

effect on those bent on mischief, as cases of conflict of interest have persisted in the years since the Act was established. These individuals took bribes and other income and failed to make the proper disclosures. This lapse does not indicate that the law is a failure, just that those who are going to be dishonest most likely will not be deterred by legislation.

Conclusion

Some regard the influence of money on politics to be inevitable. Others believe that the extensive revisions in our political system can substantially reduce the influence of money. A senior governmental official or employee prone to mischief will not be thwarted by legislated ethics. However, the hope, from its inception and throughout the various modifications and amendments, is that the Ethics in Government Act will give a potential miscreant cause to consider the ramifications and sanctions that will arise from his or her misbehavior. The Act also gives the attorney general's office numerous means to punish offenders. On balance, when a senior official fails the ethical test, the people have at least a soupçon of a possibility of holding him or her accountable.

Perhaps the more important issue, of which the Act is a small facet, is how we establish and then maintain a general trust by the public in our government. Requiring key, influential governmental employees and officials to disclose and publish their sources of income is important. However, until there is a more pervasive trust in those who work for and lead us, even the required disclosures will be looked on with mistrust.

—Michael B. Rainey and Linnea McCord

See also Accounting, Ethics of; Advertising Ethics; Amoralism; Antitrust Laws; Arthur Andersen; Bankruptcy, Ethical Issues in; Christian Ethics; Communications Decency Act; Conflict of Interest; Corporate Moral Agency; Economics and Ethics; Ethics, Theories of; Legal Ethics; Marketing, Ethics of; Natural Law Ethical Theory; Neo-Kantian Ethics; Price-Fixing; Pricing, Ethical Issues in; Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002; Teaching Business Ethics; Virtue Ethics

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ETHICS OF CARE

The term *ethics of care* refers to ideas concerning both the nature of morality and normative ethical theory. Over the past two decades or more, a discussion has arisen regarding these ideas. The caring perspective is distinctive in that it uses a relational and context-bound approach toward morality and decision making. In doing so, this perspective stands in stark contrast to ethical theories that rely on principles to highlight moral actions—such as Kantian deontology, utilitarianism, and justice theory. Importantly, such principles are meant to be absolute and incontrovertible.

Nel Noddings has provided one of the first comprehensive theories of care. Arguing that caring is the foundation of morality, she sees the dyadic relationship as ontologically basic to our very humanity. Identity is defined by the set of relationships individuals have with other humans, and as such without relationships we would not be human. In suggesting that caring is a universal human attribute, caring relation (a relationship in which people act in a caring manner) is seen to be ethically basic to humans. Since the impulse to care (in a specific way) is universal, caring ethics is freed from the charge of moral relativism to the same degree as is virtue theory.

The particularity of relations is fundamental to the ethics of care. Each relation consists of at least two people, the one-caring and the cared-for. Such a relation can certainly be more than merely dyadic as the one-caring and the cared-for come to exhibit reciprocal commitment to each other's well-being. However, what is distinctive in all such relations is that the one-caring acts in response to a perceived need on the part of the cared-for. The act is motivated by an apprehension of the cared-for's reality, a receiving of the cared-for into the one-caring such that the one-caring feels and senses what the cared-for is experiencing. The one-caring responds to the well-being of the cared-for by initiating a commitment to help the cared-for. Authentic care provides the motivation for such assistance. This does not mean that the one-caring does exactly what the

cared-for desires in all situations. Rather, the one-caring considers the cared-for's point of view, assessment of need, and expectations of the one-caring in formulating a response that provides the best opportunity for helping the cared-for. This response might be irrational, since caring involves the commitment to do something, however remote the possibilities of success, to improve the cared-for's condition. In the ideal situation, however, the reason(s) the one-caring gives for his or her actions would be sufficient to convince a disinterested observer that he or she indeed acted in a way to promote the cared-for's well-being. Caring thus involves sentiment but is not necessarily emotional in nature.

Within the ethics of care the one-caring receives the cared-for without evaluation. However, in deciding how to respond, the one-caring works in what Nel Noddings calls a "problem-solving" mode—keeping in mind the particular relationship and context to avoid slipping into the abstract, impartial, impersonal reasoning of the deontologist, the utilitarian, or the justice theorist. Ultimately, there is a defining imperative to act that is a critical function of what it means to care.

These ideals apply to both natural caring, or caring born of inclination and love for those close to the one-caring, and ethical caring, which is the feeling response of "I must" to a person's predicament. Ethical caring is a natural outgrowth of natural caring, but unlike Kant's ranking of duty as primary and inclination as secondary, in the ethics of care the inclination to care is primary. Even with regard to those with whom one has no caring relationship—complete strangers—memories of natural caring arise, generating a feeling of "I must do something." This impulse is obligatory in anyone who aspires to what Noddings calls the "ethical ideal," the sense of self as a moral, caring person. However, within the ethics of care, this obligation to the stranger is limited. Two criteria must be met for such a duty to have force: (1) The relationship with the other person must exist (or have the potential to exist), and (2) the relationship must have the potential to grow into a mutually caring relationship. One does not have either the capacity or the duty to care for everyone; however, one does hold an obligation to be prepared to care at all times for particular others—for "the proximate stranger."

Ethics of Care and Feminism

It would be easy to confuse the ethics of care with feminist ethics. Feminist philosophers have argued that the deontological, utilitarian, and justice moral theories

are grounded in the masculine experience. More specifically, these theories are seen to emerge in concert with the traditionally masculine forum of economic activity. Within this perspective, the values of competition and domination are seen to undergird both the activities of the marketplace and the rational moral theories. Virginia Held argues for adopting more compassionate bases for our human interaction(s).

Feminist moral theory at its heart has tended to mirror the differing gender experiences of women and men, particularly as these affect the development of understanding with respect to the ways the ethical life is conducted. However, it has been noted by Robbin Derry and others that *feminist* moral theory is not *feminine* moral theory, as feminist perspectives are not fully determined by gendered points of view. Nevertheless, the suggestion that gender matters, particularly as gender relates to one's ethical predispositions, calls into question the inherent "objectivity" of ethical theories, which are advanced in part due to their universal merit and application. Feminine moral theory thereby deals a blow to the exclusively rational systems of thought, which have as their grounding an inherent disregard for the inherently personal—and sometimes gender biased—nature of knowledge construction.

It was not necessary that feminine moral theory be aligned with the ethics of care. It so happens that those writing in the feminine tradition, such as Carol Gilligan, came to associate care and responsibility to others with a female-gendered approach to ethics and individual rights and justice with a male-gendered approach to ethics. Gilligan in particular made the argument that, historically, philosophers have seen women as morally inferior to men, when in fact they are simply different in emphasizing care over justice. However, central to the feminist perspective is not the content of the gender-specific approaches but rather the more fundamental observation that gender—and by extension a host of other demographic factors and interpersonal predispositions as well—contributes substantially to an individual's moral insight and development. This being the case, there is no reason to privilege masculine-rational approaches to ethics above feminine-caring approaches to ethics.

Ethics of Care Within the Business Context

The caring approach avoids the problem that many approaches to ethical management face: deciding

whose rights, among people with roughly equal rights, will be respected. While all have the duty to treat others in a caring way, in cases of conflicts of duty, the responsibility of the one-caring includes deciding who is most appropriately the beneficiary of care and then acting on that judgment. It is the concrete, particular individual with whom one has a caring relationship whose well-being must take priority in each inherently unique circumstance.

If caring is regarded as a natural inclination that serves as the base for the development of specific character traits, then one can begin to understand what caring business praxis might mean. Gilligan discusses three levels of a caring morality—one where the self is cared for to the exclusion of the other, one where the other is cared for to the exclusion of the self, and a third where the needs of both self and other are understood. This third level is the one Gilligan sees as moral maturity. While stopping short of equating feminist ethics with virtue ethics, Brian Burton and Craig Dunn suggest that this portrayal sounds very much like the description of an Aristotelian virtue. Not opposed to a legitimate place for emotion in ethical discourse, Aristotle outlines the importance of feeling at the proper times, about important things, concerning the right people, and for good reasons. Aristotle further sees the moral person as possessing various character traits and describes a virtue as behavior regarding a particular trait that is a mean between two extremes of behavior, with one showing an excess of that trait and the other showing deficiency of the trait. Applying this depiction to caring, the virtue would be caring (understanding the needs of self and other), the vice of excess might be codependence (caring for others to the exclusion of self), and the vice of deficiency might be selfishness (caring for self to the exclusion of others).

To achieve the goal of the caring approach to management, the manager needs to understand what the mean of caring is, what this implies for different situations, and what specific virtues are associated with the base of caring. The manager can then care for the particular individuals involved in a specific situation by apprehending their reality, considering their well-being, and acting in a manner that is in their best interest(s) or explain, in cases of conflict, why the action taken might not readily be seen as in the best interest of the cared-for.

Ethics of Care and Stakeholder Theory

Much of the discussion regarding the relevance to management of the ethics of care has taken place within the bounds, or in attempting to expand the bounds, of stakeholder theory. Efforts have been made to use the language of stakeholder theory to describe the caring perspective or use the ethics of care to normatively justify stakeholder theory. In some instances, the ethics of care—or, more accurately, feminine ethics—have even been advanced as the grounding for a new theory of the firm.

Just as the most often discussed forms of moral theory focus on masculine principles, however, most discussions of stakeholder theory give decision rules for how to interact with stakeholders. In categorizing stakeholders and in giving generic principles for interacting with the stakeholder categories thus formed, theorists have moved away from the essence of the ethics of care—understanding the particular context and fashioning a response to that context. But caring cannot be captured in decision rules and universalizable principles. Rather, discussions of caring by their nature center on how we live or, in a business context, how we manage relationships (not contractual obligations), which, after all, form the whole of managerial behavior. Caring focuses on particular cases, with the understanding that each situation is unique. Caring elicits intuitive responses at first, with rational analysis coming later. Caring has an underlying context of moral sensitivity instead of detachment.

Numerous writers maintain that the ethics of care provide a better way of describing the environment in which a manager operates and the manager's response to that environment than principle-based approaches. The primary difficulty with stakeholder theory in the latter instance is that it imagines stakeholders not as individuals but rather as members of homogeneous groups. Although they are members of stakeholder groups, however, when approaching the manager, stakeholders do so as individuals. Each stakeholder naturally holds unique—and in some instances caring—relations to the manager. Each stakeholder holds perceived needs that he or she is trying to convince the manager to satisfy, and such needs will vary from context to context.

The moral impulse of managers is to respond to each stakeholder with understanding, concern, and the

desire to do something to help the stakeholder. Such impulses cannot in all instances be explained through the perspectives of the more rational systems of ethical decision making. In fact, Noddings and Gilligan both argue that training in these systems may well extinguish the caring impulse. Furthermore, that impulse decreases as the relationship with the stakeholder becomes more distant—the “I must” response becomes less of an imperative because other stakeholders with closer relationships with the manager also bring forth the “I must” response and the manager can only react to a limited number of stakeholders.

Ethics of Care and Management Theory

There is a great opportunity to apply the ethics of care to organizational research and praxis. It is not too difficult to imagine how the crafting of an organization's statement of purpose and mission might be informed by this perspective. Policies supporting work-family balance are easily seen as a matter of ethics of care. Recruiting and hiring practices might take into account the well-being of the cared-for—the prospective employee. A variety of employment practices, from job sharing to telecommuting to job rotation, could reflect caring impulses that not only explicitly acknowledge the particularity of intra-office relations but serve to honor interoffice relationships as well. Vacation and sick leave policies, termination guidelines, employee assistance programs, profit participation plans, performance appraisal, and so on—the litany of organizational practices that might prove to be natural extensions of the moral impulse to care seems limitless.

—Craig P. Dunn and Brian K. Burton

See also Aristotle; Empathy; Ethics, Theories of; Feminist Ethics; Feminist Theory; Impartiality; Justice, Theories of; Kantian Ethics; Kohlberg, Lawrence; Lesbian Ethics; Maternal Ethics; Rawls's Theory of Justice; Relativism, Moral; Stakeholder Theory; Utilitarianism; Virtue Ethics

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ETHICS OF DIALOGUE

The ethics of dialogue has drawn increasing attention from scholars in the humanities and social sciences, as well as from policy makers and problem solvers in the realms of business, government, and civil society. Ethical dialogue is an approach for human discourse and reasoning directed toward improved problem understanding and possible problem resolution. Such discourse focuses on the enhancement of learning and relationship building by multiple stakeholders who are struggling to make better sense of complex, messy problems that are characterized by significant value or interest conflicts and contested knowledge claims. An ethics of dialogue can be examined by exploring dialogic modes of communication, tracing certain philosophical notions regarding dialogic ethics, and exploring possible risks and benefits for applications of dialogic ethics in organizational, business, and other contexts.