2 Kantian Care

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Introduction[1]

How do we care well for a human being: ourselves or another? Non-Kantian scholars rarely identify the philosophy of Kant as a particularly useful resource with which to understand the full complexity of human care. Kant's philosophy is often taken to presuppose that a philosophical analysis of good human life needs to attend only to how autonomous, rational agents – sprung up like mushrooms out of nowhere, without a childhood, never sick, always independent – ought to act respectfully and how they can be forced to interact rightfully. Questions involving aspects of human life captured by what Eva Kittay aptly phrased "the fact of dependency" (1999) – such as our vulnerable, fragile, and embodied social natures, asymmetrical care relations, and deep systemic injustices – are therefore commonly thought to be beyond the grasp of Kant and of Kantian philosophy. Against this historically prominent understanding of Kant's practical philosophy, in what follows I engage and draw upon recent Kant scholarship, which shows both the inadequacy of such rationalist readings and the fruitfulness of using Kant's practical philosophy to enhance our understanding of human care relations. After situating my approach in the existing, relevant secondary literature on Kant's human agent, I explore key features of Kant's accounts of human nature and the highest good. I pay special attention to his proposal that our human nature comprises reflective and unreflective aspects and patterns that we (ought to) strive to develop, transform, and integrate in wise ways through our faculty of desire. In addition, I emphasize the dangers that our ineradicable propensity to do bad things (evil) poses for our projects of self- and other care. I proceed by outlining how Kant's account of moral (ethical and legal) responsibility for self and others is developed through his theories of freedom, that is, through his theory of virtue (virtuous internal freedom with its account of perfect and imperfect duties) and his theory of right (rightful external freedom with its account of innate, private, and public right).

On the conception I am advancing, we are pretty messy, fragile, and vulnerable beings whose projects of caring are difficult, ongoing, and complex. On the one hand, we (should) strive to care for ourselves (by striving to manage and heal badly functioning parts and by developing, transforming, and integrating immature or distinct parts of ourselves into good wholes) and for others (assisting them in their projects of management and healing and of developing, transforming, and integrating themselves into good wholes) in ways that are both respectful and attentive to the particular people we are – people with lives of our own to live – and the kinds of relationships we share. On the other hand, we should, and can, be forced to interact rightfully, meaning interaction consistent with one another's basic (innate, private, and public) rights and, hence, contribute to reform projects that improve our inherited, imperfect legal-political systems with regard to care relations. Bringing Kant's philosophy into dialogue with care theorists, I conclude, advances the insights of both traditions by showing one way to arrive at a multifaceted, yet unified account of human care relations where our embodied, social as well as our rational natures are given due consideration.

Recent Developments in Kant Scholarship on Human Nature and Agency

In recent decades Kant scholarship has done much to help rectify the historically prominent misconception of the Kantian human agent as simply a rational, autonomous agent. In the 1980s and 1990s Kantian ethicists such as Marcia Baron, Barbara Herman, Thomas E. Hill Jr., Christine Korsgaard, Onora O'Neill, and Allen Wood paved the way with groundbreaking work on Kantian ethics and moral psychology in general, as well as on issues related to care and dependency relations in particular.[2] The next generation of Kantians followed their lead and took the project further.[3] In addition to making the Kantian agent less one-dimensional and more human (more embodied and more social), many of these interpretations argue that the morally responsible Kantian agent does not have to be as stringently law-abiding as Kant himself seems to think. For example, several argue that we can (or ought to) lie to the murderer at the door in order to save a friend hiding in our house or that we can (or ought to) save our loved one(s) over strangers.[4] More generally, these Kantian ethicists tend to argue that we need not accept Kant's account of absolute prohibitions (perfect duties), leaving much to be learned from Kant with regard to emotionally healthy, morally sound human psychologies, including as we face evil. More recently, there has also been an increasing amount of work on Kant's writings on human nature and anthropology, such as by Alix Cohen, Patrick Frierson, Robert Louden, Susan M. Shell, and John A. Zammito,[5] that, in

part, seeks to make evident the inaccuracy of the historically prominent rational autonomy reading of Kant. Like the aforementioned Kantian ethicists (and those who follow their lead), these scholars tend to argue that concerns of happiness are important for Kant, even if morality is more important and happiness is ultimately subservient to it in that being happy is morally beneficial by making it subjectively easier for us to do what is morally required.

My related work draws upon, yet also challenges, aspects of this existing work on Kant's account of the morally good, emotionally healthy human life. For example, I have defended Kant's claim that there is an absolute moral prohibition on lying to the murderer at the door (2010, Forthcoming). More recently, I have developed (2020b) this account of absolute moral prohibitions further (in general and in consideration of issues of sexual and gendered violence) in part by drawing upon the work of Katerina Deligiorgi (2012), who defends Kant's general account of absolute moral prohibitions as situated at the heart of Kant's practical philosophy and as something Kantians should not forego. Foregoing absolute moral prohibitions entails losing some of the distinctive character and philosophical argumentative power of Kant's practical philosophy.[6] In addition, Kant's argument regarding absolute moral prohibitions, Deligiorgi argues, is internally linked to central arguments regarding transcendental freedom, which address how it is that human beings – in virtue of being capable of the "ought" – have internal to them what it takes to be morally responsible for their capacity to set ends of their own spontaneously (2017, 2018). I argue, further, that holding this view is philosophically consistent with maintaining that human beings can face situations (such as when one opens the door to find the murderer) in which there is no morally good way out, in which all the available options involve doing a (formal) wrong or doing what Kant calls "wrong in the highest degree" (1996a, MM 6: 307f).[7] Furthermore, like some of the existing literature on Kant and human nature, I consider morality more important than happiness; practical reason must set the framework within which we pursue happiness (1996a, CPrR 5: 110f). But, I continue, Kant doesn't, as he shouldn't, think that happiness is only or simply instrumentally beneficial or useful to morality. Indeed, although it is the capacity for personality (the capacity to act as motivated by a distinctively *moral* valuing) that gives human beings a pricelessness (dignity), the embodied and social parts of ourselves are sources of genuine value for us. They are constitutive parts of flourishing human lives. Our highest human aim, therefore, is not to rid ourselves of concerns, desires, needs, and wants rooted in our pursuit of happiness but to strive to bring happiness and morality into as close a union as possible (1996a, TP 8: 279).

This is not the place to engage the many relevant Kantian interpretive debates – I do that elsewhere[8] – rather, the point is simply to acknowledge these disagreements in the interpretive literature before proceeding

to outline what I believe is the best Kantian conception of care. This conception of care uses Kant's philosophical ideas to take us beyond what Kant himself wrote on related themes. To do this, it is useful first to get a good grasp on Kant's understanding of the structure of human phenomenology, some features of which can be sketched through attending to his accounts of the predisposition to good and the propensity to evil in human nature. We can then appreciate the complementary nature of Kant's account of (internal and external) freedom in giving us (respectively) accounts of duties of virtue (ethics) and of right (justice) and how each analysis gives proper space for concerns rooted in distinctively *human* needs and concerns. In the next section, I take the first step of outlining personal care relations, postponing the corresponding discussion of justice in relation to care relations to the section on "Justice and Care Relations." A strength of the overall resulting position, I propose, is its multifaceted analysis of care relations.

Personal Human Care Relations

As mentioned earlier, I believe it is mistaken to attribute to Kant the view that human beings are or should strive to be merely rational beings. Although this is how our philosophical practice often has presented Kant's philosophy, it is not the account we find when we start looking more closely not only at his writings on freedom but at human nature generally. In fact, the overall picture we find in Kant's philosophical writings is one that views a central challenge for us, that of developing an ability to care well for ourselves and for each other, in ways that are deeply appreciative of the astonishing fact that we can set ends of own responsibly, the incredibleness of our embodied sociality, and our very unruly and vulnerable human natures. And central to exploring these features of Kant's practical philosophy is his aforementioned accounts of the predisposition to good and the propensity to evil in human nature, which we, somewhat surprisingly, find in the *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (Kant 1996b).

In these sections of the *Religion* Kant proposes that our human nature should, in part, be understood in terms of a threefold "original predisposition to good" (1996b, R 6: 26).[9] The first constituent part – the predisposition to "animality" – is taken to capture our natural, conscious drive to self-preservation, to have sex and care for our offspring, and to seek affectionate community with others. This animalistic predisposition is marked by being importantly unreflective in nature, which is why it is operative long before we can think about things and reason. Consequently, we see these conscious drives revealed even in newborn babies – in how they seek to survive (self-preservation), how they respond to touch (sex drive), and how they are calmed by affective comfort from loved ones (community). The second predisposition – to "humanity" – involves

both susceptibility to set ends of our own rationally (acting on universalizable maxims) and a social sense of self enabled by comparative uses of reason (1996b, R 6: 27). Hence, this predisposition enables both the setting of our own ends (rational end-setting) and a type of self-love that is accompanied by the inclination "*to gain worth in the opinion of others*, originally, of course, merely *equal worth*" (1996b, R 6: 27) and an incentive to culture (1996b, R 6: 27). Although fully developing this ability involves reason (though not an ability to act as motivated by practical reason), we can see this longing to act freely, Kant correspondingly argues in the *Anthropology*, in the fact that human babies are the only ones that scream when they are born, since in screaming, the babies reveal that they can represent in a way that non-human animals cannot, namely as being frustrated by our inability to act (set ends) (2007, A 7: 268). Moreover, we can see this social sense of self at play already very early in human lives too: it only takes a few months, for example, before a baby starts to interact with the caregivers through smiling and laughter, an activity that reveals that the baby is aware of and takes pleasure being seen by and in seeing the caregiver. If we realize these two natural predispositions – animality and humanity – together and in good ways, Kant argues, we will both be able to develop societies where healthy competition drives culture and progress and find ourselves in a condition where reciprocal love among emotionally healthy, grounded people is realizable (2007, A 7: 306). There is therefore nothing inherently wrong with being in the world with these dispositions; they are importantly unreflective and operate significantly on the affectionate, playful, and/or nonmoralizable emotional level. Indeed, upon reflection, there is a moral push to remain confident in these unreflective ways of being as long as they operate well; after all, they ground us and are central to giving our personal lives meaning. They are not, however, sufficient to account for human beings' ability to be morally responsible for setting ends of their own; to explain this philosophically, Kant argues, the predisposition to "personality" must be added.

The predisposition to personality concerns our susceptibility to morality's commands (to be morally responsible for our actions), or what Kant calls "moral feeling." Moral feeling is a susceptibility to act as motivated by thinking *about* whether or not what I am doing is right or wrong; that is, it enables the ability to do what is right (to follow the moral law, to obey my practical reason) *just because* doing so is the right thing to do (act from duty) (1996b, R 6: 27). Consequently, this third predisposition (personality) enables us to act upon or in response to the behavior related to the first two (animality and humanity). For example, when something I am doing feels morally troubling, I can consider it from a reflective point of view, meaning that I can stop and try to figure out what I am doing as well as whether what I am doing is respectful to and appreciative of myself and others, and I can act as motivated by this reflection

(I can incorporate this motivation into the maxim and do something rather than something else just because doing so is the right thing to do). Being susceptive to moral feeling reveals that we are at least starting to be able to be responsible for our moral actions – and, so, viewing practical reasoning as giving one reasons to do or not to do something – which is also why there is no evidence of it in babies (as they cannot do this yet). Correspondingly, Kant emphasizes in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that the kinds of self-love enabled by the first two predispositions are "natural and active in us even prior to the moral law," whereas the third predisposition (to personality) enables us to "restrict" or "*infringe upon*" them when doing so is morally necessary, that is, when the moral law (our practical reason) demands it (1996a, CPrR 5: 73). Again, when this happens – when we restrict our inclinations in these ways, when we do something just because it is the right thing to do, when we act out of duty – then we act out of *rational self-love* (rather than simply in conformity with rational self-love) (1996a, CPrR 5: 73). Kant also argues that the third predisposition, which enables rational self-love, can never be used badly, since it provides an incentive to act simply as practical reason commands (1996b, R 6: 28). The other two, however, can be used and habituated in bad ways, although their orientation toward what is good cannot be eradicated.

Trailing our predisposition to good is the propensity to evil, which comes in three degrees. At each level, there is a particular way in which it is tempting for us to do bad things and to develop inclinations that make it subjectively increasingly difficult for us to live lives that are truly good and morally justifiable. First, *frailty* is the temptation not to do what we know we ought to do (weakness of will); *impurity* is the temptation to act on bad motivations such that we have patterns of associations or ways of feeling that make it hard or are out of line with what is truly good for us; and *depravity* is the temptation to reverse the order of motivations so that rather than seeking to act in ways that are morally justifiable upon reflection, we use our reasoning abilities self-deceptively so as to seek to justify doing morally terrible things (do bad under the guise of the good) (1996b, R 6: 29–32). Switching now from the perspective of wrongdoers to the perspective of being wronged, when we are wronged our trust in others is challenged in three degrees: by someone committing a wrong against us (frailty); by someone being more generally unreliable or untrustworthy in that she is not able to act consistently from the right kinds of motivations in various situations (impurity); and, finally, by someone striving to do morally horrible things to us in the name of the good and generally feeling justified and content in doing them (depravity). That there are three degrees therefore reflects how seriously we can lose our way in life (as we move from frailty to impurity to depravity) and the increasing difficulty involved in working our way back to emotional and moral health.

Notice that because we have a predisposition to good that is threefold, evil can be aimed and experienced at all levels. As Susan Brison tells us in *Aftermath* (2011), the violent sexual assault she was subjected to affected her at all levels: at the level of animality, the aftermath included struggles to regain her ability to want to preserve herself and feel safe in the world, to enjoy sexual intimacy again, and to become able to want to have a child again; at the level of humanity, the aftermath included struggles to recover the ability to set ends of her own as others' equal and to overcome disempowering feelings of guilt and shame; and at the level of personality, the aftermath included the struggle to regain her subjective sense of having dignity. Correspondingly, in doing violent wrongs, perpetrators can experience themselves at all three levels. They can feel animalistic pleasures from their evil actions or feel socially empowered by subjecting others to their force. They may also be so utterly lost in their own life projects that they create a self-deceived reality in which others, as persons, no longer can demand their respect because, ultimately, the wrongdoer's life is much more important for some alleged moral reason and disrespecting their victims is part of some self-deceived, moralized story of their hitherto unrecognized greatness and/or of the others deserving awful treatment.[10] In sum, despite the fact that various Kantians will disagree with aspects of the earlier mentioned Kant interpretation,[11] it should be obvious by now that he has anything but a simple "rational self" conception of the human agent; this interpretation – regardless of interpretive disagreements on details – gives us a much more complex structure of our human phenomenology.[12] Kant's accounts of the predisposition to good and of the propensity to evil aim to get into view both how what we take pleasure in, value, and find meaningful (what makes us happy as the particular people we are) is subjective in that it is different from person to person *and* how this subjectivity appears to be constituted by shared structures and patterns.

It is also important to appreciate that this account of human nature is complemented by Kant's account of perfect and imperfect duties. Because this part of Kant's practical philosophy probably is the most well known, let me be very brief here. According to Kant, setting ends of our own rationally involves acting on maxims (subjective rules of action): when I learn to set an end for myself in morally responsible ways, I master the self-reflective ability to think about what I am doing (including by mastering abstract concepts that enable me to be aware of what I am trying to do or which end I am pursuing), that I am the one doing it (self-conscious), and to make sure that the ends I pursue are at least consistent with respect for rational being (perfect duties) and insofar as possible furthering of a flourishing rational world (imperfect duties). Hence, establishing whether or not an action is morally good or at least morally permissible, we do not look to the content of our maxims (our particular ends) but to the form of the maxim: could we "think" or "will" the maxim as a law for rational beings (1996a, GW 4: 424). If we cannot even *think* the maxim as a law without contradiction, then we have a perfect moral duty not to do it, whereas if we can think it but not *will* it as a universal law, then we have an imperfect duty not to do it.[13] Additionally, because we have moral feeling (personality), we can act as motivated by this reflection: as also explained earlier, we can do something just because it is the right thing to do or we can choose not to do something just because doing it is wrong. Finally, because we can choose and because we are embodied, social – *human* – beings (the predispositions to animality and humanity), the moral law is experienced by us as a categorical imperative, as something we *must* or *ought* to do – "*act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law*" (1996, GW 4: 429) – and not as something we will necessarily do. Notice too that this entails neither that we ought to try to act on universalizable maxims from duty at all times nor that the emotionally mature, morally good human point of view is the same as that of the independent, rational beings. Rather than identifying the highest good for human beings as always acting on universalizable maxims from the motivation of duty (virtue), Kant's proposal is that we must seek to bring non-moralizable and moralized forms of self-love – happiness and morality – into "close union . . . under the limiting conditions of practical reason" (1996a, MM 6: 426). Ultimately, insofar as it is within our powers of choice, what we choose to do must be something we can morally own – practical reason must set the framework within which our non-moralizable aspects function – but the aim is to realize them both in a harmonious union. This is why Kant proposes that human beings' highest good must be understood as a "union and harmony" between "human morality" and "human happiness" (1996a, TP 8: 279, cf. CPrR 5: 110f.). Our highest aim as human beings is to use our faculty of desire to develop, transform, and integrate all the good aspects of our being – those that make us emotionally healthy embodied, social, morally responsible particular beings. In addition, of course, we need to strive to heal and manage those bits that function poorly, those that hold back both our happiness and our ability to act morally responsibly.[14]

Notice too that the earlier discussion helps us critique the fact that it seems impossible to grow up in any Western country today without having inherited some racist, sexist, and heterosexist pathologies. For the most part, these pathologies are at the impure level, meaning that they are patterns of associations and emotional reactions we have in relation to ourselves and to others that are based on racialization, gender, or sexual identity or orientation. Insofar as we live in such a family or society, we will inherit either oppressed or oppressive identities. If we inherit oppressed identities – non-white, non-Christian (in the United States and in most of Europe), woman, polyamorous, member of the LGBTQIA community, and so on – we will have (at least remnants of) oppressed

pathologies (irrational sadness, lack of self-esteem, strong anger at particular instances of wrong, etc.) that subjectively hold us back in important ways. In contrast, insofar as we inherit oppressing identities (white, Christian, man, cis, monogamous, straight, etc.), we will have oppressive pathologies (numbness to effects of bad behavior, overinflated self-esteem in virtue of our identity, so-called "snowflake" anger at related criticism, etc.). Insofar as we inherit more than one of these identities (oppressed and/or oppressive), we experience how they interact with one another within ourselves – what is often, thanks to Kimberlé Crenshaw's pioneering work (1989), referred to as "intersectionality." Of course, some try to repress these bad emotional patterns by transforming them into depravity, namely by telling themselves deeply self-deceived stories about the alleged correctness of their damaging or destructive behavior. Thus, they do aggressive things to themselves or others in the name of the good. People who uphold, for example, white supremacist stories tell deeply self-deceived stories about racialization, whereas hetero-sexist people often speak in the name of God to allegedly justify their violent behavior toward women (who don't recognize their "proper," subordinate place) or toward members of the LGBTQIA-community (who don't recognize their "perverted" nature). These stories, on this Kant-based approach, reveal a "depraved heart."[15] Moreover, those who do take on the challenge of ridding themselves of the inherited, impure pathologies experience the deep challenges involved in so doing – exactly because it involves emotional and associational responses that are not simply within their reflective control – and they can feel the temptation to yield to frailty (to sell out themselves or others) in moments when this is advantageous or when standing up for what is right has a real cost. Regardless, living with oppressed identities at all times involves having to deal with learning which fights to take on and which to let pass; otherwise, one's entire life easily becomes absorbed in dealing with other people's wrongdoing rather than also living a life of one's own. Neither path is easy or morally unproblematic since every time you let a wrong pass, one lets somebody else wrong you without consequence – somebody wrongs you both materially and formally – whereas every time you take on the fight, you let somebody else's bad ways be determining for the ends you set. Moreover, each time taking on the fight involves destructive violence against another, you do not wrong anyone materially (as they are trying to wrong you), but you do use force in a way that you are not morally authorized to do: you do formal but not material wrong.[16] Managing inherited oppressed identities well is only possible, however, if we learn which fights to take on and which to let pass, since only by becoming emotionally and morally wise in these ways do we care for ourselves well, hold on to our dignity, and avoid living merely reactive and utterly exhausted lives.

In addition to such societal pathologies, we inherit pathologies from and/or develop pathological responses to things that happen to us in our families, including the patterned pathological behaviors of our parents and other significant caregivers. These domestically rooted pathologies involve the same nexus of patterns regarding temptations to wrongly lower (demean or disrespect) oneself or others in hurtful and morally unjustifiable or irrational ways. In addition, bad things happen in life: people do bad things to us or bad things happen to them that affect us (people wrong and hurt us; they die, get sick, or lose their way and consequently cannot care for us any longer), and we mess up things too (sometimes seriously) – and all of this happens both as we grow up (when we are incapable of moral responsibility for our actions) and as adults. Again, we are pretty messy, fragile, and vulnerable beings whose projects of caring for ourselves and for others are difficult, ongoing, and complex.

Indeed, the complexity of our projects of self- and other care makes it even clearer why a precondition of getting any of this right involves learning to master truthfulness – something Kant considers a "sacred command of reason" (1996a, SRL 8: 427) – as a way of life and to do so as we learn to deal with our own and others' propensity to evil. First and foremost, of course, we need to learn to be truthful with ourselves: we need to learn to attend to how we feel, what we want, what is good for us, what gets us into trouble, what is tempting but leads us astray, and so on – or what Kant sometimes calls to "know your heart" (1996a, MM 6: 441). If possible, doing some of this together with other trustworthy persons is better than doing so completely alone. Indeed, Kant's ideal of moral friendship allows us to understand why one of the best things in life is finding someone with whom we connect and whom we can trust as we seek to live in increasingly good and wise ways. True moral friendships, Kant suggests, occur when we can and do trust one another completely as we share our thoughts, fears, hopes, regrets, confusions, considerations, and so on, and we can do this because we are right in believing that we are both being truthful and helping each other have a good sense of reality. We are not judgmental, we have each other's back, and we are not drawn to betray each other's trust by sharing the content of our conversations with third parties in unauthorized ways (1996a, MM 6: 472). Within the context of such moral friendships, we can grow and flourish – we can heal, improve, and develop new sides of ourselves in integrated, stabilizing ways. And as we do, our aim is not to rid ourselves of our embodied, social selves, or of our own unique conceptions of happiness; nor is it to want for our friend anything but their flourishing as who they are and are striving to become. Rather, our aim is to heal, develop, transform, and integrate the various parts of ourselves into good wholes, and to assist our friend to do the same, something that for human beings involves the use of abstract concepts, associative thinking,

and playful imagination. Moreover, as we engage in this process, we strive to ensure that the actions we take and the particular temperaments we have are developing in as close a union with the demands of morality as possible, namely with our imperfect duties both to develop our talents and capacities and to assist others in their pursuit of happiness as well as with our perfect duties never to act in ways that wrong or damage ourselves or others. In other words, we must genuinely and truthfully seek to enable emotionally healthy and morally good being for each of us individually and for both of us as a "we."

We have seen some reasons why it is simply a mistake to attribute to Kant a conception of human agency as mere rational agency that has nothing to offer those of us – which should be all of us – who are concerned with human care. We have also seen that consistent with much of the writing in the philosophy of care tradition, Kant too thinks that caring – for oneself and others – is a lifelong project that involves learning to be around our importantly fragile, vulnerable, and rather messy human natures in sustaining, trustworthy – and, so, truthful – ways, ways that ultimately also always involve treating each human being (no matter how young or immature or (temporarily or permanently) incapacitated) as having dignity. Even if one grants all the previous arguments, however, this is insufficient to speak to all the important complexities of care relations, since they involve legal-political issues as well. Let me attend to some important, general features of Kant's legal-political conception of care relations before showing how the previous ideas concerning human nature complement this account and thereby yield a more complete Kantian approach to rightful, human care relations.

Justice and Care Relations

We may identify three distinct trends in the existing Kantian literature on justice and care relations. First, some important work – such as that by Carol Hay (2013) and Sarah Clark Miller (2012) – utilizes Kant's ethics, and especially his account of imperfect duties, to explore Kantian approaches to care for others and for oneself (including under conditions of oppression). Second, some Kantian-influenced care theorists – the pathbreaker being Eva Kittay (1999) – re-envision John Rawls's Kantianism to explore issues of justice regarding dependency and care relations. Third, some – such as Barbara Herman (1993b) and myself (2007, 2012a, 2012b, 2020b)[17] – argue that the starting point for a Kantian account of rightful care relations must be his account of right (justice), rather than his account of virtue (first-personal ethics). On this approach, justice concerns enforceable rights. Virtue (maxims, including motivations) cannot be enforced; indeed, any attempt at enforcing virtue both necessarily fails and deprives persons of their innate right to freedom. That is to say, as noted earlier, to act virtuously according to Kant is to act only on maxims

that can be thought or willed as universal laws for rational beings and that incorporate the moral motivation (duty). A maxim is a subjective rule of action, meaning it is the principle that is governing how I – from my first-personal point of view – go about pursuing an end in the world. Now, no one external to me can make me set any particular end and act from a moral motivation: others can threaten me or make me act consistent with an end, but they cannot make me set a particular end, let alone set that end because it is the right thing to do (act from duty) (1996a, MM 6: 239). Which maxim I act on – what and why I do what I do – is, in other words, not within reach of coercion – and coercion is *the* legal-political means. Moreover, switching from the analysis of virtue to that of right, Kant argues that all rightful uses of coercion – that is, any uses of coercion that are just – must be consistent with each person's innate right to freedom. The latter, in turn, is defined as their right to "independence from being constrained by another's choice . . . insofar as it [their exercise of freedom] can coexist with the freedom of every other in accordance with a universal law" (1996a, MM 6: 237). Hence, if somebody uses coercion or threatens me with coercion in an attempt to make me virtuous (set a particular end and act from moral motivation), not only will they necessarily fail (as trying to do so is metaphysically confused) but they will also thereby wrong me by threatening me or by committing battery. Hence, virtue cannot be enforced, and any attempt at doing so will fail and involve judicial wrongdoing, and these kinds of philosophical problems are major reasons why I believe that Kant's account of virtue cannot do the work of his account of right with regard to care relations either.

Turning to Kittay's revised Rawlsian account, I believe that also it doesn't work as a complete critique of rightful care relations. The main problem is that this type of account – so, a problem it shares with Rawls's own account – is that it only provides an account of public right (of citizens' legal claims only on their public institutions) and not one of private right (of persons' legal claims on each other as private persons), which is why it struggles to critique family law (as many feminists since Susan Moller Okin (1989) have pointed out in relation to Rawls's theory).[18] In other words, even if we accept that these accounts can justify the state's right to redistribute resources to care-receivers and care-providers, it cannot (as Rawls cannot) provide an account of family law (private law); the caregivers' castle remains out of reach for these Rawlsian theories of justice. To account for family law, I argue in the following,[19] we need to develop one of Kant's core proposals, namely that the home requires its own private right (law) analysis, namely an analysis he calls "status right." We will also see that once an account of innate right is combined with such an account of private right, an account of public right (systemic justice) can complement them, yielding a more complete theory of rightful care relations. That is to say, as indicated earlier, a core proposal

of Kant's that I believe care theory can draw upon is that a sufficiently nuanced account of rightful care relations requires several distinct lenses of right: innate right, private right, and public right. Innate right is the right to freedom and some important rights that are analytically related to it, private right is an account of rightful private relations, whereas public right is an account of citizens' claims on the public authority. An important aim in the following is correspondingly to show why it is a mistake to think that any one of these analyses can do all the philosophical work with regard to critiquing rightful care relations.

To illustrate this latter regarding the need for a multifaceted analysis of care relations, let me also briefly indicate how Kant's philosophy can help us see some sources of the problems characteristic of much natural right or libertarian style analyses of legal guardianship, including feminist analyses of this kind. To start, as is well known, natural right analyses that seek to explain all rightful relations as occurring between two *agents* struggle to make sense of legal guardianship, since guardianship involves someone (sometimes referred to in this literature as "patient") who lacks exactly such agency. As emphasized by A. John Simmons (1994) in his attempt at providing a Lockean analysis of care relations involving anyone who cannot assume moral responsibility for their actions – due to immaturity or illness or disability – the problem is that the care-receiver cannot exercise rights and so is not an *agent* in this sense of the word. Hence, the special analysis needed is one that doesn't fail to keep this fact in mind, and he thinks that this is where Locke fails since he argues that corresponding to parents' rights to their children is the children's duties to their parents. But children need special rights exactly because they are incapable of exercising rights or duties (obligations); hence, in some irreducible way, children cannot be agents insofar as they need special rights. Moreover, if children are not yet agents as they cannot exercise rights, how can they have rights at all? This, Simmons concludes, is a philosophical problem Locke (and Simmons on his behalf) cannot solve because this kind of natural rights analysis requires two agents, but in the Lockean sense of an agent, there is only one here, and hence it is not possible to envision a rightful care relation as existing on this analysis.

Correspondingly, if one follows the feminist natural right advocated by Virginia Held (2006), not only does it seem impossible to get into view an independent voice for dependents, since the only way to do so appears to go via their caregivers, in which case the relation between two agents collapses in similarly problematic ways. In addition, it seems impossible on these kinds of approaches to explain how the rights of, say, abused children correspond with the duties of particular responsible adults. Again, this is a problem you find already in Locke's analysis of parent-child relations: Locke argues that abusive parents forfeit their rights and so foster parents become the rightful parents of abused children. He is unable to explain, however, who has an enforceable obligation to become foster parents – a problem that only becomes more intractable once you not only assume abusive but deceased parents. And to mention a final challenge often noted on this type of position, it appears impossible to make sense of any distinction between human care rights and non-human animal rights since insofar as we are so incapacitated that we cannot be agents, it seems our functioning levels are not different in kind and may even be lower than many non-human animals.[20] Kant's analysis of status right in combination with his accounts of innate and public right provides a solution to all these problems that is consistent with a basic philosophical commitment to each person's innate right to freedom. Moreover, it is an account that shows a principled way of accommodating embodied, social concerns of nature that is worth taking seriously. Reasons of space makes it impossible to go into detail here, but let me sketch some of how this account goes – starting with innate right.[21]

Kant's account of innate right – understood as rights analytically related to each person's innate right to freedom – is ingenious. Kant argues that although we can distinguish between our person and our bodies from the point of view of virtue, from the point of view of right – a perspective that is inherently spatiotemporal as it concerns enforceable restrictions on interactions in space and time – there is no such distinction. Hence, from the point of view of right, the relationships between our bodies and our legal persons must be thought of as analytic: my legal person and my body must be regarded as coextensive (1996a, MM 6: 237f). So, if you take my money from the table, you steal from me, whereas if you wrench it from my hand, you commit battery (as you subject my legal person to violence). Moreover, anyone who, in acting on another's behalf, physically handles their body when incapacitated – such as a physician caring for an ill person or a parent caring for a child – must be seen as exercising a right to legal guardianship over us (and, so, must act within the boundaries specified by relevant laws). In other work (2012b, 2020b), I demonstrate how this analysis of innate right is also useful and important for understanding classical feminist issues such as women's right to abortion, rightful sexual interactions, and the seriousness of legal wrongs that deprive anyone of their right to bodily integrity, such as rape. Indeed, in my view, this is one of the places where the strength of Kant's account of absolute moral prohibitions and the idea of doing wrong in the highest degree shows itself: because we are embodied beings, we can be trapped in situations from which there are no morally good ways out, where the choice facing us is either to let someone wrong us (materially and/or formally) or to use violence against others that is inconsistent with treating them as having dignity (formally wronging them). People whose social (racialized, sexual, gendered) identities are severely oppressed run

the real risk of having to face the kind of brutalizing violence that leaves them with no morally good way out; good self-care becomes impossible.

Furthermore, if we follow Kant's lead and recognize that an analysis of right must accommodate embodied, social *human* concerns (1996a, MM 6: 217), we can better explain why crimes that involve bodily wrongs, such as rape, are particularly heinous – with added heinousness tracking such violence within intimate relations of trust, such as spousal rape or incest – and should be punished more severely than those that do not and why some kinds of bodily wrongdoing are more heinous than others. Being subjected to bodily violence can unground human beings in fundamental ways, the aftermath of some of these acts are particularly hard to handle, and some bodily wrongs are more heinous than others because of the ways in which the violence comes at us (cf. earlier discussion of Brison in relation to Kant's account of the predispositions to good in human nature). Kant's account of innate right together with the earlier account of human nature can therefore help us capture the importance of reforming how our legal-political and health-care systems respond to sexual assaults, for instance by changing how we conduct assault trials and how police and health-care personnel care for people who have been subjected to sexual assaults. We need, in other words, to reform these legal-political systems of care because they do not currently fulfil their intended function of providing a public means through which we – human beings – can pursue their rightful claims against one another in ways that are consistent with self-care. After all, if they did, it would simply not be the case that so many victims of sexual assault decide that they would rather not pursue justice than to go through the medical and legal processes that doing so entails. That is to say, *some* victims find that going through these medical and legal processes is within what they can responsibly put themselves through – indeed, some find it empowering to do it. From the point of view of our legal-political system, however, the fact that some can do it is insufficient. Insofar as we want a functioning legal-political system, the fact that *very many* judge that going through the current processes is something they cannot responsibly do to themselves is of central importance. Institutional reform is therefore needed so that these institutions no longer continue to exacerbate the trauma undergone by those who have been subjected to violence and such that they can reasonably be trusted to be part of restoring rightful relations (and not as it currently is; it is statistically very unlikely that they will win) and facilitate healing for the victims. Again, the aim of a legal-political system must be reconcilable with our highest good being to bring happiness and morality into union: it must be possible, in other words, to go through these legal-political process with a reasonable hope that doing so will be a means through which to start the process of full emotional (embodied, social, and moral) healing.[22]

In addition to his account of innate right, as mentioned earlier, Kant has a unique (private right) account of what he calls "status relations." Kant rightly considers this account to be a novel contribution to the history of legal-political thought (1996a, MM 6: 282). Status relations involve relations where persons have claims not only *against* one another with regard to some object (as we do in private property and contract right) but *to* one another's (legal) persons. These relations involve rights to shared homes (personal lives) and not to be abandoned. Moreover, such status relations are of three kinds: marital relations (between two equals who consent to forming a legal "us" involving a shared home); parent-child relations (between two unequal parties where one party – the child – has not consented to the relationship), which can be developed into a fuller account of legal guardianship; and relations between families and their servants (between two unequal parties where the one party's consent – the servant's – is complicated by a lack of material independence). Kant proposes that in order to conceive of these relations as rightful – as consistent with each person's innate right to freedom and not as involving unjustifiable dependency, including enslavement – we need laws that take into account the ways in which these relations involve (sometimes asymmetrical) dependencies and fusions into one, shared legally recognized home. As we saw earlier, we cannot, for example, analyze relations between parents and children by assuming both to be morally responsible agents. After all, children are incapable of moral agency insofar as they need special rights and they have neither consented nor can they consent to be in the relationship; they did not consent to being born, and they cannot choose to take care of themselves instead of being cared for by a guardian.

Similarly, Kant argues that we should not analyze relations between families and their servants through ordinary contract law – which much legal practice in the world (wrongly) does today – since such analyses fail to take into account the asymmetrical material dependency of the servant upon the family in whose home the servant lives without being a full, equal member of the household. Kant then argues that these dependency relations can be made rightful only through publicly posited status law (including family law) – thereby dismantling the so-called "man's" (or the "caregiver's") "castle," understood as the notion that the home is in principle beyond proper reach of the law. Although Kant's writings are heterosexist, his philosophical ideas can also explain why it is important for same-sex couples and people in polyamorous relationships to have the right to marry; to have the right to marry is to be able to establish a legally recognized and protected home (Varden 2007, 2020b). In sum, then, Kant's analysis of status relations shows why establishing a public authority – a legal-political authority that represents everyone and yet no one in particular – that determines, applies, and enforces these laws

is constitutive of making these dependency relations rightful, namely by giving all parties in the relationship a proper legal voice.

The earlier analysis of the embodied and social aspects of human nature – good and bad – adds to this analysis of rightful care relations by explaining important features of law and by capturing how to reform legal-political systems so that they can become more suited for human needs. For example, the account of our embodied, social human nature can explain both why domestic emotional abuse and neglect can be tempting and why it is particularly damaging. Not being safe and cared for in our own homes stunts our projects of developing, transforming, and integrating our predispositions to good in human nature because when we are vulnerable, we often have to act primarily from the animalistic attitude of survival. The earlier account of emotional health can also explain why being a parent or legal guardian of another human being requires taking into account the cared-for's particular emotional patterns, and it also speaks to how any reasonable law recognizes that it is truly difficult to get all of this right (as we do not have direct access to another's subjectivity). Moreover, given the complexity of human nature, improving our legal-political systems of care will include making these systems more flexible such that they are suited to the complexity of particular caring relations.

For example, parents who are struggling with drug abuse may need relief *only* in periods when they are unable to manage their addictions. Hence, we may imagine that in more developed or well-functioning health-care systems, parents who manage their drug abuse, including by ensuring that their children are taken care of by authorized legal guardians when their drug abuse becomes unmanageable, may not be required to forfeit their parental rights just because of their drug addiction. Furthermore, according to this Kantian approach, a public authority cannot view itself as authorized to deprive a child of access to their parents unless the parents have been proven (in court) to have committed a crime *and* the state provides legal guardians who will take good care of the children. Being forcefully separated from our parents is extremely traumatic for human beings as it deprives us of the background conditions we need as *human* children to feel safe and to develop and integrate our animality and humanity as we strive to become morally responsible persons with good lives. Hence, such separations not only deprive children of some of their most basic rights but also exemplify particularly devastating failures of justice. Among the examples of such failures are the forced separation of many indigenous children from their parents by various states – such as the Sami children in Norway – throughout much of the 20th century. The United States is currently separating many children from their parents in detention facilities for immigrant families. According to this Kantian analysis, this aspect of Norwegian history with regard to the Sami

people and U.S. history with regard to immigrants will be an irrevocable source of shame and its devastating impact will continue to be felt in generations to come, by those who have been subjected to it, by those who took or are taking part in it, by all of us who permitted it on "our watch," and by all of those who have to live with the aftermath of these horrific failures of states with regard to status relations.

In addition to his novel account of status relations, Kant has a rather complex account of systemic justice, or what he calls "public right." In contrast to Lockean and other natural right theories, according to which the rights of the state are seen as co-extensive with the rights private individuals hold against each other, Kant argues that once the state establishes its law-governed monopoly on coercion (as it must), it must reconcile this monopoly with each citizen's right to freedom through public right (law). The right to freedom is the right to be independent from subjection to anyone else's arbitrary choices and to be dependent on universal law only (1996a, MM 6: 237). For Kant, this means that the state must assume special responsibility for many inherently systemic issues such as poverty, land use, the economy, and the financial system. For example, the state must ensure that all citizens always have legal access to means such that the possibility of freedom for any one citizen is not subjected to any other citizen's private arbitrary choices, such as the decision to provide charity or employment.[23] In addition, over time, the state must reform itself such that it rids itself of any notions of inherited authority and instead seeks to build an institutional, including educational, whole through which all citizens are taken care of and, insofar as their capacities allow, can work their way into beings able to participate in knowledgeable ways in public debate and public reason.[24]

From early on (Varden 2006), I have argued that this systemic approach to poverty provides important arguments for why it is particularly troublesome for states that much of the hard care labor in the world is undertaken by poor persons (servants) and/or by women. The state is responsible for building a legal-political institutional whole, in which the labor of caring for dependents does not fall asymmetrically on people whose socioeconomic situation tracks historical oppression and in which caregivers receive insufficient payment, or even no payment at all. Moreover, the earlier account of human nature emphasizes the urgency of this point: it is of central importance for emotionally healthy human beings that they are not drowned in exhausting care for others and also are given time and space to care about their own personal development. To fulfill its entrusted public function, the state must reform its legal-political institutional framework such that no one person or social group faces no real chance of working their way into an active, flourishing condition. In addition, of course, states must ensure that no citizen or group of citizens can rightfully choose to make it impossible for another

citizen or group to get out of situations in which caring for their own well-being is practically (materially) or emotionally impossible because their "proper" role is to care only for others. Providing legal-political conditions in which each and every citizen (whether capable of moral responsibility or not) is recognized as having a right to freedom (to set and pursue ends of their own) and can exercise their duty of demanding rightful honor (of being publicly recognized as honorable insofar as they haven't deprived others of their rights) is to provide all citizens with legal-political conditions consistent with moral valuing, namely with human beings regarding themselves and each other as having dignity (a priceless-ness) and, so, (ethical and judicial) rights. Finally, elsewhere (2020b), I use the earlier account of human nature to explain why the project of providing safe homes (and not just shelters) for all citizens is a project any minimally just state must undertake and prioritize early in its development toward a more flourishing state. Although shelters suffice temporarily, and could be adequate for some rational beings, *human* beings need access to a home, because homes are typically necessary for us to heal and to develop, transform, and integrate our predispositions to good in emotionally healthy ways.

Finally, for the purposes of care relations, the following idea of Kant's is particularly fruitful: as mentioned, all citizens have a claim on the public authority (rather than only on other private persons) that they face conditions in which they are taken care of insofar as their capacities are insufficiently developed or (temporarily or permanently) impaired and in which they can work their way into an active condition insofar as their capacities allow. This right to rightful care is a basic right each person born on the territory of a state holds against everyone else as matter of public law (it is a public right claim against the public institutions). To put this idea differently: as a citizen, each person born on the territory of a state has an innate right to freedom that gives them a right (ultimately) to be dependent only on the public (and not a private) authority with its law-governed legal-political institutions as that citizen seeks to realize themselves as a free being insofar as their capacities allow. Insofar as their capacities do not allow, they have a right to be taken care of within the framework of laws constitutive of legal guardianship. Because the public authority is one that represents each person and yet no one in particular, to be so dependent on it is to be dependent upon ourselves – understood in terms of a representation of our general will – as we are cared for and seek to realize ourselves (insofar as possible). And as we become capable of participating in the public processes of the rule of law, we are not thereby subject to others' private choices. Rather, we take active part in self-governance through public law by taking part in public discussions in informed ways and by having the right to compete (based on merit) to be entrusted with public positions of authority (such as to hold public administrative offices, and to act as licensed professionals such as physicians, lawyers, or professors, etc.). The earlier account of human nature furthermore helps us envision how to reform the legal-political systems of right not only so as to ensure that everyone is secured their basic innate, private, and public rights but also to ensure that they are up to the task of providing legal-political solutions that work for us as the human beings we are. Our legal-political systems must work for those of us who are rational beings capable of moral responsibility and for those of us who are not. They must also work for all of us as embodied, social human beings who live in societies marked by serious (historical) oppression.

Conclusion

Many philosophical positions ultimately want the question of what it is like to care for human beings to require only one analysis, such as an analysis of human emotions grounded on natural sympathy, or an analysis of the maximization of (higher and lower) pleasures, or a vision of the human form (human flourishing), or an account of virtuous being, and so on. Part of what is fascinating about Kant's practical philosophy is that there is, at the heart of the issue, no one answer to this question of what it is to care well for oneself and for others. One reason why there is no one answer to this question is simply that human beings don't have any one natural emotion, or form, or set of pleasures with which all emotionally and morally good flourishing must be compatible or must involve since we set ends of our own. Of course, this idea was taken on and brought out in powerful ways by existentialists – such as in their slogan "existence precedes essence" and their various conceptions of "authenticity." But as we have seen, Kant's human agent is not reducible to the parsimonious existentialist notions of freedom (and so it avoids the problems of alienation and disembodiment associated with such accounts). Rather, Kant has a rich, multidimensional account of our embodied, social nature that is complemented by equally robust accounts of the human liability to act in evil ways and of our ability to exercise internal freedom virtuously and external freedom rightfully. Our highest good as individuals is to develop, transform, and integrate our pursuits of happiness and morality into as harmonious a whole as possible, giving primacy to morality. Relatedly, our highest (domestic) political good is to establish a legal-political institutional whole whose constitutive principles are principles of freedom (innate, private, and public right) but whose realization takes into account or accommodates our ever so human natures and histories. Overall, this account of human nature and of our highest (personal and political) good yields an interesting, complex, and unified account of emotionally healthy and morally (ethically and legally) responsible caring human being. In addition, even if other philosophical approaches may not want to take on board all of the elements of Kant's position, the

proposed analysis can still bring Kant's philosophy into dialogue with care theorists in a way that can move the discussion to a more interesting level, a dialogue that is not stunted by misinterpretations and misrepresentations, by non-Kantians and Kantians alike, of important aspects of Kant's practical philosophy. Instead, Kant's philosophy can further our understanding of the complexity and challenges of human care.

Notes

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2. For example, see Baron (1995), Herman (1993a, 1993b, 2008), Hill (1991, 2002), Korsgaard (1996a, 1996b, 2009), O'Neill (1990, 1996, 2000), and Wood (2008).
3. For an overview of related Kantian feminist literature, see Varden (2018b).
4. For example, see Cholbi (2009), Hill (1991), Korsgaard (1996a), Shiffrin (2014), and Wood (2008).
5. For example, see Cohen (2009, 2016, 2017), Frierson (2003, 2013, 2014), Louden (2000, 2011), Shell (2009), and Zammito (2002).
6. This is a central argument in my *Sex, Love, and Gender: A Kantian Theory* (2020b).
7. Throughout this chapter, I refer to all of Kant's works by means of the standard Prussian Academy Pagination as well as the abbreviations listed in the bibliography.
8. Varden (2020b).
9. For a fuller interpretation of Kant's account of human nature, see Varden (2020b).
10. In Varden (2014), I argue that this approach can capture moral psychological facts about serious wrongdoers like Anders Behring-Breivik, who performed the horrific terrorist attack in Norway in 2011.
11. To see some examples of this, notice how the account of our human nature discussed earlier contrasts with the readings mentioned in the introduction, according to which embodied, social aspects of our nature – so, aspects intimately tied to our happiness – are valuable only insofar as they make morality easier. On my reading here, happiness is valuable in itself, not only instrumentally, even though it involves a different kind of valuing than *moral* valuing.
12. More complexity is added by Kant's account of the four human temperaments, which aims to capture how there appear to be certain patterns to how we emotionally respond to various situations in terms of likes and dislikes. For reasons of space, I cannot go into Kant's account of the temperaments here. For more on this topic, see Cohen (2017), Zammito (2002), and Varden (2020b).
13. For more on this, see for example (1996a, GW 4: 420–425).
14. A more complete analysis would include an account of how our nature also is aesthetically informed, but reasons of space make it impossible to include this aspect here. See Varden (2020b) for more on this topic.
15. For relatively recent discussions of Kant's own racism, see Lucy Allais (2016) and Charles Mills (2018); of his sexism, see Mari Mikkola (2011) and Varden (2015 [2017], 2020b); and of his heterosexism, see Varden (2018a, 2020b).

16. This point connects back to the discussion in the Kant literature about absolute moral prohibitions; cf. the introduction.
17. This chapter can be seen as complementary to my paper on rightful care in that it shows how a more complete Kantian analysis of care relations includes accounts of human beings' embodied, social nature as well as an account of virtue (2012a).
18. I also argue (2012b, 2020b) that Kant's account of innate right is particularly good at explaining the seriousness both of bodily wrongdoing and of failing to protect, of denying, or depriving people of, their bodily rights.
19. I originally developed this argument with regard to Kittay (and Held; see below) in 2012b; hence, in the following I only summarize some of its main points.
20. For more on this argument concerning Held and (Lockean) natural rights analyses of legal guardianship, see 2012b. For more on my take on the insufficiency of analyses of animal rights and care rights of thinkers like Peter Singer and Tom Regan, see Varden (2020a).
21. For more detail on the interpretive and philosophical ideas discussed earlier, see Varden (2020b).
22. Notice, too, that Kant's account of the propensity to evil can help us understand why it has taken so long for sexual violence to become a topic of proper discussion in society and in philosophy. After all, those of us who are most likely to be subjected to sexual violence are members of historically oppressed – and, so, vulnerable – social groups, such as women and members of the LGBTQIA community, and have not had a strong public voice (in society or in academia) until recently. In fact, because these groups' dehumanization is commonly located at the level of impurity or depravity and often involves serious self-deception, changing these facts is emotionally hard for both them and their oppressors.
23. This type of argument is characteristic of Kant interpretations coming out of the University of Toronto in the 2000s. See, for example, Ripstein (2009), Varden (2006, 2010), and Weinrib (2003).
24. For my take on these concerns of reform, see Varden (2016). This article also provides an analysis of various interpretive approaches to Kant's legal-political philosophy, and it shows how my interpretation fits into what I there call the "liberal, republican interpretive tradition."

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3 Mill's Liberalism, *The Subjection of Women*, and the Feminist Care Ethic

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Introduction[1]

John Stuart Mill's liberalism is probably best known through his classic essay *On Liberty*, which stands as a core text of the liberal canon (Mill, CW, 18: 213–310). However, liberalism permeates his entire corpus of writings, and its themes and commitments are omnipresent. For the clearest and most complete statement of his liberal feminism, including his views on care for dependent and vulnerable persons, I focus on his arguments in *The Subjection of Women* (Mill, CW 21: 259–332). This paradigm 19th-century historical treatise marks a turning point in the philosophical and activist battle for women's emancipation. Its prominence in Mill's corpus of writing on liberalism is well known. Mill's utilitarianism and liberalism stand out for his careful and thoughtful arguments for promoting a proper balance of liberty and autonomy with sympathy, connection, and compassion. Here I set out how Mill's views on the essential and indispensable need for education and development of the higher human capacities or virtues of self-development infuse his liberalism and create a prominent space for compassion and sympathy in his philosophy. He places at the center of life's valuable pursuits those that involve caring for dependent and vulnerable humans. In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill argues for a model of marriage governed by a "principle of perfect equality" (Mill, CW 21:261). Mill's liberal feminist commitments are on full display, as the text is an extended argument for women's liberty and autonomy. The dual activist projects of fighting for liberty and autonomy and of fighting against oppression and exploitation of women unfold in unison throughout the work, since Mill sees them as inextricable and interconnected. I examine Mill's views on traditional women's work in the home, in the light of the feminist care ethic and in the context of his distinctive form of liberalism. In so doing I highlight and show how Mill's very distinctive versions of utilitarianism and liberalism make space for the value of caring for dependent and vulnerable persons. My argument goes further: I illustrate how Mill's utilitarianism and liberalism crucially make central the priority of education and