

FEMINIST ETHICS OF CARE AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR SOME NORMATIVE QUESTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews some of the contributions that the feminist ethics of care framework has made to the study of ethics. Although ethics of care framework has raised a successful critique of the masculinist bias inhering within the prominent Western moral theories, some feminist scholars have maintained a critical attitude towards care ethics because of its tendency to essentialize emotions of feminine caring. In reviewing these different feminist approaches to the study of ethics, the article argues that in thinking about the questions of war and justice in international realm, both care ethicists and its critique could be utilized for a more fruitful understanding of the ethical dimensions of our actions.

Key Words: *feminist ethics of care, ethnics of justice, ethics in International Politics*

BAKIM/ÖZEN ETİĞİ VE ULUSLARARASI SİYASETİN BAZI NORMATİF SORULARI İÇİN ÖNEMİ

ÖZ

Bu makale, feminist bakım/özen etiğinin ahlak felsefesi alanına yaptığı katkılardan bazılarını gözden geçirmektedir. Her ne kadar bakım/özen etiği, Batılı ahlak teorilerinin eril bakış açılarının başarılı bir eleştirisini ortaya koymuş olsa da, bazı feminist düşünürler, bakım/özen etiğine karşı dışil bakıma olan özcül yaklaşımları nedeniyle mesafeli durmuşlardır. Makale etik alanına bu farklı feminist yaklaşımları gözden geçirirken, uluslararası siyasette savaş ve adalet sorularının etik boyutlarını kavramada, iki yaklaşımdan da faydalanabileceğini tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *bakım/özen etiği; adalet etiği; uluslararası siyasette etik*

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Introduction

Feminist inquiries into the ethics of care have made three distinct contributions to the study of morality. Firstly, by re-reading conventional Western ethical and political theory, they managed to identify a masculine-bias in the construction of the knowledge of ethics. The feminist re-reading of the dominant canon revealed the systematic distortions of masculinist scholarship, among which has been the privileging of an 'ethics of justice' that has served as a touchstone for questions of fairness, equality, individual rights, abstract principles and the consistent application of these¹. Feminists contested the usefulness of normative frames based upon the notion of justice, and proposed the alternative notion of an ethics of care, which provided both a more realistic reflection of how ordinary people experience morality, as well as a superior normative framework from within a feminist perspective. Secondly, in the study of applied ethics, they have emphasized the importance of taking women's moral experience seriously. The basic question that they have asked concerns the 'revelation' of values and principles from a standpoint of "women's morality", which should underpin our judgements in formulating public policies, medical practices and setting the tasks for global institutions². Thirdly, studies on the ethics of care have shattered the epistemic authority of moral theory by developing an understanding of ethics as a social practice performed by everyday people³. In following Urban Walker, they embrace actual human moralities – i.e. moral reaction, moral idioms, and the standards of judgements – as a source of morally relevant knowledge⁴.

One of the purposes of this article is to delineate the core assumptions of an ethics of care by reviewing literature drawn from the

¹ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* Harvard University Press, 1983; Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986; Virginia Held, *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics*. Chicago: University Press of Chicago; 1993; Tove Pettersen, *Comprehending Care: Problems and Possibilities in the Ethics of Care*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

² Virginia Held, *How Terrorism is Wrong: Morality and Political violence*. New York: Oxford University Press; 2008; Rianne Mahon and Fiona Robinson, eds. *Feminist ethics and social policy: Towards a New Global Political Economy of Care*. UBC Press, 2011. Tove Pettersen. "Conceptions of Care: Altruism, Feminism, and Mature Care." *Hypatia* 27, no. 2 2012: 366-389; Fiona Robinson. "Care, Gender and Global Social Justice: Rethinking 'Ethical Globalization'." *Journal of Global Ethics* 2, no. 1 (2006): 5-25.

³ Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 1999; Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* New York : Routledge, 1993.

⁴ Walker 1993, 9.

disciplines of political theory. The contribution of feminist scholars in these disciplines mainly consists in an effort to define an 'ethics of care' and to establish a framework against to that offered by the dominant core of Western political thought. However, despite sharing many of the underlying tenets of care ethics, feminist moral philosophers, mainly Urban Walker and Kimberly Hutchings, also contested some of the ethnics of care claims in what I label as the power-based approach. Tong pinpoints the stark contrast between these two approaches in the following terms: "a care-focused feminist approach to ethics has as its primary task the rehabilitation of such "feminine" values as compassion, empathy, sympathy, nurturance, and kindness. It strives to make the culturally associated "female" virtue of care, for example, just as important in the moral domain as the culturally associated "male" virtue of justice."⁵ In contrast, a power-focused feminist approach to ethics is acutely sensitive to the fact that moral and social life are intertwined. It insists that there is nothing to be idealized about our moral responsibilities and projects since they flow not from a wishful thinking, but from our concrete social locations, which depend upon gender, economic status, race and other factors that distribute power and forms of recognition.⁶

In the first section after tracing the important points of these two approaches, in the second part of this paper I will argue that the "ethics of care" could offer a more critical and promising framework for international ethnics if it is critically informed by the contributions of a power-based feminist ethics. In reviewing examples of the application of both types of feminist ethics in the International Relations discipline, I will demonstrate how a more informed and critical frame infused in this manner could help us to better understand and respond to the ethical questions revolving around war and global justice.

Ethics of Care: Care-Based Approach versus Power-Based Approach

The notion of an ethics of care was first made famous by the development psychologist, Carroll Gilligan. In an experimental study that she conducted among a mixed group of female and male university students, she identified fundamentally different moral principles between the two sexes⁷. Claiming that females tend to avoid separation and abandonment whereas males tend to perceive proximity as somehow threatening, Gilligan reported that women often construed moral dilemmas as conflicts of responsibilities

⁵ Rosemary Tong, "Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics (review)," *Hypatia* - Volume 14: 2, 1999, 121.

⁶ Tong, 121.

⁷ Gilligan, 29.

rather than of rights and sought to resolve these dilemmas in ways that would repair the web of relations. Furthermore, Gilligan described females as supposedly less prone than males to formulate moral decisions by appeal to abstract rules; instead women were more likely to act upon their feelings of love and compassion for particular individuals. Gilligan characterized this typically feminine position as an "ethics of care", whose primary values were nurturance, the assumption of responsibility, and responsiveness to the needs of others, and which could be juxtaposed against values such as equal rights and impartial universalism presumed by an "ethics of justice".⁸ Both in Western philosophy and development psychology, an ethics of justice has been recognized as the highest stage of morality, and the same philosophers who have advanced this proposition have also argued that these "moral characteristics are reserved for men, since women were supposedly determined to a greater extent by their body and emotions"⁹. Gilligan aimed to undermine the implications of this difference by highlighting the moral and social advantages of thinking in terms of care as well.

Gilligan's work has appealed especially to those feminists who have associated themselves with Hartsock's "standpoint feminism", a view that proposes to take women's experience as a point of departure to reveal what is wrong with the current organization of society¹⁰, and to attend to a better set of values that have been withheld from view – i.e. attentiveness, nurturance, , compassion, etc – in order to build a more decent society. Although a few important exceptions exist, most scholars operating within the framework of an ethics of care define "standpoint" in terms of "maternal thinking". Prominent examples include Nel Noddings' *Caring: A feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Sara Ruddick's *Maternal thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, and Virginia Held's *Ethics of Care: Personal, Political and Global*. In spite of the contrasts in their perspectives, all of these authors suggest that child-rearing encourages the development of a distinctive moral sensibility, a sensibility that under current conditions is associated with the feminine¹¹. At a normative level, as Robinson notes, the framing of ethics must begin from the proposition that the giving and receiving of care is a vital part of all human life, and that it must therefore be

⁸ Gilligan, 35.

⁹ Selma Sevenhuijen, *Citizenship and the Ethics of Care; Feminist Reconsideration on Justice, Morality and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1998, 48.

¹⁰ Nancy Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism." in *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology*, ed. S. Harding and M. Hintikka. Springer: Netherlands, 1983, 283- 310.

¹¹ Allison Jaggar, "Feminist Ethics: Projects, Problems, Prospects," in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. C. Card. University Press of Kansas, 1991, 84.

a normative guide to the creation of decent societies¹². They claimed that the knowledge of ethics as it appeared in the writings of central figures in the Western canon such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and more recently John Rawls, was not gender-neutral; while issues that were deemed to be part of the private realm and hence the natural responsibility of women (e.g. care) were never recognized as bearing moral significance, the moral experience of men – especially within the public realm – was construed as the pinnacle of universalistic human morality.¹³¹⁴

While the field of care-based ethics cannot be seen to reflect a singular set of principles, it is possible to isolate some broadly shared characteristics. One of the central axioms of care-based ethics is that its analytical starting point is a *relational ontology*; regarding individuals as existing in, and morality as arising out of, personal and societal relations. The most sustained critique of the Western philosophy levelled by care approach concerns the primacy accorded to the understanding of humans as independent, autonomous and self-seeking individuals. Some feminist thinkers have argued that one of the effects of this ontology has been to obscure from view the particular experiences of women, who are most likely to define themselves in and through their relations with children, family members, friends and members of their communities.¹⁵ Held places the onus of blame for the widespread acceptance of this individualist ontology upon the social-contract tradition of political theory. The basis of ethics within the social contract, she argues, presupposes a being, which is fundamentally egocentric, living in a state of fear and competition with others. Held further claims that, in this tradition, possession of rights under the guarantee of a political society, i.e. the state, is the primary force granting individuals personhood, and that the moral value of a human being is defined in terms of the magnitude of the rights under his possession. In this situation, moral dilemmas assume the form of conflicts between the divergent rights claims of individuals. Whereas an ethics of justice seeks a fair solution between competing individual interests and rights, an ethics of care sees the interests of carers and cared-for as importantly intertwined.¹⁶

The revisionist work on the ethics of care is not limited to the terrain of ontology, but also includes a significant re-evaluation of the epistemic

¹² Fiona Robinson, “Methods of Feminist Normative Theory: A Political Ethics of Care for International Relations,” in *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, ed. B. Ackerly et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 221.

¹³ Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political and Global*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 23.

¹⁴ Jaggar, 83-7.

¹⁵ Held, 2006, 13-5.

¹⁶ Held, 15.

processes that needs to be in place before rendering moral judgements. Held maintains that in Western ethics, the basic questions of moral epistemology – how do we know – have been posed in order to ensure that a moral judgement is made from a disinterested point of view; and the solution was evidently to assign an impartial agent, either a person or reason itself, that is seen as far enough removed from the web of social connections, emotions, impulses for which morality is to provide a restraint¹⁷. This is especially true for the dominant theories of an ethics of justice, wherein the values of equality, impartiality and non-interference have assumed priority; and in the practices of justice, wherein individual rights are protected and equal treatment is sought after. Accordingly, intimacy, affection and other human imperatives are largely eschewed¹⁸. As Tronto writes, in this framework, the moral actor should be "willing to surrender special connections and circumstances when necessary to achieve a rationally justifiable account of morality"¹⁹.

In contrast, the ethics of care "typically appreciate all kinds of moral responses including the emotions and relational capabilities that enable morally concerned persons in actual interpersonal contexts to understand and judge what would be best".²⁰ As Held concurs, "the ethics of care respects rather than removes itself from the claims of particular others with whom we share actual relations".²¹ Instead of rejecting interpersonal ties as corrosive to moral judgement, care ethicists argue that people experience their moral lives in the context of a web of relationships with individuals and group of particular others. Since self-direction, responsiveness to others and mutual accountability are ongoing features of normal human social life, actual people necessarily construct and sustain an "interpersonal understanding" of morality in the daily experience of interaction²². Walker notes that this epistemology is in fundamental contrast to Western political theory, "according to which morality is never what any group of people is doing in a place at a time but something that transcends all places and times", an ideality of morality²³.

¹⁷ Held, 11. Also see, John Cottingham. "Ethics and Impartiality," *Philosophical Studies*, 1983, 43: 83–99; Shane O'Neill. *Impartiality in Context*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997; Susan Okin. "Reason and Feeling in Thinking About Justice," *Ethics*, 1989, 99: 229–49.

¹⁸ Held, 2006, 12-15.

¹⁹ Tronto, 11.

²⁰ Held, 10.

²¹ Held, 11.

²² Iris Marion Young. "Impartiality and the Civic Public: Some Implications of Feminist Critiques of Moral and Political Theory." *Feminism as Critique* 1987, 57.

²³ Walker, 13.

Although appreciative of the efforts that care-based ethics afforded to challenge some of the inherent assumptions of the justice-based ethics, power-based feminist ethnics scholars have disputed the essentialist demarcation of women and men as fixed categories in a way that could reinforce pre-established social roles, expected behavioural patterns, and traditional (i.e. androcentric biases) sexual/political/ethical orientations at the expense of women's multifaceted experiences.²⁴ In this sense, the celebration of the performance of gender as embodying a deep moral authenticity in the care-focused approach exists in tension with the power-based ethics rejection of feminine identity as a means of apprehending the world.²⁵ Power-based approach recognizes, above all, the fundamental relationship between *ethics and power*. Proponents of this view remind us that as long as human beings are ongoing participants in a social order, and not simply objects of direct violence and slaughter, there is a moral order inherent.²⁶ They also assert that such reality of 'moral orders' is intersubjectively constructed and not given, and that gendered, racial and other relations of power form a significant part of it. Urban Walker further argues that these moral orders in turn work to uphold and vindicate particular patterns of power:

We know that powers of several types (coercive, manipulative, and productive) in various linked dimensions (economic, political, social, discursive and cultural) can allow some people to rig both the arrangements and the perceptions of them, and so to obscure what's really happening to whom and why. It is this fund of knowledge that needs to be enlarged and theoretically articulated in general accounts of specific studies of different relative moral positions in differentiated social lives.²⁷

In this sense, Hutchings has stressed that the goal of feminist ethics should not be to establish the necessity of "caring relations", but to be sceptical of the claims of ethical necessity in any given moral order.²⁸ Walker stresses that one of the primary mechanisms through which gendered power relations are perpetuated is the consolidation of identities as necessary and the assignation of responsibilities in accordance with those identities.²⁹ So

²⁴ Walker, 52.

²⁵ Christine Sylvester, "Empathetic Cooperation: A Feminist Method for IR," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 23:2, 1994, 316.

²⁶ Robinson 2006, 228.

²⁷ Walker, 219.

²⁸ Kimberly Hutchings, "Towards A Feminist International Ethics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 26, 2000.

²⁹ Walker, 179.

claims of ethical necessity could be dangerous, even if they begin with the best of intentions. Hutchings stresses that the assumption that moral weight is to be carried only by the practices of mothering not only singles out virtues of care as the ultimate condition of being moral, but also obscures the inevitable relations between various moral orders and gendered relations of power. She suggests to change the terms of the debate "by starting from the premise of contingency and insisting that the crucial question is not how we know what is ethically necessary, but how certain values or practices come to be seen as ethically necessary".³⁰

While care ethicists posit the maternal model as the bedrock of a relational ontology and epistemology that offers universalizable moral content, power-based ethicists are more inclined not to derive substantive moral values from this ontology. For the care-focused approach, the content of the mothering is thus obvious (i.e. virtues of caring), and does offer a vantage point from which to judge other moral values within our social life; while the power-focused perspective remains committed to an ethnographic methodology, which could provide detailed empirical analysis about 'actually existing' morality. According to Walker, this is the most important task of moral philosophy: "to give up on philosophers and attempt to make the best and most complete sense of all information about the existing forms of moral life in diverse human affairs"³¹. In her view, since the basic ontology in the world is human relationality, and since every relationship, whether public or private, is built upon some kind of commitment to loyalty, responsiveness, and recognition, the empirical and ethnographic method can help to uncover the content of these moral orders. Walker refers to this understanding as an 'expressive-collaborative model'³², "which looks at moral life as a continuing negotiation among people".³³

According to Hutchings, in feminist ethics, the question does not concern "what ought to be" as much as it does concern "what it is" because "the feminist starting point of relational ontology simply draws attention to the always already normatively inflected nature of the world we inhabit".³⁴ Even the worst social-moral systems, such as the southern slave economy in the US, consist of human interactions based upon trust and responsibility.³⁵ Most would easily concede that slavery is one of the most ethically unsound institutions. Yet, the practices of slavery embed not only oppression and violence but also productive power relations. It produced

³⁰ Hutchings, 121.

³¹ Walker, 13.

³² Walker, 16.

³³ Walker, 60.

³⁴ Hutchings, 123.

³⁵ Robinson 2006, 226.

identities/subjectivities – that is interpersonally significant positions, standings, or roles characterized by powers and prerogatives, responsibilities and exposure to expectations and claims.³⁶ It is through these identities that even institutions, behaviours and understandings that we believe to be ethically unacceptable attain a status of necessity, and achieve widespread acceptance in the society at large³⁷. Although people might have recognized slavery as violent and have no direct interest in perpetuating it, objection to this might be attenuated by other commitments that are not necessarily oppressive in themselves such as caring for the loved ones, loyalty to the community or the pursuit of stability in the society. The values that are circulated through the institution of slavery gain an “intersubjective nature” by working in and through these multi-faceted moral commitments, which would often be a mixed bag of respectable (i.e. caring) and unacceptable traits that slaves, slave-owners and the members of the society at large practice in their everyday interactions.

Among the ontological claims of power-based ethics is that such reality is “intersubjectively” constructed, not given, and that gendered, racial and other relations of power form a significant part of it. Not everyone, every institution or social group contributes to the formation of moral values and orders to the same extent³⁸; and if outright oppression, marginalization and violence are established as acceptable by reproducing certain identities as essentially servile, feminine, backward, emotional, etc., Walker claims that that there is a successful epistemic authority that renders some moral identities as necessary³⁹. It is the task of moral philosophy to uncover how these moral understandings are formed, maintained and circulated and whose interests are served by them.⁴⁰

International Relations and Ethics: Care-Based Ethics versus Power-Based Ethics:

While feminists were engaged in re-inscribing the field of moral philosophy, the discipline of International Relations was undergoing a renewed interest in the normative and ethical dimensions of world politics. The questions that have long represented the most significant challenge to global society are naturally ethical of their very nature. From concerns of violence to forceful deportations and human trafficking, to the dilemmas of humanitarian intervention within ethnic conflict zones and the demands of

³⁶ Walker, 112.

³⁷ Walker, 159.

³⁸ Walker, 10.

³⁹ Walker, 169.

⁴⁰ Walker, 74-5.

global redistribution of wealth from North to South, we find many of the most pressing global problems are also ethical problems. Although there have been heated debates concerning how to organize the study of IR (i.e. whose security or economic-well being should be privileged as a focus of study or even activism), the ethical turn in the discipline of International Relations, for the most part, remained unabashedly state-centric: "all normative concerns within international relations" as Nyers notes, "are predicated on what is good for states".⁴¹ This ethical viewpoint, known as Communitarianism in IR, divides the international sphere into localities, or communities. Accordingly, it is these communities that possess a unique moral value and demand our attention and protection.⁴² Although Communitarianism bears a strong resemblance to the ethics of care, wherein certain communal relations hold an ethical significance as well, Sevenhuijen notes that communitarian philosophy, unlike the ethics of care, is not predicated upon a "relational ontology", but upon the binary opposition between what is within and what is without a community, and reflects an understanding of the social substratum that is fundamentally non-relational.⁴³ In this approach, our identities are derived from within so called national ties, and the approach upholds a politically dangerous, conservative inclinations.

Although limited in scope, some IR scholars have nevertheless proven willing to embrace a more humanist notion of ethics. This approach, known as Cosmopolitanism or Idealism, contrasts with Communitarianism, and involves an assumption of universal morality, one which exists regardless of social circumstances.⁴⁴ Proponents have argued that, in the public sphere, especially when it is as boundless as the global realm, a more detached and impersonal ethics might prove necessary.⁴⁵ For the proponents of this approach, humanity on a global scale should subject to a universal form of justice, which ensures non-discrimination on the basis of nationality, ethnicity or the level of economic welfare. As Neufeld notes, "Inference from that leads Cosmopolitans to emphasize the individual as the most important

⁴¹ Peter Nyers, "Emergency or Emerging Identities? Refugees and Transformations in World Order," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28:1, 1999, 4.

⁴² Fiona Robinson, *Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory and International Relations* Oxford: Westview Press, 1999, 68. Steve Smith. "The Forty Years' Detour: The Resurgence of Normative Theory in International Relations." *Millennium* 21, no. 3 1992: 489-506; David Morrice. "The Liberal-Communitarian Debate in Contemporary Political Philosophy and its significance for international relations." *Review of International Studies* 26, no. 2 2000: 233-251.

⁴³ Sevehuijen, 21.

⁴⁴ Beitz, Charles R. "Social and Cosmopolitan Liberalism." *International Affairs* 75, no. 3 1999: 515-529

⁴⁵ Robinson 1999, 69.

in the international scene".⁴⁶ In all of these approaches, the representation of a "human" in need of ethical defence assumes the characteristics of a rational, abstract, and autonomous individual.

Many feminists have levelled quite scathing critiques of the individualized depictions of "human" inherent in many such accounts, which they believe to be a product of an androcentric bias.⁴⁷ Their intervention effectively de-mystified the ethical significance and necessity of the state and of our identities based upon political nationalism or upon a cosmopolitan global humanism. In accordance with the relational ontology, feminists claim that the realm of international politics is primarily "a realm of human relations, not of human, national or state rights/interests or of any international state system".⁴⁸

Hutchings identifies three important interventions into the study of international ethics spearheaded by care ethicists, especially by Ruddick, Robinson, Held, and Porter. Accordingly, their view of what is ethically significant within the international realm represents a movement away from the traditional focus of mainstream ethics upon abstractions such as individuals, states or nations, to concentrate instead upon an examination of the relations of recognition and responsibility wherever they occur.⁴⁹ Secondly, they reject an understanding of the nature and conditions of moral judgment in terms of abstract principles and values.⁵⁰ The third intervention is the suggestion of a prescriptive agenda based upon the values implicit in the care practices. Feminist work on the international ethics bifurcates at this point, wherein camps emerge around those power and care-based ethicists.

One of the more prominent founders of the "care-focused" approach in international relations is Sara Ruddick⁵¹. Her purpose was to provide a model of reasoning based upon care ethics in order to understand the moral implausibility of waging war. In her view, "maternal thinking" involves some "moral practices which she argues do have implications for what should or should not be permissible in international relations"⁵². Her aim is to apply the concept of maternal thinking to feminist anti-militarism. As occasioned by the relational ontology, she sanctions the epistemological argument that *claims*

⁴⁶ Neufeld, Mark. "Identity and the Good in International Relations Theory 1." *Global Society: Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations* 10, no. 1, 1996: 43-56

⁴⁷ Seyla Benhabib. "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory." *Praxis International* 5, no. 4, 1986: 402-424.

⁴⁸ Hutchings, 115.

⁴⁹ Hutchings, 200.

⁵⁰ Hutchings, 117.

⁵¹ Sara Ruddick, *Maternal thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, London: Women's Press, 1990.

⁵² Hutchings, 114.

to truth in relation to social experience (and not in relation to scientific findings) correspond to the perspective from which actions are performed and differ according to the practice involved. In her view, the practice of maternal care is chiefly determined by the need for preservation, growth and social acceptability because children are dependent and vulnerable and this evokes a natural caring response:

When maternal thinking takes upon itself the critical perspective of a feminist standpoint, it reveals a contradiction between mothering and war. Mothering begins in birth and promises life; military thinking justifies organized, deliberate deaths. A mother preserves the bodies, nurtures the psychic growth, and disciplines the conscience of children; although the military deliberately endangers their bodies, minds and consciences in the name of victory and abstract causes.⁵³

In Ruddick however the judgment of the maternal thinker is "oriented by the ideals implicit in care, but these are regulative rather than determining in their effects"⁵⁴. The ethical judgement has to be made in accordance with the context and only after airing different points of view and paying careful heed to them. In her view, throughout history, women insisted that they have their maternal reasons for rejecting war.⁵⁵ Ruddick argues that this form of thinking should be our "standpoint" in judging what should be permissible and impermissible in international relations. Ruddick "places all other ethical traditions – Cosmopolitanism and Communitarianism – firmly in the realm of 'masculinist' theory and practice". Although it is clear that Ruddick does place an ethical value on humans, this is based not upon a notion of inherent individual right or interest, but on relationship – value inheres in relations to others, and, in particular, in the recognition of our responsibility for others.⁵⁶

Fiona Robinson in her *Globalizing Care* broadens the issues that need to be addressed through a care perspective to include global distributive justice and human rights, and situates her arguments against the backdrop of a globalizing world. Compared to Ruddick, she is more sceptical of invoking a "motherly metaphor". Both Gilligan's and Ruddick's "standpoint" framework has been treated with a fair measure of disdain by some feminist scholars who have opposed adopting "woman" – generally white, middle class, and heterosexual – as a single category that is reflective of all women's

⁵³ Ruddick, 135.

⁵⁴ Hutchings, 115.

⁵⁵ Ruddick, 127.

⁵⁶ Hutchings, 115.

experiences.⁵⁷ Drawing upon Tronto, she characterizes care as a gender-neutral moral orientation.⁵⁸ She works through the ways in which we can construct both global and local institutions that can build ‘good caring’ relations, even when people who need attention are too distant to receive personal care. In crafting proposals for dealing with global poverty, Robinson considers “a restructuring of political action in such a way that enduring relations can flourish and agents can focus their moral attention and ultimately act with the virtues of care – attentiveness, responsiveness, and responsibility.⁵⁹ So in Robinson, caring relations are not necessarily feminine; they need to be constructed by institutional means. Notwithstanding their difference, however, both Ruddick and Robinson are committed to the idea of care-based ethics as a transformative project, as an all-encompassing panacea for the problems of violence, poverty, etc.

As a representative of the power-based ethics, however, Hutchings regards the idealization of care as dangerous primarily because it provides a vantage point beyond politics/power.⁶⁰ In her analysis of the widespread rape campaign that occurred during the Bosnian War, Hutchings tries to explain what a feminist ethnics approach should rather strive – i.e to analyse and critique the moral order which gave legitimacy to such violence in the first place rather than prescribing a universal caring attitude. She points to two features of the war time rape phenomenon: firstly, rape appeared to be being organized systematically; secondly, rape served as a means of enforced pregnancy and was represented as the victory of an ethnically superior male over an ethnically inferior woman and, by extension, her male compatriots.⁶¹ In her view, the violence against women in war cannot be effectively addressed either by endorsing ‘caring institutions’ or criminalizing it as a war crime. The systemic rape became possible because of the patterns of responsibility and recognition – i.e. the moral order – which “underpin the identification of as possession of men or vessels of the propagation of the race”.⁶² This may help to elucidate the significance of ‘war rape’, not as a banal expression of male violence; as Hutchings argues, the use of rape as a weapon of war in this context makes sense only in terms of masculinist assumptions about the meaning of rape as an instrument for inflicting harm not upon the victims themselves as individuals, but upon their male relations and compatriots who comprise the ‘enemy’.⁶³ What is needed for a transformative feminist politics is an “analysis and deconstruction [of] the background

⁵⁷ Walker, 52.

⁵⁸ Robinson 1999, 47.

⁵⁹ Robinson, 1999, 154.

⁶⁰ Hutchings, 119.

⁶¹ Hutchings, 129.

⁶² Hutchings, 129.

⁶³ Hutchings, 129-30.

values, practices and institutions which give the actions of the perpetrators meaning".⁶⁴ It is through the association of feminine with the honour of the nation that women become more easily prey to 'systemic rape'.

Seen from this perspective, the inadequacy of an ethics of care becomes all too apparent. Feminists have called attention to the vast amount of violence that is directed against women and children not only in wartime but in intimate relations as well. Many doubt that an ethics of care can address this issue adequately. Card, for example, praises theory which is willing to seriously engage with the problem of violence against women and that centers upon resistance – violent, if necessary – over and above care-taking.⁶⁵ Bell claims that being ethically responsible in this context requires a form of protest that is based not upon 'interconnection and caring' with others but upon recognizing the perpetrator's refusal to respect the integrity and separateness of the victim.⁶⁶ She sees "women's care-taking of those who benefit from sex oppression" and gendered patterns of power as part of the problem feminist ethic needs to address.⁶⁷

There is no doubt that the goal of establishing 'caring relations' as the central plank of an ethics of care is an important and laudable objective; but this cannot be construed as an unconditional 'moral' good. This implies a need to examine more closely how gender identities that are embedded in certain moral orders facilitate violence, marginalization, and the silencing of certain concerns and voices within our politics. Moreover, one of the persistent problems associated with the ethics of care approach is the imprecision with respect to the question of who deserves care, who will be enlisted as the caregivers, and under what conditions this should proceed.⁶⁸ The fact that some women or men may reflect a caring attitude and an appreciation of contextual realities tells us nothing about who they think worthy of their care, nor whose situation may demand our attention and whose may not.⁶⁹ As Spelman reveals, "reliance on an understanding of care also obscures the fact that some forms of care are not only compatible but crucial to the maintenance of systemic oppressions based on race, gender, and economic class and violence among women".⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Robinson 2006, 225.

⁶⁵ Claudia Card, "The Feistiness of Feminism" in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. C. Card, University Press of Kansas, 1991.

⁶⁶ Linda Bell, *Re-thinking Ethics in the Midst of Violence: A Feminist Approach to Violence*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1993, 36.

⁶⁷ Bell, 36.

⁶⁸ Jaggar, 83.

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Spelman, "The Virtue of Feeling and the Feeling of Virtue," in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. C. Card, University Press of Kansas, 1991, 229.

⁷⁰ Spelman, 229.

In conclusion, it could be argued that although a care-based approach fails to pay due consideration to the question of how our perception of moral identities as necessary might depend upon gendered patterns of power relations, we nevertheless inhabit a world which would be unliveable without certain kinds of moral judgements and normative orientations. The power-based approach tends to afford an excess of attention to the construction of identities as shaped by moral orders. It is too heavily weighted toward questions of identity rather than questions of agency and moral action.⁷¹ As Sevenhuijen notes, there is a problem with this when it leads to an institutionalized forgetfulness that normativity and judgement are necessary.⁷² International politics, after all, is about shaping collective responsibilities and being transparent in relation to the epistemic assumptions that shape our decisions, responsibilities and identities.

Thus, when we consider ethical questions at the international level that actively seek to discern gendered patterns of power, it becomes obvious that there is a need to evaluate moral orders and to act with collective responsibility. This also implies a moral need to self-reflexively engage with our own epistemic authority, and to strive to maintain ‘moral integrity’ in the various forms of activism with which we engage. As Walker argues, moral integrity is not about a search for ethical ‘wholeness’, which inevitably leads to a claim of moral superiority, and ignorance of others’ moral claims, but is about encouraging ‘transparency’, that is to acknowledge ‘how we care’, “for whom we care” and “in what capacity/identity” in the most explicit terms possible.⁷³ It is true that most caring relations can be oppressive, and paternalistic; but we should nevertheless strive to develop better ‘caring relations’ as a political value and strategy as well. Although judging with care and the privileging of interconnectedness cannot be established as the ultimate moral good, these and other revelations from within the study of valuation and care underlie the need to rethink about the moral dimensions of our politics.

⁷¹ Sevenhuijen, 25.

⁷² Spelman, 29.

⁷³ Walker, 106-9.

"Feminist Ethics of Care and its Importance
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"Feminist Ethics of Care and its Importance
for Some Normative Questions in International Politics"
Fatma Armağan TEKE LLOYD

272

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