

A sepia-toned sketch of a landscape. In the foreground, there are large, dark, textured rocks and a river or stream. In the middle ground, a large, dark, textured tree trunk stands prominently. In the background, a river flows through a valley, and on a cliff to the right, there is a classical building with a portico and columns. The sky is filled with soft, sketchy clouds.

Objections to Care Theory

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Objections to Care Theory



- Drawn from wider literature and especially the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP)
- Positions the ethics as a traditional philosophical theory that demands argumentation and defense

Title image: <https://cravepainting.com/blog/landscape-drawing-exercises>

Women's Nature



- Care “linked to ‘woman’s nature’ in a way that calls upon and reinforces gender-based stereotypes”
- It may still be “epistemically, ethically, and politically imprudent to associate women with the value of care” (Tong and Williams 2018).

<https://press.rebus.community/intro-to-phil-ethics/>

Image: <https://www.google.com/search?q=women%27s+nature>

Employment Obligations

- The employee (e.g. a flight attendant) must force their own feelings into the background
- This risks blurring the distinction between “real” and “inauthentic” feelings (Sandra Lee Bartky, 1990)

<https://archive.org/details/femininitydomina00bart>



<https://www.tiktok.com/@amandamoseguera>

Care Ethics as Slave Morality

- Care ethics is a kind of slave morality valorizing the oppression of women (Puka, 1990; Card, 1990; Davion, 1993)
- Nietzsche: “oppressed peoples tend to develop moral theories that reaffirm subservient traits as virtues.”



<https://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>

<https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/morality/what-is-slave-morality/>

Studies Empirically Flawed

Gilligan has been faulted for basing her conclusions on too narrow a sample, and for drawing from overly homogenous groups



<https://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>

The 'Not a Theory' Objection



Some critics object that care ethics is not a highly distinct moral theory (e.g. “Kant’s writings... provide the care ethicists with everything they require” (John Paley, 2002))

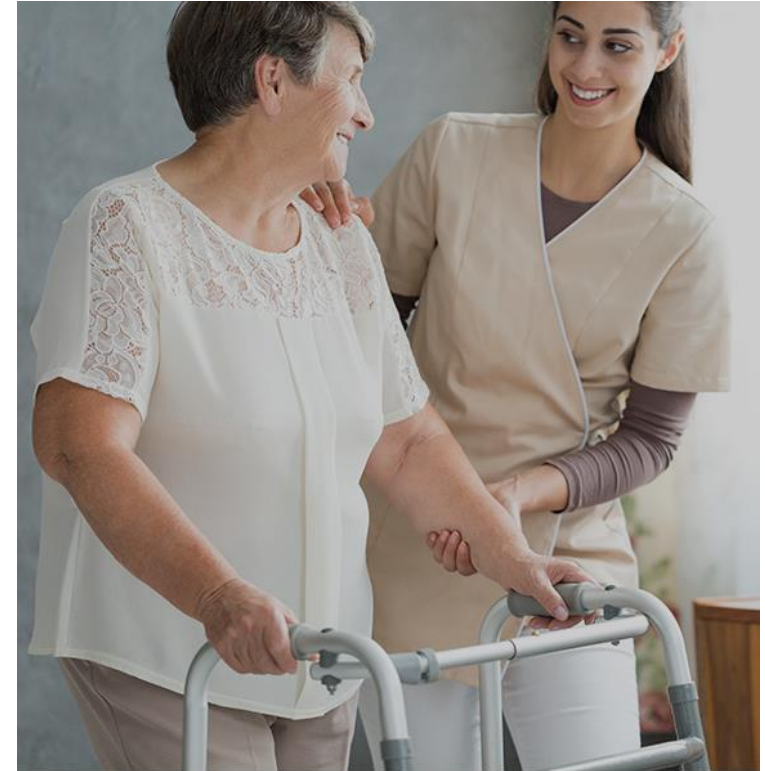
- Care ethics incorporates liberal concepts such as autonomy, equality, and justice.

<https://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>

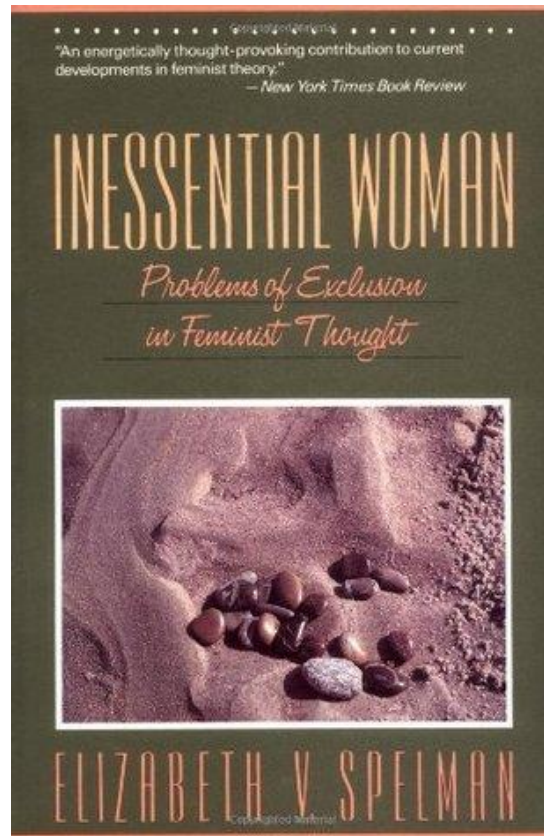
<https://uwethicsofcare.gws.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Paley-J.-2002.pdf>

Care Ethics as Parochial

- “Care ethics obscures larger social dynamics and is overly parochial”
- E.g. “Noddings’ original assertion that care givers have primary obligations to proximate others over distant others”
- “Critics worry that this stance privileges elite care-givers by excusing them from attending to significant differences in international standards of living and their causes.”



Care Ethics as Essentialist

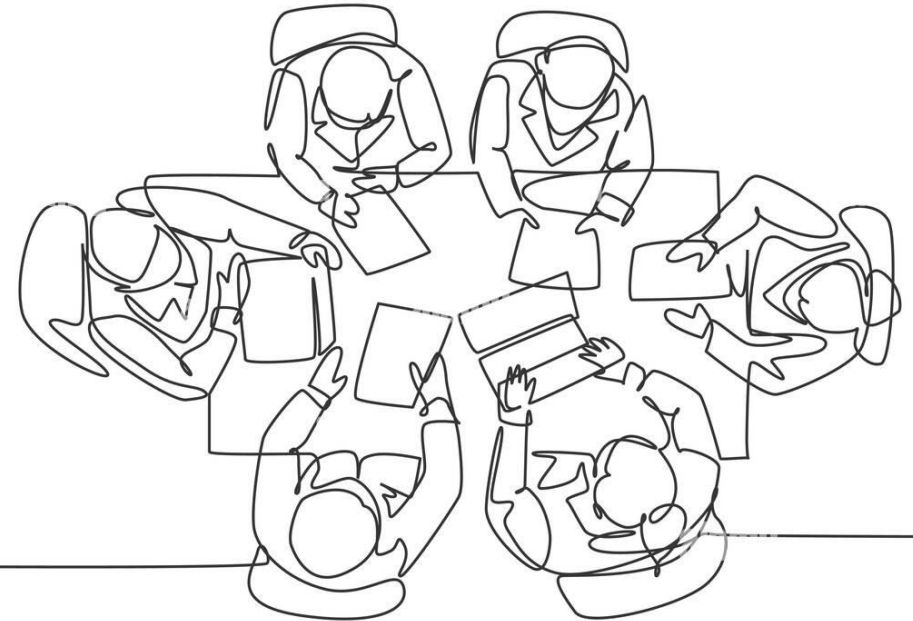


- That is, it appeals to an 'essential nature' of women
- Hence, e.g. Spelman (1988) Care ethics have been faulted for failing to explore the ways in which women (and others) differ from one another

Care Ethics as Ambiguous

“Because it eschews abstract principles and decisional procedures, care ethics is often accused of being unduly ambiguous, and for failing to offer concrete guidance for ethical action”

E.g. Held 1995 “spends several chapters refuting claims that care is anti-universalist and cannot serve as an ethical theory” held on care



<https://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/231877965> The Ethics of Care Personal Political and Global

<https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/the-ethics-of-care-personal-political-global/>

Feelings May Oppress Others



“Feelings, especially feelings that cluster around the concepts of compassion, empathy, and care, can be used as justification for great violence” (Mcgregor , 2020)

<https://hookandeye.ca/2020/04/16/guest-post-what-are-we-talking-about-when-we-talk-about-care/>

A View From Above

- My own view, that the discussion of care ethics is predominately from the position of the care-giver
- The needs (expressed or otherwise) of the cared-for may be much more pragmatic
- Plus, it doesn't seem reasonable to place an onus on the cared-for to stimulate urgency or motivation in the care-giver

