



A Brief Analysis On Natural Caring: A Moral Key Of Women Strength

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Abstract: Caring has often been understood as a private, emotional, or even passive disposition—frequently associated with women and therefore historically undervalued in philosophical, political, and ethical discourse. Strength and power, by contrast, have been framed in terms of autonomy, rational control, domination, or independence. This dichotomy has led to a persistent undervaluation of caring as a moral and human capacity. This paper argues that caring, properly understood, is not a weakness but a profound form of strength and power. By investigating the real form of caring that we approve as strength in women—and in human beings more broadly—this paper seeks to re conceptualize power itself as relational, moral, and sustaining rather than merely coercive or self-assertive.

INDEX TERMS: Care, Strength, Power, Morality, Feminism, Autonomy, Reason, Ethical Agency.

I.INTRODUCTION

Many feminist thinkers have reflected on the fact that women are society's primary caregivers worldwide. Women, far more than men, rear children, tend to the needs of the infirm, and take care of the elderly. Moreover, in many societies women as a group are associated with values, virtues, and traits such as "interdependence, community, connection, sharing, emotion, body, trust, absence of hierarchy, nature, imminence, process, joy, peace, and life." In contrast, men as a group are associated with values, virtues, and traits such as "independence, autonomy, intellect, will, wariness, hierarchy, domination, culture, transcendence, product, ascetism, war, and death." Care-focused feminists offer various explanations for why societies label some values, virtues, and traits female, or feminine, and others male, or masculine. Some of these explanations focus on men's and women's separate biologies, others on men's and women's diverging psychosexual development paths, and still others on the ways in which societies systematically shape men's and women's distinct identities and behaviors. But whatever their explanation for men's and women's contrasting gender identities, care-focused feminists regard women's capacities for care as a human strength rather than a human weakness. Moreover, care-focused feminists expend considerable energy developing a feminist ethics of care as a complement of, or even a substitute for, a traditional ethics of justice. We have been seen that women shoulder the burden of care in so many societies. We will also consider, men as a group do not routinely engage in caring practices and this situation contributes to women's oppression. So, the researcher wants to research on this topic to utilise that "care" should be evaluated as strength and power of women even of human beings.

In this paper the researcher wishes to focus on the question that What is the main characteristic of care? How does we characterise the care of women or the care of human being? Feminists point out that the act of caring is strength and power of women but the problem is which type of caring they prescribed as strength of women? Is it ethical caring or natural caring? In this paper the researcher has tried to clarify the distinctions between the two.

II.METHODOLOGY

The author has critically examined the ethics of care and Kant's idea of morality in the background of her concepts. For this, relevant books including text and reference works have been studied and conceptual as well as philosophical analysis have been done.

III.CONCEPT OF CARING

Caring is a defining feature of human beings, at least as important as their capacity for rationality. A child's memories of caring, for example, are not memories peculiar to him or her alone, said Nel Noddings. On the contrary, virtually all human beings have such memories. Indeed, Noddings went so far as to claim "that the impulse to act in behalf of the present other is itself innate. It lies latent in each of us, awaiting gradual development in a succession of caring relations." Because our memories of caring and being cared for can fade, Noddings emphasized that we must use education to enhance our natural tendency to care. She noted our initial experiences of care come easily. We act from a natural caring that impels us to help others because we want to: "The relation of natural caring will be identified as the human condition that we, consciously or unconsciously, perceive as 'good.' It is that condition toward which we long and strive, and it is our longing for caring—to be in that special relation—that provides the motivation for us to be moral. We want to be moral in order to remain in the caring relation and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring."

But as philosopher Immanuel Kant's view that doing things because we ought to do them, for example we have to care our parent because we ought to do them - this is the act of ethical caring. Kant says that doing things because we ought to do them is better than doing things because we want to do them. But In contrast to Kant, Noddings argued our "oughts" to build on our "wants".

• Traditional Conceptions of Strength and Power

In much of classical philosophy, strength is associated with rational autonomy and self-mastery. From Aristotle's emphasis on rational excellence to Kant's focus on autonomy and duty guided by reason, moral strength is frequently understood as the capacity to act independently of inclination or emotion. Power, in political philosophy, is often defined as the ability to impose one's will or to control outcomes.

These frameworks, while influential, implicitly marginalize caring practices. Caring involves emotional responsiveness, attentiveness to vulnerability, and relational dependence—qualities traditionally coded as feminine and viewed as secondary or inferior. As a result, women's moral contributions have often been framed as "natural" dispositions rather than as expressions of ethical agency or strength.

Moral philosophy has long associated ethical strength with rational autonomy, impartiality, and adherence to universal principles. Immanuel Kant's moral theory represents one of the most influential articulations of this view. In contrast, the ethics of care—developed primarily within feminist philosophy—challenges the priority of abstract reason by emphasizing relationships, emotional responsiveness, and contextual moral judgment. This paper examines the tension between Kantian ethics and the ethics of care in order to investigate whether caring can be understood as a genuine form of moral strength and power. It argues that while Kant provides a robust account of moral autonomy and dignity, the ethics of care exposes the limitations of a purely rationalist conception of moral strength and offers a complementary, relational account of ethical power.

• The Ethics of Care and Moral Power

Feminist philosophers such as Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, and Virginia Held challenge this narrow understanding of moral strength. The ethics of care emphasizes relationships, responsibility, and responsiveness to concrete human needs. From this perspective, caring is not sentimental attachment but an active moral practice that requires judgment, commitment, and endurance. Caring involves the strength to remain engaged with suffering rather than withdrawing from it. It demands patience, emotional resilience, and moral courage—particularly in social contexts where care work is undervalued or invisibilized. In this sense, caring constitutes a form of power: the power to sustain life, to repair harm, and to preserve human dignity.

• Caring as Strength in Women

Women's caring roles have often been used to justify their exclusion from public and political life. Ironically, the very capacities that sustain families, communities, and institutions are dismissed as signs of weakness. This paper argues that caring should instead be recognized as a form of strength that resists domination and instrumentalization. Caring strength does not seek control over others but commits to their flourishing. It involves the ability to balance self-concern with concern for others, to act responsibly within conditions of vulnerability, and to maintain ethical commitment despite emotional and social costs. When women care under conditions of inequality or exploitation, caring itself becomes an act of resistance and moral power.

• Caring and Human Strength

Importantly, caring is not a gender-exclusive virtue. While women have historically borne the burden of care, caring is a fundamental human capacity. Human beings are inherently relational and dependent at various stages of life. Recognizing caring as strength challenges the ideal of the self-sufficient individual and replaces it with a more realistic and humane moral anthropology. Caring as human strength involves acknowledging vulnerability—both one's own and that of others—without reducing moral agency. It requires practical wisdom, emotional intelligence, and ethical responsibility. Far from undermining autonomy, caring can deepen it by situating moral action within the reality of interdependence.

IV. Kant on Moral Strength and Autonomy

For Kant, moral strength lies in autonomy—the capacity of rational agents to legislate moral law for themselves. An action has moral worth only when it is performed from duty, that is, from respect for the moral law rather than from inclination or emotion. Inclinations, including feelings of sympathy or care, are morally unreliable because they are contingent and subjective. True moral power, therefore, consists in the ability of reason to govern the will independently of empirical desires.

Kant's emphasis on universality and impartiality aims to secure moral equality and prevent favoritism. By abstracting from personal relationships, Kant seeks to protect human dignity and ensure that all rational beings are treated as ends in themselves. From this perspective, caring motivated by emotion appears morally inferior or, at best, morally neutral unless it is guided by duty.

• The Ethics of Care and Moral Agency

The ethics of care rejects the idea that moral reasoning must be detached from emotion and particularity. Philosophers such as Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings argue that moral life is fundamentally relational and that attentiveness to concrete needs is an essential feature of ethical judgment. Rather than viewing emotions as obstacles to morality, care theorists understand them as sources of moral knowledge.

Caring, in this framework, is an active and demanding practice. It requires responsiveness, empathy, and sustained commitment. Moral strength, therefore, is not located in detachment from relationships but in the capacity to remain ethically engaged within them. The ethics of care thus redefines power as the ability to maintain, repair, and nurture relationships under conditions of vulnerability and dependence.

• Kantian Critiques of Care Ethics

From a Kantian standpoint, the ethics of care faces several objections. First, its emphasis on particular relationships risks partiality and moral inconsistency. Second, grounding morality in emotion may undermine the universality and necessity of moral obligations. If caring depends on feeling, then moral motivation becomes unstable and unevenly distributed. Moreover, Kantian ethics would argue that without rational principles, care ethics cannot adequately address cases where caring impulses conflict or where care must be extended beyond one's immediate circle. In such cases, reason and universal law appear indispensable.

• Care Ethics' Critique of Kant

The ethics of care, however, criticizes Kantian ethics for presenting an overly abstract and masculinized conception of moral agency. By prioritizing independence and self-sufficiency, Kantian autonomy neglects the reality of human dependence and vulnerability. Care theorists argue that Kant's suspicion of emotion devalues forms of moral labour traditionally performed by women, thereby reinforcing gendered hierarchies of moral worth. Furthermore, care ethics challenges the idea that moral strength requires emotional suppression. Instead, it claims that the ability to care responsibly—even when emotionally costly—is itself a form of ethical resilience and power.

V.Reconceptualizing Power

Traditional moral and political philosophy has largely understood power and moral strength in terms of rational autonomy, independence, and self-mastery. Within this framework, caring—often associated with emotion, dependency, and women's moral labor—has been treated as morally secondary or even as a form of weakness. This paper challenges that assumption by reconceptualizing power as caring, understood not as mere sentiment or inclination but as a sustained and reflective moral practice. Drawing on Kant's account of moral strength and autonomy, alongside the feminist ethics of care, the paper critically examines whether caring can qualify as a genuine form of moral power.

While Kant restricts moral worth to actions grounded in rational duty and views care-based motivations with suspicion, the ethics of care emphasizes relationality, responsiveness, and responsibility as central to moral agency. This study argues that such caring practices involve moral discipline, judgment, and endurance, and therefore constitute a form of strength rather than moral weakness. By reinterpreting caring as an active capacity for responsible engagement with vulnerability, the paper proposes a relational conception of moral power that expands, rather than abandons, the Kantian ideal of autonomy. Reconceptualizing power as caring not only bridges a key divide between Kantian ethics and care ethics but also exposes the gendered devaluation of care within dominant moral theories, offering a more inclusive account of human moral strength.

VI.Toward a Reconciliation: Caring as Rational and Moral Strength

Despite their differences, Kantian ethics and the ethics of care need not be seen as mutually exclusive. Kant himself acknowledges duties of beneficence and the importance of cultivating sympathetic feelings, even if such feelings cannot ground moral obligation. This suggests the possibility of integrating care within a Kantian framework as a morally valuable disposition guided by reason.

Conversely, the ethics of care does not reject rational reflection but situates it within lived relationships. Caring can be understood as a form of practical reasoning that responds to concrete human needs rather than abstract principles alone. Moral strength, on this reconciled view, consists in the integration of reason and care.

VII.Conclusion

The contrast between Kantian ethics and the ethics of care reveals competing conceptions of moral strength and power. Kant locates moral strength in rational autonomy and obedience to universal law, while the ethics of care locates it in relational responsiveness and emotional engagement. By investigating caring as a form of moral power, this paper argues that ethical life requires both rational principles and caring practices. Recognizing caring as strength not only challenges traditional gendered assumptions but also offers a more complete and humane account of moral agency.

To investigate the real form of caring that we approve as strength is to challenge deep-rooted assumptions about power, gender, and morality. Caring is not a passive or secondary virtue but a demanding moral practice that requires resilience, courage, and ethical insight. Recognizing caring as strength in women and in human beings more broadly allows philosophy to move beyond narrow ideals of power and toward a more inclusive and realistic account of human moral life. In doing so, we affirm that the capacity to care is not a limitation of humanity but one of its greatest strengths.

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