



# Held, Gilligan and Slote

# A 'women's' ethic?

- It is a distinctly **feminine** ethic, long ignored by male philosophers
- It has **modern** appeal, paralleling the liberation of women
- It is more **holistic**, embracing men and women as having unique differences

# Argument 1:Held

- Held cites Baier who writes:
- ‘Where Kant concludes “so much the worse for women”, we can conclude “so much the worse for the male fixation on the special skill of drafting legislation, for the bureaucratic mentality of rule worship, and for the male exaggeration of the importance of independence over mutual interdependence”’ (p.11)

# Held

- She states that TEC is importantly described as a feminist ethics so as to acknowledge that the movement forward into the moral realm has been a struggle for a certain voice to be heard within the dominant conventions of morality (pp.23-25),
- So does not want to subsume it under the ideas of virtue ethics

## Argument 2:McLeod, 1998. p.295

- notes that:
- ‘[h]istorically, the task of caring has been work for women. In counselling and other human service organizations, women predominate in frontline service delivery roles, although men are proportionally more heavily represented in management roles’ (p.295).
- What do we make of this?

# Held

- describes the TEC as having:
- ‘grown out of the constructive turmoil of the phase of feminist thought and the rethinking of almost all fields of inquiry that began in the United States and Europe in the late 1960’s’ (p.23).

# Argument 3: Critics

- This interpretation of the TEC has brought with it concerns that a gendered view of care may well restrict its appeal (e.g. Jecker and Reich, 1994, pp 336–344), with critics challenging its perceived exclusivity to women's experience
- Potentially virtue ethics can offer a wider potential

# Resources

- Bond, T., 2015. *Standards and ethics for counselling in action*. 4th ed. London: Sage Publishers.
- Held, V., 2009. *The ethics of care: personal, political, and global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [e-book]
- Panza, C., & Potthast, A. 2010. *Ethics for dummies*. Indiana: Wiley Publishing. [e-book] Ch 11: Turning down the testosterone: Feminist Care Ethics.

# Contributors

Virginia Held, Distinguished Professor of philosophy at City University of New York, stated in 1990:

“Caring, empathy, feeling with others, being sensitive to each other’s feelings, all may be better guides to what morality requires in actual contexts than may abstract rules of reason or rational calculation, or at least they may be necessary components of an adequate morality” (“Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* , 50, 344).

# Contributors

Annette Baier (1929-present) a Hume scholar and moral philosopher, believes that men and women make decisions about right and wrong based on different value systems:

- Men follow an idea of justice
- Women follow a sense of trust or caring

# Contributors

Nel Noddings (1929-present), an educator, social psychologist, philosopher, and feminist, wrote her book, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* in 1984.

Noddings believes that care ethics is better than other traditions. She thinks both men and women should practice it.

# Why is it potentially so challenging?

- Because it asks questions beyond the taken for granted moral frame – e.g. Aristotle and Kant's position on women.
- Because it resonates with the current discourse of gender
- Raises questions about essentialism, constructivism and the social influence on moral theory

# A 'women's' ethic?

- Began as a distinctly **feminine** ethic, long ignored by male philosophers
- It has **modern** appeal, paralleling the liberation of women
- It is more **holistic**, embracing men and women as having unique differences – this is controversial

# Where to place the EoC

- Held
- She states that TEC is importantly described as a feminist ethics so as to acknowledge that the movement forward into the moral realm has been a struggle for a certain voice to be heard within the dominant conventions of morality (pp.23-25),

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- So does not want to subsume it under the ideas of virtue ethics
  - Wants to keep it within the public i.e. political domain and not the attribute of an individual.
  - For Kant morality is a concern of public.

- Feminist critique argues that most of women's lives have been relegated to the private sphere and therefore of little consequence in terms of influence and subjected to oppressive institutional laws – the legal right to beat your wife.
- Whilst Aristotelian VE is about individual, nevertheless it was built around an elite, oppressive and discriminatory society – which supported young men to become the ruling elite.

- Gilligan's most famous book.
- It challenged past theories made by Kohlberg of girls moral development.
- Past studies usually only consisted of male participants, and the scoring was biased towards males.
- Gilligan said that women use ethics of care to try to keep connectedness after moral dilemmas, while males use ethics of justice to decide moral issues of individual rights.

## In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development

# Main points

- Women were previously taught to only care for others, and have others care for them
- Women must care for their own interests, as well as others interests
- She asked four questions to women: who is speaking? In what body? Telling what story? And in what cultural framework ?
- Founded *difference feminism*
- There are differences between the moral habits of men and women
- Men think more of rules, and justice
- Women think more of caring and relationships

# Ethics—The Basics

## Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

### Six Stages of Moral Development

**Post-Conventional  
Stages (Abstractly  
Oriented Stages)**

**6. Universal ethical principles; mutual respect  
as a universal principle**

**5. Social contract orientation; justice and rights;  
contractual perspective**

**Conventional Stages  
(Socially Oriented  
Stages)**

**4. Authority and social order ;“Law and order”  
mentality; social systems perspective**

**3. Interpersonal conformity: “I’m a good  
boy/girl.” social norms; social relationships  
perspective**

**Pre-Conventional  
Stages (Egoistically  
Oriented Stages)**

**2. Self-interest : “What’s in it for me?”; reward;  
instrumental egoism perspective**

**1. Obedience; fear of punishment;  
blind egoism perspective**

# Carol Gilligan

## Humans Are Relational Beings

- Gilligan points out that the central insight of care ethics is that **self and other are interdependent**.
- Attention to **humans as relational beings** makes care ethics unique.
- The **one-caring** does not merely think fondly of the **cared-for**.

# CARE ETHICS

Carol Gilligan (1936-present), a research assistant to Kohlberg, and a psychologist herself, argued that his ideas were too **androcentric**:

- He originally only used privileged white male subjects
- He seemed to be little female ethical concerns based on caring and relationships

# Gilligan's criticisms

of Kohlberg's interpretations, and her own views of moral development, are summarized in her 1982 book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*.

Despite many awards, Gilligan's views are controversial.

# Criticism

- Christina Hoff Sommers criticized her work in *The War Against Boys*
- She called her research was inadequate because she did not follow standard research protocol
- She said her samples were too small, her evidence was disjointed, and she said that she failed to produce the data form her research

# What is the theory of “ethics of justice?”

- Also known as the morality of justice
- Moral choices through rights of the people involved
- Picking a solution that seems to harm the least amount of people
- Arguing from Principles

# What is the theory of “ethics of care?”

- A morality of care that rests upon the understanding of relationships.
- Focuses on the importance of maintaining healthy relationships with those who we value.
- Focuses on being responsive in important relationships.
- Relationships don't exist in terms of right and wrong.

# Relational turn

- Women's sense of self, experience of relationship, and development all appear differently when they are not alone
- The continuation of relationships are based on the ability to repair breaks in connection
- Adolescent girls are much more receptive and intuitive than most people believe



# **Michael Slote**

## **The ethics of care and empathy**

2007, Oxon, Routledge.

# Slote

- His work consists of a response to many people writing about Care Ethics.
- As his book suggests, his major point refers to the fact that from Hume onwards to contemporary care ethicists, there is a fundamental piece missing
- And that is the underlying motivation of **EMPATHY**
- Which itself is a moral concept
- Should this be taken into Counselling Ethics?

# Slote -

- Action is morally permissible, and even good, if it exhibits caring on the part of its agents.
- Distinguishes between a caring attitude, on the one hand, and an attitude of indifference or hostility to others, on the other.
- The latter when displayed to relevant others counts as ethically wrong.

# Empathy

- Genuine acts of caring involve an emotional/motivational sensitivity to particular other people.
- One is concerned about the situation a given person is in, and one's focus is on the individual herself, rather than on any abstract or general moral principles that someone might want to consult in order to determine how to act towards that individual.

# Controversial – within TEC

- The concern is for that person with the **immediate need** and how one's actions may affect the welfare of the person one is, **at the moment**, concerned about, and the welfare of *other* people may be very much a background issue.

# Partiality vs Impartiality

- Do I stand back or do I involve myself?

# Nel Noddings -Partiality

- Utilitarianism or consequentialism may have concern for the individual, but TEC are openly transparent about the immediacy of care through partiality of that person with whom a person has an immediate relationship

# Slote + Held

- Argue that there is no reason why care should be limited to immediate proximity.
- Caring attitudes towards groups of people are demonstrable.
- What one can do for people not know personally is less than what one can do for someone who one has an immediate relationship with.