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A Study on Public Ethics of Care: Care, Justice and Economics of Social Service*

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Abstract

Purpose - This paper explores a new possibility of care ethics for social service. As the needs for care have been growing rapidly in various social fields, 'care' became an important concept in envisioning a welfare state. However, due to the lack of proper ethics and political stance applied to the newly arisen needs and challenges, there exist lots of confusions and difficulties.

Research design, data, and methodology - Introducing the feminist ethics of care, this paper examines the relationship of care and justice in social service. As a main research perspective, this study has focused on Kittay's public ethics of care and Tronto's political ethics of care.

Results - Drawing on the main research perspective, this study discusses on the necessity of a political conceptualization for an integrative care ethics. In the process, The specialty and professionalism of care work as a relational labor was reconsidered. Kittay's care ethics provides a persuasive justification for social support for care workers as well as care receivers, and Tronto's ethics shows us the role of care politics for democratic citizenship.

Conclusions - Tronto's ethics of care with Kittay's gives us valuable insights to envision a new public ethics for social service that takes into account both care and justice properly.

Keywords: Ethics of Care, Justice, Social Service, Public Ethics, Relational Labor.

JEL Classifications: D63, I19, I31.

1. Introduction

These days, how to see the needs for care has become an important question in welfare debates. Traditionally, responsibilities on care and support were attributed to family, but now a large portion of it is being transferred to the responsibility of community or society. As care for various populations such as children, the elderly, the disabled has become one of major considerations of government, social service policy has taken up a sizable proportion of national policy.

The problems becoming major issues in Korean society such as health insurance, free child care, basic old age pension all are related to care. Furthermore, the problems of long-term care insurance, care-giver for the sick, personal

assistant service, care worker, homemaker service, etc. located in blind spots of care services are not even recognized yet.

As a social animal, human beings are innately disposed to care for one-another. Feminist ethicists have attended to this basic human condition of dependency. Although the word, care now has found a new meaning as in 'social care', still, as Joan Tronto(2013) argues, "caring activities are devalued, underpaid, and disproportionately occupied by the relatively powerless in society" As social care attracts our attention as a major issue in debates on a welfare state, the concept of care that has been marginalized for a long time, also asks for a proper place in social change.

For the concept of care itself has undergone some significant changes in its meaning and boundaries, people no longer see the concept of care from a dualistic perspective such as private/public, formal/informal, paid/unpaid. The change with which care has come out of family sector means a fundamental change in a traditionally categorized boundary of public and private. Rethinking the

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meaning of publicness, Nam(2012) saw that care ethics, alternative to the existing ethic of justice, has significant implications on the debates of publicness. He investigates “how the politics of recognition can be applied to care work which contains relational labor as its core component and what ethics of care argue for socio-economic recognition of care work”(Nam, 2012: 122).

With these regards, first this study has introduced feminist ethics of care, examining the relationship of care and justice in social service. And it discusses the necessity of a political conceptualization for an integrative care ethics under the title of ethics of care, revisited. In the process Tronto’s ethics of care and Kittay’s public ethics of care would enrich our discourses on political ethics for social service that takes into account both care and justice.

2. Methodology

In order to better understand the issues of care and justice in social service, this paper examined the contemporary studies on care ethics and social policy. Particularly, focusing on Kittay’s public ethics of care and Tronto’s political ethics of care, it attempted to find new possibilities of care ethics and their implications on social welfare policy. Kittay has developed an ethics of care which includes the definition of what is good/ ideal care. She insists that public care needs to be organized under ‘the principle of Doulia’, which sums up values and virtues implicated in care relations. Kittay also helped us understand care as work. If care is recognized as work, it would require a proper social status and appropriate rewards. In this way, Kittay has demystified the care relations. However even if it is a paid work, care requires a certain attitude such as concern, connection, affection, etc. and asks more attention to care-receivers than to care workers themselves. Kittay’s theory can give us insights into what purpose and which policy components social policy and welfare state that is based on reciprocity of care relations and the universality of human dependency implies (Ma, 2010: 344).

Tronto has emphasized the political, power relational characteristics of care. She criticized that feminism hadn’t paid enough attention to the political context of moral arguments. She stated that care need to be redefined so that critical reflection on the way care is located within comprehensive power relations is possible, and furthermore it could show the direction for care politics. Tronto helps to

better understand the place of care in citizenship and democracy under the social influences of neo-liberalism, globalization and market etc. A new political ethics of care can provide insight into “a model of public care that can resist the reduction of democratic logics to market logic” (Whilte, 2015: 208).

3. Care, Justice and Social Service

Social welfare aims to improve the quality of human life. What is a good life, then? When we consider social welfare service as a moral enterprise, it is a crucial question to frame the aims of social welfare. And for this we can suppose two forms of life, living well and living rightly. While the former is related to the virtue of well-being or happiness, the latter is concerned with justice and equality. Regarding the debate on ethics, there are two competing paradigms: “the ethic of justice” emphasizing fairness, right and justification/judgment vs. “the ethic of care” highlighting the relational, caring aspects of morality. Some might think there two paradigms are dichotomous alternative to each other. However, considering the dual focuses of social welfare, i.e. individual and society, we cannot help but attend to both care and social justice.

As a feminist theorist, Carol Gilligan was the one who had first criticized Kohlberg’s ethics of justice in that Kohlberg’s theory reinforced gender prejudices that women couldn’t be maturer than men in moral development. She saw that men and women had fundamentally different orientations to moral problems. With her famous book, ‘In a difference voice’, Gillian developed an alternative ethics to Kohlberg’s ethics of justice, reflecting more on women’s experiences and characteristics. Gilligan originally drew the distinction between justice and care, associating justice with rights, rules, and equality, and care with responsibility, meeting needs in context, and equity. Nel Noddings(1984) reinforced this distinction by portraying justice as universal, impartial and principled, and care as particular, relational and situational. Noddings saw “the heart of morality” in caring arising from the goodness of concrete caring situation. According to her, ethics is based on natural caring relations. And the question: how to meet the other morally leads our attention from natural caring to “ethical caring.” Ethics of caring is practical and “since caring is a relation, an ethic built on it is naturally other-regarding”(p.99).

<Table 1> Comparison between ethics of justice and ethics of care

	Ethics of Justice	Ethics of Care
Major theorists	Kant, Rawls, Kohlberg	Gilligan, Noddings, Held, Kittay, Tronto
Perspectives on humans	autonomy, independence	relationality, (inter)dependence
Major moral principles	rights, universality, justice	contextual sensitivity, care, responsibility,

However, as care theorists began to apply care ethics into a political theory, however, the original distinction was questioned and theorists began to reconsider the relationship between care ethics and justice theories. With this regard, Virginia Held was one of first theorists to explore the relationship between care and justice from a broad moral and political perspective (Held, 1995). Held saw care mainly as the problem of relationship. For Held, care means practices as well as values, where relationships are central. Based on the relational characteristics of care, Held expected that care ethics could give us a certain moral perspective, which would be distinguished from the dominant moral theories such as Kantian ethics and utilitarian theories. Held argued for the priority of care over justice. In Held's view, practices of care already include the value of justice.

According to Hankivsky (2004) care ethicists can be classified as the first and the second generation. In the classification, Gillian, Noddings, and Held belong to the first generation group. The first generation theorists have considered care ethics as a type of moral reasoning occurring from the experiences of maternity, care and nurture, and tended to relate them to gender. However, these gender-oriented theories were criticized that they hadn't proved how the ethics of care could be suitable for the public realm, and how it could be used as the basis for political and institutional reforms (Hankivsky, 2004: 13). On the other hand, the second generation care ethicists have related care ethics to the humans in general not only to women. In other words, ethic of care can be related to all the activities humans do in order to sustain and reform the human society. It is a kind of species' activity (Hankivsky, 2004: 27). Also the second generation theorists, though there exist strategic differences among them, pursue a synergy of care and justice, while advocating the originality of the ethics of care (Ibid. 27-32).

As the second generation theorist, Kittay paid attention to the problem of justice that care had addressed to the society. Who is responsible for care, and who would provide care, and how to support care relation and people in care relations, these are all social and political problems and how to organize these needs is an issue of social justice (Kittay, 1999).

Kittay(2015) has differentiated two meanings of care: care is sometimes treated as a moral value. In this sense care is the ideal at the ethical core of ethic of care. At other times it is used as a descriptive term. Care in its descriptive sense is akin to a commodity, something people need and desire that can be of varying quality, distributed fairly or unfairly, and in adequate or inadequate doses. Then how can we speak of care both in its fully normative and its descriptive sense with respect to justice? We tend to hold fixed the distinction between an ethic and a political theory, wherein political theories are applicable to social institutions, while ethical theories govern relationships between individuals, and say that justice is a virtue of political

institutions. But according to Kittay, the question of justice can be said to be the question of how we arrange our social institutions so that citizens can realize an ethical life (Kittay, 2015: 52-53).

While Rawls's theory of justice as a mainstream theory emphasizes independent, autonomous images of humans, Kittay has challenged it and attempted to envision an alternative theory of justice, based on the care ethics, which put more emphasis on the relational and interdependent human beings.

Emphasizing the inevitable human condition of dependency, Kittay suggested the notion of reciprocity what she called, "doulia" Kittay adopted the term "doulia" from the postpartum caretaker, the doula, who assists the mother who has just given birth, not by caring for the infant as much as by caring for the mother so that the mother can herself care for the infant. She argued for a public conception of doulia (service) by which we acknowledge the social responsibility to care for the care taker (Kittay, 2011: 117-118). Kittay was interested in social justice issues for care workers as well as dependents, and the principle of doulia has provided a basis for public support and social responsibility for care services.

Meanwhile, Tronto casted a more critical eye on how these arguments for care had been denied/ excluded or marginalized in the existing policy discourses and power relations. According to Tronto(1993), care is a kind of activity including everything we do to live in the world and to continue, sustain and improve our world. With this much broadened concept of care, she believed we can problematize what is central to human image. If we relocate care at the central, the world would be different; reciprocity would become human attribute, and we can see how existent moral, political theories sustain power and inequality of privilege, and facilitate 'otherization' of care-givers. Furthermore, Tronto tried to rethink care as one of important criteria for citizenship (Tronto, 2001: 71).

In her recent book, Care democracy: market, equality and justice, Tronto reinterpreted democracy as care. In her view, care is the responsibility of democratic citizen. How to share the responsibilities of care has become a central issue in our society. Traditionally, women were responsible for care at home. Despite the socialization of care these days, care responsibilities are still disproportionate between men and women. According to Tronto, democracy should make equal care for everyone in a society, this means we accept our responsibilities to take care of children, the elderly, the weak, and people with different capabilities due to the differences in mind and body. Tronto states that there are many ways to change the world. We would ask to participate in taking care of ourselves and others by providing enough resources and by reconsidering and accepting our care responsibilities. Then we could raise the level of trust, reduce the inequalities and provide a genuine freedom for all (Tronto, 2014: 332). She concluded the book

with the phrase from Giambattista Vico: “what is justice? it is the constant care for the common good”(Vico, 1990: 67), which seems appropriate to be reminded in closing the chapter.

4. Ethics of care, revisited: Towards a political ethics of care

We live in a world where the concept of ‘publicness’ itself is challenged; the concept needs to be reconsidered. While publicness tended to relate to the value of Justice, equality, etc., social changes, such as ‘privatization’ and ‘socialization of care,’ have asked us a new meaning of publicness. As care has rapidly moved outside of family sector, although provided as a care work, its value both in economy and social relation haven’t yet properly recognized. Care work needs recognition in economic distribution as well as in social relation (Nam, 2012: 105).

Work on the ethics of care has evolved since the publication of Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice*(1982). Several of the early associations with the ethic of care positioned care as a private virtue, gendered feminine, and central to mothering practice. Nowadays, however, many scholars have been interested in revising and rethinking care as public virtue.

Unlike the former feminist theorists, Kittay began from the problems of social justice that care had addressed to the society. Kittay argued that care ethics should be developed for care workers and care receivers on the basis of human dependency and reciprocity. According to Kittay’s ethics of care, when high quality caring is performed, and dependency relations are satisfactory, care labor is characterized as 3Cs: care, attending to others in response to their vulnerability; connection, building intimacy and trust or sustaining ties between intimates; and concern, giving expression to the ties of affection that sustain the connection(Kittay, 1999: 31). In such context, care givers would be more interested in the welfare of dependents than in his/her own needs. In a good environment of care, there would be an emotional investment on the welfare of caretakers from caregivers, and from the care receivers, there would be a trust and emotional bond for the care givers.

Refining the original principle of *doulia*, Kittay(2015) has further suggested four principles of a care-based conception of justice- the first principle: non-deprivation and non-discrimination. This principle would demand that public resources and opportunities be distributed in such a way that meeting dependency needs receive priority over other concerns. The second principle: non-exploitation for dependency workers(caregivers and assistants) is needed to protect those who attend to others in a condition of

inevitable dependency from exploitation and deprivation of resources and opportunities. The Third principle: non-exploitation for dependents, is needed to protect against abuse and exploitation due to the vulnerability of dependency. And the fourth principle: support for sustaining (effective and non-exploitative) caring bonds means that fair terms of social life (given our inevitable dependency) must recognize the importance of bonds that form between a dependent and those who assist and care (Kittay, 2015: 62-64).

With the refined principle of *Doulia* and as its lemmas, the four principles above, Kittay asked for “fair terms of social life.” Given our inevitable dependency and our inextricable interdependency, our social institutions need to consider those principles seriously, so that the condition of dependency should not be an impediment for a good life. She shows us a new prospect that “dependency (which is always set up against independence), when properly managed and fairly dealt with, is paradoxically not the enemy of freedom but the very condition of the possibility of our freedom”(p.67).

On the other hand, Joan Tronto was more concerned about a political conceptualization of care values. Tronto criticized that feminism haven’t paid enough attention to the political contexts of moral arguments. She put a particular emphasis on the political and power attributes of care.

According to Tronto(1993), politically proper way of care would have the following four phases: caring about (attentiveness to care needs, taking care of, care-giving, and care-receiving. The first, ‘caring about’ means recognition of care needs. It makes us attentive to other’s or certain group’s care needs and evaluate that these needs should be satisfied socially. Second, ‘taking care of’ is about the decision how to cope with the recognized needs. Without the allocation of proper resources - materials, time, organization and personnel, we could not be responsible for the needs. Third, ‘care-giving’ means direct satisfaction of care needs. Direct contact with needy person would occur through the physical and mental labor. Finally, ‘care-receiving’ indicates the reciprocity of care process. Responses from the care receivers can be a good indicator of caring well. If the above three processes are not satisfactory, caring would not be successful.

However, each phase also implies power and conflict as well, which shows the functioning of care politics regarding how to define, provide and evaluate care. What is the necessary need that requires public support, which need is the most important value to be satisfied among many needs, what kind of support, which resources and in what degree should we bring for the recognized need? These all are structured by power, and depend upon the position of the person who speaks.

<Table 2> Tronto's four phases of care relation & process

	phase	moral value and attitude	power and conflict
1	caring about	attentiveness	- what is the necessary need asking for public support? - which need is the most important value to be satisfied?
2	taking care of	responsibility	- what kind of support and resources, in what degree should we bring for the recognized need?
3	care-giving	competence	- conditions of providing good care - how care giver perceives the need of care receiver and how to provide care
4	care-receiving	responsiveness	- conditions of receiving good care - whose need have a priority?

Care is not only the distribution matter of goods and services, it is also related to the quality of life, and it is the matter of how we experience and interpret the needs. Good care would be different, depending on the quality of relationship between care giver and care recipient (Ma, 2010: 341). Traditionally, theorists of justice has emphasized the universal and general characteristics of human needs, But, although we acknowledge the importance of human need, i.e. need for survival as the basic, universal need, how to satisfy the need varies depending on the cultural, historical environment, and it always presupposes the relational and concrete context in which satisfaction of the need takes place (Tronto, 1993).

As seen above, the moral principles such as 'context sensitivity' and 'attentiveness' what care ethics advocates, are quite different from the existent discourses on justice. Especially it is in contrast with the Rawlsian perspective on humans as abstract, and general concept, for care ethics focuses on the concrete and particular human beings. According to Tronto, care is not only a value but also a politics, a politics of need interpretation, for each particular situation is different.

Tronto also emphasized 'responsiveness' as an important moral principle of care ethics. In her view, it is different from reciprocity in that responsiveness indicates accepting the other's position as it is expressed, while reciprocity means learning from changing each other's position - it still presumes the similarity or sameness of humans as independent and autonomous beings. However responsiveness presupposes a mutual relation in which each participant is empowered to express his/her own otherness. Such an interaction would be a dialogue and/or narrative. This principle also acknowledges that individual explanation of his/her experience itself is socially constructed (Hankivsky, 2004: 35). Whereas reciprocity still remains in the paradigm of humans as abstract and general beings, responsiveness asks for radical politics of recognition and difference/otherness.

Nam (2012: 114) indicated that care work with relationality had not got a proper socio-economic recognition yet. Care work as relational labor is often seen as invisible, for emotional, affective intervention tended not to be regarded as general characteristics of labor. For a socio-economic

recognition, we need to consider the specialty and professionalism of care work as relational labor. The emotional, affective intervention needed for care work as a relational labor requires considerable dedication, at the same time, such intervention should be kept official. In order to keep the appropriate balance, the relationality of care work needs suitable knowledge, skill, practice and experience, but it has not been properly recognized, and socio-economically devalued. In addition, care work need to be improved in terms of a value recognition in social relations as well.

Political reconceptualization of care also shows us the necessity of care politics. In order to realize the value of good care and/or ideal care, and to change into an alternative society, where care is no longer marginalized, we need care politics in which diverse subjects can participate and thus their voices can be heard.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Summary

Our society has been facing new challenges; the needs for care are growing rapidly, and the subject of care itself became the object of political acts and negotiations. In order to cope with the challenges properly, we need a new way to look at the relation of care and justice and social ethics, so that we can better interpret and dealt with the issues of injustice care work addresses in our society. To improve the welfare of people who need care and also to help care-givers not to find themselves in vulnerable situations while supporting the needy persons, it would be necessary to further develop a political ethics of care for social service.

As the second generation of feminist theorists, Kittay and Tronto helped us to rethink the concept of care in much broader way than the first generation of feminism such as Gilligan, Noddings and Held did, not limited to the gender-oriented position.

Kittay was interested in justice issues care had addressed. With her public ethics of care, called 'principle of doulia, Kittay tried to integrate and re-establish a new relationship between care and justice for care work. Kittay

has challenged the priority of independence and autonomy over human dependency and reciprocity as human nature. Especially, considering the relational characteristics of care work, ethics of care could give us better insights for the work ethics and help to envision an alternative society, where people in care relations are not alienated or marginalized. However, Kittay's theorization of care relation seemed to disregard or to be less developed regarding the awareness of power relations among the people.

Advocating a political ethics of care, however, Tronto has de-constructed the dualistic boundary of morality and politics. Tronto has indicated five moral components of care ethics: concern, responsibility, performativity, responsiveness, and solidarity(trust), with which we can evaluate care itself. However, (care) needs are complicated and also changing, thus to make a decision on the need is a process that requires one of the most political efforts (Tronto, 2013). In Tronto's view, the definition of care and its attributes are not set in stone, and rather an effect of ruling power, functioning in a particular social context. With a further discussion on how to integrate otherness in citizenship discourses, Tronto has promoted care politics in which marginalized people in care participate, and their voices are heard.

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5.2. Implications of Research

This study aims at finding a better way to conceive the social problems of care service with the help of recent developments in feminist ethics of care. Combined with Kittay's public ethics of care, Tronto's critical reflection on the political processes of care work and care relations could give us valuable insights to envision a public ethics for care service and to make a caring society.

5.3. Limitations & Further Research

As a limitation of the study, this research could not deal with various criticism on ethic of care from other traditions of ethics. For example, Slote(2015) as a leading scholar of liberal ethics still believes that care ethics is short of being an alternative to rationalist/traditionalist approaches to morality, because it is focused on individual morality and thus not enough for social, political ethics. As a further research, it would be a worthwhile to examine the debates around care ethics, including the criticism from the liberal ethicists.

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