

Tammy Shel, Ph.D.

Critical philosophical discussions on cultural identities – a caring approach

The philosophy on caring has been gaining more attention in recent decades, due to female thinkers such as, Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984, 1992) and Chodorow (1978). While Gilligan brought into attention the ethics of care, attributing that to girls' socialization, Noddings established the concept of caring as essentially inherent in the philosophy of education. Nussbaum's (2002, 2011) writings, more specifically on multiculturalism and citizenship, also lean by far on caring. Nevertheless, the definition of the concept leans predominantly on male philosophers such as Levinas (1988), Buber (1970), Fromm (1994) and many more, who seek venues to emancipate society from violence. What is missing from this discourse is an explicit reference to caring from critical and unisex lenses.

For feminists of color such as Collins (1991), Hurtado (1996) hooks (1995) and more, the definition of caring is derived from the stereotypical images of white bourgeois female fragility and maternity, and thus, from the attribution of emotional vulnerability to weakness. The robust and seemingly physically strong and militant force however, leans primarily on macho-masculine images of power. These perceptions are still dominant and govern our faculties and choices, and mostly serve macho-male type and more so, patriarchal hegemony. Borrowing from Kuhn's (1970), a paradigm shift is required, in which macho patterns will be perceived as violent and as a weakness, while caring, as an emancipatory approach from these shackles, inclusively.

Like many other terms, various possible conceptions of caring depend on our experiences and the application to our values system. Gilligan emphasizes the realization that human beings, and like Noddings I also add non-human nature, are like one big web and hence, any rupture at one end, affects the entire web. We are thus enmeshed in interactions and relationships, and the question is how to approach them. When we are in a state of caring, we are not driven initially by an inner imminent and impeding threat, which is liable to induce violent reactions, or by alienating relationships that Buber terms, I-It. We are rather driven by an inner strength, in terms of I-Thou, that opens us to see ourselves in relation with others such as, our families, communities, fellow citizens and more. We thereby, Levinas suggests, have a responsibility for our and others' well-being. Meaning, that one is driven primarily by an open heart and mind towards the other. Therefore, it is emancipatory. Levinas teaches us to see the other as equal in her/his humanity, regardless of the complexity of their

intertwined and complex identities. Therefore, a caring approach requires courage and inner strength, while reacting violently, is an indication of weakness and cowardliness.

By and by, with respect to the topic's proposal, I argue that education that emanates from the approach of caring, undermines the male-macho dominant hegemony in matters such as multiculturalism. While there is a worldwide tendency to celebrate multiculturalism, in particular in western democratic states, the question is whether it is so. For example, Israel is a multicultural state but has many conflictual challenges because of its identity, Jewish and democratic. Benyamin and Haj-Yehia (2019) discuss the tension that this duality entails - between Jews and Arabs - and according to Yonah and Shenhav (2005) also between secular and religious orthodoxy, ashkenazi and mizrahi, and more. Feminists of color (e.g., Hill Collins, 1999; Dahan-Kalev, 2006; Delpit, 1995; Hasan, 1999; hooks, 1995 & Hurtado, 1996) induce us to question multiculturalism with respect to women of color and to women of minorities, within and outside their communities. All indicate that multiculturalism is actually a guise to strengthen patriarchy, and more so, in macho patriarchy domination (in that case, white and non-white are alike). Likewise, western societies establish hegemonic standards that lean on macho-standards, and there is no substantial change. Multiculturalism is thus more instrumental and aesthetic, being governed by hegemonic narrow-dimensional macho-type dominance. In this proposal, I will examine the complexity of cultural identities through the lenses of caring, and will ask how to surmount the oppressive forces through education that emanates from caring.

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