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Bringing Out The Feminist In Bernard Williams: Constructing An Anti-Moralistic Care Ethic

Benjamin David Hershey Kenofer
University of North Florida, ben.kenofer@unf.edu

BRINGING OUT THE FEMINIST IN BERNARD WILLIAMS: CONSTRUCTING AN ANTI-MORALISTIC CARE ETHIC

by

Benjamin David Hershey Kenofer

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

"Bringing out the Feminist in Bernard Williams: Constructing an Anti-Moralistic Care Ethic"

Benjamin Kenofer

Approved by the thesis committee: Date

_____ _____

Bryan Bannon
Committee Chairperson/Assistant Prof. of Philosophy

_____ _____

Mitchell Haney, Associate Professor of Philosophy

_____ _____

Erin Gilson, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Accepted for the Graduate Program:

_____ _____

Andrew Buchwalter
Coordinator, Philosophy Dept. MA Program

Accepted for the Department:

_____ _____

Hans-Herbert Koegler
Chairperson, Department of Philosophy

Accepted for the College:

_____ _____

Barbara Hetrick
Dean of College of Arts and Sciences

Accepted for the University:

_____ _____

Len Roberson
Dean of Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

There are different versions of the ethical approach known as “care ethics”, making care ethics more like a cluster of approaches rather than a singular one. Hence the question is not just whether care ethics is a suitable feminist ethic, but which version(s) of care ethics feminists should endorse. Considering which versions of care ethics are capable of recommending the sort of political activism that is required for progressive political change goes some distance in answering this question. The concern about whether care ethics can recommend the political activism needed for feminist aims arises because such activism exposes those the activist has intimate relationships with to various sorts of harm.

I argue that when construed as an ethical theory that incorporates a decision procedure for generating correct conduct, care ethics recommends against the sorts of actions that are required of political activists and for the practical goals of feminists. Construed as an ethical framework that has the more modest concern of providing conceptual orientation and critical tools for interpreting and reflexively interrogating the ethical landscape, however, care ethics can overcome the challenge presented by political activism when including what Bernard Williams calls “ground projects” amongst its available tools. However, because feminist care theorists and others sympathetic with care ethics have criticized aspects of Williams’ account of ground projects, I first respond to these concerns in order to accommodate these criticisms and demonstrate that I am not importing something into care ethics as a framework that does not have a place there.

CHAPTER 1

BERNARD WILLIAMS AND FEMINIST CARE ETHICS

1.1 Thesis Introduction

In 1981, the psychologist Carol Gilligan introduced through her book *In a Different Voice* a manner of approaching moral problems that has come to be known as "the ethics of care" or "care ethics". According to Virginia Held's helpful and concise formulation, "the central focus of the ethics of care is on the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility" (10). Feminist theorists who have taken an interest in a care perspective have been refining care ethics to a considerable degree since Gilligan published her landmark book, and different versions of care ethics have been developed since that point, although these approaches are still regarded as having crucial features in common that distinguish this cluster of approaches from classical moral theories (Held 10; Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 25). One important feature common amongst differing versions of care ethics is that care ethics brings to the forefront the fact that humans beings are social creatures that, given the physical and mental capacities of our species, are necessarily dependent upon other humans to varying degrees at various stages in our lives (Kittay 51; Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 11).

Because all versions of care ethics brings into focus the fact that dependency and interdependency are regular features of human existence, a care perspective challenges the

picture of the autonomous individual put forth by traditional liberal political theories (Held 13-4; Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 10-11). Another feature common amongst differing versions ofcare ethics is a contestation of the clean demarcation that traditional liberal theories make between public and private spheres of life, a demarcation that historically has been to the disadvantage of women (Held 12).[1] Hence, care ethics has qualities that appeal to feminist theorists such as myself. Some versions of care ethics have features that are at odds with feminist concerns, however, with the version coming from Nel Noddings often being pointed toward as an example (Held 16, 63, 89; Hoagland 109-114; Tessman 66-7, 81). Some feminist theorists are not just concerned that certain versions of care ethics are unsuitable as a feminist ethic, but that the whole cluster of approaches is inadequate. In her influential article "Caring as a Feminist Practice of Moral Reason", Alison Jaggar argues that care ethics, being concerned with particular others, directs attention away from structural and societal sources of oppression that cause problems for these particular others to arise in the first place, and hence Jaggar concludes that care ethics faces problems as a feminist ethic (195-6).

Feminist theorists have further developed the care perspective in order to respond to Jaggar's criticism (Robinson, *Globalizing Care* 44-50, 102-3). I want to consider another challenge for the care perspective that has not received this same level of attention, although the concern is not entirely unrelated, since it involves the worry that structural and societal sources of oppression will remain unaddressed. My concern is not whether care ethics is capable of attending to oppressive social structures and background conditions, but whether care ethics (and if so, which versions) is capable of recommending or even permitting actions that are required to make effective change in combatting these societal sources of oppression and exclusion. As I elaborate in the sixth chapter, this concern arises because the sorts of actions required of political

[1] See chapter five, section two for elaboration of this point.

resisters and for the practical goals of feminists involve bringing danger and/or harm (of various kinds) upon intimates that one has special personal relationships with.

I make a distinction in the fifth chapter of this thesis between ethical theories and ethical frameworks, and I describe features that associate different versions of care ethics with one or the other. I am open to the possibility that there will be no ethical framework, whether care ethics or otherwise, that will be capable of addressing all feminist concerns, and that we might need to utilize a plethora of ethical frameworks when considering how to change the world. However, I do contend that we should investigate how far care ethics can take us, especially should our alternatives be attempting to delimit care ethics as just being appropriate for our interactions with intimate others, or too hastily regarding care ethics as a "second-rate" feminist ethic or not adequate as a feminist ethic at all. Exploring whether, and if so which versions of, care ethics impede efficacious political change is a central investigation of this thesis. In particular, one of the two main claims I make in this work is that that when construed as a framework, but not when construed as an ethical theory, care ethics is capable of recommending the political action required to address societal sources of exclusion and oppression, and is not an obstacle to efficacious political change.

I demonstrate in the sixth chapter of this thesis that care ethics as an ethical framework is capable of meeting the above challenge when the framework includes amongst its available conceptual and critical tools a crucial theme from the work of Bernard Williams, which is the idea that our lives revolve around what Williams calls "ground projects". In chapter two, I will articulate how we should understand ground projects, through responding to Margaret Walker's criticism that elevating ground projects to this central role within individual life reflects just the lives of those who inhabit a specific social position. For present purposes, however, I will just

give the schematic description that a ground project consists in how we go about enacting our commitments to various things, such as persons, relationships, institutions, and causes, and that ground projects are what allow an individual to find meaning in her life.

I contend that Williams' account of ground projects is an asset for care ethics as an ethical framework, and creates problems for care ethics as an ethical theory. However, feminist care ethicists, and feminists who have sympathies with care ethics, have criticized various aspects of Williams' account of ground projects and the connections he makes between ground projects and other concepts like meaning in life, individual character and integrity. It is important to be responsive to these concerns, and further elaborate and develop Williams' conception of ground projects and the connection to concepts such as integrity, so as to accommodate these criticisms and demonstrate that I am not importing something into care ethics as a framework that does not have a place there.

There are three feminist criticisms of Williams that I address in this thesis, and the particular relevance for overcoming each criticism in order to include ground projects as a tool for care ethics as an ethical framework will be presented at the start of the chapter focusing on the criticism in question: (I) Margaret Walker argues that Williams' contention that ground projects have a role in discussions about one's character and ground meaning in one's life reflects what Walker calls the "career self". The career self is a social ideal regarding a valuable kind of person or life that is not accessible to all people within the culture within which it is constructed, which is nevertheless viewed as "natural" or "culturally transcendent" since it stems from culturally dominant sources, thus masking its contingency from view (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 138). (II) Cheshire Calhoun, in her article "Standing for Something", critiques two accounts of integrity that she attributes to Williams. In particular, Calhoun contends that

Williams' conceptions of integrity are too individualistic (235-6). (III) Virginia Held portrays Williams' arguments regarding the conflict between ground projects and impartial morality as falling within a problematic egoistic/altruistic dichotomy that care ethics rejects (Held 92).

The second main claim that I make in this thesis then, required for the success of the first main claim that I have mentioned above, is that the account of ground projects (and integrity) that Williams offers is not susceptible to these criticisms offered by Margaret Walker, Cheshire Calhoun and Virginia Held, although how others have further developed and utilized the notion of a ground project might be susceptible to their criticisms. The criticisms of Walker, Calhoun and Held will be dealt with in chapters two, three and four, respectively. Discussion about different versions of care ethics will take place in chapter five, and the differences between ethical theories as opposed to ethical frameworks shall be detailed within that chapter. Some conceptual set-up that is needed for making the distinction between ethical theory and ethical framework will be the focus of the next two sections within this current chapter, however, as it provides background for the discussions in each of the upcoming chapters.

1.2 Two Models: Theoretical-Judicial vs. Expressive-Collaborative

The work of Margaret Urban Walker has a significant role in this thesis, because as I will argue in chapter six, the version of care ethics that can recommend political activism and resistance relies upon the meta-ethics of Walker's expressive-collaborative understanding of ethics. In anticipation of that discussion, where the concept of integrity plays a part, chapter three involves merging Walker's and Williams' accounts of integrity. Furthermore, Walker's notable critique of ground projects is the feminist criticism that I respond to in chapter two, and it is through

engagement with that critique that I explicate how we should understand ground projects, in turn affecting how we should understand integrity. Because Walker's meta-ethics provides the grounding for the version of care ethics that can address the challenges of political activism, I have chosen this portion of the introduction to elucidate her conception of the nature of morality, and in particular the division she makes between approaches to morality that correspond with the aforementioned expressive-collaborative model and approaches to morality that correspond with the theoretical-judicial model.

The theoretical-judicial model is not itself an ethical theory, but rather "a kind of template for organizing moral inquiry into the pursuit of a certain kind of moral theory" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 7-8). The theoretical-judicial represents morality as consisting of a special and unique class of action-guiding propositions that should be internalized and guide the behavior of individual agents: "[this model] makes morality look as if it consists in, or could be represented by, a compact cluster of beliefs" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 8). Identification of the "correct" or "true" moral propositions will inform each individual what s/he should do regardless of the actual person that s/he is and where s/he is socially situated, whether in a more immediate, circumstantial sense or more general, societal sense. The theoretical-judicial model portrays morality as being capable of unilateral action guidance, and properly having that role, because these moral propositions are thought to consist in some special sort of knowledge that is purified of undue social influence: "it is the nature of core moral knowledge to transcend culture, history, and material conditions, both individual and shared" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 9). For these reasons the theoretical-judicial model considers ethical theory, assuming one has the correct theory, as being capable of offering an answer to Socrates' question "How should one live?" for each person.

Walker does not endorse the theoretical-judicial model. The perspective on morality that Walker endorses she calls the expressive-collaborative model, which she also describes as not being an ethical theory but rather "a template and interpretive grid for moral inquiry" (*Moral Understandings* 9). In contrast to the solipsistic action-guiding characteristics of the theoretical-judicial model, the expressive-collaborative model "prescribes an investigation of morality as a socially embodied medium of mutual understanding and negotiation between people over their responsibility for things open to human care and response" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 9). On the expressive-collaborative model, there is no special class of what can be called "moral knowledge" that is separable from shared, social understandings, and people express these understandings through assigning, accepting and deflecting responsibilities for various things: "Moral accounting invokes the evaluative language, exemplary judgments, deliberative formats, and distributions of responsibility that are recognized as authoritative – 'shared' – in its social setting" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 10).

On the expressive-collaborative model, moral progress occurs when certain moral considerations, and the configuration of responsibilities those considerations support, are unable to withstand critical reflection: "Critical reflection asks whether what is going on in actual moral orders makes the right kinds of sense to the participants in those ways of life" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 12). When moral considerations and understandings cannot stand up to critical reflection, confidence in them as the standards for how we should organize our responsibilities between one another is lost, resulting in an endorsement of different moral considerations and (hence) a re-organization of responsibilities (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 235-42).

1.3 Morality vs. Ethics

Having presented the two models that Walker describes, I have selected this section of the introduction to explain the important distinction that Williams makes between ethics and morality, starting with his recommendation that "morality should be understood as a particular development of the ethical… [Morality] particularly emphasizes certain ethical notions rather than others, developing in particular a special notion of obligation, and it has some peculiar propositions" (*Ethics* 6). Since Williams' discussion of ground projects arises within a context that brings up ground projects to challenge the approach to ethical thinking that he calls morality, it is important to grasp what morality consists in before moving onto the explication and discussion of ground projects in subsequent chapters. Furthermore, in describing what constitutes Williams' distinction between ethics and morality in greater detail, I will map his distinction onto the division between theoretical-judicial and expressive-collaborative that Walker makes. Doing so will be important, because indicating how Williams understands the ethical and contrasts it with both the nonethical and the moral, will clarify what I object to and do not object to when utilizing Williams to argue against attempts to construct an ethical theory out of care ethics and in favor of utilizing care ethics as an ethical framework.

Williams chooses to "for the most part use 'ethical' as the broad term to stand for what this subject [moral philosophy or ethics] is certainly about, and 'moral' and 'morality' for the narrower system" (*Ethics* 6). He describes the ethical as a vague notion, contending that there is not a sharp boundary between the realms of ethical and nonethical considerations: "we can admit that there is a range of considerations that falls under the notion of the ethical, and we can also see why the range is not clearly delimited" (*Ethics* 7). Although Williams thinks the notion of the

ethical is vague, and that the vagueness is not problematic,[2] he does not think the ethical should be thought to encompass whatever we value or whatever scheme of living could be an intelligible answer to the question, "How should I live?" Williams contends that despite its initial vagueness, "we have a conception of the ethical that understandably relates to us and our actions the demands, needs, claims, desires, and generally, lives of other people, and it is helpful to preserve this conception in what we are prepared to call an ethical consideration" (*Ethics* 12). The social orientation of Williams' understanding of the ethical meshes with Walker's expressive-collaborative model, where morality (or in this case the ethical) concerns the organization of responsibilities for those seen to be within ethical community. Indeed, in discussing the force of ethical justification, when presented to others who give ethical considerations serious weight in their deliberations, Williams argues that the actual effect of such discussion is "not to control the enemies of the community or its shirkers but, by giving reason to people already disposed to hear it, to help in continually creating a community held together by that same disposition" (*Ethics* 27).

Williams further distinguishes certain kinds of nonethical consideration as belonging to the counterethical: "Counterethical motivations, a significant human phenomenon, come in various forms, shaped by their positive counterparts in the ethical" (*Ethics* 13). Williams uses the contrast between malevolence and benevolence to illustrate an example of the connection between the ethical and counterethical: "It is not that benevolence has to do its work before malevolence has anything to go on, but rather that each uses the same perceptions and moves from them in different directions" (*Ethics* 14). In one sense or another then, the counterethical has a relational definition and opposition with ethical considerations that the rest of the

[2] For example, Williams argues that the concept of an "obligation" does not need to have special characteristics that set it apart from social expectations concerning what others can be relied upon to do in order for it to function as an ethical concept (*Ethics* 185-7).

nonethical lacks; the counterethical clashes with the ethical not on a circumstantial basis, as other nonethical considerations might,[3] but rather because of certain anti-social features that pertain to what we understand the counterethical to be. In contrast to "counterethical", I will use "unethical" to refer to motivations or goals that offend against our ethical understandings, but from the perspective of those ethical understandings are not inherently hostile to ethical life as such and so are offending on a circumstantial basis.

Whereas the boundaries of the ethical are not delimited in a precise manner, Williams contends that morality, as a specific development of the ethical, does demand a sharp divide between itself and other realms such as social expectation – it must in all cases be clear whether something is "moral" versus "nonmoral" (*Ethics* 7). The separation or "purification" of the moral from nonmoral is motivated in large part because (I) someone's status as moral agent is supposed to be immune to luck, as opposed to nonmoral statuses, such as one's merit as an artist and (II) moral considerations are regarded within morality as necessarily *overriding* should they conflict with considerations from realms not immune to luck, such as legal, political, artistic or "personal" considerations (*Ethics* 195). The isolation and elevation of the moral above all other considerations, something not shared with more broad notions of the ethical, is what prompts Williams to describe morality as a "peculiar institution", and understood in this way, morality corresponds with the theoretical-judicial model that Walker describes. Hence Williams uses the term "morality" to refer to something narrower than Walker's use of that term, since she applies the term to the focus of the expressive-collaborative model as well.

From this point forward in the thesis, I will be using the terms "ethics" and "morality" in the manner that Williams does, using "ethical" instead of "moral" when discussing the

[3] For someone to drink water could in certain circumstances come into conflict with ethical considerations (perhaps, for instance, if there was not enough water to go around), but for someone to drink water could not (on a sane view) come into conflict with ethical considerations regardless of circumstance.

expressive-collaborative model. The distinction between ethics and morality is relevant when interpreting Williams' conception of integrity, which I will illustrate in chapter three. The distinction is also important for understanding how Williams' account of ground projects accompanies care ethics in rejecting the dichotomization of actions as being exclusively either egoistic (self-interested) or moral (altruistic), something I demonstrate in chapter four. Furthermore, the difference between the moral and the ethical, along with the associated differences between the theoretical-judicial model and expressive-collaborative model, forms part of the backdrop for the contrast between ethical theories and ethical frameworks that I construct in chapter five.

1.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has set the stage for the discussions in the upcoming chapters. In chapters two, three and four, I will respond to criticisms that have been directed at ground projects from feminist care ethicists and feminists sympathetic with care ethics, contending that the account of ground projects (and integrity) that Williams offers is not susceptible to the criticisms offered by Margaret Walker, Cheshire Calhoun and Virginia Held. Once the criticisms have been dealt with, the contention that Williams offers materials that can be utilized by care ethics construed as an ethical framework can be explored in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER 2

GROUND PROJECTS AND CAREER SELVES

2.1 Chapter Introduction

The role that ground projects have within human life will be invoked in chapter six to demonstrate how a care based ethic can motivate the political activism and resistance required for feminist aims. For that argument to work, ground projects must reflect some universal aspect of the human condition, in the same sense that the relational self reflects a universal aspect of the human life,[4] rather than just the localized social positions of certain particular individuals. Margaret Walker, however, contends that Bernard Williams' account of categorical desires, ground projects and individual character expresses a localized social identity that she calls the "career self". Her contention that Williams' account of ground projects and individual character advances a variation of the career self without acknowledging the social ideal is not, nor is it intended to be, a knockdown argument against "the moral worth of the idea or the particular forms of life that demand it" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 138). Walker's intent is to achieve clarity as to "what it is we are appraising if we go on to a moral evaluation of this moral ideal" (*Moral Understandings* 138). However, ground projects need to be a ubiquitous feature of human existence rather than a social ideal in order for them to play the role in chapter six that I have in mind. Hence, the aim of this chapter will be to responding to Walker's critique, arguing

[4] See chapter one, section one; chapter five, section two.

that Williams' account of ground projects does not express the career self and that ground projects will be able to have a productive role in a version of care ethics that rests upon Walker's expressive-collaborative model of ethics.

Although I argue against Walker's criticism of Williams, I also commend Walker for illustrating how the materials of categorical desire, ground project and individual character can be developed (and distorted) in a career self direction. She elucidates when ground projects, which give meaning to individual life, get distorted into career selves where meaning gets withheld from an individual's life unless that individual has "earned it".

2.2 The Career Self

Walker describes the career self as a "culturally embedded and socially situated ideal of character" and a "a richly normative self-conception" that, despite its social origin and contingency, is regarded as though it indicates some culturally transcendent fact(s) about what personhood or agency or moral individuality consists in (*Moral Understandings* 138). Far from these things that the career self purports to indicate, the picture given from the career self is that of a dominant identity, where that is understood as an "idealized picture of an exemplary person in a certain kind of society" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 158). Dominant identities are the reflection of "certain specific social norms that confer special value and visibility on those lives which can claim to embody them… In many cases of these, no lives embody them stably and for the most part over the long haul, while most lives cannot hope to look much like what these normative ideals require at all" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 155).

Walker considers the "career self" to be a culturally fleshed out version of a contemporary and familiar dominant social identity, which is the autonomous man (Walker, "Getting out of Line" 189; Walker, *Moral Understandings* 159). In particular, the career self gives a "picture of autonomy as energetic self-superintendence with a consistent track-record over a lifetime to show for it" (Walker, "Getting out of Line" 194). Viewing one's life as a career that one undertakes, keeps on track and is responsible for the success or failure of "binds a whole life or lifetime together in a unified way for which the individual is accountable. The individual's ability to account for this life – to bring forward its plan, project or narrative plot – testifies to the individual's *self*-control" (Walker, "Getting out of Line" 194). Those individuals whose lives exhibit "good standing" as a superintendent claim valuable social recognition and rewards such as (for example) the status of having lived a meaningful existence (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 158).

Walker questions the value of viewing our lives as progressive and self-directed careers, where the worth of one's whole life is to be assessed at the end of the "career", as opposed to the value of other perspectives, such as viewing life akin to a journey without some pre-set destination.[5] One of her central concerns however in discussing the career self is not regarding its merit as a social ideal but the *lack of awareness* that it *is* a social ideal that is promoting a manner of living which is fitted to a specific socio-economic environment (Walker, "Getting out of Line" 195; Walker, *Moral Understandings* 138). When dominant identities are presented from those with social authority as though they are de facto representations of the human condition, these represented social positions and locations get promoted as the standard type of case (if not

[5] Walker proposes "we might see our lives stages (whether linked to our chronological age or not) as characterized by central lessons, tasks, pleasures, experiences or bonds… Our lives on this view are more like journeys than careers: our physical trajectories are continuous, but where we stop and what affects us may not follow a linear path. Some of what affects us may transform us into discontinuity with who or what we were before" ("Getting out of Line" 199-200).

the only type), which permits the socially situated and particular character of these views and positions to disappear (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 60). Such is the case with the proponents of the career self, since these proponents "treat an aspirational ideal for a moral agent as if it were a constitutive requirement of being one, and they treat as a uniform measure an ideal to which not everyone has been encouraged or allowed to aspire even in those places where the ideal has obtained" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 138).

Walker points to Bernard Williams' discussion of categorical desires, ground projects and individual character within "Persons, Character and Morality" as an instance where characteristics of lives from those who inhabit a particular social position, and have particular social opportunities, are incorrectly projected as being representative of the human condition as such, claiming that Williams presents "a culturally embedded and socially situated ideal of character, a richly normative self-conception that certain selves in particular places at specific times find intimately familiar and personally compelling" (*Moral Understandings* 138). The picture of the self that Walker thinks Williams gives us is one where individuals have an internal imperative to make their lives meaningful in order to justify their continued existence, with a life that one has made meaningful being a requirement for one's having had a character, where these individuals "face direct and indirect demands, from themselves and presumably from others, to rate that life for its worthwhileness, and so to be responsive to the question, 'why do I go on at all?' That question might be understood… as a standard maintenance routine" (*Moral Understandings* 148).

2.3 Internal Reasons and External Reasons For Action

Williams' notion that a ground project gives one a "reason to go on" is pivotal in both Walker's and my own interpretation of his discussion in "Persons, Character and Morality". Williams declares at one point during his discussion that "we need only the idea of a man's ground projects providing the motive force which propels him into the future, and gives him a *reason for living*" ("Persons", emphasis added). In determining whether Williams is indeed presenting a dominant identity through his discussion of categorical desires, ground projects and meaning in one's life, it is important to understand what Williams means when he makes statements pertaining to individuals having a "reason for living". For Williams, the claim that someone has a reason for living is *not* a claim about the worth of that agents' character or life in an ethical sense or aesthetic sense, for instance, where that individual will just have a reason to continue living if s/he is "worthy" to continue existing. That cannot plausibly be Williams' view because of his position, central to his work, that all reasons for action are "internal reasons". The conceptual link between Williams' reasons internalism and his remarks about categorical desires and ground projects is not considered in Walker's discussion, and that connection causes me to disagree with the conclusion that endorsing Williams' conception of ground projects reflects an endorsement of the career self. We therefore must take a detour into an elucidation of Williams' reasons internalism before returning to the question of whether he is espousing a variation of the career self.

What does it mean to claim that someone possesses an internal reason for action, or when on the internalist perspective would it correct to state for some individual that "*A* has a reason to

Φ", where Φ stands for some action?[6] Williams gives the following answer: "*A* has a reason to Φ only if there is *a sound deliberative route* from *A*'s subjective motivational set (which I label 'S', as in the original article) to *A*'s Φ-ing" ("Some Further Notes" 91). The idea of an agent's "subjective motivational set" includes a wide range of psychological elements, such as an individual's desires, attitudes, affections, evaluative dispositions, projects, commitments, and personal attachments (Williams "Internal and External", 111; Williams, "Internal Reasons" 35). Williams' contrasts his internalist perspective with what he refers to as the externalist perspective, or the view that there are external reasons for action, which holds that it can be true of an agent that she has a reason to perform some action regardless of the contents of her subjective motivational set. On the externalist perspective, a reason for action is not as a necessary condition required to stem from the elements that constitute a given agent's S – hence the externality of the reason to the agent (Williams, "Internal Reasons" 35). Thus an externalist account will hold there are reasons to Φ, or lack of reasons to Φ, that apply to anyone regardless the particular individual in question.

Part of the motivation for adopting reasons internalism is that it gives "reasons for action" explanatory force – it allows us to see how reasons for action can figure into what an agent actually does. As Williams puts the point, "If there are reasons for action, it must be that people sometimes act for those reasons, and if they do, their reasons must figure in some correct explanation of their action (it does not follow that they must figure in all correct explanations of their actions)" ("Internal and External" 102). The idea is that internalism provides a person's reasons with distinctive content, giving them a connection to psychological elements that actually motivate that person to undertake specific actions. Whereas externalism "is

[6] When discussing what one has reason to do, Williams intends for "A has a reason to Φ" to mean (for the sake of simplicity) that "A has more reason to Φ than A has reason to do anything else" ("Values, Reasons" 109). The same holds for the present discussion.

uninformative about the conditions of saying that [someone] has a reason to act in some desired way, as opposed to other things that may be said about [that person]" (Williams, "Internal Reasons" 43). External reasons cannot provide that distinctive content, because whenever a consideration comes to motivate an individual as a reason for action, it does so through interaction with elements in one's S set and thus that consideration is de facto an internal reason (Williams, "Internal and External" 107). Williams holds that if external reasons statements are to be sensible, they need to be interpreted in some other way, such as conveying an optimistic internal reasons statement that is attributed to some individual or a preferable state of affairs that we, the ones making the external reasons statement, have a reason to want ("Internal and External" 110-11).[7]

On the internalist account, statements about reasons provide normative in addition to explanatory force – such statements go beyond merely stipulating what an individual is currently motivated to do (Williams, "Internal Reasons" 36). Indeed, Williams asserts that for an internalist account to be plausible, it is must be possible for an agent to be shown that she is mistaken in believing she has a reason to perform a certain course of action (Williams, "Values, Reasons" 111). Williams's preferred example in demonstrating this point describes an agent who believes he has reason to mix the contents of some container (thinking it contains gin) with tonic, because he wants to drink a gin and tonic, when in fact the container is filled with some sort of poisonous substance. In such circumstances, Williams argues that the agent does not have a reason to perform an action that she thinks she does – something that agent would recognize if we were to provide evidence of her mistaken belief ("Internal and External" 102). The notion of what counts as a sound deliberative route generally includes correcting for false information,

[7] There are other grounds for adopting reasons internalism as well. For example, Williams thinks that reasons internalism is much better equipped for making sense of the practice of blame and what it can hope to accomplish (see Williams, "Internal Reasons" 40-5).

since in virtue of being a rationally deliberative agent, someone has as one of the elements in her S a general interest in not failing through error.[8] Acknowledging that there can be general interests shared by all rational deliberators is not a concession to reasons externalism – rather, in such cases we are simply aware of some content that is necessarily within the S of any rational agent (Williams, "Values, Reasons" 111). Williams advocates that having room to improve upon or correct an agent's fallacious beliefs when considering what she has most reason to do is enough to provide the account of internal reasons with normative force ("Internal Reasons" 36).

However, the normative force contained in the account of internal reasons is not equivalent with an ethical or moral force. On the internalist account, it is possible for someone to have reason to undertake unethical actions (i.e., for someone to be rational in behaving in some unethical manner). In order to claim that anyone is irrational whenever s/he chooses to undertake some unethical action, either it must be the case that there is an element in the every agent's S which always gives an overriding reason to act ethically,[9] or there must be something about the structure of practical reason that demands all actions undertaken be ethical (Williams, "Some Further Notes" 93-4; Williams, "Values, Reasons" 111).[10] Nevertheless, Williams thinks there are several things we correctly claim about an individual who has no reason to perform some ethically appropriate action – for example, that the person is selfish, ungrateful, or that it would be a better state of affairs if s/he acted otherwise ("Internal Reasons" 39).

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[8] Williams acknowledges that there are complex exceptions to the working of this general desire ("Values, Reasons" 111). Presumably, these would be cases where other elements within an agent's S give him or her a reason to be mistaken or misinformed about some particular issue.

[9] It is important to note how strong a claim this is. Even the general desire to not fail due to misinformation that Williams claims is present in the S of every rational agent (in virtue of being a rational deliberator) has exceptional cases where it does not give us an overriding reason.

[10] As Williams writes when discussing this second possibility: "Moreover, if it could be made good (which I doubt) I think that what it would yield would be a limiting version of internalism. If it were true that the structure of practical reason yielded reasons of a certain kind as binding on every rational agent, then it would be true of every rational agent that there was a sound deliberative route from his or her *S* to actions required by such reasons" (2001, 94).

Beyond the general feature of correcting for false information / deliberating in light of true information, Williams does not present an account of what constitutes a sound deliberative route, "except to the extent that this is required by the demands of internalism" ("Some Further Notes" 91). The reason Williams does not give a detailed picture of a sound deliberative route is that he believes that what we can count as a rational deliberative process is not fully determinate ("Internal and External" 110). He makes the point, for instance, that we cannot take "the agent could arrive via sound deliberative route at the conclusion to Φ" as simply meaning "if the agent were to deliberate, and were to deliberate soundly, then he would arrive at this conclusion" (Williams, "Values, Reasons" 110). To do so ignores the psychological effects that the deliberative process has on the agent (itself being a mental process), which might interfere with the agent pursuing what she has the greatest reason to pursue – on certain occasions someone might in fact do what she has most reason to do *because* she did not go in for rational deliberation (Williams, "Values, Reasons" 110, 113).

Furthermore, rational deliberation is far more extensive than discovering the means to achieving some already posited end. There is for example: constructing ends that would satisfy some general project that has hitherto remained unspecified in regards to its specific goals, reflecting on which of two competing and incommensurable values one attaches more importance to during a conflict of values, or inventing alternative possibilities in order to break free from some dilemma (Williams, "Internal and External" 104; Williams, "Internal Reasons" 38). Because of the above considerations, Williams asserts that "there are many ways of deliberative thinking, [so] it is not fully determinate in general, even for a given agent at a given time, what may count as a 'sound deliberative route'" ("Internal Reasons" 38).

Since there is some indeterminacy regarding what is to count as a sound deliberative route for an agent at some given time, Williams further asserts that, "the question of what the agent has most reason to do is itself not fully determinate… But this is not a disadvantage of the position. It *is* often vague what one has a reason to do" ("Internal Reasons" 38). One motivation for thinking that the question of what has most reason to do is not fully determinate, and also for thinking that what counts as a sound deliberative route is not fully determinate, is that there is no clear demarcation between rational thinking and imaginative thinking: "If someone is good at thinking about what to do, he or she needs not just knowledge and experience and intelligence, but imagination; and it is impossible that it should be fully determinate what imagination might contribute to a deliberation" (Williams, "Internal Reasons" 38).

2.4 Categorical Desires, Ground Projects, and Meaning in Life

How categorical desires and ground projects relate to an individual's character will be the subject of the following section. I first want to argue against the notion that ground projects (as such) give us the vision of "a kind of life that a person experiences as handed over to him or her, with a sort of internal imperative to *make* it meaningful" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 148). However, I nevertheless contend that Walker's critique alerts us to criteria for determining when the notion of a ground project gets misappropriated and utilized in a manner that allows meaning in life to be withheld from an individual, unless that individual has "made something" of her life.

Williams defines a categorical desire as a special kind of desire that is not contingent on the prospect of one's being alive, "since it is possible to imagine a man rationally contemplating suicide, in the face of some predicted evil, and if he decides to go on in life, then he is propelled

forward into it by some desire (however general or inchoate) which cannot operate conditionally on his being alive, since it settles the question of whether he is going to be alive" (Williams, "Persons" 11). Williams does not, however, spell out in precise terms what the relation is between a categorical desire and a ground project. Walker, describing his view at one point, states that an individual must have a ground project in order to have categorical desires (*Moral Understandings* 147). However, that line of interpretation gets the relation between categorical desire and ground project backwards, for it is not able to explain why the failure of a ground project is so devastating for an individual. Since the ground projects an individual has are subject to change over time as elements within their S change, having a categorical desire dissipate need not be burdensome, except insofar as one has a desire for that other desire to be a categorical one. What *is* burdensome, however, is to have a categorical desire that does not dissipate even when one is incapable of fulfilling or realizing that desire, regardless of which activities (e.g., projects) one undertakes. Such a circumstance indicates how one can have categorical desires without having ground projects, because while projects can succeed or fail, desires themselves are not something that can succeed or fail (one rather succeeds or fails in getting what one desires), and the failure of a project does not automatically eradicate whatever motivated one to undertake that project. So categorical desires are antecedent to ground projects, although projects *are required* in the sense that only if a categorical desire can give rise to a ground project can the desire have a propelling role in an agent's life, and hence give the agent reasons for actions that contribute to their survival.[11]

[11] Williams argues that on the internalist perspective, when it comes to what an individual needs (such as in order to survive), "If an agent really is uninterested in pursuing what he needs, and this is not the product of false belief; and he could not reach any such motive from motives he has by the kind of deliberative processes we have discussed; then I think we do have to say that in the internalist sense he indeed has no reason to pursue these things" ("Internal and External" 105).

I take the following to be an accurate reconstruction of the relation between categorical desires and ground projects: a ground project consists in the performance of actions required for the (continual) realization of some categorical desire, with the undertaking of the ground project expressing one's hope or desperation in relation to the categorical desire.[12] Hence I connect Williams' discussion in "Persons, Character and Morality" to Walker's own account of the hope from her book *Moral Repair*, wherein she describes four elements of hope (futurity, desire, belief in possibility, and efficacy) that I contend correspond to the view that ground projects propel individuals into the future with internal reasons for action and survival.

When someone experiences hope, her thought is mentally directed towards something in the *future*, where the relevant outcome is not at the current point in time certain from one's perspective. And one *desires* the object of one's hope, since otherwise the outcome would not be wanted or sought after (Walker, *Moral Repair* 44-5). Hope involves more than experiencing desire that is directed toward the future, however, which is the reason I contend a ground project and not a categorical desire is an expression of hope. For hope must involve a *belief* that the desired outcome *could* be or become actualized, whether or not one thinks the possibility is likely (Walker, *Moral Repair* 46). The belief component explains how hope can be undermined or strengthened in light of incoming information. Walker contends that there is one more component to hope, which we need and in fact reference in order to distinguish hope from other mental states, such as resignation or cynicism. This last component of hope involves someone taking a certain kind of affective attitude or emotional stance in relation to her beliefs about the possibility of realizing her future-directed desire (Walker, *Moral Repair* 48). In attending to the affective dimension of hope, we can see that "there are forms of attention, expression, feeling

[12] I do not claim that a ground project could not be the expression of emotions other than hope or desperation in relation to some categorical desire, just that it does not need to be the expression of an emotion other than one of these two.

and activity that manifest in hope. And second, there is what these forms of attention, expression, feeling and activity in turn reveal: that people have varied and characteristic ways they try to invite, affect or produce an outcome for which they hope" (Walker, *Moral Repair* 49).

Walker refers to the psychological effects of hope's affective stance as the *efficacy* of hope (*Moral Repair* 60). The term is appropriate since hope brings forth certain dynamic tendencies: "When we are hoping for a certain state of affairs, our thoughts, imaginings, and feelings about the desired situation are stirred, and these can prompt actions, as well as further thoughts, imaginings and feelings" (Walker, *Moral Repair* 50). We can see then how, in virtue of these dynamic tendencies, hoping for the fulfillment of a categorical desire leads to and is expressed in the adoption and pursuit of ground projects as I have described them since when "our own actions form some part of the conditions for our hopes being realized… hope clearly can dispose us in a variety of ways to seek out, plan for, strive for, take heart about, concentrate on, put renewed energy into getting the outcome we want" (Walker, *Moral Repair* 50).

The above understanding of categorical desires and ground projects means that a person can cease to have a ground project for one of at least three reasons. The first would be for someone to cease to have the relevant categorical desire, which would not cause the associated ground project to suffer irreparable failure but would cause the ground project to disappear, in the same manner as the emergence of a new categorical desire can lead to the emergence of a new ground project; these two in tandem indicate how the ground projects one pursues can change as the result of lived experience. The second consists in the realization of the categorical desire in question, where the realization of that desire concludes the project (e.g., one manages to climb to the top of Everest). The third involves discovering that the mechanisms for realizing the relevant categorical desire have ceased to be available, or one realizes that the mechanisms are

not and never have been available to them. The second and third routes for the evaporation of a ground project, and the idea that pursuit of a ground project is an expression of hope (when not desperation), correspond to Walker's claim that "hopes come to an end when what they yearn toward is either realized or no longer seen as possible" (*Moral Repair* 40).

Having given my position that ground projects should be understood as an expression of hope in relation to some categorical desire, or as an expression of desperation in unlucky circumstances,[13] I now defend my interpretation through reference to specific comments that Williams makes. To start, let us return to the quote from Williams that I gave at the top of the third section: "we need only the idea of a man's ground projects providing the motive force which propels him into the future, and gives him a *reason for living*" ("Persons" 13, emphasis added). I am now in a position to contend that the idea expresses the following: because someone's hope regarding the fulfillment of her categorical desires leads in virtue of hope's efficacy to her adopting ground projects that cause her to care about her continued existence, ground projects give her internal reasons to perform actions that contribute to her continuing to live.[14] The active engagement with and interest in the world that hope regarding an individual's categorical desires brings forth is what it means for ground projects to give meaning to an individual's life. Furthermore, considerations about what is required to prevent the failure of a ground project should for a rational agent have a significant weight in her deliberations about what she has most reason to do, should these conflict with other considerations not required for some ground project that can in several other kinds of circumstances provide reasons for action.

[13] Walker makes the following point regarding desperation: "At the same time we are able to discriminate hope from desperation, in which the will to get the object takes on a drive approaching panic; perhaps desperation, sometimes considered a 'contrary' of hope, is an unstable mixture of hope and fear" (*Moral Repair* 54). I contend, then, that a ground projects is an expression of desperation when one's actions stem from the fear that the object of her relevant categorical desire is close to being either unrealized or no longer realizable.

[14] Except in those cases where the completion of a ground project requires self-sacrifice, since she will be unable to continue the ground project if she perishes.

This deliberative priority that ground projects have for an agent is one place where an idea about reasons internalism that was mentioned earlier, that one can have reason to do something unethical, finds its footing.

The defense I have presented so far might have done little to dissuade concerns that Williams is presenting a version of the career self. If there are limitations placed on which categorical desires can give rise to ground projects in virtue of some evaluation of a desire's worthwhileness,[15] or limitations placed on which ground projects are capable of allowing individuals to find meaning in their lives, these claims deserve to be met with the skepticism that rather then describing the human condition as such, some particular dominant identity is being put forth instead. That possibility is the reason that Walker's criticism of Williams, even though misplaced, is extremely valuable. Her critique raises consciousness about what to look for in order to detect when the capability to form ground projects and find meaning in one's life is reflecting the social location of those with the social power to spread these ideas, and being cut off from those who occupy other social locations. I intend to bring this point out through comparing the perspectives of Williams, who I contend is not giving a presentation of the career self, and Susan Wolf, who I contend is in fact using Williams' materials to do so inadvertently.

Let us look again at Williams. He makes the claim that categorical desires do not have to be "very evident to consciousness, let alone grand or large… and the propelling concerns may be of a relatively everyday kind such as certainly provide the grounds for many sorts of happiness" (Williams, "Persons" 12). Elsewhere Williams indicates that the categorical desires which can be

[15] Both Williams and I think that it is possible for a desire to be incapable of being a categorical desire, but not because of some appraisal regarding the desire's worthwhileness. Excluding a desire as a candidate for being categorical should be accompanied with an explanation, which can be examined to see whether the career self or some other dominant identity is the cause for the desire's exclusion. For example, Williams contends that the desire to avoid pain cannot be a categorical desire, with the reason being that in the absence of other desires that drive a person forward in spite of their suffering, a desire to avoid pain can be the reason someone *opts out of life* (Williams, "The Makropulos Case" 93).

the focus of one's ground projects can be desires pertaining to things as varied as "a person, a cause, an institution, a career, one's own genius, or the pursuit of danger" ("A Critique" 112). That a categorical desire can have as its object various kinds of thing (including personal relationships) within the world, and that a categorical desire (the core of a ground project) can be something that one does not have a strong and constant awareness of, suggests that categorical desires and ground projects do not *as such* require the sort of "standard maintenance routine" which demands for individuals to constantly rate their lives for their worthwhileness.

The understanding of ground projects I have offered is compatible with alternatives to the career self that Walker discusses, such as spiritual growth, the learning of lessons, participation in certain communities such as religious communities, and other forms of social connection ("Getting out of Line" 198-200). The desires for these things can be categorical for some individuals, and be focal points around which their actions revolve, something we can see for instance in those individuals who become more engaged with a religious calling after personal tragedy. In tune with those who seek an alternative to viewing their whole life as a career, and of particular importance to care ethics, is the idea that "commitment or involvement with a particular other person might be one of the kinds of project which figured basically in a man's life in the ways already sketched" (Williams, "Persons" 16). Relationships require actions to maintain them, and prudent individuals reflect on the impact their actions have on their relationship with another, and which actions will help to sustain, deepen or strengthen that relationship, but such practical deliberation does not require the sort of intensive self-superintendence of the career self. Consonant with these above points, that participation in certain relationships and communities or seeking spiritual growth can be ground projects and also alternatives to viewing life as an overarching career, is the claim Williams makes that when

it comes to the importance of ground projects in human life: a person with a ground project "is not pictured as thinking that he will have earned his place in the world, if his project is affirmed: that a distinctive contribution to the world will have been made, if his distinctive project is carried forward. The point is that he wants these things, finds his life bound up with them, and that they propel him forward, and thus give him a reason for living his life" (Williams, "Persons" 14-5).

Contrast the above view that I have given for Williams with Susan Wolf's views on meaning in life (and why it matters). Wolf is concerned with the existence of constraints on what sort of thing can give meaning in one's life: "meaningfulness in life, in other words, arises out of people's responding to things that are and that they see to be *worth* responding to" ("Meaning and Morality" 304). The idea that meaningfulness involves someone responding to something she sees as worth (in some sense) her responding to sounds right, since otherwise it is not clear that one's response would actually involve a categorical desire and an expression of hope. But we should question Wolf's addition of "and has objective value", given Walker's argument that our value judgments occur from some culturally situated position and invoke social understandings.

One concern that motivates Wolf is the thought that a person should be able to be mistaken about whether some ground project that the person was involved with was a source of meaning for them. She contends that "for a person to not just think that she has a meaningful life, but to actually have one, the activities with which she is engaged must not just seem to her worthwhile – they must actually be so. Acknowledgement of this point is necessary to explain how a person whose life seemed meaningful to her can come to change her mind and *be right*" (Wolf, "Meaning and Morality" 305). What is the point of demanding that someone getting

meaning out of her interaction with the world requires the possibility that she believes she has been receiving meaning through the pursuit of a ground project when, as a matter of objective fact, she never was? This requirement seems reminiscent of the notion that one must be conscious of whether one's has chosen the wrong kind of career (e.g., a career that is worthless), and at odds with the picture of Williams's view I have given.

There are a couple statements that Williams makes in "Moral Luck" which might at first appear to support Wolf's reasoning. When discussing considerations surrounding the collapse of ground projects, and their relevance for retrospective assessment, Williams advances the claim that "[the ground project] in the interests of which the decision is made is one with which the agent is identified in such a way that if it succeeds, his stand-point of assessment will be from a life which then derives an important part of its significance for him from that very fact; if it fails, it can, necessarily, have no such significance in his life" ("Moral Luck" 35). He follows this claim with the assertion that provided "an intrinsic failure, the project which generated the decision is revealed as an empty thing, incapable of grounding the agents life" (Williams, "Moral Luck" 36).

One manner of interpreting these thoughts would be in the manner that Wolf does, such that the agent now sees that s/he in fact was not having and perhaps never had a meaningful existence. But that interpretation is neither in the spirit of Bernard Williams in general nor most true to the specific discussion within which the ideas about the ground projects arise. The better interpretation, which coheres with what I have argued above, regarding the idea that a ground project is later revealed to be an "empty thing" is that up until the point where the ground project can no longer be sustained the project provided meaning in life for that individual. Once the project deflates however (e.g., once one endorses that there is no hope of realizing her

categorical desire), the project becomes incapable of continuing to fulfill that role, since it cannot provide an individual with reasons for action because *the realization that attempts to realize the relevant categorical desire are hopeless has become transparent to that individual*. On my understanding, the failure of a ground project removes a source of meaning from one's current standpoint in her life, but it does not indicate that one was under an illusion or would be under an illusion now when believing that in the past she received meaning from that ground project. Nor (contra Wolf) does it indicate that others can claim the individual was not finding meaning in life, although there could be negative evaluations that others might be justified in making, such as concluding the individual in question acted in a rash manner.

This last point is relevant when considering Williams' first comment concerning the significance a ground project can have for one's life if it succeeds, and the significance it de facto cannot have should the project fail. That comment provides support for Wolf's view just if "significance" is taken to be identical to "having provided meaning", and there is no reason to draw that conclusion. "Significance" can stand for an evaluation made from various different perspectives, such as ethical or artistic perspectives. The failure of some ground projects can mean that one's life is unable to achieve some level of significance in respect to some measure of ethical, or practical, or aesthetic (etc.) judgement that one desired to succeed in, without it being ruled out that before the collapse of one's ground project one found meaning in her life. When discussing internal reasons, Williams suggests that it is not clear what is to be gained if we can label someone "irrational" in the externalist sense in addition to (for example) the criticisms that someone is sexist, inconsiderate, and/or selfish that can be made within the internalist model ("Internal Reasons" 39). Similar thoughts are welcome here. What is to be gained if we can label

someone as having not actually experienced meaning in her life, as opposed to evaluative statements that can be made from other perspectives?

Another related concern that motivates Wolf is the thought that some pursuits are trivial, or stem from counterethical motivations and have counterethical goals, and such pursuits that do not promote some sort of "objective value" cannot be providers of meaning. The idea is that ground projects must have some form of "objective worth" in order to provide meaning to those who carry them forward. When it comes to unethical projects, for example, Wolf dismisses the idea that child molesting could provide meaning in anyone's life ("Meaning and Morality" 306). When it comes to trivial pursuits, Wolf has a plethora of examples of projects that she contends do not make the cut for providing meaning, including: spending time on crossword or Sudoku puzzles, reading through mystery novels, and making handwritten copies of *War and Peace* ("Meaning and Morality" 304; *Meaning in Life* 16).

It should be noted that Wolf does express concern about the threat of elitism in proclaiming some projects to be meaningless, and she acknowledges the suspicion that "the interests I am discussing are bourgeois interests, commonly of concern only to persons from a certain place, time and social class" (*Meaning in Life* 30). She emphasizes the point that "the object of thinking about the category of meaningfulness in life is not to produce a meaningfulness scale for ranking lives" (Wolf, *Meaning in Life* 39). But when various ground projects are said to be unable to provide meaning in life because the project pursues something trivial (or unethical), or because projects are unsuccessful at realizing something that is of value, we can see how this entails the reflexive superintendence of the career self, and the imperative to monitor that one has pursuits which allow herself to claim she has meaning in her life. The career self criticism that Walker misdirected at Williams' discussion, that he presents "a kind of life that

a person experiences as handed over to him or her, with a sort of internal imperative to *make* it meaningful… if it is [the person's responsibility] to make the life meaningful… the ratings will have to reflect their success at something *they* care about" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 148) can instead be accurately directed at Wolf's work, despite Wolf's intentions.

2.5 Ground Projects and Individual Character

I have argued that Williams' views that ground projects provide meaning in life does not reflect a version of the career self. There is, however, another component of Williams' discussion in "Persons, Character and Morality" that Walker points to when making her case regarding the career self. The other component in question is Williams' introduction of character into his discussion, with the claim that "an individual person has a set of desires, concerns or, as I shall often call them, projects, which help to constitute a *character*" ("Persons" 5). Walker argues that Williams' connection between categorical desires, ground projects and character is counterintuitive, contending: "Everybody who has a functionally integrated personality (and that is perhaps only to say, a personality) at all has some kind of character in the familiar sense" (*Moral Understandings* 147). Walker's confusion as to Williams' point in bringing character into his discussion of categorical desires and ground projects causes Walker to suspect that Williams is invoking "character" as a term of appraisal (*Moral Understandings* 146). Where it concerns individuals who have life-driving commitments that give them meaning in life, "character" functions "less as a description than as a dimension of appraisal of how well people succeed at this kind of a life. It is hard to see yourself as (much of) a character in this scheme unless you can give this account of yourself" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 148).

Here is an alternative understanding of Williams' use of "character", which coheres with what I have argued earlier in this chapter and which seems consistent with other aspects of Williams' philosophy. On this understanding, "character" refers to the more provisionally fixed aspects of one's subjective motivational set (his/her S) from Williams' discussion of internal reasons – it is that collection of desires, values, traits, habits, (etc.) that we associate with someone and form our expectations about her behavior in light of, and that subsequently causes us to contend that someone has acted "out of character" when she violates those expectations.

The above understanding of character is compatible with Walker's aforementioned contention regarding character and personality, and it gives character a place in discussions about ground projects, without restricting our conception of who can and cannot not possess a character to those individuals whose activity reflects the opportunities available to others inhabiting their socio-historical position. When we consider whether some categorical desire has a realistic hope in terms of the agent's psychology of being realized through a ground project, or when we consider what new categorical desires and ground projects someone can reasonably be expected to form, especially after the collapse of one central ground project or a whole nexus of them, we should be cognizant of the S for the individual in question. For *who one is in this sense* is relevant for him/her and for others in determining what s/he has most reason to do, and for others in coming to expect what s/he might in fact do or is psychologically capable of doing. Ground projects (e.g., what one hopes for) form an important component of one's character since (through necessarily providing reasons for action that work to keep one alive) they provide assurance that one (and hence his/her character) will continue forward into the future,[16] in the sense that s/he will not commit suicide or die as a result of becoming apathetic toward life.

[16] There are exceptions, since one's ground project could involve one courting death or flirting with death – but then (of course) these are *exceptions*.

However, understanding character in this manner might appear as though it conflicts with another important aspect of Williams' philosophy, despite my claim to consistency. This is the idea, associated with Williams' views on moral luck, that it can be appropriate for our conception of *who one is* to be affected by the outcome of one's actions, regardless of whether the outcome was intended (hence regardless of whatever motivations stemmed from one's S).[17]

There will in fact be tension between the understanding of character I propose and the view that our conception of ourselves can appropriately be affected from elements of the world outside of one's motivations and intentions just in case all the attributes about oneself are reducible to or subsumable under the heading "one's character", and we don't have ground for holding this reductionist view.[18] The reductionist move fails to acknowledge a distinction between one's character and one's identity, with the latter encompassing the former but being broader. An individual's character is a crucial but not an exhaustive component of his or her identity, since actions flow from one's S (one's character), and there are certain attributes (e.g., biological and social facts) that are connected to one's social identity which cannot be understood as elements within or stemming from one's S (and hence do not pertain to one's character) – just a couple examples would be for someone to have a displeasing physical appearance or that someone is a woman. Insofar as these sorts of attributes are thought to be involved with one's character, or are invoked when discussing an individual's character, it is

[17] "If one attaches importance to the sense of what one is in terms of what one has done and what is the world one is responsible for, one must accept much that makes its claim on that sense solely in virtue of its being actual" (Williams, "Moral Luck" 29-30).

[18] This is not a view within Williams' own philosophy, which can be seen when he argues in "The Self and the Future" for a distinction between psychology continuity (of which categorical desires and ground projects would be a part) and the continuance of one's identity.

through the use of such attributes as stereotypes and/or prejudices to infer, indicate or speculate about elements within that individual's S.[19]

Furthermore, an individual and others can acknowledge that individual's connection to unintended effects in the world, such as in Williams' example of a truck driver who through no personal fault runs over a child,[20] and this can affect how she and others conceptualize her, without the nature of the incident requiring her or us to change our description and/or appraisal of this person's character. A shift in our evaluation of that person's character should pertain to how, or whether, the individual acknowledges being responsible for the unintended effect in question.[21] The thought "s/he is a good person who did a bad thing" is a familiar enough in the popular imagination to indicate that we can acknowledge a change in someone's identity (that the person has become someone who has performed some action Φ that cannot be ignored) without our proclaiming a change in the value of her character (her desires, values and the other contents of her S remain in a positive light). To a significant degree one's identity, such as whether someone can make a claim to some particular accomplishment, will be affected from resultant luck,[22] but evaluations of one's character need not be affected in the same manner; though character evaluations can still be affected in other ways, since as Williams points out certain evaluations of character (such as whether someone exhibited "weakness of the will") can

[19] Here I utilize Miranda Fricker's understanding of stereotypes and prejudices. Fricker considers stereotypes to be "widely held associations between a given social group and one or more attributes" (*Epistemic Injustice* 30). This definition allows stereotypes to consist not just as beliefs but also as other components within an agent's psychology, such as "those that may have an affective aspect such as commitments which derive from the collective imagination and which may permit less transparency than beliefs" (Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* 31). Fricker describes prejudices as judgments "which may have a positive or negative valence, and which display some (typically, epistemically culpable) resistance to counter-evidence owing to some affective investment on the part of the subject" (*Epistemic Injustice* 35).

[20] See Williams, "Moral Luck" 28.

[21] See the discussion of integrity in section four of chapter three.

[22] "Resultant luck" refers to "luck in the ways out actions and projects turn out" (Walker, "Moral Luck and the Virtues" 21).

in some cases depend on understandings not available at the time of decision (*Shame and Necessity* 45).[23]

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

I have argued that ground projects are an expression of an individual's hope in relation to some categorical desire, which gives her a drive to survive and provides internal reasons for action. I have also argued that one's character and the more provisionally fixed points of one's subjective motivational set (S) should be seen as interchangeable, with "character" being a more congenial term for most conversation, and that comments about the possession of a good or bad character should be understood as evaluations made regarding the content of someone's S. So long as we do not moralize our conceptions of what can count as a categorical desire, ground project or what can ground meaning in life, we do not moralize our conception of who does and does not possess a character, though each character will inevitably be evaluated in relation to some socially situated understandings.

However, because our evaluations of a ground project are socially situated, dominant understandings can proclaim certain kinds of categorical desires, ground projects and characters to be viewed as "the norm", and those that do not conform to this norm are in danger of getting dismissed as being a desire or a project that could "really" give meaning to someone's life. Walker's work is important because she makes us cognizant of when discussions about those desires and projects that give a person meaning in his/her life makes the transition from basic psychological materials to elements of social ideal, such as the career self, or in other words,

[23] Character is consistently subject to another kind of moral luck (constitutive luck), since one does not have control for instance over the upbringing and socialization that one has received (Williams, "Moral Luck" 20).

when Williams' ideas are misappropriated and used for the purpose of ranking whether some lives had meaning in them in virtue of enshrining a certain sort of career.

CHAPTER 3

GROUND PROJECTS AND INTEGRITY

3.1 Chapter Introduction

Ground projects have a connection to the account of integrity that Bernard Williams espouses. Walker's notion of integrity as interpersonal reliability will play a role in a version of care ethics I describe as being capable of recommending political activism and resistance. As such, it is important to argue that ground projects, which have a conceptual link to Williams' account of integrity, are not seen to support an incompatible notion of integrity. In the article "Standing for Something", Calhoun attacks three views of integrity, which she refers to as the integrated-self, identity, and clean hands pictures of integrity (235). These last two views she associates with Bernard Williams in particular (Calhoun 241, 246). Regarding these two views, Calhoun says that on "the identity view, integrity means fidelity to those projects and principles which are constitutive of one's core identity. On the clean-hands view, integrity means maintaining the purity of one's own agency, especially in dirty hands situations" (235). Calhoun offers up two general lines of criticism of these views of integrity: "First, each ultimately reduces integrity to something else with which it is not equivalent… Second, all three accounts are of integrity as a personal, but not a social virtue" (235-6). A personal virtue consists in having proper relation to oneself, whereas a social virtue consists in having proper relation to others (Calhoun 252). Calhoun's own position is that integrity has the elements of a personal and social virtue (253).

The aim I have in this chapter is to reconcile Bernard Williams' account of integrity with the perspective of Cheshire Calhoun and Margaret Walker that our conception of integrity should be an interpersonal one. I am going to argue that Williams does not give us a "clean-hands" picture of integrity, and that rather his remarks to this end should be considered part of the same perspective as the so-called identity view. I also argue that Williams' account of integrity does not map onto the identity view that Calhoun lays out, and I contend that Williams need not be understood as "reducing" integrity to just his perspective, and that his perspective is compatible with a social view of integrity. In particular, I am going to contend that Williams' views on integrity can be combined with Walker's views on integrity, and the resulting notion of integrity will have a role in the version of care ethics that I contend is capable of coping with challenges stemming from political activism and resistance.

3.2 The Identity View of Integrity

The identity perspective involves the notion of "integrity as fidelity to projects with which the individual deeply identifies" (Calhoun 242). It involves the notion that a "person with integrity stands for those desires that are constitutive of her core self. This explains why such persons might prefer death to the betrayal of what they stand for" (Calhoun 242). Calhoun says that proponents of the identity view "admit, on this view, one might have integrity even though one's identity-conferring projects are nonmoral or even morally despicable. This is because deeply identifying with what one does, puts one's integrity beyond question" (242). Calhoun takes issue with the identity view because, psychologically speaking, one might identify with a desire that one does not endorse: "Although it may happily be true of many of us that we want to be who we

are – that endorsement and psychological identification coincide – this is not inevitable" (244). It is through pursuing these desires that one endorses, rather than just the desires one finds oneself bound up with, that Calhoun thinks causes one to display integrity. The need for desire endorsement explains how one might try to better oneself through ridding oneself of desires one might be deeply identified with but not endorse (for example, malevolent desires) without risking compromising one's integrity (Calhoun 244).

It is important to take note of a passage from one of Williams' discussions of integrity that Calhoun does not acknowledge in her presentation of Williams' views. This passage gives rise to a significant source of the disagreement I have with Calhoun's interpretation of Williams, and bears a significant weight in my own interpretation and development of Williams' views on integrity. Calhoun starts off her discussion with the contention that integrity is a virtue (235). However, at the conclusion of her article, Calhoun suggests "that integrity may be a master virtue, *less a virtue in its own right* than a pressing into service a host of other virtues – self-knowledge, strength of will, courage, honesty, loyalty, humility, civility, respect and self-respect" (260, emphasis added). Calhoun's revisionary comment bears similarities to the passage from Williams that I find to be relevant, which occurs in his article "Utilitarianism and Moral Self-Indulgence", where contra to considering integrity a personal virtue, Williams contends that integrity is not a virtue at all ("Utilitarianism and Moral" 49).

In claiming that integrity is not a virtue, Williams is not contending that integrity is not something of ethical importance. Rather, he contends that integrity is not related to motivation in the manner that virtues are related to motivations ("Utilitarianism and Moral" 49). Williams contends that virtues involve characteristic patterns of desire and motivation, and hence are more than mere skills: "One can be a good pianist and have no desire to play, but if one is generous or

fair-minded, those qualities themselves help to determine, in the right contexts, what one will want to do" (*Ethics* 9). Williams contends that integrity is not an actual disposition (like generosity) that yields certain motivations, adding that "nor is [integrity] a virtue of that type, sometimes called 'executive virtues', which do not themselves yield a characteristic motive, but are necessary for that relation to oneself and the world which enables one to act from desirable motives in desirable ways – the type that includes courage and self-control" ("Utilitarianism and Moral" 49). What Williams contends integrity in fact consists in is "one who displays integrity acts from those dispositions and motives which are most deeply his, and has also the virtues that enable him to do that. Integrity does not enable him to do it, nor is it what he acts from when he does so" ("Utilitarianism and Moral" 49). In this sense, with integrity being something displayed or reflected, "integrity" would not be an element within one's S, in the same sense that virtues such as generosity would be. Rather, integrity concerns the overall state of one's character.

At this point, it might not sound as though the interpretation I offer conflicts with the identity view of integrity that Calhoun attributes to Williams. The next step in my interpretation is going to be relevant for the argument that Williams' view is distinct, and is apt to be more controversial. This step involves providing some degree of ethical constraint on which ground projects can reflect integrity, which contrasts with the argument in the previous chapter that there are not ethical constraints that ground projects must meet as a precondition for them being able to provide one with meaning in her life. However, where integrity is concerned, the connection I draw between ground projects and ethics remains in line with the anti-moralistic spirit of Williams' philosophy and is consistent with his other positions.

What considerations cause me to contend that there are ethical constraints on the ground projects that allow one to display integrity? In chapter two I argued that Williams' views on

finding meaning in life are not the reflection of a social ideal. One finding meaning in life reflects a certain psychological engagement with the world, one that propels the individual into the future. In contrast, that one displays integrity indicates that a person matches up to a certain *ideal* about how to live as a person. The notion that integrity for Williams involves an ideal should not be controversial, considering he refers to integrity as "an admirable human property" ("Utilitarianism and Moral" 49). However, Williams also advocates the importance of values outside the realm of the ethical, and questions the extent to which the ethical can be regarded as supreme ("Moral Luck: A Postscript" 244-5). So the case needs to be made that integrity for Williams is not just an ideal of value, but also an ideal of *ethical* value.

I am going to point to some remarks that Williams makes to support the interpretation I have offered. First, lets look again at the passage I provided before. Williams claims "one who displays integrity acts from those dispositions and motives which are most deeply his, *and has also the virtues that enable him to do that*" ("Utilitarianism and Moral" 49). It might appear as though the statement just indicates that the individual has certain character traits that enable him to act in accordance with his deeply held convictions or things of importance for the individual, but "virtue" for Williams and for others indicates more than just character traits that enable one to act in one manner or another. Insofar as we are able to make sense of the distinction between for example a "virtue" and a "vice", virtues are character traits that must enable the individual in certain manner – namely, an ethical manner. Williams describes a virtue as "a disposition of character to choose or reject actions *because they are of a certain ethically relevant kind*" (*Ethics* 9, emphasis added). Insofar as Williams considers a virtue to be an "ethically admirable disposition of character" (*Ethics* 9), then as long as Williams was not being flippant in his word

choice when discussing virtues in the context of integrity, there is an ethical core built into his conception of integrity.

Remarks Williams makes elsewhere lend further support to the above idea. In “Persons, Character and Morality”, when Williams is discussing the potential for conflict between ground projects (in the form of personal relationships) and impartial morality, he makes the following revealing remark that his discussion does not entail that “if there is some friendship with which his life is much involved, then a man must prefer any possible demand of that over other, impartial, moral demands. That would be absurd, and also a pathological kind of friendship, since both parties exist in the world and it is part of the sense of their friendship that it exists in the world” (17). The suggestion that the dogmatic pursuit of a ground project *as such*, and that doing *whatever* the project might require for its continuation or success at the expense of whatever other demands one might face, is pathological suggests an evaluation of character that is quite different from one who is “admirable” when pursuing ground projects.

Furthermore, I have already indicated how Williams does not think that having an internal reason to perform an action that is unethical makes the individual immune to criticism, including being the target of negative thick ethical concepts: “There are of course many things that a speaker may say to one who is not disposed to Φ when the speaker thinks that he should be, as that he is inconsiderate, or cruel, or selfish or imprudent” (“Internal and External” 110). Insofar as integrity is an ethical quality that one can display or fail to display, then we can think that someone who is acting in accordance with what s/he has most reason to do could be criticized for the ethical failing of not having integrity, in the same sense as the individual can be criticized for these other ethical failings.

The ground project for someone who is bent on genocide can provide meaning in that

individual's life, but insofar as the project has motivations and a goal that are counterethical and requires anti-social vices and the absence of virtues,[24] we are not compelled to claim such an individual exemplifies the ethical ideal of integrity. This conclusion is compatible with Calhoun's claim, concerned with integrity being a social value, that "integrity is not just a matter of sticking to one's guns. Arrogance, pomposity, bullying, haranguing, defensiveness, incivility, close-mindedness, deafness to criticism (traits particularly connected with fanaticism) all seem incompatible with integrity" (260). Virtue is bound up in the display of integrity, and recalling from section three of chapter one that there is an inherently social dimension to ethics *as a project*, since integrity involves *personal* commitment to a *pro-social* project and values, there are not grounds for assuming that the virtues involved in Williams' account of integrity are restricted to "personal virtues" and do not include "social virtues".

Because of the ethical core in Williams' account of integrity, his view does not correspond to an identity perspective that considers fidelity to just any ground project as a display of integrity. There is no contention that our understandings about which ground projects have counterethical aims, and which motivational dispositions are virtues (or vices), are not the subject of shared social understandings, which will be important since I intend to combine Williams' and Walkers' accounts of integrity.

3.3 The Clean-Hands View of Integrity

In addition to the identity picture, Calhoun associates the clean-hands picture of integrity with Williams. On the clean-hand perspective, "integrity is a matter of endorsing and, should the occasion arise, standing on some bottom-line principles that define what the agent is willing to

[24] See chapter one, section three for the distinction I make between counterethical and unethical.

have done through her agency… A person has integrity when there are some things she will not do regardless of the consequences of this refusal" (Calhoun 246). Calhoun argues that the clean-hands picture is flawed insofar as it views consequentialism a unique enemy of integrity. A theory of moral justification, she argues, "If it also places value on acting on principle, it does so only insofar as the principle supplies a good reason. By contrast, to value integrity is to place value on an agent's acting from *her* reasons, whether they are good ones or not" (Calhoun 248). A consequentialist can choose to refuse performing actions that do not maximize consequences, even when the decision is not in the consequentialists own narrow self-interest, and this seems to display integrity as much as one who acts on principle regardless of consequences (Calhoun 249).

For Williams, a consequentialist could do make such a decision and display integrity, insofar as his/her ground project involved promoting the greatest consequences in the world. But his criticism is that the morality system, of which utilitarianism is a paradigm example, requires agents to take a certain perspective on their central concerns and commitments (e.g., their categorical desires and ground projects) that make life meaningful for them, regardless of the ethical or nonethical value that the agent and others place on those projects. For a committed utilitarian who places the utmost concern on utilitarian reasoning, views morality as automatically overriding, and has the promotion of utilitarian ends as an overriding ground project, exhibiting integrity would look like what Susan Wolf has called "moral sainthood". On the parameters of impartial morality, an individual must to be prepared and able to give up whatever their commitments are, whether ethical or nonethical, when the sum total comes out against them. Should the dictates of impartial morality (like utilitarianism) have the role of a ground project for an agent that overrides all her other concerns, that agent will have to monitor

her other commitments to ensure impartial morality will trump them and this “will restrict not only the extent but also the quality of one’s attachments to these interests and traits. They are only weak and somewhat peculiar sorts of passions to which one can consciously remain so conditionally committed” (Wolf, “Moral Saints” 429).

When it comes to the actual commitments and attachments that individuals form, there are a wide variety of projects that are admirable both from the ethical perspective construed more broadly than the narrowly moral, and from nonethical perspectives that nonetheless make some contribution to human life that we value, such as artistic perspectives. Insofar as care is something required by all individuals at various times of their lives, particular other individuals whom we love and our relationship with them will be at the center of some of our ground projects. The concern raised from Williams about utilitarianism and an agent’s integrity is not that utilitarianism requires actions the agent views as morally repugnant. It is that utilitarianism and other variations of the morality system require us to view our own life-driving attachments with a sort of detachment and expendability, so long as supreme importance is given to impartial morality, something that impartial morality itself demands (Williams, “A Critique” 116). Insofar as we form ground projects other than (for example) “promote the greatest good for the greatest number”, and insofar as these ground projects are directed towards things we think are not counterethical and promote some value, whether ethical or nonethical, impartial morality encourages against forming such projects and thus against having integrity, unless one’s concerns are just those of impartial morality and nothing more. Insofar as people are relational selves within the world, such a narrowing of one’s concerns will rarely (if ever) be the case.

3.4 Integrity Involving Interpersonal Reliability and Ground Projects

Margaret Walker shares Calhoun's view that the best conception of integrity is a relational account that is interpersonal (*Moral Understandings* 123). Walker understands integrity as a kind of reliability in ethical matters: "reliability in the accounts we are prepared to give, act by, and stand by, in moral terms, and dependable responsiveness to the ongoing fit among our accounts, the ways we have acted, and the consequences and costs our actions have in fact incurred" (*Moral Understandings* 122). Her account is interpersonal because "a central use of 'integrity' then is to describe not only people who act well from, as it were, a standing position but also people who own up to and clean up messes, their own and others. People who don't beg off, weasel out, or deflect flack toward others as life lurches on have integrity" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 125).

Lisa Rivera, in discussing Williams' account of integrity, contends that Williams need not be construed as giving us a comprehensive picture of the notion (72). I am in agreement with Rivera, and want to suggest that we can achieve a more comprehensive picture should we combine the view of integrity that I have attributed to Williams with the view of integrity that Walker offers. One of the main concerns about an attempt to combine these two accounts might involve concerns surrounding enacting a ground project that does not have a counterethical goal in a circumstantially unethical manner. Keeping one's child safe is a fine goal for a ground project, but if one were required in some situation to target and murder an innocent person in order to keep one's child safe, circumstances would (on several accounts, at least) cause moving forward with that ground project to be unethical. Of course, given the goal of that ground project, that could be a tragic dilemma where either option open to the agent would be unethical, and in

order to act in favor of an ethical consideration, the agent must offend against another ethical consideration. Williams' example of the quasi-historical Gauguin from "Moral Luck" is another example of a ground project that is (plausibly) circumstantially unethical and (plausibly) not a tragic dilemma. It should be a hard sell that a ground project oriented toward painting has a counterethical goal, but it should also be a hard sell that abandoning familial responsibilities in order to do so is not ethically problematic in some form. While barring off those ground projects that have a counterethical goal or stem from counterethical motivations, I leave open the possibility that an agent can in some cases display integrity while pursuing a ground project in an unethical manner.[25] Is this idea incompatible with interpersonal reliability as a component of integrity?

I want to make the following suggestion for reconciling the two accounts. An agent can still display integrity when enacting a ground project that does not have a counterethical goal in an unethical manner, depending on how the agent responds after this to what s/he has done. Insofar as we endorse a rejection of ethical considerations as *necessarily overriding* all other sorts of consideration,[26] then if we think an agent can emerge from tragic dilemmas with her integrity intact based on her post-tragic dilemma responses (e.g., not deflecting an acknowledgment of the ethical wrong she has done and engaging in some form of reparation), we should be open to the idea that an agent can emerge with integrity from dilemmas between ethical considerations and considerations of nonethical value where one violates the ethical consideration based on his after the fact responses (e.g., not deflecting an acknowledgement of

[25] Depending on how abhorrent we consider the unethical activity involved, recalling Williams contention that doing *anything* for the sake of a friendship would be pathological. We can make a distinction, in terms of ethical relevance, between stealing in order to feed one's children and starting a nuclear holocaust to save one's children, for example, and think one might be able to retain integrity in the one case and not the other.

[26] This is something that feminists who reject the peculiar institution of morality might have reason to do. Those who want to reject the peculiar institution, but nevertheless want to demand that ethical considerations be necessarily overriding in all circumstances, might want to reflect on why they make this demand.

the ethical wrong he has done and engaging in some form of reparation). On the combined view, our conclusions regarding actual cases for both kinds of scenario, such as whether someone has given proper acknowledgement and reparation, will in accordance with Walker depend on shared, socially situated, ethical understandings.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

The account of integrity that emerges through synthesizing William, Calhoun and Walker is one that is permeated with reliability. From both the interpersonal emphasis of Calhoun and Walker and the social orientation of ethics (and hence virtue), there is the notion that *other individuals can count on an agent*, and connecting this to an agent's ground projects from Williams, there is the notion that *the agent can count on herself.*

I have highlighted a discontinuity in how to understand how ground projects generate meaning in life and ground projects contribute to integrity, in the sense that someone can have a ground project that does the former without doing the latter. In the previous chapter, I argued that what can count as a ground project and what pursuits can give one meaning in life should not be moralized, so that ground projects as such (whether ethical, nonethical or counterethical) cause agents to find meaning in their existence. This lack of ethical restriction is because a ground project and the state of finding meaning in life are not themselves ethical values, but rather reflect a sort of psychological engagement with the world. On the present account, however, integrity is an ethical value, rather than just a matter of an agent's psychology. Hence, unlike with what can provide meaning in life, it is pursuing ground projects that *do not* have counterethical ends that indicates the possession of integrity along one dimension, and not

deflecting the responsibilities for reparation and the justified criticism that are directed towards someone who pursues a ground project that does not have a counterethical end but was circumstantially carried out in a unethical manner that indicates the possession of integrity along another.

The above is compatible with the contention that our determinations about which projects have counterethical ends, or which manners of pursuit are circumstantially unethical, will depend on our situated ethical understandings. We can be cognizant that ascriptions of integrity will be subject to shared, morally situated ethical understandings, and should have the same non-foundationalism as the rest of the ethical tools within a care ethic that rests upon the expressive-collaborative model.

CHAPTER 4

GROUND PROJECTS AND RELATIONAL SELVES

4.1 Chapter Introduction

One of the central features of care ethics is the ontological perspective that the self exists as a self through relation with others and does not have an essential core that can be separated from one's social positioning in the world (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 4). Because one's selfhood is bound up with particular others that one has social relations with, one's own good is not completely separated from, and is to some degree intertwined with, the good of those individuals that one has relationships of care with (Held 15). This entwinement between oneself and particular others entails the care perspective's rejection of categorizing actions and motivations as being either egoistic or impartially altruistic, where altruistic is understood to mean promotion of the good of others that is motivated from impartial reasoning.

If ground projects trap us within an egoism/altruism dichotomy that care ethics rejects, it would be problematic to claim that ground projects can be a tool for the care ethic I support to utilize, and Virginia Held makes the suggestion that ground projects do remain with that dichotomy (92). It would be likewise problematic if ground projects are seen as binding us up with the idea that there is some "core" self separable from one's social world. Hence, the aim I have in this chapter is to argue that Bernard Williams' conception of a ground project is not trapped within a faulty egoism/altruism dichotomy and that his associated notion of character,

which I argued for an understanding of in chapter two, is compatible with the view that the self is relational.

4.2 Ground Projects and the Rejection of the Egoism/Altruism Dichotomy

In discussing the differences between the care perspective and impartial moral reasoning, Virginia Held draws a contrast between care ethics and Bernard Williams' discussion in "Persons, Character and Morality", where Williams describes a husband who invokes impartial moral reasoning to determine that it is permissible to prioritize saving his wife instead of a stranger in a disaster scenario as having "one thought to many" (Williams 18; Held 90). Held claims that the challenges from feminist care ethics to impartial moral thinking "resemble Williams' in some respects, but differ from it in others" (92). Held does not appear to be making an argument against Williams' view, but the difference she points to is one that makes it seem as though Williams' view might be unsatisfactory from a care perspective. The point of departure appears to be that "Williams' arguments are presented from the point of view of a man with a set of projects, the sort of projects that make life worth living for this man" (Held 92). Held follows this with the remark:

> In the example of the wife and the drowning others, the man's wife may be his project, but the dilemma is posed in terms of an individual's own particular goals versus his universal moral obligations. At a formal level it remains within the traditional paradigm of egoism vs. universalism. Williams is unwilling to yield the claims of the ego… But he does not reject the traditional way of conceptualizing the alternatives (92).

Held contrasts Williams' perspective with that of care ethics, contending that care ethics "does not pit an individual ego against universal principles, but considers a particular relationship

between persons, a caring relationship, and questions whether it should always yield to principles of justice. It sees the relationship as not reducible to the individual projects of its members" (92).

Williams' ground project position and the care position are more similar than the picture that Held gives us. I begin with noting that the self-interested / non-self interested divide can be introduced at several levels. Putting the interests of one's social group ahead of one's own can appear selfless to others within that social group, but can still appear self-interested from the perspective of those outside the social group, who themselves are not considered or do not receive the benefits of one's actions: "requirements of benevolence or fairness may always stake a claim against self-interest; we can represent a self-interest as much as I; and who we are depends on the extent of identification in a particular case, and on the boundaries of the contrast" (Williams, *Ethics* 15). So even if within the context of a particular relationship one and the other's interests are intertwined in a manner that problematize the egoism/altruism divide within that relationship, individuals from outside that relationship could invoke some standard to make the claim that the individuals are acting egoistically, since even though intertwined with the other's interests, the individuals' interests are being met.

The problem with the morality that Williams argues against in "Persons, Character and Morality" is that, from the perspective of that kind of moral reasoning, "all nonethical considerations [are] reducible to egoism, the narrowest form of self-interest" (*Ethics* 15). When this morality requires moral reasons and considerations to adhere to standards of impartiality, it means that anything less than universal, impartial rules or considerations will fall under the purview of egoism. What makes a particular relationship of value for a care ethicist (whether it involves protecting those who are vulnerable, fulfilling a societal role, or acting from love) can be egoistic from the impartial morality perspective, assuming these actions were not chosen

because of some impartial rule. Williams' account of ground projects is helpful in pointing out the problem with this dichotomy pitting impartial altruism against individual egoism. Williams himself makes the statement that if we are not motivated like Kant was to reduce nonethical considerations to egoism, "we can accept the obvious truth that there are different sorts of nonethical motivation – and, moreover, that there is more than one kind of motivation acting against ethical considerations" (*Ethics* 15).

Although ground projects are concerned with the agent insofar as they are directed towards satisfying categorical desires, they do not need to have the agent's happiness, whether this is understood as attainment of pleasure or human flourishing, as their goal or even their motivation: "Ground projects do not have to be selfish, in the sense that they are just concerned with things for the agent. Nor do they have to be self-centered… that a man's projects were altruistic or moral would not make them immune to conflict with impartial morality" (Williams, "Persons" 13). Susan Wolf argues against the egoism/altruism dichotomy through invoking the subjective aspect of her account of finding meaning in life, in such a manner that does not (contra Wolf) require her "objective" condition, and hence in a manner that flows from Bernard Williams' account of ground projects and internal reasons.[27] Dividing (forcing) reasons, considerations and motivations into one of these two camps "leave[s] out many of the motives and reasons that shape our lives… Indeed, we might say that the reasons and motives omitted by these models are some of the most important and central ones in our lives… They, and the activities they engender, give meaning to our lives" (Wolf, *Meaning in Life* 2). Wolf argues that meaningfulness, or one's finding meaning in life, is not subsumable under happiness (as understood, for instance, by those who rely on the egoism/altruism divide) or under (impartial) morality (*Meaning in Life* 3).

[27] See chapter two, section three.

A central example that Wolf uses to make this point involves when we "act out of love for individuals about whom we deeply and especially care" (*Meaning in Life* 4). There are several cases where we perform actions that do not promote our self-interest in a narrower sense (such as the pursuit of pleasure or the promotion of our survival)[28] when we act lovingly towards another, and these actions cannot be understood as part of morality when morality is conceived of as acting impartially (Wolf, *Meaning in Life* 4). Wolf also argues that our interest in things and activities other than persons, which she still refers to as falling under "reasons of love", do not depend upon partial reasoning and do not fall under a narrow view of self-interest, giving examples such as "writing philosophy, practicing the cello, keeping one's garden free of weeds, may demand more of one's time and attention than would be optimal from the point of view of one's own well being" (*Meaning in Life* 4). Whether acting out of concern for an individual or some other thing, reasons of love "are not to be assimilated to reasons of self-interest or reasons of [impartial morality]. Insofar as we fail to recognize and appreciate the legitimacy and value of these reasons, we misunderstand our values and ourselves and distort our concerns" (Wolf, *Meaning in Life* 6). I take the objects that we feel our reasons of love towards to be the objects of our categorical desires, and our acting on those reasons of love to be our expression of hope through some ground project.

A categorical desire of course can be in someone's self-interest, or involve a goal that is given from impartial morality. However, given what has been said about categorical desires, there is a disconnect with self-interest (in a narrow sense) insofar as Williams claims that "There is no contradiction in the idea of a man's dying for a ground project – quite the reverse, since if death really is necessary for the project, then to live would be to live with it unsatisfied,

[28] See the point about Williams above, that circles of "self-interest" can be drawn more or less narrowly.

something which, if it really is his ground project, he has no reason to do" ("Persons" 13).[29] Likewise, Williams contends that having an altruistic project, which pursues an end that is moral from the perspective of impartial morality, does not rule out conflict between the ground project and impartial morality ("Persons" 13).

When we recall the point that circles of "self-interest" can be more narrow or broad in terms of their boundaries, then forcing all things into an egoism/altruism divide where impartial moral reasoning is identified with altruism causes all ground projects that do not have a goal that impartial morality would promote to be considered egoistic. Even those that have such goals would be considered egoistic if we take a hard Kantian line and discount them as moral because the projects are based on categorical *desires*.[30] One must have considerations within one's S (for example, certain dispositions resulting from socialization) that dispose one towards the dictates of impartial morality in order for one's categorical desires to take an interest in what impartial morality demands. Hence I contend that when ground projects are considered within other philosophical commitments of Williams, rather than airlifted out of his philosophy in order to stand for the pursuits of atomistic subjects or rational choice theory, ground projects are used as a manner of indicating the problem of clearly demarcating and pitting the moral against the nonmoral, and lead to a rejection of the view where a caring relationship that is pitted against demands of impartial justice has the same status as a narrowly egoistic pursuit.

What about Held's contention that when it comes to care ethics, "the relationship is not reducible to the individual projects of its members" (92)? This contention does not create a

[29] This is, of course, oversimplified. If one has multiple ground projects, and the object of one's categorical desire would fail to be realized for those projects should one die (e.g., one's desire to finish writing a memoire), then one can have some reason to not die for the other ground project. What we have in such cases, where the object of the categorical desire cannot be expected to be realized without one's presence (e.g., a mother who could not expect her partner or other relatives to care for her child), is a tragic conflict of values.

[30] There is of course Christine Korsgaard's brand of Kantianism, where even those maxims that pass the categorical imperative and moral law tests are still based in agential desire/inclination, and are just a special kind of desire ("The Authority of Reflection" 90-105).

conflict with Williams' view, since the relationship need not be reduced to a ground project, anymore than a social cause that one takes part in as a result of a ground project must be. When we consider the significance a particular non-reducible relationship has to an individual in her decision making process, however, we must refer to that agent's psychology (their S), of which ground projects form a crucial component.[31] Someone might regard her relationship with a particular other as having ethical salience in part because the other is uniquely vulnerable to her and she is responsive to this social fact,[32] or perhaps because of what she has been socialized to think about what others expect of the social role that she inhabits. A personal relationship can be seen as significant to oneself for several reasons, and one can prioritize a relationship against the dictates of impartial reasoning for various of these reasons. As Fiona Robinson contends, however, when it comes to those relationships that we consider to be the most significant in our lives: "Do I care about my family and friends because they are vulnerable to me? Do I act morally because I recognize that if I 'withdrew' my care, they would hurt and abandoned? Or do I care about them simply because those relationships in themselves, and the attention which they demand, are inseparable from my moral responses of care in love?" (*Globalizing Care* 28). When considering that a relationship toward another is valued because one regards the other as a unique and irreplaceable individual and values the other for that reason, that relationship will be significant to oneself because the other is the center of a ground project one has.

[31] For the importance of ground projects for an individuals S, see chapter two, sections three and four.
[32] Eva Kittay, for example, is concerned with notions of vulnerability arising within social relationships. See chapter five, section three.

4.3 Individual Character and the Relational Self

Care ethics involves a relational ontology, where the self exists as a self through relation with others, and does not have an essential core that can be separated from one's social positioning in the world (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 4). One might wonder whether the idea of self as relational runs into conflict with the idea from Williams we encountered in chapter two, that a connection is drawn between one's character and one's categorical desires and ground projects (Williams, "Persons" 5). We can see there need be no conflict, should we understand character as equivalent to the provisionally fixed aspects of one's S and understand one's (relational) self as one's identity, which as I argued in chapter two encompasses but is distinct from one's character.

One's relationship to another contributes to an understanding of that person's character just insofar as their relationship, whether in lieu of mere social and/or biological fact (e.g., brotherhood) or through some understanding as to the content of that relationship, is being used to infer dispositions, desires, values, etc. that belong to that individual's S. For someone (call him Carter) to be the son of an infamous serial killer no doubt pertains to how others conceptualize Carter, but insofar as we think this biological and social relationship informs us about Carter's character, it will either be through reference to inherited character traits or to the sort of socialization that we expect Carter to have received from his father. That explains how, if we instead imagined Carter to be the son of a personal hero, we might become disappointed and disillusioned upon meeting him.[33] In the above cases, we will be using the relationship to make inferences about the content of Carter's S.

[33] This is along the same lines of the argument in chapter two, that insofar as we use some sort of group identity (e.g., that someone is Indian) to make comments about an individual's character, we are invoking stereotypes about the S of individuals who belong to that social group.

That the above is the extent of the role that social relationships have in determining character is not to suggest (I) that the social definition of oneself is unimportant compared to one's character or (II) that our social embeddedness is not antecedent to the formation of an individual character. Concerning (I), I have indicated in chapter two that how one responds to, acknowledges, or ignores responsibilities that flow from one's identity can itself affect our understanding of that person's character. That a brother's relationship to a sibling does not register on the brother in terms of acknowledging certain social responsibilities is the sort of thing that can (but does not need to)[34] indicate a lack of integrity, for example. How one carries out or ignores responsibilities connected to shared understandings concerning some social role or relationship will not just affect the evaluation of that person's character from others; it will affect the evaluation coming from her own person as well.

Concerning (II), there is the acknowledgement that one's S set, one's categorical desires and one's ground projects are not formed in a vacuum, with the individual then plunging into the world after her projects are formed. Williams himself advocates that since "we are not unencumbered intelligences selecting in principle among all possible outlooks, we can accept that… [history] has both made us, and made [our] outlook as something that is ours. We are no less contingently formed than the outlook is and the formation is significantly the same. We and our outlook are not simply in the same place at the same time" ("Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline" 490). So long as one does not take the view that one is an unencumbered self whose ground projects are "freely chosen" without influence from one's relations to particular others and from one's society, and we acknowledge that the contents of one's S are to a significant degree constituted through one's social environment, there is not a conflict between viewing

[34] We would need to know more about the particulars of their relationship and the reasons why the fact of biological and familial relationship fails to motivate the brother.

one's character as the provisionally fixed components of one's S and endorsing the relational self.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

I have argued that although some individuals might invoke notions of a ground project in a manner that reinforces a sharp egoism/impartial altruism divide, Williams himself should not be understood as doing so. When combined with other elements of his philosophy, which is when his views on ground projects are at their strongest, the notion of a ground project as something that gives meaning to one's life indicates what is wrong with constructing a dichotomy that places impartial reasoning on one side and all other kinds of motivation as belonging to the other class of "nonmoral" egoism, a position that coheres with the care perspective. Furthermore, I have explained how the notion of character that I attribute to Williams is compatible with the relational self that is central to care ethics.

I have now responded to the three feminist critiques of ground projects that I mentioned in chapter one, and I have further elaborated and developed the notion of a ground project and its implications, as well as the conceptions of integrity and individual character associated with ground projects, through dialogue with these feminist criticisms. Overcoming these three hurdles puts me in the position to introduce ground projects as a tool that care ethics as a framework can utilize in addressing the challenges posed by political activism and resistance.

CHAPTER 5

CARE ETHICS – ETHICAL THEORY VS. ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 Chapter Introduction

As I mentioned in chapter one, there are various versions of care ethics, despite several features that are shared between these versions that separate them from other approaches in ethics (Held 10; Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 25). This diversity makes care ethics more like a cluster of approaches, instead of a singular approach. I am concerned with exploring the contrast between two manners of thinking that care ethics can be designated into. One manner involves construing care ethics as an ethical theory, while the other construes care ethics as an ethical framework. The position which I shall argue for in the next and final chapter, is that the considerations we get from the work of Bernard Williams, particularly those associated with his account of ground projects, favors a version of care ethics as an ethical framework over versions that are ethical theories and indicates that care ethics as an ethical framework is more congenial with feminist concerns. Before moving onto that final discussion, however, I must give a more detailed picture of the features that the different versions of care ethics have in common, as well as explain the difference between ethical theories and ethical frameworks, and indicate which features go along with which associated versions of care ethics. Completing that undertaking is the aim of the present chapter.

5.2 Common Features Across Different Versions of Care Ethics

One of the most central features of care ethics, regardless of whether it takes the form of ethical theory or ethical framework, is the view of the self as relational. On the relational perspective, our identities are mutually constituted within and through our relationships with other individuals (Held 13-4; Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 4). Furthermore, interdependence shared between individuals and dependence upon other individuals are seen as pervasive features of human living, rather than as exceptional or problematic cases: "While the balance and direction of dependence may change over time, dependence is a regular feature of human existence that, for some individuals and groups, is inevitable and permanent. All human beings are dependent on some others at times throughout their lives" (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 11). This acknowledgement of our interdependence reveals that "life as we know it would be inconceivable without relations of care" (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 2). The other central features of care ethics, which I turn to next, flow from this relational ontology concerning human beings (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 29).

The second feature of care ethics involves an orientation towards particular (concrete) others. According to Virginia Held's influential description, care ethics involves "attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility" (10). Because of this focus on actual rather than theoretical or abstract human beings, care ethics addresses ethical problems "in the historical and spatial contexts of real, lived experiences" (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 29). Because one's identity is bound up with particular others, especially those we take responsibility for, one's own good is not completely separated from and is to some degree intertwined with the good of those individuals that one has relationships of care with (Held 15).

This entwinement of one's own good with the good of others leads to the contestation of actions and motivations as being either egoistic or altruistic that was discussed in the previous chapter.

Finally, care ethics causes a conceptual shift that problematizes prevailing understandings of, and even a clean separation between, the so-called "public" and "private" spheres (Held 12; Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 29). In modern Western societies as least, caretaking for children is often thought to be a matter for individual families and not political communities to be concerned with: "The traditional view, built into dominant moral theories, is that the household is a private sphere beyond politics into which government, based on consent, should not intrude" (Held 12). However, various aspects of the "public" domain, including male access to power, resources and opportunities unavailable to women, structure the "private" sphere, something a focus on care brings out when examining how (for instance) patriarchal social conditions bring about an unequal division of labor within the traditional nuclear family (Held 12). Economic globalization also affects who gives care to whom and on what bases within the household, with global capitalism creating a market for migrant care workers in affluent countries: "When we consider care in this way, it becomes difficult to argue that care is a 'private' issue" (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 3).

Having discussed these features that are shared among different variations of care ethics, I now turn to features I associate with care ethics construed as an ethical theory.

5.3 Care Ethics as an Ethical Theory

Virginia Held notes "some advocates of the ethics of care resist generalizing this approach into something that can be fitted into the form of a moral theory" (9). I am among those advocates,

but before discussing those characteristics that push care ethics toward the form of an ethical theory, I need to make clear how I am using the term “ethical theory”. Throughout this discussion, I will adopt Bernard Williams’ usage for the term, where Williams describes an ethical theory as “a theoretical account of what ethical thought and practice are, [where that] account either implies a general test for the correctness of basic ethical beliefs and principles or else implies that there cannot be such a test” (*Ethics* 72).

Using Williams’ above definition, I demarcate ethical theory from other ethical approaches, such as ethical frameworks, that offer some account of the ethical without requiring that one’s ethical conclusions must be capable of being generated from a decision procedure in order for those conclusions to be legitimate in some sense. By a “decision procedure” I mean an intellectual rubric that someone (anyone) can consult in order to claim knowledge concerning the “correct” course of action in some situation. A decision procedure allows someone to “test” possible courses of action and demarcate them as “required”, “permissible” or “impermissible” based on the results of the test. Williams writes that ethical theories “are philosophical undertakings and commit themselves to the view that philosophy can determine, either positively or negatively, how we should think in ethics – in the negative case, to the effect that we cannot really think much at all in ethics” (*Ethics* 74). Although care ethics as a framework contrasts with ethical theories in the negative sense as well, I will be using “ethical theory” just to refer to ethical theories in the positive sense throughout the remainder of this discussion.

The above understanding of ethical theory is an instance of the approach to morality that Margaret Walker calls the theoretical-judicial model, which recalling our discussion in section two of chapter one, “prescribes the representation of morality as a compact, propositionally codifiable, impersonally action-guiding code within an agent, or as a compact set of law-like

propositions that 'explain' the moral behavior of a well-formed moral agent" (*Moral Understandings* 8). As expressions of the theoretical-judicial model, ethical theories entail a manner of approaching ethical life that is both individualist and impersonal. Ethical theory is individualist "in its assumption that the central moral concepts and premises are to equip each moral agent with a guidance system he or she can use to decide upon a life or its parts" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 9). Ethical theory is impersonal in that "the right equipment tells one what is right to do (or explains why something is right to do) no matter who one might happen to be and what individual life one is living" (Walker, *Moral Understandings* 9). So ethical theories are incompatible with an expressive-collaborative approach to ethics (also introduced in section two of chapter one).

It might be the case that several accounts of care ethics will contain features that clash with the above kind of ethical theory. For example, Tove Pettersen, whose care ethic is one of the versions that I contrast with care ethics as an ethical framework within chapter six, describes her own account of care ethics as a "bottom up" model, which she asserts stands in contrast with the "top down", theoretical-judicial model (31-2). Her own usage of ethical theory, which she considers her care ethics to be an instance of, she contends is more "minimalistic": "A normative ethical theory is considered as a philosophical attempt to provide reasons for why one should support certain moral principles, attitudes, conducts and/or virtues" (Pettersen 47). However, regardless of whether or not theorists intend to build up care ethics into a full-blown ethical theory, care ethicists are at risk of conceptual slippage and (unwittingly) bringing elements of

ethical theory over into their views.[35] The remainder of this section points toward different tendencies a care ethic can have that push it towards the realm of ethical theory.

One such tendency is an insistence that in order for considerations of care to serve as legitimate guidance, care ethics must be founded on some "purely" evaluative premise or ideal, which is sharply demarcated from descriptive information about the world coming from lived experiences or the social sciences (Pettersen 40). For Pettersen, the "expanded principle of not hurting" fulfills this role, where that principle prescribes (negative duties) refraining from inflicting harm on others and (positive duties) intervening in situations where intervention is required for preventing harm (41-2). The demand that the recommendations of care ethics be premised upon some non-descriptive transcendent principle, rather than for instance thick ethical concepts, reactive attitudes, considerations of human flourishing, the outcome of collaborative discussion with particular others, and/or ground projects involving particular others, is a reductionist move that pushes care ethics toward that "peculiar" institution of morality and its "pure" moral knowledge. Of particular concern in the next chapter will be whether founding the "authority" of care ethics upon such principles as "the expanded principle of not hurting" will make injunctions to care "too thin" in content to be helpful in giving guidance and resolving disagreement, and whether that principle in particular is a potential impediment to feminist goals.

Another tendency that can push care ethics toward ethical theory, and one that connects to concerns about care ethics being "too thin", is for care to be conceptualized as some sort of abstract, ill-defined "normative good". Davina Cooper argues that despite "constant injunctions to write in care's specific context and derive good notions of care in relation to it… and despite Gilligan's influential work on women's 'different voice' as something contextualized rather than

[35] See for example Davina Cooper's discussion in her "'Well, you go there to get off': Visiting Feminist Care Ethics through a Women's Bathhouse" concerning the practices in the Toronto Women's Bathhouse, where she highlights the conceptual abstractness and slippages that care discussion is prone to.

abstract, the idealist tendencies of much care writing privilege a kind of disembodied, disembedded utopianism" (252). This abstractness is problematic because a "lack of specificity in normative care writing enhances care's wider discursive power without being able to effectively anchor care to a progressive or feminist project" (Cooper 252). For care ethicists to present care as though it were some normative good that can be promoted, distributed and/or maximized, like pleasure for a utilitarian, makes care ethics akin to a species of welfarism with the goal of creating the "most caring world". If that is conceived as the goal for care ethics, it is not a far step to consider whether there is or should be a decision procedure for figuring out how one's actions will best contribute to the realization of the most (or a more) "caring world".

The last tendency I raise involves the notion that someone, through considering the relationships tied to her social role, can come to determinate conclusions about what anyone who inhabits her social role ought to do (from an ethical perspective) in her given situation. Eva Feder Kittay, building upon Robert Goodin, discusses the perspective that vulnerabilities within relationships give rise to obligations: "What is striking about [the Vulnerability Model] is that the moral claim arises not by virtue of the properties of an individual – construed as rights, needs or interests – but out of a *relationship* between one in need and one who is situated to meet the need" (55). Concerning the roles that individuals inhabit, Kittay points toward familial ties, friendship, and paid employment as examples of social roles that "serve as socially acknowledged justifications for the charge being vulnerable to the actions of this particular individual" (57). The present concern is *not* to contest the idea that certain vulnerabilities can generate obligations or responsibilities for individuals who are positioned to assist. Nor do I suggest that other features of one's social roles and relationships cannot generate obligations and responsibilities. Rather, I want to raise concerns about care perspectives that suggest one can

invoke social roles as a decision procedure about what courses of action (for example) mothers, husbands, or teachers should take in given situations, rather than (for example) collaborating with others and negotiating the meaning of our social roles within some context.

Virginia Held, in contrasting care ethics with impartial moral theories and describing how the two can conflict, constructs a case that illustrates differences between care ethics and utilitarianism. The case in question involves a schoolteacher, who must pick between the alternatives of helping troubled children after school hours and spending afternoons / evenings with his child. Held stipulates that on the utilitarian calculation, the teacher/father "ought to devote more time to his work, staying at his school after hours and so on, and letting his wife and others care for his own young child" (97). Held also stipulates that teacher/father "thinks that from the perspective of care, he should build the relationship he has with his child, developing the trust and mutual consideration of which it is capable… the moral demands of care suggest to him that he should spend more time with his child" (97-8).

Held acknowledges that "there could be ways of interpreting the problem that would avoid a conflict between impartial moral rules and the pull of relationship between parent and child, but then the case would not be the one I am considering. The case I examine is one where the moral agent must choose whether impartiality or care should have priority" (98). I am not sure what implications Held intends for this acknowledgement, in conjunction with her example, to have – she could mean that one might attempt to dissolve the conflict through stipulating differently how much pleasure and pain will be experienced from everyone involved. Or Held could mean that a teacher/father could think that the perspective of care in fact requires him to spend time with his students rather than his child (perhaps considering vulnerabilities like Kittay discusses could prompt him to that conclusion). What would be disconcerting, however, would

be for a care ethic to recommend that teacher/fathers *as such* must prioritize their own children over students, just as it would be disconcerting for care ethics to recommend that teacher/fathers *as such* must prioritize students over their children.

Whether or not Held would endorse the view, discussions of care do seem to prioritize family considerations *as such*. We can see this prioritization when considering Marilyn Friedman's criticism of Bernard Williams' suggestion that a father could be justified in forsaking his family in order to enact a ground project: "In terms of a care ethic, the pressing human claims forsaken by Williams' artist were precisely those of close family relations for whose care the artist was responsible. For these persons, there is no risk of good or bad luck but rather a near certainty of suffering" (166). Although it might in part be due to the nature of Gauguin's project, we should remember that Friedman considers artwork as a metaphor for whatever project might cause one to forsake familial considerations (164). There will be a significant difference between holding that care ethics should cause such a father to acknowledge an ethical remainder to his decision even should the decision be justified, and that care ethics should in all circumstances prohibit the pursuit of a ground project at the expense of familial wellbeing. I argue in chapter six that protecting one's family from suffering, if viewed as necessarily overriding, is hostile to feminist projects and goals.

5.4 Care Ethics as an Ethical Framework

The second manner of dividing care ethics that I make utilizes a care perspective not as a normative theory that involves a decision procedure, but rather as a framework for focusing our attention and for interpreting the domain of the ethical. Care ethics as an ethical framework

differs also from negative ethical theories, because the framework provides us with (to borrow a term from Amartya Sen) “an informational focus”, which brings under our purview which features of the universe are relevant for our making assessments of social conditions (Sen 231). The account of care ethics as an ethical framework developed here draws heavily upon the work of Fiona Robinson, whose care ethic is based upon Walker’s expressive-collaborative model for ethics.

Understood as an ethical framework, care ethics is not first and foremost prescriptive in nature or purpose: “Instead of prescribing ‘right’ or ‘good’ ethical behavior, [the aim of care ethics] is to provide a framework for interrogating the patriarchal conditions under which values and practices associated with caring have developed” (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 32). This approach does not posit “care” itself as a “normative good” that should be maximized (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 28). Instead of a normative theory that provides some utopian picture of how the world ought to be (e.g., a more caring world) or that contains a decision procedure that can generate the “right answer” to a given problem (e.g., “correct” care), care ethics as an ethical framework contains various “critical tools” for evaluating and criticizing the distribution of responsibilities to care and current constructions of our social (ethical) relations within our global political context (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 105). The notion of care ethics as involving critical examination of existing social relations is a central component of care ethics as a framework (Robinson, *Globalizing Care* 47-8; Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 28). Robinson argues that the “critical lens of care ethics exposes the ways in which dominant norms and discourses sustain existing power relations that lead to inequalities in the way societies determine how and on what bases care will be given and received” (*The Ethics of Care* 28).

Viewed as an ethical framework, care ethics takes a naturalistic approach to ethics, where "naturalistic" is understood in a broad sense. On this broad understanding, a naturalistic perspective of ethics is contrasted with a supernaturalistic perspective: "It [means] the kind of ethical view that stems from the general attitude that [humans are] a part of nature… Views that are naturalistic in this broad, useful sense do not necessarily commit the 'naturalistic fallacy'" (Williams, *Ethics* 121). Walker describes the expressive-collaborative model as being naturalistic in this sense, since it conceptualizes "morality as a phenomenon of human life in real time and space [consisting] in trust-based relations anchored in our expectations of one another that require us to take responsibility for what we do or fail to do, and that allow us to call others to account for what they do or fail to do" (*Moral Repair* 23). The expressive-collaborative model, and hence care ethics as a framework, joins Williams in rejecting morality as a "peculiar institution", or a domain isolated from other domains of human thought, since the perspective views moral relations as seated in, understood and expressed through our social relations (Walker, *Moral Repair* 26; Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 26).

The informational focus of the care framework centers attention on how actual practices of caregiving are foundational social relationships through which moral responsibility finds expression (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 4). Utilized as a framework, care ethics can reveal new possibilities for ethical life through examining how our relationships and hence responsibilities to one another (and ourselves) are organized and can be reconfigured: "Hence, claims about what ought to be the case are never abandoned entirely. But these claims cannot be judged or justified according to some transcendent or external standpoint – rather, they are always context dependent and always subject to revision and reconfirmation" (Robinson, *The Ethics of Care* 28).

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

Within this chapter, I have given detailed support for the contention, which first appeared in chapter one, that care ethics is a cluster of approaches rather than a singular one. In describing which features push care ethics towards ethical theory, and which features make care ethics an ethical framework, I have set the stage for a comparison of different versions of care ethics, which will aid feminists in determining which version is best suited for feminist goals and projects. Such a comparison takes place in the next and final chapter, where I consider connections and potential conflict between care ethics and those engaged in some sort of political resistance or revolution, something that should be of particular concern for those who (like feminists) are interested in combating oppressive and exclusive social conditions.

CHAPTER 6

CARE ETHICS AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE

6.1 Chapter Introduction

In her “Caring as a Feminist Practice of Moral Reason”, Alison Jaggar argues that care ethics diverts an individual’s attention from structural and societal sources of oppression, and hence Jaggar concludes that care ethics might be problematic as a feminist ethic (195-6). The problem I consider in this chapter stems from a related concern, which remains even if, as others such as Fiona Robinson have argued, care ethics is capable of focusing on and critiquing social arrangements. This question is not whether care ethics is capable of attending to oppressive social structures and background conditions, but whether care ethics (and if so, which versions) is capable of recommending or even permitting actions that are required to make effective change in combating societal sources of oppression and exclusion. I argue that when construed as an ethical theory with the features I discussed in the previous chapter, care ethics either is rendered silent on this question or else promotes a protective stance that recommends against the sorts of actions required of political resisters and for the practical goals of feminists, since these actions involve bringing danger and/or harm (of various kinds) upon intimates that one has special personal relationships with. For reasons separate from those Jaggar suggested then, when care ethics is construed as an ethical theory, it is questionable as a feminist ethic. As an ethical

framework, however, I argue that care ethics can approach this issue through engagement with the ground projects of (potential) political activists and those in close social relationship to them.

6.2 Efficacious Political Resistance and Activism

In her "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy", Iris Young advocates in favor of non-deliberative political practices as a source of democratic criticism (41). The deliberative political practices, engagement in deliberative democracy, is understood "both [as] a normative account of the bases of democratic legitimacy, and a prescription for how citizens ought to be politically engaged. The best and most appropriate way to conduct political action, to influence and make public decisions, is through public deliberation" (Young, "Activist Challenges" 42). Young acknowledges the importance and value of deliberative democracy, but contends that non-deliberative activism is also required for democratic aims that promote justice: "Bringing the approaches into critical relation with one another in this way, however, helps sound a caution about trying to put ideals of deliberative democracy into practice in societies with structural inequalities" ("Activist Challenges" 41-2).

In societies with structural inequalities (that is, in all societies that have existed), there are concerns about engaging in an open discussion with those who have coercive power over oneself. The concern is that "powerful officials have no motive to sit down with [an activist], and even if they did agree to deliberate, they would have the power unfairly to steer the course of the discussion" (Young, "Activist Challenges" 43). This genuine possibility can cause someone who supports a cause to engage in various nonviolent actions that can be more efficacious in realizing her goal, such as picketing, street demonstrations that hold up traffic, sit-ins, boycotts,

destruction of property, or disrupting attempts at deliberation that the powerful officials do partake in (Young, “Activist Challenges” 44).

Young details, throughout her article, various reasons for considering non-deliberative political action as something to be pursued. What is relevant for our present purposes, once we acknowledge the importance of non-deliberative political action, is the potential strain such action can place on an activist’s personal relationships and the risk of danger that it brings for particular others connected to the activist. Lisa Tessman, in her *Burdened Virtues*, argues that certain virtues required for conducting effective political resistance exact a toll on the individual that bars the individual from flourishing (107). Tessman argues “the traits that enable resistance and the traits that enable human flourishing often fail to coincide” (114). Although when discussing human flourishing Tessman is coming from the perspective of an Aristotelian virtue ethic, her discussion raises concern about conflict between practices that might be required for political resistance and practices sustaining close interpersonal relationships with particular others (e.g., family and friends). An emphasis on the courage and commitment required for an individual to pursue political resistance raises questions about potential conflicts between “risking oneself in order to achieve victory in a battle against injustice or seeing to it that one returns home consistently, attentively, and safely enough to be able to love and care and be loved and cared for well” (Tessman 126). The demands of political resistance include facing consequences that can range “from being socially ostracized and harassed and having one’s children taunted, to losing one’s job or being jailed, or more drastically, to being tortured or killed” (Tessman 126).

There is reason for feminist care ethicists not to frame this dilemma facing political activists[36] as though it must be or fundamentally is a conflict between considerations of care on the one side and non-care considerations, whether justice or otherwise, on the other. To set up the dilemma in this manner would be in accordance with Marilyn Friedman's contention, when she critiques Williams' discussion about Gauguin abandoning his family in order to produce great paintings, that her discussion treats "artwork" as "a metaphor for any project other than caring for one's intimates and for the sake of which one might abandon those care-giving responsibilities" (Friedman 164). This construal of the conflict between ground project and familial responsibility has the unfortunate effect of reinforcing the idea of care as a *private* morality as opposed to a *public* one. If we recall the discussion in chapter three, the aim of the ground project getting prioritized over caring for one's intimates could, while having circumstantially unethical implications, nevertheless have an ethical goal. The implication that care ethics would condemn pursuing a ground project in such circumstances obscures the consideration that the ground project competing with familial considerations could in fact itself have a goal that is ethical, even if not overriding, *from* the perspective of care ethics. Remembering how one of the central features of care ethics is a contestation of a clean separation between of human life into "private" and "public" spheres, we can see that it is problematic to not acknowledge that a care perspective can pull someone in competing directions in those situations when certain ground projects conflict with responsibilities for one's intimates, with a possibility that could be an ethical cost whatever one decides.

Once we have acknowledged the existence of ground projects other than caring for intimates that can have an ethical focus from a perspective of care, we bring into focus the problem with construing care ethics as an ethical theory with the above characteristics I

[36] I understand "political activism" as encompassing political resistance.

mentioned. Positing "care" or a "caring relationship" as a normative good is unhelpful, since this move does not itself inform us how the good should be distributed, something that is in accordance with Cooper's criticism of idealizing care where the "lack of specificity in normative care writing enhances care's wider discursive power *without being able to effectively anchor care to a progressive or feminist project*" (252, emphasis added). Contending that the normative good of "care" or "caring relationships" should be promoted according to some decision procedure, such as the expanded principle of not hurting or thinking that certain kinds of intimate relationships (e.g., familial or friendship-based ties) fundamentally and/or *overridingly require* individuals to subordinate other considerations to them, will be problematic for reasons I will discuss in the upcoming two sections. The next section illustrates the problem of grounding responsibilities to care in an overarching principle, using the expanded principle of not hurting as an example, whereas the section after that demonstrates the problem with thinking that social roles themselves entail overriding requirements for their inhabitants, even if there is not a single overarching principle (like the expanded principle of not hurting) that grounds the overriding requirements of these roles.

6.3 Problems with the Expanded Principle of Not Hurting

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Tove Pettersen argues that care ethics should be based upon the expanded principle of not hurting (hereafter referred to as EPNH), which prescribes that an agent refrain from causing harm and intervene where intervention is required for preventing harm (41-2). This intervention component is seen to be important because of emotional, psychological and physical harm that can stem from a failure to care (e.g., inaction) within

relationships (Pettersen 159). Nevertheless, intervening to prevent harm cannot be an option should intervention require harming someone else, since Pettersen stipulates that inflicting harm on someone for the (greater) good of others is *incompatible* with the ethics of care (41). Hence the EPNH entails a perfect duty to not cause harm that is universalizable and "held by all, owed to all" (Pettersen 72).

The EPNH is purported to guide, rather than determine, our decisions regarding care while requiring us to being sensitive to particular contexts, requiring co-feeling and communication with others when determining what actions will cause or prevent harm (Pettersen 59, 102). However, although contextual information should be heeded to help in determining which actions can prevent harm and which can cause harm, the overriding prohibition against causing harm that stems from the EPNH is demanded of each (and any) agent regardless of the situation that agent finds herself within. Thus the EPNH is invoked in a more ambitious manner than some helpful heuristic device, and does fulfill requirements of a decision procedure in giving a test (does the action violate the perfect duty to not cause harm) that actions can pass or fail and thus be taken out of consideration for.

The use of the EPNH in this decision procedure manner should be disconcerting for feminists who think that efficient political resistance, needed for feminist aims, will require as a practical matter *some* degree of violence or threats of violence. If skeptics are well-founded in their skepticism that nonviolent resistance[37] can in all political circumstances be capable of progressive political change, and if care ethics takes violence off the table regardless of the form that the violence takes, and as a result prohibits political activists from doing what is required to eliminate sources of oppression and exclusion in the world, then care ethics might be of limited

[37] I use nonviolence here to mean both refraining from intentionally inflicting damage on the bodily integrity of others and also to refrain from making threats to inflict damage on the bodily integrity of others.

use for feminists. However, these same worries are *also* present for those who contend that nonviolent resistance is capable of achieving whatever feminist goals are realizable in the world, because the EPNH involves an abstract notion of what it means to hurt and to be harmed. Pettersen contends that where the EPNH is concerned, harm is "understood in a broad sense; it includes emotional and psychological harm on connected selves" (96-7). Without more detailed notions concerning what counts as harm and/or what harms we should care about,[38] "not causing harm" is such a thin concept that it can be stretched to encompass such a large range of actions that, insofar as there is an overriding prohibition against inflicting harm, most outlets for political resistance will be barred off.

Recall the various nonviolent courses of action that Iris Young attributes to the political activist who does not find deliberative democracy sufficient: picketing, holding up traffic, sit-ins, boycotts, disrupting attempts at deliberation (e.g., with smoke or stink bombs), and/or destruction of property ("Activist Challenges" 44). Insofar as such nonviolent actions and the altercations with others that flow from them are relied upon to instigate political change, it will be through generating emotions such as discomfort, annoyance, embarrassment, guilt, shame, and desperation, perhaps even fear, in those that one wants to persuade in a nonviolent manner. Some of these kinds of action (e.g., destruction of property and boycotts) place financial strain on particular individuals and others for whom that individual is responsible, while others (e.g., picketing and holding up traffic) can have adverse social effects in the lives of particular individuals who are impeded. That the EPNH treats harm like some idealized "evil" that should be avoided, a counterpart to the idealized "good" of care that should be promoted, leaves nonviolent feminists with the same problem faced from those feminists who find some degree of

[38] Going back to the discussion of ground projects from chapter two, should we contend that we (in some sense) harm a pedophile through not letting him pursue a ground project (molesting children) that gives him meaning in life, we might nevertheless think this is a harm we are not responsible for preventing.

violence acceptable: through prohibiting political activists from doing what is required to eliminate sources of oppression and exclusion in the world, care ethics might be of limited use for feminists.

Even if the EPNH could incorporate a more detailed account of what counts as harm, so that nonviolent political resistance does not inflict harm on those it is targeted towards, the EPNH still faces a problem. Recall Tessman's description that depending on one's cultural, historical and economic circumstance, hostile reactions to political resistance can range from having one's intimates harassed and terrorized, to losing one's source of income and ability to provide for dependents, to (in dire circumstances) torture and death (126). If someone pushes forward in a cause for progressive feminist goals after threats have been made against that person and her intimates, and those threats are made good against her intimates as a result of her perseverance, should she be regarded as causing that harm or as failing to prevent that harm? If someone must leave behind one's intimates in pursuit of a ground project aimed at political change, and those intimates connected to that person suffer after her absence, has the person caused that suffering or just failed to prevent that suffering? What if the nonviolent resisters actions get her fired or killed for pursuing her ground project, both things that (at least financially) obstruct her from supporting her dependents?

It is misleading to claim that the nonviolent activist is "the cause" of the harm in an ethical sense within the first sort of scenario, where the nonviolent activist's continued political action is the direct reason that aggressors enact their threats against the activists intimates, and where it is straightforwardly true that if the activist had not continued political action then the aggressors would not have enacted their threats, for the reasons related to integrity that Williams brings forward in his criticism of utilitarianism ("A Critique" 99, 109). As Williams argues the

point in his example of Jim and Pedro:[39] "While the deaths, and the killing, may be the outcome of Jim's refusal, it is misleading to think, in such a case, of Jim having an *effect* on the world through the medium (as it happens) of Pedro's acts; for this is to leave Pedro out of the picture in his essential role of one who has intentions and projects" ("A Critique" 109). To understand the distinction between person A's harming or killing person C, and person B's harming or killing person C as direct reaction to what A does, instead of invoking a distinction between action and inaction (or intervening vs. letting things take their course), we should be cognizant of the distinction between the projects of A and the projects of B (Williams, "A Critique" 117). Otherwise, Williams argues, "this is to neglect the extent to which *his* actions and *his* decisions have to be seen as the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and attitudes with which he is most basically identified" ("A Critique" 116-7).

The above considerations of integrity, coupled with ideas that get inspiration from Iris Young's critique of the liability model of responsibility, indicate that it is also misleading to claim that the nonviolent activist is the "cause" of the harm in an ethical sense within the second and third sort of scenarios I described. Young writes that under the liability model of responsibility: "one assigns responsibility to a particular agent (or agents) whose actions can be shown to be causally connected to the circumstances for which responsibility is sought" ("Responsibility" 116). Young does not contest that the liability model is appropriate in several circumstances, nor do I – indeed, the liability model is needed in order to focus punishment towards or demand reparations from those individuals that carried out their threats against the activist's intimates within the first sort of scenario I described. The liability model allows for

[39] The example involves a researcher (Jim) stumbling upon a captain (Pedro) who is about to execute twenty Indians who were protesting the government (as a warning to other potential protesters). Pedro tells Jim that as his "guest of honor", should Jim shoot (and kill) one of the Indians, Pedro will arrange for the other nineteen to be set free. If Jim refuses, then Pedro will order for all twenty Indians to be murdered (Williams, "A Critique" 98-99).

Williams' line of analysis that the causes of the harm in these scenarios are the ones whose projects and desires motivated them to perform those actions that physically or psychologically entailed the harm, and we must consider the ethical status of those projects as part of determining how we want to respond to such perpetrators. Young argues that the liability model ceases to be appropriate, however, when multiple actors perpetuate structural injustice but the individual participants are not aiming to bring about the injustice in question**.** Because the negative outcome stems from complex processes involving multiple actors, where it concerns those individuals whose actions contributed to yet did not intentionally or physically bring about the outcome, we cannot trace the outcome to their actions in a direct mechanistic causal chain (Young, "Responsibility" 118).

The present argument does not involve a direct application of Young's own proposed social connection model. Young's own discussion concerns multiple actors whose actions have an underdetermined role in the production of structural injustice when taken in isolation, but nevertheless perpetuate structural injustice when combined, with her contending that "while it is usually inappropriate to *blame* those agents who are connected to but removed from the harm, it is also inappropriate, I suggest, to allow them (us) to say that they (we) have nothing to do with it" ("Responsibility" 118). The kinds of considerations that indicate the liability model to be unsuitable for the perpetuation of structural injustice, however, are also relevant for the second and third scenarios I offered above. Like the production of structural injustice, what happens to the intimates in those situations is the result of interplay between several actors, economic and political institutions. In the second scenario and third scenarios, there are questions concerning which other individuals (e.g., relatives, friends, public servants) are in a position to assist the activist's intimates and the reason those individuals do not assist should they be so positioned. If

others are not in the position to assist, there are questions about what the reasons for that are, which point to the relevancy of the surrounding economic and political institutions in which the activist and her intimates are enmeshed (we might consider, for example, how the presence or lack of a social safety net bears on such scenarios).

However, to insinuate that the nonviolent activist in those scenarios merely failed to prevent harm to her intimates is problematic as well, for to speak in this manner *also* downplays the role of one's actions in bringing about what occurs, as though one were a bystander who stumbled across a situation already in progress. In discussing the example of Jim and Pedro, William suggests that if it is causally true that Pedro would not have killed the Indians had Jim not refused, this "may be enough for us to speak, in some sense, of Jim's responsibility for that outcome, if it occurs" ("A Critique" 109). Within Williams' own scenario, we can make a distinction between Jim's not saving the Indians insofar as Jim is not capable (like some fictional action hero) of snatching Pedro's gun and killing Pedro and his men, and Jim not saving the Indians because *he* (while capable) refuses Pedro's offer. Once Pedro has made his offer to Jim, and once threats are made to the nonviolent activist, these individuals cannot claim to be bystanders to an event; doing so involves deflecting responsibility in the manner Walker argues people with integrity stand against.

The idea that the nonviolent activist still in virtue of her connection has *shared responsibility* for the harm on her intimates is also relevant for the second and third scenarios. In describing the social connection model and the responsibility individuals who perpetuate structural injustice share, Young contends: "Each individual is personally responsible for outcomes in a partial way, since he or she alone does not produce the outcomes; the specific part that each person plays in producing the outcome cannot be isolated and identified, however, and

thus the responsibility is essentially shared" ("Responsibility" 122). A similar idea applies in the scenarios I have discussed, since although there an interworking of factors brings about the harm to the activist's intimates, the activist did have a role in producing that state of affairs and so shares in the responsibility for them.

The idea that someone can be in some positive sense responsible for harm without being "the cause" of that harm problematizes the clean division, which the EPNH relies upon, between refraining from causing harm and intervening where that is necessary to stop harm. The EPNH relies on this divide so that, through having the intervention requirement dissipate should this require one to be the cause of the harm, the EPNH will avoid irresolvable moral dilemmas where an agent is pushed in incompatible directions (Pettersen 98). Thus the EPNH cannot make adequate sense of, let alone guide us out of, conflicts within the sorts of scenarios I posed. The suggestion that the EPNH could be further expanded to include, in addition to refraining from causing harm and requirements to intervene to prevent harm, a clause about refraining from performing actions that require one to take shared responsibility for harm, is dubious because of our globalized economy.[40] Even if the expansion could be achieved, that principle, if it is supposed to entail perfect duties, would still be inadequate without an argument that duties to refrain from performing actions that require one to take shared responsibility for harm should be always be subservient to the duty to not cause harm. Should we decide on a contextual basis whether we are more prepared, from the care perspective, to live with personally causing some harm or "sharing responsibility" for some harm, the EPNH has ceased to be something more than a heuristic to remind agents about the ethical salience of harm.

[40] This point is demonstrated in Iris Young's discussion of the interconnections between globalized economic systems, consumers in affluent countries and sweatshops in developing countries ("Responsibility" 107-11).

Other attempts to construct overarching principles to ground what we (anyone) ought to do from a care perspective, for instance, contending that one ought in all circumstances to prioritize responding to or protecting those who are vulnerable to oneself, even most vulnerable to oneself,[41] face the same sorts of problems as the EPNH. For example, if the conception of vulnerability is too thin and tries to encapsulate all stripes of vulnerability under one heading of "vulnerability",[42] such a principle will not be helpful in directing how one's care should be apportioned (who is "more" vulnerable to oneself, the friends and family one has, or comrades in a political cause who rely upon one's virtues and expertise?). Having discussed the problem with attempting to include a decision procedure in care ethics that invokes overarching principles as something more ambitious than heuristic devices, I turn in the following section to a different manner of incorporating a decision procedure into care ethics.

6.4 Problems with Overriding Obligations to Protecting/Cultivating Intimates

The other association I presented in chapter five between care ethics and ethical theory involved the idea that someone must prioritize care for intimates over care for "more distant" others because of the *type* of social relationship (e.g., father) one has. As I have suggested before, this idea can be illustrated through Marilyn Friedman's criticism from the perspective of care of pursuing ground projects that cause an individual to forsake the needs of one's intimates, for whom one is said to be responsible, on the grounds that for those intimates "there is no risk of good or bad luck but rather a near certainty of suffering, and possibly, of tragedy" (166). The ground project of a nonviolent activist whose political endeavors entail the possibility, or in

[41] Instead of considering others' vulnerability as one factor amongst others in considering what (and who) one is responsible for, like care ethics as a framework can do.
[42] Akin to how the EPNH utilized a thin conception of harm that was stretched to cover too much ground.

some scenarios the near certainty, of adverse outcomes such as losing her job (e.g., source of income), getting killed in action, or provoking violence against her family leaves the nonviolent activist's intimates in similar straights.

The above idea can also be illustrated through changing Held's teacher/father example to that of activist/father, while holding consistent the contention that *in virtue of his (or anyone's) role as a father* "from the perspective of care, he should build the relationship he has with his child, developing the trust and mutual consideration of which it is capable… the moral demands of care suggest to him that he should spend more time with his child" (Held 97-8). If a parent's devoting a great deal of his/her personal time to helping his/her students were to always go against what care ethics ultimately demands of him/her as a parent, having to go into hiding as a result of one's political activism, or risking imprisonment and/or death would go against the demands of care as well.

Following the discussion in the previous section about the problems with the expanded principle of not hurting, and the risk of and/or actual harm that political activism brings to one's intimates, it should be predictable how overriding obligations to protecting and cultivating one's intimates should be a problem for feminists. Political activism, whether violent or nonviolent, provokes aggression from those wanting current social/political/economic arrangements to be maintained, for instance arrangements that non-whites cannot eat in the same restaurant as whites or that women should not be allowed to vote. Answering Alison Jaggar's challenge regarding the alleged parochialism of care ethics must involve care ethics being capable of attending to *and assist in changing* structural sources of oppression and exclusion, so that political activism can stem from ground projects that have ethical goals from the perspective of care. But political activism takes a toll (sometimes a considerable one) on the activist's intimate others and her

relationships with them. So if care ethics overridingly requires protecting one's intimates, for example, from failing to have certain needs met or from assaults on bodily integrity or from psychological damage *just in virtue* of the kind of relationship to those intimates one has (e.g., as a parent), then due to prohibiting political activists from doing what is required to eliminate sources of oppression and exclusion in the world, care ethics might be of limited use for feminists.

Matters become more complicated when we emphasize that a "critical care ethic" that is reflective enough to answer Jagger's challenge must, as Fiona Robinson has argued, involve a critical questioning of the social context in which our caring relations towards one another are created, sustained and disrupted (*Globalizing Care* 47-8). While a care ethics involves responding to situations that necessitate care for particular individuals, our focus on meeting needs is flawed from a feminist perspective when our focus is too narrow; following the insight of Margaret Walker,[43] feminists should be aware of and in some manner factor into their deliberations the social conditions that give rise to particular needs and make a demand for particular forms of care. As Robinson puts the point, we should be cognizant of "where, why and how the structures of existing social and personal relations have led to exclusion and marginalization, as well as to how attachments may have degenerated or broken down so as to cause suffering" (*Globalizing Care* 46).

Such social consciousness worsens the dilemma for the individual (and would-be activist), if for the reasons discussed above care ethics will regardless of the individual's identity close off political activism that would contribute to changing social conditions for the betterment

[43] Walker argues that to attain a critically informed understanding of the distribution of responsibilities within a moral community, we must interrogate the background social conditions generating both vulnerabilities that give rise to a demand for responsibilities and also the assignment of responsibilities, itself a social factor that gives rise to particular vulnerabilities (*Moral Understandings* 93-6).

of her intimates *because* those intimates would also be jeopardized from her actions. Since that same care ethic, if it is critical, involves awareness of how structural oppression and exclusion affect the kinds of relationships we can have with our intimates and the kinds of relationships our intimates are capable of forming with others, care ethics would prohibit someone from engaging in the activism needed to change the social relations that she recognizes contribute to marginalization, oppression and exclusion in the lives and relationships of those she cares for. Rather than suggest that the considerations raised in this section and the previous one indicate that care ethics should be jettisoned as a feminist ethic, or made secondary to another feminist ethic that is purported to permit needed political activism, I suggest that what feminists should jettison is attempts to construe care ethics as an ethical theory.

6.5 Interpersonal Collaboration – Care Ethics as a Framework and Ground Projects

I have discussed how care ethics, when construed as an ethical theory that contains a decision procedure, faces serious obstacles to being a feminist ethic. Directly following on the discussion above, I argue that care ethics, when construed as an ethical framework without a decision procedure, does not run into these problems of closing off political activism required for feminist goals. I contend that care ethics as a framework, having the more modest concern of providing conceptual orientation and conceptual tools for both interpreting and reflexively interrogating the ethical landscape, instead of utilizing some method for generating codes of conduct, can take into consideration the ground projects of political activists and their intimates in a productive manner. This is because the ground project of an individual, and the multifaceted ways in which that ground project affects that individual's relationships with particular others, can *itself* be one of

the conceptual tools within a care ethic framework that is relevant when examining and considering how our practices for responding to one another can be reconfigured (for better or worse).

We should remember the crucial role of ground projects in the lives of individuals. Ground projects are an expression of the agent's hopes regarding those desires that propel her forward and give her an interest in life,[44] and insofar as these ground projects do not stem from counterethical motivations, developing virtues which allow one to stand up for her ground projects is a crucial though not exhaustive condition for displaying the ethical concept known as integrity.[45] So care ethics' attentiveness toward the interests of particular others should, in order to make sense of those things that are of most interest to one another, involve agents who use a care ethics framework taking into consideration the ground projects of particular others. Insofar as someone regards (at least some of) her interests as entangled with the interests of particular others, the ground projects of those particular others, so long as those ground projects are not considered counterethical from one's care framework, will be relevant for the agent in thinking about her own good.[46] In some cases, this entanglement of interests might involve the agent adopting the ground project of particular others as her own, so that the individuals *share* a ground project. In cases where one does not come to share the ground project of a particular other, the ground projects of particular others who are the focus of one's own ground project(s)[47] should at least cause one, when determining how to enact one's own ground project, to take into consideration the conditions for realizing or continuing the ground projects of those particular

[44] See chapter two.
[45] See chapter three.
[46] I do not consider here the question as to whether the care perspective should prompt one to (in some cases at least) view a particular other's pursuit of a counterethical project to be part of her own good.
[47] E.g., one has a categorical desire to cultivate and maintain a relationship that has certain qualities with a particular other, or to (in a more general sense) promote the wellbeing of a particular other.

others (something which could involve, for example, attempts to instill in others the virtues required for integrity).

I want to look at a discussion Williams has that emphasizes the above point, and illustrates how to help situate thinking about conflicts from a care perspective concerning on the one hand protecting the wellbeing of particular others and cultivating our relationship with them, and on the other hand engaging in political activism that entails risks for those connected to oneself. The discussion is ironically relevant to the discussion insofar as it involves the potential for conflict between an obligation to a particular other (a promise that one has made to a friend) and an unexpected opportunity one has to further some political cause. Williams points out that should contextual information be added to such a schematic examples, the purported conflict might in fact dissolve: "There is the question of your friend's attitude toward the cause and also toward your support of the cause. If he or she favors both, or merely the second, and would release you from the promise if you could get in touch, only the stickiest moralist would find a difficulty. If the friend would not release you, you may wonder what sort of friend you have" (*Ethics* 180). These two attitudes Williams describes correspond with two ideas I mentioned above, that of two individuals within a particular relationship sharing a ground project and that of one individual not sharing the other's ground project but still giving that ground project important weight in her deliberations.

The above idea, something in accordance with an expressive-collaborative view of ethics, involves the importance of co-deliberation and communication in determining whether one's actions will in fact involve an ethical cost from a care perspective (and if so, how serious that cost is), with no procedure for how all the relevant factors must be weighed. Insofar as the ground project of a political activist is also the ground project of those intimates who are placed

at risk from the activist's actions, a collaborative discussion of various factors could allow it to make sense that one does not wrong those particular others from a care perspective. Recall that ground projects involve the notion that one's reason for action can involve sacrificing oneself for a ground project.[48] Should the ground project of the activist be shared with her particular intimates, since even if those intimates are not themselves political activists they might enact that ground project through *supporting* the activist in some sense, those intimates could be prepared like the activist to be endangered or even killed from hostile reaction to attempts that aim to realize the object of their (shared) categorical desire. Should the ground project itself not be shared between the activist and her intimate, that intimate might, in order to promote *his* own ground project centered around the activist and his relationship to her, still endorse facing whatever backlash the activist incurs as pursues her ground project

In other scenarios, the activist and her intimates might determine from utilizing a care ethic framework that the political ground project should not (at least for the time being) be pursued, perhaps through considering ground projects in relation to other conceptual tools within the ethical framework. Our actual world is permeated with structural sources of oppression and exclusion, and Iris Young's aforementioned social connection model calls attention the manner in which we are implicated in reproducing these structural maladies. In discussing the forward-looking[49] and shared aspects of responsibility in her social connection model, Young contends: "It is asking too much to expect most of us to work actively to restructure each and every one of the structural injustices for which we arguably share responsibility" ("Responsibility" 125). In

[48] "There is no contradiction in the idea of a man's dying for a ground project – quite the reverse, since if death really is necessary for the project, then to live would be to live with it unsatisfied, something which, if it really is his ground project, he has no reason to do" (Williams, "Persons" 13).

[49] When used in a forward-looking manner, claiming that an agent is being responsible "does not imply finding the agent at fault or liable for a past wrong, but rather refers to the agent's carrying out activities in a morally appropriate way and aiming for certain outcomes" (Young, "Responsibility" 119).

sketching some solutions in regards to how we then figure out our responsibilities,[50] Young proposes since "a combination of responsibilities may be overly demanding, and given that agents have discretion in how they choose to discharge their responsibilities, it is reasonable to say that it is up to each agent to decide what she can and should do under the circumstances, and how she should order moral priorities" ("Responsibility" 126). This proposal is compatible with Williams' portion of the conception of integrity. Young also adds, however, something that is in accordance with Walker's portion of the conception of integrity: "Others have the right to question and criticize our decisions and actions, however, especially when we depend on one another to perform effective collective action. Part of what it means to be responsible on the social connection model is to be accountable to others with whom one shares responsibility" ("Responsibility" 126).

Conceptions of shared responsibility and forward-looking responsibility are also conceptual tools that have a place within care ethics as an ethical framework; these notions are at least consistent with, and probably coherent with, care ethics' notion of the relational self. Let us then return to the co-deliberation and communication between the activist and her intimates. The care perspective could push them to conclude that the activist should not pursue her political ground project (for the time being at least), should this political ground project jeopardize other ground projects held by the activist or intimates or both, and should the they conclude that there other activists who are for whatever reason better positioned to pursue this political ground project.[51] Due to the conceptions of integrity and shared responsibility that find a place within

[50] Young distinguishes between a duty and a responsibility, in that duties involve specific rules regarding which actions can count as performing one's duty, while responsibility is more vague about what can count as upholding it ("Responsibility", 125-6).

[51] There could be less risky ground projects with feminist aims that the activist could pursue, or perhaps the activist could find a small (and considerably less dangerous) way to still pursue her the ground project (even if that were to boil down to providing moral support for those who are activists who are directly engaged with the struggle).

care ethics as a framework, these individuals would be open to criticism for deliberating and deciding in the manner they did, as would those individuals who decide to go ahead with the political ground project that incurs risks. As Fiona Robinson conveys in her description of care ethics as a framework, ethical conclusions about what care ethics requires "cannot be judged or justified according to some transcendent or external standpoint – rather, they are always context dependent and always subject to revision and reconfirmation" (*The Ethics of Care* 28).

I have described how care ethics as a framework can in some scenarios dissolve the purported dilemma between care ethics pulling one in the direction of political activism and pulling one in the direction of caring for one's intimates, through indicating, via consideration of ground projects, situations where the two in fact coincide or where one will determine that demands from one of the directions are not (despite first appearances) present. Thus care ethics as a framework has resources for striving toward what Tove Pettersen hopes to accomplish with the EPNH and what she considers as important characteristic of care ethics, that of dissolving (apparent) dilemmas involving conflict through finding solutions that are agreeable to all relevant parties, or through balancing the needs of self and other that characterizes Carol Gilligan's "mature care" (100-1). However, care ethics as a framework will not be able to dissolve all scenarios where considerations of care pull one in multiple conflicting directions, and to make this a requirement for a "correct" conception of care ethics as Tove Pettersen does[52] in regards to whatever situations one might encounter, "is to misplace the source of the agent's

[52] "This means the dilemma in question cannot be dissolved within the existing theoretical framework. That framework harbors a contradiction since it requires the agent to adopt two incompatible alternatives. As I see it, generally speaking, such a situation calls for a revision of expansion of the moral theory in question" (Pettersen 98).

trouble, in suggesting that what is wrong is his thought about the moral situation, whereas what is wrong lies in his situation itself" (Williams, "Conflicts of Values" 74).[53]

Whether a particular scenario is from the care perspective capable of being resolved without ethical remainder cannot be determined *a priori*, but will require contextual information concerning the ground projects of the relevant individuals and the ethical aims and/or requirements of those ground projects, a narrative concerning how the individuals found themselves within the dilemma in question, and various other factors. Depending on contextual considerations, such as the content of the ground projects held by the relevant individuals and the narrative explaining how the dilemma arose, in some scenarios the competition between some form of political activism and one's intimates might not be resolvable without remainder, although the individual might decide in light of the contextual information that one or the other pull is stronger, even if the other pull is not eliminated.

6.6 Thesis Conclusion

The arguments in this chapter against care ethics as an ethical theory, and in favor of care ethics as an ethical framework, suggest that it becomes dubious to make generalizations that an ethic of care "requires" or "prohibits" engagement in political activism that does not have counterethical aims but nevertheless makes one and one's intimates vulnerable and/or leads to certain (important) needs being unmet. I contend that such universalistic statements regarding such political activism should be viewed akin to how Williams suggests we view external reasons statements; like how external reasons statements express "optimistic" internal reasons statements

[53] For Williams' response to how individuals like Pettersen construe the logic of moral dilemmas, see the article "Ethical Consistency", 179-186.

or express a desire for states of affairs that the speaker has reason to want, universalistic statements coming “from” a care perspective regarding political activism that does not have counterethical aims should be seen to express an “optimistic” view that individuals in certain sorts of situation will decide to act how the speaker would or express a desire for people utilizing the care perspective to contribute in bringing about the state of affairs the speaker has reason to want.

I have argued over the course of this thesis that Williams’s views on ground projects are not hostile to feminism, contending that ground projects do not (as such) reflect the socio-historical career self, that ground projects can have a role within an interpersonal understanding of integrity, and that a focus on ground projects goes along with care ethics in contesting making sense of our motivations through a sharp egoism/altruism divide. I have also argued that since ground projects can have aims that are ethical from a care perspective, it becomes problematic to assume there is a decision procedure that (independent of ground projects) can determine what “the care perspective” requires from each of us. And I conclude that care ethics as an ethical framework can incorporate ground projects as one of the critical tools we have access to when discussing with our particular others what we should do when encountering the bleak decisions that life constantly throws our way.

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VITA

Benjamin Kenofer graduated from Portland State University in the fall of 2011 with a Bachelor's of Science in Philosophy and Social Science, and expects to graduate from the University of North Florida in the summer of 2014 with a Master of Arts in Practical Philosophy and Applied Ethics. During his time at UNF, Ben has served as a graduate teaching assistant for the philosophy department, serving as a breakout instructor for Introduction to Philosophy courses. His main areas of interest are in ethics, feminist theory, social and political philosophy, and personal identity.