

Editorial

The fifth Special Issue of ABSTRACTA is dedicated to *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* (Routledge, 2007) by Michael Slote (University of Miami). We are proud to publish this critical discussion on such a relevant topic for ethical theory in general (embracing both normative ethics and metaethics), and whose importance extends to a range of related subjects such as moral psychology, philosophical psychology, the philosophy of action and of emotion, as well as feminism.

Taking inspiration from the sentimentalist tradition in moral philosophy and the contemporary work of care ethicists, in *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* Michael Slote takes seriously the possibility of an ethics *totally* based on the notion of care. The full-blooded care-based approach to ethics proposed in that book can be said to be distinct from other forms of care ethics in that it, firstly, makes ‘caring’ unequivocally the central notion of a theory about the content and nature of ethical judgements. But, secondly, it also puts *empathy* at the centre stage of such an ethical view. As Slote says,

Care ethicists often speak about empathy and its role in caring attitudes and relationships, but they haven’t stressed empathy to anything like the extent that I shall be doing here. I shall, for example, be making use of the recent literature of psychology to argue that empathy is the primary mechanism of caring, benevolence, compassion, etc. (*The Ethics of Care and Empathy*, p.4)

So, one of Slote’s main tasks (and challenges) in *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* is to justify and explain central ethical notions—like justice, autonomy, and rights—as well as to shed new light on old ethical questions from a broad empathy-based account of ethics. But this is not all. *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* is supposed to offer not only a coherent and significant view on ethics, but also to provide an alternative and superior approach to other traditional views such as utilitarianism and kantianism.

In the light of such an innovative, ambitious, and radical ethical project, the result of this critical discussion of Slote's work—having among its participants Annette C. Baier, John Cottingham, Julia Driver, and Nel Noddings—could not have been more stimulating.

We are thankful to all those who have taken part in this symposium for giving us the opportunity of publishing such a high-level discussion. We would like to thank, first of all, Michael Slote for his attention, time, and generous support throughout the process of editing this symposium, as well as for making it possible in the first place. We also thank the discussants who dedicated their time and effort to write their contributions, and who have made possible such an open and qualified academic debate. They are: Annette C. Baier, John Cottingham, Julia Driver and Nel Noddings. Last but not least, we are grateful to Routledge / Taylor & Francis Group for their kind and generous support.

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EDITORS.

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