Philosophic Exchange

Volume 27
Number 1 *Volume 27 (1996-1997)*

Article 4

1997

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Eva Feder Kittay

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Kittay, Eva Feder (1997) "Women, Welfare, and a Public Ethic of Care," *Philosophic Exchange*: Vol. 27 : No. 1 , Article 4.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/phil_ex/vol27/iss1/4

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The College at BROCKPORT
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Eva Feder Kittay

Women, Welfare, and a Public Ethic of Care

Eva Feder Kittay

A few years ago, a prominent welfare official wrote:

> Every time I see a bag lady on the street, I wonder, 'Was that an A.F.D.C. mother who hit the menopause wall — who can no longer reproduce and get money to support herself?
> (Lawrence Townsend, a Riverside California's welfare reform director (Cited in (Williams, 1995: 6))

The misogyny (and unspoken racism) in that single statement should alert us that the welfare and the welfare reform discussions that have dominated US social welfare policy are not only matters of poverty. While the right speaks incessantly of "family values" "unwed mothers," "family breakdown," and "teenage pregnancy," and the left responds with "poverty" "jobs" "structural poverty." Despite this mismatch in call and response, the two positions share philosophical underpinnings. Both, in different ways, presume a model of the citizen as male wage earner and do not question a model of social cooperation which presumes, but does not credit, women's unpaid labor as caretaker. (Young, 1995; Pateman, 1989)

Welfare as we knew it, that is Aid to Families with Dependent Children, now replaced by a program entitled Temporary Aid to Families in Need, affects mostly women and their children. Ninety percent of adults on AFDC have been women. The idea of "illegitimacy" — an idea steeped in sexual inequality where stigma attaches itself to the woman and the children she has borne outside of marriage, but not to the man who sired these children — has reared its ugly head. As some current studies indicate, more than half of the women who make use of public assistance are coming out of abusive relationships.[1] Clearly welfare is not *only* a poverty issue, it is a *woman's* issue. Beyond this, I believe that it is an issue of fundamental importance to *feminist theorists* and *philosophers* — to those who challenge women's subordination and gender injustice, and who question the morality of refusing support to those most vulnerable and those made vulnerable by fulfilling gender roles.

To those who hold that the end of women's subordination is a *sine qua non* to the formation of a just society, the end of AFDC, a sixty year program guaranteeing women with children a basic level of income if they fall below a certain level of poverty, must be a siren call to understand why "a war against poor women is a war against all women" (as the slogan of a feminist advocacy group, the Women's Committee of One Hundred, declares). This moment should also be grasped as the occasion to reconsider the basis of welfare. We need to formulate a foundation of the political will to shape and support a welfare policy that can serve women raising families without stigmatizing those in need. Without such policy, women, particularly in modern industrial economies, cannot achieve full citizenship (Fraser, 1997; Young, 1995; Sevenhuijsen, 1996; Mink, 1995) and the gains of feminism will not be consolidated.

In this paper (which is part of a project still "under construction," as they say on the web) I will attempt to consider such a basis for welfare, a basis which speaks to the needs of poor women and their families and which, I believe, can guide us to appropriate means by which to form the requisite political will. For such a political will, we require policies that are universal in scope, policies in which all women especially, can have a stake. Only universal policies can avoid stigmatization of the programs' participants and only such policies survive in times of financial constriction, when the poorest need their benefits the most. Universal welfare policies have drawbacks as well, but I will address some of these at the end of the paper.

The literature on the welfare state reflects not only the contemporary "right"/"left" debate concerning welfare, to which I alluded earlier. It also reflects two different understandings of the welfare state by those who endorse it. Feminists see welfare and the welfare state as a woman's issue: as a patriarchical control over the lives of poor women, but also as an essential safety net for all women[2]. Paraphrasing Kate Millet in a recent talk on welfare, welfare was support from "The Man" when "your man" walked out. Men, meanwhile, who defend the welfare state see welfare as a response to inequalities generated by capitalism and need-based welfare as a response to poverty — poverty de-gendered[3]

Well, again citing Millet, "The Man walked out — he quit." But poverty, poverty with a woman's face remains. Eliminating poverty, as confoundingly difficult as it is to accomplish, is, in another sense, a straight forward matter. In a money economy, three options are available to keep a person from being poor: provide money; provide needed goods and services; or provide the means by which to acquire money lawfully, i.e., a job. Of course, matters are not so simple. What constitutes a need for goods or services? How much money and how much access to goods and services will alleviate poverty? Within a market economy, the satisfaction of needs, the creation of needs, and the negotiation of what constitutes need is tied to one's participation in a relation of reciprocity between the production of wealth and its consumption. To participate in this reciprocal relation is to be involved in the relation of social cooperation that is a virtual prerequisite for citizenship in contemporary Western society. This participation is marked first and foremost by labor that is compensated in wages or salaries. It defines "independent." To stand outside these reciprocal arrangements reduces one to the status of dependent, someone dependent on another individual, a charity, or the state.[4]

But as even the earliest proponents of a market economy saw, a market economy, in and of itself, will not guarantee that all who can and want to work will be adequately employed. A capitalist industrialized society creates great wealth and great poverty. On the one hand, to redistribute wealth (in the form of cash transfers or goods and services in kind) is presumed to undermine the sense of participation in the community and so to undermine a sense of self-worth. On the other hand the creation of jobs by state intervention threatens the autonomous functioning of the market and so threatens the machine that generates wealth. Donald Moon calls this "Hegel's dilemma" a dilemma articulated and never resolved by the philosopher in his *Philosophy of Right* (Moon, 1988).

It is this picture of poverty and state welfarist intervention which dominates many of the discussions on welfare, by the right — which has pushed us to the current legislation of workfare (or should we call it unfair-work) — and by the left — which asks "Where are the jobs?" to which the welfare "dependents" are to turn in their newly forged (and forced) independency. On this model, the poverty of the welfare 'recipient' is the poverty of the unemployed worker. But the model of the worker remains that of a male wage earner, whose income is supposed to sustain not only himself, but his family.

Certainly not *everyone* in a society is able to perform waged work even if jobs were limitless. They may lack the capacities required: ill health, disabling conditions not corrected for in the work environment, disabling conditions for *any* form of employment, or inadequate education or training and no means by which to acquire these. Nor do we expect everyone to work: we exempt and even prohibit children from working and don't presume that those over a certain age will continue to work.

As (Fraser & Gordon, 1994) argue, dependency, which in preindustrial times was

seen as a structural social feature, has in industrial society and still more strikingly in postindustrial society come to be seen as a characterological feature of those who are poor. Social policy then comes to be directed at controlling the behavior of dependents rather than at addressing the economic and social conditions which result in poverty. Paradoxically, women's entry into the workforce and the increased opportunity of women as a group to acquire material resources, has coincided with the increased impoverishment of many women. Today women constitute the largest adult group of the poor[5]. While previous social policies attempted to distinguish the "deserving" from the "undeserving" poor women the removal of obstacles to women's employment has opened the door to characterizing all unemployed poor women, as undeserving.

But not all poverty, even in post industrial society, has been viewed as a character flaw. When the disabled are poor, we either alter the working environment to enable employment and reduce the handicapping conditions, or, we look to supplemental income for those so disabled that they cannot maintain employment even with altered work environments. We do not say to them work or lose benefits. (Although today there are certain disabling conditions for which we are withdrawing support — so we see, with the advent of a disability rights movement, a parallel effort to separate out the "deserving disabled" from the "undeserving disabled.") When, in the 1960's, the aged constituted the majority of the poor, our nation looked for solutions that were adopted to that population. The solution was not to force every able-bodied elderly person to get a job, but to tag Social Security benefits to inflation and to secure medical benefits for the elderly. (Marmor, et al., 1990)

In reading the literature by men, and some women, one comes to wonder, why when *women* are poor, the particular way and causes of *women's* poverty come to be so invisible. Why, in the case of women's poverty, do we now presume gender equality? No gendered wage inequity; no gendering of familial caretaking responsibilities; no gendered vulnerability to spousal abuse or an employer's sexual abuse. If it is indeed the case that the very demise of legal barriers to women's economic and political participation and women's increased control over reproduction through contraception and abortion rights are responsible for this presumption of gender equality, then feminists have a special responsibility to concern themselves with welfare reform efforts. For the improved conditions brought about by feminist efforts have not eliminated the unequal vulnerability of women to exploitation and abuse at home and in the workplace. Naomi Zack (Zack, 1995), in another context warns, "You must dismount a tiger with great care." The efforts of some better situated women to dismount the tiger of patriarchy may well have left other women— less well situated— in mortal danger.

Still, for the left, the woman in poverty is a worker who has suffered from economic displacement, a victim of structural unemployment. When the right drops the family values rhetoric (reserved to chastise poor women for being sexual) and assumes the work ethics rhetoric, the welfare recipient is simply an able-bodied worker who is failing to see the value of hard work, the dignity of a job. She is told to accept "a job, any job;" that no job is a "menial job." The welfare *recipient* (and take note of the passivity of that very term — she receives and gives nothing in return) instead of working hard like the rest of us is making money with her *body*, irresponsibly producing babies — at least until she hits the menopause wall— and by then, its too late to retool. (Come to think of it, that sounds rather like a widespread view of women — they use their bodies — by delivering up sex and babies — to get a man to support them, until they hit the menopause wall and then... the unhappy fate of the aged woman who is all too easily left

— with few skills and less income — replaced by a younger model.)

The gendered nature of the poverty of the white mother without a male wage earner was not always invisible. (For the black mother poverty continued to be seen in non-gendered terms till the 1960's.) The particular conditions of white women's poverty was recognized as distinctive. All too distinctive. Feminist scholars have documented the influence of women in constituting the welfare state in the United States and in drafting the policy that was to become AFDC (Sapiro, 1990; Gordon, 1994; Nelson, 1990; Fraser, 1990). As these scholars have also made evident, we have a two-tier welfare system, the one addressing the model of the male worker, for example Social Security benefits and Unemployment Insurance — universal or "contributory" popular programs. The second has been based, until just last July, on woman as homemaker. These programs are means-tested, invasive, poorly financed, and stigmatized. The story of how a welfare program initiated by women for women became the despised program we now call simply "welfare" is a fascinating, if depressing, story. At best, it is a story of a "progressive maternalism," which gained power through the efforts of well-educated upper and upper-middle class women even before women had gained the vote. At worst, it is a story about how these same women, mostly white, used the social benefits conferred to women to "Americanize" (and thus erase the native ethnic identities of Eastern and Southern European women), even at the cost of preventing those benefits from being extended to Black women and non-European immigrants. (See especially (Mink, 1995).)

The history of US welfare policy indicates that the woman who lives her maternal and sexual life outside the traditional family is consistently viewed within some patriarchical model. Paternalist conceptions of welfare, models of welfare which construe the welfare recipient on the model of the male worker see the woman who receives welfare as a cipher onto whom those formulating and criticizing welfare policy project their "dreams, fears and idols," to use the memorable phrase of Simone de Beauvoir. But maternalist policies have not treated the mother in need in ways that fully protect her personhood. These policies tended to treat her as a mere conduit. As Gwendolyn Mink writes: "The fruits of maternalist social policy research were policies designed to improve motherhood through cultural reform. The beneficiary of these policies was the child, the conduit her mother, the social goal the fully Americanized child." (Mink, 1995: p. 27) The progressive maternalists adopting a philosophy of "social housekeeping" saw their role as bringing maternal virtues into the public sphere. They accomplished a great deal in establishing a Children's Bureau within the executive branch of government, in making possible the Sheppard-Townser Act and mother's pensions. They were also responsible for protective work legislation, which, while protecting women from some of the abuses of employers, also significantly limited the earning capabilities of low income women — the income of the very mothers they were concerned to help — since benefits were kept so low that it was difficult for the families to survive without women's (and children's) supplemental wage labor. Along with their advocacy of the mother's pension, they were also responsible for legislation which monitored mother's sexuality, reviewed the women's housekeeping standards, intervened in feeding and rearing habits and customs retained from the Old World. As the city housekeepers, the eyes of the well-meaning reformers were directed at the end result — the child. They by-passed the mother as a citizen in her own right.

They were maternalists in that they wanted to bring women's values into the public sphere. This feminist vision resonates with certain feminist visions today, especially

those which are associated with the feminist morality of care. Although there are doubtless many significant differences between the historical case and feminists today, the historical example alerts us to some of the dangers lurking in the otherwise worthwhile project of bringing women's value of care, of concern for children, and so forth to the public arena. For how, and in what spirit, we try to import these values makes all the difference.

The question before us today is whether, and if so how, we can conceive of welfare which addresses women's lives, which does not insist that all women must fit the Procrustean bed of the male wage worker, which recognizes the demise of the "family wage" and which recognizes the dependency of those for whom mothers care, but does so without reducing the mothers themselves to dependency and control.

I want to suggest that we need to shift our attention on dependency away from the social/political/economic/ and moral registers which Fraser and Gordon explicate. For there is another deployment of the term that gets lost and which we can retrieve in the acronym AFDC — Aid to Families with *Dependent* Children. Why are the women who dependent on welfare 'dependent' — because they have dependent children to care for. Human development, disease, disability and decline result in what I have called inevitable dependencies. (Also see (Fineman, 1995).) The relationships in which these dependents are cared for, I have called dependency relations (Kittay, 1995; Kittay, 1996). Dependency relations, as I conceive of them, have as their core, a dependent (or charge) and a dependency worker (one who cares for the charge).

Elsewhere, I (along with other feminists) have argued that these relationships constitute the fount of all social organization (Held, 1987; Fineman, 1995; Baier, 1987). And yet it is one which is eclipsed in the construal of society understood as an association of equals. (See also (Pateman, 1989)). The bonds of political association among equals, however binding they may be, are not as powerful as those created by caring relationships. As Virginia Held has argued, the intimate bonds of dependents and their caretakers make civic order and civic friendship possible (Held, 1987). These are ties that allow individuals at different stages of life to withstand the forces that act upon them. The relationship between the solo mother and her children is the distillation of this bond. But in caring for the dependent, the dependency worker herself is in need of support — especially so in a more highly developed economy where caregiving is not compatible with wage earning.

We should say that social order depends not only on principles of justice but on principles of care. Perhaps it is still more accurate to say with Susan Okin and Marilyn Friedman that the distinction between care and justice should not be overdrawn (Okin, 1989; Friedman, 1987). That instead, justice itself is not served if principles of care are not incorporated within the social order and that care is not served if it is meted out without reference to principles of justice. For dependents to receive care, they must be able to be cared for by one who can focus on their particular needs. Good caring requires a relationship between the one cared for and the one caring. But the one caring must herself not be treated without justice or caring. Her needs must themselves be met if a just caring is to be possible. But in caring for another, the dependency worker becomes dependent, to some significant degree, on another to see that her needs are met. The dependency of the dependency worker is derivative, not inevitable — it is structural, not characterological.

Patriarchical family structures have been one answer to the requirement that dependency relations require support. But, as feminist critiques of the family have

shown, they are neither the only nor the best response. Within this structure, dependency work is assigned by gender, not by skill or disposition, and the dependency of the dependency worker is the condition of her vulnerability to exploitation, abuse and all the ills against which feminists have fought. Patriarchical state support in the form of welfare has been the response to the solo mother in need. Again, it has been a poor response — better than none, but too little, too stigmatized, and too intrusive. The welfare repeal, a.k.a. 'reform' is no response at all. The demand that women on welfare "work" fails not only to value the unpaid dependency work of the women using welfare to support themselves and their children, it fails to recognize the dependency work of mothering. In the name of fostering a fictive "independence," it refuses to acknowledge "the obligation of the social order to attend to the well-being of dependents *and* of their caretakers, and to the *relation* of caretaker and dependent upon which all other civic unions depend." (Kittay, 1996) A society that refuses to support this bond absolves itself from its most fundamental obligation — its obligation to its founding possibility.

The ideal of independence presumes an equality and reciprocity of social relations which is blind to the inherent dependencies in which we all are immersed. To incorporate dependency and the dependency relation into social relations, we need a concept of interdependence that recognizes what is not precisely a relation of reciprocity but a relation that I characterize as "nested dependencies." These link those who help and those who require help to give aid to ones who cannot help themselves. If we look at women's poverty and the social response to "welfare" from a perspective of the dependency relation, and we attempt to reconstruct our understanding of social cooperation and participation from this perspective, we get, I believe, a different take on how to argue for welfare.

If we agree that the care of the dependents must take place within a dependency relation, then the ethical justification of the welfare state is to support dependency relations. The purpose of welfare needs to be at once to care for dependents and to mitigate the costs to dependency workers for their participation in the dependency relation.

As we look for a way to bring a care ethic to the public arena, the contemporary version of social housekeeping, we need a conception of social cooperation which does not presume the equality of all who participate, but which acknowledges dependencies, yet also requires a certain form of reciprocation. This is a concept I have called *doulia*, adopting a term that derives from the Greek word for a service. [6] To elucidate the notion of doulia, I like to begin with the relation from which I have borrowed the term, from a form of care extended to the postpartum woman.

The postpartum period is one of special vulnerability for the mother as well as the infant. Some traditional cultures and religions mark this period of maternity: the mother is enjoined to care for her child while her needs and her other household and familial duties are attended to by others. Some traditions assign a *doula*, a postpartum caregiver who assists the mother and, at times, relieves her. Instead of the time-worn paid help with which we are familiar, the "baby nurse" who displaces the mother by taking over care of the infant, the doula assists by caring for the mother as the mother attends to the child. Doulas are becoming an option of postpartum care in the US today (Aronow, 1993). I am advocating the extension of the notion of the service performed by the *doula*, for an arrangement by which service is passed on so that those who become needy by virtue of tending to those in need can be cared for as well. *Doulia*, the practice

of the *doula*, is part of an ethic that is captured in the colloquial phrase: "What goes round comes round."[7] If someone helps another in her need, someone, in turn, will help the helper when she is needy—whether the neediness derives from her position as caretaker or from circumstances that pertain to health or age. A principle of *doulia* would therefore read something like this: *Just as we have required care to survive and thrive, so we need to provide conditions that allow others—including those who do the work of caring—to receive the care they need to survive and thrive.* *Doulia* is a principle of cooperation by which the benefit and burden of care[8] is received and distributed in such a way that dependents are well cared for, the dependency worker is not exploited and the integrity of dependency relation is preserved. If we are each implicated in a set of dependency relations at some point in our lives then there is some point in our lives when we each need care, and in which we may each be called upon to care for another, or see that another is cared for. We may not be called upon to care for the person who cared for us, but we reciprocate the caring we received by either caring for another ourselves, or making available the resources for another to do the care for those who depend on us to be concerned for their welfare. The circles of reciprocity move outward to the larger social structures of which we are a part, and upon whom we depend.

While the doula who serves as our paradigm, is engaged in private interactions, the idea of *doulia* I propose extends to the public domain. The caretaker has a responsibility to care for the dependent; and the larger society should seek ways to attend to the well-being of the caretaker, thereby allowing the caretaker to fulfill responsibilities to the dependent without exploiting the labor and concern of the caretaker. This is a *public* conception of *doulia*.

The notion of doulia, as a principle of social cooperation, has a correlate in a received conception of reciprocity. I am thinking here of the notion of reciprocity Rawls employs to argue for a principle grounding justice between generations. Since society is an association that persists through generations, an extended notion of "reciprocity," a transitive (if you will) responsiveness to our dependence on others, is needed for, as Rawls recognizes, the care we take to hand over a world that is not depleted, is never reciprocated to us by those whom we benefit. Rather, the benefit we bestow on the next generation ought to be the benefit we would have wanted the previous generation to bestow on us. In this extended notion of reciprocity and *doulia*, we deal with human development and with its "chronological unfairness." Just as the gains and savings from a previous generation pass from us to the next generation, the care a mother bestows on her child is reciprocated not only from the adult child not only back to the parents, but also forward to a future generation.[9]

Within each generation we can say that just as care of a dependent morally obliges the dependency worker to give a certain priority to the welfare of her charge (see (Kittay, 1996)), a public conception of doulia is needed to accomplish the tripartite goal of treating the dependency worker equitably, providing care for dependents, and respecting the dependency relations in which fundamental human attachments grow and thrive.

Robert Goodin (Goodin, 1988), writes that the justification for the welfare state is, ultimately, an ethical one, namely to address the needs of dependents. His argument is that "those who depend on particular others for satisfaction of their basic needs are rendered, by that dependency, suspectible to exploitation by those upon whom they depend. It is the risk of exploitation of such dependencies that justifies public provision — and public provision of a distinctively welfare state form — of those basic needs"

(Goodin, 1988: 121). There is much to be said for an understanding of welfare as the protection of the vulnerable. The vulnerability in need of protection, however, is not only the dependent who is disadvantaged by age, illness or disability, but also one made vulnerable by caring for a dependent. In tending to the needs of one who is significantly incapable of caring for oneself, the dependency worker is not only economically vulnerable, but is also less able to make her social and political voice heard, especially when it goes against the provider of the material support that helps to sustain her and her charge. When that material support is threatened, both her own well-being *and* that of her charge is in danger.[10] The dependency of her charge therefore makes the dependency worker vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, misuse, and silencing. And because the dependent requires a relationship, not only the care taking itself in order to thrive[11], and because the dependency worker to be a caring working requires the recognition that only a genuine relationship provides, the relationship itself requires protection. What I am suggesting here is that the concept of doulia can serve as a justification for the welfare extended to the solo mother, but that it is a justification that calls for a much broader implementation.

The concept of doulia itself suggests that the dependency worker must be involved in what Fraser has called "the struggle over needs interpretation." The feminist theorist and advocate must be careful not to follow the model of the invasive baby nurse rather than the assisting doula. Nonetheless because dependency work does partially deprive the dependency worker of political voice, interventions are crucial. With these caveats in mind, I would like to say a few thing about what basing welfare policies on a concept of doulia entails.[12] First, it entails that all dependency work, whether it is care for children, the ill, the aged or the disabled must be recognized as social contributions which require reciprocation, not by the cared for but by a larger social circle in which the dependency relation is embedded. There are a number of possible ways in which such reciprocation can be recognized. As we've already noted the traditional family, with its breadwinner and caretaker, forms one such embedding nest at least for the care of young children. Because it is, many conservatives, but also some liberals have seen the "two-parent" family as the best solution to welfare dependency. Is it? Let us presume the viability of the traditional family — ignore for the moment the social forces which have hammered away at it and at the questionable justice of its gendered division of labor. Let us imagine a family form and an economy in which one breadwinner can produce income sufficient to support another spouse who does the domestic labor and caring work and a couple of children, and let us suppose that this family is not governed by traditional gender divisions of labor. The dependency worker cares for the dependents, the breadwinner, whom we'll also call "the private provider" supports the dependency relation with resources sufficient to maintain all, and provides whatever additional support the dependency worker requires to fulfill her obligations and care for herself. This is then a private arrangement which presumably calls upon no additional social supports and so is "self-sufficient."[13]

There are at least three problems with this analysis. The first is conceptual, the second is economic, and the third is ethical and a matter of justice. First, it is an obfuscation to think of such a structure as "self-sufficient." Employment is itself a dependency relation — the provider is dependent on an employer and still more significantly dependent on an economy whose skills, services, or products are marketable. The waged worker is him/herself in nested dependencies — dependent on an employer, who is dependent on a market and on a particular configuration of

economic structures and forces, such as interest rates, global competition, etc. A private provider does not lend "self-sufficiency" to the dependence relation, because this self-sufficiency is a conceptual chimera in a capitalist economy.

Second, an economically self-reliant provider/caretaker model requires a rate of compensation that makes it viable for a provider to support a family. The fact of structural unemployment, as we all know, means that not all providers can find employment, and especially employment adequate to support a family. The rates of poverty among families with two adults present indicate that this goal is not achievable within the current economy for large numbers of families. (According to the *Current Population Survey* of March 1994— 9% of married couples were poor and single mothers comprised 46% of the poor; of all poor families 12% had at least one year-round, full-time worker and 32% has at least 1 member who worked at least 30 weeks during the year. These figures are based on a rate of poverty that all experts agree are set too low.) The reality for most two-parent families today is a wife who both has primary responsibility for domestic work and dependency work, but who also holds down a job, often part-time, almost always not paying as well as her husband's. The pure provider, caretaker model has been hybridized. The change comes, in part out of women's aspirations, and in part out of economic necessity since the average weekly inflation adjusted earnings have declined by 19% since 1973, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics (U. S. Department of Labor).

Dependency work and provision can be so divided that each of two partners engage in each of the two forms of labor and relationship. But more often, even the hybridized model follows many of the same structural features as the pure model.[14] The hybridized dependency worker continues to assume primarly responsibility for dependents and remains largely (though not totally) dependent on the income of the hybridized breadwinner partner. If the marriage falls apart, the financial suffering falls largely to the one who bears the major responsibility for dependency work. It is often the demands of the dependency work which prevents that partner from pursuing financially more advantageous situations.

Third, as we have suggested, the work of dependency care disadvantages the dependency worker with respect to her (or his) exit options if the relationship with the breadwinner becomes fragile. As I pointed out in speaking of the vulnerability of the dependency worker, her own dependency is both derivative of her charge's, and includes her charge's, for she has a moral duty to fulfill the needs of her charge and she often has an emotional tie which binds her to her charge. Her vulnerability to the good graces of the private provider means that she has what Sen terms, a disadvantage of bargaining power in relations of "cooperative conflict" (Sen, 1989). This handicap is a source of the myriad injustices that pervade the intimate relations of family life. The consequences of cooperative conflict are aggravated by women's subordinate position in the larger society — but they would be present (albeit to a lesser degree) in the private arrangement for the reciprocation of dependency work. Again, even if that dependency work were not gendered, the vulnerability to such injustices would be a consequence of the dependency work.

This means that a just reciprocation for dependency work could not presume the so-called private arrangement of the traditional breadwinner-caretaker model — or even the hybridized model. This suggests a universalization of benefits for dependency work. Just as workman's compensation and unemployment insurance became programs that were universally available to workers, with benefits rationalized and routinized (and

extended without stigma), so must compensation for dependency work (Waerness, 1987). I can envision a payment for dependency work, which can be used to compensate a mother for her time caring for her child, or allow her to use the money to pay for daycare. Or provide money for a son or daughter to care for an ailing parent, or to pay someone else to perform the service. The level of reciprocation, furthermore must allow the dependency worker not only to survive, but to have the resources to care for the dependent as well as herself. This means considering what else a dependency worker requires: health coverage (as all workers should get and all dependents should get); certain in kind services or goods or monetary equivalent; housing. But again, specifying these must be a work in which dependency workers are themselves engaged.

The conception of doulia respects not only the nature of dependency, but also the caretaker as a dependency *worker*. Like workers whose labor is not exploited they need vacations, exit options, retraining when they are no longer needed at their employment. And like all work, dependency work must be de-gendered, in fact, not in name only. This suggests public programs of educating for dependency work — especially young boys and men.

But workers normally are accountable to those who pay their wages. One problem with having public support for dependency work may be that when the state pays for the labor of caring for one's own children, or one's aging parents, then the state can claim that it has the right of oversight to the quality of work and the input of the worker. Such intrusion into the "private domain" runs counter to much liberal thought. Can we justifiably say to the state, "be the 'public' provider, be the one who pays the dependency worker her salary, but then, except of course when the dependency worker violates the trust of her charge and begins to be abusive or negligent, stay out of the 'private' dependency relation?" Putting the matter this way may rely too much on the dichtomony of public and private that feminist theorists have urged us to reconsider. But state oversight of personal relations, except to protect against abuse and the perpetuation of sexist oppression, seems to run counter to most feminist liberatory goals as well. I believe that the concept of social cooperation inherent in the concept of *doulia* offers a resolution to this dilemma. Ordinary concepts of reciprocation dictate that if I provide you with a product or a service, you compensate me for the product or the labor I poured into that product or service. Lines of accountability follow the lines of reciprocation. If you do not pay me, I do not receive the benefits for which I labored, and so I hold you accountable, and it is my right to do so. If you pay me but I do not deliver the goods, I do not receive the benefits for which I labored, and I hold you accountable and again, it is my right to do so. There is no third party affected by the transaction, and each party is accountable to the other, except that the state may have a duty to insure that both parties honor their agreements. But the labor of the dependency worker flows to the dependent. If I do a good job as a dependency worker, the dependent is the beneficiary. I am accountable, first and foremost to the direct beneficiary of my actions, that is, to my charge. Just as any other worker, I have a right to demand compensation for my labor. But because the dependent, virtually by definition, is not in a position to compensate, the compensation comes from another source, e.g. the provider. But the right to demand that the work be well-done is the right of the dependent. The duty of the state, whether it is a provider or not is to be sure the work is well-done and that the dependency worker is compensated. The duty of the state is especially significant in the case of a party as vulnerable as the charge. But that duty is very constrained, and is not any more significant if the state also serves as a provider. Such a duty is not an open

ticket to intrude upon the relationship or to regulate the life of the dependency worker. The duty of the public provider would remain pretty much the duty of the state at present: to insure that a child is neither neglected nor abused nor denied provisions of a fundamental sort. One only hopes the state would fulfill that duty more consciously than it does now.

Adequate public support of dependency work, then would significantly alter the dependency workers' bargaining position, making both them and their charges less subject to abuse within the family, and regulation by the State. Even the miserly AFDC program was primarily a boon to women with children escaping abusive relations. A welfare program that universalizes compensation for dependency work would allow women to leave abusive relations without the stigma of current welfare participation.

Within our own society, dependency workers — paid or unpaid — are generally poorer than others. Paid dependency workers, such as child care workers, are the most poorly paid workers relative to their level of education and skill. (Hartman & Pearce, 1989). In hospitals and nursing homes, orderlies and aids, those who do most of the hands on dependency care of patients and clients, are the lowest paid staff. Female-headed households account for the poorest families in the US. Doulia requires that dependency work which is currently paid work be well-paid. It is not enough that women be able to have affordable childcare. We are not adhering to a principle of doulia when we exploit other women to care for our children.

And finally, a concept of doulia would be accepting of any family form in which dependency work is adequately realized. It would honor different familial forms of caring, a child caring for an elderly parent; a gay man caring for his partner with AIDS; a lesbian woman caring for her lover, and her lover's children, through a bout of breast cancer; a single parent household or a multiple adult household in which children are being raised. A concept of doulia only recognizes need, and the vulnerability arising from the responsiveness to need — not family form, forms of sexuality, gender, class, or race.[15]

The debate over AFDC has been precisely a debate over the visibility and the social responsibility for the dependency work of women and the way in which such work and such responsibility will keep the poor impoverished and will impoverish the women who try to raise families on their own without support of a man or without familial or professional resources. The category of dependency worker, however, is not simply another "universal" among women. It is a category in which the interests of women of different race or class can be turned against each other. White women benefit from the dependency work of women of color; wealthy women benefit from the dependency work of poorer women, and so forth.

The call for a concept of *doulia* and universal policies is not to smooth over these difficult issues between women with different interests and from different races and classes, and to reinstate universalism as if none of identity politics, post-modernism, and race critical theories mattered. But the call for universal policies is not universalism. Universal policies do not pretend that we are all alike in some designated characteristic. They only maintain that if anyone should have access to a given resource, everyone should have access to such a resource, because such a resource comes to us by virtue of our membership within a given community, often because it is believed that such a resource is needed for each to function as a full member of such a community. As I indicated earlier universal policies have had their critics. They have been criticized as not sufficiently redistributive and as benefitting most those who need them least. But universal policies that are formed from the perspective of the least well-off and formed

to serve their needs first are least likely to be deficient in this respect. A good example is provided by the case of disability. The ramps and modified sidewalks meant to serve the disabled, but available for all to use have benefitted many populations for whom they were not envisioned without diminishing their usefulness to the disabled.

The universal policies advocated on a conception of doulia, derive from the need that women have to function as full citizens in a post-industrial world. To function, free of vulnerability to exploitation due to paid or familial dependency work, to be free to engage with the full resonance of their voices, women must have access to universal provision that recognizes their indispensible function as dependency workers and the importance of their participation as full citizens.

NOTES

[1] A new study released by the McCormack Institute and the Center for Survey Research both at the University of Massachusetts Boston, found that among a representative sample of the Massachusetts Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Families (T.A.F.D.C.) caseload, 65% would be considered victims of domestic violence by a current or former boyfriend or husband using Massachusetts state law definition of abuse.

[2] Many of these feminist writers see welfare both in terms of gender and race. For some examples of these analyses see Abramovitz, 1996; Sassoon, 1987; Skocpol, 1992; Gordon, 1990; Gordon, 1994: Mink 1995.

[3] Among these writers are some women who do not view welfare as a predominately women's issue. Some of these writers also emphasize race. Examples of the works I have in mind include Jencks, 1992; Marmor, et al., 1990; Gutman, 1988.

[4] For an excellent discussion of how the term "independent" came to be associated with wage labor and "dependent" became attached to those who were excluded from wage labor see Fraser & Gordon, 1994. They point to three groups who epitomized a dependent status: paupers, slaves and women. As they narrate the semantics of dependency, children, the disabled and the frail elderly, do not figure in the primary use of the term.

[5] According to a report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Despite Economic Recovery, Poverty and Income Trends Are Disappointing in 1993* (Washington, D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, October 1994) in 1993, 37.4 percent of the nation's poor were women over eighteen, 40 percent were children.

[6] I wish to thank Elfie Raymond for helping me search for a term with the resonance necessary to capture the concept articulated here.

[7] The importance of this ethic within the African-American community is documented in Stacks, 1974.

[8] Care may be conceived along the lines of a Rawlsian primary good. See Kittay, 1996.

[9] Alasdair MacIntyre has recently elaborated a similar argument (MacIntyre, 1997), with respect to reciprocity in the case of dependent relations.

[10] In Schmidtz & Goodin, 1997, a later work, Goodin takes these matters into account. His is a superb defense of the notion of collective responsibility against those who maintain the primacy of "personal responsibility."

[11] An example is found in recent studies indicating that "After birth...in humans, the inflowing stream of sights, sounds smells touches — and most importantly, language and eye contact — literally makes the brain take shape." In other words, not only do infants require feeding and clothing, they require high quality interaction with their caretaker to develop well cognitively. Such interactions are most likely to be found in on-going relationships with caretakers Blakeslee, 1997.

[12] Fraser, 1997 has listed a number of criteria by which to evaluate proposals for the welfare state. The criteria are guided by an ideal of gender parity. I invite the reader to consider the proposals put forward here in terms of these criteria.

[13] This is a close to the vision articulated by the 1996 Vice-Presidential candidate Jack Kemp in one of the Vice-Presidential debates. He articulated a vision of an economy that could support a family with one breadwinner and one stay-at-home parent, although he was quick to add that the stay at home parent would not have to be the woman! It is interesting to have the ideal of the "family wage," a concept fought for by the left in this country, reemerge as a proposition by the right, at the same time when they are legislating the entrance of women (usually without male support) on welfare, even those raising children as young as two, into the labor force at minimum wage salaries.

[14] Why this is so is an interesting sociological question. It is also interesting to contemplate the possibilities for gender equity within the family if such an arrangement within the home is coupled with genuine gender equity in the public domain of paid employment and political and social power. But in spite of all of women's advances, this remains a utopian vision, whose possibility of realization remains in the realm of speculation. I suspect that the sorts of considerations with respect to dependency work that I bring forth here would be relevant to the realization of this more private instantiation of genuine gender equality and sharing of dependency responsibilities and dependency work.

[15] But it also recognizes that all these specificities are called into play when in discursive matters of need interpretation — so again, how the need is defined and how it is to be satisfied is something that must be negotiated by those in the dependency relation. (See (Fraser, 1987).)

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