Baier notes:

Note that Hume (monish virtues), Mill (women and, with Bentham, homosexuals and Mormons), and Nietzsche (aesthetes) were moral entrepreneurs. Kant wasn’t, but, as B says at p. 273 was the opposite. All Kant has going for him is a transc. arg.

Does moral entrepreneurship need anything specifically philosophical? Or do Betty Friedan and Harriet Beecher Stowe and such do the job? Is MacKinnon a moral philosopher?

Maybe the task of moral philosophy can be turned over to novelists and people with political proposals.

Baier raises two questions:

(1) The feminist question: how can one bring the need to have loving parents, and thus avoid sociopaths, under the rubric of concepts like “obligation”, “duty”, “rights”, etc.?

For Baier, this raises the question of how to get a better moral theory. Thus she says (p. 31) that “the best moral theory must be a cooperative product of men and women, has to harmonize justice and care”.

Elsewhere in the book, she experiments the idea of substituting “justified trust” for “obligation” as ‘the central moral concept’, she is still presupposing that we need THE BEST POSSIBLE MORAL THEORY. Here, unlike her paper on “Doing without moral theory”, she takes the need for granted.

Go through “What do women want...?” quoting marked passages.

(2) But if one does not believe that K-style transc. Args. Can work--If one accepts that there is no argumentative path leading from the Mafia to the Enlightenment-- should we keep doing moral theory? Or has moral theory degenerated into an apology for sado-masochism, and become irrelevant to everything except itself? (the question that bothers Posner and Schneewind as well)
One answer to the question “what is moral theory?” is “what is the phenomenology of moral experience?”—as in Scanlon. This is an utterly unhistoricist view of the kind that Baier deplores. It assumes something like the Korsgaardian view of a natural order of reasons.

Another is given by B at MP, p. 230: the intellectual construction business—more efficient packaging of intuitions

Another answer is rejected by Schneewind on p. l of “What has moral philosophy done for us...lately?”, when he says that it won’t do to call it “reflection on how to live”.

Another is rejected by Schneewind in the article I quoted from at our first meeting—Revisions, p. 114

Schneewind’s own answer is (p. 7) “conceptual imagination”, by which he seems to mean defining “thin” terms. S wants to say that the novel has not replaced moral philosophy, because such redefinitions (Scanlon’s or Habermas’ definition of “right” or Rawls’ of ‘a just society’ as one chosen behind a veil of ignorance) But would we bother to summarize if we didn’t think we can get an algorithm out of the summary? Schneewind’s 1968 article makes clear that he has no use for attempts at algorithms.

The question Schneewind raises is “is there conceptual imagination as well as just plain imagination, so that we need Socrates as well as Sophocles (pace Nietzsche and Williams) and Kant as well as Stendhal”? Quote Schneewind on this, and ask whether he is consistent in saying that Kant is a strong misuser of language and also “conceptual”.

Quote Moral Prejudices, p. 236: “the villain, as I see it, is the rationalist, law-fixated tradition...”

Quote MP, p. 236 on Hume as model because he had a psych. Theory and a politico-economic theory, but no “normative” theory (by which—see p. 232—B means a “system of moral principles” of the Schneewindian “classical” sort)

See Moral Prejudices, p. 235 where Donagan claims that any moral theory worth the name must be Korsgaard sytle, and p. 234 where B says that moral theory just doesn’t even try to produce the Sunday-school effect that religion did, and consequently cannot assume the same role.
Baier’s “Doing without…” in MORAL PREJUDICES

Chapter 2: two perspectives on morality: (p. 20)

Fiat justitia, ruat coelum.

We must love one another or die

The ideas of justice, law, rule obligation, legitimacy and command form a circle within which most post-Kantian moral philosophy revolves. See p. p. 26 for a good exchange between Kant and The Feminist about the role of rules in morality, one which encapsulates the opposition above.

I want to focus on this tension between “no theory” (but just descriptions of utopian family, people, communities, states, etc.) and “a woman’s moral theory”.

This means focusing on the question: what remains of the need for moral theory once one gives up the idea of a natural order of reasons which will lead from the Mafia to the Enlightenment—an order more or less followed by Europe as it emerged from feudalism/barbarism to the modern world.

To put it another way: once we give up on “the Kantian [and Greek] picture of a controlling reason dictating to possibly unruly passions” (p. 30) in order to make room for women’s duties to look after children, and the unforced desire to do so, what exactly is our “theory” about?

Or, once we give up on the geometrical model Schneewind describes, is there a middle ground between that and novels and political utopias—is there something between Korsgaard’s natural order of reasons and ways of luring people into behaving differently?

Maybe all there is is a summary of the intuitions of a time and place, not by way of sketching, e.g., the magnanimous man, but by way of something like “the difference principle” or Habermas’ “principle of
discourse ethics”. **But would we bother to summarize if we didn’t think we can get an algorithm out of the summary?**

The “maternal” or “care” stuff can’t get a look-in on this circle. This is one of the reasons why calling it “slave morality”, a pis aller, seems so attracting. The rulers, the wise and noble happy ones, do not see much need for it.

What the first sort of morality leaves out is summarized by B at p. “their rights, and respect for rights, are quite compatible with very great misery, and misery whose causes are not just individual misfortune and psychic sickness but social and moral impoverishment”. The problem is, so to speak, that they have rights and ‘rational life-plans’ but no souls.

At pp. 24-25 B brings in the Hegelian ‘self-as-constituted-by-social-relationships” bit to contrast with the Kantian “life-lans plus traffic rules” conception.

Note that this is different from an ethics of identity vs. an ethics of rational obligation. The Nietzschean übermensch has an identity, but not a socially constituted one.

I regard individualism-vs.-communitarianism as a phony issue, since all the issues between Korsgaard and her critics can be debated without reference to it. There are no liberal individualists if this means believers in the Cartesian self which is what it is regardless of Mom, the teachers, the community, etc..