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Gender and Moral Agency in the Humanistic Approach

Masoumeh Sadat Salek*

Abstract

Humanistic psychology, with its emphasis on conscious choice and self-actualization, provides a framework for understanding moral agency. However, its claim to gender neutrality has been contested. This study examines how feminists critique the perceived gender neutrality of humanism, arguing it reflects masculine hegemony and contributes to the suppression of non-masculine genders. Concurrently, some feminists' adoption of humanistic concepts, such as in Gilligan's humanistic interpretation of care ethics, faces significant criticism. This interpretation, rooted in women's lived experiences and relationships, grapples with challenges like moral relativism and difficulties in articulating universal ethical standards. Additionally, moral agency within humanistic approaches has been scrutinized for its foundational assumptions and methodology. Critics question its applicability to universal ethical prescriptions, particularly in collectivist cultures, citing the quality of evidence and the focus on "healthy" and "self-actualized" individuals. The central question of this study is: How does the humanistic approach in psychology explain the gendered nature of ethics, and what challenges does this explanation face? A descriptive-analytical method, drawing on documentary and library data, is employed to address these questions.

Keywords

Humanistic Ethics, Feminist Ethics, Feminine Ethics, Moral Agency, Gendered Ethics.

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5

Abstracts



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Content

Gender and Moral Agency in the Humanistic Approach..... 5

Masoumeh Sadat Salek

Analysis of Conflicts Between Practical Reason and Other Evidences: Mohammad Baqer Sadr's Perspective29

Mohammad Shafiei | Abdosaleh Sadeqi

Analysis of Gradation in Moral Values within the Islamic Ethical System, Emphasizing Types of Guidance.....51

Saeid Reyhani | Hamidreza Haghshenas

Analysis of Impartiality in Aid: A Utilitarian Perspective Evaluated Through Islamic Scriptures71

Seyedeh Fatemeh Zahra Mohri Adaryani | Seyyed Ahmad Fazeli

Formulating an Ideal Model for the Relationship Between Ethics and Artificial Intelligence: Emphasizing the Ethical Foundations of Allama Misbah Yazdi89

Rezvan Hamani | Mostafa Mokhtari

Utilitarianism as the Ethics of Colonialism113

Hosein Tavakoli | Seyyed Mohammad Hoseini Souraki

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