Why care? On motivation in care ethics
Gardiner, Katherine Elizabeth

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CHAPTER SIX: NORMATIVE CARING

Introduction

In the previous chapter I described a refurbished form of obligation in which obligation is capable of doing several things: it can command, it can restrain and it can permit. As such, obligation can occupy several different places on the moral ground: it can be overtly present in the foreground; it can be generally present in the form of signposts (active or inactive); and it can be unobtrusively present in the background in the form of confirmation. This makes obligation a multifarious, diverse and flexible concept – quite unlike the usual association it has with the monolithic external command to commit some (usually) onerous deed. Indeed, ‘obligation’ is merely the name for that which we ought to do.

Furthermore I have argued that the compellingness of obligation lies not in its nature as an external command but because it is that which is critically endorsed by its proponent and because it is intricately connected to the inclinations – the emotions and desires and wishes of the proponent. The acceptance of the authority of obligation as prescriptive is, as I argue in this internalist account of motivation, necessary for explaining why obligation galvanises me to commit certain actions and prevents me from undertaking others. My obligation is that which I have accepted or discovered I must do even if this obligation is contrary to my inclinations. My responsibility or liability, both on a critical and an intentional level, are prerequisites for the effectiveness of obligation.

I have been at pains to separate ‘obligation’ from its association with morally repugnant or onerous tasks imposed upon one from without. I have done this because I concur with philosophers like Herman and Baron that ‘obligation’ is a moral concept capable of nuance and sensitivity. And that it is a necessary concept in morality in that it illustrates how motivation works by combining the elements of being compelled and yet being able to carry out the task you are compelled to do competently. In effect I argue that it is not useful to see obligation merely as an imposed task but as a set of internalised permissions and restraints – or rules, if you like – according to which one can decide upon the best course of action. The significance of this internalisation is that rules - and the recognition thereof – are inseparably intertwined with inclinations. The pertinence of obligation is that the person carrying out the
obligation is responsible for his actions – it must be that which he also accepts that he must do. And he can also be held responsible for doing so: he is liable or culpable in the sense that the responsibility lies with him and he can be judged in these terms. These were, in short, the conclusions of the previous chapter.

The next question, it seems to me, is what does obligation have to do with caring? Why have I taken the trouble to refurbish ‘obligation’? In the previous chapters I have reviewed several care ethical accounts of motivation for caring. These accounts are “engrossment” (Noddings’ phenomenological account), “solidarity” (Sevenhuijsen’s postmodern humanist account), caring as a “responsibilist virtue” (Dalmiya’s epistemological account) and caring as necessary for “flourishing lives” (Halwani’s virtue ethical account). Some of these accounts emphasise the compelling aspects of caring; others the competency aspects. I reject the accounts that propagate selflessness (the phenomenological and epistemological) because of their normative vacuity. I also reject ontological accounts and teleological accounts in which it is argued that that which humans supposedly are, is also what they should become (postmodern communitarianism and maternal thinking). I am also extremely wary of ethical accounts that include naturalism instead of normativity (some kinds of virtue ethics). This elimination process leaves a lacuna on the terrain of motivation in caring: I have suggested that obligation – even though it is commonly assumed that obligation is synonymously far removed from caring – could provide both the compulsion and the competency required for motivation.

I have argued that the desirability of obligation lies in its capacity to delimit inclinations by operating as a guideline in suggesting what should be done or as a boundary in indicating what should not. In other words, obligation is no more or less than a concept indicating normativity: indicating that which you ought to do. Obligation is itself content-free: it merely states that that thing should be done/it is required of one but makes little sense unless these requirements are internally endorsed by the moral agent who must do them. The question here is: is caring something that should be done? Ought we to care? Can caring be described as an obligation?

‘What obliges us to be caring?’ is the topic of this final chapter. If we accept that an obligation is that which we should do and we ourselves condone that obligation, what is this obligation based on? According to Korsgaard, this obligation is based on its normativity; my question is how? How does it have the required effect, as it were? In order to formulate a reply I shall, first, ask
when caring is normative. Second, in an attempt to understand what normativity is, I shall examine Korsgaard’s account of the source of normativity. Third, I explore how this normativity works. And last, having reached an account of how caring motivation works, I seek an answer to Pim’s (the man who wishes to care but cannot) dilemma.

**When is caring normative?**

When told “You should be caring”, you could ask “Why?” Why should you commit yourself to a caring task with all the responsibilities and complications it (probably) brings with it? This “why” question is a normative question and, here’s the rub, any answer can prompt a further why, and yet another, and so on. Is there an answer to end this regression? Is there something, to use Korsgaard’s phrase, “really behind morality”\(^1\) – an answer to end all whys?

In previous chapters I have reviewed several potential answers in care ethics to this question. From some perspectives in care ethics it is argued that one should care because caring is a basic and good human relation. Other care ethics argue that caring is basic because it makes one capable of judging others’ humanity or that caring about others creates the preconditions for important and special knowledge. Again other care ethical theories argue that caring is a basic virtue or that caring is an essential part of human nature. I have questioned whether these answers provide the ultimate reply to what lies “behind morality”. Moreover, the answers provided are substantive, which means that they argue that caring is basic or essential and that caring has a meaningful content: an inherent goodness, for example. Much of what I have been doing in the previous chapters – but not in these terms – is to argue that the primary moving force of caring does not lie in its having a meaningful moral value but in something else, something that is not necessarily moral.

But this is not to argue that anything goes. My non-substantive approach coincides with Frankfurt’s concept of caring in that he too avoids giving care a substantive filling. Where our accounts differ, though, is that his account of caring is explicitly non-normative whereas I believe that a discussion of caring as an ethical practice must include the element of normativity. Frankfurt’s account of caring is all-inclusive (he makes no normative distinctions between caring for old-timer automobiles or for world peace). I

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\(^1\) Korsgaard 1996, 13.
shall argue that an ethics of care includes those things and people and issues for which we bear responsibility and that they exercise a powerful influence upon us. Caring for, from a care ethical perspective, is thus profoundly normative.

What constitutes normative reasons for caring? If we care as Frankfurt describes, then we can care for anything - no one type of caring is better or worse than another. An ethic of care is distinct from caring in this fashion in important ways. The very essence of an ethic of care, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, is that caringethically constitutes a way of being concerned and involved with the welfare of the one cared for. It is not only having an invested interest in the other; it is also a taking on board of the interests and well-being of the cared for. And this leads to responsibilities and commitments that surpass merely having a caring impulse or desire. It involves forming a relationship with the cared for: creating expectations, sustaining dependencies and meeting requirements. Having reasons to be caring in this manner would involve not only finding an overlap between your own desires and those of the cared for, but also the distinct belief that you ought to care for the cared for. The obligation to be caring, I would argue, is that which transforms caring from merely a ‘finding something important’ (in the words of Frankfurt) into a normative activity. Only when the relationship is such that we must care is there reason to subject the caring for to stringent demands: is it good caring? Does it meet the requirements of the cared for? Does it enhance the well-being of the cared for? Is it done without the one caring having to compromise or contradict his principles or beliefs? What are the circumstances and the context? Where must it begin and end?

This means that there is an enormous variety and diversity of the types of caring possible. It is not the caring itself that is good; it is the context within which is cared, how and why. It would be an impossible task to specify every context under which caring should be conducted. I must rather focus on normativity itself - what does it mean when I pose the question why should I care? Because of the diversity of caring I have chosen to seek the source of normativity in the moral agent who does the caring rather than in the value of caring itself. This means that I shall be looking at subjectivity rather than objectivity - I shall be looking at how a caring act is normative because of why it is done rather than at the value of the caring deed itself. The motivation for caring, I argue, must be sought in the subjectivity of the one caring.
The following account of how normativity can be achieved is derived from the various writings of Christine Korsgaard with the critical help of the historian of philosophy Stephen Crowell and the meta-ethicist Michael Smith. According to both these critics, Korsgaard does not succeed in securing the source of normativity as the basis of normative action. Her attempt is bold and original but her source of normativity, the reflective self - which Korsgaard posits as the ultimate decision-maker in normative issues - cannot guarantee normativity, they argue (via very different routes). I argue that, although Korsgaard might not be able to provide an invincible account of the source of normativity, she does have a good deal to say about normativity itself and what she has to say throws much-needed light on the issue of normativity in caring.

In what follows I shall, first, outline Korsgaard’s argument that subjectivity is the source of normativity. Second, I shall deal with a two-fold critique of this argument and, third, I shall offer an addition to Korsgaard’s argument on the basis of the phenomenological account of caring that I have established in this dissertation (especially in Chapter One), thereby arguing that Korsgaard’s account of normativity is feasible.

**What is the source of normativity?**

Korsgaard argues that, because we no longer believe in a supreme deity or in the essential qualities of all things on earth, humanity is the only source of all valuing. This means that any value in the world has been put there or invested by people. Things no longer have inherent value: “The real is no longer the good.” This would imply that the activity of valuing makes for value and that there are no objective values outside of this valuing. Who values? The human subject is the source of valuing in Korsgaard’s account (as distinct from animals).

Korsgaard’s Kant-inspired theory rejects the metaphysical conception of the subject as a substance with certain fixed properties, arguing instead that subjectivity is an achievement, something that I can succeed or fail at being. For Korsgaard, this non-metaphysical conception of subjectivity underlies an

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2 Sources of Normativity (1996) and Creating the Kingdom of Ends (1996a).
3 This is Korsgaard’s point in her essay “Excellence and Obligation” (1996) and I whole-heartedly share her anti-realist position in this point.
5 Crowell 2007, 315.
account of normativity: an explanation of how standards - including the standards that measure success or failure at being a subject - can bind you, provide you with reasons for acting in some ways and with obligations that forbid you from acting in others. Her argument is complicated, as Crowell says. He summarises it as turning on characterising subjectivity as self-consciousness: normative concepts do not arise as answers to theoretical questions; rather they exist, as Korsgaard says,

because human beings have normative problems. And we have normative problems because we are self-conscious rational animals, capable of reflection about what we ought to believe and do. (Christine Korsgaard *The Sources of Normativity* 1996, 46.)

Self-consciousness, in this account, thus gives rise to the normative, and from the normative flows obligation. But how is self-consciousness connected to having particular obligations? How can I explain why some people care and others do not, or why people care for different things? Korsgaard argues that what is characteristic of humans is that they choose the principles that are definitive of their will. But what does ‘definitive of their will’ mean? Practical identity provides the answer.

Korsgaard defines practical identity as a “conception of one’s identity”, a “description under which you value yourself and find life worth living”.” Such conceptions are as various as the roles that human beings can occupy: parent, teacher, employee, citizen and so on. Such identities are practical because they are not primarily objects for theoretical contemplation, nor merely social roles that are attributed to us in a third-person way, but are expressed in what we do. For most people, as Korsgaard points out, their practical identity is a “jumble” of such conceptions, which often compete and conflict with one another. But insofar as you value yourself under a conception you can be said to identify with it and so constitute yourself in its image. In doing so, you provide yourself with reasons to act in certain ways; practical identity becomes the principle of choice that replaces mere (or animal) instinct.

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6 Crowell 2007, 315
7 Korsgaard 2002b, 26 in *op cit* 318.
10 Korsgaard’s concept “choice” needs to be understood very broadly as the
Human autonomy, according to Korsgaard’s Kantian programme, involves choosing one’s principles, and so arises the consciousness of normativity. I must now act not only in accord with norms but also in the light of them; I must act for a reason, where ‘reason’ does not refer to an external cause but to “a kind of reflective success”; something that I can endorse from the first-person point of view. If I had no practical identity - no conception under which I value myself - my choices would not have any purchase on reasons; I would have no principle on which to act and so would be incapable of acting at all.\(^{12}\) By identifying with a practical identity I gain reasons to do things in a particular way, and practical identities become normative for me to the extent that I identify with them. I identify with my practical identity as mother, and as teacher of philosophy, and as partner, and as daughter, and sister and so on. I do the things that I associate with having all those identities and I reflect on whether I do them well or not. On the basis of my reflection I can conclude whether I should have done otherwise. This is because practical identities involve standards of success or failure: there are things that mothers ought to do (and ought not). This is not to argue that practical identity is a simple matter; practical identity and having a practical identity and expressing and dealing with it well or not is a complex and imperfect practice.

We need practical identities because of “our reflective nature”.\(^{13}\) This nature makes us aware of the “workings of incentives within us … (and) sets us with a problem that other animals do not have”.\(^{14}\) Where the animal’s incentive is governed by the principle of instinct, our self-conscious nature means that we can “distance ourselves from [incentives] and call them into question”.\(^{15}\) And this in turn means that I must decide whether to act on them or not. It is in this situation of decision, “in the space of reflective distance, in the internal world created by self-consciousness, that reason is born”.\(^{16}\) Because I am aware of the workings of incentives within me I must ask whether it really gives me reasons to act in a certain way. On what principle do I decide this question? The source of what counts as a reason is my practical identity.

\(^{11}\) Korsgaard 1996, 93.
\(^{12}\) Op cit, 123 in Crowell 2007, 318.
\(^{13}\) Korsgaard 1996, 96.
\(^{14}\) Korsgaard 2002c, 7.
\(^{15}\) Ibid.
\(^{16}\) Op cit, 8; Korsgaard 1996, 93 and 96 in Crowell 2007, 320.
Identifying with it, its norms provide me with the principles that, in lieu of instinct, tell me “what [is] an appropriate response to what, what makes what worth doing, what the situation calls for”.\textsuperscript{17}

In Korsgaard’s account, then, our “self-conscious nature” is the source of the normative space in which we operate as humans. According to Crowell this is a powerful account - but he argues that Korsgaard’s concept of self-consciousness lacks an unequivocal basis. On the one hand, self-consciousness is understood to be a mode of self-awareness, an essential “structure of our minds that makes thoughtfulness possible”. On the other hand, this structure is defined in terms of reflection: “The human mind is self-conscious in the sense that it is essentially reflective”, where reflection is understood as our ability “to turn our attention into our perceptions and desires themselves”.\textsuperscript{18} Reflection, Korsgaard goes on to say, is a specific higher-order act that ‘reifies’ our states into “a kind of mental item” or content of consciousness.\textsuperscript{19} However the attempt to explain the essentially self-aware structure of our minds by an appeal to a specific mental act leads to an infinite regress argues Crowell. And infinite regress will not lead us to the source of normativity. It is possible to paraphrase Korsgaard’s position thus: we must see whether we can reflectively endorse desiring as we do. That is, by seeing whether, on reflection, we can sustain a desire to so desire. The regress that Crowell mentions is then that we might need a desire to desire that we so desire, and so on. As with all regression, it is not clear when we have reached the ultimate desire from which all others proceed.

But Korsgaard’s goal is finally not simply an account of the norms that make us good mothers, teachers or friends, but of moral norms, those that constitute the “rules for being good at being a person”.\textsuperscript{20} She argues that were there no such norms, all other normativity would be groundless. But how do moral norms differ from other norms? Because all my practical identities are contingent it is possible that I do not value myself under their description, and thus they are, in a certain sense, not really binding on me. Moral norms, however, according to Korsgaard, would be norms that bind me, come what may. But what are these based on? Korsgaard’s answer is quite simply:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18] Korsgaard 1996, 92 - 3.
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humanity - humanity implies rationality, which implies normativity. \(^{21}\) But how is this normativity formed, what gives it content?

At this point Korsgaard returns to the idea of practical identity for it is, after all, only when humanity is expressed in terms of a practical identity that it has content and can provide reasons for acting in one way rather than another. But Korsgaard has just argued that practical identity is contingent. Are we to understand that the universal (humanity) is dependent for its meaning on the contingent? In other words that humanity has no content without practical identity? What Korsgaard says is action requires that you identify yourself with a particular practical identity, for if you do not, “you will lose your grip on yourself as having any reason to do one thing rather than another.” \(^{22}\) This reason stems from your humanity itself. Hence the reason that your practical identity provides you to act in a certain way is a reason only “if you treat your humanity as a practical, normative form of identity, that is, if you value yourself as a human being”\(^{23}\).

Korsgaard is thus arguing that our identity as human beings itself provides reasons to act - but she has not convinced me that these reasons are any different to the reasons implied by a (contingent) practical identity. In addition, it would seem that she uses a tautologous argument: it is human to have practical identity; being human is a practical identity. Furthermore, I am yet to be convinced by Korsgaard that humanity provides moral norms other than those provided by practical identity. The best explanation of this confusion is to argue that Korsgaard has smuggled a metaphysical concept - humanity - back into her otherwise elegantly non-realist equation. This is not a problem for Crowell. He argues that the claim that the normativity of practical identities has its roots in an ontological structure that is not a contingent practical identity seems largely correct.\(^{24}\) I do have a problem with Korsgaard’s transcendentalism on this point because, on the one hand, she argues that only when humanity is normatively binding when it is expressed in terms of practical identity and the reasons that proceed from that identity. On the other she argues that humanity itself provides reasons for moral action. Crowell describes this as an “aporia, a knot in our understanding of just what it can mean to identify with, or value, our humanity as such.”\(^{25}\)

\(^{22}\) Op cit, 121.
\(^{23}\) Ibid.
\(^{24}\) Crowell 2007, 323.
\(^{25}\) Ibid.
But to continue: what does it mean to identify with, or value, our humanity as such? Korsgaard defines the human being as a “reflective animal who needs reasons to act and to live”.\(^{26}\) It is this identity, our humanity, which is supposed to provide “rules for being good at being a person”.\(^{27}\) It is at this point that Crowell identifies a problem. Humanity for Korsgaard, says Crowell, is an internally riven concept, an additive composition of animality-plus-reflection in which reflection is defined as a break with animality.\(^{28}\) He identifies two problems with this composite concept.

First, self-unification can only come about if, in choosing a practical identity, I also commit myself to my identity as human: “Since you cannot act without reasons, and since your humanity is the source of your reasons, you must value your own humanity if you are to act at all”.\(^{29}\) This is indeed to treat humanity itself as a kind of practical identity, as I argued above. But, Crowell argues, my humanity cannot be the source of reasons in the way that a practical identity is - that is, by providing norms that determine a particular way of getting on in the world. Being human in this sense is not something I can choose to be, not something, therefore, which I can value or identify with. Korsgaard acknowledges that “[t]he necessity of choosing and acting is our plight: the simple inexorable fact of the human condition.”\(^{30}\) But this means that it really makes no sense to speak of constitutive rules or standards here - I cannot succeed or fail in being human in this sense. I am it, whether I want to be so or not. In contrast, practical identities such as being a mother do involve satisfaction conditions that I can fail to instantiate, and so they can give me reasons to do what I do: providing meals, picking children up from school, and bringing them to bed, for example. Though there is no such thing as reasons unless there is humanity - and so humanity is the source of my reasons in that transcendental sense - humanity as a ‘plight’ is not by itself the source of any special reasons, concludes Crowell. Being human is not an identity in Korsgaard’s terms of being able to fail at it. In this sense it is not normative.

I cannot imagine that this is a conclusion that Korsgaard would want to reach. She seems to be saying rather than the plight of being human, the human condition, gives rise to - where she wants to go - binding moral norms. She

\(^{26}\) Korsgaard 1996, 121.  
\(^{27}\) Korsgaard 2002a, 18 in Crowell 2007, 323.  
\(^{28}\) Op cit, 324.  
\(^{29}\) Korsgaard 1996, 123 in op cit, 325.  
\(^{30}\) Korsgaard 2002a: 2 in ibid.
tries to do this in non-realist terms by calling humanity a ‘kind of practical identity’ but ends up instead with a marriage between ontology and moral constructivism: animality-plus-reflection.

Crowell’s second problem is that Korsgaard’s concept of humanity as a plight must entail constitutive standards that are both distinct from those involved in practical identities and provide reasons that can compete with those provided by practical identities. Only so can morality help me to act out one practical identity or another or ‘test’ the reasons to which practical identity gives rise, according to Crowell. Korsgaard’s normative concept of humanity is in fact wholly governed by the concept of reflection, the deliberating agent who is ‘distanced’ from his animal identity. The agent here is thus conceived entirely ‘intellectualistically’. And this is where the greatest problem lies in Korsgaard’s account of normativity according to Crowell. The intellectualistic conception of the agent means that Korsgaard cannot give a coherent account of non-deliberated action (Crowell is thinking of instinctual behaviour, or causal behaviour - behaviour that animals and humans alike share: satisfying hunger, avoiding danger, mindlessly coping) unless she smuggles deliberation back into it. In opting for the latter, Korsgaard rationalistically distorts the phenomenology of such action according to Crowell. She has effectively excluded the unreasonable and the irrational that are also part of human action.

The example that Korsgaard uses is the cowboy Tex who refuses to let his friends amputate his badly wounded leg. Since Tex will die if his leg is not amputated and he refuses to have his leg amputated, then he allows fear to dictate his actions and, in Korsgaard’s terms, therefore “fails at being a subject”. Crowell challenges this conclusion on the basis that it is a common-sense idea that the supposedly non-rational choices of the soul are no less relevant than explicit choices. The point is, it seems to me, that Tex might have good reasons for his fear: fear of the pain and perhaps also of the loss of the leg. While there is undoubtedly an unreasonable element in Tex’s reaction (we all instinctively avoid pain), it seems wrong to conclude that Tex has failed at being a subject by not choosing to have his leg amputated. It might be possible to argue that Tex’s refusal to have his leg amputated is a

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31 Crowell 2007, 325.
32 Op cit, 327.
33 Discussed in Crowell, footnote 20, p. 332.
34 Ibid.
rational choice (insofar as this is a ceteris paribus choice moment) if he fears losing a leg more than he fears death - is a cowboy with one leg a cowboy?

Rather, it would be better to argue that there are many non-deliberative actions and moments (hopefully not all as acute as Tex’s) in humans’ lives, none of which involve the failure of subjectivity. On the one hand, if I eat because I am hungry, I am clearly fulfilling a non-deliberative desire, namely hunger - but I do not fail at being a subject. On the other, this is one of many actions that I perform that is both non-deliberative and yet is a matter for which I have normative reasons for performing: what I eat, how I eat, where I eat, when I eat and how much I eat. I conclude that the correct conclusion to draw, as Crowell does, is not that non-deliberative action is not normative but that reflection is not always seated in the controlling position in the human psyche.

This is a point on which Michael Smith concurs. He too has a problem with the role that Korsgaard gives to reflection as forming what he calls “Korsgaard’s meta-ethical premise”. He interprets Korsgaard as arguing that normative thought is a matter of the formation and expression of beliefs about the desires we would have if our desires were to survive a process of reflective critical scrutiny. She thinks, he says, that the question ‘Should I desire that p?’ is the same as ‘Is p desirable?’ He quotes:

> When you deliberate, it is as if there were something over and above all of your desires, something which is you, and which chooses which desire to act on. This means that the principle or law by which you determine your actions is one that you regard as being expressive of yourself. (Korsgaard Sources of Normativity 1996, 100, quoted in Smith 1999, 388.)

Unfortunately, Korsgaard gives no arguments whatsoever for how you are to determine what is expressive of yourself. She only specifies it as “a description under which you value yourself, a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking.”

This means, argues Smith, that the reflective self can perform two roles: it can either provide us with examples of behaviour we should try to emulate, or it can provide us with advice that we should try to follow. He has critical points to make about such a conception of the reflective self but first it should

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35 Smith 1999, 386.
36 Op cit, 387.
be pointed out that Korsgaard is not arguing for a simple, one-to-one relation between believing that I have a practical identity and having such an identity. The mere fact that I have a certain conception of my practical identity does not mean that I should conceive of myself in a certain way. Smith believes she is correct in arguing as such. His example is that the mere fact of his believing that he is a devoted parent does not mean that he is a devoted parent.

Korsgaard insists that there is an answer to the problem of locating this “you” and “yourself”. She argues that we know how to conceive of our practical identities if we can find a conception of our practical identity that we cannot legitimately question. There is one conception of practical identity that I cannot question, says Korsgaard, and that is that I cannot question whether or not I have the practical identity of a creature that is capable of reflective questioning of my desires. 38 The normative claim that issues from this incontestable premise is that I must value being a creature that has desires as the result of the exercise of the capacity to form desires via reflection. I must value myself as a rational creature and, because this premise is not unique to me or to my own practical identity, I must value the same in all other creatures that are rational. I must value other humans. This is the device around which I build my practical identities in order for it to lend my actions normativity. It is also the device by which I value other humans. This valuing gives rise to obligations, in Korsgaard’s terms, and not contingent norms.

Like Crowell, Smith draws a distinction between the reflective self and the contingent (non-reflective or practical identity) self. Smith argues that it is unlikely if not implausible that the reflective and the contingent self are one and the same (otherwise what would the reflective self have to do?). Furthermore, assuming that the reflective self is the one with ready (readier) access to the correct normative attitude, then the contingent self doesn’t always ‘get it right’ and commits non-deliberative actions and the like. Korsgaard argues that the contingent self must emulate the reflective self but, as Smith argues with the following example, the reflective reaction is very often not the type of reaction that is required by others. Smith again uses the example of being a devoted parent. 39 It is conceivable, he says, that his reflective self would want him to have care and concern for his children as a natural response to their needs, rather than on the basis of reflection. Perhaps children can detect the difference between a concern for them that is naturally

38 Korsgaard 1996, 103 - 125.
39 Smith 1999, 393.
formed in response to their needs, as against a concern for them that is reflectively formed. Perhaps they develop in a happier and healthier way when those who care for them have natural cares and concerns rather than the reflective ones. If this is right, then his reflective self will certainly not want the (contingent) devoted parent to have the desires that he has. The reflective self will not want that the contingent self emulate the reflective self and the reflective self will not want itself to want it. It is therefore possible, says Smith, that the reflective self should not be emulated by the contingent self. And therefore he concludes that Korsgaard’s normative conclusion cannot be drawn from her meta-ethical premise that we know how to endorse - by reflection - a desire to desire.

While this example is a trifle construed, the point is that Smith is correct when he argues that there are situations imaginable when the contingent rather than the reflective self should be making normative decisions. Tex’s predicament (leg off or dead) is arguably one of them. It is significant that both Crowell and Smith reject Korsgaard’s source of normativity argument on the basis of her inadequate dealing with the category of non-deliberative actions. Crowell, because Korsgaard seems to be arguing that committing non-deliberative actions means that you fail at being a subject; Smith, because he questions whether reflection has the exclusive right to be the normative exemplar. Both point out that practical identity is something contingent and that Korsgaard’s attempts to give this identity a categorical normative foundation - by referring to “humanity” - do not succeed. Crowell rejects Korsgaard’s attempt because she bases practical identity on humanity and humanity, in her eyes, is a “plight”, a universal given and therefore cannot, says Crowell, be the basis for the content of normative reason. Smith reads Korsgaard differently on this point: he sees Korsgaard as arguing that it is in the valuing of reflecting on desires that we value other people (because they value reflecting on desires too). And that this is the basis of our normativity: that we value humanity (in others and in ourselves). This is not where the problem lies for Smith, apparently. His problem is rather with Korsgaard’s idea that the reflective self provides the exclusive categorical basis for normativity and therefore that the normativity of humanity is seated in its powers of reflection.

Why are Crowell’s and Smith’s arguments concerning the normativity of non-deliberative actions interesting for me? They are so primarily because they reject the idea of an exclusively reflective basis to normativity. Caring is, as I have argued extensively in Chapter One, primarily a non-deliberative normative action - or at least an action that has, at its basis, a non-deliberative
motivation. I argue, following Noddings and Frankfurt, that caring for is to be captivated by something irrespective of your will and yet it is something you do because you are willing to do so. It is, in Frankfurt’s phrase, “volitional necessity”, or, in other words, to be willingly compelled. The reflective self, I argue, plays an insignificantly small role in this process: the motivation to be caring is, in Crowell and Smith’s terminology, primarily non-deliberative.

I do have two points on which I differ from Crowell and Smith though. First, I disagree with Crowell’s point concerning the non-normativity of ‘humanity’. I will argue that even if being human is a “plight” to use Korsgaard’s phrase, or a given, it is nevertheless a source of value. And second, I disagree with both Crowell and Smith that Korsgaard does not give us the means with which to understand non-deliberative actions. Though she does not argue this herself, I argue that Korsgaard’s account of how normativity works (and not so much her account of the source of normativity) has potential for explaining why non-deliberative actions can also be normative. I offer now a (third) reading of Korsgaard’s account of the source of normativity and I argue in favour of a subtle but distinct change of emphasis.

**How does normativity work?**

In order to argue that Korsgaard can provide a good working model of non-deliberative actions, I need to rephrase what I see Korsgaard doing with her account of valuing. Firstly, I shall not even attempt to find a source that will guarantee the normativity of actions and practical identity. It is not my intention to provide an infallible account of the source of normativity. Instead I shall argue in favour of the following two points: first, as Korsgaard argues, valuing is located in (rather than beyond) human activity. And second, Korsgaard’s account of how normativity works has potential for explaining how (some) non-deliberative actions can be normative.

Korsgaard argues that we humans, in the absence of any higher deontological presence, confer value onto things. This amounts to a constructivist account assuming that values are only brought into the world via human beings. The advantage of this position is that it avoids un-examinable ontological assumptions about ‘objectively given’ values. The problem however is that

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40 Frankfurt 1999.
41 Korsgaard 1996, 1.
nothing has objective value: I value potatoes, you value tomatoes; how could we ever get along? Furthermore, the objection has been made that to value everything merely because humans value it would open the door to a form of value relativism that is unacceptable.\footnote{As Allan Gibbard points out in his essay “Morality as Consistency in Living”, \textit{Ethics} 110 (October 1999), 150. Just because someone holds something valuable would mean that anything goes, including all the dubious and harmful morality possible.} But it should be pointed out that the mere fact of valuing something is not sufficient to make it valuable. This would be to open the door to a pernicious moral relativism in which the so-called “Caligulas” and drunkards and Mafioso of this world could then justify their actions as expressions of their valuing and therefore as rightful actions.\footnote{This summary by no means does justice to the complex arguments given by Gibbard. I would certainly recommend the inquisitive to refer directly to his article \textit{(ibid)} and that of Cohen (G. A. Cohen, “Reason, humanity, and the moral law”. In Korsgaard \textit{Sources}, 1996, 167 – 188).} What is needed is a moment (a long moment, if necessary) in which the things that you want are compared with the things that people you care about also want. Thus debauchery and sadism is what Caligula wants but, as it is not everyone’s cup of tea, he might find that as a consequence most people will not - of their free will - want to share his values. This does not however mean that, in some evolutionary sense, we will all eventually desire the same things (in a convergence of values).\footnote{This view on how values persevere leads, to my mind, to an unacceptable form of moral realism. I would argue that moral values, historical conditions and people are sufficiently diverse to guarantee a significant lack of convergence. This is not to deny that humans do share significant values. It is merely a denial of some kind of progressional and inevitable convergence.} The point is, rather, that we should not seek unanimity in what we value – the only unanimity that there is is \textit{that we value}. This is the significant starting point of what might be called a naturalised (in distinction to a transcendental) account of normativity.

As far as the ‘objectivity’ of values is concerned, insofar as we share values, this is not so much a fact about valuable objects but a fact about human beings and their relations to each other. The reasons I have in finding something valuable should make me understand the reasons that someone else has in finding something else valuable: as Korsgaard says, taking into account what other people find of value in whatever they care about is a way of being rightly related to those people.\footnote{Korsgaard 1996, 127. In fact, Korsgaard refers to a Kantian description of personal relationships: “a personal relationship is a reciprocal commitment on the part of two people to take one another’s views, interests, and wishes into account”. \textit{Kant, Lectures}} Unanimity in valuing is not derived
from the objects that are valued but from the human relationships in which those things are found to be valuable. In this way, shared value has to do with mutual appreciation of one another’s capacities, minds, tastes, interests and creativity.46

The exact form of morality and the obligations that flow from it is dependent on how we see the idea of moral identity taking shape. In this respect, it is clear that we cannot value just any old thing or refer to it as being normative. We can value something only if it has some form of appeal to us – broadly understood – it satisfies one of our needs, it is the kind of thing we are capable of being interested in, it has aesthetic appeal; it is something we can endorse; it is something that people we care about also endorse. Something in us has to answer to something in the object or the action in order for the object or action to be valuable to us. Philippa Foot describes how, during lectures on virtue, she holds up a piece of torn paper and asks the question: “Is this good?”47 The inappropriateness of the question usually gets her a laugh from the audience, she relates. I would argue that it is precisely the random nature of the piece of torn paper that makes it impossible for us to find it either good or bad. It has no relevance and, most likely, no connection to anyone’s practical identity, and therefore has no pertinent value.

But if value is a human construct, socially endorsed, then how then does it have effect or authority on these very same humans? The next step is to argue that because the only source of value is the human experience of it, human experience itself is valuable. This is a problematic step and I acknowledge its circularity. However, unlike the typical example used in any undergraduate Logics I course – sleeping potion induces sleep because it contains a sleep-inducing ingredient - there is no possible alternative description of the active and/or valuable ingredient of humans except humanity. Therefore I am afraid that we shall have to make do with it.48

I can rephrase and shift the emphasis of the debate though: humans experience value and what is significant for an ethical discussion is how they

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46 Korsgaard 1996, 128.
47 Although I cannot locate the exact quotation, the essay entitled “Moral Beliefs” in Foot’s collection: Virtues and Vices 1978, is an elaboration of this apparent absurdity.
48 Does this mean that I am admitting to a form of substantivism? In other words that the only value that exists prior to all other is humanity? Perhaps it does - if seen in a metaphysical sense which is not my intention. My conclusion is rather that humans determine what humans find important.
do so. And this is where Korsgaard makes an important contribution: they do so rationally because rationality has to do with making decisions that are compatible with what one finds valuable. And what one finds valuable has to do with who you are - what she calls “practical identity”. Korsgaard does not argue that it is sensible to be moral in accordance with your practical identity. Korsgaard argues that it is morally necessary to act according to your sense of who you are. Morality in this conception is therefore the outcome of rationality – in the broadest sense of “wise people don’t make moral decisions counter to their identity.” In another sense, practical identity has a very practical (rather than logical) aspect: it relates to a jumble of conceptions, sometimes contradictory, of who you are, a composite of all the identities which you hold to be part of yourself and it is one’s moral task to give expression to these identities in the appropriate fashion at the appropriate moment. These can be “contingent and local” identities but even these bring with them moral obligations.

Korsgaard connects practical identity to having obligations because humanity requires both: “part of the normative force of those reasons springs from the value we place on ourselves as human beings who need such identities. In this way all value depends on the value of humanity.” Thus it is not so much that humanity has a specific content which then lends practical identity normativity (as I understand Crowell as having understood Korsgaard as arguing) but it is rather because we value ourselves as human beings that our practical identity is normative. It is the valuing itself that makes our activity normative and the moral obligations we have to one another flow from that recognition of mutual valuing. This, it seems to me, is the crucial step to make in a naturalised account of normativity - away from transcendental values: it is not the value of humanity but the fact of human valuing that lends our actions normativity and gives rise to obligations.

This means, I would argue, that the fact that human beings have rationality does not make morality subordinate to reflection (as I understand Smith as arguing that this is what Korsgaard advocates). For two reasons: firstly, rationality or reflection is not the same as morality. Rather, rationality is a

49 Korsgaard 1996, 100 ff and discussed in the section above.
51 Does Korsgaard mean this in a necessary sense, like Aristotle’s ’A good man cannot do wrong’? A weaker, conditional form - ’a wise man should not do wrong – or else…‘ – doesn’t quite have authoritative effect.
52 Op cit, 121.
53 Op cit, 121
pre-requisite for morality; it is by no means a guarantee of morality, either by example or by means of advice.\textsuperscript{54} Quite simply, very often the best thing to do is not the thing about which one reflects but is the thing that relates immediately and directly to who we are.\textsuperscript{55} If rationality implies impartiality (as it indeed does), then it is correct to argue that reflective morality is but one kind of morality and therefore that rationality plays an important but limited role in being moral.

This leads to the second, related point: is all morality rational? In a broad sense this is true (it is, after all, rational to be moral) but Korsgaard gives an answer to the question ‘how can we judge when something is normative?’ with a reply that falls both inside and outside of rationality. The only answer that Korsgaard provides to this question is highly subjective: it must make your life worth living. Practical identity, she says is “a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking.”\textsuperscript{56} There is no blueprint for what a worthwhile life is and there are no values other than those created and sustained by us. And this means that the contingent and local aspects of practical identity are not necessarily, in the first place, rational - and nor do they have to be. The ambition of the man who wants to be the first who flies single-handedly over large parts of the world, or climbs inhospitable mountains, or swims great stretches of ocean is not reasonable - but it is an undeniable part of his practical identity. Doing these things makes his life “worthwhile” - he derives a good deal of normative satisfaction from doing these things: they are “right” for him. Rationality need not, I would argue, be the sole categorical basis for morality. This was the first point I wished to make concerning normativity.

The second concerns the ‘working’ of normativity - the phenomenology of normativity, as it were: what does it do? Korsgaard argues that normativity (and the obligations attached to that normativity) issues from having a practical identity. Practical identity, although often not something simple or straightforward, is nevertheless necessary, according to Korsgaard. Its necessity arises from self-consciousness because self-consciousness forces us

\textsuperscript{54} This is indeed the conclusion that Smith reaches. But because I find his counter-example too construed, I prefer to argue the point thus.

\textsuperscript{55} I am thinking of Bernard William’s famous a “thought too many” in which he argues that some actions are justified in particular ways to agents and this means that agents will make choices that are immediate and subjective (for example, rescuing one’s wife and not a stranger when both are in peril and only one can be rescued). http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/williams-bernard/

\textsuperscript{56} Korsgaard 1996, 101.
to have a conception of ourselves and we must act according to that conception. This is a fact about what it is like to be reflectively conscious. The fact that normativity issues from having a practical identity means that normativity is as necessary as practical identity is because of being self-conscious. Thus acting normatively, acting according to our practical identity, will have consequences – good, identity affirming consequences. And this would also imply that not acting according to our conception of ourselves will have consequences – presumably not good consequences, whatever these might be. For these latter consequences there is a rich semantic tradition concerning the conscience, in particular, what it is to have a bad conscience, to be guilt-ridden, remorseful or full of regret. To choose but one example, the adulterous King David, in Psalm 32:3, complains: “When I kept silence, my bones grew old through my groaning all day long.”

Korsgaard argues that “a person’s own mind does indeed impose sanctions on her: that when we don’t do what we should, we punish ourselves, by guilt and regret and repentance and remorse.”\footnote{Korsgaard 1996, 151.} This is because, she continues, “pain is the perception of a reason”.\footnote{Ibid.} Someone who recalls failing to do what he is obliged to do will feel pain – that is what remorse and guilt is. “The mind’s authority does not depend upon the experience of the negative moral emotions, but it absolutely implies it”, she argues.\footnote{Ibid.} This pain is what I call the phenomenology of normativity. Korsgaard only mentions pain. This is probably because she is primarily concerned with the transgression of morality rather than with confirmative experiences of the same. What is significant to me in her argument is the description of the effect of normativity: the realisation that normativity is an experienced and felt thing; that the transgression and affirmation of normativity are felt by the person who transgresses or confirms moral reasons. This is an essential part of understanding what normativity is - that it is something that is not exclusively in the domain of the reasonable but is also something that is (acutely) felt. This was the second point about how normativity works: normativity is something that you experience: you feel the effect of the confirmation or transgression of morality.

Korsgaard expresses this experience in an extreme form: she links this to the consequences of having a practical identity: you act morally because you could not live with yourself otherwise. Not following the precepts of one’s
practical identity would be continually to contradict or oppose that identity, she says. To use Korsgaard’s dramatic phrase: “it could be ... worse than death”.60

(M)orality can ask hard things of us, sometimes even that we should be prepared to sacrifice our lives in its name. This places a demanding condition on a successful answer to the normative question: it must show that sometimes doing the wrong thing is as bad or worse than death. And for most human beings on most occasions, the only thing that could be as bad or worse than death is something that for us amounts to death - not being ourselves any more. (Korsgaard Sources 1996, pp. 17 - 8)

Using the example of extreme old age, accompanied by diminished intelligence or an altered character, she argues that the thought ‘that would not be me any more’, would lead one to wanting rather to be dead. She then concludes “if moral claims are ever worth dying for, then violating them must be, in a similar way, worse than death. And this means that they must issue in a deep way from our sense of who we are.”61 Korsgaard therefore equates morality with identity, and identity with normativity - all necessary for human beings.

This conclusion provides the necessary defence to Crowell’s critique that if humanity is a “plight” then it cannot be the source of normativity. Korsgaard argues that being human is a plight in which we have no choice; if you are human, you have an identity; when you have an identity you have obligations; therefore to be human is to have obligations. My response to Crowell is that the necessity of having to have an identity does - contrary to what he seems to think - provide us with moral content. It might not guarantee the logical security of the source of normativity but it emphasises the point that humans construct value because they have to. You are not human unless you have an identity. Once you have an identity, you have obligations: particular obligations flow from being (a particular) someone.

I have argued here that Korsgaard gives us enough material to construct an argument in favour of the normativity of non-deliberative actions. I argued that her notion of practical identity is confusing when regarded as a transcendental notion (humanity). I have argued in favour of four precepts.

61 Op cit, 18.
These are: first, obligations originate from the necessary plight of being human; second, what makes your life worth living is the basis for deciding what is normative; third, reflection is not always the best guide for moral action; and fourth, the effect of normativity is felt - it is experiential. This reading of Korsgaard’s account of the normativity gives me a valuable insight for my discussion of caring. I have argued that the activity of caring is in large part non-deliberative and necessary and experiential - and now I shall argue that it is also normative.

**Non-deliberative yet normative**

It is at this point, I would argue, that a discussion of normativity in care ethics can begin. Caring is an expression of valuing other people (I will limit my discussion to caring for people here but it can include projects and work and programmes and processes and even things). We value because of our own practical identities (in the words of Frankfurt: because of our own concerns and love), and we value what people who matter to us value (in the words of Korsgaard) – if this is consistent with our own practical identities. As a mother, I value the well-being of my children; their well-being is dear to me because I am a parent. This I can easily conclude after due reflection - it is something that fits seamlessly into my practical identity as mother. But my love for and profound enjoyment of who my children are goes beyond the bounds of reflection. In loving my children as I do, I am seized by the power of my emotional response to them: I am enraptured, captured, necessitated - and I was from the very first moment I laid eyes on them, in other words when I only knew what they were and not who they were. This experience is normative in the sense that I strive to fulfil the sufficient conditions for being a (good) parent; this experience is non-deliberative, even irrational at times, and yet also normative (I am a devoted parent).

Caring, with its compelling and necessary character, is an excellent example of non-deliberative activity. Though caring has reflective and reflexive moments too: at moments when the one caring must evaluate whether what he is doing is required by the cared for, what kind of effect his interventions have and in what kind of situation the caring for places him. But the motivation to be caring is primarily - as is clear from the caring theories of Noddings and Frankfurt and Dalmiya and Halwani - not a reflective activity at base at all. In the words of these authors it is “engrossment”; it is “being seized” or “pulled”; it is “displacement”; it is “necessary”. None of these experiences warrant the description ‘reflective’. And yet, despite this
definitive characteristic of what caring involves, there are important normative consequences of caring. These consequences are felt not only by the care recipient, the one cared for, but also by the one caring. Because the phenomenon of being captured by the object of care has to do with the interests and concerns (the practical identity) of the one caring. There has to be a significant overlap between what the one caring finds important and gripping and rousing in his own self and what he finds in the cared for. Without this overlap there is no impetus for caring. Thus, although the urge or impulse or tendency to be caring in the first place is largely involuntary, there are reasons for why it happens. And these reasons, this overlap between the identity of the one caring and what the one caring finds or sees in the cared for, is the basis for the normativity of the caring relation. If it is an unwarranted or a somehow false representation of the practical identity of the one caring, then it is not good care. We can only care if the things we care about are somehow consistent or compatible with our practical identities. Also, from the point of view of the cared for, if it is illicit, or perverse, or exploitative, or inappropriate, or manipulative or harmful in any way, then it should be stopped because it is not good care.

Both rational obligations and non-deliberative impetus to care bring with them the normative effect that Korsgaard speaks of: the mental sanctions guilt, remorse, repentance and regret. This pain is the realisation that something should have been done and was not or that something that should not have done was. It is the phenomenology of normativity. But not all phenomenological effects are painful. Because care ethics is about relations with others, it is also concerned with the beneficial effects of caring. Some care ethicists focus on the aspect of humanity and define humanity in terms of being vulnerable and fallible (care ethicists like Verkerk and Manschot and other Dutch care ethicists). Some care ethicists focus rather on perception and ‘how it is with the other’. This can include need and vulnerability - as well as happiness. The carer recognises and takes pleasure in the other’s happiness and identifies with and is concerned about his needs, and is also aware and responsive to the “fragility and mortality of human existence”.

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62 The historical ontologist Michel Foucault with his concept of “care of the self” is an exception to this rule. Foucault *The History of Sexuality*, Volume III, 1984.
63 See their essays in Verkerk 1997.
64 Ricoeur, cited in Verkerk 1994, 64.
Do we have an obligation to care?

But how do we get from a theory of what is valuable about caring to an obligation to care? At the beginning of this chapter I described that the compellingness of an obligation does not lie in its being a command but in its endorsement. Only when that which is required to be done is also endorsed by the person required to do that thing does the command become an obligation. Then it becomes something that someone must do. One has reasons based upon one’s practical identity for doing that thing. The activity of caring has this structure too: caring is often in response to an appeal of some kind, for help or attention. When the appeal overlaps with the one caring’s own concerns and desires - when object of care is endorsed - caring becomes an obligation. Obligation is thus a step further than the impetus to be caring: it is the finding of reasons for being caring rather than (merely) being compelled to or propelled into caring. Having being ‘pulled into’ a caring relation with someone, it is very often the case that there comes a moment in which one says: “I must care for this person”. This moment is the moment in which obligation ‘takes over’ and transforms what was a “volitional necessity” into a (perhaps but not necessarily) longer stage of commitment, responsibility, and trust. In this sense, caring is an obligation in that involves the acceptance or endorsement of the responsibility of the caring relation by the one caring.

One cannot have an obligation to love in the sense that we cannot be required to love (Kant made this quite clear in his Metaphysics of Morals\(^65\), but I argue that one can have an obligation to care. Though both love and care involve an element of liability, these are different kinds of culpability. In love, we are held much less responsible than when we care – love being primarily that which is not rational: inclinational, impulsive, unreasonable - in short, wholly amoral. Care, on the other hand, has as its goal the achievement of what the other desires whether or not one finds them worthy of love. This indeed is the single most distinguishing feature of caring. Love can also include caring for the other; caring does not include loving the other. It is precisely the element of wanting to achieve what the other desires – or

\(^{65}\) Kant Metaphysics of Morals 1797 (1991), 449 – 52. Kant distinguishes between “practical love” or “active benevolence” and “the love that is delight”, 450 – 1. Caring, to my mind, is very similar in character to what Kant calls “active benevolence”, though benevolence is characteristically an eighteenth-century moral sentiment and caring has a distinctive late twentieth-century admixture of psychologism and individualism.
“making their ends your own” in Kantian terminology – irrespective of whether you find them worthy of your love that makes caring an activity that must be sustained beyond the whimsicality of mere affection. Caring for others is also a responsibility without concern for reciprocity. The cared for is under no obligation to reciprocate but the one caring, once the caring responsibility has been accepted, has an obligation to sustain this relationship.

This is not to deny the importance of the initial impetus to care which, I have argued is non-deliberative. The urge to care can originate in being ‘seized’ by the object of care in the sense that the one-caring cannot forbear to care. The one caring can become ‘engrossed’ in the cared for or might, due to a process of ‘displacement’ in the cared for, feel the same urgency that underlie the appeal for care by the cared for. Caring, described as such, is necessary: irrefutable, impossible not to do.

Korsgaard argues that the normative question becomes an issue when an agent acknowledges the truth of a moral claim but fails to feel the force of the claim. Pim, the reluctant carer cited in the Introduction, is caught in ‘the normative question’: he asks – knowing that he should care – why he is unable to do so; why doesn’t he feel that caring drive to the same degree as his partner does? Evidently the knowledge that caring for his child is something that is beneficial to that child is not sufficient to galvanise him into action. Pim has located the crux of the issue of motivation and finds himself in the same predicament as moral rationalists were warned they would find themselves: the predicament that understanding is not sufficient to motivate one to act morally. Quite clearly the solution to Pim’s problem will not come from rationality. Pim seems to know what his obligations are - what he must do - but he does not. What happens next?

I argue that Noddings’ and Frankfurt’s accounts are helpful in being able to understand what it is to care and (hopefully) to get Pim to care. First of all, Pim should do what Noddings urges carers must do: namely to distance himself from his own (all too readily taken) perspective and “perceive the reality” of the person requiring care - that of his son. For this is indeed what is unique and urgent about caring: the needs of the to be cared for are prior to the carer’s needs (however temporally and to whatever degree). Sam’s

66 Kant *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 1785, 430.
68 David Hume *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the*
demands, because he is young and dependent and vulnerable, take priority over Pim’s wanting to read the newspaper or spend his time as he wants to. Pim needs to see what it is that Sam needs from him in terms of caring - Pim must ‘take on Sam’s reality as his own’, in the words of Noddings. Only when Pim’s desires have subsided sufficiently to the background will Pim have the space to know what it is that Sam requires of him as a carer. This does not mean that Pim must do so selflessly or without reflection; Pim after all must bear the responsibility for caring for Sam.

But Pim seems unable to push his own desires and wants into the background. He knows that he is a father and should care for his son but he regards Sam’s needs only in terms of obstacles in the way of his achieving what he wants: to read the newspaper undisturbed, to phone, to sleep, to read his mail. How can Pim be encouraged to ‘take on Sam’s reality’? Noddings does not have an answer. In her account, morality is located primarily “in the pre-act consciousness” of the person caring.\textsuperscript{69} She argues that experience of, and longing for, a caring relationship is condition general to all humans; in other words, everyone has, or has had, access to one or more caring relationships and we all know, “pre-act consciously” what this relationship entails. Pim should therefore have this knowledge and it should galvanise him into action – but it does not. What now?

A second approach, derived from Frankfurt, is more compelling: you care because you cannot forbear not to. You are compelled, albeit willingly to care for something or someone - because of your own concerns and love. According to Frankfurt, either you have concerns and love (for the object of caring) or you do not. Nothing, in this account, can make you care. If Pim felt these concerns and love as Frankfurt describes them, then he should not be able to forbear from caring for Sam. Unfortunately, in this case study, Pim apparently does not feel the necessary concern in order to enable him to care. Pim does not feel; therefore he cannot care.

If we were to stop here then, I am afraid, we would have to reject Pim as a moral deviant and believe him beyond help. But there is hope in a third attempt: much like Frankfurt, Korsgaard argues that one’s normativity flows directly out of one’s practical identity (Frankfurt would say that you care for the object of caring because of what you find important). But where Korsgaard differs from Frankfurt is that she describes is the effect of caring

\textsuperscript{69} Noddings 1984, 28.
(or not caring). In particular, Korsgaard describes the pain that one feels if one acts contrary to one’s practical identity - to act against it feels “worse than death”, in the words of Korsgaard. Practical identity is not only something one has - this is the third step - as it is for Frankfurt; for Korsgaard having a practical identity has profound normative implications and consequences. These are the consequences that Pim is experiencing: he is feeling the pain of not facing up to his obligations in the sense that these obligations are his; they are direct consequences of his practical identity (in the words of Korsgaard). His illnesses, his rashes, his frustrations and feelings of inadequacy: Pim is not fulfilling the obligations that accompany, in particular, his practical identity as father, as carer (and therefore also, as partner). Pim does not care; therefore he feels.

Conclusion

While most of the care ethics literature begins with examples of loving and tender caring moments, I have expressly chosen a case study that illustrates what I regard as the most urgent problem that care ethics faces: how to motivate people to care for others, particularly when they seem insufficiently moved to do so. What is problematic for care ethics is that there are those who do care and those who do not, and the danger is that the twain shall never meet. Furthermore, those who do not can do so by virtue of those who do; and those who do are obliged to continue doing so because of those who do not. Can care ethics effectively address those who do not do caring? An ethics cannot force anyone to act morally (and supposing it could do so, there are good reasons for not wanting any system of thought that tries to). As force is out of the question, we are left to consider various persuasive or prescriptive theories and choose the ones with the most compelling arguments to motivate.

I have chosen a combination of three accounts of being necessitated to value, two of which concern caring. Noddings’ account of how the one-caring can perceive what it is that the cared-for needs and Frankfurt’s account of why it is you care - how you are gripped by the object of care. These two accounts have no binding moral consequences attached to caring (or not) and are therefore non-normative. Frankfurt has an either or account: either you care

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70 Korsgaard 1996, 17.
71 Tronto has a powerful account of the political consequences of this division of labour in her Moral Boundaries 1993.
or you don’t and there is no damage or shame if you do not. Noddings’ account is also non-normative in the sense that she cannot consider the alternative that you will not “perceive the reality of the other” and therefore be swept into a caring relationship. Korsgaard’s key contribution is adding the normative aspect to being necessitated - what happens, in the case of Pim, when you do not comply to the demands of your practical identity. Without Korsgaard, we would have to write Pim off as a moral deviant; with Korsgaard, we can understand Pim’s pain.