer reasons why care is a virtue, and a primary one at that—reasons other than that thinking of it as a virtue helps us to avoid the problems in and surrounding CE. Finally, I explain briefly how my approach toward CE avoids the pitfalls of previous ones regarding the connections between CE and justice morality. Throughout this discussion, I focus on Nel Noddings's views of care, and I assume a general familiarity with VE on the part of the reader.<sup>2</sup>

### I. NODDINGS'S CARE ETHICS

Nel Noddings (1984) formulated an influential attempt to build a comprehensive moral approach on the concept of care. It is important to look at her attempt because it allows us to see what is lacking in her approach and to delineate the concept of care.<sup>3</sup> Starting with the claim that relations between human beings are *ontologically* basic, Noddings construes caring relations as *ethically* basic.<sup>4</sup> In order to be moral, according to Noddings, one must maintain one's self as caring. She calls this view of oneself the "ethical ideal": "We want to be *moral* in order to remain in the caring relationship and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring [that is, as givers of care]. It is this ethical ideal . . . that guides us as we strive to meet the other morally" (5). This ethical ideal comes from the two sentiments of natural and ethical caring (104). The former is the natural sympathy we feel for others; it is the sentiment expressed when we *want* and *desire* to attend to those we care for, such as a mother's caring for her child. The latter occurs "in response to a remembrance of the first" (79), and it forms the basis of ethical obligation: it is the "I must" that we adhere to when we want to maintain our ethical ideal as one-caring. So even in situations when I find it difficult to engage in caring action, I am under an obligation to do so if I want to be moral, that is, to maintain myself as one-caring (82).

What, however, is involved in caring relations? Noddings claims that for caring to be genuine it has to be for persons in definite relations with the one-caring.<sup>5</sup> Though she makes room for the idea that one can expand one's circle of those cared-for (that is, those who are the recipients of care), she insists that genuine caring is not caring for abstract ideas or causes (112). More specifically, genuine caring involves what Noddings calls "engrossment and motivational displacement." In engrossment, the one-caring attends to the cared-for without judgment and evaluation, and she allows herself to be transformed by the other, while in motivational displacement the one-caring adopts the goals of the cared-

for and helps the latter to promote them, directly or indirectly (15–20, 33–34). This account has the result, as Noddings emphasizes, that caring has its limits. If genuine caring is not to be corrupted, the one-caring simply cannot care for everyone (18, 86). This, moreover, is not simply a practical consequence but a conceptual one: given Noddings's requirements of engrossment and displacement, it is impossible for any one person to engage a large number of people in such caring relations.

Noddings's views have been subject to severe criticism. Two of these are crucial to bringing out what is essentially missing in a moral view built simply on the notion of care. Claudia Card takes as her starting point the fact that in Noddings's view caring cannot be extended to everyone. If so, Card asks, how are we to think of our moral obligation to the people that we are not in caring relations with? We seem to need another moral concept that would ground our moral obligations to those who are not cared-for, and Card opts for justice: ". . . in a densely populated world life is not apt to be worth living without justice from a great many people, including many whom we will never know" (1990, 107).

Victoria Davion's criticism of Noddings has as its starting point the moral dangers attending engrossment and motivational displacement. If one cares for someone who is evil, then the one-caring might himself become evil. For if engrossment and displacement are, respectively, allowing oneself to be transformed by the cared-for and adopting the goals of the cared-for, then in caring for someone who is evil the one-caring allows himself to be transformed by the cared-for and to adopt immoral goals, and such a person, the one-caring, simply cannot be viewed as a moral paradigm. Hence, something is needed to regulate care and to ward off the possibility of such moral corruption. Davion opts for integrity, and her argument is that integrity is essential to one's ethical ideal, since "[s]eeing oneself as a being with moral integrity is part of seeing oneself as one's best self" (1993, 175). Since caring is sometimes incompatible with maintaining integrity, caring simply cannot be the only absolute moral value, as Noddings would have us believe.<sup>6</sup>

These two objections point to an important conclusion: *any* ethics that attempts to build itself simply on the concept of care is bound to face severe difficulties. Though my discussion relied only on Noddings's account, the conclusion holds. For it is implausible to believe that caring is the only basic component that goes into an ethical life: if one understands "care" as Noddings does, it is clear that in being one-caring one can nevertheless act morally wrong.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, Carol Gilligan's views are more plausible than Noddings's, because Gilligan is not committed to the idea that an ethics built solely on care would yield a comprehensive moral theory. Indeed, Gilligan (1982) often claims that a care approach needs to be combined with other approaches. However, it is precisely this issue that makes the problem of the status of CE within moral theory pressing, for it is not clear how this combination is to be articulated.

Before we turn to it, however, we need to try to understand whether the analysis of the concept of care given by Noddings is acceptable. Doing so allows us to trace in a more accurate way the contours of the concept, and this offers us a good entry into the status of CE in moral theory.

Should we accept Noddings's characterization of care? Is it true that caring involves engrossment and motivational displacement, and that genuine caring is personal? I cannot see how we can escape such an account of caring if we are also to maintain its intuitive appeal. After all, much of the interest in CE stems from the fact that it attends to those areas in life, such as friendship, parenting, love, and marriage, which have been neglected by some traditional moral theories. In all of these areas there is an essential element of attention to particular individuals. Moreover, in all such areas there is an essential element of motivational displacement. Surely it is correct to state that friends support and promote each others' goals, that parents do the same for their children, and that lovers do so for each other. This support, we should keep in mind, need not always be done directly, but also indirectly. For example, since friendship involves the friends' intimate knowledge of each other (including their goals), then when friends provide support, comfort, and care for each other they indirectly promote each others' goals.<sup>8</sup>

However, this might *seem* too hasty. For while it is indeed plausible to claim that much that goes under the activity of caring involves the support and promotion of the goals and life-plans of the cared-for, this seems to deny the truth of describing some relationships as caring even though such relationships do not involve the elements insisted upon by Noddings. To give an example my students are especially fond of, it is plausible to claim that two siblings or two friends care for each other even though they have been geographically and temporally distant from each other. Since such relationships are caring and yet do not involve engrossment and displacement, it would seem that Noddings's account is at best incomplete; it would have emphasized some central elements of the concept of care but would not have given an exhaustive analysis of it.

I think, however, that such objections involve under-described examples and cases. Noddings, for instance, can respond by asking for more detail. Consider the sibling case: the fact that they have not seen each other for a long time need not entail that there is no support and promotion of each other's goals. After all, they could have been corresponding with each other consistently, emotionally, and substantively. Furthermore, if the two siblings are not only geographically and temporally but also psychologically and emotionally out of reach of each other, then there would be no plausibility to the claim that they are in a caring relationship with each other. The fact that they are siblings should not force us into thinking that they must have an intimate and close relationship; they could be, simply, emotionally and psychologically distant from each other. And if so, there is no temptation at all to describe their relationship as being one of caring.

The important point of the above (slight) digression is that Noddings's emphasis on relationships is quite central. If there is no relationship between two people, or if the relationship is too superficial (or maintained out of obligation), then we should not acknowledge it as a caring one, even if the two parties in question are biologically related and even if they have *had* a close relationship (for example, as children growing up in the same household). But even if this is plausible, one important question still remains for Noddings's account: Is it sufficient that the goals of the cared-for be believed by her (the cared-for) to be good in order for her friend, the one-caring, to promote them? Or should the goals be genuinely good?

Suppose a friend of mine is in a love relationship which, though it began well, has turned sour.<sup>9</sup> My friend's spouse, Y, has started abusing her, say, verbally and psychologically. My friend, given her love for Y and her closeness to the situation, cannot perceive that the situation is hopeless and clings to the goal of preserving the relationship. I, on the other hand, having the advantage of being an external observer, am able to grasp the basic fact: Y is a man who does not love and respect my friend. The question that this case gives rise to is whether it is a requirement that the goals of the cared-for *be* good in order for the one-caring to support them, or whether it is enough that the former *believes* that they are good. In the above case, my friend believes that her goal of preserving the relationship is a good one, while I believe—and know—that it is not only worthless but actually bad.

There is a straightforward answer to this question: the goal should not be supported. Since my friend's well-being is primary, and since supporting her goal would help further damage her well-being, then I should not support it. What I should do is talk to her, try to understand her point of view, and, if upon finding that she is being deluded, try to reason with her and to show her why the relationship is not worth pursuing. This much, perhaps, is uncontroversial.<sup>10</sup> However, there is a tougher question: Is it morally permissible that I act in such ways so as to *frustrate* her goal? Should I, directly or indirectly, bring it about that my friend's efforts to achieve her goal are defeated? I want to leave this question open for three reasons. First, the answer depends on the case (how fragile she is, how damaging the abuse is, how clingy she is to Y, etc.). Second, and related to the first, positively interfering to thwart my friend's goal seems to be an interference with her autonomy, and this is a thorny issue (and, perhaps, depends on the case: Would *not* interfering at this point in time thwart her future autonomy by allowing my friend to degenerate into a hopeless state?).

Third, in distinguishing between goals genuinely good and goals merely believed to be good, we have all that we need by way of a theoretical restriction on the notion of motivational displacement: genuine friends support those goals that are not only believed, by their friends, to be good for them, but that are also genuinely good. This point, moreover, brings out the importance of the case discussed. For if Noddings views caring as the basic moral value—as she

indeed does—then her account will be crippled by such a case: if the one-caring refuses to support and promote the goals of the cared-for, then the one-caring would be acting under a diminished ethical ideal on Noddings's account. Since this is an implausible result, we have clearly laid out the need for an ethical scrutiny of caring relationships, so that one does not end up caring for another no matter what the other's goals are. To summarize, then, the discussion up to this point: it is plausible to claim that the parties in intimate relationships adopt and support each others' goals, and that for this motivational displacement to be ethical, the goals adopted must be genuinely good for the cared-for.

Considerations similar to those about motivational displacement apply also to engrossment. While uncritical acceptance of another is morally undesirable, no friendship or marriage can last if each party subjects the other to continual evaluation. After an initial screening, so to speak, one can rest content that his friend is not an immoral person, so that befriending him presents no danger to one's moral integrity. Also, this need not foreclose the possibility of change. If one's friend begins to show signs of corruption, one could start a process of reevaluation and slow detachment to ensure against further engrossment (and future pain should the friendship be severed). Incidentally, the idea of an initial screening lends further support to the idea that there is a need for some moral concept other than care (for example, integrity) or some concept tied to moral ones (for example, reason) to do the work alongside care, because we cannot get this type of evaluative posture out of care alone.

We can conclude that caring, for it to retain the moral appeal and importance that many have attached to it, has certain aspects deemed by its advocates to be crucial. First, care is aimed at particular people that the moral agent is in relation with (without denying the possibility that the agent might expand such relations to include new people). Second, it involves the element of motivational displacement, usually in an indirect form, and it involves a certain critical amount of engrossment. Third, because care relationships typically involve caring for our loved ones, for those who are dear to us, we can add the further element that care has an important emotive dimension, such that when one cares for X one also expresses emotion, by, for example, being happy to care for X, being pleased to do so, and desiring to do so.

In addition, we can highlight some salient features found in *acting from care*. First, the agent acts in relation to another that the agent knows and is in relation with, such as one's friend, lover, or offspring. This distinguishes care from other altruistic motives that typically target strangers and perhaps acquaintances, such as sympathy, pity, and compassion. This need not deny that caring can involve sympathy and compassion (pity is controversial since it might be an innocuous form of contempt and superiority), but it does distinguish care from these in terms of their objects.<sup>11</sup> Second, what is involved in caring is the intimate knowledge of the person cared-for. In acting from care,

one utilizes one's knowledge of the cared-for to tailor one's action to suit the needs of the cared-for.

Third, acting from care does not typically involve the use of moral principles. Indeed, this is one crucial element of CE that has been emphasized so as to distinguish it from justice reasoning. In justice reasoning, it is claimed, an agent uses some moral principle or other and applies it impartially to the issue at hand to act correctly. By contrast, in acting from care one can act directly without the mediation of principles. However, acting without the mediation of principles should not tempt us into taking caring action to be thoughtless and impulsive. Indeed, in using one's knowledge of the cared-for, one takes account of relevant features that help determine one's action, and this is not usually found in cases of acting impulsively.<sup>12</sup> The claim that caring action is sometimes spontaneous can also be found in the literature (see, for example, Blum 1980) though with the emphasis that spontaneity is not thoughtlessness. I will discuss below some possible tensions between spontaneity and virtuous action.

Fourth, in acting from care one typically acts emotively. The one-caring has an attachment to the cared-for and is concerned for her well-being. The one-caring is concerned for the needs of the cared-for, takes pleasure in her happiness, and is sad when she is not faring well. When one cares, then, it seems that one would also enjoy, and take pleasure in, one's caring actions. In cases when caring is done to alleviate suffering and ease pain, an emotive component is also present: one shares the pain of the cared-for. However, in either case, the one-caring gladly acts out of care, much as the brave person, according to Aristotle, gladly acts courageously even while facing fear and danger.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the word "typically" in the first sentence of the above paragraph is important. For there are cases of caring actions that carry with them no emotional components, and these are easy to envisage. Consider, for example, actions such as cleaning, cooking, and doing the laundry. These might be done for another *because* the one-caring cares for another, that is, they stem from the commitment of the one-caring to care for the cared-for, yet they need not involve any pleasure in being carried out, nor need they be motivated by a desire to do them. This is not to say that they involve pain or that they never involve pleasure or motivating desires. It is simply to claim that such emotional components are not a necessary requirement for such types of action.

The characteristics of care and of acting from care yield four desiderata of CE, all of which are emphasized in its literature: the concern with people embedded in contextual relations; attention to areas of life, neglected by some traditional moral philosophy, such as friendship and the family (indeed, the above contextual relationships are usually found among friends and family members); the emphasis on the emotive component in ethical engagement; and partiality. But with partiality, the issue is more complicated. While many advocates of CE claim that CE allows us to be both partial and moral, we will see that what it

demands of us need not conflict with impartiality (or universalizability, for that matter). For now, the question is whether virtue ethics (VE) can incorporate CE within its framework while at the same time (1) preserve the elements of CE thought to be valuable, (2) avoid the objections to CE, (3) explain how caring action need not conflict with certain traditional moral constraints (for example, impartiality), and (4) yield a unitary moral framework for both care and justice reasoning.

## II. CE AS PART OF VE

### A. PARTICULARITY, EMOTION, AND VIRTUOUS CARING ACTION

My suggestion now is to think of care as a virtue, as one virtue, albeit an important one, among those that go into constituting a flourishing life.<sup>14</sup> As a virtue, care would not simply be a natural impulse, but to use Noddings's terminology, also ethical (in Aristotelian terms, it would not be a natural virtue, but one harnessed by reason). This position allows us to maintain what is most desirable about CE. First, consider CE's insistence on the idea that human beings are not abstract individuals who morally relate to each other following principles such as justice and nonviolation of autonomy. One of VE's main claims is that we are social animals who need to negotiate the ways we are to deal and live with each other.<sup>15</sup> With this general claim about our sociality, VE also claims that without certain types of relationships we will not flourish. Without friends and family members, human beings will lead impoverished lives, being unable to partake in the pleasures of associating with people with whom they can trust and share their joys, sorrows, and activities. It is not just that intimate relationships are instrumental to flourishing, but that they are also part and parcel of a flourishing life: the ends and goals of intimate others constrain the very ends and goals of the agent, and the very conception of the agent's life: intimate relationships "are not external conditions of [virtuous] activities, like money or power. Rather, they are the form virtuous activity takes when it is especially fine and praiseworthy" (Sherman 1989, 127). VE, then, gives pride of place to CE's insistence on the sociality of human life and to its emphasis on the importance of certain types of relations such as those of friendship and family.<sup>16</sup>

However, one might object that while CE takes human relationships to be ontologically basic, VE does not. Instead, it takes the individual as ontologically basic and the individual's flourishing as ethically basic. If so, then VE does not take caring for others as ethically basic. But then VE would not incorporate CE's claims *well* and would not seriously accommodate its central claims. The objection raises a serious worry, but much depends on what we mean by "ethically basic" and on how we construe the claims of VE.



It is true that VE takes the concept of flourishing to be basic in important respects. First, VE is not narrowly act-centered as are some other theories, and in this respect, it takes seriously the issue of what a well-lived life is. Second, VE, as a neo-Aristotelian theory, claims that it is *rational* to be virtuous because being virtuous provides one's best chance to lead a flourishing life.<sup>17</sup> But from these claims, it does not follow that flourishing is ethically basic *in the sense* that it gives virtuous agents moral license to violate the claims of others, be these strangers or intimates, when the agent's flourishing is at stake. The virtues are constitutive of a flourishing life; we need to be virtuous if we are to flourish. But being virtuous is not a tactic an agent adopts when it so suits the agent. Having the virtues requires time, effort, and good upbringing. When one has the virtues, one has, among other things, the right values, thoughts, and emotions with respect to what is good and bad, right and wrong, worthwhile and not worthwhile. And this implies that being virtuous is compatible with, and often requires, sacrifices, sometimes of one's own self. One cannot, for example, claim to be courageous and then say that, even though this good is worth fighting for, one will not because one's life, and so one's flourishing, is at stake.

With the above remarks in mind, and given the thesis that care should be thought of as a virtue, a virtuous, caring agent would act in a caring manner, and would feel the requisite emotions, when the situation calls for care (unless some justified defeating conditions are present). In this respect, then, VE does accommodate CE's emphasis on caring. VE also does so *well*, by giving care an important status among the virtues (an issue I will treat in the penultimate section). What VE, however, does not accommodate is CE's claim that human relationships are ontologically basic. But this is not a difficulty, because what is important is for VE to incorporate CE's claims about ethics, not ontology. Furthermore, the claim that caring relations are ethically basic does not entail the claim that human relations are ontologically basic, and so VE is not logically bound to accommodate CE's ontological claims (nor should it: it is difficult to see how human relationships can be ontologically basic when they conceptually *require* human beings to form the relationships).

Let us turn next to the issue of emotion. As we saw, under CE acting typically involves acting emotively, being prompted to act by one's care for the cared-for, and that this implies the desire (self-conscious or not) to promote the cared-for's goals and to allow oneself to be transformed by the cared-for (for the sake of this discussion, I am setting aside those humdrum cases of caring that do not involve emotive components). Most advocates of VE, furthermore, claim that when a virtuous person acts she would also, characteristically, have the requisite emotion, both as an impulse to act and as a reaction, and this claim is part of the Aristotelian view—and most contemporary views—of the emotions, namely, that they partake in reason.<sup>18</sup> VE accommodates CE's concern about emotion, then, quite easily: when a virtuous person acts in a caring manner

toward another, he also feels the tender emotions associated with caring action. Moreover, he is also prompted to act out of the desire and love for the cared-for. And this is a desirable view to have, since we do not want caring actions to be unthinking and devoid of reason.

That the emotiveness of caring action and reason are in harmony can be nicely demonstrated through Aristotle's conditions for virtuous action and a discussion of some possible worries found therein. Aristotle states that "First [the agent] must know that he is doing virtuous actions; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state" (1985, 1105a30–1105b). Consider the first condition. For example, Aristotle requires that if one tells the truth, one must also *know* that one is telling the truth. But there is more. For as is well known, one can tell the truth, know that one is telling the truth, and yet not know that telling *this* truth in *these* circumstances is the virtuous or right thing to do. And Aristotle seems to require that the agent *also* know that her action of telling the truth in this situation is the right thing to do. This requirement is a crucial one: without it, it would be hard to see how the first condition is a condition for virtuous actions, rather than for actions that are right by accident. Moreover, it does not entail that emotion cannot be present: having the requisite emotional motivation can go hand-in-hand with such thoughts as "I must do this" or "I should take away that knife from her hand right now before she harms herself" or "This is the right thing to do."

The reason for having the above requirement is the sensible one, which is that without it, it is difficult to set the virtuous apart from the non-virtuous: it is the former, *because* they are virtuous, who engage in their actions with knowledge rather than accidentally and by stumbling through their daily lives. The idea is that virtuous agents be able to tell the difference between actions that are good and right and those that are not, and this is part and parcel of Aristotle's requirement that decent agents be morally wise. And this is surely a plausible demand as far as, specifically speaking, caring actions are concerned: no matter how spontaneous and emotional we want caring actions to be, we do, and should, also want them to issue from reflective and morally committed agents. Otherwise, we will all be in danger of becoming Ms. As (Noddings 1984, 109–11; see also note 6 of this paper).

Turning to Aristotle's second condition, it requires the virtuous agent to act *because* the action is just, or honest, or courageous, or, to stick to our topic, caring.<sup>19</sup> The harmony with emotion should again be evident: a caring person can act caringly with all the needed and felt emotion while also acting for the right, virtuous reasons. But this might seem to pose a problem. For it might be thought—plausibly enough—that it is too much to require of caring agents that they say to themselves, "I am doing this *because* it is caring" (Broadie 1991, 86–87). Indeed, as far as CE is concerned, such a requirement would run directly

contrary to CE's emphasis on the *spontaneity*—though not on the unthinkingness—of many caring actions.

This is a tricky issue. It is difficult to see how agents can act and yet not have their reasons for actions present in their minds. It is difficult to see, for example, how a brother who takes away a knife from the hand of his sister can act without having some relevant reason to motivate him, such as “Knives are dangerous,” or, “She could hurt herself,” or, “She is my baby sister.” Spontaneity, in short, does not preclude acting for reasons. The difficulty with Aristotle's condition might then be not so much that it is too demanding to require that reasons be present to agents when acting, but what sort of *terms* agents construct their reasons out of. For example, the objection might be that it is too demanding that agents use such terms as “just” or “benevolent” or even “virtuous” to articulate their reasons. This would be too demanding because not all caring, virtuous agents are philosophers, or have taken Ethics 101.

This is a perfectly plausible objection. It is fully correct in claiming that such requirements are too demanding, and perhaps more importantly, unrealistic. But Aristotle's second condition need not be interpreted in this way. There are arrays of terms that agents can, and do, use that do not require philosophical training and that reflect perfectly the virtuous reasons for action. Here are some examples given by Rosalind Hursthouse: “What are reasons ‘typical of’ a virtue? They will be the sorts of reasons for which someone with a particular virtue, V, will do a V act. So, thinking of the sorts of reasons a courageous agent might have for performing a courageous act, we can come up with such things as ‘I could probably save him if I climbed up there,’ ‘Someone had to volunteer,’ ‘One can't give in to tyrants,’ ‘It's worth the risk’ . . . With respect to the agent with the virtue of being a good friend, ‘He's my friend,’ ‘He's expecting me to,’ ‘I can't let him down.’ And for justice we get such things as ‘It's his,’ ‘I owe it to her,’ ‘She has the right to decide,’ ‘I promised.’ And so on and so forth” (1999, 128). The reasons Hursthouse offers for the virtue of being a good friend can also help us generate a large number of others as we move from caring within friendships to caring within other types of relationships, such as those between lovers, siblings, and parents-children. So a brother can say, “She's my sister.” A wife: “He's my husband.” A father: “They need me.” A lover, “He's my one and only.” Another lover, “She's my world.”

Alternatively, the difficulty with Aristotle's second condition might be that the condition is taken to require of agents that they *deliberate* prior to their actions, and *this* surely is in tension with spontaneity. But this difficulty arises only if we adopt an uncharitable interpretation of Aristotle. For we know, and so did Aristotle, that not every action on the part of the virtuous person requires deliberation. Deliberation is a time-consuming process that requires the agent to weigh reasons for and against one or more courses of action. And there are numerous situations in which agents simply do not have the luxury of time that

deliberation requires. Furthermore, not all actions require deliberation for the obvious reason that on many occasions what ought to be done is perfectly clear. In caring relationships, moreover, a virtuous agent would not need to deliberate every time he acts in a caring manner toward his cared-for. The agent need not, prior to assisting her friend in correcting the latter's architecture plans, deliberate about whether she should do so or not, whether *morally* she may help her friend. If her friend is *good*, and if her friend's projects are good (and do not, say, include designing propaganda buildings for some fascist regime), there is no need for the virtuous agent to scrutinize her actions toward that friend on every occasion. Similar reasoning applies to all other caring relationships.

It is the third condition, namely, that the agent act from a "firm and unchanging state," that will allow us to successfully complete the discussion of the harmony of emotion and reason. The firm and unchanging state of which Aristotle speaks is, roughly, the agent's character. A virtuous agent is *reliable*: because of her moral education, training, and upbringing, she can be relied upon to do what is virtuous. Part of what this helps us see is that the reliability in question is not just that of action and thought, but also that of emotional reaction and motivation. For an essential part of the virtuous agent's moral training is that of her emotions, and so when she acts from a stable state she not only does the right thing but she also has the right emotional reaction and motivation (of course, all this assumes that the agent is not acting out of character or is being coerced, etc.). Thus, we can now put the point of this discussion about caring action, emotion, and reason as follows: caring, virtuous action is typically emotive. Its emotiveness goes hand-in-hand with the agent's knowledge that her actions are virtuous and with the agent's acting for virtuous reasons. Indeed, caring action that is *virtuous* is so precisely because of the presence of the correct rational and emotional response. VE accommodates CE in this respect with a vengeance.

The discussion thus far has been on the compatibility in VE of the emotiveness of caring action with reason. It has not yet addressed the different issue—with which Davion's worry is mainly concerned—of whether the caring relationship *itself* is moral or not. The former issue is about acts *within* caring relationships; the latter is about the ethical standing of the relationships themselves. I turn to the latter issue next.

## B. CARING RELATIONSHIPS, REASON, AND DAVION'S CRITICISM

I will begin addressing the issue of the moral desirability of intimate relationships by looking at some remarks Aristotle gave on friendship; these offer a good segue into my account.

Aristotle claims that the virtuous person's friend is another self: "The excellent person is related to his friend in the same way he is related to himself, since a friend is another himself. Therefore, just as his own being is choiceworthy for

him, his friend's being is choiceworthy for him in the same or a similar way" (1985, 1170b6–7). In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle states, "For friendship seems something stable, and this alone is stable. For a formed decision is stable, and where we do not act quickly or easily, we get the decision right. There is no stable friendship without confidence, but confidence needs time. One must then make trial. . . . Nor is a friend made except through time . . ." (1984a, 1237b10–17). Though Aristotle does not explicitly speak of choosing our friends, his remarks indicate that there is a choice involved in friendships, a choice to the effect that we choose our friends given certain standards, such as having a morally desirable character (his remarks commit him to choosing our friends because without the notion of choice, his points about building confidence and making trial would not be plausible: Why test the character of our potential friends if we do not have the option to choose not to be their friends?). The choice need not be about *initiating* friendships, though this is true in many cases, but is about opting to continue or to quit them. Furthermore, the choice takes time and needs to be tested until a certain amount of confidence and trust is established. In addition, the friend, who is "another self," will share "a sense of our commitments and ends, and a sense of what we take to be ultimately 'good and pleasant' in living" (Sherman 1989, 131).

It is important to note that the notion of choice is important not just for its own sake, but for what it indicates, namely, that with choice comes rational deliberation, and this implies that we can use reason to evaluate and regulate friendships (indeed, the notion of choice as such provides a poor basis for intimate relationships that do not involve much choice for their parties in initiating the relationships, such as siblings, and children in parental ones). Reason, then, plays a crucial role in our choice of friends. In choosing X for a friend, I need to make sure that he has a character compatible with mine, that his goals and activities are morally in the clear, and that I can even share them and be willing to (indirectly, at least) support them. Such a choice, of course, requires the time needed to evaluate my friend's character, actions, and goals. With time, my choice of X as a friend is either cemented or shaken. If the former, then, in caring for him, I need not always deliberate about whether my action is right. In caring for X by, say, helping him to achieve a certain goal, I need not think whether doing so is ethically correct, for this has already been established. He would not have been my friend if his goals were deemed unworthy. We have to remember that friendships contain a good amount of trust between the friends. If I come to know that my friend is a morally decent person, and given my intimate knowledge of his character and his life (he is, after all, my friend), then I can trust that his goals are morally in the clear, especially in those cases when he adopts new goals.<sup>20</sup>

This account need not deny the possibility that a friend's character changes. If this were to occur, we use reason to re-evaluate not only our actions toward him, but the relationship itself. Aristotle recognizes that friends sometimes

change (1985, 1165b12–36), and if a friend changes to the point where he is no longer the same person, the grounds of the friendship dissolve.<sup>21</sup> The point is that reason plays a crucial regulative role: it assesses the goals and the general character of a friend, and in doing so, it offers a generally reliable mechanism with which we can check that the friendship is morally in the clear.

The above account applies as well to married couples and lovers, and to other relations that do not involve as much choice in initiating the relationship, such as child-parent ones, but that also essentially involve caring. The regulative role of reason would allow the one-caring, be it the offspring or the parent, to decide whether to continue to be in such a relationship and so to continue to be caring or not. And surely this is a result that ought to be welcome. For insofar as CE has been criticized on the grounds that it does not leave room for a mechanism by which the caring relation is evaluated as good or not, such an account of the role of reason would, in principle, supply such a mechanism. Furthermore, we can here see a role, though a limited one, for choice: if the emphasis is placed not so much on the choice to *enter* a relationship but on the ability to leave it, or at least to withhold care, then the one-caring would have some choice in the decision to minimize care, withhold it altogether, or even suspend the relationship entirely.

But one might find the idea that a parent or a child can opt to leave a parent-child relationship to be highly unrealistic or implausible. It might be thought unrealistic not because it is sometimes difficult to leave such a relationship due to factors specific to the case, but because, in addition to social pressures, few parents or children can just simply decide to leave such a relationship, even after much deliberation. For aside from the rare case in which the child or parent is thoroughly evil, children and parents find themselves to be, for good or ill, emotionally attached to their parents and children, respectively, in ways that spouses—perhaps—do not. Furthermore, opting to leave such relationships might be thought implausible because children-parent relationships have special obligations. Even if my mother, say, is self-centered and rarely shows concern for me, it is still my obligation to tend to and care for her.

The above reflections are plausible. However, we must keep in mind that the main idea in the above account is giving a regulative role for reason in intimate relationships. In those cases of parent-child relationships in which one (or both) of the parties shows signs of moral corruption, and if opting to leave is an implausible solution, then reason will have to play a more direct role, much like it would have to in cases of friendship that exhibit signs of going awry. Reason would have to play a role in how best to care for the other party in the relationship in order to make sure, for example, that the moral integrity of the one-caring is not compromised, or that the one-caring does not open himself up to corruption. So a son might decide to do the minimum required in terms of his duties to his father but maintain his emotional distance from him as much

as possible. And a mother might lie to her son about how much money she has so that he won't forcefully take it and spend it on alcohol and gambling, even though she continues to perform her household activities, including those that tend to her son's domestic life (for example, his laundry).

To summarize, VE requires that caring relationships be subjected to a regulative role of reason to ensure their moral desirability. VE's emphasis on moral wisdom and on the virtues supplies us with an in-principle mechanism with which to morally scrutinize such intimate relationships. This, moreover, should be a welcome result given the need to supply care with a method of self-evaluation. I should, moreover, emphasize that this account is not a temporal one; that is, it is not an account that states that *first* reason must evaluate a potential friendship or relationship, and *then* the virtuous person can rest assured that her caring actions are morally okay. This would be implausible because evaluating relationships is not done in this way, since the evaluation typically goes temporally hand in hand with the development of the relationship. Rather, my account is a conceptual one: it makes room for the role of reason in the evaluation of relationships by giving reason a regulative role to play.

The account of the regulative role of reason should supply us with an adequate way of accommodating Davion's criticism of Noddings's ethics of care, namely, that one can care for someone who is evil and so open oneself to moral corruption. We can put this point in terms of integrity, the concept that Davion herself uses. A virtuous person is one who is concerned with her character and her life: she is someone who cares that she maintains an ethical character and that her dealings with others are moral. Put in this way, no person can be virtuous and yet lack moral integrity. To think otherwise is to think of someone as having what Aristotle calls "natural virtue," of someone who acts rightly, desires to do so, yet does and is so accidentally, so to speak. To be virtuous one must subject one's conduct and desires to the scrutiny, and shaping, of reason. And so, if a virtuous person finds herself in a relationship such that the one-cared for is turning evil (whether this is due to malicious reasons or to bad luck, such as oppression, is not the issue here), and if she fails to reverse or at least prevent such a change from being completed, then her concern for her character would imply severing such a relationship.

We can even go a bit further. Davion recognizes the role of integrity in her account as one of necessity but not sufficiency (1993, 179). In other words, while integrity is necessary to maintain a morally good relationship, it is not sufficient, because two evil people can have integrity (so long as their actions, say, cohere with their principles) and so maintain a strong relationship. But VE can avoid this possibility. For under VE, integrity comes after certain conditions have been met. Simply put, a virtuous person is someone who is *virtuous* (excuse the banality). Her integrity will, *ipso facto*, be that of a person who is good, not evil. So the sufficiency condition is met.

### C. CARD'S CRITICISM, PARTIALITY, AND UNIVERSALIZABILITY

Card's objection to CE is that it does not give us a way to ground our obligations to non-intimate others, especially strangers, who, as far as the one-caring is concerned, comprise the bulk of humanity. However, once CE is incorporated within VE, Card's worry would be adequately addressed: for a virtuous person has the virtue of justice, and justice is the primary virtue in which our obligations to strangers (and to a good extent intimate others as well) are grounded. Thus, while VE is able to account for our caring relations to others, it does not neglect justice.<sup>22</sup> It is, furthermore, within a discussion of justice that the issue of partiality arises in full force, for it is here that we see the need to find a way to justifiably adjudicate between the claims of partiality and impartiality.

CE advocates usually construe the demand of impartiality as the claim that all persons should be treated on equal footing and that displaying favoritism in one's moral actions is morally prohibited. They then claim that such a demand is not plausible when it comes to our family members and friends. The idea is that it is not only morally permissible but also praiseworthy that we attend to our cared-fors, and that in (at least some) cases of *conflict* between partiality and the demands of impartiality, being partial is ethically acceptable, if not even laudable. Partiality, then, is not a limit on morality, but part and parcel of it. Still, since, as we have seen, we cannot endorse *all* forms of partiality and partial behavior, and since partiality and impartiality conflict, we need to plausibly situate the former within an overall moral theory.<sup>23</sup> The issue, then, is this: Can VE supply us with a principled way to justify those cases of partiality that one could, indeed, reasonably consider justified? If VE can do this, then, given its emphasis on the virtue of justice, VE can offer us one theoretical framework within which our treatment of strangers and intimate others is balanced in a morally justified way. And in doing this, it can both incorporate CE and improve on it, in, respectively, inasmuch as CE has emphasized the importance of partiality, and has proven to be deficient in treating the claims of strangers upon the moral agent convincingly. The answer to this issue is clear and straightforward: VE includes, among others, the virtues of practical wisdom, of justice, and, on my proposal, of care. Because of this, it has an in-principle way of distinguishing between justified and unjustified partiality, and of distinguishing between justified and unjustified claims of strangers on the agent. I will illustrate this claim in what follows.

First, we should not exaggerate the conflict between partiality and impartiality. For one thing, it is not usual that our attention to our loved ones conflicts with the demands of impartiality, because the moral domains of our dealings with intimates and with strangers are usually separate from each other.<sup>24</sup> It is not typically the case that one is conflicted between the demands of friends and of strangers. Furthermore, even given a duty of general benevolence toward



people, this is not usually understood as the claim that we ought to divide our attention to everyone equally. There is a good reason for this (in addition to the fact that it is humanly impossible to do so): in order for individuals to lead happy and rich lives, they need to be able to pursue their own goals, activities, and interests, and this ability would be thwarted were individuals to divide their time and energy equally with others. And VE recognizes this: in its emphasis on flourishing, VE gives ample room to the above idea, and insofar as it insists on friendship as an essential factor that goes into flourishing, it also recognizes the importance of having friends and family relationships, and the importance of the attention such relationships require.

But cases of conflict between the demands of friendship and those of others do arise, and it is important to see whether VE would adequately deal with such types of cases. First, there are *resolvable* cases of conflict. These are exemplified by cases such as (1) breaking a promise to meet someone for lunch so as to attend to a friend who has just had a crisis; (2) being involved in an accident such that both the agent's spouse and a stranger require immediate medical attention but the agent can attend to only one; (3) being involved in an accident along the lines of (2) but such that the spouse is not in need of immediate medical attention; and (4) considering bribing a school official in order to secure a place for one's child in the school.<sup>25</sup> If the idea behind CE's insistence on partiality is that in cases (1) and (2) the agent should attend to his near and dear, then no (sane) philosopher would wish to argue against such a conclusion, and no (sophisticated) moral theory would, since we recognize that loved ones have special claims upon us. VE is no exception, for it recognizes that friends, spouses, and children have special claims.

In case (2) for instance (and supposing I were the agent), given my love for my spouse, his importance to my life and to my well-being, I simply cannot be morally faulted if I help him. That VE accommodates this type of case needs, I take it, no explanation.

Consider briefly case (3): Should I attend to my spouse, knowing that the other person is in need of immediate assistance? While the agent would surely feel a strong desire to be with his loved one, he would not, if he is virtuous, act on this desire (he might rush to his spouse and say something to the effect that he will be with him soon). He would give the necessary help to the stranger, because a virtuous person is not blind to the immediate needs and suffering of others. This is the right conclusion to reach because the stranger's needs are more urgent. Such conflict cases indicate that it is not always morally correct to act on one's desires to help and care for a loved one. Sometimes strangers have immediate needs that one is in a position to attend to and that one should attend to, even if this involves discomfort to the loved one.

In case 4, bribing a school official, the agent obviously violates just procedures. Given that the agent is being partial toward his child, would it be correct

to say that his action is morally permissible? Surely not: even if the action is done out of care for the child, if Card's criticism that we need justice to ground our obligations to those we are not in caring relations with has any plausibility to it (and it has), then to argue that the agent's action in this case is permissible is to reject, in effect, the claims that justice has on us. Furthermore, a virtuous person would surely not act in this way, for she has the virtue of justice, a virtue that covers treating others fairly and according them their dues.<sup>26</sup>

Now it is important to keep in mind that the virtuous person is just, since much of this discussion would be put in perspective. For an essential part of the story of what it means to be virtuous is that one has the virtues and that one has practical wisdom that allows the agent to decide on the correct exercise of the virtues given the context. It should then be realized that not every case of partial action is going to be morally permissible on VE. Whether it is will depend, partly, on whether it impermissibly violates the dictates of justice. And I am not here begging the question against proponents of CE, because if they claim that partial actions are morally permissible simply *because* they are partial, then they will be faced—again—with the objection that this neglects the important concept of justice. There is, therefore, the need for a way to reconcile the two, and VE can, in principle, do this.<sup>27</sup>

To summarize the points about impartiality, I have argued that, typically, conflicts between the claims of strangers and those of cared-for are rare. In cases in which there are conflicts, one would have to consider the factors involved in each case. Sometimes the claims of strangers are overridden when those near and dear to us require immediate attention. Sometimes the claims of strangers override those who are near and dear to us because the former's are pressing and humanly important, while the latter's can withstand delay of attention. When both are equally pressing and one can attend to only one, then the claims of loved ones take priority. And we morally cannot violate just procedures simply because this would help the ones that we love. While there are no neat formulas here, the point is that care considerations cannot simply trump other ones, even if we are in situations in which we are strongly desirous of attending to the cared-for. While care comprises an essential dimension of our ethical lives, strangers, acquaintances, colleagues, and others do have claims upon us, and these need to be balanced.

Second, we get to cases of irresolvable conflicts (the cases I have mentioned so far contain dilemmas, but they all seem to be resolvable). Consider the case—and others can be generated by following its basic recipe—in which the agent is the captain of a ship, the ship is sinking, and the only way to save the ship is for the agent to either throw out her spouse or the two other passengers (because the spouse weighs as much as the other two, and a certain amount of weight needs to be jettisoned). The agent, say, cannot commit suicide in this case because she is the only one who knows how to steer the ship to safety. In

this case, the agent should, *as captain*, save the two other passengers, but should, *as wife*, save her spouse.<sup>28</sup> Either action is wrong from some point of view. Can VE still offer us an in-principle way of addressing such cases? And wouldn't CE have a clear answer to it and thus the upper hand?

First, while it might be true to claim that CE has a clear answer to this, it does not follow that its answer is correct, for the reason that the case is a dilemma. So it does not follow that we have a case in which VE cannot accommodate the claims of CE. For consider what CE is seen to be telling us: on the assumption that CE would indeed recommend that the agent save her spouse (and it is an *assumption*, because its claim need not command general assent from CE advocates), CE would give a controversial answer. Part of the case is that the agent is the *captain* of the ship, and captains have particular duties. The answer that the agent should save her spouse cannot, then, be uncontroversially the correct answer, and so CE does not obviously have the upper hand here.

Part of the difficulty has to do with the very idea of irresolvable conflicts, since the existence of these has been denied by quite a few philosophers. What is often involved in such denials is the attempt to resolve each case by stating what the agent ought to do and thus claiming that the case is not, after all, irresolvable. But that an answer can be given does not show that it is the right answer, but, rather, simply that, depending on one's theoretical commitments or intuitions, one can offer *an* answer. The points of this and the preceding paragraph are, of course, connected. An advocate of CE might offer an answer to the above case, but he will do so precisely because he is an advocate of CE, and this should indicate that the answer is controversial.

But what would VE tell us that the agent should do? I believe that cases such as that of the ship—and putting their suspicious fictitiousness aside—are irresolvable conflicts, and so I don't think that VE would—and should—claim that there is one correct answer to each.<sup>29</sup> Either option is permissible, but on either one, the agent is going to emerge deeply shaken; whatever she does, her life is marred because of the serious wrongdoing that she could not avoid. To insist, moreover, that there should be one answer is to go against the fact that our lives are sometimes faced with situations from which the agent—barring suicide—emerges with her life deeply and irrevocably marred.<sup>30</sup>

But we should keep in mind to what extent this discussion is relevant to the issue at hand. The issue is VE's ability to offer an in-principle method to justify partial and impartial actions when these are indeed justified, and surely the existence of irresolvable dilemmas does nothing to impugn the conclusion that VE is able to do this. The existence of such tragic cases *would* threaten this ability only on the assumptions that CE gives a clear and uncontroversial answer to the case and that VE's answer departs from CE's. But neither assumption is warranted. Some of the cases I mentioned earlier involve making decisions that leave the agent with unease and perhaps even with a good amount

of pain, such as case (2), but the answer to the cases were clear, and so they did not constitute irresolvable dilemmas. In *these* cases, we can see how VE can balance care/partiality and other requirements. But that VE refuses to say that there is one right answer to cases of irresolvable dilemmas is not a strike against it (indeed, it is a point in its favor), nor is it a point against its ability to accommodate CE's concerns.

There is, however, one aspect of the partiality debate that I have not yet considered. Sometimes this aspect is stated in terms of universalizability, that is, that some moral actions are done toward particular others in particular situations, and so they need not be universalizable.<sup>31</sup> In short, this aspect of the partiality debate is concerned with the rejection of universalizability as a way of justifying actions. Noddings, for example, argues that since universalizability is parasitic on the notion of sameness of situations, and since sameness requires abstracting from the concrete situation, then universalizability is not a desirable justificatory criterion, given the importance that the particularity of the situation has for caring (1984, 84–85). As far as VE and CE are concerned, the issue that emerges is this: VE is very much hospitable to universalizability, while CE seems not to be. If so, we would have on our hands one crucial aspect of partiality on which VE and CE part company. But then VE would not be able to successfully incorporate CE.

First, consider how VE, and despite its emphasis on the particular, is hospitable to universalizability. There are reasons why a virtuous agent would act in the way she does in a given situation, and these reasons might be repeatable: if we agree that in such-and-such a situation doing A is wrong because of reasons X, Y, and Z, then in any situation similar to the one at hand it would be wrong to do A for these very same reasons. If the situation is different, then the reasons might be defeasible, such that other reasons would have to play a role. But this, again, is a universalizable case. Universalizability, in short, is not generality, and that is why it is compatible with particularity.

Next, consider Noddings's argument against universalizability. Briefly, it relies on an exaggerated sense of "sameness." If it means "identical in every respect," then Noddings is right, for no situation would be identical to another (they would at least differ in their temporal or spatial properties). But this is not the sense of "sameness" that is usually employed in such situations. The relevant sense is that of "moral similarity." What is crucial for universalizability is that the situations be sufficiently similar in the moral elements involved. In this sense, it is entirely possible that two situations be the same.<sup>32</sup> As George Sher (1987) has argued, surely in thinking contextually one cannot take *every* factor into account but must be selective. And this requires some amount of abstraction. Moreover, it is surely possible that those factors salient in some situation might also be the ones salient in another, and that if the agent's action in the first situation is permissible, then the action of another in a similar situation would also be permissible.

Granted, I have discussed only Noddings's argument against universalizability, and this is not enough to show that CE cannot employ other arguments. But given the importance of universalizability for consistency in action, and given that it is perfectly compatible with particularity, there seems to be no reason why CE should be set against it. And if so, then one possible worry about VE's success in incorporating CE is removed.

I have so far argued that (1) by construing care as a virtue and incorporating it within the theoretical structure of VE we are able to preserve the desiderata of CE, while also (2) explaining how caring need not clash with the requirements of impartiality and universalizability. I have argued that VE preserves and emphasizes the social embeddedness of human beings, that it allocates a central role to friendships and family relationships, and that it gives the emotional component of caring actions the importance it deserves. I have also argued that VE is able to emphasize the importance of partiality in our moral lives so long as partial actions do not conflict with other moral demands, such as justice, and that this answer is what ought to be expected from a theory that calls itself "moral." What now needs to be explicitly addressed is whether VE has the ability to give care an important status as a virtue, and what good reasons can be offered to support this ranking.

### III. CARE AS A PRIMARY VIRTUE

One might wonder whether there are independent reasons for thinking that care is a virtue; independent, that is, from those reasons that I have so far adduced, namely, that construing care as a virtue allows us to preserve what is important about CE while avoiding its problems. This issue becomes more pressing when we keep in mind that Noddings denies that care is a virtue, her reason being that if we claim that care or any other trait traditionally dubbed "virtue" is a virtue, then we somehow get saddled with paying too much attention to our own characters rather than displaying these traits in concrete relationships with others (1984, 96–97). She instead gives care the status of a primary ethical *concept*, the concept which grounds our moral thinking, behavior, and emotion. Her two reasons for doing so seem to be that caring relationships are ethically basic, and in conjunction with the first reason, that caring is innate to human beings (3, 5, 83). Noddings wants to carve out for caring an important and crucial place in moral discourse. If VE cannot offer care an important role to play in ethical life, then my thesis that VE can successfully incorporate CE becomes utterly implausible, since CE's main claim is that caring is an essential aspect of morality. VE cannot, then, treat care as simply *one* virtue among the others, but must give it an elevated status if it is to treat CE with the respect the latter deserves. So are there considerations that support the claim that care is indeed a virtue? And are there ones that support the claim that care is a primary and important virtue?

Yes there are, and the second type of consideration I will offer for the idea that care is a virtue also implies that it is primary one, and that is why I chose to discuss the two issues of care being a virtue *and* of it being a primary one in one section (I should note that my remarks on this score will be brief and programmatic, due to space limitations). To show X as a virtue requires two crucial steps: 1) that it fits the definition of virtue, and 2) that it satisfies the criterion for a trait being a virtue. These two steps are programmatic and somewhat sketchy, but they do give some important and needed support to the claim that care is a virtue.

So, consider as a start Aristotle's definition of "virtue," namely, that it is a state involving choice and lying in a mean, with the mean relative to the individual (1985, 1107a1–4). There is no difficulty in thinking of care as an actual state that would dispose the agent to act given the right circumstances. It also involves choice: barring unusual circumstances, the agent is not coerced to care for others; it is ultimately up to the agent to decide whether to withhold or offer care on a particular occasion. Most importantly, caring can admit of a mean: caring can be done "at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end and in the right way" (1985, 1106b20–23). Exhibiting care can then be done wrongly (defectively, viciously): one can care for the wrong person (for example, a morally corrupt one); one can exhibit care at a wrong time (for example, attending to X whereas it is Y, a stranger, which needs attention at that time); one can exhibit care about the wrong thing (for example, supporting a project that should not be supported); one can care for the wrong reasons (for example, I give you chocolate because I want you to stop crying), and in the wrong way (for example, I calm your fears by lying to you).

Or, to look at one more definition of "virtue," consider the contemporary definition offered by Linda Zagzebski: "a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end" (1996, 137). Putting details aside, it is no violation of our understanding of caring to think of it as a deep trait of a person; or as enduring (a caring person is one who is liable to stay a caring one, everything else being equal); or as acquired: while we might have the capacity to care, caring *properly* is a trait acquired by training and good upbringing. Caring is also an *excellence* because, simply, it is a *good* trait to have. Furthermore, a caring person would be characteristically motivated to care for others (see section I), and would typically, in particular caring actions, desire to produce a certain end: to help him out, to feed her, to take him out for a stroll in the park, to make her feel better, etc. Lastly, the caring, virtuous person is not a stumbler; with the world fortunately cooperating, he would in general be successful in attaining his caring ends.

Consider next the second type of consideration: caring satisfies the *criterion* for being a virtue, namely, a trait one needs to flourish as a human being. It is,

for example, an obvious point to make that without proper care human beings cannot generally grow up to lead mentally and emotionally healthy lives. This indicates strongly that proper care is generally necessary if one is to flourish. Furthermore, if intimate relationships are essentially characterized by caring, and if flourishing is constituted by intimate relationships (among other things), then the necessity of caring to a flourishing life stares us obviously in the face. Without giving and receiving care, the sociality and the rationality (mental health) of the agent is seriously endangered, and this strikes at the heart of the agent's flourishing *qua* human being (and it is from such facts that the plausibility of Noddings's claims about the importance of caring relationships is derived).<sup>33</sup>

For this to imply that caring is a primary virtue, consider the suggestion that a glance at Aristotle's list of virtues yields the plausible idea that not all the virtues on the list deserve equal ranking. The virtue of wittiness, for example, cannot plausibly be placed on equal footing with that of truthfulness as far as the importance of these virtues for social life and for the agent's flourishing are concerned. Friendliness, to give another example, might be more important than wittiness, though it might not be more so than courage, and would certainly not be more so than justice. The point is that we need to be able to offer some sort of ranking of the virtues in terms of their importance. The ranking need not be precise and exact, and it need not be set in stone, either: we might want to leave the possibility open for cases in which, say, exercising wittiness is more important than being just, the difficulty of imagining such circumstances notwithstanding. Moreover, the ranking need not be rigid not just because of *situations* in which one generally less important virtue takes precedence over another, generally more important one. We should also keep in mind that sometimes a less generally important virtue might take precedence over a generally more important one in a person's *life* (as when people often need the virtue of tactfulness more so than honesty during times of oppression).

The above point tells us that VE is in principle perfectly hospitable to the idea that some virtues are more important than others. And this entails that, if care is a virtue, we are at liberty to give it a (rough) ranking among the virtues, provided we offer reasons to justify its assigned ranking. And the reasons for giving care a high ranking among the virtues are the ones offered above in the second type of considerations as to why care is a virtue, namely, that it is a trait one generally cannot do without to flourish *qua* human being. Thus not only is it plausible to construe care as a virtue, but it is plausible to think of it as a primary one. Alongside justice, honesty, and proper pride, care would take its deserved place as an essential virtue needed for living well.

## IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have argued that CE should be incorporated within VE. This approach to the status of CE as a moral theory, in addition to its plausibility, avoids the shortcomings of other accounts that have been given regarding the relationship between care and justice reasoning. I would like to offer a brief demonstration of this advantage in this section and then conclude by briefly discussing one objection. One account, favored by Gilligan (1987), has it that these types of reasoning cannot be seen simultaneously in a given situation; they are like the duck-rabbit gestalt switch: one sees the situation in terms of either care or justice. But this is surely false. Not only is it conceptually possible to see one and the same situation in both terms, it is also psychologically possible.<sup>34</sup> I can see attending to my spouse as a matter of care while also seeing that the injured stranger has no demand upon me to attend to him instead, given that both are injured and I can attend to only one. Also, while I can see that care for my child to attend school makes me entertain ideas of possible bribery, I can see that doing so would violate just procedures. A virtuous person would not see each of these situations as being simply one of justice or care, but would see both elements and their moral weights.

Another approach to the connections between care and justice reasoning is that each has its own separate domain of application.<sup>35</sup> While this approach is tempting, especially in light of my remarks that partiality and impartiality typically do not conflict, it should be resisted because it is false that friendship and family relations are domains in which the notions of fairness, justice, and duties do not arise.<sup>36</sup> As some have argued, friends have duties to each other, and justice within the family is a moral necessity.<sup>37</sup> And although I have not discussed this issue in my paper, VE can do justice to it. A virtuous person would be fair to her children, for example, and would not treat them with favoritism (not unless the case is special, for example, one of the children is evil, as Damien is in *The Omen*). Also, while I might not be in the mood to help my friend move his furniture to a new house, I would still do so because he is my friend and has special claims upon me. I am, of course, not claiming that considerations of justice are all that enter into intimate relationships. After all, if the relationship between spouses is reduced to talk of justice, then this would be a sign of real trouble between them. My claim is simply that such considerations are necessary to intimate relationships.

Finally, another approach is to simply claim that CE does not in any important way necessitate a re-visioning of traditional moral theory.<sup>38</sup> Thus, one can argue that no justice tradition has ever asked us not to take into account the moral complexity of the situation, that no such tradition has ever asked us to neglect the domain of the family and of friends, and that no such tradition has ever required us to act as calculating robots, with no emotive dimension to



our actions. While I agree with this general reasoning, my worry is that some traditions have not given theoretical emphasis to CE's concerns, and I have tried to argue that VE does this in a unified moral framework. For example, while consequentialists might argue that caring relationships are conducive to over-all better states of affairs, the theoretical priority is still given to the latter. Thus, caring actions would have to be considered as instrumentally good. VE, however, gives theoretical priority, via its emphasis on flourishing, to intimate and caring relationships.<sup>39</sup>

The fact that VE is superior to these alternatives should not be surprising. VE is a powerful theory that contains a rich array of virtue and vice terms. We must remember that by incorporating CE within VE we do not just supply CE with wisdom as a regulative mechanism to scrutinize caring relationships, nor do we just allow caring actions, in all their emotiveness, to be in harmony with virtuous reasons for action, nor do we just locate a theory that can give due importance to the role that caring plays in a flourishing life; we also imbed care, as a virtue, among a host of other virtues (and they need not be just those on Aristotle's list). With a suitable account of the unity of virtues, caring becomes part of a virtuous character that is courageous, kind, honest, sensitive, fair, temperate, friendly, proud, modest, self-respectful, and dignified. With such richness and complexity, one wonders why so much ink has been spilled over the status of care in moral theory.

Now to one important objection. It might be thought that the account I offer is too schematic and ends up solving problems by hand-waving them away: I do not go into the nitty gritty of how caring actions can be virtuous, and regarding Davion's worry, simply saying that practical reason can regulate relationships won't do much, since practical reason can be used for good or ill. And calling it "wisdom" instead of "reason" would indeed be hand-waving the problem away.

This objection is in a sense plausible. I have indeed not gone into the nitty gritty of caring, virtuous action, but that is because my project is of a different sort: it is to locate a theoretical framework within which CE can be appropriately housed, so to speak. One important claim of VE is that what counts as a virtuous action cannot be read off simply from a moral principle, and the response to it depends on the moral wisdom of the virtuous agent. In this sense, any discussion of how virtuous action operates in specific cases would require a very different discussion from mine. It would require a detailed discussion of cases and what would count as virtuous action in these cases. Related to this point, it should be seen that calling practical reason "wisdom" is not hand-waving away a problem. For it makes an important theoretical difference whether an agent has practical wisdom or has cleverness, which is what the vicious agent, for example, has at best, according to Aristotle. It is true that saying that one has wisdom while the other has merely cleverness does not give us details about how each would

act in particular situations, but it does say quite a bit, namely, what the values, commitments, moral outlook, and character of each are, and how each would emotionally react to moral situations. And these are substantive and meaty claims, indeed. To be sure, wisdom and virtue cannot *ensure* that misfortunes, accidental wrongdoing, and bad relationships would not occur. But then again, given the way life works, nothing human can.

## NOTES

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1. To avoid confusion, the following three issues are ones that my paper does not address: (1) whether women reason along care lines while men reason along justice lines (on this, see Gilligan 1982 and parts I and II of Larrabee 1993); (2) the possibility that VE could consistently include CE, but that philosophers who write on VE nevertheless continue not to address issues of specific concern to women (on this, see Calhoun 1988); (3) whether incorporating CE within VE would meet the desiderata for ethics that some feminists have argued for (see, for example, Jaggar 1991).

2. The literature on VE is by now quite large, but a few noteworthy works are Slotte 1992; Crisp 1996; Statman 1997; and Hursthouse 1999.

3. I do not address accounts of care found in other writers' views since these are more about conflict resolution (see, for example, Ruddick 1989), or use a notion of care broader in scope (applied to public policy issues) than the one I am interested in (see, for example, Tronto 1993).

4. I discuss in Section III VE's ability to do justice to CE's crucial claim that care is important to an ethical life.

5. By "persons" I do not exclude babies and children, but rather animals, plants, and inanimate objects. Noddings's reason for insisting on people as being the recipients of care is her requirement of completion and acknowledgement of caring by the cared-for. Such completion cannot be attained by animals, plants, and things. But the discussion is more complex, because Noddings allows for some completion in some animals (1984, chap. 7).

6. Card's and Davion's criticisms can be made vivid when put in the context of Noddings's notorious discussion of Ms. A, a woman who opts to fight on the side of her racist family rather than on the side of Jim, a black man who "spoke eloquently of the prevailing injustice and inhumanity against blacks" (1984, 109–11). Ms. A would fight on the side of her racist relatives, but would not point her gun at Jim. The reason is that

in Noddings's view, caring for her relatives constitutes the supreme moral imperative, given that caring is the only absolute moral value that Noddings accepts. But in not fighting on Jim's side, Ms. A not only neglects considerations of justice, but is also willing to violate her integrity, given that she believes that Jim is correct in his demands.

7. Michael Slote attempts to build a form of VE entirely on the concept of care, and he specifically tries to argue that his form of care-based VE can handle the difficulties posed by justice. I believe that his attempt fails because Slote ends up packing so much into the concept of care that it loses its distinctive force. See Slote 1998a and 1998b.

8. Aristotle recognizes something similar to this in his discussion of concord between friends (1985, 1167a20–30). Aristotle's point is that friendship involves concord because friends often have shared goals and act together to support these goals.

9. The case was suggested to me by Marianne Janack.

10. Some, however, might find this to be controversial. Claudia Card, for example, wondered (in personal communication) whether the friend has asked for advice to begin with. If the friend has not, then interfering in this way *would be* controversial. While I am sympathetic to this claim, it does not seem to me to rest on a picture of *friendship*; it seems to rest more on a picture of two people who are colleagues or acquaintances. In these types of relationships, interfering without being asked would be controversial.

11. On this and the next three features on acting from care, see Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1984; Benhabib 1987; Friedman 1987 and 1995; Blum 1993.

12. Blum argues that acting out of altruistic emotions and friendship need not utilize principles but also need not be unthinking (1980, chap. 4).

13. One should also not equate care with moods, which usually lead to impulsiveness. It is perfectly possible for one not to be in the mood to, say, help a friend, yet nevertheless help her out of care. Moods are not the same as altruistic emotions such as caring. See Blum (1980, chap. 2).

14. This suggestion has not gone unnoticed in the literature. Flanagan and Jackson suggest that "there is every reason to think that Gilligan's program would benefit from moving in a more virtue-theoretical direction, insofar as the conception of moral agency she describes is potentially so much thicker than Kohlberg's, embedded as it is in self-conception and social context" (1993, 74). In his remark that friendship is a virtue or "involves a virtue," Aristotle might be taken to make such a suggestion. But Aristotle, of course, did not frame the issues in contemporary terms. Swanton argues that caring must be construed in a thick way so that it can plausibly be construed as a virtue: "In [the agent's] (fully virtuous) caring, [the agent] must not display an unhealthy need for the cared-for to be dependent on her, . . . not display feelings of resentment or martyrdom, and so on" (1997, 501). I should add that a thin account of a virtue simply identifies the sphere of the virtue, whereas a thick account spells out what it is to be well-disposed with respect to that sphere (Nussbaum 1988). Tong (1998) makes the suggestion that CE is a "species" of VE, and seems to defend it on the basis that both approaches give the emotions a central role. But Tong's view is not elaborated, and its concerns are mainly fleshed out along gender and historical lines. Putman (1991) also argues for the thesis that putting caring in the context of VE allows us to distinguish between good and bad caring relationships. The thrust of his paper is aimed at argu-

ing that care is, generally, a virtue, but his paper lacks a good discussion of the roles of emotion and reason in caring action. Blum claims that not all of the concerns of care ethics can be “encompassed within what currently goes by the name of ‘virtue theory’” (1993, 58). But Blum does not explain this claim nor does he give examples, and without these it is difficult to assess it given that VE has been cashed out differently by different philosophers. (I should add that my brief criticisms of Tong’s, Putman’s, and Blum’s views are meant to help the reader approach these with a critical eye, rather than to just simply assert the superiority of my approach to theirs.)

15. Aristotle claimed that without *filia* we cannot exercise many of the virtues, and that we need friends and loved ones to guard and protect our prosperity, and to turn to in times of grief (1985, 1155a5–12). On the importance of sociality, see also Hursthouse (1986 and 1999, part III).

16. One worry is that the claims of traditional moral theories, such as Kantian ethics and utilitarianism, have been caricatured. Also, no one can deny that by now these two theories are sophisticated enough to handle the requirements of CE (for example, the latter theory might allow for—even insist on—the idea that human beings enter in caring relationships since this would best promote over-all desirable states of affairs). If so, then making it seem as if VE is the only theory that can accommodate CE would be implausible. While I share the worry that Kantian and consequentialist claims have often been caricatured, and while I do not wish to deny the possibility that these theories are able to accommodate the desiderata of CE, my claim is simply that VE can also do so, and to argue for this claim there is obviously no need to argue that the other theories fail in this respect. However, having said this much, there is also the issue of theoretical priority: Do Kantian ethics and consequentialism give theoretical priority to the desiderata of CE or do they think of them as instrumental to maintaining what these theories consider to be prior? I will leave this question open, arguing only that VE does give the claims of CE theoretical priority.

17. I cannot defend this claim here, given space limitations. But see Hursthouse (1999, part III), for an excellent and detailed defense.

18. See especially Hursthouse (1999, chaps. 4 and 5).

19. We should not confuse the claim that “X does A because it is just” with the claim that “X’s intention in acting justly is to make sure that she is a just person.” While it is important that X be concerned with her character, the latter claim smacks of undue attention to the repercussions of one’s *specific* actions to one’s character, and it is very different from the former claim, which states that the reasons for X’s actions are the deserts of others, not X’s interests in how her action rebounds on her character. For a discussion of the closely related issue of the tension between the virtuous person’s concern for her virtue and her concern for others, see Annas (1993, 249–62).

20. For the sake of dispelling possible misunderstanding, my claim is neither that a friend does not nor should not deliberate about the goals of his friend. There are situations within friendship when deliberation is called for, and these are not confined to ones in which caring for a friend conflicts with another moral requirement. It might be that, for example, my friend undertakes a project that I think could be, for one reason or another, unsuitable for him, and so have to deliberate as to whether I will support him. However, I also do not want to make the weak claim that deliberation is always appro-

ropriate within friendship or the strong claim that it is always necessary. These extreme positions, I believe, would make the conceptual claim that friends trust each other shaky, and would (causally) endanger the trust that friends do have for each other.

21. For similar arguments from a Kantian perspective regarding the regulative role of reason, see Baron 1995.

22. Of course, merely saying that virtuous people are just says nothing about what laws and institutions a society ought to have; this is a claim different from the one I advocate. Also my claim that justice to strangers is met under VE might seem cavalier, since Aristotle's remarks were about justice to members of one's *polis* (Annas 1993, 312–16). However, I believe, but cannot argue for it here, that there is nothing in Aristotle's account that would prevent extending Aristotle's remarks about justice to strangers.

23. The type of impartiality under discussion here is what is sometimes called "level 1" impartiality, which is at the level of day-to-day decisions regarding our actions. This is opposed to level 2 impartiality, which is a higher-order level concerned with which rules and principles to be adopted; see Baron 1991.

24. Blum argues that "impartiality is a moral requirement only in certain restricted sorts of situations: . . . In particular, friendship does not typically involve us in situations in which impartiality between the interests of our friends and those of others is a moral requirement" (1980, 46).

25. I borrow case (3) from Baron (1995, 126) and case (4) from Blum (1993, 55).

26. For Aristotle's views, see 1985, Book V. See also Aristotle's *Politics* (1984b). Aristotle's remarks about justice are scattered throughout this latter work, but a couple of important passages are 1282b15–1283a20 and 1332a8–1332a20.

27. I am not claiming that in these cases the agent *must* invoke a moral principle before acting; to claim this is to go against CE's emphasis on acting directly. Indeed, in the first three cases at least, the agent need not even deliberate about what to do, need not have one thought too many, in the words of Bernard Williams (1981, 18).

28. I borrow this case from McFall 1987.

29. One referee of this journal objected to the use of such highly fictitious examples on the grounds that they are not very common in life, and that many such situations can actually be resolved. I agree that in many actual cases that seem to be irresolvable dilemmas, they are not. However, I do not agree that there are no irresolvable dilemmas in our actual lives. Moreover, the point in giving such examples is not to say that they are common, but to highlight a conceptual issue, an issue which is important given that people *do* face irresolvable dilemmas.

30. On VE and irresolvable dilemmas, see Hursthouse (1999, chap. 3).

31. See Meyers 1987 and Jaggard 1995.

32. See Hospers 1961, specifically the section on rule utilitarianism, for an argument along these lines.

33. See MacIntyre (1999) for some good elaborations on these claims which also draw on much feminist literature.

34. I owe this point to Flanagan and Jackson: ". . . it is not impossible to see both the justice and care saliences in a moral problem and to integrate them in moral deliberation" (1993, 73).

35. Blum (1980 and 1993) advocates such a position.
36. One can also argue that people care about justice, and so care considerations enter into the justice-reasoning. However, I am a bit hesitant about this because the notion of care employed here does not have the emotive components (engrossment and displacement) which are part of the conception of care I am dealing with. See note 7.
37. See, for example, Stocker 1987 and Okin 1989.
38. Sher claims this in "Other Voices, Other Rooms?" (1987)
39. At the end of "Other Voices, Other Rooms?" (1987), Sher states: "The oppositions of concrete and abstract, personal and impersonal, duty and care are not recent empirical discoveries, but generic determinants of the moral problematic. We have always known that a proper theory must assign each its proper place. What we have not known, and what Gilligan's findings bring us little closer to knowing, is what those places are" (1987, 187–88). My paper is an attempt to supply such "proper places."

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