

# Against Good Caring? Meeting Immediate and Distant Needs Democratically

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# AGAINST Good Caring?

- Title of conference: a meaningful life in a just society implies that we live in a just society...
- But.....We don't... we live in
- the thrall of neoliberalism

“There is no alternative.”



# Neoliberalism, everywhere...

- McRuer R. (2006) Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability, New York: NYU Press.
- “Throughout Crip Theory, I take neoliberal capitalism to be the dominant economic and cultural system in which, and also against which, embodied and sexual identities have been imagined and composed over the past quarter century.” (McRuer, 2006) (2)

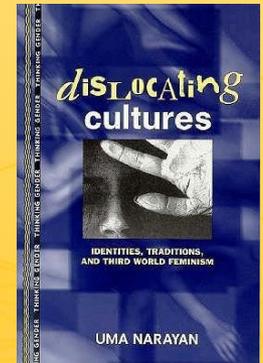


McRobbie A. (2011) Preface. In: Gill R and Scharff C (eds) *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism, and Subjectivity*. New York Palgrave MacMillan.

- "Most vivid here is the expectation of 'equality.' Where there is no question of this being fulfilled in socio-economic terms, or even of it becoming a lively subject for discussion, nevertheless it is promulgated as a prevailing cultural norm, as though to say in capital letters 'Girls and Women Are Now Equal.' This provides a new horizon of power against which all sociological analyses must now proceed..."

# What is the cost of surrendering to this new world view?

- Should we celebrate good care in the context of neoliberalism?
- No society ever thinks its own form of care is bad
- Good care in unjust setting
- Uma Narayan, imperialism as care



# Neoliberal care

- Good care = personal responsibility + market
- If you don't have enough resources to care well, it is your own fault



# Neoliberal care fits with a “flat world”

- Shopping for care on the global marketplace:
  - “medical tourism”
  - “surrogate mothers”
  - “global care chains”
  - “‘Mail-order’ brides”



# Democratic caring is the alternative

~~Good care = personal responsibility + market~~



# Is there anyway out of neoliberalism?

- At the level of theoretical discourse:
- It is market fundamentalism, not the desire to create social conditions that allow care to flourish, that is utopian.
- Caring democracy is the alternative paradigm



# To serve as an alternative, good care must be:

- Democratic care
- Equal power, equal dignity
- Shared values of human rights, expansive liberty, value of individuals to engage in care relations as they wish

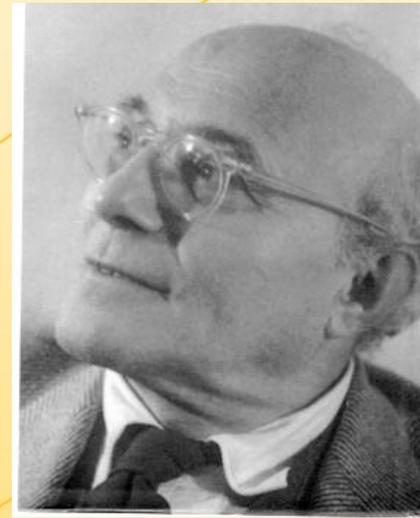


# Critique of Neoliberalism

- Karl Polanyi: The Great Transformation (1944, new edition 2001):
  - “never before our own time were markets more than accessories of economic life” (71)
  - “Regulation and markets, in effect, grew up together.”



# Polanyi's account of market economy...



- 1. sole motivation for human behavior
- 2. separation of economic and political spheres
- 3. Creates a 'market society': labor, land, money

# This is problematic

- “But labor and land are no other than the human beings themselves of which every society consists and the natural surroundings in which it exists.” (75)
- “But labor, land and money are obviously not commodities; the postulate that anything that is bought and sold must have been produced for sale is emphatically untrue in regard to them.” (75)



# A “satanic mill”

- But as the organization of labor is only another word for the forms of life of the common people, this means that the development of the market system would be accompanied by a change in the organization of society itself. All along the line, human society had become an accessory of the economic system.” (77)



# The Double Movement

- As a result, there has never been, and can never be, a fully realized market society
- The responses are always present: a double movement



# Free market utopia

- This is utopian
- One consequence: it is 'non-falsifiable' (Karl Popper)
- A second consequence: the free market tautology



# “Free market”

- Eric McGillvray:
- [T]he close association in modern political thought between freedom and the market is ... historically anomalous ...
- To the extent that the defenders of market freedom are able to monopolize the language of freedom in public life, they are able to skew the terms of debate in a way that tends to exaggerate the merits of market-based solutions to matters of public concern.





- ...there is a folk intuition that says that in a truly free society ... economic growth would be promoted by private rather than public means, failing businesses would be allowed to fail, people would have to live with the consequences of their bad decisions or bad luck, those in need would be left to their own devices, and so on.”
- 182: “In short, the very language that we use to talk about questions of political economy—the language of the ‘free’ market—predisposes us to respond to those questions in a certain way, even when there is reason to think that this may not be the best response either in economic or in human terms.”



# Where does freedom come from?

- Not the free market, but the double movement (and don't forget imperialism)
- There is much buzz about Hayek but not Polanyi's critique of his work
- The lack of freedom for non-choosers is forgotten (Bowles and Gintis: choosers v. "learners")
- (Where does historical ignorance come from?)



# From the free market to democracy

- Democratization is the unintended consequence of the free market's demand for ever greater expansion of the market
- It is the underside of the “double movement”
- What can care look like in a democratic society?



# Caring Democracy

- Defining care
- On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (Fisher and Tronto 1990: 40) Tronto 1993, 103



# Care v. liberal theories of democracy

- Ontological
- Ethical
- Epistemological
- Political



# Ontological differences

- Relationships as fundamental
- All humans are vulnerable and need care
- Humans are fragile
- All humans are givers and receivers of care



# Ethical

- Responsibilities v. obligations
- Obligations can include those to a “contract of mutual indifference”
- Responsibilities: out of responses



# Epistemological differences

- Walker: Moral Understandings
- “theoretico-juridical” thinking v.
- “expressive-collaborative” morality
  
- Involvement of all: already this epistemology moves in the direction of a democratic politics



# Political account

- Democracy as the allocation of caring responsibilities in a political community and the method of giving equal voice to all members of the community in making these allocations



# Walker

- “An “ethics of responsibility as a normative moral view would try to put people and responsibilities in the right places with respect to each other.” (Walker 1998: 84)
- Imagine then: a responsibility-setting game: everyone at the table



# Inclusion and Exemption

- Exclusion v. inclusion: as a way to allocate care responsibilities is to exclude those you want to saddle with the most difficult tasks
- Exemption: absent oneself from responsibilities because one has more important duties: protection, production, taking care of one's own, etc.



# Changing the Political Conversation

- Creating a caring society is not a utopian idea.
- Organizing society according to free market fundamentalism is a utopian idea



# This was not an key part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave feminist movement

- NOW 1966
- Judith Stacey: “Brave New Families” 1990
- Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein: initially care workers were below feminists’ concerns
- Neoliberalism was push-back against feminism, increased power for minorities: but knowing this doesn’t explain how to respond to neoliberalism



# Care's "realism"

- Power: larger dynamics of power within care relationships
  - Past injustices
  - Domination
  - Struggles among care givers, receivers, others
- Interdependence
- Time
- Obligations v responsibilities



# Conclusion

- Free market utopianism
- Democratic care is messy, includes problems, and is more realistic:



# A Care Credo?

- It is possible to change the political discourse
- Care provides a framework by which citizens can direct attention back to themselves and their collective and particular needs



# “Double trouble”\* on this side of the “double movement”

- We need to continue to fight political fights daily against neoliberal advances
  - shorten the work week/time for care
  - higher wages
- But we cannot do so effectively if we stay within the framework of “the market economy”

• \*Inaugurates of Selma Sevenhuijsen and Rosi Braidotti , 1991: University of Utrecht



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- Thank you!

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- Comments:  
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