Empirically grounded ethics of care: 
a methodological perspective

8th LECTURE

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2014, Dec. 3th

Introduction

1. This 8th lecture: turn to empirical research into EoC
2. EoC needs such research
3. Focus on care ethical professional carers
4. Content:
   1. Our position in the fact-value debate
   2. Empirical turn to care and the ordinary life: forms, results and organization
   3. From empirical inquiries to grounded theory of the EoC
I. The fact-value discussion and our stance
I Overcoming fact and value gap

There are serious problems when linking empirical facts to ethical reasoning.

The Fact-Value Gap

In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, when all of a sudden I am surpriz’d to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, There is and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is however, of the last consequence.

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Book III Part I Section I)  
"Moral Distinctions Not derived from Reason"

There is a fundamental gap between  
is and ought  
the descriptive and the prescriptive  
fact and value  
motive and reason
I Overcoming fact and value gap

Accepted positions of empirical data in ethical decision making:

• Knowledge of the context
• Knowledge of (probable) consequences
• Knowledge of (existing) values and opinions
• Knowledge of motives and reasons
• Behavioral predictions.

Helpful to ethicists but still the humble *ancilla* function of the empirical sciences
I Overcoming fact and value gap

### Table 1. Heuristic overview of different ways of using empirical data within ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACHES</th>
<th>I: Fundamental distinction descriptive-prescriptive sciences?</th>
<th>II: Method (is it an exercise in normative ethics?)</th>
<th>III: Central goal (is it order to judge?/object of study)</th>
<th>IV: Type of normativity</th>
<th>V: Use of empirical data</th>
<th>VI: Method</th>
<th>VII: Interaction empirical data and moral theory</th>
<th>VIII: Cooperating with descriptive sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRESCRIPTIVE APPLIED ETHICISTS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mixed theory</td>
<td>Evaluate social practice</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>A) Conditional (corresponds to values) B) As a subject of study</td>
<td>Deductive (top down, theory-building)</td>
<td>One way</td>
<td>Synthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEORISTS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mixed theory</td>
<td>Improve moral theory</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>As a means to refine theory</td>
<td>Empirical evidence of empirical results</td>
<td>One way</td>
<td>Synthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITICAL APPLIED ETHICISTS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Both moral theory and social practice</td>
<td>Evaluate social practice</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>A) As object of study B) As a means to improve moral theory and moral background assumptions</td>
<td>Deductive and inductive (nearly autonomous empirical data, empirical data and moral theories)</td>
<td>Weak interaction</td>
<td>Synthetic/integrative (conceptual improvements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTEGRATED EMPIRICAL ETHICS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Experience within social practice (theory is seen as a practice)</td>
<td>Interpretation, Evaluation, Methodology development</td>
<td>Research process: material context and normativeity</td>
<td>As a subject of study</td>
<td>Integrative (continuity of method between ethics and social sciences)</td>
<td>Strong interaction</td>
<td>Integrative (mutual constitution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICULARISTS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Social practice</td>
<td>Interpretation, Explanation</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>As subject of study</td>
<td>Inductive and case-based reasoning</td>
<td>No interaction</td>
<td>Integrative (theoretical unity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Overcoming fact and value gap

Our position:
1) Rejection of the radical fact-value distinction
2) Empirically grounded EoC
3) Related to integrated empirical ethics
4) Result of inductive qualitative research in continuous exchange with theoretical frames

What it learns us:
1) The emergence of goods (example: the relation as a good per se)
2) Lived meaning of facts (Sayer)
I Overcoming fact and value gap

What it learns us:
1) The emergence of goods + example: the relation as a good per se
2) Lived meaning of facts (Sayer)
3) Continuous adequate handling of morals in practices and by practitioners (phronesis)

This bridges in a certain way the fact-value gap
1) Generating critical insights
2) Keep moral reasoning empirically grounded
3) Away from moral dilemmas to ‘what makes care good care?’
4) More sources of relevant knowledge into the moral debate
5) The broadening of moral subject
6) Facts interpreted in an politically ethical reasoning
I. Overcoming fact and value gap

Why is this care ethical?

✓ Relational reasoning
✓ Object: good care
✓ The many sources of moral deliberation
✓ Priority to the 1st person’s perspective
✓ Pragmatic handling of the care – justice dichotomy

II. Intermezzo: a quick picture of the kind of research we do
II Intermezzo: picture of our research

A quick picture of the kind of research we do
1. Methodological characteristics
2. Examples: themes and objects
3. Immediate benefits / example of correction
4. Researcher and theorist in one person
III. The shift in attention by the empirical turn

A. Images of care beyond naivety
   a. Beyond the beauty of (the non-existing) purity
   b. Beyond the attractiveness of (non-existing) simplicity
   c. Beyond theory-driven irrelevance
   d. Beyond the artificial fixation of care
   e. Beyond the dream of healing and recovery
III Shift in attention by the empirical turn

B. Issues that matter
a. On the level of concepts → Beyond the luxury of generalities.

*1st illustration: not phased emotions but layered emotions*
III Shift in attention by the empirical turn

B. Issues that matter

c. On the level of concepts → Beyond the luxury of generalities.

1st illustration: not phased emotions but layered emotions

2nd illustration: key concept of relations is not just dependency but there are at least 6 more entries
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central question</th>
<th>Key concept</th>
<th>Relation to care</th>
<th>In short</th>
<th>Relations as...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origin of help when I am in need?</td>
<td>(Inter-)dependency</td>
<td>Ontological, Sociological fact</td>
<td>Care thanks to relations</td>
<td>Source of practical help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who may refuse care to another?</td>
<td>Nearness</td>
<td>Ethical, Inquiry into obligations</td>
<td>Care regardless of (personal) relation</td>
<td>Sources of ethical commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is care as an experience?</td>
<td>Being secured</td>
<td>Psychological, Experiential, the lived meaning of care</td>
<td>Care as (being in) relation</td>
<td>Sources of human beneficence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do we know what the (individual) other needs, desires, can tolerate etc.?</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Epistemological programming matrix</td>
<td>Care out of the relation</td>
<td>Sources of regulative knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do justice to the uniqueness of the care receiver as a social human being?</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Historical, Situatedness of the care receiver</td>
<td>Care within the network of relations</td>
<td>Sources of to be respected restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How caring contributes to good society</td>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>Political-ethical, The social order of caring</td>
<td>Care into (good) relations</td>
<td>Sources of social cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May the care receiver present him/herself as subject?</td>
<td>Subjectivity</td>
<td>Spacial and temporal, A stage to make your self known</td>
<td>Care beyond the relation</td>
<td>Source of becoming someone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introductie**
III Shift in attention by the empirical turn

B. Issues that matter

b. On the level of burning issues

• Professionalism and the formation of the care ethical professional
• How to induce care ethical organizational transitions?
• More than neediness
• The dominant care discourses

⇒ Conclusions
III Shift in attention by the empirical turn

B. Issues that matter

c. Emphasis on interdisciplinary
   • The development of crucial concepts
   • The typical care ethical research methodology; our way of doing empirical qualitative research (next sheets)

Methodological movement between critical conceptual, hermeneutic, phenomenological and qualitative empirical research
From the conceptual deep into the empirical and vice versa

Ethics of care – critical

Reflection zone: Epistemological Focus

Talk back

Sensitivity

Ethics of care – qualitative empirical

Introductie
III. Shift in attention by the empirical turn

B. Issues that matter

c. Emphasis on interdisciplinary
   • The development of crucial concepts
   • The typical care ethical research methodology: our way of doing empirical qualitative research (sheets)
   • The trajectory from multi, over inter- to intradisciplinary in the EoC

IV. The yield of the empirical turn
IV The yield of the empirical turn

Summary until now:

- Position of the empirically grounded EoC
- Characteristic: attentive to emergent goods, lived meaning and lived morals in such a way that a broad ethical reasoning about good care is possible.
- Impression of our empirical research, methodological and substantial
Summary until now:

- I explored the empirical turn and the shift of attention it has caused in three chapters:
  - One loses his / her innocence and arrogance
  - Concepts get alive, become specified and burning issues – so dominant in the everyday practice of care – come forward
  - The question how to develop EoC as an interdisciplinary endeavor becomes actual

Now the last steps: the results of the empirical turn (as far as not yet mentioned):

1. Generating and setting the agenda of the EoC
2. Generating critical insights:
   a. What are critical insights?
   b. The top 5 (6)
IV The yield of the empirical turn

Now the last steps: the results of the empirical turn (continued):

3. Generating a grounded theory of the EoC
   a. Putting together our empirical findings
   b. In dialogue with philosophy
   c. Just as I have done with the theory of presence (from 1992- until today) – long term endeavor

4. Back to the beginning of this lecture, back to the theory – including the empirical turn (since 2007 with Frans Vosman).