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How an Ethics of Responsibility Enriches Shannon Sullivan's Transactional Epistemology

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HOW AN ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY ENRICHES SHANNON SULLIVAN'S
TRANSACTIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores feminist ethical theories in regards to their ability to enrich Shannon Sullivan's transactional epistemology (STE) presented in *Living Across and Through Skins*. The feminist ethical theories that will be explored within this paper include care ethics, as presented by Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, and responsibility ethics, as presented by Margaret Urban Walker. In order for a theory to enrich STE it must have an understanding of the person and environments as mutually constitutive of one another and subsequently apply this understanding to effectively address oppressive attitudes and behaviours, particularly those found in the application of rigid gender binaries, in a way that aims to dismantle them. Sullivan describes such an understanding of persons through the notion of "transactional bodies" and asserts that this understanding is significant to the goal of improving bodily existence. Sullivan places this goal of improving bodily existence as central to her philosophy, and to any philosophy that explores corporeal existence. The feminist ethical theory that best addresses the application of rigid gender binaries and thus contributes to STE's goal of improving bodily existence will be best suited for enriching STE.

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This paper will explore how feminist ethical theories operate within the transactional epistemology developed by Shannon Sullivan in *Living Across and Through Skins*. Sullivan's transactional epistemology (STE) presents a comprehensive way of knowing the world that takes into account the complexity of the person and the environments that influence the person. According to STE, we can most accurately understand the world through the mutually constitutive interaction between individuals and environments. Sullivan, however, notably characterizes what people often call "interaction" as "transaction", thus establishing the basis for STE. It is through an exploration and understanding of transactions that people gain knowledge, thus allowing for knowledge to be grounded in real lived experiences. It is in this deep connectedness of knowledge with lived experiences that feminist ethical theories can find common ground with STE.

This paper will explore the mutual goal that STE and feminist ethical theories share of improving bodily existence in the world by understanding the world through the multiplicity of individual lived experiences and the acknowledgement and examination of environments in which those perspectives have developed (Sullivan, 2001, p. 5). People exist within various environments with which they continually transact. Understanding how these various environments influence people is important to understanding how the gender binary is maintained. And addressing the role and impact of harmful gender binaries is an essential means for understanding individual lived experiences and moving towards the shared goal of improving bodily existence in the world, as the application of rigid gender binaries has long been used as a tool of oppression. I wish to highlight the importance of feminist ethical theories within STE by

providing an account of how feminist ethical theories, specifically care ethics and an ethics of responsibility, contribute to STE, particularly in their ability to address rigid gender binaries.

After presenting STE as the basis for this paper's discussion, I will examine care ethics and responsibility ethics respectively in relation to STE's major tenets in order to weigh the potential of each theory for enriching STE. In order for a theory to enrich STE it must understand the person and the environments as mutually constitutive of one another and apply this understanding to effectively address oppressive attitudes and behaviours, particularly those found in the application of rigid gender binaries, in a way that aims to dismantle them. This act of effectively addressing gender binaries constitutes action towards improving bodily existence. Thus, the feminist ethical theory that most accurately follows this path will be best suited for enriching STE by contributing to the realization of the goal of improving bodily existence.

Section 1: Sullivan's Transactional Epistemology

In *Living Across and Through Skins*, Shannon Sullivan draws inspiration from pragmatist and feminist philosophers to establish her transactional epistemology. To begin, Sullivan draws her use of the word "transactional" from John Dewey's pragmatist philosophy which places an emphasis on the physical body. The body, and thus the individual, can be defined by what Dewey describes as "transactions" (Sullivan, 2001, p.1). From this account, Sullivan (2001) seeks to "explore corporeal existence as transactional," by delving into the complex transactions that constitute bodily existence (p. 1). For Sullivan, using the notion of transactional bodies as the basis for her inquiry allows for understanding to be grounded in concrete lived experience, so as to avoid becoming overly abstract and, thus, risk losing applicability to real life (Sullivan, 2001, p. 4). Wishing to move away from abstract theory, what Sullivan (2001) presents is still

very much a theory, though one which "returns to concrete bodily life in order to test its fruits in lived experience." (p. 4). Such a theory has very much to offer in regards to understanding human life in a maximally cohesive and intricate manner, a manner that does not attempt to divide the individual or view them separately from their environments. People exist within various environments and in order to understand a person we must understand the diverse influences that these environments have on a person and the influences a person in turn has on these environments through their transactions. There are three major points essential to understanding Sullivan's transactional epistemology (STE) within the context of this paper, and these include the importance of the concept of *"transaction"*, a description of bodies as *activity* or doing, and the notion of *discursivity*.

Due to its particular definition and contrast with the word "interaction", it is important to note Sullivan's deliberate choice to use Dewey's concept of *"transaction"*. Sullivan's exploration of transactional bodies provides insight into an understanding of ourselves, the world, and our place within it. To transact means for something to be exchanged in some manner in a "back and forth" type of dynamic (Sullivan, 2001, p. 14). The body and its environments are in the process of constant "mutual influence and impact" and "mutual transformation" of one another (Sullivan, 2001, p. 1). "Interaction" does not do what is being described here justice as it cannot provide an accurate picture of the complex and intricate relationship at play (Sullivan, 2001, p. 13). The fundamental concern lies in the fact that "to interact" implies a body and environments which have developed and formed independently from one another, or in other words, are ontologically separate from one another, which is not the case (Sullivan, 2001, p. 12). Rather, taking the notion of exchange into account, "transaction" more fully captures the way a

body and its environments are entangled with one another in a complex manner by which they are in constant exchange.

Sullivan describes the individual as a "transactional" body and, in order to understand what this entails, it helps to take a closer look at what is meant by the use of the word "transactional". Transactions occur between our body and our environments, in a way that blurs the lines between self, other, and environment. To blur the lines is not to lose individual identity, but simply to understand the complex ways we shape and have been shaped by our environments and by one another, thus enriching our notion of identity. As Sullivan (2001) quotes Dewey, we live "as much in process across and 'through' skins as in process 'within skins'" (p. 13). I point this out simply to highlight the notion that "identity" is not an internal and static construct; rather it is a process that occurs across transactions as part of a much larger picture that includes our environments (Sullivan, 2001, p. 13) Once we are able to view ourselves and one another on this larger scale, then the manifestation of more complex transactions found in social, political, and ethical matters can be addressed.

An example of these complex transactions can be found in the application of rigid gender binaries within society. Sullivan (2001) addresses gender binaries as an important site for change because "current categories of sex and gender are extremely rigid: each member of the binary pair is defined in sharp opposition to the other" (p. 89). She claims that "the need to rethink contemporary conceptions of gender, and notions of sex and sexuality that transact with them, is urgent" because "the binary remains rigid and powerful enough to make life very dangerous for those who attempt to blur its boundaries." (Sullivan, 2001, p. 89-90). Gender binaries are rigid in the way that they are applied. From the moment we are born we are categorized under the binary

of "boy" or "girl" and become subject to the socialization, restrictions, and potential harms that follow as a result of being categorized under one of these rigid labels. Once a person is categorized it is difficult to define oneself outside the limits of this label due to the restrictive and comprehensive character of such labels. Gender binaries, therefore, can be described as rigid. A strong understanding of gender binaries requires the intricate transactions that produce them, as well as the ways gender binaries themselves further influence these transactions, to be taken into account.

Sullivan (2001) states that "the best way to understand and improve bodily existence is to concentrate on the environments and situations that effect bodies" (p. 11). We are as much a product of the environment as the environment is a product of our existence within it, and understanding this is essential to the possibility of creating change. As a result, "the best way to attempt to change the world is to transform a body's transactions with it" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 11). Addressing oppressive attitudes and behaviours is a significant way that bodily existence can be improved, as Sullivan highlights in the need to address the application of rigid gender binaries. Sullivan (2001) believes that "thinking about the world and the place of bodily existence in it should be at the heart of philosophy" and that thinking of bodies as transactional will be the best way to achieve this task (p. 11). This goal or theme of improving bodily existence is one that connects STE with feminist ethical theories and which makes exploring bodies as transactional so significant.

Understanding ourselves as "transactional" is significant because it allows for a holistic understanding of the individual. In absence of this "holistic" understanding, we have many understandings of persons that artificially separate the person into component parts. These

understandings of the self attempt to divide and separate different *aspects* of the self as though these aspects were ontologically separate pieces, rather than the self being ontologically whole from the beginning. Understandings of the self that attempt to divide or fragment the self invoke assumptions that may act as obstacles to understanding bodies in the world. The assumptions that a transactional understanding overcomes include the dualism of self and world, in addition to the atomism which follows as a consequence of this dualism (Sullivan, 2001, p. 12). Both of these assumptions are harmful because they present a fragmented view of ourselves that ignores the essential roles that others play in shaping the self. These include the cultural, social, and political meanings that have unquestionably influenced who we are in addition to how we understand ourselves and the way we transact with others.

To understand how these two assumptions are overcome, I would like to take a moment to look more closely at the body and the importance of Sullivan's use of the term "*body*" in particular. By "body", Sullivan refers to the individual as a whole, rather than the body in isolation or as a material vessel that somehow houses the individual. There are many benefits to viewing ourselves in terms of "bodies" compared to ways that seek to divide our bodies into varying parts (such as a mind or a soul) that exist within a body. To overcome this obstacle, Sullivan uses the word "body" to describe the entirety of a person. By viewing the body as the person, we can then look at our bodies as an integral part of our environments, and vice versa. This can be made possible by understanding bodies in terms of activity, that is, in what bodies *do*. When we view bodies in terms of activity, this activity is not internal and cut off from our environments, rather this activity *is* our transactions with our different environments.

Over time our transactions develop into habits, as "habits are formed in and through an organism's transactions with its various environments" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 33-34). Bodies can thus be understood in terms of collections of actions that form into patterns of behaviour and patterns of behaviour that naturally form into habits (Sullivan, 2001, p.3). In viewing ourselves in terms of individual bodies and in terms of what our bodies do, it becomes essential to also view our environments at the same time, as this is the only space in which our body can act. This highlights how closely our habits are formed in response to our environments which means that the key to creating change exists in understanding and changing how these habits are formed.

The first assumption a transactional understanding of the body overcomes is that of the dualism of self and world, understood through the opposition of "mind versus body". What a transactional understanding is able to provide is a holistic account in which all aspects that have shaped and influenced an individual are acknowledged and taken into account. Since Sullivan's notion of a transactional body firmly places the individual within the world, there is no "body" which appears within the world and then a mind which is *separate* from this body and untouched by said world. Other theories have described a mind which exists within a body, as well as a soul which is contained within or confined to a physical body, or anything else which presents the individual as fragmented. So rather than viewing ourselves within the confines of the "person in isolation" (i.e. a mind merely interacting with a body), STE aims to view ourselves as situated elements of our environments (Sullivan, 2001, p.4). In other words, by moving beyond the mind versus body dualism, focus can be given to the concrete aspects of how we transact with our environments.

STE provides a holistic account of the individual that allows attention to be drawn to the experienced world, as the "mind marks a particular way for some physical bodies who are organisms to transact with the world," (Sullivan, 2001, p. 26). Rather, the mind *is* the body insofar as it is inseparable from the body and a necessary part of what it means to be human. In other words, there is no metaphysically distinct mind to discuss. The mind and all that constitutes it can instead be viewed as an *activity* of the body. The mind cannot be viewed in isolation from the physical body anymore than people can properly be viewed in isolation of the environments in which we exist. And so an understanding of the individual as a "transactional body" overcomes the problem of atomism, as we have our own identity, but an identity which is not separate from the environments in which we exist, and which cannot be understood in isolation from the environments in which we exist (Sullivan, 2001, p. 19).

From here, we can now move beyond the belief that we are somehow beings separate and isolated from the world to begin understanding how the world is an important and inseparable part of who we are. This is significant because understanding the influence of our various environments as an inseparable part of who we are plays a crucial role in understanding important issues such as gender and the complex ways that gender roles can be used to restrict and harm individuals. Rather than gender being intrinsically linked to an individual, STE offers us a means of understanding gender as culturally and socially situated. In other words, we can understand gender as shaped, influenced, and perpetrated by current discourse. Sullivan describes this as the "discursivity" of the body which allows for one to be situated and thus further overcomes the problem of atomism. As such, the notion of "discursivity" is also essential to understanding Sullivan's transactional epistemology. Bodies, and thus their habits, can be

understood as "discursive", that is in relation to current discourse. Discourse includes the traditions, beliefs, and values of a culture and society. We cannot have an understanding of bodies which is separate from these cultural and social meanings of which they are a part (Sullivan, 2001, p. 41).

Conceiving of bodies outside of these meanings and contexts, in terms of "pre- or nondiscursive" bodies, has traditionally been used to justify oppression of one group over another. This happens when understanding based on a description of bodies that has been divorced from the cultural, social, and political meanings which have shaped them becomes the basis for understanding the person as a whole (Sullivan, 2001, p. 41). As Sullivan (2001) describes, "anatomical differences often have been used to justify the social and political oppression of some groups over others, such as men over women, white people over people of colour, the 'civilized' European over the native 'savage'" (p. 41).

Removing the body from the cultural and social meanings which *created* these oppressive attitudes or habits further harms the people who are subject to these oppressive attitudes and habits. Instead of viewing oppressive attitudes and habits as products of our various environments, they are viewed as products of the body and thus shift blame to the recipients of these negative attitudes rather than viewing them as the victims that they are. Sullivan (2001) highlights this in the presence of rigid gender binaries within society that confine and limit one's roles within society; as she states, to question and challenge this binary, "is to risk all the psychological, physical, emotional, financial, and other punishments that are meted out to gender traitors in society" (p. 89-91). In other words, our bodies cannot be understood outside of the cultural and social meanings that have shaped them. Discourse shapes our habits for transacting

with the world, and it is from these habits that oppressive attitudes can develop. And as these

types of habits become rigid and inflexible, this can result in the "enslavement" of an individual

(Sullivan, 2001, p. 33). It becomes essential that we are able to "recognize the discursivity of

gendered bodies not to neglect lived, bodily experience, but precisely so that one might better

understand and slowly transform it" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 63). In other words, if we can understand

ourselves and others as discursive bodies, then we can begin to see how certain habits have been

formed and we can begin to break down our own oppressive attitudes and those of society.

This discourse may place or remove certain pressures on an individual that ultimately

contributes to who the person is as a whole. For example, those categorized by society as

"biologically female" will experience very different transactions with their environments than

those categorized as "biologically male". Studies have observed adults "transacting" differently

with an infant depending on whether they were told the infant is male or female (Delk, Madden,

Livingston, et. al., 1986). Researchers found that those who were told a child was female

interacted with the child in feminine stereotyped ways and vice versa when told the child was

male (Delk, Madden, Livingston, et. al., 1986). These differences in transactions continue

throughout one's childhood, into adolescence, throughout the entirety of one's life, and will

ultimately contribute to the development of different gendered habits in each individual. These

gendered habits will then further reinforce certain attitudes that society holds about men and

women, whether positive or negative.

As a result of the mutual constitution of individuals and their environments, which

includes the current discourse, Sullivan (2001) states that "the best way to attempt to change the

world is to transform a body's transactions with it" (p. 11). In adopting a view of the self and the

world that adheres to Sullivan's theory, we can become more aware of the ways that we are transacting with our environments and how our environments, which include the current discourse, influence or affect the ways that we are transacting. This awareness can be applied to the categorization of individuals within the gender binary as either male or female. If people are categorized as female, for example, they are expected to transact with their environments in rather specific and often limited ways. The best way to address gender binaries then is to transform how we transact in gendered ways.

Sullivan (2001) suggests that this can be done by experiencing certain gendered habits outside of the types of transactions that have helped to form them (p. 106). This can help us become particularly aware of and ultimately question the habit. One way we can create change in the world comes from challenging the gender binary in this way. We can describe this as an attempt at transforming a body's transactions with its environments, and thus help contribute to Sullivan's goal of changing the world for the better. Since gendered habits have formed through certain transactions within specific environments or situations, witnessing or experiencing the performance of these gendered habits outside of the context in which they have been traditionally formed serves as a powerful way to challenge and question them. When we become more aware of gendered habits and begin to question and challenge them this serves as an important act of weakening the application of a rigid gender binary as the line that often harshly divides "male/masculine" and "female/feminine" will begin to become blurred.

It follows that this breaking down of gender binaries can aid in giving rise to an increased possibility for change. As Sullivan (2001) states in the beginning of *Living Across and Through Skins,* she wishes to "explore corporeal existence as transactional," and, in the process, explore

"some of the social, political, ethical, and epistemological implications of transactional bodies." (p. 1). This is important, because exploring the implications of transactional bodies in these various spheres of human life shows how these transactions might be changed in order to affect positive change on a personal level. It begins with acknowledging the role and impact of gender binaries on our transactions within these realms. This has the potential to create a "chain reaction" by means of continual, more conscious, transactions with the world. Change is often something that occurs slowly over time, but through adopting a view of the world and the individual as prescribed by STE, we can begin understanding how these changes are possible.

Exploring other areas of thought, such as ethics, within the context of STE encourages us to question *how* and *what* transactions have helped to form these theories that have been widely accepted and for whom they are beneficial. Sullivan (2001) summarizes the importance of understanding bodies as transactional to the continual process of change:

> holding that bodily activities are shaped by transactions with their environments is valuable to philosophy in particular, and to life in general, because such an understanding of bodying encourages people to ask whether, when, how, and for whom those transactions are beneficial (p. 64).

Asking these sorts of questions encourages greater self-awareness of harmful transactions, such as those most heavily influenced by gender binaries, and improves our ability to critically examine those types of transactions. The ability to acknowledge and examine harmful transactions in day-to-day life creates the potential for increasing the rate at which changes to these transactions might occur.

A transactional understanding of the world would require an ethical theory that is not overly abstract and thus inapplicable to the real lived experience that it addresses. By "overly abstract" I am referring to ethical theories that move beyond individual experiences in an attempt to attain objectivity, or a "neutral, 'God's eye' point of view, which feminists have shown to be covertly masculine" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 5). Moving forward it will remain important to continually return to lived experiences to test the fruits of the ethical theories to be addressed. Since gender binaries will be a common theme traced throughout this paper, it will be important to examine the ways that these ethical theories are influenced by gender binaries and to what degree they contribute to either maintaining or breaking them down. The result of these inquiries will reveal which feminist ethical theory is best suited for enriching STE and contributing to the goal of improving bodily existence in the world.

Section 2: How care ethics can enrich STE

Care ethics first emerged out of Carol Gilligan's (1982) work as a psychologist studying morality and moral development, and can be seen as a direct critique of popular developmental models in psychology at the time which "implicitly adopt[ed] the male life as norm, [and] tried to fashion women out of a masculine cloth" (pp. 1, 6). Gilligan's (1982) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development,* was concerned in particular with the theory of moral development posited by Lawrence Kohlberg (p. 18). Kohlberg's work and his notion of 'moral maturity' was "derived from the study of men's lives and reflects the importance of individuation in their development" and, therefore, is inapplicable to women and instead becomes a tool to support the notion of their moral inferiority to men (Gilligan, 1982, p. 17, 18). In other words, "a problem in theory became cast as a problem in women's development"

(Gilligan, 1982, p. 7). "Care thinking" emerged largely in opposition to what Gilligan (1982)

referred to as "justice thinking", or the type of moral thought favoured by men (p. 164, 167;

Saul, 2003, p. 212).

Care ethics is favourable for the purpose of enriching STE due to its attention to the

existence of gender binaries, the way it views the individual as transactional, and its

acknowledgement of the influence of discourse. Gilligan (1982), through the course of her own

work, developed her theory of "care thinking" as an approach to morality favoured by women (p.

164; Saul, 2003, p. 212). We can see how Gilligan (1982) attempts to address the gender binary

through her belief that this "different voice" she is describing is "characterized not by gender but

theme" and that "its association with women is an empirical observation" (p. 2). She attempts to

address gender binaries by including the experiences of women in theories that are otherwise

based solely on specific men and their experiences, and then passed off as "gender neutral"

(Gilligan, 1982, p. 6). This acknowledgment of the gender binary is an important feature of care

ethics as it moves moral theory a step away from those theories that use "male as norm" then

present them as "gender neutral". For this reason, care ethics can find some common ground

with STE, in terms of its concerns regarding gender.

Care ethics also views people in a way that supports Sullivan's transactional

understanding of individuals. Carol Gilligan (1982) describes the development of female gender

identity as an "ongoing process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community"

(p. 156). Jennifer Saul, on Gilligan's care ethics, explains that "women view themselves

primarily as situated in a complex web of interrelationships, [and] emphasize particular contexts

over general principles" (Saul, 2003, p. 213). We can see here how care ethics might be relevant

to STE as it describes the individual as "situated in a complex web of interrelationships", thus taking into account the mutually constitutive or "transactional" nature of our existence. By situating the individual and placing an emphasis on the role of community and "particular contexts over general principles," care ethics continues to present ideas shared by STE by taking the environments and others into account. Within ethics, the task of "situating" oneself becomes imperative because "more philosophers are in the plane of morality, not hovering above it or perched outside it," and as such, ethical theories must be understood as emerging from a "particular social place" (Walker, p. 26, 27).

Lastly, care ethics also takes the discursivity of individuals into account. As necessarily situated, we must be situated within a certain discourse, which means that in order to understand someone's situation or perspective we must first understand their actions as influenced by the customs, beliefs, and traditions of the community in which they find themselves. By "situating" ourselves, we are acknowledging that the culture and society in which we live plays an integral part in who we are. In other words, we are part of many different communities and our "transactions" within these communities. Care ethics views individuals as "fundamentally interdependent" in that we continually require care from others throughout our lives in order to flourish (Saul, 2003, p. 214). This "interdependence" can be compared to a major belief of STE: we do not exist nor can we be understood in isolation from one another. It is in this notion of "interdependence" that we can see the role of community emerge. If all humans are interdependent in varying ways, then every individual exists as a member of a community or communities. We cannot be understood in isolation, just as we do not exist in isolation from other humans. The community in which we live exists as a necessary part of our environments

and as such plays an essential role in who we are. As we go on, we will continue to see how these similarities can be used to enrich STE.

Before exploring how these similarities can enrich STE, we will first contrast care ethics with traditional ethical theories to demonstrate the shortcomings of traditional ethical theories within STE and to highlight the strengths of care ethics for enriching STE. In her article, *The revolutionary fact of compassion: William James, Buddhism, and the feminist ethics of care*, Cathryn Bailey (2012) describes "traditional ethical theories" as favouring "values associated with men, such as individualistic autonomy and abstract justice" (p. 184). These types of theories have been criticized by feminists for the fact that they often "obscure the particularity of moral actors and relations by emphasizing universality, sameness, and repeatability, excluding or regimenting emotional experience" (Walker, p. 51). "Traditional" ethical theories fail to account for the reality of different individual experiences and instead "stem in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation" and that "single mode" comes from the lives of certain men (Gilligan, 1982, p. 173). Traditional ethical theories, therefore, are harmful within STE and can be contrasted with care ethics on three particular grounds: the harms and limits of attempting to establish an objective moral theory, the characteristics of the moral agent, and the role of reason versus emotions in addressing moral dilemmas.

Objectivity attempts to reach an understanding of the world that is not influenced by human experience or emotion. Since all understandings of the world emerge from individual perspectives and experiences such a task is impossible to achieve. Many standard ethical theories relied on what Gilligan referred to as "justice thinking", which emphasizes objectivity, universal principles, impartiality, reason, and rights (Saul, 2003, p. 210). Due to the fact that each person

employing "justice thinking" would necessarily be doing so from their own limited perspective which would have been shaped and influenced by their transactions with their environments, such "objective" and "impartial" ideas are impossible to reach in reality. There can be no "God's eye perspective" of understanding a person's actions. Relying on a "supposedly universal list of moral directives" becomes inaccurate and insincere on the part of the proponents of such theories (Bailey, 2012, p. 191). There is no "objective and universalizable" account of what actions are right or wrong, or when and why they are right or wrong because our actions are always influenced by the time and place in which they are occurring. What action might be wrong in one situation could be right in another; in other words, there are simply too many "grey areas" and objectivity lacks the perspective to address them.

With this lack of perspective, traditional ethical theories have potential for harm in the form of oppression through gender and other biases (Walker, p. 51). The notion of "objective and universally grounded moral theories," which characterize standard moral philosophies "have...been used as instruments of oppression and exclusion." (Bailey, 2012, p. 184). Women have been "carefully socialized into their feminine roles" by society, a fact that is often ignored by traditional moral theorists who, instead of suggesting that women should be afforded the same opportunities to develop their capacities as men, would rather claim that women simply don't have those capacities (Saul, 2003, p. 200-202). Care ethics acknowledges that these differences between men and women are due to their gendered "transactions" with the world rather than an innate characteristic found in the hypothetical "nondiscursive body", that STE rejects (Gilligan, 1982, p. 2).

Accounts of what is right or wrong, or good or bad, are not objective and universally grounded, but "rather [right and wrong, good and bad] emerge from our experience and are to be transformed by use," which is the basis on which an ethics of care operates (Bailey, 2012, p. 191).What is right or wrong can be revealed only when environments, including the current discourse within those environments, are used as the backdrop for such inquiries. It is only through such a practice that ethics can take on any sort of valuable meaning and provide practical advice. Traditional ethical theories, "prescribe the representation of morality as a compact, propositionally codifiable, impersonally action-guiding code within an agent," that "demotes a great deal of what is known, felt, and acted out in moral relations to 'nonmoral'--merely factual or collateral--information" (Walker, 1998, p. 7, 8). Essentially, care ethics allows for the transactional and discursive aspects of existence to be included in its analysis of ethical problems on a situation by situation basis.

Care ethics confronts objectivity by positing a theory that attempts to explain the reality of morality found in real lived experiences. Nel Noddings (2013), who helped to develop an ethics of care out of Gilligan's initial work, states, "if a substantial segment of humankind approaches moral problems through a consideration of the concrete elements of situations and a regard for themselves as caring, then perhaps an attempt should be made the enlighten the study of morality in this alternative mode" (p. 28). This involves viewing the individual within their various environments. So where other ethical theories have failed to view the individual as inseparable from their environment and the current discourse, care ethics does not. Since care ethics takes into account the transient nature of existence and the need to assess each moral

decision individually within its particular context, it can be said to reject objectivity and thus align with STE's major tenets.

Within traditional ethical theories that aim to be objective, the type of moral agent that must be posited is completely incompatible with STE's major tenets. Ethical theories that prioritize "justice thinking" view "moral agents as autonomous individuals rather than beings thoroughly enmeshed in connections with and dependencies on others" (Saul, 2003, p. 213). These kinds of ethical theories, therefore, cannot align with the idea of the body as transactional and discursive. This can become harmful because it removes the moral agent from their environments, and in doing so, misses many variables necessary for making a fair moral judgement or decision. In addition to this, ethical theories have traditionally pushed the primacy of reason over emotion in making judgements and aiming for "mathematical type certainty". Again this is not cohesive with STE because it removes the need for context that transactions and discourse provide. It would follow then that standard ethical theories are insufficient and, thus, a different ethical theory is needed that will work in greater unity with the major tenets of STE.

In contrast, care ethics provides better means for viewing the "transactional body" within the realm of ethics because it provides an account of ethics which is applicable to STE and thus posits a much more favourable moral agent than traditional ethical theories. Care ethics has the potential to create a move towards positive change by questioning and rejecting the views found in traditional "masculinist" ethical theories that "ignore or degenerate the role of emotion in knowing and interacting with the world" (Bailey, 2012, p. 195). And in doing so, Noddings (2013) explains that a difficulty arises when we approach "morality or ethical behaviour from a rational-cognitive approach", because "we fail to share with each other the feelings, the conflicts,

the hopes and ideas that influence our eventual choices" (p. 8).The way that we think and feel can be described as an aspect of how we transact, because STE holds hope for potential positive change, it would follow that a theory of ethics which takes into account these transactions could help to enrich STE.

The role of reason versus emotion has long been debated within ethics as traditional ethical theories have prized reason as the epitome of what it means to be human; what separates us from other living organisms. In doing so, a large portion of human experiences have been ignored and shut off as unimportant. It is here in ethics, and in philosophy in general, that we can identify the reason versus emotion dualism that has not only prized reason as the only means capable of examining ethical problems, but has also been used as a means of oppression against women. This dichotomy links directly to gender binaries. Reason has been associated positively with men, as a means of explaining why there have historically been more male thinkers in academia for example. Seemingly only men act in accordance with their reason and only reason is needed to be a good thinker. While emotions have been negatively associated with women, as an attempt to discourage women from becoming such thinkers. Supposedly to think in a way that utilizes emotion in any capacity is to be a poor thinker. This either/or condition of the reason versus emotions dichotomy, in which people are described as applying *only* reason or *only* emotion while thinking, is a rigid and fragmented way to view thought processes. This dichotomy links directly to gender binaries because it is rigidly applied to different people based on the gender society has categorized that person as.

Care ethics addresses the reason versus emotion problem by introducing caring as a real means of addressing ethical problems. Instead of favouring reason or emotions, care ethics takes

an important step towards dismantling this dichotomy by acknowledging the need for reason and emotions to work together and inform one another. Since caring has long been viewed as a duty for women to concern themselves with inside the home it has been viewed as unimportant or unworthy of examination. Caring has largely been associated with women due to the fact that the act of caring about someone often involves emotional labour. Care ethics gives attention to this aspect of bodily experience found in our emotions, thus presenting emotions as capable of playing an important role within ethics. In addressing this reason versus emotions dichotomy, care ethics is taking an important step towards addressing the gender binaries that the dichotomy reinforces.

Care ethics is important to STE because it provides the means for not only viewing individuals within the realm of ethics in such a way that is consistent with STE, but which also provides potential for mediating these harms. Sullivan (2001) points towards the need for different areas of thought to come together so as to enrich one another, which is evident through her own use of "cross-fertilizing of pragmatism and feminism, along with phenomenological and genealogical philosophy" to advance philosophy in a positive direction (p. 170). So it would be consistent with Sullivan's beliefs that there is much to be learned by "cross-fertilizing" different areas of thought to arrive at her goal of improving transactions. Improving transactions through addressing the existence of rigid gender binaries is an important part of this.

Where traditional ethical theories relied on the experiences of men, care ethics brings forward experiences of women as an equally important part of moral theorizing. In doing so, care ethics allow for us to experience gendered habits (i.e. how women assess moral problems) as a legitimate voice, thus, allowing a theory to be built that relies on the experiences of women. This

is an important step forward in terms of improving human transactions because it legitimizes the experiences and voices of at least some women in an area of thought that has otherwise been dominated by men's experiences and voices. In addition, the new legitimization of experiences and voices of women works to further challenge gender binaries by utilizing traditional feminine roles in a non-traditional way. The gendered habit of caring, which has long been a "woman's labour", is being expressed outside of the transactions that had originally formed them, namely performing caring labour in the home. Care ethics has instead presented caring as an ethical standpoint, thus taking it beyond the act of caring for one's family and home out of necessity. The experience of the gendered habit of caring outside of the transactions that had formed it has certainly caused many to become aware of and question the absence of such experiences within the field of ethics up to that point.

Care ethics is important in STE because it examines transactional bodies as moral agents through an ethics that is consistent with STE's ideas. Viewing bodies within an ethical discourse can provide not only a deeper understanding of the importance of understanding bodies as transactional and discursive, but a demonstration of the importance of STE as a theory in general. In addition, we can consider the importance it holds for moving beyond harmful and oppressive attitudes that opposing theories may perpetrate. Through care ethics, a more comprehensive and *holistic* account of the individual is developed because an ethics of care takes into account the context of each situation in question, including "the participants, their feelings, needs, impressions, and so on" (Nodding, 2013, p. 3). Much like STE moves attention to more productive concerns (by moving past the mind-body dualism), so too does an ethics of care move attention to more productive concerns by moving past the reason versus emotion dualism within

ethics or the alleged need for an objective theory. These 'more productive concerns' include oppressive attitudes perpetrated by the opposing theories and provide support for Sullivan's ultimate goal of enhancing bodily existence.

Section 3: How care ethics gave rise to responsibility ethics

We can now introduce responsibility ethics as a yet more favourable framework for replacing 'justice thinking' styles of ethics. Responsibility ethics is born out of care ethics in that it takes into account the notion of caring; however, it looks beyond the mother-child relationship as the epitome of a caring relationship capable of representing all humans. Instead it takes this notion of "caring for one another" and expands it. Margaret Urban Walker's expressive-collaborative model of responsibility ethics posits that when one is caring for another, that person in some sense has a responsibility to the person for whom they are caring (Walker, 1998, p. 78). It is this notion of "responsibility" that is of greatest importance because people do not only have responsibilities to those for whom they care, but they also have responsibilities to those who care for them, we have responsibilities to our community, even those members of our community with whom we lack any direct relationship. This is important because responsibility implies a sense of duty and accountability. In other words, we do not necessarily have to *care* about someone else in order to have some sort of responsibility towards them. "Responsibility" does not do away with the notion of caring and rather caring becomes but one example of a responsibility we might have towards another (Walker, 1998, p. 108).

Care ethics historically gave rise to responsibility ethics in order to limit the overemphasis care ethics places on the role and importance of a maternal voice (as a voice for all women) which provides a limited and narrow view of ethics. While the maternal voice certainly

provides some important insights that are helpful to STE, using it as a basis for a complete ethical theory loses sight of STE's goal of addressing the gender binary by looking through too narrow of a lens. An ethics of responsibility, however, is able to continue from where care ethics was incomplete, simply by examining further what is at the root of "caring". When we care for someone, in some sense we also have a responsibility to them. While caring can certainly play an important role in responsibility, it is not a prerequisite for that responsibility to exist. We may not automatically *care* in a real and concrete way about those people we have never met, or for such an abstraction as "humanity as a whole", but we certainly have a *responsibility* towards these people. We have a responsibility to not cause harm to others and if we are able to positively influence or affect others in some sort of capacity then we have a responsibility to do so. It is in this *responsibility* that we can find more solid ground to work from than we could with care ethics.

Care ethics brings us in the right direction in that we are moving past the "masculinist" views of traditional ethical theories and thus it appears suitable for moving towards the goal of improving transactions. Sullivan, however, posits that rigid gender binaries should receive urgent attention and should remain an important point for these changes. While care ethics does move us a step into the right direction in the sense that it is "testing" gendered ways of acting and thinking by bringing the perspectives and experiences of women from the private sphere to the public sphere, thus challenging the dominant masculinist perspectives, it does fall short in some important ways. Care ethics challenges gendered perspectives, but does so by positing female gendered perspectives. Replacing one gendered moral theory with another gendered moral theory does not address this issue at the source which is the *rigid gender binaries*. So while care ethics

is a promising contributor to STE's goal of addressing gender binaries, there are various flaws it possesses which limit its effectiveness for breaking these gender binaries down and, thus, for enriching STE.

While concern has been raised in regards to "the authority of some men to represent 'people'," the same criticism can be raised about "the authority of some women to represent 'women'" (Walker, 1998, p. 24). Many feminists have critiqued care ethics because it places an over-emphasis on the role and the importance of a particular type of maternal voice as a voice for all women, and as a voice which all *people* should listen to as a moral authority. It makes various assumptions, including the assumptions that (1) there is only one single maternal voice representative of all mothers, (2) that all women possess a maternal voice, and that (3) that maternal voice is the same for every woman across every period of time, across every culture, and across every individual situation regardless if she is a mother or not (Saul, 2003, p. 216, Walker, 1998, p. 57). Beyond all, it assumes that the maternal voice is one which should be valued more than any other, so much so that it is capable of functioning as a source of moral authority for everyone.

Other theorists, including Walker (1998) are critical of care ethics, as she states care ethics "valorizes stereotypes of bottomless feminine nurturance and self-sacrifice that continue to haunt women while politically disempowering and personally exhausting them," (p. 108). While care ethics *does* take into account the changing position and situation of those that it is assessing, it does so from the single fixed perspective of a maternal voice that attempts to understand all moral situations in terms of caring. In addition, this single fixed perspective is one that is harmful to women since it perpetuates oppressive stereotypes of what it means to be a woman. Women's

bodily existence extends far past the limiting role of caretaker, and in fact, may not even include this role at all. As Walker (1998) notes, "a care 'ethic' can look like the lamentable internalization of an oppressively servile social role" (p. 108).

A theory of ethics that situates itself, not only as a fixed perspective, but as a fixed highly rigid *gendered* perspective could never be sufficient to truly enrich STE. Sullivan focuses on the changing nature of the individual through her emphasis and focus on the transactional and discursive nature of the body. Just as standard ethical theories fall short due, in part, to their limited and fixed perspective, care ethics falls short for this same reason. In addition, Sullivan has made it clear that in order to improve human transactions, an essential step must include the move away from rigid gender binaries. Care ethics cannot support this goal of STE in a truly meaningful way because care ethics essentially rests upon a single fixed perspective and because this perspective is a rigid gendered perspective that perpetuates harmful stereotypes of women, both of these reasons make care ethics fundamentally incompatible with STE as a whole.

A meaningful point that care ethics and responsibility ethics highlight is the application of morality to the supposedly "private sphere" of life. While we abandon care ethics going forward, it has certainly brought us a step in the appropriate direction. One major sense in which traditional ethical theories have been masculinist is in the way they only applied morality within the "public sphere" of life. This can be seen as a result of a majority of theorists being men who often had wives at home taking care of the family and other private matters. Since this aspect of life was left for the women to manage it was deemed unimportant and low-ranking on the list of things worth discussing, thus leaving the private sphere of life unfit for philosophical discussion (Saul, 2003, p. 213-214). In addition, avoiding such discussions allowed them to avoid truly

noticing and examining women's position in society and was thus "important to preserving the subordination of women," (Saul, 2003, p. 214). Theories were constructed to make sense only if people were "autonomous rather than fundamentally interdependent," and so women's position in society was often at odds with these theories (Saul, 2003, p. 214). In other words, the avoidance of applying theory to the "private sphere" works to "keep some people and what happens to them outside the view of some authoritative community of mutual moral accounting" (Walker, 1998, p. 172).

An example of avoidance to address the private sphere of life, which functioned to maintain women's position in society second to men, can be found in the application of laws regarding rape. Rape laws have been applied differently depending on whether the rape occured within the "private sphere", involving a husband and a wife, or outside of this sphere, involving a man and a woman who do not know one another (Walker, 1998, p. 173). Prejudices like these become "culturally normative" in that the prejudices themselves are not questioned or deliberated upon, so "it feels like business as usual" (Walker, 1998, p. 181). Bringing attention to the private sphere of life and examining it as it deserves to be is an important way that feminist ethical theories can be used to enrich STE and help to further Sullivan's goal of addressing oppressive attitudes and behaviour. Where care ethics fails to fully address this issue due to it functioning within the gender binary, responsibility ethics offers a means past these shortcomings.

In order for transformation and change to occur, the categorization of rigidly gendered habits must be changed. Any theory that operates within these "rigid gender binaries" will only contribute to the continuation of harmful gendered transactions and stereotypes and, thus,

oppressive attitudes and behaviours. As Sullivan (2001) states, "to eliminate [old habits and customs] without creating new ones is to ensure that only the old habits and customs are available to fill their own place" (p. 95). If the habits that traditional ethical theories have helped to create are to be transformed or changed, there must be some other structure for discussing ethics that can replace it. That structure cannot be found in care ethics because care ethics is merely replacing one gendered way of thinking with another gendered way of thinking. So due to the fact that care theory relies very heavily on favouring the maternal voice and perpetuates the binary association of women with parenting it is hardly a satisfactory replacement. This is where we can begin to see the need and benefit of turning entirely away from a theory of ethics which is overly focused on one perspective, especially a gendered perspective, whether implicitly or explicitly.

Responsibility ethics goes beyond the gendered perspective found in justice style ethics in that it is not limited by a male-dominated perspective. By "male-dominated perspective" I do not mean a perspective that is *innately* male, or a perspective that is held by all male individuals, only that these perspectives are heavily influenced and informed by the privileged positions and experiences males are often afforded in society, as all major theorists have been male. It might help to look more closely at what *makes* a perspective or habit "gendered". It certainly is not the mere nature of being classified as male at birth, but rather a by-product of the different experiences, transactions, and learned habits that such authors confront and learn as a consequence of being assigned male. While there may prove to be subtle differences based on sex, "the size and the significance of those biological differences will depend, *in every single instance*, on the situational context in which women and men live their lives" (Bem, 2007, p.

141). It is in the way in which children are raised and taught to transact with others that shape

these gendered habits. Since each one of us must think from our own situated perspective, it can

be difficult to think beyond or outside of our own gendered perspectives as is evident with

traditional ethical theories including care ethics. However, becoming aware of these

perspectives, as responsibility ethics attempts to do, can help to mediate them.

In addition to the concern of its limits, care ethics also loses some of its traction when

taking a deeper look at how the term "care" itself is defined. It is unclear who exactly we should

be caring for and who should be caring for us. Noddings (2013) defines caring as involving an

encounter or sets of encounters "characterized by direct attention and response", which is to say,

"it involves the establishment of a caring relation, person-to-person contact of some sort" (p.

153). This requirement of a direct connection between carer and cared-for raises the concern as

to who one is in fact obligated to care about beyond such relationships, for example, larger

obligations to people we will never meet, such is the case with massive environmental pollution

or the use of nuclear weapons (Card, 2002, p. 151). Noddings (2013) does allow for the notion of

"caring about" (in contrast to "caring for"), though this is vaguely defined as varying from

simply "expressing concern" without acting on that concern, to perhaps "making a donation to a

charitable organization" (p. 162). While it is true that we might "care about" a problem, this does

not fully capture what our obligations or responsibilities to act may entail. Perhaps we should be

obligated to care about these problems, but this does not really tell us very much in terms of

moral actions or duties. So in addition to its limited perspective, care ethics is further limited in

the scope of its applicability. Within STE, it becomes clear that we are part of many different

communities or environments on many different scales, and we transact with each of those

environments in different ways, and so one holds a variety of different responsibilities within each of these communities or environments.

There are many individuals who may influence or have responsibilities regarding us and whom we may also influence and hold responsibilities regarding, and yet we may never actually physically encounter each other. Care ethics could not adequately account for these transactions since it involves some sort of connection between the carer and the cared for or simply the notion of caring about without any sort of action. It does not follow that we have no more than an obligation to "care about" these individuals in an abstract sense, rather we have a responsibility to these individuals to act regardless if we "care about" them or not. Our obligation is in taking responsibility, on an individual and collective scale, for human pain and suffering in the world in the form of action. What these responsibilities look like will differ from person to person and will often be limited to a person's community and the things that they can do at that moment. These actions could be as simple as questioning a sexist comment someone makes to something more involved such as volunteering one's time for a local cause. There are many opportunities, both large and small, that arise for a person to act on and thus to take on the responsibility of improving the world for one another.

The idea that we hold responsibilities for one another is not a new idea within ethics. Walker (1998) claims that "it has been revealing to see which-- or better, whose-- responsibilities are spotlighted as representative of 'moral obligations,' and which [whose] do not show up at all" (p. 77). Responsibilities have always had a role in ethics; however, it is those responsibilities that men within the public sphere hold that are seen as representative of "moral obligations" as a whole, while those responsibilities that we see in the private sphere of life that involve women's

responsibilities to her family and within her home (as prescribed by society) have long been ignored and essentially seen as irrelevant within morality. The problem with this is that predominantly "men's responsibilities" are not representative of a large majority of people, including women and other marginalized groups. This same sort of problem is evident within care ethics which views responsibility through "the lens of 'care'" and thus focuses solely on caretaking responsibilities (Walker, 1998, p. 78). In the face of "the distribution of caring labours disproportionately to women in our society, more disproportionately still to women who are relatively poor and nonwhite," care ethics provides us with an ethics that does not apply well to a large majority of people and circumstances (Walker, 1998, p. 78). This is significant because "if gender is a feature of status revealed in who gets to do what to whom, it also shows in who is expected or permitted to do what to whom." (Walker, p. 78).

Walker (1998) notes that "gender partly consists in distinct assignments and assumptions of responsibility, and attracts them" (p. 78). These responsibilities, however, can reach beyond "caring" to provide a more complete picture of human ethics. Responsibilities are not only to others, but also to oneself, to one's community, and to humanity as a whole. As a result, responsibility ethics is able to take those things within care ethics that showed the most promise and build upon them in a manner that will provide a more applicable theory that is more in tune with STE. This is possible because the underlying notion of "caring" is the idea that we have responsibilities to ourselves and to others. Therefore, focusing on responsibilities in general, rather than only through the lens of caring and the maternal voice, a greater ethical scope is able to be established.

Section 4: How responsibility ethics will serve STE better than care ethics

In contrast to the limited scope of action prescribed by caring, Walker (1998) presents responsibility as a practice that is realized through action and engagement (p. 60). Walker (1998) describes responsibility in terms of practices and so through allotting and accepting responsibility there is a sense in which we are required to act or "practice" responsibility (p. 94). We can see how the practice of responsibility is action-oriented through the examples of things that we can be responsible for, including "specific tasks or goals, roles with discretionary powers, acts and failures to act, outcomes and upshots of actions, contributions to outcomes that are not ours alone, and attitudes, habits, and traits" (p. 94). In accepting responsibility, for performing a certain gendered habit for example, one is acknowledging the need for change and, thus, must act in a way that reflects having taken responsibility for such a habit. It becomes apparent that the language of "caring" is not extensive enough to encompass the abundant and intricate types of responsibilities found within and across individuals and their communities. We can look again to Walker (1998) who puts it succinctly, "I prefer the more capacious language of responsibility as a conceptual framework for ethics; it invites us to follow the trails of people's diverse responsibilities through different domains" (p. 78).

Sullivan's transactional epistemology defines bodies in terms of their actions, so an ethics that is focused on the practice of allotting and accepting responsibilities will serve STE better than an ethics that places a narrow focus on the action of caring. Caring for another can exist as a general feeling of "caring about" them, which would not necessitate action as we can care about something or someone without acting on that feeling. And when caring can be seen in terms of action, these actions are often narrow in scope due to the fact that caring has long been a gendered action. As Walker (1998) states, "while caring is fundamental, the amount and degree

to which it is taken up is largely based on gender" (p. 78). We can see this in the way that

"gender partly consists in distinct assignments and assumptions of responsibility," as caring

becomes but one type of responsibility largely assigned and assumed by women (Walker, 1998,

p. 78).

Within Walker's expressive-collaborative model of responsibility ethics, the goal is to

uncover what morality *is* and what it is *for* by looking at "moral life as a continuing negotiation

among people, a practice of mutually allotting, assuming, or deflecting responsibilities of

important kinds, and understanding the implications of doing so." (Walker, 1998, p. 60)

Collaboration is a necessary aspect of action when considering ethical problems. Walker (1998)

notes that all moral agents are "*situated* in (typically multiple, overlapping) epistemic

communities," and "it is communities, not individuals, that maintain the resources for acquiring

and certifying knowledge," (p. 57). Walker's (1998) expressive-collaborative model looks at

how moral knowledge is "produced and sustained within communities," (p. 59). In this way,

actions are evaluated based not only on the people directly involved, but also on how those

actions fit within and are understood by the community as a whole.

As Claudia Card (2002) states about Walker's responsibility ethics, "we have

responsibilities regarding many people...with whom either we do not share moral understandings

or it is unclear what moral understandings we share" (p. 150). This means that we will not

always find agreement between or across communities in terms of what is right or wrong, so

while we may not share moral understanding with one another, there will be responsibilities on

which we can agree to, such as the responsibility "not to poison [other communities'] water, soil,

and air" (Card, 2002, p. 150). Relationships within an ethics of responsibility therefore are

coherent with STE's transactional and discursive body in the way that responsibility ethics understands the individual as enmeshed within a complex array of relationships across multiple communities and also the importance of taking this point into consideration if we are to truly understand the morality of an action or actions as they must be understood in relation to the moral understandings of the community in which they arose. This is important because it acknowledges the impossibility of establishing an objective account of morals, but rather finds common ground between individuals, communities, and cultures in terms of responsibilities we hold to one another.

In addition, an ethics of responsibility helps to enrich STE by addressing moral problems in such a way that mediates for gender differences. While traditional ethical theories are more applicable to the "public sphere" of life, not to mention *men's* experience of the "public space", and care ethics focuses more closely on the "private sphere" of life from the woman's perspective, responsibility ethics is applicable across both these spheres of life and across gender. As Walker (1998) notes, "a lot of what we need in order to understand specifically moral judgements or principles goes beyond specifically moral matters. We need to understand a *social world*." (p. 203) Therefore, the social world in its entirety, including both private and public spheres of life, must be examined. Responsibility ethics does not favour a particular experience when considering or explaining ethical problems, but rather allows the person or people and environments to set the stage for inquiry. This is important if we are to move past rigid gender binaries and understand individuals within the contexts that helped to establish their habits and styles of acting. When working alongside STE, an ethics of responsibility can help to turn the "causal arrow" around so that instead of blaming one's classification as a particular gender, race,

or class for one's actions, we can uncover how one's various environments have influenced these actions. Then we can begin to move beyond the confines of such harmful labels and stereotypes.

Responsibility ethics moves past the problem of individual responsibility to encompass group and collective responsibility, which is also cohesive with STE in that a person cannot be viewed in isolation from their environments and those around them. There is difficulty in doing this, however, as it does involve the act of balancing responsibility between the individual as well as the social structures which have influenced that individual. By placing a greater focus on individual relationships, as care ethics tends to do, the influence of our environments and community tends to fall into the background. While placing greater focus on the environment might cause the role of individual agency to instead fall into the background. A person must remain responsible for their actions and the choices that they have made, while at the same time acknowledging the role and influence that environments may have played in making those choices.

Acknowledging the role of a person's various environments in their choices and actions is not to remove responsibility from that person, but simply to gain a deeper understanding of that person and their individual situation. This can help us to recognize and address issues as they arise and help to mediate harmful stereotypes of people. If people within a poorer community are stealing it might be easy for others to stereotype those people as untrustworthy and weak-willed. These people are still responsible for their actions and should be held accountable; however, by examining the influence of the environments in which they made the decision to steal, it could be revealed that there are not enough social resources available and something should also be done about this lack of resources. This example shows how individual

responsibility should exist alongside social responsibility and how understanding the two *together* can begin to move us beyond the careless and uncritical act of stereotyping people.

An ethics of responsibility takes into account our interconnectedness with others and the environments in which we exist. This is where responsibility ethics answers with a much broader and encompassing perspective that acknowledges the presence of different points-of-view and the ways that our position in the world and to one another can affect how we view ethical responsibility. Walker (1998) states that "an expressive-collaborative model looks at moral life as a continuing negotiation *among* people, a practice of mutually allotting, assuming, or deflecting responsibilities of important kinds, and understanding the implications of doing so" (p. 60). It acknowledges the historical and social context that we live in and makes judgements within this context and allows for disagreements without compromising respect and responsibility towards others.

Responsibility ethics supports STE's notion of discursive and transactional bodies by acknowledging the continuously changing nature of human life and the need to take the environments into account. Responsibility ethics *situates* the individual in a way that previous ethical theories have not been successfully able to do and can therefore help to mediate the concern about gender binaries. The outcome of rigid gender binaries, expressed in gendered performances and prejudiced and oppressive actions and attitudes, can become something that we take collective responsibility for perpetrating. While both traditional ethics and care ethics have seemed to posit a "pre- or nondiscursive body" in the ways that they both view gender differences as inherent differences linked to one's sex rather than differences of social and cultural influence, responsibility ethics unequivocally posits a discursive body. Responsibility

ethics, therefore, is able to enrich STE by providing a framework for evaluating human actions that can work alongside STE in hopes of challenging rigid gender binaries. Furthermore, responsibility ethics helps to provide us with the tools to understand and respect when others are testing gendered habits outside of the contexts that formed them.

Responsibility ethics is active and progressive in that it allows us to hold ourselves, as well as others, accountable for actions and attitudes. In regard to accountability, Walker (1998) notes that

> Practices of holding each other responsible *do* have a fundamental and critical role in trying to secure certain states of affairs open to impact by human attention and effort, especially those consisting in or bearing on harms and benefits to other people (or beings). (p. 93).

The practice of holding one another accountable, therefore, provides us with a greater potential for changing oppressive attitudes than did previous theories. Sullivan (2001) explains how change can be made possible "through the effects of many…local and minor alterations of the habits that produce a culture's gender constructs...the reconfiguration of a culture's gender categories can begin." (p. 107) Utilizing responsibility ethics in reply to gender constructs is an important step to beginning the process of drawing our attention towards the existence of these constructs and to those people they may harm or benefit, thus opening the possibility for criticism and effort towards change.

These small changes towards the improvement of transactions in the world can occur when certain gendered habits are "tested" outside of the context that formed them. Sullivan (2001) provides the example of the "woman philosopher" (p. 105-6) who must learn to combine

what society views as a "woman" with what academia views as a "philosopher". The habits of each can become contradictory with women expected to be more passive and gentle than men, while philosophers, having historically been men, have a more masculine expectation of being aggressive and forward with their arguments. These two different habits or roles will combine in various ways, as Sullivan (2001) states:

> To be a woman philosopher is to have developed the conflicting habits of both a 'good' woman that politely defers to others by means of her bodily and verbal gestures and a 'good' philosopher whose bodily and verbal gestures are part of his aggressive argumentation and defense of claims. (p. 106).

The conflict between the two opposing habits of this example has the potential to create friction between this female philosopher and her colleagues or individuals in her personal life as they may misunderstand certain habits of transacting that she has developed. Through the framework of responsibility ethics, we would look at her behaviour within the context of the communities in which she is a member and attempt to understand how her style of transacting has been influenced by this. As a result of this, we can begin to assign responsibility on a more collective scale as we recognize that these gendered habits of transacting are shaped by our collective participation in performing them. We can thus acknowledge the ways these constructs have either harmed or benefited her and those around her. Her contradictory actions arose from contradictory gender constructs as opposed to some innate character flaw within this woman. When we become aware of the reality of gender constructs, we can begin holding one another responsible by opening dialogue and laying ground for critical examinations.

Utilizing responsibility ethics within the context of STE in this way is important because if "testing gendered habits outside of their context" is necessary to challenging gender binaries then this will certainly create conflicts between different habits as they are pushed further and further outside of their contexts. Responsibility ethics can provide us with the framework for understanding and mediating these conflicts. When one is able to understand that the conflict has emerged as a result of gender habits, this can encourage us to continue to question them and learn how to accept them for what they are. This can be done most fruitfully when an ethics of responsibility works alongside STE so that they may continually inform one another.

Regarding the cultivation of moral understanding amongst individuals, Walker (1998) states that "these understandings may be fragile and temporary bridges, or they may settle into firm common ground" (p. 202). Nonetheless, it is in the encouragement and attempt to reach these understandings that there is hope as these understandings are the basis for responsibility towards others. While we remain hopeful for this "firm common ground" to be reached through understanding others' beliefs and customs in the context of their environments, responsibility ethics accounts for the fact that this is something that will not always be attained nor be obtained easily. This supports Sullivan's belief that improvements and positive change must be worked at over long periods of time as challenging gender binaries is done with the hope of creating understandings among individuals that "may settle into firm common ground".

One way the stereotypes that emerge from rigid gender binaries can be harmful is in their potential to create a self-fulfilling prophecy, in that all it takes for stereotypes to function is that a person be aware of the stereotype's existence (Walker, 1998, p. 196, 197). This is called "stereotype vulnerability" and has been observed across studies which suggest that "stereotypes

may work directly in situations and interactions to alter behaviour and perception, not through beliefs that embody or affirm them, but rather through beliefs *that* the stereotypes exist." (Walker, 1998, p. 196, 197) The fact that other people believe stereotypes is enough to affect our behaviour, which is rather alarming and lends support to Sullivan's urgency in needing to address gender binaries. As Walker (1998) expresses, we can be held responsible in a multitude of ways and at different levels, such as "specific tasks or goals" to "outcomes that are not ours alone, and attitudes, habits, and traits." (p. 94) When assessing the moral content of others actions we must learn to also assess the extent to which society has criticized these actions as right or wrong and on what basis. For example, is a woman really a "bitch" for being assertive? *Or* is she just assuming a habit that is perfectly acceptable in men, and it is her gender and the context in which she is acting that are responsible for this assessment? Examining responsibility ethics within STE can provide us with a means for critical reflection when considering such problems.

It becomes essential that our habits influenced by gender binaries are assessed and challenged. Responsibility ethics presents us with some tools to move towards this goal by presenting us with a different way of understanding morality that attempts to account for these concerns. In contrast, care ethics embraces gender binaries by promoting a theory of ethics that is grounded in a stereotypical gendered perspective of woman as the caregiver. Responsibility ethics can enrich STE better than care ethics can by encouraging critical self-reflection. In addition, the ideas that an ethics of responsibility puts forward are more consistent with those of STE by supporting the notion of a discursive transactional body. Even more importantly, responsibility ethics and STE both aim to challenge rigid gender binaries and can together inform one another and aid the reaching of this goal. Not only is it important that we address and

challenge gender binaries, but through responsibility ethics, actually doing so can be described as a moral responsibility we have for one another. For these reasons, responsibility ethics is better suited than an ethics of care for enriching STE.

Conclusion: An ethics of responsibility can enrich STE.

To conclude, feminist ethical theories continue to evolve, as seen through care and responsibility ethics, much as our understandings of ourselves and our environments continue to change and evolve over time. As care ethics emerged to address the shortcomings of traditional ethical theories, so too has responsibility ethics emerged as a broader understanding of ethics, in the process addressing the shortcomings of care ethics. Ethics exists as a form of knowledge that is continually evolving as we work out new ways of understanding ourselves and our environments. As Sullivan (2001) states, "truth is not a matter of humans 'fitting' their beliefs to the world. Nor is it a matter of matching internal representations to external reality. It is a mutual negotiation and transformation of a relationship between humans and their environments" (p. 144). Ethics also possess this ability to evolve over time. As we have seen new ethical theories arise, often in response to the criticisms or shortcomings of the theories that preceded them, we will continue to see new theories arise that build upon responsibility ethics as well as other ethical theories.

This constant evolution seems to find some stable ground through STE, on which we can question, learn, and know about the world in a way that takes into account how humanity changes through the notions of transaction and discourse. Sullivan acknowledges that this transactional understanding of bodies is also a form of knowledge that will evolve over time as it is cross-fertilized with other theories and built upon by other theorists. Understanding bodies as

both transactional and discursive, and as such, existing in a constant state of "transaction" and "change", provides us with a means for making sense of this continual evolution. No environment or individual exists in a static and unchanging state. For an ethical theory to enrich STE it is essential for that theory to understand the person and their environments as mutually constitutive of one another, so as to align with STE's major tenets of understanding bodies as transactional and discursive.

While care ethics and responsibility ethics both offer theories that agree with these major tenets, an ethics of care falls short due to its reliance on a static and unchanging perspective. Care ethics does take into account the need to address ethical issues on a situation by situation basis and does not attempt to gain objectivity through its application of the maternal perspective; however, this use of a single fixed perspective is one of the reasons that care ethics is ultimately unsuccessful in contributing to STE. The role of change reveals that there can never be a single maternal perspective that all mothers would agree is fully representative of their own. By relying on a static perspective as the basis for its inquiry, care ethics is unable to accurately view people as transactional and discursive.

Responsibility ethics moves beyond the problems of care ethics by providing a more comprehensive view of the individual that doesn't focus on or favour a particular "voice" or point of view, but rather applies itself more generally and is thus better equipped to serve STE than care ethics. Moral issues are still dealt with on a situation by situation basis, but the perspective from which judgements are made is not predetermined at the outset of that inquiry as it often has been within traditional ethical theories and care ethics. Rather, responsibility ethics acknowledges that each individual will be making inquiries from their own perspective which

has been influenced by their own experiences and environments and it is these individual viewpoints that will determine the perspective from which judgements are made. From here a greater appreciation can be given towards understanding the unique experiences and perspectives of those whom we are considering for our inquiries. There is a sense of collaboration by which the moral agent is not being judged by means of some perspective, whether that be an objective "God's eye" perspective or a maternal one, but rather by another person. Collaboration is present in this sense as moral inquiry exists as a conversation that must take place by which each person attempts to gain a mutual understanding of one another's position. Because responsibility ethics does away with the use of fixed perspective as the basis for its inquiry, responsibility ethics is better suited than care ethics to enrich STE as it is able to accurately view people as transactional and discursive.

Since Sullivan views gender binaries as in urgent need of attention, and the goal of this paper is to enrich STE, it would follow that we address this binary itself as it exists within ethics if that ethics is to in any way enrich STE. Care ethics was brought in as an alternative to "justice thinking" in ethics which some criticized as favouring a 'masculine' point of view and way of thinking. Yet, care ethics has also been similarly charged with favouring the 'feminine' point of view and way of thinking by focusing on maternal thought. This shows exactly why the gender binary needs urgent attention. In attempting to provide a "different voice", care ethics instead simply moves us from one end of the binary to the other.

What is required is a move away from an ethics that excludes women as well as an ethics relevant primarily to women (not to mention *only one* possible aspect of woman's identity), towards an ethics that does not focus on one end of the binary, but rather attempts to operate

outside of this binary while also accounting for it. In an effort to challenge and move beyond the application of rigid gender binaries we must avoid theories that are responsible for perpetuating this binary, such as we saw in traditional ethical theories, and later within care ethics. Rather what is needed is an ethical theory that will take the progress that care ethics made in terms of bringing attention to the private sphere of life, while moving past the use of a gendered perspective that is supportive of unwanted gender stereotypes. We were able to find this within responsibility ethics.

Responsibility ethics not only takes into account the evolving and ever-changing nature of our existence by accurately viewing the individual as transactional and discursive, but it also moves beyond the confines of rigid gender binaries as means for understanding the world. Walker acknowledges that moral understanding must be in relation to an understanding of the social and cultural context--or environments--in which one exists, which necessarily includes the influence of gender constructs. As Walker (1998) stresses, "the single most important claim of this book is that a lot of what we need in order to understand specifically moral judgements or principles goes beyond specifically moral matters. We need to understand a *social world*." (p. 203) Walker presents similar ideas to those found in care ethics in that we must look beyond "specifically moral matters", or in other words take into account more than the individuals involved and the facts of the situation to include what Walker calls a "social world". This social world encompasses the "discursive and transactional body". The social world can be described as encompassing the current discourse and transactions that occur within a community without separating the private and public spheres of life. In this way, an ethics of responsibility compliments ideas found within STE.

In addition to and because of this, we can discover how an ethics of responsibility can enrich the epistemology of STE. Sullivan encourages the coming together of various theories in service of similar goals while mutually enriching one another. As a result of this, responsibility ethics helps to facilitate movement towards an important goal for Sullivan, which is to improve transactions and thus improve bodily existence. This is done largely by addressing harmful and oppressive constructs within society. Rigid gender binaries are an important construct which Sullivan notes "requires great urgency". Gender binaries continue to be sustained by habits that have originated over time due to avoidance or lack of knowledge of the complex nature of the person in transaction with their environments. Sullivan notes that habits indeed can be quite difficult to change once established; however, there is always hope and potential for change.

A way these habits can be changed is by "making the ordinary seem strange" by experiencing certain habits out of context, such as the example of the philosopher woman (Sullivan, 2001, p. 105). Sullivan describes this in detail: "In subtle and often unconscious ways, friction between these conflicting habits occurs virtually any time a woman philosopher transacts with others, whether inside or outside the academy" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 106). This "can generate ways of being gendered that slightly shake the sedimented masculine and feminine habits." (Sullivan, 2001, p. 106). Experiencing certain gendered habits outside of the types of transactions that helped to form them can help to make us particularly aware of and ultimately question the habit. Since care ethics rests on the notion of gendered habits (i.e. maternal care), it would be unable to aid progress in the way that Sullivan describes.

Gendered habits outside of the contexts that formed them would still be assumed as feminine or masculine within care ethics, and so there would arise a difficulty in truly breaking

and challenging these habits. In contrast to this, responsibility ethics can work effectively alongside STE to understand why that habit seems "out of place" when experienced in this different way, and what harms or benefits these gendered habits might afford to those practicing them and those encouraging or reinforcing them. In other words, responsibility ethics complements STE in this goal of addressing and challenging gendered habits and thus the gender binary.

It is Sullivan's hope that this persistent form of challenging the binary will become useful in learning to accept and eventually break these habits. Sullivan states that when a habit is changed it must be replaced with a new one to take its place. An ethics of responsibility is useful in moving towards this goal as it centralizes the social world and thus provides a means for navigating morality that works to mediate gender binaries. Responsibility ethics helps to mediate gender binaries by avoiding universal and abstract theory that is supposed to speak for all people while also avoiding placing emphasis on any specific one perspective over another. It avoids these problems by concentrating on the social world as a means of understanding moral problems. Responsibility ethics can provide us with a framework for evaluating moral problems and understanding the extent and content of our role in that evaluation, therefore, providing us with a new moral theory to lean on as we break down the harmful habits originating from traditional ethical theories as well as care ethics. It is for all these reasons that responsibility ethics can operate alongside STE in such a way that is mutually informative and beneficial and thus ultimately helps to enrich STE.

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