

Can the Ethics of Care Handle Violence?

Virginia Held

It may be thought that the ethics of care has developed important insights into the moral values involved in the caring practices of family, friendship, and personal caregiving, but that the ethics of care has little to offer in dealing with violence. The violence of crime, terrorism, war, and violence against women in any context may seem beyond the ethics of care. Skepticism is certainly in order if it is suggested that we can deal with violence simply by caring. Violence seems to call for the harsh arm of law and enforcement, not the soft touch of care. Elsewhere I have discussed how the ethics of care would recommend respect for international law and how it would thus approach issues of military intervention. I will concentrate here on how the ethics of care can contribute guidance in dealing with family violence and in confronting terrorism.

Keywords Care; Ethics of Care; Kantian Ethics; Law; Violence; Violence against Women; Terrorism; War

It may be thought that the ethics of care has developed important insights into the moral values involved in the caring practices of family, friendship, and personal caregiving—both the values that can be found in existing practices, and guidance on how these practices should be improved—but that the ethics of care has little to offer in dealing with violence. The violence of crime, terrorism, war, and violence against women in any context may seem beyond the ethics of care.

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ISSN 1749-6535 print/1749-6543 online/10/020115-15

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DOI: 10.1080/17496535.2010.484256

Skepticism is certainly in order if it is suggested that we can deal with violence simply by caring. Violence seems to call for the harsh arm of law and enforcement, not the soft touch of care. I will argue, nevertheless, that the ethics of care is a comprehensive morality that can offer guidance for problems of violence as it can for other problems.

In recent years I have worked on the ethics of care, on the one hand, and terrorism and political violence on the other. For some time I saw these two topics as poles apart, at something like the opposite ends of a continuum of human interaction. What could be less caring than terrorism, we might think, and what could require more avoidance of violence than caring for a helpless infant? Until recently I pursued these topics independently and did not even try to bring them together. Lately, however, I have been trying to see what the ethics of care can helpfully say about violence, especially political violence, and to see how even violence between groups and states can better be understood with the help of the ethics of care.

Elsewhere I have discussed how the ethics of care would recommend respect for international law and how it would thus approach issues of military intervention (Held 2008c). I will concentrate here on how the ethics of care can contribute guidance in dealing with family violence and in confronting terrorism.

In recent decades, the ethics of care has been developed into what is potentially a comprehensive moral outlook suitable for human relations generally. It can evaluate the relations that exist not only within families, between friends, and in small groups, but relations that are social and political on a large scale. It can provide guidance for how relations between human beings should develop even in the international arena and in the growing relations of global civil society. The ethics of care has developed in ways that show how it can address persons morally in their most distant as well as their closest relations.

For many issues in the domains of the legal or political, when these are seen as embedded within a wider network of relations between human beings, traditional and dominant moral theories may still be suitable. The deontological and consequentialist approaches of Kantian ethics and utilitarianism, for instance, may still be appropriate for many issues within the realm of the legal or political. From the perspective of the ethics of care, we can agree to treat certain issues in the ways they recommend. These theories, however, are less satisfactory than usually thought when expanded into comprehensive moral theories, as they have been. For violence arising within political conflict and being dealt with in political and legal ways, the more familiar approaches may often remain useful. For longer-term evaluations of political institutions and practices, however, the ethics of care may be more promising. It can offer guidance for dealing with states and non-state groups and the violence they often now employ, and for thinking about how the domains of the legal and political should be configured within wider societies such as a developing global one.

As it was originally developed, the approach of care was often seen as conflicting with the approach of justice, making them mutually exclusive. I have subsequently tried to show how they can be integrated if caring relations are seen as the wider and deeper network within which some relations can be dealt with in accordance with the principles of justice (Held 1995, 2006). To understand what this means I have suggested the analogy of friends engaged in a competitive game. When they play tennis, each tries above all to win, limited only by what the fair rules of the game require. If this approach were generalized to the whole of their relation, they would no longer be genuine friends, though it is suitable for limited interactions. Analogously, persons should be tied together as caring members of the same society, yet can agree to treat their limited legal interactions in ways that give priority to justice. When justice should then prevail in certain contexts, it need not oppose or cancel the care on which legal systems should be built.

To the ethics of care, the relations that are of special value are caring relations between persons. This is obvious to us at the personal level, where human life would not be able to continue without the care that has allowed each one of us to survive. But caring relations are not only valuable within families and among friends, they are important in a different way at the most general level of relations between all human beings. The ethics of care understands the value and necessity of caring labor and it emphasizes the values of empathy, sensitivity, trust, and responding to need. It cultivates practices such as the building of trust, and practices of responding to actual needs. At its most basic level it understands persons as interrelated, in contrast with the model of the independent, self-sufficient individual of liberal theory. The ethics of care as it has developed is increasingly appropriate for the wide but shallow human relations of global interactions as well as for the most personal and deepest human relations of care in families.

An appreciation of the value of care has grown out of feminist awareness of the enormous amount of overlooked but utterly necessary labor involved in bringing up children and caring for the ill. The ethics of care articulates especially the *values* involved in caring practices and it explores the guidance they provide. It also *evaluates* existing practices and understands that caring practices as they exist are usually in need of vast improvement. They usually take place in highly unsatisfactory social and political conditions that need fundamental restructuring to make them less unjust and inequitable.

The ethics of care has developed care as a value at least as important as justice, and it evaluates practices of care and of justice. It is based on experience that really is universal, the experience of having been cared for. No child can even survive without a lengthy period of care, and further care is needed for many years for adequate development. The ethics of care compares favorably with contractual views in regard to its potential appeal; contractual views of morality claim to be universal but are not thought to be so in many cultures. The ethics of care does not rest on religious views that are divisive, but on common experience. It promotes the values associated with care as fundamental, and offers strong grounds for countering violence. Whether it

can adequately address the issues that arise in dealing with violence is often questioned.

I hope to indicate its promise for doing so in what follows.

Violence in the Family

Let's consider, first, violence in the family. How the ethics of care might not be satisfactory in dealing with domestic violence was raised as a problem by feminists in the early period of interest in the ethics of care. A battered woman who continues to care for and empathize with her batterer may increase the harms she and her children suffer and worsen the effects of his violent tendencies. What seems to be needed in the face of domestic violence is the superior force of law with its stern enforcement, not caring sympathy.

And yet, with a more developed view of care, the ethics of care can well handle such issues. If it is empirically evident, as it seems to be, that in situations of domestic violence prompt legal intervention to prevent further violence is more effective than postponing it and allowing the violence to escalate, the ethics of care would have no trouble recommending this.

Consider Marilyn Friedman's discussion of domestic violence and of how the law and professional caregivers should respond when women in abusive relationships refuse to press charges and are unwilling to leave the men who batter them. Evidence suggests, Friedman notes, that 'mandated legal procedures do tend to reduce the overall level of woman battering' (2003, p. 148; see also Hanna 1996). And yet, legal intervention against the wishes of the battered woman, who may not want her batterer to go to jail and leave her economically worse off or her and her children in even greater danger from his violent retaliation, can seem to 'revictimize' the woman, paternalistically reinforcing her lack of power.

Friedman argues on grounds of respect for the autonomy of abused women that the law should tend toward preventing domestic abuse through mandatory arrest and prosecution of batterers whether or not the victim cooperates, but that professional caregiving services should 'lean toward providing support for abused women', whether or not they stay in abusive relationships and hamper legal intervention (p. 141).

The same positions could as well be arrived at on the basis of the ethics of care. Friedman's argument shows, rightly, that the functions of the law and of professional support services are different, and that law is only one, and often not the most important, of the ways society can try to reduce the incidents and harms of violence. The ethics of care can recognize how mandatory legal proceedings may reduce future incidents of domestic violence and can support them. It can also recognize how shelters, counseling, and social support may be more effective in empowering women to leave or avoid abusive relationships and improve their lives. Care requires that women care for themselves as well as for others.

Recent studies show that arrest and prosecution may not be enough to deter batterers from returning to violence against their intimate partners (Sullivan 2006). If sentences are no more than probation, this may be inadequate. It has been found that when police action was not coordinated with other components of the social system, perpetrators actually increased their use of violence against women. To actually reduce recidivism, men need to be mandated into batterer intervention programs. In the words of Sullivan's discussion of what works and what does not, 'Findings strongly support the contention that men's use of violence against women . . . is related to how the community responds to them. Lack of arrest, as well as arrests that lead to no sanctions, sends a clear signal to perpetrators that they can abuse their partners with impunity' (p. 203). Batterer intervention programs reeducate batterers through cognitive-behavioral efforts and coordinate with victim service programs to assure the safety of the women battered. Such findings are entirely consistent with the ethics of care, which would especially demand attention to how *best* to care for all involved in preventing family violence. Empirical evidence is crucial for determining this.

As services for battered women have become more professionalized, however, and such general policies as mandatory arrest instituted because they have been shown to be best for most cases, the voices of individual women have often been listened to less. Since every case is different, this can lead to responses that in some cases are less caring than they should be (Goodman & Epstein 2008). But then, once again, the ethics of care can provide the standards and values with which to criticize developed practices that need reform, in this area as in others.

Children who have been abused are at risk of becoming violent themselves, as partners and parents. A discussion by a number of experts explores ways of helping the victims of child maltreatment to develop satisfactorily (Fantuzzo *et al.* 2006). It has been shown that children making a successful transition from home to going to school for the first time strongly predicts satisfactory academic and social outcomes later. Children with various risk factors, such as having been maltreated, can be identified, and programs can intervene at this point. For instance, through special play sessions children who have difficulty engaging appropriately with others can be drawn into productive peer interactions and cooperative behavior can be reinforced. Such programs probably reduce the chances of children who have suffered from domestic violence becoming violent themselves. Clearly, values of care and responsiveness can guide such efforts.

Two authors discuss various evidence-based interventions to try to prevent the physical abuse of children. While admitting that there is not yet sufficient empirical evidence for any to be declared 'well-supported', the authors consider them promising. These treatments are: group parenting classes or parent support groups, anger management groups, family preservation and reunification programs, parent-child interaction therapy, and cognitive-behavioral therapy and family therapy. Parent-child interaction therapy can be shown to be 'highly effective in decreasing child behavior problems' (Chaffin & Schmidt 2006, p. 53) and is probably responsible for reduced physical abuse by parents. It trains

parents using live coaching and teaches relationship-enhancing and discipline skills. We might see this as an example of how the ethics of care could be better than traditional moral theories at guiding how we ought to work to prevent family violence. Instead of emphasizing the punishment of violent parents, it would focus our attention on the relation between parent and child. It would understand child abuse as a failure of care, not just a harm to an individual.

In the caring upbringing of children, it can be understood that punishment may sometimes be needed. Comparable findings can be arrived at elsewhere. But the ethics of care would emphasize how seldom the punishments of the law should be needed if the work of care is adequately facilitated and provided for in all the earlier and other ways in which persons are shaped. For instance, in times and places of high unemployment and resulting high stress, the violence to which anger and frustration can lead increases. A caring society would take responsibility for reducing the stresses of workers abandoned to the uncertainties of unfettered markets. And it would provide adequately for all the other more caring ways in which those inclined toward violence can learn to live their lives nonviolently. A caring world would fundamentally transform the oppressive social structures that produce misery and increased violence for vast numbers of people throughout the world.

The ethics of care may be especially helpful in dealing with the backlash that acceptance of women's progress and of diverse gender identities seems to provoke. To counter the hostility, its sources need to be understood. Understanding the threatened sense of masculinity felt by young men with few social and economic prospects is important; care as well as firmness or punitive legal measures may be needed in efforts to deflect the resulting rage that can lead to violence (Held 2008a).

The ethics of care can acknowledge the need for law and its enforcements in their appropriate domain. Of course, rights need to be respected and violations of them dealt with. What the ethics of care rejects is the expansion of law and legalistic thinking to encompass the whole of morality, marginalizing care to private preference or nonmoral 'natural' inclination. To imagine justice and law as the basis for all of morality, as has been done with such dominant moral theories as Kantian ethics and utilitarianism, is mistaken from the point of view of the ethics of care. But this does not mean that the ethics of care would reject legal intervention in cases of domestic violence and other crime, or, as I argue, in preventing violence between groups and states. Care and concern for victims and potential victims will demand it.

Because of its feminist foundations, the ethics of care will assure that the enormous amount of violence against women that occurs—domestic violence, violence against women in wartime, in ethnic cleansing, and as a result of repression—will be attended to. Gail Mason examines the connections between violence and power, and the view that violence erupts especially when power is threatened or in danger of losing its hold. Violence is often an instrument of power, as when a government uses violence to suppress opposition. Mason's examples are especially of violence against lesbians and gay men, where violence

makes 'a statement that to be homosexual is to be in danger of violence, or that to be a heterosexual male is to be a potential source of such danger'. Such statements and the knowledge they embody bolster 'existing systems of sexual order, and the power relations that infuse them' (2002, p. 133). Such systems, like political systems, need not use violence if they are not challenged. But their capacity to use violence can uphold their power.

If we consider the power of caregivers, however, we notice that situations of care are characteristically ones of asymmetric power: parents are far more powerful than children, nurses than patients. But this greater power has, or should have, little to do with the capacities of caregivers to use violence. It has to do with their abilities to respond to needs. Occasionally, or maybe not so infrequently, caregivers do become violent. But it is usually clear that when they do so they are violating the norms of caregiving and failing to act in accordance with the values of care (Ruddick 2002). The values of care demand that one achieve the upbringing of children and the treatment of patients with a variety of ways to influence those cared for without the violence that would harm them. Other areas of human activity could learn much from the way such practices of care exert influence nonviolently.

Liberal individualism sees a sharp break between the care that has a place in the household but not beyond it and the justice that should but often does not govern political and legal affairs. The ethics of care, in contrast, can see the strong relevance of the values involved in practices of care and those that ought to be influential in social and global realms beyond those of family and friendship (Engster 2007; Held 1993, 2006; Ruddick 2002; Tronto 1993, 2007).

Consider, however, how even in the context of care, violence may occasionally be called for. One may violently yank a child out of the path of an oncoming car even if it dislocates her shoulder. If a patient obtains a knife or gun and threatens to use it to kill someone, violent intervention may possibly be needed. The point of these uses of violence, however, will be to further the aims of care, not to destroy opponents.

In the international context, a 'humanitarian intervention' might comparably aim to advance the safety of a civilian population, not obliterate enemies. A military action might aim to restore the legal order of nonaggression between states, not destroy the evil.

A moral theory such as the ethics of care is needed to assure that we care enough about our fellow human beings to actually respect their rights and take appropriate account of their interests and especially that we refrain from aggressive violence. The ethics of care advises that we promote our policies and seek change and maintain order as nonviolently as possible.

Within both families and in a global context, to avoid paternalistic domination, care needs to be interpreted from the perspective of the recipient as well as of the provider. Care *can* be provided in ways that are domineering, oppressive, insensitive, and ineffective, but this is not *good* care. The ethics of care provides guidance for meeting the needs of persons, including needs for

peace and security from violence, in ways that are liberating, effective, sensitive, and responsible.

Terrorism and Warfare

The relevance of the ethics of care to international relations has been recognized (Held 2006, chap. 10). An example is the work of Fiona Robinson, whose discussions of globalizing care examine how attention to care would further efforts to combat global poverty (1999, 2006). Mainstream international relations theory, and mainstream normative theory about international relations have resulted, she writes, 'in the creation of a global "culture of neglect" through a systematic devaluing of notions of interdependence, relatedness, and positive involvement in the lives of distant others' (1999, p. 165). With the ethics of care, overcoming poverty would be appropriately emphasized. But can the ethics of care deal with war, or terrorism? Surely here, the skeptic contends, the ethics of care is out of place. On the contrary, I think that the ethics of care is highly relevant in dealing even with violence between states and groups.

Let's consider terrorism specifically. What, if anything, can the ethics of care usefully say about the threat of terrorism? Carol Gould argues that terrorism exemplifies a failure to care. Of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center towers she says: 'there was not only the violation of rights but also what we might call a wholesale lack of human fellow-feeling, an absence of caring about or empathy with the potential victims on the part of the terrorists' (2004, p. 350).

Although we can agree, it needs also to be said that this is true of most violence, and especially of war. Yet many believe war can be just. It is inherent to violence that it disregards its victims. War, in the extent of its destruction and the numbers of its victims, is the ultimate example of the horrors of violence and disregard. Individual participants in terrorism as in war may mourn the victims they produce, but many will not. The failure of those involved in using terrorism to be guided by empathy may be no more pronounced than is that of those who advocate war to answer terrorism.

The ethics of care would guide us away from losing the capacity to empathize with the victims of violence, whatever the kind of violence. It would also ask us, with Gould, to better understand those who turn to violence. In learning how to reduce the appeal of violence, we need to be aware of the combination of humiliation and deprivation that motivates some to support and some to engage in acts of terrorism. We need to understand how governmental and economic policies damage and oppress persons and their cultures. Since terrorist groups cannot continue to exist without a continuing supply of recruits, understanding how to draw such recruits away from the path of violence is the most important factor in dealing with terrorism.

Answering terrorism with wider war is not only among the most uncaring of responses but is also among the least successful. It multiplies both new victims

and new recruits. Louise Richardson's important book on terrorism reviews the history of fighting terrorism with military force and makes clear 'the lesson that has already been taught many times': states cannot translate overwhelming military force into victory over terrorists (2006, p. 180; see also Pape 2005).

In considering what US policy ought to be, we should begin by rejecting the blanket condemnations that demonize all terrorists as exceptionally irrational and exceptionally immoral. As political scientist Martha Crenshaw, who has studied terrorism for several decades, concludes: 'terrorism has been an important part of successful struggles for independence from foreign domination'. It is only rational that others learn from this experience. 'Terrorism', she continues, 'is a highly imitable innovation in violent tactics; it combines drama, symbolism, low cost, and ease of implementation ... Thus powerful models can stimulate the imitation of terrorists' (1983, p. 18).

Mia Bloom, another political scientist, reaches a comparable conclusion in her very useful study of suicide terrorism. She notes that

although the individual bombers might be inspired by several—sometimes complementary—motives, the organizations that send the bombers do so because such attacks are an effective means to intimidate and demoralize the enemy ... [Such] organizations are rationally motivated and use violence to achieve their goals. The operations are carefully calculated and aimed at ending a foreign occupation, increasing the prestige of the organization that uses them, and leading to regional autonomy and/or independence. (2007, p. 3)

I have argued elsewhere that terrorism is not uniquely atrocious (Held 2008a). It is political violence that often, though not, I think, necessarily, targets civilians. It often aims to create sufficient fear to cause others than those attacked to change their policies. I have argued that it resembles guerrilla war or small war in the way it should be evaluated, but it is not the same as war. Terrorist groups use crime to achieve their political goals and can be responded to in the short term with the apprehension, trial, and punishment of those involved in ways that minimize the appeal of such violence. Responding with wider war magnifies not only the violence, with all its moral costs, but also the sympathy felt for the war's victims and the terrorist groups who claim to fight for them. In the longer term, responses need to involve diplomatic, political, social, and economic measures.

There have been claims that the United States is currently faced with a 'new kind of terrorism', such that no lessons of the past are relevant. Such views have served to support the misguided 'war on terrorism' of the administration of George W. Bush, but have been effectively refuted (Crenshaw 2008). To those familiar with the terrorism of the past, that of the present is largely a continuation.

Much is often made of the difference between intentionally targeting civilians, as terrorism often or on some definitions always does, and only killing civilians unintentionally, as does conventional warfare. In the view of those who think conventional warfare can be morally justified while terrorism never can, this

distinction is crucial. Together with many others, I do not believe the distinction can bear the moral weight it has been assigned.

The distinction between targeting civilians intentionally and only killing them foreseeably as collateral damage means little to those who identify with the dead. Even if terrorism does target civilians (in fact it often, as well, attacks military targets) it is usually far less deadly than conventional warfare. Conventional warfare may proclaim an intent to spare civilians, then yield to 'military necessity', bombing whole cities and all their inhabitants. Or, as weapons become more precise, states may target specific persons and only kill civilians inadvertently but in far greater numbers than those killed by terrorism. Over many years, the deaths of Palestinian children have been approximately eight times the deaths of Israeli children resulting from the conflict (Kristof 2008).

When the United States responded with military force in Iraq to what was claimed to be a terrorist threat posed by Saddam Hussein, it caused the deaths of some 10,000 civilians in just the initial invasion (Massing 2007, p. 87).¹ Since then, the war has led to the deaths of many tens of thousands and perhaps hundreds of thousands of civilians (Altman & Oppel 2008). Terrorism, in comparison, has killed relatively very small numbers. In conventional war, the killing of civilians often becomes routine and overlooked. Certainly, some terrorists commit atrocities that are absolutely horrendous. So do some armed forces members in the course of fighting wars. The goals of some terrorists are, without doubt, morally abhorrent. So are the goals of some who use ordinary military power. If, however, the objectives for which they are used are justifiable, the weapon of terrorism and how it is used are not necessarily more immoral than the weapon of conventional military force and how it is used.

Robin May Schott effectively argues against the just war tradition on which seeing a vast moral divide between terrorism and war usually rests. She finds that the just war tradition all too easily normalizes war, suggesting that provided certain limits are observed, war is morally acceptable (2008). She uses Kant to argue that war is never morally acceptable, but an ethics of care might even more reliably keep us from forgetting that war is always atrocious, even if sometimes better than its alternatives. Which terms one uses to make the distinction between war being sometimes necessary or better than its alternatives but never morally acceptable is somewhat arbitrary. The point to remember is that it should always be viewed as needing to be prevented, averted, avoided. If it has become better than capitulation against an aggressor or abdication of responsibility in the face of genocide, the situation already represents a massive moral failure.

One could argue that the problems of the just war tradition result more from the misuse of its norms, as by the administration of George W. Bush, rather than of the norms themselves which do require that war be a last resort. But the specific norms have been developed for conflicts between the armed forces of

1. Massing writes that "10,000 civilians at a minimum were killed during the invasion, the large majority victims of the coalition" (p. 87).

states. It is questionable whether they can be applied to the kinds of violence engaged in, for instance, by nonstate groups trying to achieve liberation from colonial oppression. The ethics of care can accept the underlying norms of the just war tradition such as the requirement that one's cause be just, and that the violence used must be proportional. It is better able to keep in mind the overriding context of caring relations between human beings that are so obviously shattered by war.

Those who use terrorism often believe they have no other way to resist unjust oppression, and sometimes this judgment may be correct. To the opponents of those with vastly superior power, terrorism is often seen as self-defense, or reprisal against attacks they have suffered, attacks by the strong on the weak.

It is not inherently better to use force or violence to maintain an existing political situation or territorial boundary than to use force or violence to change them. Stability has definite value, if it can be maintained without the undue use of force or violence. When it becomes sufficiently intolerable to enough people for it to be maintained only with severe repression, however, the use of force or violence to change the political situation or territorial boundary may be less unjustifiable than using them to maintain the intolerable situation. The better alternative in all such cases is to have guidelines to achieve such change through peaceful means, through negotiations, international judicial decisions, referenda and the like. But when the power resisting change refuses to employ such means, violence to change the situation may be better than violence to maintain it, if the new situation will be more just.

In the case of South Africa, apartheid was ended without civil war and with only a moderate use of violence by the opponents of apartheid. After decades of violent repression, the African National Congress and its leader Nelson Mandela were enabled by the white South African government to pursue their objectives politically. If, on the other hand, the repression had been further escalated and the ANC had resorted to further terrorism, we might judge that in view of the justifiability of ending apartheid, the violence used by the ANC was less unjustifiable than that used by the white South African government.

If it is sincerely believed that only force rather than argument will move an opponent, and that one's position and aim are clearly just, force applied through terrorism may be on a par with force applied through conventional arms in being resorted to in the first place. Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, founder of Hamas, who was assassinated by Israel in March 2004, said that 'Once we have warplanes and missiles, then we can think of changing our means of legitimate self-defense, but right now, we can only tackle the fire with our bare hands and sacrifice ourselves' (Bloom 2007, pp. 3–4). As expressed by the secretary-general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, summarized by Ehud Sprinzak, 'Our enemy possesses the most sophisticated weapons in the world and its army is trained to a very high standard . . . We have nothing with which to repel killing and thuggery against us except the weapon of martyrdom . . . [H]uman bombs cannot be defeated' (Bloom 2007, pp. 89–90).

In assessing the justifiability of the means used in violent conflict, the demand that opponents of states with armed forces and sophisticated weaponry fight the way such states do amounts to an argument that they should meet us on our own ground so that we can defeat them. From the point of view of a militarily weak opponent, it would be irrational as well as impossible to do this. As Lionel McPherson said of Michael Walzer's demand that native groups seeking liberation must 'earn' their freedom by confining their attacks to members of the armed forces and refraining from attacking anyone else: 'this reeks of ... condescension' (2008, p. 8). Terrorism is a weapon that helps to neutralize the enormous military power possessed by some states. Using this weapon can be the rational course of action for such states' opponents, and not clearly more immoral than war.

The ethics of care provides strong grounding for valuing nonviolence over violence in political conflict. Violence damages and destroys what care labors to create. Care instructs us to establish the means to curb, contain, prevent, and head off the violence that characteristically leads to more violent behavior. In bringing up children, this requires a long process of nurturing and education in order to cultivate nonviolent feelings, self-restraint, appropriate trust, and an understanding of the better alternatives to aggressive conflict. In interactions with others at some distance, the primary institutions with which to prevent and deal with violence are political and legal, and care can recommend acceptance of these institutions when appropriate even as it recognizes their limits. Moreover, it can suggest alternative ways of interacting that may prove more satisfactory, and these understandings can be matched at the international level. Sudden reactions that are themselves violent are much less effective at reducing violence than are patient, caring, long-term efforts.

With the guidance of the ethics of care, we would acknowledge that violence is an aspect of human reality that must be expected, but that we can successfully work to contain it. With care, we can decrease violence and the suffering and damage it brings about. Guided by the values of care, we would restrain rather than destroy those who become violent, we would inhibit violence as nonviolently as possible, and we would especially work to prevent violence rather than wipe out violent persons. As Sara Ruddick has recently written: 'Many mothers know what many military enthusiasts forget—the ability to destroy can shock and awe but compelling the will is subtle, ultimately cooperative work' (2009, p. 307).

The most important factor in dealing with terrorism is understanding how to draw potential recruits away from the path of violence. In Bloom's view, the key 'is to reduce [terrorists'] motivations for suicide bombings rather than their capabilities to carry them out ... There are no military solutions to terrorism' (2007, pp. 39–40). Vengeful retribution for insulted authority leads to reactions such as the 'war on terror'. The result of George W. Bush's such reaction has been a great increase of support for extremist groups, based on sympathy for the victims of US wars. The ethics of care's focus on how to reduce the appeal of terrorist groups to potential supporters would be more effective in reducing terrorism.

The ethics of care can help us to listen to the views of others and try to understand their points of view. Care inherently involves attentiveness to others and responding to needs, and its values prepare us to do what is needed to reduce and undermine trends toward violence. Those motivated by care will be open to the evidence that terrorism is not defeated by greater violence but by promoting other means through which those with political objectives can pursue their aims. When those aims are misguided, they can be defeated politically, and when they are legitimate they can be enabled (Barber 2004; Richardson 2006).

We should constantly and insistently remind ourselves and others that violence is often or usually counterproductive, and that there are nearly always better and more effective nonviolent ways of pursuing political objectives. Yet there are good reasons not to rule out as always unjustifiable all uses of violence (Hutchings 2007). The ethics of care, I believe, would agree. Some violence is usually thought defensible in the enforcement of justifiable law. Yet education, treatment, and negotiation can usually preclude much of the need for violent law enforcement. Protest that may become violent is often thought better than acquiescence in morally indefensible repression. Civil actions of various kinds, however, such as protests, demonstrations, and disobedience, together with clever and creative uses of the media, can often shame repressive opponents. Nonviolent opposition often has more chance of success than the violence that invites greater violence or repression that, though ineffective, can be politically popular.

The ethics of care would direct us to counter terrorism with policies that will not only be more caring in the ways that they themselves minimize violence but also more effective in undermining the violence of those opposing us, whoever we are.

Acknowledgements

*An earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference on Philosophy and Everyday Life at the University of Oslo, Norway, 9–10 June 2008. I am grateful to Tove Pettersen and others for comments on that version, and to Christine Koggel and Joan Orme for subsequent comments. The paper is based in part on my books *The Ethics of Care* and *How Terrorism is Wrong*.*

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