

**BOOK REVIEW**

**KATHLEEN LYNCH. CARE AND CAPITALISM**

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In her deep and thought-provoking book (Lynch, K. *Care and Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022), engaging the reader with interdisciplinary intellectual mosaics of how one can cultivate love, care and solidarity in different spheres of social and political discourse, Kathleen Lynch not only challenges the ethics of neoliberalism as ethics of carelessness but also provides some positive solutions to the elaboration of ethics of care-centric thinking; an ethics which draws “attention to the importance of relational justice and affective equality” (p. 10). The development of care-centric thinking as such is not set as an abstract theoretical objective but is closely tied with what Lynch calls creating a care-centric narrative (p. 3). The latter should function as a counter-narrative to neoliberalism by questioning its “non-relational, self-referential ontology” (p. 2), which suppresses relationalities central to human identities and, thus, normalizes the existence and reproduction of unequal vulnerabilities in the neoliberal capitalist society.

Considering that the development of new moral, social and political instrumentarium needed for creating narratives is not deprived of an agent (the one who implies performative power to these narratives to make them functional), the careless-centric narrative can be described as supported by *Homo economicus*. In contrast, the care-centric narrative can be examined against the background of Lynch’s objective to rehabilitate the diverse profile of *Homo curans* in Tronto’s sense. In this context, Lynch reveals why *Homo curans*’ behavior can successfully counter that of *Homo economicus* if it is driven by the internalization of relational justice in the public discourse.

Based upon the challenges above, Lynch promotes the idea of affective equality as a way of maximizing people’s and institutions’ capacity “to create, maintain and resource the affective relations that produce love, care and solidarity” (p. 23). The cultivation of affective

equality through care-centered education can contribute to the recognition of “three major lifeworlds,” as defined by Lynch (*ibid.*), where love, care and solidarity interact under the guise of primary (intimate) care, secondary (lower-order interdependency relations) care and tertiary care (solidarity). Consequently, the three types of care refer to love labor, general care work and solidarity work. Practically speaking, the education of *Homo curans* who can master these interdependent works of care can establish a care reality of a new type which can counter the morality of *Homo economicus*’ ethics of self-responsibilization. Due to the latter, neoliberal ‘moral’ people secure their privileges intergenerationally via the transfer of property (including cultural capital), education, money and social networking (Cf. pp. 29-30). As Lynch cogently points out, it is the absolutization of self-interest as a virtue provoking the process of distancing and invisibilization of harm that makes “neoliberal capitalism particularly care-less” (p. 30).

The book *Care and Capitalism* (2022) consists of four major parts. The first part is devoted to different embodiments of care matters “inside and outside of capitalism” (p. 11), which reveal the genealogy of some “care-indifferent moralities of capitalism” (Müller in Lynch, *ibid.*). The latter determine the absolutization of masculinity, bureaucracy, class, race, the devaluation of love labor as non-commodifiable and the necessity of revising the idea of time in terms of care. The negative symbolic capital ascribed to care in the socio-cultural categories and practices above is what triggers the underrating of “the cooperative, nurturing and non-exploitative values” (p. 12) of caring labor by making it a tool in the hands of *Homo economicus* for stigmatizing women as “disrespected and undervalued within and without capitalism” (p. 11).

However, the care-less ethics of neoliberalism targets the recognition of care in a double-bind way. On the one hand, care is a resource of materially supporting the survival of capitalism, while on the other one, affective care relations are neglected as deprived of exchange value. As Lynch cogently argues, the axiological negligence above initially restricts one from seeing “how a caring world order can be part of a new political imaginary” (p. 51). The practical consequences of justifying care as abject are underlain by the assumption that domestic labor is not citizenship-defining labor and, more importantly, hands-on body care work is ascribed a negative symbolic capital due to the association with “vulnerable bodies in a society that valorizes individualistic independence and productivity” (p. 53).

In turn, the non-substitutivity of love labor contradicts the popular narrative that everything is commodifiable, making it eligible for providing “resource resistance to its ethical nemesis, capitalism” (p. 57). Going back to the love, care and solidarity lifeworlds, Lynch clarifies that making of love through love labor is “a distinctive form of intimate relational work” (p. 57) that differs from secondary and tertiary forms of care laboring, viz., from paid professional care, community care and solidarity. It is the uniqueness of producing “humanity in its relationality” (ibid.) that makes love laboring unsubjectable to market capitalist logic and ethics. One of the most apparent projections of the devaluation of the symbolic capital of care and love is how the low status of care work is mirrored in the low status of subjects related to care in Academia, such as social care, nurturing, and teaching. Considering that by contrast to other forms of care, love cannot be professionalized, it has “even a more subordinated standing” (p. 61). Based upon the specifications above, Lynch draws the highly important conclusion that while love is a part of care, not all care is loving. Absolutizing care as a homogenous category may invisibilize the uncommodifiable love labor dimension.

In this context, Lynch displays the results of some of her previous studies of family carers and care receivers to reveal the origin of “the time conflicts that arise in a society governed by the ethics of productivity and competition” (p. 75). Taking into account that capitalism is not the only reason for accelerating competition in time, she pays special attention to how “the competitive and appropriative culture of capitalism” (ibid.) stigmatizes making love, care and solidarity work as a matter of incidental and marginalized work that is done “in leftover time, with leftover energy” (ibid.) only when market work is completed. Thus, the time-consuming hands-on care work is devaluated in the neoliberal ‘chronopolitics’ that makes not only productivity but also time as having an exchange value.

Specifically, one of the illuminative embodiments of the neoliberal chronopolitics is that the time-money-earning nexus (Cf. pp. 80-81) prioritizes clock time which favors “calculative, conditional solidarity” over the live, cyclical time encouraging more altruistic and affective forms of solidarity (Cf. p. 86). Thus, time spent in care work is considered foundational to the co-creation of one another, and thereby unreplaceable with productivity time. The reason is that caring used to have a significant human dimension, viz., taking responsibility as a matter of response to the changing needs of others.

In turn, the second part of the book *Care and Capitalism* is devoted to the analysis of the reasons behind mutually related political values of liberalism and individualism by revealing how they have been integrated into the practices of neoliberalism and, thus, justifying the devaluation of care and social justice by enchanting the languages of liberalism, individualism, competition, choice and merit (p. 13) as “respectable languages” (ibid.) with politically positive performativity.

By showing that neoliberalism builds on the disregard of care as a private ethical matter in the historical traditions of liberalism, Lynch clarifies why individualism has encouraged the devaluation of care. As one of the reasons, she points out how liberal reforms are “‘affirmative remedies’ to injustices” (p. 104), which have a corrective rather than transformative goal of the underlying institutions and structures. As an example of why liberalism aims at providing a fair basis for dealing with inequalities rather than eliminating them, Lynch points out the assumption of John Rawls and “other liberal egalitarians” (p. 107) that equalizing opportunities is not the right to choose among alternatives of equal value, but rather the right to compete “within a system of institutionalized inequality” (ibid.).

Specifically, Lynch examines the reasons behind prioritizing freedom over equality as a matter of undermining social justice within and without the field of care, in both academic and public discourses. In this context, Lynch calls for what she calls a-structural approach to the analysis of inequalities under liberalism, as the latter disguises “the intersectionality of care-related inequalities with other social, economic and political injustices” (p. 100). Thus, the readers can recognize the implications of another dichotomy deriving from these of use value vs exchange value and clock time vs live time, viz., the dichotomy of a public sphere. The major agents are *Homo economicus* governed by their self-interest and *Homo relationalis* motivated by fellow-feeling. Consequently, the genealogy of unequal vulnerabilities triggered by neoliberalism can be traced back to how liberalism makes *Homo economicus* and *Homo relationalis* “live comfortably within the one person” (Muehlebach in Lynch, p. 113). As Lynch cogently points out, thus liberalism “accommodates a dualistic ethics of care/carelessness” (ibid.).

Based upon the specifications above, Lynch clarifies that questioning the comfort of having *Homo economicus* and *Homo relationalis* as living in one person can be successful if one deconstructs what she calls the political imaginary of *Homo economicus* in the field of

education. The knowledge-based economy model, which displays how meaning-making is generated in the market economy, employs Cartesian rationalism and the associated “moral legitimization for the cheapening and exploitation of care” (p. 131). Thus, the new political imaginary in the service of the market makes no room for educating young people on the value of relational life as a matter of cultivating “interdependent, caring and solidaristic human beings” (p. 124). The result is the increasing corporatization of care, where care-led service relationships “become defined in transactional terms, a means to an end, to a better score or a higher rank” (p. 147).

By contrast, the introduction of *Homo curans* counters the ontology of separateness brought about by *Homo economicus*. Specifically, *Homo curans* makes room for a new economic, political and cultural ontology that rehabilitates the process of how affective care relations can “find an intellectual and political voice” (p. 133), viz., to attract people’s attention that “*Homo curans* is also a living reality” (ibid.).

Furthermore, the recognition of the “everyday individual of neoliberalism” as “a market persona” (p. 132) necessitates the justification of particular meritocratic myths which undermine the role of care as immeasurable and, more importantly, that of what Lynch coins care-harming ideologies of capitalism (p. 134). The devaluation of *Homo curans* is recognized as a failure of *Homo economicus*, assuming that the failure itself is a result of *Homo curans*’ disability or irresponsibility to compete successfully according to metrics supporting the myth that “what can be ranked hierarchically can be incontrovertibly judged” (p. 145). Specifically, the moral implications of the failure address the so-called economy of moral judgment (p. 141), due to which *Homo economicus* is considered more trustworthy in the sense of being more accountable than *Homo curans*.

The practical outcome of the impossibility of transformation is that neoliberal metrics of glorifying exchange value at the expense of the use value makes the equality of opportunity a “twin ideology”, as Lynch outlines, to that of meritocratic selection. Methodologically speaking, the double-bind outcome is that these “twin” ideologies work as a trigger for normalizing social injustices by “hierarchically ordering people in care-harming ways” (p. 134), while neglecting that caring is not only goal-oriented but also “a disposition in action” (p. 146).

In turn, in the third part of the book *Care and Capitalism*, Lynch examines the complex relations between care, capitalism and violence by tackling the genesis of violence as the

*nemesis* of care. She analyzes the origin of different forms of violence, such as those to non-human animals provoked by moral indifference, cultural violence regarding the stratification of care as a subject tackled merely in some separated spaces in sociology, as well as the diverse forms of capitalist-triggered violence including the violence of allowing people to die, state violence and gender-based violence.

Regarding violence to animals, Lynch emphasizes the many ways we learn to be indifferent to non-human beings by stigmatizing them as “disposable objects, a ‘mass’ of things” (p. 156). Thus, the process of massifying contributes to concealing animals’ individuality and their suffering. It is the “anthropocentrism of language” (p. 158) that makes animals become what Adams (2000) calls absent-referents in the supermarket (p. 159). They are recognized as ‘meat’ or ‘products’ which makes humans psychologically detached from the process of violence turning a sentient living being into “cooked flesh” (ibid.). The moral diagnosis of psychological detachment is what Francione (2000) calls moral schizophrenia, viz., human dispositions of caring for their companion animals and showing indifference to the abuse of sentient animals such as calves, pigs and lambs at once (p. 165).

In the next chapter, Lynch broadens the debates about violence by comparing and contrasting different forms of structural and cultural capitalist violence by disenchanting the paradox of how unregulated profiting can deprive people of a livelihood, health care etc., without being registered “in the calculation of costs of capitalism” (p. 174). By defining love and caring as instinctual and, consequently, as feminine dispositions, they are scientifically marginalized as “a-sociological” (p. 176). Thus, love and caring are devalued through a technology of anti-relationality (Melamed in Lynch, p. 183), which incorporates the pre-capitalist stratifications of gender, race and disability into the capitalist quasi-legal and quasi-moral justification of ongoing inequalities. In this context, Lynch cogently points out that one cannot peruse affective justice “without examining its nemesis, violence, in all its forms” (p. 192) and, thus, questioning the quasi-relation between vulnerability and passivity as originating from the paternalistic humanistic discourse.

Having provided a detailed and complex diagnosis of why the processes of love, care and solidarity have been deliberately devaluated in the matrix of neoliberal capitalism, Lynch builds a broad and thought-provoking prognosis of how humans can find some intellectual, political, cultural and educational (pp. 197-198) ‘remedies’ for “moving beyond a

capitalocentric way of seeing the world” (p. 15). Theoretically speaking, Lynch defines the book’s primary objective as addressing the axiological rehabilitation of care and affective relations by challenging the idea of capitalist inevitabilities. The process of challenging itself concerns “the naturalization of neoliberal capitalism,” as expressed in both the “‘TNA (there is no alternative)’ mentality and the ‘futility’ perspective” (p. 199).

Subverting the logic of the ethics of capitalism, operating through bureaucratic rationalities which support gain-centered relations, with that of ethics of care, as well as functioning through non-bureaucratic rationalities which encourage nurture-centered relations, necessitates the deconstruction of the meaning behind *Homo economicus*. In this context, Lynch cogently outlines *Homo curans*’ transformative objective as that of revaluating ethics of care both as a challenge to capitalism and as a way of rethinking democracy in affective care terms via the adoption of relevant education. Specifically, Lynch’s contribution concerns how one rethinks the role of care by cultivating the process of “re-feeling with care and with mindfulness of the suffering of others” (p. 201), considering the various embodiments of the latter in its complexity. The origin of the moral shift above is traced back to the basis of the logic of care as antithetical to that of capital (p. 203).

Regarding the forms of affective relational resistances and refusals, Lynch emphasizes how the care crisis in the Western world, which is underlain by the narrowing of the circles of care, has not led to the establishment of “a radical, care-oriented counter-movement” yet, but rather seems to reinforce “a neoliberal ideology of self-care and self-responsibilization” (p. 209). Some of the most illuminative embodiments of this ideology can be found in “the human-capital-led frame of education” (p. 211). According to Lynch, the deficiencies of such an education, which promotes the ideal of “the autonomous rational actor, encapsulated in the Cartesian dictum *Cogito ergo sum*” (ibid.) can be overcome when students “unlearn carelessness thinking and acting and relearn how to think with care” (Bellacasa in Lynch, ibid.). Practically speaking, “‘the greed-is-good’ ethic of neoliberal capitalism” (p. 214) supported by the human-capital-led frame of education should be countered by the recognition and adoption of new epistemic models “in which care- and justice-led perspectives prevail” (p. 212).

As one of the most essential examples of why we need to adopt new care-led epistemologies, Lynch points out “care lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic” (p. 215). The lessons in question are understood as a matter of overcoming “epistemologies of ignorance”

(Sullivan and Tuana in Lynch, *ibid.*) and especially, the way of living with the so-called general “privileged ignorance” (*ibid.*). The death cases in care homes during the pandemic display not only the climax of the corporization of care but also necessitate reevaluating a new care- and rights-based perspective on justice (p. 219).

With this innovative care-centered project on justice in mind, Lynch transforms not only the dominant neoliberal epistemologies underlain by the absolutization of cognitivist rationales but also the associated myth of meritocracy, which justifies the unequal vulnerabilities as a matter of moral deservingness producing affective and politico-economic inequalities. By looking for a paradigm shift whose main social agent is *Homo curans*, Lynch profoundly questions the deeply rooted liberal tradition of decoupling justice from care in a capital-centered world, which grounds its invincibility in axiologically ‘tingled’ ontologies of separateness. In this context, Lynch convincingly shows that not only violence can be the *nemesis* of care but also care can turn into the *nemesis* of structural and cultural violence. This can happen when care-harming ideologies are transformed into capital-harming ones by rehabilitating the positive symbolic capital of love, care and solidarity in the contemporary socio-political discourse.

Furthermore, the thought-provoking and inspiring book *Care and Capitalism*, written by Kathleen Lynch points towards the necessity of introducing a new post-neoliberal dictum that *Homo curans* can successfully adopt. Specifically, being integrated into the building of an affective care-relational world, the embodiment of this new dictum into *Homo curans*’ moral behavior can demonstrate how the Cartesian dictum *Cogito ergo sum* loses its performative potential unless it is enriched with that of *Curo ergo sum*, viz., *I care, therefore I am!*