A Social Meaning of Family Nurturing Individuals:
Through the Criticism of “Independent Individuals” of Care Ethics

Yayo OKANO
Graduate School of Global Studies, Doshisha University

The purpose of this paper is to explore a further possibility of home economics education through the insights of care ethics. The ethics of care has influenced various fields of study such as philosophy, political theory, economics, pedagogics and so on. Recently the ethic of care attracts much attention not only because it urges a radical reexamination of the premises of human and social sciences and but also because it criticizes neo-liberal assumptions of human beings and society.

To clarify social potentiality of home economics education in the age of mixture of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism, the article reviews first the assumption of “independence” in the discipline of western political philosophy. The ethics of care was discovered through criticizing the male-oriented idea of “independence” in the tradition of western philosophy.

Whereas traditional political philosophy has idealized independent male citizens, women has been degraded as the second citizen mainly because they are forced to care for the dependent, such as children, the disabled, the infirm and the aged. To reexamine the history of devaluation of female care work leads us not only to reevaluate the social meaning of care work but also to criticize the idea of “independent” citizens itself. It is a significant issue how to situate home economics education in a wider political context to explore its potentiality.

Key words: the ethics of care, political thought, family, Neo-liberalism