



The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global

Virginia Held

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Virginia Held assesses the ethics of care as a promising alternative to the familiar moral theories that serve so inadequately to guide our lives. The ethics of care is only a few decades old, yet it is by now a distinct moral theory or normative approach to the problems we face. It is relevant to global and political matters as well as to the personal relations that can most clearly exemplify care.

This book clarifies just what the ethics of care is: what its characteristics are, what it holds, and what it enables us to do. It discusses the feminist roots of this moral approach and why the ethics of care can be a morality with universal appeal. Held examines what we mean by "care," and what a caring person is like. Where other moral theories demand impartiality above all, the ethics of care understands the moral import of our ties to our families and groups. It evaluates such ties, focusing on caring relations rather than simply on the virtues of individuals. The book proposes how such values as justice, equality, and individual rights can "fit together" with such values as care, trust, mutual consideration, and solidarity.

In the second part of the book, Held examines the potential of the ethics of care for dealing with social issues. She shows how the ethics of care is more promising than Kantian moral theory and utilitarianism for advice on how expansive, or not, markets should be, and on when other values than market ones should prevail. She connects the ethics of care with the rising interest in civil society, and considers the limits appropriate for the language of rights. Finally, she shows the promise of the ethics of care for dealing with global problems and seeing anew the outlines of international civility.

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