

the story of **ETHICS**

How the media got moral, or not

THE ETHICS OF CARE



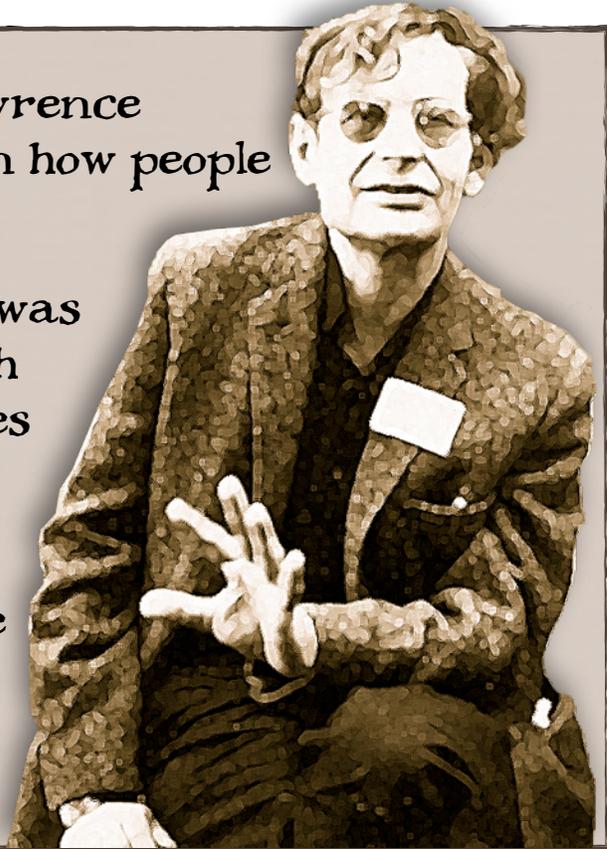
In which we
learn to listen to
other voices if
we want to hear
the whole story.

Once upon a time...

There was a man named Lawrence Kohlberg who was interested in how people matured into moral agents.

Kohlberg's original test group was composed of 72 boys from both middle-and lower-class families in Chicago.

By analyzing their answers to a series of ethical dilemmas, he was able to determine their level of moral maturity.



Here's what he asked them:

- ❖ A woman was near death from a special kind of cancer.
- ❖ There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her.
- ❖ It was a drug that a pharmacist in the same town had recently developed.
- ❖ Although the drug was inexpensive to manufacture, the pharmacist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make.
- ❖ The sick woman's husband (who was relatively poor) went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about half the price of the drug.
- ❖ He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay over time.
- ❖ But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it."
- ❖ Later that night, the desperate husband broke into the pharmacy to steal the drug for his wife.
- ❖ Should the husband have done that?

What Kohlberg discovered was that his test group tended to say NO. They believed that upholding the law was furthering justice overall within society.

Based on his findings, Kohlberg discerned 6 levels of moral development, ultimately leading to a "morally Mature" personality.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

- ❖ At stage 1 children think of what is right as that which authority says is right.
- ❖ Doing the right thing is obeying authority and avoiding punishment.



- ❖ At stage 2, children are no longer so impressed by any single authority; they see that there are different sides to any issue.
- ❖ Since everything is relative, one is free to pursue one's own interests, although it is often useful to make deals and exchange favors with others.



I'll give you this apple if you don't tell mom where I've gone.

Make that candy and you have a deal.

- ❖ At stages 3 and 4, young people think as members of the conventional society with its values, norms, and expectations.
- ❖ At stage 3, they emphasize being a good person, which basically means having helpful motives toward people close to one.



You're a very helpful stage 3 person, Herbert.

I always obey the law, judge.

It doesn't get more democratic than this.

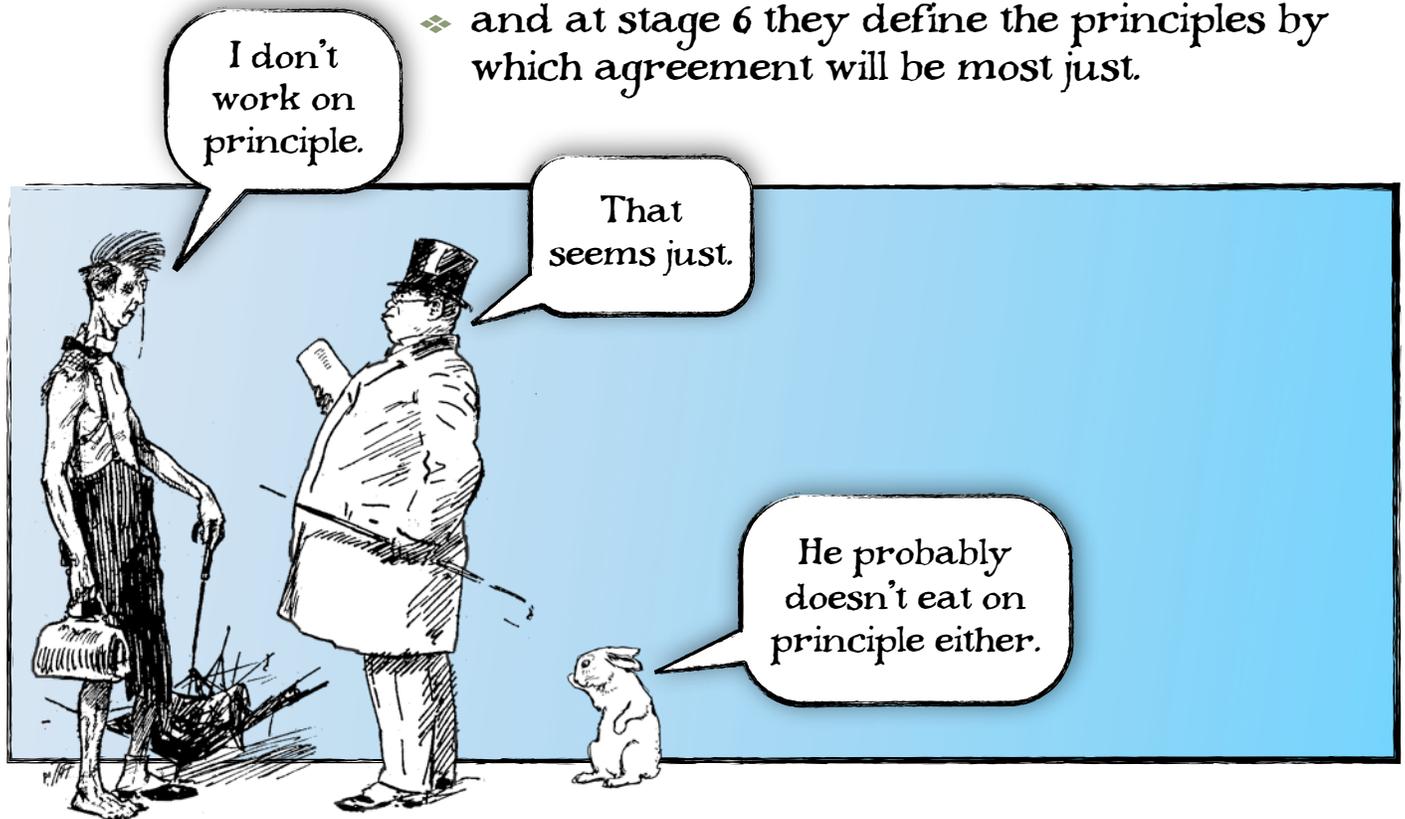
- ❖ At stage 4, the concern shifts toward obeying laws to maintain society as a whole.



At stages 5 and 6 people are less concerned with maintaining society for its own sake, and more concerned with the principles and values that make for a good society.

At stage 5 they emphasize basic rights and the democratic processes that give everyone a say.

- ❖ and at stage 6 they define the principles by which agreement will be most just.



Kohlberg's morally mature agent:

- ❖ Stage 5 people are working toward a conception of the good society.
- ❖ They suggest that we need to:
 - ❖ protect certain individual rights and
 - ❖ settle disputes through democratic processes.
- ❖ However, democratic processes alone do not always result in outcomes that we intuitively sense are just.
 - ❖ A majority, for example, may vote for a law that hinders a minority.

Thus, Kohlberg believes that there must be a higher stage -- **stage 6** -- which defines the principles by which we achieve justice.

Excuse me sir. Could I have a bit more justice?



But there was something obviously missing from Kohlberg's hypothesis.

Kohlberg's original test group was composed of only

BOYS

It's always about boys.

So what?

So? I'm a girl. That's what?



Then along came Carol Gilligan

- ❖ ...who argued that Kohlberg ignored the emergence of an alternate way of resolving moral dilemmas which was often reflected in the way little girls responded to them.
- ❖ Much of psychological theory at the time painted women as "moral midgets."
- ❖ Gilligan's reply was to assert that women were not inferior in their personal or moral development, but that they were **different**.
 - ❖ They developed in a way that focused on connections among people (rather than separation) and with a sense of care for those people.

Gilligan laid out an alternative in her groundbreaking book, **In a Different Voice**.

With a Theory I call,
THE ETHIC OF CARE.



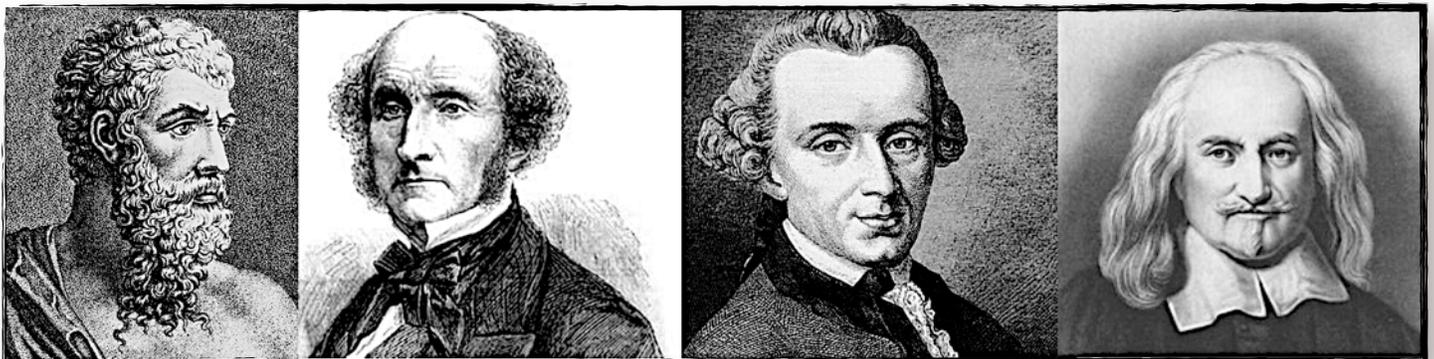
According to Gilligan, most of our moral concepts have developed from a particularly male perspective.

- ❖ The major approach to moral philosophy over the past several hundred years has been what might be called an “**ethic of justice**,” which is deeply rooted in a desire for individual autonomy and independence.
- ❖ The focus of this “ethic” is the balancing of competing interests among individuals.

Use this to balance interests.



YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED... WE'RE ALL MEN.



In fact, individualism and competition are at the heart of the American system of government and economics.

According to Gilligan...

- ❖ The formality of such concepts as duty and justice often results in an objectification of human beings.
 - ❖ or, at least, a distancing of the parties involved in and affected by moral decision making.
- ❖ Caring, on the other hand, requires a closer relationship between parties and a recognition of the other as a subjective being.

Gilligan suggests that the **female** moral voice is characterized by **caring**.

- ❖ It considers the needs of both the self and of others, and is not just interested in the survival of the self.
- ❖ Gilligan and others point out that while an ethic of care may be a predominantly female construction, it is not limited to the female perspective and can (and should) be used by male and female alike.

Yes, Leland, I expect you to care as well.



I have different needs.

I care about your needs, no matter how different



Care doesn't dismiss the importance of justice and fairness, but it does make allowances for differences in needs when making moral decisions.

In other words, **NEED** may dictate an **obligation** to care as much or more so than justice.

When do we have an obligation to care?

- ❖ When a relationship exists
- ❖ When there is a need for care
- ❖ When we have the ability to provide care

The ethic of care requires that **NEED** be recognized as an important component of human interaction.

Based on an “**obligation to care**,” this approach would have us view ourselves as part of a network of individuals whose needs (when they become clear) create a **duty** in us to respond.



- ❖ In responding, we must pay attention to the details of the need and to the outcome of our response on others potentially affected by our actions.
- ❖ This does not mean that every need requires a response. We must also weigh:
 - The seriousness of the need,
 - the likely benefit derived from our response,
 - our ability to respond to this particular need,
 - and the competing needs of others in our network.

Like most ethical decisions, responding to need requires a weighing of interests; however, relating to the need on an emotional level is a vital consideration absent from many other such formulas.

Individual **autonomy** is not entirely absent from the concept of care.

Good. I am a person, after all, Mother.

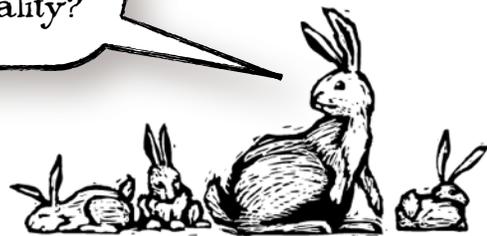
You never relate to me emotionally, George. That's just wrong.



A flexible sense of autonomy would allow us to value both the needs and interests of others while not neglecting our own needs.

- ❖ We need an awareness of our individuality coupled with an ability to choose when to accentuate our own desires and points of view and when to emphasize and cooperate with those of others.

What's individuality?



Kohlberg vs Gilligan

JUSTICE MODEL	CARE MODEL
Emphasis on Autonomy	Emphasis on Relationships
Rule & principle directed	Context dependent
Appeal to what is "just"	Appeal to compromise & Accommodation
Focus on integrity	Focus on caring responsiveness
Example: "Stealing is wrong"	Example: "It depends..."

Questions?

Yes. Is care based on Reciprocity?

- ❖ Restricting obligations to care based solely on reciprocity results in some problems:
 - ❖ Those incapable of returning care would never receive care they need
 - ❖ Relationships would fail to be based on the core principle of care and become contractual - and perhaps ego-centric - "what's in it for me?"



How do we ensure everyone gets the care they need?

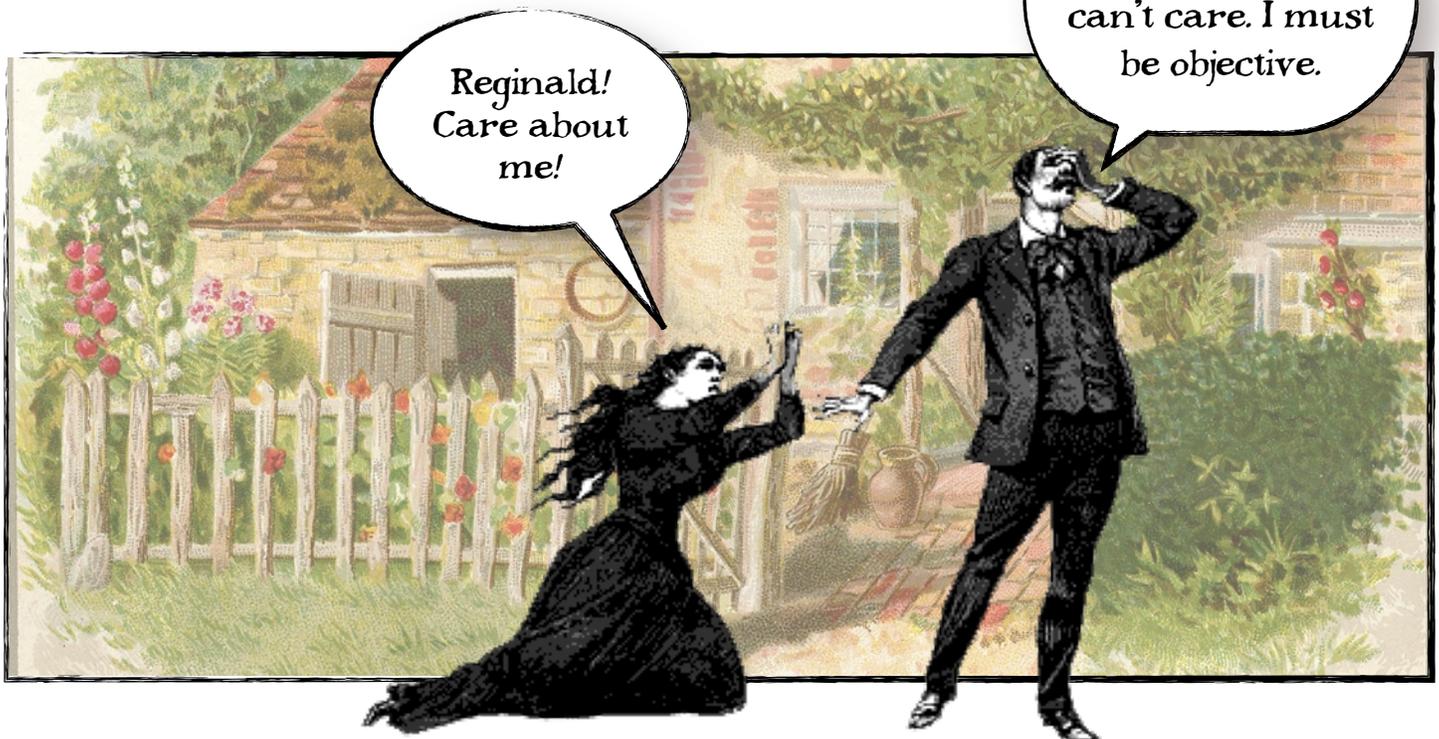
NETWORKS OF CARE

- ❖ instead of a reciprocal contract we build a community of care - as long as no one is exhausted in their capacity to care and no one is deprived of care then the goal has been accomplished.



Can the Media Care?

The question remains as to whether the media can consider an ethic of care as a realistic component of their moral curriculum.



The media, especially journalists, value autonomy above almost all else.

Caring and care giving imply a subjective viewpoint.

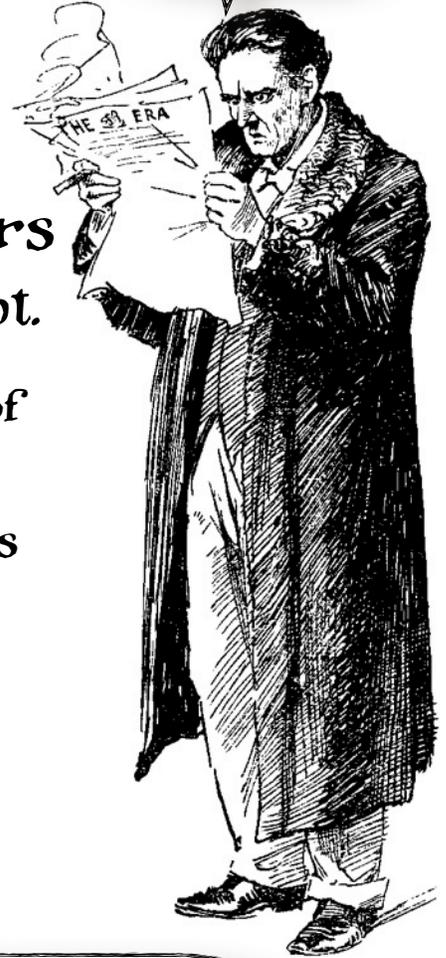
They believe that viewpoint leads to sensationalism

The notion of objectivity itself is viewed by some feminist scholars (and others) as a flawed concept.

A feminist ethic challenges the treatment of mass media subjects as objects.

It challenges the objectification of both mass media sources as well as their audiences.

This is pure, unadulterated sensationalism!



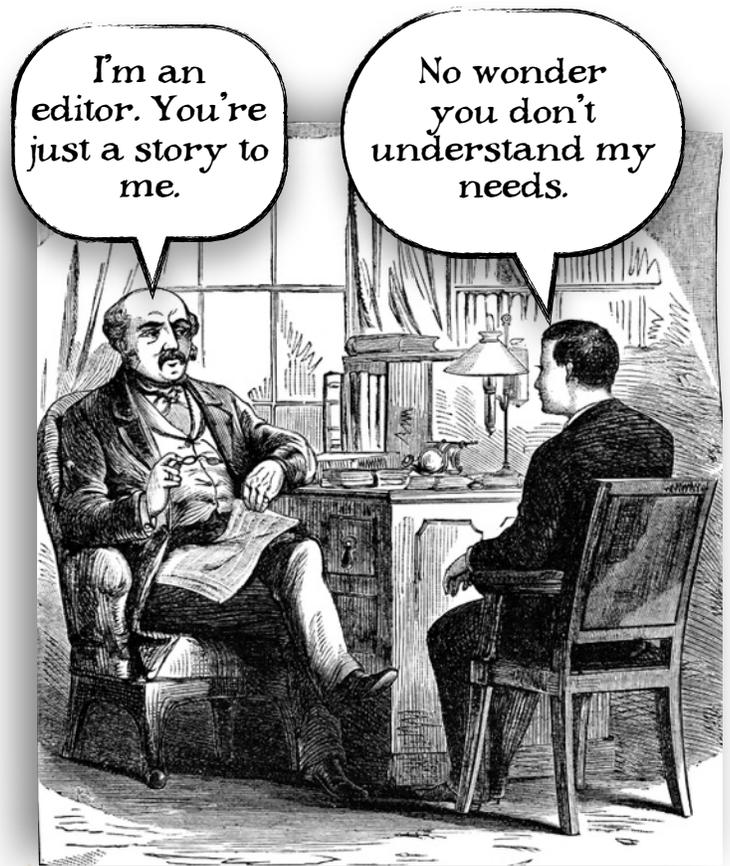
(Linda Steiner)

“The goal would be to respect others’ dignity and integrity, to make the process more collaborative and egalitarian, less authoritarian and coercive.”

Honoring the ideal of objectivity establishes an us-them relationship between the media and virtually everyone else.

This often creates a lack of understanding about the needs of the "other."

And, speaking of the other...



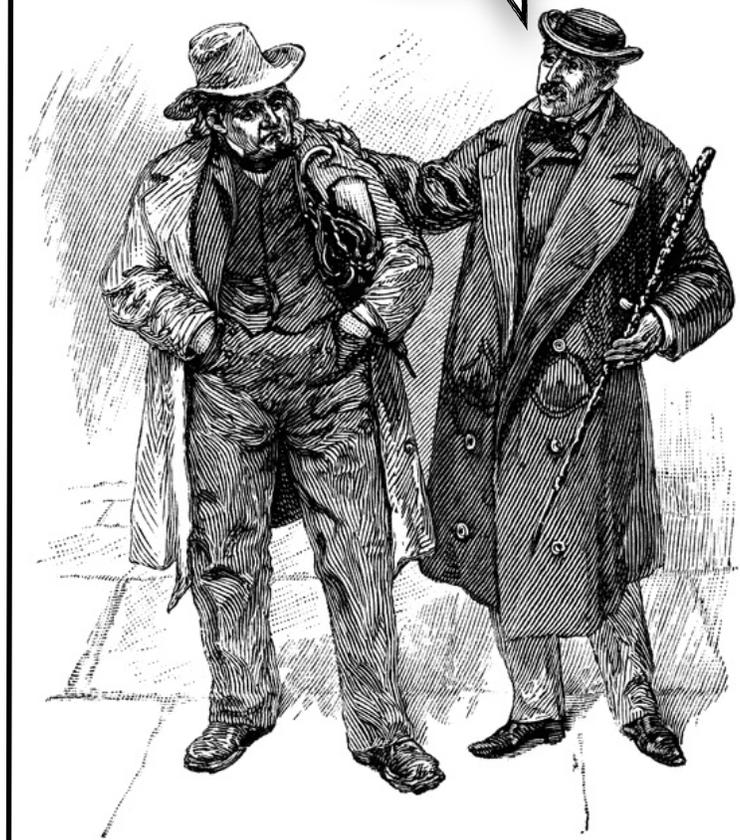
Professional codes in both advertising and public relations call for a balancing of interests in favor of non-injury to third parties.

- ❖ However, simply recognizing third-party concerns doesn't imply a caring attitude in the sense of an ethic of care.

I do recognize your concerns. I just don't care.

Any technique that has persuasion as its intended outcome is far more easily open to abuse than a technique having mutual understanding as its goal.

- ❖ The reality of both public relations and advertising is that persuasion is a recognized and respected communication technique.



However, audiences are often viewed by advertising and PR practitioners as “gullible.”

- ❖ How advertising and PR professionals view their audiences dictates the level of respect reflected in the messages.
- ❖ If they view them as stupid, then the message will reflect that.
- ❖ **The intelligence of a targeted audience should not be denigrated by serious advertisers and PR people with ethical intent.**



This doesn't invalidate the possibility of incorporating an ethic of care into the persuasive process.

- ❖ All that is needed is respect for the dignity and integrity of the receivers of your message.
- ❖ Ideally, this "respectful" approach to persuasive communication should apply equally to public relations and advertising.



In the final analysis, media communicators
Can't afford to ignore such characteristics as
empathy and caring.

Virtues such as empathy and caring can and should
function alongside concepts like integrity, fairness, and
respect for others.

Journalists and advertising and public relations
practitioners alike must learn to exhibit true respect for
their audiences.

When using the Ethic of Care,
try the following exercise:

Ask yourself whether the
seriousness of a need, the likely
benefit derived from your
response, and your ability to
respond to this particular need
(weighed against the competing
needs of others in your network)
warrant your attention—
especially if relating to the need
on an emotional level.

