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Care Ethics and Paternalism: A Beauvoirian Approach

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Abstract: Feminist care ethics has become a prominent ethical theory that influenced theoretical and practical discussions in a variety of disciplines and institutions on a global scale. However, it has been criticized by transnational feminist scholars for operating with Western-centric assumptions and registers, especially by universalizing care as it is practiced in the Global North. It has also been criticized for prioritizing gender over other categories of intersectionality and hence for not being truly intersectional. Given the imperialist and colonial legacies embedded into the unequal distribution of care work across the globe, a Western-centric approach may also carry the danger of paternalism. Hence, a critical approach to care ethics would require reckoning with these challenges. The aim of this article is first to unfold these discussions and the responses to them from care ethics scholars and then to present resources in Beauvoir's existentialist ethics, specifically the tenet of treating the other as freedom, as productive tools for countering the Western-centric and paternalistic aspects of care practices.

Keywords: critical care ethics; existentialism; Simone de Beauvoir; feminism; paternalism; existentialist ethics; western-centric approaches in care; transnational feminism

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1. Introduction

Care ethics has succeeded in establishing itself as a well-developed and well-recognized ethical discipline in its own right. In response to criticisms from feminist scholars charging it with essentialism and focusing only on the personal, the field has reworked itself to incorporate social and political dimensions and applications of caring relationships. Transformation of the early formulations of care ethics into a more political account of care ethics provided fruitful discussions addressing the hard-pressing questions related to the imperialist and colonial legacies embedded into the unequal distribution of care work across the globe. However, despite its critique of Western-centric ethical theories, care ethics has received criticisms for operating—mostly unintentionally—with Western-centric assumptions and registers by way of universalizing care as practiced in the Global North. This tendency can be understood as an indirect manifestation of the dominant Eurocentric perspective that undergirds most of the Western thinking and theorizing. Ethnocentrism is still present as a significant challenge in feminist theories developed in the Global North and care ethics is not immune to that challenge. In addition to the lack of engagement, the Eurocentric approach may also present itself in the form of paternalism when there is some level of engagement with different localities.

Transnational feminist ethics scholarship presents rich discussions showing why care questions have to be dislocated from the Global North and relocated in different geographies by taking intersectional oppressions into account. While transnational feminist ethics provides us with these well-justified concerns regarding care ethics, the discussion needs to be complemented with accounts of how to resolve such concerns and challenges with respect to care ethics, especially given the historical reality of paternalism in Western encounters with non-Western geographies. For this reason, I introduce Beauvoir's existentialist ethics and argue that it has immense resources to offer in helping us map out how to decenter care ethics from the Global North to more diverse locations without falling into the trap of paternalism. I argue that Beauvoir's notion of treating the other as freedom

enables us to better perceive the incongruity between the ideas of the one caring and that of the one cared; for regarding the best way of care as the Beauvoirian notion of treating the other as freedom helps us acknowledge the one cared for as a subject who has their unique set of needs and projects distinct and sometimes even in conflict with the one caring.

Using Beauvoir's existentialist ethics in combination with transnational feminist critiques of care ethics to argue against the paternalism that is assumed by Eurocentric conceptions of care ethics and to formulate a more viable form of care ethics may sound counterproductive given that Beauvoir herself is situated in the Western philosophical tradition. However, Beauvoir's writings and activism responds to the problem of coloniality in unique and productive ways. Her interventions in the Algerian decolonization war are exemplary of how one can be mindful of their privileged and colonialist position in interacting with the colonized.

In her interventions, Beauvoir was particularly conscious of her background as a middle-class French intellectual who was benefitting from the Algerian colonization. She treaded lightly the line between indifference and paternalism, only showing care for the oppressed who was a victim of the French imperialist policies. As she explains in *Force of Circumstance*, indifference to the Algerian War could no longer be an option for her, given her complicity in the oppression Algerian people have been enduring [1] (pp. 369, 371, 384, 652). Intervening in a paternalistic manner, on the other hand, would go against the principles of existentialist ethics she laid out in her philosophical works [2,3]. For her, engagement with the Algerian girl, Djamila Boupacha, who was raped by the French military, was like walking a razor blade, not only because she could taint the care for her with her own subject-position's values, but also because she had to avoid the pitfall of philosophical imperialism herself, painting her act as a paternalistic charity of a hypocrite [4,5].

That is why, while she deployed every tool at her disposal to help free Djamila Boupacha, she abstained from intervening when Boupacha asked for help to resist the FLN's (*Front de Libération Nationale*) request that she goes back to Algeria [6] (p. 529). Such nuances in Beauvoir's interactions will be central to my claim that Beauvoirian existentialist ethics may provide fruitful resources to counteract transnational feminist criticisms leveled against care ethics [7–10], despite the seeming fact that Beauvoir, too, is a Western, privileged, middle-class feminist. However, it is important to note that care ethics has been one of the few ethical theories with a Western origin that both welcomed and encouraged criticisms especially to open up space for inclusion and contributions from all over the world. For example, Cree scholar Katherine Walker's work [11] and Tula Brannelly and Amohia Boulton's scholarship [12] on the interlacement of care ethics and Māori thought attests to meaningful engagement with indigenous thought in care ethics. In addition, Vrinda Dalmiya's comparative reading of care ethics and the Mahābhārata [13], Chenyang Li's comparative study of Confucianism and care ethics [14], Thaddeus Metz's suggestions for care ethics based on her articulation of sub-Saharan communitarian morality [15], Sarah Munawar's work that develops an Islamic ethics of care [16], and Hil Malatino's theorization of trans care work [17] are only a few more examples from a rapidly growing literature that engages care ethics not only with different localities, but also with marginalized groups in the Western geographies.

The affinity existentialist ethics shares with care ethics regarding their fundamental principles and their critique of traditional ethical theories also constitutes another reason to turn to Beauvoir in discussing the questions above. Unfortunately, the compatibility between existentialism and care ethics has not been fully explored by feminists yet. Kristana Arp points out some of these commonalities, yet she limits her analysis to Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and only focuses on the phenomenological aspects of Beauvoir's work [18]. Maurice Hamington and Anya Daly also join the efforts to find a grounding for feminist ethics in the phenomenological tradition. Hamington explores Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodiment as a grounding for care ethics [19] (pp. 5, 39). Daly, on the other hand, appeals to Merleau-Ponty's non-dualist ontology in order to answer the questions of why one should care [20] (pp. 12–14). Based on Merleau-Ponty's thesis of

interdependence and the reciprocity and empathy that ensues from this interdependence, Daly argues that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology explains the potential of and tendency to care [21] (p. 290). Tove Pettersen is another care ethics scholar who focuses on the relational ontology of care ethics as its most significant feature [22] (p. 52). While these phenomenological aspects provide significant grounding for care, existential and postcolonial aspects of Beauvoir's work compound this process of grounding in meaningful ways.

In my analysis, I delineate that the notion of interconnectedness of people and the accompanying notion of the relational self are central to both care ethics and Beauvoir's thinking. My goal in bringing in Beauvoir's notion of existentialist freedom is to offer a model to counter the detrimental effects of ethnocentric thinking in care ethics and help relate to different localities across the globe. Ethnocentric thinking has also historically produced paternalistic interventions directed at the women of the Global South by Western women. As I have shown elsewhere, Beauvoir skillfully practiced existentialist tenets in her colonial and postcolonial engagements, and she avoided the dangers of paternalism in her interventions in the Algerian decolonization movement [23]. Here, I analyze her writings and activism in the hopes that it will shed some light on the discussions of paternalism in care ethics.

In the first section, I explain Beauvoir's existential ethics with an emphasis on her notion of freedom. In the second section, I trace the development of care ethics in relation to its critique of traditional Western ethical theories. In the third section, I locate discussions of care in postcolonial literature. The work in this section aims to address the social inequalities surrounding caring practices between the Global North and the Global South. By exploring the local contingencies in defining care practices with an emphasis on their relation to the global political structures, I show the colonial and paternalistic aspects of care practices and call for a more exhaustive account of these aspects in discussions of care ethics. In the last section, I discuss how Beauvoir's existentialist notion of freedom may prove to be useful for addressing the colonial and paternalistic aspects of care practices.

2. Beauvoir's Existentialist Ethics

A close examination of Beauvoir's life and writings reveals that her existentialist ethics was developed within the context of her political activism against the oppressive structures of her time [23]. While her existentialist ethics is centered around the notion of freedom, the notion of freedom she develops in her ethics is closely informed by an account of oppression. We first experience ourselves as dominated by our situation in our childhood where we are confined with meanings created by others. Only after childhood we can materially challenge those meanings and endorse ours. However, since we are born into those meanings and they constitute our facticity, our freedom is shaped in relation to those meanings [3] (pp. 38–39). Hence, our projects and choices are shaped by others from the very beginning. In *The Prime of Life*, Beauvoir writes,

> An individual, I thought, only receives a human dimension by recognizing the existence of others. Yet, in my essay, coexistence appears as a sort of accident that each individual should somehow surmount; he would begin by creating his project in isolation, and only then ask the community to endorse its validity. In truth, society shapes me from the day of my birth and it is within that society, and through my close relationship with it, that I decide who I am to be [24] (p. 456).

For Beauvoir, then, the self is constructed through the projects one undertakes based on those meanings. Moreover, these projects can neither be realized nor take on any meaning without others. Hence, instead of considering the need for others as an egoistic move, we should understand it as a contingent fact of our human condition. She writes, " . . . the individual is defined only by his relationship to the world and to other individuals; he exists only by transcending himself, and his freedom can be achieved only through the freedom of others" [3] (p. 156).

According to Beauvoir, we are free, yet we also choose to will ourselves free or not. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, she appeals to a distinction between natural freedom and ethical

freedom to resolve the seeming contradiction on being free and choosing that freedom at the same time [3] (p. 24). Instead of postulating these freedoms as two separate types of freedoms, drawing from Edward Fullbrook and Kate Fullbrook, I argue that they are two dimensions of our freedom [25] (p. 106). In other words, they are two different experiences of our freedom. According to Beauvoir, one's experience of herself as a consciousness is the same as one's experience of herself as freedom. In that sense, being free is the essential mode of all human beings, which she describes as natural freedom. However, in our interactions with others we are also objects and we need recognition of others to create and pursue our projects. In creating our genuine projects and demanding attention of others to our projects we are exercising ethical freedom. Beauvoir states that "To will oneself free is to effect the transition from nature to morality by establishing a genuine freedom on the original upsurge of our existence" [3] (p. 25).

One may abstain from exercising her ethical freedom because of different reasons. Two main reasons Beauvoir considers for failure in exercising ethical freedom are being in bad faith and being under oppressive conditions. In " . . . laziness, heedlessness, capriciousness, cowardice, impatience . . . " one is escaping from the anguish her freedom brings about [3] (p. 25). In situations of oppression, on the other hand, the oppressed is not given the chance to assume her ethical freedom and act upon it. If the oppressive condition ceases to exist and the oppressed still does not claim her freedom, then she would be in bad faith.

While these two modes of failure in exercising ethical freedom, i.e., being in bad faith and being under oppressive conditions, are separate, they can overlap. An example of an overlap would be acting in bad faith and choosing to remain in immanence in response to an oppressive situation. Beauvoir calls this being complicit with one's oppression in *The Second Sex*. In a patriarchal society, Beauvoir argues, many women admit or even welcome their object-like status defined by men for the purposes of rewards and protection. Nevertheless, acting in bad faith in a situation like this should be differentiated from acting in bad faith in the absence of oppressive conditions. As Beauvoir states " . . . she [*women*] discovers and choses herself in a world where men force her to assume herself as Other: an attempt is made to freeze her as an object and doom her to immanence, since her transcendence will be forever transcended by another essential and sovereign consciousness." [26] (p. 17).

Furthermore, one can exercise their ethical freedom in an oppressive way and hence act in bad faith. For example, oppressors act in bad faith by declaring themselves as sovereign and independent subjects, because they refuse to acknowledge the interconnected nature of human freedom and existence. While they may be acting towards transcendence, their actions undermine the actualization of freedom of others. Beauvoir's analysis of patriarchal oppression as practiced by men provides a good example of being bad faith in that regard.

The notions of natural freedom and ethical freedom are as well referred to as ontological (metaphysical) freedom and moral freedom, respectively. For Beauvoir, ontological freedom is the very condition of moral freedom, yet moral freedom can be realized only through the "conscious affirmation of one's ontological freedom" [27] (p. 2). We can choose among ethical action and unethical action only because we potentially have ontological freedom. Beauvoir uses the notion of natural freedom to refer to the conditions of the possibility of willing one's self free. Based on this possibility and depending on the conditions the individual finds herself in, she may or may not choose to will herself free. For Beauvoir "There is ethics only if ethical action is not present" [3] (p. 24). In some situations, on the other hand, the subject may not even have the option to will herself free, although theoretically she has this potential. Beauvoir analyzes those options under the notion of ethical freedom. Natural freedom refers to our ability to act in the world within the limits of our facticity and ethical freedom is overcoming the limits of natural freedom and being involved in the actions which transcends our facticity; thus, natural freedom is the condition of ethical freedom. Here, Beauvoir defines ethics as "the triumph of freedom over facticity" [3] (p. 44).

Notions of transcendence and immanence play a pivotal role in Beauvoir's existential ethics as well. Transcendence and immanence can refer to states of being or adjectives for

actions. In other words, an action can be considered as transcendent or immanent or a human being can be in a state that is closer to transcendence or immanence. If a person is only interested in activities that reproduce daily life (activities that are described as immanent) and does not engage in any further activities that create meaning in the world (activities that are described as transcendent) then this person would be closer to a state of immanence rather than transcendence. According to Beauvoir, we are always somewhere between transcendence and immanence and most of our activities involve elements of both [3] (p. 82).

Beauvoir exalts activities of transcendence such as inventions, industries, and books as she thinks they " . . . people the world concretely and open concrete possibilities to men" [3] (pp. 80–81). Her treatment of activities of immanence on the other hand takes a negative tone. In *The Second Sex,* for example, she talks about care-related activities as drudgery. She writes,

> Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition. The clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present [26] (p. 451).

Some may read Beauvoir's treatment of care-related activities as immanence as an act of undervaluing such activities. And, understandably, they might question the turn to a Beauvoirian notion of freedom for a grounding of care ethics. To analyze this possible criticism let us turn to Iris Marion Young, who criticized Beauvoir's treatment of domestic work in a negative light. Young reads Beauvoir as devaluing housework by associating it with immanence. In doing so, she argues Beauvoir " . . . misses the creatively human aspects of women's traditional household work, in activities I call preservation" [28] (p. 124). Since for Beauvoir activities that shape human history are marked as transcendence and activities that only serve perpetuation of life are marked as immanence, and domestic work is associated with immanence, Young argues that Beauvoir fails to see the creative potential in activities that maintain daily life [28] (p. 138).

While I do not agree with Young that Beauvoir thinks it is impossible for domestic work to be carried out in creative and transcendent ways, this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. However, based on what I laid out about Beauvoir's existentialist ethics so far, I argue that Beauvoir accords utmost value to activities of immanence because they create the environment in which activities of transcendence can be practiced. In other words, they are prerequisite for any transcendent activity and hence for any type of expression of freedom. However, their relegation to a certain group creates oppressive conditions. Since Beauvoir aimed to change this oppressive structure or at least disturb it, her insistence on talking about the negative aspects of that type of work for women can be understood as a strategy to underscore the impediments created for women by the systemic patriarchal oppression. Yet, that does not necessarily translate into devaluing of such activities per se.

Young also seems to read Beauvoir's position as one of endorsing a dichotomy between the notions of transcendence and immanence and favoring transcendence over immanence. I do not agree with Young on two grounds. First, some of our activities incorporate elements of both immanence and transcendence and therefore do not allow us to maintain this dichotomy. Second, given Beauvoir's emphasis on providing people with the resources to be able to choose and pursue their own projects, the relationship between transcendence and immanence is best described not as a dichotomous one, but rather, an interdependent one, as activities of immanence create the conditions for the possibility of transcendent activities. Many activities that fall under the category of care work, for example, can be creative and transcendent as well as well as mundane and immanent. Andrea Veltman identifies four characteristics of transcendent activity based on Beauvoir's description. They are as follows: producing something durable, enabling individual self-expression, transforming or annexing the world, and contributing to the constructive endeavors of the human race [29] (p. 123). Based on these characteristics, cooking by trying different

recipes, experimenting with them, and inventing new ones can become a creative and non-repetitive caring activity. Nevertheless, no matter how creative and self-expressive I am in my cooking, I can only produce a recipe that is durable but not a meal. Hence, cooking falls in between transcendence and immanence. On the other hand, most of the work the factory workers perform produces a great deal of durable objects, while that type of work lacks both self-expression and creativity. There are many activities which fall in the gray zone between transcendence and immanence.

Moreover, in a 1971 interview, Beauvoir acknowledged the socially constructed gender association of care while also recognizing the value of care: In an interview she maintains that "There is often, in women, a kind of caring for others that is inculcated in them by education, and which should be eliminated when it takes the form of slavery. But caring about others, the ability to give to others, to give of your time, your intelligence—this is something women should keep, and something that men should learn to acquire." [30] (p. 191).

Existence in the world necessitates action and interaction with other freedoms. One may well escape assuming others' freedom, treat others as immanence, and avoid seeing how their projects need others to have a meaning, yet they cannot escape their natural freedom in doing so; they would only escape their ethical freedom. Because for Beauvoir "to will oneself moral and to will oneself free are one and the same decision" [3] (p. 24). This is how the distinction Beauvoir makes between natural freedom and ethical freedom in connection with the notions of immanence and transcendence establishes the bond between freedom and ethics and makes an account of oppression possible in the framework of existentialist ethics [3] (p. 24). To be ethical is the same as acting on one's facticity by exercising one's freedom. Nevertheless, ethics is not limited to the subject's freedom. Since our freedoms are interconnected in such a way that we cannot conceive of a subject being free without at the same time conceiving her fellows as free, to be ethical means also to be concerned with Other's freedom. This inherent interconnectedness between individuals then necessitates a continuous interaction between us to help determine the best ways to be involved in promoting each other's freedoms.

Existentialism has been widely criticized for not providing any guidelines for action. While the claim is true, Beauvoir presents this aspect of existentialism not as a weakness but as a strength of the theory. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, she emphasizes that the ethics she is proposing does not provide any recipes for action [3] (p. 134). Her justification is that each experience is unique, and it is impossible to determine the best way to respond to it beforehand. Beauvoir writes, "the good of an individual or a group of individuals requires that it be taken as an absolute end of our action; but we are not authorized to decide upon this end a priori" [3] (p. 142). Hence, for Beauvoir, establishing a priori rules of moral action is a useless attempt as no ethical dilemma replicates itself in the exact same manner. Therefore, the individual is called upon to reinvent the rules for action every single time. However, despite nullifying every justification that can be drawn from society, history, or culture, Beauvoir leaves us with one single precept: "to treat the other [. . .] as a freedom," [3] (p. 142). Treating the other as a freedom means treating them as a subject who has their unique projects to pursue. The most significant aspect of this approach is not to conflate one's own ideals, aspirations, and desires with the other person being engaged with. While we cannot know a priori how one should care for the other, as it will depend on the particularities of the case, and treating someone as a freedom is not the only type of care, surely it is one necessary form of care in care's fullest expression. Thus, caring for another has to include treating them as a freedom. If I care for another person but do so in a way that does not treat her/him as a freedom, I am only caring for her in a diminished, and perhaps even harmful way.

For Beauvoir, an action that enhances one's (and others') freedom would be an authentic action, whereas an action that diminishes or undermines one's and/or others' freedom would be deemed inauthentic. Although Beauvoir did not use the terms "care" or "caring" in relation to her notion of freedom, the idea of interconnectedness of freedoms presents

caring for the other as an authentic mode of being in existentialism. We can argue that for Beauvoir, one of the most important ways that we should care for others is to care for and help enable them as a freedom. In other words, one cannot treat a person as a freedom without caring for him/her in some respect, and vice versa. Thus, caring for another must include treating them as a freedom. If this aspect is missing, the type of care provided would be a diminished way of caring. The type of care men provide women with in patriarchal and paternalizing white middle class heterosexual relationships presents a good example of a diminished way of caring. By treating women as fragile, and unable to protect themselves, men put women on a pedestal as dependent on them, which eventually diminishes women's freedom. Since freedom is the basic value for existentialism, any demand or act that proves to be undermining the other's freedom or that which oppresses should be denied.

Some Beauvoir scholars have highlighted Beauvoir's attention to caring for others as well. For example, Karen Vintges writes that "For Beauvoir . . . the whole point of ethics is our choosing to become connected and emotionally involved with other people, and of course care for others is much more prominent in this view" [31] (p. 176). Moreover, every performance of care navigates the antimony between social controls and individual autonomy but is grounded in the freedom and disclosure of the other. As Beauvoir describes, "One can reveal the world only on a basis revealed by other men" [3] (p. 71). A project becomes possible and meaningful only on the background of former projects and through its engagement with other past and current projects. Accordingly, ethics cannot evade moral ambiguity by appealing to transcendent justification but must do the hard work of finding common projects with other subjects that foster moral freedom. One's freedom is possible only through others' freedoms.

We can observe that Beauvoir utilized this tenet in her political activism specifically in her involvement with Djamila Boupacha's case. Her discomfort with the colonial violence exercised in Algeria and her reckoning with her indirect implicatedness in this violence as a French citizen who benefits from the colonial regime show her awareness of the interconnectedness between her freedom and the freedoms of Algerian people [1] (pp. 369, 652). Her meticulous attention to recount Boupacha's story as truthfully as possible and her careful abstention from imposing her own values on the case attest to her acknowledgment of the dangers of paternalistic care [23]. Yet, such dangers and the possibility of doing harm while the intention is enhancing others' freedoms do not deter Beauvoir from taking action. Her activism around the Boupacha case exemplifies the need to act when another's moral freedom is threatened despite the ambiguities involved.

I will explain in more detail in the last section of this paper how Beauvoir's existentialist ethics may help counter the Western-centric and paternalistic tendencies in the attempts to universalize care. However, in the following sections, I first provide an account of the origin and development of care ethics and then discuss these Western-centric and paternalistic elements prevalent in the current care practices around the globe.

3. Origins and Evolution of Care Ethics

The term "care ethics" encompasses a broad category of literature that includes substantial differences, especially when we consider early formulation of the theory by Carol Gilligan [32] and Nel Noddings [33], and the more contemporary scholarship on care ethics by Fiona Robinson, Virginia Held, and Joan Tronto, to name a few [32–39]. Moreover, care ethics has also been expanding in connection with a variety of theories and disciplines ranging from geography to political science, sociology, economics, and science. In very broad terms, care ethics can be construed as a feminist moral theory that takes human beings' interdependence by way of meeting each other's needs as the theoretical basis for considering moral questions.

Feminist care ethics has criticized traditional ethical theories for two main reasons: (i) under-emphasizing or ignoring caring needs or relegating them to the private sphere and focusing on the public sphere, which historically has undermined women's experiences

since women have been confined to the home, and (ii) entertaining a priori universal ethical ideals and rules which do not speak to the complexities of the ethical questions people face in real life. These two points are closely related because care, sharing, and interdependency have been coded as values that belong to the private sphere, as opposed to the culturally masculine values such as independence and mutual disinterestedness, the latter of which constitute the core of universalist ethical theories.

Early versions of care ethics endorse a specific type of female moral sensibility and reasoning as the basis of feminist ethics and argue that the dominant Western ethical tradition, which mostly is a product of male philosophers, naturally lacks this sensibility. In return, they received substantial criticisms for relying on essentialist notions of femininity such as motherhood. Sarah Lucia Hoagland argues that "in a patriarchal world we need something far more radical than an appeal to the feminine—itself a product of that masculine world" [40] (p. 256). The main critique is the emphasis placed on caregiving activities, which play an important role in women's subordination and imprisonment in the private sphere. In these insightful critiques, feminists show the danger of perpetuating in care ethics the primary heterosexist feminine values. For example, in the second chapter of her *Lesbian Ethics,* Hoagland provides a detailed critique of the dangers stemming from advocating for traditional feminine virtues such as self-sacrifice, vulnerability, and altruism; ideals associated with women as the fundamental care provider [41]. As Catherine MacKinnon and Gilligan articulate, idealizing caring values would exacerbate the pressure on women who are already judged and judge themselves based on the care they provide [42] (p. 51) and [32] (p. 17).

Historically and conceptually, care ethics marks the emergence of feminist ethics. Although care ethics brings invaluable insights and tools for thinking about ethical action, its initial overemphasis on the experience of women led to a general misunderstanding that it is only about women. Allison Jaggar contends that care ethics in general seems to entail that feminist ethics speaks only to women [43] (p. 94). Margaret Urban Walker also emphasizes this tendency to perceive feminist ethics as primarily about women and urges that this perception should be changed. This is because feminist ethics—although it is certainly for women and written mostly by women—is "not about women but *about ethics*" (italics in original) [44] (p. 433). Walker defines feminist ethics as a way of doing ethics by focusing on the social, economic, and cultural distributions of privileges and power. One of the main strengths of feminist ethics is its potential to address the impact of unequal distribution of material and non-material resources on a global scale based on ontological interconnectedness of people. We are fundamentally part of a plurality and are responsible for evaluating our decisions within the context of this plurality. In that respect, feminist ethics is not only about women but about class, race, ecology, disability, and many other domains in which oppression and inequality prevails. Jaggar contends that "feminism's concern for all women means that feminist ethics must address not only "domestic" issues of racism or homophobia or class privilege but also such international issues as environmental destruction, war and the current grotesque inequality in access to world resources" [43] (p. 98).

Thanks to such critical engagements between feminists, care ethics transformed drastically to accommodate global questions and concerns. The emphasis on relationality in care ethics led care ethicists to pay more attention to the increasing circulation of labor globally and its implications in a neoliberal and postcolonial world. An ethical theory that takes relationality as its main tenet had to provide an account of how the world's resources flow from less affluent nations to more affluent ones.

The emphasis on the autonomous and independent subject in justice-based moralities carry the danger of concealing the effects and consequences of agents' and institutions' actions on the global scale. An adult person is usually considered to be autonomous in making their own decisions. If we consider these decisions without the historical and colonial context, we may perceive the low-paid care work provided by the people of the Global South in the Global North as just and ethically unproblematic. As Eva Kittay

emphasizes, the language of justice-based morality is voluntaristic and does not consider the broader political and economic context, especially if both parties are benefitting from the arrangement [45] (p. 57). However, the singular voluntary act is embedded in the collective history of colonialism which contributed to the impoverishment of the South, whose paid labor is still in the process of exploitation. The same history actually drives the Southern migrants to cross the border, in search for care work which should better be conceived as "forced labour". We are all influenced and usually either advantaged or disadvantaged by international social, economic, political, and environmental decisions and policies. In addition, our location already situates us within certain political and historical configurations with respect to colonialism and neocolonialism. Hence, focusing on a just global distribution of world resources, as justice- and rights-based moralities do, would not only be insufficient, but it also conceals the power dynamics on a broader scale. One cannot make a viable moral decision without analyzing the hidden interplay between the flow of capital, and poverty and inequality across the globe. This interplay should be at the close purview of care ethics as it can only be revealed by being sensitive to historical, cultural, and economic differences between nations or groups in the globe.

Paternalism has been one of the main challenges in building a global feminist coalition. Feminist scholars have repeatedly shown the paternalistic nature of the feminist engagements between the Global North and the Global South [46–48]. The goal of feminist coalition and feminist solidarity itself can be considered as a form of caring. However, the uneven power dynamics between different geographical groups and the failure of recognition of such power imbalances may lead to an ethnocentric imposition of the values of the powerful group.

Paternalistic intervention is at best inconsistent with feminist values, and at worst detrimental to them. To begin with, paternalism diminishes women's agency and their authority as epistemic agents as it is motivated by the assumption that they do not know what is good for them. As Serene Khader suggests by drawing on Kristie Dotson's notion of epistemic oppression, by limiting or hindering certain peoples' contribution to knowledge production, paternalistic intervention may lead to epistemic oppression as well [49] (p. 6). Moreover, as Michelle Murphy documents in detail, the language of care has been used consistently in imperialist civilizing missions [50] (pp. 724, 729). Such practices employed under the pretext of civilizing a certain population could also end up disadvantaging women by limiting their participation in society. The historical examples of veil ban practices in France and Turkey are good examples of how paternalistic intervention forced women even more to the confines of the patriarchal structure from which it aimed to free them [51] (p. 111) and [52].

Due to all these considerations and the ever-present problem of paternalism in caring practices, a care ethic would need to be able to address the challenges associated with paternalism. It is important, however, to note that care does not have to be paternalistic and care ethics can and does aspire to call for forms of care that are attuned to the dangers of paternalism. Many Western care ethics scholars have discussed the potential of paternalism in caring relations in their subsequent works on social and political care. For example, in *Caring Democracy*, Tronto points out among necessary conditions for democratic care the significance of minimizing power differentials and their impact on people [39] (p. 33), and disruption of hierarchies [39] (p. 151). Tronto warns us that her focus on the United States as a political geography in her work should not be understood as a statement on the universality of American experience but rather as a strong familiarity of the culture and the political system due to being born into it [53] (p. 181). Tronto also acknowledges her positionality in the Global North with its implicated privileges. She writes that "I have had the privilege of an academic position in a country in the Global North which has allowed me to become a scholar of these questions. It is important to keep always in mind the power dimensions that create such privileges and who benefits." [53] (p. 181). The emphasis on the particular and contextual differences for each case in deciding on the best form of care also attests to the attunement of care theorists to the dangers of paternalism. Estelle

Ferrarese's reminder that every life is susceptible to being vulnerable and dependent at any moment in life underscores the fact that "vulnerability exists only in situations" [54] (p. 154). Hence, particular manifestations of care would have to stem from the specific circumstances at hand.

An important step towards countering the challenges stemming from such positionality could be to dislocate care ethics discussions from the Global North, which is what I explore in the next section.

4. (Dis)Locating Care

Care ethics rejects a priori universal ethical principles that guide action and focuses on the particularity of actual situations to determine the course of ethical action. The basis for rejecting such principles is ontological. According to care ethics, we exist in the world as caregivers and caretakers, and are responsible for goodness of care-related actions. It is difficult to define care and show how one is supposed to care for others. It is the subject's responsibility to do this work and no guidance or assurance is available. In practice then, care seems to be open-ended, which makes care practices susceptible to various risks such as malpractice, exploitation, and paternalism. While we cannot change the fact that care is open-ended as this is a human condition, we can find ways to address and minimize these risks.

Since it is impossible to determine the best form of care without knowing the local and particular conditions of the cared for, predetermined universal ethical laws seem inadequate and, at times, even harmful to the care ethicist. The transnational feminist ethicist is also wary of universal ethical laws due to the historical association between such universal ideals and Western imperialism and colonialism. However, feminists (both care ethicists and transnational feminist ethicists) would agree that care is a universal value and practice. As such, one needs to move cautiously while trying to understand what that universality means. While theoretical articulations of care ethics underline the particularity of ethical dilemmas and invite us to closely examine the concrete conditions of the ethical question to determine the course of action, discussions of care ethics in philosophical scholarship still mostly revolve around the Global North. Hence, in its efforts to provide a comprehensive ethical theory that would address care practices across the globe, care ethics by omission carries the danger of being ethnocentric as it is centered in the West. However, as Khader argues, universal normativity does not have to mean Western ethnocentrism [55] (p. 3). Historically speaking, it might be unimaginable to think of universalism independent of imperialism, yet in theory universalism and anti-imperialism are not mutually exclusive [56]. In the same vein, we are able to imagine a universalist yet anti-imperialist care ethics theory, the tenets of which I articulate in this paper by appealing to Beauvoir.

Moreover, the context of care ethics has undergone drastic changes recently. We are experiencing an increasing circulation of care needs, caregivers, and caretakers globally. Such global circulations are highly marked and organized by colonial and postcolonial engagements between different geographies. Due to migration of caregivers globally, the caregivers are increasingly leading "transnational lives" [7] (p. 156). Deployment of care theories in analyzing these transnational care practices has the implication that "the concept [care] has been transferred relatively unreflectively to different parts of the Global South without recognizing that in doing so one inherits the very different histories of development policy, care arrangements and gender regimes that influence the notion of care" [7] (p. 161). Given the colonial and postcolonial entanglements in globalization of care practices, the need for locating care thinking in transnational feminist discussions becomes inevitable. In Raghuram's words "localizing care ethics implies dislocating it from its unspoken but often implicit locatedness in very particular locations and practices of care" [8] (p. 513).

The universalizing and imperialist hegemony of Western culture and history made many care ethicists wary of the potential of care ethics, as a theory that originated in the Western geography, to be implicitly operating under universalizing claims based on Western

practices of care. Raghuram mainly criticizes care ethics scholarship for postulating caring as a universal ethical ideal without addressing the differences between regions regarding the multiplicity of care practices when she writes, "by being locationally ambiguous, the Global North became implicit" [8] (p. 521). The erasure of multiplicity of care practices leads to the tacit imposition of care as practiced in the Global North as the norm. Moreover, the ways in which the caring needs of the world are relegated to the different localities determined by colonial and neocolonial relationalities remain underexplored.

Another scholar, Olena Hankivsky, criticizes care ethicists for prioritizing gender and gendered power relations over other identity categories such as race, class, and disability. Since intersectionality vehemently opposes spotlighting one category of difference over others, Hankivsky concludes, these approaches cannot be considered truly intersectional [10] (p. 256).

While Raghuram's and Hankivsky's claims merit significant attention, there are active endeavors among care scholars to address the threat of Western-centric thinking and to foster deeper intersectional analysis in care ethics. Fiona Robinson is one care ethicist who takes both criticisms seriously. While acknowledging the need to be hyper-vigilant in care ethics scholarship to make sure the analysis is truly intersectional and it does not lend itself to Western-centric thinking, she also highlights the amenability of care ethics to address and confront these two threats. She writes, "Far from universalizing care or silencing alternative understandings of care, it could be argued that care ethics provides a basis for contesting racial and neocolonial hierarchies" [35] (p. 16). In another article, Mahon and Robinson emphasize the need for a critical care ethics to be embedded in "the concrete activities of real people in the context of webs of social relations" [57] (p. 2). Robinson also agrees with Raghuram on the need to dislocate care from the "normative white body through which much care is theorized" [35] (p. 21).

Regarding the criticism about intersectionality, the discussions around shifting the register in which we analyze care as a theory and practice away from gender should not be read as claiming gender irrelevant or unimportant. As Nancy Fraser explains, the burden of social reproduction has been mostly carried by women. Capitalist structure does not fully recognize the material and affective labor that goes into maintaining social reproductive practices. Fraser maintains that this type of labor is taken for granted and treated as an infinitely available "gift" [58] (p. 31). The depletion of affective and material capacities of caregivers in our contemporary capitalist society led to what Fraser calls "a crisis of care" [58] (p. 31). She contends: "When a society simultaneously withdraws public support for social reproduction and conscripts the chief providers of it into long and grueling hours of paid work, it depletes the very social capacities on which it depends" [58] (p. 31).

Fraser's emphasis on the inequalities centered on care practices provides us with tools to challenge the dominant structures of gender inequalities, especially apparent in care work. The neocolonial configuration of the global care chain forces us to look into the racialized and classed dynamics in addition to gendered dynamics. The category of gender is as equally important as other categories like class, race, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. Yet, I argue that the focus on gender should not come at the expense of these categories. For example, Western feminisms have a long history of advocating for and protecting the rights of middle- and upper-class white women by sacrificing black women's rights, as was the case during the suffragette movement. Focusing on gender has historically meant prioritizing middle- and upper-class white women's needs and rights. Using an intersectional approach by incorporating categories such as class, race, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, etc. into the discussion ensures inclusion of the demands of marginalized women in the debate.

Hence, the entanglements of race, class and gender dynamics among women in global care practices remain as one of the most interesting aspects of the feminization of care work on a global scale that is in need of further theorization. Care work is still mainly considered to be women's duty despite feminists' efforts to gender-neutralize it. Since the majority of the states in the Global North do not provide public support for childcare or

other forms of care, women's participation in the labor force in the Global North largely depends on their chances of outsourcing such services. While some women prefer and are able to employ full-time care workers who are mostly migrants from the Global South, some others choose or are able to afford partial care services which are, again, provided mostly by women of color. Upper-class women of the Global North, for example, are able to completely delegate their care needs to lower class women who mostly migrate from the Global South [59] (pp. 25–26). While the emotional and intellectual labor of finding, organizing, and supervising paid care remains women's work, being able to afford such paid care work makes holding a demanding full-time job possible for them. The care deficit created by the two-wage families in the Global North has been absorbed by the caregivers migrating from the Global South [60–62]. While this flow of care services might seem like a rational economic transaction for some, as Robinson articulates, it disguises the responsibility of two main parties to the question: men and states [63] (p. 74).

Despite the relentless efforts of feminists to include men in practices of caregiving, research shows that men are still falling considerably behind in participating in meeting care needs in the family [62] (p. 9). In the same vein, by not providing support for childcare, states relegate this work to families, where in turn this work gets relegated to women in the family. Hence, we can say that the upper-class women of the Global North partly owe their career development to the women migrating from the Global South who handle their care needs at low wages. Fraser makes this point succinctly by referencing Sheryl Sandberg's call to women to "lean in": " . . . it is only possible for her [Sandberg's] readership to envision leaning in at the corporate boardroom in so far as they can lean on the low-paid care workers who clean their toilets and their homes, diaper their children, care for their aging parents, and so on" [58] (p. 34).

While middle- and upper-class women of the Global North are able to choose between the options of hiring care workers or taking a break from work to provide care, the migrating care workers mostly have no place to turn to in order to meet their own caregiving needs in the family. As a result, women in those conditions mostly have to leave their children or elderly unattended, which in turn increases the risk of accidents and emergencies [64] (p. 88). Postcolonial scholars have documented how a middle class well-intentioned Western individual's daily practices are always already implicated in a broader web of exploitative relationships [65] (p. 71). Therefore, as Noxolo et al. maintain, postcolonial politics has to acknowledge the insurmountable gap created between the North and the South, despite " . . . its anti-colonising impulse in the face of continued inequality and exploitation . . . " [66] (p. 423).

Khader also underlines this point when she writes, "The facts of militarism, cultural domination, and transnational economic exploitation mean that Western women are complicit in 'other' women's oppression" [55] (p. 2). In spite of, or perhaps because of this complicity, Western feminism is in dire need of transnational coalitions that are both responsible and caring. However, Western feminists should be wary of the fact that these coalitions themselves carry the danger of replicating practices of cultural domination and economic exploitation. Most importantly, as Noxolo et al. state, responsible caring action "involves an openness and vulnerability to that which most resists European thought: those aspects of the 'other' that are not shared and are not comfortable" [66] (p. 423).

Because of these important aspects of actual care practices (it being racialized, feminized, and relegated to the lower classes) that may get lost in normative theorizations of care ethics, I mostly focus on care as practice rather than as a theory. Caring is always embodied, and it is a combination of both physical and affective labor. As Sander-Staut states, care as ethics and care as practice can never be thought of as distinct from each other [67] (p. 22). My choice to do so is also informed by the long-standing historical struggle of feminists to claim the personal as political. The distribution of household care work is a political and economic process. Hence, even when we are talking about the most intimate types of caring practices, we are not talking about a personal phenomenon, but rather a representation of a historical construction of complex social, political, and cultural norms,

values, and practices. Feminist theory, for example, provides invaluable scholarship on the dominant influence of institutions, such as patriarchy and capitalism, in the production of norms, values, and practices that define caring relationships, especially in the household. As Eva Kittay argues and skillfully demonstrates in *Love's Labor* by providing theoretical accounts and examples of lived experiences, care is never personal but rather it is a public matter [68].

Just as care is a public issue, it is also varied in cultural matrices. Scholars of care ethics are not oblivious to the differences in cultures, values, and norms. Robinson, for example, calls for "a critical account of care ethics" that can address "the question of relations among moral agents on a global scale" [34] (p. 114). She also argues that care ethics is a "phenomenology of moral life that recognizes addressing moral problems involves first, an understanding of identities, relationships and contexts" [34] (p. 131). In the same vein, Held points out the necessity to be attuned to the particularity and specificity of the needs of the cared-for instead of universally generalizing and assuming what the needs of the other would be [36] (p. 39). However, caring for the distant others in a global world brings forth new questions, such as what it means to understand these identities, relationships, and contexts.

Although feminist theory has made some progress in terms of being open to and understanding non-Western feminist practices, there are still significant challenges on the way to a pluralistic ideal of feminism. María Lugones' and Elizabeth Spelman's critique of Western ethnocentrism in "Have We Got a Theory for You!" still proves to be highly relevant in that context [69]. Engagement of Western feminists with non-Western feminists continues to be incomplete and devoid of a genuine understanding of the non-Western feminist theories and practices. What is more, the increasing global hegemony of Western cultures obscures the necessity of such engagement and understanding. Raghuram makes a crucial point when she states that being attuned to differences in the practices of care across localities around the globe is an invaluable exercise for feminist thinkers in itself [8] (p. 523). As Lugones and Spelman write, theories can be "disrespectful, ignorant, ethnocentric, imperialistic" [69] (p. 578). The implicit locatedness of care ethics in the Global North means that any conversation on care ethics is actually happening in the language of the Global North. Given the power and privilege the Global North enjoys in comparison to the Global South, this asymmetry left unaddressed creates the bedrock for "disrespectful, ignorant, ethnocentric, imperialistic" theory.

For these reasons, the challenges to feminist coalition-building that have been pointed out by transnational feminist ethicists need to be addressed in discussions of care ethics. One of the main challenges in seeking coalitions around transnational feminist ethics is the erasure of the racial and class dynamics between the Global North and Global South. Many scholars have discussed the harmful consequences of postulating universal sisterhood without accounting for the inequalities created and perpetuated by colonial and neocolonial political engagements. Hence, these attempts have been highly problematic in their selectivity and paternalism. Failing to account for the contributions of the Global North in the creation of these inequalities in the Global South creates an inauthentic and imbalanced relationship between the one-caring and the one-cared for. Such an imbalance may and does lend itself to a paternalistic form of caring. Re-establishing an authentic caring relationship between the Global North and the Global South requires that each party accepts each other as equals. For that reason, in the last section of my paper I will discuss Beauvoir's existentialist ethics as a fruitful source to address the question of paternalism in engagements of care ethics and transnational feminist ethics.

5. Paternalistic Care and Beauvoir

In the previous section, I established that care ethics should be theorized within the global order due to the increasingly global character of caring practices. Considering care ethics within the current global context also requires reckoning with the paternalistic care discourses used in justifying colonialism, as the current global order is the product of

past colonial and current neo-colonial practices. Therefore, care ethics has to address and resolve the potential danger of paternalism in applications of care ethics in the colonial and postcolonial configurations of the contemporary world. In this section, I use the theoretical tools existentialism offers to provide possible solutions to the danger of paternalistic care.

As explained in the previous section, care is ontologically an open-ended practice. By rejecting universal, decontextualized, and atemporal ethical laws, care ethicists acknowledge the ambiguity involved in ethical action, including caring practices. Similar to care ethics, existentialism is one of the theories that articulates best the ambiguity and risks involved in ethical action. Daryl Koehn, who is one of the few feminist thinkers who delineates the existential elements in care ethics, puts this succinctly:

> In the care ethic, the moral world is not already "there," fully formed in its rationality. If the world is to be good, the caregiver must make it so through her acts in accordance with her personal ideal of herself as a caring person. Since no one can specify necessary and sufficient conditions for an act to be caring, the caregiver is finally thrown back upon herself to assess the goodness of her acts [70] (pp. 22–23).

However, this ambiguity could easily lend itself to paternalistic and dominating practices. While care ethicists should always be on the lookout to make sure that they are not explicitly or implicitly endorsing tenets that may lead to paternalistic or diminishing care practices, such practices do and probably will continue to take place. If the caregiver, for example, is to determine the best form of care without any conversation with the one cared-for, they may intentionally or unintentionally choose to care in ways that diminish the agency and freedom of the one cared-for. They may impose what they think would be best for the one cared-for or they may care for the other in ways that will promote their own agenda. Due to these risks, the caring action should always be decided in an ongoing conversation with the one cared-for. The focus in care ethics on the extraordinary challenge of decentering the self so as to try and center the other and moving from a care-giver/cared-for framing to a relational one shows that care ethicists are aware of these problems arising in care practices [35,71–73].

The way Beauvoir articulates the relational and interconnected self includes a receptive mode of the ethical subject, an emphasis on action, and a considerable responsibility for one's actions. Receptivity is to be open to see, hear, and feel what the other has to convey to me. Receptivity involves both activity and passivity in that, while I am opening myself up to the other, I am also letting go of myself and my attempts to control the other. The opening up is active, yet neither manipulative nor assimilative [33] (p. 146). Explicitly drawing from existentialist philosophy, Noddings places the receptive mode at the heart of human existence. She concurs to the existential way of existence which requires a constant awareness and questioning of one's values and actions within the context of interactions with others. In this process of questioning, Noddings explains, the caregiver sees the demand of the other and remains with two options; proceeding "in a state of truth" which refers to acknowledging the call of the other or denying "what I have received and talk myself into feeling comfortable with the denial" [33] (p. 35). Existentialist ethics also requires the ethical subject to be attentive to the other's call and genuinely respond to it. For Beauvoir the good of others should be "taken as an absolute end of our action" [3] (p. 142). Taking the good of others as the main goal of our action implies the ethical necessity to be receptive to the others' call. Refusing to do so would mean being in bad faith, which is an unethical stance to take.

Responding to this call inevitably requires some action. Care ethics also entails a moral obligation to act in a way that addresses the demands for care. Caring for someone without being moved to action would not be considered as genuine caring. Noddings maintains that authentic care signifies the existence of a genuine concern for the other's wellbeing. In addition, we expect this concern to translate into actions that would endorse their wellbeing. This relationship to the other solidified in practical action again reminds us of Beauvoir's notion of interconnectedness of human freedoms and the ethical obligation

to endorse others' freedoms. Noddings reminds us of "our fundamental relatedness, of our dependence upon each other. We are both free—that which I do, I do—and bound—I might do far better if you reach out to help me and far, far worse if you abuse, taunt, or ignore me" [33] (p. 49). For Beauvoir, we need the approval and support of others for the projects we take up. Hence, we demand their support and, depending on their response, we may do "far better" or "far worse".

Relationships play a fundamental part in the constitution of the self in care ethics. We experience ourselves as independent as well, yet a self that totally perceives herself as separated from others—as in the case of justice-oriented ethical approaches—does not constitute an ideal ethical starting point for care ethicists. Recognition of one's connection to other people also constitutes the source of moral obligation to others. As Gilligan states, in a care-based approach to morality "an awareness of the connection between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another, a perception of the need for response" [32] (p. 30).

As such, endorsement of a conception of the self as relational constitutes one of the main principles of care ethics. Care ethicists converge on the claim that human beings are ontologically related to each other and posit this aspect of our ontology as the basis of an ethics. However, in postulating this relational ontology, one has to be attentive to unjust and oppressive forms of relationality as well. To that end, both care ethics and existentialist ethics emphasize the necessity of a meticulous evaluation of the case in question before the caring action can take place. They both highlight the fact that some cases may require the subject to look for or even create alternative solutions that may not be immediately available at the beginning of the inquiry.

The notion of the relational self gains even more significance in discussions of ethics given the increasing circulation of labor and the world's resources, usually in the form of a flow from less affluent nations to more affluent ones. The same contextual sensitivity is at the core of existentialist ethics as well. Existentialist ethics establishes the subject as fundamentally interconnected and interrelated through each one's freedoms and projects. The subject has an ethical responsibility to analyze her actions within the context of a web of relations. Awareness of the need for others in order to realize one's projects forms the basis for the ethical responsibility to respond to others' needs to be successful in their projects.

Others' infinite demands on us constitute one of the main sources of anguish in our lives. On the one hand, we are fundamentally connected to others and we cannot simply ignore their call; on the other hand, we are tempted to and free to ignore their call. When we do the latter, we immediately turn to reestablish our relatedness. There is an ever-present potentiality for both reciprocity and conflict in human relations. We have the potential to treat others as subjects or objects and we are susceptible to be treated as such. Therefore, we always work through these questions and constantly decide on how to treat others and assess how others treat us. Hence, the anguish arising out of this deliberation is bound to be a part of our lives. Since our freedoms are fundamentally dependent on others' freedoms, one cannot simply treat the other as an object and avoid feelings of anguish. One justifies her existence in promoting others' freedoms; "I concern others and they concern me" [3] (p. 72).

Caring for the other as a freedom then entails a variety of considerations that may guide the caring person in their deliberations on how to care. First, the caring person should be attentive to the context by analyzing the background of the individual or group being cared for. Being attentive to the context should also involve an honest evaluation of one's own subject-position in the power matrix. Second, the caring person should aim for creating the conditions for the possibility of free action and transcendence for the person or group being cared for. By focusing on creating such conditions, as opposed to imposing their own vision of what freedom and free action would entail, the caring person would also be able to have a clear picture of the genuine needs, goals, and desires of the person or group being cared for. These considerations, if embraced and practiced conscientiously, would significantly reduce the possibility of engaging in paternalistic care unwittingly.

In this article, I engaged with critiques of care ethics regarding its Western ethnocentrism and paternalism mostly raised by transnational feminist scholarship. While the critiques are viable and constitute serious challenges to the care ethics theory, they are not insurmountable, as there are many resources available both in care ethics and existentialist scholarship to address these challenges. Nonetheless, drawing on Beauvoir's political engagements during the Algerian War, I showed that even scholars situated in a Western geography could eschew ethnocentric and paternalistic engagements by deploying a self-critical approach in their caring practices. Moreover, I sought to advance a critical care ethic by using Beauvoirian existentialism and her tenet of treating the other as freedom as fruitful resources against latent paternalism and Western-centric tendencies.

To conclude, care ethics has numerous strengths in its ability to address questions of relationality and responsibility to care in an increasingly unjust global world. However, in doing so it has to be rigorously observant of the historical and geographical power dynamics and the inegalitarian terrain such dynamics have created over time. Western feminists can no longer afford overlooking the Western-centered and paternalistic caring practices presented under the disguise of universalism and responsible caring. Continuing to do so would create crucial obstacles in the way of building transnational feminist coalitions across the globe. Turning to Beauvoir's existentialism helps us generate a robust account of feminist and transnational care ethics without jettisoning the responsibility to care. The possibility of falling into paternalism in caring is not a reason to resign to indifference. On the contrary, as both care ethics and existentialist ethics articulate, any ethical action including the caring act in a messy and ambiguous world is bound to be imperfect. Hence the goal should be to minimize such imperfections as opposed to not to act at all. The existentialist tenet of treating the other as freedom may help us avoid many dangers associated with Western ethnocentrism, including being paternalistic in the process of caring for the other.

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