

ETHICS OF CARE

‘Feminist / Womanist’ moral philosophers have criticized the western moral tradition as suffering from a ‘male bias.’ Since it has been mostly males who have engaged in moral theorizing as philosophers, unless one can assume that men and women experience and think about the world in exactly the same ways, western moral philosophy may have been undertaken in a ‘one sided’ manner.

Carol Gilligan in her book In A Different Voice contrasted the ‘feminine voice’ in ethics to the ‘masculine voice’ in ethics.

The ‘masculine voice’ has been a matter of abstract, universal rules, and rights or a ‘justice perspective.’

The ‘feminine voice’ is that of relationships, responsibilities, and deep emotions such as care or a ‘care perspective.’

Does an adequate moral theory have to take ‘deep emotions’ into (as much?) account as it does ‘deep thinking?’

Annette Baier holds that the key ethical concept should be that of ‘trust’ and that a ‘trust perspective’ in ethics unites / synthesizes the ‘justice perspective’ of men and the ‘care – relationships perspective’ of women. (‘Trust’ unites feeling and thinking.)

Nell Noddings has argued that we cannot be obligated to care equally for all persons – but that our moral responsibilities are based upon the presence / absence and type of relationship that we have with persons. If there is no relationship between persons of any kind, there are no moral duties between those persons.

Prior to this, from a ‘subjective’ approach to ethics:

David Hume had affirmed that morality is based upon ‘passion’ or ‘sentiment’ rather than upon reason.

[Contrast to: ‘*Emotivism*’ affirmed that moral judgments are expression of emotions of approval or disapproval by which we try to influence the actions of others. (“Murder is wrong” is basically to express “Murder: Boo! Hiss! Yuk! – Do not murder!”)]