Original Article

Care ethics, needs-recognition, and teaching encounters

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ABSTRACT

Care ethics takes as central the discerning of needs in those being cared for and attempts to meet those needs. Perceptive caring agents are more likely to be able to identify needs in those for whom they are caring. The identification of needs is no small matter, not least in teaching encounters. This paper modestly proposes that at least some of the needs a caring agent should attempt to meet are a function of the identity of the patient of caring action. Taking Nel Noddings' account of care ethics as representative, I present it in outline. This leads to the needs-identification problematic. Following this I turn to Soran Reader's account of needs. I interpret this to offer what I designate as identity as 'what-ness'. Such an understanding of identity-based needs is a starting point for the caring agent but a more nuanced account, of identity as 'who-ness', is argued to be preferable. Identity as 'who-ness', as expressed in Paul Ricoeur's work, advances the discussion, culminating in his concept of the 'capable human being'. Having brought this aspect of Ricoeur's thought into conversation with care ethics, I offer an account of identity-based needs conducive to the broader aims of the care ethical project. Finally, I consider what this bolstered account of care ethics might say about a brief and illustrative teaching encounter.

KEYWORDS: care ethics, needs-recognition, Nel Noddings, Soran Reader, Paul Ricoeur

NEEDS IN TEACHING ENCOUNTERS AND CARE ETHICS

Care ethics is generally taken to have emerged in the early 1980s through the work in child developmental psychology of Carol Gilligan and the philosophical endeavours of Nel Noddings (Gilligan 1993 [1982]; Noddings 2013 [1984]). In the intervening

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decades, much of the development of care ethics (or the ethics of care) has been achieved through consideration of particular societal practices¹ while other theorists have focussed on refining care ethics in part or whole.² Of course, care ethics has received its fair share of criticism³ and has been the subject of projects proposing its subsumption into other moral theories.⁴ This rich and wide-ranging scholar-ship has served to strengthen our understanding of care ethics some forty years into its existence. A theorist who has repeatedly returned to the way in which educational endeavours might be positively informed by care ethics is Nel Noddings.⁵ It is for this reason that I draw on her articulation of care ethics in this paper. Noddings' work in care ethics and education constitutes at least a *prima facie* case for the suitability of the former for the latter. By this I mean that care ethics has something meaningful to say about just what is happening in teaching encounters. I do not propose to attend to all the many things that might be said about care ethics and teaching encounters; that would be a much larger work. Rather, I will focus on the issue of 'needs' in such interactions.

A central feature of care ethics is its emphasis on discerning and meeting others' needs; those others with whom one is in relation. Similarly, teaching involves people in relation. In John Passmore's analysis, teaching, 'is a triadic relation: For all X, if X teaches, there must exist *somebody*, and *something* that, is taught by X' (Passmore 1980: 22, my emphasis). For my purposes, the precise content of 'somebody' and 'something' must, at least for the time being, remain open, dependent as they are on context. Examples abound but the following illustrate the point: a parent teaches their child to tie a shoelace, a lecturer teaches undergraduates about the *Meno*, the secondary school teacher teaches 15 year olds how to solve quadratic equations. Whether in formal settings such as schools and universities or informal settings such as the home, teaching encounters are commonplace. One way of understanding such encounters is through the concept of need. A teacher might ask themselves: 'Just

Taking practices as informing care ethics, for example: in the wider political sphere (Tronto 1993, 2013; Held 2005), in the care of the profoundly less able (Kittay 2019, 2020 [1999]), across practices (Bowden 1997), in citizenship (Sevenhuijsen 1998), and in international relations (Robinson 1999).

² Arguing for care ethics: as a complete moral theory (Slote 2007), as grounding justice (Engster 2007) as admitting of a principle-based account (Collins 2015), and in theories of caring action (Steyl 2020a,b).

³ Criticisms of care ethics as: limited to the domain of 'special relations' (Diller 1988), being insufficient without justice to resist evil (Card 1990), potentially contributing to the exploitation of those in the role of ones-caring (Houston 1990; Putman 1991), not seeing the negative in unidirectionality of much caring (Hoagland 1990), ignoring the complexities of modern large-scale societies (Mendus 1993; Jaggar 1995), problematic for autonomy and integrity (Davion 1993), disability (Silvers 1995) and taking one perspective as universal (Thompson 1998).

⁴ Care ethics, or aspects of it, have been connected to or subsumed into: Kantian deontology (Paley 2002; Miller 2012), consequentialism (Driver 2005), contractarianism (Hampton 1993), and virtue ethics (Benner 1997; Halwani 2003; Curzor 2007).

⁵ Noddings has written a great deal about care ethics and education. Some major pieces include Noddings 2002a; 2005a, b; 2007.

⁶ Passmore continues in parenthesis: 'This is true whether "teaching" means "tries to teach" or "succeeds in teaching" (Passmore 1980: 22).

what is it that the person I am trying to teach needs in this particular instance?' Thus, there is a significant point of contact between care ethics and teaching: namely that both concern themselves with others' needs discerned in situations of relation.⁷

The emphasis on needs-meeting is felt throughout the care ethical literature; however, the nature of these needs remains undertheorized. It is this that prompts my turn to Soran Reader's ethics of need. Reader's account contains within in it the insight that there are some needs that are a function of a person's identity. Her approach to identity might be helpfully characterized as identity as 'what-ness'. This conception is not without utility, and I aim to carry forward the thrust of her argument. However, I take Ricoeur's work on identity and recognition to be a sea change. If Reader's account of identity is identity as 'what-ness', then Ricoeur's account of identity is identity as 'who-ness'. The latter, for Ricoeur, leads to his idea of someone being recognized as a 'capable human being'. The two sorts of identity should not be understood to be mutually exclusive; rather, when considered to be needs-generating, they tell the would-be one-caring different things about the would-be cared-for. Equipped with this enriched sense of needs, I explore, in the final part of the paper, how this might feature in a care ethical teaching encounter.

I will start by giving a brief presentation of Noddings' ethics of care. This will allow me to identify just where I see Ricoeur's recognition-theory and care ethics intersecting. Noddings seeks to give a phenomenological account of caring which is simultaneously descriptive and stipulative. She starts with caring dyads comprised of the 'one-caring', that is the agent undertaking the caring actions, and the 'cared-for', the patient of the caring actions. In a particular dyad the roles may of course switch, but in those cases where taking on the role of one-caring is an impossibility for a particular cared-for, it is all the more important that social structures are such that the one-caring does in fact receive appropriate care. Substituting 'A' for the one-caring and 'B' for the cared-for, for Noddings:

⁷ In formal educational settings there are likely to be tensions between the aims of education for the individual and for their society (Kitcher 2022: 34ff) and whether, in the latter case, the perceived educational needs are response to a world to be met as is or resisted (Biesta 2022: 11ff). My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point.

Luminaries including Charles Taylor, Paul Ricoeur, and Axel Honneth have each traced the emergence and development of the concept of 'recognition' through the history of ideas in the Western philosophical tradition (Taylor 1994; Ricoeur 2005; Honneth 2020). Moreover, recognition has received further treatment in these authors' other works (Taylor 1991; Ricoeur 1992; Honneth 1995). As such, I do not propose to retrace the history of the term 'recognition' but rather engage with how it was articulated by Ricoeur and the way I take it to contribute to how care ethics might enlarge understandings of teaching encounters.

⁹ Other examinations of recognition and care ethics include: Hegelian (Molas 2019), Ricoeurean (Lanoix 2015), Ricoeurean with an emphasis on health-care settings (de Lange 2014; Hettema 2014; van Nistelrooij 2014; van Nistelrooij et al. 2014; van Stichel 2014; Carney 2015), Honnethean (Leget et al. 2011), and Taylorean (Nguyen 2022).

The terms 'one-caring' and 'cared-for' intentionally echo the existentialist predilection for both hyphenated terminology and the use of such terminology to clarify without repetition the referents of discussion (Noddings 2013 [1984]: 4).

A theme considered in Kittay 2020 [1999]: 70-7.

- (A, B) is a caring relation (or encounter) if and only if
- i. A cares for B—that is, A's consciousness is characterized by attention and motivational displacement—and
- ii. A performs some act in accordance with (i), and
- iii. B recognizes that A cares for B. (Noddings 2002b: 19)

The use of 'relation' is a reminder that there are two parties involved, the 'onecaring' and the 'cared-for'. However, some further clarifications are warranted for this stipulative definition. The sort of attention that Noddings is insisting on in the first criterion is best understood as 'receptive attention', such that the one-caring is 'engrossed in (or receptively attentive to) the needs expressed in an encounter' (Noddings 2010: 47). Further to this receptive attention is motivational displacement. This is when the one-caring puts their own projects to one side, at least for the moment, to direct their energies towards meeting the needs of the cared-for (p. 48). The second criterion is not specifiable in advance but importantly 'depend[s] not only on the expressed need but also on the competence of the carer and the resources she has at her disposal' (p. 48). Finally, the third criterion puts forward the claim that: 'the cared-for must contribute to the relation; the cared-for must show in some way that the caring has been received' (p. 48). The third criterion includes the verb 'recognize' which prompts me to offer a brief disambiguation from the sort of recognition referred to at the outset of this paper. Noddings is referring here, and elsewhere (Noddings 2013 [1984]: 78), to what she sees as a pivotal role for the cared-for. For Noddings, care is not care without the caring action being recognized as such by the cared-for. I have argued at length elsewhere that it is preferable for care ethicists not to insist on this stipulation in an account of care (Bennett in press). In brief, I take Noddings' account of what constitutes recognition of care by the cared-for to be too broad and ill-defined to warrant being a necessary condition of ascribing the adjective 'care' to encounters; an ethic of care remains important in its absence. 13

It is a combination of an element of the first and second criteria, namely, the needs of the cared-for, that I find a point of interface between care ethics and recognition-theory. The ethics of care takes the meeting of another's needs to be

For Noddings, this shows a departure from virtue ethics, as 'we recognize that these responses contribute to the caring relation and, more generally, to moral life. In care ethics, *caring* more often points to the quality of relation than to a virtue in the one caring.' (Noddings 2010: 49 emphasis in original).

The foregoing is not intended to be a complete account of Noddings' ethics of care. For example, there is a distinction between natural caring, the sort that does not require any moral effort and ethical caring where the one-caring must take deliberate steps to act (Noddings 2013 [1984]: 79ff). Moreover, responding to criticisms of her early work wherein she had been quite dismissive of caring-about, Noddings went on to distinguish caring-for as the sort of care she had delineated previously and caring-about to be a feature of justice that would structure society and institutions in order that caring-for might flourish (Noddings 2002b: 21ff).

pivotal. 14 Vitally, for care ethics, it is not the generalized other but the concrete other, 15 embedded as they are in their particular socio-historical context and enmeshed as they are in webs of relationships, whose needs are to be met. Incongruously, despite the prominence of the concept of need in care ethics, 'needs' for the most part suffer from limited conceptualization. Sarah Clark Miller also observes this though we part ways in our responses to this lacuna (Miller 2012: 15). Across the care ethics literature, we can locate at least five themes related to the identification of needs in the cared-for. 16 First, and already acknowledged, is the fact that meeting needs features heavily in many if not most accounts of care ethics. Second, there is the recognition that needs are shaped by the context in which they are found. Third, there are some needs that are more 'basic' than others. ¹⁷ Fourth, despite recognizing the different urgency of needs there are some which can be said to relate specifically to a person's flourishing. Fifth, a distinction between 'needs' and 'wants' is often introduced, with the fulfilment of the latter also connected to a person's flourishing. However, though these are undeniably interesting and important aspects of the concept of 'needs', for the most part the accounts of 'needs' offered by these authors remain underdeveloped. For some care ethicists, this is said to be intentional; they insist that 'caring needs are not to be specified and ought to be considered always within the context of particular situations and with regards to particular individuals' (Bourgault 2020: 208 emphasis in original). Yet there is an important distinction to be made here. There is a difference between specifying, by means of a list, for example, the sorts of needs that care ethicists maintain ought to be met by ones-caring and just how 'need' should be understood within the ethic. The risk in the first situation is that the commitment to meeting the needing other, the cared-for, in their particularity, will be eroded. If this were to happen, then an emphasis thought central to care ethics would be lost. However, this does not mean that a more illuminating account of 'needs' cannot be developed within

For example, Noddings on care ethics and education: 'To care means to respond to needs, and needs do not stop (or start) at the schoolroom door.' (Noddings 2005a: xxii). Outside care ethics, what is meant by need has been the subject of a range of analysis. See, for example (Miller 1976; Thomson 1987; Wiggins 1987). In a different vein is Michael Ignatieff's discussion of King Lear: 'It is a play that sets out to show us why we must take the needs of others on trust, by showing how murderous and pitiless a place the world can be without such trust. The claim of need makes the relation between the powerful and powerless human, but the nightmare of the powerless is that one day they will make their claim and the powerful will demand a reason' (Ignatieff 1990: 30).

To use Seyla Benhabib's well-known distinction (Benhabib 1992: 148–77).

For example, on the difficulty of identifying needs (Held 2005: 39), on the importance of accounting for context (Barnes 2012: 31) and (Bubeck 1995: 129ff), and on basic needs (Engster 2007: 26ff). Kittay links needs-meeting and some wants-meeting to flourishing (Kittay 2019: 138). Relatedly Steven Steyl offers an account that uses the 'Anscombean theory of action ... to defend a theory of caring actions as those whose proximate end is to meet a need and mount an argument for a eudaimonistic understanding thereof (Steyl 2020b: 284). This approach echoes Milton Mayeroff's work on care which predates the literature typically subsumed under the title 'care ethics'. For Mayeroff, care is directed towards helping the cared-for grow which will include meeting the cared-for's needs (Mayeroff 1971: 4).

Universal human needs for water, sustenance, and shelter are basic in that they make themselves felt however society is organized.

care ethics. Care ethicists hold that people can improve the way that they care. One way of doing this would be to better understand needs.

IDENTITY-BASED NEEDS: 'WHAT-NESS'

I would now like to move towards the idea of identity-based needs. These are needs that are a function of the cared-for's identity. This is not a claim to the effect that such needs exhaust all the needs a cared-for may experience. However, it is to say that these are the sorts of needs a one-caring ought to try to discern. Of course, this does not mean they will be able to meet all such identity-based needs, nor that there is a moral imperative to do so. But being cognizant of identity-based needs would, I maintain, contribute to better care under care ethics. In the work of Soran Reader, a needs-ethicist, there is an extended account of identity-based needs. 18 The approach Reader takes has two elements. The moral agent, when in what Reader characterizes as a 'moral relationship' with a moral patient, is obligated to meet those of the moral patient's needs that are necessary for that moral patient to maintain their being. The prima facie simplicity of this approach belies the complexity of the way Reader understands 'being'. The moral agent must have some way of determining those needs they have an obligation to satisfy. Both things and people can be said to have, sometimes multiple, 'second-natural phased-sortal identities'. Such an identity, according to Reader, is an answer to the question 'what is it?' (Reader 2007: 59). Decomposing second-natural phased-sortal identity into its parts furnishes the following ideas. Sortals are used to 'sort' things into different categories, by which a thing is known to be what it is. 'Second-natural' is the nature something acquires 'through the entrenched and predictable process of teaching and learning, and are mutable through changing circumstances, whereas "first" natures are acquired through the entrenched and predictable workings of nature independent of culture, and are generally assumed to be less mutable' (pp. 60-1). Thus, 'human being' might be first-natural sortal while 'mother' is second-natural. This is because what it is to be a 'mother' varies across cultures. Finally, 'phased' recognizes that members of a kind may not hold for the entirety of a member's existence. All adult humans were once babies whereas only some adult humans are secondary school teachers. Hence, 'sortal concepts' tell us what the needing being is and thus what it needs, and that second-natural phased-sortal concepts give us a close enough specification of what a needing being is, and a full enough list of essential needs'. ¹⁹ The latter direct the moral agent to the appropriate actions, that is, satisfying those essential needs (p. 58). For Reader, needs generated by a moral patient in order to maintain second-natural phased-sortal identities are just as important as more obviously existence-affecting needs such as water (p. 66). The second element alluded

¹⁸ Before her book-length treatment (Reader 2007), Reader collaborated on two related papers with Gillian Brock (Brock and Reader 2002; Reader and Brock 2004).

Take the second-natural phased-sortal 'mother': mother is second-natural because its conception is a function of the society in which it instantiates. It is phased because the person will have points in their life in which they have never been a mother, whatever the prevailing conception of motherhood.

to above, is that the obligation to meet needs is restricted to those situations in which people are in what Reader describes as 'moral relationships': 'What distinguishes the relationships of which moral relationships are a species from mere relations is that relationships involve an actual connection, a real "something between" agent and patient which links them together' (pp. 72-3). However, I take Reader's account to be problematic because of the conception of identity through the use of second-natural phased-sortals, not because of how she understands moral relationships.²⁰

Metaphysicians and logicians in the Western philosophical tradition, since at least the time of Aristotle, have exercised themselves about how or if one thing can be distinguished from another, that is, how things are identified. If 'things' are taken to exclude 'people' then the use of sortals seems merited. However, Reader does not commit to this exclusion, far from it. Her claim for the obligation to meet needs is predicated on moral agents being able to discern by means of second-natural phased-sortals who the people with whom they are in moral relationships are. Reader's claim is that for sortals like 'mother' or 'philosopher' there is a 'constitutive link between the empirically ascertainable intrinsic principles of change or rest of members of a kind, and the question of the identity of things of that kind' (p. 60). For adults, such sortal identities as 'mother' and 'philosopher' could be concurrent, unlike linear phases (an adult cannot concurrently be a baby). In order to rescue her account from being committed to saying that secondnatural phased-sortal identities such as 'mother' and 'philosopher' are not as important as those identities which define linear phases, for example 'baby' and 'adult', Reader says:

given the Aristotelian concept of nature, I can only be essentially one thing at a time. This is because only one inner principle of unity and change can be active at any one time. So I cannot after all—actively—be both a mother and a philosopher at the same time. (Reader 2007: 62)

Unfortunately, there is no reference to which of Aristotle's ideas are being taken in support of Reader's assertion. Perhaps it is an oblique reference to the opening of Book 2 of the *Physics* where Aristotle discusses what it means to refer to the 'nature' of something. 21 Aristotle contrasts natural objects, for example animals, plants, and fire with objects made by people. The difference is that 'each of the natural ones contains within itself a source of change and stability ... on the other hand a bed or a cloak has no intrinsic impulse for change' except in the case where the artefact 'coincidentally' has been made with something natural which itself provides the

In a review of Needs and Moral Necessity, Bill Wringe observes that Reader's account of moral relationships is underdetermined (Reader 2007: 72-7). He concedes that stipulating necessary and sufficient conditions for moral relationships may reasonably be eschewed in place of the paradigm relationships which Reader does present. However, as Wringe points out, Reader spends time at the outset of her book making the case that morality does in fact need defining or at least a clear account needs to be provided (Reader 2007: Chapter 2). As such, to leave the account of moral relationships as it stands is to not engage with her own project as stated (Wringe 2010: 884). Although Reader has not engaged with a great deal of literature about moral relationships, I do not find her characterization controversial. ²¹ Bk 2 192b8-32.

impulse for change (Aristotle 2008: 33). He goes on: 'if a doctor, say, is responsible for curing himself, this does not alter the fact that it is not qua being cured that he possesses medical skill: it is just a coincidence that the same person is both a doctor and being cured, and that is why the two things are separable from each other' (p. 33). It is plausible that this distinction is the motivating factor behind Reader's claim.

In the preceding paragraph I have aimed for a charitable interpretation of Reader's explanation about how an individual will often come under multiple second-natural phased-sortals at any one time, but that they are only ever actively acting under one such sortal at a time. However, the stance she takes strikes me as a severe weakness of her position. It seems to resist the interactions between different identities within the same person and how that materially affects their life. As Kimberlé Crenshaw observed in her seminal 1989 paper Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex, feminists who do not account for racial identity when discussing sexism fail to see that women of colour are typically multiply burdened when it comes to the experience of discrimination in ways that white feminists are not (Crenshaw 1989: 154). The date of publication indicates that intersectionality is not a recent area of scholarship and is surely something about which Reader would have been aware.²² Because identities combine, the claim Reader makes about it really being the case that one is at one moment a 'mother' and another a 'philosopher' does not carry water. ²³ Even if Reader were correct about identities operating separately, where does this leave the moral agent who is trying to respond to the moral patients' second-natural phased-sortal needs? As Crenshaw observed, to only attend to one aspect of identity such as gender, is to completely miss the effects of, say, race for that same individual. Thus, the agent who attends to one second-natural phased-sortal at a time is likely destined to fail to properly meet the needs of the moral patient. Just 'who' the moral patient is, is missed on Reader's account.24

Finally, even Reader herself seems to be aware that second-natural phased-sortals may be too blunt when she says 'even second-natural phased sortals may not be specific enough to single individual human beings out, keep track of them, chronicle what they do or help them well ... my individual identity, too, is arguably not contingent, and is the source of my most morally demanding needs' (Reader 2007: 62–3). I interpret this to mean that individual identity. So is not the same as second-natural phased-sortal identity. Thus, it remains unclear as to how far second-natural phased-sortals help illuminate the relation between moral agent

See also Collins 1990; Collins and Bilge 2016; Hancock 2016.

²³ Reader also fails to explore how the use of sortals fits with their application to children. This is surprising as children are clearly the sort of beings whose needs ought to be met by someone. I do not propose to expand on this issue as it is hoped my arguments to date have demonstrated the short-comings of second-natural phased-sortal identities.

²⁴ The formation of identity, especially sortals such as 'mother' is not neutral. The shaping of sortals amidst relations of power and oppression must not be underestimated. For example, see Alcoff 2021. However, this is not the topic of my paper.

Miller 1976: 128–36 relates needs and harms to a person's 'plan of life' which is to be understood as a person's identity.

and moral patient. However, I do find the broader idea of identity-based needs fruitful and will carry that forward. Reader's project was to give an answer to 'what' this person is (pp. 58-63). Many will find this interrogative jarring when taken in reference to people but not when 'what' is used to ask after or about things. The discord provokes a reappraisal of how identity and attendant needs might be understood. In so doing I turn to identity as 'who-ness' and take up Ricoeur's line of thought. Importantly, identity as 'who-ness' is not to be taken as an adjunct to Reader's arguments, but rather as a significant change in aspect. Not paying attention to 'who-ness' risks missing what it is to be human.

IDENTITY-BASED NEEDS: 'WHO-NESS'

Ricoeur posits a self that is equidistant from the Cartesian cogito and Nietzschean anti-cogito (Ricoeur 1992: 23). This self will serve 'to fit in both with the ambition of self-founding certainty stemming from the Cartesian cogito and with the humiliation of the cogito reduced to sheer illusion following the Nietzschean critique' (p. 299).²⁶ His argument starts in the philosophy of language, proceeds through the philosophy of action and the philosophy of narrative theory, and culminates at the 'threshold between philosophical anthropology and ethics' (Ricoeur 2002: 280). Ricoeur introduces what he takes to be two meanings of identity, that is identity as sameness and identity as selfhood. Adopting the Latin words to mark the distinction, these two meanings of identity correspond to idem identity and ipse identity. Idem identity, that is, sameness, speaks to numerical identity, qualitative identity or similitude, uninterrupted continuity and permanence in time.²⁷ The concerns of *ipse* identity are somewhat different. *Ipse* 'implies no assertion concerning some unchanging core of the personality' (Ricoeur 1992: 2). Rather, selfhood seeks an answer to the question of 'who?' across time that is 'irreducible to any question of "what?" (p. 118). Identity as sameness is the proper response to 'what', while identity as selfhood is the proper response to 'who'. This 'who' is not simply someone's name, it requires more, it requires narrative, the story of their life (Simms 2003: 102). Recall, the designation I gave to Reader's account of identity as 'whatness': this finds its correlate in Ricoeur's idem. However, there is more to identity than the possibility of identification or re-identification that is offered by idem. Ipse identity could be the answer to all manner of questions but notably it is a comprehensible answer to 'Who did this?' As Ricoeur explains, if ascription of an action to a particular agent, takes on 'imputation' then there is an explicitly moral weight: not only is the agent the actual author of the action but they are also responsible for

It was questioned by at least one contemporary reviewer whether or not Ricoeur had really advanced beyond Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, that is, whether his 'hermeneutics of the self ever get[s] beyond the thinking subject to the inscrutable other' (Anderson 1993: 244). This is contrary to Ricoeur's denials throughout his work. Whether or not Ricoeur was successful in this particular task with which he burdened himself is not something I propose to explore.

²⁷ See also (Ricoeur 1992: 114–18). These are the sorts of interrogations of identity commonly found in the work of Anglo-analytic philosophy. It is the discourse in which Reader, above, appears to have been working.

the consequences that may flow from it.²⁸ The responsible *ipse* is accountable, it is the answer to the question: 'Who is the moral subject?' Just what is being imputed and what are the stakes? Nothing less than who-ness: 'I identify myself by my capacities, by what I can do. The individual designates him- or herself as a capable human being' (Ricoeur 2016: 290-1).

Ricoeur takes capability to be at least 'the power to cause something to happen' (Ricoeur 2006: 18 emphasis in original). Ricoeur does not appear to make a sharp distinction between when he uses 'capacity' and the term 'capability'—although, there is a suggestion that capability is understood as the proper realization of capacity (Ricoeur 2005: 135). It is in imputing that 'the concept of capability reaches its peak in terms of self-designation' (Ricoeur 2006: 20). By this, Ricoeur means, self-recognition, that is, recognizing oneself to be the actual author of one's own actions. In self-recognition I may take myself to possess certain capabilities but there is also a 'recourse to others required to give a social status to this personal certainty', that is, mutual recognition (Ricoeur 2016: 290).²⁹ But this 'mutuality is not given spontaneously; that is why it is sought. And this demand is not without struggle or conflict. The idea of a struggle for recognition is at the heart of modern social relations' (p. 292).30

The pivotal role in Ricoeur's thought of mutual recognition requires some elaboration. My motivation for so doing is that it brings his thought much closer to the concerns of care ethics, making a synthesis between the two all the more plausible. Ricoeur's *The Course of Recognition* was the final work to be published in his lifetime. His project was prompted by 'a sense of perplexity having to do with the semantic status of the very term *recognition* on the plane of philosophical discourse' (Ricoeur 2005: ix emphasis in original). As David Pellauer, translator and interpreter of Ricoeur's work

Ricoeur takes 'imputation' and 'responsibility' to be synonyms (Ricoeur 1988: 215 end note). However, he observes that although actions are imputed to someone, it is the person who is said to be responsible for their actions and their consequences.

²⁹ 'Mutual recognition' is not to be confused with 'mutual relationship'. The former, for Ricoeur, points to recognizing the capabilities of the other, that is what makes them, them. The latter could be understood simply through 'you scratch my back, I will scratch yours', a giving and taking common to human experience. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me on this point. Further, though it does not bear on my argument, Ricoeur takes mutuality to be preferable to reciprocity. For Ricoeur, the latter is, like 'mutual relationship' above, constricting in its undertones of commercial exchange. The irreplaceability of the self found in holding to mutuality, that is akin to gift-giving with no expectation of return, allows for the full unfolding of capabilities, though without any commitment to a 'true self' (Ricoeur 2005: 151-3). In common usage 'mutual' implies bidirectionality but I interpret Ricoeur's focus to be unidirectional at any one moment of recognition.

Ricoeur consciously draws on Axel Honneth's work in The Struggle for Recognition: 'By characterising Anerkennung as a struggle, Honneth prepares us to take into account the conflicting aspect of the dynamic process at stake and the role of a negative feeling such as contempt, which may be transcribed as a denial of recognition.' (Ricoeur 2006: 22; see Honneth 1995). It is worth noting that Anerkennung in Honneth is recognition understood as 'the granting of a certain status' and not 're-identification' (Honneth 1995: viii). Ricoeur understands recognition in the former sense (Ricoeur 2006: 21) Finally, Ricoeur actually favours a view of recognition as peaceful not a struggle, it 'is to be sought in peaceful experiences of mutual recognition, based on symbolic mediations as exempt from the juridical as from the commercial order of exchange' (Ricoeur 2005: 219ff).

puts it, the book takes a lexicographical approach to the term 'recognition'; as the meanings unearthed from dictionaries shift from the active to the passive voice, there is an accompanying move from the recognition of things to being recognized as a person (Pellauer 2007: 127). Thus, to start with, there is the meaning of recognition as identification and re-identification. Such recognition might be of things but also of persons. Thus, being a person means, of course, 'being confronted with the threat of misrecognition' (Ricoeur 2005: 150). At this stage, Ricoeur seems to be echoing his earlier discussion of *idem* identity, what I have likened to 'what-ness' identity. Next, there is recognition as attestation. This form of recognition does not dispense with the sense of identification but now the self is 'me and not the other, others, the other person' (p. 151). Now, the self is in the realm of *ipse* once more:

a vast realm of experiences opened up for description and reflection, that of the capacities each person has the certitude and confidence of being able to exercise. Self-recognition thus found in the unfolding figures of the 'I can,' which together make up the portrait of the capable human being, its own space of meaning. (p. 151)

Not only, or merely, is the self not other but the person who is 'me' is made possible through the exercise of capacities. This leads Ricoeur to the third and final form of recognition, mutual recognition, and with it the change in grammatical voice: from 'I recognize' to 'I am recognized' (p. 248). This is where the 'subject places him- or herself under the tutelage of a relationship of reciprocity, in passing through self-recognition in the variety of capacities that modulate one's ability to act, one's agency' (p. 248). The point being that a subject takes themselves to be capable of various actions and is confirmed in this by other agents: 'mutual recognition brings self-recognition to fruition' (Ricoeur 2006: 22). Imbricated with others amidst multifarious social institutions, the self is confirmed as self, not other, through recognition of that self's capabilities.³¹

CARING AND RECOGNITION IN EDUCATION

In this final section, there is a return to the concerns with which I started, namely the touchpoints between care ethics, needs-recognition, and teaching. I am mindful of the approach Noddings took in her first major work on care ethics, such that a 'teacher "is necessarily one-caring if she is to be a teacher and not simply a textbook-like source from which the student may or may not learn … we shall begin not with pedagogy but with caring. Then we shall see what *form* caring takes in the teaching function" (Noddings 2013 [1984]: 70 emphasis in original). Noddings is committed to articulating just what it is to meet the other in caring relations; the importance of the subjectivity of the teacher and the one to be taught. The next stage for her project was to explore whether her robust account of care would hold true in

The addition of social institutions to individual others is not a piece of sleight of hand, it refers to Ricoeur's discussion of connection between capabilities and rights: The 'need [to be recognized] requires the mediation of institutions providing stability and durability to the process, fulfilling step by step the need to be recognised. At the same time the category of alterity or otherness assumes the form of reciprocity or mutuality which was lacking (or remained implicit) at the previous stage of self-recognition in terms of capabilities' (Ricoeur 2006: 21).

teaching situations; whether her account offers a novel and fruitful way of characterizing these commonplace but potentially vital encounters. My approach, to conclude this paper, is more restricted given I am focussing solely on what it is the one-caring is doing when trying to get a sense of at least some of the cared-for's needs; that both 'what-ness' and 'who-ness' identity offer something to the wouldbe one-caring. As such, I will take this element of care ethics along with these notions of identity-based needs straight into a discussion of teaching, grateful for the previous work done by Noddings and other care ethicists in preparing the ground.

To reiterate, the cared-for, also Ricoeur's capable human being, in their 'whoness' takes themselves to be capable of certain actions.³² This self-recognition has emerged from their being immersed in the company of other subjects whose mutual recognition confirms in the subject that they do in fact possess certain capabilities. That is to say, the public nature of action serves to confirm or disconfirm the accuracy of such self-recognition: they take themselves to be able to X, being able to X is thus a part of their identity on Ricoeur's account. The potential for corrigibility about capability is a feature of care in teaching encounters. In these the one-caring steps into what might be called the liminal space between selfrecognition and mutual recognition. As other when teaching they may have to contest the cared-for's self-recognition. They may not assent in their mutual recognition. However, this does not necessarily entail misrecognition.³³ No, this is when a one-caring may perceive just what it is the cared-for needs in order for the latter's self-recognition to be correct. The following example will serve as an illustration. It is a reminder that in teaching encounters there are likely tensions between needs expressed by the cared-for and those inferred by the one-caring. These latter needs will at least be a function of the context of the instantiation of the teaching encounter. 34 However, in these encounters, if the teacher is not, as Noddings says, merely a textbooklike resource, then in their care, they are unavoidably bound up in influencing the being of the cared-for and are affected by them. Neutrality has no place in teaching encounters as whatever the quality of the interaction, both one-caring and cared-for are affected. It is this relational emphasis in care ethics that makes it especially apt for teaching encounters. As my concern is with the possibility of identity-based needs-recognition drawing together the foregoing ideas, the example limits itself to that. Needless to say, I acknowledge that there is more to be said about the mutual influence that is part of being beings in relation.³⁵

Not least, some of these actions may themselves be caring and are thus implicated in identity formation as 'one who is caring' (Hamington 2015: 284) and, it is assumed, 'one who can be cared for' (Noddings 2013 [1984]: 59-78; Kittay 2019: 217-9).

³³ At least as misrecognition as articulated by Honneth. There likely remains the potential for ethical import in resisting the recognition of a particular capacity but I am making no claims about whether it is necessarily the case in any meaningful way.

³⁴ I am borrowing Noddings' distinction between inferred and expressed needs. See, for example, Noddings 2002b: Chapter 3.

³⁵ For example, Jennifer Nedelsky argues that the relational selves are constituted not solely determined by their origins in the nested relations within which people are always immersed (Nedelsky 2020: 32-4).

Since 1988, in England, there has been a National Curriculum. 36 This mandates, for all state-funded schools the requirement that they offer a 'curriculum which is broadly balanced and broadly based and which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepares the pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life' and this curriculum constitutes 'an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens' (DfE 2014: 5, 6). Thus, whatever else, when a teacher welcomes a new pupil into their class, both teacher and pupil are to a greater and lesser extent aware that there are external expectations about what is expected of them both. Diachronically, between this dyad there is mutual recognition. They each take themselves to be capable of certain things and not others. For the purposes of this illustration, it is what the pupil is and is not capable of that is pressing. I will suppose that the pupil recognizes, at least in the abstract, the need to be sufficiently literate and numerate in order to navigate their society with a modicum of success. Yet, as per the National Curriculum, a great deal more is expected. The pupil is to become an 'educated citizen', cognizant of significant accomplishments of their society and others'. So too, the teacher is partly responsible for promoting all manner of developments in the pupil. Where does this leave care and identity-based needs-recognition?

The caring relation, between the one-caring and cared-for, for example, a teacher of French and their pupil, is flooded by mutual recognition pace Ricoeur. The pupil takes themselves to be capable of certain things and not others. The teacher, similarly, takes the pupil to be capable of certain things and not others. These capabilities admit, like most human activities, of a spectrum of facility. Perhaps the pupil's self-recognition is such that they take themselves to be capable of speaking French. The teacher, recognizes that there is an incipient capability but that it could undoubtedly be developed further. As one-caring, the teacher sees this need, in parts expressed, in parts inferred, and takes steps to meet it. It would not be desirable to characterize this as solely a response to 'what-ness' nor 'who-ness' identity. Why might this be the case? For a start the teacher, in a school, is not likely to have just the one pupil. The relation will be one to many, not one to one. Further, in the first instance the teacher cannot help but meet the pupils in their 'what-ness': thirty boisterous 14 year olds on a Tuesday afternoon at the start of the school year. The teacher is not a novice, they are familiar with what prior knowledge pupils of this age and stage typically have and of course, the pupils may be previously unknown to them. Thus, the teacher starts out by responding to their 'what-ness' needs. This might include that: the pupils are 14 and not 6, they have studied French for three years, not zero years or twenty, the National Curriculum has and

Hoveid and Hoveid discuss Ricoeurean capabilities and educational encounters in their 2009 paper. I agree that institutional structures commonly serve to militate against the development of capabilities but I part ways with the authors' analysis of capabilities in education. I interpret them as holding a view of the student as coming into an educational institution lacking all such capacities rather than, even when very young, having emergent capacities (Hoveid and Hoveid 2009).

is being followed, and so on. The French teacher's starting point, then, is from the pupils' 'what-ness'.

Yet, 'what-ness' cannot be the end of the story. If 'what-ness' were all that a teacher considered about a pupil, would the teacher be meeting the pupil in the latter's due subjectivity? I suggest not. For this, it is 'who-ness' that guides the teacher. In the example being discussed, there is a pupil with claims to being able to speak French. I submit, it is preferable that the teacher responds to the qualities of the pupil that are uniquely that pupil's; a response, then to the pupil's 'who-ness'. For this pupil, but not another, particular corrections to accent and grammar are offered, suggestions for French conversation with an older pupil who has similar extracurricular interests are indicated, and French comics are sought out. The teacher does all this knowing that they could not nor would not advise all of their pupils in this specific way. They are, it is hoped, increasingly sensitive to those things that may impinge on learning for this student, perhaps the student's circumstances and experience. Further, the teacher, meeting the pupil in their subjectivity, starts to have an increasing sense of the pupil's inclinations, motivations, hopes, and fears. The teacher is aware of just what the pupil wants from French and given the positive valence of this want has no qualms about directing their energies pace Noddings to meeting this want or perhaps need.³⁷ It is not merely knowing what generally works to help realize the development of speaking French, but just how to do this given the concrete particularity of this pupil. The teacher then, in their caring, takes the pupil from their partially correct self-recognition through meeting their needs to confirming them in meliorative mutual recognition.³⁸ To respond to the other in this way, is to be responsible. It is the very act of responding to 'whoness' that, it is hoped, means the teacher is not a mindless automaton, going through the motions of responding to the 'what-ness' of their pupils.

To sum up, I have taken a feature of care ethics, the meeting of needs in the cared-for, to be illuminated by Ricoeur's theory of recognizing the capable human being. ³⁹ By way of Soran Reader's account of identity-based needs I made the claim that such needs are at least some of those the one-caring should attempt to meet in the cared-for. Identity as 'what-ness' was taken as a starting point but identity as 'who-ness' was judged to be richer and congruent with the concerns of care ethics: taking the other in their particularity. This change in perspective is not taken lightly, 'who-ness' is of a different order to 'what-ness'. I interpreted Ricoeur's account of 'who-ness' identity, resulting in the 'capable human being', to offer the needed sophistication. All this leads me to posit that care ethicists may find something of value in this articulation of how to understand some of the needs of the cared-for, as a

It might be an externally imposed need due to curriculum requirements, for example.

It might be observed that this just is what it is to be a 'good' teacher. That may be, but an aim of this paper has been to try to explain what a teacher is doing when they act in this way.

³⁹ I should note that Honneth takes a different view and appears to subsume care ethics into what he describes as a morality of recognition (Honneth 2007: 129–43). In this piece Honneth does not engage with the care ethics literature so it is unclear whether he is meaning care as it is used in that tradition, though he specifically does refer to ethics of care (p. 141).

function of their 'who-ness' identity, the capabilities they may or may not possess. Given the importance in most teaching encounters of discerning which needs are to be given priority, I advocate that attention be paid to the 'who-ness' of those being educated, while not losing sight of the inevitable responsibilities of one-caring to be reflective about just what it is they perceive and how they subsequently act.

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