

# Defending Kant Against Noddings' Care Ethics Critique

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It is said that Nel Noddings “has given theoretical voice to the ethics of care...rejecting all aspects of an ethics based in abstract principles in favour of an ethics concerned only with particular relationships based on caring.”<sup>1</sup> The care ethics that Noddings lays out is intentionally and fundamentally at odds with Kant’s ethics. Care theory, she says, “reverses” and “inverts” Kantian priorities.<sup>2</sup> She points to three ways that Kant’s ethics is turned upside down by care ethics. She states:

Kant subordinated feeling to reason. He insisted that only acts done out of duty to carefully reasoned principle are morally worthy. Love, feeling, and inclination are all supposed by Kant to be untrustworthy. An ethic of care inverts these priorities. The preferred state is natural caring; ethical caring is invoked to restore it. This inversion of priority is one great difference between Kantian ethics and an ethic of care.

Another difference is anchored in feminist perspectives. An ethic of care is thoroughly relational...A relational interpretation of caring pushes us to look not only at moral agents but also at the recipients of their acts and the conditions under which the parties interact.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Sherwin, “Feminist and Medical Ethics: Two Different Approaches to Contextual Ethics,” *Hypatia* 4 (1989) No. 2: 70 n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Nel Noddings, *Educating Moral People* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 14, 86; and *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Nel Noddings, *Educating Moral People*, 14.

Contrary to Kant, who insisted that each person's moral perfection is his or her own project, we remain at least partly responsible for the moral development of each person we encounter. How I treat you may bring out the best or worst in you. How you behave may provide a model for me to grow and become better than I am. Whether I can become and remain a caring person—one who enters regularly into caring relations—depends in large part on how you respond to me.<sup>4</sup>

Noddings' version of feminist care ethics thus professes to be incompatible with Kant's ethics. She says that "care ethics...rejects...Kantian principle-based ethics."<sup>5</sup> John Paley confirms that "the ethics of care has usually been regarded as anti-Kantian."<sup>6</sup> In spite of this, some Kant interpreters have claimed that there is no sharp division between Kant's ethics and care ethics. Marcia Baron argues that "Kant's ethics doesn't require detachment from other persons and from one's own projects except in a way that is not objectionable and is congenial to feminism."<sup>7</sup> Paley makes the stronger claim that due to what Kant says about interdependence, context, teleology, and emotion, he "can be regarded as a care ethicist."<sup>8</sup>

Given Noddings' important role in defining care ethics, her claim that care ethics operates in complete opposition to Kant's ethics is important. Is Kant's ethics so fundamentally unlike care ethics in the three ways Noddings describes? To help answer this question, we must reconsider Noddings' criticisms. In this paper, we will leave aside Noddings' first criticism, that

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>6</sup> John Paley, "Virtues of autonomy: the Kantian ethics of care," *Nursing Philosophy* 3 (2002), 134.

<sup>7</sup> Marcia Baron, "Kantian Ethics and Claims of Detachment," in *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, ed. R. Schott (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 160.

<sup>8</sup> Paley, 139.

Kant misunderstands the nature and the role of human feelings, emotions, and inclinations, because others such as Jeanine Grenberg, Nancy Sherman, and Michael Burke have already contributed to a rethinking of Kant's treatment of feelings and emotions.<sup>9</sup> Noddings' second criticism is that Kant's ethics, unlike care ethics, is not relational and that thus it fails to recognize the ways that actions affect others and that people interact. A relational ethic is one that includes and is attuned to not only moral agents but to those who receive their actions and to the conditions under which they interact. On this point, we will see that Noddings does not give Kant enough credit and that there are at least relational pieces of Kant's account of moral duties and virtues. Two relational pieces in Noddings' sense are the adoption of the veil of philanthropy and hospitality. Noddings and Kant both maintain that we have moral obligations to act in ways that are philanthropic and hospitable. Kant offers a view of our moral obligations that is identical to that detailed in Noddings' care ethics and that is relational in precisely the ways that care ethics is relational. Does it follow that Kant is a care ethicist? This seems unlikely given all that Kant says about the rational, unconditional, and universal nature of moral principles. But minimally, it means that since Kant understands and describes the relational nature of certain obligations, it is overly simplistic to identify care theory in terms of a reversal or inversion of Kant's theory.

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<sup>9</sup> See Jeanine Grenberg, "Anthropology from a Metaphysical Point of View," *Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999), 92-116; "Feeling, Desire and Interest in Kant's Theory of Action," *Kant-Studien* 92 (2001), 153-79; Nancy Sherman, "The Place of Emotions in Kantian Morality," in *Identity, Character, and Morality*, edited by Owen Flanagan and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990, 149-170; "Reasons and Feelings in Kantian Morality," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55 (1995), 369-77; *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Michael Burke, *The role of feeling and sensibility in Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy* Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University Chicago, United States-Illinois. Retrieved November 8, 2010, from Dissertations & Theses @Loyola University Chicago. (Publication No. AAT 3367098).

Noddings' third objection accuses Kant of failing to see that we bear some responsibility for the moral growth and perfection of others. She is correct that Kant says we have a duty to further our own perfection but our duty to others is to promote their happiness, not their perfection (6:385).<sup>10</sup> In spite of this claim however Kant provides an account of how we facilitate others' moral growth and development through moral education. The same kinds of activities that we engage in to further our own perfection we must provide to others. For example, Kant says that furthering our own perfection requires cultivating our reason and will. We must also enable others to cultivate their reason and wills and, although Kant does not explicitly say so, in so doing we help to advance their perfection. Thus, Noddings' third criticism of Kant is also simplistic and overstated.

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**I**n this section, we dispute Noddings' claim that Kant's ethics is not relational in the way that care ethics is. The argument depends on identifying essential similarities between care ethics and Kant's ethics. The two concepts central to care ethics that are used to make this case are confirmation and hospitality. The same concepts and the actions that they morally require are then shown to be obligatory in Kant's ethics as well, under the names of the veil of philanthropy and hospitality. Let us turn first to Noddings' account of care ethics and to the activity of confirmation.

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<sup>10</sup> All references to Kant's works are cited in the body of the paper. Pagination is to the volume and page number in the standard edition of Kant's works, *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, edited under the auspices of the Königl. Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900-). The translations are from: *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)—*Critique of Practical Reason*, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, and *Toward Perpetual Peace*.

In care theory, Noddings distinguishes between those who care and those who are cared-for. The examples she provides are of parents and children or teachers and students. In these relationships, one party is the carer and the other is the cared-for and while each party has responsibilities to the other, they do not have the same responsibilities. The teacher's responsibility is to care for the student and the student's responsibility is to respond to the caring received from the teacher. Noddings does not explicitly consider other more equal relationships, such as those between friends or colleagues, where perhaps the parties are both carers and cared-for at the same time. We will set aside the question of who the carers and the cared-for are in order to focus on what caring itself entails. Noddings says:

As teacher, I am, first, one-caring. The one-caring is engrossed in the cared-for and undergoes a motivational displacement toward the projects of the cared-for.... She is present to the other and places her motive power in his service. Now, of course, she does not abandon her own ethical ideal in doing this, but she starts from a position of respect or regard for the projects of the other.<sup>11</sup>

Respect is at the forefront of this relationship of carer and cared-for. The one-caring is attentive to the cared-for and respects the thoughts and projects of the cared-for. The cared-for responds to the attention from the one-caring. When the cared-for makes a mistake, the actions of the one-caring are kind and aimed at enabling the cared-for to improve.

When a student cheats, for example, the teacher needs to be concerned with the student's motive and what this behavior means for his or her growth as a person.

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<sup>11</sup> Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 176.

Caring teachers do not confine themselves to stopping undesirable behavior and meting out fair or impartial punishments. They begin with the best possible motive, consonant with reality, and help the student to understand and evaluate his or her own thinking and behavior.<sup>12</sup>

The key concept in this passage is the idea of beginning with “the best possible motive consonant with reality.” Noddings explains elsewhere that a teacher who confronts a cheating student might say, “I know you want to do well” or “I know you want to help your friend” and from there the teacher helps the student come to better understand his or her thoughts and choices.<sup>13</sup> The one-caring ascribes the best possible motive to the cared-for’s action and instead of accusing or berating, the carer looks generously on the wrong act and thereby upholds respect for the person who committed the wrong act. Noddings calls this act of attributing the best possible motive an act of confirmation. She states:

To confirm others is to bring out the best in them (Buber, 1958/1970). When someone commits an uncaring or unethical act (judged, of course, from our own perspective), we respond—if we are engaging in confirmation—by attributing the best possible motive consonant with reality. By starting this way, we draw the cared-for’s attention to his or her better self. We confirm the other by showing that we believe the act in question is not a full reflection of the one who committed it.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Nel Noddings, “Caring: A Feminist Perspective,” in *Ethics for Professionals in Education*. eds. K.A. Strike and P.L. Ternasky (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993), 50-51.

<sup>13</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 178.

<sup>14</sup> Noddings, *Educating Moral People*, 20.

The one-caring meets the cared-for “as he is and finds something admirable and, as a result, he may find the strength to become even more admirable. He is confirmed.”<sup>15</sup> The act of ascribing the best possible motive to others is valuable because it sustains respect and self-respect and makes possible moral improvement. In the act of confirming (caring, respecting) others, even in the face of their faults and mistakes, it becomes possible for them to strive for their better selves. Noddings believes that these actions of respect are morally required. She acknowledges that care ethics like deontological ethics speaks of obligation.<sup>16</sup> We have an obligation to view others’ actions in the best possible light as a way of respecting and caring for them. The end promoted by such action is the moral improvement of others. This obligation is not unique to care ethics; Kant shares the view that there is an ethical requirement to respect others that includes overlooking their mistakes and faults. These actions in turn make possible moral growth.

Kant’s ethics, just like Noddings’ care ethics, considers our obligation to ascribe the best possible motives to others. For both, this action follows from our respect for others and it functions to make possible the moral improvement of others. If this notion is a relational aspect of Noddings’ ethics, then Kant’s ethics is similarly relational. Kant calls this duty to others philanthropy but it is the same as Noddings’ account of confirmation and similar to what others term a “hermeneutic of generosity.”<sup>17</sup> In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant says:

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<sup>15</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 179.

<sup>16</sup> Noddings, *Educating Moral People*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Paul Farmer’s discussion of the “hermeneutic of generosity” in Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man who would Cure the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 215. A hermeneutic of generosity is a generous attitude that requires one to act charitably towards another, by presuming that the other is well-intentioned and sincere. Farmer also employs by name a hermeneutic of generosity in his study of AIDS and Haiti (*AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992], 235, 243, 250, and 263).

It is, therefore, a duty of virtue not to take malicious pleasure in exposing the faults of others so that one will be thought as good as, or at least not worse than, others, but rather to throw the veil of philanthropy [*den Schleier der Menschenliebe*] over their faults, not merely by softening our judgments but also by keeping these judgments to ourselves; for examples of respect [*Beispiele der Achtung*] that we give others can arouse their striving to deserve it. (6:466)

Kant describes this duty to apply the veil of philanthropy in terms of philanthropy and respect. There are two sections in the *Metaphysics of Morals* where Kant speaks of the love of human beings (*Menschenliebe*) and respect (*Achtung*). First, he states that the love of human beings and respect are two of the four subjective conditions of receptiveness to the concept of duty (6:399). They are thus natural predispositions of the mind on the side of feeling. They are not themselves duties because they are preconditions for duty. Every human being has these predispositions and it is because of them that we can be put under obligation.

Second, when Kant lays out the “duties of virtue to others,” he distinguishes between duties to others that put others under obligation and duties to others that do not put others under obligation (6:448). “Love and respect are the feelings that accompany the carrying out of these duties.” (6:448). Duties of love put others under obligation (“I make myself deserving from him”) but duties of respect do not (“I keep myself within my own bounds so as not to detract anything from the worth that the other, as a human being, is authorized to put upon himself”) (6:450). Thus, Kant distinguishes between the “duty of love to other human beings” and the “duties arising from the respect due others.” His point is that as a kind of shorthand we

can divide duties to others into duties of love and duties of respect but strictly speaking we do not have duties to love and respect *as feelings*. So, love [*Liebe*] is to be thought of as “the maxim of *benevolence* (practical love) [*Wohltollens (als praktisch)*]” (6:449) and respect [*Achtung*] is understood as “the maxim of limiting our self-esteem by the dignity of humanity in another person, and so as respect in the practical sense” (6:449).

The passage above that describes our duty to cast the veil of philanthropy over others’ faults is found in Kant’s discussion of the second type of duties to others, duties of respect. Yet the passage speaks both of the love of human beings, *Menschenliebe*, and of respect, *Achtung*. The duty it refers to requires human moral agents to “throw the veil of philanthropy” and to “give examples of respect.” Technically, the duty named in this passage is classified by Kant as a duty of respect, a duty “regarding the respect that must be shown to every other human being” (6:462). The reason for the duty to apply the veil of philanthropy is not love of humanity but respect for the dignity of humanity. At the same time, Kant gives a reason for not insisting too strictly on the difference between duties of love and duties of respect. He maintains that although they can be discussed separately and can exist separately, “they are basically always united by the law into one duty” (6:448).

The duty to apply the veil of philanthropy is restated later on in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. Kant describes:

[...] a duty to respect [*Achtung*] a human being even in the logical use of his reason, a duty not to censure his errors by calling them absurdities, poor judgment and so forth, but rather to suppose that his judgment must yet contain some truth and to seek this out, uncovering, at the same time, the deceptive illusion...and so, by explaining to him the possibility of his having erred, to preserve his respect for his own understanding. For if, by using such expressions, one denies any understanding

to someone who opposes one in a certain judgment, how does one want to bring him to understand that he has erred?—The same thing applies to the censure of vice, which must never break out into complete contempt and denial of any moral worth to a vicious human being; for on this supposition he could never be improved, and this is not consistent with the idea of a *human being*, who as such (as a moral being) can never lose entirely his predisposition to the good. (6:463-4)

Kant recognizes a moral duty to show respect towards others by not excessively chastising them for their errors. Duty is said to require looking kindly on the mistakes of others. Kant even gives several examples of how to do this. We should downplay our criticisms of others' faults or even keep quiet in our negative judgments of them. We should not highlight or draw attention to their faults. We ought "to presume that the other's judgment must yet contain some truth and to seek this out." In sum, we must offer a generous or charitable interpretation of another's act or judgment, by supposing that there is some truth or some good present in it. Throwing the veil of philanthropy over others' mistakes means assuming the best of others and being cautious in our acts of reproach or criticism.

This sounds like Noddings' explanation of our obligation to engage in acts of confirmation. Kant and Noddings both start from an ethical position of respect for others and conclude to a moral requirement that others' faults and mistakes ought to be viewed charitably. Furthermore, the discussion of this duty is tied to the larger question of what are the conditions that make possible moral development and improvement. Noddings and Kant see that an important effect of treating others' mistakes charitably is the ability of others to improve. Our actions of confirmation and casting the veil of philanthropy enable others to maintain their self-respect and the respect of others and to move closer to their better selves and to virtue. Insofar as

Noddings' ethic is relational in describing the nature and the effects of our obligation to act in confirming ways, Kant's ethic is similarly relational in requiring us to apply the veil of philanthropy and thereby facilitate others' moral growth.

A second concept that connects Kant's ethics and Noddings' care theory is hospitality. While Noddings and Kant make only brief references to hospitality, they nevertheless consider it to be an important part of moral human interaction.<sup>18</sup> Both approaches to ethics claim that morality calls for and requires hospitality and that hospitality serves to promote moral growth and development. Hospitality provides a second example of how Kant's ethics is relational in the way that care ethics is, by paying attention to the way actions are received by others and to the conditions for interaction.

Noddings states that care theory "concentrate[s] on establishing the conditions most likely to support moral life."<sup>19</sup> Hospitality is one such condition because it allows us to learn how to move out into the world and enter into relations with others. Noddings says:

Perhaps the first step in wandering forth is learning to "welcome in." As children learn the rudiments of hospitality, they gain appreciation for the objects in their possession and also for the ways of strangers. Of course, they also learn forms of diplomacy that range from the standard rules of courtesy to gross hypocrisy... In homes

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<sup>18</sup> See the following discussions of hospitality: Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 172-73; Dwayne Huebner, "The Vocation of Teaching," in *Teacher Renewal*, eds. F.S. Bolin and J.M. Falk (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987), 22; Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 50; Edith Doron, "At Hospitality's Threshold: From Social Inclusion to Exilic Education," *Curator* 52 (2009) No. 2: 169-82; Trudy D. Conway, "From Tolerance to Hospitality: Problematic Limits of a Negative Virtue," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 16 (2009) No. 1: 1-13; and Laurence Cornu, "Trust, Strangeness and Hospitality," *Diogenes* 55 (2008) No. 4: 15-26.

<sup>19</sup> Noddings, *Educating Moral People*, 9.

children learn what is valued in residents and guests...Children learn not only what is valued in residents and guests but what is expected when they move out into other homes.<sup>20</sup>

According to Noddings, situations of hospitality are one of the first ways that children have encounters and begin to learn about the world outside the home. As a consequence of these encounters, when children move out into the world, they take with them the habits of respect, conservation, and so on, that they learned at home. A child's capacity for response reveals a basic moral need—the need to care—and this takes the child “beyond duty to something deeper that may go by the same name but induces the great joy of reciprocity.”<sup>21</sup> Hospitality is basic to both the understanding of others and to self-understanding. By means of hospitality, we learn about the guests and strangers who are welcomed and about what is expected of us as we are welcomed to other homes. Hospitality provides a way to engage others in reciprocal relationships and in so doing to foster our own growth. Noddings states that “moral education is an essential part of an ethic of care, and much of moral education is devoted to the understanding of self and others.”<sup>22</sup>

Care ethics employs the image of circles in describing the nature of social relationships. Noddings says:

We find ourselves at the center of concentric circles of caring. In the inner, intimate circle, we care because we love...As we move outward in the circles, we encounter those for whom we have personal regard...Beyond the circles of proximate others are those I have not yet encountered. Some of these are linked to the inner circle

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<sup>20</sup> Noddings, *Starting at Home*, 172-73.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>22</sup> Noddings, *Educating Moral People*, 15.

by personal or formal relations...But what of the stranger, one who comes to me without the bonds established in my chains of caring? Is there any sense in which I can be prepared to care for him? I can remain receptive.<sup>23</sup>

Noddings' care theory acknowledges that there are ethical obligations to strangers and guests. It views the moral life as requiring that we move outside of narrow circles of relationships into wider circles of community. Noddings views hospitality as a basic and common way in which we engage with others and as a form of interaction that facilitates moral growth. Hospitality serves an educational role in that it teaches us what is valued and what is expected, both of ourselves and others. For Noddings, hospitality extended to others is the occasion for moral education and growth. She speaks particularly of the value of hospitality to the host, rather than to the guest.

Kant discusses hospitality in *Toward Perpetual Peace* and in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In *Toward Perpetual Peace*, hospitality is identified as a right and, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, it is called a virtue of social intercourse. Most commentators have focused exclusively on what Kant says pertaining to the right to hospitality. Kevin Thompson argues that Kant's right to universal hospitality is rooted in market cosmopolitanism and not moral cosmopolitanism.<sup>24</sup> Raymond D. Boisvert notes that Kant's right of hospitality sets only minimal standards for action and no obligations of positive welcome.<sup>25</sup> Monica Greenwell Janzen builds on Kant's right to hospitality by arguing that hospitality, large scale or small scale,

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<sup>23</sup> Noddings, *Caring*, 46-47.

<sup>24</sup> Kevin Thompson, "Sovereignty, Hospitality, and Commerce: Kant and Cosmopolitan Right," *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik* 16 (2008) 306.

<sup>25</sup> Raymond D. Boisvert, "Ethics is Hospitality," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 78 (2004) 291.

helps citizens develop civic virtues.<sup>26</sup> Sarah Holtman however looks specifically at Kant's treatment of hospitality as a virtue. She applies Kant's social grace of hospitality to our contemporary period post 9-11.<sup>27</sup> Finally, Wendy Sarvasy and Patrizia Longo link Kant's view of hospitality to feminist concerns regarding the world community. They argue that there is a "neglected, non-individualistic, relational dimension to Kant's right to hospitality that lends itself to a feminist reinterpretation."<sup>28</sup> Kant's right to hospitality, they maintain, provides a beginning point for a feminist care understanding of a cosmopolitan community. We will consider first Kant's concept of a right to hospitality but in the end we show that his duty of hospitality provides an even stronger connection to feminist care theory because of the way it speaks to the centrality of relationships and the conditions that make possible moral improvement.

In the Third Definitive Article for Perpetual Peace, Kant says:

Here, as in the preceding articles, it is not a question of philanthropy but of *right*, so that *hospitality* [*hospitalität*] (hospitableness) means the right of a foreigner not to be treated with hostility because he has arrived on the land of another. The other can turn him away, if this can be done without destroying him, but as long as he behaves peaceably where he is, he cannot be treated with hostility. What he can claim is not the *right to be a guest*

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<sup>26</sup> Monica Greenwell Janzen, *Hospitality: Resolving gross inequalities of welfare and cultivating civic virtue*. (2006). Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, United States -- Minnesota. Retrieved March 4, 2010, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text. (Publication No. AAT 3240477).

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Holtman, "Civility and Hospitality: Justice and Social Graces in Trying Times," *Kantian Review* 6 (2002) 85-108.

<sup>28</sup> Wendy Sarvasy and Patrizia Longo, "The Globalization of Care: Kant's World Citizenship and Filipina Migrant Domestic Workers," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6 (2004) No. 3: 395.

[*Gastrecht*] (for this a special beneficent pact would be required, making him a member of the household for a certain time), but the *right to visit* [*Besuchsrecht*]... (8:357-8)

[...] this right to hospitality [*hospitalitätsrecht*] – that is, the authorization of a foreign newcomer - does not extend beyond the conditions which make it possible to *seek* commerce with the old inhabitants. (8:358)

Kant makes these same points without speaking of hospitality by name in the “Doctrine of Right” section of the *Metaphysics of Morals*. He calls the rational idea of a peaceful community of all nations on earth a principle having to do with rights, “not a philanthropic (ethical) principle” (6:352). Nations have a right to offer to engage in commerce with each other and no one may be treated as an enemy for having so offered. This right is called a cosmopolitan right. It means that citizens of the world may try to establish community and may “*visit* all regions of the earth” (6:353).

In these passages, Kant explains the right to hospitality, which is a right not to be treated with hostility when arriving on foreign shores. It includes the right to seek commerce and to visit other lands but not the right to be a guest or to settle in those lands. It seems that the right to hospitality sets some rather minimal conditions for how to treat foreigners in the context of a world community. The right to hospitality, understood as a basic requirement that strangers ought not be treated as enemies, serves to make civil society possible. Kant argues that such rights further the possibility of a world community (8:358).

For our purposes in assessing Noddings’ criticism of Kant, the real question is whether there is any moral requirement or duty to hospitality. In the Appendix to the *Metaphysics of*

*Morals*, entitled “On the virtues of social intercourse,” Kant states:

It is a duty to oneself as well as to others not to *isolate* oneself (*separatistam agere*) but to use one’s moral perfections in social intercourse (*officium commercii, socialibilitas*). While making oneself a fixed center of one’s principles, one ought to regard this circle drawn around one as also forming part of an all-inclusive circle of those who, in their disposition, are citizens of the world—not exactly in order to promote as the end what is best for the world but only to cultivate what leads indirectly to this end: to cultivate a disposition of reciprocity...and so to associate the graces with virtue. To bring this about is itself a duty of virtue...*Affability, sociability, courtesy, hospitality [Gastfreiheit], and gentleness* (in disagreeing without quarreling) are, indeed, only tokens; yet they promote the feeling for virtue itself by a striving to bring this illusion as near as possible to the truth. By all of these, which are merely the manners one is obliged to show in social intercourse, one binds others too; and so they still promote a virtuous disposition by at least making virtue fashionable. (6:473-74)

He recognizes a realm of social commerce and interaction within which there are social graces or manners or virtues. In this social realm, we ought to aim towards reciprocity, towards including in our circle of relations all citizens of the world.

One of the manners or virtues, he says, is hospitality, which includes treating the other as a guest. The kind of hospitality that is a duty requires more from us than does the hospitality that is a right others can demand from us. The former includes recognizing the other as “*Gast*” while the latter expressly excludes seeing the other this way and is satisfied by treating

the other as not an enemy. There are no specific directives given on how to practice hospitality in social interactions but a reason is given as to why its practice is important; it promotes “a virtuous disposition.” Kant claims that virtue is advanced when social interactions are conducted in ways that are courteous, hospitable, and so on. He advocates for reciprocity, for moving outside of one’s own fixed center into circles of relationships, and the result of these social relationships is the furthering of virtue. Hospitality and the other social virtues contribute to the development of virtuous character and thus to the leading of moral lives. Kant says it is both a duty to oneself and to others to practice the social virtues. Acting with hospitality (and the other social manners) encourages moral development and growth in oneself and in others because it creates a space within which there is community and reciprocity and in which feelings favorable to virtue are fostered.

For our argument, the key point is Kant’s acknowledgement of an obligation to practice hospitality. In this, we see obvious similarities between Kant’s and Noddings’ claims about hospitality. Both discuss hospitality as it relates to strangers and guests, both speak of the reciprocity of social interactions, and both treat hospitality as a moral obligation. Both accounts refer to circles of relationships and to the ethical requirement to expand our social relations. Especially significant is the fact that Noddings and Kant agree that hospitality promotes moral growth and development and the encouragement of virtue. Both acknowledge that hospitality entails reciprocity, circles of relationships, and the promotion of moral growth and education. Contrary to Noddings’ efforts to paint care ethics as an explicit rejection of Kant’s ethics, when it comes to hospitality, both understand human relationships and human duties in the same way. Thus, hospitality provides a second example that supports viewing Kant’s ethics as relational in the way that care ethics is relational.

## II

Noddings is also critical of Kant's ethics for its failure to acknowledge that we have obligations to promote the perfection of others. She maintains that we are at least partly responsible for the moral development of others insofar as our responses to them affect their willingness and their ability to act morally. Noddings is right that Kant explicitly states there are only two ends that are at the same time duties, one's own perfection and the happiness of others (6:385). There are duties to perfect oneself (but not to further one's own happiness) and to promote others' happiness (but not to perfect them). Kant says there is no duty to advance the perfection of others because no one can perfect another. This, he says, is a task that one can only do for oneself (6:386). It is self-contradictory to think we have a duty to do something that only the other can do for himself.

Noddings is not the only one to challenge Kant on his denial that there are duties to promote our own happiness and others' perfection. Diane Jeske criticizes both of Kant's omissions and argues that in fact "there are categorical imperatives instructing us to pursue our own *and others'* perfection, and to pursue our own happiness (and the happiness of a limited class of others)."<sup>29</sup> Jeske acknowledges that we cannot develop others' perfection in the same way we develop our own, but she insists we can and ought to guarantee others the "necessary preconditions" and the "resources necessary" to the development of their capacities.<sup>30</sup> Specifically, she mentions the fulfillment of basic needs and education as two required preconditions that help to further others' perfection. Keith Bustos agrees with Jeske's reconstruction of a Kantian duty to promote the

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<sup>29</sup> Diane Jeske, "Perfection, Happiness, and Duties to Self," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1996) No. 3: 265.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 269, 270.

perfection of others, although he argues for grounding this duty on the obligation to promote the highest good. The duty to further the highest good, he says, includes a duty to promote the perfection of others.<sup>31</sup> The highest good is happiness conditioned by worthiness or virtue and hence a duty to further the highest good requires that individuals must progress in moral perfection.

Finally, Susan M. Purviance argues against what she takes to be Kant's claim that there is an epistemic reason why we cannot have a duty to further others' perfection, namely, because we cannot know their inner states. She rejects what she takes to be Kant's view that we strive for our own perfection introspectively and in isolation. Instead, she says, seeking one's own self-perfection requires self-disclosure to others made possible in moral friendships.<sup>32</sup> She proposes an "intersubjective model of moral self-striving" that allows one to move toward self-perfection by means of the sharing, trusting, and disclosure possible in friendship. She asks: "In overcoming our inability to trust self-disclosure, can't we help our friend overcome it as well..."<sup>33</sup>

All these critics find reasons why Kant could have or should have acknowledged a duty to promote others' perfection. For Jeske, the duty to perfect others becomes apparent in a discussion of the preconditions necessary for well-being, that is, for objective value. According to Bustos, the duty to promote others' perfection is contained in the duty to further the highest good and for Purviance, such a duty follows from and is implicit in moral friendships and the way they enable us to work toward self-perfection. In what follows, instead of looking to Kant's accounts of well-being, the highest good, or

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<sup>31</sup> Keith Bustos, "Defending a Kantian Conception of Duties to Self and Others," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 42 (2008), 251.

<sup>32</sup> Susan M. Purviance, "Moral Self-Striving and Sincerity (Redlichkeit): The Need for the Other in Kantian Moral Practice," *Idealistic Studies* 38 (2008) No. 3: 189.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

friendship, we examine what the duty to perfect ourselves entails and then see whether the requirements of such a duty apply as well to our treatment of others. Kant is right that we cannot control others' maxims and hence we cannot make them more perfect or ensure that they adopt the end of self-perfection. But, it is still possible, as Jeske suggests, that Kant may allow that there is a role for us to play in facilitating others' self-perfection, in securing the conditions for the possibility of others' perfection. If so, then Kant can be defended against Noddings' charge that he ignores our duties and responsibilities to promote others' perfection.

Kant considers in some detail what it means to have a duty to further our own perfection. This duty consists in "*cultivating* one's *faculties* (or natural predispositions), the highest of which is *understanding*, the faculty of concepts and so too of these concepts that have to do with duty. At the same time this duty includes the cultivation of one's *will* (moral cast of mind) so as to satisfy all the requirements of duty" (6:387). He says that a human being has a duty to raise himself from animality to humanity, "to diminish his ignorance by instruction and to correct his errors," to become capable of setting his own ends (6:387). A human being must also develop his will "up to the purest virtuous disposition" (6:387). In a later section, Kant returns to these two components of the duty to perfect oneself. One part of the duty entails the promotion of the capacity to realize future ends and posits the following maxim for action: "Cultivate your powers of mind and body so that they are fit to realize any ends you might encounter" (6:392). The other part of the duty requires us to cultivate our own morality and it puts forward this maxim: "strive with all one's might that the thought of duty for its own sake is the sufficient incentive of every action conforming to duty" (6:393). In sum, the duty to further one's own perfection is a duty to develop one's natural and moral capacities.

In order to claim that there is a Kantian duty to promote the perfection of others, we need only to show that there are duties to help develop others' natural and moral capacities. To do this thoroughly would take us beyond the scope of this paper, but a partial account can be given from the doctrine of method sections from the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In these sections, Kant addresses the teaching of ethics and specifies ways in which students are led to recognize and develop their own natural and moral capacities. At least collectively as a community, we have responsibilities to make it possible for young people to cultivate their natural and moral powers and in this way, we have a duty to further others' perfection.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant states that the doctrine of method is aimed at providing a way for the laws of pure practical reason to access the human mind and influence its maxims (5:151). To bring an uncultivated mind toward the morally good requires some "preparatory guidance" (5:152). Moral examples, such as the biographies of others, provide occasions for progress in a student's faculty of judgment and "a good foundation for uprightness" (5:154). Kant speaks of the progress of goodness (5:157) and of moral cultivation and exercise (5:161). This moral development involves a cultivation of reason, a more extended use of our cognitive powers, the consciousness of our freedom, and respect for ourselves (5:159-61). In this account of moral education, Kant explains the need for such education and the methods it employs. As young people are trained to grow in virtue, their natural capacities of reason, judgment, and understanding are cultivated and ignorance is overcome.

Thus, as young people are educated, both their natural capacities, such as reason, judgment, and understanding, and their moral capacities, interest in morality and awareness of freedom, are enhanced. Their education aims at developing their mental faculties and their moral will. The language Kant

uses to describe how virtue is taught and how the moral law influences the human will is like that he uses to explain our duty to promote our own perfection. In both cases, the focus is on cultivation of human capacities, on moving from a state of ignorance and a life governed by inclinations to a truly human life where reason, understanding, and virtue are honed and practiced. In the moral education of others, we are facilitating the same kind of self-growth in others that we are required to promote in ourselves due to the duty to further our own perfection. Although Kant's explicit list of duties does not include the duty to further others' perfection, it is evident in his discussions of moral education that we are required to perform the same actions towards others that advance their moral development as we must carry out to advance our own perfection. Insofar as we have a duty or responsibility to morally educate young people, we have in effect a duty to promote their perfection. There is an unstated, but nevertheless thoroughly explained and justified, duty to promote others' perfection.

To be fair, two points call for further reflection. First, when Kant explains what it means to promote our own perfection, he includes the development of our powers of mind *and body*. In his account of the moral education of others, he speaks only of encouraging mental and moral capacities. So, one difference between the obligations to further our own perfection and others' perfection seems to be that only our own perfection includes developing physical capacities. Rather than conclude that our own perfection requires a different sort of development than others' perfection, it is likely that we need a broader view of Kant's treatment of education, beyond what is said of moral education, to get a complete picture of what is required to further others' perfection. Second, Kant's narrative of the ways in which we encourage and foster the perfection of others still may not appear adequate to Noddings. Her objection that he blatantly denies there is any duty to further others' perfection still stands in spite of an argument that in practical terms Kant

describes ways we are required to facilitate others' perfection. She also might make the case that at best Kant's account of moral education puts forth a collective requirement that others' perfection must be advanced through education. Noddings herself speaks of a more particular responsibility of individuals insofar as their actions and examples may enable or hinder others' efforts at moral improvement. Further reflection on the kinds of duties that are entailed by a requirement to promote others' perfection would be helpful, but even without this, our main point remains: contrary to the critique of Noddings' care ethics, Kant recognizes our responsibilities to advance the moral development and perfection of others.

### III

In conclusion, my argument is that at least two of Noddings' criticisms of Kant are overstated. Her view that care ethics rejects and inverts Kant's ethics is not apparent in the ways she claims. In particular, the claim that care ethics is relational and Kant's ethics is not is too broad. Kant's ethics includes relational considerations; it acknowledges that having the right sort of relationships can further someone's moral improvement. Noddings and Kant consider how actions of assuming the best possible motive and hospitality promote moral growth. They both recognize that there are obligations to act in respectful and welcoming ways, and that in confirming the humanity of others we make possible our own and others' moral improvement. They both acknowledge the way that actions affect and influence others.

It is also too simplistic to claim that care ethics recognizes a duty to further others' perfection and Kant's ethics does not. Although Kant states we have no duty to promote others' perfection, he nevertheless goes on to describe just such a duty. In our obligation to morally educate young people, we help them to develop as rational and moral beings. Virtue must be

taught, Kant says, and so our educational interactions lead to the perfection of others. Kant admits that we cannot accomplish or ensure another's perfection, and presumably, Noddings would agree. But both see the possibility and the obligation to help facilitate and foster others' moral improvement and perfection. Thus, there are grounds for rejecting the criticisms of Kant offered by Noddings' care ethics and for positing a view of the common moral obligations shared by the two theories.

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