Discontent. Michael D. Hansen employs Levinas' understanding of ethics to develop an interpretation of Jim Casy and the Joads that is both appreciative and critical. Hansen's essay embodies the virtues of the best articles in the book: narrative details are related to moral ideas in a complex manner such that each illuminates the other.

In sum, this collection includes a healthy diversity of reflections on moral reasoning in and through the works of one of America's literary masters. A recurrent theme is that attempts to censor Steinbeck typically mask (or at least fail to appreciate) the moral complexity of his characters and the situations they face; these essays consistently demonstrate this point. As noted above, the shorter essays tend to be suggestive and would be ideal for use in courses that call for student interpretation. Other, typically longer articles tend to offer more substantial philosophical reflection; these would suit courses in Ethics as well as Philosophy & Literature. Moreover, though, I recommend the book to anyone interested in mining the complexities of Steinbeck's moral insights.

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Hamington's book provides an excellent combination of analysis and research into the most important components of an ethics of care. It is useful both as an exemplary text on the subject as well as a research resource. The book provides important distinctions between this growing field of ethics and a more traditional approach. It is loaded with practical examples and historical figures and their contribution to the field. It also provides a creative analysis and integrates several approaches.

Central to the discussion is the role of the body both for epistemological purposes and for promoting habits of care. Care, contends the author, is basic to human existence. Using this premise he develops his own approach that shifts ethical considerations to context, relationships, and affective knowledge. Using these
criteria he explores in depth three major aspects of care, caring knowledge, the role of the caring imagination, and caring habits. To support his position, Hamlington draws upon a wealth of historical research that combines social, ethical, philosophical, and feminist concerns. The repertoire of names includes Nussbaum, Noddings, Baier, and Gilligan from the feminist camp. Merleau-Ponty, Dewey, Hume, Stein, and Arendt are mentioned significantly for their philosophical import. Particularly noted for her social ideas is Jane Addams.

The most striking characteristic of the book is the important role given to the caring imagination. This aspect of care is supported through theoretical analysis and fleshed out through the major examples provided. For example, the work of Edith Stein in phenomenology elaborates the role of empathy and inter-subjectivity with the crucial role of the body, while Hannah Arendt’s work provides one of the more poignant examples of how the lack of a caring imagination can lead to horrendous atrocities. Arendt’s analysis of Eichmann’s testimony led to her coining of the term the “banality of evil”. This problem relates to a lack of sympathetic reflection. Thus, one of the functions of the imagination is to fill the gap between self and other. It allows us to extend our circle of care to other, even distant, human beings. It is therefore crucial that we develop caring habits. Dewey reminds us that our habits reflect our agency. In addition, Nussbaum emphasizes the importance of literary works for ethical development, since literary works help us to put ourselves in the place of many different kinds of people and experiences.

The contribution of Jane Addams is cited in depth for many different aspects of building a caring society. It was also her contention that much of the hardness of the world was due to a lack of the imagination. Addams tried to correct this deficit by concretely promoting caring habits through active listening, participation, connected leadership, and action. Her efforts infiltrated many areas of social concerns such as the women’s suffrage movement and child labor laws, to name but a few. Her many endeavors won her the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. Her work at Hull House emphasized personal interaction and the importance of friendship. She had an amazing ability to connect the personal and the political through the development of caring habits. The imagination was also
fostered through an emphasis on the various arts. In a sense, Jane Addams is highlighted as a prime example of what it means to embody care.

While the book has many strong points, it suffers from some deficiencies in two areas. Little attention is given to psychological theories except for the early mention of the work of Gilligan. The book would benefit from the inclusion of contemporary feminist psychoanalytic and psychological theory. The second area that needs development is a more concrete response to the concerns of some feminists, such as Hoagland, that an ethics of care often translates into care for others and not enough emphasis on care for the self. Since this problem is often related to victim mentality and has been problematic for many women, the topic deserves more elaboration than provided. While the author does acknowledge that theoretically care does not rule out care of self, how this is to be played out practically is a missing and important discussion. An elaboration on contemporary feminist psychology could help provide guidance in this area. If developed in fuller detail, these two areas might prove an important supplement to this work.

In sum, Hamington’s book is well worth the reading and would appeal to a wide range of interests since it combines an integrative approach that includes philosophy, political issues, feminist and social concerns, and a good bit of historical research.

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