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Feminism and Intercultural Information Ethics

Abstract:

Rafael Capurro calls for an intercultural information ethics that radically challenges its Eurocentric, Greek philosophical roots and grapples with and validates cultural diversity. One of the voices that must be included in this project is that of feminism, both within and outside of Western culture. While there are a variety of feminist issues and approaches to feminism, embracing the naturalistic approach, suggested by Alison Jaggar, one can find sufficient commonalities, both in terms of a critique of traditional male-dominated Western ethics and in terms of a positive content and agenda, to establish a feminist framework. One strong voice that help create this framework is that of Carol Gilligan who studied the moral development of women. This paper argues that the "different voice" thesis of Gilligan (i.e., that men and women prototypically – not stereotypically – bring different voices to moral argumentation and ethical deliberation) can serve as an ethical principle, that permits all persons – male or female – to interrogate and guide their ethical choices, and that an 'ethic of care' can challenge an 'ethic of rights,' and on occasion can trump it as a major guiding ethical principle.

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 - “Intellectual Freedom, Ethical Deliberation and Codes of Ethics,” IFLA Journal 26 (July, 2000), 4, pp. 264-272.
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 - “Ethical Considerations Regarding Library Nonprofessionals: Competing Perspectives and Values,” Library Trends, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Winter, 1998), pp. 444-466.
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Introduction

In his paper on "Intercultural Information Ethics¹," Rafael Capurro raises important questions about the foundations of philosophy and ethics and its historical Western roots. Philosophy has a strong tradition in European/early Greek history, and it is problematic in the global information society to assert that ethics, in particular information ethics, have foundations that lie solely in this tradition. If we are trying to create a genuine dialog about ethical values and grounds, we cannot be bound solely to this tradition, because (e.g.,) Chinese and Indians have engaged in ethical thought and ethical reasoning and the grounds for the resolution of their ethical dilemmas may or may not be related to Western foundations. What is more problematic is that even when one speaks of Western philosophy, he or she also generally means a 'masculinist' philosophy – one argued, articulated, and developed by men around men's issues such as aggression, rights, war, etc. and by and through men's methods of argumentation and prioritization of values. Capurro raises the question of what of this historical material – despite its attempts of claiming universality – is cultural or natural or universal. There have been very few women philosophers with much influence in philosophy or ethics up until the 20th century. If we are going to ground philosophy and intercultural information ethics in intercultural discourse, one of the important voices to hear and to include in that dialogue is that of women, both within and outside the Western/Greek tradition. In an age that espouses cultural diversity, one may ask: is the moral development and reasoning of women natural, cultural or universal and, if so, in what ways or to what extent? The distinctive perspective that women bring to ethical deliberation must be acknowledged and integrated. In the "Declaration of Principles," Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium, there is an explicit declaration of the importance of women:

12. We affirm that development of ICTs [Information and Communication Technologies] provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors, in the Information Society. We are committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis on equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. To this end, we

should mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICTs as a tool to that end.ⁱⁱ

Such an assertion means that we must engage women's moral voice and their moral development, both as it has evolved in Western culture, but also in non-Western cultures.

It is doubtful that the scope of this paper can deal with non-Western approaches. Nor will it be possible to look at all approaches that regard themselves as "feminist," because it is difficult to track all interpretations of or approaches to feminism. However, based on the naturalistic approach of Alison Jaggar and the theories of Carol Gilligan, we can tentatively suggest a feminist framework, though not a universal one because additional evidence is required and even then, would any amount of evidence allow us to make claims for strict universality? We can also follow the path of a seminal researchers in the field of moral development of children and discuss how their view might fit into the domain of intercultural ethics, especially intercultural information ethics.

Kohlberg and Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg was a pioneer in studying the moral development of children. His aim was to understand the underlying concepts and reasoning involved in moral judgement and how they change over time. He realized that there was a progression of stages in the moral reasoning of individuals about what they think moral rightness or wrongness is. He came to the conclusion that there were three broad levels of development, each divided into two stages. The first level, the pre-conventional level, consisted of two stages: (1) heteronomous morality and (2) individualism, instrumental purpose and exchange. In the first stage, what is right is a matter of avoiding breaking rules, being obedient for its own sake and preventing physical damage to property and persons. The second stage a growing human persons comes to understand that right is a matter of following rules when it is one's interest and doing what is necessary to seek one's own interest and permitting others to do the same. The second level is the conventional level consisting stage 3, mutual interpersonal relationships and expectations and interpersonal conformity, and stage 4, social system and conscience. Stage 3 sees what is right as living up to people's expectations, either those close to one or as a role that one takes in society (e.g., as a son). It also means having the

right motives. In stage 4, what is right is conceived as fulfilling the actual duties about which one has agreed. In this stage, laws are upheld except for exceptional cases in which there are conflicts with other social demands. Level three is the postconventional level, which also consists of 2 stages. In stage 5, social contract or utility and individual rights, what is right is the realization that different persons have a variety of opinions and values and that most of one's values are relative to their specific social situation. Nonetheless, they should be upheld because of the social contract, although some values like life and liberty must be upheld in any society regardless of the majority views. In stage 6, universal ethical principles, what is right is matter of choosing ethical principles for oneself. Specific laws or social arrangements are usually founded on such principles. When there is a conflict with existing laws, then one acts according to these principles, which are the universal principles of justice in which one respects the dignity of each human being and upholds the equality of human rights.ⁱⁱⁱ

For the purposes of this paper, there are three important dimensions of this analytic of moral development: (1) Kohlberg sees these stages as progressive, universal and irreversible and moral development precludes the jumping over one stage to another. He did cross-cultural studies which seemed to validate the same results, though the progression of stages may proceed at a slower pace.^{iv} (2) Given the correctness of this study, it would seem that justice, particularly justice seen as fairness, is the supreme ethical principle or value (either conventionally or postconventionally), and that rights are the main ethical difficulties about which to negotiate and allocate priorities. (3) The sample for his study was derived from boys and men. It is precisely this aspect that led to the concern of another researcher, Carole Gilligan.

Gilligan's Critique of Kohlberg

Carole Gilligan had worked with Lawrence Kohlberg in trying to understand moral development of children. The samples or cases that he studied were based on boys or young men, and based on this analysis, he postulated the framework above as the process by which children come to develop a moral sensibility. Gilligan's sample included girls and she came to some remarkable insights contrary to that of Kohlberg's, particularly in her seminal work, **In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Prototypes and Women's Development.**

For Gilligan, ego development and moral development are prototypically related. The use of the word, prototype, is a deliberate interpretation by author of this paper, because it is important to avoid hasty generalizations. The usage is derived from the work of Eleanor Rosch in her work on natural categorization, how we form and use categories in our life experience. In the classical approach to categorization, as in monothetic classification schemes (e.g., the Aristotelian approach), we attempt to find a characteristic or set of characteristics that runs uniformly throughout a class, as for example, three-sidedness is a property that is characteristic of all triangles. In this scheme, every class member is equivalent to every other class member and there are no better or poorer members of class membership. In cases of triangles and other geometric objects, this would seem intuitively clear. These categories, based on monothetic classifications schemes, are defined indifferent to human perception, motility, speech. Yet when one approaches categorization in life, category formation is not so clean or clear and does not follow the model suggested above – in fact, abstract or monothetic classification is an abstraction derived from natural categorization. For example, to use one of Rosch's examples, the category 'bird' contains robins and pigeons but also penguins, dodo birds, and ostriches, and the latter are poorer examples of class membership (but nonetheless class members). If we cluster together the better or best examples of class membership, we usually find a set of characteristics that is reported in such things as dictionaries. In natural categorization, categories do not form rigid borders, are oriented toward human tasks, and provide human beings with the ability to reflectively categorize in a scientific or philosophical manner. The actual acquisition of categories is polythetic in character: not all members of a class share all the same characteristics; the prototypes share the most number of characteristics, which in fact is the reason they become prototypes, the examples by which we most quickly identify an object as being in a particular class. But there are other members of the class, members that share some characteristics of other members, but not all of them and not all of the ones that are shared by the prototype. As a consequence it takes longer to process non-prototypical members of a class (e.g. ostrich as a bird) than prototypical members. In many ways, a prototype is a convenient fiction, because we never have a general type but rather instances of an object that by the device of a prototype allow us to recognize quickly a member's class or category.

What does this have to do with our discussion? We are trying to talk about women in a general manner. When we qualify the our discussion with the notion of prototype, we are making generalizations about women's experience and women's moral development that seems characteristic of many best examples of class membership. This means that not all women have this viewpoint or upbringing and even when we talk about specific best examples of class membership, we must be cautious about implications for the entire class, particularly any universal characterizations. Rosch's natural categorization turns Aristotle's and most of Western philosophy's notion of categories on its head. We do not start from intuitive, universal categories. Even with extended experience we can never achieve the universal, only the prototypical. Space, time and other categories are natural, learned categories and how we learn them and understand them comes from experience and must be derived from experience. Whatever content they have, it is not a complete or finished content.

This approach appears to conform to Capurro's questioning the historical grounds for an intercultural information ethics, as based in universal and transcultural principles – if there are principles and values that cross all cultures, this belief cannot be assumed, but established. We must do research to find out how and why people create, use and apply such categories, particularly in ethical matters (e.g., justice). So when generalizations about categories are made in this paper, they are to be understood from a prototypical viewpoint. This approach is not how Gilligan understands her work. It is an approach postulated in this paper. In order to explain her approach, it is useful to detail her experiments with Kohlberg's case.

Gilligan's Approach to Kohlberg's Case Study: Jake and Amy

Gilligan, using the same case study used by Kohlberg in his experiments, set up an experiment to see how two children, one male, Jake, and one female, Amy, would analyze a moral dilemma. The following was the case that was presented to them:

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to

make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$ 1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug-for his wife. Should the husband have done that?"

Jake says that Heinz should steal the drug to save his sick wife. Amy argues that Heinz should take a loan, because if he were thrown in jail, he could not take care of his wife. For Amy, the moral problem changes from one of unfair domination, the imposition of property over life, to one of unnecessary exclusion, the failure of the druggist to respond to the situation of Heinz's wife. As a result of these differing approaches, Gilligan comes to the conclusion that moral development in boys and men is different than girls and women.

Prototypically, women tend to define themselves in relation to others and connection more than men. Young girls tend to bond with their mothers. Men prototypically come to define themselves in terms of separation from others, often as a counterpoint to their mothers. Because of this, male gender identity tends to be challenged by intimacy. In contrast, female gender identity tends to be threatened by individuation and separation. Prototypically, men have difficulty with relationships while women have difficulty with acquiring individual identity. In terms of Kohlberg's scale, women appear to be morally inferior insofar as their moral judgements seem to exemplify the third stage (where morality is conceived in interpersonal terms, goodness is a matter of helping others and what is right as living up to people's expectations, either those close to one or as a role that one takes in society, e.g., as a daughter or mother). And Kohlberg understands the highest stages of morality as one of rights. A morality of rights emphasizes separation and the isolation and autonomy of human beings – one can do as one pleases as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others. The notion of community while not absent is minimized. But for an ethic of responsibility, which Gilligan also characterizes as an ethic of care, the viewpoint that Gilligan uncovers in her study of women, one replaces these abstract moral divisions with a contextualized, situated feeling for the complexity of life of real people in real situations. Rights reasoning, the prototypical

point of focus in the moral development of men, focuses about principles held by people in the abstract. Responsibilities, the point of focus in the moral development of women, deal with people in the concrete, in situ. Women engage in experience with a different point of view and order human experience in terms of different priorities than those of men. Concomitantly, it may mean the men have a tendency to totalize abstract categories and principles and to live life through those categories (as one might claim is characteristic of philosophers in the Western tradition, e.g., Kant) whereas women are more concerned with the instantiation of a category: e.g., I am concerned with this particular person with whom I am speaking, who is a teacher, white, dresses nicely, etc. who is having problems with my child's behavior.

Girls and women tend to conceive of moral dilemmas as conflicts of responsibilities rather than of rights and seek to resolve those dilemmas in ways that will repair and strengthen the community and webs of relationships. Men tend to be more fixated on an ethic of rights, being more concerned with abstract rules of justice (whether Kantian or utilitarian), the obligations and duties of moral agents – whether individual or institutional, and notions of the social contract. Women and girls are less likely to justify their moral decisions and behavior by resorting to abstract moral principles. Rather they tend to act on feelings of love and compassion for particular people. Whereas men cling to a hierarchy of ethical values culminating in justice, whose primary notions are fairness and equality, women cling to an ethics of care, whose primary values are inclusion and protection from harm.

Stages of Women's Moral Development (Gilligan)

Gilligan sees moral development as progressing through stages but in a way different from Kohlberg. There are five stages, with two transitional stages, rather than Kohlberg's three levels with 2 stages at each level. In stage 1, corresponding to Kohlberg's pre-conventional morality, the concern is individual survival and the self is the object of care. In the transitional stage, the self moves away from selfishness to a sense of responsibility. The self develops a sense of attachment, comes to see problems with self-centeredness and moves toward responsibility. Stage 2 corresponds to Kohlberg's level of conventional morality. In this stage, goodness comes to be understood as self-sacrifice.

To be good means taking care of other people, which is the basis of self-worth and morality. The struggle for women to get over this stage is the struggle to learn to take care of themselves. In the transitional stage, the self's notion of responsibility expands to include both one's own self as well as others. In stage 3, moral worth is derived from taking care of oneself and others. Obviously tensions occur in trying to balance these obligations, and they are reconciled through a self-chosen morality of care, inclusivity and nonviolence.

In the progression of moral development, women's voices are about care, and morality is about caring. While this account is rather traditionalist and has been called into question by some feminists and 'masculinists,' Gilligan claims that they are only generalizations not meant to apply in all cases of individual human beings. As I have suggested they are prototypical but not necessarily universal. In fact, Allison Jagger notes that her critics claim that her samples are not representative of the diversity of women, that her hermeneutic of her data is problematic and that her "claims are impossible to substantiate, especially when the studies are controlled for occupation and class."^{vi}

Interpreting Gilligan's Work

Perhaps the best way to see her work is not to see it as a line of opposition in which men's voices and women's voices are at odds or that one is superior to the other. While one could with some legitimacy make the claim that men's voices have dominated moral discussions for centuries, that does not mean that this is necessarily wrong. What is wrong is that women's voices have not found equal footing and perhaps not even fully in this century, and that moral debate must include all perspectives, including men and women.

A good approach is not to attribute sex stereotyping to males and females, but to see that there are diversity of viewpoints. These viewpoints can be expressed externally, as when men and women as distinctive personalities engage in moral debate. But, more appropriately, they can be expressed internally: as Jung suggests, within each individual are multiple viewpoints and the dominant viewpoint can have its shadow. Men have and can develop a feminine side (for example, recent studies have suggested that as men mature, intimacy becomes more important to them); and women have and can develop a masculine side (as they mature, individual identity becomes more important). The work of

Kohlberg and Gilligan can be seen as description of the prototypical moral development of women and men -- a prototype is a natural class where members collectively share a dominant set of characteristics, but not all members need share all of the characteristics. That is, men *tend* towards separation and individuation in the early years and *tend* toward intimacy in the later years, but not all men do. And vice versa for women. One gets into trouble with claims of strict universality for moral development or the objectives of that development.

Sandra Bem suggests that masculine and feminine traits may be mapped along two axes: one ranging from high in masculinity to low in masculinity, the other ranging from high in femininity to low in femininity. Individuals can find themselves mapped somewhere in this geometric space. Traditional masculine roles are high in masculinity and low in femininity; traditional female roles are high in femininity and low in masculinity. Persons who are high in both are androgynous; for those that are low in both there is no distinct name.^{vii} However, individuals can vary widely in the level of their masculine and feminine traits, and that men and women are capable of understanding each other's viewpoint (without fully taking on or understanding the other sex's specific identity). Bem's research is not inconsistent with the idea of prototypes discussed above. We experience individuals, but we organize experience by prototypes, which may or may not do disservice to individuals.

Still, there are complaints from the critics. Jaggar summarizes them:

Gilligan (1982) claimed that her female subjects tended to speak in a moral voice different from that used by most male subjects, whose moral thinking had been taken as normative in much previous moral psychology. Gilligan believed that she had identified two distinct moral perspectives: the justice perspective, which men supposedly preferred and which was canonized in Western moral philosophy, and the care perspective, which women supposedly preferred but which Western moral psychology and philosophy branded as less rational. Many readers took Gilligan's work as providing a clear empirical sense in which the form of reasoning taken as normative in moral psychology and philosophy was male biased insofar as it represented only the thinking of male subjects. In fact, Gilligan's achievement was as much interpretive and evaluative as empirical, even though she appealed to the words of real

women and girls. She heard her female subjects saying much the same things that mainstream psychologists had heard them saying, but she interpreted and valued their words differently. Some of Gilligan's own empirical claims were questionable on a number of grounds: her interpretations of her subjects' statements were contestable and she derived very general conclusions about women from a sample that was highly unrepresentative. Equally dubious was her assignment of the so-called justice voice to men generally; some later investigators found that many men as well as women employed care thinking, especially lower-class men and men of color.^{viii}

In Gilligan's defense, we must note that while she identified distinctive perspectives, I would argue they were not rigorously dichotomized or universalized as some of her interpreters and critics have suggested. Yet I would not want to overstate this defense because she does seem to push the difference.

Gilligan's Response to Her Critics

Gilligan defends her position against her critics in "Reply to Critics," in **An Ethic of Care**, published in 1993. She sees her critics laying claims against her in three areas: method, theory or interpretation, and goals or education. The first area is that of method and whether the data or what constitutes acceptable data is sufficient to support her claims. She argues that her view is supported by the common themes that are reported in women's conceptions and articulations of self and morality. That these themes are not reported in the standard psychological literature does not surprise her for that literature **a priori** exhibits men's voices exemplifying men's experience. She says: "Therefore, in listening to women, I sought to separate their descriptions of their experience from standard forms of psychological interpretation and to rely on close textual analysis of language and logic to define the term's of women's thinking."^{ix} One could claim that she is begging the question in so doing, but those claimers -- as she indicates -- would be begging the question given the domination of male voices in psychological theories and frameworks. To say that "history is on our side" is just another form of a cultural bias that has not examined its own foundation: male and Western, which tends to be blind to its own hermeneutic. Data do **not** speak for themselves: they are always, everywhere interpreted. Data fundamentalism is just as

misplaced as religious fundamentalism (e.g., the Bible or Koran speaks for itself with no interpretation). When her critics argue that there are no sex differences based on the Kohlberg scale, she argues that they completely miss the point. They a priori assume the correctness of the Kohlberg scale, and even if women can become equally adept at justice reasoning, that does not invalidate their history or other's women's concern for care reasoning. "My interest in the way of people define their moral problems is reflected in my research methods, which have centered on first-person accounts of moral conflict."^x When women score on lower Kohlberg's scale, this may not reflect lower moral development, but differences in moral perspective.

With respect to a change in perspective, she calls into question her critics and their attack on her "different voice" hypothesis. She cites many studies (e.g., Nona Lyon (1982, 1983, 1987); Langdale (1983); Johnston (1985)) that:

(1) the justice and care perspectives are distinct orientations that organize people's thinking about moral problems in different ways; (2) boys and men who resemble those most studied by developmental psychologists tend to define and resolve moral problems within the justice framework, although they introduce considerations of care; and (3) the focus on care in moral reasoning, although not characteristic of all women, is essentially a female phenomenon in the advantaged populations studied. These findings provide an empirical explanation for the equation of moral judgment with justice reasoning in the theories derived from the studies of males; but they also explain why the study of women's moral thinking changes the definition of the moral domain.^{xi}

Furthermore, the movement of researchers to dismiss the significance of sex differences is unwarranted. "My critics are concerned about stereotypes that portray women as lacking in anger and aggression; but they do not consider the lower incidence of violence in women's fantasies and behavior to be a sex difference worth exploring."^{xii} Gilligan offers a different approach on psychology and women, one that opposes a male-dominated viewpoint: women seem themselves as caring for others and consider themselves selfish to care for themselves. This is not a passive act.

The inclusion of women's experience dispels the notion of care as selfless and passive and

reveals the activities that constitute care and lead to responsiveness in human relationships. In studies conducted by myself and my students, women who defined themselves in their own terms – as indicated by the use of active, first-person constructions – generally articulated the value of care and affirmed their own relational concerns.^{xiii}

Whether the problem is interpreted away it is bound to the facts or whether this ambiguity leads to further investigation remains to be addressed. Finally, Gilligan shares the concerns of others about what happens in education. Education must change, but it is or should not be a matter of discrediting women's voices, but acknowledging the importance and value of care.

Consequences to a Gilligan Feminist Ethic

There appear to be at least three important consequences to this research:

1. Gilligan does not therefore assert that the feminist perspective should take higher priority, only that women's voice has been ignored in moral deliberation and should be taken into account.
2. This does raise the interesting question as to whether 'justice' or 'care' (meaning the prototypical viewpoints of men and women) have equal priority in moral deliberation: traditionally, when there is a conflict among moral principles, justice trumps or supercedes all other principles. This has been a long-standing view in Western ethics, but this ethic that was male-dominated and male-oriented. We will return to this issue shortly.
3. Finally, the need for a dialog of "rights" and "care" are not really a dialog of men versus women, but of each sex paying attention to what Jung calls its shadow figure, those aspects of the personality that may be suppressed based on gender, socialization and/or acculturation. While some of the interpreters and critics of Gilligan have extended and reified her position on rights and care (and she too is ambiguous on occasion), it is more coherent to see these perspectives on a continuum to which each person has potential full access, but which nature and/or nurture tends to predispose

one sex versus the other. Several of Gilligan's critics have indicated that Gilligan's contrast of justice and care along gender lines is incorrect, and that both males and females can do moral reasoning based on justice and care.^{xiv} Walker et al., who did a study of 80 Canadian children found that only a few children used either an ethics of care or an ethics of justice, whereas most children used both.^{xv} Others have challenged the legitimacy of the cross-cultural studies by Kohlberg that also may impact on some of Gilligan's claims: a study of American and Indian subjects indicated that cultural influences do have an impact on moral development – in American culture there is an emphasis on individuality and freedom of choice whereas in Indian culture, there is more emphasis on the community and interpersonal relations.^{xvi} However, I would argue that such data do not deny the actuality of prototypes within cultures for men and women, although it may challenge the character of the prototype. However, it seems clear that whatever the scenario, two distinctive, contrasting approaches emerge ('rights' and 'care').

This paper will focus on the relationship of 'care' and 'rights.' But before moving ahead with such a theme, one must acknowledge something of the complexity of current approaches in feminism, and find some way to try to make some tentative claims.

Feminist Concerns

Women's voices have long been ignored in the West. According to Alison M. Jaggar in "Feminist Ethics," there are a series of criticisms lodged against Western ethics: there has been a lack of concern for women's issues; women are seen as auxiliaries to male institutions, such as the home, the job and the family; there has been lack of concern about 'women's issues' (e.g., issues related to domestic life are often ignored, such as family cohesion; there is a denial of women's moral agency, e.g., by arguing that women are incapable of moral reasoning and incapable of the application of such principles as justice); there is correspondingly a depreciation of such 'feminine' values as interdependence, community, connection, sharing, emotion, body, trust, absence of hierarchy, nature, immanence, process, joy and peace (male subjects such as independence, autonomy, intellect,

will, hierarchy, domination, culture, transcendence, war and death are regarded as more important than female values); there is also a devaluation of women's moral experience.^{xvii} Prevailing Western conceptualizations focus on a morality that is empirical, symbolic and normative; feminists have complained that modern moral theory is obsessed with impartiality and is exclusively focused on discrete deeds.

Feminist Issues Related to Moral Development

One related issue is that of the self or subjectivity, already anticipated in the work of Gilligan. Feminists have argued that the notion of the self that dominates Western culture was inherited essentially from Descartes: a disembodied, autonomous, disengaged self, in every instance all the same as every other self (differences being accountable only by historical accident). It is not the case that feminists alone have challenged against this model of the self, as Freudians, existentialists and post modernists have also attacked it. But in addition to that, many feminists have complained that the notion of this self is male, European and bourgeois in character, and that an adequate notion of the self must be embodied, contextualized, unequal, dependent and interdependent and communitarian. For many feminists ethical deliberation needs to focus on narrative and the concrete circumstances, flowing from this second approach to the self.

The other issue is the role and nature of reason or rationality. As part of the Enlightenment ideal, there was presumed a universal rationality – that all thinking persons would come to the same conclusion in a given context if they were fully rational. Such rationality tends to disregard emotion, devalue functional, established relationships, and find notions of community at best an abstraction. According to feminists, the Enlightenment self justifies action through rationally justified rules or principles, whereas they deny that ethical deliberation can be reduced to a system of rules and their application, implemented through some impartial reason.

Jaggar in her 2000 article, itemizes some of the issues that feminism has raised or have complained against: the espousal, tacit or explicit, of women's subordination to men, the discrediting of women's capacity for moral reasoning, the traditional Western opposition of emotion and reason, the postulated

traditional Western ideal that moral subjects should choose a rational life (really an ideal, they argue, for upper or middle class people in capitalist societies), the givenness of moral autonomy (whereas, it is at best an ideal to be achieved), the assumption that we really can in principle – as moral agents – think according to the perspectives of others (as in John Rawl's veil of ignorance).^{xviii} She summarizes:

They have charged that its purportedly universal standpoint in fact reflects a culturally specific juridical-administrative perspective that many regard as distinctively modern, Western, bourgeois, and masculine. They have shown that its supposedly universal principles have been biased systematically against women and members of other subordinated groups. They have argued that its pretensions to transcendence have been used to deflect criticism, to discredit alternative perspectives and ways of thinking, and to rationalize professional philosophers' claims to moral authority.

... As naturalists, feminists have typically begun from the empirical recognition that the insights of moral agents are always conditioned by their particular social experiences and locations. Because all agents are limited and fallible, feminists generally conceptualize moral rationality as a process that is collaborative rather than individual and its conclusions as partial, situated, and provisional rather than universal or absolute.^{xix}

In fact, Jaggar offers a methodology for feminist viewpoints: naturalism with a feminist orientation. The naturalism of which she speaks has nothing to do with natural law of Thomas Aquinas, but rather "with the contemporary tradition of naturalized epistemology and the philosophy of science stemming from the work of T.S. Kuhn (1962) and W.V.O. Quine (1969)."

This tradition abandons the idea of a first philosophy that lays the foundations for other disciplines; instead, it regards epistemology and the philosophy of science as continuous with empirical studies of scientific practice. Naturalism in this sense denies the existence of a pure realm of reason, to be studied by methods that are distinctively philosophical. Instead, it advocates multidisciplinary approaches to understanding human knowledge, utilizing the findings and methods of a range of disciplines with special reliance on the empirical sciences.

Naturalizing ethics requires that the development of ethical concepts, ideals, and prescriptions should occur in collaboration with empirical disciplines such as psychology, economics, and the social sciences. However, the Western tradition in ethics has generally tended to eschew naturalism in this sense and has even been hostile to it.^{xx}

This position is consistent with Capurro's call for rethinking the foundations of intercultural ethics from a Western, Eurocentric viewpoint and it is consistent with an approach that has already been developed in this paper.

Principles and Values

In earlier work on ethical concerns for information professionals, **Survey and Analysis of Legal and Ethical Issues for Library and Information Services**, published for UNESCO and as part of the IFLA professional series, I postulated a series of principles that information professionals invoke to help them engage in ethical deliberation with respect to some professional problem: (1). Respect the moral autonomy of self and others; (2) Seek justice or fairness; (3) Seek social harmony; (4) Be faithful to organizational, professional or public trust; and finally, (5) Act in such a way that the amount of harm is minimized. These principles were not intended to be applied as if they were some moral absolute, nor was the list to be exhaustive or the principles mutually exclusive. Rather they articulated many of the insights of traditional Western philosophy. The first principle expresses the insight of Kant and his categorical imperative and is foundation for many professional values: freedom and self-determination (moral autonomy) for our patrons, protection from injury (e.g., keep inappropriate material away from children), equality of opportunity (e.g., each patron has a right to his or her own kind of resources, which implies that a collection must be representative and balanced and must make available a wide variety of viewpoints), privacy (patron's records and searches will be held confidential), minimal well-being (e.g., patrons should have free access to materials to help them make informed decisions in an election), recognition for one's work (either as intellectual property or as creator– moral rights). The second principle articulates a commonly accepted view, seen as the epitome in Kohlberg's scale. The third is really a version of utilitarianism, that in some ethical decisions, consequences matter and we should strive to maximize the greatest amount of happiness

for the most number of people. The fourth heightens concerns for the populations with which professionals interact: patrons, sponsoring agencies (e.g., government), the profession. The last, about which we address further, is, at first blush, an inverse articulation of the utilitarian approach.

In a way, each of these can be seen as voices that one brings to ethical deliberation. It should be immediately obvious that these voices are not necessarily harmonious and supportive of one another. To spend money on a literacy program to bring non-library users into the library (acknowledging the moral dignity of each human being) works against the general principle of the library to support the happiness of most patrons (i.e., extending services for existing users will more likely promote greater happiness). So these principles are different voices to bring to a moral conversation regarding some ethical issue: e.g., the problem patron.

The last principle was an attempt to articulate a feminist principle. In earlier work, the principle was expressed in the following way: "Act in such a way that the existing, functional relationships are maintained and sustained and that the amount of harm occur in a minimal way or with the most minimum impact." It may not be the best expression of feminism but it attempts to attend the importance of contextual and individuation concerns of feminism, the appreciation of community, etc. The question is: can feminism be seen as a principle or set of values that one brings to moral deliberation just as one brings utilitarianism or justice seen as fairness? There are a good reasons to believe so, as long as moral deliberation embraces a broader notion of reasoning (i.e., not simply providing abstract reasons but one tied to the context of the situation).

We also must recognize, given the orientation of this paper, that these principles must not be seen as absolute, universal moral principles. Rather they need to be seen – despite the philosophers who popularized these principles and who made claims to universality – as empirically and naturalistically derived, often invoked in situations of ethical deliberation in Western culture.

When Principles/Perspectives/Voices Compete, Can One Supercede Another?

Socratic ignorance notwithstanding there are occasions when ethical principles compete. In such cases, when ethical principles compete for application in a given context, which principle takes priority? Can one principle trump another? In other words, is there a principle to decide about the best principle to apply in a given situation?

For example, with respect to the access of free information on the Internet, a principle of justice may advocate copyright rights only to authors of works and invest in them all rights. But justice and social harmony may argue for a sharing of information resources – especially in the context of fair use – that challenges an author's sole rights to his/her works. Which of these principles take a higher priority? There are those, such as John Rawls, who would argue that justice is the highest ethical principle. But given the challenge of the feminists that have been reviewed here, this may beg the question. A principle/perspective of care – recalling Gilligan's work above – may challenge this priority and argue for the larger social cohesion of the world.

Richard Mason in the **Ethics of Information Management** calls the result of moral deliberation in which one principle trumps another as "supersession," which he characterizes in the following way:

Because ethical reasoning requires identifying the principles on which you base your ethical conclusions, you should select the principles or principles that are the most compelling in this case. This 'trumping' process is called supersession. Supersession means using one principle to trump or outrank another.... The final result is an ethical judgement that includes a preferred course of action and the ethical principles that support and defend it.^{xxi}

Having noted this, can one further argue: is justice the supreme moral principle or is this the result of a male-dominated, Western-centric history of ethical philosophy?

Mason continues:

The route to justice through supersession may be summed up as follows: In a morally perfect world, the agent, the act taken, and the results of the act are all ethical and satisfy the requirements of justice. If so, ethical reasoning need be carried no further. If not, a virtue must be compromised, if a prima facie right or duty is violated, or if an alternative with lower utility implemented -- then the act must be defended on the basis of some other ethical principle that supercedes it. A chain of reasoning is used to find the moral grounds for the supplanting of one principle by another. The final link in the chain is the concept of justice.^{xxii}

Such a reasoning seems evident in the choice of works other than gothic romances that increase circulation counts, but it does not solve the problem of whether a book on virtues of Marxism or radical right politics should be added to the collection. Furthermore, given the arguments above, this "rational" argument itself comes into question as well as its presumed objective.

Can One Embrace Alternating Principles?

To complicate matters an ethical decision maker may embrace two different principles for the same context on different occasions. For example, in order to promote social harmony or utility (principle 3 above, social harmony), a collection developer may well order only those books that are of interest to the majority of patrons in his or her library. Yet, in order to be just and to respect the dignity of a wide variety of human beings that may frequent the library (principles 1– respecting moral autonomy of individuals and principle 3 – justice – each user should have access to works that suit their interests and development), such a developer must also order works that are representative of a wide variety of viewpoints, that may in fact be unpopular with the majority of patrons in a library: for example, books supporting the acceptance of homosexuality or advocating extreme political positions.

Obviously these principles lie in tension: (a) When one seeks social harmony, one is generally following utilitarian principles: promoting the maximum amount of happiness in the greatest number of people. But the maximum happiness often does a disservice to individuals. For example, if politicians promote minimum wage for everyone, it may work against small businesses to survive at all or the ability of someone to have a job. (b) When one

respects individuals, one respects their peculiar interests and such interests may alienate the general community – relaxing environmental relations for specific industries and not others (like carbon dioxide emissions for power generation).

Collection developers may alternate in the appeal to these principles. On one occasion they might buy the best-seller novels for the library, behaving for the most part as a utilitarian. On another occasion, they might buy the book with a radical political position, following a principle of justice – a la Kant – both supporting the eccentric library user and to insure a complete and balanced collection.

What about Ethical Consistency?

Because the principles and values enumerated above may engender tensions and conflicts and that there is the possibility that one could invoke the priority of different principles for the same occasion, one may object that our ethics should be rigorously consistent and therefore something must be wrong with these principles and values or how we should apply or interpret them.

It is clear that one should strive for consistency in values and the application of moral principles and in moral deliberations and actions, but achieving such consistency may be another matter. As maturity evolves, moral ambiguity increases in the sense that we discover and appreciate the diversity and tensions of moral values and principles that can be brought to bear on an ethical problem, not only among stakeholders but also within ourselves, even though the ideal remains. In both cases of the evolution of moral development (Kohlberg or Gilligan), such ambiguity is recognized.

On certain occasions or for certain contexts we may be prone to act like utilitarians -- for example, when we favor social welfare increases, despite the fact we know that the results will not be completely just: e.g., that certain people will receive benefits who do not need or deserve them, that some businesses whose profit margin is quite low may suffer in trying to pay for them, etc.

On other occasions, we may act like Kantians. When we promote freedom of access and freedom of information on the Internet, we are respecting individual differences and the individual rights of human beings. In light of the tension of utilitarian principles and deontological principles, Diana Woodward^{xxiii} has claimed that ethical actions are

validated if they pass both consequentialist or utilitarian validation (Mill's emphasis on objective results) and deontological validation (Kant's emphasis on motive and duty). No doubt dual validation would be desirable and comforting, but many ethical actions may not pass both validations. Sometimes ethical decisions demand the prioritization of one of these principles over the other, and these may vary based on stakeholder perspective, application to circumstances, or lack of determination of the actual results.

There may be a theoretical basis for the impossibility of a completely consistent system or a consistently complete system. The mathematician Kurt Godel established a theorem which demonstrated that any system that was complete was necessarily inconsistent and that any system that was totally consistent was incomplete. This presumably implies that ethical systems cannot be simultaneously complete and consistent. While this might be a source of frustration for Cartesians, who presumably would like both, for others this is a continuous call for openness and dialogue, to be constantly in the process of achieving more completeness and more consistency, though in fact they may not achieve it.

Feminism or Care as a Principle or a Trumping Principle?

What if we add in a principle or principles of feminism, the perspective of care? Can it be a principle of ethical deliberation, even accepting the naturalistic perspective that challenges all traditional values (justice, autonomy) as universal in character? Even if we accept such principles as justice as an ethical ideal (grounding it in an analysis of cross cultural studies), one would realize that the instantiation of it may vary from culture to culture. The methodology suggested by Alison Jaggar may be a productive starting point. So too with feminism and the ethical principles or perspectives suggested by it. And if it can be a principle, can it be a trumping principle, one that supercedes other principles in a given context? When we look at the contemporary world and its obsession with rights (my rights versus your rights, my country's rights versus your country's rights), it seems that we need a corrective action in care, for the latter has seemed to lead to more dissent, more war, more destruction of the human community. Furthermore is this trumping to be understood in the same way as Mason describes above, a method for 'rational' decision-making leading to the supreme principle of

justice? Does justice retain its character as the supreme ethical principle? If so, it would seem to be required to be thought of as something more than fairness, something sometimes precisely sensitive to the contextual character of some situations. So we end with a series of questions. One thing is clear: the issue of feminism must be addressed in any attempt at an intercultural information ethics.

This paper has tried to advance a complex thesis, starting with empirical, psychological studies of the moral development of men and women and critiques of them, followed by a tentative generalization of feminism as a somewhat coherent but not necessarily complete perspective or 'voice,' engendered by the naturalistic perspective (Jaggar's feminist naturalism) which argues against a pure realm of reason and advocates a multidisciplinary approach to our understanding of ethics. In turn we have tried to validate this voice or perspective and to turn this voice or perspective into an ethical framework or principle, accessible to both men and women, although culturally, historically and/or prototypically we may be inclined embracing one perspective over the other. In turn, this ethical principle or framework functions both as a critique of prevailing approaches and yet provides a positive agenda, which in specific circumstances can compete with other ethical principles (e.g., justice, utilitarianism) and in fact trump them (an ethic of care can challenge and trump and ethic of rights in specific circumstances). A tentative formulation of a feminist principle might be something like: "Act in such a way that the existing, functional relationships are maintained and sustained and that the amount of harm occur in a minimal way or with the most minimum impact." So, for example, a public library may face severe budget cuts due to cutbacks in its economic resources (e.g., withering governmental support). Staff cuts may be seen as the best method of handling the crisis, based on justice or utilitarian grounds. From a justice viewpoint, one is balancing the right of a specific individual or sets of individuals to have employment against the rights of patrons to have their educational, recreational, cultural and informational needs met. From a rights perspective, if such cuts were to be made, those with the lowest seniority would be eliminated. From a utilitarian viewpoint, the greatest happiness principle, it might be easy to argue for staff cuts, because while there will be suffering for those who are fired, there will be so much more happiness in the ability of the library to sustain its collections and make the general welfare of library users so much better. If we take a feminist viewpoint that looks at the

specific context of the situation, we may see this problem in a much different light. The library staff is a very cohesive and productive group; the loss of members of the staff would be demoralizing to the rest of the staff and the whole institution. Not only that, the persons that are likely to be cut may be the most vulnerable: they may be starting a family and finding another job may be extremely difficult because the cutbacks have dried up the sources where the fired persons would normally find work. So a feminist principle might argue that in this context it is better to cut back on acquisitions and preserve group cohesion and solidarity, even though principles of justice or utilitarianism might suggest otherwise. In this way an ethic of care might trump an ethic of rights.

Ironically Plato, the Greek philosopher of supreme, universal values (truth, beauty, goodness) provides us with a model for caretaking: Socrates as the caretaker of human souls. I am not sure that the Socratic notion of care is not too different than that of feminists like Gilligan. Socrates was always sensitive to context and reason. Narrative and dialog were critical methods by which positions could be advocated or denied. Socrates (though perhaps not the later Plato, depending on one's interpretation) indicated that ethical growth demands continuous engagement in ethical reflection and/or discourse at every opportunity, particularly in examining existing mores. Socrates constantly queried his interlocutors about the knowledge they presumably possessed. By his profession of ignorance, he reminded himself of the limitations of his understanding and to remain open for further growth and maturation. In my view, his profession of ignorance is not a sham, but a deliberate ethical stance: to remind ourselves to be open to other perspectives and viewpoints; to really consider that our values and principles may not be universal, but culturally and historically bound. But the Socratic profession of ignorance did not lead to a simplistic moral relativism: that is, he had clear ethical ideals, but when and how they applied and which ones took priority in a given situation was a matter of reflection, deliberation and discourse. So too information professionals must constantly remind themselves of their ignorance so as to continue to grow and mature in ethical deliberation that is grounded in an articulated set of values and principles, but which may need to grow and evolve and to be applied diversely among different contexts. And feminism challenges us to open our understanding to its and other evolving frameworks, and to pay attention to the particular. With its/their help we may make significant progress toward an intercultural information ethics.

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