Feminist Thought and the Ethics of Care

Not long ago, a moral question about the following hypothetical situation was posed to two eleven-year-old children, Jake and Amy. A man's wife was extremely ill and in danger of dying. A certain drug might save her life, but the man could not afford it, in part because the druggist had set an unreasonably high price for it. The question was whether the man should steal the drug. Jake answered by trying to figure out the relative value of the woman's life and the druggist's right to his property. He concluded that the man should steal the drug because he calculated that the woman's life was worth more. Amy was not so sure. She wondered what would happen to both the man and his wife if he stole the drug. "If he stole the drug, he might save his wife then, but if he did, he might have to go to jail, and then his wife might get sicker again." She said that if the husband and wife talked about this they might be able to think of some other way out of the dilemma.

One interesting thing about this case is the very different ways in which the two children tried to determine the right thing to do in this situation. The boy used a rational calculation in which he weighed and compared values from a neutral standpoint. The girl spoke about the possible effects of the proposed action on the two individuals and their relationship. Her method did not give the kind of definitive answer that is apparent in the boy's method. Perhaps the difference in their moral reasoning was the result of their sex or gender.2

Another example also seems to show a gender difference in moral reasoning.3 In explaining how they would respond to a moral dilemma about maintaining one's moral principles in the light of peer or family pressure, two teens responded quite differently. The case was one in which the religious views of the teens differed from their parents. The male said that he had a right to his own opinions, though he respected his parents' views. The female said that she was concerned about how her parents would react to her views. "I understand their fear of my new religious ideas." However, she added, "they really ought to listen to me and try to understand my beliefs."4 Although their conclusions were similar, their reasoning was not. They seemed to have two decidedly different orientations or perspectives. The male spoke in terms of an individual's right to his own opinions, while the female talked of the need for the particular people involved to talk with and come to understand one another. These two cases raise questions about whether a gender difference actually exists in the way people reason about moral matters.

AN ETHICS OF CARE
Debate about sex or gender differences in moral perspectives and moral reasoning has been sparked by the work of psychologist Carol Gilligan.5 She interviewed both male and female subjects about various moral dilemmas and found that the women she interviewed had a different
view than the men of what was morally required of them. They used a different moral language to explain themselves, and their reasoning involved a different moral logic. They talked in terms of hurting and benefiting others, and they reasoned that they ought to do that which helped the people involved in a particular case at hand. She concluded that males and females had different kinds of ethics. Since then, other observers have noted a variety of qualities that characterize male and female ethics. The ensuing debate, which will be discussed here, has focused on whether there is a specifically feminine morality, an ethics of caring or care. First, we will examine the supposed characteristics of feminine morality. Then we will summarize various explanations that have been given for it. Finally, we will suggest some things to consider in evaluating the theory that a feminine ethics of care does indeed exist.

Several contrasting pairs of terms are associated with each can be used to describe the two types of ethical perspective. These are listed in the table below.

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<th>Female Ethical Perspective</th>
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The various characteristics or notions in this list may need explanation. First, consider the supposed typical female moral perspective. The context for women’s moral decision making is said to be one of relatedness. Women think about particular people and their relations and how they will be affected by some action. Women’s morality is highly personal. They are partial to their particular loved ones and think that one’s primary moral responsibility is to these people. It is the private and personal natural relations of family and friends that are the model for other relations. Women stress the concrete experiences of this or that event and are concerned about the real harm that might befall a particular person or persons. The primary moral obligation is to prevent harm and to help people. Women are able to empathize with others and are concerned about how they might feel if certain things were to happen to them. They believe that moral problems can be solved by talking about them and by trying to understand others’ perspectives. Caring and compassion are key virtues. The primary moral obligation is not to turn away from those in need. Nel Noddings’s work Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education provides a good example and further description of the ethics of care. (See the selection from this work at the end of this chapter.)

The supposed typical male moral perspective contrasts sharply with a feminine ethics of care. Supposedly, men take a more universal and more impartial standpoint in reasoning about what is morally good and bad. Men are more inclined to talk in terms of fairness and justice and rights. They ask about the overall effects of some action and whether the good effects, when all are considered, outweigh the bad. It is as though they think moral decisions ought to be made impersonally or from some unbiased and detached point of view. The moral realm would then in many ways be similar to the public domain of law and contract. The law must not be biased and must treat everyone equally. Moral thinking, on this view, involves a type of universalism that recognizes the equal moral worth of all as persons both in themselves and before the law. People ought to keep their promises because this is the just thing to do and helps create a reliable social order. Morality is a matter of doing one’s duty, keeping one’s agreements, and respecting other people’s rights. Impartiality and respectfulness are key virtues. The primary obligation is not to act unfairly.

What are we to make of the view that two very different sets of characteristics describe male and female morality? In suggesting a difference between men’s and women’s morality, Carol Gilligan was taking aim at one of the dominant points of view about moral development—namely, that of
Lawrence Kohlberg. According to Kohlberg, the highest stage of moral development was supposed to be the stage in which an adult can be governed not by social pressure but by personal moral principles and a sense of justice. The principles regarded people as moral equals. They manifested an impartial and universal perspective. In his own research, Kohlberg found that women did not often reach this stage of development. He thus judged them to be morally underdeveloped or morally deficient. Of course, his conclusions were not totally surprising because he had used an all-male sample in working out his theory. After deriving his principles from male subjects, he then used them to judge both male and female moral development.

Gilligan and Kohlberg were not the first psychologists to believe a difference existed between men’s and women’s morality. Freud had also held that women “show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility. . . .” According to Freud, women were morally inferior to men. Instead of being able to establish themselves as separate people living in society and adapting to its rules, girls remained in the home attached to their mothers. Thus, they developed a capacity for personal relations and intimacy while their male counterparts developed a sense of separateness and personal autonomy. The idea was that women base their morality on concerns about personal relations while men base their morality on rules that can reconcile the separate competing individuals in society. Believing that a focus on personal relations rather than a sense of justice was a lesser form of morality, Freud and others thought that women were inferior to men morally.

Three questions ought to be asked about the theory that women and men exhibit a different type of moral perspective and moral reasoning. First, is this true? Is it an empirical fact that men and women manifest a different type of moral thinking? Second, if it is a fact, then how are we to explain it? What may be the source or cause of this difference? Third, if there is a difference, is one type of moral thinking higher or more developed or better than the other?

Is There a Gender Difference in Morality?

To determine whether there is, in fact, a difference between the moral language and logic of males and females, we need to rely on empirical surveys and studies. What do people find who have examined this supposed phenomena? We have already described some of the earlier findings of Carol Gilligan. Her findings in more recent studies have varied somewhat. For example, she now has found some variation in moral reasoning among both men and women. According to these findings, while both men and women sometimes think in terms of a justice perspective, few men think in terms of a care perspective. Being able to take one perspective rather than the other, she wrote, is much like being able to see the well-known line drawing figure as a rabbit or as a duck. The perspective that one has affects how one sees the figure. If one has a justice perspective, one will see that “the self as moral agent stands as the figure against a ground of social relationships, judging the conflicting claims of self and others against a standard of equality or equal respect.” If one has a care perspective, then one will see that “the relationship becomes the figure, defining self and others. Within the context of relationship, the self as a moral agent perceives and responds to the perception of need.” In these recent studies, Gilligan used “educationally advantaged North American adolescents and adults” and found that two-thirds had one or the other orientation as their primary focus. Still she found sex differences in the focus. “With one exception, all of the men who focused, focused on justice. The women divided, with roughly one-third focusing on justice and one-third on care.” In this study, women did not always have the care perspective as their focus—but without the women in the study, the care focus would have been almost absent.

Other theorists are not so sure about what the data show. For example, Catherine Greeno and Eleanor Maccoby believe that any difference between men’s and women’s morality can be accounted for by social status and experience rather than gender. Using other studies, they point out that in many cases those who exhibit so-called feminine morality have been housewives and
women who were less well educated. They found that career women showed types of moral reasoning similar to men. The question of whether women do exhibit a unique type of moral language and logic will need to be decided by those who study the empirical data. And, of course, you can examine your own experience to see whether the males and females you know seem to reason differently when discussing moral issues.

The Source of Feminine Morality
At least three distinct types of explanation address a possible difference between male and female morality: One proposes differences in the psychosexual development of the two sexes, a second points to biological differences, and a third gives a social, cultural, or educational explanation.

We have already described something of the Freudian account of the effects of psychosexual development on male and female moral thinking. A few more points may be added. According to this view, males and females have different concepts of the self and their gender identities; this is influenced by their development in relation to their mothers and fathers. As they grow up, females develop a sense of being connected with their mothers, whereas males find themselves being different from their mothers. According to Nancy Chodorow, who amplifies Freud’s theory, development of the self and one’s sense of individuality depends on being able to separate oneself from others. Thus males, who tend to separate themselves from their mothers, come to have a sense of self as independent, whereas females do not develop the sense of separate selves and rather see themselves as attached or connected to others. From this developmental situation, males and females supposedly develop different senses of morality: males a morality associated with separation and autonomy, and females a morality with relationships and interdependence. According to a traditional view, mature moral thinking involves being able to be detached and see things from some impartial perspective. Judging from a care perspective means that one cannot judge dispassionately or without bias, as was noted above, and this was judged to be a moral defect. However, we will consider the opposite position about the value of these perspectives shortly.

A second account of the source of the difference, one exemplified by the writings of Caroline Whitbeck, locates it at least in part in women’s and men’s biology—that is, in the difference in their reproductive capacities and experiences. In pregnancy, labor, and childbirth, women experience certain feelings of dependency and contingency. They do not have full control of their bodies. They experience weakness and pain. They feel themselves participating in species life at its most primitive level. Because of their own feelings during this time, they can sympathize more readily with the infant’s or child’s feelings of helplessness and dependency. Caring and nurturing are said to spring naturally from the intimate and sympathetic relation to the child.

Other people believe that mothering is not only a biological phenomenon but also a social and cultural one. Although women bear children, it is not necessary that they rear them. Still, because they do give birth to and nurse infants, women have generally come to be the first child rearers. It is from the elements of so-called maternal practice that women’s morality arises, according to this third view. To Sara Ruddick, for example, maternal practice results in “maternal thinking,” which is the vocabulary and logic of connections” that arises from “acting in response to demands of their children.” She believes that maternal thinking is not simply a kind of feeling that comes naturally to women, but a way of thinking and acting. It involves finding ways to preserve and develop and promote one’s children. Infants are extremely vulnerable and will not survive if they do not have the basics of food, clothing, and shelter. Children must be safeguarded from the many dangers of life. They need help in growing—physically, socially, and morally. Particular virtues are needed for a mother to be able to satisfy the needs of her children. Among those described by Ruddick are humility (for one cannot do everything), cheerfulness combined with realism, and love and affection. Mothers also need to guard against certain negative traits and feelings—for example, feelings of hopelessness and possessivism. According to this view, it mother tent wi relation mother biologic mother to this women cannot acquire the moral pincipa

Feminist
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view, it is because they spend much of their lives mothering that women develop a morality consistent with this experience. This morality stresses relationships and the virtues that are necessary for mothering. One does not necessarily have to be a biological mother, however, both to engage in mothering and develop maternal ethics, according to this viewpoint. Just because some women do not give birth does not mean that they cannot be parents and develop the outlook required for this practice. Until now, it has been a social phenomenon that maternal practice has been principally women's work.

**Feminine Versus Masculine Morality**

Many questions remain concerning these three hypotheses. Some are factual or empirical questions, for they ask whether something is or is not the case. Do women in fact think thus and so? Are they more likely to do so than men? Does giving birth or rearing children cause those involved in these practices to think in a certain way and to have a certain moral perspective? Much of what we say here is quite speculative in that we are making guesses that cannot strictly be proven to be true. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of appeal and suggestiveness in the theory of the ethics of care. In particular, we should compare this type of morality with more traditional theories such as utilitarianism and Kantianism to see how different the perspectives are as exemplified by the theories.

Whether one way of judging morally is better than the other is also an open question. As we have seen, there has been a tradition of thought that says that the so-called feminine morality, an ethics of care and relations and particularity and partiality, is a lower-level morality. When we consider the sources of this tradition, we find many reasons to criticize it. Perhaps, on the contrary, it is the ethics of care that provides a better moral orientation. For example, instead of judging war in terms of whether the overall benefits outweigh the costs, we may do well to think about the particular people involved—that every soldier, for example, is someone's daughter or son or sister or brother or mother or father. Or perhaps the two orientations are complementary. Perhaps a justice orientation is the minimum that morality requires. We could then build on this minimum and, for example, temper justice with care and mercy. On the other hand, the care orientation may be the more basic one, and justice concerns could then be brought in to determine how best to care.

If specific female and male virtues parallel these orientations, then another question arises. Would it not be possible and good for both men and women to develop both sets of virtues? If these virtues are described in a positive way—say, caring and not subservience—would they not be traits that all should strive to possess? These traits might be simply different aspects of the human personality, rather than the male or female personality. They would then be human virtues and human perspectives rather than male or female virtues and perspectives. On this view, an ethics of fidelity and care and sympathy would be just as important for human flourishing as an ethics of duty and justice and acting on principle. While there would be certain moral virtues that all people should develop, other psychological traits could also vary according to temperament and choice. Individuals would be free to choose to manifest, according to their own personalities, any combination of characteristics. These sets of characteristics and virtues would be various forms of androgyny, or the manifestation of both stereotypical masculine and feminine traits.18

**FEMINIST THOUGHT**

Not all feminist writers support some version of an ethics of care. While most would agree that one can describe a particular type of morality that exhibits the characteristics said to belong to an ethics of care, these writers question whether all aspects of such an ethics of care are good. For example, the ethics seems to be based on relations between unequals. The mother–child relation is such a relation. The dependency in the relation goes only one way. One does all (or most of) the giving and the other all (or most of) the receiving. This may tend to reinforce or promote a one-sided morality of self-sacrifice and subjugation. It may reinforce the view that women ought to be the ones who sacrifice and help and support others, chiefly children
and men. Feminist writers, as we have described the orientation here, would have us rather focus on the social status of women. One of their main ethical concerns is the historical and present-day continuing oppression of women: their status in many cases and ways as second-class citizens.

According to Seyla Benhabib, there are two “premises” of feminist thinking:

First, for feminist theory, the gender-sex system is not a contingent but an essential way in which social reality is organized, symbolically divided, and experienced. By the “gender-sex” system, I mean the social-historical, symbolic constitution, and interpretation of the differences of the sexes. The gender-sex system is the context in which the self develops an embodied identity .

Benhabib here points out how powerful and pervasive are the ways in which we are perceived and exist as males and females. It is not just a biological difference, but a difference resulting from behavioral and social expectations. One might conclude from this picture of the situation of females (and males) that there are these two different types of gender-based morality. However, Benhabib describes another premise of feminist thinking.

Second, the historically known gender-sex systems have contributed to the oppression and exploitation of women, and it is the duty of feminist critical theory to contribute to overcoming such oppression and exploitation. Women need not be thought of as the opposite of men—as not autonomous or independent, not competitive, not public. They can define their own positions and identities.

These feminist views are only some of the most recent examples of what has been one of the goals of the so-called women’s movement, which began in earnest in the West in the late nineteenth century. The history of the women’s movement includes both those women primarily concerned with promoting women’s equality with men and those who wanted to raise the value of women’s unique characteristics. However, the most well-known writers and activists of this movement have been those who have stressed women’s rights. Among the earliest examples is Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) that women were not by nature weak and emotional, but that their social situation had in many ways made them so. It was society that taught women negative moral traits such as cunning and vanity, she insisted. The suffragettes who sought political equality and the right to vote for women followed in her footsteps. Many years later, Simone de Beauvoir’s work *The Second Sex* (1949) became a classic text for what has been called a “second wave” of feminists (the “first wave” being the nineteenth-century women’s rights advocates). According to de Beauvoir, women were a second sex because they were regarded always in terms of being an “other” to the primary male sex. In an existentialist vein, she stressed the need for women to be independent selves and free to establish their own goals and projects. Various other writers in the history of the women’s movement stressed the importance of raising women’s consciousness, of helping women be aware of their second-class status and the various ways in which they were subject to oppression and subordination in their lives. The movement’s aim was not only to raise consciousness, but also to act politically to bring about the equality of women. Thus, for example, they sought the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Today, feminist moral thought is sometimes simply called *feminist ethics* and is distinguished from an ethics of care that is called *feminine ethics*. Writers who explore the former focus on bringing out the causes of women’s subordination and oppression and suggesting ways to eliminate these causes and their results. They also have a political orientation. (See, for example, the selection on pornography by Catharine MacKinnon in Chapter 10.) At the international level, women have worked together to raise the status of women around the world and seek ways to better the conditions under which they live. International conferences have brought women from all nations together to discuss their problems and lend each other support.

Among the causes of women’s oppression, some feminists point out, has been philosophy it-
self. Traditional moral philosophy has not been favorable to women. It has tended to support the view that women should develop women's virtues, and these are often to her detriment. For example, Aristotle seems to have held that women were inferior to men not only because of certain biological phenomena having to do with heat in the body, but also because they lacked certain elements in their rationality. According to Aristotle, free adult males could rule over both slaves and women and children because of the weakness in their "deliberative" faculty. In the case of woman, while she has such a faculty, he said, it is "without authority." Rousseau, in his work on the education of the young, described a quite different type of ideal education for Emile than for Sophie. Because morality is different for men and women, the young of each sex ought to be trained in different virtues, according to Rousseau. Emile is to be trained in virtues such as justice and fortitude, while Sophie is to be taught to be docile and patient.

Even contemporary moral philosophers have not given women and women's concerns their due, according to many feminist writers. They have not been interested in matters of the home and domesticity. They have tended to ignore issues such as the "feminization of poverty," the use of reproductive technologies, sexual harassment, and violence against and sexual abuse of women. It is mainly with women writing on these topics in contemporary ethics that they have gained some respectability as topics of genuine philosophical interest. So also have the issues of female domination and oppression and subordination become topics of a wider philosophical interest. Lesbian feminists, in particular, have written about patriarchal practices that prevent women from flourishing. They believe that other feminist treatments sometimes do not go far enough, because they continue to see women in terms of their relation to men. Instead, they exhort women to become independent creative beings in their own right.

EVALUATION OF FEMINIST THOUGHT AND THE ETHICS OF CARE

We have already pointed out some questions that have been raised about the ethics of care. There are others as well. First, some writers point out that mothering does not always come naturally to women, and not all women are good mothers or caring and nurturing. However, supporters of the ethics of care may reply that this is not the issue, but rather that there exists an ethics of care as a viable and valuable alternative morality. Second, critics contend that to promote the view that women should manifest these feminine traits may not be of benefit to women, for doing this can be used to continue women's subservient position in society, especially if its virtues include obedience, self-sacrifice, silence, and service. Supporters might respond that it is not these virtues that define an ethics of care. Rather, such an ethics tells us from what perspective we are to judge morally—namely, from the perspective of concrete people in relation to one another who can individually be harmed and benefited in particular ways. However, can an ethics of care free itself from the more negative aspects that these critics point out? Can feminist ethicists support both an ethics of care while also seeking to promote women's equality? It is clear at least that women cannot be restricted to the role of those who serve others if they are to be treated equally and fairly in both the public social realm and in the realm of the home and family.

What these discussions have also suggested is that we can no longer maintain that one ethics exists for the home and the private realm (an ethics of care and relationships) and another ethics for work or the public realm (an ethics of justice and fairness and impartiality). "Neither the realm of domestic, personal life, nor that of non-domestic, economic and political life, can be understood or interpreted in isolation from the other." These two realms not only overlap and interpenetrate each other, but also each should exemplify the values and virtues of the other. Elements of altruism and concern for particular concrete individuals have a place in the political as well as the domestic realm. Furthermore, when feminists say that "the personal is political" they mean that "what happens in the personal life, particularly in relations between the sexes, is not immune from the dynamic of power, which has typically been seen
as a distinguishing feature of the political." These relations should thus also be restrained by considerations of fairness and justice.

One further question arises about the ethics of care. While it describes an ideal context for ethical decision making, it does not tell us how we are to determine what will help and harm particular individuals. It does not in itself say what constitutes benefit and harm. It gives no rules for what we are to do in cases of conflict of interest even among those to whom we are partial or what to do when we cannot benefit all. It seems to give little definite help for knowing what to do in cases where we must harm some to benefit others. Supporters may respond that it is in setting the context for decision making that it already has done something valuable, for it thus provides a balance for the otherwise one-sided traditional ethics of the impersonal and universal. Perhaps this is a valuable minimum. Or, even further, it may be that today we are more than ever in need of something such as this ethic, which promotes the connectedness of humans. As Gilligan notes:

By rendering a care perspective more coherent and making its terms explicit, moral theory may facilitate women's ability to speak about their experiences and perceptions and may foster the ability of others to listen and to understand. At the same time, the evidence of care focus in women's moral thinking suggests that the study of women's development may provide a natural history of moral development in which care is ascendant, revealing the ways in which creating and sustaining responsive connection with others becomes or remains a central moral concern. The promise in joining women and moral theory lies in the fact that human survival, in the late twentieth century, may depend less on formal agreement than on human connection.29

If it is true for the late twentieth century, then it may even be more true for the early twenty-first century. Further thoughts on how these various perspectives might be reconciled can be found in this chapter's reading selections by Nel Noddings and Annette Baier. Other discussions of women's issues also occur throughout this text.

NOTES

1. This is a summary of a question that was posed by researchers for Lawrence Kohlberg. In Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 28, 173.
2. We use the term sex to refer to the biological male or female. The term gender includes psychological feminine and masculine traits as well as social roles assigned to the two sexes.
13. Ibid., 25.
17. Ibid., 214.
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Reading

Caring  
Nel Noddings

Study Questions

1. What kind of language has been the language of ethics, according to Noddings?
2. Is the approach she wants to describe one for women only?
3. How does she describe the "odd" approach of women to a moral question?
4. What is a "relation"? What are the two parties to the relation of caring?
5. According to Noddings, why do we want to be moral?
6. Why does she reject an ethics of principles and universality?

Ethics, the philosophical study of morality, has concentrated for the most part on moral reasoning. Much current work, for example, focuses on the status of moral predicates and, in education, the dominant model presents a hierarchical picture of moral reasoning. This emphasis gives ethics a contemporary, mathematical appearance, but it also moves discussion beyond the sphere of actual human activity and the feeling that pervades such activity. Even though careful philosophers have recognized the difference between "pure" or logical reason and "practical" or moral reason, ethical argumentation has frequently proceeded as if it were governed by the logical necessity characteristic of geometry. It has concentrated on the establishment of principles and that which can be logically derived from them. One might say that ethics has been discussed largely in the language of the father: in principles and propositions, in terms such as justification, fairness, justice. The mother's voice has been silent. Human caring and the memory of caring and being cared for, which I shall argue form the foundation of ethical response, have not received attention except as outcomes of ethical behavior. One is tempted to say that ethics has so far

been guided by Logos, the masculine spirit, whereas the more natural and, perhaps, stronger approach would be through Eros, the feminine spirit. I hesitate to give way to this temptation, in part because the terms carry with them a Jungian baggage that I am unwilling to claim in its totality. In one sense, "Eros" does capture the flavor and spirit of what I am attempting here; the notion of psychic relatedness lies at the heart of the ethic I shall propose. In another sense, however, even "Eros" is masculine in its roots and fails to capture the receptive rationality of caring that is characteristic of the feminine approach.

When we look clear-eyed at the world today, we see it wracked with fighting, killing, vandalism, and psychic pain of all sorts. One of the saddest features of this picture of violence is that the deeds are so often done in the name of principle. When we establish a principle forbidding killing, we also establish principles describing the exceptions to the first principle. Supposing, then, that we are moral (we are principled, are we not?), we may tear into others whose beliefs or behaviors differ from ours with the promise of ultimate vindication.

This approach through law and principle is not, I suggest, the approach of the mother. It is the approach of the detached one, of the father. The view to be expressed here is a feminine view. This does not imply that all women will accept it or that men will reject it; indeed, there is no reason why men should not embrace it. It is feminine in the deep classical sense—rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness. It does not imply either that logic is to be discarded or that logic is alien to women. It represents an alternative to present views, one that begins with the moral attitude or longing for goodness and not with moral reasoning. It may indeed be the case that such an approach is more typical of women than of men, but this is an empirical question I shall not attempt to answer.

... But we must realize, also, that one writing on philosophical/educational problems may be handicapped and even rejected in the attempt to bring a new voice to an old domain, particularly when entrance to that domain is gained by uttering the appropriate passwords. Whatever language is chosen, it must not be used as a cloak for sloppy thinking; that much is certain. This part of what I am doing, then, is not without risk.

Women, in general, face a similar problem when they enter the practical domain of moral action. They enter the domain through a different door, so to speak. It is not the case, certainly, that women cannot arrange principles hierarchically and derive conclusions logically. It is more likely that we see this process as peripheral to, or even alien to, many problems of moral action. Faced with a hypothetical moral dilemma, women often ask for more information. We want to know more, I think, in order to form a picture more nearly resembling real moral situations. Ideally, we need to talk to the participants, to see their eyes and facial expressions, to receive what they are feeling. Moral decisions are, after all, made in real situations; they are qualitatively different from the solution of geometry problems. Women can and do give reasons for their acts, but the reasons often point to feelings, needs, impressions, and a sense of personal ideal rather than to universal principles and their application. We shall see that, as a result of this "odd" approach, women have often been judged inferior to men in the moral domain.

Because I am entering the domain through a linguistic back door of sorts, much of what I say cannot be labeled "empirical" or "logical." (Some of it, of course, can be so labeled.) Well, what is it then? It is language that attempts to capture what Wittgenstein advised us "must pass over in silence." But if our language is extended to the expressive—and, after all, it is beautifully capable of such extension—perhaps we can say something in the realm of ethical feeling, and that something may at least achieve the status of conceptual aid or tool if not that of conceptual truth. We may present a coherent and enlightening picture without proving anything and, indeed, without claiming to present or to seek moral knowledge or moral truth. The hand that steadied us as we learned to ride our first bicycle did not provide propositional knowledge, but it guided and supported us all the same, and we finished up "knowing how."

... What does it mean to care and to be cared for? The analysis will occupy us at length, since relation will be taken as ontologically basic and the
caring relation as ethically basic. For our purposes, "relation" may be thought of as a set of ordered pairs generated by some rule that describes the affect—or subjective experience—of the members.

In order to establish a firm conceptual foundation that will be free of equivocation, I have given names to the two parties of the relation: the first member is the "one-caring" and the second is the "cared for." Regular readers of "existentialist" literature will recognize the need for such terminology—bothersome as it is. One may recall Sartre's use of for-itself and in-itself, Heidegger's being-in-the-world, and Buber's I-Thou and I-It. There are at least two good reasons for invoking this mechanism. First, it allows us to speak about our basic entities without explaining the entire conceptual apparatus repeatedly; second, it prevents us from smuggling in meanings through the use of synonyms. Hence, even though hyphenated entities offend the stylist, they represent in this case an attempt to achieve both economy and rigor. Another matter of style in connection with "one-caring" and "cared-for" should be mentioned here. In order to maintain balance and avoid confusion, I have consistently associated the generic "one-caring" with the universal feminine, "she," and "cared-for" with the masculine, "he." Clearly, however, when actual persons are substituted for "one-caring" and "cared-for" in the basic relation, they may be both male, both female, female-male, or male-female. Taking relation as ontologically basic simply means that we recognize human encounter and affective response as a basic fact of human existence. As we examine what it means to care and to be cared for, we shall see that both parties contribute to the relation; my caring must be somehow completed in the other if the relation is to be described as caring.

This suggests that the ethic to be developed is one of reciprocity, but our view of reciprocity will be different from that of "contract" theorists such as Plato and John Rawls. What the cared-for gives to the caring relation is not a promise to behave as the one-caring does, nor is it a form of "consideration." . . . When we see what it is that the cared-for contributes to the relation, we shall find it possible to separate human infants from nonhuman animals (a great problem for those who insist on some form of rationality in those we should treat ethically), and we shall do this without recourse to notions of God or some other external source of "sanctity" in human life.

The focus of our attention will be upon how to meet the other morally. Ethical caring, the relation in which we do meet the other morally, will be universal heart of the ethic, we must establish a convincing and comprehensive picture of caring at the outset.

Another outcome of our dependence on an ethical ideal is the emphasis upon moral education. Since we are dependent upon the strength and sensitivity of the ethical ideal—both our own and that of others—we must nurture that ideal in all of our educational encounters. I shall claim that we are dependent on each other even in the quest for personal goodness. How good I can be is partly a function of how you—the other—receive and respond to me. Whatever virtue I exercise is completed, fulfilled, in you. The primary aim of all education must be nurturance of the ethical idea.

To accomplish the purposes set out above, I shall strike many contrasts between masculine and feminine approaches to ethics and education and, indeed, to living. These are not intended to divide men and women into opposing camps. They are meant, rather, to show how great the chasm is that already divides the masculine and feminine in each of us and to suggest that we enter a dialogue of genuine dialectical nature in order to achieve an ultimate transcendence of the masculine and feminine in moral matters. The reader must keep in mind, then, that I shall use the language of both father and mother; I shall have to argue for the positions I set out expressively.

An important difference between an ethic of caring and other ethics that give subjectivity its proper place is its foundation in relation. The philosopher who begins with a supremely free consciousness—an aloneness and emptiness at the heart of existence—identifies anguish as the basic human affect. But our view, rooted as it is in relation, identifies joy as a basic human affect. When I look at my child—even one of my grown children—and recognize the fundamental relation in which we are each defined, I often experience a
fulfillment of our caring enhances our commitment to the ethical ideal that sustains us as one-caring.

Reading

The Need for More than Justice
Annette Baier

Study Questions

1. Who are the challengers to the supremacy of justice as a social virtue, and why does Baier suggest that this is surprising?
2. What kind of ethic or perspective (influenced by the work of Carol Gilligan) is contrasted with the ethics of justice?
3. According to Gilligan, what two evils of childhood parallel the two dimensions of moral development she describes?
4. What is the tradition contrasted with Gilligan’s position, according to Baier? How do Kohlberg, Piaget, and Kant exemplify this tradition?
5. From her interview studies, what did Gilligan find about women’s moral experience and moral maturity?
6. Why do some writers believe that it will not do to say that an ethic of care is an option that only some might choose?
7. How has the tradition of rights worked both against and for women?
8. According to Baier, what is wrong with the view that stresses relationships of equality?
9. What also does Baier believe is wrong with the stress this tradition places on free choice?
10. What is the fourth feature of the Gilligan challenge to liberal orthodoxy?
11. What, then, does Gilligan think is the best moral theory?

In recent decades in North American social and moral philosophy, alongside the development and discussion of widely influential theories of justice, taken as Rawls takes it as the “first virtue of social institutions,”

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Let me say quite clearly at this early point that there is little disagreement that justice is a social value of very great importance, and injustice an evil. Nor would those who have worked on theories of justice want to deny that other things matter besides justice. Rawls, for example, incorporates the value of freedom into his account of justice, so that denial of basic freedoms counts as injustice. Rawls also leaves room for a wider theory of right, of which the theory of justice is just a part. Still, he does claim that justice is the “first” virtue of social institutions, and it is only that claim about priority that I think has been challenged. It is easy to exaggerate the differences of view that exist, and I want to avoid that. The differences are as much in emphasis as in substance, or we can say that they are differences in tone of voice. But these differences do tend to make a difference in approaches to a wide range of topics not just in moral theory but in areas like medical ethics, where the discussion used to be conducted in terms of patients’ rights, of informed consent, and so on, but now tends to get conducted in an enlarged moral vocabulary, which draws on what Gilligan calls the ethics of care as well as that of justice.

For “care” is the new buzz-word. It is not, as Shakespeare’s Portia demanded, mercy that is to season justice, but a less authoritarian humanitarian supplement, a felt concern for the good of others and for community with them. The “cold jealous virtue of justice” (Hume) is found to be too cold, and it is “warmer” more communitarian virtues and social ideals that are being called in to supplement it. One might say that liberty and equality are being found inadequate without fraternity, except that “fraternity” will be quite the wrong word, if as Gilligan initially suggested, it is women who perceive this value most easily. (“Sorority” will do no better, since it is too exclusive, and English has no gender-neutral word for the mutual concern of siblings.) She has since modified this claim, allowing that there are two perspectives on moral and social issues that we all tend to alternate between, and which are not always easy to combine, one of them what she called the justice perspective, the other the care perspective. It is increasingly obvious that there are many male philosophical spokespersons for the care perspective (Laurence Thomas, Lawrence Blum, Michael Stocker) so that it cannot be the prerogative of women. Nevertheless Gilligan still wants to claim that women are most unlikely to take only the justice perspective, as some men are claimed to, at least until some mid-life crisis jolts them into “bifocal” moral vision (see D.V., ch. 6).

Gilligan in her book did not offer any explanatory theory of why there should be any difference between female and male moral outlook, but she did tend to link the naturalness to women of the care perspective with their role as primary caregivers of young children, that is with their parental and specifically maternal role. . . . Later, both in “The Conquistador and the Dark Continent: Reflections on the Nature of Love” (Daedalus Summer 1984), and “The Origins of Morality in Early Childhood” (in press), she develops this explanation. She postulates two evils that any infant may become aware of, the evil of detachment or isolation from others whose love one needs, and the evil of relative powerlessness and weakness. Two dimensions of moral development are thereby set—one aimed at achieving satisfying community with others, the other aiming at autonomy or equality of power. The relative predominance of one over the other development will depend both upon the relative salience of the two evils in early childhood, and on early and later reinforcement or discouragement in attempts made to guard against these two evils. This provides the germs of a theory about why, given current customs of childrearing, it should be mainly women who are not content with only the moral outlook that she calls the justice perspective, necessary though that was and is seen by them to have been to their hard won liberation from sexist oppression. They, like the blacks, used the language of rights and justice to change their own social position, but nevertheless see limitations in that language, according to Gilligan’s findings as a moral psychologist. She reports their discontent with the individualist more or less Kantian moral framework that dominates Western moral theory and which influenced moral psychologists such as Lawrence Kohlberg,11 to whose conception of moral maturity she seeks an alternative.
Since the target of Gilligan’s criticism is the dominant Kantian tradition, and since that has been the target also of moral philosophers as diverse in their own views as Bernard Williams, Alasdair MacIntyre, Philippa Foot, Susan Wolf, Claudia Card, her book is of interest as much for its attempt to articulate an alternative to the Kantian justice perspective as for its implicit raising of the question of male bias in Western moral theory, especially liberal democratic theory. For whether the supposed blind spots of that outlook are due to male bias, or to non-parental bias, or to early traumas of powerlessness or to early resignation to “detachment” from others, we need first to be persuaded that they are blind spots before we will have any interest in their cause and cure. Is justice blind to important social values, or at least only one-eyed? What is it that comes into view from the “care perspective” that is not seen from the “justice perspective”?

Gilligan’s position here is mostly easily described by contrasting it with that of Kohlberg, against which she developed it. Kohlberg, influenced by Piaget and the Kantian philosophical tradition as developed by John Rawls, developed a theory about typical moral development which saw it to progress from a pre-conventional level, where what is seen to matter is pleasing or not offending parental authority-figures, through a conventional level in which the child tries to fit in with a group, such as a school community, and conform to its standards and rules, to a post-conventional critical level, in which such conventional rules are subject to tests, and where those tests are of a utilitarian, or, eventually, a Kantian sort—namely ones that require respect for each person’s individual rational will, or autonomy, and conformity to any implicit social contract such wills are deemed to have made, or to any hypothetical ones they would make if thinking clearly. What was found when Kohlberg’s questionnaires (mostly by verbal response to verbally sketched moral dilemmas) were applied to female as well as male subjects, Gilligan reports, is that the girls and women not only scored generally lower than the boys and men, but tended to revert to the lower stage of the conventional level even after briefly (usually in adolescence) attaining the post-conventional level. Piaget’s finding that girls were deficient in “the legal sense” was confirmed.

These results led Gilligan to wonder if there might not be a quite different pattern of development to be discerned, at least in female subjects. She therefore conducted interviews designed to elicit not just how far advanced the subjects were towards an appreciation of the nature and importance of Kantian autonomy, but also to find out what the subjects themselves saw as progress or lack of it, what conceptions of moral maturity they came to possess by the time they were adults. She found that although the Kohlberg version of moral maturity as respect for fellow persons, and for their rights as equals (rights including that of free association), did seem shared by many young men, the women tended to speak in a different voice about morality itself and about moral maturity. To quote Gilligan, “Since the reality of interconnexion is experienced by women as given rather than freely contracted, they arrive at an understanding of life that reflects the limits of autonomy and control. As a result, women’s development delineates the path not only to a less violent life but also to a maturity realized by interdependence and taking care” (D.V., 172). She writes that there is evidence that “women perceive and construe social reality differently from men, and that these differences center around experiences of attachment and separation . . . because women’s sense of integrity appears to be intertwined with an ethics of care, so that to see themselves as women is to see themselves in a relationship of connexion, the major changes in women’s lives would seem to involve changes in the understanding and activities of care” (D.V., 171). She contrasts this progressive understanding of care, from merely pleasing others to helping and nurturing, with the sort of progression that is involved in Kohlberg’s stages, a progression in the understanding, not of mutual care, but of mutual respect, where this has its Kantian overtones of distance, even of some fear for the respected, and where personal autonomy and independence, rather than more satisfactory interdependence, are the paramount values.

This contrast, one cannot but feel, is one which Gilligan might have used the Marxist language of
alienation to make. For the main complaint about
the Kantian version of a society with its first virtue
justice, construed as respect for equal rights to for-
mal goods such as having contracts kept, due pro-
cess, equal opportunity including opportunity to
participate in political activities leading to policy
and law-making, to basic liberties of speech, free as-
sociation and assembly, religious worship, is that
none of these goods do much to ensure that the
people who have and mutually respect such rights
will have any other relationships to one another
than the minimal relationship needed to keep such
a “civil society” going. They may well be lonely, driv-
en to suicide, apathetic about their work and about
participation in political processes, find their lives
meaningless and have no wish to leave offspring to
face the same meaningless existence. Their rights,
and respect for rights, are quite compatible with
very great misery, and misery whose causes are not
just individual misfortunes and psychic sickness, but
social and moral impoverishment. . . .

Let me try to summarize the main differences,
as I see them, between on the one hand Gilligan’s
version of moral maturity and the sort of social
structures that would encourage, express and pro-
protect it, and on the other the orthodoxy she sees her-
sel to be challenging. I shall from now on be giving
my own interpretation of the significance of her
challenges, not merely reporting them. The most
obvious point is the challenge to the individualism
of the Western tradition, to the fairly entrenched
belief in the possibility and desirability of each per-
son pursuing his own good in his own way, con-
strained only by a minimal formal common good,
namely a working legal apparatus that enforces
contracts and protects individuals from undue in-
terference by others. Gilligan reminds us that non-
interference can, especially for the relatively pow-
erless, such as the very young, amount to neglect,
and even between equals can be isolating and alien-
ating. On her less individualist version of individu-
ality, it becomes defined by responses to depen-
dency and to patterns of interconnection, both
chosen and unchosen. It is not something a person
has, and which she then chooses relationships to
suit, but something that develops out of a series of
dependencies and interdependencies, and respons-
es to them. This conception of individuality is not
flatly at odds with, say, Rawls’ Kantian one, but
there is at least a difference of tone of voice be-
tween speaking as Rawls does of each of us having
our own rational life plan, which a just society’s
moral traffic rules will allow us to follow, and which
may or may not include close association with oth-
er persons, and speaking as Gilligan does of a satis-
factory life as involving “progress of affiliative rela-
tionship” (D.V., 170) where “the concept of identity
expands to include the experience of interconnex-
ion” (D.V., 173). Rawls can allow that progress to
Gilligan-style moral maturity may be a rational life
plan, but not a moral constraint on every life-pattern.
The trouble is that it will not do just to say “let
this version of morality be an optional extra. Let us
agree on the essential minimum, that is on justice
and rights, and let whoever wants to go further and
cultivate this more demanding ideal of responsibil-
ity and care.” For, first, it cannot be satisfactorily
cultivated without closer cooperation from others
than respect for rights and justice will ensure, and,
second, the encouragement of some to cultivate it
while others do not could easily lead to exploitation
of those who do. It obviously has suited some in
most societies well enough that others take on the
responsibilities of care (for the sick, the helpless,
the young) leaving them free to pursue their own
less altruistic goods. Volunteer forces of those who
accept an ethic of care, operating within a society
where the power is exercised and the institutions
designed, redesigned, or maintained by those who
accept a less communal ethic of minimally con-
strained self-advancement, will not be the solution.
The liberal individualists may be able to “tolerate”
the more communally minded, if they keep the lib-
erals’ rules, but it is not so clear that the more com-
munally minded can be content with just those
rules, not be content to be tolerated and possibly
exploited.

For the moral tradition which developed the
concept of rights, autonomy and justice is the same
tradition that provided “justifications” of the op-
pression of those whom the primary right-holders
depended on to do the sort of work they themselves
preferred not to do. The domestic work was left to
women and slaves, and the liberal morality for
right-holders was surreptitiously supplemented by a different set of demands made on domestic workers. As long as women could be got to assume responsibility for the care of home and children, and to train their children to continue the sexist system, the liberal morality could continue to be the official morality, by turning its eyes away from the contribution made by those it excluded. The long unnoticed moral proletariat were the domestic workers, mostly female. Rights have usually been for the privileged. Talking about laws, and the rights those laws recognize and protect, does not in itself ensure that the group of legislators and rights-holders will not be restricted to some elite. Bills of rights have usually been proclamations of the rights of some in-group, barons, landowners, males, whites, non-foreigners. The “justice perspective,” and the legal sense that goes with it, are shadowed by their patriarchal past. What did Kant, the great prophet of autonomy, say in his moral theory about women? He said they were incapable of legislation, not fit to vote, that they needed the guidance of more “rational” males. Autonomy was not for them, only for first class, really rational, persons. It is ironic that Gilligan’s original findings in a way confirm Kant’s views—it seems that autonomy really may not be for women. Many of them reject that ideal (D.V., 48), and have been found not as good at making rules as are men. But 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.”

It is however also true that the moral theories that made the concept of a person’s rights central were not just the instruments for excluding some persons, but also the instruments used by those who demanded that more and more persons be included in the favored group. Abolitionists, reformers, women, used the language of rights to assert their claims to inclusion in the group of full members of a community. The tradition of liberal moral theory has in fact developed so as to include the women it had for so long excluded, to include the poor as well as rich, blacks and whites, and so on.

Women like Mary Wollstonecraft used the male moral theories to good purpose. So we should not be wholly ungrateful for those male moral theories, for all their objectionable earlier content. They were undoubtedly patriarchal, but they also contained the seeds of the challenge, or antidote, to this patriarchal poison.

But when we transcend the values of the Kantians, we should not forget the facts of history—that those values were the values of the oppressors of women. The Christian church, whose version of the moral law Aquinas codified, in his very legalistic moral theory, still insists on the maleness of the God it worships, and jealously reserves for males all the most powerful positions in its hierarchy. Its patriarchal prejudice is open and avowed. In the secular moral theories of men, the sexist patriarchal prejudice is today often less open, not as blatant as it is in Aquinas, in the later natural law tradition, and in Kant . . . , but is often still there. No moral theorist today would say that women are unfit to vote, to make laws, or to rule a nation without powerful male advisors (as most queens had), but the old doctrines die hard. . . . Traces of the old patriarchal poison still remain in even the best contemporary moral theorizing. Few may actually say that women’s place is in the home, but there is much muttering, when unemployment figures rise, about how the relatively recent flood of women into the work force complicates the problem, as if it would be a good thing if women just went back home whenever unemployment rises, to leave the available jobs for the men. We still do not really have a wide acceptance of the equal right of women to employment outside the home. Nor do we have wide acceptance of the equal duty of men to perform those domestic tasks which in no way depend on special female anatomy, namely cooking, cleaning, and the care of weaned children. All sorts of stories (maybe true stories), about children’s need for one “primary” parent, who must be the mother if the mother breast feeds the child, shore up the unequal division of domestic responsibility between mothers and fathers, wives and husbands. If we are really to transvalue the values of our patriarchal past, we need to rethink all of those assumptions, really test those psychological theories. And how will men ev-
er develop an understanding of the “ethics of care” if they continue to be shielded or kept from that experience of caring for a dependent child, which complements the experience we all have had of being cared for as dependent children? These experiences form the natural background for the development of moral maturity as Gilligan’s women.

Exploitation aside, why would women, once liberated, not be content to have their version of morality merely tolerated? Why should they not see themselves as voluntarily, for their own reasons, taking on more than the liberal rules demand, while having no quarrel with the content of those rules themselves, nor with their remaining the only ones that are expected to be generally obeyed? To see why, we need to move on to three more differences between the Kantian liberals (usually contractarians) and their critics. These concern the relative weight put on relationships between equals, and the relative weight put on freedom of choice, and on the authority of intellect over emotions. It is a typical feature of the dominant moral theories and traditions... that relationships between equals or those who are deemed equal in some important sense, have been the relations that morality is concerned primarily to regulate. Relationships between those who are clearly unequal in power, such as parents and children, earlier and later generations in relation to one another, states and citizens, doctors and patients, the well and the ill, large states and small states, have had to be shunted to the bottom of the agenda, and then dealt with by some sort of “promotion” of the weaker so that an appearance of virtual equality is achieved. Citizens collectively become equal to states, children are treated as adults-to-be, the ill and dying are treated as continuers of their earlier more potent selves, so that their “rights” could be seen as the rights of equals. This pretense of an equality that is in fact absent may often lead to desirable protection of the weaker, or more dependent. But it somewhat masks the question of what our moral relationships are to those who are our superiors or our inferiors in power. A more realistic acceptance of the fact that we begin as helpless children, that at almost every point of our lives we deal with both the more and the less helpless, that equality of power and interdependence, between two persons or groups, is rare and hard to recognize when it does occur, might lead us to a more direct approach to questions concerning the design of institutions structuring these relationships between unequals (families, schools, hospitals, armies) and of the morality of our dealings with the more and the less powerful. . .

The recognition of the importance for all parties of relations between those who are and cannot but be unequal, both these relations in themselves and for their effect on personality formation and so on other relationships, goes along with a recognition of the plain fact that not all morally important relationships can or should be freely chosen. So far I have discussed three reasons women have not to be content to pursue their own values within the framework of the liberal morality. The first was its dubious record. The second was its inattention to relations of inequality or its pretense of equality. The third reason is its exaggeration of the scope of choice, or its inattention to unchosen relations. Showing up the partial myth of equality among actual members of a community, and of the undesirability of trying to pretend that we are treating all of them as equals, tends to go along with an exposure of the companion myth that moral obligations arise from freely chosen associations between such equals. Vulnerable future generations do not choose their dependence on earlier generations. The unequal infant does not choose its place in a family or nation, nor is it treated as free to do as it likes until some association is freely entered into. Nor do its parents always choose their parental role, or freely assume their parental responsibilities any more than we choose our power to affect the conditions in which later generations will live. Gilligan’s attention to the version of morality and moral maturity found in women, many of whom had faced a choice of whether or not to have an abortion, and who had at some point become mothers, is attention to the perceived inadequacy of the language of rights to help in such choices or to guide them in their parental role. It would not be much of an exaggeration to call the Gilligan “different voice” the voice of the potential parents. The emphasis on care goes with a recognition of the often unchosen nature of the responsibilities of those who give care, both of chil-
dren who care for their aged or infirm parents, and of parents who care for the children they in fact have. Contract soon ceases to seem the paradigm source of moral obligation once we attend to parental responsibility, and justice as a virtue of social institutions will come to seem at best only first equal with the virtue, whatever its name, that ensures that each new generation is made appropriately welcome and prepared for their adult lives.

... The fourth feature of the Gilligan challenge to liberal orthodoxy is a challenge to its typical rationalism, or intellectualism, to its assumption that we need not worry what passions persons have, as long as their rational wills can control them. This Kantian picture of a controlling reason dictating to possibly unruly passions also tends to seem less useful when we are led to consider what sort of person we need to fill the role of parent, or indeed want in any close relationship. It might be important for father figures to have rational control over their violent urges to beat to death the children whose screams enrage them, but more than control of such nasty passions seems needed in the mother or primary parent, or parent-substitute, by most psychological theories. They need to love their children, not just to control their irritation. So the emphasis in Kantian theories on rational control of emotions, rather than on cultivating desirable forms of emotion, is challenged by Gilligan, along with the challenge to the assumption of the centrality of autonomy, or relations between equals, and of freely chosen relations ... .

It is clear, I think, that the best moral theory has to be a cooperative product of women and men, has to harmonize justice and care. The morality it theorizes about is after all for all persons, for men and for women, and will need their combined insights. As Gilligan said (D.V., 174), what we need now is a “marriage” of the old male and the newly articulated female insights. If she is right about the special moral aptitudes of women, it will most likely be the women who propose the marriage, since they are the ones with more natural empathy, with the better diplomatic skills, the ones more likely to shoulder responsibility and take moral initiative, and the ones who find it easiest to empathize and care about how the other party feels. Then, once there is this union of male and female moral wisdom, we maybe can teach each other the moral skills each gender currently lacks, so that the gender difference in moral outlook that Gilligan found will slowly become less marked.

NOTES

10. For a helpful survey article see Owen Flanagan and Kathryn Jackson, “Justice, Care & Gender: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Debate Revisited,” Ethics.
14. I have previously written about the significance of her findings for moral philosophy in “What Do Women Want in a Moral Theory?” Nous, 19 (March 1985); “Trust and Antitrust,” Ethics, 96 (1986); and in “Hume the Women’s Moral Theorist?” in Women and Moral Theory, Kittay and Meyers (Eds.).
15. Immanuel Kant, Metaphysics of Morals, sec. 46.
REVIEW EXERCISES

1. How do the two examples given of male and female reasoning exemplify the various supposed characteristics of female and male ethical perspectives?
2. Contrast the research findings of Carol Gilligan and Lawrence Kohlberg on male and female moral development.
3. According to Freud, why were women supposed to be morally deficient?
4. What three types of explanation for the male-female difference in morality have been given?
5. How does Gilligan's duck and rabbit example help explain the difference between the two moral perspectives?
6. Describe the psychosexual development explanation of female and male morality.
7. Summarize Caroline Whitbeck's biological explanation of the difference.
8. How has the difference been explained in terms of "maternal thinking"?
9. Describe the basic issues involved in trying to decide if one type of morality is better than another.
10. Describe some of the history and characteristics of feminist thought.

SAMPLE ARTICLES

"Recent Work in Feminist Ethics"
"Reproducing Persons: Issues in Feminist Ethics"
"Living with Contradictions: Controversies in Feminist Social Ethics"

Useful Web Sites

http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/
http://www.nd.edu/~colldev/subjects/wss.html

http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/wstudies/

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


