CARING AND HUMAN AGENCY: FOUNDATIONS OF AN APPROACH TO TEACHER EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I make the case that teaching is a moral enterprise and that teacher education needs to reflect this understanding in its design and practice. Specifically, I argue that caring understood as lived moral practice grounded in care-ethical agency should be the central principle of teaching as a purposeful moral practice and that, hence, teacher education needs to help preservice teachers with the development of their care-ethical agency. In developing this argument, I articulate an approach to the ethics of care that responds to a hermeneutically inspired view of the human condition.

In chapter 1 I argue for teaching as a moral enterprise with caring as its central principle. Furthermore, I argue for the relevance of the ethics of care as a framework for caring in teaching in order to address the moral purpose of teaching. In chapter 2 I present a critical discussion of the most prominent approach to the ethics of care. Through this discussion I argue for the need for a thorough inquiry into the human condition for a conceptualization of an ethic of care that can be used as a foundation for teacher education. In chapters 3 and 4 I address this need for a thorough inquiry and argue for a particular view on the human condition. In chapters 5 and 6 I use this view of the human condition to argue for a particular approach to the ethics of care that centralizes a hermeneutically informed and inspired moral agency. This concept of a care-ethical agency, I argue, is a response to the central ethical question of what we are to be concerned about. Finally, in chapter 7 I argue for central general implications of this ethic for an approach to teacher education that aims to prepare preservice teachers for teaching as a moral enterprise with caring as the central principle of moral practice.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated

to my wife,

Angela,

with love

and deep gratitude

for her loving

dedication,

to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After having successfully completed the oral defence in the long, intense and consuming work involved in doctoral studies, completing this section of my thesis will finally allow me to publicly and permanently acknowledge those people who have supported me in this work through their intellectual, emotional, financial and other kind of support. It is with great pleasure that I express my gratitude for this support here.

I have undoubtedly received the greatest support for my doctoral work from my thesis supervisor, Heesoon Bai. It was she who introduced me to the ethics of care as a theory of morality, which has shaped the direction this thesis has taken. I appreciated her unconditional availability for conversations about my thesis work – despite her own busy schedule – as well as her continuous and authentic interest in my work. Furthermore, I benefited greatly from her truly outstanding and exemplary commitment to her graduate students, and I count myself very fortunate having met her so early on in my academic studies. It was, however, her lived care-ethical agency that had the strongest impact on my writing of the thesis. In particular, it was Heesoon's situational perceptiveness and awareness in her encounters with people and her intelligent engagement with the complex nature of being human that helped me develop a clearer notion of care-ethical agency.

I also like to acknowledge the helpful advice I received on previous drafts of this thesis from the other two members of my thesis committee, Peter Grimmett and Charles Bingham.

Making use of the benefit of writing this section after having completed the defence of my thesis, I would like to express my great appreciation to Barbara Houston,

the external examiner, for her commitment to the defence process. Her report on my thesis was called 'exemplary' in depth, breadth and authentic concern by those who read it and were able to judge the matter. I particularly appreciated the thoroughness and rigour with which she had worked through my thesis and engaged with the ideas presented in it at the defence.

I was very fortunate to have been part of a thriving culture of support and academic commitment among graduate students in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. Of particular support for my thesis work were the engaged and engaging conversations I had with my fellow graduate students Kumari Beck, Sarah Hickinbottom and Anita Bates. I also like to thank my wife Angela for the conversations we had on our many walks around Burnaby and Deer Lake, which greatly contributed to my understanding of moral agency and caring. But most of all, it has been the depth of our relationship that has helped me ground this understanding in lived practice.

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PROLOGUE

> We are like sailors who must rebuild their ship on the open sea,
> never able to dismantle it in dry-dock and to newly build it there
> from the best parts.
> (Neurath, 1932/33, my translation)[1]

In Spring 2002 Heesoon Bai asked me whether I would be interested in being a

research assistant for the project *Enacting the Ethics of Care: Theory and Practice*, which

she and two of her colleagues undertook. Heesoon was the instructor of the first doctoral

course I took the previous year, and she knew of my interest in moral education as the

area I wanted to pursue my doctoral research in. Heesoon provided me with the proposal

the three investigators had submitted for funding support to allow me a first look at what

the research was about. Up to that time my perspective on moral education was guided by

more traditional character education approaches, from the Aristotelian virtue approach to

more concrete school-oriented approaches to character education (for instance, Lickona,

1991). I had not heard of the ethics of care or of Nel Noddings. The project proposal, of

course, made ample reference to Nel Noddings's work in the ethics of care. In order to

prepare myself for the work as a research assistant for the project I read Noddings's

(1992) *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* – and

my professional as well as personal life changed.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine (1960) uses Neurath's ship metaphor as a motto for his book *Word and Object*. Neurath uses his ship metaphor to illustrate his view that there is no fresh and neutral vantage point from which we can build (scientific) knowledge – a view in opposition to the then prominent attempts by logical positivists to (re)build a foundation for scientific knowledge purely on observation.

From the time I started my studies to become a teacher in Germany, right after high-school, I have been concerned with what I later learned to call moral education, concerned with the responsibility – as I saw it – of the school for the social and political development and education of students in preparation for their responsible partaking in the socio-political life of the society they were embedded in. When I read Noddings's book in 2002, I was stunned by how the book, chapter by chapter, seemed to strike such a familiar cord, how I encountered so many instances of 'yes', 'right on', 'yeah'. Why was I so attracted to Noddings's approach to schooling in general and moral education in particular? Looking back on it and with a now deeper understanding of the ethics of care as a theory of morality, I think that the approach to education Noddings presents articulates three aspects of a deep conviction I have been holding about education and its role in society at large.

The first aspect, simplistically, is my conviction that if people would be more concerned for each other that we would be living in a better world, within our immediate community as well as worldwide. Noddings's notion of caring revolves around this very idea of concern. In this thesis I explore the idea of caring as concern. (This exploration, however, will lead to an understanding of caring that deviates from Noddings's conceptualization.) My thinking is not only greatly influenced by Noddings's writings, but I also see a close affinity between our perspectives. Similar considerations apply to the other two aspects. The second aspect is my conviction that schooling as an endeavour to intentionally influence human development is to be grounded in holistic education: helping the young to develop the multifaceted aspects of what it means to be human and develop the potential for living a meaningful life. Noddings's approach to the ethics of

care is a needs-based ethics and as such is concerned with the very notion of what it means to live a meaningful life and with helping people live a meaningful life. The third aspect, simply put, is my conviction that the individual drive for one's own happiness has to be integrated with responsibility and concern for the happiness of others. Noddings's approach to the ethics of care provides for such integration through its relational ontology, where – again simplified – the concern for one's own happiness is directly linked to one's concern for the happiness of other people.

Reading Noddings's *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* and then her (1984) book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education* had not only a transforming impact on my professional life by providing me with a conceptual framework that seem to articulate my hitherto tacit perspective on morality and moral education (I will get back to this impact on my 'professional' life below), but it also had an important impact of my personal life.[2] About half a year after I had started my involvement with the study and after I had begun studying and thinking about the ethics of care, my wife Angela told me that since my involvement with the ethics of care I have been changing – for the better as she says. I have, she told me, become more understanding and empathic and more considerate of the feelings of others. More than in connection with any of the other approaches to moral living, I did understand the ethics of care as a particular way of seeing my life-world and – most importantly – as a way of living one's life. The ethics of care – as should become clear through the discussion in this thesis – more so than other, more traditional approaches to moral living, is concerned with our everyday living of our life, because the ethics of care

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[2] It is more for heuristic reasons that I separate my professional from my private life.

is particularly concerned with our (ongoing) personal, social and intimate encounters with people. Simplified, in our everyday life with people at home, at school, in offices, in the streets, and other places of human interaction, the question of following the Kantian duty and obligation to principles does not arise as often as the question of caring in an encounter with anther person. My engagement with the ethics of care sharpened, as I would now describe it, my senses for people's (including my own) engagement in caring encounters (a term that I will explicate later). I came to notice that there were, on the one hand, those around me who were more into talking about caring and its importance, and on the other hand, those who did not just talk about the importance about caring but whose life practices I recognized as enacted caring. It was, I assume, the modelling by those of the latter type that I had the opportunity to experience and the dynamic interaction of this influence with my engagement with the ethic of care at a more theoretical level that had the changing impact on the living of my life that Angela – and than I – were becoming aware of.

I have told this personal story to illustrate how what I will discuss and develop in this thesis and the perspective I will take in this discussion is so strongly linked to my living of my life. In this thesis I will take the perspective one's moral (practical) stance and one's personal life history are directly linked. My personal story illustrates two such central links as far as the moral stance I take in this thesis and my own life history as the author of the thesis are concerned. First, the story reveals that my being drawn to the ethics of care is not a matter of some kind of 'objective reasoning' that led me to 'conclude' that the ethics of care is superior to other approaches to morality, but it is rather a kind of 'gut-feeling' response that had me explore one over another. There is a

strong 'gut-feeling' involved when it comes to decision-making, and that includes

decisions in the moral domain. There is no 'neutral reasoning' that leads to a decision; all

such reasoning needs to involve value judgments of some kind, which cannot come from

'neutral reasoning'.[3] In this thesis I develop a view of the human condition that provides

an explanatory framework for the situation in my story and which is grounded in the idea

of hermeneutical perspectivism and the existentialistic view of humans being 'thrown

into the world as it exists'; my unconscious, emotion-based biases and the identity of my

moral self result from a dynamic interaction between my (developing) human agency and

the socio-cultural environment I am embedded in. Neurath's ship metaphor quoted at the

beginning of this prologue provides a metaphorical way of understanding this view:[4]

When we develop moral agency and become aware of it, we are already sailing on the

ship of our life, in a certain direction, and the ship built in a particular style with a

particular set of sails; even when we are able and willing to take on the sailing ourselves,

we cannot sail into the harbour of 'neutral reasoning' and rebuild our ship based on some

kind of blueprint of 'preferred moral theory'. What, however, our moral agency provides

for is that we are able to modify our ship, although we have to do so while on sea and

with what the ship provides us with. That brings me to the second point.

I experienced the possibilities as well as the constraints of influencing my 'moral

agency'. I learned to appreciate these possibilities and constraints of 'inner work'.[5] Such

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[3] Formal logic, which can probably be considered the most 'neutral' way of reasoning, is a system of rules that articulate how the truth value of one statement depends on the truth value of other statements, but it does not articulate truth values for statements *per se* (aside from logically true statements, which, however, are rather irrelevant for decision making).
[4] In chapter 3 I will discuss the relevance of metaphorical understanding in our sense-making of our life-world.
[5] I am thankful to Avraham Cohen for introducing me to this so fitting phrase. His own work revolves around the importance and possibilities of the inner work of the educator.

inner work is central to care-ethical teacher education, and in this thesis I discuss

important aspects of its possibilities and constraints and provide a theoretical framework

and grounding for the practice of inner work. As human agents we are not stuck with the

type of ship we are sailing on at high sea. We have the capacities to rebuild the ship, but

we have to do it while we are on the high sea of living our life within the socio-cultural

environment we are embedded in, and we have to do it with the material available

onboard: our habituations, biases and our bio-chemical constitution. The true, meaningful

learning that we do in our life is the learning that has us see the world differently than we

saw it before. Rebuilding our ship is what happens when such learning occurs.

Above I wrote that my exposure to the ethics of care had also a great impact on

my professional life. A few years back now, while being a school teacher here in Canada,

I started getting involved in supporting the professional development of my teacher

colleagues at the local and provincial level and, later, in the education of preservice

teachers as their collaborating classroom teacher. I experienced and then contemplated

the importance of teacher development in general and preservice teacher education in

particular for impacting schooling and teaching. My thinking around my own impact on

schooling and teaching shifted from my contributions as a teacher myself, impacting my

students in the classroom, to possible contributions through impacting teacher

development, in particular at the preservice level, and, thus, having an indirect but more

extensive impact on schooling and teaching beyond my small(er) circle of influence as a

classroom teacher. This shift happened at the beginning of my doctoral studies – which I

started primarily to develop my understanding as a teacher around moral education –

when I realized and then contemplated the possibility of becoming a 'professional' teacher educator.

The importance of preservice teacher education for impacting schooling and teaching combined with my concern for the moral aspect of schooling and teaching let me develop a greater concern for the question of what this moral aspect of schooling and teaching implied for the preparation of teachers. This question shaped the direction of my research interest. With the impact the ethics of care as a moral theory has been having on me and my thinking around moral education in schooling and teaching, this general question changed to the more specific questions: How can teachers best be prepared for care-ethical education? or What should care-ethical teacher education look like? These two questions have been guiding my work on this thesis.

I had planned to approach these two questions in three steps. First, I wanted to develop a deeper understanding of the ethics of care as a moral theory. Then, second, I wanted to understand the implications that such a theory of morality would have for schooling and teaching if schooling and teaching is seen as centrally moral education – a view that I subscribe to. Finally, I wanted to understand what such understanding of the central purpose of teaching and schooling and such a theory of morality would have for the preparation of teachers, that means, what care-ethical teacher education would look like. As it turned out, such a project was too ambitious for this one study. Once I worked on the first part of my plan, my own understanding of what I saw in the ethics of care as a theory of morality developed to a degree and in a way that I found it necessary to articulate my particular understanding quite explicitly. Although, as I wrote above, the ethics of care, and here in particular Nel Noddings's approach to it, captures my deeply

felt biases and pre-conceptions about foundational issues of morality, particularly two aspects of my understanding I found required a deeper engagement beyond what I found in my readings. First, I became convinced that all theories of morality have an underlying view of 'the human condition', often not explicitly articulated, and that different approaches to the ethics of care are grounded in different (implicit) views of what that 'human condition' looks like. For the role I see for the ethics of care for schooling and teaching and, then, for teacher education, the need arose to explicitly articulate my view of 'the human condition' which would underlie the ethics of care – and that would shape my particular approach to the ethics of care, as it then turned out.

The second aspect of my understanding of the ethics of care concerned a notion of care-ethical agency, a notion which, as I just said, has been shaped by what I consider 'the human condition'. Many proponents of the ethics of care write explicitly that the ethics of care is a 'way of being' rather than a system of guidelines for moral living. But what I have found missing was a clearer picture of what that 'way of being' actually meant in terms of agency that can educationally be addressed. Some proponents of the ethics of care are writing *that* there are 'skills and attitudes' conceptually linked with this way of being in the world, but what I found missing was an articulation of such 'skills and attitudes'.

The development of these two aspects of my understanding of the ethics of care forms the backbone of this thesis and is presented in chapters 2-6. The first chapter and the last chapter anchor what I write in those middle chapters in the larger picture of the project of care-ethical teacher education. The first chapter argues for schooling and teaching being centrally a moral enterprise. Grounded in this view that schooling and

teaching is centrally a moral enterprise, the last chapter, then, discusses the implications

my approach to the ethics of care has for schooling and teaching (care-ethical education)

and for teacher education that prepares for such schooling and teaching (care-ethical

teacher education). This discussion will be programmatic in character, foreshadowing a

more thorough study into the implications of the work in this thesis for a program

framework for care-ethical teacher education.

CHAPTER 1: THE MORAL ENTERPRISE OF TEACHING

There is ample literature which argues for teaching as a moral activity.[6] However,

'moral' in 'teaching as a moral activity' is differently understood in the literature,

depending on whether it qualifies the effect of teaching, the purpose of teaching, or the

responsibilities connected with teaching. If it qualifies the effect teaching *per se* has on

students, it refers to "teaching as an inherently moral activity" (Hansen, 2001); if it

qualifies the purpose of teaching, it is generally called 'moral education'; if it qualifies

the responsibility connected with teaching, it refers to 'professional ethics' (for instance,

Strike and Soltis, 1985). There is a clear overlap between professional ethics of teaching

on the one hand and moral education and teaching as an inherently moral activity on the

other hand.[7] A central part of professional ethics of teaching involves the concern for the

impact teacher conduct (in the most general sense of the word) has on students'

intellectual and emotional – and, thus, moral – development, in particular in terms of

their right as members of the society, for instance their right to be treated fairly (see, for

instance, Strike & Soltis, 1985, chapter 4). That there is such an impact on students is at

the centre of the view of teaching as an inherently moral activity. Also, the equal

treatment of students is not just an issue of professional ethics. It can as well be a matter

of (intentional) moral education, for instance, through modelling of ethical conduct by the

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[6] For instance, Buzzelli & Johnston (2002), Campbell (2003), Dewey (1909/1975), Hansen (2001), Noddings (1992), and the articles in Goodlad, Soder & Sirotnik (1990).
[7] Carr's (2000) *Professionalism and Ethics in Teaching*, which is published in a Professional Ethics Series, argues within the assumption of such an overlap.

teacher (see below). While moral education and teaching as an inherently moral activity are of central interest to the purpose of this thesis, I consider professional ethics here only where it overlaps with the other two areas.

Exploring the connections between moral education and the view of teaching as an inherently moral activity, I argue in the first section of this chapter that teaching is a moral enterprise, which means that teaching is an intentionally practiced moral activity that is inherently moral and at the core of teaching. As an *intentionally* practiced moral human activity, teaching faces the challenge of being embedded into a theory of morality to frame and guide the intentional practice. In the second section of this chapter, then, I argue that a particular approach to education – care-ethical education – takes explicitly this view of teaching as a moral enterprise and offers a particular response to this challenge, which comes with viewing teaching as centrally a moral activity. This particular response, then, is the starting point for what I develop in chapters 5 to 7 of this thesis: a theory of morality, which then frames and guides care-ethical education, and a framework for conceptualizing teacher education that prepares preservice teachers for care-ethical education.

Teaching: A Moral Enterprise

In the introduction to this chapter I made the distinction between three ways of understanding 'teaching as a moral enterprise', the first two of which I discuss further in this section. First, I begin with arguing for the view that teaching *is an inherently moral activity*. Teaching is a moral activity because "the teacher [through her teaching] may have a considerable impact on the morality of the student" (Fenstermacher, 1990, p. 133),

and teaching is an *inherently* moral activity, because teaching "is, quite centrally, human

action undertaken in regard to other human beings" (1990, p. 133).[8]

In what ways can teaching have a considerable impact on the moral development

of students? The following four ways can be distinguished: (1) through direct moral

instruction; here the students develop an understanding or knowledge of a particular

system of (moral) expectations which are applied to them, for instance, a system of

general rules about right and wrong conduct in particular situations; (2) through direct

instructions *about* morality; here students develop an understanding or knowledge of

different systems of (moral) expectations as they exist in different times, cultures,

societies, classes, and so on, without those being directly applied as (moral) expectations

for the students themselves; (3) through the creation of a learning environment; here

students *experience* a particular system of (moral) expectations; and (4) through

modelling; here the teacher models the living up to a particular system of (moral)

expectations, and the students *experience* a particular system of (moral) expectations.[9]

Teaching activities of which one can assume that they have an effect on the morality of

the students often have to be categorised as a combination of some of the four ways

listed. For instance, when Fenstermacher (1990, p. 135) writes "Teachers must also . . .

draw attention to what they are doing and why, hold it up for the students to see and

understand, and, by suggestion and demeanor, call on the students to follow along", then

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[8] Hansen (2001, p. 828) argues similarly when he writes: "As typically understood, teaching reflects the intentional effort to influence another human being for the good rather than for the bad . . . . These claims, perhaps deceptively commonsensical, emphasize the inherently moral nature of the practice."
[9] Fenstermacher (1990, p. 134) lists ways 1, 2 and 4. I believe that the eight categories of 'the moral in the classroom' that Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993, part one) distinguish are 'covered' by either a single listed way or a combination of at least two.

someone following Fenstermacher's call uses a combination of the first and fourth way listed above.

While the first way for sure and the second to a degree require intentions toward a moral purpose, the third and fourth ways *also* have their impact even if not intentionally planned for a moral purpose. As Fenstermacher (1990, p. 133) writes[10]:

> Whenever a teacher asks a student to share something with another student, decides between combatants in a schoolyard dispute, sets procedures for who will go first, second, third, and so on . . . moral considerations [and possible moral effects on the morality of the students] are present.

Teaching *is* an inherently moral activity, whether the teacher is aware of it or even intentionally practises it or not.

I now argue, secondly, that teaching *should* also be an *intentionally practised* moral activity and that this moral activity should be *central* to the purpose of teaching: teaching as a moral enterprise. Here I move now from the first to the second way of understanding teaching as a moral activity: teaching as moral education. Why *should* we teach for moral education? My first reason derives from the view of teaching as an inherently moral activity: If teaching is an activity that has *inherently* an impact on the moral development of students, then we should move this already existing impact out of the hidden, unconscious space into the open – and, thus, 'critique-able' - and intentional realm of human activity.

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[10] Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993) provide an empirical account of the rich moral effects of every-day activities involved in teaching.

My second reason derives from the connection between intellectual education of a certain type and moral education. Dewey (1909/1975, p. 2) distinguishes between ideas and 'moving ideas' and connects moving ideas to the moral:

> The business of the educator – whether parent or teacher – is to see to it that the greatest possible number of ideas acquired by children and youth are acquired in such a vital way that they become *moving* ideas, motive-forces in the guidance of conduct. This demand and this opportunity make the moral purpose universal and dominant in all instruction – whatsoever the topic.

Dewey continues to write that, because of this possibility of making "intellectual matters" into moving ideas that function as 'motive-forces in the guidance of conduct', "the ultimate purpose of education is character forming" (p. 2). The acquisition of *moving* ideas has a life-changing effect on students; it has an impact on what drives them as human agents.[11] In chapter 3 I argue that what drives us in living our lives in one rather than another way is central to moral (ethical) thinking because it drives what we expect of ourselves and what others expect of us. Here, the reason why we *should* conceive of teaching as moral education – which is about our conduct in the world, *in the widest sense of the word* 'conduct' – is because we should teach for moving ideas and teaching for moving ideas *is* moral education.[12]

Building on this second reason, the third reason why we should teach for moral education has to do with the role of 'the moral' in human functioning. If 'the moral' guides our conduct in the world (in an empirical as well as normative sense), then it is important to address 'the moral' in an educational program schools provide to students.

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[11] It is this aspect of 'character forming' that I take from Dewey's argument without having to discuss his notion of character further.
[12] Whitehead (1929) makes a similar point when he distinguishes between ideas and thoughts, however he does not make the connection to morality as explicit as Dewey does.

From the empirical perspective, this importance derives from the need to be prepared to live their lives in a particular world, which is the world they live in as students, but also the world they will be in as grown-ups. From the normative perspective, this importance of addressing 'the moral' derives from the desire of the society to influence the conduct of its members *in a particular way*.

The last two reasons for teaching for moral education provide also the foundation for my reasons why teaching should *centre upon* moral education, and, thus, make teaching a *moral enterprise*. If teaching aims for the students' acquisition of moving ideas, which will become motive-forces in the guidance of their conduct, the normative question has to be asked: Which moving ideas do we want students to acquire? A theory of morality, into which moral education should be embedded, provides the basis for answering this question. Hence, the teaching for the acquisition of moving ideas requires a response to the normative question in moral education, which places the concern for moral education at the core of teaching. Much of the literature on morality in teaching is satisfied with arguing that teaching has 'moral dimensions'.[13] However, I am arguing here for teaching having a moral *core*, meaning that the other aspects of teaching, for instance, subject matter teaching, are considered subordinate to moral education as the core purpose of teaching.

Some authors who argue for teaching as an inherently moral activity – the practice of teaching itself has moral significance – explicitly reject the need to ground this view in a moral theory. Buzzelli and Johnston (2002, p. 9), for instance, write:

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[13] See, for instance, Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Cutforth, 1999; Sanger, 2001.

> The claim Hansen [2001] is making and with which we concur is that rather than seeing, as some would, a need to ground the moral aspects of teaching in moral philosophy, moral theory, or other disciplines . . . , the features that imbue teaching with moral significance are those features inherent in the practice itself. We feel this is a crucial point to make because many teachers and researchers have eschewed the examination of the moral dimensions of teaching for fear of becoming mired in arguments about moral philosophy and moral theory.[14]

That teaching has moral significance is independent of the explicit articulation of a moral theory. However, once we start talking about *what* that moral significance actually looks like or even do something about that significance (moral education), we cannot get around the very assumptions made by theories of morality. It is these very assumptions that frame our thinking about the moral significance of teaching, whether we can and do articulate those assumptions or not. Thus, inquiring into the moral significance of teaching requires being explicit about or work on those underlying assumptions that are usually articulated in a theory of morality.

> Buzzelli and Johnston (2002, pp. 3-4) write:

> There are two other crucial qualities that distinguish the moral. First, much like knowledge of language, moral beliefs, values, and understandings are played out at the critical point of contact between the private, individual sphere and the social realm. Thus, moral beliefs are both 'personal' and 'cultural.' A crucial part of morality involves the interplay between theses spheres.

What the authors are articulating here in their explication of their notion of 'the moral' is part of a framework of a theory of morality! Thus, they provide an example for the claim I just made, namely that talking about the moral significance of teaching quickly leads to assumptions of an underlying moral theory, like the socio-cultural assumption the authors

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[14] Hansen (2001, pp. 827-828) argues that moral education is to be conceptualized separately from the concept of teaching as an inherently moral activity. At the centre of his argument is the view that moral education in teaching – in distinction of teaching as an inherently moral activity – is intentionally directed toward a moral end and is, as such, embedded within a theory of morality that is *external* to teaching.

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make implicitly that the society they are talking about allows for a separation of a private and public domain.[15] The main part of the author's work is – in their later words – the "reading of the classroom as a moral context and teachers as moral agents" (2002, p. 120) by focusing on language, power and culture in classrooms. As later chapters in this thesis argue, 'reading of the classroom as a moral context' as other forms of human understanding cannot be done outside of (theoretical) assumptions / biases. Also, once the move is made from the view of teaching as an inherently moral activity to moral education – as I argued for above – the approach will need to be rooted in a theory of morality. A good portion of this thesis is dedicated to the articulation of exactly such a theory of morality. Once one wants to do something with the insight that teaching is an inherently moral activity, one needs to face what Buzzelli and Johnston claim many (teachers) would like to avoid: a theory of morality.

I now link this discussion about teaching as a moral enterprise to teacher education, the central concern of this thesis. I have just argued that moral education should be the core purpose of teaching. In all four ways of influencing the moral development of students I listed above – direct moral instructions, instructions about morality, creation of a 'moral' learning environment, and modelling – the teacher plays a centre role. If the central purpose of teacher education is to prepare preservice teachers for their work as teachers, teacher education would need to address the preparation of preservice teachers for their central role in moral education with a focus on (at least some of) those four ways of influencing students' moral development.

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[15] As I argue in the next chapter, a more normative view at these kinds of assumptions leads to assumptions about the human condition as an even more foundational matter for inquiring into the moral significance of schooling and teaching.

Preparing teachers for the fourth way of influencing students' moral development requires some additional comments. In an article on virtues in teachers (which he calls 'manners'), Gary Fenstermacher (2001, pp. 649-650) addresses the issue of modelling of the virtues by the teacher. The argument he brings forward is that being virtuous can only be modelled by someone who *is* virtuous. While it is possible to *pretend* to be virtuous, it is impossible to *model* being virtuous. Teachers often model particular behaviour, for instance how to properly use a Bunsen burner or even how to respond assertively. But while one can model an assertive response without actually being assertive (in a dispositional sense), one cannot model virtues without actually being virtuous, because the latter is grounded in being more than in acting. This argument transcends a virtue-ethical framework: By the very nature of 'moral qualities', it is impossible to pretend to have those without actually having them.

This argument implies for the fourth way of influencing students' moral development that teachers have to actually have the 'moral qualities' in order to model them for the students. Assuming the importance of modelling for impacting students' moral development, Fenstermacher's argument has tremendous implications for teacher education that wants to prepare pre-service teachers for moral education in consideration of the fourth way: Teacher preparation is not just about preparation for instructional competence, but it is also concerned with the 'moral qualities' of the preservice teachers. This concern can show in the selection criteria for applicants to teacher education programs or in the teacher education program itself or both.[16]

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[16] See Sirotnik (1990, pp. 314-320) for a position that gives strong consideration to the *selection* of preservice teachers, and Ryan and Bohlin (1999, pp. 151-164) for a position that gives strong consideration to the development of 'moral qualities' in preservice teachers.

So far I have argued that these implications are there for teacher education *if* teacher modelling is intended to be used as a way to influence students' moral development. The importance of this fourth way, however, becomes prominent if one accepts Hansen's (2001) argument that teaching is an inherently moral activity partially because a teacher *qua* her conduct in her teaching *always models 'moral qualities'* – whether 'desired' or 'undesired' – and, thus, has an impact on the moral development of students. From this perspective – and I take this perspective – the fourth way is not optional but inherently built into the very activity / practice of teaching. The implications for teacher education programs are clear: Selection of preservice teachers and addressing the 'moral qualities' of preservice teachers in teacher education programs is not optional anymore if one is concerned about the moral development of students.

Care-Ethical Education: Responding to the Moral Enterprise of Teaching

In the previous section I have argued that teaching is *centrally* a moral enterprise. This perspective provides a challenge to approaches to school-based education because it sees moral education as being at the core of teaching. Approaches to school-based education, then, would need to respond to this challenge. In this section I argue that care-ethical education – as it has already been developed (see below) – is a full-blown response to the view of teaching as *centrally* a moral enterprise. Five different aspects of the view that teaching is centrally a moral enterprise can be distinguished, and I discuss each of these different aspects in turn to argue that care-ethical education is a full-blown response to this view of teaching.

(1) One aspect of the view of teaching as a moral enterprise is that the understanding of teaching as an inherently moral activity has to be grounded in a theory of morality. This means for care-ethical education that it, too, needs to be grounded in a theory of morality. Care-ethical education is grounded in *the ethics of care* as its theory of morality. At the core of the ethics of care is the view that humans are *essentially* relational beings and *caring* relations are (to be) central to ethical human living. This means that the building, maintaining and enhancing of caring relations for the common well-being is given a central role in societal and personal decisions in the moral realm of human living.[17] As a first approach, 'caring' and entering and being in 'caring relations' is here understood as being affected by, concerned about and ready to do something about the other person's needs. (More on the notion of caring in the next chapter).

Grounded in this view of the centrality of caring to ethical human living, *care-ethical education* is focused on developing attitudes and skills required to sustain caring and the desire to do so (Noddings, 1992, pp. 21-22), and for care ethical education "the primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 172). Care-ethical education is moral education. Care-ethical education (in the sense here used) started with Nel Noddings's (1984) influential work *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics & moral education*. The work primarily conceptualizes an ethic of care as a theory of morality guiding (ethical) human living, but it also provides a framework for care-ethical

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[17] As is more explicated in chapter 2, 'the ethics of care' refers more (as is the case for other approaches to morality) to a class of particular approaches to morality which have a common core, but might differ quite dramatically in questions less central to the core (see the discussion in chapter 2, in which also a particular approach to the ethics of care developed by Nel Noddings is discussed in more detail).

education as moral education (see 1984, chapter 8).[18] Noddings, then, more or less single-handedly, expanded this framework for care-ethical education to include curriculum, instruction, and school organization (for references see aspect 3 below).[19] Foundational to all these developments is what is foundational to care-ethical education: developing attitudes and skills required to sustain caring and the desire to do so. This 'primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort' is grounded in the view that caring is at the core of (ethical) human living, an idea which is grounded in the ethics of care. In this sense, care-ethical education is grounded in the ethics of care as its theory of morality.

(2) A second aspect of the view of teaching as a moral enterprise is that moral education has an impact on the moral development of students – at least at the level of plausibility in the absence of empirical evidence. As mentioned in the previous aspect, the purpose of care-ethical education is to develop the attitudes and skills required to sustain caring and the desire to do so. Care-ethical education as moral education then has the (assumed) impact of developing those attitudes and skills and this desire. With the assumption about the centrality of caring to ethical human living (a view grounded in the ethics of care), care-ethical education would, thus, have an (assumed) impact on the moral development (in the care-ethical sense) of students.

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[18] Noddings's 1984 work is not the first time that caring has been suggested as the core notion for ethical human living (see, for instance, Mayeroff, 1971; Gilligan, 1977, 1982), but it is, to my knowledge, the first time that caring as an ethical notion is suggested as a foundation of moral education and schooling.

[19] By no means is Noddings the only scholar writing on care-ethical education - understood as education grounded in the ethics of care (see, for instance, Noblit, 1993; Prillaman, 1994; Rauner, 2000) – however, Noddings provides by far the most developed approach to care-ethical education. For examples of what care-ethical education can look like at the concrete level in elementary classrooms, see Charney (2002), Dalton and Watson (1997).

(3) A third aspect of the view of teaching as a moral enterprise is that teaching

centres upon moral education. As just explicated, care-ethical education is focused on

developing attitudes and skills required to sustain caring and the desire to do so. Thus,

teaching within care-ethical education would centre upon the development of those

attitudes and skills and the respective desire. Because of the claimed centrality of caring

to ethical human living, teaching in care-ethical education, then, would centre upon moral

education. Furthermore, care-ethical education acknowledges that teaching is saturated

with morality: "Everything we do, then, as teachers, has moral overtones." (Noddings,

1984, p. 179)

This centrality of moral education pervades all aspects of care-ethical school

education, and, thus, makes not just teaching centre upon care-ethical moral education

but schooling in general as well[20]: (a) Care-ethical moral education frames the aim of

school education: "The main aim of education should be to produce competent, caring,

loving, and lovable people." (Noddings, 1992, p. 174) (b) Care-ethical moral education

guides the organizational structure of schooling. With the view of caring as being based

in the relationality of being human, schools need to be structured in a way that allows the

building, sustaining and enhancing of caring relations. For Noddings (1988/1996) this

need challenges the traditional hierarchical structure of management, the rigid mode of

allocating time, and the size of schools and classes. Furthermore, Noddings (1992,

chapter 5) suggests that this need requires as well that schools are structured in a way that

allows continuity, here in particular continuity of the teacher-student relationship.

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[20] "If we were to explore seriously the ideas suggested by an ethic of caring for education, we might
suggest changes in almost every aspect of schooling: the current hierarchical structure of management, the
rigid mode of allocating time, the kind of relationships encouraged, the size of schools and classes, the
goals of instruction, modes of evaluation, patterns of interaction, and selection of content." (Noddings,
1988/1996, p. 238)

Allowing teachers to stay together with their students for longer than one year allows for the building, sustaining and enhancing of the caring relations between teacher and students. Also, continuity of place is important in caring for students, since "one of their greatest needs is stability – a sense of belonging." (Noddings, 1992, p. 67): "When we have to choose between highly specialized programs for a narrow age range and continuity of place, we should choose the latter." (1992, p. 66) Furthermore, to address students' particular intellectual needs and interests, school programs should be open to all students with an interest in the program without required prerequisites (1992, chapter 11).[21] (c) Care-ethical moral education provides the guiding criteria for selecting curriculum content. Noddings (1992. p. 70) suggests that

> if we were starting from scratch to build a curriculum, I would suggest organizing it entirely around centers or themes of care: care for self, care for intimate others, care for strangers and distant others, care for nonhuman animals, care for plants and the living environment, care for objects and instruments, and care for ideas.[22]

(d) Care-ethical moral education guides also situational priorities in the day-to-day teaching. The way teachers encounter their students in their situational day-to-day teaching is generally guided by their concern for students' academic achievements. Care-ethical education does not devalue this concern, but – in full agreement with the proposed aim of education – promotes another guiding concern:

> We do not ask how we must treat children in order to get them to learn arithmetic but, rather, what effect each instructional move we consider has on the development of good persons. Our guiding principles for teaching

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[21] This latter point, then, has curricular implications and implications for teacher education: Waving prerequisites for an area of study will lead to different curricular needs of students, so does the consideration of different interests by students within a given area of study; in order for teachers to respond adequately to this diversity of needs and interests they would need to have a deep understanding of the area of study (Noddings, 1998, 1999a).

[22] On 'teaching themes of care' see also Noddings (1992, pp. 61-62; 1995).

arithmetic, or any other subject, are derived from our primary concern for the persons whom we teach, and methods of teaching are chosen in consonance with these derived principles. (Noddings, 1986, p. 499)[23]

Two of the four major components of care-ethical moral education (Noddings, 1992, pp. 22-26) concern directly the situational day-to-day encounters in schools: dialogue and confirmation (the other two are discussed below). "Dialogue is a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation", it is "open-ended; that is, in a genuine dialogue, neither party knows at the outset what the outcome or decision will be", and serves the purpose to "[connect] us to each other and [help] to maintain caring relations" (Noddings, p. 23). Confirmation (in care-ethical education) is "an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others", however, when confirming the other, "we must . . . see [the other's attribute or goal] as at least morally acceptable" (Noddings, p. 25) (e) Finally, care-ethical moral education guides the general conduct in schools through its aim of developing attitudes and skills required to sustain caring and the desire to do so. Assuming that "the capacity to care may be dependent on adequate experience in being cared for" (Noddings, 1992, p. 22), 'caring conduct' – particularly by teachers – is then central to care-ethical moral education and, thus, to care-ethical education (see 4d below). Furthermore, the 'practice of caring' is one of the four major components of care-ethical moral education (Noddings, 1992, pp.23-25), which has then an impact on the general conduct in schools.

(4) In the explication of the view that teaching is centrally a moral enterprise in the previous section of this chapter, I have distinguished four different (types of) ways of

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[23] Also: "Clearly, in professions where encounter is frequent and where the ethical ideal of the other is necessarily involved, I am first and foremost one-caring and, second, enactor of specialized functions. As teacher, I am, first, one-caring. . . . The student is infinitely more important than the subject matter." (Noddings, 1984, p. 176)

influencing students' moral development. I now argue that care-ethical education makes use of all four types to guide and develop students' 'care capacity'. (a) The first way was direct moral instructions, which means for care-ethical education the direct teaching of moral living based on caring. Teaching themes of care (referred to above) is such a direct teaching of moral living based on caring. (b) The second way was teaching *about* morality. This way is somewhat integrated into the first one in the sense that the discussions within teaching themes of care are partially meta-discussions around issues of caring. For instance, when Noddings (2002b, pp. 36-38) suggests discussions with students around themes like love, friendship, and women's traditions, the discussions are meta-discussions about issues of caring. All three themes address aspects of human living and being human that are of importance to caring. (c) The third way of influencing students' moral development mentioned in the previous section was creating a 'moral' learning environment. Creating a 'caring environment' in schools in which students are cared-for, learn to care and practice caring themselves is an important aspect of care-ethical education (Noddings, 1992). (d) Finally, teacher modelling of moral living was listed as the fourth way of impacting students' moral development. Noddings conceptualizes modelling of caring and building, sustaining and enhancing caring relations as one of the four component of moral education, which concerns primarily the modelling by the teacher.[24] As I argued above for 'moral qualities' in general, caring is conceptualized in such a way that it is not possible to model caring without being engaged in authentic caring.[25]

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[24] See Noddings, 1984, chapter 8; 1988/1996, pp. 239-240; 1992, chapter 4.
[25] I discuss Noddings's conceptualization of caring in chapter 2.

(5) The fifth and last aspect of the view of teaching as a moral enterprise is that in order for teachers to be able to model 'moral living', the teacher needs to have particular 'moral qualities', and teacher education, then, should be designed to support the development of those 'moral qualities'. Care-ethical education responds to this aspect by requiring that teachers themselves are caring and that teacher education supports preservice teachers' 'care capacity'. The former is already dealt with in the previous aspect 4d, and the latter is central to care-ethical teacher education (see chapter 7).

Care-ethical education, thus, responds to each of the five central aspects of the view that teaching is centrally a moral enterprise. Care-ethical education, then, can be seen as a full-fledged response to this view. The discussion also makes clear how important it is that teachers are 'ready' for care-ethical education. Since care-ethical education is a response to the moral enterprise of teaching, the question arises: Can teacher education prepare teachers for care-ethical education? If yes, how can it? This is the guiding question for this thesis as explicated in the prologue.

In the 1990s somewhat and much stronger over the last couple of years, caring and teacher-student relationships in teaching have been recognized in the professional education community and in academic literature directed at the teaching profession as being of great importance to K-12 education.[26] Much of this literature, however, is quite distinct from care-ethical education in the sense that the former is not based on the ethics of care as their theory of morality. Often no connection to moral education is made and intended at all, and often 'caring' is meant in a very general sense of being respectful and

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[26] See, for instance, *Building Classroom Relationships* (2003), *Creating Caring Schools* (2003), Deiro (1996), Gootman (1997), Joseph & Windschitl (1999).

considerate of others.[27] This difference between care-ethical education and other 'caring-based' approaches to education and teaching that are not grounded in the ethics of care has to be kept in mind. In the next chapter I explore one of the more prominent approaches to the ethics of care, which underlies the most prominent approach to care-ethical education. Later, I argue for and explicate a modified version of this approach to the ethics of care.

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[27] For instance, Robicheaux's (1996) article 'Caring Teachers Can Realize the Vision of the Standards' – which Goldstein (2002, p. 1) characterizes as describing "the importance of caring in the teaching of mathematics" – is an example for the former type. The article carries the word 'caring' only in the title, and 'caring teacher' refers more to 'teacher who is concerned about improving her mathematics teaching in the light of the NCTM Standards' (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989). Roberts' (2002) article 'Learn to Care, Care to Learn' is an example for the latter type. Here the focus is centrally on the individual development of a positive attitude towards learning ('caring to learn'), and creation of a learning environment ("a calmer, less threatening classroom climate", p. 48) that is more conducive to the learning engagement suggested in the article.

CHAPTER 2: DISCUSSING NODDINGS'S ETHIC OF CARE

In the last chapter I argued that teaching is a moral enterprise and that care-ethical education as it has been developed so far can be understood as a response to seeing teaching as a moral enterprise. As noted in the previous chapter, seeing teaching as a moral enterprise assumes a certain ethical view. The ethical view underlying care-ethical education is the view of the ethics of care, a particular approach to morality. A critical review of the ethics of care in this chapter will reveal central assumptions made explicitly or implicitly about human and societal functioning in this approach to ethics. Based on this discussion I will argue that an inquiry into those assumptions will be required. In chapters 3 and 4 I undertake such inquiry.

Although philosophical treatises on the ethical role of caring in human experience and practice were written before (for instance, Mayeroff, 1971), the beginning of the ethics of care is generally set with Gilligan (1982; sometimes 1977) and Noddings (1984).[28] As within other fields, there are different approaches within the ethical orientation labelled as 'the ethics of care', and sometimes these different approaches are critical of each other, as we will see.[29]

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[28] Such references can be found in introductions to the ethics of care in philosophical textbooks (for instance, Darwall, 1998), psychological textbooks (Lapsey, 1996) and in handbook and encyclopedia articles (for instance, Turiel, 1998), and scholarly treatises (for instance, Flanagan, 1991). I think this is due to the ethics of care as a topic and orientation in moral psychology and moral philosophy being picked up, (critically) discussed, and promoted by feminist oriented scholars in both fields. Seeing caring in this light started with the work by Gilligan and Noddings.

[29] I use the phrase 'the ethics of care' as a collective term for the tradition of care-ethical approaches to morality and the term 'an ethic of care' to refer to any particular such approach that is part of that tradition.

I decided to focus in my critical discussion in this chapter on Nel Noddings's particular approach to the ethics of care (Noddings, 1984, 1992, 2002a, 2002b) for two reasons. First and foremost, Noddings is by far the most prominent proponent of an ethic of care who inquires into its relevance for education including teacher education. For that reason her work will have to play a major role in subsequent chapters. Second, her care-ethical approach to morality is by far the most developed one, starting with a detailed conceptual framework (Noddings, 1984) and reaching into moral education (Noddings, 2002b) and school education in general (Noddings, 1992, 1988/1996), social policy (Noddings, 2002a), and the aims of life (Noddings, 2003).

Noddings's Ethic of Care: Core Features

There are three core features of Noddings's ethic of care, which I label as 'relational ontology', 'attention-with-concern' and 'particularism'. I discuss each in turn.[30]

Relational Ontology

In Western societies an individualistic view of humans is generally held. Contributing to this state of affairs and its development is the dominance of the political philosophy of liberalism.[31] The moral (ethical) theory underpinning the political liberal philosophy sees the individual human being as a moral agent who autonomously and rationally deliberates about what is right and wrong to do in a particular situation, based on moral principles of right and wrong or good and bad. In one version of political liberal philosophy,

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[30] See also Ann Diller's (1991) analysis of Noddings's ethic of care. Diller distinguishes five key features, which are partially integrated into the three I distinguish and discuss.
[31] The most prominent proponent of this liberal philosophy is John Rawls (1999).

contractarianism, autonomous and rational moral agents engage voluntarily in social

association for mutual benefits.[32]

In opposition to this view of human agency and society stands what Ann Diller

(1991) has called the view of relational ontology: "The nature of being for us humans is

to be in relation" (p. 90). "Relation will be taken as ontologically basic" (Noddings, 1984,

p. 3) in the sense that humans are not seen as autonomous individuals but rather as

relational beings, whose very existence and well-being depends on the quality of their

relationships to others.[33] With our relationships to others being basic to our being human,

Noddings's ethic of care is a relational ethics (Noddings, 1988/1996, p. 236). The point

here is less that we are in relation to others; even from the standpoint of the philosophy of

political liberalism autonomous individuals are in relation to each other, because of

which 'social contracts' are required in the first place (contractarianism). From a

viewpoint of relational ontology, however, these relations have quite a different quality:

The way we live our lives is oriented toward others.[34] For Noddings (2002b, p. 15) this

ontological principle of relational interdependence brings with it an *ethical* principle of

relational responsibility:

> 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

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[32] See, for instance, Freeman (1998).

[33] These relationships include relationships to not just other human beings but also to other living beings,
our natural environment, and objects, even ideas (see, for instance, Noddings, 1992). For the time being,
however, I will stay focused on the relationships to other human beings.

[34] "A relational ethics remains tightly tied to experience because all its deliberations focus on the human
beings involved in the situation under consideration and their relations to each other." (Noddings,
1988/1996, p. 236)

caring person – one who enters regularly into caring relations – depends in large part on how you respond to me.[35]

As the quote indicates, the quality of the relationships to others as characterized by the two features is captured in the notion of *caring for* the other.[36] Our concern for caring relationships should have *primacy over any other ethical consideration*:[37]

> Despite sometimes irresolvable differences [of moral values and standards held], students should not forget the central aim of moral life – to encounter, attend, and respond to the need to care. (Noddings, 2002b, p. 23)

Noddings's starting point for an explication of the notion of caring for someone is the dyadic caring encounter:[38] *A* (the carer) cares for *B* (the cared-for) if and only if: (a) *A*'s state of consciousness is characterized by (i) engrossment (= open, non-selective attention to *B*'s needs), (ii) motivational displacement (= motivation to do something to address *B*'s needs); (b) *B* receives *A*'s state of consciousness (= acknowledges *A*'s caring state of consciousness).

Three central features characterize Noddings's notion of caring for someone, part of which distinguishes Noddings's ethic of care from care-ethical approaches by others, as I will discuss in the next section. First, what is at the centre of caring for someone is

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[35] See also Noddings, 1988/1996, p. 239.

[36] "Relation will be taken as ontologically basic and the caring relation as ethically basic." (Noddings, 1984, p. 3)

[37] See also Diller, 1991, p. 94.

[38] On her phenomenological starting point see, for instance, Noddings, 1986, p. 501 ("An ethic of caring is, clearly, phenomenological in its method."); 2002a, pp. 11, 13-19. Noddings definition of 'caring for someone' can be found more or less unchanged in several of her publications (for instance, 1984, pp. 14, 69, 150; 1988/1996, p. 237; 1992, pp. 15-16, 91; 1999a, pp. 206-207; 2001, pp. 99-100). To my knowledge only once does Noddings (2002a, p. 19) include a requirement of an actual caring *action* in her definition of caring. I discuss the issue of the role of an actual caring *action* in the next section.

the carer's concern for the *need(s)* of the other person, the cared-for.[39] Second, it is not

the doing of something that is characteristic for caring for someone, but rather a certain

state of consciousness by the carer, 'attention-with-concern' as I call and discuss it

below. Third, the cared-for has to positively respond to ('receive') the carer's state of

consciousness and the actions that might result from it.[40] From the relational ontology

point of view caring *relations* need to 'fit' both parties involved in the relationship,

because of which this third feature of caring relations should not surprise. This 'fit' has to

be of central concern for the (potential) carer:

> Saying 'because I care' has too often been used to justify cruelty and self-righteousness. Therefore, I have insisted that the reaction of the cared-for is essential in establishing a relation as one of caring. The cared-for's rejection of a claim does not by itself invalidate a claim to care; time may change rejection to acceptance. But rejection of a claim raises a question, and that is the important point here. Any relation in which one person claims to care and the recipient of that care denies the claims is one that demands close scrutiny. (Noddings, 2001, p. 101)

Attention-with-Concern

As the definition of a caring relation makes clear, engrossment and motivational

displacement, which I like to collectively call the conscious state of attention-with-

concern, are principal to Noddings's notion of caring. A carer's attention-with-concern is

centrally directed toward the other person, the cared-for, and her needs. In this sense

Noddings conceptualizes caring in a 'personal' way. Thus, she often puts the 'personal

encounter' with the mother/parent–child relationship as its prototype at the outset of her

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[39] Although many other aspects of the conceptualization of caring vary among different proponents of an ethic of care – as will become clear from the next section – for all of them the concern for the needs of the cared-for is at the centre of caring; see, for instance, Rauner, 2000, p. 19; Tronto, 1994, p. 105.

[40] Noddings (1984, pp. 69-74) has unfortunately called this criterion for caring the reciprocity feature of caring. Taking the traditional meaning of 'reciprocity' in a context of ethical theories, this criterion should mean that the cared-for also cares for the carer. This is, though, not what Noddings explicitly means. (See on this point as well Card, 1990, p. 106.)

explication of her notion of caring.[41] Conceptualizing caring through personal encounters

does not prevent using such a care-ethical approach to address 'larger issues' like social

policy, as Noddings's (2002a) work on caring and social policy illustrates, but it means,

as this work suggests, that social policy is to be 'anchored' in personal encounters in the

sense that the latter provides for the purpose of the former: Social policy is to be designed

such that it creates the social and institutional framework for (personal) caring

encounters, the building, sustaining and enhancing of caring relations, and thus the

addressing of needs, to happen.[42]

The attention-with-concern that connects the carer to the cared-for in a caring

encounter is not based in moral duty in a Kantian sense, but rather in moral sentiments in

a Humean sense (Noddings, 2002b, p. 8). For Noddings caring "is essentially

nonrational" (1984, p. 25), although rational thinking has an *instrumental* purpose in

caring: "to figure out what to do once I have committed myself to doing something"

(1984, p. 35).[43] The actualization of our moral sentiments in the form of attention-with-

concern in particular situations is what Noddings calls 'natural caring', which is "when

we care quite naturally. We just do care; no ethical effort is required." (Noddings, 1984,

p. 81).[44] But what about caring in situations in which attention-with-concern does not

arise naturally?

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[41] See, for instance, Noddings, 1992, p. 16, where she gives the example of a stranger stopping her and asking her for directions as an example for "a caring encounter". For her view that the mother/parent-child relationship is prototypical for a caring relationship see 1984, p. 175; 1988/1996, p. 237. Taking a phenomenological analysis of caring as a starting point (see footnote above) fits well together with her conceptualization of caring as a 'personal encounter'.
[42] This is, of course, an oversimplification, but characterizes the very central idea of Noddings's approach to social policy; see her kind of credo in connection with (social) justice and caring in 2002a, pp. 23-24.
[43] Following Hume's lead, Noddings "believe[s] that reason is (almost) slave to the passions." (2002b, p. 8)
[44] "By 'natural' I mean a form of caring that arises more or less spontaneously out of affection or inclination." (Noddings, 2002a, p. 29)

> Then, if we value ourselves as carers, we summon ethical caring – a dutiful form of caring that resembles a Kantian ethical attitude. On such occasions we respond as carers because we want to uphold our ideas of ourselves as carers. . . . Care theory reverses Kantian priorities. By placing natural caring above ethical caring, we suggest that ethical caring is instrumental in establishing or restoring natural caring. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 30)

'Our ideas of ourselves as carers' are manifested in our *ethical self* or *ethical ideal*, and while for Kant we (should) behave morally out of duty toward rationally established moral principles, for Noddings we (should) care for the other in a personal encounter because of our *natural* inclination to care (natural caring) or because we want to stay true to our ethical self / ideal.[45]

Conceptualising caring with attention-with-concern at its centre leads Noddings to a distinction between caring *for* and caring *about* (Noddings, 2002a, pp. 21-24). In her view, we can care *about* people or groups of people we do not personally know, for instance people in developing countries, in the sense that we are concerned for their well-being, but there is no attention-with-concern involved, because we do not have a personal encounter with them. This distinction makes clear how attention-with-concern is directly linked to *personal encounters* in Noddings's conceptualizing of ethical caring. Originally, Noddings was very dismissive of actions out of caring about (1984, pp. 18, 112) because of the stated reason, however, later (2002a, pp. 21-24) she saw caring about someone or something as one form of adequate response in the *public sphere* and a developmental link between caring for and (public) justice. However, for Noddings (2002a, pp. 23-24) caring about can ultimately be not more than instrumental for caring for others in personal encounters.

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[45] See, for instance, Noddings, 1988/1996, p. 236.

Particularism

That caring for someone is directly linked to personal encounters is tied to the third

central feature of Noddings's ethic of care, to particularism: The carer responds to the

cared-for relative to the particularities of the given situation in the personal encounter.

Such consideration of contextual particularities might seem to make a lot of sense at first

sight, but modern Western moral philosophical thinking went in the opposite direction by

suggesting moral deliberation and decision making should be based on universal moral

principles. Kant's (1785/1988, p. 49) categorical imperative provides one extreme

example: "Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should

become a universal law." Here the particularities of any given situation are told to be

ignored for the sake of principled living. Even the probably most famous moral

imperative, the Golden Rule, which can be found cross-culturally and in all current major

religion, is based on the idea of a general principle as well: "We should treat others as we

ourselves want to be treated and not in a way we ourselves would not want to be treated"

(Coloroso, 2001, p. 5).[46] Noddings (1992, p. 21) holds against this idea of

universalizability of moral deliberation:

> There is . . . a rejection of universalizability, the notion that anything that
> is morally justifiable is necessarily something that anyone else in a similar
> situation is obligated to do. Universalizability suggests that who we are, to
> whom we are related, and how we are situated should have nothing to do
> with our moral decision making. An ethic of caring rejects this.

For Noddings (1984, pp. 25-26) the problem with principle-based moral

deliberation is that it distracts from the attention-with-concern toward the cared-for, and

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[46] Barbara Coloroso (2001, pp. 5-7) points to nine different religions, all major ones among them, in all of
which the Golden Rule is explicitly stated as a moral rule or guide. For further references on the
universality of the Golden Rule see Gensler (1996, p. 105).

it moves the focus from the cared-for and her needs to an abstract moral problem of fitting one's response to moral principles. Particularism in the ethics of care implies that what it means to care depends on the context, that means, time, culture, individuals involved, situational context, and so on, that there are no universal principles of caring.[47] There has been some doubt expressed on the opposition that Noddings has created between principle-based moral reasoning and caring, which I will discuss in the now following section.[48]

Challenging Noddings's Ethic of Care

The Challenges

The challenges to Noddings's approach to the ethics of care are put forward either directly as critique on or indirectly through alternative approaches to Noddings's ethic of care. They can be grouped into four major classes, which I call the personal-versus-social challenge, the challenge to the ethical priority of caring, the challenge to particularism, and the emotion-versus-reasoning challenge. I present each challenge in turn. The presentation is more descriptive than critical. A more critical discussion of the challenges follows in the discussion of the underlying assumptions in chapters 5 and 6. Some of the challenges come from the 'inside', with which I refer to other care-ethical writers and to feminist writers who are sympathetic to the general approach behind the ethics of care. Challenges from the 'outside' come from proponents of other approaches to ethics and morality.

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[47] This questioning of the ethical adequacy of moral deliberation by principles applies even to principles based on a notion of social justice, as her discussing of segregated schooling illustrates (Noddings, 1999b).
[48] For an illustration of this opposition, see Noddings's (1999b) discussion, in which she contrasts a principle-based and a care-ethical approach to the issue of segregated schooling.

The Personal-versus-Social Challenge

Two challenges are brought forward here. First, there is the challenge from the 'inside'. Caring *for* someone is conceptualized by Noddings as being based on a *personal* encounter with a *particular* individual and a moral responsibility that derives out of this encounter for the *particular* relationship and the *particular* other, with the mother/parent-child relationship seen as the prototypical caring relation. The challenge brought forward against this perspective on caring and the ethic derived from it is that it neglects the socio-political basis for caring.[49] Fisher and Tronto (1990, p. 40), for instance, define caring as "a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible."[50] For Noddings caring and the ethics derived from it are rooted in the *personal* one-to-one encounter, viewed from the pre-act consciousness of the carer[51] and the post-act consciousness of the cared-for, framing caring in terms of the ethical self of the individual and her relational self. Fisher and Tronto, on the other hand, conceptualize caring as being rooted in institutionalized social practices within a social, political and economical context, viewed from a socio-political analysis of the practice which frames such practices in terms of power relations, abuse and exploitation.[52]

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[49] For main proponents of this challenge see Bowden (1997), Card (1990), Fisher and Tronto (1990), Held (1993), Hoagland (1990), Houston (1990), Tronto (1993).

[50] See also Tronto (1993, p. 103).

[51] "An ethic of caring locates morality primarily in the pre-act consciousness of the one-caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 28)

[52] See, for instance, Fisher and Tronto (1990) where they discuss "the primary social modes of caring in our society: the household, the market, and the bureaucracy" (p. 38) and Tronto (1993), who argues for placing an ethic of care into a social and political theory, because "only if we understand care as a political idea will we be able to change its status and the status of those who do caring work in our culture." (p. 157) Barbara Houston (1990, p. 116) criticizes Noddings's "valuation of caring relations in abstraction from their social, political and economic contexts" as well.

The second challenge in this class comes more from the 'outside' and charges that the ethics of care in general – and, thus, Noddings's ethic of care in particular – is a domain ethic, that means, an ethic that is adequate only for a particular domain of human life: the private domain as distinguished from the public domain.[53] With their socio-political conceptualization of caring and the ethics derived from it, Fisher and Tronto (1990; Tronto, 1993) aim to overcome that very "moral boundary" (Tronto, 1993) between the private and the public realm.[54] While this challenge of being a domain ethic might be overcome in Fisher and Tronto's approach to the ethics of care, the challenge is very serious for Noddings's 'private' approach to caring and the ethics of care.

The Challenge to the Ethical Priority of Caring

The two challenges to Noddings's ethic of care in the second class are concerned with the priority given to caring over other 'ethical values'.[55] The first concern from the 'inside' is that the ethics derived from the way Noddings conceptualizes caring perpetuates the exploitation of the carer, which is generally a woman, and does not provide the ethical basis for required societal change. The second concern is that in Western ethical thinking fundamental 'ethical value' of justice is not (sufficiently) considered in Noddings's ethic of care and in the ethics of care in general. Both challenges are connected.

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[53] For proponents of this challenge see Kohlberg (1984, p. 232), Habermas (1990, pp. 175-181), Kymlicka (1990, pp. 262-286). For a discussion of this challenge from the 'inside' see Diller (1991, pp. 94-96).
[54] For another strong critique of the private versus public split see Held, 1993.
[55] I use 'ethical value' (in single quotation) as a generic term for notions, principles, and so on, that are used to guide our moral deliberation and living. This is to avoid a closer discussion of the distinctions between different approaches to 'ethical values' like virtue approaches, rule approaches, and so on, which is not necessary in this context.

The argument for the first concern runs as follows.[56] As already explicated above,

Noddings conceptualizes caring as unidirectional, and the 'moral commitment' from the

ethics derived from that conceptualization is other-orientedness in an absolute sense:

> Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference
> into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his
> objective needs, and what he expects of us. Our attention, our mental
> engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. Our reasons for acting,
> then, have to do both with the other's wants and desires and with the
> objective elements of his problematic situation. (Noddings, 1984, p. 24)

Since this other-orientedness is not connected to true reciprocity (illustrated by

Noddings's response to an abusive relationship discussed below), it seems obvious how

an ethic that derives from this conceptualization of caring can be an ethic that perpetuates

exploitation, since our ethical (caring) concern is directed toward the needs and

expectations of the cared-for. Being in a socio-political context in which true reciprocity

of such other-directedness is not practiced, Noddings's ethic of care may not just

perpetuate the exploitation of those who usually do such caring, generally women, but it

also does not provide an ethical basis for a change of the situation of systemic

exploitation.[57] In order to have an ethic of care that counters such exploitation and allows

to be used as an ethical theory to overcome their systemic existence, so the argument

continues, an ethic of care needs to be placed within a framework of other 'ethical

values', justice being a central one of them. Then, the 'moral commitment' of the other-

orientedness in one's caring would be qualified by, for instance, the justice-features of

the context of such caring.

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[56] For the argumentation see Card (1990), Hoagland (1990), Houston (1990), Tronto (1993, p. 158). See
also the insightful discussion of this challenge to Noddings's approach in Diller (1991, pp. 96-98)
[57] "I fail to see how Noddings' ethics offers any hope for a radical transformation of these gendered
conventions." (Houston, 1990, p. 118)

The second challenge in this class brought forward from the 'outside' is that other 'moral values' – in particular justice – are of at least the same importance to human living as caring, which is often identified as benevolence, so, for instance in Kohlberg (1984, p. 227) and Slote (2001). Sometimes caring is presented as in competition with justice (Habermas, 1990, pp. 175-184; Strike, 1999), sometimes it is argued that both care and justice are needed in human social living (Baier, 1995; Flanagan & Jackson, 1987; Kohlberg, 1984, pp. 229-230; Slote, 2001). The concern raised in this second challenge has generally less to do with a concern for the exploitation of the carer, generally women, and more with the view that benevolence and justice reflect two human qualities needed for good community living – even in a patriarchal society with a clear private-public split.

The Challenge to Particularism

The challenge in the third class charges that the level of particularism Noddings's ethic of care in particular claims is ethically not adequate.[58] The claim made here is that Noddings's ethic of care cannot become a comprehensive moral theory because of its emphasis on particularism, which is contrary to one of the central features – so the critique goes – of a comprehensive moral theory: universalizability through moral principles (Kohlberg, 1984, p. 232; Habermas, 1990, pp. 175-181; Kymlicka, 1990, pp. 262-286). For Strike (1999) universalizability allows for reliability (predictability), which, he argues, is also important in personal caring in Noddings's sense: "Predictability is important for a child's sense of security and for responsible discipline. . . . Moreover,

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[58] The challenge is directed toward the ethics of care as a whole, since the feature of particularism is an explicitly noticed feature of all care-ethical approaches (see, for instance, Gilligan, 1982, pp. 21-22), but because I focus on Noddings's care-ethical approach, I talk about the challenge as a challenge to Noddings's approach.

children who find their parents capricious are unlikely to feel cared for." (p. 28)

Additionally, Kymlicka (1990, p. 268) points out that it is important to consider that – as

he writes with reference to Held (1987) – each of us has only limited resources to care

and that we need moral guidelines for ordering our priorities. Such moral guidelines

would then go beyond particularism and be provided by more generalized, maybe even

'impartial' 'moral values'.

The Emotion-versus-Reasoning Challenge.

Noddings's attention-with-concern by the carer, which is at the centre of her

conceptualization of caring, is emotion based: "To care is to act not by fixed rule but by

affection [toward] and regard [for the cared-for]" (Noddings, 1984, p. 24). Reasoning and

problem solving, as mentioned, has an instrumental function in Noddings's ethic of

caring. The emotion-based affection and regard are not just the motivational force for the

caring, they also serve a corrective function when – in what Noddings (1984, pp. 26, 36)

calls 'turning points' – the carer turns from the emotion-based mode of receiving the

cared-for to the (instrumental) mode of abstract reasoning and problem solving:

> If rational-objective thinking is to be put in the service of caring, we must
> at the right moments turn it away from the abstract toward which it tends
> and back to the concrete. At times we must suspend it in favour of
> subjective thinking and reflection, allowing time and space for *seeing* and
> *feeling*. . . . Otherwise, we find ourselves deeply, perhaps inextricably,
> enmeshed in procedures that somehow serve only themselves; our
> thoughts are separated, completely detached, from the original objects of
> caring. (Noddings, 1984, p. 26)

There are two challenges to this view of the emotional base of caring and the role

of 'rational-objective thinking' in caring and, thus, the ethics of care. Aside from one

challenge coming from the 'outside' while the other coming from the 'inside', both

challenges are distinguished in the degree to which they give emotions a role in ethics and morality. The first challenge comes from theories of morality which are completely based on abstract rational deliberation. Kant's (1785/1988, 1797/1996) deontological theory of moral duty is an example for such an approach, in which the highest moral goods and moral rules are determined solely through impartial abstract moral deliberation, a view that the educationally influential work by Lawrence Kohlberg (1981, 1984) adopted by focusing on a person's reasoning for her moral decisions in order to establish her level of moral development.

The second challenge in this class comes from the 'inside' through alternative approaches to an ethic of care. These approaches allow for rationality, even duty and moral principles to be the motivational force of the caring responsiveness to the cared-for's needs (Rauner, 2000, p. 21) and for abstract reasoning and problem solving to be at the very centre of one's engagement in caring (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, pp. 40-46).[59] For Fisher and Tronto (see also Tronto, 1993) caring is or should be, as already mentioned, rooted in the concern for the state of the world, society, and so on, which implies a focus on human needs from a more abstract point of view than what Noddings suggests.

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[59] "Responsiveness reflects the necessity of caring, regardless of whether that necessity springs from principle, duty or affect. As such, it might be a primarily emotional or primarily rational process, depending on the situation and the individuals involved." (Rauner, 2000, p. 21).

Consequently, three of the four phases of caring distinguished by Fisher and Tronto (1990, pp. 40-46) revolve around rational deliberation.[60]

Underlying Assumptions

I turn now to a more detailed discussion of one of the challenges just presented in order to make explicit central underlying assumptions in Noddings's ethic of care and in the critical challenges about what I call 'the human condition'. Following the detailed discussion are shorter discussions of the other major challenges to Noddings's ethic of care to demonstrate that there as well are underlying assumptions about 'the human condition', assumptions which shape the respective ethical position. I then argue that in order to assess and respond to these challenges a more thorough inquiry into 'the human condition' is required.

In particular Fisher and Tronto put forward the challenge that caring should be conceptualized as being rooted in institutionalized social practices within a social, political and economical context rather than as being based in a personal encounter where the moral aspect of caring is primarily located in the pre-act consciousness of the carer and the post-act consciousness of the cared-for. Such different perspectives on what seems at first the same phenomenon – caring – suggest different views on specific issues around the phenomenon. These different views are directly linked to different

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[60] The first phase is 'caring about': "Caring about involves paying attention to our world in such a way that we focus on continuity, maintenance, and repair." (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40) The second phase is 'taking care of': "The central skill involved in taking care of, then is that of judgment: the skill involved in choosing one course of action rather than another. Judging involves assessing available resources." (1990, p. 42). The third phase is 'care-giving': "The knowledge involved in caregiving requires a more detailed, everyday understanding. Those who take responsibility for care may have to change the caring plan periodically . . . To make such revision requires experience, skill, and ultimately, judgment." (1990, p. 43). The fourth phase Fisher and Tronto (1990, p. 44) distinguish, 'care-receiving', is "defined as the response to caregiving by those toward whom care is directed."

assumptions about 'the human condition'. The following is an example of such an issue,

illustrating other central differences of the two perspectives, the personal and the social.

In a response to a series of critical reviews in the journal *Hypatia* (Card, 1990;

Hoagland, 1990; Houston, 1990) Nel Noddings (1990, p. 125) illustrates her view on

caring in a situation of domestic abuse:

> An appropriate caring response from an abused woman should be, I will
> not allow you to do this to *me, you, us*. Given the power relations in this
> society, she may not be able to carry through her commitment 'not to
> allow,' but there is nothing the ethic of caring itself that disables her.
> Women in abusive relations need others to support them – to care for
> them. One of the best forms of support would be to surround the abusive
> husband with loving models who would not tolerate abuse in their
> presence and would strongly disapprove of it whenever it occurred in their
> absence. Such models could support and re-educate the woman as well,
> helping her to understand her own self-worth. Too often, everyone
> withdraws from both the abuser and the sufferer.

This suggestion to not withdraw is based on Noddings's view that the ethical self is

diminished by any withdrawal from relationships in which a partner is guilty of gross

wrong-doing or wrong-thinking (see 1990, pp. 124-125 and 1984, p. 114). Noddings's

response to the abuse case makes several points clear about Noddings's ethic of care.

First, it makes clear how seriously Noddings takes the core feature of relational ontology

in her ethic of care: Even withdrawal from an abusive relationship implies a diminishing

of our ethical self.[61] Second, the issue is framed as a personal issue in two ways: The

abuse issue is seen as a personal issue in a particular relationship of two particular people,

and the response is personal in the sense that surrounding the abusive husband by people

with positive influence on him requires personal relationships between those people and

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[61] However, Noddings draws a clear line between our care-ethical responsibility toward others in general
and our relationships in particular on the one side and self-sacrifice on the other: "One exception to this
would be the case of direct personal abuse where *physical* withdrawal is necessary for self-protection."
(1990, pp. 124-125, my emphasis)

the husband in order to have the desired influence on the husband. This second point illustrates how seriously Noddings takes the core feature of particularism in her ethic of care: Responding personally is considering the particularities of a relational situation.

Tronto (1993, pp. 160-161) and Hoagland (1990, p. 111) respond very critically to this view. Tronto suggests that the quote demonstrates on Noddings's part "an ignorance of the nature of domestic violence: that abusive husbands deliberately isolate themselves and their wives from others, that victims are often secretive about the fact that they are abused, that abusers often do not think of themselves as abusers." (1993, p. 160) Hoagland (1990, p. 111) "want[s] to suggest there must be the possibility of withdrawal from a cared-for without a diminishment of the ethical ideal, for at times withdrawal is necessary to preserve my ideal. . . . Withdrawal may also be the only way one can help another."

What is of interest here for my purpose is less the content of their arguments but rather what perspective is behind the respective argumentation. Noddings argues from a perspective in which the relational self of the abused women is emphasized, a perspective according to which the concern for the (abusing) other is a concern for yourself, your (ethical) self. Tronto and Hoagland, on the other hand, take a perspective which focuses on the abused woman as an individual person with rights, like the right to live without abuse, a right which can be accommodated through withdrawal. The former perspective, which focuses on the relational self, involves then what I have called 'the personal' response, because for Noddings caring relations are rooted in the personal, while the latter perspective, which focuses on the individual right, invites a 'social' response, because rights are defined in the socio-political sphere.

The problem of abusive relationships is framed differently in each of the two

perspectives. In the former perspective the problem poses as a breakdown of a (caring)

relationship and the diminished ethical self of the abuser, for which all and particularly

those in personal relationships with the abuser are partially responsible. In this

perspective a withdrawal from the abuser does not solve the problem of the abusive

relationship – though a *physical* withdrawal might be necessary for self-protection. In the

latter perspective the problem of an abusive relationship poses as a violation of the

fundamental human right of the abused to being safe of physical and psychological harm.

From this perspective the immediate *complete* withdrawal from the relationship and the

abuser does solve the problem in the most efficient way. The different perspectives

expressed here are not that Noddings does not recognize a right to live without abuse or

that Tronto and Hoagland do not recognize a relational nature of human beings, but rather

that their foci from their respective perspectives are different in the way just described.[62]

The ethics of care as a moral orientation – of which these are two perspectives – gives

recognition to both the relational dependency of abuser and abused as well as the high-

level needs of the abused for a harm-free relationship. However, particular approaches to

the ethics of care can place different emphases on both, as is the case with the two

approaches just described.

At the very base of the two different perspectives lie two different views of what

it means to be human and – connected to each of these views – different norms (ethics)

for human living. Taking the relational nature of human beings further than Tronto et al.,

Noddings sees the identity, the self of each human bound up in the quality of her

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[62] For Noddings's recognition of rights, which she frames in terms of needs, see, for instance, Noddings (2002a, chapter 3), and for Tronto's recognition of relational nature of human beings see Tronto (1990, pp. 162-164).

relationships to those around her (relational self). Such an assumption about the

fundamental character of being human demands a normative (ethical) aspect of human

living that frames the ethics of one's living in terms of one's contribution to the quality of

one's relations. Thus, giving up on one's relations is a diminishing of one's (relational)

self. For Tronto et al., on the other hand, human beings are fundamentally relational, but

this relational aspect of being human has to be balanced with or kept in check by

individual qualities of human living which find their expression in the modern Western

view of human rights.[63] Such view of the fundamental character of being human demands

a normative (ethical) framing of human living in terms of the respect for those rights for

those others one enters into a relationship with – whether it is relationships at a more

personal or a more general level.[64] Thus, giving up on an abusive relationship does not

diminish our ethical self, but rather protects its integrity.

This difference in assumptions about being human is even more prevalent when

theories of morality are considered from outside a care-ethical approach to morality.

Rawls (1999), for instance, has developed a modern deontological theory of morality in

the Kantian tradition, which is based on negative liberty, equal opportunity and

distributive justice.[65] His theory of justice creates a political framework which sees as its

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[63] When I discuss fundamental human needs below, this view will be discussed in more length.

[64] In her review of Noddings's *Caring*, Claudia Card notes critically: "Technology has made it possible for the effects of our actions to extend far beyond the range of our personal encounters. We can affect drastically, even fatally, people we will never know as individuals. What does a caring ethic say about our relations with them?" (Card, 1990, pp. 102-103)

[65] The distinction between positive and negative liberty goes back to (at least) Isaiah Berlin (1984), who explicated the notion of negative freedom as follows: "I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity." (p. 15) Negative liberty is liberty *from* something, from the interference by others. For at least some liberal thinkers, negative and positive liberty seemed to go together: "The only freedom which deserve the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it." (Mill, 1984, p. 72) In Western thinking about justice the understanding of justice is usually captured by the distinction between corrective and distributive justice (Barry & Matravers, 1998), where the former refers to just

main purpose to create a stage of personal freedom (autonomy) in which autonomous individuals can each pursue their potentially completely different interests. Here humans are viewed as atomistic, autonomous individuals, who are – in principle – disinterested in the other autonomous individuals and their interests (Rawls, 1999, p. 12). This view of humans as autonomous individuals has two consequences. First, it supports the idea of a separate public and private domain in order to account for the personal interest in the other person in close relationships.[66] Second, it creates a need for a conceptualization of justice in the public domain in such a way that it regulates the pursuit of individual interests and takes a central position among the (if any) other 'moral values' guiding human conduct. This conceptualization of justice needs to be rule and principle-bound to support, as Strike pointed out above, the predictability that is considered necessary to guide human economic and social living in the public sphere.

These two implications are in contrast to the consideration of context-sensitivity and features of 'personal' relationships in the ethics of care in general and Noddings's ethic of care in particular. These differences are at least partially based on different assumptions of what it means to be human and to live a human life. Furthermore, the challenge to Noddings's approach to root caring in emotion-based affection and regard for the cared-for I presented above indicates as well a different view of what it means to be human in the way we relate to other people. Somewhat simplified to emphasise the difference, from a Kantian point of view we are guided in our relations to other people

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punishment and the latter to a just distribution of resources. Recently the non-Western idea of restorative justice has had some influence as an alternative to corrective justice (see, for instance, the collection of essays in Strang & Braithwaite, 2001). In restorative justice the focus is moved from punishment toward healing the emotional, psychological and relational damage done through the respective transgression.
[66] Tronto (1993, chapter 2) demonstrates how this view is directly linked to the economical and societal changes during the eighteenth century in the West.

and their needs through the application of general moral principles and rules. From a

Fisher–Tronto point of view we are guided by a *general* concern for their needs, a

concern that comes from a concern for the state of the world, society, particular sections

of society, and so on. From Noddings's point of view, on the other hand, to be human in

our relations to other people is guided by our emotion-based affection and regard for the

others, affection and regard which are directed toward *particular* individuals we

encounter in *particular* situations.[67]

So far I have argued that underlying Noddings's ethic of care as well as the

discussed challenges are assumptions about what it means to be human and that the

central differences in the suggested approaches to ethics in general and the ethics of care

in particular are at least partially shaped by those assumptions. Which assumptions

should be made and why? I conclude from this analysis a need for a deeper look into such

assumptions about what I call 'the human condition'. I undertake such an inquiry in the

next two chapters. From this inquiry into the human condition a particular perspective on

the human condition emerges to which an ethic of care should respond. Following the in-

depth discussion of this human condition, I propose in chapters 5 and 6 an ethic of care

that responds to this discussion as well as the challenges brought forward against

Noddings's ethic of care as discussed in this chapter.

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[67] It is an interesting question to me whether these differences in theoretical views among the three parties correspond to differences in the way the three parties live their lives. The more general version of this question is of some interest to the discussion in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3: SOCIO-CULTURAL AGENCY

The conditions under which we as humans live our lives fall broadly into two categories.

One category of conditions captures the *general* conditions that apply to all humans *qua*

being human, while the other category captures those conditions that are more time and

location specific, for instance the economical conditions of living in Canada in the 21th

century. I will use the term 'the human condition' to denote the former category and

'social-cultural conditions' to denote those conditions belonging to the latter category.[68]

That we live our lives under particular socio-cultural conditions, for instance, is part of

the human condition, while the particular socio-cultural conditions we live in are not.

Socio-cultural conditions as understood here include the economical and political

conditions humans live in in particular times and locations, and I use the term 'socio-

cultural environment' to refer to the setting which establishes said conditions.

In the following introduction to this chapter I like to paint in very broad strokes

the picture of the human condition as I see it and for which I argue in more detail in the

different sections of this chapter. There are probably many aspects of the human

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[68] I will shy away from any talk about 'human nature' for two reasons. First, I want to distinguish the approach used here from those approaches talking about human nature when assigning fairly specific characteristics to all humans, often used to justify a certain socio-cultural view, as in 'It is human nature to be competitive' and 'It is human nature to look after yourself first.' While the latter approach is about fairly *specific characteristics* claimed for all humans, the approach taken in this thesis is about *conditions* all humans have to live by. Those conditions set constraints and provide possibilities for humans to live their lives. Although it seems possible to translate my condition talk into a human characteristics talk, but the latter would be substantially different from the one I just characterised by not making claims even close to any specific characteristics as in the examples given above. Second, the use of the term 'human nature' has the danger of suggesting a too *deterministic* view of the matter under investigation.

condition I do not bring up, but I claim that those I do discuss are among the most fundamental aspects of the human condition, and they are those aspects of greatest relevance in connection with the assumptions about the human condition made in theories of morality as discussed in chapter 2. Within this qualification, the two probably most fundamental general conditions for human living are that humans are constrained through their embeddedness in a socio-cultural environment they are born into, growing up and living in, and that humans have the possibility of agentic self-determination by being less constrained by instinct, habituation, impulse and automatic response than other living beings. These two conditions frame *the constraints and possibilities of human agency*. Both conditions are not independent of each other: Human agency and the socio-cultural environment are dynamically interacting with each other, varying constraints and possibilities for human agents. I discuss this dynamic interaction in more detail in the first section of this chapter.

The possibility of agentic self-determination provides for two central conditions for human agency. As I will argue below, agentic self-determination is not characterized by arbitrary and capricious decisions I make as a human agent when deciding on how to live my life or how to act in a particular situation. Rather, my self-determining agency is guided by what drives me as a human agent. Furthermore, being less constrained by instinct, habituation, impulse and automatic response provides me with the possibility of agentic self-determination, but with this possibility and the intellectual capacity that allows for this possibility in the first place comes the normative question how I *should* live my life or act in a particular situation. The first aspect concerns the condition for human agency that as human agents we are driven by 'something' in the way we exert

our agentic self-determination. I discuss the different aspects relevant to the question of

what drives us in the exertion of our agentic possibilities in the second, third and fourth

section of this chapter. In the last section I address the normative aspect of human agency

by discussing human moral functioning.

Dynamic Interactionism

When it comes to thinking about the human condition, the starting point seems to make

much of a difference. Liberal philosophical thinking in the tradition of contractarianism

(Hobbes, 1649/1991; Locke, 1690/1963; Rawls, 1999; Rousseau, 1762/1968) takes as its

starting point for its analysis of social entities and their governmental structures the

postulated rational and autonomous individual that freely decides to engage into such

social entities. [69] On the other hand, the feminist tradition out of which the ethics of care

as a moral and political orientation has developed (for instance Held, 1993; Noddings,

1984) explicitly takes as its starting point the child, who is in existential need of nurture

for its development and is existentially dependent on the care by others for its well-

being.[70] Out of this starting point develops a relational view of human life that stresses

the social dependency for human well-being in adult life as well.

The different starting points in each of the two socio-political approaches to

human life and social living result in opposite views of the human condition. Simplified,

while the contractarian approach puts self-determining human agency in the centre of

human living, the feminist relational view puts dependency on our relations to other

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[69] See Freeman (1998) for an overview over the tradition of contractarianism.

[70] See for instance Held, 1993, chapter 10; Noddings, 1984, p. 175; 1988/1996, pp. 236-237. Not all
feminist proponents of an ethics of care take the mother-child relationship as prototypical for caring
relations, so for instance Fisher and Tronto, 1990; some find this starting point even dangerous from the
point of women's emancipation (Hoagland, 1990; see also Diller, 1991, pp. 96-98).

people – an important aspect of our socio-cultural environment – at the centre of human living.[71] Where should the starting point be?

Three points seem to me can be drawn from this contrast of the two socio-political approaches to human life. First, there is the danger of overlooking the relational basis of human living and our dependency on the socio-cultural environment when starting considerations about the human condition with adult life in general and particular emphasis of the postulated autonomous, rational aspect of our living. Second, a view of humans growing up in a world of dependencies has to account for self-determination (agentic) aspects in human lives. Third, if dependency on our respective socio-cultural environment as well as the possibility of agentic self-determination make up central aspects of human living, the relationship between the two needs to be clarified. In the following I present a view of the human condition which will respond to these three points. This view draws on the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics.[72]

When humans are born, they are 'thrown' (Heidegger, 1927/1962) into the world as it exists, into a certain physical, biological and socio-cultural environment. The respective socio-cultural environment provides the infant and the developing child with a tradition, which includes systems of beliefs and socio-cultural practices and which the infant is *embedded* into and *participates* in. At the same time, the infant brings with it a

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[71] This, as mentioned, is a simplification and does not take into account the variations within each of the two approaches. The tendentiously appropriate simplification allows me better to place the view of the human condition I present in this section in the larger context. A second qualification I would like to make is the following. When I talk about 'the starting point' of the respective approaches, I have less in mind the starting point of a logical order of arguments than a hierarchy of importance of certain parts of a web of assumptions, beliefs, and so on, in the sense of Duhem-Quine holism, where 'importance' is measured by the unwillingness to give up a particular assumption, belief, and so on, compared to other assumptions and beliefs making up the respective web when a situation of accepted incompatibility within the net of all assumptions, beliefs, and so on, arises. The 'starting points' in the web are marked by a high level of importance.

[72] See Heidegger, 1927/1962; Gadamer, 1960/1989; Taylor, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1985d, 1991; Martin & Sugarman, 1999; and Martin, Sugarman & Thompson, 2003.

particular bio-chemical (for instance, genetic) constitution and the developmental

potential for sophisticated memory and imagination. Following the socio-constructionist

argument (Martin et al., 2003), the socio-cultural level of reality (the systems of shared

beliefs and practices in a socio-cultural environment) has a forming influence on the

emerging (psychological) agency through an appropriation and internalization of the

systems of beliefs and social practices of those socio-cultural environments into which

the infant is born into and the child engaged in. "For example, when a parent reads to a

child a story about friendship, the parent makes available to the child a set of

sociocultural practices concerning what it is to be a person with commitments and

obligations to others." (Martin et al., p. 107) The appropriation and internalization of

aspects of her socio-cultural environment provide the developing child with a 'horizon'

(Gadamer, 1960/1989, pp. 302-307) for understanding the life-world she is embedded in.

One's horizon shapes one's understanding, but at the same time it is that very horizon

that provides for the possibility that one can give different significance to different

aspects of one's life-world.[73]

At the same time, the emerging and developing capability to reflect upon the

actual and possible (using memory and imagination) allows the developing child to

engage in more and more sophisticated acts of selecting and choosing, and with it *human

agency* emerges. Human agency manifests itself in the practiced capability of making

choices in self-determination, and thus control instinct, impulse, even habituation to some

degree. It is human agency that allows us to shift our horizon set by our appropriation and

internalization of the practices and beliefs dominating our socio-cultural environment.

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[73] With a person's 'life-world' I refer to the totality of those parts of the natural, socio-cultural and psychological aspects of reality which concern that person's life-experience. (See also the explication of the hermeneutical concept of life-experience in Marin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003, pp. 73-74.)

Changes in the physical and biological settings can change socio-cultural environments, but some of those changes – and the abolishment of slavery in the Western world might be one of those – cannot be exclusively explained this way. The notion of human agency is to capture the 'force' behind those changes by acknowledging the transcending potential of the capability to understand one's life-world through reflecting on the actual and possible.

As a first approach, the socio-cultural environment together with our bio-chemical constitution can be said to constrain how we experience our life-world, how we reflect upon it, and how we respond to it, while our emerging and developing human agency provides us with possibilities of choosing how we live our lives, potentially transcending those constraints. However, both parts of the human condition, the socio-cultural environment and human agency, *interact dynamically* with each other in a complex way. As mentioned above, the traditions and practices of our socio-cultural environment, and thus the socio-cultural environment itself, change through the exertion of human agency. Inventions, new ideas that are adopted, new practices and ways of living are examples for ways in which the exertion of human agency changes socio-cultural environments. On the other hand, it is *out of* the socio-cultural environment (which human agency can transcend) that human agency is made possible in the first place. This is to be captured by the notion of *dialogical* human agency, which I discuss in the next section.

The interaction between the socio-cultural environment and human agency is *dynamic* in the sense that it is not an interaction between two separate entities, but rather the interaction has *constitutive* character for each part in the sense that it is through the very process of interaction that both parts of the human condition are constituted: At any

given moment the socio-cultural environment is (at least partially) the product of exerted human agency; this very socio-cultural environment, then, is the basis for the emergence and development of human agency, which in turn contributes to the changes in the very socio-cultural environment.[74]

Furthermore, the interaction at the level of the individual human agent is not limited to the early years of the agent's life. The contractarians I mentioned above do not deny an influence of the socio-cultural environment on the development of human agency, as the educational writings of Kant (1803/1960) and Rousseau (1762/1979) illustrate.[75] However, this influence is seen as limited to the early years of development. It is not, as I like to argue here, seen as *constitutive* during the *whole* of a human life. Both points should become clear in the now following discussion of the second central idea in this section, the idea that human agency is centrally dialogical and based on (interpretive) understanding.

Understanding Agents and Dialogical Agency

As noted above, it is the reflective capabilities the infant and child develops and refines that are central to the emergence and development of human agency. But reflection requires *understanding*, and reflection upon one's life choices requires understanding of one's life-world and the physical world. One's reflection might lead to a new

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[74] On the idea of dynamic interaction between the socio-cultural and the agentic aspect of the human condition see Martin and Sugarman (1999). The notion of dynamic interaction in the sense of a constant reciprocal influence between 'the outside' and 'the inside' is not new in psychological thinking. It can be found in the study of the human brain (dynamic interaction between the brain structure and environmental stimuli; see, for instance, Strauch, 2003), in the study of human behaviour (dynamic interaction between genotype and environment; see, for instance, Plomin, 1994, pp. 38-39), and in the study of human personality (dynamic interaction between phenotype and environment; see, for instance, Asendorpf, 2000; Fonagy, 2000; Helson, 2000).

[75] Although Kant is generally not considered a representative of contractarianism, he is one of the major proponents of the view of autonomous human agency, a central thought in contractarianism.

understanding of (part of) one's life-world, but there has to be a prior understanding upon

which the reflection can take place. As the hermeneutical tradition suggests (see, for

instance, Gadamer, 1960/1989), this prior understanding comes from our embeddedness

in socio-cultural practices and traditions. This embeddedness provides us with tacit

understanding of (part of) our life-world, tacit understanding that, for instance, allows a

child to expect general support from a friend or be *justifiably* disappointed. The

developing capability of reflection together with already developed understanding makes

it possible for us to make (at least some of our) tacit understanding explicit. Heidegger

(1927/1962) calls this pre-understanding 'fore-understanding' and Gadamer (1960/1989)

'prejudices'.[76]

Gadamer (1960/1989, pp. 276-277) emphasises that it is especially a person's

prejudices ('pre-judgments') that are central to her identity, a point I discuss further in the

next section. Gadamer's choice of word ('prejudice', 'pre-judgment') indicates that much

of what we use in our reflective judgment is tacit understanding, which we have not

critically examined. Modern cognitive and brain sciences have started to emphasise the

central role of unconscious thinking in daily functioning in our life-world, a point I

discuss further in the next section as well. Furthermore, there is no explicit understanding

without at least partially tacit fore-understanding. It is the very availability of a fore-

understanding that allows us to explicitly understand aspects of our life-world in the first

place (Heidegger, 1927/1962, §32; Gadamer, pp. 277-307). Events, actions, things, and

so on, have meaning for us only against the background of already existing (partially

tacit) understanding, a point I get back to in a moment.

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[76] On Heidegger's notion of fore-understanding see Grondin (1994, pp. 92-95). A literal translation of the German word 'Vorurteil' used by Gadamer would be 'pre-judgment'.

In particular the last two points should allow shedding a clearer light on the dynamic interactionism between human agency and the respective socio-cultural environment I was talking about above. When our capability to reflect emerges and develops it is our (tacit) understanding of the socio-cultural practices and systems of beliefs we are embedded in that make the reflecting possible in the first place. In this sense, our embeddedness in our socio-cultural environment is a condition for our human agency, thus, it is *constitutive* of our human agency. Furthermore, the two points make the case that this role of the socio-cultural environment for human agency is *ongoing* and not limited to the 'developmental years' of human agency. The fore-understanding changes over time for each of us, but fore-understanding is required at any given time for us to be able to reflect on our choices and, thus, to exert human agency.

Using their reflective capabilities and based on fore-understanding of their life-world, human agents *deliberate* upon their choices for living their lives. The deliberative character of human agency includes 'monological' forms of deliberation in the sense of a deliberation with oneself. However, as just discussed, even these deliberations happen against the background of one's tacit and explicit understanding of one's life-world, which is grounded in some form in one's embeddedness in a socio-cultural environment.

Our agency is, however, *dialogical* as well (Taylor, 1991) in the sense that at least part of our identity we have through our agency, that is, through the self-determined choices we make, is constituted by our participating in dialogical acts and practices, which Taylor (p. 311) explicates as follows:

> An action is dialogical, in the sense I am using it, when it is effected by an integrated, nonindvidual agent. This means that for those involved in it, its identity as this kind of action essentially depends on the sharing of agency.

These actions are constituted as such by a shared understanding among those who make up the common agent.

(Pair-)Dancing is a prototypical example of dialogical acts. Both partners form the common agent; if one stops, the particular action of (pair-)dancing stops (shared agency). Only the *rhythmic responding to each other in a specific, practice-typical way* makes dancing a 'dialogical' act, and distinguishes it from other forms of 'jointly moving'. Practices that constitutively involve dialogical acts can be called dialogical practices.[77] Our participation in dialogical practices "means that our identity is never simply defined in terms of our individual properties. It also places us in some social space. We define ourselves partly in terms of what we come to accept as our appropriate place within dialogical actions." (Taylor, p. 311) As our embeddedness in our socio-cultural environment sets constrains for our agency and, thus, for the understanding of self-determination, so does the dialogical aspect of our agency.

For example, traditional institutionalized public education in Western societies provides the framework for the practice of schooling and teaching to be dialogical. The practice of schooling and teaching is at least partially defined by acts where the 'agent' is complex and non-individual, involving teachers, students, school boards, government, parents, school administrators, and societal interest groups. The act of teaching a curriculum is an example of a dialogical act within the practice of teaching and schooling, in which the different 'agentic elements' act in a practice-typical way to create the act of teaching a curriculum. Like Taylor suggests for political or religious movements, the dialogical act of teaching a curriculum is constituted by the responding

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[77] Taylor (1991, p. 310) lists "sawing and dancing" as "paradigm cases of dialogical actions". Political or religious movements, Taylor also suggests (p. 311), can represent an integrated, non-individual agent where the responding to a common purpose constitutes the dialogical act.

of teachers, students, government, and so on, to a common purpose connected with schooling and teaching. Teachers, then, define their agentic teacher identity, at least partially, through the role within the dialogical act of teaching a curriculum, where they have to come to accept that role in the practice of schooling and teaching.

In the previous section of this chapter, human agency has been characterized as emerging and situated (in a particular socio-cultural environment). But in order to exert one's emerging agency, I argued in this section, the agent requires a (tacit) understanding of the socio-cultural practices and systems of beliefs of the socio-cultural environment she is embedded in (interpretive understanding). Such understanding is (generally) at the 'pre-judgment' level, but without such understanding no deliberation and reflection would be possible. Deliberation and reflection are centrally constitutive of human agency. An agent's embeddedness in a socio-cultural environment, I argued, is at least partially characterized by the agent's participation in 'dialogical acts' within that environment. How we understand our role within such shared agency makes up part of our agentic identity and, thus, impacts our deliberating and functioning as human agents. Human agency, then, is not just emerging and situated, but also dialogical and based on (interpretive) understanding. The next section discusses important constraints and possibilities for such (interpretive) understanding.

Possibilities and Constraints for Interpretive Understanding

Understanding our life-world and, thus, ourselves is central to our functioning as reflective human agents. There are important conditions – constraints and possibilities – for such understanding and, thus, constraints and possibilities for us as humans to live our lives as (moral) agents – a point that, thus, will become important to an approach of

teacher education which is to be grounded in a theory of morality. Newer developments

in the cognitive sciences suggest very strongly that humans' understanding of their life-

world is metaphorical, prototypical, narrative, and embodied with a central role given to

the unconscious and the emotions. In the following, I briefly discuss the first and last

two.[78]

Metaphors are not just literary devises, but our very conceptual system and even

our reasoning are metaphorically structured (Johnson, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

For instance, a teacher might understand teaching metaphorically as (parental)

nurturing.[79] Students are then *conceptualized* (centrally) as children to be nurtured,

school as nursery or home, teachers as parents, and so on. A teacher with this particular

metaphorical understanding will then *reason* on the basis of the metaphor of teaching as

nurturing: For instance, whenever a conflict between 'covering the curriculum' and

important personal issues for students exist, the teacher will argue for addressing the

personal issues, *because* students are vulnerable and need to be nurtured with respect to

the development, in particular their personal growth.

Central concepts that guide our deliberation in, for instance, moral matters, like

justice, equality, caring, and so on, are prototypically formed. That means that we have a

good understanding of the prototypical cases that fall under the respective concept. That

is, whenever a prototypical situation comes up, we easily classify the case as falling

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[78] For a more thorough discussion see particularly the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. For the metaphorical aspect of our understanding see Johnson, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; for the prototypical aspect see Johnson, 1993; for the narrative aspect see Johnson, 1993 (particularly chapter 7); for the embodied aspect see Johnson, 1987, 1989; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Polanyi, 1983; for the unconscious aspect see Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, and for the emotional aspect see Damasio, 1994, 1996; LeDoux, 1996.

[79] For the role of metaphors in teaching and teacher education see the articles in *Theory Into Practice, Vol. 29* (2).

under the concept. However, there are many non-prototypical cases, which require

deliberation to decide whether they do fall under the concept or not. For instance, we

have a prototypical understanding of lying (Johnson, 1993, pp. 91-98). Many specific

cases fall under this concept, but there are, as well, cases where we cannot say whether

someone is lying (in a morally apprehensive sense) or not. It is here where much of our

reasoning is located, namely as an attempt to decide whether certain specific situation fall

under a concept of not.

The cognitive unconscious aspect of our understanding and thinking is "the realm

of thought that is completely and irrevocably inaccessible to direct conscious

introspection" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 12).[80] The cognitive unconscious does not

just make up the vast majority of all of human thought (over 95%, according to Lakoff

and Johnson, p. 13), but it also shapes and structures all of our conscious thought.[81] With

such a central role in our human cognitive functioning, the cognitive unconscious is an

important part of what moves us as human agents and, thus, of our agency.

When Lakoff and Johnson write that the cognitive unconscious aspect of our

thinking is inaccessible to direct conscious inspection, the emphasis is on 'direct'. We do

have different indirect ways to access and influence at least part of our unconscious

understanding and thinking. For instance, the cognitive unconscious and how it can be

influenced has been investigated quite extensively under the term 'tacit knowledge'

(Polanyi, 1974, 1983), particularly for professional practice (Schön, 1987; Sternberg &

Horvath, 1999).

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[80] The adjective 'cognitive' is to distinguish the notion of unconscious used here from the one used in the psychoanalysis tradition.
[81] See Gladwell (2005) for extensive illustrative examples for momentary unconscious thinking, how it affects, even controls our decisions and how we can affect it consciously.

Another example of ways to access our unconscious understanding and thinking

is provided by the work of the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1994, 1999, 2003). He

has shed some new light on the central role of emotions for human decision making, an

area of human functioning that is traditionally (in Western philosophical thinking) seen as

in the realm of rationality and independent or even in opposition to emotion. 'Don't be so

emotional' is a phrase often used to disqualify the emotional state of someone as helpful

in problem solving and decision making situations. But as Damasio's work strongly

suggests, emotions in the form of somatic markers – which are "special instances of

feelings generated from secondary emotions" (Damasio, 1994, p. 174) – are central to

rationality and adequate decision making in particular in the personal and social space.

Somatic markers allow us to access connections we made in the past between state-of-

affairs of a particular type and particular evaluations ('good', 'problematic', and so on) of

such state-of-affairs. These connections, however, are mainly unconscious, because we

mostly perceive a given state-of-affair unconsciously. We become aware of these

connections through somatic markers, which are 'gut feelings' that provide us with a

basis for 'how we feel' about a particular *type of* state-of-affairs. Judging a state-of-

affairs on the basis of past experiences is rational in the classical sense, although here the

process involves unconscious experience and thinking.[82] This line of research suggests

that there is a direct connection between human unconscious thinking (as I have

discussed it before) and the emotional base for decision making. Feeling our emotions

(Damasio, 1999) is a way for humans to access at least part of the unconscious

experience and unconscious thinking.

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[82] On the somatic marker hypothesis see in particular Damasio, 1994, chapter 8. See Storch (2003) for an
approach to use Damasio's somatic marker theory for the practice of making 'wise decisions' (see also
Storch, 2005).

In the previous section I wrote that (tacit) understanding is a prerequisite for reflective agency and that there is no explicit understanding of our life-world – and thus no deliberation and, thus, no exertion of agency – without at least partially tacit fore-understanding. In this section I have discussed the constraints of such tacit understanding as well as particular central qualities of humans' understanding (metaphorical, prototypical, and so on) that provide constraints but also possibilities for our deliberation as human agents and, thus, for the exertion of our agency. A meta-understanding of these possibilities and constraints will strengthen our agency, because it provides us with a better understanding of our *functioning* as human agents. As a better understanding of the functioning of the ecosystem in my garden should allow me to engage in a more intelligent practice of gardening, so should a better understanding of my prototypical-way of understanding my life-world allow me to engage in a more intelligent practice of dealing with my own biases and prejudices.

The last section discussed the grounding of human agency in an interpretive (tacit) understanding of our life-world, which itself is (at least partially) grounded in our socio-cultural embeddedness (dialogical agency). This section discussed possibilities and constraints of such interpretive understanding and, thus, the exertion of human agency. But what moves us to exert agency in the first place and what lets us prefer one possibility over another in our reflective decision making as agents? The next section addresses this question.

Being Deeply Concerned About

Following the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger (1927/1962, chapter 6), I see in concern (care) for oneself the basic condition of human life.[83] We live in a constant state of existential concern, which sometimes manifests as deep worry about our life and how to live it. It is this concern that gives our emerging and developing capacity to reflect – and thus our human agency – meaning in our life by providing a purpose for our reflecting, namely the purpose to influence how we live our life. If we were not concerned about how we should live our lives, why should we reflect upon it or develop that capacity in the first place?[84] Furthermore, our existential concern for how we should live gives us a *direction* for a central concern of our reflecting: creating and choosing among life options.

Existential concern (care) for oneself is not the same as selfish or egoistic concern for one's own interests. A person's existential concern for herself can be bound up in being unselfishly concerned with the fate and life of other people. As I will now discuss, a person's existential concern for herself manifests itself in what that person is deeply concerned about; and a person can be deeply concerned about the fate and life of other people, even to a point where the person is willing to endanger her life for those people. Being existentially concerned for oneself is not the same as being concerned about being and staying alive.

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[83] The German word 'Sorge', which Heidegger uses, is unfortunately generally translated as 'care', but should be more accurately translated as '(existential) concern' or '(existential) worry', a point made also by Tronto (1992, p. 207 fn. 31). Martin et al. (2003, p. 117) recognize this very specific meaning of care in Heidegger's use of the word 'Sorge' when they write: "Human subjectivity, whatever its contingent historical, sociocultural character, exhibits care in the sense of concern for itself."

[84] This is a more evolutionary argument. The point I am making here about existential concern (care) is that we do not have a choice on whether we are deeply concerned about our life and how to live it or not. Being concerned for how one should life one's life fits well together with being able to reflect upon and influence how one lives one's life. This is the evolutionary aspect of the argument.

For a more thorough analysis of the notion of what we are deeply concerned about I draw on Harry Frankfurt's (1982) conceptual analysis of what he calls 'caring about something'. His analysis is an attempt to explicate a more generic notion of 'caring about something' and is generally not considered being part of the tradition of the ethics of care. In order to distinguish this more generic notion of caring from those notions in the care-ethical tradition – I see this thesis as being in that tradition – I like to continue to use the phrase 'being deeply concerned about' rather than Frankfurt's 'caring about'. However, in order to allow for a certain flow in the following discussion of his conceptual analysis, I will use Frankfurt's term 'caring about'. This use will be limited to *this discussion within this section.* I understand Frankfurt's explication of 'caring about' as an explication of my notion of being concerned about.

Frankfurt (1982, p. 260) characterizes caring about something as follows:

> A person who cares about something is, as it were, invested in it. He *identifies* himself with what he cares about in the sense that he makes himself vulnerable to losses and susceptible to benefits depending upon whether what he cares about is diminished or enhanced.

What distinguishes caring about something from liking, wanting or desiring it is that " the agent *devotes* his life to what he or she cares about, makes efforts to fashion his or her life accordingly" (p. 260). Desiring (which I will be using summarily for liking, wanting and desiring) is momentary, while what we care about is persistent and enduring in the sense that it directs us not just for the moment but also for the future. In this sense what we care about gives us guidance for our life pursuits. Although desires can last, they are momentary by directing us only in the moment. It is not constitutive of our desires that they persist beyond the moment, as it is the case in caring about something. Of course,

persistence in the case of caring does not mean permanency. What I have been caring about for a while may cease being important to me, and then I stop caring about it.[85]

Caring about things can take different strengths (Frankfurt, 1982, p. 263), and Annette Baier (1982, p. 274) in her response to Frankfurt's article suggests a conceptualization of caring that can be probably placed at the higher end of the scale, when she writes that "a reliable sign of real caring is the intolerance of ignorance about the current state of what we care about." Of particular interest for this chapter are those cases of caring in which a person cannot help but caring about what she cares about. Frankfurt (p. 264) calls the constraint the person is under in this case 'volitional necessity', and I will call the respective type of caring *volitionally necessary caring* or *caring with volitional necessity* (being deeply concerned about something with volitional necessity).

Because we *identify* with what we care about with volitional necessity (as Frankfurt was quoted above), what we care about with volitional necessity moves us and drives us in living our life in one way rather than another. In this sense what we care about with volitional necessity is central to our identity as a particular human with agency. To illustrate the power of this connection between one's identity and what one cares about with necessity, Frankfurt (1982, p. 263, emphasis in original) quotes at one point Luther's famous declaration "Here I stand; *I can do no other.*" To give another example, a teacher might care about the intellectual development of her students in a way that she identifies herself with the concern for her students' development to a degree that she also cares about her caring for her students, or in other words, that she is also

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[85] Frankfurt (1982, pp. 269-272) distinguishes between what someone cares about and what is important to that person, a distinction that is not necessary to consider for the purpose of this thesis.

concerned about her concern for her students. This concern about her concern might

manifest itself in her attending professional development session beyond expectations,

her purchasing teaching material she considers helpful to her teaching from her own

money, her feeling a loss when a student of hers does not develop intellectually to the

degree she hoped or expected, and her feeling thrilled when students of hers develop

intellectually. She has a hard time not to take up these opportunities for improving her

teaching and not to respond differently to the successes and problems of her students; in

other words, she cares for the intellectual development of her students *with volitional*

necessity ("Here I stand, I can do no other").

Frankfurt's conceptual analysis sheds a clearer light on the notion of human

agency. I used self-determination as a central characteristic of the exertion of human

agency. *I suggest now that we best understand self-determination as being deeply*

concerned about what we are deeply concerned about (caring about what we care about).

When we exert human agency by reflecting about and making choices on how to live our

lives, we do so on the basis of our deep concern for what we deeply are concerned about.

This concern is with volitional necessity, which implies that 'self-determination' by

human agents does not mean the possibility of *arbitrary* decision making concerning the

living of one's life, but rather decision making that is based on what we are deeply

concerned about, exemplified by Luther's 'I can do no other'. The 'freedom in decision

making', which we usually connect with 'agency', appears in two places but as 'qualified

freedom': (i) when the contextual situation (traditions, particular practices, physical

force, and so on) seems to suggest strongly a type of decision which is in conflict with

what the agent is deeply concerned about; (ii) when the agent has stopped being deeply

concerned about what she had been deeply concerned about before and starts being

concerned about something else. In both situations the agent seems to make decisions

about her life that seem free of outside pressures and free of expectations. Nevertheless,

in both situations it is our deep concern with volitional necessity for what we are deeply

concerned about that guides our decision making ('I can do no other').

Frankfurt's analysis also helps us to better understand the existential concern

(care) for ourselves, which is – according to what I have adopted in the previous sections

– a central part of our human condition: The existential concern for how we should live

our lives manifests itself (at least partially) for us as human agents in our being concerned

about what we are deeply concerned about. It is in our concern for what we are concerned

about that we respond to our existential concern for ourselves. Why are we concerned

about certain things but not others, things that move us to pursue a certain way of life

over another ways? Being central to our identity as particular human agents, what we are

concerned about emerges, develops and morphs out of our understanding of ourselves as

agents and our life-world, which in turn – as elaborated upon above – emerges and

develops out of the dynamic interaction between the socio-cultural environment we are

embedded in, our human agency and our bio-chemical constitution.[86]

I like to summarize the view of the human condition that I have developed thus

far using Neurath's ship metaphor used as the motto for this thesis in the prologue. As the

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[86] Damasio (1994, chapter 3) reports on a person with damage to a particular part of his brain. Elliot, as Damasio calls the person, showed superb social and other kind of knowledge in testing, but he failed to make adequate decisions in (generally much more complex) real life situations in his private and professional life. He was able to rationally lay out the options he had, but he would not know which of the options to choose from. In the framework just presented, one can say that this person has lost to a certain degree his existential concern for how to live his life. This example also points to the importance of a value framework that allows us to make life decisions, which, in turn, points to the importance of being embedded into a socio-cultural environment, which provides for the formation of such a value framework.

sailors in the metaphor are sent off on a voyage in a ship of a certain shape, size, and so on, which they have become familiar, comfortable and somewhat competent to sail, so is each of us humans born not just with a specific bio-chemical constitution, but also born by necessity into a certain socio-cultural environment with certain traditions and practices, which we – again with necessity – participate in and respond to. As it is possible for the sailors to rebuild their ship with the constraints of having to do so on open sea, so are we humans – equipped with memory and imagination – able to transcend the traditions and practices of our socio-cultural environment (human agency). As the understanding of the ship, the weather, and so on, is what provides the sailor with the possibility of rebuilding the ship, so does the understanding of oneself and the socio-cultural practices and traditions through our capability to (self-)reflect provide us with the possibility to live our lives one way rather than another. As the sailors have to take what is available on the ship and as their ingenuity does not allow them to predict and determine what the rebuilt ship will look like, so does our human agency have 'to work with' our situatedness, our bio-chemical constitution and the possibilities and constraints for our understanding of our life-world. This dynamic interaction does not allow for a predictable outcome either; otherwise there would be no room for agency. As there has to be a driving force for the sailors to go through the effort, challenges, and so on, to rebuild their ship on open sea, there is the existential concern for ourselves and our deep concern about what we are concerned about as its manifestation which moves us as human agents to live our lives one way rather than another.

Human Moral Functioning

The approach in this chapter has so far been to describe and argue for a particular view of the conditional framework for humans to live their lives in general and for human agency in particular. So far this conditional framework has characterized human agency in terms of the capacity to reflect and understand oneself and one's life-world and – based on one's understanding – make certain choices about how to live one's life while being moved and guided by what one is deeply concerned about. The tradition of ethical thinking, however, suggests that in this process of reflecting and making choices in and for one's life there is a *normative* ('should' or 'ought') component to human functioning and decision making. This normative component of human agency has two aspects which impact on reflecting, reflective understanding and self-determination: How do others expect us to act, and how do we expect ourselves to act? The former involves socially constructed norms within the socio-cultural environment, and the latter involves an 'ethical ideal' we have for ourselves as human agents. The next part of this section inquires into the first aspect of the normative component and the following part inquires into the second aspect. Since, as I argue, both aspects dynamically interact with each other, a strict separation of both aspects will not be possible.

An Integrated View of Ethics

I have noted above that humans are born into particular socio-cultural environments with their traditions and practices and that these traditions and practices provide a dynamically interactive framework for our interpretive understanding of our life-world out of which

develops what we are deeply concerned about and what drives us in our living our lives.[87]

In the following, I argue that the expectations by others of how we ought to act – and, thus, ethics – is *an integral part* of the respective socio-cultural environment, a part that dynamically interacts with the other parts, for instance the economical part.[88] This view is in opposition to the view that ethical deliberation is centrally a matter of rationally inquiring into what is right and what is wrong. The first of the two examples of ethical theories discussed below is an example of the latter view.

There are centrally two domains within a socio-cultural environment from which expectations of us by others are located: in the realm of practice and the realm of ideas (reflective understanding). As I have noted in the previous part, both domains are not independent of each other. Many expectations of us coming from the realm of practice are implicit in the sense that they are not explicitly articulated (for instance, codified) and are part of our tacit understanding of our life-world in general and certain practices in particular. These (implicit) expectations from the realm of socio-cultural practices are an integral part of the respective socio-cultural environment *qua* being integral to the practices.

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[87] The degree of dynamic interaction, of course, can vary between different socio-cultural environments.
[88] Although – for the sake of ease – I use the phrase 'expected from us *by others*', I am talking here about those socially constructed expectations, which not all members of the social entity necessarily have to be able to explicitly articulate, which, however, everybody becomes aware of once those expectations are not fulfilled.

Expectations coming from the realm of ideas are based in normative ethical theories.[89] In the following, I discuss briefly two principally different and dominant approaches to moral theory from a more general point of view and argue that *in each case the approach can be framed as a response to a particular socio-cultural environment and view of what it means to be human.* Those ethical theories, then, can be seen as an integral part of the dynamic interaction between socio-cultural environment and human agency I have discussed in the previous chapter.

One approach to the role of ethics in human life starts out with the comparison of humans with animals (or non-human animals), and here one often made distinction is that humans are far less influenced in their behaviour by instinct; that is, humans have more *freedom* to decide on their conduct. But if instinct does not dictate to us how to respond in a given situation, is there anything else that, if it does not dictate, then at least guides us how to respond in the situation? Here, some theorists see the role of ethics. Some moral philosophers like Immanuel Kant see reason as *the* distinctive feature of humans, a feature that gives us *autonomy* from the forces of instinct and other influences. For him, reason provides humans with the means to decide how to use autonomy and freedom to decide on their conduct. But what guides the reasoning? Kant, following Rousseau, postulates a '*universal* moral law' as the institution that should guide us in our conduct. This universal moral law is accessible through our faculty of reason. Placing the

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[89] I use 'ethics' and 'morality' synonymously. Etymologically, they have the same basic meaning. 'Ethics' comes from the Greek *ēthos* and means character, while 'morality' comes from the Latin and refers to character or to custom and habit (Annas, 2001). Annas refers to a recent attempt to give the two words different meanings with morality having a narrower meaning than ethics. However, I will use the two words interchangeably and capture the difference through a different characterization of the domain of ethics / morality.

autonomous human being at the center, this universal law has to be such that it requires the recognition and honouring of this autonomy in other humans.

Viewing humans as autonomous beings begs the question of how to deal with the fact that humans are quite obviously (inter)dependent social beings. Having started with viewing humans as autonomous individuals, the question seems to pose itself in the following form: What social (political) form best preserves the autonomy of the individual? Social contract theories (mentioned above) were developed in this spirit. These theories want to describe and prescribe how autonomous individuals can live in a larger social unit to the benefit of each.[90] The guide for the social living is a codified set of rules that protect the autonomous individual through specific rights each of them has *qua* being an autonomous individual. If those rights are such that they guide human conduct in a way that protects the autonomous individual, then those rights are part of the universal moral law. This is the fundamental ideal behind the ethics of rights.[91] Here, ethics plays the role of establishing in principle and determining in specific situations what is right and wrong, good and bad with respect to a universal moral law which views humans as autonomous (free) human agents. The notions of right and wrong and good and bad establish the explicit expectations for us.

Why people develop particular theories about the role of ethics in human life can have different reasons, which can lie in the personal or societal realm. Human

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[90] Another distinction can be made here about the relationship between humans as social beings and humans as autonomous individuals. One could view, like Hobbes did, human nature such that humans are not naturally suited for social living, but the individual enters a social contract with other individuals and gives up some of his or her freedom for the benefit of security, to avoid 'a war of every man against every man' (Hobbes in *Leviathan*). One could also view, as Rousseau did, human nature such that humans are naturally social with concern for a common good. This distinction will play a role in the other approach in which the starting point of ethical considerations is not the autonomous individual but rather the human as a member of a community.

[91] A modern version of this thinking and the ethics of rights can be found in Rawls (1999).

imagination is very creative. But when a specific type of theory finds public support, it seems often possible to identify central characteristics of the societal state of affairs that ask for this kind of moral theory as a response to that very state of affairs. A universalistic type of moral theory as just described has been of high public interest in the Western countries for the last three hundred years. How can it be understood as a response that was considered by many or at least the influential / dominant people as an adequate response to the societal state of affairs? Using the change of dominant moral theories during the Scottish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century from theories of moral sentiments to theories of universal morality, Joan Tronto (1993, chapter 2) illustrates how the change to a universal moral theory can be seen as a response to a major societal change.[92] In Europe during the eighteenth century major economic and social changes have taken place, among which there were: the expansion of the markets from local to domestic, international and even overseas markets and the shift of the central workplace from home or local place to public places removed from home. These institutional and social changes implied more economically based relationships with distant-others, whom a merchant or craftsman, for example, has never met before but has to enter into a working relationship with, often one based on trust. For the economical system to function effectively, these distant-other relationships required some kind of trust guarantee or predictability, one that has to be different from the traditional one of knowing each other and having a reputation within a community. A moral theory that

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[92] Tronto's purpose with this chapter is different from mine here, but her study, nevertheless, can be used for my purpose, too.

puts rights (and that includes property rights, and so on) into the center[93] can be seen as responding to the call for such a guarantee of predictability.

In the universal moral law approach, ethics plays the role of providing the 'moral framework' for living, but not the actual 'purpose of life'. Another approach to the role of ethics in life is that ethics provides us with the 'purpose of life'. Happiness as the 'purpose of life' could be suggested and has been at least since ancient Greece (Noddings, 2003). But what does it mean to be happy and how can that be achieved? Here is another possible role for (and origin of) ethics: Guiding the pursuit of happiness, or the practice of living a happy life, or whatever is assumed as the 'purpose of life'. Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* is a prototype of this possible role of ethics in human life.

For Aristotle and other ancient Greeks the practice of happy living was directly connected with the functioning in the community they were living in. Analogous to the universal moral law approach, the influence of a community-based role of ethics in the human life of ancient Greeks can be seen as a response to the societal conditions of ancient Greece. Compared to the expanding distant-other relationships that can be related to the influence of the universal moral law approaches to ethics, the small-scale city-states of ancient Greece made a more community-based ethics appealing. Another example of an ethical response to a societal condition is the prominence of courage as a virtue. With many small-scale city states wars and war-like conflicts occurred more often and the safety of the individual and the community relied directly upon the military

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[93] See the prototypical "The Doctrine of Right" in Kant's (1797/1996) *The Metaphysics of Morals*.

qualities of its soldiers, and the best military qualities are useless if the courage to use them in a dangerous situation is missing.

The connection of the individual pursuit of happiness with the practice of living in a specific community provides a new view on the role of ethics. Now it is not the individual human and her conduct that is the starting point of the investigation but rather the individual as a member of her community. Here two approaches are thinkable. First, there is the more ancient Greek approach to see the individual still at the center but to acknowledge a crucial role of the community for the well-being (or happiness) of the individual. What is the functioning of the community in the well-being of the individual? To answer this question can be seen as the role of ethics. Communitarian theories of ethics play that role.[94] The second approach gives consideration to the well-being of the community. Ethics can now be seen as having the role to determine the rights and responsibilities of the individual toward the community.[95]

Already integrated in the discussion of the two different approaches to the role of ethics in human living, I have argued that the expectations of us explicitly articulated in such ethical theories are an integral part of the socio-cultural environment and dynamically interacting with other parts of that environment. The economic development in Western societies made an ethics of rights more suitable to the economic life of those societies. A more community-based ethics seemed more suitable to the city-state societies in ancient Greece. Along these same lines Virginia Held (1996, p. 85) argues that

> [m]oral problems . . . do not simply present themselves. We decide to
> make certain empirical situations into moral problems, to interpret them as

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[94] See MacIntyre (1984), Sandel (1982), Walzer (1983).
[95] Durkheim's (1925/1973) socialization theory of morality assumes this role of ethics in human life.

moral problems. Forty years ago, very few people saw the prevalent confinement of women to household roles as a moral problem, a matter of injustice. On the contrary, dissatisfaction with such confinement was interpreted as a personal problem of psychological adjustment. But because a few persons, later joined by others, made the normative as distinct from empirical judgment that it was unjust that opportunities outside the household were so widely closed to women, opportunities have gradually increased.

Here Held does not just argue that the expectations of us by others are an integral part of the socio-cultural environment, but also for the dynamic interaction between the realm of ideas (normative) and the realm of practice (empirical). The realm of (ethical) ideas is ultimately based in the individual's (moral) agency, linked to what we are deeply concerned about. The following part of this section inquires into this ethical aspect of human agency or, as I called it, the issue of what we expect of ourselves.

(Moral) Identity

In their respective presentations given at a conference on 'Mind and Morals', Owen Flanagan and Mark Johnson on the one side and Virginia Held on the other have taken fundamentally different positions on the contributions that the cognitive sciences can make to ethics. Held (1996, p. 69) argues that "cognitive science has rather little to offer ethics", and what it has is "subordinate to rather than determinative of the agenda of moral philosophy", because "ethics is normative rather than descriptive". Flanagan (1996) and Johnson (1996), on the other hand, see a *central* role for moral psychology and other human sciences for ethics, "because morality involves deliberation about possible courses of action, a vast range of empirical knowledge about action, desire, and reasoning is centrally relevant to moral philosophy", as Johnson (p. 49) writes with

reference to John Dewey's view of moral theory.[96] However, they do not deny a necessary role for normativity in moral deliberation, although their view of the normative aspect is much more 'enlightened', as will become clear.[97] While Flanagan and Johnson see a *central* prescriptive ('is') component for the moral aspect of human agency, Held sees this moral aspect (more or less) limited to the normative ('ought') component.

The very enterprise of this chapter – to characterize central aspects of the human condition, the conditions for living our lives as humans – is very much in line with Flanagan and Johnson's approach of giving the *prescriptive* component a central role in human agency theory. In the previous part of this section, in which the question of how others expect us to act was central, empirical socio-cultural (prescriptive) aspects played a central role in my response to this question.[98] For the question for the current part of this section – what we expect of ourselves – more psychologically oriented prescriptive aspects of the conditions of how we live our life play a role, a point I will now make in the following.

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[96] Johnson is referring to and quoting from Dewey's "Human Nature and Conduct" from 1922 (see also Johnson, 1998). Held (1996, pp. 84-85) expresses explicitly her opposition to Dewey's approach to moral theory: "John Dewey's ethics remain fundamentally unsatisfactory, in my view, because he thought moral theory was the sort of theory to which sciences like cognitive science could provide answers. He wrote as if moral problems simply present themselves and as if the tasks of morality are to find empirical solutions to such problems." In a wider sense, Held's concern is discussed in the history of moral philosophy around the metaethical principle of no-'ought'-from-'is' and the issue of 'the naturalistic fallacy' (see Pigden, 1991).
[97] See Flanagan (1996, pp. 20-21), Johnson (1998, p. 700). On the 'enlightened' view of the normative aspect of ethics, see Johnson (1996, pp. 66-67).
[98] Countering Dewey's view that "the tasks of morality are to find empirical solutions to [moral] problems" (Held, 1996, p. 85), Held makes the point in her quote in the last section that it is how we think the world *should* be that is central to our moral agency, and that, hence, moral theory should be about this very kind of normative thinking. However, it seems to me that the very example Held provides in her quote illustrates the central role that 'empirical understanding' of human – here more societal – functioning can play in human *moral* agency. Unless Held has a very restricted view of 'empirical', empirically oriented sciences like sociology, socio-psychology and history can provide an understanding that not just supports but also initiates one's view on moral matters. For instance, the 'empirical understanding' of the connection between existing societal structures, socialization and discrimination can lead to, develop and support one's view of the role of women in society. Such 'empirical understanding' does not replace normative positioning, but it can play a central role in developing, supporting and understanding a moral stance in these societal matters. The underlying idea here is that it is 'empirical understanding' that is central to our framing of situations, including of situations as moral.

The approach in this chapter has so far been to describe and argue for a particular view of the conditional framework for humans to live their life in general and for human agency in particular. So far this conditional framework has characterized human agency in terms of our capacity to reflect and understand our life-world and – based on our understanding – to make certain choices about how to live our life and in terms of our being moved and guided by what we are deeply concerned about. Where, in this picture of human agency painted so far, does the issue of what we expect of ourselves fit in?

My generation is now at an age in which our parents will have or have already been having a need for dependent living or support of some sort. The changing situation of our life-world can have and for many of us it already has an impact on how we live our life. I might be deeply concerned about continuing the professional work I have been doing to my great satisfaction, but the new situation puts the possibility into perspective that I might have to scale down or even give up what I have been so much deeply concerned about. What should I do in this situation? What do I expect of myself? I am deeply concerned about my parents, but I am also deeply concerned about the development and fostering of my professional life. What should I do in this situation of conflict of what I am deeply concerned about? What do I expect of myself?

This is an example of what Held in the quote above has called moral deliberation. While the question of what others expect of me in those situations plays a role in such moral deliberations, there is also a 'normative component' in us that 'tells' us what we expect from ourselves, what we should do or should have done in a particular situation. It is an important part of the human condition *that* there is such a 'normative component' in us that guides our human agency, helping us choosing reflectively how we live our life.

Philosophers and moral psychologists have suggested that here is the place for the notion of what some call 'ethical self' (Noddings, 1984, p. 49), others 'moral self' or 'moral identity' (Blasi, 1984, 1993). Ethical self, and so on, are understood by some as how we see ourselves as moral agents, while others see it as how we really are, regardless of how we see ourselves. In the following, I will not make this distinction unless otherwise noted. It is the moral agent's need to keep up the integrity of her ethical self that sets constraints for her moral deliberations. To use the example from above, my ethical self might include seeing myself as a caring son first and foremost. To stay true to my ethical self, to uphold the integrity of my moral self, I then will be willing to put myself under a great deal of stress or scale down or even give up my professional status to provide for my parents' need for dependent living.

In the previous section of this chapter I have talked about a person's identity as it is partially defined by what the person is deeply concerned about, in particular with volitional necessity. *I suggest that the notion of a person's ethical self, moral self or moral identity can be understood within this framework in exactly this way: as what a person is deeply concerned about (with volitional necessity).* I will use the term '*(moral) identity*' for this.[99] A person's identity, then, is central to what the person expects of herself. Furthermore, I noted above that our existential concern (care) for us, which is part of the human condition, manifests itself in our being deeply concerned about for

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[99] 'Moral' is in parentheses to indicate that there is no principle separation between one's moral identity (identity as a moral agent) and a kind of more general identity for the non-moral life questions. There is no separate or even independent *moral* domain in the realm of a person's life. Morality is an integral part of a person's identity as a human agent. As Johnson (1993) has made the case, we do *not* function differently in moral matters than we do in other matters, and Anthony Weston writes: "The real point of ethics is to offer some tools for thinking about difficult matters, recognizing from the start – as the very rationale for ethics, in fact – that the world is seldom so simple or clear-cut. Struggle and uncertainty are part of ethics, as they are a part of life." (quoted in Campbell, 2003, p. 13)

what we are deeply concerned about. Thus, our caring for our identity can be understood as a manifestation of our existential concern for us.

In this section I have placed the issue of ethics and morality within the larger framework of the human condition outlined in the previous sections by arguing that moral agency manifests itself as an integral part of human agency in general. Human moral functioning is expressed in the two normative aspects of living our lives: what others expect from us and what we expect from ourselves. The former can be found in the realm of practice and socio-culturally anchored moral theories, both of which are part of the socio-cultural environment as it was discussed in this chapter. The latter makes up a person's identity, that is, it characterizes what a person is deeply concerned about, which is central to a person's agency.

CHAPTER 4: HUMAN NEEDS

The ethics of care is, in the literature and will be here in this thesis, understood as a

needs-based approach to ethics.[100] This gives human needs a central role in the

foundation of care ethics. This chapter will establish human needs as an important part of

the human condition and, thus, provide a basis on which the ethics of care can be

understood as responding to the needs part of the human condition.

Needs are talked about in a three-term relation, of which often the third term is

omitted: someone needs something for something. What is needed is *essential* for what

the person needs it for, or, as Frankfurt (1988, p. 106) writes: "At the heart of the concept

of need is the notion that there are things one cannot do without."[101] For easier reference,

I like to use the following terms for the different places in the relation: for the person in

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[100] Nevertheless, of all the care-ethical literature I am aware of, only Noddings discusses and conceptualizes human needs in her work on caring, although only in her more recent work (2002a, chapter 3; 2003, chapter 3).

[101] Needs talk is not limited to humans as those entities filling the first place of the relation. Other living beings have needs, and objects can also be in need of something: 'This painting needs a dark frame for the painting's bright colours to be emphasized'. Since this section is about *human* needs, the first place of the relation will be limited to human beings. (It might be of interest to note that it could be well argued that objects have no needs at all, at least not in the same sense as humans and animals do – I will be using 'person' and human being' interchangeably here. Objects, the argument could go, have the needs we ascribe to them only in the sense that humans have a need for the object to have the property that we see the object to be in need of. Using this argument, the painting in the above example is not really in need of a dark frame, but it is rather a certain person who has the need to see the painting having the property of being framed by a dark frame. Talking about an object's need, then, is just an abbreviated form of expressing a certain type of human need involving the object. Since needs talk about objects are excluded from the discussion in this part of this chapter, the issue around needs for objects does not affect my discussion.)

need I will be using 'the needy',[102] for what is needed I use the term 'the need', and for what the need is needed for I use 'the need-purpose'. In a very general sense, human needs are those needs for which the needy is a human being. In this general sense, human needs are various and go from very general as in 'humans need air to breathe' to very specific and circumstantial cases as in 'we need wine, crackers and cheese for this event (in order to meet expectations)'. A first conceptual distinction to be made, then, is the distinction between human needs in a general and human needs in a specific sense. The former refers to needs that are shared by all humans, that is, all humans are needy with respect to those needs. Furthermore, the meeting of those needs is *essential* for being human (the need-purpose). I will call this kind of need *fundamental human need*.[103] Needless to say, all of us have needs that are not fundamental human needs in this sense. Here, I start off with a discussion of human needs in this fundamental sense.

Fundamental Human Needs

In this section I argue for the following claims about fundamental human needs[104]: (a) fundamental needs discussion cannot be free of hermeneutical perspectivism; (b) the perspectives on fundamental human needs are based on particular conceptualizations of

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[102] It is interesting to note that there is no real 'neutral' term for the first place term. As Noddings (2002a: 56) points out: "We have no proud or even respectable word for 'one who needs.' 'Needy' is not a label that any of us can embrace with the pride that accompanies 'rights-bearer.'" (This quote is taken from a section in which she talks about the relationship between rights and needs). My term will stretch the English language in the sense that an adjective is used as a noun, which the English language allows for when referring to a collective, as in 'the elderly', 'the needy', and so on,, but not to denote individuals. But I use the term as a technical term here, as Noddings has used 'carer' and 'cared-for' as technical terms in her writing on caring (see below). Furthermore, my *New Illustrated Webster's Dictionary*'s entry explains 'needy' as "being in need, want, or poverty". Considering that the term 'poverty' will be, further below, expanded from its general meaning, my chosen term seems to put the right focus on the fact that all of us are needy. (I will be using 'person' and 'human being' interchangeable here.)

[103] I want to emphasize that the discussion of fundamental needs here is focused on needs fundamental to *being human* and not limited to needs fundamental to survival as a *biological being*. The former focus includes the latter.

[104] As noted above I deal only with human needies, so that it will be sufficient to talk only about 'needs' rather than 'human needs'.

human well-being; and (c) fundamental needs appear to us in the form of socio-cultural need-satisfiers. The way I proceed to make the case for these claims is by discussing three different and influential approaches to fundamental needs and by arguing that the way they approach the notion of fundamental needs and that how they differ in their approaches make the case for the claims. The three approaches I have chosen come from three completely different fields of research. Martha Nussbaum's (1992, 1995a, 2000) approach to human needs is developed within the field of liberal political philosophy,[105] Abraham Maslow's (1954) approach within the field of psychology and psychotherapy and Manfred Max-Neef's (1991, 1992) approach within the field of economics. I discuss each claim in turn.

(a) Martha Nussbaum is a proponent of a first-wave feminist liberalism[106], and her central concern is for social justice, in particular for women (see Nussbaum 1992, 1995a, 2000). For her fundamental human needs are linked to a liberalist notion of human rights (Nussbaum, 2000, pp. 5, 97)[107]:

> The aim of the [capabilities] project as a whole is to provide the philosophical underpinning for an account of basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by the governments of all nations, as a bare minimum of what respect for human dignity requires.

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[105] It, however, has to be noted that Nussbaum's human capability approach to human needs is closely linked to Amartya Sen's capabilities approach in economics; see Nussbaum, 2000, p. 70. For an explication of the differences of the two approaches to human capabilities, see Crocker, 1992.

[106] See Nussbaum, 2002. For a characterization of the three waves of feminism see Held, 1993, pp. 160-170.

[107] Nussbaum does not actually talk about human needs but rather about human *capabilities*. For the development of the list of human capabilities, Nussbaum starts with the question 'What forms of human functioning are to be considered central to living a dignified human life?' The identified forms of human functioning are then articulated as human capabilities articulating what all humans should be able to do and achieve, in the sense that the socio-cultural environment should be such that (Nussbaum, 2000, pp. 83-88) the development and functioning of these human capabilities should be made possible and nobody should be forced to actually exercise the developed capabilities.

Thus capabilities as I conceive them have a very close relationship to human rights, as understood in contemporary international discussions.

Thus, for Nussbaum human needs are fundamental if they "exert a moral claim" (2000, p. 83) in a way human rights do, that is, if their need-purpose is to provide human dignity.

Maslow was a representative of Humanistic Psychology.[108] In her afterword to the third edition of Maslow's *Motivation and Personality* Ruth Cox (1970, p. 249) writes: "The main purpose of both the journal [the Journal of Humanistic Psychology] and the Association of Humanistic Psychology was to explore the behavioural characteristics and emotional dynamics *of full and healthy human living.*" Maslow labels such living alternatively with the terms "psychological health", "gratification health" and "happiness health" (1954, pp. 115, 116). As the term 'gratification health' already indicates, Maslow sees a direct correlation between gratification of fundamental human needs and psychological health (1954, p. 115):

> It would seem that degree of need gratification is positively correlated with degree of psychological health. Can we go further and affirm the limit of such a correlation, namely, that complete gratification and ideal health are the same? Gratification theory would at least *suggest* such a possibility.

A person whose needs are not met is discontent and restless (Maslow, 1954, p. 91). For Maslow human needs are, thus, fundamental if their needs-purpose is to be psychologically healthy, that is, if their gratification is essential to living a psychologically healthy life.

Nussbaum and Maslow conceptualize fundamental needs differently, based on a different conceptualization of the general need-purpose. Nussbaum's conceptualization is

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[108] Carl Rogers and Erich Fromm are the other two central figures of Humanistic Psychology.

guided by a liberal notion of (human) rights, which explains her focus on 'capabilities'

and her view of fundamental needs as establishing entitlements (rights) which do not

need to be redeemed. Maslow's conceptualization, on the other hand, is guided by the

view of humanistic psychology. This perspective of humanistic psychology explains his

focus on the notion of a psychologically healthy person as the general need-purpose and

that he develops his approach to fundamental human needs within a theory of *motivation*,

in which fundamental human needs have more of a motivating, mobilizing, activating

character. [109] As just noted, the different perspectives lead also to different

conceptualizations of the need-purposes of fundamental needs. This brings me to the next

claim to be discussed: perspectives on fundamental human needs are based on particular

conceptualizations of human well-being.

(b) Nussbaum's and Maslow's approach to fundamental needs are each based on a

different view of human well-being or a view of what it means to live 'humanly'. This

should not surprise us, since the basic idea behind the notion of fundamental needs is to

capture 'the essence' of what is required to human life and living.[110] For Maslow

fundamental needs are derived out of a view of what it means to be a psychologically

healthy individual. The understanding of what a psychologically healthy individual is is

for him framed by the view of humanistic psychology and, thus, for instance, self-

actualization is a fundamental need for Maslow (1954, pp. 91-92). Nussbaum, on the

other hand – writing from a liberal point of view – sees human well-being more in terms

of having fundamental capabilities for living one's life, for instance the capabilities of

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[109] The title of Maslow's (1954) book in which he develops his theory of fundamental human needs is *Motivation and Personality*. Max-Neef (2000, p. 24) shares the view that fundamental human needs have such a motivating, mobilizing and activation character.

[110] Nussbaum, for instance, understands herself explicitly in the tradition of Aristotelian essentialism (see 1992, p. 222; 1993; 1995b).

"being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressive works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth", and of "being able to search for the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 79).

The capabilities that Nussbaum describes here are closely linked to Maslow's idea of self-actualization. However, while Maslow claims that the general process and product of self-actualization is a fundamental need of humans for their (psychological) well-being, Nussbaum is far more specific in her characterization of the capabilities required for self-actualization. Maslow (1954, chapter 12) studied the characteristics of self-actualized people, but for him those characteristics are not needs. This difference in generality in the approach to fundamental needs brings me to the next claim to be discussed.

(c) As for Nussbaum and Maslow, for the Brazilian economist Max-Neef (1991; 1992) fundamental needs are directly connected to the quality of human life.[111] However, Max-Neef's conceptualization of fundamental needs is far more abstract than Nussbaum's. For instance, one fundamental need Max-Neef lists is 'to understand', that is, humans need to understand. One of Nussbaum's (2000, pp. 78-79) capabilities is

> Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do
> these things in a 'truly human' way, a way informed and cultivated by an

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[111] Nussbaum's and Max-Neef's approach to fundamental needs are very similar in motivation and purpose. Nussbaum's concern for fundamental needs is directly linked to her concern for women's living condition (see the titles of Nussbaum, 1995a; 2000), Max-Neef's concern for fundamental needs is directly linked to his concern for the social and economic development of, particularly, Latin American countries. Nussbaum (2000, p. 70) wants to have her list "giving good guidance to governments and international agencies", for Max-Neef (1991, p. 21) fundamental needs are to centrally guide economical and political development in countries, because "the purpose of the economy is to serve the people, and not the people to serve the economy".

adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training.

This capability captures something close to Max-Neef's fundamental need to understand, however it frames the need in terms of a more modern view of education: the 'truly human way' of understanding (using one's senses, imagination and thinking and reasoning powers) *requires* cultivated and cultivating education, which (at least) needs to address the fundamental human 'intelligences' of literacy, numeracy and scientific understanding. Additionally, cultivated and cultivating education would mean *systematic* education, which often means (but not necessarily) *formalized* education.[112]

While Nussbaum's list of fundamental human capabilities is "intended for the modern world, rather than as timeless" (2000, p. 77), Max-Neef claims universality (in terms of culture and time) for his list of fundamental needs (1991, pp. 27-28). The abstractness and generality of his fundamental needs, thus, should not surprise.[113] There is some benefit in conceptualizing fundamental needs at such an abstract level. Having a more abstract view on humans' fundamental needs allows one to put Nussbaum's

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[112] In her earlier work on the human capability approach, Nussbaum (1992) considers "a wide variety of self-understandings of people in many times and places" (p. 215) to identify "the most important functions of the human being, in terms of which human life is defined" (p. 214). Nussbaum claims that there is a great convergence across cultures in what those most important functions are (p. 216; also in 2000: 76), and she tries to capture those in her list of human capabilities, which she calls "an intuitive approximation, whose purpose is not to cut off discussion but to direct attention to certain features of importance." (1992, p. 21; see also 2000, p. 101). The stronger socio-cultural embeddedness of her approach to fundamental human needs become very obvious in a footnote comment on a change made to her capability list (2000, p. 78 fn. 82): "The current version of the list reflects changes made as a result of my discussions with people in India. The primary changes are a greater emphasis on bodily integrity and control over one's environment . . . , and a new emphasis on dignity and non-humiliation. Oddly, these features of human 'self-sufficiency' and the dignity of the person are the ones most often criticized by Western feminists as 'male' and 'Western,' one reason for their more muted role in earlier versions of the list."

[113] Maslow's needs – including the need for self-actualization – are of a similar kind of abstractness. Furthermore, for Nussbaum the purpose of establishing fundamental needs is to set requirements (from a liberal point of view) for the socio-cultural environment to allow all of its members to live a dignified life (2000, pp. 71-73). This entitlement approach brings with it a very specific list of human needs. In Nussbaum's (2000, pp. 78-80) I counted 30 items in her list of fundamental capabilities. Max-Neef, on the other hand, has a list of seven fundamental needs.

(derived) need for a systematic or even formalized education into perspective, to question the way in which a particular (class of) socio-cultural environment(s) responds to the fundamental need to understand.

However, there is also a danger in postulating such highly abstract basic needs. The notion of needs includes the notion of addressing, meeting and having needs met. The more abstractly needs are conceptualized, the less meaningful they are for being addressed in a specific socio-cultural context. It is ultimately the concern for the adequate meeting of fundamental needs that should guide our thinking about such needs, and the meeting of those needs has always to be sensitive to the respective socio-cultural context. As Noddings (2003, p. 59) points out, self-respect is a basic need for most people in modern liberal democracies: "In today's liberal democracies, people are hard pressed to maintain self-respect if they have no medical insurance or income security." Is it possible to keep a universal notion of fundamental needs – and, thus, keep the advantage I was talking about above – and still be sensitive to the socio-cultural context of the impact of needs on particular people? Max-Neef's approach to fundamental needs makes this possible.

Max-Neef distinguishes between fundamental human needs and their satisfiers (1991, pp. 16-18; 1992, p. 199).[114] The relationship between the two is complex as Max-Neef (1991: 17) makes clear:

> There is no one-to-one correspondence between needs and satisfiers. A satisfier may contribute simultaneously to the satisfaction of different needs or, conversely, a need may require various satisfiers in order to be

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[114] This distinction was already made by Maslow (1954, p 67): "Two different cultures may provide two completely different ways of satisfying a particular desire, let us say, for self-esteem. In one society, one obtains self-esteem by being a good hunter; in another society by being a great medicine man or a bold warrior, or a very unemotional person and so on."

met. Not even these relations are fixed. They may vary according to time, place and circumstance.

Formal school education can then be seen as a socio-cultural need-satisfier, satisfying, or probably better, addressing the fundamental need to understand. While fundamental human needs are socio-culturally transcendent, needs-satisfiers exist as such only relative to a socio-cultural environment. Max-Neef (1991, p. 18) even suggests that "we may go as far as to say that one of the aspects that define a culture is its choice of satisfiers." Fundamental needs appear to us in the form of socio-cultural need-satisfiers.

Within such a framework, the discussion about the quality of life in a given socio-cultural environment takes the form of inquiring into the effect specific socio-cultural satisfiers have on the satisfaction or addressing of all fundamental human needs. Bureaucracy as a satisfier of the fundamental need of protection (for instance, in the sense that bureaucracy guards the execution of directives and applies the same procedure mechanically to everybody in the same way) can impair the satisfaction or addressing of other fundamental human needs like understanding (for instance, in the sense that bureaucratic procedures and decisions can have no meaningful rational).[115] Max-Neef (1992, p. 200) expands the notion of poverty, which is generally limited to an economic understanding: "Any fundamental human need that is not adequately satisfied, reveals a human poverty." The use of the term 'poverty' in this context exposes the strong *political* aspect connected with fundamental needs and their socio-cultural satisfiers.

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[115] This example is taken from Max-Neef's (1991, p. 33) table of "violators or destroyers" that are not really satisfiers of fundamental needs.

I started out with the idea that fundamental needs are needs that are shared by all humans. The discussion in this section has qualified this view in two important ways. First, fundamental needs are based on a particular conceptualization of the notion of human well-being as the purpose of fundamental human needs. Such conceptualizations vary and, thus, the understanding of what needs are shared by all humans varies. Second, fundamental needs manifest themselves in the form of needs for particular needs-satisfiers, which generally vary among different socio-cultural environments as well as somewhat within the same socio-cultural environment. The view that fundamental human needs are those needs that are shared by all humans has to be seen in the context of these qualifications.

With these qualifications the question arises: Is there value in talking about fundamental human needs at the general level? In my view conceptualizing fundamental human needs helps us *orient ourselves* as we live our life embedded in the traditions and practices of a particular socio-cultural environment. The notion of fundamental human needs at the general level helps us recognize *that* we are living with socio-cultural qualifications of those fundamental needs and *what particular form* these qualifications take within a particular socio-cultural environment. As the previous chapter discussed, as human agents we interact actively with our socio-cultural environment and can interact with other such environments. The recognition of what need-satisfiers manifest the fundamental needs in a particular socio-cultural environment can and should shape our engagement as agents with that socio-cultural environment.

The view of fundamental needs that I have suggested through the three claims fits into the picture of the human condition I have painted so far as follows. As other aspects

of the human condition discussed so far, fundamental needs are to be seen in relation to particular socio-cultural contexts in which they take form through socio-cultural satisfiers. Fundamental human needs develop out of the dynamic interaction between socio-cultural environments and the human agents engaged in them through the conceptualization of what 'human well-being' is, which results from such dynamic interaction. Furthermore, what drives us human agents, that is, what we are deeply concerned about, is central to instantiations of fundamental human needs. For instance, assuming that the writing of fictitious stories is an instantiation of someone's fundamental need of self-actualization (to accept Maslow's approach to fundamental needs), the need for writing fictitious stories is then (part of) what that person is deeply concerned about and what would drive her in her living her life.

Many of the needs we encounter in people in our daily life are not fundamental in the sense just discussed – although they might be *linked* to a fundamental need. In the next section I suggest a conceptualization of human needs that will be so general to include those 'daily-life' needs as well as the fundamental needs.

Conceptualizing Human Needs

As introduced above, the *formal* characteristic of needs is that a need is a need for somebody (the needy) and only with respect to a 'purpose' (the needs-purpose). The *substantial* characteristic of needs is that they are *essential,* and therefore *necessary* for the respective needs-purpose (for the particular needy in the particular situation). For instance, I need the car keys in order to get into the locked car, because having the keys is *necessary* to get into the locked car.

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I will use state-of-affairs descriptions to characterize needs as particular entities, for instance, *to get the car keys* (a particular state-of-affairs the need) is a need of mine (the needy) in order for me to get into the locked car (a particular state-of-affairs as the needs-purpose). Using this example, we often talk as if the need is for *an object* ('I need the car keys'), but what we actually need is to be in a certain relationship with that object ('to have the car keys in my hand'), which means that the need is a certain kind of state-of-affairs, here having control over the car keys.

Expanding on one of Frankfurt's (1988, p. 107) examples of a need (a person needs a dictionary to solve a crossword puzzle) I want to illustrate what could be called *the socio-cultural background of a need*. With the widespread use of computers, we can say that the person does *not necessarily* need a dictionary, because the person could use the internet instead. In turn, one could now argue that whatever you find on the internet is a dictionary, just not a printed one. On the other hand, a well versed person could also be used to fulfil the needs-purpose of solving a crossword-puzzle. What follows from this consideration is that needs are established *in a particular socio-cultural context as well as situation-specific circumstances*. As those situations and circumstances change, needs change in the sense that what was before necessary in order to materialize a certain state of affairs might not be anymore. It might just be *one* out of several possible ways of materializing it or none at all anymore. Only within a given socio-cultural environment can we speak of a connection of necessity between two states of affairs (the need and the need-purpose) involving a person; for instance, surgery is only *necessary* for extending my life by a few more months in a socio-cultural environment in which this kind of surgery is possible in the first place and in which there are no other possible alternatives,

a situation which might change in the future. The socio-cultural environment that connects the need (a certain state of affairs) and its purpose (a certain other state of affairs) *with necessity* I will call *the socio-cultural background of the need*. As the examples of the necessary surgery illustrates, we also need to consider a certain biological background for needs and a physical background as well, as the example with the locked car demonstrates, since it is the physical reality together with biological facts that human cannot open locked cars.

There is a difference between 'needing something for something' and 'believing to need something for something'. I might believe that I need the car keys to get into the car. However, since the car is not locked, I *actually* do not need the car keys to get into the car. In this sense, needs are objective: They represent rationally based relations between state-of-affairs and a needy. This, of course, does not make the epistemology of needs a simple matter. The ethics of care, as the following chapter will discuss, has a particular perspective on the epistemology of needs (the identification and understanding of needs).

This objective view of needs is different from Noddings's conceptualization of needs. Noddings (2002a, p. 58) writes the following:

> When do we acknowledge wants and desires as needs? We might use criteria such as these: the want is fairly stable over a considerable period of time and/or it is intense; the want is demonstrably connected to some desirable end, or, at least, to one that is not harmful, and the end is impossible or difficult to meet without the object wanted; the want is in the power (within the means) of those addressed to grant it; and the one wanting is willing and able to contribute to the satisfaction of the want. When these criteria are met, most groups will acknowledge an expressed need.

Implicitly, Noddings suggests here two things. First, that wants and desires on the one hand and needs on the other are the same kind of thing just distinguished by degree (of intensity, and so on). This explains why she is talking about 'the end' of a desire, which could be understood as the 'purpose' for which the person desires the respective object, similarly to the purpose *of a need* in my conceptualization. Second, that when we recognize a need we should be generally inclined to try to satisfy this need, something that is not the case for wants and desires. I will not follow her suggestion in both points, but will come to a somewhat different notion of need.

I understand a want and desire as a certain psychological (added by maybe a certain physiological) state of persons.[116] Desires are directed towards a particular (the desired) state of affairs (the intentionality of desires). Desiring an object would then be understood as desiring the state of affairs of having possession of or control over that object. A need, on the other hand, is a particular state of affairs which is in the relationship of being necessary for another state of affairs (the needs-purpose) to happen relative to a person (the needy) who has the need. Desires are based on psychological (and physiological) states of persons, while needs are based on a certain state of affairs (the need) being *necessary* for another state of affairs (the needs-purpose). [117]

There is another distinction between the two needs conceptualizations. Desiring a particular state of affairs— as Noddings suggests – can have a certain 'purpose': I desire something so that I can achieve a certain 'end'. That, however, implies that I also have to desire that end. If I desire something for a certain end, my desire for the end has to take

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[116] I will consider wants and desires being of the same ontological type of psychological states, distinguished just by degree, and will be using the term 'desire' summarily for those psychological states.
[117] As I explicate later, this relationship of necessity is always not just relative to a person, but also to the socio-cultural, biological, physical, and so on, circumstances.

priority over my other desire. In the case of a need, I do not have to desire the state of affairs that is the need nor the state of affairs that is the needs-purpose. Nevertheless, what I need is still necessary for me for the needs-purpose (relative to the situation). Furthermore, in the case of desiring something for a certain end, I have to *believe* that what I desire and what I desire it for are connected in such a way that I can achieve the end through what I desire. There does not actually have to be this connection, though. In the case of a need, however, the relationship of necessity between what I need and what I need it for is independent of what I believe: I do not need something just because I believe I need it, and I can believe I need something without actually needing it. Needs can, thus, be independent of the needy's inner state of believing and desiring. In many cases, however, a certain state of affairs becomes a need for someone with respect to a certain needs-purpose due to the needy *desiring the need-purpose.* For example, I desire to become a physician; hence, it is a need for me to attend university to study medicine (a need relative to the socio-cultural environment I am living in, which requires a university degree to practice medicine). Following Frankfurt (1988) I call such needs *volitional needs.* All other needs are non-volitional needs. In the following, I will explicate and discuss Frankfurt's exploration of human needs. Although his analysis is motivated by another purpose, it provides in my view a deeper understanding of the structure of human needs, an understanding which has to be seen as central to an ethic of care, which puts the concern for the needs of the cared-for at the forefront.

Volitional needs are needs for which the needy desires the needs-purpose. Whether the needy also desires the state of affairs that is the need is irrelevant for a need to be a volitional need. Viewing desires as psychological (and physiological) states of

persons, I can desire to be a physician, but I can dislike attending university, although the latter is a need I have relative to my desired need-purpose of being a physician. There are also the cases of volitional needs where the needy not only desires the need-purpose but also the state of affairs that is the need. However, the latter desire can but does not have to be linked to the desire for the need-purpose. For instance, I may desire to attend university *because* I desire to be a physician and I recognize my attending university as a need to become a physician, but I may desire to attend university quite independently of my desire to be a physician; I might, for instance, not know that to become a physician in this country I need to attend university. Additionally, both cases may hold simultaneously.

Driving the conceptual analysis even further, Frankfurt (1988) distinguishes two different types of volitional needs. He has done so in order to be able to have a way to characterize those needs that fulfil what he calls the Principle of Precedence (p. 106), which says that "when there is a competition between a desire and a need for the same thing, the need starts with a certain moral edge, that is, when A needs something that B wants but does not need, then meeting A's need is *prima facie* morally preferable to satisfying B's desire."[118] I am here less interested in the issue around the Principle of Precedence and moral preference and more with the distinction between the two types of volitional needs, because their distinction allows a richer structural understanding of human agency and, thus, of the human condition.

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[118] It is important to not overlook the '*prima facie*' condition, because in certain situations it might be morally preferable to satisfy A's desire or it might be the case that the satisfaction of neither of the two is morally preferable.

As introduced above, volitional needs are needs for which the needy desires the state of affairs that is the needs-purpose. Frankfurt distinguishes between two different types of such desires: (i) *voluntary desires* that are not aroused in us but rather "formed or constructed by acts of will that we ourselves perform, often quite apart from any emotional or affective state" (Frankfurt, p. 107) and (ii) *involuntary desires* that are not up to us "but [are] a matter of feelings or inclinations that arise and persist independently of any choice of [our] own." (Frankfurt, p. 107)[119] Based on this distinction between the two types of desires, Frankfurt (p. 107) distinguishes between free and constrained volitional needs. A *free volitional need* is a volitional need for which the desire the needy has for the need-purpose is formed or constructed by acts of will that the needy herself performs. A *constrained volitional need* is a volitional need for which the desire the needy has for the need-purpose is not up to the needy but rather a matter of feelings or inclinations that arise and persist independently of any choice of hers.[120]

The distinction between voluntary and non-voluntary desires – and, thus, between free and constrained volitional needs – is based on an understanding of a person's will according to which a person does not need to have voluntary control over her will in all situations. Frankfurt makes a distinction between 'volitional' (= depending on a person's *will*) and 'being voluntary' (= can be influenced / controlled by the person). He (p. 107) writes:

> Having a volitional need is not necessarily a voluntary matter. This is
> because a person's will is not invariably under his voluntary control. That

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[119] Damasio's (for instance, 1994, 1999) work on the role of emotions in our decision making strongly suggests that there is no *categorical* distinction between voluntary and involuntary desires. Nevertheless, experiences with our own desires suggest that there is at least a *distinction by degree* between these two types of desires.

[120] The comment in the previous footnote about the distinction between will and emotion-based desires transfers to the distinction between free and constrained volitional needs.

is, it may not be up to him whether he has the desire upon which his volitional need depends.

That a person's will is not invariably under her control should not surprise us, considering Frankfurt's conceptualization of a person's will. (See the section on being deeply concerned about.)

In the presented conceptual framework here, a need is a need for someone with a certain need-purpose. A person can have a need only if the need-purpose is somehow 'relevant' for that person; otherwise we would have what could be called a 'subjunctive need'; that is, a particular state of affairs *would be* necessary for me for a particular need-purpose in case the need-purpose *were* relevant to me. There are two ways conceivable in which a certain state of affairs (a needs-purpose) can be relevant to a person: The person *desires* that state of affairs or the state of affairs *is of importance* to that person, independently of whether the person recognizes this importance or not. I have already dealt with the first case. I will now discuss the second case. In this respect 'importance' is similar to 'need': The needy might believe that she does not need what she actually needs, might not believe that she needs what she actually needs and might not recognize what she actually needs. As with needs, what is important to a person is located 'outside' of the person's beliefs. However, as in the case of what one is deeply concerned about, a person can influence what is important and to what degree something is important to her.

One example of what is generally important to a person from an 'outside' point of view is avoiding harm. Free volitional needs are not *inescapably* linked to harm, because by definition it is through an act of will by the needy through which the desire for the need-purpose was created. In the case of a free volitional need the needy has volitional

control over the desires, and therefore any harm that could come with the frustration of the need is volitionally escapable.

In the case of *constrained* volitional needs, Frankfurt (1988) distinguishes between two types of situations involving constrained volitional needs. The first type concerns situations in which "the person's need is exclusively volitional; that means, he needs a certain object only because he desires it." (Frankfurt, p. 114). In these cases the "need is inescapably linked to harm only in virtue of [the] desire". (Frankfurt, pp. 113-114). *The harm is the pain of a frustrated desire.* The example Frankfurt (1988, pp. 113-114) provides is the situation of a man who desires a sports car. If the desire is so strong and persistent that the man cannot help but desire the car (an involuntary desire), this desire *creates* a constrained volitional need, namely the need for the car in order to avoid the suffering of need frustration. This avoidance is the need-purpose. But because the man has this particular need for the car only because of his desire for the car, the harm for the needy (the frustration of the desire) is not inescapably linked to the satisfaction of the need. Without the desire there could be no need frustration.

The second type concerns situations in which "a person has a non-volitional need as well as a constrained volitional need for a certain object; and he would therefore need the object even if he did not desire it." (Frankfurt, 1988, p. 114) Frankfurt provides as an example needs due to heroin addiction. The addict has a constrained volitional need to get high on heroin as well as a non-volition need for heroin. The constrained volitional need is structured similarly as in the example of the first type: The constrained volitional need for heroin for the purpose of getting high is *created* by the desire for heroin. Heroin, however, does not just have the property of making people high, but it also brings with it

physical pain as withdrawal symptoms. In order to avoid the withdrawal pain (need-purpose) the addict has a non-volitional need for heroin. This need is non-volitional, because the need is there regardless of whether the addict desires to avoid the withdrawal pain or not. This does not exclude the possibility that the addict has the desire to avoid the withdrawal pain, in which case the desire creates a constrained volitional need for heroin, while the desires do not create the non-volitional need for heroin but rather "correspond" to it, as Frankfurt (p. 114) points out. In the case of the addict's non-volitional need for heroin, the need is *inescapably* linked to harm (physical pain) *independently* of the desires of the addicts: The addict would need heroin to avoid the withdrawal pain even if he would not desire it.

How do fundamental needs fit into the conceptualization of needs presented in this section? A need as presented in this section is a state-of-affair that is necessary for the needy for the need-purpose relative to a socio-cultural background. Fundamental needs are of this type, whereby the need-purpose is something like the well-being of humans relative to a particular socio-cultural background, a background which provides a particular view of human well-being. Well-being itself is not a need but rather something like an ultimate need-purpose.[121]

How do needs as conceptualized in this chapter fit into the larger picture of the human condition as I characterized it in the previous chapter? Our needs are to a certain degree the result of the dynamic interaction between the socio-cultural environment and our emerging human agency. The need-satisfiers, which are characteristic of a particular

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[121] Frankfurt (1988, pp. 106-107 fn. 2) points this out when he writes: "It appears to be implicit in the concept of need that what something is needed for must be other than itself. That is why it is somewhat dissonant to suggest that life and happiness are among the things people need."

socio-cultural environment and, thus, a result of this dynamic interaction, manifest themselves as needs of (many) members of the respective socio-cultural environment. Our capacity as understanding agents allows us to be and become conscious of our and others' needs and to pursue and support their satisfaction. What we are deeply concerned about, and hence what drives us as agents, can be understood as our drive to the satisfaction of the corresponding, deeply seated needs.

As explicated above, central to the ethic of care is the orientation by the carer toward the needs of the cared-for. This and the previous chapters have presented a particular view of central aspect of the human condition, including human needs. The next two chapters present a view of an ethic of care that is guided by this view of the human condition. In this sense, this ethic of care responds to the human condition as viewed in the previous two chapters.

CHAPTER 5: CARE-ETHICAL AGENCY

In this and the next chapter I take the perspective on the human condition as articulated in the previous two chapters as well as the critical review of Noddings's approach to the ethics of care in chapter 2 and suggest an ethic of care that is a direct response to this perspective on the human condition and the critical review. Thus, the previous two chapters articulate the assumptions made about the human condition for the ethic of care presented here. I understand this proposal as contributing to and being developed out of the tradition of the ethics of care. As has been done in other approaches within this tradition, I explore a particular notion of caring. For the rest of this thesis I will talk about *this particular notion* when I use terms like 'caring', 'care', care-ethical agency', 'ethic of care', and so on. Any other use will be explicitly noted.

At the very centre of our human condition is our existential concern for ourselves and the question of how we should live our life. Ethics as it is understood here (see chapter 3) is about the response to this concern and this question. The suggested integrated ethics proposes two aspects to this question: What do we expect of ourselves and what do others expect of us in living our life? The theory of morality outlined in the following two chapters responds to both aspects of this question. The notion of care-ethical agency developed in this chapter is in response to the first aspect of the question, and the explications in chapter 6 are more in response to the second aspect of the question.

Care-Ethics as Needs-Based Ethics

In line with the central idea behind the ethics of care as an ethical theory, the ethic of care

I would like to propose in this chapter is a *needs-based ethics*. As mentioned in chapter 2,

this is what all approaches to the ethics of care have in common. However, they differ in

the assumption they make about the human condition, and, thus, they differ in what sense

the respective ethic of care is needs-based. This section explicates in what sense the ethic

of care I propose in this thesis is needs-based.

At a very general level, *to care means to be considerate of human needs.*[122] It is

this understanding that forms the foundation for the way in which the approach to the

ethics of care I propose responds to the two fundamental ethical questions 'What do I

expect of myself?' and 'What do others expect of me?' I discuss the response to each of

the questions in turn.

Responding to the First Ethical Question: "What Do I Expect of Myself?"

With the consideration of human needs at the centre, the general response to the question

'What do I expect of myself?' takes the following form. To the more normative

component of the question, the ethic of care responds by centring a care-ethical agent's

(moral) identity around the consideration of human needs, that means, my identity as a

human agent, which defines what I am deeply concerned about, centres upon the

consideration of human needs. To the more empirical component of the question the ethic

of care responds by emphasising the importance for care-ethical agents to be aware of

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[122] I limit the domain of caring to *human* needs, leaving the consideration of needs of the rest of the
biological world and nature in general out of the domain of caring due to the focus of this thesis. However,
it seems to me that much of the concern for nature – even what is often articulated as '*intrinsically* valuing
nature' – can be reconstructed as an integrated part of human needs: Conceptualizing fundamental human
needs (see chapter 4) in such a way that the integration of human living into the larger picture of the natural
world is an integral part of or condition for human self-actualization.

and understand their own needs and other people's needs as well as their own and other people's functioning as human agents with particular bio-chemical and temperamental constitutions.

The expectations I have of myself as a care-ethical agent are rooted in a (moral) identity that centres around concern for human needs and are based in my understanding of human (moral) functioning in general and my idiosyncratic constitution in particular. The former is 'more normative' in the sense that it 'tells me what I *ought* to do', while the latter is 'more empirical' in the sense that it 'tells me how I *am*' as a human agent with a particular 'constitutive framework' within which I can enact 'what I ought to do' – which is why it is an important part in the response to the questions what I expect of myself. The latter is about my *actual* functioning as a human being in general and an individual in particular.

The *general* characteristics of a care-ethical agent, thus, are that her (moral) identity centres upon the consideration of human needs and that she has an awareness and understanding of her and others' needs and her and their general as well as idiosyncratic functioning as human beings. As the nature of these characteristics already indicates, being a care-ethical agent is less a matter of a particular type of conduct in particular situations and situational states of consciousness (Noddings) and more a matter of *disposition and practice*. Although the latter brings with it the former, focusing on disposition and practice recognizes the source of our moral functioning in agency – in accordance with the view of the human condition laid out in chapters 3 and 4.[123] The two components of the answer are '*more* normative' and '*more* empirical' because –

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[123] The third section of this chapter explicates in more depth what those two *general* characteristics mean for living a life as a care-ethical agent.

assuming the human condition outlined in chapter 3 – there cannot be a clear line drawn between the normative (ought) and the empirical (being) and each includes an element of the other. My (moral) identity has to be considered to be part of my idiosyncratic being and at the same time it *prescribes* to me 'what I ought to do'. My bio-chemical constitution (as a central part of my 'being'), for instance, has a normative aspect to it in the sense that it – for some more for others less – contributes to what we feel we ought to do (in particular in consideration of our own needs).

Responding to the Second Ethical Question: "What Do Others Expect of Me?"

The second ethical question – 'What do others expect of me?' – focuses on the socio-cultural environment human agents are embedded in. The response to the more normative component of the question by the ethic of care is, of course, the care-ethical theory as a needs-based theory itself: We are expected to be concerned about human needs, and this provides the explicit ethical framework for us as human agents. To the more empirical component of the question 'What do others expect of us?' the care-ethical theory responds by emphasizing the importance of the ways the practices and traditions as well as the socio-cultural conditions that exist in a particular socio-cultural environment relate to the concern for human needs expected in the ethic of care: How do those practices and traditions allow for, support, enhance, ignore, impede, undermine, suppress, and so on, concern for human needs (in the form of care-ethical agency and practice)? The *general* characteristics of a *care-ethical socio-cultural environment* which frames what is expected of me are, then, that it makes the concern for human needs the explicit ethical framework to guide practices and traditions within this environment and that its practices

and traditions as well as the socio-cultural conditions it provides are indeed such that concern for human needs is modelled, encouraged, supported, enhanced, and so on.

While the (care-ethical) expectations I have of myself are grounded in the notion of care-ethical agency, the (care-ethical) expectations others have of me are grounded in the notion of a care-ethical socio-cultural environment. This environment, however, has to be distinguished from a particular *actual* socio-cultural environment a human agent is embedded in.[124] As a theory of morality, the ethic of care responds to the question 'What do others expect of a human agent?' by articulating care-ethical expectations from a perspective of a care-ethical socio-cultural environment. There are, of course, also (moral) expectations toward human agents by the *actual* socio-cultural environments they are embedded in, and these expectations can be in conflict with those by the *care-ethical* socio-cultural environment. It is here where there is the room for a human (care-ethical) agent to interact with the socio-cultural environment to influence it toward a more *care-ethical* socio-cultural environment. There is another connection between the socio-cultural expectations by the ethic of care and the *actual* socio-cultural environment: Care-ethical agents are expected to live their situational agency by embedding their agency into the *actual* socio-cultural environment. I will discuss this notion in the next chapter.

The ideas of a care-ethical agency and a care-ethical socio-cultural environment explicate what it means that the ethic of care I propose here is a *needs-based* ethic: Both ideas centre around concern for human needs in the ways just explicated. Both ideas also

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[124] Before – and I will continue to do so – I have been using 'socio-cultural environment' always in the sense of an *actual* socio-cultural environment. Whenever I talk about the *care-ethical* socio-cultural environment, I will explicitly use this qualification.

frame the notion of *caring as a lived moral practice*, a notion that the next chapter

explores further.

The Ethic of Care as a Response to the Current State of Affairs

In chapter 3 I expressed the view that ethical theories – especially those dominant in a

socio-cultural environment – can be understood as a response to that very socio-cultural

environment.[125] I now can address in more general terms the question how the ethics of

care – understood as a needs-based ethical theory – can be understood as a response to

the socio-cultural environment that characterizes current Western societies. Because the

question addresses a *current* state of affairs and does not look back to a situation, for

instance, two hundred years ago, the question is ambiguous in the sense that it can be

understood more empirically or more normatively. In the case of the former the

perspective is more a socio-historical one from which the relationship is 'explained',

while in the latter case the perspective is more a normative one from which the

relationship is argued to be needed or desired. I will address the question from each

perspective in turn in the given order. Because the ethics of care is currently not the

dominant general ethical framework used in Western societies (see Held, 1993 and

Tronto, 1993), the normative perspective will allow us to make a much stronger, although

different, point about the relationship between the current general socio-cultural

environment in Western societies and the ethics of care as a needs-based ethics as a

general ethical framework.

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[125] Here 'response' is not to suggest a causal relationship but rather one of 'matching': The orientations of
both the dominant ethical theory and central aspects of the socio-cultural environment (for instance, the
political and the economical aspects) are such that they can and do support each other. 'Response', then, is
more meant in a hermeneutical sense in the way the relationship between human agency and socio-cultural
environment is characterized in chapter 3.

Historically, the ethics of care is a response to the perceived neglect of the

'female voice' in the moral domain of human life ('feminist morality').[126] Chapter 2 has

laid out common characteristics of this approach to morality. There are essentialistic

(Held, 1993) and non-essentialistic (Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 1987, 1993) approaches to

a 'feminist morality', [127] and in those approaches there are different emphasises on the

role of nurturing, the role of justice and equitability issues, and the role of the socio-

cultural conditions in the way the 'female voice' or 'feminist morality' is conceptualized.

However, all those approaches have in common that they emphasize human qualities and

practices that are commonly connected with women and their roles in the public and

private domain. Simplifying a complex issue to a simplified tendency, over the last few

decades women have established a much larger and more influential (without suggesting

a sufficient) role in particular in the public domain.[128] Again, in simplified terms: A

needs-based approach to morality that is more strongly grounded in qualities and

experiences of women and that, thus, gives 'voice' to a 'female morality', matches much

better the just suggested socio-cultural trend of women's greater role in the public

domain.

From the more normative perspective, the question 'How can the ethics of care as

a needs-based ethical theory be understood as a response to the socio-cultural

environment that characterizes current Western societies?' is understood as the question:

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[126] See Gilligan (1982), Held (1993) and Noddings (2002b, chapter 5).

[127] Noddings calls her approach to the ethics of care "A *feminine* approach to ethics and moral education" (1984; emphasis added).

[128] According to the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (2005) in 2001 59% of all university degrees in Canada were granted to women and the proportion of female full-time university faculty has increased over the last decade: only 16% are full professors, but 33% are associate and 41% are assistant professors at Canadian universities. Furthermore, there are now or have been women in the top political position of several European countries.

Why does the current socio-cultural environment need or make it desirable to embrace a theory of morality that is grounded in the concern for human needs as explicated above? I want to mention two reasons. First, the current 'ethical framework' in Western society is what Howe (1993, pp. 31-34) has called 'liberal egalitarianism', a liberal tradition which is committed to the two liberal values of liberty and equality, where liberty is limited by and equality grounded in notions of rights and justice. [129] This approach to ethics guiding human moral living is what Bai (2004) has called ethics for 'moral emergencies', in which the guidance of this ethical framework is applied once such emergencies occur, like when rights or different ways of living one's life interfere with each other. It is within this mindset that the discussion of 'moral dilemmas' has become so important in thinking about ethics in schooling and ethics for the teaching profession, for instance in the form of case study teaching. [130] Bai (2004) contrasts this type of 'emergency ethics' with 'preventative ethics', which she suggests as an 'every-day ethics' guiding the living of our life on a day-to-day basis. Such a day-to-day ethics would reduce though not eliminate the number and intensity of 'moral emergencies', as preventative medicine reduces but not eliminates the number and intensity of medical emergencies. [131] A needs-based ethics as suggested here is an example of such an every-day ethics as will become clear from the explications in the rest of this chapter.

Second, in particular through advances in technology a development seems to have been taking place in Western societies that can be called 'social autism' [132]: The

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[129] See also Kymlicka (1990, chapter 3) and Rawls (1999).

[130] For the former see, for instance, Kohlberg's (1971) moral dilemma approach to moral education and for the latter Strike & Soltis (1985) and Strike (1993).

[131] The medical analogy is from Bai (2004).

[132] I came across this expression in a Globe and Mail (November 12, 2005) review of Lynn Truss's book *Talk to the Hand.*

always expanding possibilities in the use of the internet provide more opportunities for spending time interacting in a virtual rather than a face-to-face social world; iPods and similar devices provide opportunities for people to listen to music while they go to work, go for a walk, sit in a physician's office, and so on. Devices like the Blackberry allow people to be connected to the internet wherever they are, to communicate with others without being in face-to-face contact with all the other components that make up social interaction, which is the basis for social understanding. More and more people seem to make use of this opportunity.[133] The human condition as outlined in chapters 3 and 4 suggests the following two things. (a) A form of 'social engagement' is required for us to be able to respond to our existential concern for ourselves and to understand our identity as human agents, which is partly defined by our dialogical engagement with our socio-cultural environment (dialogical agency). (b) 'Social engagement' is a fundamental human need. Concerning the second point, an expressed need for 'social isolation' induced by technological advances can be in conflict with the fundamental need for social engagement. Within the framework of liberal egalitarianism the balancing of the fundamental and the expressed need is generally left to the individual agent. Conflicts between fundamental needs and expressed needs come to the forefront of 'ethical problem solving' within this ethical framework only in cases of 'moral emergencies', for instance, when the neglect of the fundamental need through the gratification of the expressed need leads to a psychologically or physically unhealthy state (to use Maslow's

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[133] This statement is based on my own observation I made and reports in the media I became aware of over the last couple of years. The tendency toward greater 'social autism' due to information technological advances I have just spoken off is not quite as simple a phenomenon as I have just portrayed it to be. MSN, cell phones and other forms of 'quick communication' seem to be used in an increasing number for keeping social connections. What, however, changes is the form of social interaction, and, thus, the way of developing social understanding and, thus, the social understanding itself. For instance, MSN and cell phones allow us to stay in contact with more people at a given time, however, all or most non-verbal signs of social meaning are not communicated.

perspective on fundamental human needs). In a needs-based ethics like the ethics of care, on the other hand, the consideration of needs conflicts – in particular between fundamental and expressed needs – is given appropriate attention, because the concern for human needs (and that includes such conflicts) is here at the centre.

Revisiting Noddings's Ethic of Care

I have mentioned above that all approaches to the ethics of care centre upon a notion of human needs, including Noddings's approach discussed in chapter 2. The approach I propose here, however, is one that is grounded in the human condition characterized in chapter 3. Based on the discussion in chapter 2, I now argue that Noddings's care-ethical approach is not compatible with central aspects of the view of the human condition given in chapter 3.

As outlined in chapter 2, at the core of Noddings's approach to the ethics of care is her notion of attention-with-concern. Noddings postulates this *emotional* disposition to respond with engrossment and motivational displacement to a recognized need as *the* disposition for caring. Rational thinking has only the *instrumental* purpose of figuring out what to do "once I have committed myself to doing something" (Noddings, 1984, p. 35). This separation of and the order between the emotion-based motivation to address a person's needs and the instrumental role given to rational thinking is problematic in the light of the human condition as characterized in chapter 3. An emotional-based motivation to address a person's need requires *the understanding* of that need *first;* we can emotionally respond to something only after we have understood it as having certain features. As discussed in chapter 3, such understanding does not have to be (completely) conscious and such an understanding is interpretive in nature and has to be seen in the

context of the carer's and needy's embededdness in a socio-cultural environment. If a panhandler approaches you with a request for change, what need is expressed? A need for some money? For alcohol or drugs to get high? For a dignified life of work and housing? My emotional disposition has to be triggered by something, and I argue that it can be one's answer to these questions – answers that are influenced and can be influenced by rational thinking – that play a central role whether my emotional dispositions are triggered or not. Interpretive understanding of what one is facing in a particular situation is an integral part of any encounter including caring encounters. This interpretive understanding has room for rational thinking, which, thus, should play a larger role in caring than just the role of helping figuring out what to do "once I have committed myself to doing something" (1984, p. 35).[134] My very ability (as distinct from my capacity) to fully concentrate on a needy's need (motivational displacement) might be triggered by my conscious understanding of the needs situation I am facing. Also, the need to interpretively understand the needs situation requires some skills-like dispositions, in particular in the area of *awareness*. Furthermore, I argued in chapter 3 with reference to recent developments in the cognitive sciences that our decision making (in particular in the social realm) is not just based on rational thinking, but involves as an integrated component the feeling of our emotional state. That means, caring should involve an emotional aspect not just at the motivational level, but the feeling of our emotional state should also be an integral part in finding ways of addressing the cared-for's needs.

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[134] Flanagan (1991, p. 245) raises a similar point when he criticizes Noddings for her neglect of the need "for a heavy dose of knowledge, principles, and cognitive skills in addition to powerful emotional dispositions" in ethical caring (as discussed in chapter 2, Noddings distinguishes between 'natural caring' and 'ethical caring'). However, the point I make concerns both forms of caring in Noddings's approach.

As outlined in chapter 2, Noddings separates in her approach to the ethics of care between two types of caring: natural caring and ethical caring. While natural caring is motivated out of a 'natural' impulse to respond when facing a needy, the caring response in ethical caring is based on our desire to keep our ideal image as a caring person intact. Noddings provides the parental response to the needs of the infant as a prototypical example for natural caring. The human embeddedness in a socio-cultural environment and the dynamic interaction between human agency and this socio-cultural environment as discussed in chapter 3 (situated agency) provide a strong argument against the assumption of something like 'natural' caring. How we respond to the needs of our infant children is very much influenced by what we perceive those needs to be, which is itself very much influenced by our embeddedness in a particular socio-cultural environment with particular practices and traditions.

There are practices of child rearing that see a need for infants to be trained to feel hunger only in certain intervals. Within this tradition, letting a child cry – although expecting that giving it a bottle would make it stop crying – is seen as part of caring for the infant, looking after its needs. Our 'natural' caring responses to a perceived need seem only 'natural' when seen from within particular socio-cultural practices and traditions. The point I want to make here is that the "caring that arises more or less spontaneously out of affection or inclination" (Noddings, 2002a, p. 29), which Noddings calls 'natural caring', is dependent on our perception of needs we address in our caring and that that perception does not just depend on our capacity to perceive needs but also

on what we *conceptually* are capable of perceiving as needs, which is very much

influenced by the socio-cultural environment we are embedded in.[135]

The notion of care-ethical agency that I outline in the next section will have to

take into consideration the arguments made here against particular features of Noddings's

approach to the ethics of care.

The Three Aspects of Care-Ethical Agency

As argued above, care-ethical agency is the response to the question 'What do I expect of

myself?' from the viewpoint of the care-ethical approach suggested here. Care-ethical

agency is characterized by the agent's (moral) identity being centred upon the

consideration of human needs and her awareness and understanding of her own and

others' needs as well as how she and others function as human beings with particular

'qualities'. This section is to explicate this notion of care-ethical agency in more depth.

In this section I argue for three specific features that explicate the notion of care-

ethical agency. These three central features are: an emotion-intelligent disposition to be

concerned about human needs, an imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care, and

the practice of being actively concerned about human needs.

The first of the three aspects I call the *dispositional* aspects of care-ethical agency,

the second the *imaginative* and the third the *effective* aspect (in the sense of having an

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[135] Noddings recognizes that 'natural caring' needs cultivation (2002a, p. 19) – which is a matter of being embedded in a socio-cultural environment – and that needs (aside from what she calls biological needs) are shaped and even constituted within a socio-cultural environment (2002a, chapter 3; 2003, chapter 3), but she does not seem to share the view that our *affective response* is dependent on our needs-perception and that our needs-perception is strongly influenced by our embeddedness in a particular socio-cultural environment.

effect) of care-ethical agency.[136] In the following, I will characterize each aspect, relate it to the human condition as characterized in chapters 3 and 4, and discuss implications the aspect has for the care-ethical debate as outlined in chapter 2.

The Dispositional Aspect of Care-Ethical Agency

The dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency is the disposition to be emotionally and intelligently concerned about human needs. This disposition has attitudinal and skill-based components to make the care-ethical agent willing and able to be concerned about human needs in a care-ethical sense. This disposition has three components: to be concerned when 'facing' human needs, to be aware of human needs, and to have an inquiry stance concerning human needs. In the following, I discuss each component in turn.

Concern about Needs

Foundational to care-ethical agency has to be that a care-ethical agent is somehow affected when 'facing' human needs. This is the general idea behind this first component of the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency. More specific, this 'affectedness' when 'facing' human needs in care-ethical agency has two particular features: (a) it is generally based on a mixture of emotion and intelligence, whereby a stronger emphasis can lie on either of those two in different situations and in different 'habituated personalities'; (b) we can 'face' human needs through other than personal encounters. Both features are not independent of each other; as a general rule, emotion-based affectedness seems more

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[136] The labels I use for the three aspects have to be seen more as expressing emphasis than exclusivity. The latter two aspects involve dispositional components as well, so is imagination involved in the first and the third aspects and the dispositional and the imaginative aspects will have an effect in the sense the effective aspect has.

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often to occur in personal encounters with human needs, and affectedness in non-personal encounters seems more often based on an intelligent perception of a situation.

Above I have argued that we need to (interpretively) understand needs in a given situation, which requires some form of intelligent interaction with the situation. There is a difference to be made between being emotionally affected by a situation, on the one side, and perceiving, understanding a situation as a needs-situation and what those particular needs are on the other. Both are not unrelated. Often the former functions as a condition for the latter to happen: We are first emotionally (for instance, empathically) affected by a situation and then are 'ready' for perceiving and making care-ethical sense of the situation. This connection points to the importance of the disposition of a certain level of emotional responsiveness for care-ethical agency. However, such emotional responsiveness by itself is not *constitutive* of caring – as it is in Noddings's approach to the ethics of care – even if it creates the motivational base for doing something in response. [137]

In order to be concerned about the needs of someone, we do not need to 'face' those needs through direct personal encounters with the needy. We might 'face' those needs in more indirect ways through reports by others or through 'intelligent inferences' using our imagination and memory.[138] Needs that are faced more in this indirect way – for instance, the (perceived) need of special needs students for integrated education – are

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[137] Hoffman (2000, p. 29) writes: "Empathy has been defined by psychologists in two ways: (a) empathy is the cognitive awareness of another person's internal states, that is, his thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and intentions . . . ; (b) empathy is the vicarious affective response to another person." The latter would be an example of 'being emotionally affected' in the sense here used, while the former definition corresponds more to a disposition belonging to the second (the awareness) component of this first aspect of care-ethical agency.

[138] It is because I want to include here non-face-to-face encounters of human needs (for instance, through 'facing' those needs in the media) that I have put 'facing' in single quotation marks. From here on I will omit those.

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what could be called 'generalized needs': needs that are implied by generalization rather than by the consideration of the particular situation and the particular needy involved. True to a radical view of particularism, Noddings conceptualizes caring as being grounded in particular needs particular people have in particular situations, and she explicitly keeps 'generalized needs' and 'particular needs' conceptually and categorically separate from each other ('caring for' and 'caring about'; see chapter 2). Allowing needs concern derived from generalizations to be an integral part of the ethic of care I suggest here qualifies the idea of particularism (see chapter 2). I have three comments on this qualification. First, the ethic of care subscribes to the idea of particularism in a particular form explicated below when I discuss the third component of the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency. Second, based on the view that all our understanding is not just grounded in prior understanding and biases but also requires them to even happen (see chapter 3), all perception of needs is to some degree based on generalizations about needs. The difference is less categorical and more one of degree. Based on this view, third, the (interpretive) understanding of needs is here seen as an on-going process. To *start* with 'generalized' needs is a legitimate approach to the understanding of *particular* needs of *particular* persons in *particular* situations. The point is that care-ethical responsiveness to human needs does not stop with a 'generalized' understanding of needs by *particular* persons. Again, the third component addresses this point of 'not stopping there'.

Awareness of Needs

The general idea behind the awareness component is that care-ethical agency requires a certain level of 'awareness ability' concerning human needs. The 'awareness ability'

involves the disposition to be sense-able about others' needs as well as about one's own

needs – the former in direct personal encounters as well as in non-direct situations of

facing human needs as discussed above. With 'awareness ability' being a component of

the disposition of being emotionally and intelligently concerned about human needs, this

sense-ability has emotional aspects as well as aspects of intelligence. To be aware of

needs we need to be in an emotional state of readiness. For instance, in a state of fear, our

'awareness ability' can easily be blocked. We can also be sense-able only with an

(intelligent) understanding of the situational context of what we are to be sense-able

towards. For instance, to be sense-able toward particular needs of a Moslem colleague of

mine related to her religion I need to have a certain (intelligent) understanding of her

religion. Another example of awareness-ability is an understanding of what Nancy Fraser

(1989, chapter 8) has called 'the politics of need interpretation', an example of a

metacognitive (intelligent) understanding of human needs that has an effect on our sense-

ability for being concerned for human needs: If we understand how official or dominant

discourses around the needs of homeless people are shaped, we are able to move beyond

those discourse perspectives and can *become aware* of needs homeless people have that

were outside of the discourse before, for instance the need for an education to participate

in the economic life of a country.[139]

Inquiry Stance

The third aspect is the disposition of taking an inquiry stance concerning human needs.

The general idea behind this component is that we should have the disposition to

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[139] Van Manen's (1991) notion of (pedagogical) tact provides one example of the other-oriented sense-ability I envision in connection with care-ethical 'awareness ability'. The Buddhist notion of mindfulness, on the other hand, provides one example of the self-oriented sense-ability I envision (see, for instance, Bai, 2006).

constantly question what we do and think in connection with human needs. There is a general and a specific aspect to this inquiry stance. The general inquiry stance concerning human needs is focused on more general issues of human needs. The questioning that underlies the three approaches to human needs discussed in chapter 4 illustrates a more extreme example of such a general inquiry stance. The general inquiry stance provides a more *general* direction for the practice of being actively concerned about human needs (the effective aspect of care-ethical agency) as will be discussed below. The general inquiry stance is also connected to the imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency as I discuss in the next subsection.

The specific aspect of the inquiry disposition is to capture the idea behind what Noddings has (unfortunately) called the reciprocity feature of caring in her approach to the ethics of care: When we face and then respond to the needs of a particular needy in a particular situation, we *constantly question* whether our (interpretive) understanding is adequate – in the sense discussed in chapter 2. Similarly, the specific inquiry stance is an 'intelligent balancing' of the feedback by the needy regarding her needs and the 'imaginative vision' we have of the functioning of human beings, and so on. I discuss this 'imaginative vision' in next section.

Qualified Particularism

In the discussion of all three components of the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency a position of particularism has been taken: Being concerned when facing human needs involves concern that is based in the facing of particular needs in particular situations by particular people rather than concern based in moral or ethical principles; the active awareness for human needs involves sensibility for the particular needs of

particular people in particular situations; and the specific questioning is focused on those particular needs and the particular needy in the particular situation. However, the particularism in all three components is qualified by the *general* aspect in each component: We can face particular needs first through the lenses of 'generalized needs', and, furthermore, our (interpretive) understanding requires a more general perspective of human needs; the active awareness of particular needs requires, as discussed above, a more general understanding of the particular situation; and there is a general aspect to the inquiry stance concerning human needs. All those general aspects, though, have their foci on the particular needs of the particular needy. The particularism is a *qualified particularism*.

In chapter 2 I referred to the point Kenneth Strike (1999) raises against the radical form of particularism promoted by Noddings, namely that predictability, which arises in good part out of an orientation toward general principles, contributes very much to being cared for.[140] Strike's case can serve as an example for the qualified particularism I have in mind. 'What do others expect of us?' is one central ethical question important for the way we live our lives. For example, the reliability (and, thus, the certain level of predictability) with which my parents looked after my twin brother's and my needs with equal concern contributed very much to our feeling cared for by our parents. The general equitable concern, however, was more a general framework to start with, because it could not guide what particular decision and action has to be taken in a particular situation to address a particular needs situation. It is one of the conditions of human life that not all needs can be addressed at the same time. Some needs will always have to be neglected.

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[140] The point here cannot be that predictability *per se* does that, since I can be predictable in being uncaring to the people around me.

My parents addressed these needs situations by 'intelligently balancing' (a notion I discuss in the next section) my brother's and my needs in a given particular situation. I think that because elaborations on their rationale for the way they 'balanced' our needs accompanied their decisions and actions, we slowly developed an understanding of the notion of 'equitability', and slowly abandoned the notion of 'equality' as a prerequisite of feeling being cared for by our parents. My parents' practiced particularism was framed by a general principle of predictability.[141]

Before I turn to the next subsection, I want to make two general comments on the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency. First, all the components of this aspect are conceptualized as a disposition, not as an actual practice. This does not mean that I consider having the disposition as sufficient for care-ethical agency. The practice aspect will be addressed below.

Second, the enactment of care-ethical agency involves intelligence. This is one of the central points in the conceptualization of the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency. This conceptualization is a more comprehensive reconstruction through the lens of an ethic of care of the following view of ethics:

> Ethics asks us to live *mindfully*: to take some care about how we act and even about how we feel." (Weston, 1997, p. 2 as quoted in Campbell, 2003, p. 9)

> Despite the stereotypes, the point of ethics is not to moralize or to dictate what is to be done. Ethics is not another form of dogmatism. The real point of ethics is to offer some tools for thinking about difficult matters,

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[141] To illustrate his notion of 'balanced caring', Michael Slote (2001, pp. 67-68) provides an example of a parent of a handicapped and a non-handicapped child, 'balancing' the differed needs. His example makes exactly the same case as I just have.

recognizing from the start – as the very rationale for ethics, in fact – that the world is seldom so simple or clear-cut. Struggle and uncertainty are part of ethics, as they are a part of life. (Weston, 1997, p. 4 as quoted in Campbell, 2003, p. 9)

The Imaginative Aspect of Care-Ethical Agency

In chapter 2 Noddings's approach to the ethics of care is characterized as being rooted in the *personal* (one-to-one) encounter. This feature of her approach is challenged in two ways in the first of the four challenges discussed in chapter 2: This approach neglects the aspect of caring as an institutionalized social practice within a social, political and economical context, and with the focus on the *personal* one-to-one encounter, this approach conceptualizes the ethics of care as a domain ethics with the focus on the private to the neglect or even exclusion of the public domain. Noddings's (2002a) work on care-based social policy can be seen as a response to this challenge. Here the approach to social policy is as follows: Social policy should create the opportunities for and support the experience of personal one-on-one caring and being cared for. Nevertheless, caring stays in Noddings's approach still *rooted* in personal encounters. Noddings is very clear that the conceptualization of caring she proposes involves particular needs of particular individuals in particular situations, and we face those needs directly in personal encounters. At the same time she acknowledges that care can also be involved in our concern for people outside of personal encounters. To account for this latter view of caring, Noddings introduces the distinction between 'caring for' – which stands for the notion of caring she promotes – and 'caring about' (see chapter 2).

The discussion of Nussbaum's approach to human needs in chapter 4 makes clear that for Nussbaum the concern for (social) justice is an important component of 'caring about'. Thus, the distinction between 'caring for' and 'caring about' is directly linked to

the concerns raised in the second challenge to Noddings's approach to the ethics of care in chapter 2, which is the concern that caring leaves out other ethical values like justice.

Slote (2001) has suggested a 'bridging' of 'caring for' (caring for people involved with us through personal encounters) and 'caring about' (caring for people that are not part of our 'inner care circle'), which is – considering the connection just made – also a 'bridging' of justice and caring (for). Slote suggests that we *balance* our caring for the people of our 'inner circle' with our (expected) caring for those outside of that 'inner circle'.[142] This balancing, he writes (2001, p. 70), takes the form of the balancing a parent does between addressing the needs of her two children. What does not seem sufficiently addressed in Slote's suggestion, however, is that there is nothing that 'guides' this balancing. While I can see that a parent's emotional attachment to her children and intelligent thinking about adequate practical preferences can guide her balancing the needs of her children, I am wondering what it is that guides the balancing between 'caring for' and 'caring about'.

The imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency fills this gap. It introduces something that guides the balancing suggested by Slote, and it also extends Noddings's notion of 'ethical caring' to include what she calls 'caring about', which then becomes part of the notion of caring as suggested here. The imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency is that the latter involves *an imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care.* There are two components for this 'world vision' in order to function as a guide for the balancing discussed above: The vision is a general view of what the world should look like from a care-ethical point of view, and care-ethical agency involves an emotion-

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[142] Slote (2001, chapter 3) calls the former form of caring 'intimate caring' and the latter form 'humanitarian caring'.

intelligent attachment to this vision. The first component involves aspects like the natural environment (a vision of the role of the natural environment within the needs system of humans), living conditions in other countries (a vision of a caring world community), the economical practices in one's socio-cultural environment (a vision of economical practices that support and enhance care-ethical agency), and so on. Following the direction given by the cognitive science research on unconscious understanding referred to in chapter 3, part of this world vision will be unconscious and become conscious once corresponding issues are raised. This point implies the importance of a care-ethically stimulating socio-cultural environment in bringing these issues to the forefront, a point I discuss further below.

In order for the 'world vision' just characterized to be able to serve as a guide for the balancing of our different 'care commitments', there needs to a commitment toward that vision. The second component of the 'world vision' conceptualizes this commitment. The emotional aspect of that component lets us feel emotions of happiness / joy and sadness, respectively, about the state of affairs in the world. The intelligent aspect of the component is there to have us intelligently question our vision, a questioning that is rooted in the inquiry stance that is part of the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency. This imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care guides the balancing of our different 'care commitments' as discussed above through an *intelligent engagement* of this vision with the living of our life.

It should now be clear what I meant when, in the previous subsection, I wrote that the disposition of taking a general inquiry stance has to be seen in connection with the imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency: Our imaginative world vision of a holistic life

of care provides us with some guidance for the general issues of human needs that the general inquiry stance is focused on.

In chapter 3 I mentioned that having imagination is a human characteristic that is central to seeing possibilities and making choices and, thus, making the central ethical question 'How should I live my life?' relevant to humans in the first place. The imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency gives this human characteristic a role in an ethic of care.[143] Furthermore, our imaginative view of the world based on the ethic of care is part of our (moral) identity as care-ethical agents: Contributing to (or at least not violating) our care-ethical vision of the world is part of what care-ethical agents are deeply concerned about. Within Noddings's ethic of care we are not just responsible for our own ethical living but also for the ethical living of the people around us; we are to bring out the good in the people around us; their 'ethical failure' is partially our responsibility.[144] This ethical responsibility has its place within the care-ethical agency as it is conceptualized here as well: Care-ethical agency is centrally about concern for human needs, and it is (at least partially) our imaginative view of the world based on the ethic of care that drives us in the way we live our life; both together strongly suggest an interest in the 'ethical living' of the people around us. Furthermore, the imaginative view

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[143] Human imagination has found its way into literature on ethics under the term 'moral imagination' (see, for instance, the discussion in Falkenberg, 2003).

[144] Noddings (2002b, p. 15) writes: "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. Further, ethical caring requires reflection and self-understanding. We need to understand our own capacities and how we are likely to react in various situations. We need to understand our own evil and selfish tendencies as well as our good and generous ones. Hence 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."

of the world based on the ethic of care can serve as a *guide* for us in our concern for the 'ethical living' of the people around us.

The Effective Aspect of Care-Ethical Agency

The two aspects of care-ethical agency discussed so far are more potential in nature: Human dispositions are inclinations toward effect (for instance, to be affected by something or to respond by action), but they do not represent the actual effect; having an imaginative worldview of a certain type does not imply that one acts upon such view. The general idea of the effective aspect is to require of care-ethical agency that it includes an 'actual care-ethical effect' through *the practice* of actually being concerned about human needs. There are two notions of practice I am using in this thesis, one of which is used here.[145] The two notions are: practice as the nominalization of practicing in the sense of 'applying in action regularly' and practice in the sense of a socio-cultural practice.[146] Those two forms of practice are not unrelated, since the first one is a prerequisite for the latter one to exist. The general idea of how the two notions are used in this chapter is as follows. The effective aspect provides for the first form of care-ethical practice, and care-ethical agency as a whole *embedded in a socio-cultural environment* (as it will be discussed in the next chapter) is the basis for the socio-cultural form of practice, which I will refer to as *caring as lived moral practice* (which will also be discussed in the next chapter). I now explicate what I mean when I say that care-ethical agency requires an

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[145] The context should always make clear which term I am using or I will be explicit about it.
[146] Only the second notion can appear in plural form, as in 'different child rearing practices in North American society can be distinguished'. The first notion of practice combines two meanings of 'practice' as listed in the *New Illustrated Webster's Dictionary*: "to apply in action: make a practice of: *Practice* what you preach" and "to make use of habitually or often: to *practice* economy".

'actual care-ethical effect' through the practice of actually being concerned about human needs.

The practice and the concern about human needs in the effective aspect of care-ethical agency evolve out of the dispositional and the imaginative aspects. In general, the dispositional aspect captures the dispositions required for the practice and the imaginative aspect captures the image of desired possibilities that can drive us as human agents. In the following, I discuss a more specific characterization of this relationship between the first two and the third aspect of care-ethical agency.

The first component of the dispositional aspect is the disposition of being concerned when facing human needs. With this disposition, a care-ethical agent is *actually* concerned about (the particular) human needs when facing these needs (in a particular situation). This concern results directly out of having the disposition and the facing of human needs. However, the facing of human needs – the necessary requirement for being *actually* concerned about human needs – requires a certain level of *awareness* of human needs. The second component of the dispositional aspect is the disposition of being aware of human needs. The effective aspect of care-ethical agency requires, in addition, that this awareness ability is based on *active engagement* in the sense of actively providing the opportunity to apply this 'awareness ability'. The following quote from a book by William Ayers (2003, p. 18) illustrates the idea behind this requirement:

> When I think of teaching for justice and care, I think beyond the classroom
> to teachers like Jane Addams. Addams was one of our greatest dissenters:
> a socialist, early feminist, pacifist, and activist. She has been sanitized and
> defanged with the rosy glow of history, but it is important to remember
> that she was a fighter and a builder, that she did not follow a path already
> laid out. When she established Hull House in Chicago over a century ago,
> she argued that building communities of care and compassion required

more than 'doing good,' more than volunteerism, more than the controlling stance of the benefactor. It required human solidarity, a oneness with others in distress. She had this in mind when she opened her settlement house, lived there with families of crisis and need, and saw the world through their eyes.

By establishing the Hull House, Jane Addams was actively engaged in providing herself with the opportunity to apply her ability to become aware of the needs of "others in distress" through personal encounters.[147]

Another example for such active engagement – smaller in scale and of a somewhat different type – is the following. As a rule, high school students in particular have difficulties getting up in the morning. Many come late to school and even more are tired for at least the first class. They go late to bed, claiming that they cannot fall asleep before late in the night. Actively engaging in providing opportunities to apply one's 'awareness ability' to the needs of ones teenage students could mean asking the question 'Why?' and then reading up on how current brain research suggest strongly that the sleep patterns in the teenage brain are quite different than in adults (Strauch, 2003). This active engagement provides the teacher first with an understanding of 'generalized needs' of her teenage students, which then supports the teacher's awareness of the particular needs particular students in her early morning class have on particular days.

The why-question, which is the starting point of this second example for active engagement in providing opportunities to apply one's 'awareness ability', is at the centre of the third component of the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency, the disposition of taking an inquiry stance concerning human needs. A general inquiry stance into human needs – as discussed above –would lead the teacher in the above given example about the

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[147] Jane Adams was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. On Addams and the Hull house see http://www.hullhouse.org

sleeping needs of teenagers to ask the why-question. It is the disposition of this general

inquiry stance that is the basis for a *systematic* active engagement to provide

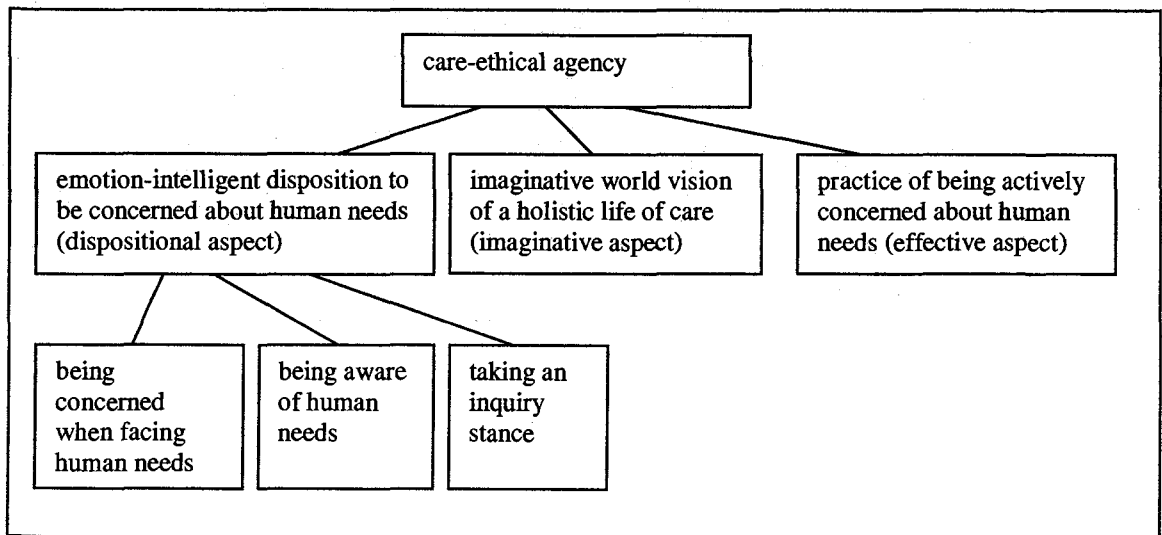opportunities to apply one's 'awareness ability' to human needs.

The imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency provides an imaginative world

vision of a holistic life of care as outlined above. Out of this vision evolves for the

effective aspect of care-ethical agency the requirement that this vision has an actual

impact on how we see and act in the world.

As discussed in chapter 3, human agency – and, thus, care-ethical agency – is

dialogical: As human agents we understand our existential concern (our understanding of

what we are deeply concerned about) *through our interaction* with our socio-cultural

environment. The effective aspect of care-ethical agency provides for this interaction

with the socio-cultural environment by requiring the practice of actual concern for human

needs within the framework set out by the notion of care-ethical agency. *We need to*

actively engage our care-ethical dispositions and our imaginative image of a holistic life

of care to understand what it means in concrete situations and what it means to us and

our existential concern for us. The care-ethical dispositions and the guiding imaginative

images of care-ethical possibilities we have form the basis for our concern for human

needs to be of existential concern to us; and it is the effective aspect of our care-ethical

agency that provides us with an understanding of what this means to us.

The dialogical character of human agency makes the socio-cultural environment

of central importance to care-ethical agency. In the next section I discuss what

implications this importance has for the notion of care-ethical agency by moving from the

first notion of care-ethical practice ('applying in action regularly') just discussed in

connection with the effective aspect to the second notion of care-ethical practice, namely

socio-cultural care-practice(s). As well, in the next chapter I put the notion of care-ethical

agency developed in this chapter (see figure 1) into the larger context of the human

condition (chapters 3 and 4) and of the notion of the ethic of care as a needs-based ethics

(this chapter).

Figure 1: Care-Ethical Agency

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│                          ┌──────────────────────┐                              │
│                          │  care-ethical agency │                              │
│                          └──────────────────────┘                              │
│                                                                                │
│  ┌──────────────────────────┐  ┌────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐    │
│  │ emotion-intelligent      │  │ imaginative world  │  │ practice of being│    │
│  │ disposition to           │  │ vision             │  │ actively         │    │
│  │ be concerned about human │  │ of a holistic life │  │ concerned about  │    │
│  │ needs                    │  │ of care            │  │ human            │    │
│  │ (dispositional aspect)   │  │ (imaginative aspect)│ │ needs (effective │    │
│  └──────────────────────────┘  └────────────────────┘  │ aspect)          │    │
│                                                         └──────────────────┘    │
│  ┌────────────┐  ┌────────────┐  ┌──────────┐                                   │
│  │ being      │  │ being aware│  │ taking an│                                   │
│  │ concerned  │  │ of human   │  │ inquiry  │                                   │
│  │ when facing│  │ needs      │  │ stance   │                                   │
│  │ human needs│  │            │  │          │                                   │
│  └────────────┘  └────────────┘  └──────────┘                                   │
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CHAPTER 6: CARING AS LIVED MORAL PRACTICE

So far I have argued that care-ethical agency is the centre piece in the care-ethical response to the ethical question 'What do I expect of myself?': Care-ethical agency is characterized by the agent's (moral) identity being centred upon the consideration of human needs and her awareness and understanding of her own and others' needs as well as how she and others function as human beings with particular qualities. The last chapter explicated this notion of care-ethical agency further. In this chapter I argue that the notion of *embedded care-ethical agency* is the centre piece in the care-ethical response to the ethical question 'What do others expect of me?' The first section of this chapter addresses this notion.

The two notions of care-ethical agency and embedded care-ethical agency form the core of the ethic of care as a theory of morality. Both notions articulate caring more as a practice based on agency rather than a system of guidelines for conduct or *situational* states of consciousness. The second section draws on the two core notions of the ethic of care to conceptualize caring as lived moral practice. In the third section, finally, I revisit the challenges that were brought forward against Noddings's approach to the ethics of care and briefly presented in chapter 2 and discuss these challenges from the viewpoint of the ethic of care presented here This discussion will explore and make clearer certain features of this theory of morality.

Embedding Care-Ethical Agency

The conditional framework for humans to live their life presented in chapters 3

and 4 includes a particular view of human agency. Human agency was characterized in

terms of the capacity to reflect and understand oneself and one's life-world and – based

on one's understanding – make certain choices about how to live one's life while being

moved and guided by what one is deeply concerned about. This characterizes the more

'self-determining' aspect of the notion of human agency. However, chapter 3 has also

discussed the embeddedness of human agency in a socio-cultural environment. This

embeddedness is characterized by two central features. First, the socio-cultural

environment has *constitutive* character for human agency (situated agency) and is in

dynamic interaction with human agency. Second, human agency is dialogical and based

on interpretive understanding: Our identity as human agents is – at least partially –

defined by our embeddedness in a socio-cultural environment (dialogical agency), and we

make sense of our socio-cultural environment and ourselves as human agents through

interpretive understanding based on explicit and tacit pre-understanding; the reflecting

and deliberating that is characteristic of human agency is made possible only before a

background of these (partially unconscious) pre-understandings. The self-determining

aspects of human agency 'arises out of' the very embeddedness of human agency in a

socio-cultural environment: The understanding of self and one's life-world – so central to

the self-determining aspects of human agency – happens before the background of our

socio-culturally formed pre-understandings, shaped by our embeddedness in particular

tradition(s) and practices. So far, this chapter has conceptualized care-ethical agency

more within the framework of the self-determining aspect of human agency. If the ethic

of care I suggest in this and the last chapter is indeed to be understood as a response to the human condition as characterized in chapter 3, then I have to give some due consideration to the 'embeddedness aspect' of human agency in the conceptualization of the ethic of care in general and care-ethical agency in particular. This section deals with this embeddedness aspect of human agency in the ethic of care. In the previous chapter I made a conceptual distinction between the care-ethical socio-cultural environment – from which the more empirically based expectations for the questions 'What do others expect of me?' are drawn – and the *actual* socio-cultural environment in which the care-ethical agent is embedded. The embeddedness aspect of human agency I discuss in this section is about the embeddedness of the care-ethical agent in the *actual* socio-cultural environment. At the end of this section, though, I argue for an 'overlap by degree' between both types of environments.

Central to the embeddedness of human agency as discussed in chapter 3 is the situated as well as the dialogical character of human agency. The embeddedness of care-ethical agency needs to give consideration to both. In the following I first discuss each characteristic in turn as I see them apply to the notion of care-ethical agency.

We understand others and our life-world through being situated in the context of a socio-cultural environment. Central to the ethic of care is the concern for human needs. Following the argumentation of chapter 4, there is a continuum of levels of needs interpretation. In one direction of the continuum we find the more general levels at which we interpret fundamental human needs as particular needs satisfiers. In the other direction of the continuum we find the more specific levels, at which we interpret the needs of a particular person in a particular situation. Along the continuum we understand human

needs through our being situated in a particular context *within* our being embedded in a

socio-cultural context. Our very understanding of human needs – whether at the

situational or the more general level – is possible as well as actually done on the basis of

our *situated care-ethical agency.*

In chapter 3 I argued for our identity as human agents being at least partially

dialogical in character: Part of our agentic identity is our participation in dialogical

practices in which we function not as autonomous agents but as part of a larger agentic

entity. For our care-ethical agency this means that part of our (moral) identity as care-

ethical agents comes from our *participation in caring as a dialogical practice.* For

heuristic reasons I separate two levels of caring as a dialogical practice. The first level is

directly linked to one of the defining characteristics of Noddings's notion of caring: The

cared-for receives the carer's state of consiousness (see chapter 2). Adopting this central

aspect of Noddings's approach to caring, caring in the sense discussed here, then, is to be

a dialogical practice in the sense that the practice itself involves carer and cared-for as

constitutive parts of a common agent of this practice: Both have to 'move together in

dialogue' in the identifying and addressing of the situational needs; the concern for the

(situational) needs of the cared-for is to be a *joint engagement* and the understanding of

the (particular) needs situation and how to respond to it has to be a *shared understanding.*

However, as in pair-dancing, which I characterized as a prototypical example of a

dialogical act, 'joint engagement' and 'shared understanding' in an 'act of caring' does

not mean that one party cannot take a lead in addressing the (specific) needs situation, but

it means that the concern and the understanding have to 'move together'. One cannot

derive a specific direction for action from this notion of joint engagement and 'moving

together'. For instance, 'shared understanding' does not mean automatically

'compromise'. As Noddings (2002a, p. 67, 2002b, pp. 28-31) writes, sometimes caring

means to be coercive toward the cared-for, whereby the *immediate* resistance by the

cared-for to a particular form of needs interpretation and needs response is to be

understood as a serious concern and an engagement into a dialogue about the needs

interpretation and the needs response. The directions for action have to be derived from

the situation, using perceptivity, awareness and intelligence (dispositional aspect of

care$_T$-ethical agency) and from of the understanding of caring as a dialogical practice

involving carer and cared-for as common agents.

At the second level of caring as a dialogical practice I expand the idea put forward

for the first level to also include the socio-cultural environment as part of the common

agent when we engage our care-ethical agency: our understanding of a particular or a

more general needs situation involves the cared-for but also the socio-cultural

environment with its practices and traditions. Part of our (moral) identity as care-ethical

agents is to come from our dialogical engagement with the socio-cultural environment:

the understanding is to be seen as a shared understanding and our engagement in the

needs situation is to be a joint engagement with the socio-cultural environment we are

embedded in. In particular the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency makes clear to

what degree the socio-cultural environment is *integrated* in our functioning as care-

ethical agents and, thus, in care-ethical practice. Here is an example. A teacher as a care-

ethical agent is concerned for the (situational as well as general) needs of her students.

This concern falls within a particular practice of being concerned about and addressing

the students' needs within a socio-cultural environment. In particular the students'

parents, but also administrators and other teachers involved with the students have all shaped and influenced the care-ethical practice involving the students. The teacher as a care-ethical agent being concerned about her students' needs is to understand herself as situated in this larger tradition and practice; being in a particular needs situation with a particular student, the teacher is to understand herself – even if authorized and solely responsible in this situation to respond to the situational needs of the student – as being in dialogue with the other parts of the larger entity which is the common agent for care-ethical practice in a socio-cultural environment.

The perspective of care-ethical agents being situated in a tradition of care-ethical practice does not mean, for instance, that care-ethical agents have to be conforming to the particular ways of perceiving, understanding and responding to needs typical for that tradition. It is not the responding differently to the tradition's way that breaks the dialogical practice, but it is rather the responding without the consideration of this practice as a dialogical practice that breaks it. (In pair-dancing it is not the invention of new moves that breaks pair-dancing as a dialogical practice, but rather inconsideration of it being a joint endeavour.) Quite to the contrary, the perspective on human agency put forward in chapter 3 sees the dynamic interaction between agency and the socio-cultural environment as constitutive of human agency. Our responding in a needs situation – in full awareness and consideration of the care-ethical practice within the respective socio-cultural environment – contributes to the development of the very care-ethical practice as the practice is to impact on us as care-ethical agents. The notion of socio-cultural practice implies tradition and embeddedness, but it does not imply particular conduct.

I have separated the two levels of caring as dialogical practice for *heuristic* reasons. Conceptually, those two levels are not separated. From a care-ethical agent's perspective, her engagement in caring as a (socio-cultural) practice is to be seen as dialogical with and a joint engagement between three agentic components: the carer, the cared-for and the socio-cultural environment with its practices and traditions. The engagement of the socio-cultural environment in the caring practice is less immediate than the engagement of the cared-for because there is a greater variety of voices characterizing the caring practice compared to the one voice of the cared-for.

This perspective on the socio-cultural environment being a part of the common agent in care-ethical practice has important implications. As care-ethical agents care-ethical practice (practised in the socio-cultural environment) is of great importance to us; we participate in the shaping of the practice, and we are interested that the actual socio-cultural environment that frames the practice allows for, supports and enhances rather than ignores, impedes, undermines, or suppresses concern for human needs as we understand it. In other words, we are interested that the *actual* socio-cultural environment approaches a *care-ethical* socio-cultural environment. From this derives an expectation as part of the ethic of care as a theory of morality responding to the more normative component of the question 'What do others expect of me?', namely the expectation that I am interested in and concerned about the actual socio-cultural environment approaching a *care-ethical* socio-cultural environment.

In the following, I discuss three particular points in connection with the embeddedness of care-ethical agency in a socio-cultural environment as just explicated. First, the case has been made that we often need to stand *against* the socio-cultural

environment and its traditions and practices (including its caring practices) in order to adequately care for others or even for ourselves.[148] This is not – at least in principle – in opposition to the view I have just explicated according to which care-ethical agents *are to* engage in their concern about human needs through *shared* understanding and *joint* engagement not just with the cared-for but also with the socio-cultural environment they are embedded in, in particular with its practices and traditions of caring. Based on the notion of dynamic interaction between human agency and the socio-cultural environment it is situated in (as explicated in chapter 3), the relationship between care-ethical agency and the socio-cultural environment is not unidirectional. As situated care-ethical agents jointly engaged in the dialogical practice of caring as described above, we do shape this practice and the tradition. Being against a particular traditional understanding or common practice of caring can be a way of our care-ethical agency engaging with this practice and the tradition, and thus within what is a constitutive characteristic of care-ethical agency.

The point, however, is that in such an engagement the care-ethical agent understands herself as being part of this joint agency of caring for human needs in general and in particular situation. This different perspective on a common agency with the socio-cultural environment in one's care-ethical engagement has important implications for such engagement. First, as in the case of the consideration of the cared-for in one's care-ethical engagement as suggested by Noddings, the consideration given to the socio-cultural practices and traditions of caring in one's care engagement serves as a *corrective* for one's interpretation of and response to the (particular or general) needs of needies. Second, human needs (particular and general) – as discussed in chapter 4 – are

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[148] See, for instance, Tronto (1993, chapter 4).

interpreted and also responded to *within* a socio-cultural environment, its traditions and practices. Interpreting and responding to (particular and general) human needs has to be (at least partially) understood within these traditions and practices. To stand *against* the socio-cultural environment means, then, to develop its traditions and practices further.[149] Third, caring is about the concern for human needs and that includes the recognition of and concern for people' s needs to sustain particular practices and traditions of care. Fourth, standing 'against' the socio-cultural environment is often understood as standing against political, social and economical *institutions* that do not allow for what one considers adequate care-giving. As Bellah (1992) argues, institutions are central in the moral life of societies, and moral engagement – like care-ethical concern for human needs – should happen not just in consideration of institutions but often *within* such institutions, for instance, within a given socio-cultural environment.

The second point concerns the distinction I made between the *care-ethical* and the *actual* socio-cultural environment in which a care-ethical agent is / can be embedded. In the following I argue that there is an 'overlap by degree' between a given *actual* socio-cultural environment a care-ethical agent is embedded in and the care-ethical socio-cultural environment in which there are traditions and practices of being concerned about human needs and which allow for, support and enhance concern for human needs by care-ethical agents. Is caring, then, already practiced in all socio-cultural environments? The short answer to this question is 'yes'. But this answer has to be qualified. Aside from the fact that *concrete* practices of caring will take different forms in different socio-

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[149] Charles Taylor's (1994) article provides an illustration of what this viewpoint can mean. He discusses strategies and ways to create socio-cultural conditions which "[make] it more possible for people to care again and carry out caring within the caring profession" (p. 174) in modern Western bureaucratic and market societies.

cultural environments, it is a matter of degree. As far as I can assess, the socio-cultural environment I am embedded in is one in which people are concerned when facing human needs, they are aware of human needs and they take an inquiry stance toward human needs (dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency). They also practise being actively concerned about human needs, for instance in the rearing of their children (effective aspect). Many people might also have an imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care. The practice of caring that exist in a given socio-cultural environment is a matter of degree. The inquiry stance as a defining aspect of care-ethical agency (dispositional aspect) conceptually results from this perspective: We are to constantly question what we do and think in connection with human needs in recognition that there is no right answer as there is no *category* of being a caring agent, but, at any given moment, there may be a better answer and a better caring agent (relative to a give socio-cultural context). This perspective also underlines *the importance of self-knowledge* in order to understand the conditions for improving ourselves and *the importance of our understanding of the socio-cultural conditions* in order to participate in the improvement of the socio-cultural conditions for care-ethical practice. The argument brought forward here also suggests that there can be no care-ethical agency without the *actual* socio-cultural environment in which the agent is embedded having at least to some degree traditions or practices that allow for, support and enhance concern for human needs. Care-ethical agency cannot sustain outside of traditions or socio-cultural practices.

Third, a view of a care-ethical socio-cultural environment is embedded in a care-ethical agent's imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care (the imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency). How does this 'imagined' care-ethical socio-cultural environment

differ from the care-ethical socio-cultural environment whose traditions and practices

provide the more empirical component to the response to the question 'What do others

expect of me?' The latter provides through its traditions and practices the framework for

caring as a practice, while the former is *my* imaginative framework for *my* functioning as

a care-ethical agent. Both are not unrelated. As a care-ethical agent I *take part* in,

contribute to and influence (dynamic interaction) those traditions and practices that are at

the core of a care-ethical socio-cultural environment.

Caring as Lived Moral Practice

This section has the main purpose to draw the argumentation developed in chapter 5 and

the previous section together by addressing the following two issues. The first issue

concerns my claim that the ethic of care I propose here is a theory of morality developed

in response to the particular view of the human condition articulated in chapters 3 and 4.

In other words, it concerns my claim that the human condition explicated in chapters 3

and 4 articulates the assumptions about the human condition made in my approach to the

ethics of care. This section should make this connection clearer. The second issue

concerns the notion of caring in the ethic of care I have been developing in this thesis.

The notion of *embedded care-ethical agency* – developed in chapter 5 and the previous

section – is at the heart of this approach to the ethics of care. For Noddings, on the other

hand, it is her particular notion of caring that is at the heart of her ethic of care: She

defines caring *situationally* as a motivational and intentional state of consciousness by the

carer and a state of conscious acknowledgement by the cared-for. Noddings's approach to

caring is an attempt to conceptualize 'natural caring' through a phenomenological

analysis, where 'natural caring' is prototypically seen as the caring that occurs in dyadic

caring encounters. How is the notion of caring conceptualized within the ethic of care? This section responds to this question by conceptualizing caring as a particular practice (lived moral practice) rather than as a feature of a particular situational encounter of a particular type.

In order to be better able to argue for the ethic of care as a response to the human condition presented in chapters 3 and 4, I would first like to review the four central features of the human condition and then the characteristic of the integrated view on ethics. At the very centre of the human condition are the following four characteristics. (1) We are born into an already existing socio-cultural environment with its traditions and practices. We grow up embedded into and participating in those traditions and practices, which provide a dynamically interactive framework for our interpretive understanding of our life-world. (2) As human beings with the developing capacities of memory and imagination, we live with an existential concern for ourselves in the form of the question of how we should live our life, a concern which manifests itself (at least partially) for us as human agents in our being concerned about what we are deeply concerned about. (3) As human agents we have the capacity to reflect (on the actual and possible) and understand our life-world and – based on our understanding – make certain choices about how to live our life while being moved and guided by what we are deeply concerned about. In particular, are we concerned about what we are deeply concerned about, which means that what we are deeply concerned about is important to us as human agents. (4) Our human agency with our capability to understand our life-world through reflecting on the actual and imagining the possible brings with it the potential to *transcend* the

traditions and practices of the socio-cultural environment we are born into and, thus, influence these very traditions and practices.

The view of an integrated ethics (outlined in chapter 3) sees ethics (theories of morality) as to be responding to people's existential concern by providing expectations of how to live their life. The response suggested in this view of ethics is broken down into two questions: 'What do I expect of myself?' and 'What do others expect of me?' In the following I try to make clearer how the ethic of care outlined in this chapter is a response to the human condition and the view of the role of moral theories in human living. As human agents we are driven by what we are deeply concerned about, and we are concerned about what we are deeply concerned about. *Care-ethical* agency is human agency where the (moral) identity underlying what drives us as human agents (what we are deeply concerned about) is grounded in concern for human needs; also, as care-ethical agents we are concerned about our concern for human needs.

So far I have talked about concern for human needs in general without giving due consideration to the distinction between the concern for our own needs and the concern for the needs of others. If concern for the needs of others is part of our (moral) identity, then addressing this concern is a central need of ours. At this *fundamental* level, our needs as care-ethical agents are not in conflict with the needs of others. Of course, at the more concrete needs-level, our particular needs as a care-ethical agent can be in conflict with those of others, but that is not different from the conflict that exist at this level between different needs we have and not different from the conflict that exist between needs that different other people have. It is here where the qualities of care-ethical agents as characterized in chapter 5 come into play. Through our being concerned when facing

human needs, our taking an inquiry stance toward our concern for human needs (our own as well as that of others) and our having an imaginative world vision of a holistic life or care – which are all characteristics of human agency – we are to engage as human agents in an *emotion-intelligent balancing between our different concerns for human needs* (our own as well as that of others). I write '*are to* engage' because the ethic of care as a moral theory is a response to the existential question of how we *should* live our lives. In the following I analyse how the ethic of care as a theory of morality responds to this existential question in more detail.

Responding to the more normative component of the question 'What do I expect of myself?': My (moral) identity as a care-ethical agent is characterized by a deep concern for human needs and by my deep concern about my concern for human needs, thus, by my concern about my care-ethical agency. Based on the conceptualization of care-ethical agency, the concern about my care-ethical agency means that I am concerned about the three different aspects of care-ethical agency: the dispositional, the imaginative and the effective aspects. What I expect of myself is that I *work on* these aspects of my care-ethical agency. I work on my disposition of being concerned when 'facing' human needs, on my awareness of my human needs and on my inquiry stance I take in my concern for human needs. I also work on my imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care in two ways: I work on it in the sense that I try to put this vision into reality, and I work on this vision in the sense that I question constantly (inquiry mode) the appropriateness of my vision against new experiences, new ways of understanding my life-world, and so on. I also work on my practice of being actively concerned about

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human needs, which concerns my seeking actively opportunities of being concerned about human needs as well as the quantity and quality of the practice.

In this work on my being a care-ethical agent, *understanding my functioning* as a human being in general and *understanding myself* as a human being with a particular 'make-up' is of great importance. For instance, when working on my being concerned when facing human needs, I am more successful in this work if I understand what kind of facing triggers my concern. When working on my awareness of human needs, I am more successful in this work if I understand my biases in my awareness, what triggers my awareness, and so on. It is the more empirical component of the ethical question of 'What do I expect of myself?' that captures this important aspect of being a care-ethical agent: getting to know myself as a care-ethical agent in the sense the examples just illustrated.

In very general terms, this perspective on the question 'What do I expect of myself' has the following implications for moral education based on the ethic of care: The moral education should aim for the development of a (moral) identity that makes being concerned for human needs central to the identity; the moral education should also aim for the development of 'skills' that help to get to know oneself as a care-ethical agent.

To the more normative component of the question 'What do others expect of me?', the ethic of care itself as a needs-based moral theory provides the response. We are expected by the theory to be concerned about human needs in the sense as it has been explicated in this and the last chapter: One ought to strive for care-ethical agency and understand one's care-ethical agency as situated and dialogical with respect to the actual socio-cultural environment and its traditions and practices, in particular its care-ethical

practice; included are in particular the two expectations discussed above, namely to be concerned about the actual socio-cultural environment approaching a *care-ethical* socio-cultural environment (in which traditions and practices of caring are such that they allow for, support and enhance concern for human needs by care-ethical agents) and being considerate of the caring traditions and practices in the *actual* socio-cultural environment. To the more empirical component of the question 'What do others expect of me?' the care-ethical theory responds by embedding care-ethical agency into the actual socio-cultural environment to help care-ethical agents to make sense of the notion of traditions and practices of caring that allow for, support and enhance concern for human needs.

The ethic of care's response to the existential concern of how we should live our life is based on a hermeneutical circle of understanding care-ethical practice. An actual socio-cultural environment with its traditions and practices is required for human agents to make sense of the notion of care-ethical agency and a care-ethical socio-cultural environment that supports such an agency. Making sense of those two notions, in turn, has an impact on the practice of caring, which has an impact on the traditions and practices of the actual socio-cultural environment and the degree to which it is a care-ethical socio-cultural environment. Then the circle continues at a different level.

I have just painted a particular picture of the engagement of an embedded moral agency responding to the agent's existential concern about how to live her life. I now wish to capture this picture in the phrase '*caring as lived moral practice*'. As already mentioned, the ethic of care is less focused on capturing the notion of caring as a situational act and more on capturing caring as a practice in the dual meaning of the word: in the sense of applying regularly one's human agency in action and in the sense of

a socio-cultural practice. The former gives a central role to the notion of care-ethical agency, while the latter places the meaning of an 'agentic act of caring' into the larger picture of a socio-cultural practice. The moral practice of caring is 'lived' because the practice – in the view of the ethic of care – plays such a central role in how a care-ethical agent lives her life. The way care-ethical agency is conceptualized, caring is *a way of being in the world, encountering and engaging with one's life-world*: the way of being an embedded care-ethical agent.

According to the tradition of modern moral philosophy, if a theory of morality focuses on the quality of the moral agent rather than on conduct (its underlying intention or its actual consequences), the theory is considered a virtue ethics (Pence, 1991). In particular, the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (*After Virtue*, 1984) has connected virtues with socio-cultural practices.[150] It is outside the scope of this thesis to relate the ethic of care to virtue theory in general and MacIntyre's concept of a practice in particular. It should suffice here to say the following. First, certain human qualities characteristic of care-ethical agency are central to caring as a socio-cultural practice. Someone might call those human qualities or even the quality of being a care-ethical agent virtues. However, in this case it should be kept in mind – in particular considering the movement of principle-based character and virtue education that seems to get stronger in North America – that the focus in the ethic of care is the consideration of human needs (situational and in general) and that this consideration is a constant act by the carer to use

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[150] For MacIntyre (1984, pp. 190-191) a (social) practice has standards of excellence which partially define the practice activity; through the practice internal goods specific to the practice are realized; without certain key virtues the good internal to practices cannot be achieved; being involved in a practice involves being in relationship to other participants of the practice and, thus, the three key virtues of justice, courage and honesty (in our relating to others in the practice) are central to achieving the excellence and internal goods of any such practice; different societies have and have had different codes of truthfulness, justice and courage.

her understanding of the human needs under consideration and her imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care, the cared-for's understanding of her situational or general needs as well as the socio-cultural traditions and practices of understanding and addressing those needs in order to 'make sense' of the needs situation and to act accordingly. The acting is put in the hands and judgment of the understanding, inquiring moral agent as an emotion-intelligent, enlightened participant in the socio-cultural practice of caring.[151] Secondly, caring as a socio-cultural practice has to be far less cohesive than the practices MacIntyre has in mind. There are no specific rules concerning the activity of caring – the act of caring is very much situation specific and includes not just the consideration of socio-cultural practices and traditions, which might have particular rules, but also the assessment and judgment by the carer and the cared-for to come up with a response to a particular need. Since being a care-ethical agent is more a matter of degree than of category, the participants in caring as a practice would not form a very cohesive group, which probably means that the notion of practice MacIntyre is using is somewhat different from the more generic notion I am using when describing caring as a socio-cultural practice.

Facing the Challenges

In this section I revisit the challenges that were brought forward against Nel Noddings's approach to the ethics of care (chapter 2) in order to, first, face those challenges from the

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[151] Noddings (2002a, p. 212; see also Noddings & Slote, 2003) has seen some connection between her approach to the ethics of care and virtue theory. However, a central distinguishing feature is that in virtue ethics the focus is on the individual agent and her concern to become (more) or be virtuous, while the focus in the ethics of care with its relational ontology is on being concerned about (the other person's) needs and, thus, on the carer's being in relation rather than on individual qualities. It is for this reason that Noddings (2002b, p. 14) sees an important conceptual difference between the ethics of care and virtue ethics as two theories of morality. I discuss the issue of relational ontology and how the ethic of care, which gives (individual) agency a central role, relates to the idea of a relational ontology in the last section of this chapter.

here proposed ethic of care; and secondly, shed some more light on this approach to the ethics of care by making clearer some of the fundamental assumptions that are made in this approach. In chapter 2, three core features of Noddings's ethic of care were characterized. I labelled those features as 'particularism', 'attention-with-concern' and 'relational ontology'. I have already discussed how the first two features relate to the features of the care-ethical approach suggested here. How this approach relates to the idea of particularism has been explicated in the subsection on the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency in the previous chapter as 'qualified particularism'; and the previous section has explicated how different Noddings's attention-with-concern is from the view of caring as lived moral practice, in which a kind of 'attention-with-concern' is involved, however, in a conceptually and practically quite different form. How the ethic of care compares to the 'relational ontology' is considered in the following discussion on the second group of challenges. I now discuss in turn how the ethic of care I propose in this thesis responds to the four groups of challenges to Noddings's care-ethical approach (chapter 2).

(1) The first group of challenges concerns the private versus public separation. The first challenge in this group is the claim that caring should not be conceptualized as centrally being grounded in the personal encounter but rather should be conceptualized as a social practice, which gives strong consideration to power relations, abuse and exploitation. The second challenge in this group is the claim that the ethics of care is a domain ethics, concerned with the private realm of personal relationships. I now discuss these challenges from the point of view of the ethic of care conceptualized in this thesis.

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As discussed above, the ethic of care is *not* built around situational personal

encounters (as in Noddings's approach), and caring does *not* revolve around *situational*

states of (emotional) consciousness by the carer and the cared-for (as in Noddings's

approach) but around *the practice of being concerned about human needs*, and in this

practice care-ethical agency and its embeddedness in a socio-cultural environment are

made central. All three aspects of care-ethical agency conceptually include socio-cultural

aspects like power relations, abuse and exploitations. Being aware of human needs

includes the awareness of these aspects; an imaginative world vision of a holistic life of

care might include a vision of non-abusive, non-exploitative living. It is part of what is

expected of us as care-ethical agents by others that we are also concerned about the needs

of people outside of our realm of personal encounters.

However, although the 'personal care-encounter' does not have the same status as

it has in Noddings's approach to the ethics of care, it is of great importance to us as care-

ethical agents for different reasons. First, as care-ethical agents we are concerned when

facing human needs. The way societies currently function, personal encounters make up a

good portion of our life-world. Hence, through personal encounters we face many needs

situations.[152] Second, with our concern for the care-practices in our actual socio-cultural

environment, we are also concerned about the care-ethical agency of other people. Needs

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[152] It is particularly interesting to look at cases where the concern for human needs is present in its general, amore abstract form as well as in its personal, direct, concrete form. Personal encounters at a conference on 'social justice', for instance, are such a case. The conference participants, it can generally be assumed, are aware of and concerned about the needs they face in the form of reports and presentations on unmet needs for justice. At the same time, the conference participants encounter other participants in different situations in personal encounters with unmet needs, for instance to talk to someone else, to be heard and respected when voicing a view that deviates from the one most others have, and so on. To what degree do those who give great consideration to human needs they face as general social justice needs also give consideration to needs they face in those personal encounters?

situations in personal encounters provide us with the opportunity to influence and support others in their work on their care-ethical agency.

In the ethic of care the concern for human needs is conceptually not linked to a feeling of 'emotional attachment' to the cared-for and, thus, to a 'personal relationship' to the needy. Furthermore, being concerned about *general* human needs is part of care-ethical agency (see in particular the discussion of the dispositional and the imaginative aspects). What Noddings has called 'caring about' is of concern to care-ethical agency, because – as argued above – the understanding of situational, specific needs in particular needs situations requires or at least is enhanced by an understanding of general human needs, which – through the imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care – makes the needs of people outside our personal realm of concern for us as well.[153]

This discussion suggests that the ethic of care is not a domain ethics in the way Noddings's approach was challenged to be. Neither is the expected concern limited to the people of our inner circle of personal relationships, nor to people we have personal encounters with.

Noddings's attention-with-concern, a core feature of the ethic of care, is not a core feature in the ethic of care I have proposed, although, there is a form of 'attention-with-concern' (in the sense of 'giving attention to and being concerned about human needs') at play in the ethic of care. This feature, however, is conceptually and practically quite different from Noddings's conceptualization of 'attention-with-concern'.

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[153] As mentioned above, Noddings (2002b, p. 15) suggest that we are at least partially responsible for the 'ethical self' of others.

(2) The second group of challenges concerns the priority that is given to caring over other 'ethical values'. The first challenge in this group claims that giving such a priority to caring perpetuates the exploitation of the carer. The second challenge charges that there are other ethical values like justice that are at least as important as caring. I now discuss these challenges from the point of view of the ethic of care.

With caring seen as a way of being in the world and as lived moral practice, ethical priority is indeed given to the 'ethical value' of caring. However, although other-orientedness is a central part of a care-ethical agent's (moral) identity, the other-orientedness is not absolute as it is characterized for Noddings's ethic of care (see chapter 2). The care-ethical agent is also asked to consider her own needs, which can go beyond finding fulfilment in the concern for the needs of others. There is not just balancing between the competing needs of those different people whose needs we are concerned about (it is one of the human condition that we are not able to address all the needs we face), but there is also a balancing between those needs and one's own needs. Furthermore, even if the other-directedness is not absolute, to be primarily concerned for the needs of others *can* be a life-fulfilling way of living one's life – a way of life that is often religiously or spiritually motivated.

As far as the challenge that the ethic of care gives unwarranted priority to caring over other important 'ethical values' like justice, is concerned, the ethic of care does indeed give priority to caring over other 'ethical values'. This, however, does not result in a neglect of justice (to pick one example). The neglect charge assumes a similar status of caring and justice; the neglect consists then in not recognizing the status that justice has in the ethical living. From the perspective of the ethic of care, however, justice – and

other 'ethical values' – are seen *in the light of human needs*: A notion of justice is important in the living of our life because we experience a need for being treated justly and for 'seeing justice be done'.[154] From the perspective on the human condition taken in chapters 3 and 4, 'ethical values' like 'justice' are part of the world-view within the traditions and expressed in the practices of a socio-cultural environment. As needs-satisfiers are considered a reflection of a socio-cultural environment, so are, then, needs articulated in terms of justice. Thus, we find different notions of justice throughout human history and in different socio-cultural environments (MacIntyre, 1988). In the view presented in chapter 3, care-ethical agency can centrally contribute to a change of a view of justice dominant in a particular socio-cultural environment (dynamic interactionism).

Relational ontology has been traditionally seen as at the core of the ethics of care (see chapter 2). This chapter has put *agency* into the centre of the ethic of care, however, in a way that locates explicitly how human agents are *existentially* in relation to other human beings[155]. The ethic of care responds to our existential concern for ourselves by making the concern for human needs (others and our own) a central part of our (moral) agency. The understanding of our life-world – required for our understanding of human needs – is possible only through our *embeddedness* within a socio-cultural environment and its traditions and practices (dialogical agency). I shall use the term '*relational agency*' to characterise this existential relationship of human and care-ethical agents.

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[154] The work on social justice in particular for women by Nussbaum and Sen discussed in chapter 4 makes clear how the notion of justice is rooted in human needs.
[155] As mentioned previously, *that* all of us are in relationships to other people is a rather trivial notion in the sense that nobody would probably deny that. To be *existentially* in relation with other people, on the other hand, is incompatible with the widespread view of humans as *autonomous* (moral) beings.

Noddings (2002b, p. 14) sees – despite some commonalities (see the previous subsection) – an important conceptual difference between the ethics of care and virtue ethics as two theories of morality: While virtue ethics focuses on the qualities of the individual and, as moral education, on the improvement of the qualities as an individual agent, the ethics of care is to focus on humans as relational beings and, as moral education, on the improvement of our caring relationships with others and our responsibility for the betterment of those others. The perspective of an existential relationship with others (relational agency) proposed for the ethic of care conceptualized in this thesis is in between those two views.

(3) The third group of challenges charges that the exclusion of universalizability and moral principles in ethical thinking in the ethic of care excludes the ethic of care from being a comprehensive moral theory because of the role that universalizability and moral principles play in ethical living – according to the challengers. The discussion around the notion of 'qualified particularism' in the subsection on the dispositional aspect of care-ethical agency in the previous chapter has already responded to this challenge from the perspective of the ethic of care.

(4) The fourth group of challenges argues against the exclusivity and the important role respectively given to human emotions in caring. Following the integrated view of human emotions as integrally linked to intelligent thinking in human decision making discussed as part of the human condition in chapter 3, the ethics of care does not give human emotions any exclusivity at any stage of our concern for human needs. On the other hand, it does give human emotions an important place in our concern for human needs.

In this and the previous chapter I have outlined a particular approach to the ethics of care, an approach that is grounded in the assumptions about the human condition outlined in chapters 3 and 4. In the next and last chapter of this thesis I return to the larger framework for which this thesis creates the foundations, that is, a framework of an approach to teacher education that helps preservice teachers in their preparation for the moral enterprise of schooling and teaching (chapter 1). The next chapter outlines central implications the foundations developed in this thesis have for the conceptualization of such an approach to teacher education. The conceptualization itself would exceed the limits of this thesis and has to be left for a subsequent study. The next chapter, though, provides central elements of the framework for such a study.

CHAPTER 7: FRAMING THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CARE-ETHICAL TEACHER EDUCATION

Chapters 3 and 4 have developed a particular perspective on the human condition that sees at the very core of human existence the human agent's existential concern about herself and about how she should live her life. This existential concern is grounded in the self-determining agency that emerges through the developing capacities of memory and imagination. This self-determining aspect of human agency was characterized as our concern for what we are deeply concerned about. However, we understand what we are deeply concerned about through our engagement with the socio-cultural environment we are embedded in as human agents, an engagement that is characterized by dynamic interactionism: We interpret the socio-cultural environment around us, and our functioning in it as dialogical agents has an influence on the very environment through our interpretive understanding of what we are deeply concerned about and through our concern for what we are deeply concerned about; and then we interpret and understand the influenced environment again, and so on goes the recursive process. Understanding education as an intentional and purpose-driven influencing of human development, this perspective on the human condition suggests as the most general main purpose of education *to help people with their existential concern of how to live their life*. This purpose applies to a very generic notion of education, which includes institutionalized schooling as well as parental up-bringing, and also includes the education of children as well as designed educational experiences for adults. From this perspective, this general

main purpose of education would frame any specific purpose of the respective educational engagement.

Ethics has been understood in this thesis as that domain of sense-making of our human living which responds to our existential concern of how we should live our life (see chapter 3). Within this domain, the more normative parts of a theory of morality respond to the existential concern by responding to the two central ethical questions 'What do I expect of myself?' and 'What do others expect of me?' The ethic of care developed in chapters 5 and 6 responds to these questions by expecting from human agents and to have them expect of themselves that they engage in the world as socio-culturally embedded care-ethical agents or, in other words, to engage in caring as lived moral practice (chapter 6).[156] With this response by the ethic of care to the existential concern of how to live one's life, the general main purpose of education given above, then, *specifies* the purpose of education to be *helping people engage in the world as socio-culturally embedded care-ethical agents* or, in other words, *to engage in caring as lived moral practice*. This is the central idea behind the moral education approach of the ethic of care: Moral education is helping people engage in the world as socio-culturally embedded care-ethical agents, which helps them to respond in a particular way to their existential concern of how they should live their life.

What are the implications of this care-ethical approach to education for the conceptualization of teacher education? This is the central question for this chapter. Although the conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education will have to be left to a

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[156] As before, whenever I talk in the following about 'the ethic of care' and 'caring' I am referring to the approach to the ethics of care characterized in chapters 4 and 5 and the notion of caring connected with it, respectively.

subsequent study, responding to this question in this chapter will provide a programmatic framework for such a conceptualization. I address the question, first, by discussing the implications of the care-ethical approach to education for the *purpose* of teacher education; and then, secondly, by discussing central implications of the care-ethical approach to education for how that purpose – fostering care-ethical agency - can or should be accomplished.

The Purpose of Schooling and Teacher Education

The framing of teacher education in this chapter is centrally grounded in the idea that teacher education prepares preservice teachers for a particular vision of school education, that is, teacher education proceeds from a particular notion of school education. Accordingly, I first discuss the general implications of the foundations developed in the previous chapters for the purpose of *school* education (care-ethical school education) before I turn to the general main purpose of *teacher* education (care-ethical teacher education) as the preparation of preservice teachers for care-ethical school education.

As memory and imagination develop in children over time, so does their existential concern about how to live their life. Helping students develop as care-ethical agents, helping them develop caring as their lived moral practice is the educational response to this concern by the ethic of care, thus, making it the main objective of care-

ethical school education.[157] According to the notion of 'caring as lived moral practice' (chapter 6) and the conceptualization of care-ethical agency (chapters 5), *care-ethical moral education in schools*, then, is about developing in students a moral identity that is centrally characterized by being concerned about human needs, the dispositions and skills to live this moral identity (included in the three aspects of care-ethical agency) and a deep concern about this moral identity and the dispositions and skills.

If teacher education proceeds from a notion of school education, the main purpose of teacher education is then to prepare preservice teachers to accomplish this purpose of school education. This makes *the main purpose of care-ethical teacher education to prepare preservice teachers for helping students develop as care-ethical agents.*

Helping students develop as care-ethical agents, I argue now, can *best* be done by helping preservice teachers develop as care-ethical agents, because care-ethical agents, so runs the argument, are *best* equipped to (a) show what care-ethical agency means (modelling), (b) create and implement a program that best allows care-ethical agency to develop (program design and implementation), (c) practise care-ethical agency (care-ethical enculturation) and (d) engage in the respective socio-cultural environment to make care-ethical school education happen (care-ethical activism). I briefly elaborate on each part of the argument.

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[157] The concern 'what do I do after I have graduated?' is only a small aspect of a student's existential concern of how to live one's life. Much more prevalent is generally a students' concern about how to live her *present* life. Thus, care-ethical school education is not just about preparing students for the existential concerns for the time they leave school, but in particular it is about helping them cope with their existential concerns as they evolve in the respective present. Developing as interpreting and dialogical agents is an ongoing process. Dewey wrote somewhere that schooling for preparing students for their future life is best done by focusing on helping students understand and live their present life as students. Care-ethical education shares this view, and provides in the existential concern a basis for this view.

Modelling. In many diverse approaches to moral education, teacher modelling is mentioned as at least one of the best ways of influencing the moral development of students in a particular way.[158] At the end of the first section of chapter 1, I argued that modelling 'to be virtuous' as a means of intentionally influencing students' moral development requires that the model actually *is* virtuous, because it is impossible to pretend to be virtuous. For care-ethical school education, then, this means that using modelling as a means of influencing students' care-ethical agency requires a certain level of caring as lived moral practice by the teacher herself.

Program Design and Implementation. As explicated above, care-ethical school education is centrally about helping students develop as care-ethical agents. Considering the explication of care-ethical agency (chapter 5), this means that school education is centrally about helping students develop their perception of and affectedness by human needs, their awareness of human needs, and so on. What should a program look like that supports this goal? What decisions are adequate to make in the daily challenge of implementing such a program? Someone who is perceptive of and affected by human needs (in particular the needs of her students) – in other words, someone who has developed a certain level of care-ethical agency – should then be best in the position to design and implement programs that help students with the development of these dispositions, and so on.

Care-Ethical Enculturation. As human agents we are engaged in constant dynamic interaction with the socio-cultural environment we are embedded in, which contributes to our response to our existential concern about how to live our life (see

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[158] See, for instance, Lickona, 1991, chapter 5; Noddings, 1984, pp. 178-179; 1992, p. 22; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999, p. 153.

chapter 3). Embedding students into a learning environment (school-based socio-cultural environment) that is characterized by caring as lived moral practice should then provide them with the best opportunity to develop their care-ethical agency. Students are enculturated into care-ethical practice by having them see, experience and reflect upon the practices involved in caring as lived moral practice. Having teachers, who are centrally contributing to the design of the learning environments in schools be the agents of such practice seems to be the best way of enculturating students into caring as lived moral practice.

Care-Ethical Activism. The dynamic interaction between the imaginative and intelligent human agent and the socio-cultural environment with its traditions and practices provides for a dynamic evolution (sometimes even revolution) of those traditions and practices and, thus, of the respective socio-cultural environment. For those who want to hold on to (part of) a state of affairs of the socio-cultural environment, this state of affairs is (constantly) under threat and 'active work' has to be done to hold on to it. For those who like to see a change in (part of) the state of affairs, 'active work' has to be done to achieve the change. In the care-ethical framework, this dynamic evolution of traditions and practices manifests itself in an evolution of needs satisfiers and, thus, derived needs, as well as the socio-cultural conditions for enacting caring as lived moral practice. From the care-ethical perspective, a constant concern for and engagement with the socio-cultural conditions for caring as lived moral practice is in order. For school education this concern and engagement means a concern for and engagement with the socio-cultural conditions that frame the constraints and possibilities for care-ethical school education programs and their implementation. Developing care-ethical agency

seems best suited to preparing for this concern and engagement, which I want to summarize as 'care-ethical activism'. Here is why. The imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency involves an imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care, which guides the concern and engagement. The imaginative vision is connected to the care-ethical agent's moral identity and, thus, the agent has an emotion-intelligent attachment to this vision. The effective aspect of care-ethical agency involves the agent's active engagement with the socio-cultural environment out of concern for human needs. This concern would include the concern for the socio-cultural conditions that frame the constraints and possibilities for care-ethical school education programs and their implementation. Such concern would be anchored in the imaginative vision, to which the care-ethical agent is emotionally and intelligently attached.

The *derived* main purpose of care-ethical teacher education, I just argued, is to help preservice teachers develop as care-ethical agents. This has two implications for the conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education. First, all other aspects of a teacher education program to prepare preservice teachers for their work in school, like general and subject-specific teaching proficiency, understanding of the social-cultural conditions of schooling or legal matters related to schooling and teaching, are, then, all *framed* by this central goal of care-ethical teacher education. Second, teacher education from a care-ethical viewpoint (care-ethical teacher education) is centrally a moral enterprise, because it is to help preservice teachers with the development of their care-ethical agency. I just argued that care-ethical teacher education does so for a *functional* reason, namely in order to *best* prepare preservice teachers for the main purpose of schooling. However, it is also an ethical enterprise because all education is (to be) moral education from a care-ethical

viewpoint as explicated at the beginning of this chapter: Education is centrally about

helping people engage in the world as socio-culturally embedded care-ethical agents.

This perspective moves care-ethical teacher education beyond having solely the

functional purpose of preparing preservice teachers for the particular vision of schooling

to include the concern for the (moral) development of preservice teachers beyond their

role as future teachers.

Care-ethical teacher education is a moral enterprise with a transformative purpose

with respect to the impact on preservice teachers' moral agency. This transformation is to

be *holistic* in the sense that through this impact it is to affect how preservice teachers

engage as moral agents with their socio-cultural environment in general and other agents

in particular. In order to help preservice teachers in their development of caring as lived

moral practice, a conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education has to take into

consideration this more holistic approach, implying that care-ethical teacher education

will have to overcome the traditional separation of the professional and personal aspects

of the life of preservice teachers. Although the focus of care-ethical teacher education is

on human needs in the context of teaching and schooling, care-ethical agency affects all

domains of human functioning.

With teacher education having this holistic and transformative purpose, the

question arises how teacher education can foster the care-ethical agency that is at the

centre of this holistic and transformative purpose. In the following section I discuss this

question by emphasizing central implications of the foundations developed in this thesis

for the conceptualization of a care-ethical teacher education approach that is designed to

achieve the holistic and transformative purpose. The articulation of the implications, and

particularly the actual conceptualization, will have to be left to a subsequent study.

Developing Agency in Teacher Education

If the main purpose of teacher education from the care-ethical perspective taken in this

thesis is to help preservice teachers develop as care-ethical agents, then the question

arises how teacher education can accomplish that. A proper response to this question

would go beyond the constraints of this thesis, but what this section will be doing is to lay

out central implications of the foundations developed in the previous chapters for a

proper response to this question. The first part of this section focuses on the more general

issues of constraints, challenges and possibilities for teacher education to foster agency in

preservice teachers, while the second part focuses more on the implications for fostering

in preservice teachers the particular form of agency conceptualized in the previous

chapters, namely care-ethical agency.

Constraints, Challenges and Possibilities in Fostering Agency in Teacher Education

The previous section of this chapter has argued for a particular purpose of schooling and,

thus, of teacher education as seen from the care-ethical perspective developed in the

previous chapters. This purpose sees helping preservice teachers develop a particular type

of agency at the core of what teacher education is to be about. The idea of giving the

development of agency a central role in teacher education is not new. However, the

understanding of 'agency' can vary quite a lot in this context. Smylie, Bay and Tozer

(1999, p. 29), for instance, distinguish between three 'types' of change agency,

depending on where the focus for the change is: change in the students to teach

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(students), social change (society) or school change (school programs). Furthermore, while some authors talk explicitly about developing agency in preservice teachers (for instance, Price & Valli, 2005; Smylie, Bay & Tozer, 1999), much of the literature which can be considered as contributing to the issue of developing agency in preservice teachers does not explicitly talk about it in terms of agency.[159] With the variety of views and foci taken on developing agency in teacher education, the efforts for fostering agency in preservice teachers might best be characterized negatively: Approaches to developing agency in preservice teachers *do not* view teacher education as 'training', a view according to which teacher education is about instructing (training) preservice teachers in the use of pre-determined 'best teaching practices'.[160]

Among the approaches to fostering agency in preservice teachers, those that are of particular interest to the conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education have the following two features at the core of their notion of agency: an active engagement with the (narrower and larger) socio-cultural environment from a 'self-determining position' and a grounding of such engagement in the agent's beliefs and attitudes (moral

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[159] For instance, in the 750-page report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005), which is to my knowledge the most comprehensive and, of course, most up-to-date meta analysis of teacher education research in the USA, the index does not include 'agency' as an entry, although several contributions to the report are clearly discussing 'teacher education for agency', for instance, Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Grossman, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005.

[160] Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) distinguish in the history of teacher education in the USA between the 1950s and 2000s two broad approaches. The authors characterize the first one (1950s to 1980s) as 'teacher education as a training problem' and the second one (1980s to 2000s) as 'teacher education as a learning program'. This distinction might serve as a general distinction of approaches that try to foster agency in preservice teachers (teacher education as a learning problem) and those that do not.

identity).[161] In teacher education from a care-ethical perspective, the notion of care-ethical agency is characterized by these two features as core features as well: care-ethical activism grounded in caring as the agent's lived moral practice (care-ethical identity). The similarity of the 'type' of agency is one reason why research within teacher education that aims to foster (this type of) agency is of interest to those like me who are into conceptualizing care-ethical teacher education in general and the development of specific care-ethical teacher education *programs* in particular. For instance, research into questions like 'How can teacher education foster agency (in this sense) in preservice teachers?' or 'What obstacles to the development of agency exist for teacher education programs?' are shared questions, despite differences in the notion of agency in some respect.

A second reason why the conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education can draw upon the research on fostering this type of agency in student teachers has to do with care-ethical agency being concerned with human needs. At the core of, for instance, teacher education for social justice or for culturally responsive teachers is the addressing of neglected needs of students. Thus, the issues at the centre of these approaches for teacher education are also of central concern to care-ethical teacher education.

Research on fostering agency (of this type) in preservice teachers can help better understand the constraints, challenges and possibilities of developing care-ethical agency

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[161] An example of such approaches are those that aim to prepare student teachers for an engagement for social justice (for instance, Cochran-Smith, 2004, chapter 1; Gay & Howard, 2000; Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The authors of the small set of literature that approaches teacher education from the perspective of an ethic of care (for instance, Arnstine, 1990; Goldstein, 2000a, 200b, McLaughlin, 1994; Morris & Morris, 2002; Noddings, 1986, 1996, 1999a, Rogers & Webb, 1991; Weinstein, 1998) all assume a notion of agency that incorporates these two features, however, many emphasize much more the preparation of preservice teachers for classroom internal concern for students' needs and less for concern for the socio-cultural conditions for such classroom internal concern.

as an instantiation of this type of agency and help put the implications of the foundations developed in this thesis for the conceptualization of a care-ethical teacher education approach into an already existing research context. Any conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education will need to take this research context into account. Illustrating how this research context and the implications from the foundations presented in the previous chapters might interact in at least some cases, I would like to briefly discuss the issue of changing attitudes and beliefs in preservice teachers as one central aspect in the research on fostering agency in preservice teachers in teacher education.

Developing agency of the type discussed will in most cases require a change in preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about schooling, teaching and learning. However, overall, those beliefs and attitudes in preservice teachers are very resilient to change in teacher education programs (Richardson, 1996; Richardson & Placier, 2001; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998).[162] Nevertheless, there are documented cases of successful intervention in individual situations.[163] Furthermore, there is – as Richardson (1996, p. 113) writes –

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[162] Richardson (1996, p. 113), summarizing studies investigating change in preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about schooling, teaching and learning through individual courses or whole teacher education programs, writes that preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with "strong, or perhaps even central beliefs . . . about teaching, learning, subject matter, and students" and concludes that "except for the student-teaching element, preservice teacher education seems a weak intervention".

[163] For instance Yost (1997) reports on a study in which preservice teachers have "demonstrated markedly similar views of their mission as teachers, views coinciding with the moral dimensions of teaching that the university used to define its central mission." (p. 290) "The majority [of the study participants] provided significant evidence . . . that they preferred state-of-the-art teaching practices to the more traditional methods used by many of the teachers they observed. This finding is significant in light of the literature that portrays an opposite scenario – that preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching tend to revert back to more traditional notions despite innovative coursework and experiences" (p. 290) Looking at her own study and at a study by Zeichner & Liston (1987), Yost comes to the conclusion that "critical reflection based on real school observations in addition to coursework/readings is a crucial factor in encouraging preservice teachers to develop a set of beliefs coinciding more readily with the philosophy of their teacher education program." (Yost, 1997, pp. 290-291). See also the 'successful cases' in Richardson & Placier, 2001 (pp. 914-917).

some indication that the academic elements of preservice teacher education have an impact on teachers, although perhaps not recognized by them. . . . [Studies] suggest a lag time between when teachers start their career and when conceptions acquired in preservice education begin to make an impact on practice. . . . Furthermore, a growing number of studies point to changes in conceptions and beliefs on the basis of specific teacher education classes.

Preservice teachers come as adult learners into teacher education programs with developed, particular ways in place in which their existential concern for themselves manifest itself (the needs they have) and in which they have been responding to this concern. Enrolling in a teacher education program is one way in which they have responded to their existential concern about how to live their life. Their attitudes and beliefs about schooling, teaching, learning, students, and so on, is thus of great importance for how they live or see themselves living their life as a teacher. Consequently, the challenges of influencing preservice teachers' agency documented in the research on fostering agency in teacher education has to be taken seriously in the conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education. There is a response in the literature on developing agency in (preservice) teachers to this challenge. It is to conceptualize teacher education as an ongoing process that is not limited to pre-service phase: *teacher development* (see, for instance, Lieberman, 1994; Smylie, Bay & Tozer, 1999, p. 37). But there is also one 'internal' response to this challenge, a response which derives as a consequence from the care-ethical foundations developed in the previous chapters: relational teacher education. As written above, enrolling into a teacher education program is one way in which preservice teachers respond to their existential concern about how to live their life, and their attitudes and beliefs about schooling, teaching, learning, students, and so on, are, thus, of great importance for how they live or see themselves living their

life as a teacher. In care-ethical teacher education this situation has to be recognized, validated and seriously worked with for two reasons. First, and foremost, care-ethical teacher education is based on an ethical stance that puts the concern for human needs at the very centre. Having one's moral identity validated is one of the most important needs of a moral agent. Second, the moral identity and moral understandings preservice teachers come with into a teacher education program are the 'prior understandings' the program and the teacher educators have to 'work with'. Both reasons form the foundation for what could be called a *relational approach to teacher education*. Care-ethical agency means to be concerned about human needs, and in an educational program that means the needs of the students. Where a student is at a given moment in terms of her beliefs and attitudes defines much of what her needs are. A conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education – which is grounded in a relational ethics – will need to give consideration to this relational thinking, and the care-ethical practice will need to be about helping preservice teachers develop *their* care-ethical agency.

Furthermore, as Noddings (1992, p. 36) writes:

> "students will do things for people they like and trust. This is a fact that we must acknowledge. . . . At bottom, subject matter cannot carry itself. Relation, except in very rare cases, precedes any engagement with subject matter.

Developing deeper and meaningful relationships in teacher education programs promise to have a great impact on helping preservice teachers (in their preservice and later service years) foster agency with 'care-ethical' attitudes and beliefs. A subsequent study on the conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education should inquire whether the difference in terms of success in impacting attitudes and beliefs in the different studies reported in

the literature on fostering agency in preservice teachers can at least partially be understood in terms of the relationship that existed between instructor(s) and students.

Developing Care-Ethical Agency

In this last part of the chapter I briefly outline some central implications of the care-ethical foundations developed in this thesis for the conceptualization of teacher education that is grounded in these foundations and accepts the argument I made in the previous section of this chapter for the purpose of such teacher education.

Implications from the particular view of the human condition. (1) The central characteristic of human agency is agentic self-determination, which was explicated in chapter 3 as being concerned for what we are deeply concerned about. This deep concern is a central component of the agent's (moral) identity. Within the framework of the ethic of care proposed in chapters 5 and 6, care-ethical agents are deeply concerned about human needs. Accordingly, their self-determination as care-ethical agents is driven by that deep concern, which is grounded in care-ethical agency. Care-ethical teacher education needs to help develop this kind of self-determination, which means that, in a conceptualization of care-ethical agency, preservice teachers are not simply prepared to execute or implement externally established knowledge of 'good practice', but rather to develop a self-determining agency that drives them to be active contributors to their own understanding of their engagement in 'good practice'. This point has already been made above, but here it is linked to the conceptualization of the human condition in the previous chapters of the thesis.

(2) It is in the preservice teachers' functioning as care-ethical agents that they engage with the socio-cultural environment in dynamic interaction and, thus, contribute to the ongoing change of the socio-cultural environment, its traditions and practices (chapter 3). Care-ethical teacher education, then, needs to be conceptualized in a way that preservice teachers are supported in their development as self-determining 'agents of change', being aware of their role as 'change agents' and engaging in this role in their living their life as teachers. The hermeneutically influenced view of the human condition recognizes that as human agents we all (some more than others) are involved in changing the traditions and practices of the socio-cultural environments through our intelligent and imaginative engagement in those traditions and practices (chapter 3). However, teachers involved in care-ethical education are contributing intentionally and with purpose to the development of students' care-ethical agency, which then is the students' foundation upon which they enact their agency and contribute to the development of the socio-cultural environment they are embedded in. This results in teachers contributing exponentially to the development of socio-cultural environments. It is in this sense that the care-ethical teacher education does not just view preservice teachers as (potential) agents of change, but actually prepares them to be agents of change by helping them develop as care-ethical agents.

(3) Conceptualizing caring as lived moral practice (chapter 6) is a direct response to the moral functioning of human agents characterized in chapter 3: Care-ethical agency is grounded in *the integrity of one's (moral) identity*, which drives our concern for what we are deeply concerned about as a response to our fundamental existential concern about how we should live our life. It is this integrity of one's care-ethical identity that

does not allow for care-ethical agency to be cut up into domains of one's life. In other words, we cannot be care-ethical agents in one context but not in another, in one domain of our life but not in another. It is also the other way around: It is our functioning in our life with all its domains, contexts, and so on, that characterizes our care-ethical agency. If care-ethical teacher education's central aim is helping preservice teachers develop as care-ethical agents, then the conceptualization of this approach to teacher education has to address teacher education in a *holistic* way, not separating the context of schooling from preservice teachers' functioning in other domains of their life. Although the *purpose* of care-ethical teacher education is focused on preservice teachers' care-ethical agency as it relates to teaching and schooling, the actual help care-ethical teacher education would provide for preservice teachers in their development as care-ethical agents will be much more holistic and would involve a preservice teacher's other life domains as well.

Implications from the specific notion of care-ethical agency. The notion of care-ethical agency developed in chapters 4 and 5 is characterized by three aspects: the dispositional aspect (being concerned when facing human needs, being aware of human needs and taking an inquiry stance), the imaginative aspect and the effective aspect. Each has implications for a conceptualization of teacher education. In the following I briefly outline those central implications that I think will need to be explored for such a conceptualization.

(1) Care-ethical teacher education needs to be conceptualized in a way that helps preservice teachers develop their concern when they face human needs, in particular within the schooling context. 'Being concerned when facing human needs' will include two aspects: perceiving needs and responding to those needs with concern. For the

former, care-ethical teacher education needs to help preservice teachers develop situational needs sensitivity and an awareness of how situations and their own functioning as moral agents affect that needs sensitivity. For the latter, care-ethical teacher education needs to help preservice teachers develop their emotion-intelligent response to the needs perception, where the emotional component can probably best be characterized as 'empathy' in the sense used in chapter 3: "the vicarious affective response to another person" (Hoffmann, 2000, p. 29), while the 'intelligent' aspect corresponds well to an "embodied mindfulness" or "thoughtful action" which van Manen (1991, p. 109) has called "pedagogical tact".

Care-ethical teacher education needs to be conceptualized in a way that raises preservice teachers' awareness of human needs in particular within the schooling context. For instance, a teacher's level of perception of nutrition-related difficulties for students to stay focused in class might increase with her awareness of the importance of water and adequate food for a better functioning of the human brain (Jensen, 1998, chapter 3). Developing preservice teachers' needs awareness ability within the domain of schooling and teaching requires the conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education to consider helping preservice teachers with at least the following: an understanding of generalized needs with the respective socio-cultural environments in general and students in particular, an understanding of one's own needs and an understanding of the needs

discourse and "the politics of need interpretation" (Fraser, 1989) with a particular focus on schooling.[164]

A conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education also needs to be such that it considers the need for preservice teachers to cultivate an inquiry stance, a constant questioning of what we do in connection with human needs. In the needs-based ethics presented in chapter 5, which is grounded in this relational view of human agency, the understanding of and responding to human needs is relational work. We have to relate our understanding of human needs to our understanding of the needs situation, to the needies' self-understanding of their needs, to the needies' response to our response to their needs, to our assumptions, biases, application of generalized needs to a particular situation, and our imaginative world view of a holistic life of care. Especially in the schooling context, teachers face constantly a discrepancy between the assumed needs educators have for students, like the (assumed) need to do homework regularly, and students' assumption of not having those needs. It is this relational view of human agency and the relational work to be done in caring as lived moral practice that form a central reason for inquiry as a stance in care-ethical agency.

(2) In chapter 3 I characterized the imaginative aspect of care-ethical agency as an imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care, a vision of what 'the world' would be like if concern for human needs were the central ethical principle. Addressing this aspect of care-ethical agency, care-ethical teacher education, then, helps preservice teachers

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[164] Nancy Fraser (1989, chapter 8) argues for the consideration of the *interpretive* dimension of any politics of needs dialogue. This interpretive aspect is expressed in questions like 'What and whose language is used in formulating the need?', 'How is the need defined?' 'Who interprets or defines the need?' Fraser's point can be seen as an instantiation of the interpretive character of human agency discussed in chapter 3. Care-ethical teacher education, then, not just is to prepare preservice teachers for their participation in the needs dialogue around schooling, teaching and learning but also for their *critical* understanding of the *interpretive* aspect of needs dialogues.

develop an imaginative world vision of a holistic life of care for themselves and an emotional attachment to this vision. The latter was considered an integral part of the imaginative aspect (chapter 3). It is this emotional attachment that creates the concern for this imaginative world vision and that can serve as a motivator for engaging with one's life-world in order to put one's vision into reality.

(3) In chapter 5 care-ethical agency has been characterized not only as dispositional, but both the engagement in and the 'care-ethical effect' on one's life world have been conceptualized as an integral aspect of care-ethical agency. I have called this aspect 'the effective aspect' of care-ethical agency. A conceptualization of care-ethical education needs to consider the following two differences. First, there is a difference between activism for social change and care-ethical effectiveness if the activism is inconsiderate of the needs of *all* those affected by the activism (whereby 'being considerate of' does not mean 'addressing' all needs, in particular if derived needs are in conflict with each other and in conflict with one's imaginative vision of a holistic life of care). Care-ethical agency is based on a relational ethics, and as such the relationships – grounded in our concern for human needs – are central in caring as lived moral practice. Second, care-ethical effectiveness is distinct from 'having good intentions'. The very point of the effective aspect of care-ethical agency is to conceptualize the idea that caring as lived moral practice is a practice which has indeed an impact on needs. *Effective* care-ethical engagement has to have such an effect.

Furthermore, care-ethical teacher education needs to be conceptualized in a way that preservice teachers' understanding of the constraints and possibilities of the socio-

cultural environment of schooling, teaching and learning for teachers' care-ethically effective engagement is developed.

In this last chapter I have characterized central implications of the care-ethical approach developed in this thesis for a teacher education approach that is grounded in this approach to the ethics of care. Thus, this chapter will help frame the conceptualization of care-ethical teacher education in a subsequent study. In the very first chapter of this thesis I have argued that schooling and teaching is a moral enterprise. Chapters 3 to 6 provide a particular perspective on the human condition as well as a particular theory of morality grounded in this perspective. Both form the foundations for a response to the question of an adequate preparation of preservice teachers for schooling and teaching as a moral enterprise.

EPILOGUE

Education is an academic discipline that allows research into areas that deal directly with issues concerning how humans live their life – unlike other disciplines like theoretical physics, mathematics and even many areas within the biological sciences as in the case of research on termites.[165] As I have written in the prologue, the research I have undertaken in this thesis "is so strongly linked to my living of my life" (p. 4) that the work I have now completed has had quite an impact on me as a (moral) agent. As an epilogue to my thesis, I like to briefly talk about this personal influence of the working on this thesis.

The conscious impact of my thesis writing on me (my moral agency) has not been without mediation. Thesis writing is, in my experience, for the most part 'making a case', which requires critically looking at the work of others on the same issue and justifying one's own approach in the light of the research problem as well as the work of others. How the work and the working impacts on the worker is not usually in focus when writing a thesis. During my work I had to intentionally sit back and contemplate how the *content* of my thesis relates to my living my life.[166] My engagement with the issues that I

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[165] Being involved in mathematical research in probability theory can have an impact on how one live one's life. However, I am talking here about impact of a more substantial nature. Furthermore, I am talking here about the impact of the *content* of one's research or the research-guiding questions and issues on the researcher's life rather than of the process of the research itself. Undoubtedly, the *process* of doing research can have a tremendous impact on a researcher's life regardless of the academic discipline or the research issues.

[166] I am here reminded of the story someone told me once about a philosopher who wrote a book on human happiness but was one of the more miserable persons to be around.

deal with in this thesis has been having an influence on my agency and the practice of living my life in three ways.

The first way in which the content of my thesis has been impacting on my living my life is by having changed the perspective I have had on my life-world, in particular concerning my encounters with people. The most impressive experience I have had so far with the impact of a perspective change happened when I was involved in a teacher development project in the school district I was working in as a mathematics teacher. I was part of a group of K-12 teachers that was charged for two weeks to write a curriculum implementation document for the grades 1-9 that could be used by teachers in the district and the province in their implementing of the mathematics curriculum. Each of us was assigned a different grade level to work on. With only three days left to complete the document, one colleague was desperate about the perspective of not being able to complete all parts of her grade level, because the allocated time for the project was clearly too short for this ambitious project. She was desperate up to the point where her emotional state affected the productivity of her work. Being in a similar situation as she, I told her that the way I was approaching my portion of the project was to think of my work as spiralling through the different parts. In a first round through I was working more superficially through all the different strands and topics of my grade level. With each additional round, then, I returned to each topic in more depth. This way, I explained, I would at least cover each part of the portion I had been charged with. As soon as I finished my suggestion, she 'saw her work through different eyes'. Her mood and productivity changed immediately. She now saw a chance of being able to cover all parts of her portion of the project – having adopted this perspective of what her work would

look like. She could accept the situation that the quality of her work was a function of the time that the school district provided her with for working on the project. This experience stayed with me as a vivid example of the power of perspective, of the powerful impact of one's perspective for how one experiences one's life-world and of how sudden a powerful change in perspective can happen.

The change in perspective through my thesis writing has not been as radical and not as sudden as in the case I just described. It has been more a slow process of becoming aware of and development through a critical engagement with the work and thinking of others. Nevertheless, as far as I can judge (being the subject of change myself), the content of my thesis work has been having quite an impact on my perspective on my life and my life-world. Here are some examples.

Through my thesis work I inquired into what I called the human condition, characterized by an emerging agency that comes with a developing existential concern for how we should live our life. Dynamically interacting with the socio-cultural environment we are embedded in, our interpretive understanding of the socio-cultural environment provides us with the possibilities and constraints to respond to our existential concern. The ethical aspect of our existential concern is the question of what matters we are to be concerned about. Since I have developed this perspective on the human condition, I have often caught myself 'understanding' and 'explaining' my life-world experiences through this perspective. Furthermore, this perspective calls for a response to the central ethical question of what matters *I* am (to be) concerned about. What am I deeply concerned about? It should suffice here to say that I have been trying to understand my emotional and cognitive responses to experiences, events and state of

affairs in terms of this question, and I have been relating this understanding to the central ethical question discussed in this thesis.

The notion of a needs-based ethics as a response to the central ethical question 'What do I expect of myself?' had probably the strongest impact on my perspective on my life-world. The perspective of the ethic of care which I propose in this thesis suggests a concern for human needs as central to care-ethical agency. I started understanding people's conduct as expressions of their needs. This has been quite challenging for me, for instance, when I tried to understand the conduct of the reckless driver who was cutting into my lane as an expression of that person's needs, and to understand the urge to 'get back at him' as not really a need of mine, at least not one that comes close to my deep need for arriving safely home to continue my happy life with my wife and daughter. I also started experiencing encounters with other people much more often as an 'educational encounter' or as a 'moral encounter', where the other person's care-ethical agency is more of concern. Much more often than in the past, I have been responding to the person than the situation – because I perceive situations now more often as needs-situations.

The second way in which the content of my thesis has been having an impact on me has been through its (moral) guidance. Part of this guidance has been set up by the perspective change I just talked about. For instance, by understanding a person's conduct as an expression of that person's needs, I have been 'guided' to respond to those needs rather than 'the situation'. This understanding has not just provided me with a different framework of perception but also with new experiences that I find often quite challenging, often because it puts me in situations of concern for conflicting needs –

often conflicts between my own needs and those of others. In my thesis I suggest a needs-based ethic of care as a response to the central ethical question 'What do I expect of myself?' This notion of a needs-based ethics – and here in particular the notion of care-ethical agency – has been providing the strongest guidance for my living my life.

The notion of care-ethical agency is developed in detail in this thesis. What motivated me to this level of detail was an attempt to 'educationalize' the notion of care-ethical agency. I wanted to have a notion of agency that could serve as a 'guide' for educational purposes (school and teacher education) as well as for 'inner work'. Now being at the end of my thesis work, I would say that with the notion of care-ethical agency I have explored my 'imaginative vision of a holistic life of care'. The components of the dispositional aspect of the notion of care-ethical agency have been guiding the way I engage in 'inner work' to respond to my changed perspective on my life-world. For instance, more often than before I find myself reflecting on past encounters and asking myself whether I had become aware of the needs in that encounter and how I might better understand the respective person in the future. More often than before, I reflect on past encounters as opportunities to work on my level of needs sensitivity and my awareness of different types of needs.

The third way in which the content of my thesis has been impacting my living my life is by giving me directions for my professional life as a teacher educator and educational researcher. For now almost a year I have been holding a position at a faculty of education, where I am heavily involved in the teacher education program. As I have mentioned in the prologue, this involvement addresses my deep concern for the public good of institutionalized general education. In this thesis I argue that teaching is a moral

enterprise and propose a theory of morality – grounded in a particular perspective on the human condition – which can and should provide the framework for the response to the view of teaching as a moral enterprise. From the teacher education perspective, I argue in the thesis, this theory of morality provides the moral foundation for the preparation of preservice teachers for teaching as a moral enterprise. *This thesis articulates the foundations for my professional work as a teacher educator.* I have written the thesis with this understanding in mind, and accordingly, it shapes my view of teacher education in general, the teacher education program within my institution in particular and my own practice as a teacher educator.

Using the purpose of teacher education developed in this thesis – helping preservice teachers with the development of their care-ethical agency – as a guide, I have been trying to make sense of my experiences as a teacher educator in the courses I taught and as a supervisor in practica and as a faculty member in program discussions. I have experienced constraints of different types relative to this purpose, from institutional constraints (different visions of what teacher education should look like; little time to actually engage in foundational discussions that might result in a common approach to teacher education, maybe even one that is grounded in the ethics of care; and so on) to course-related constraints (course-content expectations by institution and students; limited contact with students; and so on). Such constraints, however, do not provide the ground for objections to the case I make in my thesis, but they are rather parameters that any care-ethical engagement has to work with. The odd times, I have also seen small successes in helping preservice teachers develop their care-ethical agency – and it was a wonderful experience for me when I actually realized that.

Being true to the spirit of the foundations I have articulated in this thesis, I will need to engage with the traditions and practices of teacher education in my institution (and beyond) to understand what the implications for teacher education I have laid out in chapter 7 'really' mean for the preparation of preservice teachers. And it is here, where my work on the thesis has another impact on my professional life: to provide me with a path for further research into teacher education. This thesis is the first step toward an exploration of an approach to teacher education that is grounded in the very foundations outlined in this thesis. What these foundations 'really' mean for preservice teacher preparation, or in other words, how such an approach to teacher education should be conceptualized is a challenge for a subsequent study, which builds on this thesis. My engagement in teacher education practice and research in my institution and beyond will provide me with the dynamic interaction to help me develop an understanding of the implications laid out in this thesis. It is with great excitement that I write these last words of the beginning of an even deeper exploration of what I deeply care about.

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