

Why Has the Ethics of Care Become an Issue of Global Concern?

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Abstract: Since Carol Gilligan published her masterpiece, *In a Different Voice*, many scholars, especially feminist scholars in various fields, including moral theory, philosophy, and political and legal theory, have been inspired to establish a more inclusive approach to social injustice as well as sexual inequality. The purpose of this article is to explore the depth and expanse of the ethics of care for its potential as a political philosophy. To pursue this end, the article analyzes first the main claims of care ethics by responding to its typical counterarguments, which criticize the ethics of care as being too dependent on gender differences, particularism, and essentialism. The second section examines three challenges that care ethics poses to the male-oriented mainstream of political philosophy, especially the theory of justice. The ethics of care provides us with a new approach to moral and political issues because it focuses responsively on social injustice, proposes a new idea of relational self and takes the social connection model to justice. With these three perspectives proposed by the ethics of care in mind, the article turns its eyes to global implications of care ethics by referring to the issue of the “comfort women” of Japanese troops during the Second World War.

Keywords: the ethics of care, global issue, comfort women

Introduction

Carol Gilligan's 1982 masterpiece, *In a Different Voice*, is well known to have influenced various fields of study such as philosophy, political and social theory, economics, pedagogics, and psychology. Although the work discussed mainly empirical inquires of the different moral development between men and women, it not only explored the different images held by women and men, such as these of the self, the life cycle, human relations and the human world, but also criticized male-centered epistemology and moral

standards. Gilligan distinguished the ethics of care (which she identified in different women's voice) from the morality of justice. The latter was used to function as the norm by which women's judgments were devalued as underdeveloped.

Instead Gilligan evaluated highly an ethics of care, contrasted with the logic of justice, because it was “the central tenet of nonviolent conflict resolution,” and reflected “belief in the restorative activity of care,” and attitudes to seeing “the actors in the dilemma arrayed not as opponents in a contest of rights but as members of a network of relationship on whose continuation they all depend” (Gilligan, 1993: 30).

Gilligan's work encouraged many feminist scholars to pose “a challenge to both

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traditional and contemporary assumptions underlying moral theory” and to be gathered under the banner of care ethics (Kittay and Meyers, 1987: 3).

Inspired by Gilligan's works, Eva Kittay and Diana Meyers organized the conference on feminist moral theory at The State University of New York, Stony Brook in 1985. They “relied on Carol Gilligan's thesis that women undergo a moral development distinct from but parallel to that of men” (Meyers and Kittay 1987: 3). Even though Milton Mayeroff published *On Caring* in 1971 and characterized the significance and functions of caring (Mayeroff 1971), it was *In a Different Voice* that encouraged feminists and other scholars to criticize the exclusive focus on morality of rights, theory of justice, individual autonomy and that contributed to the establishment of feminist ethics.

Upon its publication the book met with criticisms from theorists, including feminist scholars, for its lack of empirical evidence,¹ yet the theoretical claims in Gilligan's book have urged a radical re-examination of the premises of human and social sciences.

The purpose of this article is to explore the depth and expanse of the ethics of care for its potential as a political philosophy. To pursue this end, the article analyzes first the main claims of care ethics by responding to its typical counterarguments. The second section examines three challenges that care ethics pose to the male-oriented mainstream of political philosophy. Then the article turns to the global implications of care ethics by referring to the issue of the “comfort women” of Japanese troops during the Second World War.

The Ethics of Care as a Critical Theory

In a Different Voice has received a wide range of responses from feminists in various different fields. While the debates over care could be characterized as one over the relation between the theory of justice and the ethics of care (see Held, 1995, Clement,

1996), I engage here with three closely related themes in the debates over care; the approach to equality, the evaluation of mothering, and the understanding of gender difference. These topics demonstrate clearly how deeply the theoretical root of ethics of care is embedded in the history of feminism, especially that of US feminism.²

The first theme can be characterized as a controversy over difference or sameness, the second as a debate over the parochial and private, or the universal and public, and the third as a heated and ongoing argument about essentialism or social constructivism. *In a Different Voice* and so-called care feminists were mainly criticized as siding with the former positions in all these three debates. In this part, I briefly discuss the context of each criticism to show where its critical edge as political philosophy exists.

The first controversy, difference or sameness, can be understood as reflecting a dilemma inherent to feminism's long history of struggle for equality as a full-fledged citizen. Once described as “Wollstonecraft's dilemma,” women's history of fighting for political citizenship started with the issue of what value they should emphasize in their demand for equality with male citizens (Pateman, 1992). Pateman viewed women's struggle for citizenship, especially for the suffrage as the following:

From at least 1792, when Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published, women have demanded both equal civil and political rights, and that their difference from men should be acknowledged in their citizenship. (Pateman, 1992: 14)

Even though Wollstonecraft and the suffragettes in 19th and 20th century demanded both equality and difference, the rift over the question of equality in feminist movements was often intensified, especially when the demand for social reform became pressing.

In the same vein, a crucial conversation over Gilligan's work was published as "an edited transcript of the discussion held in 1984 at the law school of the State University of New York in Buffalo" (MacKinnon *et al.*, 1985: 11). In this conversation, Catharine MacKinnon, who takes the dominance approach to gender equality (see MacKinnon, 1987),³ contextualizes *In a Different Voice* as a feminist struggle over an unsolved question about equality.

MacKinnon regards Gilligan's work as adopting a difference approach to equality. She also points out the importance of praising women's experiences, reflected both in female morality such as "relatedness, responsibility and care virtues" and in "the discipline of women's history" (MacKinnon *et al.*, 1985: 25). On one hand, MacKinnon emphasizes the importance of the dominance approach to equality in order to change the reality that women are forced to be either the same as men or different from them. On the other hand, she subtly criticizes the values of care ethics because it has resulted in maintaining the status quo with respect to women. MacKinnon continues by arguing that affirming women's voices is politically damaging because it reinforces feminine stereotypes. She even states that she is infuriated by recognizing a woman's voice as her authentic voice because "his foot is on her throat" (MacKinnon *et al.*, 1985: 74–75).

Second, many feminists are ambivalent about the ethics of care because it seems to have an affinity with maternalism, which right-wing conservatives also support. As MacKinnon pointed out, the ethics of care was characterized and manifested through the historically enforced work of women, such as housekeeping and child care. In the article juxtaposing a conservative feminist Jean B. Elshtain with an anti-militarist and radical feminist Sara Ruddick (Ruddick, 1989), Mary Dietz criticizes both as "pro-family feminists" who ennoble or reverse the political value attributed to historically

disdained women's work within the family (Dietz, 1998).

By mainly referring to Elshtain's (1981) work,⁴ Dietz distinguishes sharply political activities from familial and private ones, which both Elshtain and Ruddick evaluate positively as bearing dignity and purpose. With the traditional Aristotelian definition of the political in mind, Dietz emphasizes the universal and the most inclusive aspects of political activities, which also determine the notion of the private and the public. Therefore, it is logically impossible to re-evaluate private moral imperatives, such as love and attention as a political ethos, because they cannot "survey all other particular activities from a more general point of view" (Dietz, 1998: 53). Dietz alerts us to the inadequacy of values and activities in the intimate sphere as a political basis for feminist politics:

Because Elshtain envisions a world divided naturally and abstractly into dual realms, and human beings as either virtuous private or arrogant public creatures, feminist political consciousness is perilously close to becoming politically barren. (Dietz, 1998: 56)

The third controversy in the ethics of care is closely related to, or more precisely, underlies the first and second debates. As Dietz's criticism indicates, the ethics of care led to the debate over what "femaleness" was, because the works of Gilligan and the care feminists were seen to naturalize the identity of women, especially that of mothers. Although no feminist can ignore the fact that the difference in nurturing boys and girls has influenced their different identities, Ruddick and Gilligan have been criticized for being indifferent to historical, cultural, or racial differences, that is, perpetuating "an implicit essentialism" (Robinson, 1999: 21).

Patricia Hill Collins, for example, argues that mainstream feminists' re-evaluation of

motherhood might effectively challenge a white, middle-class man's image of motherhood and yet that the white feminist standpoint does not encompass black motherhood. Black mothers historically created women-centered networks among grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and cousins, all of whom are called "other mothers" (Collins, 1995). They have struggled not with the image of attentive, self-sacrificing, and passive women, but rather with that of "the white-male-created 'matriarch' or the Black-male-perpetuated "superstrong Black mother" (Collins, 1995: 119).

Linda Nicholson also suggests that we ought not rely too heavily on gender differences, but give more attentions to how "race, class, and the sheer specificity of historical circumstances also profoundly affect social life and thus a moral perspective" (Nicholson, 1993: 88). She asks why women should limit their identities to *one* female voice that differs from the Eurocentric male voice, even in the age of post-structuralism when dogmatic fixity is radically rejected for its oppressive exclusiveness.

For all these three critiques of care ethics as being too dependent on gender difference, particularism, and essentialism, where and how can we find its critical potentiality? Some feminists, such as Olena Hankivsky, argue that a second-generation of care ethics has emerged that is distinct from the nascent articulation of care.⁵ While the second generation maintains the value and purpose specific to care ethics, it combines the ethics of care "in a respectful way with the values of justice to ensure a balanced and reasoned resolution of practical issues and social problems" so that it can overcome the limits of the first generation (Hankivsky, 2004: 25).

Others have called into question the premise of these controversies. According to Fiona Robinson, the criticisms of care ethics arose from the fear that it was not effective in solving a wide range of moral

conflicts. However, this skepticism fails to grasp care ethics' radical re-examination of the male-oriented premise of human and social sciences. She notes:

If care ethics is understood solely as a "corrective" to universalistic, impartialist theories, or simply as a "useful addition" to our moral vocabulary, then it will always retain its image as a "private", "personal" morality which is antithetical to justice and most relevant to women as mothers and, more generally, occupiers of the private sphere of the household and the family. (Robinson, 1999: 12)

In this part, I follow Robinson's position and reconfirm her argument by revisiting the Gilligan's original claims. In a preface to the revised edition published in 1993, 20 years after she began writing, Gilligan responded to readers' unexpected responses. In the preface Gilligan first sketched the historical context of when she started to research and write the book. This was in the 1970s at the height of women's liberation movement and when, after a long history of suffering and subordination of women, the US Supreme Court epoch-making decision, *Roe v. Wade* upheld a women's right to an abortion (Gilligan, 1993: ix).

Indeed, Gilligan contrasts "an ethics of care" with "the logic of the justice," each of which respectively reflects the responses of 11-year old siblings Amy and Jake to Heinz' dilemma.⁶ She points out that women tend to focus on a world of relationships whose "connection between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another," and that men usually see a world of contracts where "the actors in the dilemma [are] arrayed ... as opponents in a contest of rights" (Gilligan, 1993: 30). Her point, however, is not to endorse these tendencies, but to reveal how the speech acts of girls are interpreted and evaluated within the

hierarchical framework of traditional psychology.

Contrary to the criticism that her research engages in empirically strict stereotyping of femaleness, Gilligan explicitly argues that her project was about revaluing the norms and values held by traditional psychologists and moral theorists. She explicitly draws on Virginia Wolf's philosophy for women's education, which "might break the historical cycle of *violence* and *domination*" (Gilligan, 1993: xii, emphasis mine). Gilligan reminds us of the inseparable connection between our life, our history, politics, and psychology.⁷

She rejects the question whether gender difference is biological or social, since it tends to reduce "psychology either to sociology or biology" (Gilligan, 1993: xix). She even asserts that such a reduction cultivates the soil for totalitarianism, where our relationships and contexts are all controlled by a fixed ideology, as Hannah Arendt once noted (Arendt, 1973).

For example, although Heinz' dilemma is usually cited as a typical and central argument on gender identity in Gilligan's work, Amy's ambiguous answer to the question "should Heinz steal the drug?" ironically reveals the limits of the traditional liberal framework; its abstraction of the political and social context, the monologue-style of logic, and its indifference to human interdependence. Ruddick, for example, sees Amy's answer as a proposal to embrace alternative political values (Ruddick, 1989: 94–95).

Indeed, the responses to the question are not meant to go out of the framework that was set by questioner, even though it is the framework itself that creates Heinz's dilemma. Heinz cannot negotiate the price with a druggist, send his wife to a public hospital where decent treatment is offered, or ask anyone to help him. In this hypothetical question, surprisingly enough, his wife's opinion is not considered. This is how Amy responds:

Well, I don't think so. I think there might be *other ways* besides stealing it, like if he could borrow the money or make a loan or something, but he really shouldn't steal the drug—but his wife shouldn't die either. (Gilligan, 1993: 28, emphasis mine).

Gilligan sees Amy's answer as showing her capacity to acknowledge "a narrative of relationships that extends over time" (Gilligan, 1993: 28). This has the radical potential to see our society in ways other than the male-oriented tradition of liberalism, which is based on a certain theory of justice, rights, and individualism. In the next section I analyze the three criticisms of the ethics of care in an effort to illustrate why it has become an alternative political theory that overcomes the limits of liberalism.

Three Challenges of the Ethics of Care

So far I have not explained what I mean by male-oriented tradition of liberalism. Drawing on the works by Annette Baier (1994) and Iris Young (1990), I here characterize it as a theory of justice that "requires respect for each person's individual rational will, or autonomy, and conformity to any implicit social contract" (Baier, 1994: 21).

Both philosophers question why many US activists suffering from domination and violence are unsatisfied with the mainstream theories of justice represented by John Rawls' influential book, *A Theory of Justice*, published in 1971. Young points out that the theoretical range of contemporary arguments of justice is too narrow to eliminate the current situation of "institutionalized domination and oppression" (Young, 1990: 15). Young argues that the ironical consequence of resurgence of theories of justice, especially the Rawlsian type of distributive justice, obscures the direct purpose of social justice, which is

righting social injustice such as exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young, 1990: 48–63).

Baier explicitly argues that the ethics of care problematizes these shortcomings of theories of justice. “*In a Different Voice* 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” (Baier, 1994: 21). In a liberal understanding, independent and autonomous citizens can freely choose to be dedicated mothers, persuade their partner to provide care for them, or avoid pregnancy. On one hand, no liberal theorists obligate women to be the primary caretakers of their own children. On the other hand, they “exploit the culturally encouraged maternal instinct and/or the culturally encouraged docility of women” (Baier, 1994: 7).

Baier interprets Gilligan’s contribution as offering a perspective on social reality that leads to social change. Gilligan’s contrast between the theory of justice and the ethics of care reflects the Marxian notion of alienation (Baier, 1994: 23). The ethics of care tries to bring our attention to social and political impoverishment, where women’s work is exploited and therefore women are alienated from themselves as well as from social connections. As long as the sexual division of labor was maintained, “liberal morality could continue to be the official morality, by turning our eyes away from the contribution made by those it excluded. *The long unnoticed moral proletariat were the domestic workers, mostly female*” (Baier, 1994: 25–26, emphasis mine).

In contrast to MacKinnon’s criticism, the ethics of care has uncovered the political implications of personal moral dilemmas and brought to light social injustice that has been historically unrecognized. Indeed, Gilligan herself expressed what moral

obligations meant to female college students facing a dilemma over abortion.⁸ Gilligan listens to her interviewees and find their concept of responsibility is “to discern and alleviate the ‘real and recognizable trouble’ of this world” (Gilligan, 1993: 100). She criticizes abstract moral questions because they turn our attention from the social and political context in which moral decisions must be made and the involvement and interdependence of human beings at a certain point of time and space. She continues:

Only when substance is given to the skeletal lives of hypothetical people is it possible to consider the social injustice that their moral problems may reflect and to image the individual suffering their occurrence may signify or their resolution engender. (Gilligan, 1993: 100).

The idea of relational self against a structural violence

As Robison suggests, if we stop seeing the ethics of care as a useful addition to our moral vocabulary, we might see the radical potentiality of care ethics, because it changes our perspective towards society as well as human beings. On one hand, liberal theorists respect the autonomous will when people make a decision, on the other hand, care theorists ask why and in what context people make such a decision. The difference derives from their respective conceptualization of what it is to be a human being.

As Jake’s answer typically shows, a general and abstract understanding of moral problem keeps us distant from the historical and social embeddedness of human beings. Steal the drug would be a right answer to the dilemma if we did not have to consider the consequence of this decision. However, if we realize that that moral dilemma hurts some people but not others, the answer cannot be found in the *right* answer to dilemma.

One of Gilligan's interviewees "sees Heinz's decision as "the result of anguish"" whether he steals or not (Gilligan, 1993: 103). She even thinks that the problem is not the morality of his decision but the social situation in which he finds himself. Heinz is "the victim of exploitation" by a society "which breeds and legitimizes the druggist's irresponsibility and whose injustice is thus manifest in the very occurrence of the dilemma" (Gilligan, 1993: 103).

Sensitivity to such social injustice is cultivated and elaborated through the conceptualization of a relational self in comparison to an independent and autonomous self of liberalism. This reconceptualization of the self is indeed gained through the experience of mothering and house-keeping. At first glance, an idea rooted in real experiences appears to be constrained in time and space, as Dietz noted, and moreover, motherhood has been too romanticized to be a political base for feminists. The idea of the relational self, however, involves wider and more profound social and political implications and challenges radically the liberal theory of justice.

Jennifer Nedelsky, who proposes a relational approach to law and social policy, identifies two meanings of the relational self. One is based on personal relationships with others and social institutions, and the other is based on a pattern of social relationships (Nedelsky, 2011). Nedelsky starts by describing how a girl is brought up within a family, partly because it problematizes the different treatment of boys and girls in the family and partly because it challenges the deep-rooted liberal idea that the family issues are matters of personal choice. When we look at the concrete cases of personal relationships, we realize that the relationship is not always benign. Many feminists of care ethics emphasize that we should not romanticize relationships or communities (see Ruddick, 1989; Tronto, 1996; Kittay, 2001).

That mothering is experienced in diverse and different forms reveals how illusionary "motherly love," the masculine image of the relationship between mother and child is. They are not and should not be a harmonious symbiotic unit at all. A child is a totally new and even strange being to the world. Her needs are changing and unpredictable even to her mother.

A mother sometimes is troubled by a child's whim. Children's needs often overwhelm mothers' needs and even herself. Therefore the ethics of care entails stronger imperatives among them than among citizens because the relation between mothers and children is one between a powerful recipient of demands and a powerless claimant. Ruddick, therefore, carefully describes the efforts that mothers try to make:

[S]ome mothers struggle to create nonviolent ways of living with and among children. They school themselves to renounce violent strategies of control and to resist the violence of others despite provocation, exhaustion, and multiple temptations to assault and passivity. (Ruddick, 1989: xix)

The strength of the imperative of care ethics, "Don't hurt others," or "avoid injuries," paradoxically indicates that uncountable examples are overridden. On the part of children, they are totally dependent on those who take care of them. It is easy to imagine how profoundly a mother's response, whether with careful affection or with indifference and violence, has influenced her child's life over extended time. Children are too vulnerable to resist to or escape from their relationship with those who raise them.

As Baier bitterly called those who raise children "the long unnoticed moral proletariats," are historically and usually positioned as the powerless in a wider society. Once we take a relational approach to

seeing personal choices, behavior and tendencies, we find:

[H]ow these relationships intersect with institutions, such as family law (which defines marriage and stipulates spousal and parental obligations), a market economy, the presence or absence of state-supported child care, the presence or absence of a “family wage” (and thus norms of one or both parents in the paid labor force). (Nedelsky, 2011: 21)

Furthermore, we can add to Nedelsky's lists the national policy on receiving foreign domestic workers and care workers.

Liberal theorists might respond to these analyses by saying that they also agree that human beings are always social beings. Nedelsky, however, argues that liberal notion of boundaries among the self, others, and society that protects individuals from infringements of their rights by others presupposes “the existence and interaction of independent (potentially threatening) others (Nedelsky, 2011: 121). She emphasizes that the individual capacity to find their own way of life is being nurtured in the wider range of network from the intimate sphere to the global economy.

It is unnecessary to say that the notion of self as socially constructed, but not completely determined is one of variants of the second wave feminist slogan, “the personal is the political.” Taking a personal (moral) problem to be a political one leads us to the notion of structural violence discovered in the field of international politics or peace studies. Because there is unequal allocation of vulnerability to a social situation among people, the inequality itself causes more violence to vulnerable people than to others. Relational thinking enables us to “see the violence inherent in inequality” (Gilligan, 1993: 100).

Just as Nedelsky proposed a child-rearing model for approaching human

rights, autonomy, law, and social policies (Nedelsky, 2011: ch. 3), Virginia Held also argues that although personal relationships among family members and friends are the most obvious paradigm of care ethics, the ethics of care is highly relevant in the realm of global issues as well as political ones (see Held, 2006, 2008). She condemns global and national communities for their lack of concern about children:

In a caring society, attending to the needs of *every child* would be a major goal, and doing so would be seen to require social arrangements offering the kinds of economic and educational and child care and health care support that members of communities really need. (Held, 2006: 136, emphasis mine)

As I already discussed, emphasizing the importance of child rearing involves meanings that are ontological (because it shows the interdependence of human beings), practical (because it reveals the vulnerable and unequal aspects of human beings), and critical (because it enables us to see the violence inherent in inequality). Held and other authors also indicate that the ethics of care proposes a different approach to social injustice from that of the traditional theory of justice. Such an approach uncovers the exclusive and closed character of the liberal understanding of justice. Arguing that the ethics of care has more inclusive scope of concern than theories of justice may sound unusual, given that liberal theory of justice is based on the notion of universal and autonomous individuals, and thus its scope seems to be universal and highly inclusive. Held and others, however, argue that this individualism itself presupposes fixed ideas of rights, and a limited scope of justice, especially with respect to the current boundaries of nation-states.

Liberal theories of justice have failed to see injustice in the exploitation of domestic workers, as in them it is the image of

economically independent male citizens that defines what kinds of rights should be respected. Liberal theorists would respond to such a criticism by asserting that their theory of rational choice or social contract does not aim to be applied to personal or familial interactions, but to the public realm or contexts of strangers. However, who are strangers?

Held finds that the paradox of universal individual rights is safeguarded by the nation-state. We have to decide who we are, prior to deciding which rights are to be secured. She notes that in the bloody ethnic conflicts or civil wars, the problem of citizenship often arouse. "Before hypothetical citizens can agree on the hypothetical terms of their self-government, they must agree on whom they seek agreement with" (Held, 2006: 128–129).

Young also regards the theoretical link between individualism and the statism of liberalism as one reason why liberal theories of justice can be indifferent to the five faces of injustice I have discussed earlier. In one of her works, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Young shows that liberal theories of justice cannot respond to social justice in different areas because they tend "to conceive of individuals as social atoms, logically prior to social relations and institutions" (Young, 1990: 27). For social oppression is not caused by individual actions or malice but rather by institutionalized and structural patterns and social norms to which people ordinarily are accustomed and subject.

Following Shklar's radical criticism of the liberal understanding of justice,⁹ Young proposes a new approach to social injustice, which she calls "the social connection model." She analyzes the paradigmatic change that took place in recognizing the problem of poverty. The view shifted from that of social problems to that of the personal responsibility of poor people in 1980s in the USA. In 1996 Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work

Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which exemplifies this change.

Even though liberal theorists of justice, such as Ronald Dworkin, apparently aim for more equal social justice and subscribe to more welfare assistance and a fair redistribution of social resources, their work results in reinforcing the libertarian sense of responsibility, which finds the fault of every social problem to be the result of deviant personal behavior. Dworkin and other luck egalitarianism theorists distinguish between the inequality that arises out of personal choices that are made and that based on social and personal circumstances beyond an individual's control. Although Dworkin argues that disadvantages based on circumstances beyond one's control should be compensated in a just welfare system, Young finds his approach to justice "focuses largely on attributes of persons and ignores or rejects a theoretical place for bringing social structures into view" (Young, 2011: 30).

According to Dworkin, a person who is born without sight should be compensated for her unfortunately disadvantageous situation. Young, however, argues that if we merely compensate her for her bad luck, we will never go on to examine why the current system of institutions and social norms make her blindness socially disadvantageous. To attain more justice, Young proposes a social connection model, in which we are attentive to social injustice, especially to the injustices that derive from the globalization of market economy. This model involves five characteristic approaches to social injustice.

First, it aims to investigate where social injustice occurs and to situate its occurrence within the social connections and interactions nested by thousands of our legal and everyday behaviors. In contrast to the normal model of justice, where assaults are singled out and separated from society, the social connection model seeks to reform the current patterns of social

connection in efforts to respond to victims suffering from social injustice.

Second, if the pattern of social connections that one cannot control is the most pressing concern, the boundaries of nation-states should be much less significant than they are in the normal model of justice. Especially in the age of globalization, we are interconnected and interdependent not only economically but also personally. The global connections where human beings interact offer the circumstances that enable some people to advance their capacities while simultaneously preventing others from realizing their capabilities, thus disadvantaging them. This inequality is a result of the typical structural violence to which the social connection model urges us to respond.

Third, given that no one can avoid political responsibility for reforming currently unjust social situations, even the victims of social injustice are considered to bear some responsibility for them. Those who suffer from structural injustice often know better than others what they really need for compensation or reforming their personal circumstances. Young therefore argues that “on some issues those who might be argued to be in less advantaged positions within structures perhaps should take the lead in organizing and proposing remedies for injustice” (Young, 2010: 113).

Fourth, on one hand the normal model of justice focuses on the past actions that are seen to be the direct cause of the injuries, on the other hand, the social connection model urges us to act together for the future reform of society. As Gilligan’s interviewees and the character of Amy in Heinz’s dilemma show, as long as the current social institutions remains unchanged, the dilemma itself is unchanged and individual decisions often hurt others without any intention of doing so.

Therefore, finally, the social connection model entails taking political responsibility while the liberal model is a judicial one

which isolates the person who is liable for the injury from innocent others. Young defines this political responsibility as follows:

Those who share responsibility for structural injustice may also find ways of making social change, moreover, through collective action in civil society independent of or as a supplement to state policies and programs (Young, 2010: 112).

Towards a Global Ethics of Care: The Case of the “Comfort women” of Japanese Troops

In the section two, I examined the three interwoven perspectives to personal sufferings and social injustice. With these perspectives, many care ethics feminists begin to focus on global issues, such as “care drains” (Tronto, 2005, 2013; Kittay, 2009), “peace building” (Robinson, 2011), and “global justice” (Young, 2007, 2011). In the final section, I examine the issue of comfort women of Japanese troops during the Second World War with the ethics of care.

Before I explore how the ethics of care offers us a better approach to the issue of the comfort women, of Japanese Troops under the Second World War, I summarize the crucial aspects of the issue first. The issue of comfort women became widely known in 1991 when the first victim, Kim Hak-sun came out in public. Since then, feminist scholars and activists in Japan have asked why it took so long for victims to speak out? Was it a problem of nationalism or sexism? Why does sexual violence hurt victims more than other forms of violence? How could we restore justice and dignity of the victims of the sexual slavery system called the “comfort station”?

The Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal held in Tokyo, December 2000, was organized by the Violence against Women in War Network Japan (VAWW-Net Japan) and other grassroots Asian women’s organizations such as the Korean

Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery. It was the practical trial that responded to these questions, especially the last about the restoration of the victims' justice and dignity.

The assertion that the Japanese government should take responsibility was characteristic of the claims made by both VAWW-Net Japan and the Korean Council. Japan as a state should take legal responsibility as the first and indispensable step to restore justice and dignity of victims. It was essential for compensating war crimes that had been ignored for a long time because of deep-rooted sexism and colonialism inherent to the system of international law.

Despite all demands they take legal responsibility for the issue of comfort women, the Japanese government has never admitted having legal or political responsibility for this event: only moral responsibility. It has firmly denied having legal responsibility, and the Japanese courts have repeated over and over again their justification of the government's denial. The reasons cited are that all international law issues were settled by the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims on Economic Cooperation between Japan and Republic of Korea, and other relevant treaties.

During the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal, survivors of sexual enslavement during the war often made the claim that they wished to restore justice for themselves. Their testimonies were such moving, courageous, and powerful voices for justice that they demanded us to rethink whether any political theory of justice had ever engaged with this kind of atrocity. In the last part of this article, I show the relevancy of care ethics to the issue of comfort women according to three characteristics discussed in the above section, "Three Challenges of the Ethics of Care".

First, an ethics of care makes us aware of that our gender and identities are constructed and connected by the political power of the state as well as by personal relationships. The state, and especially the modern state, has politically constituted the gender and sexual hierarchy, the sexual division of labor, and the boundary between the private and the public sphere, at times by using raw violence. Being a woman, whether biologically or socially, makes a person more vulnerable to social and political pressures than being a man because she is situated in a socially subordinated position.

The system of comfort women itself was created by the political powers of the state. Even though feminists cannot adopt a position entirely outside the formations of state power, or biopolitics, they should and can fight against state power by changing its current constellation. Unless the state power that created the system of comfort women is radically challenged, we still live in the same power vacuum as before and cannot change ourselves.

Second, the ethic of care does not teach us how to heal wounded people effectively but rather teaches us how difficult it is to do so. To heal the wounded requires an unpredictably long time, for their sufferings are caused not only by direct injuries but also by the structural violence inflicted on their historical and political situation. The ethics of care requires us to explore why and how some women but not others became victims of sexual slavery by the Japanese troops in the Second World War as well as to find out who caused these atrocities. Moreover, it makes us attentive to the reasons why survivors could not raise their own voice or why national and international communities silenced their voices for such a long time. The efforts to compensate them for their sufferings seem to constitute the impossible task of repairing the irreparable. We need to engage in long and varied processes of caring and listening to the victims' own voices.

Finally, we can interpret the civil movements of supporters and survivors themselves through the social connection model of justice. Survivors as well as their supporters seek justice to reform the current constellation of gender politics. We have many examples of women's issues such as domestic violence and sexual harassment, demanding the reinterpretation and reimagining of misfortunes as injustice by challenging established positive laws and the rigid division between the public and the private realm. As for violence against women during warfare, especially sexual violence against women, it used to be said that this could not be prevented and that sexual violence against women was a by-product of war. Becoming the victims of sexual aggression were considered as a misfortune to women and as both natural and inescapable.

As Young tried to approach the issue of responsibility across borders and historic injustices (Young, 2011), the social connection model reveals that traditional justice and the current legal system are bounded by the power dynamics of nation-states and their history. When survivors bring an issue to the trial, they are not only under the current legal system but also enter the public sphere where their dignity may be been infringed. As many studies about the social situation of women in the Korean peninsula under Japanese colonization show, those who were forced to be comfort woman were socially deprived and were much more powerless than those who forced them.

The ethics of care presupposes that a society is a connected network of variously situated people. Some have prerogatives and powers and others are stigmatized and disadvantaged. Thus, some are more vulnerable than others. The victims of war, especially, were situated as an extremely powerless group in front of the massive and institutionalized violence of the state. Margaret Walker argues that, despite the

importance of material compensation for their wrongs, "the more fundamental issue in reparations ... is the moral vulnerability of victims of serious wrongs" (Walker, 2010: 15). She argues that releasing "the victims from ignominy and contempt is at the very heart of what is due in reparative justice" (Walker, 2010: 16). Survivors once denied their dignity need to appeal to justice in order to ascertain that the world is changed to one in which their dignity as a free person can be respected.

Judith Harman underlines the significance of experience of being listened to by others without fear of disgrace in order to be at home in the world:

For individual victims, the path to recovery begins with the ability to name the problem and disclose it to others. As in the case of the so-called "comfort women," victims who speak out often risk public disgrace as well as retaliation by the perpetrator. That is why the organizing strategy of the feminist movement begins with the creation of confidential relationships in small groups of women, where secrets can be shared without shame. The mutual support of the group is a powerful antidote to the fear and isolation imposed by the perpetrator. Once victims feel some sense of belonging, they may find the courage to expose the violence and to challenge its legitimacy. (Herman, 2002: 192).

As the title of Harman's essay, "Peace on Earth Begins at Home" explicitly asserts, women's voices could encourage us to change the current power structure bound by traditional notion of justice, the rigid dichotomy between the private and the public, national borders and the boundaries between citizens and foreigners. Since Gilligan called into a question the general attitudes of scholars who devalued women's voice, scholars of the ethics of care have searched for more inclusive and responsive theories to the issues of those

who have suffered for being silenced and marginalized in a male-centered world.

alternative way of building a less violent world for those who are most vulnerable and at risk.

Conclusion

The comfort women in Japan show us a human reality where human vulnerability is a feature of gender, historical, and political situations, and one's own moral status. The insights of care ethics reveal that such an unequal situation itself is a violent one. The Tokyo Women's Tribunal asked the Japanese government to make reparations for the prolonged suffering of survivors as well as for harm done during their sexual enslavement, and to educate future generations. These requests were made as the Tribunal respected the dignity of female survivors and listened to their voices with a respect rooted in an ethics of care. The Tokyo Women's Tribunal showed a different way for the Japanese government to take responsibility other than restoring justice by simply punishing the offenders.

When we take seriously the question about how we can restore justice and dignity to victims of sexual slavery in Imperial Japan, an ethics of care provides us with many useful insights. An ethics of care is responsive to various dimensions of vulnerability as a normative theory and approaches justice differently from existing theories of justice. The ethics of care has now become an indispensable normative idea in approaching restorative justice or transformative justice. In this way, the ethics of care provides us with a new approach to the issues of structural violence across borders, such as the issue of the migration of caregivers. As Herman asserts, the ethics of care asks us not only to listen carefully to voices of those who are morally devalued but also to question critically the globally structured relation of the powerful and the powerless. Hence, the ethics of care is a normative theory. It shows us an

Notes

- 1 For example, Kohlberg, whose study of the differences in moral development between boys and girls was criticized by Gilligan, argued that Gilligan's discussion resulted in reinforcing the traditional moral dichotomy between impersonal and personal ethics (Kohlberg, 1982: 517–519).
- 2 Unfortunately, because discussions about care ethics are usually framed in a debate between the theory of justice and the ethics of care in the academic fields of legal or political philosophy, and ethics in Japan, it often fails to recognize the importance of the historical background of American feminist theories.
- 3 MacKinnon's "dominance approach" to gender equality is the approach by which subordination and domination, not equality and difference, are examined to empower women. For example, MacKinnon argued that if "the first problem of inequality is the problem of the subordination of women and not the inaccurate differentiation between people on the basis of sex, it is inappropriate to discuss the reality or proposition of treating women as sub-human as a matter of good versus evil. Appropriate, instead, is an argument and a discussion about empowerment, about power" (MacKinnon *et al.*, 1985: 27–28).
- 4 Elshtain's aim was to answer the question why "women were silenced in part because that which defines them and to which they are inescapably linked—sexuality, natality, the human body (images of uncleanness and taboo, visions of dependency, helpless, vulnerability)—was omitted from political speech" (Elshtain, 1981: 15). By answering this, she affirmed the values practiced in the private and familial sphere, especially by women.
- 5 According to her definition, an important distinction between the first and second generation of care ethics consists in the difference between "care theorists who have linked an ethics of care ... to gender and those who propose that care is central to all human life" (Hankivsky, 2004: 11).

- 6 Heinz' dilemma, which is one of Kohlberg's standard dilemmas, was used to assess moral maturity of children. In the story, Heinz has a wife who needs expensive drugs that he cannot afford to buy. The interviewer asks interviewees whether Heinz should steal the drug or not. According to the answer, Kohlberg distinguishes three stages of moral development, "preconventional," "conventional," and "post-conventional." Gilligan criticizes the male-centered scale of moral maturity where girls' moral development generally measured scored lower than boys. See for example Gilligan (1993: 72–72).
- 7 It should be noted that Gilligan's work was in the same vein as that of Nancy Chodolow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, in which Chodolow called into a question of deep-rooted idea of the naturalization of mother's love and analyzed why girls tend to take the role of mothering and how mothering is reproduced through generations.
- 8 The current interest in the ethics of care in Japan fails to see its political implications because it focuses on the framework that situates the ethics of care, in contrasted to the theory of justice. Chapter three of *In a Different Voice* is the most important of her contributions, even though Japanese male philosophers and theorists hardly focus on it.
- 9 Shklar criticizes a traditional understanding of justice for regarding "injustice" as "a breakdown of justice, as if injustice were a surprising abnormality." (Shklar, 1990: 17). She finds that the normal model of justice limits our intellectual sensitivities to injustice.
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